Who Opens Doors?

How institutional rules shape access to opportunity

SS24.S.11c "Explain the role of social institutions in fostering change and reinforcing stratification.*"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle the social institutions named in the passage, underline two rules that limit access, and double-underline two changes that could widen access so you can compare their effects.

The Schools Three Miles Apart

1 In fictional Harbor City, two public schools sit three miles apart. The school district assigns students mainly by home address. Families with higher incomes can more easily afford homes near the school with a newer science lab. Parents there also raise money for clubs and field trips. Across town, many families rent apartments near a school with fewer after-school options. A city rule allows only detached houses near the first school, limiting the number of lower-cost homes there. Neither a school boundary nor a housing rule mentions income, yet together they make access to school opportunities depend partly on what families can afford.

2 At a public meeting, students describe how they miss clubs because the only late bus serves the first school. The school board, which governs the district, votes to provide late buses at both schools and shares funding for clubs more evenly. Those choices could widen access without requiring families to move. The city council also votes to permit apartments near the first school, creating room for more kinds of housing. But new apartments may still have high rents. A policy can open a door while leaving other barriers in place, especially if families cannot afford to walk through it.

3 Local banks influence the results too. A bank may require strong credit and a large down payment for a mortgage. These requirements can reduce lending risk, but they also make it harder for some families to buy homes near either school, particularly families with little savings. Renters may benefit from the new apartments, yet only if the rents fit their budgets. Meanwhile, the district must keep its late buses running for students to use the new clubs. In Harbor City, rules made by schools, government, and banks interact. Changing one rule can expand opportunity, but other rules can preserve gaps in access.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the district's address rule and the city's housing rule work together to limit access to the first school?

2. How could the school board's two decisions change students' access to clubs?

3. How might the city council's apartment policy widen access, and why might it not be enough?

4. How could bank requirements preserve an access gap even after the city changes its housing rule?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a setting other than schools and housing, such as health care or work. In four or five sentences, name two social institutions, explain how a rule could reinforce unequal access, describe a specific change that could widen access, and show how the institutions affect each other.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.S.11c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle the social institutions named in the passage, underline two rules that limit access, and double-underline two changes that could widen access so you can compare their effects. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the district's address rule and the city's housing rule work together to limit access to the first school?	**The district assigns students by address, while the city limits lower-cost housing near the first school. Families who cannot afford homes there have less access to that school's opportunities.**
2	How could the school board's two decisions change students' access to clubs?	**Late buses at both schools would help more students get home after clubs, and more even club funding could give students at the second school additional options.**
3	How might the city council's apartment policy widen access, and why might it not be enough?	**Permitting apartments creates room for more kinds of housing near the first school, but high rents could still keep some families from living there.**
4	How could bank requirements preserve an access gap even after the city changes its housing rule?	**Strong-credit and large-down-payment requirements can make buying a home difficult for families with little savings, so the new housing rule may not give them equal access to homes near the schools.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A hospital and an employer can shape who receives medical care. If the employer offers paid time off only to managers, hourly workers may delay hospital visits because missing a shift costs money. The hospital could add evening appointments so workers can come after their shifts. The employer could offer paid medical leave to all employees, making those appointments easier to use. Together, these changes would reduce a barrier that falls hardest on workers with less control over their schedules.

Accept other well-supported explanations that connect an institution's rule to access. For Your Turn, look for two interacting institutions, a clear source of unequal access, and a specific change that could reduce it.