Who Does the Care?

Compare family roles across societies and generations

S.5.4 "Explore how gender roles differ in different societies and how they change over time."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one 1950s expectation about parents in each country, then circle one later change in family roles in each country. Write 1 beside Sweden's leave policy and 2 beside the U.S. federal leave policy to track differences across time and place.

Parents, Work, and Changing Expectations

1. In the United States in the 1950s, a common image of family life showed a father earning wages and a mother caring for children at home. This image never described every household: many women worked for pay, and families divided tasks in different ways. Still, married women often faced pressure to leave paid jobs when children arrived. By the 2020s, many mothers remained in paid work, and more fathers took an active role in daily care. Yet mothers still tended to spend more time on childcare than fathers. Changing behavior has not erased every older expectation.

2. Sweden also had a strong expectation in the 1950s that mothers would manage home and children while fathers earned wages. As more women entered paid employment, lawmakers changed the support available to parents. In 1974, Sweden introduced parental insurance that allowed either parent to take paid leave to care for a child. Later reforms reserved some leave for each parent, so one parent could not transfer all of it to the other. These changes made it easier for fathers to take time away from work, although mothers still used more parental leave than fathers.

3. Today, a new parent in Sweden can receive publicly funded income-based benefits during parental leave, with some leave reserved for each parent. In the United States, federal law provides eligible workers with up to 12 weeks of job-protected family leave, but does not require that leave to be paid. Some states and employers offer paid leave, so American families do not all have the same options. These policies shape choices, but they do not dictate them. A Swedish father might take little leave, while an American father might take substantial leave. Comparing societies reveals patterns, not rules about every person.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the common expectation for mothers in the United States change from the 1950s to the 2020s? What older pattern remained?

2. What expectation did Sweden and the United States share in the 1950s? How did Sweden's later leave policy challenge it?

3. Compare the leave available through U.S. federal law for eligible workers with Sweden's parental leave benefits today.

4. Why would it be misleading to say that every father in Sweden takes more leave than every father in the United States?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Design a school family-care night in 75 to 100 words. Describe one activity that challenges a 1950s expectation about mothers and fathers, explain how today's leave options in Sweden and the United States might shape families' care plans, and show why families within either country might make different choices.

Who Does the Care?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one 1950s expectation about parents in each country, then circle one later change in family roles in each country. Write 1 beside Sweden's leave policy and 2 beside the U.S. federal leave policy to track differences across time and place. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the common expectation for mothers in the United States change from the 1950s to the 2020s? What older pattern remained?	**In the 1950s, mothers were often expected to care for children at home. By the 2020s, many mothers remained in paid work, but mothers still tended to spend more time on childcare than fathers.**
2	What expectation did Sweden and the United States share in the 1950s? How did Sweden's later leave policy challenge it?	**Both societies commonly expected mothers to care for children and fathers to earn wages. Sweden's parental insurance allowed either parent to take paid leave, and later reforms reserved some leave for each parent.**
3	Compare the leave available through U.S. federal law for eligible workers with Sweden's parental leave benefits today.	**U.S. federal law provides eligible workers up to 12 weeks of job-protected family leave without requiring pay. Sweden provides income-based benefits during parental leave, with some leave reserved for each parent.**
4	Why would it be misleading to say that every father in Sweden takes more leave than every father in the United States?	**Policies do not determine each family's choices. A Swedish father might take little leave, while an American father might take substantial leave.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At family-care night, adults and teens would plan a week of meals, school pickups, and bedtime routines together. Sharing these tasks would challenge the 1950s expectation that mothers handled childcare while fathers earned wages. A Swedish family might plan around paid parental leave, including time reserved for each parent. An eligible U.S. worker could take federally protected leave, but federal law would not guarantee pay. Our activity would let families create different plans, since work schedules, available benefits, and personal choices vary even among families in the same country.

Accept responses that distinguish broad social patterns from the choices of individual families. For Part 3, check that the proposed activity, historical comparison, policy comparison, and variation among families are all present.