Who Shapes the Plaza?

Groups, public space, and sociological perspectives

S.2.4 "Describe various subcultures, counter cultures, and social movements, and explain their influence according to sociological perspectives."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline practices that identify each group, circle actions or rules that affect plaza life, and number each distinct sociological perspective the first time it appears.

A Plaza for Everyone?

1. After school, skaters gather at a city plaza. They share names for tricks, teach newcomers how to fall safely, and recognize one another by worn boards and stickers. These shared practices make skating a subculture, a group with its own habits within a larger society. Skaters do not have to reject the wider society to belong. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, people build shared meanings through everyday contact. A sticker may signal friendship to another skater but look like litter to a passerby. Those different meanings affect who feels welcome at the plaza and how neighbors talk about its use.

2. On weekends, a local punk collective holds free concerts near the plaza. Its members repair old clothes, share equipment, and turn down offers to put company logos on their shows. They openly challenge the idea that every public gathering must sell something. This makes the collective a counterculture, a group that rejects an important value or practice in the wider society, not just a group with distinctive tastes. A conflict perspective asks who has power over the plaza. Business owners can pressure the city to limit concerts, while the collective has fewer resources to defend free public events.

3. After a proposed ban on both skating and concerts, skaters, musicians, and neighbors form the Open Plaza Coalition. For months they collect signatures, speak at council meetings, and request posted safety rules instead of a ban. This organized push for lasting policy change is a social movement, not simply a shared style. The council eventually allows skating during set hours and permits small concerts with noise limits. From a functionalist perspective, these rules help different groups share a public space with less conflict. From a conflict perspective, the partial victory also shows how less powerful residents can challenge city decisions through collective action.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why are the skaters a subculture, and how might a symbolic interactionist explain the effect of their stickers?

2. What makes the punk collective a counterculture rather than only a subculture? Use the conflict perspective to explain one challenge it faces.

3. Why is the Open Plaza Coalition a social movement? How would a functionalist explain the council's new rules?

4. How do symbolic interactionism and the conflict perspective explain different influences on who can use the plaza?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a school group that does not appear in the passage. In 4 to 5 sentences, describe its practices or goal, classify it as a subculture, counterculture, or social movement, and explain one possible effect using a sociological perspective named in the reading.

ANSWER KEY

Who Shapes the Plaza?

HIGH SCHOOL · S.2.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline practices that identify each group, circle actions or rules that affect plaza life, and number each distinct sociological perspective the first time it appears. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why are the skaters a subculture, and how might a symbolic interactionist explain the effect of their stickers?	**Skaters share practices and symbols without necessarily rejecting wider society. Their stickers carry different meanings for skaters and passersby, affecting who feels welcome and how people discuss the plaza.**
2	What makes the punk collective a counterculture rather than only a subculture? Use the conflict perspective to explain one challenge it faces.	**The collective challenges the expectation that public gatherings should sell something. Business owners have more power to pressure the city than the collective has to defend its free concerts.**
3	Why is the Open Plaza Coalition a social movement? How would a functionalist explain the council's new rules?	**The coalition organizes over months to seek lasting policy change. A functionalist would say the hours and noise limits help groups share the plaza with less conflict.**
4	How do symbolic interactionism and the conflict perspective explain different influences on who can use the plaza?	**Symbolic interactionism focuses on how meanings, such as what a sticker signals, affect whether people feel welcome. The conflict perspective focuses on unequal power, such as business owners' ability to pressure the city and residents' efforts to challenge a ban.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A group of students starts a campaign to add water refill stations at school. For three months, they collect signatures and ask the school board to change its facilities plan. This group is a social movement because it organizes people to seek lasting change. From a functionalist perspective, refill stations could help the school meet students' needs while easing crowding at water fountains. The campaign might also help students and staff agree on where the stations should go.

Accept other passage-supported examples of group practices and influences. For the open task, the classification must fit the invented group's actions, and the named perspective must explain a plausible effect.