

BBC Learning English

6 Minute English

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Blood

Callum: Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Callum.

Jennifer: And I'm Jennifer.

Callum: Now Jennifer, how squeamish are you?

Jennifer: Squeamish?

Callum: Yes, squeamish. For example, how do you feel when you see blood?

Jennifer: Well it depends on whether it's mine or not! But generally I don't have a problem with the sight of blood, why?

Callum: Well the topic of today's programme is blood and in particular how in some countries, particularly in Asia, your blood type can play an important part in your life. Do you know what your blood group, also called your blood type, is?

Jennifer: I think that I'm blood type O but I can't remember for sure. Do you know?

Callum: Er, I haven't the foggiest idea what my blood type is. Do you actually know what the main groups are though?

Jennifer: Well I certainly know that O is one of them and I think A too. Erm, not sure about the rest.

Callum: Well there's A, AB, B and O are the four main classifications. I mean I'm no doctor, no scientist but that's what I understand are the main classifications. And before we explore this topic a little more here's your question. When were these four blood groups first classified with the names, A, AB, B and O? Was it: 1899, 1909, 1919 or 1929

Jennifer: Well I imagine they've been around for quite some time so I will say 1899.

Callum: OK, we'll find out if you're right at the end of the programme.

Our World Service colleague Ruth Evans has made a fascinating programme about the topic of blood groups and how they are used by some people in Japan. Here she is describing the importance of blood groups. Of course blood and blood groups are important in medicine and science, but what other areas does she say blood groups can influence? Here's Ruth Evans.

Ruth Evans

Here in Japan blood isn't just important for medicine and science, it's also got big implications for life, work and love.

Callum: So Jennifer, as well as medicine and science, what else can blood type influence?

Jennifer: She says that blood can be important to life, work and love. I can see how blood is important to life – we all need blood – but I'm not sure how it is connected to work and love.

Callum: Well let's listen to a bit more from Ruth, she goes on to explain the connection.

Ruth Evans

Here in Japan blood isn't just important for medicine and science, it's also got big implications for life, work and love. "What's your blood type?" is often a key question in everything from matchmaking to getting a job.

Callum: She says "What's your blood type?" is a key question. What does she mean by that – a 'key' question?

Jennifer: A 'key' question is an important question. She says blood type is important to 'matchmaking and getting a job'.

Callum: Matchmaking?

Jennifer: Yes, finding a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Callum: Mmm, not very romantic is it? You can imagine the situation, you're out a bar, you meet someone, you say: "Hi, would you like a drink? Would you like to dance? What's your blood type? "

Jennifer: Well I've definitely never had that chat-up line before. It's not really very romantic, no.

Callum: Let's listen to some more of Ruth who explains why blood types are important.

Ruth Evans

"What's your blood type?" is often a key question in everything from matchmaking to getting a job. A person's blood type is popularly believed to determine temperament and personality.

Callum: She says that blood type is popularly believed to determine temperament and personality. Tell us about temperament.

Jennifer: Your temperament describes your natural character – whether you are usually cheerful, pessimistic, friendly, reserved, outgoing and so on. And Ruth says that in Japan blood type is popularly believed to determine – or decide – your temperament. I think the phrase 'popularly believed' is interesting here.

Callum: Why's that?

Jennifer: Well if you say that something is 'popularly believed' it means that it's not a proven scientific fact – it's just something that a lot of people believe, even if there is no real evidence for it.

Callum: Let's listen to all of Ruth again.

Ruth Evans

Here in Japan blood isn't just important for medicine and science, it's also got big implications for life, work and love. "What's your blood type?" is often a key question in everything from matchmaking to getting a job. A person's blood type is popularly believed to determine temperament and personality.

Callum: Do you think there is something to this? Do you think your blood type can determine your personality?

Jennifer: I think it's a really interesting question. I think it could be possible. What about you? What do you think?

Callum: Do you want a diplomatic answer?

Jennifer: I think that's best!

Callum: Personally I'm a sceptic. I find it hard to believe that my character could be determined by the blood that flows around my body. But then I don't believe in astrology either – that the position of the stars and planets in the sky when you are born can determine your temperament or personality. It seems to me these are quite similar theories, neither of which has any scientific background – yet are popularly believed in different parts of the world.

Anyway, it's nearly time for us to go – but before that it's time to get the answer to this week's question. The question was: In what year were blood groups described with the groupings A, AB, B and O?

And Jennifer you chose?

Jennifer: 1899

Callum: And the correct answer was, in fact, actually, 1909. But just a stab in the dark, you were right it was quite, quite early on.

For now, that's all from this week's 6 Minute English. Thank you very much Jennifer.

Jennifer: You're welcome

Callum: Goodbye.

Jennifer: Bye.

Vocabulary and definitions

to be squeamish	to feel uncomfortable or ill at the sight of blood or injuries
to not have the foggiest idea about something	to not know anything about something
a key question	a very important question
matchmaking	the process of finding or arranging romantic meetings and relationship
a chat-up line	something that is said as a way of starting a conversation with someone you have a romantic interest in
temperament	your natural character
popularly believed	if something is 'popularly believed' many people believe it even though there is no scientific evidence to support the belief
a diplomatic answer	a polite answer that may hide the strength of someone's true feelings on a subject
a sceptic	someone who doubts that a particular idea or belief is true

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