

Sociology – A Level Summer Preparation Activity

Sociology will be a new subject for you, and can present a challenge for a summer preparation activity – it would be unrealistic to expect you to be able to work in a way which fully reflects the subject or to use as is sometimes termed a ‘sociological imagination’. In fact, the first 3 weeks or so of the course in September does focus on developing some key ideas and skills associated with Sociology. So – the summer preparation activity needs to be seen as exactly that – a preparation for Sociology rather than a complete exploration of the subject.

Sociology has a number of strands. One is a more academic study of society – the ways in which people in groups operate and especially the patterns of power, structure and agency which influence these human groups. There is also a more applied part of Sociology which considers the ways in which policies (broadly defined as the intentions of Governments or others in power or who wish to have power and influence) can have an impact on social life. For the summer preparation activity you are asked to carry out research which links both of these strands.

Task

Your task is to carry out some research and to complete a ‘Media Diary’ in relation to the Sociology of Families and Households or Education - the main topics in year 12. This will involve you selecting a few - about 3-5 - news stories during the summer which relate in some way to the broad content areas of Families and Households or Education. This year is unusual, and you may want to consider how people in our society are behaving in their households; are most people following the government guidelines of ‘stay at home’. You may have noticed stories of people supporting the NHS, and how people are coming together in society. You may also have noticed that not everyone is following these rules, can you find a story of people who have not followed the guidelines? The easiest place to find these is probably the BBC News website, although other news sources are also suitable such as the Guardian Newspaper website.

The first stage is to read the story. Probably at this stage it is worth developing the habit of active reading, which will involve highlighting key aspects and checking the meaning of any new words. (Sorry if this is a bit patronising but Sociology as a subject will involve to some extent a new and wider vocabulary and it is important to get into the habit of developing this vocabulary)

The next stage is the real work. You are asked to write a brief commentary for each story that you select describing and explaining your views about the issues raised in the story. These might relate to aspects such as :

- 1) What, if anything, do you think should be done about the issues raised ?
- 2) Who or which group seems to be in the right or the wrong about the issues raised ?
- 3) How might the changes involved have a wider impact on society - who might benefit and who might lose for example ?
- 4) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments raised in the story ?
- 5) What, if anything, do you think should be done about the arguments and issues raised in the story ?

If you use the BBC news website for this task then you may well find that there are some comments which have been made about the issues by members of the public. You may find that these are helpful in developing your own commentary – it would be possible for example to quote some of these other views and to say what your reaction is to them.

As a guide, this may involve about a 500- 700 words in total. About 4- 6 articles and about 100 words of commentary for each one is likely to be about right.