

次の英文を読み、下記の設問に答えよ。

Today, America has gone a long way toward an appearance of classlessness. Americans of all sorts enjoy luxuries that would have dazzled their grandparents. Social diversity has erased many of the old markers. It has become harder to read people's status in the clothes they wear, the cars they drive, the votes they cast, the god they worship, the color of their skin. The contours of class have blurred; some say they have disappeared.

But class is still a powerful force in American life. Over the past three decades, it has come to play a greater, not lesser, role in important ways. (a)At a time when education matters more than ever, success in school remains linked tightly to class. At a time when the country is increasingly integrated racially, the rich are isolating themselves more and more. At a time of extraordinary advances in medicine, class differences in health and lifespan are wide and appear to be widening.

One difficulty in talking about class is that the word means different things to different people. Class is rank, it is culture and taste. It is a source of identity, a system of exclusion. To some, it is money. It is an accident of birth that can influence the outcome of a life. Some Americans barely notice it; others feel its weight in powerful ways.

At its most basic, class is one way societies sort themselves out. Even societies built on the idea of eliminating class have had stark differences in rank. Classes are groups of people with similar economic and social positions. Such groups may share political attitudes, lifestyles, consumption patterns, cultural interests and opportunities to (1)get ahead.

When societies were simpler, the class landscape was easier to read. As societies grew increasingly complex, the old classes became more heterogeneous. As some sociologists and marketing consultants see it, the commonly accepted three-the upper, middle and working classes-have broken down into dozens of microclasses, defined by occupations or lifestyles.

A few sociologists (2)go so far as to say that social complexity has made the concept of class meaningless. Conventional big classes have become so diverse-in income, lifestyle, political views-that they have ceased to be classes at all. Many other researchers disagree. "I find these 'end of class' discussions naive and ironic, because we are at a time of booming inequality. Yet people say, 'Well, the era of class is over,'" said Michael Hout, a professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley.

Many Americans say that they have moved up the nation's ladder. In a New York Times poll, 45 percent of respondents said they were in a higher class than when they grew up, while just 16 percent said they were in a lower class. Overall, 1 percent described themselves as upper class, 15 percent as upper middle class. 42 percent as middle, 35 percent as working and 7 percent as lower.

Americans have never been (3)comfortable with the notion of a pecking order based on anything other than talent and hard work. Class contradicts their assumptions about the American dream, equal opportunity and the reasons for their own successes and even failures.

(Adapted from: *The New York Times*, May 15, 2005)

設問 1. 次の 1. ~、7. について、本文の内容に合うものはマーク解答用紙の T を、合わないものは F を書け。

1. America seems to be headed toward a classless society, and this tendency is confirmed by all kinds of luxuries Americans have.
2. One of the biggest differences between rich and poor people is the probability of doing well at school.
3. As an example of class differences, it may be said that rich people can live longer in America today, because they can benefit more from advanced medicine.
4. Class can mean different things to different people, but the fact remains that it continues to exert essentially the same influences on the American people as before.
5. Some researchers think that a large number of microclasses that existed earlier has been reduced to three commonly accepted classes.
6. The number of researchers who think classes have ceased to exist is about the same as that of researchers who think otherwise.
7. According to a poll, nearly three times as many people think that they have moved up the social ladder than those who feel they've moved down.

設問 2. 下線部(1) ~ (3)の意味にもっとも近いものを、(a) ~ (d) からそれぞれ一つ選べ。

- (1) (a) be successful in life  
(b) be optimistic in life  
(c) reach the goal faster than others  
(d) start earlier than others
- (2) (a) commonly say (b) even say (c) falsely say (d) further say
- (3) (a) amazed (b) confronted (c) excited (d) happy

設問 3. 本文から“class”の定義をしている英文を抜き出せ。

設問 4. 下線部(a)を日本語に直せ。