# 4.2 HL: theory applied to ethnography

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 30 marks**

**KEY WORDS** remittance • change • agency • structure

## Objective

Practise **applying theory** to ethnographic material: read the same case through different theories, compare what each reveals and hides, and write an HL theory essay.

**You must be able to:**

- read one case through three theories
- compare what each theory reveals and hides
- connect theory to the key concepts
- choose ethnographies that fit a theory question
- plan an HL theory essay

## 1 Key knowledge and worked examples

### One case, three theories

**Case (written for practice):** in a fishing village, young men now leave to work on container ships for nine months a year. They send money home; families build concrete houses; the yearly boat-blessing festival has become larger and more expensive.

| theory | what it sees |
|---|---|
| functionalism | the festival keeps the community together while men are away |
| interpretive | the bigger festival and new houses *mean* success and belonging; they are read as statements |
| political economy | global shipping and low wages pull men out; remittances tie the village to world markets |
| practice theory | men and families adjust their habits (habitus) to a new life, changing the village slowly |
| feminist | women now run boats, money and ritual in the men's absence: gender roles change |



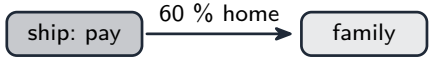
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**Worked judgement.** No theory is complete: political economy explains *why* the men leave; interpretive and feminist approaches explain what the change *means* and *who* carries it.

## 2 Practice

**2.1** Explain what a **functionalist** would say about the larger boat-blessing festival. [2]

**2.2** A sailor earns US$1,200 a month for nine months and sends home 60 % of his pay. Calculate how much he sends in a year, and explain how a **political-economy** approach would interpret this flow of money. [3]




**2.3** Explain how a **feminist** approach would study the village. [4]

**2.4** Compare what an **interpretive** approach and a **political-economy** approach each **reveal** and **hide** about the village. [6]

## 3 Exam-style questions

**3.1** *(Paper 3 style.)* Compare and contrast how **two** theoretical approaches explain **change** in a community. Refer to ethnographic material. [15]








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## Solutions

Marking: **M1** a correct method, **A1** the correct answer, **B1** an independent mark.

Each answer shows the steps, then the **result**.

**2.1**

the festival has a function: it brings the community together and strengthens belonging; this is needed more when many men are absent, which explains why it has grown

**2.2**

$1200 \times 9 \times 0.6 =$ **US$6,480**; the village depends on global shipping and wage labour; local life is shaped by the world economy; low wages in shipping and lack of local jobs show unequal power between global companies and villages

**2.3**

it asks how gender roles change when men are absent; women may take over boats, money and ritual; it would interview and observe women, whose voices earlier studies might leave out; it asks who gains and who carries extra work or risk

**2.4**

interpretive reveals: what the houses and festival mean to people, e.g. success, belonging; hides: the global causes of migration; political economy reveals: why men leave: wages, global shipping; hides: local meanings and choices; comparison: the two are complementary; a judgement on which explains more for a given question

**3.1**

Mark with the markbands: [13-15] clearly focused on the question, key concepts used accurately, ethnographic material in detail (author, place, group), different perspectives and theories evaluated, well-developed critical analysis, different perspectives evaluated, a reasoned conclusion; [10-12] focused, mostly accurate knowledge, analysis with some evaluation; [7-9] some focus, relevant knowledge, mostly narrative or description with limited analysis; [4-6] little focus, limited knowledge, mostly narrative; [1-3] little understanding of the question. Points that may be included: concept of change explained; theory 1 explained; theory 2 explained; ethnographic material for theory 1 in detail; ethnographic material for theory 2 in detail; similarities explained; differences explained: causes vs meanings, structure vs agency; what each reveals and hides; evaluation: which explains change better and when; a reasoned conclusion



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