One Act, Three Lenses

Analyze how sociologists explain a missed bus fare.

SS24.S.6a "Analyze deviance from each of the three sociological perspectives (interactionist, functional, and conflict)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail that each perspective would study, and number those details 1 for interactionist, 2 for functional, and 3 for conflict. Notice how the three perspectives ask different questions about the same act.

The Fare Maya Missed

1. At a crowded bus stop in an imagined city, Maya steps onto a bus without paying the fare because her transit card has no funds. A driver calls her a "fare dodger," while a friend says she is trying to get to work. An interactionist perspective asks how people give an act meaning through words and everyday encounters. If other riders repeat the driver's label, Maya may be treated as untrustworthy even outside the bus. If a neighbor instead offers help, she may not take on that label. This perspective studies how reactions can shape identity, not just why the fare was missed.

2. A functional perspective asks how a rule and reactions to breaking it affect the whole transit system. Fares help pay for service, so a rule against riding without paying supports a shared expectation: riders contribute to a service they use. A public warning could remind passengers of that expectation and strengthen support for the rule. Yet a costly fine for a missed fare could keep Maya from getting to work, creating another problem for the community. This perspective weighs ways responses can preserve order against harms those responses may cause. It does not assume that every penalty benefits everyone.

3. A conflict perspective asks who has the power to make rules and who carries the costs. In this imagined city, the transit board sets fares, and employers set work start times. Maya has little say in either decision, but a fine would take a large share of her week's pay. A rider with more money could pay the same fine without missing rent. Conflict analysis would ask whose interests the fare policy protects and whether the penalty burdens low-income riders more heavily. It might also ask why the board chose fines instead of lower fares or more discounted passes.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the driver's and friend's different reactions help explain Maya's act from an interactionist perspective?

2. From a functional perspective, how might a public warning help the transit system, while a costly fine might harm the community?

3. Why would a conflict perspective question giving Maya and a wealthier rider the same fine?

4. If Maya receives a fine, what would an interactionist perspective investigate that a conflict perspective would investigate differently?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A school bans students from selling homemade snacks. One student sells muffins after school to pay for a club trip. In 5 to 6 sentences, explain how interactionist, functional, and conflict perspectives might analyze the rule and the student's act. Include one specific question each perspective would ask.

ANSWER KEY

One Act, Three Lenses

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail that each perspective would study, and number those details 1 for interactionist, 2 for functional, and 3 for conflict. Notice how the three perspectives ask different questions about the same act. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the driver's and friend's different reactions help explain Maya's act from an interactionist perspective?	**The driver labels Maya a "fare dodger," while her friend sees someone trying to get to work. Those reactions give her act different meanings and may affect how others treat her.**
2	From a functional perspective, how might a public warning help the transit system, while a costly fine might harm the community?	**A warning could reinforce the expectation that riders pay for a shared service. A costly fine could keep Maya from getting to work, creating another community problem.**
3	Why would a conflict perspective question giving Maya and a wealthier rider the same fine?	**The fine would take a large share of Maya's pay, while the wealthier rider could pay it without missing rent. The same penalty would place unequal burdens on them.**
4	If Maya receives a fine, what would an interactionist perspective investigate that a conflict perspective would investigate differently?	**An interactionist perspective would investigate how people label and treat Maya after the fine. A conflict perspective would investigate who sets the penalty and how its costs fall on riders with different incomes.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

An interactionist perspective would study whether classmates call the student a rule-breaker or a helpful fundraiser. It would ask how those labels affect the student's treatment at school. A functional perspective would consider whether the ban supports orderly sales or food safety, but also whether it limits ways to fund club trips. It would ask what benefits and harms the rule brings to the school. A conflict perspective would examine who made the ban and who can afford to follow it. It would ask whether students with less money have fewer other ways to pay for trips.

Accept different conclusions when students use each perspective accurately and support their reasoning with the scenario. Functional analysis should consider effects on the group, interactionist analysis should address meaning or labels, and conflict analysis should address power or unequal burdens.