What is the Government's Role in Reducing Poverty? Module

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ATOS Text Level 6.9

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What is the Government’s Role in Reducing Poverty?

Section 1: Minimum Wage

Student Materials
Before You Read

A. Discussion Questions

1. What is the minimum wage in the US?
2. What is the purpose of the minimum wage?
3. What do you think a fair minimum wage should allow you to buy and do?
4. Why would a business owner choose to pay more than the minimum wage?
5. Some states, counties, and cities have higher minimum wages than others. Why?

Guiding Question: Why can’t we agree on a fair minimum wage?
B. Vocabulary Sort and Connections
Your instructor will give you a set of vocabulary words from this unit. First, set aside any words you don't know. Then, sort the words you know into groups of connected words. There are many correct ways to group the words, and you can make as many groups as you want. Finally, explain to another student why you think those words are connected.
C. Pre-reading: First Sentences
You will read an article about the federal minimum wage. The first sentence from each paragraph in the article is below. Read each sentence and make predictions. Whether you're right or wrong is not important. The important thing is to start thinking about the ideas in the text before you read it.

Answer at least one of these questions for each sentence:
   a. What questions might the paragraph answer?
   b. What details or examples might be in this paragraph?
   c. What other ideas does this sentence make you think about?

1. “Imagine earning twenty-five cents an hour.”

2. “Today, in 2017, the federal minimum wage is $7.25 an hour.”

3. “More than two million workers in the United States earn the federal minimum wage.”

4. “However, many business owners say that a higher minimum wage would hurt the economy.”

5. “Raising the minimum wage is a complicated issue.”
Minimum Wage Debate

1) Imagine earning twenty-five cents an hour. That’s how much the first national minimum wage was. President Roosevelt started the minimum wage in 1938 during the Great Depression. Then, nearly one in five people in the US were unemployed. Giving workers a minimum wage was one way the government tried to make the economy stronger. When workers earned more, they spent more. That spending helped businesses grow.

2) Today in 2017, the federal minimum wage is $7.25 an hour. States can choose to set their own minimum wage. It must be equal to or higher than the national minimum wage. More than half the states have minimum wages that are higher. Massachusetts, Washington, and Washington, D.C., have minimum wages that are $11 an hour or more.

3) More than two million workers in the United States earn the federal minimum wage. For many, paying for basic food, housing, and clothing is very difficult. Recently, the cost of living has gone up very quickly. Minimum wage has not. People who want a higher minimum wage say that, as in the past, it will help the economy by encouraging spending and creating jobs.

4) However, many business owners say that a higher minimum wage would hurt the economy. In a 2013 Gallup poll, 60% of the companies surveyed said raising the minimum wage would hurt small businesses. People against a minimum wage hike say that if companies pay their workers more, they will have to raise prices. They would hire fewer people. They might even have to lay off some current employees. Layoffs would make unemployment go up.

5) Raising the minimum wage is a complicated issue. There are strong arguments on both sides. Some say that the benefits of increasing the minimum wage outweigh the costs. Supporters say it will help the economy by increasing spending. Others say that it will hurt businesses and cause higher unemployment. In a recent New York Times survey, 71% of people surveyed want to raise the minimum wage in the US to over ten dollars an hour. Will that happen? Only time will tell.
References
www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0104719.html
http://minimum-wage.procon.org/
http://www.workingwa.org/seattle-minimum-wage/
A. First Reading and Self-Evaluation
Read the text quickly the first time. Don’t write on it or stop for any new words. Push through to the end. Reading this way is a good strategy to get a main idea quickly.

After you read, think about how much you understand. Your instructor will give you an Evaluation Scale. At the top of your text, write your rating for Reading 1.

B. Author’s Purpose or “What does the author want me to think about?”
Skim, or read the text quickly, to answer this question:

1. What is the author’s purpose?
   a. to give information supporting both sides, without choosing one
   b. to argue in favor of raising the minimum wage
   c. to argue against raising the minimum wage
   d. to criticize the US government for not doing enough to support economic growth

2. Why did you choose your answer? What made it the best choice? ____________________________

3. Why weren’t the other answers the best choice?

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
B. Analyze the Structure
Your instructor will give you a set of topic strips. Each strip of paper has the topic of one paragraph on it. Compare the topics to the paragraphs in the text. Put each topic in the correct place on the chart. After your instructor checks your answers, copy the topics into the chart to help you remember them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph Number</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 1</td>
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<td>Paragraph 2</td>
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<td>Paragraph 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paragraph 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

D. Evaluate Your Understanding
Re-read the text, then think about how much you understand. At the top of the text, rate your understanding for Reading 2 using the Evaluation Scale.

E. Linking Words and Phrases: How Writers Connect Ideas
Linking words and phrases help to connect ideas and sentences. They are often, but not always, at the beginning of sentences.

