The haves and the have-nots

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
ADVANCED | C1

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each advanced term with its definition.

1 structural inequality ____	**a** disadvantage built into the ordinary functioning of institutions rather than individual prejudice
2 economic precarity ____	**b** chronic insecurity regarding income, employment or housing
3 rent-seeking ____	**c** gaining wealth through manipulating economic conditions rather than producing genuine value
4 capital accumulation ____	**d** the process by which wealth grows through investment and compounding returns over time
5 redistributive taxation ____	**e** tax policy designed explicitly to reduce inequality by transferring resources
6 meritocratic myth ____	**f** the belief that economic outcomes purely reflect individual talent and effort, obscuring structural factors
7 inherited privilege ____	**g** advantages passed down through family wealth, connections or status rather than earned
8 poverty trap ____	**h** a self-reinforcing situation in which poverty itself prevents the conditions needed to escape it
9 social stratification ____	**i** the hierarchical ranking of individuals and groups within a society by wealth, status or power
10 Gini coefficient ____	**j** a statistical measure of income or wealth inequality within a population

2 Choose the most precise term for each context.

1 Disadvantage embedded in institutional functioning is structural inequality / individual prejudice.

2 Chronic insecurity about income or housing is economic precarity / financial security.

3 Gaining wealth through manipulation rather than production is rent-seeking / genuine innovation.

4 Wealth growing through investment over time is capital accumulation / stagnant savings.

5 Tax policy designed to reduce inequality is redistributive taxation / flat taxation.

6 The belief that outcomes purely reflect effort is the meritocratic myth / structural analysis.

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7 Advantages passed down through family wealth are inherited privilege / earned achievement.

8 A self-reinforcing cycle preventing escape from poverty is a poverty trap / upward mobility.

3 Match the verbs with the noun phrases to form academic collocations.

1 perpetuate ____	**a** existing disparity
2 entrench ____	**b** structural barriers
3 mitigate ____	**c** inequality via a statistical measure
4 legitimise ____	**d** accumulated advantage
5 dismantle ____	**e** economic precarity
6 compound ____	**f** privilege as merit
7 quantify ____	**g** wealth across a population
8 redistribute ____	**h** a poverty trap

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4 Complete the analysis with terms from the box.

capital accumulation | economic precarity | Gini coefficient | inherited privilege | meritocratic myth | poverty trap | redistributive taxation | rent-seeking | social stratification | structural inequality

Economists studying persistent 1 _____ increasingly emphasise 2 _____ as a mechanism whereby existing wealth compounds and multiplies across generations, largely independent of individual effort. This dynamic complicates the 3 _____, the widely held assumption that outcomes primarily reflect talent and hard work, since 4 _____ - advantages of family wealth, education and connections - shapes life trajectories well before individual merit becomes relevant. Some economic activity, described as 5 _____, extracts value through favourable regulation or market position rather than genuine productive contribution, further concentrating resources upward. Meanwhile, households facing chronic 6 _____ often find themselves caught in a 7 _____, unable to accumulate the savings or stability needed to improve their circumstances despite consistent effort. Policymakers debate whether 8 _____ can meaningfully address the resulting 9 _____, given that the 10 _____, a standard measure of inequality, has risen in many advanced economies despite existing tax policy.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

The persistence of inequality across generations

Sociologists studying social stratification increasingly emphasise that economic advantage compounds across generations through mechanisms considerably more complex than direct inheritance alone. Access to superior schools, professional networks and even subtle cultural capital, such as familiarity with elite institutional norms, transmits advantage in ways that resist simple redistributive intervention. This complicates efforts to address inequality through taxation alone, since redistributing income at a single point in time does little to alter the accumulated structural advantages that shape opportunity over an entire lifetime. Some scholars argue that meaningful intervention requires addressing structural inequality directly, through investment in early childhood education and public infrastructure, rather than relying solely on redistributive taxation after wealth has already accumulated.

1 What do sociologists studying social stratification increasingly emphasise? _____

2 Name two mechanisms of advantage transmission besides direct inheritance. _____

3 What does this complicate efforts to address through taxation alone? _____

4 Why does redistributing income at a single point in time do little to alter advantage? _____

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5 What do some scholars argue meaningful intervention requires? _____

6 What do they argue this should not rely solely on? _____

6 Replace the words in bold with a precise term or collocation.

1 Wealth grew and compounded across generations through investment. _____

2 The advantages of family wealth shaped his opportunities from birth. _____

3 The family was trapped in a cycle preventing escape from poverty. _____

4 The belief that success purely reflects effort obscured structural factors. _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 160-190 word critical commentary on how economic advantage and disadvantage persist across generations, distinguishing observation from inference.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Include four academic collocations. [ ] Maintain a precise, balanced register.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Advanced terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Precise terms

1 structural inequality 2 economic precarity 3 rent-seeking 4 capital accumulation 5 redistributive taxation 6 the meritocratic myth 7 inherited privilege 8 a poverty trap

3 Academic collocations

1 a perpetuate existing disparity 2 b entrench structural barriers 3 e mitigate economic precarity 4 f legitimise privilege as merit
5 h dismantle a poverty trap 6 d compound accumulated advantage 7 c quantify inequality via a statistical measure 8 g redistribute wealth across a population

4 Analysis

1 structural inequality 2 capital accumulation 3 meritocratic myth 4 inherited privilege
5 rent-seeking 6 economic precarity 7 poverty trap 8 redistributive taxation
9 social stratification 10 Gini coefficient

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 That economic advantage compounds across generations through mechanisms more complex than direct inheritance alone.
2 Access to superior schools and professional networks, and subtle cultural capital.
3 Efforts to address inequality through taxation alone.
4 Because it does little to alter accumulated structural advantages shaped over an entire lifetime.
5 Addressing structural inequality directly, through investment in early childhood education and public infrastructure.
6 Relying solely on redistributive taxation after wealth has already accumulated.

6 Precise terms and collocations

1 capital accumulation 2 inherited privilege 3 a poverty trap 4 the meritocratic myth

Over to you

Answers will vary. Look for conceptual precision, evidence-aware reasoning and balanced evaluation.