

Social Class Inventory¹

Please answer the following questions about your social class background. This will not be handed in and you will not be required to share your answers.

1. When you were growing up, what was your family's source(s) of income? (Investments, public assistance, parent(s)' or guardian(s)' salaries or wages, from what occupation(s)?)

2. Describe your home(s) and neighborhood(s) growing up. (Own vs. rent, amount of space inside and between houses or apartments, safety, condition etc.)

3. How does the education you are getting now compare with the education of others in your family in this generation, and in the previous two generations?

4. How was your family's leisure time spent when you were growing up? (Travel, camp, hobbies, sources of entertainment?)

¹ Adapted from *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, Second Edition, Routledge 2007

5. Circle five values or expectations from the list below that seem to be most valued in your family. Then underline five that seem to be least important:

getting by
making a good living
gaining social status or prominence
open communication among family members
going to a place of worship
keeping up with the neighbors
being physically fit or athletic
working out psychological issues through therapy
helping others
owning a home
being patriotic
physical appearance
being a professional
getting a high-school degree
getting a college degree
getting an advanced or professional degree
learning a trade
helping to advance the cause of one's racial, religious, cultural group
having good manners

being an entrepreneur
going to a good school
not being wasteful
getting married and having children
respecting law and order
defending your country
staying out of trouble with the law
being politically or socially aware
recognition
community service
saving money
making your money work for you
enjoying your money

6. Other values or expectations not listed above?

7. What you gained from your class background experience?

8. What has been hard for you from your class background?

9. What impact does your class background have on your current attitudes, behaviors, and feelings? (about money, work, relationships with people from the same class/from a different class, your sense of self, expectations about life, your politics, etc.).

10. What is your class Identity?²

Ruling/Upper Class: The stratum of people who hold positions of power in major institutions of the society.

Owning Class/Rich: The stratum of families who own income-producing assets sufficient to make paid employment unnecessary.

Upper-Middle Class: The portion of the middle class with higher incomes due to professional jobs and/or investment income.

Middle Class: The stratum of families for whom breadwinners' higher education and/or specialized skills brings higher income and more security than working class people have.

Lower-Middle Class: The portion of the middle class with lower and less stable incomes due to lower-skilled or unstable employment.

Working Class: The stratum of families whose income depends on hourly wages for labor, or on other non-managerial work or very small business activity that doesn't require higher education.

Poverty Class/Lower Working/Working Poor Class: The stratum of families with incomes persistently insufficient to meet basic human needs.

² Class identity is your predominant class experience at this point in your life. These are not fixed or absolute categories, but serve to help identify salient features of respective social class identities.

Please read the following:

Back in the days when everyone was old and stupid or young and foolish and me and Sugar were the only ones just right, this lady moved on our block with nappy hair and proper speech and no makeup. And quite naturally we laughed at her, laughed the way we did at the junk man who went about his business like he was some big-time president and his sorry-ass horse his secretary. And we kinda hated her too, hated the way we did the winos who cluttered up our parks and pissed on our handball walls and stank up our hallways and stairs so you couldn't halfway play hide-and-seek without a goddamn gas mask. Miss Moore was her name. The only woman on the block with no first name. And she was black as hell, cept for her feet, which were fish-white and spooky. And she was always planning these boring-ass things for us to do, us being my cousin, mostly, who lived on the block cause we all moved North the same time and to the same apartment then spread out gradual to breathe. And our parents would yank our heads into some kinda shape and crisp up our clothes so we'd be presentable for travel with Miss Moore, who always looked like she was going to church, though she never did. Which is just one of things the grown-ups talked about when they talked behind her back like a dog. But when she came calling with some sachet she'd sewed up or some gingerbread she'd made or some book, why then they'd all be too embarrassed to turn her down and we'd get handed over all spruced up. She'd been to college and said it was only right that she should take responsibility for the young ones' education, and she not even related by marriage or blood. So they'd go for it. Specially Aunt Gretchen. She was the main gofer in the family. You got some ole dumb shit foolishness you want somebody to go for, you send for Aunt Gretchen. She been screwed into the go-along for so long, it's a blood-deep natural thing with her. Which is how she got saddled with me and Sugar and Junior in the first place while our mothers were in a la-de-da apartment up the block having a good ole time.

Taking some of the assumptions you bring to class, and some of the definitions given earlier in this handout, please respond to the following:

What social class is Ms. Moore? How do you know?

What social class is the narrator? How do you know?

What else do you assume about the narrator? Why?
