

# The Divorce Case

A discussion class for Intermediate + Students

By Lindsay Clandfield

**Level:** Intermediate +

**Aim:** A discussion where students decide who gets what in a divorce, then discuss issues surrounding divorce.

**Language Point:** Expressions to describe relationships

**Materials:** Worksheet: The Divorce Case (2 pages) / Follow up discussion questions on Divorce

**Note:** *The issues surrounding divorce can be very personal and sometimes controversial, depending on where and whom you are teaching. Teachers should use this material only if they, and their students, are comfortable discussing it.*

## Warm Up

Write the following letters on the board.

P A I T N S H E R O L I

Ask students to work in pairs and to make as many words as they can using these letters. Give them a time limit of 2 minutes to do this, and then check back their answers. Could anyone make a word using all the letters? There is one word you can make using all the letters: it is RELATIONSHIP. Tell the students that today's class is about relationships, more specifically about divorce.

## Expressions about Relationships

Give each pair of students the worksheet and ask them to do the first task. Check back the answers all together. If you have a monolingual class, you could ask them if they have any similar expressions in their language.

Answers:

*Their relationship is on the rocks. U*

*They are still in a honeymoon period. H*

*They aren't getting along very well. H*

*They're going through a rough patch. U*

*They can't see enough of each other. H*

*She can't put up with him any more. U*

*They're going (their) separate ways. U*

*They stick together through thick and thin. H*

## The Divorce Case

Ask each pair to work with another pair and form a group of four. Ask one student to read out the introduction to the divorce case on the worksheet. Pre-teach *custody* and any other words you think your students might have trouble with. Then let students read the situation. Make sure that everybody knows what they have to do. Stress that they must discuss this case, but can only use English in their discussion. They must write their recommendations in the space provided on the second worksheet. Set a time limit of fifteen minutes. You could let this go on longer if the students really get into it. Circulate and help where needed. When the time limit is up, do some feedback on what the different groups decided. Was there a consensus in the class?

## Divorce Discussion

Doing the above task will probably raise some issues about divorce that can now be discussed. Give each group a copy of the third worksheet. Appoint a reader for each group. The reader chooses one of the questions on the worksheet and asks it to the group. Emphasize that this should also be in English. Circulate and listen to the different groups. If you have time, correct and review new language that came up in the activity at the end.



## Vocabulary: Talking about relationships.

Look at these expressions about John and Cristina. Which ones indicate that they are in a happy relationship, and which expressions indicate that they are in an unhappy relationship? Write H for happy and U for unhappy next to each sentence.

- Their relationship is on the rocks.
- They are still in a honeymoon period.
- They aren't getting along very well.
- They're going through a rough patch.
- They can't see enough of each other.
- She can't put up with him anymore.
- They're going (their) separate ways.
- They stick together through thick and thin.

## Divorce Case: Ford vs. Ford

Imagine you are judges. YOU are responsible for divorce cases where the husband and wife cannot agree. Today you have been presented with another difficult case: Ford vs. Ford. Read about the case below.



### Cristina Ford

Cristina Ford is a forty-year-old advertising executive. She works very long hours and earns a lot of money. Since their daughter Olivia was born four years ago, Cristina has worked and supported the family.

### John Ford

John Ford is an unemployed forty-two year old man. He worked for many years in a bookshop. At the moment he is trying to write a novel. He stopped working when their

daughter Olivia was born, and has stayed at home to take care of her for the past four years.

**The Divorce**

John and Cristina got married ten years ago. They began to have problems in their marriage after Olivia was born. They have decided to get divorced, but are now very angry with one another.

**Cristina wants:**

- Full custody of Olivia.
- The family house, a three-bedroom house in a nice part of town.
- Charlie, the family dog.
- Cristina wants to sell the summer beach apartment and share the money. She refuses to give John any money at all. She does not want any money from John. John can see his daughter every two weeks and have her for the summer holidays.

**John wants:**

- Full custody of Olivia.
- Charlie, the family dog.
- The summer beach apartment so he can write there.
- John wants to sell the family house in the city and share the money. He also wants Cristina to pay \$1000 a month for child support. Cristina can see her daughter every two weeks and have her for the summer holidays. John also wants \$25 000 compensation because he feels he sacrificed his work to raise Olivia.

*Now discuss with the other judges in your group. You must come to a decision and make some clear recommendations. Write your recommendations here:*

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*When you have written your recommendations, consult with another group of judges. Did you agree on what should be done? Then turn the page and look at the discussion questions on divorce.*



## Divorce conversation questions

What are some of the common causes of divorce?

Is divorce legal in your country? Has it always been legal?

Is it easier to get a divorce now than in the past? Why?

Is divorce more common now than in the past? Why or why not?

Some people say that children of divorced parents are more likely to divorce themselves. What do you think?

Many actors, for example Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta Jones, sign very detailed contracts before they get married (called pre-marital contracts). These contracts say exactly how much money and materials each person will get if they divorce. Do you agree with these contracts? Would you make one before you get married?

Does age make a difference in divorces? Are younger couples more likely to divorce than older ones?