Who Am I Becoming?

How social experiences shape self-concept

S.3.2 "Explore the contributions of George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley to the development of theories of self-concept and how the self-concept is formed."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentences that explain Cooley's three-step process, and circle the sentences that show how Mead's role-taking shapes Maya's actions.

Maya Joins the Newspaper

1. On the first day of the school newspaper, Maya reads her article aloud and watches her classmates' faces. She wonders whether they see her as a careful writer. She then imagines that their quiet expressions mean they are unimpressed, and she feels embarrassed. Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley called this kind of process the *looking-glass self*. We imagine how we appear to others, imagine how they judge us, and develop feelings about ourselves in response. The judgment we picture may not match what others actually think. Still, that imagined judgment can shape Maya's view of herself as a writer.

2. Sociologist George Herbert Mead explained self-concept through *role-taking*, learning to see a situation from another person's point of view. A child first practices the roles of particular people, such as a parent or teacher. Later, in organized group activities, the child must consider several roles and shared rules at once. Mead called the wider community's shared expectations the *generalized other*. As Maya edits the newspaper, she considers what readers need, what writers mean, and what the staff's standards require. By using those viewpoints to guide her work, she learns to see herself as a responsible editor.

3. Cooley and Mead both treated the self as something formed through social interaction, not as a fixed trait present at birth. Their explanations emphasize different parts of that process. Cooley highlights Maya's feelings about how she thinks classmates judge her article. Mead highlights her growing ability to take other people's roles and follow the expectations of a group. Suppose a classmate later says the room was quiet because everyone was listening closely. Maya may rethink her imagined judgment and feel more confident. As she keeps editing, the habits she learns from working with others may also change how she understands herself.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Trace the three parts of Cooley's looking-glass self in Maya's reaction to reading her article.

2. How does Maya's editing work illustrate Mead's role-taking and generalized other?

3. What different parts of Maya's developing self-concept do Cooley and Mead help explain?

4. Why might Maya feel more confident after a classmate explains the quiet room? Connect your answer to Cooley's theory.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a situation outside a school newspaper in which someone joins a group. In five sentences, show how an imagined judgment affects that person's self-concept using Cooley's theory, and how considering others' roles or group expectations affects it using Mead's theory.

Who Am I Becoming?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentences that explain Cooley's three-step process, and circle the sentences that show how Mead's role-taking shapes Maya's actions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Trace the three parts of Cooley's looking-glass self in Maya's reaction to reading her article.	**Maya wonders whether classmates see her as a careful writer, imagines they judge her article poorly, and feels embarrassed.**
2	How does Maya's editing work illustrate Mead's role-taking and generalized other?	**She considers readers' and writers' viewpoints, along with the newspaper staff's shared standards, to guide her work.**
3	What different parts of Maya's developing self-concept do Cooley and Mead help explain?	**Cooley explains how Maya's imagined judgment affects her feelings about herself. Mead explains how taking others' roles and following group expectations helps her see herself as an editor.**
4	Why might Maya feel more confident after a classmate explains the quiet room? Connect your answer to Cooley's theory.	**She may realize that she imagined a negative judgment when her classmates were actually listening closely. Rethinking that judgment could change how she feels about herself.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

When Luis joins a neighborhood soccer team, he misses a pass during practice. In Cooley's looking-glass process, he imagines that his teammates think he is unreliable and starts to doubt his ability. Following Mead's idea of role-taking, he considers what the goalkeeper and defenders need from him and changes his position. He also follows the team's shared rule of calling out when a player is open. His imagined judgment lowers his confidence, but considering others' roles and the team's expectations helps him see himself as a dependable teammate.

Accept other accurate examples of imagined judgment for Cooley and role-taking or shared group expectations for Mead. Students should distinguish what a person imagines others think from what others actually think.