

This is Your Heritage...

Stories from the South Gloucestershire Indian Community

Resources for Schools - MARRIAGES

You will find National Curriculum, PSHE and RE links in the overview sheet.

Initial class discussion about marriage. Ask the children for their different ideas about what marriage is. Encourage them to think about love, companionship, supporting each other, family. Ask if they have been to a wedding. What was it like?

Explain that in all cultures, marriage represents a legal commitment which is meant to be lifelong between two people. In different cultures, families, and religions there are different traditions and expectations about marriage.

Different types of marriage (see more on pages 6 -7 of this resource):

Arranged marriages In an arranged marriage consent is required from the bride and groom even though the match may have been made by parents, even at a young age. Make sure the children understand this is different from forced marriage.

Interfaith marriage When people who have different religious backgrounds get married. Sometimes they choose the type of ceremony of another their future partner, sometimes they blend the two, and sometimes they create something entirely new and unique to them.

Multi-cultural wedding This is when people from different cultural backgrounds get married. In the video you will hear stories about people from Indian and Jamaican backgrounds getting married, and people from Indian and British backgrounds.

Non-traditional weddings When people decide to create their own ceremony and vows in a way that is meaningful to their own beliefs.

If you don't have access to a video player, you can read the transcript below with the children.

Watch the video with the children [Marriages](#) (Total duration 7 minutes) You are prompted to pause between each section. There are suggested focus questions below.

Transcript of video – Marriages



SHIV SAMA - Patchway

So, my aunt, my mother, and her friend, they were sitting in the house in India. They were talking about it, they said, "My sister's daughter is in Ireland, you know, they're looking for a boy." My mother said, "Oh, my boy is in London." Eventually we got a phone call from Ireland they said, "We've got this (daughter). Would you come and see our daughter?" I said, "No chance." Ireland was in a troubled time then. So that was end of the story. Then out of the blue, January '77, Sunday morning, we got a phone call from my wife's mother that they were in London. They would like to come and see us. Sure, so we met. We talked about it. We were sent into one room to talk to each other. And that was it. Then after that they said, "Well what do you think?" I said, "Well, listen, I need to write to my mother. And see if she is okay with that, then I would say 'yes.'" They said, "Well, actually, your mother has written a letter. There is the letter, it says she likes the woman." So, I was engaged that day.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Where were all the different places that different members of the family were based when Shiv's mother and her friend were talking about marriage for Shiv and his future wife?
2. What type of marriage did Shiv have? (*arranged*)
3. Did Shiv have to marry his wife?



****This video is primarily in Punjabi with subtitles which might be difficult for some children to follow.**

PARMJIT KAUR, Kingswood

My husband came here before me, he came 2 to 4 years before we got married. And then, this sister of mine, she was one smart lady in Bristol, she had a clothing material shop here. My mother-in-law used to go to the shop to buy material for clothes. And then these two met each other and my sister told her that she has got a sister. And thus, she fixed our match. Then I got married in 1972. Then in 1973 in September I came here.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Where do you think Parmjit was when her sister suggested she get married to her future husband?

2. Parmjit says that her sister and her future husband's mother 'fixed our match'. What do you think that means? (*it means that it was an arranged marriage*)
3. How long was it before Parmjit joined her husband in the UK?
4. Do you think you would like a marriage that was arranged for you?



MARIA COELHO - Winterbourne

They were married in 1959 in a time when, if you look at their wedding photographs, one half comes from an Asian background and the other half comes very much from a white British background. And that photograph of their wedding is quite extraordinary for that time. I feel really proud and really privileged that it was my parents making that decision. My mum or my dad didn't really think about it. They were just two people that were in love with each other. I used to talk to my mum about what it was like having children that looked different, and her husband that looked different, back in the fifties, in the sixties and through the seventies, which as we kind of well know was not the most tolerant society at the time. And my mum said, "I never noticed anything."

VOCABULARY

Tolerant - Willing to accept or respect what is different in others, especially their beliefs and customs.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. There are many types of marriage. Arranged, love, interfaith, multicultural. Which type of marriage do you think Maria's parent's marriage was? (*love and multicultural*)
2. Why do you think Maria was proud of her parents' decision to get married.



