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1 UNIT

Essentials of Family



Family is universally regarded as the basic unit of society, and therefore family stability can ensure social stability. Bonds between family members make families a close-knit unit. Generally, family structures and relations are influenced by social and economic changes in different historical periods.

Text A introduces a variety of American family structures throughout history, looking at each type chronologically and analyzing its causes. Text B, by telling a story of an old Chinese mother and her son, shows the subtle relationship between parents and children, and how family members are expected to take care of each other's physical and emotional needs. In the text, ungrateful children are criticized.



Exploring the Topic

- 1 Complete the following table with the features of different family structures, and discuss with your partner the possible reasons behind their formation.

Family structure	Features	Reasons
Extended family		
Nuclear family		

- 2 Translate the following sayings about family into English.

家和万事兴。

天下之本在家。

欲治其国者，先齐其家。

Text A



The Evolution of American Family Structure

Tricia Hussung

- 1 Mainstream culture in America is constantly evolving to reflect the predominant values and belief systems of the day, including what are often considered immutable social systems, such as the family. Instead of being one unit, the institution has been in a constant state of evolution since the founding of America itself.
- 2 Today, there really is no consistent definition of the American family. With single-parent households, varying family structures and fewer children, the modern family defies categorization. But these most recent changes have brought with them a nostalgia-based



myth: that “divorce, domestic violence and single parenthood are recent phenomena and that, throughout most of American history, most families consisted of a breadwinner husband and a homemaker wife.” When the history of the American family is surveyed in depth, it becomes apparent that this is not the case. Constant change and adaptation are the only themes that remain consistent for families throughout America’s history. In fact, “recent changes in family life are only the latest in a series of disjunctive transformations in family roles, functions and dynamics that have occurred over the centuries.”

A Brief History of the Pre-20th Century Family

- 3 When America was founded, a family consisted of a husband, a wife, biological children and extended family—except for in the case of slaves. This meant that most people who could legally marry did, and then stayed married until death. Divorce was rare. Because this structure was so dominant, it played “a crucial role in the creation and replication of cultural roles for men and women.” The role of wives was to assist their husbands within the home, both keeping house and raising children.
- 4 Wives had no legal identity under a condition called coverture, in which married women “could not own property, could not enter into contracts and could neither sue nor be sued in their own names.” Husbands, in contrast, were managers and providers in the family. They controlled finances and had ultimate authority in the eyes of both society and the law. This meant that a husband had “a duty to provide his wife (and children) with the necessities of life.”
- 5 It was generally against the law to live together or have children outside of marriage. However, by the 19th century these rigid legal boundaries were relaxed, with common-law marriage widely recognized as an acceptable union.

Government and the Family

- 6 The 19th century brought about a number of important changes to the family. In the first half of the century, married women began to have property rights through the Married Women’s Property Acts, which began to be enacted in 1839. By the early 20th century, most states permitted married women to “own property, sue and be sued, enter into contracts and control the disposition of property upon her death.” However, during this time a woman’s role in the family was still defined by her husband.

- 7 Another important development was government regulation of some aspects of childhood, such as child labor and schooling. To improve the well-being of children, “reformers pressed for compulsory school attendance laws, child labor restrictions, playgrounds...and widow’s pensions to permit poor children to remain with their mothers.”
- 8 Despite these legal changes, the family became an even more important source of happiness and satisfaction. The “companionate family was envisioned as a more isolated, and more important unit—the primary focus of emotional life.” New ideas about marriage emerged, based on choice, companionship and romantic love. This in turn caused a surge in the divorce rate, which tripled between 1860 and 1910.

Depression and War

- 9 The stability of families was tested by the Great Depression, as unemployment and lower wages forced Americans to delay marriage and having children. The divorce rate fell during this time because it was expensive and few could afford it. However, by 1940 almost 2 million married couples lived apart. Some families adjusted to the economic downturn by “returning to a cooperative family economy. Many children took part-time jobs and many wives supplemented the family income.”
- 10 When the Depression ended and World War II began, families coped with new issues: a shortage of housing, lack of schools and prolonged separation. Women ran households and raised children alone, and some went to work in war industries. The results of the war-stricken state of society were that “thousands of young people became latchkey children and rates of juvenile delinquency, unwed pregnancy and truancy all rose.”

Family Structures in the Postwar World

- 11 In reaction to the tumult both at home and abroad during the 1940s, the 1950s marked a swift shift to a new type of domesticity. The average age for women to marry was 20, divorce rates stabilized and the birthrate doubled. However, the perfect images of family life that appeared on television don’t tell the whole story: “Only 60 percent of children spent their childhood in a male-breadwinner, female-homemaker household.”
- 12 This “democratization of family ideals” reflected a singular society and economy, one that was driven by a reaction against the Depression and war and compounded by rising incomes and low prices. The economic boom that followed World War II led to significant economic growth, particularly in manufacturing and consumer goods; around 13 million new homes were built in the 1950s.

