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Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

## **World record 80 years of marriage**

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**2 June, 2005**

## THE ARTICLE

### World record 80 years of marriage

**BNE:** A pair of British centenarians has been certified by the Guinness Book of Records as being the longest living married couple – 80 years of wedded bliss. Percy Arrowsmith, 105, and 100-year-old Florence tied the knot on June 1, 1925, in Hereford, England. They also hold the record for the “oldest married couple’s aggregate age”: their combined age is a mind-boggling 205.

Britain’s Queen Elizabeth marked the world record-breaking, eight-decade bond by sending the couple a congratulatory card. She said their feat was a “splendid achievement” and sent them “warm congratulations”. The record setters celebrated the anniversary in their abode of 77 years, surrounded by family and a few close friends.

The couple’s foster daughter, Jane Woolley, said both her parents were as “fit as fiddles” and very “perky”. She marveled at their still very loving relationship and said they have stuck together through thick and thin. She described them as being inseparable, “like two peas in a pod”.

The secret to a lasting marriage? They claim the key to marital bliss is never to sleep on an argument, never be afraid to apologize after a quarrel and to “kiss and hold hands before retiring for the night”. Mrs. Arrowsmith said Percy “can’t settle down if I’m not holding his hand”. She told the BBC: “I think we’re very blessed. We still love one another, that’s the most important part.”

## WARM-UPS

**1. LONG MARRIAGE:** Imagine you have been married for 80 years. Walk around the class talking to other students who have also been “married” a long, long, time. Ask questions about their married lives and explain the secrets to your long marriage.

Variation: Walk around the class with your “partner” and talk to other “partners”.

**2. COUPLE:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “couple”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them.

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Centenarians / Guinness Book of Records / married couples / knots / Britain’s Queen Elizabeth / peas / apologizing / kissing / holding hands / love*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. 80 YEARS:** Eighty years is a long time. In pairs / groups, talk about which of these things you would like to / hope to do for 80 years. Which is most / least desirable?

- Live
- Be married
- Stay in the same job
- Live in the same house
- Be able to run a marathon
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Keep your own hair and teeth
- Have the same mobile phone
- Remain mentally alert
- Keep fit
- Study English

**5. PER CENT STATEMENTS:** In pairs/ groups, give a percentage to each of these statements to show how far you agree with them. (E.g. I 80 per cent agree with the first one; I only 10 per cent agree with the last one. etc.)

- a. I would totally, totally love to be married for 80 years.
- b. Eighty different partners in 80 years would be nice.
- c. I would get sick to death of being with the same person for 80 years.
- d. Marriage sounds like / is too much hard work. Staying free and single is the way to go.
- e. I want a congratulatory card from the British Queen.
- f. After 80 years of marriage, there’s nothing new to discover. How boring.
- g. Staying married for 80 years means a match made in heaven.
- h. Love is the most important thing in the world.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. A couple has been married for 80 years.                       | T / F |
| b. They got some Guinness, books and records as presents.        | T / F |
| c. The couple's combined age is 180.                             | T / F |
| d. The couple has lived in the same house for 80 years.          | T / F |
| e. Each partner plays the fiddle and violin.                     | T / F |
| f. The husband and wife are inseparable, like two peas in a pod. | T / F |
| g. The key to marital bliss is to never be afraid to apologize.  | T / F |
| h. The husband cannot sleep unless his wife holds his hand.      | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| a. certified     | achievement   |
| b. bliss         | lucky         |
| c. mind-boggling | entwined      |
| d. feat          | ecstasy       |
| e. abode         | going to bed  |
| f. perky         | home          |
| g. inseparable   | authenticated |
| h. retiring      | sleep         |
| i. settle down   | staggering    |
| j. blessed       | sprightly     |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                        |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| a. wedded              | the record      |
| b. tied                | down            |
| c. hold                | in a pod        |
| d. sent them warm      | bliss           |
| e. a few close         | as fiddles      |
| f. as fit              | marriage        |
| g. like two peas       | friends         |
| h. secret to a lasting | the knot        |
| i. retiring            | congratulations |
| j. settle              | for the night   |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**WHICH WORD?:** Circle the correct word from each pair in *italics*.

