



1. Have you ever wondered why some sections of the society have remained poor throughout history? What can be the reasons why specific groups of people have always enjoyed the riches of a country while others have been suffering from poverty one generation after another? Is it because the poor are not given the opportunities to improve themselves or do they lack the ability to solve their problems? The theory of a culture of poverty, which aims to answer these questions, was created by the anthropologist Oscar Lewis in 1959. The culture of poverty theory states that some people constantly live in very poor conditions. That is, they suffer from long-term poverty. As a result, **this** leads to the development of a specific culture. This specific culture causes poor people to adapt to the bad conditions they have been living in for long periods of time. That is, several generations of people get used to being poor after experiencing poverty for hundreds of years. They don't just get used to it but poverty becomes their culture. When poverty becomes their culture, it continues for many years and affects the future generations, too. Thus, for Lewis, behaviours and attitudes that are developed in a culture of poverty get passed down to the next generations. This means that not only behaviours and attitudes but also poverty is passed down to the next generations, which creates **a cycle of poverty**. This cycle tends to continue and it is possible but difficult to break it once poverty begins.

2. The culture of poverty is characterized by feelings of helplessness, dependency, isolation and powerlessness. Lewis describes individuals living within a culture of poverty as having no sense of history. He thinks that these people only know about their own problems, their own neighbourhood and their own local conditions. As a result, they are not aware of the conditions of other social classes in their own country. Without knowing what is happening outside their social class, poor societies cannot improve their own conditions. According to Lewis, poor people are unmotivated and they have weak work ethics. He thinks that these people are lazy and dislike working hard because they don't have moral principles. Lewis also claims that poor parents don't pay attention to their children's learning, largely because they do not value education. They don't attend parent-teacher meetings at schools or care about their children's educational problems. Another quality that the culture of poverty brings is drug and alcohol abuse. Lewis points out that drug and alcohol abuse is more **prevalent** among poor neighbourhoods than rich ones because poor people have a greater tendency to become addicted to drugs and alcohol. These negative qualities, Lewis claims, passes from one generation to another and they cause poor people to remain in these bad conditions for hundreds of years.

3. Although the culture of poverty theory was very popular among scholars in the 1960s, it has received a lot of criticism since the beginning of the 21st century.

The first one of these is that Lewis claims poor people tend to be lazy and had weak work ethics. However, many critics state that 83 % of children from low-income families have at least one employed parent and 60 % of poor children have at least one parent who works full-time. In fact, many poor adults must work in two, three, or four jobs and if they had weak work ethics, they would steal or commit crime instead of working so hard. Critics point out that some rich people may also have weak ethics. They may be rich but it doesn't mean that they have all this money by working hard and ethically. Some rich politicians and businessmen earn money because they steal money or commit other crimes. This shows that weak work ethics may not be the reason why some people are poor. Secondly, Lewis claims that poor parents didn't care about their children's educational success because they didn't give importance to education. However, critics think that because poor people are most likely to work in multiple jobs or work in the evenings, they cannot attend school meetings or spend time on their children's education. This shows that schools fail to take these considerations into account. It is not the parents but the schools that do not value the participation of poor families in their children's education. The third criticism of Lewis' theory is related to drug and alcohol use. Critics admit that drug sales are more noticeable in poor neighbourhoods, however, they point out that drug use is actually equally distributed across poor, middle class, and wealthy communities. In fact, research shows that alcohol consumption is significantly higher among upper middle



class white high school students than among poor black high school students. In other words, when considering alcohol and drugs, wealthy people are more likely than poor people to be addicted.

4. Another dangerous implication of the culture of poverty theory is that it claims that the situation of poor people is difficult to change. If governments accept this theory, they will think the poor are responsible for their situation because it is their own culture that results in poverty rather than lack of opportunities. If politicians accept this theory, they will blame the poor people for being lazy and not having good jobs. They will claim that poor people don't have successful children and they use drugs because it is a part of their culture. As a result, they will think that it is not worth dealing with poor people. They will not spend government money on projects that aim at educating or financially helping poor people. They will also ignore other external factors that may create poverty. They will only focus on the culture of poverty as a reason for poor people's condition, which is a possibly dangerous effect of the culture of poverty theory. Therefore, many scholars warn politicians that this theory will cause poor people to be isolated from the society and they emphasize other factors rather than the culture of poverty.

5. The other factors that cause poverty can be racism, prejudice, lack of quality education and lack of nutrition rather than the values and the behaviours of poor people. These can affect poor people's lives in many ways. When poor women are pregnant, they often don't eat well because they cannot afford nutritious food like meat.

_____ . This may lead to lower educational success in the future. Failing at school is not only linked with nutrition but also lack of qualified teachers and materials like computers and textbooks in poor neighbourhood schools. Because poor students cannot receive quality education, they cannot go to the best universities and get enough professional training. As a result, they have to work in low-paid or part-time jobs, which lead to low family income. This demonstrates that the cycle of poverty may not be a result of a culture of poverty but some other factors such as bad nutrition, lack of education and lack of job opportunities. It is not always the cultural values, behaviours or attitudes that cause poverty but other outside factors that are really difficult for poor people to change without politicians' help.

1. The writer begins the text by asking questions because s/he wants to...

- A learn what the reader thinks about the reasons for poverty.
- B introduce the topic and make the reader think about the causes of poverty.
- C prove that some people should always stay poor throughout history.
- D offer solutions to end the poverty that people have been facing.

2. What does the writer mean by '**a cycle of poverty**' in paragraph 1?

- A When communities have limited resources, their circumstances are likely to stay for long periods of time.
- B Only the attitudes and behaviours of poor families are passed down to their children and grandchildren.
- C When societies get accustomed to poverty, it is absolutely impossible for them to change or improve their conditions.
- D As a result of getting used to living in poverty, poor societies refuse to accept the theories of sociologists.



3. From the information given in paragraph 2, we can infer that if poor people read about Lewis' opinions, they would feel...
- A optimistic.
 - B insulted.
 - C capable.
 - D intimate.
4. **Prevalent** in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to...
- A inappropriate.
 - B various.
 - C surprising.
 - D widespread.
5. Which of the following sentences best completes **the gap in paragraph 3**?
- A Lewis didn't live long enough to see the approval he received from his co-workers.
 - B Some scholars still value the opinions of Lewis and quote him in their academic work.
 - C Critics of the culture of poverty theory point out several weaknesses within the theory.
 - D Poor people have to remain poor because they don't have the power to change the world.
6. The writer's tone towards schools' attitudes in paragraph 3 is...
- A supportive.
 - B humorous.
 - C critical.
 - D unsure.
7. We can infer from paragraph 4 that if politicians are influenced by the culture of poverty theory, they...
- A will alter the laws that prevent poor people from improving their conditions.
 - B will not try to provide poor people with employment or educational opportunities.
 - C may work hard to incorporate people with low income into the society.
 - D may not ask poor people to support them or vote for them in elections.
8. Which of the following sentences best completes **the gap in paragraph 5**?
- A Despite their poor conditions, they ignore the importance of birth control.
 - B As a result, their babies' brain development may not be completed.
 - C The reason for this is that they spend their money on school materials.
 - D However, they do their best to take care of their babies' health.



9. The text is probably taken from...

- A an encyclopaedia.
- B a teenagers' magazine.
- C a newspaper article.
- D a graded reader.

10. The purpose of the text is to...

- A explain the ways poor people can be provided with resources.
- B raise the readers' awareness of a controversial social theory.
- C warn the public about some dangerous ideas of politicians.
- D persuade people that poverty is definitely linked with culture.