Growing Minds

Three theories, three ways to understand development

PS.4.3 "Describe the theories of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Erik Erikson regarding human development."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline what each theorist says develops. Then circle one example in each paragraph that shows that idea.

A Garden Through Three Lenses

1. At a school garden, students test whether shade changes how quickly seedlings grow. Jean Piaget's theory describes changes in how children think, not simply how much they know. A younger child using concrete operational thought can sort plants by height and reason about measured results. An adolescent using formal operational thought can also imagine possible causes, predict what might happen if sunlight changes, and plan a test before seeing the result. Piaget proposed that thinking develops through stages as children interact with the world. People may show these ways of thinking at different times and on different tasks.

2. When a class has only one watering can, a student considers taking it from another group's plot. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory focuses on the reasons people give for moral choices, rather than the action alone. At the preconventional level, the student might leave the can to avoid punishment. At the conventional level, the student might leave it because sharing follows class rules and supports trust. At the postconventional level, the student might argue for a fair system of access based on equal rights, even if the current rule favors one group. Kohlberg described a progression in moral reasoning, not a test of whether someone is good.

3. A student who enjoys the garden begins wondering whether to study ecology or pursue art. Erik Erikson's theory describes psychosocial development across eight stages, each centered on a challenge involving the self and other people. During adolescence, the central challenge is identity versus role confusion: exploring interests, values, and possible roles can help a person build a sense of who they are. The student's choice of a club does not settle that challenge once and for all. Erikson proposed that earlier challenges, such as building trust in infancy, and later ones, such as forming close relationships in young adulthood, also shape development.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How would Piaget's theory explain the difference between sorting plants by height and planning a test of a possible cause?

2. In Kohlberg's theory, how do the preconventional and conventional reasons for leaving the watering can differ?

3. How does the student's choice between ecology and art illustrate Erikson's challenge of identity versus role confusion?

4. If the garden student plans a fair watering schedule, what different part of that situation would Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories each examine?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a student planning a community talent show who must decide whether to share a stage slot with a rival. In 4 to 6 sentences, describe how Piaget, Kohlberg, and Erikson would each examine a different part of this situation. Include a specific thought, moral reason, or identity question for each theory.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline what each theorist says develops. Then circle one example in each paragraph that shows that idea. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How would Piaget's theory explain the difference between sorting plants by height and planning a test of a possible cause?	**Sorting plants by height uses concrete operational thought about measured, visible results. Planning a test of a possible cause uses formal operational thought about possibilities not yet observed.**
2	In Kohlberg's theory, how do the preconventional and conventional reasons for leaving the watering can differ?	**The preconventional reason is avoiding punishment. The conventional reason is following class rules and supporting trust.**
3	How does the student's choice between ecology and art illustrate Erikson's challenge of identity versus role confusion?	**Exploring ecology and art lets the student consider interests and possible roles while developing a sense of identity. One club choice does not settle that challenge.**
4	If the garden student plans a fair watering schedule, what different part of that situation would Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories each examine?	**Piaget's theory would examine how the student thinks through possible schedules. Kohlberg's theory would examine the student's moral reasons for calling a schedule fair.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Piaget's theory would examine how the student thinks about possible schedules before trying them. The student might imagine how sharing the slot would affect both performances. Kohlberg's theory would examine the reason for sharing, such as a belief that both performers deserve fair access. Erikson's theory would examine how the choice connects to the student's developing identity. The student might ask whether being a supportive performer matters more to them than winning the rival's attention.

Accept accurate explanations in students' own words. For Part 3, look for distinct applications of thinking, moral reasoning, and identity, rather than three descriptions of the same choice.