UPPER-INTERMEDIATE (B2/C1) Lesson on Incel Attitudes & Beliefs: Warm-up

1) In your opinion, is getting a boyfriend or girlfriend difficult?
2) Are you the type of person who is good at dating or attracting a partner?
3) What kind of person are men and women typically physically attracted to? Complete the table below:

Women desire someone who is ….	*Men desire someone who is …*

4) Some people identify as "incels". What does this mean? What do you know about them?

Reading Passage: **New Study on Incel Attitudes & Beliefs**

Incels are men who describe themselves as involuntarily **celibate** (in + cel). In other words, these men want a sexual or romantic partner, but they cannot get one. Incels often have **prejudiced** views about women, thinking that women are only **attracted** to a limited type of men. As a result, incels feel that they have been "*black-pilled*", i.e. forced to live in a situation that they cannot change due to their appearance or society. In the past two decades, incels have built community spaces online. People who **identify as** incels have also committed a number of violent attacks against women.

A large study[1] on the incel community was recently published by Swansea University and the University of Texas. It surveyed 561 incels from the US and UK. Researcher Andrew G. Thomas comments that there is a **stereotype** of incels as "young, white, *right-wing* men who are not in employment, education, or training." Thomas's research challenges some of these ideas. Its key results are as follows:

- *Mental health*: 37% of incels said they think about **suicide** every day. A total of 86% had experienced **bullying**. Thirty percent of the community showed signs of **autism**, compared to one percent for the general population.
- *Backgrounds*: 58% were white while 42% were people of color. 42.4% were employed full time. The average participant age was 26. Politically, most were slightly *left of center*.

Overall, the study found two causes for harmful attitudes among incels. The first was mental health challenges, including autistic traits, bullying, and low **self-esteem**. The second was having an **antisocial** personality that includes selfishness and **extreme** right-wing views.

The study is the first to **examine** the incel community in detail. The researchers hope it will help government respond to both online hate and the challenges faced by some young men today.

[Sources: https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/1086144, https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/article/over-500-incels-completed-a-survey-this-is-what-researchers-learned/, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10508-025-03161-y]

SAMPLE

Comprehension Questions & Follow-Up Questions

1) **Recall & Retell:** Summarize the main ideas of the passage in your own words.
2) What does it mean to feel *black-pilled*? How might that affect the motivation of incels?
3) According to Thomas, what do people commonly believe about incels?
4) How are the results of the study similar or different from these common beliefs?
5) What does the phrase "slightly left of center" mean in the description of participants? Does this match the stereotype of incels?
6) **Chicken or the egg**: In your opinion, are mental health challenges caused by feeling black-pilled, or is it the other way around?
7) **Opinion**: What could government do to help resolve this problem?

Vocabulary: **Match** the **bold** words to their meaning based on how they were used in the article.

1.	celibate (adj)	a)	repeated unkind or harmful behavior toward someone weaker
2.	prejudiced (adj)	b)	very strong or far from what is normal
3.	attract (v)	c)	the act of killing yourself
4.	identify as sb (v)	d)	to say that you are part of a certain group or category
5.	stereotype (n)	e)	not having sexual/romantic relationships, usually by choice
6.	suicide (n)	f)	a common but often untrue idea about a group of people
7.	bullying (n)	g)	not caring about social rules
8.	autism (n)	h)	having opinions about a group of people
9.	self-esteem (n)	i)	the way you feel about yourself and your value
10.	antisocial (adj)	j)	a condition affecting how someone thinks, communicates, or relates to others
11.	extreme (adj)	k)	to make someone feel interested in you romantically
12.	examine (v)	l)	to study something closely

Pronunciation: Pronounce the underlined syllables above with your teacher.

Replace the underlined phrase with one of the words below. Then ask the questions to a partner.

1. How does social media affect feelings of our own value?
2. Does your country have many very strong and not-normal political groups? If so, what are they?
3. What common beliefs are there about people from your country?
4. Do you say you are part of a certain group, e.g. gamers, vegans, foodies, etc.?
5. Do you have any experiences with repeated unkind behavior that you'd feel comfortable sharing?
6. Do you think more people will remain nonsexual in the future?
7. What type of personality romantically interests you?

Speaking Activity: Debate

- *There's someone out there for everybody.*
- *Dating apps have made dating worse for most people.*

Speaking Activity: **Incel Archetypes**[2]

Note: This activity describes stereotypes in incel culture. Its purpose is to learn the stereotypes and language but also to discuss how they can be harmful.

Step 1: Guess the **name** that matches four archetypes (typical examples) on the right:

The Virgin / The Becky / The Chad / The Stacey

Step 2: Below are some **descriptions** of each archetype found in **memes**. Match each phrase below to an archetype. More than one phrase may apply to the same archetype.

a) Thinks guys like the "natural" look
b) Feminist
c) Never works a day in her life, lives in luxury
d) Walks with confidence and perfect posture (back perfectly straight)
e) Will marry a banker when she hits 30.
f) Has a job but dreams of being a "travel blogger"
g) Has many Chads blowing up her phone
h) Wears backpack with both straps
i) Bends forward when he walks, avoids eye contact
j) Likes cats and pumpkin-spiced lattes
k) Tells The Virgin he's "like a brother"
l) Always knows what to say
m) Practicing conversations in head

[Answers on last page of lesson]

Name: _____

a sexually attractive woman who can have her choice of sexual partners; ignores "nice guys"

Name: _____

an attractive male who is sexually successful with women; is quite good-looking (square jaw, height, etc.)