- 13 Families moved to the suburbs because they could afford to, and the family became a “haven in a heartless world,” as well as “an alternative world of satisfaction and intimacy” for adults and children that had experienced the ravages of wartime. In fact, this is where the concept of close-knit families as we know it originates. Domestic containment as a way of life was reinforced by American youth, who wanted to have long-lasting and stronger relationships than their parents had. Soldiers and servicemen who returned from war were looking to get married and raise children.

The Idyllic '50s

- 14 The standard structure of the family in postwar America consisted of a “breadwinner male, his wife who did household chores and looked after the children, and the children.” Families ate meals and went on outings together, and lived in sociable neighborhoods. Parents paid close attention to disciplining their children and live-in relationships were unheard of—in fact, girls stayed in their parents’ home until marriage and did not commonly attend college. Children became emotional rather than economic assets for the first time, close with their parents and the center of the family. Because of this, parents studied child development and worked to socialize their children so that they would become successful adults. Childhood became a distinct period of life. However, young girls were “not considered to be fit for the attainment of higher education, as they were looked upon as housewives.”
- 15 All in all, family structure in the '50s was based around one central necessity: a secure life. The economic and global instability of the early 20th century gave rise to the need for closely defined family units. This led to an ideology that lauded economic advancement and social order, the results of which were younger marriages that lasted longer, more children, fewer divorces and the nuclear family.

The Modern Family Unit

- 16 The nuclear family of the '50s epitomized the economically stable family unit. The idea of the middle-class, child-centered families that were “headed by wage-earning husbands became the ideal, although making that family model the norm for most Americans took decades and (even) then was short-lived.” This is why the modern family, in most cases, bears little resemblance to this “ideal” unit.
- 17 Many of the changes that were part of this transition are a direct result of the expanding role of women in society, both in terms of the workplace and education. The rise of the

post-industrial economy, based on information and services, led to more married women entering the workplace. As early as 1960, around a third of middle class women were working either part- or full-time jobs. Since the '60s, families have also become “smaller, less stable and more diverse.” More adults, whether young or elderly, live outside of the family as well. Today, the male-breadwinner, female-housewife family represents only a small percentage of American households. A considerable majority of Americans (62 percent) view the idea of marriage as “one in which husband and wife both work and share child care and household duties.” Two-earner families are much more common as well. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that women made up almost 50 percent of the paid labor force, putting them on equal footing with men when it comes to working outside the home. In addition, single-parent families headed by mothers, families formed through remarriage, and empty-nest families have all become part of the norm.

- 18 Along with these shifts have come declining marriage and birthrates and a rising divorce rate. The American birthrate is half of what it was in 1960, and hit its lowest point ever in 2012. In addition, the number of cohabitating couples increased from less than half a million in 1960 to 4.9 million in the 2000 census. According to the 2005 American Community Survey, more than 50 percent of households in America were headed by an unmarried person during that year. And by 2007, almost 40 percent of children were born to unmarried, adult mothers. One reason for these developments is that marriage has been repositioned as a “cornerstone to capstone, from a foundational act of early adulthood to a crowning event of later adulthood.” It is viewed as an event that should happen after finishing college and establishing a career.

(1,583 words)

Notes

1. A common-law marriage is a practice in some countries. In a common-law marriage, the couple lives together for a period of time and holds themselves out to friends, family, and the community as “being married,” but without ever going through a formal ceremony or getting a marriage license. The legal validity of common-law marriage is still a controversial issue.
2. The Married Women’s Property Acts were laws enacted by the individual states of the United States beginning in 1839, which helped to rectify some of the difficulties that women faced under coverture.
3. The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about the U.S. and its people. Through the ACS, American people know more about jobs and occupations, educational attainment, veterans, whether people own or rent their homes, and other topics. Public officials, planners, and entrepreneurs use this information to assess the past and plan the future.

