

# Group Behavior

By Michael Stahl



The word “social” means: “relating to society or its organization.” There is a special type of science that studies how human beings interact with each other and it is called “sociology.” One quality of our society that sociologists, the type of scientists who study society, have looked closely at is mankind’s desire to be a part of different groups. Sociologists call this “group behavior.”

Sociologists believe that group behavior began in mankind a long time ago when man was more primitive. Back then, people did not have big homes made of concrete or brick to protect them from dangerous animals. People slept in caves and were out in the open during the day a lot more. They would look all around for food so that the species could continue living. Eventually, people began to realize that if they traveled and worked together, they could find more food and would be able to more effectively battle animals that threatened them. Bigger quantities of food and a better sense of safety helped humans survive and prosper.

As time went on, people began to see the benefits of being a part of a group. Groups provide companionship. People simply get to be around other people, which we as a species began to enjoy. Usually, this sense of companionship would be stronger felt if the group as a whole had a common purpose. This could also lead to members of a group feeling extra proud of themselves when they accomplish something, especially if it benefits the rest of the group. Some people also began to become leaders within their groups, which created a higher level of appreciation and respect for them from their peers. This marked the beginning of roles within a group.

A “role” is another word for a job within a group. Individuals in a group either naturally created a purpose for themselves or might have been given one by the group’s leader. Some men of a group had the role of hunter, for example. Others may have been the builders of campfires.

Group behavior also included the creation of “norms” and “values.” Norms are examples of what a group normally does over a period of time. Members of a group might all wake up at the same time and begin to carry out their various duties during the day, but repeat those same activities day after day. Values are a summary of what the group’s goals might be or a general idea of what is acceptable behavior. Some groups might strongly believe in honesty and dislike theft.

There are actually some negative things that can come along with group behavior. From time to time, if a person is not accepted within a group, they might feel rejected and saddened. Other times, a group might find itself fighting a “common enemy,” which is another group that is disliked as a whole because it may have different norms or values. Group behavior also makes it more likely that all of the members of a group will believe something just because one member says so, even if it is not true or favorable.

Group behavior is the basis for so much of what we see in our society today. Cities, towns, and countries were built because of a group behavior that created common values. The same can be said for all of the large organized religions of the world, not to mention little after-school clubs that focus on art or the game of chess.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is "group behavior"?

- A mankind's desire to study sociology
- B mankind's desire to be part of one group
- C mankind's desire to not be part of different groups
- D mankind's desire to be part of different groups

2. Being part of a group is an effect. What caused people to become part of a group a long time ago?

- A People wanted to believe something just because one member said it was so.
- B People wanted to be able to better survive and prosper.
- C People wanted to be alone.
- D People wanted to have big homes made of concrete or brick to protect them from dangerous animals.

3. Groups accept certain behaviors according to what their members believe to be correct. Which sentence from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A "Individuals in a group either naturally created a purpose for themselves or might have been given one by the group's leader."
- B "Group behavior is the basis for so much of what we see in our society today."
- C "Group behavior also makes it more likely that all of the members of a group will believe something just because one member says so."
- D "Norms are examples of what a group normally does over a period of time."

4. Based on the passage, what might the identity of a group be based on?

- A the group's values
- B the group's location
- C the group's "common enemy"
- D the group's size

5. What is the passage mostly about?

- A how to use group behavior to better interact with other people
- B how to be accepted in a group
- C groups in different societies
- D group behavior

6. Read the following sentences: "Eventually, people began to realize that if they traveled and worked together, they could find more food and would be able to more effectively battle animals that threatened them. Bigger quantities of food and a better sense of safety helped humans survive and **prosper**."

Based on the passage, what does the word "**prosper**" most nearly mean?

- A to move
- B to fight
- C to die out
- D to succeed

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Values are a summary of what the group's goals might be or a general idea of what is acceptable behavior; \_\_\_\_\_, some groups might strongly believe in honesty and dislike theft.

- A otherwise
- B on the contrary
- C however
- D for example

8. Describe at least two advantages of being in a group by using information from the passage.

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9. Group behavior also makes it more likely that all of the members of a group will believe something just because one member says so. Explain why this may be a negative aspect of group behavior by using information from the passage.

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10. Explain whether a group fighting a “common enemy” is a positive or negative thing. Use information from the passage to support your argument.

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## Teacher Guide &amp; Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 1020

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  - B mankind's desire to be part of one group
  - C mankind's desire to not be part of different groups
  - D **mankind's desire to be part of different groups**
  
2. Being part of a group is an effect. What caused people to become part of a group a long time ago?
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  - B **People wanted to be able to better survive and prosper.**
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3. Groups accept certain behaviors according to what their members believe to be correct. Which sentence from the passage best supports this conclusion?
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8. Describe at least two advantages of being in a group by using information from the passage.

**Suggested answer:** Answers should include any of the following:

- Humans in groups from long ago were able to find more food.
- Humans in groups from long ago were able to more effectively battle animals that threatened them.
- People in groups feel safer.
- People in groups enjoy a sense of companionship.

9. Group behavior also makes it more likely that all of the members of a group will believe something just because one member says so. Explain why this may be a negative aspect of group behavior by using information from the passage.

**Suggested answer:** The thing which the one member believes, and as a result the entire group believes, may be not true or favorable. Thus, the group's behavior may be guided by a faulty belief which could have dangerous results.

10. Explain whether a group fighting a "common enemy" is a positive or negative thing. Use information from the passage to support your argument.

**Suggested answer:** Answers may vary and should be supported by the passage. Students may explain that a group fighting a "common enemy" is a negative thing because the members of the group may need to engage in dangerous behavior to protect the group against an enemy that has different norms or values. Students may also note that this is a negative thing because groups may be more inclined to attack other groups that do not have the same norms or values, which may or may not be right.

Conversely, students may argue that a group fighting a "common enemy" is a positive thing because the members of a group are united behind one goal or cause and show their dedication to the group's norms or values. This may end up strengthening the group.