

# Y11 Sociology Bridging Unit



This unit is designed to give you a good grounding in A level Sociology. The tasks will give you a head start and prepare you for the key topics you will encounter in Y12. **Please complete all the tasks. The transition task** at the end of the booklet is **compulsory** and **must be neatly presented and handed in** to your teacher in the **first lesson** in September! This booklet should be completed and printed and stored in your subject file for the first file check In September.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## An Introduction to Sociology

Sociology is the study of human social life. There are many different aspects of Sociology to address, so you must be curious and attentive to looking at the world in a different way! There is usually another way of looking at things – and that is what we do as sociologists. We take normal, taken-for-granted life and turn it upside down, looking for meanings. And very often we end up seeing things very differently.

### Part 1: Social Change

The social world is changing. Some argue it is growing; others say it is shrinking. The important point to grasp is: society does not remain static over time; it constantly changes – through decades, centuries; and across countries, societies.

**Task 1:** *Think of 3 different ways society has changed over the last 100yrs.*

*Name 3 ways in which British society is different to another (America, Italy, etc.)*

*Why has society changed? Why are societies different?*

### Part 2: The Sociological Imagination

We are all sociologists at heart; we can all identify changes between people, cultures, and social institutions. Much of it is common sense or pub man philosophising. Through studying Sociology you can put theory and research to your opinions, supporting your viewpoint. What is useful to start with is to employ what C. Wright Mills (1959) called the “sociological imagination”. Mills suggests

the sociological imagination could help individuals cope with the social world by helping them to step outside of their personal worldview and thus seeing the events and social structure that influence their behaviour, attitudes, and culture.

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**Start as you mean to go on – Do additional research!**

- The secret to A level success is independent study – in other words, doing work the teacher has not set you to do! The Sociology dept expect you to complete additional non-directed work each week.
  - **Watch this video** and make further notes for your file on the Sociological Imagination! [A\\* Sociology: The Sociological Imagination - YouTube](#)
  - Show your teacher your notes in the first file check to get a ripple/point!
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**Part 3: Political and Social Awareness**

You may think that politics is for old boring men who rant and rave and do very little for the country; BUT it doesn't have to be like that. If you have an opinion about something then you are involved in the politics of it. For Sociology, it is important to have some idea of what is going on around you: politically and socially; in the UK and globally. Don't worry; you're not going to transform into a boring nerd!!!! But it does help you to think about what is really going on and why!! If you don't know left wing from right wing it's time to get clued up!

**Task 3:** *Name the three main British political parties. Do you know what ideas they stand for or represent? Which would be classes as "right wing" and which "left wing"? – Find out!*

*Who is the British Prime Minister?*

*If you were in power, what would your first four items be on your agenda? What would you hope to do? Why?*

It is always useful to know what is going on in society around you; locally, nationally and globally.

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### Developing good habits!

Get into the habit of checking out the news headlines every day – become socially and politically aware! Note down examples of inequality, social research findings, major social and political events that arise. Here are some good places to start:

- Visit the BBC news page every day - [www.bbc.co.uk/news](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news)
  - Read newspapers - The Guardian – On Tuesday there is a useful ‘Education’ supplement, and on Wednesday there is a useful ‘Society’ supplement; The Independent; The Times; The Observer; The Telegraph; The Financial Times.
  - Find some news stories that you think have sociological relevance over the summer and make some notes for your file. Show your teacher in the first file check to earn a ripple/point!
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**Task 4:** Consider the following significant events have happened in society in the last 3 – 5 years? - The pandemic; Black Lives Matter; growth in climate change activism.

*What has the media coverage been like?*

*What effect has it had/ have they had on people, and on the UK?*

#### Part 4: Identity

Who are you? Are you part of a group, an individual, a student, a sister, a brother? Identity is about how we see and define ourselves – our personalities – and how other people see and define us. Many aspects of our individual identity are influenced by **agencies of socialisation**. These are **structures or groups of people (such as education, the family, the media, religion, peer groups etc)**.

