Us and Them

How group identity can shape judgments and choices

S.4.3 "Explain in-group and out-group dynamics, and how these dynamics can shape behavior, perception, and morality."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two judgments shaped by school membership, circle one action that treats the schools differently, and put a star beside the change that helps students cooperate. Use your marks to track perception, behavior, and fairness.

The Packing Team

1. After a windstorm, students from Northside and Southside high schools met at a community center to pack food boxes. At first, the students wore school shirts and worked beside classmates. When a Northside student asked to move canned food closer to the doors, a Southside student muttered, "They always want to run things." Neither student had met the other before. School loyalty gave each group a quick sense of belonging, but it also turned a practical suggestion into a suspected power grab. Here, an in-group was the school students saw as "us"; the other school became the out-group.

2. Later, a Southside student accidentally dropped a box. Her teammates called it an understandable mistake and helped her repack it. When a Northside student dropped a box, one Southside teammate said, "They are careless." A Northside student made the same kind of judgment about Southside students after seeing a single late arrival. Group membership shaped what people noticed and how they explained it: an in-group member's error seemed temporary, while an out-group member's error seemed to reveal character. One incident was treated as evidence about an entire group, even though both schools had careful and careless volunteers.

3. The divide also changed what felt fair. Some students defended saving the easiest packing jobs for their own classmates, although they would have objected if the other school did the same. A coordinator then formed mixed-school pairs and asked each pair to finish one set of boxes together. As students shared supplies and solved small problems, several began calling themselves the packing team instead of naming their schools. They did not forget where they attended school, but their shared goal made cooperation easier. Working together did not guarantee fairness; it gave students a reason to question snap judgments and apply the same rule to everyone.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did school identity change the way the Southside student understood the suggestion about canned food?

2. Compare the Southside students' responses to the two dropped boxes. How did group membership shape their explanations?

3. Why was saving the easiest jobs for classmates a double standard?

4. How did mixed-school pairs change the way some students saw their group, and how might that affect their behavior?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a situation outside the food-packing event involving two groups. In five sentences, show how an in-group view shapes a judgment, a behavior, and a decision about what is fair, then describe one specific step that could change the dynamic.

Us and Them

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two judgments shaped by school membership, circle one action that treats the schools differently, and put a star beside the change that helps students cooperate. Use your marks to track perception, behavior, and fairness. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did school identity change the way the Southside student understood the suggestion about canned food?	**The student treated a practical suggestion from someone at the other school as an attempt to take control.**
2	Compare the Southside students' responses to the two dropped boxes. How did group membership shape their explanations?	**They treated their classmate's mistake as temporary but called the Northside students careless after one Northside student dropped a box.**
3	Why was saving the easiest jobs for classmates a double standard?	**Some students defended giving their own group the easiest jobs but would have objected if the other school did it.**
4	How did mixed-school pairs change the way some students saw their group, and how might that affect their behavior?	**Some began identifying as one packing team rather than as separate schools. Their shared goal made cooperation easier and gave them a reason to question unfair judgments.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a school play rehearsal, actors call the stage crew "slow" after one missed cue, although an actor also misses a cue. The actors excuse their classmate as tired but treat the crew member's mistake as proof that the whole crew is unreliable. They begin keeping the easiest tasks for actors, even though they would call that unfair if the crew did it. The director pairs one actor with one crew member to check each scene together. Working toward the same opening night may help both groups judge mistakes by the same standard.

Accept different examples of judgments for the marking job if the student can connect them to school membership. For Part 3, look for a clear link from group identity to perception, behavior, and a fairness decision, plus a plausible step toward change.