Who Gets In?

Read how beliefs about fairness can shape access to opportunity.

S.4.1 "Define stratification as understood in sociology and describe its connection to ideology."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show unequal access to the club, circle a belief that calls the system fair, and number the sentences that describe a different view of fairness. Use your marks to trace the connection between stratification and ideology.

A Seat in the Club

1. At a city library, a free coding club fills up minutes after registration opens. Some families have flexible work hours and reliable internet, so they see the announcement and sign up quickly. Others depend on shared phones or work shifts that make registration harder. The pattern is not simply about which teen likes coding most. In sociology, **stratification** means the patterned ranking of groups that gives some people greater access to valued resources, opportunities, or power. A club seat is one small resource. Repeated differences in access across schools, jobs, and neighborhoods can shape a person's chances over time.

2. Now imagine the library has funding for only one club. A council member says, "The families who got seats worked hardest to find them, so the system is fair." This claim expresses an **ideology**, a set of connected beliefs about how society works and what it should reward. The claim treats unequal access as the result of individual effort. Yet registration depends partly on internet access and free time, which families do not have equally. When leaders accept the council member's view, they may keep the same sign-up system because they see no unfair barrier to fix.

3. Other residents argue that public programs should offer a fair chance to families with different schedules and resources. They suggest opening registration in person and reserving some seats for people who cannot sign up online. Their view is also ideological: it connects a belief about fairness to a proposal for distributing opportunities. Neither belief changes who currently has a club seat, but each can influence what people think the pattern means and which policies they support. Ideology can justify stratification by calling an unequal pattern fair, or challenge it by pointing to barriers and calling for change.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could the club's sign-up process contribute to stratification, rather than simply reflect which teens like coding?

2. What belief makes the council member see the sign-up system as fair? Which barrier does that belief overlook?

3. How does the other residents' view of fairness challenge the current sign-up system?

4. How could the council member's ideology help keep unequal access to the club in place?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a city gives paid summer internships only to students who submit a teacher recommendation. In 4 to 5 sentences, explain how this rule might contribute to stratification, then describe one ideology that could justify the rule and a different ideology that could challenge it.

ANSWER KEY

Who Gets In?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show unequal access to the club, circle a belief that calls the system fair, and number the sentences that describe a different view of fairness. Use your marks to trace the connection between stratification and ideology. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could the club's sign-up process contribute to stratification, rather than simply reflect which teens like coding?	**Families with reliable internet and flexible schedules can sign up more easily, giving their teens greater access to a valued opportunity. This difference in access could contribute to a broader pattern of unequal opportunities.**
2	What belief makes the council member see the sign-up system as fair? Which barrier does that belief overlook?	**The council member believes families who got seats worked hardest. That belief overlooks unequal access to internet service and free time.**
3	How does the other residents' view of fairness challenge the current sign-up system?	**They believe public programs should give families with different schedules and resources a fair chance. They propose in-person registration and reserved seats for people who cannot sign up online.**
4	How could the council member's ideology help keep unequal access to the club in place?	**If leaders believe effort alone determines who gets a seat, they may see no unfair barrier and keep the sign-up system unchanged.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Students who can easily reach a teacher may be more likely to get recommendations and paid internships. If that access repeatedly favors one group, it could contribute to stratification by giving that group more income and work experience. A belief that recommendations reward personal initiative might make the rule seem fair. A belief that opportunities should not depend on unequal access to teacher support might lead people to offer another way to apply.

Accept answers that distinguish a patterned difference in access from individual interest and connect a belief about fairness to support for or opposition to a rule. For Part 3, students may identify other plausible barriers to getting a recommendation.