**Task 5:** *Suggest six examples of structures or groups of people that impact upon you:*

Individuals are like moulded putty, squished and squashed by society and its structures. But there are decisions we make driven by internal motivations. Behaviour that comes from within us – decisions we make in order to do things is called **agency**. Agency behaviour is meaningful and a reflection of self-will. Sometimes we can challenge and oppose structures, and in this way we help construct a part of our identity. List three agency decisions you have made or will make today.

#### Part 5: Nature vs Nurture – The Big Debate

There are many ways of explaining why certain people do things in certain ways. For example, biologists think that people behave as they do because they are controlled by nature. This is known as **Nature theory**. Humans are compared to animals and seen to act on instinct. Sociologists believe that people behave as they do because they are taught how to behave. For example the sociologist Michael Haralambos states: ‘human beings learn their behaviour and use their intelligence whereas animals simply act on instinct’. This is known as a **Nurture theory** of human behaviour. Nurture means the way you were brought up. It is also a reference to socialisation, the lifelong process by which we learn our culture, values, norms and how to behave.

**Task 6:** *Write down a list of things that you were taught by other people about how to behave.*

Sociologists reject nature theories for two particular reasons. If people behaved as they do because of nature, they would all act the same as each other. We know that people do not all act the same: Historically, people acted differently in the past from the way that they do today. They had different ideas and different beliefs.

*Think of two ways in which we are different from people in the past:*

**Anthropology:** this is the study of different human societies. Wherever you go in the world, people act differently from the way they do in Britain.

*Think of/research four ways in which people in other countries are different from people in Britain:*

### **Part 6: Social Behaviour and Culture.**

Sociology is the study of human groups and social life in modern societies. Sociology recognises that as members of society we have to learn social behaviour and this is done through a variety of social institutions and social groups throughout our lives.

**Task 7:** *Imagine a new born human infant cast adrift on a desert island. For the sake of this illustration we will assume that it doesn't become an instant snack for some passing predator! Now, bearing in mind that this baby has had no human contact; can you think of anything that would enable it to survive? Explain why you think the baby would either survive or not survive.*

It should have become clear as you thought about the chances of our fictional baby's survival that humans, more than most other animals, are dependent upon other humans for the most basic needs such as food and shelter.

“We do not arrive in this world equipped with an array of instincts inherited from our parents that will enable us to survive in a potentially hostile environment.” (An instinct can be defined as a complex unlearned pattern of behaviour that is universal in a species.)

*Do you agree with the above statement? Do we have instincts? If so, list as many as you can think of (to get you started, what about the maternal instinct?).*

Look back at the list you have made and see how many of the things have to be learned. If they have to be learned they are not really instincts. Instincts are usually defined as complex patterns of behaviour that do not have to be acquired through someone teaching or instructing us. On the maternal 'instinct' we do not 'instinctively' know how to act as a mother. Little girls learn about mothering via a range of 'learning' experiences (called socialisation) such as how their mother behaves towards them or younger brothers and sisters, toys such as dolls and other related influences. The green turtle lays eggs on a desert island and when the baby turtles hatch they instinctively make their way to the ocean and swim hundreds of miles to join the adult turtles without their mother's presence. Virtually all the things that we do have to be learned from others, for example walking, speaking, knowing what to eat, defending ourselves etc., that our desert island baby is unlikely to survive. We have now established an important principle.

Human behaviour is largely learned through a process called **socialisation**. Therefore what is termed as **culture**, which is our way of life, including the ways in which we behave relates to: - The language we speak - The clothes we wear - The food we eat and whether we eat it with knives, forks and spoons - The homes we live in - To the things we believe about the origins of life - What is good or bad? - Or the ways in which we should be governed. The above are all acquired from other people (this involves the process of socialisation into the culture of our society) It is through our membership of social groups that we acquire an understanding of the ways in which behaviour is patterned and organised and of the values, customs, norms and roles of our society. Sociologists refer to this as culture —the learned, shared behaviour of members of society. Culture is a social blueprint, a guide for living. It refers to all the aspects of human behaviour that are learnt rather than genetically transmitted.

Socialisation is the term that sociologists use to describe the life-long process of learning the culture of any society. Culture is socially transmitted from one generation to the next through the process of

socialisation. The American sociologist Charles Cooley (1864–1929) distinguished two types of socialisation: primary and secondary. These two forms of socialisation are defined partly in terms of the particular groups or ‘agencies’ in which they occur: -

**Primary socialisation:** The Family is the main agency where an individual learns many of the basic lessons for life such as language, how to act as a boy or a girl, how to share and how to love.

