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IMPROVISATION

Exercise 3

Make up a few sentences or a short paragraph based on the news headings below. Then, read the articles and compare the one that you made up with the actual articles.

Titles

Future Homes

The World's Oldest Man

Designer Babies

Articles

1. Imagining homes of the future

A unique project is in progress in Sheffield to monitor the movements of a family living in a futuristic home filled with the latest technological innovations. The aim is to help house builders predict how we will want to use our homes 10 or 20 years from now. But what will the homes of the future be like? Experts Christopher Sanderson, of The Future Laboratory and Richard Brindley, of the Royal Institute of British Architects, outline their visions of what might be to come.

Climate

One of the major factors affecting home design in the future will be our changing climate, with hotter summers, colder winters and more floods predicted. Mr. Brindley says houses will be built with better insulation and old houses will have to have it installed. They will also need ways of keeping cool in hot weather, whether that's air conditioning or adapting the type of windows we use.

Creating space

Mr. Brindley predicts overcrowding will get worse in cities and property prices will increase a lot more, forcing more people to live in smaller homes and flats. With space at a premium, he says homes will have to be adaptable, with the same rooms used for many purposes. The technology already exists to build houses with moveable walls which run on tracks to enable the same space to be arranged in different ways for different functions. Glass technology is also changing, so you will have glass which is clear but turns opaque with an electrical current, which could be used to separate areas. Small homes will need more adaptable

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furniture, such as convertible sofa-beds and furniture which can be neatly stacked away when not in use.

Entertainment

Experts predict ever-more elaborate home entertainment making staying in as fun as going out. These too will double up to perform several functions. Mr. Brindley says: "A flat screen on your wall could double up as your front door intercom, your computer and be used to watch films." You will also be able to do things like operate things at home even when you're not there, and that sort of thing."

Water

Mr. Sanderson predicts a significant decrease in the amount of water used in the home, with sound wave technology used to replace it for cleaning jobs. He said: "Water is now known to be a fairly inefficient cleaner - sound waves can clean a lot better, more sensitively and more healthily than water or other cleaning materials." Contact lens cleaners which use sound waves to shake off dirt are already on the market and the technology is being explored for dishwashers and washing machines. Mr. Sanderson takes it one step further, asking: "In the future, if you're taking a shower, will you take it with water, or with sound waves?"

Clever fridges Mr. Sanderson expects Radio Frequency Identification technology (RFID), already used to security tag items in shops, to be extended to food packets. Small transmitters fitted in the packaging will transmit information which can be read by fridges or cupboards and then alert the cook when products are about to go off. Your fridge could also suggest recipes using the item, possibly paired with other items on its shelves, or suggest complementary items for a shopping list.

Robots

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Mr. Sanderson says robots look likely to start appearing in our homes quiet soon, with models ranging from Sony's childlike Qrio and robot pet dog to robotic vacuum cleaners. But Mr. Brindley expects most robots to be more functional than lifelike. "They will mostly be small, inbuilt silent little robots sorting out your fridge or opening and closing your blinds than Jeeves the butler-like robots wandering around with dusters. "There will be micro-robots designed to carry out specific tasks such as cleaning toilets or drains." He also foresees new materials for buildings and appliances which can repair and regenerate themselves, or which change shape when an electrical current is passed through them.

2. *Secrets for a Long Life*

Nobody lives forever, but most of us try to delay the inevitable as long as possible. Walter Breuning, a retired railroad worker from Great Falls, Mont., succeeded at this better than most. Breuning recently died of natural causes at the age of 114. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the average age at time of death in the U.S. is just under 78. An amiable man with a fatalistic view of life, Breuning had a life that spanned the entire 20th century. In 1896, the year of his birth, the Klondike Gold Rush began. A decade later, Britain's first modern battleship, HMS Dreadnought, was launched. Breuning bought his first car in 1919 for the then-substantial sum of \$150. Breuning witnessed the primitive years of human flight, but lived long enough to see space travel become almost routine. After a long career as a railroad worker, he spent his final years in a studio apartment in a retirement home.

