



Sociology

GCSE to A level

Bridging Work
Year 11 into 12 for 2026/27



Name: _____

Tutor Group: _____

Teacher: _____

WELCOME TO SOCIOLOGY

The purpose of this booklet is to give you essential information and resources for the whole AS Sociology course. This booklet will also help you to understand and develop the skills you will need.

Please remember the following items for **EVERY** lesson – **ESSENTIAL**:

- Relevant work booklets
- A file with your (well organised) notes in
- Pens (highlighters are useful too) and paper

SUPPORT

We hope you enjoy sociology BUT sometimes even the best of students can have problems:

- **Problems with work/essays**
- **Problems understanding concepts**
- **Problems getting your head round sociological ideas and theories**
- **Problems with college in general**
- **Problems in their personal lives**

If any of this applies to you, don't feel there's nowhere to turn – **THERE IS!**

ALL the staff in the Sociology Department will be happy to talk through your concerns or can advise you – so don't panic or think about giving up, **HELP IS AT HAND**.

Come and find us, or e-mail – no problem is ever so big that we can't help, honest!

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EXPECTATIONS

As a part of its quality approach to teaching, the Sociology Department follows a common policy on the setting and marking of work. This code of practice is followed by both staff and students and is aimed to help you achieve success in Sociology.

What we expect of YOU

- ☐ It is expected that your attendance will be 100% - if you are absent you **MUST** inform your tutor (beforehand if possible). If you do miss a lesson for medical or academic reasons it is **YOUR** responsibility to catch up on the work that you have missed.
- ☐ You are expected to spend **FOUR** hours a week per subject on personal study. This time may be directed by homework set by the teacher; otherwise you will be expected to use this time to read around your subject, supplement your notes and ensure that your notes are well organised and complete
- ☐ You will be set an assessment (essay or short answer questions) on a regular basis. If you have been unable to complete the work, you will be expected to inform your teacher prior to the lesson that the work is due in. You must record the outcome of these assessments in your Assessment Tracker.
- ☐ You are expected to manage and organise your work effectively, and to be responsible for keeping your notes, files and assessment pack up to date.
- ☐ You are expected to listen respectfully to your peers in discussions and group work.

What you can expect of US

- ❑ Well prepared and organized lessons with up to date information about contemporary issues relevant to sociology
- ❑ Assessed work will be marked and handed back within TWO weeks of the handing date.
- ❑ We will always be willing to discuss your progress and support your learning.

USEFUL WEBSITES

The following Internet resources are useful and will help with your A Level Sociology course:

Exam board website:

- 🔗 www.aqa.org.uk: contains past papers, exam dates and most importantly EXAMINERS' REPORTS which will tell you where students commonly go wrong/suggest how to improve.

Revision and consolidation of knowledge:

- 🔗 <http://www.s-cool.co.uk/a-level/sociology> (This website also has an iPhone App for revision on the go!)
- 🔗 www.revisesociology.com
- 🔗 <http://www.sociology.org.uk/index.htm>
- 🔗 <http://getrevising.co.uk/resources/areas/sociology>
- 🔗 www.youtube.com/user/TheTEACHERSOCIOLOGY
- 🔗 www.tutor2u.net/sociology

Other useful websites include:

- 🔗 www.bbc.co.uk: Has many sociologically relevant current affairs articles/clips and images
- 🔗 www.guardian.co.uk: A great (and free!) archive for searching for relevant news articles.
- 🔗 www.spreaker.com/show/the-sociology-show The Sociology Show Podcast has Sociologists talking about their work

Welcome to Sociology!

Congratulations! You have completed your GCSEs and have made an exciting choice to continue your studies at A-Level by choosing Sociology.

Over the next two years, you will explore Sociology: the systematic study of society, social groups and human behaviour within a social context. Sociology seeks to understand how society influences the way people think, behave and interact with one another.

By examining patterns, institutions and inequalities, sociologists investigate the forces that shape our everyday lives and the wider world. It is a fascinating subject that encourages you to question assumptions, explore different perspectives and develop a deeper understanding of contemporary society.