**Secondary socialisation:** Associated with the later stages of identity formation, from later childhood and continuing through adulthood. The school is an important example of an agency of secondary socialisation, but all formal organisations, including religion and work, are influential.

**Task 9:** *List 2 ways in which your family teach you something. Similarly, list two ways in which school teaches you something. Don't be a smart ass! Something other than subjects!!!!*

Socialisation is not only the process by which we learn the culture of our society; it is also a mechanism of **social control**. This refers to methods used to persuade or force individuals to conform to those values, norms and patterns of behaviour which the culture of their society requires. Social control involves the use of rewards and punishments. Sociologists refer to these as **sanctions**. These may be either positive sanctions (rewards) or negative sanctions (various types of punishment):

- **Positive sanctions** may range from gifts of sweets from parents to children, to merits and prizes at school, to promotion at work or to knighthoods and medals.

- **Negative sanctions** may range from expressions of disapproval, physical punishment, being ridiculed or gossiped about, dismissal from work to being fined or imprisoned.

**Task 10:** *List and briefly explain three positive and three negative sanctions which affect the way you behave in your daily life:*



## Part 7: Key Concepts in Socialisation and Culture

- **Norms**

Norms are social rules which define correct and acceptable behaviour in a society or social group to which people are expected to conform. They are essential to human society. They guide and direct our behaviour and allow us both to understand and predict the behaviour of others. Norms exist in all areas of social life. In Britain, being late for work or an appointment; jumping queues in supermarkets; laughing during funerals; walking through the streets naked or never saying hello to friends are likely to be seen as rude, annoying or odd because they are not following the norms of accepted behaviour. Norms are usually enforced informally—by the disapproval of other people, embarrassment, or a ‘telling off’ from parents.

**Task 11:** Think of one thing that you do which is typical for each of these situations. School; Home; Friend’s house:

- **Values**

Values are less specific than norms. They are general guides for behaviour. Values are ideas and beliefs about what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ and about standards which are worth maintaining and achieving in any society. In Britain, values include beliefs about respect for human life, privacy and private property, about the importance of marriage and the importance of money and success. There are official legal rules, concerning values, which are formally enforced by the police, courts and prison and involve legal punishment if they are broken. For example, laws against murder enforce the value attached to human life in our society. Task 12 Think of two ideas that are really important to you as a person. You may have strong views about animals or children.

- **Status**

Sociologists use the term ‘status’ to refer to a position in society, for example father, doctor, son, bank manager, teacher. Statuses may be **ascribed** or **achieved**. Ascribed statuses are fixed, often at birth and are largely unchangeable. For example, gender and race are fixed characteristics usually given by others. An achieved status involves some degree of choice and results partly from individual

achievement. For example, a person achieves his or her job as a teacher, doctor or scientist on the basis of ability and effort.

**Task 13** Give some examples of what might give a 16 year old status (both positive and negative)

- **Role**

Each status has an accompanying role. A role is a set of norms which defines appropriate and expected behaviour for those who occupy a particular status. A role can be compared to that of an actor on the stage following a 'script'. Roles are patterns of behaviour which are expected from people in different positions in society. People in society play many different roles in their lifetimes, such as those of a boy or girl, a child and an adult, a student, a parent, a friend and work roles like factory worker, police officer or teacher. People in these roles are expected by society to behave in particular ways. The police officer who steals or the teacher who is drunk in the classroom, show what these expectations of behaviour are!

**Task 14:** List some of the roles you play and briefly outline what others expect of you in each of these roles. For example, how are you expected to behave as a student/pupil and what activities are you expected to carry out which you wouldn't have to if you were not a student?

One person plays many roles at the same time. For example, a woman may play the roles of woman, mother, worker, sister and wife at the same time. This may lead to **role conflict**, where the successful performance of two or more roles at the same time may come into conflict with one another, such as the conflict between the roles of full-time worker and mother which some women experience. For example, what happens if a child is ill? (Note: consider why women are referred to and not men.)

