Beyond the Vote

Four theories for studying one teen group

SS24.S.5c "Investigate and explain the impact of psychological theories that influence sociology, including Erikson's Psychosocial Development, Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each theorist's name, then underline one phrase for each that shows how the theory could change a sociologist's study of the teen group.

Who Gets Heard at the Library?

1. At a neighborhood library, a teen planning group debates whether to extend weekend hours. Some members volunteer to lead, while others try out roles as interviewers or note takers. Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory suggests that adolescence often centers on identity versus role confusion: young people explore who they are through roles and relationships. A sociologist might therefore study how the library group offers chances to test identities, not just whether its plan succeeds. This lens also raises a question about access: teens with jobs or caregiving duties may have fewer chances to join.

2. When the group votes, one teen says the library must follow its current schedule because rules keep things orderly. Another asks whether longer hours would make access fairer for families who work weekends. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development draws attention to the reasons behind judgments, such as maintaining social order or appealing to broader principles, rather than to a vote alone. Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development highlights how formal operational thinking can help adolescents consider hypothetical outcomes, like what might happen if hours change. Neither theory means all teens reason alike; a sociologist can investigate differences in their arguments.

3. During planning, an experienced member shows newcomers how to survey library users and helps them revise questions that confuse respondents. Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes learning through interaction and cultural tools, including language. With guidance, newcomers may complete a task they could not yet manage alone; as their skills grow, the help can fade. A sociologist using this lens would look at who gets guidance, whose ways of speaking are valued, and how group practices shape participation. Together, these four lenses connect personal development to social opportunities, moral discussions, reasoning, and shared learning.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How would Erikson's theory change what a sociologist studies about teens joining this group?

2. Using Kohlberg's theory, what difference between the two teens' arguments would a sociologist examine?

3. How could Piaget's theory help a sociologist investigate the group's decision about weekend hours?

4. How would Vygotsky's theory change what a sociologist notices about the newcomers' work?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a situation outside a library in which young people make a group decision. In four or five sentences, apply two named theories from the passage to explain different parts of the situation and state what a sociologist could investigate.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.S.5c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each theorist's name, then underline one phrase for each that shows how the theory could change a sociologist's study of the teen group. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How would Erikson's theory change what a sociologist studies about teens joining this group?	**The sociologist would examine how group roles let teens explore their identities and whether some teens have fewer chances to join.**
2	Using Kohlberg's theory, what difference between the two teens' arguments would a sociologist examine?	**The sociologist would compare their reasons: one emphasizes following rules to maintain order, while the other appeals to fair access.**
3	How could Piaget's theory help a sociologist investigate the group's decision about weekend hours?	**The sociologist could examine how teens use hypothetical thinking to consider what might happen if the hours change.**
4	How would Vygotsky's theory change what a sociologist notices about the newcomers' work?	**The sociologist would examine how guidance and language help newcomers learn to survey users, including who receives that help.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a community garden, teens must decide who will lead the first planting day. Erikson's theory suggests that trying the leader role could help a teen explore their identity. An experienced gardener helps new members plan jobs they could not yet organize alone, which fits Vygotsky's theory of learning through guided interaction. A sociologist could investigate who gets to try leadership and who receives planning help.

Accept answers that accurately connect each theory to what a sociologist would investigate, even if students use different wording. For the open task, look for an original group decision and two distinct, accurate applications.