

Summar of "the radical idea of marrying for love," by stephanie coontz essay sam...

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Summar of “ The Radical Idea of Marrying for Love, ” by Stephanie Coontz Essay Sample

Author Stephanie Coontz writes about the ideas of love and marriage through out history in the article “ The Radical Idea of Marrying for Love.” Early in the article Coontz quotes an early twentieth century author by the name of George Bernard Shaw, who states, “ marriage is an institution that brings together two people under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient of passions. They are required to swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal, and exhausting condition continuously until death do them part.” (qtd. in Shaw 378) Coontz explains that the ideas of marriage today are, although heart felt, unrealistic and daunting. She reveals that not so long ago the thoughts on love and marriage were very different for many societies and cultures throughout the world. Coontz shows how different the feelings of love and marriage were. She brings the reader to a different place and time with the interesting details about love and marriage. She stated that the Greek philosopher, Plato, believed that love was not an emotion suited for marriage. Love, for some societies, was first and foremost meant for the extended family not for husband and wife.

Coontz also writes about the ancient Indian culture, they believed love was meant to develop after a marriage had begun and to do so prior would cause problems for the couple socially. She writes about how the Europeans felt the emotions brought on by love were signs of insanity and could be cured only by the act of sex, and not necessarily with ones marital partner. Coontz

states that the Chinese saw love between married couples as a threat to the dynamics of the entire family. She also shares details of Europe, during the twelfth century; infidelity in marriage was not viewed as taboo. In fact, true love was meant for intimacy outside of the marriage. It was common knowledge that kings and queens, for centuries, married for political reasons saving their love for others. It was believed by many that love was meant for the mistress, not the wife. Coontz made it a point to mention that not all societies deemed marriage loveless, but couples were to follow strict rules about public displays of affection.

She tells us that medieval Muslims, although promoted sexual intimacies between husband and wife, felt that too much intimacy would lessen ones devotion to God. She writes about Africans, more specifically the Fulbe people, and how they do not see love as an important part of marriage. Fulbe women will refuse that they have any type of feelings of love for their husbands. They feel excessive feelings of love would threaten their way of living, causing couples to withdraw socially from society. Coontz states that men and women of this tribe would marry for convenience or other social benefits rather than love. Coontz feels that for many cultures love was and still is not the reason couples should marry. She tells us the Hindu believes that love is an emotion that grows and develops after a marriage. She also writes that early modern Europeans share the same views on love after marriage and that Europeans also feel young people need guidance in choosing ones husband or wife. Throughout the article Coontz shares that many cultures practice arranged marriages and the majority of young people

preferred this arrangement, leaving the difficulties that come with finding love for someone else to deal with. Polygamy is a subject that is briefly touched on in the article as well.

Coontz writes about the Ancient Chinese, the Cheyenne Indians, Tibetans, Eskimos and the woman of Botswana all sharing similar views on multiple women marrying the same man. Ancient China was accustomed to men having multiple wives. Some men would even take on one wife's sister as another wife or lover. Married Eskimo couples often believed in the open marriage motto, where the couples would swap husbands and wives to partake in sexual intercourse. It was not unusual for Tibetan women to marry two or more brothers, all of which she had sexual relations with. China is not the only culture to participate in co-wives, women in Botswana and the Cheyenne Indians of the United States both were very fond of having co-wives. The Indian wives felt a certain camaraderie between each other and the Botswana women felt having multiple wives made their work as women easier.

Coontz states, today, western society would be appalled at this type of sexual behavior. Coontz believes that people have always fallen in love, but in the past marriage was more of a business proposal rather than the joining of two people in love. If love was part of marriage it was considered a luxury not an aspect that was needed. Coontz goes on to describe the ideas for love in marriage in the modern western society. She states that the expectations of marriage include the couple having a deep unconditional love chosen for themselves without the influence of others. The couple must put each other

first before anyone including family and friends. They must be loyal to one another and share with each other their dreams and ambitions, problems and secrets, and must never take part in infidelity. Coontz goes on to write about how these expectations of marriage have never been more far from the ideas of love and marriage centuries ago. She feels that these rules or beliefs will certainly have an undesirable impact on the expectations people have for a healthy happy marriage.

Work Cited

Coontz, Stephanie. " A Pop Quiz on Marriage; The Radical Idea of Marrying for Love." Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum. 11th edition. Eds. Lawrence Behrens and Leonard Rosen. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2011. 376-389. Print.