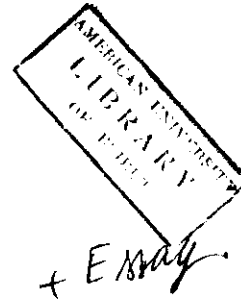




ENGLISH 102
FINAL EXAM
SPRING 2000-2001



Why Marriages Fail
by
Anne Roiphe

1. These days so many marriages end in divorce that our most sacred vows no longer ring with truth. "Happily ever after" and "Till death do us part" are expressions that seem on the way to becoming obsolete. Why has it become so hard for couples to stay together? What goes wrong? What has happened to us that close to one-half of all marriages are destined for the divorce courts? How could we have created a society in which 42 percent of our children will grow up in single-parent homes? If statistics could only measure loneliness, regret, pain, loss of self-confidence and fear of the future, the numbers would be beyond quantifying.
2. Even though each broken marriage is unique, we can still find the common perils, the common causes for marital despair. Each marriage has crisis points and each marriage tests endurance, the capacity for both intimacy and change. Outside pressures such as job loss, illness, infertility, trouble with a child, care of aging parents and all the other plagues of life hit marriage the way hurricanes blast our shores. Some marriages survive these storms and others don't. Marriages fail, however, not simply because of the outside weather but because the inner climate becomes too hot or too cold, too turbulent or too stupefying.
3. When we look at how we choose our partners and what expectations exist at the tender beginnings of romance, some of the reasons for disaster become quite clear. We all select with unconscious accuracy a mate who will recreate with us the emotional patterns of our first homes. Dr. Carl A. Whitaker, a marital therapist, and emeritus professor of psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin, explains, "From early childhood on, each of us carried models for marriage, femininity, masculinity, motherhood, fatherhood and all the other family roles." Each of us falls in love with a mate who has qualities of our parents, who will help us rediscover both the psychological happiness and miseries of our past lives. We may think we have found a man unlike Dad, but then he turns to drink or drugs, or loses his job over and over again or sits silently in front of the T.V. just the way Dad did. A man may choose a woman who doesn't like kids just like his mother or who gambles away the family savings just like his mother. Or he may choose a slender wife who seems unlike his obese mother but then turns out to have other addictions that destroy their mutual happiness.



4. A man and a woman bring to their marriage bed a blended concoction of conscious and unconscious memories of their parents' lives together. The human way is to compulsively repeat and recreate the patterns of the past. Sigmund Freud so well described the unhappy design that many of us get trapped in: the unmet needs of childhood, the angry feelings left over from frustrations of long ago, the limits of trust and the recurrence of old fears. Once an individual senses this entrapment, there may follow a yearning to escape, and the result could be a broken, splintered marriage.
5. Of course people can overcome the habits and attitudes that developed in childhood. We all have hidden strengths and amazing capacities for growth and creative change. Change, however, requires work- observing your part in a rotten pattern, bringing difficulties out into the open- and work runs counter to the basic myth of marriage: "When I wed this person all my problems will be over. I will have achieved success and I will become the center of life for this other person and this person will be my center, and we will mean everything to each other forever." This myth, which every marriage relies on, is soon exposed. The coming of children, the pulls and tugs of their demands on affection and time, place a considerable strain on that basic myth of meaning everything to each other, of merging together and solving all of life's problems.
6. Concern and tension about money take each partner away from the other. Obligations to demanding parents of still-dependend-upon parents create further strain. Couples today must also deal with all the cultural changes brought on in recent years by the women's movement and the sexual revolution. The altering of roles and the shifting of responsibilities have been extremely trying for many marriages.
7. These and other realities of life erode the visions of marital bliss the way sandstorms eat at rock and the ocean nibbles away at the dunes. Those euphoric, grand feelings that accompany romantic love are really self-delusions, self-hypnotic dreams that enable us to forge a relationship. Real life, failure at work, disappointments, exhaustion, bad smells, bad colds and hard times all puncture the dream and leave us stranded with our mate, with our childhood patterns pushing us this way and that, with our unfulfilled expectations.
8. The struggle to survive in marriage requires adaptability, flexibility, genuine love and kindness and an imagination strong enough to feel what the other is feeling. Many marriages fall apart because either partner cannot imagine what the other wants or cannot communicate what he or she needs or feels. Anger builds until it erupts into a volcanic burst that buries the marriage in ash.
9. It is not hard to see, therefore, how essential communication is for a good marriage: A man and a woman must be able to tell each other how they feel and why they feel the way they do; otherwise they will impose on each other roles and actions that lead to further unhappiness. In some cases, the communication

patterns of childhood- of not talking, of talking too much, of not listening, of distrust and anger, of withdrawal- spill into the marriage and prevent a healthy exchange of thoughts and feelings. The answer is to set up new patterns of communication and intimacy.

