4.7 The Tripartite System and Selective Education: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. For extended question 2 write full sentences and include a short conclusion. Total time suggested: 30 minutes.

1 Describe two pieces of evidence sociologists used to argue the tripartite system reproduced class inequality rather than providing equal opportunity between 1944 and 1965.

(Total for Question 1 is 3 marks)

2 In your answer, consider arguments that selection allowed talent to flourish regardless of background and arguments that selection reproduced class divisions. Reach a supported judgement.

(Total for Question 2 is 8 marks)

3 Define the term 'tripartite system' as used in British education policy in the 1940s and 1950s.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Explain one feature that distinguished grammar schools from secondary modern schools in the tripartite system between 1944 and 1965.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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5 The 11-plus examination decided which type of school a child attended at age eleven.

(a) Identify one type of test or skill commonly assessed in the 11-plus examination in the 1944 to 1960s period. **(2)**

(b) Explain one practical consequence for a child who failed the 11-plus in terms of future opportunities in the tripartite system. **(2)**

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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6 Identify and explain one sociological criticism that claimed selection by the 11-plus reproduced class inequality rather than creating a meritocracy in the 1944 to 1965 tripartite system.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.7 The Tripartite System and Selective Education: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

first piece of evidence identified, e.g. statistical patterns showing higher pass rates on the 11-plus for middle-class children	**B1**
development of first piece, e.g. these patterns suggested social background correlated with selection outcomes	**B1**
second piece identified, e.g. qualitative evidence such as interviews showing differences in access to tutoring and cultural knowledge	**B1**

Answer: Evidence included statistical patterns with higher 11-plus pass rates for middle-class children, suggesting social background correlated with selection outcomes, and qualitative interviews showing differences in access to tutoring and cultural knowledge that helped pass the test.

Question 2

Level 1 Basic statements about selection with little development. May assert a single view without supporting evidence or make general claims about fairness or unfairness with no specific examples.	**1-2**
Level 2 Attempts to discuss both sides. Offers some relevant evidence or examples, such as higher pass rates for middle-class pupils or the aim to select by ability, but analysis is limited or unbalanced.	**3-5**
Level 3 Developed evaluation showing understanding of competing arguments. Uses specific evidence, for example statistical differences by social class, differences in access to tuition, limits of technical schools, and the proponent claim about meritocratic selection, and reaches a clear, supported judgement on how far genuine equality of opportunity was achieved.	**6-8**

Indicative content:

- Argument that selection offered equality of opportunity: the 11-plus was presented as a universal test which could allow academically able children from any background to access grammar schools and university routes.
- Counter-argument that selection reproduced class inequality: middle-class children had higher pass rates because of greater resources, private tutoring, and cultural capital; local variation in tests and the rarity of technical schools limited fairness.
- Evidence to use: historical statistics showing class differences in pass rates, documented local variation in 11-plus formats, accounts of tutoring and parental support, and the limited expansion of technical schools.
- Consideration of long-term effects: early selection fixed educational trajectories, reducing later mobility for many who failed the test; community-level effects where many children attended secondary moderns.
- Balanced judgement: on balance, while the system offered some routes for social mobility, strong structural advantages for middle-class children meant it fell short of delivering genuine equality of opportunity for most pupils between 1944 and 1965.

Question 3

identifies that the tripartite system divided secondary education into three types of school, grammar, secondary modern and technical (oe)	**B1**
development, e.g. allocation to these schools was intended to be by testing ability at age eleven, the 11-plus	**B1**

Answer: A system dividing secondary education into three types of school, grammar, secondary modern and technical, with allocation intended to be by ability tested at age eleven via the 11-plus.

Question 4

identifies a distinguishing feature, e.g. grammar schools focused on academic subjects and preparation for higher education	**B1**
development, e.g. they offered O-levels and A-levels aimed at university entry	**B1**
identifies a contrasting feature, e.g. secondary moderns offered more practical or vocational courses and fewer opportunities to take advanced exams	**B1**
development, e.g. secondary modern pupils had more limited routes to higher education or professional careers	**B1**

Answer: Grammar schools focused on academic subjects and preparation for higher education, offering O-levels and A-levels aimed at university entry, while secondary moderns offered more practical or vocational courses with fewer opportunities for advanced exams and limited routes to higher education.

Question 5

(a) identifies a test type, e.g. verbal reasoning, mathematics, or English comprehension	**B1**
(a) brief development, e.g. verbal reasoning tested vocabulary and ability to follow logical word problems	**B1**

(a) Answer: Verbal reasoning (or mathematics or English comprehension) was commonly assessed; verbal reasoning tested vocabulary and logical use of language.

(b) identifies the consequence, e.g. being sent to a secondary modern rather than a grammar	**B1**
(b) development, e.g. this reduced their access to O-levels, higher education and professional careers	**B1**

(b) Answer: Failing the 11-plus typically meant being sent to a secondary modern rather than a grammar, reducing access to O-levels, higher education and professional careers.

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Question 6

identifies a criticism, e.g. middle-class children were more likely to pass the 11-plus	**B1**
development, e.g. because they had more resources such as books, private tutoring and cultural knowledge	**B1**
identifies the implication, e.g. this meant selection reflected social background not pure ability	**B1**
development, e.g. so the system reproduced class divisions across generations rather than being a neutral meritocratic filter	**B1**

Answer: Critics argued middle-class children were more likely to pass the 11-plus because they had more resources, such as books, private tutoring and cultural knowledge, so selection reflected social background rather than pure ability and reproduced class divisions across generations.

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