As you progress through the course, Sociology will encourage you to:

- develop a critical understanding of society and the social forces that influence behaviour
- question common-sense assumptions and evaluate sociological explanations using evidence
- explore how different sociological perspectives explain social issues and patterns of behaviour
- appreciate the diversity of human experiences across different cultures, communities and social groups
- develop empathy by considering the experiences and viewpoints of people from a range of backgrounds



- understand how sociologists collect and analyse evidence to investigate society
- interpret and evaluate quantitative and qualitative data, drawing well-supported conclusions

Throughout the year, you will develop knowledge and skills in areas including:

- the origins of Sociology and the major theoretical perspectives that explain society
- key sociological concepts, theories, terminology and contemporary research
- research methods, the collection and analysis of social data, and the strengths and limitations of different methods
- the ability to analyse, interpret and evaluate sociological evidence and competing explanations
- ethical issues in sociological research and the challenges of studying human societies
- how sociological knowledge can be applied to understand and address contemporary social issues, inequalities and social change

A-Level Sociology is both challenging and rewarding. It will encourage you to think critically, question the world around you and develop a deeper understanding of how society shapes our lives and how individuals can contribute to social change. We hope you enjoy the journey and discover just how relevant Sociology is to your everyday life and to the communities and societies in which we live.

Activity One: Key Terms

In studying Sociology over the next two years, you are going to encounter lots of new key terms. **Get a head start by researching and finding definitions for these key terms.**

Term	Definition
Sociology	
Culture	
Socialisation	
Norms	
Values	
Social Control	
Functionalism	
Marxism	
Feminism	
Interactionism	
Consensus	
Primary Data	
Secondary Data	
Quantitative Data	
Qualitative Data	
Questionnaire	
Interview	
Observation	
Reliability	
Validity	
Interpretivism	
Positivism	
Hidden Curriculum	
Formal Curriculum	
Labelling	
Streaming	

Setting	
Achievement	
Meritocracy	
Social Class	
Institutional Racism	
Anti-school subcultures	
Educational Policy	
Nuclear Family	
Extended Family	
Family Diversity	
Conjugal Roles	
Division of Labour	
Social Policy	
Childhood	
Domestic Labour	
Patriarchy	
Symmetrical Family	
Family Functions	

Activity Two: What is Sociology?

WHAT IS 'SOCIOLOGY'?

Definition of Sociology:

Isn't Sociology just common sense?

The following are 'common-sense' beliefs that are quite common in Britain today. But are they true or false?

1. There is no poverty in the UK
2. Men and women are equal now
3. Marriage is no longer important to people: there are more divorces nowadays because people don't take marriage so seriously.
4. Schools offer everybody and equal chance of educational success: people who do fail in education do so because they are 'thick' or lazy
5. A person's chances of good health and long life are largely a matter of luck
6. In all societies some people will be unhappy or depressed; therefore rates of suicide will tend to be about the same throughout the world
7. In previous times the family was a stable unit, but today there is a great increase in the proportion of 'broken homes' and single parent families.

So, how does sociology differ from common-sense?

(i) But isn't human behaviour innate/instinctive?

This is known as the nature versus nurture debate. If human behaviour was solely natural, surely behaviour would be the same in all societies. But is it?

List some examples of how behaviour varies across the world:



Sociologists have found that there are very wide differences in societies in customs, values, behaviour and beliefs, e.g. the roles of men and women. Therefore sociologists argue that the behaviour is learnt by individuals as members of society, and from a wide range of **institutions**. Sociologists call this **socialisation**.

(ii) How is it different from other disciplines that study human behaviour?