Name: _____

an average looking woman; incels feel they are 'owed' sex and relationships from these women

Name: _____

a socially awkward, shy, and sexually inexperienced man

Step 3: Discuss these questions:

- In your opinion, do these labels describe real people? Do you see yourself in any of the archetypes?
- How do memes like this affect people's view of gender or dating?
- Becky is considered a "normie" (slang for *normal person*). Why do people dislike being a 'normie'?
- How much do physical features affect a person's dating success?

Speaking Activity: Roleplay

Situation: John's 17-year-old son, Eugene, is graduating high school this year.

John: You are worried about Eugene. He spends a lot of time online, where most of his friends live. He's never had a girlfriend. He's not bad looking, but he doesn't want to talk to girls.

Task: You were popular in high school and had a lot of fun. Talk to Eugene. Try to improve his self-esteem. He has a great sense of humor and he's really kind. You want him to get a girlfriend and have a "normal" social life. You will start the conversation.

Possible expression: Girls are attracted to confidence; it's not all about looks.

Eugene: Your dad was a Chad in high school (tall, strong chin). That's not you. He probably wants you to get a girlfriend. You tried talking to a girl once. She laughed and embarrassed you. You are not doing that again.

Your dad wants to talk with you.

Possible expression: That's easy for you to say, Chad.

Situation: ManWolf is a TikTok influencer with 2 million followers. He sells courses that promise to make young men into "alpha males." Crystal Cheung is a content manager at TikTok. She has gotten many complaints about @ManWolf's posts.

"subscribe to my $300/mo course on how to be an alpha male"

Crystal: People are complaining that ManWolf's content breaks TikTok rules (e.g., it is hate speech). People are also worried that it harms young men. They say:

- He makes money by taking advantage *of* young men
- His service is a pyramid scheme—paying members recruit other members to earn fees.
- He's said terrible things about women. For example,
    - "Women only respect power. If you show emotion, you lose."
    - "You don't date women — you manage them."

Task: Call ManWolf and discuss his content. Decide whether his account should be removed or not.

Possible expression: We're concerned that you're taking advantage of young men.

ManWolf: Some losers are complaining about your posts. A TikTok representative wants to talk with you. You are worried that they'll shut down your account, which would be terrible for your business.

Task: Talk with the woman. Explain that your service helps young men who feel lost. If she doesn't believe that, tell her that websites like TikTok have to protect free speech.

Possible expression: I help men boost their self-esteem. What's wrong with that?

Famous Quotation

- *"If you're not being rejected, you're not trying hard enough." – Mark Cuban*

Collocation Review from Passage

1. a romantic	a. partner
2. a number of violent	b. wing men
3. young, white, right-	c. color
4. people of	d. center
5. most were slightly left of	e. attacks

Collocation Review from Archetype Activity

1. thinks guys like the "natural	a. blogger
2. lives in	b. lattes
3. walks with perfect	c. blowing up her phone
4. a travel	d. look"
5. has many Chads	e. luxury
6. pumpkin-spiced	f. posture

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Vocabulary: Insert one of the below vocabulary items into the appropriate blank.

bullying / identify as / antisocial / celibate / self-esteem / autism / stereotype / suicide

attract / examine / extreme / prejudiced

1. *Incels are men who describe themselves as <u>in</u>voluntarily _____ (in + cel).*
2. *Incels often have _____ views about women, thinking that women are only _____ to a limited type of men.*
3. *People who _____ incels have also committed a number of violent attacks ….*
4. *… there is a _____ of incels as "young, white, right-wing men who are not in employment, education, or training."*
5. *37% of incels said they think about _____ every day.*
6. *A total of 86% had experienced _____.*
7. *Thirty percent of the community showed signs of _____ …*
8. *The first was mental health challenges, including autistic traits, bullying, and low _____.*
9. *The second was having an _____ personality that includes selfishness and _____ right-wing views.*
10. *The study is the first to _____ the incel community in detail.*

Final Discussion Questions

1. Should people with extreme views be allowed to use social media platforms?
2. Do you ever feel *black-pilled* with your situation in life?
3. Incels are typically men. Have you heard of women who have similar problems?
4. How important is appearance in relationships?

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Comprehension Question Answer Key

1. *Incels are men who feel rejected by women and society; the study challenges stereotypes and highlights mental health and personality issues.*
2. *Believing your situation can't improve due to looks or society; it leads to hopelessness.*
3. *That incels are young, white, right-wing, and unemployed.*
4. *Many are employed, not all are white, and most are politically left of center.*
5. *Politically progressive or moderate; no, it doesn't match the stereotype.*
6. *…*
7. *…*

Vocabulary: 1-e, 2-h, 3-k, 4-d, 5-f, 6-c, 7-a, 8-j, 9-i, 10-g, 11-b, 12-l

Archetype answers:

1) Stacey-c,e,g,j
2) Chad-d,k
3) Becky-a,b,f
4) Virgin-h,l,l

Passage Collocations 1-a, 2-e, 3-b, 4-d, 5-d

Archetype Collocations: 1-d, 2-e, 3-f, 4-a, 5-c, 6-b

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[1] https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10508-025-03161-y

[2] https://www.educateagainsthate.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Incels-A-guide-for-those-teaching-Year-10-and-above-1-1.pdf , descriptions: https://www.vox.com/2018/4/28/17290256/incel-chad-stacy-becky

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