Linking words and phrases are often used to:
- give examples
- show how things are similar
- highlight differences or contrast
- specify time or sequence
These linking words are in the “Minimum Wage Debate” article. Re-read the text, find these linking words, and circle them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>then</th>
<th>as in the past</th>
<th>today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>recently</td>
<td>however</td>
<td>the result</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Which linking word introduces a different opinion? __________________________
2. Which introduces the effects of a set of actions? __________________________
3. Which is about the present? _____________________________________________
4. Which linking words are about the past? _________________________________
Show Your Understanding

1. Find one piece of evidence in paragraph 3 that supports raising the minimum wage and copy it here:

2. Find one piece of evidence in paragraph 4 against raising the minimum wage and copy it here:

3. Which paragraph should this piece of evidence be added to? “Raising the minimum wage to about $10 per hour would grow the US economy by $22 billion.” Circle your answer.
   Paragraph 2  Paragraph 3  Paragraph 4

4. Why should the piece of evidence be added to that paragraph? Why doesn’t it fit in the others?

5. Which of the following pieces of evidence would you add to paragraph 4 if you were teaching a job training class for recent high school graduates?

   a. If companies need to pay higher wages, they might use robots to replace people working in manufacturing jobs.

   b. Finding jobs would be harder for teens and young adults because companies do not like to employ people with little to no work experience at such a high rate.

   c. If hotels need to pay higher wages to staff, owners might raise their room prices to make up the difference.

6. Why would you add that piece of evidence? Why not the others?

Evaluate Your Understanding
Re-read the text, then think about how much you understand. At the top of the text, rate your understanding for Reading 3 using the Evaluation Scale.
Rock the Test
Use the text to find the best answer for each question.

1. How is the information in paragraph 1 related to paragraph 2?
   a. The paragraphs present opposite opinions about raising the minimum wage.
   b. Paragraph 1 does not include evidence about the minimum wage, but paragraph 2 does.
   c. Paragraph 1 describes the past, and paragraph 2 describes the present.
   d. Paragraph 1 is part of the body of the text, and paragraph 2 is the conclusion.

2. The main idea of paragraph 2 is implied. The reader can understand it, but it is not included in the paragraph. What would be the best topic sentence for paragraph 2?
   a. The minimum wage in Washington is higher than the national minimum wage.
   b. Although the federal government sets a minimum wage, state governments can create a higher minimum wage.
   c. Why do some states have a higher minimum wage?
   d. Raising the minimum wage would help people who earn it and would make the economy stronger.

3. In paragraph 4, the author tells us that 60% of companies surveyed say raising the minimum wage would hurt small businesses. Which idea does this detail support?
   a. Many people think that today’s minimum wage is too low.
   b. Raising the minimum wage could harm the economy.
   c. Whether or not to raise the minimum wage is a controversial issue in the United States.
   d. A 2015 survey by the New York Times newspaper found that 71% of people surveyed supported raising the minimum wage to over ten dollars an hour.

4. Paragraph 4 includes evidence about why some people are against raising the minimum wage. Based on information in that paragraph, what can you infer will happen if unemployment goes up?
   a. Higher unemployment will hurt the national economy.
   b. Companies will raise their prices.
   c. Workers in Washington, D.C. will not be affected because their minimum wage is higher.
   d. Businesses will make more money.
5. Which idea is supported by the details included in paragraph 5?
   a. Congress is considering a bill to raise the minimum wage.
   b. Most people in the US want to raise the minimum wage, so it will happen soon.
   c. Congress will never raise the minimum wage again.
   d. Many people have different opinions about raising the minimum wage.
What is the Government's Role in Reducing Poverty?

Section 1: Minimum Wage

Instructor Notes
B. Vocabulary Sort and Connections Directions
Copy and cut the vocabulary cards on the next page. Circulate and ask students why they grouped particular words together. Some surprising connections may come to light. If there is an error in understanding, try to keep explanations short. Avoid defining new words and instead emphasize that students will learn more through the process of reading.

Depending on the level and size of your class, pairing students or having them work in small groups might be helpful.

C. Pre-reading: First Sentences Suggested Activity
Before beginning the activity, share the title with the students and ask them to make predictions about what they’ll read.

C. Pre-reading: First Sentences Instructor Notes
The First Sentences activity can be challenging for students, especially at first. Asking students to circle key words in the first sentences may help. Encourage them to play with ideas. Students who are struggling could make a few predictions, rather than complete all of the items.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>federal</th>
<th>increase</th>
<th>imagine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>outweigh</td>
<td>wage</td>
<td>minimum</td>
<td>economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equal to or higher than</td>
<td>supporters</td>
<td>cost of living</td>
<td>encourage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poll/survey</td>
<td>lay off</td>
<td>unemployment</td>
<td>recent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GED® Connections

Minnesota Literacy Council, 2017
Read Closely

B. Author’s Purpose Answer Key
1. What is the author’s purpose?
   a. to give information supporting both sides, without choosing one
   b. to argue in favor of raising the minimum wage
   c. to argue against raising the minimum wage
   d. to criticize the US government for not doing enough to support economic growth

It’s helpful to point out that test writers often give one or more answers that are true but only present a detail, while another answer will more fully answer the question.

