

Grade 9 Life Orientation Worksheet

Weddings in South African and Western Europe

Read these two texts. The first one deals with the way in which South Africans celebrate traditional African weddings. The second deals with different aspects of weddings from Western Europe.

1. African wedding traditions in South Africa

After the bridal procession into the church, a prayer of dedication will precede the wedding ceremony. Vows are exchanged and a unity candle is lit. The couple will then be pronounced man and wife, and blessed by the priest.

The twelve symbols of life important in African culture may be administered as part of the wedding ceremony. These are wine, wheat, pepper, salt, bitter herbs, water, a pot and spoon, a broom, honey, a spear, a shield, and a copy of the Bible or the Koran. Each one represents a different aspect of the love and strength which unite two families.

The wedding feast, which follows the ceremony, is traditionally known as the Karamu.

In South Africa, to mark the start of the newly-weds' life together, the bride's and groom's parents would traditionally carry a fire from the hearth in their home to the home of the new couple, where a new fire would be lit.

Adapted from <http://www.worldweddingtraditions.com>

2. Some Western European wedding traditions

One of the ancient traditions of Western Europe, which is still going strong today, is the idea of the engagement ring. It was way back in 860 A.D. that Pope Nicholas I proclaimed that not only was an engagement ring required to seal an agreement to be married, but the engagement ring also had to be made of gold. The making of the ring out of gold signified that the groom was willing to make a financial sacrifice for his new bride-to-be. It would be another 617 years before the tradition of adding a diamond to an engagement ring would be started. It was in the year 1477 that King Maximilian presented the lovely Mary of Burgundy with a diamond engagement ring, and from that day to this a diamond has been a girl's best friend.

It was in **Italy**, the land of love, that gold wedding rings first became popular, and it was also in Italy that the tradition of the wedding cake was first begun when, in the first century B.C., a cake or bread was broken over the bride's head to ensure fertility.

It was in ancient Germany that the Western European tradition of the 'best man' at a wedding began. In olden days it was sometimes necessary for a man to kidnap his bride from a neighbouring village, and he needed his strongest friend (his 'best man') to help with the kidnapping and to stand by him at the wedding ceremony to fight off any relatives that might try to take her back.

Many of our most enduring Western European wedding traditions started in England. The ancient nursery rhyme about something old, something new, something borrowed,

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something blue is now an important part of most Western European weddings, even though many brides and grooms no longer know the significance of the rhyme. Something old is symbolic of continuity. The old item was often a piece of lace or a grandmother's scarf or an old piece of jewelry. Something new signifies hope for the future, and can be anything from a piece of clothing to the wedding band itself. Something borrowed is symbolic of future happiness and is often provided by a happily married friend of the bride. And finally, something blue. In ancient times, blue was the color of purity, and often both the bride and the groom wore a band of blue cloth around the bottom of their wedding attire.

It was the knights of yore who gave us the Western European tradition of the groom wearing a single flower. It was customary for a knight to wear a flower or a colourful handkerchief belonging to his lady fair when entering a tournament. The tradition later evolved to the groom wearing a flower from his bride's wedding bouquet.

What wedding today would be complete without the white wedding gown? Prior to the 16th Century, however, this most important Western European wedding tradition was not common. It wasn't until Ann of Brittany popularised the white wedding dress in 1499 that the tradition became part of Western European wedding culture.

During the Tudor period in England it became customary for the wedding party to throw old shoes at the bride and groom's carriage; if the carriage was struck by a shoe, it was considered a symbol of good fortune to follow. From this old Western European wedding custom was born the tradition of tying shoes to the back of the groom and bride's car.

And finally, what wedding tradition would be complete without the groom carrying his new bride over the threshold of their home? This Western European tradition began with two beliefs. The first one was that if the bride were to trip or stumble as she entered her new home (as she crossed her new threshold for the first time), bad luck would plague the marriage. The second belief was that evil spirits inhabited the threshold of a new couple's home, and if the bride stepped on the threshold, the evil spirits would enter through her feet and the marriage would be doomed.

The romantic answer, of course, was for the groom to carry his new bride across the threshold.

Western European wedding traditions have come down to us from many countries and many cultures to blend together seamlessly into the romantic wedding traditions that we know and cherish today.

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Now answer the following questions in your own words:

1. In the African tradition, what is lit after the exchange of vows? [2]
2. Name any two of the symbols of life in the African culture. [2]
3. Why was the engagement ring first introduced? [1]
4. When was the diamond added to engagement rings? [1]
5. Where did the idea of a wedding cake begin and how was it started? [1]
6. How has the role of the best man changed? [2]
7. Why do you think that brides still wear 'something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue'? [2]
8. Why do you think brides still wear white wedding gowns? [2]
9. Why do you think people still tie shoes to the groom's car? [2]
10. In your culture, does the groom still carry the bride over the threshold? Explain your answer. [2]
11. Why do you think weddings in South Africa still follow the Western European traditions? [2]
12. Why do you think weddings in different cultures have different traditions? [2]
13. Which of all these wedding celebrations do you like the most? Describe your favourite and explain why it appeals to you. [5]

Total marks: 25

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Suggested Solutions

Question Number	Possible marks	Solution
1	25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A unity candle. [1] 2. Any two: wine, pepper, salt, bitter herbs, pot and spoon, broom, honey, shield, spear, copy of Bible/Koran. [2] 3. To seal agreement to be married. [1] 4. In 1477. [1] 5. In Italy, bread or cake was broken over the bride's head to ensure fertility. [1] 6. Now the best man supports the groom, but does not fight! [2] 7. It is just tradition. [2] 8. Again, it is tradition, and it also denotes purity. [2] 9. Tradition, for good luck. [2] 10. Own answer. [2] 11. Own answer. [2] 12. Own answer. [2] 13. Own answer. [5]