

Unit 1 >>> What's in a name?

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions with your partner.

- 1 How many names do you have? Why?
- 2 How did you get your name – who gave it to you?
- 3 Does your first name mean anything?
- 4 What about your surname?
- 5 Do you have a nickname?

2 Quickly read the texts. In which text is something like a 'nickname' mentioned?

A

Hi Cora,
You're right, May doesn't really look like a Chinese name, but it does sound like one. All I've done is made it a bit easier. My real Chinese name is Meixiang – the spelling is difficult. May comes from Mei – they sound just the same. Most Chinese people have two sounds with meanings in their name; 'mei' means beautiful (that's quite a popular name for girls in China) and 'xiang' means fragrance, so I'm called Beautiful Fragrance. It's quite funny really because in China you never give a child a name before they're born; it's bad luck. Chinese people are quite superstitious. They give unborn babies an ugly name to keep evil spirits away. Before my 'red egg and ginger' naming ceremony, which takes place when you're one month old, I was called 'bad smell', which isn't nearly as nice! Unfortunately, some people in my family still call me that!
Love,
May
PS At a 'red egg and ginger' ceremony you get your name and a lucky red egg for happiness and life.

B

NEWS FEED 1972

Ceylon adopts Sri but not for tea.

Former British colony Ceylon, has decided to change its name and officially adopt the more modern *Sri Lanka* which means 'splendid thing'.

The name *Ceylon* dates back to 1550 and comes from the Portuguese word *Ceilão*. The British Anglicised the name when the island became a British colony.

Since Queen Elizabeth II is not head of state there anymore and Ceylon has become a republic, the government has decided the new name is more appropriate.

However, they are not in a hurry to change any of the names of official institutions and they have definitely decided to keep the name *Ceylon Tea*. Traditionally tea from Sri Lanka's tea plantations has been of the best teas in the world. Since *Ceylon Tea* is a brand name synonymous with quality, the government sees no reason to change this.

C

Read this quote from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. What is Juliet trying to say about names? Do you agree?

*'What's in a name?
That which we call a rose,
By any other name would smell as sweet.'*

The play *Romeo and Juliet* is a love story about two people who come from two families that hate each other: the Montagues and the Capulets. Romeo and Juliet have the wrong surnames. One is a Montague and the other is a Capulet. The families have been fighting for many years, so a marriage between the two could never be allowed.

In this quote, Juliet is expressing a very modern idea. Although in her world a name shows who or what you are, she doesn't believe this. She believes that people are not defined by their name. If Romeo had a different name, she would love him just as much. In my opinion, this is true. I don't think a name is important. It's your actions that matter.

3 Read the texts again and answer the questions. Use your own words.

- 1 In what way did May change her name? Why?
- 2 What example of superstitious behaviour in China does May give?
- 3 In what way is *Sri Lanka* a positive name?
- 4 Where does the name *Ceylon* come from?
- 5 Why aren't the Sri Lankans changing the name for their tea?
- 6 Why can't Montagues and Capulets marry?
- 7 Why is Juliet a modern woman?

4 Work in pairs. Talk about the texts you have read in relation to your country. Are there any similarities? What differences are there? Think about:

- giving baby names
- superstitions
- your country name and where it came from
- things of quality linked to the name of your country
- the importance of a family name and marriage
- important families in your country

5 Imagine you have a new pen friend. Write a short email or letter to him/her. Tell her about one of the following

- a Your name, how you got it, what it means
- b Your country's name and what it means
- c Important families in your country