Tick the appropriate columns to show which statements apply to biologists, journalists, psychologists and/or sociologists:

	Biologists	Journalists	Psychologists	Sociologists
Often produce reports that are <u>biased or one-sided</u> .				
Believe that much of our behaviour is caused by our <u>genetic make-up</u> e.g. we inherit it through our genes.				
Concentrate on understanding the <u>minds of individuals</u> , often considering mental illnesses and abnormalities.				
Are interested in <u>group behaviour</u> , and how large social groups (e.g. social classes) have differing life chances.				
Follow the guidelines set by the <i>British Sociological Association</i> in carrying out <u>thorough and ethical research</u> .				
Their main aim is to encourage people to buy, read and/or watch news reports, and therefore may <u>speculate, exaggerate and/or even act unethically</u> in order to obtain an eye-catching story.				
Believe that it is a person's <u>biological make-up</u> that affects how they act e.g. may blame aggression on a person having too much of the male hormone (testosterone).				
Will argue that human behaviour is caused by <u>socialisation</u> : the process of learning the norms and values of our society by interacting with other people.				
Work with the government & universities to carry out research to <u>identify the causes and consequences of wide scale problems</u> in our society, and recommend solutions e.g. sexism, racism, etc...				
Their research often informs the government when making new social policies (like laws).				

Summary:

Complete the missing words using the word bank below:

- Sociologists delve into areas of social life that we often assume are ‘natural’ and_e.g. the way humans behave.
- Sociologists are generally interested in studying social_____and investigating the effects of society’s institutions (e.g. the_____system) and social processes (e.g. _____and social control) on human behaviour.
- They carry out rigorous and_____research, often based on_____principles. In terms of the *nature versus nurture* debate, most sociologists consider human behaviour to be the result of our _____ and socialisation processes.
- Their work is often focused on investigating social_____and discovering the causes and potential solutions, and can be used to inform social_____.

Word bank:	education	inevitable	nurture	problems	systematic	socialisation
		scientific	groups	policy		

Activity Three: Sociological Perspectives

A theory, for our purpose, is something that explains the relationship between two or more things. A perspective can be defined as a way of looking at and seeing something. To have a perspective, therefore, means to look at something (whatever that thing might be) in a particular way. When we talk about the sociological perspective, therefore, we are talking about the particular way those sociologists, as opposed to non-sociologists to try to understand human social behaviour.

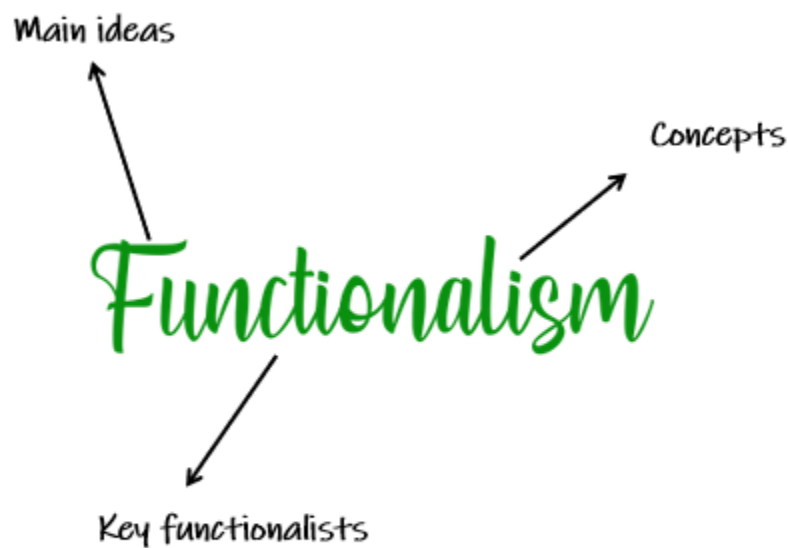
Use the internet to find out about the main sociological theories. For each one summarise the main idea and concepts and the key sociologists (use the following slides to add to your notes):

1. Functionalism
2. Marxism
3. Feminism
4. Which perspective do you agree with; why?

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8dPuuaLjXtMJ-AfB_7J1538YKWkZAnGA

<https://revisesociology.com/sociology-theories-a-level/>

<https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/topics/group/theory-methods-key-terms>



Main ideas

Concepts

Marxism

Key Marxists

Main ideas

Concepts

Feminism

Key Marxists

Which perspective do you mostly agree with, and why?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Activity Four: How have families changed?

