



Power Relationships

Part 1

- A. Read the definitions of *privilege* and *oppression*. In pairs, brainstorm privileges that different people or groups of people have and how other groups can be oppressed.**

privilege (*n*): special rights, advantages, and protections that some people or groups have that others do not

oppression (*n*): unfair or cruel treatment by a powerful group, person, or the government

- B. Read the quotes about different types of privilege. In pairs, match the privileges in bold (1–8) to their definitions (a–h). Were any privileges the same as the ones you brainstormed in Activity A?**



1. "I think there's definitely **sexism**. It is clear that men have the privilege of earning more and having more opportunities in life than women."
2. "**Socioeconomic privilege** is just part of life. Some people have money and power in society, but others don't."
3. "I am sure **ableism** exists, doesn't it? It is a real privilege to be able to travel around easily. Far too many places and institutions are still not easy to access for people with disabilities."
4. "What about **passport privilege**? People from certain countries can visit other places around the world more easily."
5. "**Educational privilege** exists everywhere. If you have a good education, you have a real advantage."
6. "As an older person, I often experience **ageism**. Many younger people have the privilege of youth, but they may not know it."
7. "Some people have **non-immigrant privilege**. People who have lived in a country since birth are able to do more things than people who come from other countries."
8. "Social media has made **beauty privilege** an issue. Looking good has never been more important and valuable."

Having this type of privilege means you...

- a can afford to do things you want and access expensive or exclusive services, like specialist doctors.
- b have more opportunities because you are male.
- c have been to school, college, or university.
- d are considered better or more capable because of your age.
- e can travel for fun or business without a visa.
- f are usually considered attractive or pretty.
- g can do more things by law because you were born in a place.
- h rarely experience limits in the everyday things you can do physically or mentally.



Adult

Part 2

A. You are going to play a game named "Privileges for Sale." First, read the privileges. Check (✓) the five most important privileges for you.

Privileges for Sale - \$100 each

- I can rent or buy a home in an area I like and can afford.
- I can be sure that my neighbors will welcome me.
- I can go out alone and not feel afraid.
- I can see positive images of people like me on TV.
- I can access public buildings and public transportation easily.
- I can be sure that I can get healthcare when I get older.
- I can wear the clothes I want without people criticizing me.
- I can marry who I want without causing problems.
- I can travel freely between countries.
- I can find well-paid work close to home.



B. In groups, play the "Privileges for Sale" game. Your teacher will give you an amount of money. As a group, choose the privileges you want to buy. Then share your answers with the class.

C. Answer the questions. Then share your answers with the class.

1. How was the process of deciding as a group?

2. Did the amount of money you had affect your choices?

3. How are privileges related? Did you notice that some of these privileges cause you to have others?

4. What other statements could you add to the "Privileges for Sale" game in Activity A to reflect other types of privilege?

5. What else have you learned about privilege?



Adult

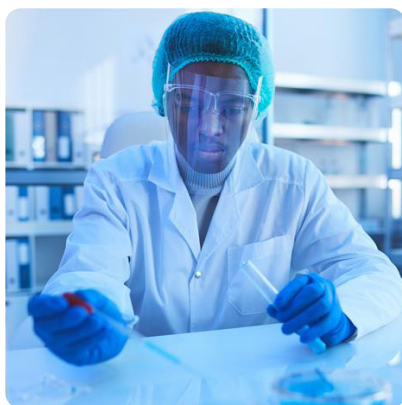
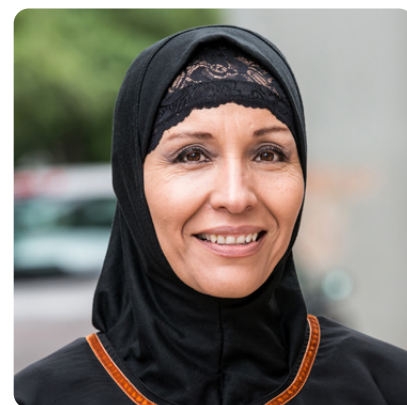
Part 3

A. Read about three people. In pairs, discuss which elements of their lives or identities gave them privileges, and which could make them oppressed.



Miriam is a 34-year-old businesswoman originally from Abuja in Nigeria. Although her early life was happy, her father died in an accident when she was 7. Miriam was also badly injured and lost the use of her legs, which put her in a wheelchair. Her school in Nigeria was not accessible to wheelchairs, so she had a hard time completing her education. When she was 12, her mother and her five brothers and sisters started a new life in France. She says, "School in France was much nicer, the building was much more comfortable for me, but I was a new kid from another country, and sometimes that was challenging. Other children noticed that I didn't look or talk like them." Miriam worked hard and went to college. After that, she started her own company. It is now valued at about 4 million euros and Miriam and her family live a comfortable life in a lovely town near Paris.

Azra couldn't attend school and didn't learn to read and write until she was an adult. She says, "When I was a young girl, I saw women staying at home to cook, clean, and take care of children. They never went to school. It wasn't common for women to even discuss politics. I didn't want that and, luckily, I got an education later in life." Azra has made a big change in her local community. She works for the local government on projects to help educate women who want to get an education or find work outside the home. "Now, more women are seeing it as the way to change things and make life better. Some men don't like it when their wives are employed, so it's our job to help them understand that women's roles are changing, but it can be very difficult in some of the rural areas like mine. There's still a lot of work to do."



Alan is a biochemist from Exeter in the UK. When he was a child, he spent a lot of time collecting insects. He preferred reading about them to playing with other kids. At school, the teachers didn't like him and sometimes told him off because he would correct what they said or interrupt them. He had very good grades in biology and chemistry, but not in other subjects. He couldn't focus in those classes because he found them boring. Alan says, "My grades in sciences were so good that I got a scholarship to study biochemistry at the local university. I was the best student in my class and even finished a year early. I'm now looking for a job, but I can't find one. I'm autistic, so I don't do well in face to face job interviews." Alan hopes to find work soon.



college
take care of
grades



university
look after
marks

B. Did you find any of the examples of privilege or oppression in the texts familiar? Have you, or anyone close to you, had similar experiences? Discuss in pairs.



Extension

A. Prepare to explain to a partner or group the examples of privilege and oppression in your life. Write notes, make a mind map or create a drawing you can refer to. Use the questions to help you think of ideas.

1. What privileges do you enjoy in your life?

- Do you live near good and cheap or free educational institutions or hospitals?
- Is your neighborhood safe?
- Were you born in the country where you currently live?

2. What discrimination or oppression do you experience in your life?

- Have you experienced discrimination or oppression in the past that you no longer experience?
- How have these experiences affected your life in the past?
- Do they affect your life on a daily basis now? How?

B. Choose one of the examples of oppression from the information about your life in Activity A. How would your life improve if you didn't have this example of oppression? Brainstorm ways to eliminate this oppression. Then, think of ways this improvement could benefit other oppressed groups that you are not a part of.

Diego says: "Face to face interviews are difficult for me. Maybe employers could offer interviews on the phone or by email. This would also help people who have mobility issues."