

Part I: Comprehension**60 minutes****THE SORRY SIDE OF A SINGLE LIFE**

Just about the most important social change going on around us is simply that more and more of us are living on our own.

5 In 1950 just 3 % of British people lived alone. That figure has increased to about 10 % and all the indications are that the trend will continue. It's not just that more old people are living alone. By 1991 2.2m British households were home to singletons. And as the Friends and Sex and the City generation grow older – with no apparent plans to give up their independent, non-family lifestyles – that number could well be up to 5m by 2011.

10 In the old days we believed in the *nuclear family*. But in family life, as in physics, we have been breaking up into smaller and smaller particles. Taken to extremes this process could result in all of us *living in a completely atomised society*. On this view the shifts from large families to small families, from marriage to cohabitation, from shared parenthood to lone parenthood are all merely transitional steps to a world in which we all live on our own.

15 If you want to see our demographic future all you need to do is walk down Kensington High Street in London. There is a lot of expensive but relatively small accommodation. More people eat out with friends rather than in with families. Sian Wolchover, 45, is typical. "I've lived here all my life, I've always been single and totally by choice. Why would you get married if you don't want children? I work in the theatre and love it – working every evening doesn't lend itself to children and I enjoy my freedom and independence. A lot of my friends have made a similar choice to avoid long-term relationships – only about half of them are married. I love the freedom of coming home and having the place to myself, not being answerable to anyone."

20 Like Wolchover, we can all see the good side of these social changes – the sheer pace, energy and freedom created by so many single people. It is the migration of young single people to London that helps to make it the greatest city in the world. But there is a downside as well. This trend is really telling us that we find it more and more difficult to make the compromises and sacrifices necessary to live with other people. This is bad news; ultimately no man, or woman, is an island.

25 Some of the long-term costs of our new way of living are beginning to emerge. There is a steady increase in the number of people attending accident and emergency departments in hospitals. One reason appears to be that if you feel ill at night and there is nobody beside you to mop your brow you are much more likely to seek medical help.

30 The biggest single reason why John Prescott, the deputy prime minister, is trying to concrete over the southeast is not population growth but because the same number of people require more households. In addition the biggest single factor driving poverty in Britain over the past 25 years has been the fragmentation of families. If you live on your own and are not working then there is nobody else to keep you – you immediately become a workless household, *likely to be claiming benefit*.

35 There is an easy assumption that social liberalism and economic liberalism go together. This sounds great. But one of the long-term effects of social liberalism – freedom to live as we wish without restriction or ties – appears to be that it pushes up the amount of support from the state that people need because they get less from their own families.

- 50 There are other social changes going on as well. For a start, there is the emergence of a new way of living, which researchers have described as Living Apart Together – LAT for short. LATs are people who live alone but are in a committed relationship. As more and more couples have careers it is increasingly difficult to live in the same place as your partner.
- 55 One study found that most couples where both held senior jobs had at some point spent a period of at least six months living apart. With the cost of living in London so high, many people might do a weekly commute, living in a bedsit during the week and going back to their partner at weekends. LATs could be the couples of the future.
- 60 Maybe we have not given up our desire to share our lives with someone else but it is just taking us a long time to find the right person. Modern life is incredibly fast but when it comes to the big things – choosing a career, finding a spouse, having kids – modern life is very slow.
- 65 Oddly enough, two of the biggest problems we face in Britain today also make me optimistic. The sheer cost of housing is a big problem, especially for first-time buyers. It is one of the reasons why people are delaying settling down and having kids. At the other end of the scale we have got lots of people facing a lonely impoverished retirement because of the crisis in our pensions. The one thing that many of them do have is a house bigger than they need.
- 70 One of the most interesting charities I know – Home Share – tries to link up young people who need accommodation and old people with low incomes but big houses who need help and company. Sometimes the young lodgers don't have to pay rent but in return for accommodation they provide a range of services – from shopping to caring.
- 75 It is just possible that the pressures on our atomised society might just provide the cure. It would certainly be better than all of us living on our own.
- 80 From: The Sunday Times, October 24, 2004

Annotations

I. 10 nuclear family a family consisting of father, mother and children

A. Vocabulary (only one answer will be accepted!)

1. Write the expressions indicated in brackets

- I. 4 increased (antonym) _____
- I. 10 believed (noun) _____
- I. 11 process (verb) _____
- I. 18 friends (abstract noun) _____
- I. 27 energy (adjective) _____
- I. 27 created (noun: person) _____
- I. 27 migration (synonym) _____
- I. 30 necessary (noun) _____
- I. 35 reason (adverb) _____
- I. 39 require (noun) _____
- I. 42 immediately (synonym) _____
- I. 52 committed (noun) _____
- I. 65 optimistic (superlative) _____
- I. 74 caring (synonym) _____
- I. 76 provide (noun) _____

