Society Under Study

How new questions and methods shaped sociology

S.1.1 "Describe the development of the field of sociology as a social science, including the contributions of leading theorists within sociology."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the social changes that prompted sociology, circle each named thinker, and number the descriptions of their contributions in the order they appear.

How Sociology Took Shape

1. Imagine a crowded nineteenth-century factory town: workers arrive from farms, families share small rooms, and strangers must learn to live together. Industrialization, growing cities, and political revolutions raised new questions about how societies change. Earlier thinkers had debated social life, but in the 1830s Auguste Comte gave the study of society the name sociology. He argued that researchers should study social patterns through observation and evidence rather than rely only on speculation. His call to investigate society systematically helped establish sociology as a social science, even though later sociologists disagreed about which methods and questions mattered most.

2. Karl Marx examined the factories that reshaped Europe. He argued that owners and workers had conflicting interests because owners controlled production while workers sold their labor. For Marx, these class conflicts helped drive social change. Émile Durkheim asked a different kind of question: how do people remain connected as traditional communities change? In his study of suicide, he compared rates across groups, not just individual stories, and linked patterns to social ties and regulation. His work showed how evidence about groups could reveal social forces that are hard to notice in any one person's choices.

3. Max Weber argued that numbers alone could miss the meanings people give to their actions. He studied how beliefs and institutions, including bureaucracies, shape modern life. In the United States, W. E. B. Du Bois used surveys and detailed neighborhood research in Philadelphia to investigate Black residents' lives and challenge claims that racial inequality resulted from individual failings alone. Jane Addams, who helped found Chicago's Hull House, combined community research with efforts to address poverty and immigrant needs. Their work broadened the field's questions and showed that sociologists could study institutions, lived experiences, and inequality with evidence.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Comte's approach help move the study of society beyond debate alone?

2. How did Marx and Durkheim focus on different problems in changing societies?

3. What could Weber's approach add to Durkheim's comparison of rates across groups?

4. How did Du Bois and Addams expand what sociologists studied or how they studied it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose two thinkers from the passage. In one paragraph, explain a different question each might ask about why students choose certain cafeteria tables and name evidence each could collect.

ANSWER KEY

Society Under Study

HIGH SCHOOL · S.1.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the social changes that prompted sociology, circle each named thinker, and number the descriptions of their contributions in the order they appear. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Comte's approach help move the study of society beyond debate alone?	**Comte called for systematic observation and evidence to study social patterns, helping establish sociology as a social science.**
2	How did Marx and Durkheim focus on different problems in changing societies?	**Marx focused on conflict between owners and workers as a force for change. Durkheim focused on social connections and used group patterns to study their effects.**
3	What could Weber's approach add to Durkheim's comparison of rates across groups?	**Weber's approach could examine the meanings people give their actions, which group rates alone might miss.**
4	How did Du Bois and Addams expand what sociologists studied or how they studied it?	**Du Bois used surveys and neighborhood research to investigate racial inequality. Addams combined community research with work addressing poverty and immigrant needs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Durkheim might ask whether students with strong club or team ties usually sit with other members. He could compare seating patterns among groups and ask students about their connections to classmates. Weber might ask what sitting at a particular table means to the students who choose it. He could interview students about whether a seat signals friendship, comfort, or status. These two approaches would investigate both social ties and students' own explanations instead of guessing why the tables form.

Accept other pairs of thinkers when each question and proposed evidence fit that thinker's contribution as described in the passage. Students need not predict what the evidence would show.