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CHAPTER

Switched at Birth: Women Learn the Truth 56 Years Later

Prereading Preparation

1 Look at the photo and read the title of the article.

a. What does **switched at birth** mean?

b. What do you think happened to these two women?

c. What is **the truth**?

d. When did they learn **the truth**?





Switched at Birth: Women Learn the Truth 56 Years Later

by Imaeyen Ibanga, *ABC News*

1 When Oregon nurses handed Marjorie Angell her newborn daughter in the hospital in 1953, she insisted they had given her the wrong child. Her concerns were brushed off, but in an unlikely story that was 56 years in the making, her mother's intuition foreshadowed what was to come.

5 It was true. Her daughter had been switched at birth when she and the other baby were being bathed, but Marjorie Angell would never learn the truth because she died before it was revealed. "It's sad," DeeAnn Angell Schafer told "Good Morning America." "Just to think I missed out on knowing my own parents." Even though Kay Rene Reed Qualls said she enjoyed a wonderful life, she still feels guilty about the memories that should belong to DeeAnn and her family. "I look at them and I feel like I cheated somebody," she said. The story of two women who grew up in the wrong families just came to light last month to the surprise of everyone and no one.

A Secret Switch?

15 On May 3, 1953, DeeAnn Angell of Fossil, Oregon, and Kay Rene Reed of Condon, Oregon, were born at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in the eastern Oregon town of Heppner. They grew up, got married, and had children and grandchildren of their own. The women's lives were uneventful until last summer, when Kay Rene's brother, Bobby Reed, received a call from an 86-year-old woman who claimed to hold an astonishing secret. He met the woman in her nursing home. She said she had known the Reeds' mother and had lived next door to the Angell family in Fossil. Her shocking claim was that Kay Rene wasn't really a Reed at all; she was an Angell. The elderly woman said Kay Rene and DeeAnn were switched at birth. To bolster her story, she showed Bobby Reed an old photo of DeeAnn's sister. Reed saw an instant and undeniable resemblance to the woman raised as his sister.

Switched at Birth: Uncovering the Truth

25 If what the elderly woman said was correct, then DeeAnn really was Reed's sister and not Kay Rene. The secret stunned Reed, who was unsure what to do with the potential bombshell. He always had known and loved Kay Rene as his sister. Though Kay Rene was a brunette in a sea of blonds, no one ever thought to question her paternity.

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Reed didn't want anything to change, nor did he want to hurt anyone. He decided to tell his two oldest sisters, and one of them broke the news to Kay Rene. With both the Reed parents and the Angell parents dead, the children had to come together to uncover the truth about the alleged mix-up.

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The families learned rumors of babies being switched at birth had been around for decades. In fact, Kay Rene first learned of such gossip in 1995 when her sister Carol told her during their dying father's last camping trip. After his death, Kay Rene's mother approached her about the subject. She acknowledged that she heard another new mother in the same hospital, where she had given birth, question if her baby was her own. But after looking into Kay Rene's big brown eyes, she determined this was her baby and she wouldn't bring the issue up anymore.

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Growing Up with Questions

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Growing up, Kay Rene had questioned whether she truly was a Reed. She had her suspicions. She knew she didn't look like anyone else in her family. Eventually, Kay Rene said, the rumors started in her family that maybe she wasn't really related to them.

"I think all the older sisters knew this," she said. But neither woman ever had blood tests and DNA testing was not an option.

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The doubts just lingered. Even Kay Rene's husband joked about whether the Reeds truly were her relatives after seeing her at family functions. Kay Rene just knew she didn't want those thoughts to be true. She chalked them up to being ornery. She justified her placement in the Reed clan by saying her blue eyes came from her father. DeeAnn, too, had suspicions growing up. She wondered why she loved horses so much. She received a phone call from her sister in February to tell her about the news—the rumors might be true.

