Seeing Social Patterns

How sociology became a field of study

S.1.1 "Define sociology and trace its development as a distinct discipline."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the definition of sociology, circle two social changes that helped prompt its development, and number the contributions of Comte, Durkheim, and Du Bois in the order they appear.

From Personal Problems to Social Questions

1 Imagine a city where rents rise and several families share one apartment. One person may explain the crowding by pointing to a family's choices. Sociology asks a different kind of question: How do wages, housing rules, and patterns of inequality shape what many families can afford? Sociology is the systematic study of social life, including groups, institutions, and relationships. Sociologists look for patterns across people, not just details about one person. They use evidence such as interviews, records, and surveys to test explanations. This approach can connect a private difficulty to conditions shared by a community.

2 In the nineteenth century, European cities grew quickly as factories drew workers from rural areas. Crowded housing, new jobs, and clashes over political power raised questions that older explanations did not fully answer. French thinker Auguste Comte introduced the term sociology in the 1830s and argued that society could be studied systematically, much as the natural world was studied. His proposal did not create a finished science overnight. It helped shift discussion from what society ought to be toward questions about how social patterns form and change. Sociology grew distinct as people sought evidence-based explanations for rapid social change.

3 Later researchers gave the new field its own studies and methods. Émile Durkheim compared suicide rates among groups and argued that differences in social ties could help explain differences in those rates. His 1897 book *Suicide* showed how a seemingly personal act could be examined as a social pattern. In the United States, W. E. B. Du Bois used surveys and other evidence in his 1899 study *The Philadelphia Negro* to investigate Black residents' lives and the effects of discrimination. Their work helped establish sociology as a discipline that tests claims about social conditions rather than relying only on opinion.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Define sociology. How does its approach to crowded housing differ from an explanation based only on a family's choices?

2. How did changes in nineteenth-century Europe help sociology develop as a distinct field?

3. What did Comte contribute, and how did his proposal point toward a distinct field of study?

4. How did Durkheim's and Du Bois's research move sociology beyond Comte's proposal?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A school district finds that bus riders are late more often than students who walk. In 4 to 5 sentences, define sociology, explain why it emerged as a distinct field, and link one early scholar's approach to evidence you would gather to investigate this pattern.

ANSWER KEY

Seeing Social Patterns

HIGH SCHOOL · S.1.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the definition of sociology, circle two social changes that helped prompt its development, and number the contributions of Comte, Durkheim, and Du Bois in the order they appear. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Define sociology. How does its approach to crowded housing differ from an explanation based only on a family's choices?	**Sociology systematically studies social life, including groups, institutions, and relationships. It examines shared conditions such as wages and housing rules, rather than only one family's choices.**
2	How did changes in nineteenth-century Europe help sociology develop as a distinct field?	**Factories drew workers to growing cities, where crowded housing, new jobs, and political clashes raised questions that called for evidence-based explanations.**
3	What did Comte contribute, and how did his proposal point toward a distinct field of study?	**Comte introduced the term sociology in the 1830s and proposed studying society systematically, shifting attention toward explanations of how social patterns form and change.**
4	How did Durkheim's and Du Bois's research move sociology beyond Comte's proposal?	**They carried out evidence-based studies: Durkheim compared suicide rates among groups, while Du Bois used surveys and other evidence to investigate Black residents' lives and discrimination.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Sociology is the systematic study of social life and patterns among groups. It emerged as a distinct field when industrial growth and expanding cities raised new questions about society. Durkheim showed that comparing rates among groups can reveal social patterns behind actions that seem personal. I would compare arrival records for bus riders and walkers, then examine bus schedules and school start times. This evidence could test whether transportation conditions help explain the difference.

Accept accurate definitions that emphasize systematic study of social life. For the open task, accept any relevant early scholar if the response connects that scholar's contribution to a workable investigation of the new situation.