Words and Expressions

predominant /prɪ'dɒmɪnənt/ *adj.*

more powerful, more common, or more easily noticed than others

immutable /ɪ'mju:təbəl/ *adj.*

never changing or impossible to change

defy /dɪ'faɪ/ *v.*

to be almost impossible to describe or understand

nostalgia /nɒ'stældʒə/ *n.*

a feeling that a time in the past was good, or the activity of remembering a good time in the past and wishing that things had not changed

parenthood /'peərənθud/ *n.*

the state of being a parent

breadwinner /'bred,wɪnə/ *n.*

the member of a family who earns the money to support the others

homemaker /'həʊm,meɪkə/ *n.*

a woman who works at home cleaning and cooking, etc. and does not have another job

disjunctive /dɪs'dʒʌŋktɪv/ *adj.*

serving or tending to divide or separate

replication /,replɪ'keɪʃən/ *n.*

the act of copying something exactly

coverture /'kʌvətʃə/ *n.*

the condition or status of a married woman considered as being under the protection and influence of her husband

sue /sjuː/ *v.*

to make a legal claim against someone, especially for money, because they have harmed you in some way

bring about sth.

to make something happen

enact /ɪ'nækt/ *v.*

to make a proposal into a law

well-being /'wel bi:ɪŋ/ *n.*

a feeling of being comfortable, healthy, and happy

press for sth.

to keep asking for something

compulsory /kəm'pʌlsəri/ *adj.*

that must be done because of a law or a rule

pension /'penʃən/ *n.*

an amount of money paid regularly by the government or company to someone who does not work anymore, for example because they have reached the age when people stop working or because they are ill

companionate /kəm'pænjənɪt/ *adj.*

resembling, appropriate to, or acting as a companion

envision /ɪn'vɪʒən/ *v.*

to imagine something that you think might happen in the future, especially something that you think will be good

surge /sɜːdʒ/ *n.*

a sudden increase in amount or number

triple /'trɪpəl/ *v.*

to increase by three times as much, or to make something do this

downturn /'daʊntɜːn/ *n.*

a period or process in which business activity, production, etc. is reduced and conditions become worse

supplement /'sʌpləmənt/ *v.*

to add something, especially to what you earn or eat, in order to increase it to an acceptable level

latchkey child /'lætʃki: tʃaɪld/ *n.*

a child whose parents both work and who spends time alone in the house after school

juvenile /'dʒu:vənəɪl/ *adj.*

relating to young people who are not yet adults

delinquency /dɪ'lɪŋkwənsi/ *n.*

illegal or immoral behavior or actions, especially by young people

truancy /'tru:ənsi/ *n.*

the practice of staying away from school without permission

tumult /'tju:mʌlt/ *n.*

a confused, noisy, and excited situation, often caused by a large crowd

stabilize /'steɪbəlaɪz/ *v.*

to become firm, steady, or unchanging, or to make something firm or steady

democratization /dɪ,mɒkrətəɪ'zeɪʃən/ *n.*

the process of making a country or an institution more democratic

singular /'sɪŋgjələ/ *adj.*

very great or very noticeable; very unusual

haven /'heɪvən/ *n.*

a place where people or animals can live peacefully or go to in order to be safe

originate /ə'rɪdʒəneɪt/ *v.*

to come from a particular place or start in a particular situation

containment /kən'teɪnmənt/ *n.*

the act of keeping something under control, stopping it from becoming more powerful, etc.

idyllic /ɪ'dɪlɪk/ *adj.*

peaceful and beautiful; perfect, without problems

outing /'aʊtɪŋ/ *n.*

a short trip that a group of people take for pleasure

attainment /ə'teɪnmənt/ *n.*

success in achieving something or reaching a particular level

give rise to sth.

to be the reason why something happens, especially something bad or unpleasant

ideology /,aɪdɪ'blədʒi/ *n.*

a set of beliefs on which a political or economic system is based, or which strongly influence the way people behave

laud /lɔ:d/ *v.*

to praise someone or something

epitomize /ɪ'pɪtəmaɪz/ *v.*

to be a very typical example of something

footing /'fʊtɪŋ/ *n.*

the conditions or arrangements on which something is based

cohabit /kəʊ'hæbɪ,tet/ *v.*

to live together

census /'sensəs/ *n.*

an official process of counting a country's population and finding out about the people

reposition /,rɪ:pə'zɪʃən/ *v.*

to change the way people think of something, usually so that more people will like it, buy it, or support it

cornerstone /'kɔ:nəstəʊn/ *n.*

something that is extremely important because everything else depends on it

capstone /'kæpstəʊn/ *n.*

someone's greatest achievement or the greatest part of something

crowning /'kraʊnɪŋ/ *adj.*

making something perfect or complete

Analytical Reading

- 1** Complete the following table which presents an overview of the evolution of American family structure.

