

# 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.