'Swisters': Switched Sisters

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Kay Rene wanted to know the truth; she needed to know it. So last month, she, her brother and their sister Dorothy met the blond-haired DeeAnn at a Kennewick, Washington, clinic for a DNA test. When Kay Rene finally met the Angell family, she realized she looked more like them. The DNA test confirmed what Kay Rene had seen with her own eyes and what DeeAnn realized the second she met Kay Rene. Kay Rene was not a Reed and had no biological link to her brother Bobby Reed. DeeAnn actually was Bobby Reed's sister and Kay Rene really was an Angell.

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The news was shocking and disturbing for Kay Rene, who felt as if she had lived a lie. She questioned if her memories actually belonged to her since she lived what should have been DeeAnn’s life. DeeAnn finally got the answer to why she had an affinity for horses. Her biological father had been a horse trainer. DeeAnn and Kay Rene have become close following the revelation. They refer to each other as swisters, short for switched sisters.

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The hospital where the women were born has offered them counseling, but neither has accepted the offer. “We’re old women now,” Kay Rene said. They also haven’t decided if they’ll sue the facility. And while DeeAnn harbors at least some anger about the situation, Kay Rene said she doesn’t because there’s no use in it.

A

Reading Overview: Main Idea, Details, and Summary

Read the passage again. As you read, underline what you think are the most important ideas. Then, in one or two sentences, write the main idea of the reading. **Use your own words.**

Main Idea

Details

Use the following chart to organize the information in the article. Refer back to the information you underlined in the passage as a guide. When you have finished, write a brief summary of the reading. **Use your own words.**

| Switched at Birth: Women Learn the Truth 56 Years Later | |
|---|--|
| What happened? | |
| When did this happen? | |
| Where did this happen? | |
| How did this happen? | |
| Who was Kay Rene's biological mother? | |
| Who was DeeAnn's biological mother? | |
| How did they learn the truth? | |
| How does Kay Rene feel about what happened? | |
| How does DeeAnn feel about what happened? | |

Summary

B

Statement Evaluation

Read the statements. Then scan the article to find out if each sentence is **True (T)**, **False (F)**, or an **Inference (I)**. Write **T**, **F**, or **I**.

- 1 _____ DeeAnn and Kay Rene are sisters.
- 2 _____ The 86-year-old neighbor had been at the hospital when DeeAnn and Kay Rene were born.
- 3 _____ Bobby Reed's sister told Kay Rene the truth about being switched at birth.
- 4 _____ Kay Rene did not resemble the Reed family.
- 5 _____ Both women had suspicions about their origins.
- 6 _____ DeeAnn's and Kay Rene's parents knew for sure about their daughters having been switched at birth.
- 7 _____ DeeAnn was the only person in the Angell family who loved horses.
- 8 _____ DeeAnn and Kay Rene refused counseling from the hospital where they were born.

C

Reading Analysis

Read each question carefully. Circle the letter or number of the correct answer, or write the answer.

- 1 Read lines 1–4.
 - a. What were Marjorie Angell's concerns?
 1. She believed her newborn daughter was ill.
 2. She felt very ill after her daughter's birth.
 3. She believed she was given the wrong baby.
 - b. **Her concerns were brushed off** means
 1. no one listened to her concerns
 2. no one helped her with her concerns
 3. no one understood her concerns

- c. Her mother’s intuition foreshadowed what was to come.** This means
1. the nurses were right, and Marjorie Angell was wrong
 2. Marjorie Angell’s mother was right, and the nurses were wrong
 3. Marjorie Angell was right, and the nurses were wrong

2 In line 8, DeeAnn Angell says, **I missed out on knowing my own parents.** Why didn’t DeeAnn know her parents?

- a. Her parents died before she learned about the switch.
- b. Her parents were very young when they died.
- c. She lived with the wrong family.

