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Divorce is bad for the environment

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Contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading / Listening	7
Student Survey	8
Discussion	9
Language Work	10
Writing	11
Homework	12
Answers	13

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THE ARTICLE

Divorce is bad for the environment. This is the conclusion of a research study carried out by ecologists at Michigan State University in the USA and published in the journal 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences'. Researchers found that divorce has different kinds of negative impacts on the planet, including a higher demand for resources and a lower rate of efficiency in the use of household resources. The research team analyzed data on married couples and their use of resources in 12 countries, including the USA, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Greece, Mexico and South Africa. Lead researchers Eunice Yu and Jianguo Liu discovered that divorce led to smaller average household sizes, which resulted in a larger number of total households and thus a greater demand for energy, water, and land.

In many countries around the world divorce rates have been rising. "A married household actually uses resources more efficiently," said Mr Liu. He added that people seemed surprised by his findings at first, and then after thinking about it, decided it was simple. He said: "People have been talking about how to protect the environment and combat climate change, but divorce is an overlooked factor that needs to be considered." His report states that in America in 2005, divorcees could have saved more than 73 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity and 627 billion gallons of water if they had stayed married. In percentage terms, divorcees used 42-61 percent more resources per person compared with a married person. To help save natural resources, Yu and Liu recommended that governments consider the environmental impact of divorce and separation.

WARM-UPS

1. DIVORCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT: Walk around the class and talk to other students about possible links between divorce and the environment. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

divorce / environment / ecologists / resources / efficiency / household sizes / divorce rates / being surprised / climate change / electricity / water

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. TWO-MINUTE DIVORCE DEBATES: Have the following fun 2-minute debates. Students A strongly believe in the first argument, students B the second. Change pairs often.

- a. Divorce is bad for the environment. Vs. What a ridiculous idea.
- b. Children should be able to divorce their parents. Vs. A crazy idea.
- c. Divorce is healthy. Vs. Divorce is unhealthy.
- d. Parents can never divorce. Vs. Divorce is often good for the kids.
- e. Divorce should be illegal. Vs. Don't be silly. This is the 21st Century.
- f. People should sign divorce settlements before marriage. Vs. How stupid.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT: With your partner(s), discuss the possible impact on Earth's environment of these situations:

- ___ an increase in divorce
- ___ more and more people being able to speak English
- ___ a huge increase in the popularity of the colour pink
- ___ Mickey Mouse being totally unpopular
- ___ a doubling of the ant population
- ___ people becoming ten times happier
- ___ people watching, reading and listening to the news more often
- ___ 1960s fashion making a comeback

5. DIVORCE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'divorce'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. QUICK ROLE PLAY: Student A believes divorce has no impact on the environment; Student B believes divorce has a huge impact on the environment. Role play their conversation. Change partners often. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Divorced people create a bad environment in schools and offices. | T / F |
| b. Researchers say divorce increases the demand for our resources. | T / F |
| c. The research was carried out on couples in 112 countries. | T / F |
| d. The research team discovered divorce reduced demand for water. | T / F |
| e. Divorce rates are going down in many countries around the world. | T / F |
| f. Divorce is rarely looked at as a factor of environmental change. | T / F |
| g. Divorcees use 14 percent more resources than married people. | T / F |
| h. The researchers urged governments to think about divorce more. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. conclusion | a. examined |
| 2. impacts | b. look at |
| 3. analyzed | c. effects |
| 4. resulted in | d. call |
| 5. demand | e. proportions |
| 6. rates | f. fight |
| 7. simple | g. findings |
| 8. combat | h. missed |
| 9. overlooked | i. led to |
| 10. consider | j. straightforward |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. the conclusion of a research study carried | a. on the planet |
| 2. different kinds of negative impacts | b. at first |
| 3. a lower rate of efficiency in the use | c. been rising |
| 4. smaller average | d. out by ecologists |
| 5. a greater demand for | e. per person |
| 6. divorce rates have | f. energy |
| 7. people seemed surprised by his findings | g. of household resources |
| 8. divorce is an overlooked factor that | h. household sizes |
| 9. divorcees used 42-61% more resources | i. the environmental impact |
| 10. recommended that governments consider | j. needs to be considered |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Divorce is bad for the environment. This is the _____ of a research study carried _____ by ecologists at Michigan State University in the USA and published in the journal 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences'. Researchers found that divorce has different kinds of _____ impacts on the planet, including a higher demand for resources and a lower _____ of efficiency in the use of household resources. The research team analyzed _____ on married couples and their use of resources in 12 countries, _____ the USA, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Greece, Mexico and South Africa. Lead researchers Eunice Yu and Jianguo Liu discovered that divorce _____ to smaller average household sizes, which resulted in a larger number of total households and _____ a greater demand for energy, water, and land.

