

FAMILY

Warm-up

- 1) What is the best environment to raise a family in (e.g. apartment, village, etc)?
- 2) What was the worst thing you did as a child? Did you get caught?
- 3) Is there anything funny or different about your family?
- 4) Does someone in your family maintain a family tree? How far back can you trace your family history?

Key Vocabulary in Context

The *nuclear family* is the traditional family structure in the West. This term, originating in the 1950s, describes families consisting of a father, a mother, and their **offspring**. Under this **conventional** structure, the family is seen as the basic unit in society; the father functions as the **breadwinner** and the mother as the **homemaker**. Nowadays, alternative family types are becoming more common, such as single-parent families, families headed by same-sex parents, and extended families where families live with their **kin**, which may include several generations. Extended families are less common in North America, where it is not uncommon to place grandparents in retirement homes.

A Social Trends survey in 2009 reported radical changes in child **rearing** and marriage practices in the United Kingdom. Figures showed that while 30 percent of women under thirty had given birth by the age of 25, only 24 percent had married. This marked the first time childbirth had become the first major **milestone** in adult life, ahead of marriage. In 1971 in the U.K, 3/4 of women were married by the age of 25 and half were mothers.

Judging by the high rates of divorce and the increasing number of children born out of **wedlock**, it would appear that the family as an **institution** is **in decline**. American sociologist Stephanie Coontz believes so too, but for different reasons. Coontz points out that marriages are no longer arranged for political or economic reasons, and children are no longer required to contribute to the family income. Marriages nowadays are founded on love. She believes this shift towards love, emotional fulfillment, and free choice has actually weakened the family by making it optional and **fragile**.

Follow-up Questions

- 1) What is a nuclear family?
- 2) **True or False:** extended families are replacing nuclear families in North America.
- 3) How has marriage and raising children changed in the U.K. since 1971?
- 4) Why does Stephanie Coontz believe the institution of the family has weakened?
- 5) Do you agree or disagree with the ideas in the article?

Match the words with their meaning as used in the article.

1. offspring	a. a very important stage in the development of sth
2. conventional	b. traditional
3. breadwinner	c. bring up and care for a child until it is fully grown
4. homemaker	d. the income-earner of a family
5. kin	e. breakable; delicate; weak
6. rear (verb)	f. failing; dying
7. milestone	g. the state of being married
8. wedlock	h. children
9. institution	i. a person who takes care of the house and family
10. in decline	j. your family or your relatives
11. fragile	k. a custom or system that has existed for a long time

Master the language: Connect the below ideas to make a sentence. (note: good as homework)

government / crush / uprising	e.g. The government plans to crush the uprising.
care / offspring	
conventionally / breadwinner	
homemaker / rear	
kin / gifts	
milestone / life	
born / wedlock	

- 6) In your country, are mothers allowed maternity leave (from work)? What about paternity leave for fathers?
- 7) What is a *mid-life crisis*? How can one be avoided?
- 8) When are children old enough to move out of the house?