3 Read lines 5–12. Which word is a synonym for **came to light**?

4 Read lines 16–24.

- a. Who called Bobby Reed last summer?
 1. Kay Rene
 2. An elderly neighbor of the Angell family
 3. A nurse from the nursing home
- b. What secret did she tell him?
 1. She knew both the Angell and the Reed families.
 2. She lived in a nursing home next door to the Reeds.
 3. DeeAnn and Kay Rene were switched at birth.
- c. What proof did she show Bobby Reed?
 1. A picture of DeeAnn’s biological sister
 2. A picture of Bobby Reed’s mother
 3. A picture of DeeAnn when she was young

5 Read lines 26–29.

- a. **The secret stunned Reed** means
 1. he was afraid
 2. he was shocked
 3. he was excited
- b. What was **the potential bombshell**?
 1. Kay Rene was not really his sister.
 2. DeeAnn was not really his sister.
 3. Kay Rene looked different from her family.

c. **No one ever thought to question her paternity** means

1. no one asked Kay Rene any questions
2. no one asked about Kay Rene's real family
3. no one wondered who Kay Rene's father was

6 Read lines 36–41.

a. Did Kay Rene's mother know that the other mother had wondered if the babies were switched at the hospital?

1. No
2. Yes

b. Kay Rene's mother **wouldn't bring the issue up anymore**. This means that

1. she decided not to ask any questions about the possibility that this wasn't her baby
2. she decided not to meet the other new mother in the hospital that had questions about the baby
3. she was sure that Kay Rene was her baby because she had brown eyes

7 Read lines 42–52.

a. **Kay Rene had questioned whether she truly was a Reed**. Why?

b. What are **suspicious**?

1. Questions
2. Uncertainties
3. Ideas

c. What is a **clan**?

1. An inherited trait such as eye color
2. A group of related people
3. A special interest in something

8 Read lines 55–62.

a. Why did the two women have DNA tests?

b. What did the DNA tests confirm?

1. Kay Rene was not a member of the Reed family; she was an Angell.
2. DeeAnn was not a member of the Reed family; she was an Angell.
3. Bobby Reed was really Kay Rene's brother.

- 9 Read lines 71–73.
- a. Who is angry about the switch?
 1. Kay Rene
 2. DeeAnn
 3. Both DeeAnn and Kay Rene
 - b. One of the women isn't angry **because there's no use in it**. This means
 1. she doesn't care about the switch because she had a good life
 2. she doesn't want to sue the hospital because she's old now
 3. she doesn't feel anger because it's useless to be angry

D

Dictionary Skills

Read the excerpts from the article. Then read the dictionary entry for the boldfaced word and write the number of the definition that is appropriate for the context. Be prepared to explain your choice.

- 1 Her shocking **claim** was that Kay Rene wasn't really a Reed at all; she was an Angell.

claim: _____

claim **1**: a demand for something due or believed to be due <an insurance claim> **2 a**: a right to something; *specifically*: a title to a debt, privilege, or other thing in the possession of another **b**: an assertion open to challenge <a claim of authenticity> **3**: something that is claimed; *especially*: a tract of land staked out

- 2 The doubts just **lingered**.

linger: _____

linger *intransitive verb* **1**: to be slow in parting or in quitting something: TARRY <fans *lingered* outside the door> **2 a**: to remain alive although gradually dying **b**: to remain existent although often waning in strength, importance, or influence <*lingering* doubts> <*lingering* odors> . . . **4**: to move slowly . . .

- 3 Even Kay Rene’s husband joked about whether the Reeds truly were her relatives after seeing her at family **functions**.

function: _____

function **1**: professional or official position : OCCUPATION **2**: the action for which a person or thing is specially fitted or used or for which a thing exists : PURPOSE **3**: any of a group of related actions contributing to a larger action; *especially*: the normal and specific contribution of a bodily part to the economy of a living organism **4**: an official or formal ceremony or social gathering . . .

- 4 And while DeeAnn **harbors** at least some anger about the situation, Kay Rene said she doesn’t because there’s no use in it.

harbor: _____

harbor **1 a**: to give shelter or refuge to **b**: to be the home or habitat of <the ledges still harbor rattlesnakes>; *broadly*: CONTAIN **2**: to hold especially persistently in the mind : CHERISH <harbored a grudge> . . .

