

## **Suggested responses: 'Homosexuality news reports'**

### **1. Write down some of the questions/comments made by the interviewer. What attitudes are being presented towards the Sexual Offences Bill?**

The interviewer begins by commenting that the Bill could be seen to be 'condoning something which is absolutely wrong and immoral'. This belies a strongly oppositional attitude towards the Sexual Offences Bill.

### **2. Leo Abse was the sponsor of the Sexual Offences Bill, which sought to decriminalise private homosexual acts. What do his comments suggest about his personal attitude towards homosexuality? Explain your answer with reference to the clip.**

He says that he does 'not condone homosexuality' in the same way that he doesn't condone adultery, which is not illegal. Therefore, both should have the same legal status. He refers to homosexuality as an 'unfortunate condition', indicating that he feels that it is still something that is wrong in some way.

### **3. What is the difference in the way in which homosexuality is presented between these news reports from the 1990s and the clip from the *Today Programme* in 1966? Support your answer with an example from the clips.**

Both news reports from the 1990s refer to people's anxieties surrounding the debate, as well as equal rights campaigners who support the debate, whereas the previous clip had a more negative attitude towards homosexuality as 'problem'. For example, Edwina Currie is seen debating with MPs and members of the public to try to convince them of her opinion that the age of consent should be lowered to 16.

### **4. Consider the content of all three videos that you have watched so far. How far did public opinions and government attitudes towards homosexuality change between 1966 and 1997?**

The first clip implied that homosexuality was an idea condemned in the same way as adultery, despite the changing legal status. The later clips show a more representative debate, with a further legal change described as a 'human right'. This indicates significant attitudinal change. However, the issue of inequality is still obvious, as even the Prime Minister voted to have a different age of consent for homosexuals and heterosexuals. This indicates that limited change had taken place. Some change is clear, though, in that this issue was being debated at all and that it was clear that the age of consent would be lowered; the question was more about what it would be lowered to.

### **5. What is the difference in tone between this news report and the previous clips? Write down two examples.**

This modern clip has a lighter and more celebratory tone, despite the fact that it is also reported that some called it a 'day of shame'. It is also significant that not only are the rights of homosexual people being debated and analysed by others in this clip, but the couples involved in the news story are also given a platform to share their views.

### **6. How far would you agree that Britain in 2005 had seen significant change since the 1960s in attitudes towards homosexuality? Explain your answer using examples from all four clips.**

There is certainly significant change to be seen throughout these clips, as the first deals with the issue of legalising homosexuality, whereas the last builds hugely on this by allowing homosexual couples the right to enter into a civil partnership. However, opposition to gay rights is still evident in the twenty-first century.

### **7. Based on your knowledge of 1960s culture and society, how significant was the Wolfenden Report in changing people's attitudes towards homosexuality?**

Although the report did not have majority public support, it did pave the way for greater gains in equality for homosexuals in the decades following it. However, this road was long and slow, and these clips demonstrate the continuing negative attitudes towards homosexuality into the twenty-first century.

**8. To discuss in class: How does the fact that these are BBC radio and news reports affect their usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?**

These reports include the views of a large number of different people, meaning that they are useful for comparing differing opinions on the topic. The latter news reports allow a wider range of perspectives to be heard. They are contemporary to the period, so reveal people's responses to social change at the time.