

Gretna Green

Activity 1

Listen carefully, and from the context put a word or phrase in column A with a word in column B.

Sweetheart

Scoundrel

Elope

Countless

Irregular

Anvil

Hugely

Unusual

A large number

Darling \ lover

Very

Rogue \ bad man

Run away to get married

A large iron block

Activity 2

Answer these questions:

1. What did Lord Hardwicke's marriage Act state?

2. When was it introduced?

3. What were the minimum marriage ages in Scotland at that time?

4. And from 1929?

5. What did you need to make a wedding valid?

6. How is a blacksmith symbolic of marriage?

Activity 3

Listen and complete the gaps

So. It's 1753 and you and your _____ sweetheart have decided that you want to get married. Congratulations and have a long and happy life _____. But just a moment. There's a problem. The new Act of Parliament, Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act, has just been passed and it states that _____ you are both 21 or over you can't get married unless you have the consent of both sets of parents. Oh dear. I can't imagine that daddy will consent to marrying that scoundrel from the _____ - so what can you do? Well, why don't you elope to Scotland?

Yes, since 1753 that's exactly what countless numbers of young lovers have done. The Marriage Act didn't _____ in Scotland and so as long as the boy was 14 and the girl was 12 it was legal to marry without parental consent. In 1929 this changed to 16 years old but the principle is the _____. Gretna Green is one of the first villages you find once you've crossed the border into Scotland, and the couples waste no time looking for someone to _____ the ceremony.

In those days the law in Scotland allowed for irregular marriages which meant that almost _____ could perform a ceremony on the condition that there were two witnesses. The blacksmiths, people who worked with iron and steel to make objects, became popular choices and in no time their workshops were regularly _____ into wedding venues. The first was used from 1710 and the other two years later. These blacksmiths became known as 'anvil priests' and their work was _____ with the idea of marriage - the union of two parts (two pieces of hot metal in the case of their regular work and a young couple when performing wedding ceremonies).

Even today, some 250 years on, Gretna Green _____ a hugely popular place to get married. It's also a great place to have as a base while you explore some of the attractions in the surrounding area and pass a few quiet days before going back to tell your _____ what you've done!!

Transcript

So. It's 1753 and you and your young sweetheart have decided that you want to get married. Congratulations and have a long and happy life together. But just a moment. There's a problem. The new Act of Parliament, Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act, has just been passed and it states that unless you are both 21 or over you can't get married unless you have the consent of both sets of parents. Oh dear. I can't imagine that daddy will consent to marrying that scoundrel from the village - so what can you do? Well, why don't you elope to Scotland?

Yes, since 1753 that's exactly what countless numbers of young lovers have done. The Marriage Act didn't apply in Scotland and so as long as the boy was 14 and the girl was 12 it was legal to marry without parental consent. In 1929 this changed to 16 years old but the principle is the same. Gretna Green is one of the first villages you find once you've crossed the border into Scotland, and the couples waste no time looking for someone to perform the ceremony.

In those days the law in Scotland allowed for irregular marriages which meant that almost anybody could perform a ceremony on the condition that there were two witnesses. The blacksmiths, people who worked with iron and steel to make objects, became popular choices and in no time their workshops were regularly transformed into wedding venues. The first was used from 1710 and the other two years later. These blacksmiths became known as 'anvil priests' and their work was symbolic with the idea of marriage - the union of two parts (two pieces of hot metal in the case of their regular work and a young couple when performing wedding ceremonies).

Even today, some 250 years on, Gretna Green remains a hugely popular place to get married. It's also a great place to have as a base while you explore some of the attractions in the surrounding area and pass a few quiet days before going back to tell your family what you've done!!

This student worksheet is free to download and print for use in the classroom or for self-study. It is meant to be used in conjunction with the listening file which is available in mp3 format. However, the transcript can be used not only to check answers but also for reading comprehension and vocabulary