Period	Main features of the family structure
The pre-20th century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A family consisted of a husband, a wife, biological children, and extended family. • Wives _____. • _____ was not legally allowed.
The early 20th century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family was a more important source of _____. • Marriage was based on _____.
The Great Depression and the WWII period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment and lower wages forced Americans to delay marriage and having children. • Some families returned to _____. • The results of the war-stricken state of society were that “thousands of young people _____.”
The 1950s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divorce rates stabilized and the birthrate doubled. • The family became _____ and _____. • Young people were willing to have _____ relationships than their parents had. • The standard structure of the family consisted of _____. • Children became for the first time _____.
The modern times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More married women _____. • Families become less stable and more diverse. • Marriage and birthrates decline, and the divorce rate rises.

2 Paraphrase the following sentences.

1. Because this structure was so dominant, it played “a crucial role in the creation and replication of cultural roles for men and women.” (Para. 3)
2. In reaction to the tumult both at home and abroad during the 1940s, the 1950s marked a swift shift to a new type of domesticity. (Para. 11)
3. This “democratization of family ideals” reflected a singular society and economy, one that was driven by a reaction against the Depression and war and compounded by rising incomes and low prices. (Para. 12)
4. Children became emotional rather than economic assets for the first time, close with their parents and the center of the family. (Para. 14)
5. This led to an ideology that lauded economic advancement and social order, the results of which were younger marriages that lasted longer, more children, fewer divorces and the nuclear family. (Para. 15)
6. One reason for these developments is that marriage has been repositioned as a “cornerstone to capstone, from a foundational act of early adulthood to a crowning event of later adulthood.” (Para. 18)

3 Answer the following questions.

1. Different types of family structures are mentioned in the text. What are they? List as many as possible.
2. What does the phrase “a nostalgia-based myth” in Para. 2 refer to? Why does Tricia Hussung use “myth” here? What can be inferred from this word about the actual situation in the history of American family?
3. In Para. 8, Hussung states that “New ideas about marriage emerged, based on choice, companionship and romantic love.” What do the “new ideas” refer to? What influence might the new ideas have on family?
4. What does “a cooperative family” refer to in Para. 9? What led to the return of this type of family?
5. In the last sentence of Para. 11, what kind of picture did television paint of family life after WWII? What was the actual situation?
6. Why does Hussung describe the 1950s as idyllic?
7. Why do marriage and birthrates decline while the divorce rate rises in modern times?
8. Text A presents us the evolution of American family structure and social and economic changes behind the evolution. Families are cells of society. Can you illustrate the relationship between family and society according to your understanding of Chinese values on family?



Language Focus

Vocabulary

- 1** Complete the following sentences with words given in the box below. Change the form where necessary.

predominant	crowning	surge	stabilize	stricken
resemblance	containment	envision	originate	epitomize

1. When I look back on my _____ moment, I'll think of the day my child was born.
2. This building _____ the spirit of Britain in the 19th century.
3. Fire crews are hoping they can achieve full _____ of the fire before the winds pick up.
4. It is not impossible to _____ a scenario where people can live peacefully with AI robots.
5. Yellow is the _____ color in Vincent van Gogh's paintings.
6. A(n) _____ in household consumption may allow economic growth to remain high.
7. The strange custom _____ in ancient times when people had no idea about the general rules of weather change.
8. The updated version of the last photo bears so little _____ to the original that it may as well be a painter's creation.
9. Once a national-level poverty-_____ area, it has shaken off poverty in 2019 after years of anti-poverty efforts.
10. The major banks of this country cut interest rates in a futile effort to _____ currency markets.

2 Read the sentences, explain the meaning of the words in bold in different contexts, and translate the sentences into Chinese.

defy

1. That article written by the professor **defies** a simple summary.
2. Kids are kids, and they would like to **defy** their parents sometimes.
3. I **defy** you to give me one good reason for believing you.

enact

4. The bill would be submitted for public discussion before being **enacted** as law.
5. The characters wear colorful outfits and **enact** their scenes on the center stage.

mark

6. That year **marked** his transformation from an innocent scholar to a passionate statesman.
7. In his briefcase was a document **marked** “confidential.”
8. The table **marks** easily, so please be careful.
9. Carter’s 90th birthday will be **marked** with a large party at the Savoy Hotel.

3 Choose an appropriate word from the brackets to complete each sentence.

1. As the only (**breadwinner/homemaker**) in her family, the single mother was confronted with great difficulty during the economic crisis.
2. I’m in my (**cornerstone/capstone**) semester, which means all my classes are hard.
3. We are greatly encouraged by her success in preparing her 19-year-old disabled daughter for independent (**parenthood/adulthood**).
4. She finally found a place to escape to, a small (**heaven/haven**) for herself and her daughter.
5. Gossip is spreading fast about the recent death of the king and the (**marriage/remarriage**) of his widow to his brother.
6. It’s not the (**norm/standard**) in this country for teenagers to sit at a table and order from a menu.
7. The (**constant/consistent**) stream of yellow taxis lined the avenues, the waves of pedestrians hurriedly crossing the road.
8. Dietary (**supplements/compensations**) may also be important to ensure adequate vitamins and minerals are being absorbed.