Thesaurus *function* Also look up:

- n.** action, duty, job, responsibility, celebration, gathering, occasion
v. operate, perform, work

Critical Thinking Strategies

Read each question carefully, and write a response. Remember that there is no one correct answer. Your response depends on what **you** think.

- 1 Marjorie Angell insisted the nurses had given her the wrong child, but no one believed her. Why do you think the nurses didn't believe Marjorie Angell?

- 2 Kay Rene Reed Qualls said she enjoyed a wonderful life, but she still feels guilty. Why do you think she feels this way?

- 3 Bobby Reed received a call from an 86-year-old woman who said that Kay Rene wasn't really a Reed at all; she was an Angell. Why do you think she waited such a long time to tell the truth?

Another Perspective

Read the article and answer the questions that follow.

CD 1
Track 10



Polish Twins Swapped by Doctors as Babies Receive Damages

by Michael Leidig, *Telegraph Media Group*

1 A court in Poland has awarded almost £350,000 (US \$584,600) in damages to the families of two girls who were mistakenly swapped by hospital staff when they were babies. The ruling in Warsaw brings to a close a seven-year battle for the families after their daughters discovered their true identities.

5 Kasia and Nina Ofmanska, who are identical twins, were taken to a Warsaw hospital after developing pneumonia in 1984, when they were two weeks old. While they were there, staff mistakenly switched Nina with another girl, Edyta Wierzbicka. Neither set of parents noticed and, as the “twins” grew up, doctors explained their startling differences by claiming that they had never been identical.

10 The separated twins grew up just a few miles from each other in Warsaw and were only reunited when an old school friend of one of the girls said she had another friend who was the spitting image of her. Kasia and Nina—now aged 25—came face to face and the shocking truth began to unravel. “Oh God, she was just like me. We even walk the same way,” said Kasia. Nina added: “We were seeing each other for the first time, but I felt as if I knew everything about her.”

15 Now their parents are trying to piece their family back together after the court ruling ended their struggle to force Poland’s medical authorities to admit their error. Both sets of parents have received counseling. The twins were born prematurely to their mother, Elzbieta Ofmanska, in one hospital while Edyta’s mother, Halina Wierzbicka, gave birth at a nearby clinic on December 15, 1983. But all three premature babies developed lung infections and were transferred separately to a third hospital, the Saskiej Kępie Clinic, at which Nina and Edyta were mixed up.

25 Warning bells started to sound almost immediately when Nina’s real mother was told by doctors that a slight foot deformity she had been born with had miraculously cured itself. “People always ask us how on earth it was possible that we didn’t notice that Nina wasn’t Nina,” Mrs. Ofmanska said. “But you have to understand that she went into an incubator as soon as she was born. As they grew up, the Ofmanska “twins” grew more and more different.

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“Nina—or the girl we thought was Nina—was very shy, calm and law-abiding. But Kasia was more boisterous and more emotionally extroverted. She never played with dolls but liked to get out of the house, to ski and sail.” It was only when the friend introduced the separated twins, aged 17, that the truth finally dawned. They had got the same exam grades at school and had

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boyfriends with the same name. The real Nina then met her birth parents and the two families realized what had happened in the hospital. While the twins were delighted at their reunion, the parents were devastated and angry. Mrs. Ofmanska said of her rediscovered daughter: “I gave birth to her, but after that I missed the whole of my daughter’s

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childhood and can never get it back. It’s hard to believe that she was here in our home, as a tiny baby, for just nine days after she came home from hospital. But after that we lost her, we weren’t there for her for 17 years.”



Kasia Ofmanska, who was mistakenly separated at birth from her twin sister, poses in Warsaw with a picture of her biological sister, Nina Ofmanska (right) and a picture of Edyta Wierzbicka (left), whom she and her parents thought for years was her twin.