### World record 80 years of marriage

**BNE:** A pair of British *centenarians / octogenarians* has been certified by the "Guinness Book of *CDs / Records*" as being the longest living married couple – 80 years of wedded *bliss / bless*. Percy Arrowsmith, 105, and 100-year-old Florence *tied / tried* the knot on June 1, 1925, in Hereford, England. They also *hold / grip* the record for the "oldest married couple's aggregate age": their combined age is a *heart- / mind-boggling* 205.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth *marred / marked* the world record-breaking, eight-decade *bond / glue* by sending the couple a congratulatory card. She said their *feet / feat* was a "splendid achievement" and sent them "*scorching / warm* congratulations". The record *setters / settlers* celebrated the anniversary in their *abode / adobe* of 77 years, surrounded by family and a few close friends.

The couple's foster daughter, Jane Woolley, said both her parents were as "fit as *fiddles / violins*" and very "perky". She *marveled / marvelous* at their *still / motionless* very loving relationship and said they have stuck together through thick and *sickness / thin*. She described them as being inseparable, "like two *peas / apples* in a pod".

The secret to a *lasting / last* marriage? They claim the key to marital bliss is never to sleep *on / before* an argument, *never / always* be afraid to apologize after a quarrel and to "kiss and hold hands before *retrying / retiring* for the night". Mrs. Arrowsmith said Percy "can't settle *down / up* if I'm not holding his hand". She told the BBC: "I think we're very blessed. We still love one another, that's the most important *portion / part*."

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**book**' and '**record**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. WHICH WORD?:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about any relationships between the words in italics. Try to explain why the incorrect word is wrong.

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "MARITAL BLISS" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups write down questions about marital bliss and the keys to a lasting marriage.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make a mini-presentation to another group / the class on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |             |          |
|-------------|----------|
| • certified | • foster |
| • bliss     | • perky  |
| • aggregate | • peas   |
| • Queen     | • secret |
| • splendid  | • afraid |
| • abode     | • settle |

## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did you like the headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Do you think there should be more happy stories like this in the news or do you prefer to read about heavier, more serious topics?
- d. Would you like to be married for 80 years?
- e. What do you think 80 years of marriage would be like?
- f. Do you think their love grew stronger as each year passed?
- g. What do you think they talk about over breakfast every morning?
- h. Do you think they still go on dates?
- i. Do you think they still have a lot to learn about each other?
- j. Would their life story together make a good movie?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading the article?
- b. How did this news make you feel?
- c. Do you think being married for 80 years is an achievement?
- d. Describe the relationship of a couple you know, who has been married a long time.
- e. What wedding anniversary present would you buy a couple that has been together for 80 years?
- f. How would you celebrate your 80<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary?
- g. What is the secret to a lasting relationship?
- h. What world record would you like to break?
- i. Have you ever stuck with anything / anyone through thick and thin?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

## SPEAKING

**WEDDING WORDS:** Match the wedding / marriage words on the left with their meanings on the right.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. (to) get down on one knee      | a) A man and woman are forced to marry because the woman is pregnant with the man's child. |
| 2. (to) tie the knot              | b) A promise made at the wedding ceremony to live together forever.                        |
| 3. Mr. (Ms.) Right                | c) Extremely comfortable and happy together.   |
| 4. (to be) all roses and light    | d) How someone physically proposes to his or her intended partner by half-kneeling.        |
| 5. A match made in heaven         | e) Marital / Wedded bliss.   |
| 6. A shotgun wedding              | f) The big day – the day of the wedding.   |
| 7. (to be) like two peas in a pod | g) The perfect person to marry.  |
| 8. The happy day                  | h) To ask someone to marry you.  |
| 9. To pop the question            | i) To get married.   |
| 10. "Until death do us part"      | j) Two people are made for each other.   |

- i. Check your answers after you have finished.
- ii. In pairs / groups, talk about each expression. Do you like them? Is there a similar expression in your own language?
- iii. In pairs, write one question for each of the expressions. Change partners and ask each other your questions.
- iv. Pool your questions and write down any unknown vocabulary. Talk about the questions you like.
- v. Try to tell a story to your partner using all of the expressions.
- vi. Use each of the expressions to describe your own wedding (imagined or real).



## LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### World record 80 years of marriage

**BNE:** A pair of British centenarians \_\_\_\_\_ by the *Guinness Book of Records* as being the longest living married couple – 80 years of wedded bliss. Percy Arrowsmith, 105, and 100-year-old Florence \_\_\_\_\_ on June 1, 1925, in Hereford, England. They also hold the record for the “oldest married couple’s \_\_\_\_\_”: their combined age is a mind-boggling 205.

Britain’s Queen Elizabeth marked the world record-breaking, \_\_\_\_\_ by sending the couple a congratulatory card. She said their feat was a “splendid achievement” and sent them “warm congratulations”. The record setters celebrated the anniversary in \_\_\_\_\_ 77 years, surrounded by family and a few close friends.

The couple’s foster daughter, Jane Woolley, said both her parents were as “\_\_\_\_\_” and very “perky”. She marveled at their still very loving relationship and said they have stuck together \_\_\_\_\_. She described them as being inseparable, “like \_\_\_\_\_”.

The secret to \_\_\_\_\_? They claim the key to \_\_\_\_\_ is never to sleep on an argument, never be afraid to apologize after a quarrel and to “kiss and hold hands \_\_\_\_\_ the night”. Mrs. Arrowsmith said Percy “can’t settle down if I’m not holding his hand”. She told the BBC: “I think we’re \_\_\_\_\_. We still love one another, that’s the most important part.”

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on centenarians. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. THE KEY TO MARITAL BLISS:** Write your own "guide" on how to have a long-lasting marriage. Include the most essential tips that will ensure success. Show your guide to your classmates in your next lesson. Talk about your ideas for wedded bliss.

**4. LETTER TO PERCY & FLORENCE:** Write a letter to the new record breakers telling them what you think of their achievement. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did your classmates write similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

a. T      b. F      c. F      d. F      e. F      f. T      g. T      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. certified	authenticated
b. bliss	ecstasy
c. mind-boggling	staggering
d. feat	achievement
e. abode	home
f. perky	sprightly
g. inseparable	entwined
h. retiring	going to bed
i. settle down	sleep
j. blessed	lucky

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. wedded	bliss
b. tied	the knot
c. hold	the record
d. sent them warm	congratulations
e. a few close	friends
f. as fit	as fiddles
g. like two peas	in a pod
h. secret to a lasting	marriage
i. retiring	for the night
j. settle	down

### WHICH WORD?:

#### World record 80 years of marriage

**BNE:** A pair of British **centenarians** has been certified by the *Guinness Book of Records* as being the longest living married couple – 80 years of wedded **bliss**. Percy Arrowsmith, 105, and 100-year-old Florence **tied** the knot on June 1, 1925, in Hereford, England. They also **hold** the record for the “oldest married couple’s aggregate age”: their combined age is a **mind-boggling** 205.

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The couple’s foster daughter, Jane Woolley, said both her parents were as “fit as **fiddles**” and very “perky”. She **marveled** at their **still** very loving relationship and said they have stuck together through thick and **thin**. She described them as being inseparable, “like two **peas** in a pod”.

The secret to a **lasting** marriage? They claim the key to marital bliss is never to sleep **on** an argument, **never** be afraid to apologize after a quarrel and to “kiss and hold hands before **retiring** for the night”. Mrs. Arrowsmith said Percy “can’t settle **down** if I’m not holding his hand”. She told the BBC: “I think we’re very blessed. We still love one another, that’s the most important **part**.”

### SPEAKING:

1. d      2. i      3. g      4. e      5. j      6. a      7. c      8. f      9. h      10. b