Who Gets Ahead?

Class, opportunity, and changing work

SS24.S.10 "Explain the relationship between social stratification and social class, including status ascription versus achievement, intergenerational social mobility..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two examples of unequal resources or power, circle one ascribed status and one achieved status, and number the sentences that explain mobility and changing jobs. Use your marks to trace how class position can shape opportunity.

A Town Changes Jobs

1. On a bus route in a former factory town, riders head to jobs with very different pay, benefits, and control over their schedules. A hospital surgeon may have more say over decisions and earn far more than a hospital cleaner who works overnight. Both jobs matter, yet their rewards and authority differ. Social stratification names this patterned ranking of people by resources and power. Social class describes positions within that ranking, often shaped by income, wealth, education, and occupation. In the United States, wealth and access to stable housing tend to be concentrated among some households, not spread evenly.

2. Consider two students who want hospital careers. Lena's parents own a house and can pay for training; Amir's family rents and cannot cover tuition. Being born into a family with resources gives a child an ascribed class position, received rather than earned. A nursing credential is an achieved status, gained through study and work. Neither label means effort is unimportant: inherited resources can make achievement easier or harder. Discrimination in hiring or lending can add barriers, so people with the same qualifications may not have the same opportunities. These patterns affect groups as well as individual plans.

3. Now imagine Lena's grandfather worked at a local factory that closed when production moved elsewhere. Her mother found work as a medical assistant, and Lena hopes to become a nurse. A move to a higher or lower class position than one's parents is intergenerational social mobility; Lena's future resources and security would need to be compared with her mother's to judge her move. The town's shift from factory jobs toward health care is structural occupational change, a change in the kinds of work available. It creates openings for some workers but can leave others without affordable training.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the surgeon and cleaner show the relationship between social class and social stratification?

2. How could an ascribed class position affect Lena's and Amir's chances of gaining an achieved status?

3. Why is Lena's hope of becoming a nurse not enough to show that she has moved up in class from her mother?

4. How could the town's change in available jobs create opportunities for some workers but barriers for others?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a family in a town where the kinds of jobs available are changing, but do not use the factory-to-health-care shift from the reading. In four sentences, include an ascribed class advantage or barrier, an achieved status, how the job change affects a group, and what you would compare to judge a child's mobility relative to a parent.

ANSWER KEY

Who Gets Ahead?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two examples of unequal resources or power, circle one ascribed status and one achieved status, and number the sentences that explain mobility and changing jobs. Use your marks to trace how class position can shape opportunity. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the surgeon and cleaner show the relationship between social class and social stratification?	**Their jobs hold different positions in a patterned ranking of pay and authority. Those positions are part of the town's social class structure.**
2	How could an ascribed class position affect Lena's and Amir's chances of gaining an achieved status?	**Lena's family can pay for training, while Amir's cannot cover tuition. That difference could affect their chances of earning a credential.**
3	Why is Lena's hope of becoming a nurse not enough to show that she has moved up in class from her mother?	**She has not yet become a nurse, and her future resources and security must be compared with her mother's to judge intergenerational mobility.**
4	How could the town's change in available jobs create opportunities for some workers but barriers for others?	**Growing health care work may offer openings, but workers who cannot afford the needed training may be unable to enter those jobs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In a town where print newspapers are closing, Maya's parent works at a printing shop, while digital media jobs are growing. Maya is born into a family without money for a computer, an ascribed class barrier. She earns a web design certificate, an achieved status, but people who cannot afford internet access have a harder time entering the new jobs. To judge whether Maya moves up or down in class, compare her adult income, wealth, and job security with her parent's at a similar age.

Accept other accurate comparisons of class position, including pay, wealth, benefits, or job security. For Part 3, look for a plausible change in available jobs and a clear distinction between a received class position and an earned status.