2. Explain each expression in YOUR OWN WORDS in complete sentences!

- I. 12 living in a completely atomised society

- I. 43 likely to be claiming benefit

- I. 52 a committed relationship

B. Answer the following questions in YOUR OWN WORDS in complete sentences!

1. Describe the atomizing social process as the author sees it.

2. Name three long-term effects for society the author is worried about.

3. What will the economical consequence for society be when people live alone?

4. Characterize the new way of living a partnership that has recently emerged according to the author of the article.

5. What makes the author think positively about the new trend of living on one's own?

6. Does the author eventually support the idea of individuals living totally independently?
Justify your answer.

Part II: Language**60 minutes**

1. Use the verbs in brackets in the correct form. (Gerund, Participle[present or past] or Infinitive and add what is necessary)

a) Earlier warnings have been without success. Now scientists try (warn) _____ the inhabitants in certain regions of tsunamis by (set up) _____ a lot of special instruments along the coast. Would they have succeeded (save) _____ the people in Southeast Asia?

b) The bird was sitting on the edge of its nest, (sing) _____ a beautiful song, but after a while it stopped (search) _____ for food.

c) I vaguely remember (he, ask) _____ his neighbour if he would agree to (I, borrow) _____ his car if I did not mind (pay) _____ for the petrol.

d) Our family never got used (smoke) _____. My father used (smoke) _____ cigarettes when he was a teenager but my mother refused (marry) _____ him if he did not stop (smoke) _____.

e) The old man (wait) _____ at the bus stop made (I, laugh) _____ because he was the only person (wear) _____ a winter coat on that hot summer day.

f) The Red Cross was delighted (get) _____ so much support from donors so that the organisation had the possibility (help) _____ the victims of the earthquake. I think it will be worth while (read) _____ its report on the aid (give) _____ to the victims. You should not forget (order) _____ it from its Headquarters in Geneva.

2. Use the correct tense in the correct form (simple or progressive/continuous form)

a) On their trip along the Orinoko River last year they (have) _____ to pass through a large forest. It (rain) _____ heavily all night long and (still, rain) _____ when we (start) _____.

b) Before we (go) _____ very far, we (find) _____ that we (lose) _____ our way. After we (wander) _____ about through the wet undergrowth for hours, we finally (come) _____ to a small hut. By that time it (stop) _____ raining. There (be) _____ nothing to

eat in the hut except some stale bread that (be left) _____ behind by former occupants.

c) When a husband (come) _____ home in the evening, he (ask) his wife: "(there, be) _____ any letters this morning?" – "No," she (reply) _____," there (not, be) _____ any." The husband (explain) _____: "I (wait) _____ for a letter from the insurance company for more than two weeks." – "Oh, there (be) _____ a chap from that company on the phone a few minutes before you (come) _____ home. I (tell) _____ him to phone tomorrow."

d) Jenny's grandfather (be) _____ eighty in 2006. By then he (see) _____ all five continents because he (intend) _____ to go to Australia this year. He (be, already) _____ on the other four continents. He (look) _____ forward to this trip.

e) Tell me, what (do, you) _____ after these exams? – Well, my father (help) _____ me to find a part time job for two months, then I (visit) _____ my Chinese friends – I (book, already) _____ the flight – I (promise) _____, I (send) _____ you a postcard from Beijing before the plane (take) _____ me back to Europe.

3. Translation:

1. (Use Passive Voice where possible!)

Als man die Türe des riesengrossen Saales öffnete, durften wir eintreten. Man war gerade dabei, einige Instrumente herein zu tragen, da man ein Konzert mit grossen Stars geplant hatte. Doch erzählte man uns trotzdem etwas über die Geschichte des Saales und zeigte uns danach noch einen Film über den Neubau.

Part III: Essay**60 minutes**

(Write 300-350 words, create YOUR OWN HEADLINE for your essay, structure it properly, and count the words in groups of 50 please)

Topics for all classes

1. The author of the article “The sorry side of a single life” quotes the poet John Donne when he writes *‘ultimately no man, or woman, is an island’*. Analyze and discuss the quotation and add your personal view.

2. Does humanity need tsunamis and other catastrophes to be ready for solidarity?

3. *“The function of the novelist is by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you **see**”*

Did English literature we read in class influence you in the sense of Joseph Conrad’s statement? Did it broaden your horizons? If yes, to what extent, if not, why not?