

## Exam focus

### Top tips for answering questions

- ✓ Remember, this paper is worth a total of 60 marks. Questions a, b and c are worth a total of 12 marks and questions d and e are worth 24 marks each.
- ✓ You have only 1 hour to complete this paper, so timing is crucial.
- ✓ For question d, you can earn up to 14 marks for AO1 skills (knowledge and understanding) and up to 10 marks for AO2 skills (interpretation, application, analysis and evaluation).
- ✓ For question e, you can earn up to 10 marks for AO1 skills and up to 14 marks for AO2 skills.

### Short-answer questions

- ✓ Aim to finish all three short-answer questions (a, b and c) in around 10 minutes.
- ✓ Don't write out the question or repeat it in your answer – it's a waste of valuable time.
- ✓ Many of these questions start with the word 'suggest' – so you only have to give a short response, not a long explanation.
- ✓ These questions can be answered in bullet points or incomplete sentences.
- ✓ If you are unsure about an answer, leave a gap and come back to it later.
- ✓ There are no guidelines on how much to write for these essays. Write as much as you can in the time, but remember – an essay is marked on its qualities not its length!

### Culture and identity questions

- ✓ Make sure that you can define the following key terms in an essay: norms, values, socialisation, culture and identity.
- ✓ Remember that identity is not just due to one factor; it is usually a combination of age, gender, class and other factors.
- ✓ If the question is about ethnicity, remember that not all ethnic minorities are the same and don't ignore the ethnic majority!
- ✓ When discussing socialisation, it is a good idea to distinguish between primary (in the home) and secondary (elsewhere).
- ✓ Also remember that socialisation does not stop at a certain age; it is a lifelong process.

### Essay-answer questions

- ✓ Questions d and e require essay answers, so write in complete sentences and use paragraphs for new ideas.
- ✓ Remember time is tight and spend about 20 minutes on planning and writing each essay answer. If you do overrun on the first and don't answer the second, you will lose 24 marks.
- ✓ Spend a few minutes planning each answer – just enough to streamline writing the essays.

## Exam focus

### Specimen question: Culture and identity

#### Item A

High culture is sometimes contrasted with low culture, which, as its name suggests, is seen as inferior, of lower quality, as less worthy. Thus, the high culture of classical music is contrasted with the low culture of pop music. Clearly the idea of high and low culture is based on a value judgement – one is judged to be superior. Sociologists usually try to avoid value judgements, which is why some prefer the term ‘popular culture’ to ‘low culture’.

(Source: adapted from *Sociology in Focus* for AQA, pages 8–9)

#### Item B

Partly because of the huge influence that feminist writers and ideas had on sociology in the later part of the twentieth century, it is now recognised that it is impossible to talk about identity without also discussing gender. Many sociologists believe that gender is the most basic feature that divides and defines people in modern society. This is not to suggest that no other factors are important in shaping people’s identities; it simply states that, for many people, gender is a vital part of who they are.

- a) What is meant by the term ‘popular culture’? (2 marks)
- b) Suggest one type of high culture and one type of low culture apart from those mentioned in Item A (4 marks)
- c) Suggest three other factors that can shape identity apart from gender (6 marks)
- d) Examine why sociologists believe socialisation is a vital process for individuals and society. (24 marks)
- e) Using material from Items and elsewhere, assess the view that gender is the main source of people’s identity. (24 marks)

This is asking for just a definition, so a one-line answer will do.

Make sure that you don’t include either of the types given in Item A in your answer.

This can be answered in short phrases or even single words and written in bullet points. However in the heat of the exam don’t forget to list three!

Note that the question says ‘individuals and society’, so you need to make points about both. Don’t just concentrate on what socialisation does for the individual.

A command word asking you to look in some detail.

These are such vital concepts that you need to define them clearly.

This implies there are other sources. Try to work out what these are (e.g. what answers did you give to question c?) and consider them as alternatives to gender being the main source.

This command word asks you to weigh up and come to a decision on the statement. Remember, the view can be supported or challenged, so don’t make your answer one-sided.

## Exam focus

### Exemplar response: Candidate A

- a) Popular culture is different from high culture, it is not just held by the middle classes. It refers to things everyone likes or does, such as watching TV.