10. At the same time, however, we must see each other as individuals. "To achieve a balance between separateness and closeness is one of the major psychological tasks of all human beings at every stage of life," says Dr. Stuart Bartle, a psychiatrist at the New York University Medical Center.
11. If we sense from our mate a need for too much intimacy, we tend to push him or her away, fearing that we may lose our identities in the merging of marriage. One partner may suffocate the other partner in childlike dependency.
12. A good marriage means growing as a couple but also growing as individuals. This isn't easy. Richard gives up his interest in carpentry because his wife, Helen, is jealous of the time he spends away from her. Karen quits her choir group because her husband dislikes the friends she makes there. Each pair clings to each other and are angry with each other as life closes in on them. This kind of marital balance is easily thrown as one or the other pulls away and divorce follows.
13. Sometimes people pretend that a new partner will solve the old problems. Most often extramarital sex destroys a marriage because it allows an artificial split between the good and the bad- the good is projected on the new partner and the bad is dumped on the head of the old. Dishonesty, hiding and cheating create walls between men and women. Infidelity is just a symptom of trouble. It is a symbolic complaint, a weapon of revenge, as well as an unraveler of closeness. Infidelity is often that proverbial last straw that sinks the camel to the ground.
14. All right- marriage has always been difficult. Why then are we seeing so many divorces at this time? Yes, our modern social fabric is thin, and yes the permissiveness of society has created unrealistic expectations and thrown the family into chaos. But divorce is so common because people today are unwilling to exercise the self-discipline that marriage requires. They expect easy joy, like the entertainment on TV, the thrill of a good party.
15. Marriage takes some kind of sacrifice, not dreadful self-sacrifice of the soul, but some level of compromise. Some of one's fantasies, some of one's legitimate desires have to be given up for the value of the marriage itself. "While all marital partners feels shackled at times it is they who really choose to make the marital ties into confining chains or supporting bonds," says Dr. Whitaker. Marriage requires sexual, financial and emotional discipline. A man and a woman cannot follow every impulse, cannot allow themselves to stop growing or changing.

16. Divorce is not an evil act. Sometimes it provides salvation for people who have grown hopelessly apart or were frozen in patterns of pain or mutual unhappiness. Divorce can be, despite its initial devastation, like the first cut of the surgeon's knife, a step toward new health and a good life. On the other hand, if the partners can stay past the breaking up of the romantic myths into the development of real love and intimacy, they have achieved a work as amazing as the greatest cathedrals of the world. Marriages that do not fail but improve, that persist despite imperfections, are not only rare these days but offer a wondrous shelter in which the face of our mutual humanity can safely show itself.

English 102
Final Exam
Spring 2000-2001

Name: _____

Instructor: _____

- A. Circle the letter of the correct answer. (25 points, 5 pts. each)
1. Which statement is true according to paragraph 3?
 - A. A child with an abusive father may choose an abusive mate.
 - B. A child with an alcoholic father will never drink.
 - C. A child with a mentally disturbed parent may show signs of imbalance.
 - D. A child with a loving parent will choose a cold spouse.

 2. According to paragraph 3
 - A. Men and women are consciously self-destructive in their choice of a partner.
 - B. Women treat their husbands the same way they expect their husbands to treat them.
 - C. Both men and women believe they are marrying someone unlike their parents.
 - D. Men usually make sure to marry someone unlike their mothers but women marry men like their fathers.

 3. According to paragraph 4
 - A. Adults fear escaping an unhappy marriage for fear of being alone.
 - B. Freud predicted that happy children may end up as divorced adults.
 - C. When two people first marry, they find marital bonds suffocating.
 - D. A married adult can find it difficult to get rid of childhood fears and frustrations.

 4. According to the author, which one of the following is not a primary or basic cause of marital problems:
 - A. childhood memories
 - B. lack of communication
 - C. infidelity
 - D. loss of individuality

 5. According to paragraph 8, couples can save their marriage if they learn to be more
 - A. passive
 - B. selfless
 - C. resourceful
 - D. docile

II. Answer the following questions in the blank spaces provided. (57 points)

1. The author refers to Whitaker, Freud, and Bartle to explain why many marriages fail. Assume these psychiatrists were giving advice to couples -- what would they advise? (4 pts. each)

a. Whitaker's advice to couples

b. Freud's advice to couples

c. Bartle's advice to couples

2. In your own words show how change, work and the myth of marriage are interrelated (according to paragraph 5). (6 pts.)

3. In your own words explain how communication is essential for a good marriage. (6 pts.)

4. In a short paragraph summarize the main reasons for failure in a marriage. (8 pts.)

5. In your own words formulate a thesis for the passage. (6 pts.)

6. Identify two kinds of concrete support used in the passage and give an example of each. (6 pts.)

Concrete support _____ example _____
(parag. _____)

Concrete support _____ example _____
(parag. _____)

7. Explain how infidelity (paragraph 13) is a “symbolic complaint” and “weapon of revenge”. (6 pts.)

8. Paraphrase Dr. Whitaker’s statement in paragraph 15 (“ While all marital... supporting bonds”). (7 pts.)

III. Follow the directions for the following words and expressions. (18 pts)

1. Give a synonym (word or phrase) for

a. obsolete (paragraph 1) _____ (4 pts.)

b. entrapment (paragraph 4) _____ (4 pts.)

2. a. Find a word in paragraph 4 similar in meaning to "in an obsessive manner". _____ (3 pts.)

b. Find a word in paragraph 7 similar in meaning to "wear away".
_____ (3 pts.)

3. Explain the following expression
"inner climate" (paragraph 2).

_____ (4 pts.)