

# Should Adoption Records Be Open?

Some people who were adopted want to find their birth parents. But some birth parents don't want to be found.

Beth Osborne had known all her life that she had been adopted. She loved the parents who raised her. Yet she always wondered who her birth parents were.

"It wasn't like I was trying to fill a big, huge void," she said. "I was curious."

When she was 18, Beth searched for her birth mother, and she found her.

"I was thrilled," said Judy Majdic. Majdic was 20 years old when she gave Beth up for adoption. She was a single mother. She said she couldn't afford to raise Beth alone.

"I always prayed that she would be all right," Majdic said. "I never stopped thinking about her."

Unlike Majdic, some birth parents don't want to be found. Those people are upset by new laws in some states. The laws open up adoption records. They let adults who were adopted search for their birth records.

Should those people be allowed to see their adoption records? Read the arguments. Then decide.

## Yes! Adoption Records Should Be Open!

Many people wonder about where they came from. Millions of people want to learn more about their families. People who were adopted should be able to learn about their families, too.

For some adopted people, birth records are important to their health. Some have medical questions. They might need to find out about illnesses in their families.

Open adoption records might also help people find long-lost family members.

For example, members of the Oldham family have been searching for their sister Linda for more than 50 years. She had been taken from her abusive

father when she was 7 months old. The family knows that she spent time in a state home for children. Later, a foster family adopted her. If the adoption records were opened, the Oldham family members might be able to find their lost sister.

If adopted people want to find out who their birth parents are, they should be allowed to do so.

## **No! Adoption Records Should Be Kept Secret!**

Opening adoption records is a bad idea. It would hurt mothers who gave up their babies for adoption.

Usually, it is hard for a mother to give up her baby for adoption. Many of those mothers just want to move on with their lives. Opening adoption records could bring back painful memories.

Many mothers thought giving up their babies for adoption would be kept secret. If adoption records were opened, those women would feel as if they had been lied to. They would feel betrayed.

Many women who gave up children for adoption now have families of their own. They don't want their husbands and children to know that they once gave up a baby for adoption. Opening adoption records would reveal those secrets.

People who gave children up for adoption have a right to privacy. Opening adoption records could take that privacy away. The records should be kept secret.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is one reason stated in the passage that adopted people look for their birth records?

- A One reason is to tell the families of their birth parents about their adoption.
- B One reason is to answer medical questions.
- C One reason is to give birth parents privacy.
- D One reason is to find out if they were adopted.

2. What is one argument against opening adoption records that is presented in the text?

- A One argument against opening adoption records is that birth parents have a right to privacy.
- B One argument against opening adoption records is that adopted people should be able to find out about illnesses in their families.
- C One argument against opening adoption records is that people have the right to connect with family members.
- D One argument against opening adoption records is that new laws to open adoption records are important.

3. It can be inferred from the passage that

- A all adopted people are interested in opening their adoption records
- B most birth parents are glad to be found by children they placed for adoption
- C all states in the United States will soon have laws opening adoption records
- D some adopted people do not want to search for their birth parents

4. In the passage, Beth Osborne says, "It wasn't like I was trying to fill a big, huge void."

In this example, the word **void** most nearly means

- A loud sound
- B empty space
- C long trip
- D important information

5. What would be another good title for this passage?

- A Adoption Records: Open or Closed?
- B Why Adoption Records Should Stay Secret
- C Why Birth Parents Feel Betrayed
- D How to Find a Long-Lost Family Member

6. According to the passage, how do some birth parents feel about laws that open up adoption records?

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7. What is one argument presented in the passage for opening adoption records?

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Beth Osborne had known all her life that she had been adopted. \_\_\_\_\_, she had always wondered who her birth parents were.

- A However
- B Instead
- C Otherwise
- D Because

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Many adopted people are searching for their birth parents because they want to learn more about their families.

Who? many adopted people

(doing) What? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

**Vocabulary Word:** betray (be · tray): to hurt someone who trusts you.

10a. Read the sentences below and underline the word **betray**.