C. Analyze the Structure Teacher Prep
Copy, cut, and shuffle these topic strips, hand out to students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History of minimum wage in the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum wage today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The minimum wage should be raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The minimum wage should not be raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
C. Analyze the Structure Answer Key

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Paragraph 1</td>
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<td>The minimum wage should not be raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 5</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Linking Words and Phrases Answer Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linking Word</th>
<th>Location in the Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>then</td>
<td>Paragraph 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>as in the past</td>
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<tr>
<td>the result</td>
<td>Paragraph 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F. Purpose of Linking Words Answer Key
1. Which linking word introduces a different opinion? **however**
2. Which introduces the effects of a set of actions? **the result**
3. Which is about the present? **today**
4. Which one are about the past? **then, as in the past, recently**
Show Your Understanding Answer Key

Answers may vary

1. Find one piece of evidence in paragraph 3 that supports raising the minimum wage and copy it here: (This is a list of possible answers.)
   - For many, paying for basic food, housing, and clothing is very difficult.
   - Recently, the cost of living has gone up very quickly. The minimum wage has not.
   - It will help the economy by encouraging spending and creating jobs.

2. Find one piece of evidence in paragraph 4 against raising the minimum wage and copy it here: (This is a list of possible answers.)
   - 60% of the companies surveyed said that it would hurt small businesses
   - If companies pay their workers more, they will have to raise prices.
   - They would hire fewer people.
   - They might even have to lay off some current employees.
   - Layoffs would make unemployment go up.

3. Which paragraph should this piece of evidence be added to? "Raising the minimum wage to about $10 per hour would grow the US economy by $22 billion." Circle your answer.

Paragraph 2  Paragraph 3  Paragraph 4

4. Why should the piece of evidence be added to that paragraph? Why doesn't it fit in the others? Because paragraph 3 gives arguments in favor of raising the minimum wage. It doesn't fit Paragraph 2, because that is about current minimum wage in different parts of the country. It doesn't fit in paragraph 4 because that paragraph gives evidence against raising the minimum wage.

5. Which of the following pieces of evidence would you add to Paragraph 4 if you were teaching a job training class for recent high school graduates?

   a. If companies need to pay higher wages, they might use robots to replace people working in manufacturing jobs.
   
   b. It would be harder for teens and young adults to find jobs because companies do not like to employ people with little to no work experience at such a high rate.
   
   c. If hotels need to pay higher wages to their staff, owners might raise their room prices to make up the difference.

6. Why would you add that piece of evidence? Why not the others? Because it has information about how raising the minimum wage might affect young adults and teenagers in the job class. They would be very interested in how easy or difficult it might be to find jobs.
Some of them might be considering manufacturing jobs, but that detail doesn’t have as much general interest.

Paying more at hotels is probably not a major concern for these students.

**Rock the Test Answer Key**

1. How is the information in Paragraph 1 related to paragraph 2?
   a. The paragraphs present opposite opinions of raising the minimum wage
   b. Paragraph 1 does not include evidence about the minimum wage, but Paragraph 2 does.
   c. **Paragraph 1 describes the past, and paragraph 2 describes the present.**
   d. Paragraph 1 is part of the body of the text, and paragraph 2 is the conclusion.

2. The main idea of paragraph 2 is implied. The reader can understand it, but it is not included in the paragraph. What would be the best topic sentence for paragraph 2?
   a. The minimum wage in Washington is higher than the national minimum wage.
   b. **Although the federal government sets a minimum wage, state governments can create a higher minimum wage.**
   c. Why do some states have a higher minimum wage?
   d. Raising the minimum wage would help people who earn it and would make the economy stronger.

3. In paragraph 4, the author tells us that 60% of companies surveyed say raising the minimum wage would hurt small businesses. Which idea does this detail support?
   a. Many people think that today’s minimum wage is too low.
   b. **Raising the minimum wage could harm the economy.**
   c. Whether or not to raise the minimum wage is a controversial issue in the United States.
   d. A 2015 survey by the New York Times newspaper found that 71% of people surveyed supported raising the minimum wage to over ten dollars an hour.

4. Paragraph 4 includes evidence about why some people are against raising the minimum wage. Based on information in that paragraph, what can you infer will happen if unemployment goes up?
   a. **Higher unemployment will hurt the national economy.**
   b. Companies will raise their prices.
   c. Workers in Washington, D.C. will not be affected because their minimum wage is higher.
   d. Businesses will make more money.

5. Which idea is supported by the details included in paragraph 5?
   a. Congress is considering a bill to raise the minimum wage.
   b. Most people in the US want to raise the minimum wage, so it will happen soon.
   c. Congress will never raise the minimum wage again.
   d. **Many people have different opinions about raising the minimum wage.**
What is the Government’s Role in Reducing Poverty?

Section 2: SNAP Benefits

Student Materials
Before you Read

A. Discussion Questions

1. Why does the federal government give people money to buy food?
2. What would happen if the government stopped helping low-income people buy food?
3. What are some other ways to get food if you don’t have the money to buy it at the grocery store?
4. Food assistance programs are very expensive. Are they a responsible, effective way to use taxpayer money? Why or why not?
5. Do you think getting benefits from the government would make someone work harder to find a job or slow down his or her job search?

