**1b Page 12 READING TEXT**

Upper Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

A confused generation

Change brings problems. Bella lives with her parents in a brand new apartment in Shanghai. Her real name is Zhou Jiaying – ‘Bella’ is the name that she has been given by her English teacher. Her parents are representative of a confused generation in a confused time. In modern Chinese society different ideologies are fighting against each other. Enormous material benefits have been brought by China’s economic boom, but the debate is not about these; it’s about family life and values. Old values – the respect of family and the older generations – are being replaced by new ones which place money as the critical measurement of one’s position in society. But at the same time these new values are also being questioned. Have our lives been made richer by all our new possessions? Is Chinese culture being supplanted? As in all changing societies people are trying to find the right balance between the ‘new’ and ‘old’.

Recently, Bella’s family put their grandfather into a nursing home. It was a painful decision. In traditional China, caring for aged parents has always been an unavoidable duty, but times are changing. Bella’s ambition? ‘I want one day to put my parents in the best nursing home’ – the best that money can buy, she means.

‘When she told us that’ Bella’s father says, ‘I thought – is it selfish to think she will be a dutiful and caring daughter and look after us? We don’t want to be a burden on her when we get old. This is something my daughter has taught us. Once it was parents who taught children, but now we learn from them.’ The family can buy many more things these days, and when they go shopping, Bella makes sure that the ‘right’ western brands are selected. (Pizza Hut is her favourite restaurant.)

She also teaches her parents the latest slang. Her parents want to be supportive, but they no longer help with Bella’s homework; in spoken English she has surpassed them. She has already learnt much more about the world outside than them. ‘Our advice is not listened to and it is not wanted,’ her mother says. ‘When she was little, she agreed with all my opinions. Now she sits there without saying anything, but I know she doesn’t agree with me.’ Bella glares, but says nothing. ‘I suppose our child-raising has been a failure.’ In China there is no concept of the rebellious teenager.

Life