Syntactic Complexity

Syntactic complexity, a feature closely associated with formal English language, refers to a greater variety of syntactic patterning. Both simple and complex sentences can demonstrate syntactic complexity.

- The rise of the post-industrial economy, based on information and services, led to more married women entering the workplace.

This is a simple sentence, but syntactic complexity is revealed, firstly, in the -ed adjectival phrase “based on information and services,” and secondly, in the gerund phrase “more married women entering the workplace.” The insertion of the -ed adjectival phrase “based on information and services” interrupts the SV structure, providing more background information and making this sentence complex.

- Wives had no legal identity under a condition called coverture, in which married women “could not own property, could not enter into contracts and could neither sue nor be sued in their own names.”

This is a complex sentence. The syntactic complexity of this sentence is revealed in the use of the -ed adjectival phrase “called coverture,” the relative clause “in which married women...” and coordinate verb phrases “could not own property,” “could not enter into contracts” and “could neither sue nor be sued in their own names.”

Syntactic complexity serves as an indicator of English learners’ language proficiency. Structures with syntactic complexity are more frequent in formal writing and speech.

1 Translate the following sentences into Chinese and assess the syntactic complexity demonstrated in each sentence.

1. But these most recent changes have brought with them a nostalgia-based myth: that “divorce, domestic violence and single parenthood are recent phenomena and that, throughout most of American history, most families consisted of a breadwinner husband and a homemaker wife.”
2. In fact, “recent changes in family life are only the latest in a series of disjunctive transformations in family roles, functions and dynamics that have occurred over the centuries.”
3. In the first half of the century, married women began to have property rights through the Married Women’s Property Acts, which began to be enacted in 1839.

4. In reaction to the tumult both at home and abroad during the 1940s, the 1950s marked a swift shift to a new type of domesticity.
5. Children became emotional rather than economic assets for the first time, close with their parents and the center of the family.
6. This led to an ideology that lauded economic advancement and social order, the results of which were younger marriages that lasted longer, more children, fewer divorces and the nuclear family.

Sentence Structure

2 Translate the following sentences from Text A, paying attention to the words or expressions in bold.

1. When America was founded, a family consisted of a husband, a wife, biological children and extended family—**except for** in the case of slaves. (Para. 3)
2. **Despite** these legal changes, the family became an even more important source of happiness and satisfaction. (Para. 8)
3. This is why the modern family, **in most cases**, bears little resemblance to this “ideal” unit. (Para. 16)
4. **As early as** 1960, around a third of middle class women were working either part- or full-time jobs. (Para. 17)

3 Translate the following sentences, referring to the sentences in Task 2.

1. 公园里**除了**一个戴着墨镜的人在遛狗，没有其他人。
2. **除非**有正当理由，作者明确禁止复制该网站上所有受保护的内容。
3. **尽管**她竭尽全力控制自己，但她的声音仍然在颤抖。
4. **虽然**我一直是这款浏览器的忠实用户，但这次我得考虑换个新的了。
5. **尽管**多次遇到挫折，他从不气馁。
6. **通常**，社会中最贫困的群体受到的冲击也最为严重。
7. 食物中毒**大多**发生在夏天。
8. **通常**，普通人能够在水下憋气的时间约为半分钟。
9. 那个国家的社保受益人希望可以**最早**在 60 岁时领取一半社保，另一半则延后领取。
10. 家长不应该要求孩子们**早**在学前阶段就要开始认字读书。

Practice Your Translation

4 Translate the following paragraph into Chinese.

The standard structure of the family in postwar America consisted of a “breadwinner male, his wife who did household chores and looked after the children, and the children.” Families ate meals and went on outings together, and lived in sociable neighborhoods. Parents paid close attention to disciplining their children and live-in relationships were unheard of—in fact, girls stayed in their parents’ home until marriage and did not commonly attend college. Children became emotional rather than economic assets for the first time, close with their parents and the center of the family. Because of this, parents studied child development and worked to socialize their children so that they would become successful adults. Childhood became a distinct period of life. However, young girls were “not considered to be fit for the attainment of higher education, as they were looked upon as housewives.”