1. I was so sad when my friend betrayed me by telling my secret.
2. I do not want to betray my sister by giving her diary to my mother.
3. If a family member betrays you by breaking a promise, it is important to talk to them about how you feel.
4. My aunt betrayed me when she took my cousin to the movies on my birthday instead of me.
5. Her loud voice betrayed the fact that she was very upset about the robbery.

10b. Which image shows something being betrayed?



11. Would you feel betrayed if your best friend became friends with your enemy?

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## Teacher Guide &amp; Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 620

**Featured Text Structure:** Argumentative – the writer presents evidence for both sides of an argument

**Passage Summary:** The passage describes the issue of adoption records and how some states have passed laws opening up adoption records. The passage then puts forth arguments for and against the idea that adoption records should be open.

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  - B One reason is to answer medical questions.**
  - C One reason is to give birth parents privacy.
  - D One reason is to find out if they were adopted.
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  - D One argument against opening adoption records is that new laws to open adoption records are important.
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  - A all adopted people are interested in opening their adoption records
  - B most birth parents are glad to be found by children they placed for adoption
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4. In the passage, Beth Osborne says, "It wasn't like I was trying to fill a big, huge void."

In this example, the word **void** most nearly means

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5. What would be another good title for this passage?
  - A Adoption Records: Open or Closed?**
  - B Why Adoption Records Should Stay Secret
  - C Why Birth Parents Feel Betrayed
  - D How to Find a Long-Lost Family Member
6. According to the passage, how do some birth parents feel about laws that open up adoption records?

**Suggested answer:** Some birth parents are not happy about laws that open up adoption records because they do not want to be found. [paragraph 7]

7. What is one argument presented in the passage for opening adoption records?

**Suggested answer:** One argument presented in the passage for opening adoption records is that opening the records might help people find long-lost family members. [paragraph 11]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Beth Osborne had known all her life that she had been adopted. \_\_\_\_\_, she had always wondered who her birth parents were.

- A However
- B Instead
- C Otherwise
- D Because

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Many adopted people are searching for their birth parents because they want to learn more about their families.

Who? many adopted people

(are) what? **searching for their birth parents**

Why? **because they want to learn more about their families**

10. ReadWorks recommends that you teach this vocabulary word to the whole class out loud using the four steps listed below.

**Vocabulary Word:** betray

**Step 1:** Introduce the word

- a. Teacher writes the word on the board and divides it into syllables: (be · tray)
- b. Teacher says: "This word is betray. What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "betray."]

**Step 2:** Provide a child-friendly definition

- a. Teacher says: "To betray is to hurt someone who trusts you."
- b. Teacher says: "In the passage, the author states that women who had placed their babies for adoption would feel betrayed if the adoption records were opened. This means they would feel very hurt, because they had trusted that the records would remain secret. Betray can also mean to show something without wanting to, as in "my face betrayed that I was angry." But in this passage betray means to hurt someone who trusts you."
- c. Teacher says: "What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "betray."]

**Step 3:** Practice the word

Teacher provides examples and additional opportunities to repeat the word. Read the 1<sup>st</sup> sentence out loud to your students. Begin reading it again and when you come to the vocabulary word prompt students to say the vocabulary word out loud. Then, finish reading the sentence out loud to your students.

- 10a.**
1. I was so sad when my friend betrayed me by telling my secret.
  2. I do not want to betray my sister by giving her diary to my mother.
  3. If a family member betrays you by breaking a promise, it is important to talk to them about how you feel.
  4. My aunt betrayed me when she took my cousin to the movies on my birthday instead of me.
  5. Her loud voice betrayed the fact that she was very upset about the robbery.

**Step 4:** Check for student understanding

This step can be completed as a whole class activity or as an independent practice.

**10b.** Which image shows something that can be betrayed?



**11.** Would you feel betrayed if your best friend became friends with your enemy?

**Suggested answer:** Yes, because she would be hurting me by becoming close to someone who hurt me.

*Suggested Additional Vocabulary:* adopt, void, afford, illness, abusive