Despite some problems with the first sentence, this answer does score the 2 marks. The vital part of the answer is where it says 'things everyone likes or does' because this captures the meaning of 'popular'.

(2 out of 2 marks)

- b) High = plays of Shakespeare  
Low = music of Oasis

While both of these are correct the example of pop music is in the item so cannot be rewarded.

(2 out of 4 marks)

- c) Our identity can be shaped by many things about ourselves, not just our gender. Some of the other factors include such things as our class, the job that we do or even where we live.

There are two acceptable answers. Class is acceptable, as is job, in that it is different from class position. The final suggestion is too vague. If the response had replaced it with region, country or nationality, the candidate would have gained full marks.

(4 out of 6 marks)

- d) Socialisation starts in the family. Parents bring up their children by teaching them things like table manners and even how to walk and talk properly. If children didn't get this, they would be like the wolf children and not really human at all.

This is a reasonable start to an essay but notice that the key term 'socialisation' is not defined. A better way to start would be to give a short definition (see Exemplar response B). There are a couple of good examples of what children learn in socialisation but the candidate misses the chance to mention norms and values. Introducing these concepts would make this a stronger introduction. Also the reference to 'wolf children' is not really explained so adds little to the discussion.

Schools carry on socialisation after the family. Schools don't just teach subjects like maths and physics, they also teach children to behave properly. In class children are taught not to shout out, they have to put their hands up. Also they have to line up and be quiet when they are going into class. All of this teaches them how to behave properly.

It is a good idea to expand the discussion to include secondary socialisation. Also the examples given are good illustrations. What the candidate does not discuss is how these processes help people 'fit in' to larger groups and so benefit society. They could discuss how school is a preparation for work, perhaps even introduce a functionalist or Marxist perspective on the role of schooling.

Today we also learn a lot from the mass media. Children watch a lot of TV, and young girls especially have a lot of magazines aimed at them. Mostly these are all about fashion and music and they can have a big influence on what we like and how we spend our money. Celebrities like David and Victoria Beckham act as role models to young people and often they try to be like them. If they say a particular product is good many people will believe them and go out and buy it.

Here a third agent of socialisation is introduced, which shows some breadth of knowledge. Another good point is that the candidate uses a sociological concept, that of role model. This is one of the few concepts in this answer and using more would boost the mark. There is some attempt to show how the media might influence people but it would be better if the candidate could discuss how people are influenced by many factors, including parents, peers, teachers, and so on, and how the media works differently on different people.

So we can see that socialisation starts off in the family. It is then carried on in schools and finally the media. All of these have a big influence on people and help make them the sort of people they are.

This is a weak conclusion. It simply lists the three areas the answer has covered. Also the essay has not really addressed the question by looking at the importance of socialisation and its impact on both individuals and society. The answer needs to focus more on why socialisation is so important. It also needs to introduce some more analysis by explaining and developing the points it makes, for example what do case studies such as feral children like the wolf children tell us about why socialisation is so vital?

**(11 out of 24 marks)**

e) From an early age boys and girls are brought up differently. They are dressed in different colours, pink for a girl and blue for a boy, and get different toys to play with. As they get older boys are allowed to play out more while girls have got stricter control over their movements.

While this paragraph makes a number of valid points about gender differences in socialisation, there is no link to identity, which is the focus of the question. It would be better to start with an attempt to define what the term 'identity' means and then link these points to it.

When they go to school boys and girls are often treated differently. Teachers expect girls to be quiet and hard working while boys are seen as loud and aggressive. At secondary school boys and girls start to study different subjects even though girls now do better than boys in all types of examinations.

Again no mention of the word 'identity'! Discussing how school experiences can shape identity is a good idea but the candidate does not make the link. Also they make a number of statements about education that could be backed up with reference to one or more actual studies of gender differences in education.

Despite some changes there are still differences in the jobs males and females do. So called 'caring' jobs like nursing and teaching are mostly done by women. The majority of top scientists and engineers are male and often men get paid more than women. Also women have career breaks to have children and this reduces their earning power.

