

COMMUNICATION

My family biography

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_2101X

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

- I can use a range of vocabulary and phrases related to family history.
- I can talk about my own family and where I come from.



Warm-up

1. **Match** these words from the lesson text to the correct definition.
2. **Complete** the activity in the yellow box.



1 an **antique**

2 a **relative**

3 to **inherit**

4 **remote**

5 **roots**

a someone who is related to you

b far away from where other people live

c where you and your family come from

d to receive something from someone when they die

e something old and usually valuable

You're going to read a short description of a novel called ***In the Shadow of the Family Tree***.

Based on the title, **make one prediction about the novel**. What do you think it will be about?



Reading

In the shadow of the family tree

A long-lost relative with a dark secret... A dusty old photo album with pages removed... The disappearance of an antique necklace that has been passed down from generation to generation...

Lucy has never been close to her mother's side of the family. Then one day, she receives a letter informing her that her great-aunt Lucinda has passed away, and that Lucy has inherited her cottage in a remote Scottish village. Every family has a few skeletons in the closet, but when Lucy sets out on a journey to discover her roots, her life will be changed forever...



Alice Elliot is the author of three novels. Her debut novel won the New Fiction prize in 2011. She lives in Dorset with her two cats.

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Reading comprehension

Answer the questions below about the text.

- 1 Does Lucy know her mother's side of the family well?
- 2 What does Lucy learn from the letter she receives?
- 3 Would you like to read this novel? Why or why not?





Discuss

The text you have just read is a short description called a *blurb*.

**Do you always read the blurb before you buy a book?
Why or why not?**





Every family **has a few skeletons in the closet...**

Can you guess what the phrase in purple means? Do you think it has a positive or negative meaning?

Is there a phrase with a similar meaning in your language?





Match the words and phrases to the definition

Match these words and phrases from the text to their definition.

1 a long-lost relative

2 a photo album

3 to pass something down

4 your mother's or father's
side of the family

5 to discover your roots

a to give something to your children,
which they then give to their children

b the relatives of your mother or father

c someone you haven't seen or heard
from in a long time

d to find out about the place where your
family comes from

e a book where you keep photos



Multiple choice

Choose the correct word or phrase to fill the gap.

1 This recipe for apple cake was passed _____ to me from my mother, who got it from her mother.

- a. up b. away c. through d. down

2 I went on a trip to Albania to discover my _____. That's where my father's side of the family comes from.

- a. root b. roots c. leaves d. tree

3 I've been trying to find out more about a _____ relative who moved to Australia back in the fifties. I don't know anything about that side of the family!

- a. lost b. long-found c. long-lost d. lost and found

4 For my sister's birthday, I collected all our childhood photos and made a photo _____.

- a. album b. novel c. book d. closet



Fill in the gaps

Complete the sentences using the vocabulary in the red box.

- 1 The place where my grandmother grew up is very _____. She told me that it took three hours to get to the nearest shop!
- 2 Careful with that mirror! It looks old and dusty, but it's an _____. I got it in a second-hand furniture shop a few years ago.
- 3 When my great-uncle _____, I _____ his old army medals.
- 4 A lot of people are trying to discover their _____ these days using websites where you can find out more about your family history.
- 5 If you go far enough back in any family, you'll probably find _____ in the closet.

to inherit
roots
to pass away
remote
skeletons
antique



Discuss

Ask and answer these questions with a classmate, using the lesson vocabulary in your answers. (Optional: you can do this activity **in breakout rooms**. If so, **share** one interesting fact about your partner with the rest of the group afterwards.)

- Do you enjoy spending time with both sides of your family?
- Has your family always lived in the same area?
- Do you own anything that is very old and valuable?
- Have you ever received anything when a relative passed away?
- What have you learned or received from the older generations in your family?

- a long-lost relative
- a photo album
- an antique
- to discover your roots
- to pass something down
- to inherit something
- to be close to (one side of the family)






Get creative!

**If you wrote a
book about your
family...**

**...what would its title be?
What picture would you put on
the cover?**





End of the lesson

Idiom

To follow in someone's footsteps

Meaning: to do the same thing as someone else (often a family member)

Example: I decided to follow in my mother's footsteps and become a doctor.



Additional practice



Match the sentences

Match the beginnings of the sentences with their correct endings.

1 I **inherited** my grandma's engagement ring when she passed away...

2 This watch **has been passed down** through...

3 After my father died, I met a few **long-lost**...

4 I know a lot about **my mother's side of the family** but...

5 I took a trip to Italy **to discover my roots** because...

a all four of my grandparents were born there.

b relatives at the funeral.

c our family for over 200 years.

d and it's not worth much money but it's very special to me.

e I'd really like to know more about my father's side.



Your family history

Choose the sentence below that **you relate to most**. Discuss your choice with a partner.



I'm not interested in finding out about my family history.

I'd like to learn about my grandparents' lives, but I'm not curious about anything further back than that.

I think it's important to learn about my roots as a way to connect with my culture.

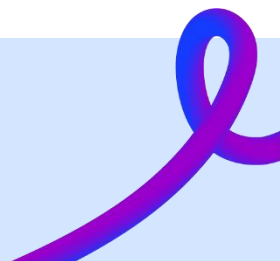
I already know something about my family's history but I'd love to know even more.



True or false?

Decide if these statements are true or false. If they are false, correct them to make them true.

		true	false
1	The phrase skeletons in the closet means that there is something good in your family history that people don't know about.		
2	Antiques are always worth a lot of money.		
3	The blurb is the description on the back of the book that tells you what the book is about.		
4	Pass away is a synonym for <i>die</i> .		
5	Your relatives can be your friends as well as your family.		





Your family name



**Do you know the
origin of your
family name?**

**If not, are there surnames in
your country that can tell you
something about a person's
family history?**



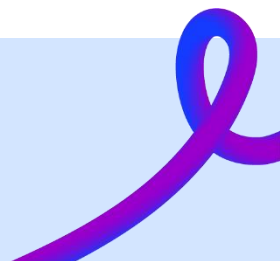


Discuss

**Do you know any books or films about family?
Tell the class.**



Is family an interesting theme for a book or film, in your opinion?





Further discussion questions

Discuss the questions below with your classmates.



- Who are you closest to in your family?
- How would you describe your family? (Give three words)
- What do you like best about your family? Is there anything you don't like?
- Do many of your relatives live near you? Do any of them live far away or in a different country?
- Do you keep in contact with your family members and relatives?
- Have you ever asked your parents or grandparents about your family history?
- Have you ever used websites to help you discover more about your family?



Answer key

P.3: 1. (e) 2. (a) 3. (d) 4. (b) 5. (c)

P.5: 1. no 2. Lucy learns that her great-aunt has died/ that she has inherited a cottage from her great-aunt

P.8: 1. (c) 2. (e) 3. (a) 4. (b) 5. (d)

P.9: 1. (d) 2. (b) 3. (c) 4. (a)

P.10: 1. remote 2. antique 3. passed away; inherited 4. roots 5. skeletons

Additional practice:

P. 17: 1. (d) 2. (c) 3. (b) 4. (e) 5. (a)

P. 19: 1. F 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. F



Summary

Vocabulary and phrases related to family history

- *to inherit, to pass (something) down, to pass away, to discover (your roots)*
- *an antique, a long-lost relative, mother's/father's side of the family,*

Compound nouns

- *Family tree, photo album*



Vocabulary

antique

relative

remote

to inherit

roots

long-lost

photo album

mother's/father's side of the family

to pass away

to pass something down

skeletons in the closet

to set out on a journey

to discover your roots

(book) blurb

