

Families in other cultures

Sociology skills

- Analysing a piece of stimulus evidence

Key skills

- Communication
- Working with people

Stimulus materials

Read the following passage about a family in China.

Following the custom, my great-grandfather was married young, at fourteen, to a woman six years his senior. It was considered one of the duties of a wife to help bring up her husband.

The story of his wife, my great-grandmother, was typical of millions of Chinese women of her time. She came from a family of tanners called Wu. Because her family was not an intellectual one and did not hold any official post, and because she was a girl, she was not given a name at all. Being the second daughter, she was simply called 'Number Two Girl' (*Er-ya-tou*). Her father died when she was an infant, and she was brought up by an uncle. One day, when she was six years old, the uncle was dining with a friend whose wife was pregnant. Over dinner the two men agreed that if the baby was a boy he would be married to the six-year-old niece. The two young people never met before their wedding. In fact, falling in love was considered almost shameful, a family disgrace.... With luck, one could fall in love after getting married.

Chang (1991:29) *Wild Swans*

Understanding the stimulus

1. Why was the wife in China older than her husband?
2. How old was the great-grandfather when he married?
3. How old was the great grandmother when she became engaged to her husband?
4. What was the name of the author's great-grandmother?
5. What attitude did the Chinese have towards 'love'?
6. When did the marrying couple meet for the first time?
7. What name is given to this form of marriage?

Development and Revision

1. What name is given to marriages where people can have more than one partner at a time?
2. What does the term 'serial monogamy' mean?
3. List differences between the Chinese and the British attitudes towards marriage as shown in this passage.