

Title	Divorce
Time	Approximately 30 - 40 minutes (with optional time for sociological explanations)
Preparation	This exercise can be done with a single group, but ideally 3 or 4 groups should be involved.
Materials	None (although each group will need pens and paper). You could, if you like, give each group a large piece of rice paper / marker pens to write their ideas.
Prior Knowledge	The basis of this exercise is a comparison between two levels of divorce. The students should, therefore, be given some idea of changes in the level of divorce this century (see Item A for examples).
Objective	<p>By applying a very simple method of comparison (a process of identification and elimination) students should be able to produce a set of theoretical explanations for the increase in the level of divorce in our society this century.</p> <p>This technique illustrates the value of a comparative methodology in Sociology as well as social reasons for the increase in divorce levels.</p> <p>This technique is so simple and adaptable it can be used in any number of different contexts (marriage levels, illegitimacy, crime and so forth). All that is initially required are basic statistics to explain...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ask the students to brainstorm and write down every possible reason (however implausible) they can think of that might lead to a divorce (allow 10 minutes). Ask each group to tell you their reasons; write each reason on the board / flip chart for everyone to see (5 - 10 minutes).
The Exercise	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Give them the statistical information in Item A (for example, compare 1921 with 1997). You can adapt this to your specific requirements if necessary.3. Ask each group to cross off any reason on their list that would have applied equally to the dates you've given them (10 minutes). Ask each group to identify any reasons they have left on their sheets and write each reason on the board / flip chart (5 minutes).4. Invite explanations for these reasons and interpret them sociologically if necessary. For example, "Easier divorce" = legal changes (20 - 30 minutes).

Item A: Divorce in England and Wales.

1857: Approximately 200 - 300

1921: 3,000

1941: 7,500

1947: 47,000

1951: 29,000

1970: 58,000

1989: 151,000

1997: 164,000