

# Swaziland king buys wives BMWs (Mon 14 Feb)

## WARM UPS

**CHAT:** Talk in pairs or groups about Swaziland / BMWs and Mercs (slang for Mercedes) / King Mswati III / lavish lifestyle / polygamy / being king...Change topic / partner frequently to energize the class.

**BMW BRAINSTORM:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with BMWs. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

**SWAZILAND BRAINSTORM:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Swaziland. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

**10 SPOUSES:** With a partner spend five minutes writing down all of the advantages and disadvantages of having ten husbands or wives, all at the same time. Talk about these. Change partners and share your advantages and disadvantages, and decide if it is better to marry just one person or ten.

**OPINIONS:** Talk about these with your partner:

- a. Polygamy is wrong in any culture.
- b. The United Nations should depose King Mswati III and rescue the Swazi people.
- c. King Mswati III is the leader of an ancient culture. We cannot question its traditions.
- d. He should have bought Mercedes.
- e. Swaziland's Southern African neighbours should pressure King Mswati III more to reform.
- f. Variety is the spice of life.
- g. Leave him alone. He isn't a dictator like they have in Zimbabwe or North Korea, or had in Iraq.
- h. Come on, any young king with total power would buy his loved ones a car each.
- i. Looking at King Mswati III is like looking at living history – It's great.
- j. Isn't he the big romantic?

## PRE READING EXERCISES

**WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries, or a search engine, to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'brand' and 'new'.

**TRUE / FALSE:** Predict from the headline whether these statements are true or false:

- a. Swaziland's king bought ten of his wives a BMW each for Valentine's Day. T / F
- b. Swaziland's king rarely makes the headlines. T / F
- c. Swaziland is a rich and populous country. T / F
- d. King Mswati III actually has eleven wives and two fiancées. T / F
- e. Swaziland has the world's highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection (39%).. T / F
- f. Most Swazi people eat three good meals a day. T / F
- g. The king chooses to marry any woman he wants, she cannot refuse. T / F
- h. He was educated in Britain. T / F

**SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |     |              |                             |
|-----|--------------|-----------------------------|
| (a) | coincidence  | creating                    |
| (b) | brand-new    | famine                      |
| (c) | stirring up  | over-the-top                |
| (d) | impoverished | subsist                     |
| (e) | drought      | fluke                       |
| (f) | survive      | escape                      |
| (g) | lavish       | supreme                     |
| (h) | sweeping     | hot-off-the-production-line |
| (i) | flee         | destitute                   |
| (j) | absolute     | extensive                   |

**PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases based on the article

- |     |                                      |                               |
|-----|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (a) | just a                               | example of                    |
| (b) | yet another                          | drought                       |
| (c) | stirring up                          | food aid                      |
| (d) | impoverished tiny                    | criticism                     |
| (e) | it constantly battles                | coincidence                   |
| (f) | the world's highest rate of HIV/AIDS | lifestyle                     |
| (g) | survive by living on                 | monarch                       |
| (h) | lavish                               | kingdom of one million people |
| (i) | He is often subject to sweeping      | controversy                   |
| (j) | absolute                             | infection                     |

## GAP FILL

### Swaziland king buys wives BMWs (Mon 14 Feb)

**BNE:** It may be just a \_\_\_\_\_ that today is Valentine's Day and the king of Swaziland bought ten of his wives a present each – a brand-new \$90,000 BMW. Or, it may be yet another example of King Mswati III \_\_\_\_\_ up controversy in his impoverished tiny kingdom of one million people. He actually has eleven wives and two fiancées, but only ten of his wives were lucky enough to get a BMW. Swaziland is one of the world's poorest countries, it constantly \_\_\_\_\_ drought, and it has the world's highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection (39%). Most Swazi people can only survive by \_\_\_\_\_ on food aid. Even so, its king likes to spend what little GDP the country has on luxuries and a lavish lifestyle for his family and himself. In December he bought himself a car costing \$500,000. He is often subject to \_\_\_\_\_ criticism for his support and practice of polygamy, and the fact that he chooses a virgin teenage bride to marry each year. The young woman has no \_\_\_\_\_ but to marry the king. His wives often \_\_\_\_\_ the country to escape him, but he soon replaces them, even though he is building each of them her very own palace – another \$14 million. He was educated in Britain, but prefers the power of being an \_\_\_\_\_ monarch, and the power to buy whatever he wants while his people starve.

*sweeping   stirring   choice   battles   living   flee   coincidence   absolute*

## DISCUSSION:

- a. Would you prefer a brand-new BMW or Merc?
- b. What do you think of this article?
- c. What do you think of King Mswati III?
- d. Should the world be doing something to help his people?
- e. Should polygamy be allowed in any society?
- f. Swaziland has many ancient traditions (including polygamy). Shouldn't we let these traditions continue?
- g. Attacking King Mswati for his polygamy is the same as the Christian missionaries did when they went to 'civilize' Africans in the nineteenth century. Do you agree?
- h. A virgin, teenage Swazi girl cannot refuse to marry the king. What do you think?
- i. Would you marry an absolute monarch if he/she promised you brand-new luxury cars and palaces?
- j. What would you do if you became king / queen of Swaziland?
- k. What one word best describes King Mswati III?
- l. If you met King Mswati III, what advice would you give him?
- m. If one of his people met him and could say anything, what would they say?

## HOMEWORK

**LETTER TO KING:** Write a letter to King Mswati III from one of his people.

**CULTURE CONSERVATION:** Write a short article evaluating the importance of keeping the Swazi tradition of monarchical polygamy alive.

## INTERNET / WEB LINKS:

King Mswati III's web site:

<http://www.swazi.com/king/king.html>

CIA fact file on Swaziland:

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/wz.html>

List of Reuter's news alerts on Swaziland:

<http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/countryprofiles/220230.htm>

A bare-knuckled blog site on King Mswati III:

<http://forums.fark.com/cgi/fark/comments.pl?IDLink=1335175>

News story about King Mswati III's wives running away:

[http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447\\_1549527,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447_1549527,00.html)

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