Revision

The return of social class? (p. 16)

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You can use this worksheet alongside Geoff Andrews’ article, ‘The return of social class?’, on p. 16 of this issue of the magazine. The worksheet will help you to pick out things that will be most useful to you when revising. Work through the questions below and at the end you should have a relatively brief summary of the most important points. Note that not all of the answers can be found within the article — you will have to use your own knowledge to provide some of the information.

(1) If you are familiar with Downton Abbey or other period dramas, suggest a couple of ‘class stereotypes’ that are portrayed.

(2) Suggest two ‘new divisions’ in society that have emerged under the coalition government.

(3) Geoff Andrews gives the example of food banks as providing evidence of increasing inequality. Identify one other example to illustrate the growth in inequality.

(4) What example(s) can you think of to illustrate the point about a return to ideas about the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’ poor? (Think of some of the language used to describe some groups in poverty.)

(5) What is meant by ‘regressive welfare policies’?

(6) In what ways might these policies reaffirm older gender divisions and attempt to reinforce traditional gender roles?

(7) Thinking in particular of television programmes, give examples of how some of these portray particular ‘representations of class’. Which social class seems particularly well represented?

(8) Geoff Andrews uses the example of ‘chavs’ to illustrate how a term can be used in a demeaning way to refer to a particular class group. Give at least one other example of a word or phrase used in this way.

(9) Briefly explain what is meant by ‘structural explanations’ of class.

(10) Briefly explain what Marx meant by ‘a class in itself’ and ‘a class for itself’.

(11) Can you think of any evidence to suggest that the working class is beginning to emerge as ‘a class for itself’? What kind of evidence would you look for?

(12) In what ways might the impact of the global economy affect class divisions?

(13) What, in this context, is meant by ‘populism’?

(14) Give some examples of ‘the recent rise in populism’ from the UK or other societies.

(15) What influences in the social sciences have led some sociologists to put less emphasis on social class?