NITHYA BALASUBRAMANIAM

AND PRABU KARUPPANNASAMY - Kingswood, Bristol

Ours wasn't termed as an arranged marriage. It was love/arranged sort of thing because our family knew each other. So, when we raised it with our parents, they were comfortable with you know, our choices, our individual choices. Now, the problem is, at that time, not now, at that time, families were looked down upon if they had love marriage, that was the crucial fact that they would think. So, in that sense, I would consider, we both are lucky that both our parents were not concerned about that. But boy's family wouldn't mind that much. The girl's family is actually looked down upon very badly, so in that sense, I would say my father was a trend-setter.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Why might Nithya and Prabu consider their marriage love/arranged?
2. Why do you think Nithya calls her dad a 'trendsetter'?
3. In times gone by, whose family gets looked down upon the most if there is a love marriage? Why do you think that might be?



ALKA MEHTA-GRAHAM – Emersons Green

(Interviewer: Can I ask what Mr Graham's heritage is?) Yeah, he has a Jamaican background. And on the 25th of November, I literally got married facing the Caribbean Sea, just the two of us with two witnesses, no parents from any side. Our vows were based on nature. So, they were based on the sea, the sunrise and that's it, we said that was our parents. And then in 2000 we came to the UK and that is when my mother and father saw my big wedding ring. My mother said, 'I knew that you were married. I just knew.'

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Where was Alka's husband from?
2. Which sort of marriage do you think Alka and her husband, Mr Graham had? (*love, multicultural, non-traditional*)
3. Who did Alka and her husband say they said their vows in front of?

SARIKA MORRISON, Bradley Stoke



My husband's not Indian. As I said, there weren't very many families or Indian people in Northern Ireland. And although my father and my family and I had talked about, similar to my mum and dad, having an arranged marriage, that wasn't something that I wanted. It might have been that I would have met somebody of my own heritage when I was in university, which I didn't, it just didn't happen that way. I came back to Northern Ireland. But yes, he's Irishman and he's a Roman Catholic. So, he's not in the same ethnicity. My husband was only too happy to for us to have an Indian wedding. He was completely, I mean, my dad, we talked about an elephant at one point coming to the wedding, but he came on the horse, the traditional turban, he had a sword, he was so excited about that, and did all of that. And it was great because as I mentioned, hadn't been to India for a long time. I wasn't sure how my cousins in particular would receive my husband. Most of my dad's brothers, sisters, their children are of similar age, particularly my dad's brothers, welcomed him and like he was another brother. It was fabulous.

VOCABULARY

Turban – A type of headwear based on winding cloth around the head. Worn by many men in India.

Roman Catholic - The oldest and largest branch of Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church is led by the Pope in Italy.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Where was Sarika's husband from and what was his religious background?
2. Sarika said her parents marriage had been arranged but that wasn't something she wanted. Why do you think that might be?
3. Name some of the things that happened at their wedding. *(husband wore a turban and carried a sword, rode in on a horse)*

Activities:

Create a Wedding Invitation

Create a wedding invitation.

After reading about all the different sorts of weddings below, choose one and design an invitation card for your guests



Let them know where the wedding will be, (Church, Temple, Gurdwara, beach) what time to arrive, and how many days it will last. You can draw a decorative border around your invitation.





Hindu Weddings are traditionally big, bright, and colourful, they are a celebration of love and commitment. Marriages, according to Hindu beliefs, are made in heaven and once you are married, the bond is supposed to last for seven lifetimes.

The couple walk seven steps reciting a prayer at each step. These are the seven vows which are exchanged. The first for food, the second for strength, the third for prosperity, the fourth for wisdom, the fifth for progeny (having children) the sixth for health and the seventh for friendship.

Traditionally, a Hindu wedding will take place over three days, however, some will be extended to five.

Nithya and Prabu's wedding was traditional, but their parents were happy for them to have a love match rather than the more traditional arranged marriage.



Sarika's husband has a Northern Irish background, and his family are Catholic. But he liked the idea of their wedding following Hindu traditions. Sarika and her dad even talked about having an elephant at the wedding. In India as elephants are symbols of good luck and excellent fortune, something

every bride and groom need. But in the end they decided an elephant was too much and her husband rode a horse into the ceremony.