Read the below information about families in three different time periods, using it to answer the following questions:

Pre-Industrial Families

Pre-Industrial Families 1600-1800 had large numbers of children. Family life in the pre-industrial period was characterized by the dominance of a family-based economy. All family members worked at productive tasks differentiated by sex and age. No sharp distinction was made between family and society. In addition to its economic task of providing employment, the family performed many functions such as health-care, education, welfare etc.



Family Structure and Household Composition – this consisted of male head of the family, his wife and children, his aging parents (who will have passed on the farm). Together they worked as a productive unit producing the things needed to sustain the family's survival. The key point is the kin relationship during this period is one of binding obligations. The obligation of carrying on working on the farm for the family's survival.

Wives and Husbands – in the early colonial period, marriages were arranged based on the social and economic purposes of larger kin groups. Romantic love was not wholly absent, but marriage was more of a contractual agreement based upon a specific and sharp gender-based division of labour. A shortage of women in this period enhanced the status of women, but despite this, wives were unquestionably subordinate to their husbands.

Children – families of the premodern period reared large numbers of children, but household size was not very large because childbearing extended over a long span of years. Children's religious training was intensive and discipline severe. Childhood was recognized as a separate stage of development, and children, like spouses, were viewed in economic terms. Social class and regional differences, however, are responsible for some variation in the lives of children.

1. **Describe two key characteristics of family life in the pre-industrial period (1600–1800).**

2. **Explain how the roles of husbands, wives and children contributed to the survival of the pre-industrial family.**

3. **Why can the pre-industrial family be described as both an economic unit and a social institution? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.**

Parent-child relationships in the past

Details from the 1841 census show that in towns around Lancaster, more boys than girls aged 10–14 years were employed in paid work. The Lancashire textile industry provided the greatest number of jobs for children, who were employed as cotton mill workers, spinners and weavers.

Few children under the age of 10 years worked in paid employment. According to census figures for England and Wales, in 1851, 36.6 per cent of boys and 19.9 per cent of girls aged 10–14 worked. Many girls were involved in unpaid work at home, for example in housework and childminding, but this was not officially recorded in the statistics.

Poverty may have prevented many parents from sending their children to school. Well into the 20th century, many working-class parents seem to have viewed education as a barrier to their children's paid employment. Many working-class parents sent their children out to work as soon as they could and relied on their children's income.

However, following the introduction of the Education Act of 1918, all children had to attend school until the age of 14 years. Young and Willmott argue that only then did childhood come to be officially recognised as a separate stage in human life.



Children at work in the 19th century.

- 4. According to the text, what types of work did children commonly do during the 19th century?**

- 5. Explain two reasons why many children from working-class families were employed instead of attending school.**

- 6. How did the Education Act of 1918 change childhood, and why did Young and Willmott argue this was an important development? Use evidence from the text in your answer.**

Contemporary parent-child relationships

Some sociologists argue that relationships between parents and children are becoming less authoritarian. There is less emphasis on discipline, obedience and parental authority and more emphasis on individual freedom. Children are seen as important members of the family. They are listened to and their views are taken seriously. It is increasingly recognised that children have rights and are able to contribute to decisions about parental separation and divorce.

Pryor and Trinder (2004) identify class differences in the relationships between parents and children. Middle-class families are more likely to have **democratic relationships**, whereby parents consult their children and involve them in decision-making.

Today, relationships between parents and children are generally more child-centred and focus on the interests and needs of the child. Parent-child relationships are emotionally closer and warmer. The average family size is smaller than it was 100 years ago, so individual children are likely to get more attention from their parents. At the same time, for many parents, full-time parenting is not seen as an option, due to either financial necessity or choice. As a result, many young children are regularly separated from their parents, sometimes for most of the working week.