Guiding Question: What are pros and cons of government benefits to help people buy food?
B. Vocabulary Sort and Connections
Your instructor will give you a set of vocabulary words from this unit. First, set aside any words you don't know. Then, sort the words you know into groups of connected words. There are many correct ways to group the words, and you can make as many groups as you want. Finally, explain to another student why you think those words are connected.
C. Pre-reading: First Sentences
You will read an article about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The first sentence from each paragraph in the article is below. Read each sentence and make predictions. Whether you're right or wrong is not important. The important thing is to start thinking about the ideas in the text before you read it.

Answer at least one of these questions for each sentence:
   a. What questions might the paragraph answer?
   b. What details or examples might be in this paragraph?
   c. What other ideas does this sentence make you think about?

1. “The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is spending too much taxpayer money.”

2. “The American people pay 75 billion dollars for the SNAP program every year.”

3. “Taking free money from the government can make it easy to make bad decisions.”

4. “I think you need to get up and earn the money to buy what you want in life.”

5. “In 2009, the law about SNAP changed.”

6. “People should use other resources to buy food and prepare for good jobs.”

7. “I see why we need a safety net like SNAP to help families through hard times.”
A Letter to the Editor:
SNAP Uses Too Much Taxpayer Money

1) The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is spending too much taxpayer money. It is expensive, single adults should not need it, and many people who get it make poor choices because of it. There are other options that work better and would not cost the taxpayers so much money.

2) The American people pay 75 billion dollars for the SNAP program every year. Seventy-five billion! Most of that money is used to buy food, but more than five billion dollars is used to run the program. Imagine how great it would be to spend five billion more on schools, public transportation, or even giving the money back to the hardworking people who paid that tax in the first place.

3) Taking free money from the government can make it easy to make bad decisions. When I worked in a grocery store, people paid for junk food with SNAP cards every day. They had pop, candy, cookies, and chips in their carts. That food is expensive and can cause health problems. That’s not the way I want my tax dollars to be used. People on SNAP aren’t careful enough about how they spend taxpayer money.

4) I think you need to get up and earn the money to buy what you want in life. A friend of mine had a child when he was eighteen years old. He lived with his mother and worked two jobs...
to make sure he didn’t need government support. He could have used SNAP benefits, but he worked hard and sacrificed a lot. He made it through tough times without using government money.

5) In 2009, the law about SNAP changed. Now, even more people are using SNAP. Under the new law, healthy adults without children can get SNAP benefits. If you are single, you have enough time to find a job. People like this should not need help from the government to buy food. In the US, more than 15 million new jobs have been created since 2010. There are more and more opportunities.

6) People should use other resources to buy food and prepare for good jobs. People can get food from food shelves, take free job training classes from libraries, and use some of the thousands of support services available from churches, mosques, and temples. Today, there are four million single adults in the US who take money from the government for food every month. They could find other ways to get what they need.

7) I see why we need a safety net like SNAP to help families through hard times. However, we need to make sure our taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. With other ways to get free food and plenty of job opportunities for people who are ready to work hard, why do we need the federal government to give people money to buy food?

References
https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/05/business/economy/jobs-report.html?_r=0
Read Closely
A. First Reading and Self-Evaluation
Read the text quickly the first time. Don’t write on it or stop for any new words. Push through to the end. Reading this way is a good strategy to get a main idea quickly.

After you read, think about how much you understand. Your instructor will give you an Evaluation Scale. At the top of your text, write your rating for Reading 1.

B. Author’s Purpose or “What does the author want me to think about?”
Skim, or read the text quickly, to answer this question:

1. What is the author’s purpose?
   a. to convince the reader to vote for a political party
   b. to convince the reader that no one should ever use SNAP benefits
   c. to convince the reader that the SNAP program is too expensive
   d. to convince the reader that the US economy is growing

2. Why did you choose your answer? What made it the best choice? _____________________________

3. Why weren’t the other answers the best choice?
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
C. Analyze the Structure
Your instructor will give you a set of topic strips. Each strip of paper has the topic of one paragraph on it. Compare the topics to the paragraphs in the text. Put each topic in the correct place on the chart. After your instructor checks your answers, copy the topics into the chart to help you remember them.

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<td>Paragraph 5</td>
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<td>Paragraph 6</td>
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<td>Paragraph 7</td>
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D. Evaluate Your Understanding
Re-read the text, then think about how much you understand. At the top of the text, rate your understanding for Reading 2 using the Evaluation Scale.

E. Finding Definitions
Underline the definition of the bolded word in the sentences below.

1. Government benefits are free services or money from the government to help low-income people.

2. The new law allows able-bodied, or healthy, adults to receive SNAP benefits.

3. The author thinks that SNAP is a misuse, or bad way to use, taxpayer money.
Find the examples in the text that help define these words.