- 1 For how long was this switched-baby case in the courts before it was settled?

- 2 Why might the parents not have noticed that the daughter they took to the hospital had been switched for another baby?

- 3 When did the girls discover they had an identical twin? Who made them suspicious of this fact?

- 4 Why did the parents have to take the medical authorities to court?

- 5 How were the babies mixed up? What were the circumstances of the mix-up?

- 6 What made Mrs. Ofmanska suspicious that Nina might not be Nina?

- 7 Why didn't Mrs. Ofmanska notice that her baby wasn't Nina?

- 8 How were "Nina" and Kasia different?

- 9 When the error was finally revealed, how did the family members react to the news?

G

Topics for Discussion and Writing

- 1 The Polish court awarded almost £350,000 (US \$584,600) in damages to the families of two girls who were mistakenly swapped by hospital staff when they were babies. Do you agree with the court's decision? Explain your answer.
- 2 Although Kay Rene Reed is not angry at the hospital that made the mistake when she and DeeAnn Angell were born, DeeAnn still harbors anger. Which woman do you agree with? In other words, would you be angry in this situation? Why or why not?
- 3 What do you think Kay Rene and DeeAnn will do in the future, now that they know the truth? Will they become close to their biological families? Will they become close to each other? Will they decide to sue the hospital?
- 4 **Write in your journal.** You are a parent, and have raised your child from birth, believing that he or she was really yours. One day you discover that your child, who is now an adult, is not your biological son or daughter, but was switched at birth. How would you feel? What would you do?

H

Follow-up Activities

- 1 Refer to the **Self-Evaluation of Reading Strategies** on page 114. Think about the strategies you used to understand "Switched at Birth: Women Learn the Truth 56 Years Later." Check off the strategies you used. Think about the strategies you didn't use, and apply them to help you understand the readings that follow.
- 2 Work with a partner. You are employed by a local hospital to develop procedures to ensure that babies are never given to the wrong mother. Create a list of guidelines that must be followed by the doctors and nurses at your hospital. Compare your guidelines as a class. Draft a set of regulations for hospital personnel to follow.

Cloze Quiz

Complete the passage with words from the list. Use each word only once.

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| bathed | elderly | lived | shocking |
| birth | everyone | married | story |
| born | foreshadowed | nursing | switched |
| concerns | insisted | revealed | true |
| daughter | light | secret | uneventful |

When Oregon nurses handed Marjorie Angell her newborn _____⁽¹⁾ in the hospital in 1953, she _____⁽²⁾ they had given her the wrong child. Her _____⁽³⁾ were brushed off, but in an unlikely _____⁽⁴⁾ that was 56 years in the making, her mother's intuition _____⁽⁵⁾ what was to come.

It was _____⁽⁶⁾. Her daughter had been switched at _____⁽⁷⁾ when she and the other baby were being _____⁽⁸⁾, but Marjorie Angell would never learn the truth because she died before it was _____⁽⁹⁾. The story of two women who grew up in the wrong families just came to _____⁽¹⁰⁾ last month to the surprise of _____⁽¹¹⁾ and no one.

On May 3, 1953, DeeAnn Angell of Fossil, Oregon, and Kay Rene Reed of Condon, Oregon, were _____⁽¹²⁾ at Pioneer Memorial Hospital in the eastern Oregon town of Heppner. They grew up, got _____⁽¹³⁾, and had children and grandchildren of their own. The women's lives were _____⁽¹⁴⁾ until last summer, when Kay Rene's brother, Bobby Reed, received a call from an 86-year-old woman who claimed

to hold an astonishing _____ (15) . He met the woman in her
_____ (16) home. She said she had known the Reeds' mother
and had _____ (17) next door to the Angell family in Fossil. Her
_____ (18) claim was that Kay Rene wasn't really a Reed at all; she
was an Angell. The _____ (19) woman said Kay Rene and DeeAnn
were _____ (20) at birth.