

# Marriage and Divorce

## Polygamy

Polygamy = having more than one wife at the same time

A wealthy man might have more than one wife. The number of wives a man could have was only limited by his ability to support them.

If a man was a successful hunter he might bring home a great deal of work. The more able bodies to do the work, the more the family could get done. Having more wives meant that the work could be shared.



Many men were killed in war and hunting, so there were more women than men. If a man's brother died, he would be expected to marry the widow to take care of her children.

To the Sioux Indians, Polygamy seemed a perfect solution. It meant one wife did not have too much work, and everyone could be properly looked after.

## Divorce

The wife was highly honoured because she did all the work except hunting, fishing and fighting. She was well treated. However, if the marriage was not working, divorce was easy for either partner.

To be divorced the man would announce publicly that he had "thrown away his woman" - men usually did this by banging a drum. The woman could divorce her husband simply by moving all her belongings back to her parent's tepee.



### TASKS

1. What does polygamy mean? [1]
2. How many wives was a man allowed? [1]
3. Explain two reasons why the Sioux Indians thought polygamy was the perfect solution. [4]
4. Why was a wife highly honoured? [1]
5. How could a man divorce his wife? [1]
6. How could a wife divorce her husband? [1]