6.7 Forms of Social Stratification: Caste, Feudal and Slave Systems: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences for any question worth 4 marks or more. Allocate about 30 minutes for this paper.

1 Item A: A short public survey on perceived openness of the British class system. Item A data: 60 percent of respondents say people can change class by education, 25 percent say class is fixed by family background, 15 percent are unsure. Using Item A and your own knowledge of social stratification, explain two reasons why many respondents might say education allows class change in modern Britain.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the British class system is genuinely open, allowing movement between classes.

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

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3 Define the term 'caste system' as it is used in GCSE sociology, naming the typical key feature of status transmission.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Identify and explain one feature that distinguishes a caste system from an open class system in a society.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

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5 Explain two features of the feudal estate system in medieval Europe that show it was neither fully open nor identical to a modern class system.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 6.7 Forms of Social Stratification: Caste, Feudal and Slave Systems: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies one reason linked to Item A, e.g. education is seen as a route to better qualifications and higher paid jobs **B1**

develops that reason, e.g. qualifications can give access to professional occupations and therefore higher social status **B1**

identifies a second reason linked to Item A, e.g. policy initiatives and scholarships increase educational opportunities for some from poorer backgrounds **B1**

develops the second, e.g. such policies are perceived to improve social mobility by reducing barriers linked to family background **B1**

Answer: One reason is that education provides qualifications that open access to better paid and professional jobs, raising social status. Another reason is that policies such as scholarships, bursaries and widening participation are seen to increase educational opportunities for people from poorer families, which respondents may view as helping social mobility.

Question 2

Level 1 Limited response. Makes one or two simple points about openness or closure with little sociological explanation or evidence. Little or no use of concepts or examples. **1-3**

Level 2 Some development. Describes reasons why the system might be open and reasons why it might be closed, with basic examples or theory. Some sociological concepts used, but evaluation is limited. **4-6**

Level 3 Clear argument. Presents well developed reasons and evidence both for openness, such as the role of education and meritocratic ideals, and for closure, such as persistent inequalities and inheritance of advantage. Good use of sociological concepts and examples and some evaluation. **7-9**

Level 4 Excellent balanced evaluation. Provides sustained, well supported argument considering multiple sociological perspectives and evidence, for example noting policies that promote mobility, structural barriers that limit it, and that agreement among sociologists is partial. Reaches a supported judgement on how far the British system is genuinely open. **10-12**

Indicative content:

- Points in favour of openness: the open class system idea, achieved status through education and occupation, examples of social mobility via higher education, meritocratic rhetoric in policy and public life, anti discrimination laws increasing equal opportunity.
- Points against openness: evidence of persistent intergenerational inequality, the role of wealth inheritance and home ownership in reproducing advantage, regional inequalities in opportunity, the effects of social capital and networks that favour those born into higher positions.
- Sociological perspectives: note that some sociologists emphasise openness and mobility possibilities without denying barriers, while others argue structural factors make mobility limited; avoid lengthy functionalist or Marxist theory beyond stating general perspectives on mobility.
- Empirical evidence and examples: reference to statistics showing limited mobility or to well known cases of mobility, caution that specific figures are not required but using an example strengthens the answer.
- Evaluation and judgement: weigh the evidence and perspectives, acknowledge that the British system has features that support mobility but also structural limits that mean it is not fully open, and conclude with a supported judgement on the balance.

Question 3

identifies caste system as a closed, hierarchical social system in which social position is fixed by birth, often linked to religious rules (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. notes status is ascribed and passed down within families **B1**

Answer: A caste system is a closed, hierarchical social system where social position is fixed by birth and often regulated by religious rules; status is ascribed and passed down within families.

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Question 4

identifies a distinguishing feature, e.g. status is ascribed in a caste system but achieved in an open class system	**B1**
explains why, e.g. ascribed status is fixed by birth and limits mobility, whereas achieved status can change through individual effort	**B1**

Answer: Status is ascribed in a caste system but achieved in an open class system; ascribed status is fixed by birth and limits mobility, while achieved status can change through individual effort like education.

Question 5

identifies one feature, e.g. status was largely determined by land ownership and birth	**B1**
development of that feature, e.g. land and birth limited upward mobility because estates and titles passed through inheritance	**B1**
identifies a second feature, e.g. reciprocal obligations between lords and vassals structured social life	**B1**
development of that feature, e.g. these obligations tied people into fixed social roles rather than encouraging individual achievement	**B1**

Answer: One feature is that status depended on land ownership and birth, limiting upward mobility because estates and titles were inherited. Another feature is the system of reciprocal obligations between lords and vassals, which tied people into fixed roles rather than encouraging individual achievement and movement.

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