*From your list of roles, try to pick out two examples of those which conflict with each other. Give a brief explanation of each example of role conflict.*

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### Consolidation Tasks:

Complete the table below with definitions of the key concepts we have explored in this unit:

Right Wing	
Left Wing	
Identity	
Role	
Norms	
Values	
Socialisation	
Primary Socialisation	
Secondary Socialisation	
Agencies of Socialisation	
Nature theory	
Instincts	
Nurture Theory	

Role	
Role conflict	
Status	
Anthropology	
Agency	
Identity	
The Sociological Imagination	
Culture	
Sanctions	

### **Earn some more Ripples/points! - Extension Task:**

Remember, wider reading and independent research are the key to success at A Level. It isn't enough to simply turn up to lesson, do your work and homework. You must work independently, read around the topics and seek out further information. You are expected to use your free periods for these sorts of tasks and your teacher will check your progress in regular file checks.

With that in mind, watch the following lecture. It is by no means an easy watch. It introduces some key sociological perspectives (ways of seeing an understanding society). Try to make some notes on the key ideas as you watch. Remember, you can pause and re-watch sections of necessary.

[What is sociology? - YouTube](#)

Show your teacher your notes in the file check and you will earn another Ripple!

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## Transition Assessment Task:

The following assessment task is **compulsory** and **must be handed** in to your teacher in the **very first lesson**.

### 1. Read the paragraph below:

#### *Feral Children*

*Feral or “wild” children are those who, for whatever reason, are not brought up entirely, or at all, by humans. One example is the case of Oxana Malaya. She was born in 1983 and at the age of 8 she was found in the Ukraine living in a kennel at the back of her house and spending her time with wild dogs. Although she had been raised by her parents until she was 3, the parents were alcoholics who were incapable of looking after her. She therefore, moved into the kennel and started associating with the wild dogs which roamed the streets rather than with humans. As a result, she had developed a number of dog-like habits such as growling, sniffing her food and crouching like a dog. Her sense of smell and her sight were very acute. When she was found, Oxana could not talk and she ran around on all fours. She was taken to live in a home for the mentally disabled and only lost her dog-like habits slowly. Even at 23, she would still bark occasionally, though by this time she had learnt to count (though not to add up) and she could speak, though with little or no tone or inflection in her voice. She continued to have learning difficulties but found work outside the home milking cows.*

### 2. Now watch this video and take some additional notes.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93HymGXC\\_wM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93HymGXC_wM)

### 3. Now answer the following questions. Answer in **full prose**, using the **key concepts** from this unit. **Think and write like a sociologist!**

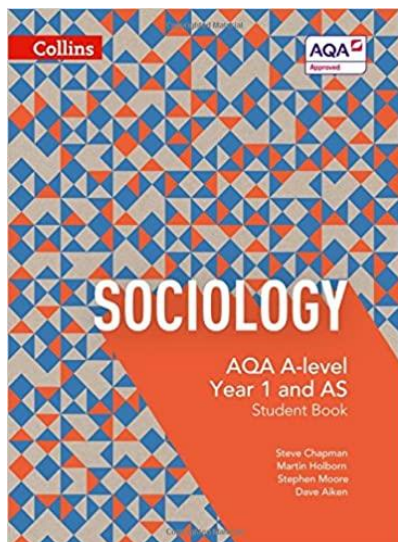
- a. Who is Oxana Malya and what happened to her? Why is she considered to be a feral child?
- b. Describe all the ways in which Oxana Malaya behaved differently to most 8 year olds when she was found.
- c. What kinds of skills do you think she would have that other 8 year old children would not have and vice versa?
- d. Why do you think she continued to have some learning difficulties?
- e. How important is nurture (socialisation) for human beings and society? Is this more important than nature? Explain your answer.
- f. See if you can find any other cases of feral children (extreme neglect). What has happened to these children? Can they ever live a “normal” life in society? Why/why not?
- g. What do the cases of feral children tell us about the nature of society and the causes of human behaviour?

You can **hand write or type up** this work. Present it to the best of your ability. This will give your teacher an indication of your strengths and any weaknesses that will help them to assess your suitability for the course and any support needs you may have.

