

Compare sociological approaches

Pupil activity

Audience: Sociology pupils

Compare functionalist and Marxist explanations of how a school study club may shape opportunities, using a fictional case and one limitation.

Fictional case: the lunchtime study club

A school opens a lunchtime homework club with 20 places at each session. Requests exceed the number of places. The case gives no information about which pupils attend, their reasons, or their results.

Two approaches

Functionalist starting point

A functionalist account may ask how education helps share knowledge, routines and expectations. For this case, it could consider whether the club supports learning and belonging.

Marxist starting point

A Marxist account may ask how power and unequal access to resources shape education. For this case, it could ask who gets one of the limited places and whether access is fair.

Compare using the same case

Question	Functionalist explanation	Marxist explanation
What does the approach focus on?		
Which case detail supports the interpretation?		
What could the approach leave out?		

Write a judgement

"A __ approach helps explain __ because __. A limitation is __. To find out who benefits, I would need __."

Do not claim that the club raises attainment or excludes a group: the fictional case provides no outcome or attendance data.