

SOCIOLOGY · CHAPTER 3

Understanding Social Institutions

A 1-page guide for parents · 90-second read.

EXPECTED MARKS

10 marks

TIME TO MASTER

6-8 hrs

HELPLINE

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WHAT THIS CHAPTER IS, IN PLAIN ENGLISH

In this chapter your child learns what sociologists mean by a 'social institution' — not a building, but the stable set of rules and roles that organise an important area of life. The five big institutions covered are the FAMILY (and marriage and kinship), WORK and the economy, POLITICS (power, authority, the state), RELIGION, and EDUCATION. Your child learns two ways of looking at each: the 'functionalist' view (the institution meets a real need and keeps society running smoothly) and the 'conflict' view (the institution can also serve powerful groups and keep inequalities in place). There are some precise terms to learn — different types of family (nuclear, joint), forms of marriage, and kinds of kinship (relatives by blood versus by marriage). It is a definition-heavy chapter, and exact wording earns the marks.

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD

- What is a social institution? Is your school the institution, or an example of one?
- What is the difference between the functionalist and the conflict way of looking at the family?
- What is the difference between polygyny and polyandry?
- Which relatives are 'consanguineal' (by blood) and which are 'affinal' (by marriage)?
- What did Durkheim mean by the 'sacred' and the 'profane'?

WEAK-SPOT INDICATORS

- Thinks a 'social institution' is a building or one particular school/hospital, rather than a system of rules and roles.
- Can describe only ONE perspective (functionalist or conflict) and not apply both to the same institution.
- Confuses polygamy with polygyny, or mixes up affinal and consanguineal kin.
- Cannot explain the sacred/profane distinction or the idea of a 'hidden curriculum' in schools.

WHEN TO WORRY — AND WHAT TO DO

This chapter supplies the conceptual toolkit — institution, functionalist, conflict — that later chapters (and Class 12 Sociology) reuse constantly. If your child can only memorise the typologies but cannot apply the two perspectives to a fresh example, they will lose the long-answer marks that decide the grade. The fix is practising the dual-lens move out loud: take any institution (family, school, religion) and ask 'what need does it meet?' AND 'whose interests does it serve?'

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