Childrearing is no longer dominated by economic factors. The minimum school-leaving age was raised to 18 years in 2015 and, although young people may have part-time jobs before they are 16, their working hours are restricted by law. This means that young people are financially dependent on their family for longer, particularly if they go to university. Youth unemployment also makes it more difficult for young people to achieve independence. This can potentially lead to conflict and stress within families.

Sociologists such as Scott (2004) question how far children should be seen as dependent. Children may contribute to childcare and housework, and help out in family businesses. They may also provide emotional support to their parents. Children of **immigrant** parents may be asked to translate for their parents. As a result, it is misleading to see children solely as dependants who contribute nothing within families (see also page 131 on young carers).

7. How do children play a much different role in modern families? Give a real-life example.

8. How might class make a difference to the role of children in the family according to Pryor and Trinder (2004)?

9. How has education impacted the role of raising children in a family?

Task 2: Research 3 government policies which have impacted families in the UK

<https://revisesociology.com/2015/12/17/social-policy-family/>



- The Divorce Act 1969 and 1984

- The Paternity Act 2010

- The Civil partnerships Act 2004 and the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013

Activity Five: What was education like in the past?



Task 1: Watch the YouTube video (QR on right), and read about the government reform of Education in The 1944 Butler Act.

The 1944 Butler Education Act

The aims

The 1944 Education Act aimed to give all students an equal chance to develop their talents and abilities in a system of free, state-run education. The main changes were in the organisation of the secondary sector. The aim here was to introduce a meritocratic system where children would receive an education based on their own academic ability, rather than on the ability of their parents to pay. The result was the tripartite system.

Children's ability was tested at the age of 11 years by the 11-plus exam. Based on the results of this exam, children went to one of three types of school (see table below), each of which was designed to meet their needs. The 11-plus exam still exists in some areas of the country where grammar schools still exist, and much of the private sector uses entry tests.

The tripartite system

11-plus exam		
(taken at age 11 years; designed to test ability and potential of student)		
Based on this, students were placed in either:		
SECONDARY MODERN	SECONDARY TECHNICAL	GRAMMAR
general education for less academic	practical education, e.g. crafts, skills	academic education for more academic
(approximately 75% of students)	(approximately 5% of all students)	(approximately 20% of all students)

Summarise the 3 main impacts of the 1944 Butler Act

-
-
-

Which school would you prefer to attend, and why?

Do you think there would be a relationship between social class of children and the type of school they attended?

Task 2: Be a Sociologist!

Interview an adult older than you (ideally someone over 50!) (parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin) about their school experience.

Record their answers to these questions below.

1. What type of school did they attend?	
2. How was behaviour managed in the school? Was physical punishment used?	
3. Did their type of school prepare them for the world of work?	
4. Did boys and girls do the same subjects in school at this time?	

5. Were there some more interested in education, and others who did not care as much? How did anti-school students behave?

INDUCTION ASSESSMENT

Your task is to write 1-2 page (between 500-1000 words) answer to the following question:

Examine the ways in which the FAMILY and EDUCATION shape the process of socialisation for individuals

1. **Examine** = demonstrate your understanding of the topic area and to make your explanation logical and understandable.
2. You need to try and use as many of the key sociological concepts learnt in the induction programme in your essay as possible (see table below).
3. You will be given a **GRADE** for this piece of work. Good essays not only use the key terms but also explain them and apply them correctly within your answer. A/B grade essays will also include evaluation points e.g. 'however...'

Key Concept	Included?	Key Concept	Included?	Key Concept	Included?
Achieved status		Informal social control		Roles	
Agencies of socialisation		Life chances		Sanctions (- and +)	
Ascribed status		Normal/deviant		Secondary socialisation	
Culture		Norms		Stratification	
Formal social control		Power		Social class	
Identity		Primary socialisation		Values	

Possible essay plan (there is more than one right way to write a good essay, but the structure below is organised and logical):

