

Answer Key for In-Text Questions

Chapter 3

Title: Chapter 3 Questions for Review

Question/Prompt: 1. How does culture relate to the social structure of society?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Culture reflects the values and norms that direct the behaviour of people who belong to a particular society. Culture is the repository for a society's thoughts about good and evil, purity and impurity, virtue and vice. It is the way a society forms goals, sets standards, and gives itself meaning. For all these reasons, culture is the foundation of any society and of any person within that society.

Question/Prompt: 2. What is a cultural universal? Provide one example.

Correct Answer Example(s):

A cultural universal is a feature that exists in every culture. For example, athletic sports, bodily adornment, cooking, dancing, and language are all cultural universals.

Question/Prompt: 3. Which theoretical approach argues that culture is fluid, and which argues that culture is stable?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Symbolic interactionism argues that culture is fluid, while functionalism argues that culture is largely stable.

Question/Prompt: 4. What does language tell us about culture?

Correct Answer Example(s):

People use language to express their thoughts, feelings, ideas, plans, and wishes. The structure of a language significantly influences the way people experience the world. Different languages provide people with different ways of organizing and interpreting reality. When children learn to communicate in the language of their culture, they also learn to make the assumptions that permeate their language.

Question/Prompt: 5. How do the mass media shape culture?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Under capitalism, the bourgeoisie—the members of the ruling class—own most of the media and can control which ideas become part of public opinion, or the dominant ideology.
- The bourgeoisie use the mass media to broadcast the ideas that they agree with, making their views seem legitimate, commonplace, and factual.
- Mass media and popular culture have developed together. They both reflect the rise of enormous new audiences with money to spend.

Question/Prompt: 6. What is the difference between cultural capital and cultural literacy? Which is critical?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Cultural capital refers to a body of knowledge and social skills that help people get ahead socially. It often includes learning about and taking part in high culture. In contrast, cultural literacy refers to having enough general knowledge of a society's popular culture to be able to communicate effectively with an adult member of that society.

Among the poorer members of society, gaining cultural literacy, not cultural capital, is often critical. Unlike cultural capital, which is a luxury, cultural literacy is a basic necessity. Without cultural literacy, you may miss the context for what is said in any given conversation.

Question/Prompt: 7. Why do some people consider science to be a part of culture or a kind of subculture?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Science is a socially organized, culturally specific approach to seeking knowledge that follows particular rules. Some people, like Robert Merton, consider science as a social institution that is governed by social norms and cultural values. Like other social institutions, modern science has guiding values, or cultural principles, including communism, universalism, disinterestedness, and organized skepticism.

Title: Chapter 3 Questions for Critical Thought

Question/Prompt: 1. In this chapter we have considered the breadth and importance of culture. Can you name three things that are not a part of culture and not influenced by culture?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer might include or relate to the following points:

- Culture is the foundation of any society and of any person within that society. Some might argue that anything can be influenced by culture.
- Some might say that the following are not a part of culture: the cosmos, the animal kingdom, and human biological drives such as hunger, thirst, and the need for sleep.

Question/Prompt: 2. Some view cultural relativism as a great liberating force in social life, while others criticize the practice. What are the pros and cons of cultural relativism, in your view?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Pros:
 - Challenges ethnocentrism
 - Promotes tolerance
 - Encourages willingness to understand and accept different cultural practices
 - Preserves different cultures
- Cons:
 - Unable to condemn other cultures and societies
 - Able to judge moral actions by consulting one's own culture

Question/Prompt: 3. How would functionalists explain the wide variety of ways people organize one specific cultural feature: for example, values associated with family life or work life? How would conflict theorists explain this same cultural feature?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Functionalism:
 - Functionalism view society as a set of parts that work together to preserve the overall stability and efficiency of the whole.
 - For functionalists, cultural values related to family life or work life play an essential role in society's survival.
- Conflict theory:
 - Conflict theory is mainly concerned with the unequal distribution of wealth and power in a society.

- For conflict theorists, cultural values related to family life or work life, in the form of dominant ideology, can manipulate popular opinion and ensure conformity to maintain inequalities.

Question/Prompt: 4. What, if any, evidence supports the view that language shapes the way we think about the world we live in?

Correct Answer Example(s):

The structure of a language significantly influences the way we experience the world. Different languages provide people with different ways of organizing and interpreting reality. When children learn to communicate in the language of their culture, they also learn to make the assumptions that permeate their language.

Some evidence that language shapes the way we think about the world we live in includes:

- The difficulty in accurately translating the meaning of a text from one language to another; and
- Androcentric or sexist expressions that reveal gender inequality in our society.

Question/Prompt: 5. What evidence, if any, might support the idea that high culture is somehow better than popular culture? What evidence might support the opposite idea?

Correct Answer Example(s):

High culture refers to the subcultural preferences, habits, tastes, values, and norms that are characteristic of, or typically supported by, high-income groups in society. Some people use these cultural associations to preserve and try to improve their social status. In contrast, popular culture takes in all of the cultural artifacts or media content produced for mass audiences. It is made up of content that the majority of people like or enjoy.

Pierre Bourdieu's influential theory about social ranking based on taste and social distinction offers an interesting perspective on high culture and popular culture. Bourdieu argued that taste is socially constructed, rather than an inherent skill or set of values. Consequently, one culture is not inherently better than the other.

Question/Prompt: 6. What are the connections between social capital, cultural capital, and cultural literacy, and how are they different?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Social capital refers to the networks of relations among people who live and work in a community.
- Cultural capital refers to a body of knowledge and social skills that help people get ahead socially. Often, people with a lot of cultural capital also have a lot of social capital.
- Cultural literacy is a solid knowledge of popular or mainstream culture, which contains the building blocks of all communication and learning. Among the poorer members of society, gaining cultural literacy, not cultural capital, is often critical.
- Unlike cultural capital, which is a luxury, cultural literacy is a basic necessity. To be culturally literate is to have enough general knowledge about the world to be able to communicate effectively with an adult member of society.

Question/Prompt: 7. Does the culture of science rest on any moral or spiritual principles that might prevent scientists from harming society?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Some sociologists, like Max Weber and Robert Merton, see the rise of science as similar to, and occurring alongside, the rise of Protestantism and capitalism. And like Protestantism and capitalism, science is not only a way of thinking, it is also a set of social practices.
- Like other social institutions, modern science has guiding values and or cultural principles. For example, Robert Merton identifies communism, universalism, disinterestedness, and organized skepticism as guiding principles. However, modern science often does not follow these principles.
- There has always been a strong relationship between science, culture, and morality. It is not fully objective or separate from cultural bias and influence, and it is not morally neutral.
- Science and technology can work for good or bad social purposes. For example, they have given us remarkable achievements, like modern medicines, but also have brought horrible disasters, like climate change and the risk of nuclear warfare.