5 Translate the following passage, using the words and expressions in brackets.

自美国建国以来，不断变化（constant change）和适应一直是美国家庭不变的（consistent）主题。法律、政策、战争、经济、教育等因素定义了女性的性别身份和社会地位，家庭结构（family structure）的变化（evolution）反映出主流（mainstream）价值观的变化。传统的理想（ideal）家庭——男性养家糊口，女性操持家务、照顾子女——占比越来越小，未来美国家庭会发展成什么样子还有待观察。

6 Decide which of the words given in the box below would best complete the passage if inserted in the corresponding blank. The words can be used **ONCE ONLY**.

A. minority	B. ordering	C. surge	D. reflected	E. image
F. decrease	G. allowing	H. custom	I. cooking	J. household
K. certainly	L. made	M. perform	N. economic	O. approximately

The formal legal breakdown of gender roles and greater flexibility in the structure and understanding of marriage have been (1) _____ and reinforced by social and cultural changes with respect to the roles of men and women in the family. Historically, husbands were the financial providers for the family. The 20th century has seen a dramatic (2) _____ in the participation of women, including wives, in the paid workforce. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, in 1950 about one-third of women participated in the paid labor force. By 1998, this number had increased to (3) _____ 60 percent. As a result of this increase, by 2008 the Department of Labor reported that women (4) _____ up almost 50 percent of the total paid labor force. Thus, only a(n) (5) _____—fewer than 25 percent—of couples today reflects the traditional (6) _____ of the one wage earner family. Since the 1970s, courts have been increasingly likely to enforce contractual arrangements between spouses, (7) _____ them to further alter their respective rights and responsibilities in marriage.

The gendered roles in marriage have not, however, disappeared altogether. Despite the fact that more women are contributing financially to the (8) _____, women and wives generally continue to (9) _____ the vast majority of household and caretaking responsibilities in the home. As Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung reported in *The Second Shift*, “Even when couples share more equitably in the work at home, women do two-thirds of the daily jobs at home, like (10) _____ and cleaning up.”

Critical Thinking



Intellectual Integrity

Intellectual integrity means we hold ourselves to the same standards to which we hold others. A person who possesses this trait does not hold people to standards they are not willing to uphold themselves. In other words, this trait eliminates double standards. For example, if a team leader requires team members to come to the office on time, he/she should be punctual as well. Intellectual integrity requires honestly admitting discrepancies and inconsistencies in one's own thought and action, and identifying inconsistencies within one's thinking.

Text A describes changes in family structure in the U.S., some of which result from the promotion of women's social participation and contribution. When women take on more important social responsibilities, they cannot afford to spend as much time on family chores and on child-raising as before. Husbands have to adopt a new attitude toward their wives and their wives' family duties. If husbands require their wives to devote more time to the family, they themselves should do the same. When they want their wives to do housework or spend time with their children, they should share these duties with their wives. Only when there are no double standards for husbands and wives can families and society develop in a healthy and harmonious way.

Think for Yourself

1. Work in groups of four. Take turns to share what you want your future children to be like. Bear in mind that the standards you hold your future children to should be the ones you are willing to uphold yourself. Then work with your group and make a list of these standards.

Text B



课文录音

The Old Mother

○ Pearl S. Buck

- 1 The old mother had always loved children, and although in her early youth she had married a poor man, a man who must earn their rice by extreme labor on the land, still she welcomed every child that came to her.
- 2 Of her three children who had lived to grow up, she had only this one son left, but she and her old husband had always considered him the finest they had. Yes, when this son was a baby he was the cleverest and the most willful child of all. From the first they had said to each other that they must give this child more than the others and make a scholar out of him, and so her husband had taken him to a foreigners' school in the nearest city when the boy was not more than ten years old, and they had left him there for ten years.
- 3 At first the boy had come home for New Year holidays and in the summer, but after a few years he did not wish to do this, because he had become so fine a scholar he was not comfortable any more in the earthen country house. Well, those foreigners put it into his head even to go to other countries to study even more, and they gave him some money to help him, but not enough either. She remembered that very day when her son had come in unexpectedly and said to her and to his father while they were planting the rice in the water beds,
- 4 "Mother, I am going away to foreign parts to study more. The foreigners will give me some money, but not enough, and I want to ask you and my father for all you can give me, and in your old age I will care for you uncomplainingly."
- 5 At first it had seemed the wildest thing for him to do, but she and her husband had talked here and there with everyone about it, and there were many who said,
- 6 "We have heard that if men go to foreign parts they get such learning that when they return they make vast sums of money every month. If you let him go you will not need to work in your old age."



7 Yes, so they heard, and they let him go then.

8 Well, when her son's return was yet two years off, her good old man died. A lusty, hearty old fellow he was, and yet he died all of a sudden one cold winter, and he died of a pain in his chest and a fever, and before she could call a doctor, thinking it would right itself and he unwilling to go to the expense. There he was, dead, and she had to pay for his coffin and his funeral, and there was nothing for it but to sell some of the land, because they had kept themselves so pinched to send money to the boy in foreign parts.