*negative**rate**out**thus**including**conclusion**led**data*

In many countries around the world divorce rates have been _____. "A married household _____ uses resources more efficiently," said Mr Liu. He added that people seemed surprised by his findings at _____, and then after thinking about it, decided it was simple. He said: "People have been talking about how to _____ the environment and combat climate change, but divorce is an _____ factor that needs to be considered." His report states that in America in 2005, divorcees could have _____ more than 73 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity and 627 billion gallons of water if they had stayed married. In percentage terms, divorcees used 42-61 percent more resources _____ person compared with a married person. To help save natural resources, Yu and Liu recommended that governments consider the environmental _____ of divorce and separation.

*saved**actually**impact**protect**per**overlooked**rising**first*

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

Divorce is bad for the environment. This is _____ research study _____ ecologists at Michigan State University in the USA and published in the journal 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences'. Researchers found that divorce has _____ negative impacts on the planet, including a higher demand for resources and a lower rate of efficiency _____ household resources. The research team analyzed data on married couples and their use of resources in 12 countries, including the USA, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Greece, Mexico and South Africa. Lead researchers Eunice Yu and Jianguo Liu discovered _____ smaller average household sizes, which resulted in a larger number of total households _____ demand for energy, water, and land.

In many countries around the world divorce _____. "A married household actually uses resources more efficiently," said Mr Liu. He added that people seemed surprised _____ first, and then after thinking about it, decided it was simple. He said: "People have been talking _____ the environment and combat climate change, but divorce is an overlooked factor that needs to be considered." His report states that in America in 2005, divorcees _____ than 73 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity and 627 billion gallons of water if they had stayed married. In percentage terms, divorcees used 42-61 percent more _____ compared with a married person. To help save natural resources, Yu and Liu recommended that governments consider the environmental _____ separation.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'negative' and 'impact'.

negative	impact

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conclusion • negative • lower • data • led • greater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rising • surprised • combat • saved • per • separation
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STUDENT DIVORCE SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about divorce in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
 - b) Do you think divorce is bad for the environment?
 - c) What else is divorce bad for?
 - d) Is divorce a problem in your country?
 - e) Do you think religions should teach people about the environmental impact of divorce before they get married?
 - f) Do you think divorcees should pay a special CO2 charge?
 - g) Do you think this study will be taken seriously?
 - h) What other negative impacts do you think divorce might have on the environment?
 - i) Do you think more couples will think about the environment before splitting up and getting divorced?
-

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Why would a married couple use resources more efficiently than two divorced people living alone?
- c) Don't you think a lot of the contents of this study is obvious?
- d) Why do you think divorce has been overlooked as contributor to climate change for so long?
- e) Are the numbers in the last half of paragraph two in the article serious numbers?
- f) Do you think the research findings will encourage environmentally conscious single people to cohabit?
- g) Do you think governments should now seriously consider the environmental impact of divorce and separation?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?
- i) Did you like this discussion?