4. Find and copy the sentence in paragraph 3 that lists several examples of *junk food*.

5. Find and copy the sentence in paragraph 5 that gives an example of growing *opportunities* to find work.

6. Find and copy the sentence in paragraph 6 that lists examples of *resources*. 
F. Evaluating Evidence
Authors make a claim, or say what they believe. Then they use evidence to support their ideas. Some types of evidence are stronger than others. Read each piece of evidence in the chart below from “SNAP Uses Too Much Taxpayer Money” and write the type of evidence in the middle box. Choose from these types:

- Fact
- Statistic
- Example
- Personal Story
- Opinion

Good evidence also needs to be relevant. This means that there should be a strong connection between the evidence and the author’s claim. Finish the statements about the connection between the author’s claim and evidence. If there is no connection, write a question mark (?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Connection to the Claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The American people pay 75 billion dollars for the SNAP program every year.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. More than five billion dollars is used to run the program.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Imagine how great it would be to spend five million more on schools, public transportation, or even giving the money back to the hardworking people who paid the tax in the first place.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When I worked in a grocery store, people paid for junk food with SNAP cards every day.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. That’s not the way I want my tax dollars to be used.</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A friend of mine could have used SNAP benefits, but he worked hard and made it through tough times without using government money.</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Now even more people are using SNAP.</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If you are single, you have enough time to find a job.</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. In the US more than 15 million new jobs have been created since 2010.</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. People can get food from food shelves, take free job training classes from libraries, and use some of the thousands of support services available from churches, mosques, and temples.</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Today there are more than four million single adults in the</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the GED® test, statistics and accurate facts are stronger evidence than examples and personal stories. Writers may try to use opinions to support a claim, but opinions are not strong evidence by themselves. Opinions need to be supported with facts and statistics.
Review your notes in the chart above.

12. Does the writer of “SNAP Uses Too Much Taxpayer Money” use strong and relevant evidence? Why or why not?

13. Review your notes about the facts and statistics. The writer leaves out relevant information. What additional information does the reader need to decide if the SNAP program costs too much? (hint: What kinds of questions did think about as you read? What kinds of counterarguments did you think about as you read?)
A Letter to the Editor:
SNAP: Good for People in Need, Good for the Economy

1) My friend is a single mother with three children under the age of five. She has a full-time job, but it only pays minimum wage. Her job doesn’t pay enough for her to support herself and her children. She uses money from a government program to buy most of her food. Without that government benefit, her kids might not have enough to eat every day. The program that helps her is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP is a federal program that helps low-income people buy food. More than 46 million people in the United States use SNAP. It helps my friend and millions of people like her make sure that their families have enough to eat, and the program also helps the economy.

2) Nutritious food is good for all of us, but it is very important for children. About 70% of the families receiving SNAP have children. Children’s bodies and brains start developing before birth. They continue developing past age 18. When children are malnourished, or hungry every day, they don’t grow well. Another way hunger hurts kids is that hungry kids can’t concentrate in school. If children are hungry every day, they won’t learn well. Those children might lose future opportunities, and that loss would hurt the economy.

3) SNAP benefits are good for the economy. Since most low-income families spend all of their money on necessities, SNAP benefits let them spend more money on things other than food. That means they spend more money on housing, clothing, etc., which helps the economy. For every
new dollar the government spends on SNAP benefits, there is $1.70 in new economic activity. That’s a strong help to the economy.

4) Some people criticize SNAP and the people who use it. Critics say that if the government pays for food, people won’t work. The program has rules to limit those problems. Adults who are healthy, but aren’t working, can only get SNAP benefits for three months in a three-year period. Many people who use SNAP work very hard. In fact, 96% of people who worked before receiving SNAP continued to work after they started to receive SNAP. In addition, more than two-thirds of the people who benefit from SNAP are children, the elderly, or the disabled. If you cut SNAP benefits, you hurt the people who most need and deserve help from the government.

5) The facts show that SNAP works. For my friend’s sake, and for millions of other families like hers, we need to continue to provide SNAP benefits to people in need.

References
http://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-introduction-to-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap
Show Your Understanding
Refer to "SNAP: Good for People in Need, Good for the Economy" to answer these questions.

1. The author makes two claims about the SNAP program. What are the two claims?

2. The author includes evidence to support both claims. Which paragraph(s) focus on the first claim?

3. Which paragraph(s) focus on the second claim?

4. In paragraph 2, the author uses the word malnourished. What does that word mean? (Hint: You can find the definition in the text.)

5. In paragraph 2, the author gives evidence about children's development. How is this evidence relevant to the author's claims?

6. Find and copy the evidence the author uses in paragraph 4 to support the claim that people who receive SNAP are hardworking. What type of evidence is this (statistic, fact, example, etc.)?

7. Find the paragraph with evidence that SNAP helps the economy. What types of evidence does the author use?

8. What evidence could the writer add to this paragraph about SNAP helping the economy to make it stronger?
Rock the Test
Refer to "SNAP: Good for People in Need, Good for the Economy" to answer these questions.

1. Why does the author share the story of her friend who uses SNAP?
   a. To get the reader’s attention and help the reader connect to the topic.
   b. To use a personal story to support the claim that SNAP is good for the economy.
   c. To use data and statistics to support the claim that SNAP is good for the economy.
   d. To prove that the author is an expert in nutrition.

2. In paragraph 1, the author states, “Without that government benefit, her kids might not have enough to eat every day.” Which sentence means the same thing?
   a. Her family doesn’t have that government benefit, so her children don’t have enough to eat every day.
   b. If she didn’t have SNAP, she might not be able to put enough food on the table.
   c. Her children are hungry some days, but not every day, because they have SNAP.
   d. Her children will never be hungry again.

