Seats and Signals

Build a sociological report from observations and careful claims.

S.1.7 "Prepare original written and oral reports and presentations on sociological topics."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the report's main claim, number two observations that support it, and circle a phrase that limits what the report can conclude.

Who Gets a Seat?

1. At a school cafeteria, the same students often sit together, but the pattern may reflect more than friendship. This model report asks: How might an unwritten rule shape where students sit at lunch? Imagine a researcher observing one lunch period without recording names. Three students enter a half-full room, pause beside a large table, and move to a smaller table after seeing backpacks on the open chairs. Later, another student approaches the large table, and someone there moves a backpack off a chair. These imagined details suggest that small signals can make a table seem open to some people and closed to others.

2. A sociological report connects observations to a social idea instead of guessing what anyone feels. Here the idea is a norm, an informal expectation about how people should act. The backpacks on the chairs and the moved bag could signal who is welcome to sit at the large table. That is an interpretation, not proof that anyone meant to exclude a classmate. Students might choose the smaller table because it is quieter or closer to a friend. Because the scene covers only one imagined lunch period, the report cannot show whether this pattern occurs on other days or in other schools.

3. To prepare a written report, the researcher would state the question, describe the two observed moments, explain the possible norm, and note the limits. The report should avoid names because the point is a social pattern, not a judgment about particular students. In an oral presentation, a speaker can begin with a concrete scene: "Picture a student searching for a place to sit while backpacks cover the nearest chairs." The speaker can then name the tentative claim and explain why other explanations remain possible. Asking listeners what else they would need to observe invites discussion without turning a single scene into a rule about every cafeteria.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What question guides this report, and what sociological idea does the writer use to explore it?

2. Which two observed moments could you include as evidence for the report's main claim?

3. What limit should the writer explain when sharing this report, and why does it matter?

4. Write a one-sentence spoken opening that states the report's claim without presenting it as a proven pattern.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a shared school space other than the cafeteria and write a six-sentence mini-report based on an imagined observation. Start with a sociological question, give two specific details, explain a possible norm, acknowledge one limit, and end with a sentence you could say aloud to open a presentation.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the report's main claim, number two observations that support it, and circle a phrase that limits what the report can conclude. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What question guides this report, and what sociological idea does the writer use to explore it?	**The report asks how an unwritten rule might shape lunch seating. It uses the idea of a norm.**
2	Which two observed moments could you include as evidence for the report's main claim?	**Three students move to a smaller table after seeing backpacks on open chairs. Later, someone moves a backpack off a chair when another student approaches.**
3	What limit should the writer explain when sharing this report, and why does it matter?	**The scene is imagined and covers only one lunch period, so it cannot establish a pattern across other days or schools.**
4	Write a one-sentence spoken opening that states the report's claim without presenting it as a proven pattern.	**In this imagined lunch scene, backpacks may signal which seats feel open, but one lunch period cannot prove a lasting pattern.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Who gets to use the benches outside our school library during the morning break? In this imagined observation, two students sit on one bench while three others stand nearby and check their phones. When the seated students leave, the standing group takes the bench, although another bench farther away is empty. The shaded bench may be treated as the group's usual meeting place, a norm that shapes access to space. One imagined morning cannot show whether that norm holds on other days, and the group may simply prefer the shade. Picture a busy break area where one empty bench still feels unavailable.

Accept different plausible interpretations if students connect them to details in the passage and distinguish a possible norm from a proven fact. For the mini-report, check for six sentences, two concrete imagined details, a cautious explanation, a limit, and a spoken opening.