CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
This lesson fits in perfectly with units that address curriculum standards in language arts, social studies, civics, economics, thinking and reasoning, and history.

SAMPLE STANDARDS ALIGNMENTS

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.5** Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3** Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3** Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
LESSON PREPARATION

• Prepare a monitor with Internet access to screen “The Unbelievably Sweet Alpacas!” at www.wetheeconomy.com/films (TRT 5:47)
• Prepare copies of Student Handouts for distribution
• Prepare strips of paper into “status labels” as follows:
  - 2 strips with the word ELITE written on them
  - 6 strips with the word PRIVILEGED on them
  - 24 strips with the word UNDERSERVED written on them
• Prepare 100 “wealth” items such as pennies, pieces of candy, pencils, etc. Items should be divided into 3 piles of 35, 50, and 15.

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES
Inequality, taxes, global trade, government policy, economic ladder, mobility, inflation, income gap, satire

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

• Students will evaluate some of the potential forces behind the inequality in our nation’s current economic class structure and propose solutions.
• Students will work in small groups to negotiate and reach consensus.
• Students will analyze the various factors that fuel inequality in this country.
• Students will consider various approaches to closing the income gap.
• Students will learn how satire plays a role in political dialogue.

REQUIREMENTS

MATERIALS

• Whiteboard and markers, chalkboard and chalk, or chart paper and markers
• Monitor/ projector, and computer with Internet access
• A quantity of 100 “wealth” items such as candy, pencils, or pennies
• Paper “status” labels, enough for one per student
• Student Handouts: Income Distribution by Chart

TIME:

• 1 class period

TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS

Vocabulary building, large group discussion, small group work, problem solving, critical and analytical thinking, literary analysis, balancing various viewpoints, comparing and contrasting information sources, research skills, listening skills, expository and responsive writing
PROCEDURES

1. Randomly pass a pre-labeled strip of paper to every student, ensuring that at least 1-2 students receive an “elite” label. Note: numbers below are approximations and will vary based on the size of the class.
   - 1-2 students should receive “elite” labels
   - 4-6 students should receive “privileged” labels
   - 20-24 students should receive “underserved” labels

2. Have the students rearrange themselves so they are sitting by group. Pass out your chosen “wealth” item to students. Give the elite group 35 items, the privileged group 50 items, and the underserved group 15 items.

3. Explain to the class that they have 15 minutes to complete the following assignment. Give the “elite” group their Student Handout first. A few minutes later, give the “privileged” group their Student Handout. Wait at least 5 more minutes before giving the “underserved” group their Student Handout.

4. Allow 15 minutes from when the “elite” group received their Student Handout for students to complete their assignments. As groups are working, spend 5 minutes sitting with the “elite” group, helping them with their assignment, giving them answers, etc. Then, spend 2-3 minutes with the “privileged” group, doing the same. Do not assist the “underserved” group at all.

5. When 15 minutes have elapsed from the time that the “elite” group got their Student Handout, instruct groups to stop working. Pose the following questions to the class:
   - What did you notice about today’s activity that felt unfair? Explain.
   - What made it easier for the elite group to complete their assignment?
   - What made it harder for the underserved group to do so?
   - How did you divide up your group’s items? How many items did each of the members of your group receive? What does this amount allow for each member to afford each month?
   - How did you feel when you saw that some groups were getting more time, more items, and more assistance?


7. After the film, conduct a whole group discussion reflecting on both the film and the assignment, and how they related to each other. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:
   - How does today’s class activity relate to the content of the film? How does it relate to the economic breakdown of our country?
   - How might the film “The Unbelievably Sweet Alpacas” be considered political or social satire?
   - How did the way our class was divided into groups compare to the three alpacas in the film?

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PROCEDURES CONTINUED

• Is income inequality a good or bad thing? Why?
• What is causing the rising gap between the richest and poorest Americans?
• How is income distributed amongst different occupations and demographics in the United States? Why is our distribution like this?
• Do you think the government should aim to decrease income inequality? If so, how?
• How do minimum wage and inflation affect income inequality?
• Why do you think the filmmaker chose to spoof a well-known cartoon to communicate his message? What does he accomplish by using this method rather than a traditional documentary?
• How does the film communicate serious issues in a humorous way?

8. For homework, ask students to write an expository essay that answers the following question: How is a nation impacted when there is a large gap between its rich and its poor? What is your solution to the problem of an increasing gap between our nation’s elite and its underserved? Provide specific examples to support your hypothesis. Note: Students may watch the film again at home by going to www.wetheeconomy/films/, and can incorporate data or information from other sources including films, books, articles, etc.
DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND OPPORTUNITY

DIRECTIONS: First, without looking them up, provide definitions for the following terms. Use examples to illustrate their meaning whenever possible. Then, complete the assignment at the bottom of the page.

1. Inequality
2. Inflation
3. Minimum wage
4. Mobility
5. Economic policy
6. Income gap

As a group, divide your wealth items among yourselves; consider the general cost of living that is outlined below. Your goal is to ensure that everyone in the group has their basic needs covered.

- Rent: 4 items/month
- Food: 2 items/month
- Utilities: 2 items/month
- Extra Expenses, such as: clothing, transportation (car, fuel, or train/bus fare), entertainment (lectures, movies, concerts, etc.), school tuition, savings: amount of items is variable, based on ability
- Additional Items (describe):