9 Once an old neighbor said to her,

10 "It is better not to sell all your land, for even sons do not love so well a mother who brings them nothing."

11 But she was not afraid; she answered,

12 "He is a good son, and it is all his land anyway, now, and if he needs it, let him have it. As for me, I am not afraid. He has said he will care for me without complaining, and I am not afraid he will not have a place for me in his house." She laughed as she said this, for she was sure of her son.

13 But now she sighed as she thought of this answer. Well, here she was in her son's house. It was a very fine house. Every visitor who came exclaimed how fine a foreign house it was. There was a top floor above this one and a stair going to it, but they let her have this room on the lower floor because she could not climb the stairs, or if she did manage to get up somehow, she must be led down again. But when they wanted to be rid of her they took the children and went upstairs and sat there and left her alone. Oh, she knew them very well! Although they thought her so old that she did not see through them, yet she saw.

14 Suddenly the two children came, fresh and rosy from their sleep, into the room across the hall from her open door. She saw them sit down to play with a toy. Both of them were little girls.

15 When she turned again, she saw the younger child looking at her, and she smiled at her. It was true that these were the sweetest children, and of the two she loved the baby better. She longed suddenly to hold the little round thing in her arms. Then the old mother thought of something. She rose and went to one of her many little tin boxes and opened it. In it she found a little sweet nut cake that she had put there ten days or so before. It had a film of mold over it, but this she blew off and wiped the cake clean with her hands. Then



she held it out silently to the baby.

- 16 The child looked at it and, having but newly learned to walk, she rose painstakingly and toddled to the old mother, holding out her hand for the cake. The old mother seized the little thing and gave her the cake and the child ate it gravely. The old mother closed the door, then, and sat down on her bed, the child in her arms, and she buried her wrinkled face in the little warm neck.
- 17 Suddenly the door opened and the son's wife came in swiftly and she said very gently, but with what cold, compelled gentleness,
- 18 "Mother, thank you, but it is time now for the child to go out into the garden." Then, seeing crumbs upon the child's red lips, she cried out, forgetting her gentleness, "What have you given her to eat?"
- 19 The old mother tried to answer boldly, for after all, how could a little sweet cake hurt anyone?
- 20 "It is only a little cake I had."
- 21 But the child's mother seized the child and pried her little jaws open.
- 22 "Nuts!" she said angrily. Then she pressed her own lips together and said no more, but she took the child in her arms and carried her away, and the child cried with fright.
- 23 Nevertheless, that night the younger child became ill. Whether it could have been the small nut cake or what it was, the child fell ill. The young mother tended the child through the night, and the son was sleepless also, but by the next morning the child was over the worst and could rest. The old mother when she heard this from a passing servant was much relieved, for she had been very much frightened by the bustle in the night. So therefore when she came into the dining-room for the morning meal and found only her son there, she said to him as she seated herself at the table,
- 24 "Ah, it was nothing serious, then! Children will have these little illnesses. I remember when you were small also—"
- 25 But he interrupted her. She saw at once that he had something to say to her, and that he was very pale and angry. Instantly she could not eat any more and she put down her chopsticks. She stared at him. She tried to remember that he was her son, and but a younger son, and she tried to remember him when he was a small, crying child, coming to find her breast. But she could not. It seemed to her he had always been what he was now, a very proud and learned man, dressed in these foreign clothes he wore, his gold spectacles



on his nose. He was a merciless and unsmiling man, and she was desperately afraid of him. For a moment she even wished her daughter-in-law were there, for sometimes she stopped her husband when he spoke too harshly to his own mother.

26 But there were only the two of them, mother and son. He had even sent the maids from the room... Would he kill her then—his old mother?...He was saying,

27 “I do not wish to be unjust, my mother. I know my duty and you have your place in my house. Nevertheless, if you are to be here, you must do as I say. You shall not spoil my children. I am responsible for my children. Yesterday in spite of all we have begged you before, and we have told you that you are not to give the children food, and particularly not any one of those stale bits you keep in your room as though we starved you—” He stopped an instant to control an old irritation. Then he went on very coldly. “In spite of our wishes you gave the younger child a thing she had never eaten in the best of times. Last night she was ill.”

28 “It was a very small, good cake,” muttered the old mother, still rebellious.

29 “But we have asked you to give her nothing,” repeated the son firmly.

30 Suddenly the old mother gave way. She could not bear any more, and she began to weep aloud and to sob out as she wept.

