**Analyzing Economic Inequality**

**Subject area/course:** Social Sciences, Introduction to Sociology

**Grade level/band**: 11–12

**STUDENT PROMPT SECTION**

1. **Task context:**

The issue of economic inequality has been an ongoing social concern in the United States for decades. Not surprisingly, sociologists have developed multiple theories that try to explain why there is such an imbalance in terms of income across America’s society.

For this task, your job is to research three different theories of poverty. Through your research, you will develop a deeper understanding of these three theories by reading three or more articles written by respected scholars. Summarize what you learn about each theory in preparation for your final paper.

Once you have a solid understanding of these theories of poverty, the next step is to apply those theories to a social policy. After all, what good is a theory if it can’t be used to actually explain something? Choose one of the following social policies to analyze through the lenses of the theories of poverty that you have studied:

* Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

OR

* Federal minimum wage

What do you think the theories of poverty you researched would have to say about your chosen social policy? Would they declare the policy useful and beneficial, or would they condemn it as harmful? By critically examining one of the above social policies through the lenses of these theories of poverty, you will be equipped to better understand the ways other public policies impact different social groups in our society.

1. **The task:**

After reading at least three academic articles that analyze three different poverty theories, write a 5- to 6-page paper in which you critically analyze one of the following social policies: 1) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or 2) Federal minimum wage. To develop this paper and your claims, you will need to provide examples and evidence from your research. Be sure to make an argument about which theory of poverty best helps to explain the effects of that policy on low-income people.

Your paper should:

* Describe the specific social policy and use poverty theory to analyze the policy.
* Support your position with evidence from your research.
* Provide an accurate summary of the main ideas in the articles.
* Use discipline-specific vocabulary.
* Use in-text citations correctly and include a Works Cited page using MLA format or another style that your instructor selects.

1. **Materials/resources:**

You will need access to a digital library such as JSTOR, or hard copies of sociology journals in a library to conduct your research.

1. **Time requirements**:

Depending on your class schedule, you will have three to four weeks to complete your research and write your paper.