

**Chapter**  
**1****INCREASING YOUR  
READING COMPREHENSION**

**Directions:** Read the selection, then answer the questions that follow. How well did you understand what you read?

**Invitation to Sociology** (*Sociology and You*, page 35)

The sociologist . . . is a person intensively, shamelessly interested in the doings of men. His natural habitat is all the human gathering places of the world, wherever men come together. The sociologist may be interested in many other things. But his consuming interest remains in the world of men, their institutions, their history, their passions. And since he is interested in men, nothing that men do can be altogether tedious for him. He will naturally be interested in the events that engage men's ultimate beliefs, their moments of tragedy and grandeur and ecstasy. But he will also be fascinated by the commonplace, the everyday. He will know reverence, but this reverence will not prevent him from wanting to see and to understand. He may sometimes feel revulsion or contempt. But this also will not deter him from wanting to have his questions answered. The sociologist, in his quest for understanding, moves through the world of men without respect for the usual line of demarcation. Nobility and degradation, power and obscurity, intelligence and folly—these are equally interesting to him. However unequal they may be in his personal values or tastes. Thus his questions may lead him to all possible levels of society, the best and the least known places, the most respected and the most despised. And, if he is a good sociologist, he will find himself in all these places because his own questions have so taken possession of him that he has little choice but to seek for answers . . .

The sociologist moves in the common world of men, close to what most of them would call real. As a result, there is a deceptive

simplicity and obviousness about some sociological investigations. One reads them, nods at the familiar scene, remarks that one has heard all this before and don't people have better things to do than to waste their time on truisms—until one is suddenly brought up against an insight that radically questions everything one had previously assumed about this familiar scene. This is the point at which one begins to sense the excitement of sociology.

It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is—things are not what they seem. This . . . is a deceptively simple statement. It ceases to be simple after a while. Social reality turns out to have many layers of meaning. The discovery of each new layer changes the perception of the whole.

People who feel no temptation before closed doors, who have no curiosity about human beings, who are content to admire scenery without wondering about the people who live in those houses on the other side of the river, should probably . . . stay away from sociology. They will find it unpleasant or, at any rate, unrewarding. People who are interested in human beings only if they can change, convert, or reform them should also be warned for they will find sociology much less useful than they hoped. And people whose interest is mainly in their own conceptual constructions will do just as well to turn to the study of little white mice. Sociology will be satisfying, in the long run, only to those who can think of nothing more entrancing than to watch men and to understand things human.



**Main Idea**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Identify the *main idea* of the passage.
- a. Sociologists must be passionately interested in learning about people.
  - b. Sociologists are frequently disgusted by people's actions.
  - c. Sociologists are inquisitive.

**Subject Matter**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. This passage is about
- a. the special training required to be a sociologist.
  - b. the character traits of a good sociologist.
  - c. the significance of sociological research.
  - d. types of sociological investigations.

**Supporting Details**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What is the "first wisdom of sociology"?
- a. The sociologist moves in the common world of men.
  - b. Things are not what they seem.
  - c. Social reality has many layers of meaning.
  - d. People feel no temptation before closed doors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. A good sociologist is primarily interested in
- a. people.
  - b. scientific philosophy.
  - c. laboratory research.
  - d. little white mice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Sociologists study
- a. human beings.
  - b. social institutions.
  - c. human beliefs.
  - d. all of the above.

**Vocabulary**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The writer's tone would best be described as
- a. angry.
  - b. passionate.
  - c. depressed.
  - d. indifferent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. In this passage, "consuming" means
- a. crushing.
  - b. eating.
  - c. absorbing.
  - d. dangerous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A "truism" is
- a. a complicated or scientific theory.
  - b. a simple, obvious truth.
  - c. a religious or philosophic belief.
  - d. something that seems true but isn't.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. "Perception" in this passage means
- a. eyesight.
  - b. understanding.
  - c. recognition.
  - d. conscience.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A "conceptual construction" is
- a. a special tool.
  - b. a building.
  - c. an idea.
  - d. a type of behavior.