(1,582 words)

Words and Expressions

willful /'wɪlfəl/ *adj.*

continuing to do what you want, even after you have been told to stop

make sth. out of sb./sth.

to change a person or thing into something else

earthen /'ɜːθən/ *adj.*

(of floors or walls) made of soil

put sth. into sb.'s head

to make someone think or believe something

wild /waɪld/ *adj.*

done or said without much thought or care, or without knowing all the facts

lusty /'lʌsti/ *adj.*

strong and healthy

pinched /pɪntʃt/ *adj.*

suffering from financial hardship

exclaim /ɪk'skleɪm/ *v.*

to say something suddenly and loudly because you are surprised, angry, or excited

film /fɪlm/ *n.*

a very thin layer of liquid, powder, etc. on the surface of something

mold /məʊld/ *n.*

a soft green, gray, or black substance that grows on food which has been kept too long, and on objects that are in warm wet air

wipe /waɪp/ *v.*

to rub a surface with something in order to remove dirt, liquid, etc.

painstakingly /'peɪnzteɪkɪŋli/ *adv.*

very carefully and slowly

toddle /'tɒdl/ *v.*

(especially of a young child) to walk with short steps, trying to keep the body balanced

swiftly /'swɪftli/ *adv.*

quickly; after a very short time

boldly /'bəʊldli/ *adv.*

in a brave, confident way; without being afraid to say what you feel or to take risks

pry /praɪ/ *v.*

to force something open, or force it away from something else

fright /fraɪt/ *n.*

a sudden feeling of fear

tend /tend/ *v.*

to look after someone or something

merciless /'mɜːsɪləs/ *adj.*

cruel and showing no kindness or forgiveness

stale /steɪl/ *adj.*

(of food, especially bread and cake) no longer fresh and therefore unpleasant to eat

irritation /,ɪrɪ'teɪʃən/ *n.*

the feeling of being annoyed about something, especially something that happens repeatedly or for a long time

mutter /'mʌtə/ *v.*

to speak in a low voice, especially because you are annoyed about something, or you do not want people to hear you

give way

to agree to do what someone else wants, instead of what you want, especially after a lot of discussion or argument

Independent Learning

- 1 Find more information on the Internet or in the library about the terms and names related to the text you have just read. Share what you have learned with your classmates.

1. Pearl S. Buck

Analytical Reading

- 1 The following outline presents an overview of the text. Fill in the blanks to complete the outline.

Storyline	Content
Exposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Characters: _____.• Background: _____.
Rising action	The widowed old mother did have a place in her son's fine foreign house. One day she _____. The girl _____.
Climax	The confrontation between the old mother and her son: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The old mother _____.• The son _____.
Resolution	The old mother broke down and sobbed.

2 Answer the following questions.

1. What can you tell about the old mother's living background from Para. 1?
2. What message does Buck intend to convey by the brief description of the father's death in Para. 8?
3. Why did the old mother sigh when she was finally living with her son's family in a fine foreign house?
4. What can you infer about the old mother's characteristics from the sentence "It had a film of mold over it, but this she blew off and wiped the cake clean with her hands" in Para. 15?
5. What was the duty of a son in the eyes of the old mother's son? Do you agree with the son?
6. Why did the old mother begin to weep aloud in the end?
7. Read the text carefully and analyze the main character of the son with textual evidence.
8. Traditional Chinese family virtues include: respecting the elderly and loving the young; running the family diligently and thriftily; abiding by etiquette, discipline, and law. Does the son in the text bear those traditional virtues? Why or why not?

Guided Writing

The Evolution of Chinese Family Structure

Family is a topic of constant concern in almost every culture. It functions as a shelter providing emotional support and the first school for children. Due to factors like economic growth, social development, and educational improvement, family structure in many cultures undergoes a great number of changes. So does Chinese family structure. China is a country that attaches great importance to family and Chinese family structure has its own features and it keeps adapting itself to the times. Write an essay of at least 350 words on the evolution of Chinese family structure. You can follow the guidance given below.

- Introduce Chinese family values and give an overview of traditional Chinese family structure.
- Present the evolution of Chinese family structure from ancient times to modern times including the main features in different periods, and analyze the possible reasons behind these changes.
- Summarize your findings and give your readers something to take away from your essay.

Further Reading

○ Pearl S. Buck, “The Old Mother”

Read the complete version of “The Old Mother” by Pearl S. Buck and supplement the missing information about the protagonists. Think about how a woman was defined by her marriage, her husband, and her children in the early 20th century in rural China.

○ Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*

The book consists of 16 interlocking stories about the lives of four Chinese immigrant mothers and their American-born daughters. Read the novel and analyze the different understandings of mothers and daughters about family and life.