

Speaking and Listening – Discussion

May They Marry? Lesson Plan

Level: *Intermediate and above*

Skills: *Speaking & Listening, Discussion, Vocabulary*

Time: *60 – 90 mins + homework*

Aim: *To discuss marriage law in the UK and around the world; to learn and discuss new vocabulary associated with family, relationships, and social status*

Materials: *May They Marry? Criteria – Pages 1 and 2 cards: 1 full set for each pair, printed on thin card or paper, then cut up and put in a bag or box; 1 People Card for each pair; blank cards (optional)*

Procedure:

A. Discussion questions:

1. Are you married? How did you meet your partner? Tell me about your wedding.
2. Did you encounter any opposition to getting married? If yes, why? What happened?
3. What is the purpose of marriage? What does marriage mean to you? Do two people who love each other need to be married? How important is it to... a) the two individuals, b) society? Why?
4. Who may marry... a) in this country, b) in your country / culture? Who may not marry? Why not?
5. What is the punishment for illegal marriage in... a) this country, b) your country / culture?
6. How much should a couple spend on getting married? What is the average cost of a wedding in... a) this country, b) your country / culture?
7. What unusual wedding traditions do you have in your country?
8. Should marriage always be between two people who are equal in every way?
9. Can marriage work without love?
10. What obstacles have you experienced in your marriage or relationship(s)?
11. Is marriage a sacred union of two people? Should weddings always have a religious element? Why? / Why not?
12. Can it ever be the case that although a couple may marry, they perhaps *should not*?
13. Look at the categories of criteria for people who may marry (below). Which are the most / the least important, in your opinion? Put a selection of them into order.
14. Do you agree that *any* two people who love each other should be able to get married?

B. Game:

Proposition: We are often told that “If two people love each other, they should be allowed to marry. Love wins!” But how true is this? May we really marry who we like? What does the law say? SS (students) work in pairs and ask each other how far they agree with this proposition.

1. Each person in the pair chooses to be either Person 1 or Person 2. They decide whether the two people are: a) a man and a woman, b) a woman and a woman, c) a man and a man, d) your options. They decide whether to focus on UK law (as shown below) or the law in their country, or another country.
2. Student 1 (S1) takes a card and puts it beneath the first person. The students discuss the situation and ask “May they marry?” If yes, Student 2 (S2) takes a card and puts it under Person 1 on the People Card. Each time the SS ask “May they marry?” If they may, the game continues. If the SS are not sure, they may check the situation online. SS look up and write down any new vocabulary words. (SS could also discuss whether the couple *should* marry, even if they are legally able to get married.)
3. SS continue taking and placing cards until somebody takes one that receives the answer: “No, they may not.” The round ends and the player who did not take that card receives 10 points. If a card is drawn that creates an illogical situation, that card is discarded and a new card is drawn. An example would be if we had already said that one person was “their lawyer”, and the next card drawn for them was “their pupil”, which means a person under-16 in full-time education.

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4. The cards used are put aside and not used again. A new round begins. The aim is for the SS to completely fill the board (8 places) without finding a card that gives a legal reason why they may not marry and ends the round. If the SS achieve a full board, they both receive 20 points each.
5. The game continues through a number of rounds, until all of the cards have been used, or a set time limit expires. The winner is the student with the most points. In the event of a tie, SS play another quick round.
6. Conclusion: SS discuss the original proposition again and say whether their opinion remains the same or has changed. If it has changed, why? If not, why not? They discuss it together. They talk about what they enjoyed / disliked about the activity; what was easy / difficult? What surprised them? What other categories/criteria, would they add, if any? Whole class feedback could follow.

Variation: spread a random selection of cards on the table and ask SS to put them into groups: *may marry* and *may not marry*. SS discuss the reasons for their choices and check any situations they are not sure of online.
Note: feel free to add your own criteria using the blank criteria cards (below).

C. Free practice:

Develop a role play or presentation about a couple that you have designed, e.g. when you filled the board. How did they meet? Fill in details like names, ages, location, appearance, jobs, etc. What challenges does their relationship face / has it faced? Does it have a future? ...and so on.

D. Homework:

Write a newspaper article or story, or create a short film about one of the couples on your board; or on the topic of who may marry – in the UK or in your country / culture.

The law in the UK

If any of the criteria below applies, it means that the couple **may not** marry:

married to another	you cannot be married to two people at the same time
married to another but living apart	you cannot be married to two people at the same time
divorce from another in progress	you cannot be married to two people at the same time
in a civil partnership with another	you cannot be married and in a civil partnership
their parent	you cannot marry a blood relative
their grandparent	you cannot marry a blood relative
their aunt / uncle	you cannot marry a blood relative
unable to give consent in a coma	both parties must be able to give consent
illegal immigrant	both parties must be able to give consent
under-16	their status is illegal / they cannot prove their identity
their pupil	legally a child
their adoptive parent	legally a child (under-16)
	this relationship is equivalent to being a parent

The criteria below do not cause a problem regarding getting married, so the couple **may** marry:

Relationship status:

single	divorced from another
single parent	ex-civil partnership with another
widowed	engaged to another

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their foster parent
their fiancée / fiancé

their girlfriend / boyfriend
their ex-

Family:

their step-relative
their in-law
their adoptive sibling

their cousin
orphan

Organised marriage:

arranged marriage
marriage of convenience Proviso: if the authorities do not learn the truth about it

Sexuality¹:

heterosexual
lesbian
homosexual

bisexual
questioning
transgender

Age:

aged 16-17²
aged 18+

much older

Education:

their lecturer

Questionable; depends on the age of the student, e.g. over-21 / mature student

their student

Questionable; depends on their age, e.g. over-21 / mature student

Work:

their lawyer
their former nanny

unemployed
their boss

Race:

different race

mixed race

Religion:

Protestant
Catholic
Jewish

Muslim
their religious leader

¹ in England, Scotland and Wales same sex couples may marry; in Northern Ireland only opposite sex couples may marry
² with parental consent (in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland); in Scotland without parental consent

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Social status:

in prison
immigrant
asylum seeker

refugee
their landlord
homeless

Class:

upper class
middle class

working class
underclass

Financial status:

rich
poor

in debt
on benefits

Health:

disabled
terminally ill
mentally ill

addicted to _____
their GP
their carer

Politics:

generally liberal views
generally right-wing views

their MP
not interested in politics

Appearance:

obese

ugly

Romantic status:

falling out of love with them

not in love with them

Selected online resources:

<https://www.mylawyer.co.uk/the-law-on-getting-married-a-A76051D76350/>

<https://www.gov.uk/marriages-civil-partnerships>

<https://www.expatica.com/uk/living/love/getting-married-or-having-a-civil-partnership-in-the-uk-1138294/>

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/mother-marries-her-foster-son-2213911>