
Kate: Hello this is '6 Minute English'. I'm Kate Colin and I'm joined today by Jackie Dalton. Hello Jackie!

Jackie: Hello!

Kate: The topic for today's programme is the cultural icon – Barbie. Believe it or not, the blonde-haired doll is 50 years old this year. Did you ever have a Barbie doll Jackie?

Jackie: Yes, I had one Barbie doll when I was younger and I used to enjoy playing with her and pulling her head and legs off!

Kate: Oh dear, I'm sure she didn't like, that but as I said earlier, she's a 'cultural icon' - could you explain what a cultural icon is?

Jackie: Yes, a cultural icon a person or it could be an object that's readily recognised by a lot of people and it has a lot of importance to them. Shakespeare is seen as a cultural icon, Madonna for many, is a cultural icon.

Kate: OK, well as usual I have a question for you. We all know that Barbie dolls have a worldwide appeal. In fact, when they first went on sale in 1959, around 350,000 were sold in the first year. But how many dolls do you think sell today?

- Is it a) 3 per hour
 b) 3 per second
 c) 3 per minute

Jackie: I would say 'a', 3 per hour because I can't imagine they're still that popular.

Kate: OK, well we'll see if you're right at the end of the programme. But first let's listen to the Senior Vice President of Barbie Worldwide, Richard Dixon, and try to find out how many countries, Barbie is currently sold in...

'...it's a global brand in 150 different countries and our sites are developed everywhere to make sure we unite girls around the world through Barbie.'

Kate: Did you catch that? How many countries is Barbie sold in?

Jackie: He said 150 countries.

Kate: That's correct, he said that Barbie is a 'global brand' in 150 different countries. What's a 'global brand'?

Jackie: A 'global brand' is a product made by a company which sells successfully and is recognised all over the world.

Kate: Barbie is often described as a role model? What's that?

Jackie: A role model is a person or figure, who is admired and whose behaviour others try to copy. So a female role model would be a woman or girl who other girls are inspired to copy.

- Kate:** There has also been some controversy over Barbie's figure when it was pointed out that if Barbie was a real person her measurements would be an impossible 36-18-38, which is extremely thin!
- We're going to hear what some women on the streets of London had to say on the subject, but first let's have a look at some of the vocabulary often used when talking about women and role models.
- First of all 'average' – what does 'average' mean Jackie?
- Jackie:** It means typical or usual.
- Kate:** And stereotype or stereotypical?
- Jackie:** A stereotype is a fixed idea that people have about what someone or something is like and it's often wrong.
- Kate:** What about 'image'?
- Jackie:** An image is an idea or a mental picture you might have about how something or someone is.
- Kate:** OK – well let's see what people think. As you listen, see if you can hear whether this first lady is a fan of Barbie or not?
- Woman 1:** *'She is not the average size of an average woman, she purports far too much make-up for someone her ages, her clothing is very stereotypical - just an image that isn't something to be followed I don't think'.*
- Kate:** She said she's 'not the average size of an average woman'. What does she mean...?
- Jackie:** I think she's means that she's too thin and the proportions of her body aren't very realistic...
- Kate:** Is this lady a fan of Barbie?
- Jackie:** No, I don't think she is.
- Kate:** I agree, I don't think she is either.
- Kate:** Moving on....in the next clip you might hear the following words.

‘Portraying’ – what does ‘portraying’ mean?

Jackie: It means ‘to represent or show’

Kate: What about ‘skinny’?

Jackie: This refers to a very thin body type and it’s often used in a negative way to mean someone’s too thin.

Kate: Right, so let’s have a listen to the next person we met. See if you can hear the words we’ve just talked about.

Woman 2: *‘It’s about image isn’t it – it’s about image and portraying yourself and she’s portrayed as this blonde, skinny woman...and that’s not what women are about.’*

Kate: And in this last clip we’re going to hear that word ‘role model’ again. Does this woman think Barbie is a good or bad role model?

Woman 3: *‘I don’t think she is a role model – I think she’s a doll you know and it’s like everyone going politically correct mad. It’s a doll and it’s a dressing up doll and that’s fine, yeah, no problem with it’.*

Jackie: Well, she doesn’t think that Barbie is a role model at all....she says Barbie is only a doll and should only be played with.

Kate: ‘Politically correct’ – that’s an expression we hear a lot these days. What does it mean?

Jackie: Yes, politically correct means to choose your language very, very carefully so you don’t offend people especially when it comes to things like sex and race. But sometimes people think that political correctness has gone to an extreme, we get too worried about what we’re saying.

Kate: You’re listening to BBC Learning English.com and today we’ve been talking about Barbie and whether she’s a suitable female role model. Let’s re-cap on some of the vocabulary we’ve been looking at.....

- Jackie:** We had a 'global brand' – a product made by a particular company which sells successfully all over the world.
- role model - a person or figure who is admired and whose behaviour others try to copy.
- average - which means typical or usual.
- stereotypical - a fixed idea that people have about someone or something
- image – a mental picture in your mind of how something or someone is
- portraying - which means 'to represent or show'
- skinny – very thin
- politically correct – to watch your language so you don't upset anyone.
- Kate:** Thanks, well we're nearly out of time so finally to the question I asked earlier. Barbie is 50 years old this year – how many do you think sell around the world?
- Jackie:** Well I stand by my first answer which is 3 per hour.
- Kate:** I'm afraid you were wrong, it's actually 3 per second which is amazing! She's still as popular as ever even after 50 years.
- Jackie:** That's all for now. Goodbye
- Kate:** Goodbye.