Theories about longevity are plentiful. Because lung cancer remains a major killer, the CDC says one of the best things you can do to prolong your life is simply to not smoke. Jack LaLanne, the late exercise guru and TV personality, asserted that physical fitness is the key to

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a long life. Author Henry David Thoreau thought the key to eternal youth was maintaining your enthusiasm. The world's oldest man had his own ideas, however.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Breuning offered this advice about living long and well:

*Accepting change, even when change is disappointing. No one ever said everything would go your way.

*Limiting yourself to two meals a day. At 5 foot 8 and 125 pounds, the lean Breuning restricted his meals in his final years to breakfast and lunch, with lots of fruit. He skipped dinner, but drank plenty of water.

*Continuing to work as long as you are able. After retiring from the railroad, he volunteered for the local Shriners chapter until he was 99.

*Finding ways to help others. As Breuning told the Associated Press, "The more you do for others, the better shape you're in."

*Accepting death. The world's oldest man said acknowledging the inevitability of death is one of the keys to enjoying a long life. Never be afraid of death, Breuning said, because you're born to die.

*An Active Mind. Elizabeth Lombardo, a clinical psychologist and physical therapist in Wexford, Pa., says Breuning's commitment to working late into life likely was responsible for keeping his mind active far longer than most. This alone can prolong life, she says. "When we have a sense of purpose, we are so much happier." Dennis Kravetz, a psychologist based in Scottsdale, Ariz., says one very important thing Breuning did was to maintain a positive attitude.

"This gentleman was right on," Kravetz says. "There is compelling, powerful evidence that if people have a positive attitude, particularly in retirement years, they live longer. It means looking forward to the future. That is easy when you are 25 years old, but when you are 85 years old, you may say, 'Well, my life is just about over with.' That creates your death."

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3. *Designer Babies*

Advanced reproductive technology allows parents and doctors to screen embryos for genetic disorders and select healthy embryos. “Designer babies” is a term used by journalists to describe this concept. It is not a term used by scientists. Advanced reproductive techniques involve using In Vitro Fertilization or IVF to fertilize eggs with sperm in 'test-tubes' outside the mother's body in a laboratory. These techniques allow doctors and parents to reduce the chance that a child will be born with a genetic disorder. At the moment it is only legally possible to carry out two types of advanced reproductive technologies on humans. The first involves choosing the type of sperm that will fertilize an egg: this is used to determine the sex and the genes of the baby. The second technique screens embryos for a genetic disease: only selected embryos are implanted back into the mother's womb.

In the future we may be able to "cure" genetic diseases in embryos by replacing faulty sections of DNA with healthy DNA. This is called ‘germ line therapy’ and is carried out on an egg, sperm or a tiny fertilized embryo. Such therapy has successfully been done on animal embryos but at the moment it is illegal to do this on humans. Today it is possible to choose the sex of the embryo using advanced reproductive techniques during IVF. Determining the sex of an embryo can be useful because some genetic diseases only occur in male babies. Doctors choose a healthy female embryo without the faulty gene and implant this into the mother's womb to grow into a healthy baby.

In most countries sex selection is only permitted to avoid diseases that are linked to a certain sex. In Britain it is illegal to select the sex of a child just because the parents want either a boy or a girl. In the United States a deaf lesbian couple has intentionally had two deaf children by artificial insemination using sperm from a man who had a long family history of deafness. This couple deliberately chose to bring a child into the world with a disability. This sort of choice raises new ethical issues.

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In 2000, in the United States, the Nash family made medical history by having a baby boy who had been selected to be a perfect tissue match for his very ill older sister. His sister suffered from a rare genetic disease so tissue from her new-born brother's placenta was used to restore her to health. The same thing was allowed to occur in 2001 in the UK and now many more parents are applying to the authorities for permission to do the same thing.

In the future it may be possible to really create 'designer babies' and to move from testing for medical conditions to the selection of designer features such as height, eye color, facial appearance and perhaps even intelligence and personality.

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