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

Divorce is bad for the environment. This is the conclusion (1) _____ a research study carried (2) _____ by ecologists at Michigan State University in the USA and published in the journal 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences'. Researchers found that divorce has different kinds of negative (3) _____ on the planet, including a higher demand for resources and a lower rate of efficiency in the use of household resources. The research team analyzed (4) _____ on married couples and their use of resources in 12 countries, including the USA, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Greece, Mexico and South Africa. (5) _____ researchers Eunice Yu and Jianguo Liu discovered that divorce led to smaller average household sizes, which resulted in a larger number of total households and (6) _____ a greater demand for energy, water, and land.

In many countries around the world divorce (7) _____ have been rising. "A married household (8) _____ uses resources more efficiently," said Mr Liu. He added that people seemed surprised by his findings at first, and then after thinking about it, decided it was simple. He said: "People have been talking about how to protect the environment and (9) _____ climate change, but divorce is an overlooked factor that needs to be considered." His report states that in America in 2005, divorcees could have saved more than 73 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity and 627 billion gallons of water if they (10) _____ stayed married. In percentage terms, divorcees used 42-61 percent more resources (11) _____ person compared with a married person. To help save natural resources, Yu and Liu recommended that governments consider the environmental impact of divorce and (12) _____.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) with | (b) for | (c) by | (d) of |
| 2. | (a) away | (b) in | (c) out | (d) across |
| 3. | (a) impacts | (b) compacts | (c) pacts | (d) pact |
| 4. | (a) datum | (b) data | (c) database | (d) databank |
| 5. | (a) Lead | (b) Gold | (c) Metal | (d) Steel |
| 6. | (a) though | (b) this | (c) thus | (d) these |
| 7. | (a) ratio | (b) rates | (c) rate | (d) pro rata |
| 8. | (a) acutely | (b) actuary | (c) actual | (d) actually |
| 9. | (a) combatant | (b) combative | (c) combats | (d) combat |
| 10. | (a) had | (b) have | (c) has | (d) have to |
| 11. | (a) pair | (b) poor | (c) per | (d) pre |
| 12. | (a) separate | (b) separation | (c) separates | (d) separated |

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about the report on divorce and the environment. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. DIVORCE: Make a poster about divorce rates around the world and how societies treat divorcees differently. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all include similar things?

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about how we can use the Earth's resources more efficiently. Include imaginary interviews with a river and the sky.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down new words and expressions.

5. LETTER: Write a letter to your government leaders. Give them three suggestions on what they should do about divorce and its impact on the environment. Give them three reasons they should act immediately. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. F d. F e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. conclusion | a. findings |
| 2. impacts | b. effects |
| 3. analyzed | c. examined |
| 4. resulted in | d. led to |
| 5. demand | e. call |
| 6. rates | f. proportions |
| 7. simple | g. straightforward |
| 8. combat | h. fight |
| 9. overlooked | i. missed |
| 10. consider | j. look at |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. the conclusion of a research study carried | a. out by ecologists |
| 2. different kinds of negative impacts | b. on the planet |
| 3. a lower rate of efficiency in the use | c. of household resources |
| 4. smaller average | d. household sizes |
| 5. a greater demand for | e. energy |
| 6. divorce rates have | f. been rising |
| 7. people seemed surprised by his findings | g. at first |
| 8. divorce is an overlooked factor that | h. needs to be considered |
| 9. divorcees used 42-61% more resources | i. per person |
| 10. recommended that governments consider | j. the environmental impact |

GAP FILL:

Divorce is bad for the environment

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In many countries around the world divorce rates have been **rising**. "A married household **actually** uses resources more efficiently," said Mr Liu. He added that people seemed surprised by his findings at **first**, and then after thinking about it, decided it was simple. He said: "People have been talking about how to **protect** the environment and combat climate change, but divorce is an **overlooked** factor that needs to be considered." His report states that in America in 2005, divorcees could have **saved** more than 73 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity and 627 billion gallons of water if they had stayed married. In percentage terms, divorcees used 42-61 percent more resources **per** person compared with a married person. To help save natural resources, Yu and Liu recommended that governments consider the environmental **impact** of divorce and separation.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - d 2 - c 3 - a 4 - b 5 - a 6 - c 7 - b 8 - d 9 - d 10 - a 11 - c 12 - b