



GSOC.ED7 The Tripartite System and Selective Education

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 50 minutes

Total Marks

--

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. For extended question 15 write full sentences and include a short conclusion.

Total time suggested: 50 minutes.

- 1** Which government Act introduced the tripartite system of secondary education in England and Wales after World War Two?

- ☐ A) The 1918 Education Act
- ☐ B) The 1944 Education Act
- ☐ C) The 1965 Comprehensive Schools Act
- ☐ D) The 1988 Education Reform Act

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

- 4** 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 4 is 4 marks)

- 5** 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 5 is 4 marks)

- 6** State one feature of technical schools in the tripartite system and give a brief reason why they were less common between 1944 and 1965.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

- 7** Explain one practical difficulty in administering a fair 11-plus test across different local areas in the 1944 to 1965 period.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

- 8** Describe two ways in which parental background could influence a child's chance of passing the 11-plus in the tripartite era, 1944 to 1965.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

- 9** Identify one sociological argument that selection at eleven might limit social mobility under the tripartite system, and give a short explanation.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

- 10** Explain one way teachers or schools could influence 11-plus outcomes for pupils in the tripartite era, 1944 to 1965.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

- 11** State one long-term consequence for local communities where a high proportion of children were sent to secondary moderns rather than grammars during the tripartite era.

(Total for Question 11 is 4 marks)

- 12** Identify two ways policy critics suggested to reduce the unfair effects of selection by the 11-plus in the 1944 to 1965 debate.

(Total for Question 12 is 3 marks)

- 13** Explain one reason why proponents argued selection by the 11-plus did offer some fairness in education in the 1944 to 1965 period.

(Total for Question 13 is 3 marks)

- 14** 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 14 is 3 marks)

- 15** Discuss how far the tripartite system created genuine equality of opportunity in education in England and Wales between 1944 and 1965.

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 15 is 8 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ED7 The Tripartite System and Selective Education

Question 1

- **B1** B (The 1944 Education Act)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** 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
- **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 3

- **B1** 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
- **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 4

- (a) **B1** identifies a test type, e.g. verbal reasoning, mathematics, or English comprehension
- (a) **B1** brief development, e.g. verbal reasoning tested vocabulary and ability to follow logical word problems
- (a) **Answer: Verbal reasoning (or mathematics or English comprehension) was commonly assessed; verbal reasoning tested vocabulary and logical use of language.**
- (b) **B1** identifies the consequence, e.g. being sent to a secondary modern rather than a grammar
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. this reduced their access to O-levels, higher education and professional careers
- (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.**

Question 5

- **B1** 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
- **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.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies a feature, e.g. technical schools focused on technical and vocational subjects
- **B1** brief reason, e.g. they were less common due to limited funding, low numbers established and political or organisational difficulties in setting them up
- **Answer: Technical schools focused on technical and vocational subjects, but they were less common because relatively few were established, partly due to limited funding and organisational difficulties.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies a difficulty, e.g. tests varied between local authorities in style and content
- **B1** development, e.g. this variation made results inconsistent and affected which children gained grammar places depending on where they lived
- **Answer: Tests varied between local authorities in style and content, making results inconsistent and affecting which children gained grammar places depending on where they lived.**

Question 8

- **B1** first way identified, e.g. parents could afford private tuition or extra books
- **B1** development of first way, e.g. tuition and resources improved familiarity with test formats and vocabulary
- **B1** second way identified, e.g. cultural practices at home like reading, visits to museums or encouragement to pursue academic work
- **B1** development of second way, e.g. these practices build the verbal and reasoning skills valued by the test
- **Answer: Parents who could afford private tuition or extra books helped children become familiar with test formats and vocabulary, and home cultural practices such as reading and encouragement to pursue academic work built verbal and reasoning skills valued by the 11-plus.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies an argument, e.g. early selection fixed educational and career paths too soon
- **B1** development, e.g. this meant working-class children who failed the test had fewer later chances to qualify for professional careers, limiting upward mobility
- **Answer: Selection at eleven fixed educational and career paths too soon, so working-class children who failed the test often had fewer later chances to qualify for professional careers, limiting upward social mobility.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies an influence, e.g. teachers could encourage some pupils more than others to take the test seriously or provide practice
- **B1** development, e.g. greater encouragement and preparation could raise a pupil's chance of passing the 11-plus
- **Answer: Teachers who encouraged some pupils more than others or provided additional preparation and practice could raise those pupils' chances of passing the 11-plus.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies a consequence, e.g. fewer people from the area going on to higher education
- **B1** development, e.g. this reduced the number of local residents entering professional occupations
- **B1** further development, e.g. it could entrench local class patterns and limit economic opportunities in the community
- **B1** additional development, e.g. reduced local aspiration for higher education across generations
- **Answer: A high proportion sent to secondary moderns led to fewer people from the area going on to higher education, reducing local entry into professional occupations, entrenching class patterns and limiting economic opportunities and aspiration across generations.**

Question 12

- **B1** first correct suggestion, e.g. standardise tests nationally or improve early-years resources for disadvantaged children
- **B1** second correct suggestion, e.g. delay selection to a later age or introduce comprehensive schools to remove selection entirely
- **B1** brief development showing both suggestions are different
- **Answer: Suggestions included standardising tests nationally or improving early-years resources for disadvantaged children, and delaying selection to a later age or introducing non-selective comprehensive schools to remove selection entirely.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies a proponent reason, e.g. it aimed to match schooling to ability so academically able working-class children could access a grammar education
- **B1** development, e.g. proponents argued this allowed social mobility on merit for those who passed regardless of background

Question 14

- **B1** 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
- **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 15

- **Level 1** (1-2): 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.
- **Level 2** (3-5): 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.
- **Level 3** (6-8): 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.
- **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.