Personality in Focus

Compare how theories explain patterns and choices.

P.5.1 "Identify the major personality theories involved in the study of personality and describe the main characteristics of these theories, differentiating trait theory."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each theory's name and circle the words that describe its focus. Number the theories as you find them so you can compare them.

Why Do People Act Differently?

1. Why does one student volunteer to lead every group project while another hangs back? Personality theories offer different ways to explain patterns in thinking and behavior. Trait theory describes relatively stable characteristics, such as sociability or carefulness, that vary from person to person. It asks how strongly someone shows a trait across situations, rather than tracing one hidden cause. A classmate who often starts conversations might score high on sociability, even if that classmate sometimes prefers quiet.

2. Psychodynamic theory emphasizes unconscious conflicts and early experiences. Someone's sharp reaction to a harmless joke might, in this view, reflect feelings they do not fully recognize. Humanistic theory focuses instead on conscious choices, personal meaning, and the drive to grow. It might ask whether a person has opportunities to pursue a valued goal. Neither approach mainly sorts people by stable traits. Each looks for a different kind of explanation.

3. Behaviorist theory focuses on learned behavior shaped by rewards and other consequences. A student who earns a prize for practicing piano may practice more. Social-cognitive theory adds that thoughts, expectations, and surroundings influence one another: another student may expect an audition to go well, practice more, and revise plans after feedback. Unlike trait theory, these approaches emphasize learning or the exchange between a person and a situation, not just a person's typical pattern.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. A student describes Lee as organized across several classes. Which theory fits this description, and what does it focus on?

2. A counselor suggests that feelings outside a student's awareness affect the student's behavior. Which theory fits, and how does it differ from trait theory?

3. One researcher studies how extra credit affects completed assignments. Another studies how a student's expectations and classmates' reactions affect the student's choices. Name and distinguish the two theories.

4. A student joins a club to pursue a meaningful personal goal. Which theory best explains that choice, and how is its focus different from trait theory?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a person and one specific situation not described in the passage. In two sentences, explain how trait theory and one other theory would focus on different things about that person.

Personality in Focus

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each theory's name and circle the words that describe its focus. Number the theories as you find them so you can compare them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	A student describes Lee as organized across several classes. Which theory fits this description, and what does it focus on?	**Trait theory fits because it describes a relatively stable characteristic shown across situations.**
2	A counselor suggests that feelings outside a student's awareness affect the student's behavior. Which theory fits, and how does it differ from trait theory?	**Psychodynamic theory fits. It emphasizes unconscious influences rather than stable characteristics.**
3	One researcher studies how extra credit affects completed assignments. Another studies how a student's expectations and classmates' reactions affect the student's choices. Name and distinguish the two theories.	**The first is behaviorist theory, which focuses on consequences that shape learned behavior. The second is social-cognitive theory, which considers the interaction of thoughts, behavior, and surroundings.**
4	A student joins a club to pursue a meaningful personal goal. Which theory best explains that choice, and how is its focus different from trait theory?	**Humanistic theory fits because it focuses on personal meaning, choice, and growth rather than stable traits.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Jordan regularly double-checks plans for weekend hikes, so trait theory would describe Jordan as careful across situations. Social-cognitive theory would instead examine how Jordan's expectations about trail risks and feedback from fellow hikers shape each choice.

Accept other accurate theory matches when the explanation identifies that theory's focus. Part 3 should use an original situation and distinguish a stable trait from another theory's explanation.