

Prepare an outline for the following five paragraph essay.

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Do you realize that newly born children are not even aware that parts of their bodies belong to them? I learned this fascinating fact in my psychology course from a book that says a baby “lies on his back, kicking his heels and watching the little fists flying past his face. But only very slowly does he come to know that they are attached to him and he can control them” (Mary Ann Spencer Pulaski, *Understanding Piaget*, page 21). Children have a lot of learning to do before they can see the world—and themselves—through grown-up eyes. As children pass through this remarkable process of growing up, they often do some humorous things, especially in learning to speak, in discovering that all objects do not have human characteristics, and in trying to imitate others around them.

Not surprisingly, one area in which children are often unintentionally humorous is in learning to speak. I remember one time I was talking to a friend on the phone while my little sister, Betsy, seemed to be playing inattentively on the floor nearby. After I hung up, Betsy asked me, “Why is the teacher going to give Janet an old tomato?” At first, I couldn’t figure out what Betsy was talking about. When I asked her what she meant, she said, “You said if Janet doesn’t hand in her homework, the teacher is going to give her an old tomato.” Finally, I caught on. The word I had used was *ultimatum*!

Children also can be funny in the way they humanize the objects around them. According to my psychology book, “Up to four or five years old, the child believes anything may be endowed with purpose and conscious activity. A ball may refuse to be thrown straight, or a ‘naughty’ chair may be responsible for bumping him” (Pulaski, *Understanding Piaget*, page 45). I, myself, still can remember one vivid and scary afternoon when I was sure the sun was following me around, just waiting for the right moment to get me. I also can remember a time, not scary, when Betsy stood at the top of the stairs and yelled to her shoes at the bottom, “Shoes! Get up here!”

Another way in which children are sometimes funny is in their attempts to imitate what they see around them. All children look pretty silly when they dress up like their mothers and fathers and play “house.” My psychology book tells of a more interesting example, though. The famous psychologist Jean Piaget wrote of the time his sixteen-month-old daughter quietly watched a visiting little boy throw a tantrum in trying to get out of his playpen. Piaget’s daughter thought it would be fun to try the same thing: “The next day, she herself screamed in her playpen and tried to move it, stamping her foot lightly several times in succession. The imitation of the whole scene was most striking” (quoted in Pulaski, *Understanding Piaget*, page 81).

Little children are funny creatures to watch, aren’t they? But as we laugh, we have to admire, too, because the humorous mistakes are but temporary side trips that children take on the amazingly complicated journey to maturity—a long way from the beginning, when they lay in wonder, silently watching the strange, fingered spacecraft passing, back and forth, before their infant eyes.