Maria's parents on their wedding day

Christian Weddings

Maria's parents had a Christian wedding. In a traditional Christian wedding in the UK, the bride wears a white dress, and is walked down the aisle by her father or another significant person and then 'given away' to the groom. A priest or minister oversees the service and the couple make vows in the presence of their guests and witnesses. The traditional wedding vow

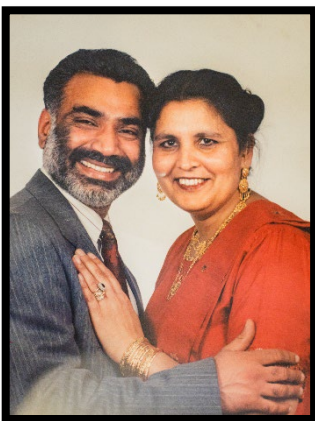
uses words like this: "I, (Name), take you,

(Name), to be my wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy law, in the presence of God I make this vow." The service lasts about an hour and then a wedding meal or party follows.

Non-traditional Wedding Alka and her husband decided that they wanted a wedding with only two witnesses present. They faced the Caribbean Sea, and nature was their parents. In this kind of wedding, people will create a marriage which feels totally individual and right for their own beliefs and not be guided by a set of religious traditions.



Alka and her husband on their wedding day



Parmjit and her husband when they were younger

Sikh Weddings are about two people and two families coming together. The ceremony does not focus on one single day. The ceremony is known as 'Anand Karaj' which means 'Blissful Union.' The ceremony is very colourful and the two people are joined as a partnership of equals. The couple will marry in front of the Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Book) while the guests gather around the couple, usually men on one side and women on the other. For people of the Sikh religion their goal is to merge their soul with God, and the couple vow to help each other towards this goal. The religious ceremony usually takes place in a Sikh Gurdwara (temple)

Who said that?

Print out the six pictures of the people in the film. Put one picture on six different tables around the classroom. (So, there is a Parmjit table, Alka table, Maria's parents table...)

Read out the statements below about the stories and ask the children to go to the picture of the person who the statement is about. Alternatively, you could write out their name, or stay seated and do the activity as question and answers.

Nithya and Prabu



Maria



Parmjit



Sarika



Shiv



Alka



Questions	Answers
My father was Indian, from a Catholic (Christian) background. He married my mum who was white and from Britain out of love.	<i>Maria</i>
My sister met my future mother-in-law met in a fabric shop in Bristol and agreed I should marry her son. I was in India at the time. I joined him a year later.	<i>Parmjit</i>
I'd agreed with parents I shouldn't have an arranged marriage, even though they had one.	<i>Sarika</i>
My husband was Catholic, but he agreed to have a traditional Hindu wedding. We even thought about him arriving on an elephant.	<i>Sarika</i>
When we got married, we faced the Caribbean Sea, and we just had nature as our parents.	<i>Alka</i>
Our parents were happy for us to get married because we were in love. But it also felt traditional because our families all knew each other.	<i>Nithya and Prabu</i>
One of my parents was from the UK and white, the other was from India. It was unusual at the time.	<i>Maria</i>
When the families first approached me about this bride in Ireland I said "No." At that time Ireland was troubled.	<i>Shiv</i>
In India it used to be looked down on if a family allowed a love marriage. It was worse for the girl's family than the boy's family. It's different now.	<i>Nithya</i>
I met my future wife. We sat and talked and when I found out my mother had consented, we were engaged that day.	<i>Shiv</i>
My husband was excited about riding a horse, wearing a turban, and carrying a sword at our wedding.	<i>Sarika</i>

Become an interviewer.

Plan an interview with someone you know about their wedding day. It might be a neighbour or grandparent or someone who works at your school. Think of five questions you would like to ask them and think about how you will record the interview. Will you write notes? Will you be able to use a phone to record the answers? When you come back to class how will you present the things you found out? You could make a poster, or do short presentation, or play the recording or write a story about the interview. You could invite someone in or (if willing) teacher might want to go into role?