3. In paragraph 4, the author uses the phrases “in fact” and “in addition.” How do those linking words connect sentences to the rest of the information in the paragraph?
   a. They show sequence, or what happened first, second, and third.
   b. They add evidence to support the argument that most SNAP recipients really need the benefit.
   c. They review the arguments supporting SNAP in a summary.
   d. They introduce information that shows that two special types of SNAP recipients are more important than the rest.

4. Which evidence supports the author’s claim that SNAP helps a large number of people in need?
   a. When children are malnourished, or hungry every day, they don’t grow well.
   b. Adults who are healthy, but aren’t working, can only get SNAP benefits for three months in a three-year period.
   c. The poverty line was $24,250 a year for a family of four in 2015.
   d. More than 46 million people in the United States use SNAP.

5. Why does the author use the statistic "In fact, 96% of people who worked before receiving SNAP continued to work after they started to receive SNAP," in paragraph 4?
   a. To explain why healthy adults receive SNAP benefits.
   b. To support the claim that SNAP recipients work harder than most people in the US.
   c. To make readers feel a strong emotion about SNAP recipients.
   d. To support the claim that many SNAP recipients are hardworking.
Academic Discussion

A. Prepare

You will work in groups to discuss the following questions:

1. What should the federal government do to reduce poverty?
2. Should the federal government raise the minimum wage?
3. Should the federal government continue the SNAP program?

Before you discuss, review your texts and notes. Copy any useful information in the "Notes" section below. When taking notes, writing short phrases is best. Don't write full sentences.

Notes:

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B. Discuss
The key phrases in the box will help you in an academic or professional conversation. Use them to share your ideas and evidence and to learn more about what other people think. You don’t need to change anyone’s mind. The important thing is to contribute to the discussion and listen respectfully.

Key phrases to use when you want to:

1. Agree: “________ has a good point about _______ because...”
2. Build on or continue: “To add on to what _______ said, I think that...”
3. Disagree: “I see it differently because...”
4. Make a Counterargument*: “________ has a good point about _______, but...”
5. Get Clarification: “Could you tell me more about...?” or “Could you give an example?”

*Acknowledging that the other side has a good point, and then adding your information shows that you understand both sides of the situation and makes your argument stronger.
C. Self-Evaluation
Think about how you contributed to the discussion. Circle the best number to represent your participation and add notes to give an example or explain why you chose that rating.

1 = very little or not at all
2 = yes
3 = maybe too much

1. In the discussion, I shared evidence from the text.
   1  2  3
   Notes: ____________________________________________

2. I shared my own ideas during the discussion.
   1  2  3
   Notes: ____________________________________________

3. I asked questions to better understand what someone else was saying.
   1  2  3
   Notes: ____________________________________________

4. I let people know, respectfully, when I disagreed with what they were saying.
   1  2  3
   Notes: ____________________________________________

5. I used the key academic discussion phrases (or something similar) during the discussion.
   1  2  3
   Notes: ____________________________________________

6. The next time I participate in an academic discussion, I want to
   __________________________________________________
B. Group Evaluation

1. Was the discussion on topic? ________________________________

2. Did the group members listen to each other? ________________________________

3. What did they do/not do that showed they were or weren’t listening? ________________________________

4. Did one person or a few people do most of the talking, or was the discussion balanced? ________________________________

5. Was the discussion respectful? ________________________________

6. If it was respectful, what made it respectful? If it wasn’t, what could be changed to make future discussions respectful? ________________________________
Writing Assignment

Two opposite opinions about the SNAP program are included in this section. Newspapers often print two letters to the editor with opposite opinions. This gives readers a chance to evaluate two opinions about the same subject. The GED® exam uses this format too. You will need to choose which opinion is better supported and give evidence from the text to explain your decision.

A. Analyze the position that SNAP is not a wise use of taxpayer money.

1. Review the Evaluating Evidence Chart you completed after reading “SNAP Uses Too Much Taxpayer Money.” What types of evidence did the author include?

2. What pieces of evidence strongly supported the claim that SNAP spends too much taxpayer money?

3. What pieces of evidence had a weak connection to the claim that SNAP spends too much taxpayer money?

B. Analyze the position that SNAP helps people in need and helps the economy.

1. The article “SNAP: Good for People in Need, Good for the Economy” claims both that SNAP helps millions of families make sure they have enough to eat and that it supports the economy. Highlight all the evidence in the article that supports these two claims.

2. What types of evidence does the author use to support the two claims described in question 1?

3. What pieces of evidence strongly support the claims that SNAP helps millions families get enough to eat and that it is good for the economy?
4. What pieces of evidence have a weak connection to the claims that SNAP helps millions families get enough to eat and it is good for the economy?

C. Evaluate

Review your notes above. According to your answers, which argument about SNAP is better supported by the evidence in the text and why? (This might not be the argument with which you agree.)

D. Writing Options

Option A: paragraph
Write one paragraph for an essay that supports the government raising the minimum wage and continuing SNAP benefits. Remember that a paragraph is a group of sentences that support a main idea. First, make a claim in your topic sentence, and then support it with three or more pieces of strong evidence and relevant details.

