Who Gets Ahead?

Examine what schools do and who benefits.

S.7.5 "Examine one or more important social institutions (e.g., marriage, family, education, health care, judicial system, religion) and their functions for society; consider how conflict theory sees the institution."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways schools serve society, circle two details showing unequal opportunities, and write 1 beside a sentence explaining how power can shape school decisions. Use your marks to compare the functions of education with a conflict theory view.

What Schools Provide, and for Whom

1. At 7:45 a.m., students enter a public high school from different neighborhoods. In biology, they learn how to test a claim with evidence. In history, they practice debating a public decision. Schools do more than teach facts: they help young people develop skills, learn shared rules, and meet people outside their families. A diploma can also signal preparation for jobs or further study. These functions matter to society because employers need trained workers and communities need people who can weigh arguments and participate in public life. Yet the same institution does not work the same way for everyone.

2. Consider two schools in one state. Both offer required science classes, but one can afford more advanced courses and newer lab equipment. The other has fewer course options and older supplies. School budgets may draw on state aid and local tax revenue, among other sources, so funding rules can shape such differences. A student with access to advanced courses may have more chances to build a strong college application. A student without those courses may have fewer chances, even if both students work equally hard. Schools still provide learning, but unequal resources can affect who gains the most from that learning.

3. Conflict theory asks who has power, who receives benefits, and whose interests guide an institution's rules. Applied to education, it would examine how families with more money or influence might secure better school resources or shape decisions about course offerings. It would also ask whether college admissions and employers reward credentials that are easier to earn in well-resourced schools. This view does not claim that teachers intend to create inequality or that students lack effort. Instead, it studies how rules and resources can preserve advantages across generations. A fairer system might give schools with fewer resources extra funding and wider access to advanced classes.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Identify two functions of schools in the passage. How does each benefit society?

2. How could the differences between the two schools affect students' opportunities, even if they work equally hard?

3. How would conflict theory examine the role of families with more money or influence in school decisions?

4. Explain how schools can serve society while also preserving an advantage for some students. Use one detail from the passage for each part of your answer.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A district plans to offer internships only to students who can travel to workplaces after school. In 4 to 5 sentences, explain a function the program could serve, use conflict theory to identify who might gain an advantage and why, and propose one rule that could widen access.

Who Gets Ahead?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways schools serve society, circle two details showing unequal opportunities, and write 1 beside a sentence explaining how power can shape school decisions. Use your marks to compare the functions of education with a conflict theory view. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Identify two functions of schools in the passage. How does each benefit society?	**Schools develop skills needed by employers and help students practice weighing arguments so they can participate in public life.**
2	How could the differences between the two schools affect students' opportunities, even if they work equally hard?	**The school with more advanced courses gives students more chances to strengthen a college application. Students at the other school have fewer such chances.**
3	How would conflict theory examine the role of families with more money or influence in school decisions?	**It would ask whether those families can secure better resources or shape course offerings in ways that benefit their students.**
4	Explain how schools can serve society while also preserving an advantage for some students. Use one detail from the passage for each part of your answer.	**Schools teach skills that employers need, but students at better-resourced schools may have greater access to advanced courses that strengthen college applications.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The internship program could help students learn workplace skills that employers value. Students with reliable transportation might gain more experience, while others could be shut out even if they qualify. From a conflict theory view, this rule could reward students whose families can afford cars or have flexible schedules. The district could provide free bus rides to internship sites so more students can participate.

Accept other passage-supported functions and examples of unequal access. For Part 3, look for a plausible social function, an explanation of who benefits under the travel rule, and a specific change that could widen access.