

# Attack of the Clones

A discussion class for Upper Intermediate Students

**Level:** Upper Intermediate

**Aim:** Students “tell” each other a short news item about clones and then exchange opinions about the ethics of cloning. The emphasis is on fluency. Reading skills aim: deducing the meaning of difficult words in a text from the context.

**Materials:** Reading A (The first human clone), Reading B (Death of a clone) for each pair of students – discussion questions to follow up.

**Note:** *The issues surrounding clones and cloning are very controversial. Views about ethics, moral right and wrong, and religion may surface during a discussion about clones. Teachers should only use this material if they, and their students, are comfortable discussing it.*

## Stage One – Pre speaking task/Warmer

Start the class off by asking students some questions about their news reading habits. Ask different students different questions, see if the others think the same way or do the same thing. Here are some sample questions to ask:

- Do you follow the news regularly?
- How do you get your news: newspaper, TV, Internet?
- Do you ever read an English newspaper?
- Do you think there is too much bad news in the news?

Let this stage go on for about 5 minutes. Then write the word CLONE on the board. Ask students what news stories they have heard recently about clones. Don’t let this part go on too long; there will be plenty of time to talk about clones and cloning in the rest of the lesson!

## Stage Two – Pre-speaking 2 – Reading and Vocabulary Clarification

Put students into pairs. Explain that each student will get a different news article about clones and cloning. At this stage they mustn’t speak with each other or show each other their article. Tell students to read the article. If there are any difficult words, ask them to underline them – they will be clarified later.

## Stage Three – Speaking Task 1

When the students have finished, tell them that they are going to “tell” each other about their news story but in their own words. They have two minutes to prepare this mini talk. They can’t read their story out loud. While students tell each other their story, circulate and take notes of any common errors.

After they have finished, ask them to go back to the difficult words they had underlined. They should discuss them together quickly with their partner (the point is that the students should have been able to summarise the article without having to understand every word). If by the end of this there are still problems, take up the difficult words with the whole class, or instruct them to use their dictionaries. You could also correct or highlight the errors you heard in the speaking task.

## Stage Four – Speaking Task 2 Discussion

Ask students “What do you think of these two articles?” Get some feedback from the class as a whole. Then distribute the statements for discussion. Students complete them individually. When they are finished, ask them to reform groups of four and compare their answers. If you don’t have too big a class, let them discuss it for a while then compare opinions across the class.

## THE FIRST HUMAN CLONE?

On Friday December 26 2002, a religious cult called the Raelians announced that the first human clone had been born.

Brigitte Boisselier announced to reporters that the birth “had gone very well.” She is the president of Clonaid, a company created by the Raelians in 1997. She told the press that the baby girl was called Eve, and had been cloned from the genes of her mother, a 31 year old American woman.

Boisselier announced that a group of world scientists would be invited to verify that Eve was the first clone.

The Raelian cult was founded by Claude Vorilhon, a former French journalist, who now calls himself Rael. He and his followers believe that all human life on earth was created by extra terrestrials. They are in favour of cloning human life. The group has their base, called UFO Land, in Quebec, Canada.

The scientific world was quick to dismiss the story as a hoax, but there are scientists that believe it is possible that Clonaid has made a human clone. Nobody has proved that Eve exists at present.



## DEATH OF A CLONE

On Friday February 14, 2003 Dolly the sheep died.

Dolly was the first mammal to be cloned from an adult cell. She was created by the Roslin Institute, a research centre in Scotland. Dolly became internationally famous in 1997 when she was shown to the public seven months after her birth. It was considered one of the most significant scientific achievements of the decade.

But many people believed that it was unethical to clone a living being. Dolly became a symbol of the promise, or threat, of cloning.

During her six years of life, Dolly suffered from different health problems. When she was young she was overweight. She had arthritis at the age of five, a fact that suggested she was getting old very quickly. Before she died, scientists discovered that Dolly had a lung disease. They took the decision to put her down. She was six years old. Many normal sheep live to twelve years of age.

Dolly had four baby sheep before she died. All four of them are still in good health. Dolly will be stuffed and put on display in the National Museum of Scotland.

## Right or Wrong?

Put an 'X' on the line to show how much you agree or disagree with the statements. Then compare with a partner.

1. *It is not ethical to clone a human being.*

Agree completely

Disagree Completely

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2. *It is not ethical to clone any living creature, even an animal.*

Agree completely

Disagree Completely

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3. *In the next twenty years there will be human clones.*

Agree completely

Disagree Completely

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4. *Cloning is acceptable if it helps against terrible diseases like AIDS or cancer.*

Agree completely

Disagree Completely

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5. *Cloning is acceptable if it saves the life of a baby who is very sick or dying.*

Agree completely

Disagree Completely

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