Option B: essay
Write an essay about the government’s role in addressing poverty. Include all the parts listed below. Choose to write either for or against raising the minimum wage and continuing SNAP benefits.

Introducory paragraph: State why the federal government should/should not raise the minimum wage and continue SNAP benefits for low-income people.

Body paragraph 1: Explain why the government should/should not raise the minimum wage and include evidence to support your claim.

Body paragraph 2: Explain why the government should/should not continue SNAP benefits and include evidence to support your claim.

Body paragraph 3 (choose either A or B):
C. If you are writing to support raising the minimum wage and continuing SNAP benefits, state a problem with both programs, and then state why the benefits of the programs are greater than the risks.
D. If you are writing against raising the minimum wage and continuing SNAP benefits: State a benefit of each program, and then state why the problems are greater than the benefits.

**Conclusion:** Re-state that the federal government should/should not continue these programs and why.
What is the Government’s Role in Reducing Poverty?

Section 2: SNAP Benefits

Instructor Notes
Before You Read

B. Vocabulary Sort and Connections Directions
Copy and cut the vocabulary cards on the next page. Circulate and ask students why they grouped particular words together. Some surprising connections may come to light. If there is an error in understanding, try to keep explanations short. Avoid defining new words and instead emphasize that students will learn more through the process of reading.

Depending on the level and size of your class, pairing students or having them work in small groups might be helpful.

C. Pre-reading: First Sentences Suggested Activity
Before beginning the activity, share the title with the students and ask them to make predictions about what they'll read.

C. Pre-reading: First Sentences Instructor Notes
The First Sentences activity can be challenging for students, especially at first. Asking students to circle key words in the first sentences may help. Encourage them to play with ideas. Students who are struggling could make a few predictions, rather than complete all of the items.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>taxpayer</th>
<th>SNAP</th>
<th>billion</th>
<th>junk food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tax dollars</td>
<td>run the program</td>
<td>government support</td>
<td>benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources</td>
<td>food shelves</td>
<td>support services</td>
<td>safety net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard times</td>
<td>spent wisely</td>
<td>federal</td>
<td>letter to the editor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Read Closely

B. Author's Purpose Answer Key

1. What is the author's purpose?
   a. to convince the reader to vote for a political party
   b. to convince the reader that no one should ever use SNAP benefits
   c. to convince the reader that the SNAP program is too expensive
   d. to convince the reader that the US economy is growing

Test writers often give one or more answers that are true but present a detail, while another answer will more fully answer the question.

C. Analyze the Structure Directions
Copy, cut, and shuffle the strips.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The cost of SNAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning how people use SNAP benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can work more instead of using SNAP benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single people can work instead of using SNAP benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can find other ways to get food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Analyze the Structure Answer Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph Number</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 2</td>
<td>The cost of SNAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 3</td>
<td>Questioning how people use SNAP benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 4</td>
<td>People can work more instead of using SNAP benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 5</td>
<td>Single people can work instead of using SNAP benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 6</td>
<td>People can find other ways to get food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 7</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Finding Definitions within a Text Answer Key

1. Government benefits are **free services or money from the government to help low-income people.**

2. The new law allows **able-bodied,** or **healthy,** adults to receive SNAP benefits.

3. The author thinks that SNAP is a **misuse,** or **bad way to use,** taxpayer money.

4. Find and copy the sentence in Paragraph 3 that lists several examples of **junk food.**
   **"They had pop, candy, cookies, and chips in their cart."**

5. Find and copy the sentence in Paragraph 4 that gives an example of growing **opportunities** to
   find work.
   **"In the US, more than 15 million new jobs have been created since 2010."**
6. Find and copy the sentence in Paragraph 4 that lists examples of "resources."
"People can get food from food shelves, take free job training classes from libraries, and use some of the thousands of support services available from churches, mosques, and temples."

**F. Evaluating Evidence Directions**

Students may not know how to label the types of evidence from the article. If necessary, pre-teach the difference between a fact and statistic (a statistic is a specific type of fact that includes numbers), and the difference between an example and a personal story (a personal story is a specific type of example that is from the writer’s own experience).

It may also be necessary to review and practice the difference between facts and opinions.

