



IN SHORT Nonfiction



THE 700 HABITS OF HIGHLY INEFFECTIVE PARENTS

By Jonathan Biggins
Victory Books, 260pp, \$27.99

Jonathan Biggins has a very reliable comic technique. Make a list and, at the end, throw in an incongruity for laughs. Thus "history's long line of miscreants, from Caligula to Pol Pot, from Attila the Hun to Naomi Campbell". Ha! Ha! It works over and over again in this amusing book about being an incompetent parent. As every parent on the planet fits into Biggins's taxonomy, this is a book that, if we all enjoy laughing at our own foolishness, should sell millions of copies. And it deserves to succeed because it is a genuine, laugh-out-loud trot through the joys, failings, problems and, most importantly, the statistics and hard facts attached to creating and raising a child up to the age of nine.

It doesn't, as the title suggests, really have 700 "habits". Rather it has 227 snippets of highly amusing advice, starting with number 11 (I guess the author just bypassed the first 10), "Having children in the first place", and finishing with 238, "Allowing your children to watch too much television".