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## Recommended Reading:

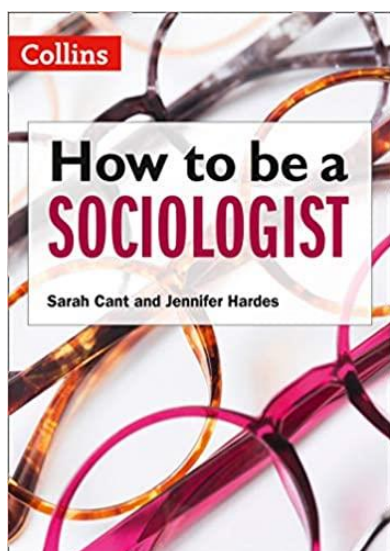
The JCL will loan you a text book for each year of the Sociology course so you do not need to buy one. If you wish to buy your own copy then the following book is the one we use in year 12.



***AQA A Level Sociology Student Book 1 (Collins AQA A Level Sociology) Paperback – 4 Sept. 2015***

by [Steve Chapman](#) (Author), [Martin Holborn](#) (Author), [Stephen Moore](#) (Author), [Dave Aiken](#) (Author)

The following book is excellent introductory reading and has been written as an introduction to Sociology for those about to start A level Sociology. It will give you a good grounding in some key issues and concepts. (Please note, there is no requirement for you to purchase this book either. It is just a recommended text for summer reading).



***How to be a Sociologist: An Introduction to A Level Sociology Paperback – 1 July 2021***  
by [Sarah Cant](#) (Author), [Jennifer Hardes](#) (Author)

The **British Sociological Association** have a website full of information aimed at A level students. Try it out! <http://www.discoversociology.co.uk/>

The following list includes titles of **fiction texts** that you may find interesting:

1. Isaac Asimov – *Foundation* (series) Scientists analyze an entire galaxy and they predict the future dynamics of behaviors over thousands of years. The series takes you through

different planets, times, and individuals who are involved in shaping the power structure throughout time-but the predictions of the original mathematical psychologist hold steady. *Research, prediction, societal change, power, macro perspective.*

2. Margaret Atwood – [Handmaid's Tale](#) A handmaid is what we now call a surrogate and in a position of servitude in a society where women are not educated. *Gender, education, inequality.* (Atwood's *Oryx & Crake* series is also excellent for social change.)

3. Junot Díaz – [The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao](#) Biography and history of Oscar, his family, and the Dominican Republic and the intertwining events. C. Wright Mills would love this book as it demonstrates the application of a *sociological imagination*. *Culture, power, politics, socialization, family, gender, nationality, immigration.*

4. Charlotte Perkins Gilman – [Herland](#) In this utopian novel, three men (one of whom is a sociologist) encounter a society with all women (and no men). *Societal structure, culture, gender.*

5. William Golding – [Lord of the Flies](#) Creating society in a vacuum. *Gender, groups, inequality, social change.*

6. George Orwell – [Animal Farm](#) *Marxian theory* with farm animals – good stuff!

7. Joseph Heller – [Catch-22](#) The main character faces a “catch-22” as he wants out of war but can't because the paperwork to get out won't let you get out if you do the paperwork. *Bureaucracy, war, gender.*

8. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn – [The First Circle](#) A dense read but worth the effort, we learn about Gleb Nerzhin, a prisoner, and the intertwined lives of many others in a Russian prison (WWII era). *Politics, war, crime, imprisonment, work, gender, social class.*

9. Robert Heinlein – [Stranger in a Strange Land](#) A look into our society from an outsider's perspective, including *norms, mores, culture, prejudice, social order.* (A potentially good partner with [Horace Miner's Body Ritual of the Nacirema](#).)

10. Ray Bradbury – [Fahrenheit 451](#); George Orwell – [1984](#); Aldous Huxley; – [Brave New World](#) All deal with authoritarian futures and include so many things we discuss in sociology classes, e.g., *bureaucracy, media, political power, censorship.*

**Once you start in sixth form, your teacher will guide you towards additional resources that are available to you to further expand your sociological understanding!**

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Finally, I do hope you have a wonderful summer break. The Sociology department looks forward to welcoming you in September!

**Mrs H. Abell**

**Subject Leader for Sociology.**