The candidate continues to make potentially relevant points but fails to link them back to the question, which is about gender identity. For example, the point about women experiencing issues concerning career and having children could be explored by looking at how society defines childcare as essentially feminine and how work appears to be more central to the identity of males than that of females.

Women still face discrimination today. Some employers don't want to employ women in case they leave to have a baby and they have to pay for maternity leave. Men only get a few days paternity leave. It is also harder for women to become an MP.

This answer really has lost its focus now. It seems the candidate has reinterpreted the question to be about gender roles. There has been no mention of identity. Discussing how different work and life experiences can have an impact on identity would be a good way to refocus this paragraph to make it relevant to the question.

Because of all of these things it is clear that men and women have different experiences in society today. For this reason I agree with the statement in the item that gender is the main source of people's identity.

Note the reference to the item. There is no development of it, it just 'lifts' it from the text. The candidate could use it by perhaps suggesting other factors that also impact on identity, such as age or ethnicity. Throughout the question the candidate has discussed gender differences but has failed to

make any reference to identity in general and very little reference to male identity. It is important to keep coming back to the question. In this case it would be useful if identity was mentioned in each paragraph.

(11 out of 24 marks)

Total: 30 out of 60 marks

Grade: this response is likely to be around the D grade

First, greater care is needed in the short-answer questions – 4 vital marks were lost here, which is the equivalent of dropping one whole grade. Second, a closer reading of the essay questions would avoid producing answers that miss out important points, such as not concentrating on identity in e). Finally, the answer for e) would be greatly improved if it could include some studies done by sociologists (see how this is done in Exemplar response B on page 40).

## Exemplar response: Candidate B

a) It refers to lifestyle and pastimes of ordinary people.

Despite being much shorter than Exemplar response A, this response is sufficient to gain both marks.

(2 out of 2 marks)

b) An example of high culture is going to the theatre while low culture would be going to bingo.

This brief answer does all that is needed to gain maximum marks. Both answers are correct and neither appears in the item.

(4 out of 4 marks)

c) Identity can be shaped by age, gender, class and ethnicity.

Can such a short response really be worth 6 marks? Well, yes, because there are three factors suggested that are acceptable. Despite including gender (which is not allowed by the question), the other three all score so we ignore the prohibited response.

(6 out of 6 marks)

d) Socialisation is the process of learning the norms and values of society. It is a vital process because without it individuals would not know how to act and behave in society. Without this, people would not be able to function properly and society would suffer.

This is a very good introduction. It starts with a clear and accurate definition of the key term and directly addresses the question. This makes a very good first impression.

A number of case studies have looked at children who did not experience proper socialisation. Some of them were raised by animals. The children could not talk or even walk like humans and did not behave as people expect humans to. This shows that the human child has to be taught the basic ideas of how to behave and to learn ideas of right and wrong from their parents.

This paragraph builds on the good start and explores why socialisation is so important. It could be extended to look at how children denied human contact find it difficult to interact with others and how vital processes like language are difficult to develop if they are not experienced at an early age.

Children are born without any idea of how they should behave. From an early age parents have to teach them things. For example, a child has to learn how to eat food with a knife and fork. They also have to learn how to behave and parents teach them how to be polite and how to interact with other people. This carries on when the child goes to school.

This paragraph also looks at why socialisation is vital. It suggests a couple of things that children learn. The link with education is a good one but does need to be developed. The candidate could start to explore the difference between primary and secondary socialisation.

Some sociologists think that poor socialisation is to blame for many of the problems of modern society. New Right thinker Murray says lone-parent families don't socialise their children properly. Young boys who grow up without an adult role model do not learn to respect authority. Murray says this is often the cause of crime in later life because the child doesn't know the difference between right and wrong.

Here the candidate introduces some theory to advance their answer. The material is broadly accurate and successfully applied to the question. The importance of inadequate socialisation is stated, but it would be good if the point could be developed a little more. For example, young people's involvement in criminal behaviour is damaging to their future and the stability of society and this could be explored a little more.

However Murray's views have been criticised. There are many children from lone-parent backgrounds who don't turn to crime and a lot of crime is committed by people from good homes. So it can't be as simple as Murray suggests. But he does have a point in that if a child doesn't learn norms and values at an early age they can end up breaking the norms of society later on.