**F. Evaluating Evidence Answer Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Connection to the Claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The American people pay 75 billion dollars for the SNAP program every year.</td>
<td>statistic</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because it shows how much money taxpayers pay for the SNAP program. It leaves out information about how much government programs usually cost taxpayers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. More than five billion dollars is used to run the program.</td>
<td>statistic</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because it shows how much money it takes to run the SNAP program. It leaves out information about how much government programs usually cost to run.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Imagine how great it would be to spend five million more on schools, public transportation, or even giving the money back to the hardworking people who paid the tax in the first place.</td>
<td>opinion</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because it shows other ways to spend the money that goes to the SNAP program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When I worked in a grocery store, people paid for junk food with SNAP cards every day.</td>
<td>personal story</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because it shows that the writer saw people making poor choices on how to spend SNAP money.</td>
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<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. That's not the way I want my tax dollars to be used.</td>
<td>opinion</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because it shows that the writer wants the money for the SNAP program to be used differently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A friend of mine could have used SNAP benefits, but he worked hard and made it through tough times without using government money.</td>
<td>personal story</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because it is not always necessary for someone to use the SNAP program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Now even more people are using SNAP.</td>
<td>fact</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because the SNAP program costs more than before. It leaves out information about how many single people participate in the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If you are single, you have enough time to find a job.</td>
<td>opinion</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because it shows a reason that single people may not need to use the SNAP program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. In the US more than 15 million new jobs have been created since 2010.</td>
<td>statistic</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because it shows that it may be easier to get a job instead of using the SNAP program. It leaves out details about what kinds of jobs were created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. People can get food from food shelves, take free job training classes from libraries, and use some of the thousands of support services available from churches, mosques, and temples.</td>
<td>fact</td>
<td>This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because it shows that people have other options instead of using the SNAP program. It leaves out information about how many food shelves there are, how</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Today there are more than four million single adults in the US who take money from the government for food every month. This evidence shows that SNAP is spending too much taxpayer money because it shows how many people use the SNAP program. It leaves out information about how many people use other government programs and who details about who uses the program such as family status, disability status, employment status, etc.

statistic

12. Does the writer of “SNAP Uses Too Much Taxpayer Money” use strong and relevant evidence? Why or why not?

The writer does not use strong evidence. The writer uses three opinions and two personal stories. The facts and statistics are relevant to the claim that SNAP costs taxpayers too much money.

13. Review your notes about the facts and statistics. The writer leaves out relevant information. What additional information does the reader need to decide if the SNAP program costs too much? (hint: What kinds of questions did think about as you read? What kinds of counter-arguments did you think about as you read?)

(Answers will vary) The reader needs to know how much government programs usually cost, how much an individual taxpayer pays for the SNAP program, what kinds of new jobs were created, how many jobs are usually created in a year, how long a family typically uses the SNAP program, and more details about who uses the program and why.

Show Your Understanding Answer Key

1. The author makes two claims about the SNAP program. What are the two claims? The author claims that SNAP is good for families and good for the economy.

2. The author includes evidence to support both claims. Which paragraph(s) focus on the first claim? Paragraphs 1, 2, 4 (especially 2)

3. Which paragraph(s) focus on the second claim? Paragraph 3
4. In paragraph 2, the author uses the word “malnourished.” What does that word mean? (Hint: You can find the definition in the text.) “Hungry every day.”

5. In paragraph 2, the author gives evidence about children’s development. How is this evidence relevant to the author’s claims? The evidence is relevant because many people who receive SNAP benefits are children. It shows that SNAP is good for children because it helps them get good nutrition. Good nutrition is very important for development.

6. Find and copy the evidence the author uses in paragraph 4 to support the claim that people who receive SNAP are hardworking. What type of evidence is this? “In fact, 96% of people who worked before receiving SNAP continued to work after they started to receive SNAP.”

   It’s a statistic.

7. Find the paragraph with evidence that SNAP helps the economy. What types of evidence does the author use? a fact, a statistic

8. What evidence could the writer add to this paragraph about SNAP helping the economy to make it stronger? (Answers will vary) The author could add an example sample budget for a family that received SNAP, statistics about how much money SNAP participants spend on food, housing and clothing, more information about where the statistic on economic activity comes from and how it was calculated, and a definition of economic activity.
**Rock the Test Answer Key**

1. Why does the author share the story of her friend who uses SNAP?
   a. To make the topic real and connect the reader to the topic
   b. To impress the reader with the words of a famous person
   c. To use data and statistics convince the reader that this point of view is correct
   d. To prove that the author is an expert in nutrition

2. In paragraph 4, the author uses the phrases “in fact” and “in addition.” How do those linking words connect sentences to the rest of the information in the paragraph?
   a. They show sequence, or what happened first, second, and third.
   b. They build up the argument that most SNAP recipients really need the benefit.
   c. They review the arguments supporting SNAP in a summary.
   d. They introduce information that shows two special types of SNAP recipients to recipients are more important than the rest.

3. Which evidence supports the author’s claim that SNAP helps a large number of people in need?
   a. When children are malnourished, or hungry every day, they don’t grow well.
   b. Adults who are healthy, but aren’t working, can only get SNAP benefits for three months in a three-year period.
   c. The poverty line was $24,250 a year for a family of four in 2015.
   d. More than 46 million people in the United States use SNAP.

4. Why does the author use the statistic “In fact, 96% of people who worked before receiving SNAP continued to work after they started to receive SNAP.” in Paragraph 4?
   a. To explain why healthy adults receive SNAP benefits.
   b. To show that SNAP recipients work harder than most people in the US.
   c. To make readers feel a strong emotion about SNAP recipients.
   d. To show that SNAP recipients are hardworking and that most have jobs.

5. In paragraph 1, the author states, “Without that government benefit, her kids might not have enough to eat every day.” Which sentence means the same thing?
   a. Her family doesn’t have that government benefit, so her children don’t have enough to eat every day.
   b. If she didn’t have SNAP, she might not be able to put enough food on the table.
   c. Her children are hungry some days, but not every day, because they have SNAP.
   d. Her children will never be hungry again.