we the economy
20 SHORT FILMS YOU CAN’T AFFORD TO MISS
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

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

SAMPLE STANDARDS ALIGNMENTS

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.HSS.MD.B.5 Weigh the possible outcomes of a decision by assigning probabilities to payoff values and finding expected values.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.HSS.MD.B.5.B Evaluate and compare strategies on the basis of expected values.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.HSS.ID.C.9 Distinguish between correlation and causation.

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.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
LESSON PREPARATION

• Prepare a monitor with Internet access to screen the short film, “The Value of Work” at www.wetheeconomy.com/films (TRT 8:05)
• Prepare copies of Student Handouts for distribution

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Minimum wage, free market system, mobility, wage scale, politics, inflation, fairness, economic justice, economic growth, unemployment

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

• Students will learn about the importance and impact of a federal and state minimum wage.
• Students will work in small groups to negotiate and solve a problem.
• Students will analyze multiple perspectives on an issue.
• Students will communicate their opinion to the class, using data collected from a secondary source.
• Students will discuss, negotiate, and strategize to reach consensus.
• Students will analyze media through a specific lens.

REQUIREMENTS

MATERIALS

• Whiteboard and markers, chalkboard and chalk, or chart paper and markers
• Monitor/ projector, and computer with internet access
• Student Handouts: Work- What’s It Worth?

TIME:

• 1 class period

TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS

Vocabulary building, large group discussion, small group work, problem solving, critical and analytical thinking, comparing and contrasting information sources, communicating ideas, weighing pros and cons, research skills, listening skills, categorizing and organizing ideas
PROCEDURES

1. Write the term “MINIMUM WAGE” on the whiteboard, chalkboard, or on a piece of chart paper. Ask students to respond to this term, allowing 5 minutes for a short discussion. Create a word-web of student responses, using some or all of the following questions as a guide:
   • What does the phrase “minimum wage” mean?
   • What images does the term conjure for you?
   • What do you know about the minimum wage?

2. Ask students to direct their attention to the monitor/screen. Play the film “The Value of Work” (TRT: 8:05).

3. When the film ends, divide the class into groups of 4-5 students each. Instruct each group to sit together for the duration of the following activity. Explain that each group is going to role-play an activity as if they were a small business.

4. Instruct the students in each group to assign, by consensus, one of the following jobs to each member of the group:
   • An entry-level worker: with no real education or skills, in a position to earn money and potentially learn a trade. Full time job comes with benefits like health insurance, and store discounts.
   • A shift manager: not entry level, but with direct contact and oversight with minimum-wage workers, dependent on them to show up for their shifts, do a good job. Responsible for morale.
   • A store supervisor: higher level than the shift manager, is responsible for balancing the store budgets and justifying store policy to central management.
   • A member of senior management: A CEO, CFO, or SVP of the company. No necessary direct contact with store employees, but responsible for the economic health, public relations, and growth of the overall business.
   • A customer, client, or “end user” to whom this business caters/sells/markets its services/products.

5. Distribute a copy of Student Handout: Work – What’s It Worth? to each group, and explain that they have 15 minutes to complete the assignment.

6. While students are working in small groups, draw a replica of the chart from the Student Handout on the whiteboard, chalkboard or chart paper.

7. After 15 minutes have elapsed, reconvene as a large group. Allow time for each small group to share their results with the class. As they share, copy their ideas in the “effect” column on the large chart for the entire class to see.
8. Conduct a whole group discussion using some or all of the following questions as a guide:

   • What factors must a business owner weigh when deciding how much to pay his or her workers?
   • How can raising the minimum wage have a potentially positive effect on our national economy? Negative effect? Why?
   • Should the government regulate minimum wage? If so, should this be the responsibility of the national or state governments? Why?
   • What did you learn about economics from the activity you completed in class today? What did you learn about your own community?
   • How does minimum wage relate to the increasing gap between the upper and lower classes in the U.S.? Do you think this gap is good or bad?
   • What is the difference between a minimum wage and a living wage?
   • How do minimum wage and inflation affect income inequality?
   • What pressures are put on our social welfare system when employers pay workers less than a living wage?
   • How do we define poverty? Who decides what salary is high enough to be considered fair and livable?

9. For homework, instruct students to take a piece of notebook paper and fold it in half vertically. On one side, at the top write “Worker.” Under this heading, make a list of all the expenses a family of four might incur on a monthly basis. Remind students to consider factors such as food, housing, education, clothing, transportation, electricity, water, childcare, and any other essentials. On the other side, write “Small Business Owner.” Under this heading, make a list of all expenses a small business might incur on a monthly basis, including taxes, rent, salaries, overhead costs, licensing costs, marketing, packaging, etc. Consider the impact if the wage is lower, allowing small businesses the ability to grow and invest in the local economy, but limiting the working class’s ability to spend locally. Then consider the impact if the wage is higher, allowing working class people more income to support their families and invest in the local economy as consumers, but making it harder for businesses to open, and stay open. Then, ask students to decide what they think would be an appropriate living wage for a family in their city. Students should draw on information from the class activity as well as the film to complete this assignment. 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.
DIRECTIONS: Imagine that your group is a small business. Your business currently has approximately 20 minimum wage workers. These workers are currently making $10/hr. You have recently read in the news that the city council is voting to increase minimum wage. On one hand, you’ve heard from your workers that they are having trouble paying their rent, buying groceries and cannot afford the price of a college education for their children. However, your business is on a tight budget and you fear that you may not be able to raise your workers’ salaries without cutting back elsewhere, or increasing the cost of your product to the public. What do you do? As a group, fill out the following chart. Then, answer the questions at the bottom of this sheet. Use the back of this paper to record your responses. Be prepared to share your decision and reasoning with the class.

Type of Business (i.e., restaurant, retail, manufacturer, service provider): _________________________________

End-User Product (what your company provides to the public): _________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>EFFECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option A: You continue to pay your workers $10/hr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option B: You lower salaries to $9/hr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option C: You raise salaries to $14/hr.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option D:</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

What does the entry-level employee want to do? Why?

What does the shift manager want to do? Why?

What does the store supervisor want to do? Why?

What does the senior executive want to do? Why?

What does the customer want the company to do? Why?

What does your group decide to do? Why?