This is a good paragraph as it subjects the sociological theory to critical analysis. The candidate provides evaluation of Murray's ideas in a balanced way suggesting both good and bad aspects of his theory.

So we can see that socialisation is vital to both the individual and society. It teaches the young child how to behave and helps them fit into society. Sometimes it is only when socialisation has not been successful that we can see how important it is.

A short but good conclusion that relates back to the question and neatly sums up what the candidate has discussed in their answer.

The positive side of this answer is that it does directly focus on the individual and society and has some depth of knowledge. The major problem is its very narrow focus. It is almost totally about primary socialisation and neglects all other agents of socialisation. A way to improve would be to explore aspects of secondary socialisation, for example by looking at the role of schools, the hidden curriculum, and so on.

**(17 out of 24 marks)**

e) Identity is about who we are, how we see ourselves and how others see us. There are a number of things that can influence our identity. One of these is gender but other factors have an influence and these include our age, our occupation and if we have a disability.

A good start to an answer. The key term in the question, 'identify', is defined. Also the candidate has already suggested that gender is not the only thing we need to consider when studying identity.

Some sociologists think gender is the most important aspect of our identity. There is a difference between sex and gender. Sex is a biological concept while gender is a social construction. Society has different ideas on what it is to be masculine and feminine. Not only this but these ideas vary between different societies and over time

The answer continues very well here with the concept of social construction introduced and explained. The point could be improved by giving an illustration of how notions of gender vary either over time or from one society to another.

Studies by feminist writers such as Ferguson have suggested that boys and girls experience different types of socialisation which directly influences how they see themselves. They claim girls 'learn' to be feminine eg they are taught not to be aggressive or loud whereas such behaviour is seen as normal for boys.

It is good that a study has been introduced here but we could do with a little more detail on it. Also, if the idea of socialisation was developed a little bit the answer could discuss how identity is formed through interaction with people like our parents and with society as a whole.

Also studies have looked at how girls' self image is greatly influenced by schools and wider society. Sue Sharpe found a massive change in girls' expectations took place over a short period of time. Priorities in the past used to be love and marriage but now they are more likely to be qualifications and career. This could be due to changes in the labour market so females now see there are lots of career opportunities for them.

The introduction of the concept of self-image is a good point here and the use of a study to explore it allows the candidate to look at changes in female identity. It would be useful if the study could be located historically (Sharpe's research was in the 1970s with a follow up in the 1990s). Also the candidate should be careful not to just concentrate on females to the exclusion of males.

However it is still the case that society has different expectations of men and women. Studies of dual-income families show that women still take major charge of childcare because this is still seen as a woman's role. But this is also changing and Gittins says the fact that most divorces are started by women shows they are less willing to put up with inequality in the home and they have higher expectations and don't just see themselves as housewives.

Once again the answer remains focused on identity and considers changes in how women see themselves. However as before there is no mention of men so the focus is somewhat narrow.

It should also be remembered that not all women have the same experiences. Class differences are very common, for example working-class women are more likely to still be expected to do all the domestic work. Black feminists have pointed out that black women have a very different set of life experiences than those of other women and so their identity will be different.

This is a good paragraph in that it broadens out the debate. Factors other than gender are introduced, although it would be better if the very good points were developed a little more. This could be done by discussing the work of one of the Black feminists mentioned in the answer.

Also note there is no real conclusion to this answer, perhaps time ran out. It is important to leave time for a conclusion as this rounds off a response. You can recap what you have discussed and come to some final statement regarding the question – in this case, is gender the main source of identity?

(17 out of 24 marks)

Total: 46 out of 60 marks

Grade: this total mark is comfortably within the grade A boundary

This response gained a grade A by obtaining maximum marks in the short-answer questions and by making sure that the essay questions were well focused and by quoting some sociologists and their research to support the points made.

However, even a grade A answer can be improved by getting closer to maximum marks. In this case, the answers could be broader, for example, in d) only discussing the role of the family in socialisation leaves out other important agencies such as religion or the media. Essay e) could also be widened out to discuss male identities and how these might be changing.