Introduction	• Decode the question e.g. put it into your own words • Define the key words e.g. what is socialisation? Two types? • Signpost your answer e.g. what are you going to discuss (without saying 'I' or 'This essay will discuss...!')
Para 1	In what WAYS do families socialise people? E.g. what do we learn from our families? E.g. examples of norms and values Include evidence e.g. feral children <i>Possibilities for analysis and evaluation – e.g. do all sociological theories approve of this type of socialisation; do all families socialise children well/the same; do all children live in families?</i>

Para 2	How is this type of socialisation reinforced?
Para 3	In what WAYS does education socialise people? E.g. what do we learn from our education? E.g. examples of norms and values Include evidence <i>Possibilities for analysis and evaluation – do all sociological theories approve of this type of socialisation; do all children receive the same/positive experiences at school; are schools the only type of education; how is this type of socialisation different from that provided by the family?</i>
Para 4	- How is this type of socialisation reinforced.
Conclusion	Answer the original question!

Potential Reading List

Society and Sociological Thinking

- *Sociology: A Very Short Introduction* – Steve Bruce
- *The Sociological Imagination* – C. Wright Mills
- *Freakonomics* – Steven D. Levitt & Stephen J. Dubner

Families and Households

- *The Way We Never Were* – Stephanie Coontz
- *The Second Shift* – Arlie Russell Hochschild
- *All Our Kin* – Carol B. Stack

Education

- *Learning to Labour* – Paul Willis
- *Savage Inequalities* – Jonathan Kozol
- *The Class Ceiling* – Sam Friedman & Daniel Laurison

Crime and Deviance

- *Gang Leader for a Day* – Sudhir Venkatesh
- *Discipline and Punish* – Michel Foucault
- *Code of the Street* – Elijah Anderson

Marxism and Social Inequality

- *Why Marx Was Right* – Terry Eagleton
- *Capitalist Realism* – Mark Fisher
- *The Spirit Level* – Richard Wilkinson & Kate Pickett

Feminism and Gender

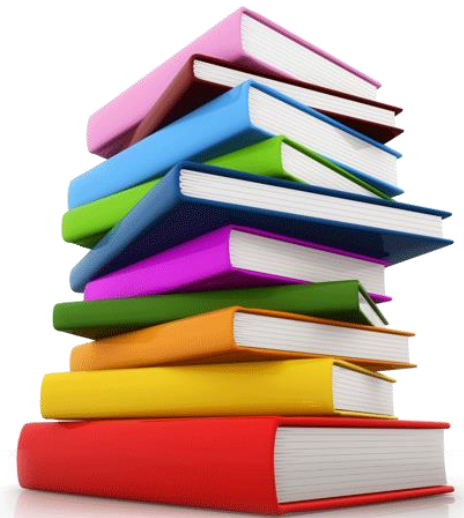
- *The Second Sex* – Simone de Beauvoir
- *Invisible Women* – Caroline Criado Perez
- *We Should All Be Feminists* – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Religion and Beliefs

- *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* – Émile Durkheim
- *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* – Max Weber
- *Religion for Atheists* – Alain de Botton

Contemporary Society

- *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* – Owen Jones
- *The Establishment: And How They Get Away With It* – Owen Jones
- *Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire* – Akala
- *Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging* – Afua Hirsch



Potential Watching List

- **Educating Yorkshire** (and the *Educating...* series) – Examines education, teacher-student relationships, social class and inequality in schools.
- **School Swap: The Class Divide** – Investigates how social class shapes educational experiences and opportunities.
- **Benefits Street** – Explores poverty, welfare, social inequality and media representations of the working class.
- **Growing Up Poor: Britain's Breadline Kids** – Documentary examining child poverty and its impact on family life and education.
- **The Boy Whose Skin Fell Off** – A thought-provoking documentary about disability,
- **13th** – Ava DuVernay's documentary examining race, crime, punishment and inequality within the US criminal justice system, with strong links to sociological theories of crime and power.
- **Louis Theroux: Extreme Love / Law and Disorder / Altered States** (selected episodes) – Investigates a wide range of social issues including families, crime, religion, deviance and identity through immersive documentary filmmaking.

