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SHOULD VICTIMS' FAMILIES ALL RECEIVE THE SAME COMPENSATION?

Word Generation - Unit 1.21

Focus Words

financial | compensation | fund | sum | recover

Weekly Passage

Ron Malin's father and Serena Johnson's father were each killed on the same day, 9/11/2001. Ron's father died when terrorists flew an airplane into the building where he was working. Serena's father was killed in front of his house in a drive-by shooting. To help Ron's family recover, the government compensated them with three million dollars. Serena's family got financial compensation, too. However, theirs was only three thousand dollars.

Some people say that if families experience equivalent tragedies, it is not fair to compensate them differently. They say that every victim's family should receive the same amount. Many religions also support this view. These religions regard all human lives as equally valuable.

Crime victims' families receive money from the government to pay for certain expenses caused by the crime. However, the government created a special fund to give larger sums to families of 9/11 victims. Many people say 9/11 victims deserve special treatment because they died during an attack on our country.

Some say families of 9/11 victims received high payments because many were wealthy. Others voice yet another concern. They say that government

officials were worried that these families would sue the airlines. People who win lawsuits can receive enormous sums, many times the amount that Ron's family received. With thousands of victims, the airlines could have gone bankrupt. The insurance companies who pay damages if airlines are successfully sued could have gone bankrupt too.

Although money can never bring back someone who has died, it can help a family recover from a tragedy. What do you think? Should victims' families all receive the same compensation?

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Discussion questions:

- ▶ How do the sums that the two families received differ?
- ▶ What was the reason the government gave for the huge financial compensation given to the families of 9/11 victims?
- ▶ What are some ways that money could help a victim's family recover?
- ▶ How is the idea of equal compensation related to a religious view?
- ▶ Why would the government worry about the airlines being sued?

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Focus Word Chart (teacher version)

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/ Suffixes	
compensation	(n.) – something given as payment, or to make up for a loss, injury, or death	compensational	compensate		
financial	(adj.) – having to do with money	financially	finance (v.)		finances (n.) financials financiers
fund	(n.) – a supply of money for a specific purpose	funds (pl.) fund (v.) funds (v.) funded funding		defund refund	foundation
recover	(v.) – to regain strength, or to get back something that was lost	recovers recovered recovering	cover	uncover recovery recoverable	
sum	(n.) – amount	sums (pl.) sum (v.)			sum up (v. phrase) summary summarize

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Problem of the Week

Each state has a crime victim **compensation** program. These programs oversee **funds** to help crime victims **recover** crime-related **financial** losses. Each state has its own rules. For example, Michigan's crime victim compensation program will pay for funeral expenses, medical bills, and lost wages. However, the maximum award is \$15,000. The average **sum** awarded is \$3,841.

Option 1: The federal government set up a special victim compensation fund for victims of September 11. This fund awarded an average of \$1.8 million to each victim. In the state of Michigan, the maximum award a crime victim can receive is \$15,000. How many \$15,000 awards would it take to total \$1.8 million?

- A) 12
- ☒ B) 120
- C) 130
- D) 1,300

Option 2: The average sum awarded by the federal September 11 victim compensation fund was \$1.8 million. The highest sum awarded was \$7.9 million. In 2008, the median household income for the U.S. was \$52,029. If \$50,000 can support an average household for a year, how many years of support does \$1.8 million represent? How many years of support does \$7.9 million represent? (Hint: to solve quickly, use exponents!)

Answer: $1.8 \times 10^6 / 5 \times 10^4 = 36$, so \$1.8 million represents 36 years of support. $7.9 \times 10^6 / 5 \times 10^4 = 158$, so \$7.9 million represents 158 years of support.

Math Discussion Question: Victim **compensation** programs help victims **recover** after a tragedy. The **funds** awarded cover costs like medical bills for wounded people, funeral expenses for murder victims, and lost wages. When lost wages are considered, people who have earned more money receive more **financial** help than people who have earned less. Is this fair? Or should we develop a different system that awards an equal **sum** to each victim?

Should victims' families all receive the same compensation?

Debating the Issue



GO!

1. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A Every human life is equally valuable. Victims' families should all receive equal compensation.

B The government should pay more to victims of an attack on our country than it pays victims of neighborhood crime.

C The government should pay victims enough money to prevent huge lawsuits that can cause businesses to go bankrupt.

D The government should pay families of wealthier victims more money because these families probably have higher expenses.

E _____

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

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» Some students may need help defining their position on the weekly topic. Here are some examples:

I think it's more accurate to say...

That's interesting - can you tell why you think that?

I think the evidence is contrary to what you're saying because. . .

Let me share something from the reading that will help us...

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Science Activity



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

Professor Kahn's class held a lively debate about the **compensation fund** for the families of 9/11 victims. Professor Kahn explained that government compensation is meant to replace victims' income and help families **recover financially**. Therefore, the families of lower earners get smaller **sums**. "That's not fair," said Alicia. "Rich people and poor people are worth the same." Her classmates agreed. Professor Kahn admired their strong sense of fairness. She decided to put their sense of fairness to the test.

Question:

Will students give up cookies in the name of fairness?

Hypothesis:

Students will say no to any offer other than an even 5 and 5 split.

Materials:

- ▶ 100 cookies
- ▶ 10 students

Procedure:

1. Divide students into 5 pairs: A, B, C, D, and E.
2. For each pair, make one student the divider and the other student the decider.
3. Give each pair 10 cookies.
4. The divider makes two piles: "Mine" and "Yours"
5. The decider decides:
Yes – both partners keep their cookies
or
No – nobody gets cookies
6. Write down each decider's choice.

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This experiment is fictitious. It is loosely based on real experiments done with monkeys and chimpanzees.

Real Research

-This 2009 article sums up research into whether animals have a sense of fairness. For example, in one study, two monkeys were given a task. When they both completed the task, one was given a cucumber (a pretty good reward) and the other was given a grape (a really good reward). Monkeys who ordinarily would've enjoyed their cucumber protested the unfair reward, sometimes by throwing the cucumber.

Dingfelder, S. F. (2009, September). Nice by nature?: Moral behavior may have ancient roots, new research suggests. *Monitor on Psychology*, 40: 8, 58. Retrieved on October 19, 2009 from <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2009/09/moral-behavior.html>

Data:

	Division		Decision
Pair A	Mine - 5	Yours - 5	yes
Pair B	Mine - 9	Yours - 1	no
Pair C	Mine - 6	Yours - 4	no
Pair D	Mine - 5	Yours - 5	yes
Pair E	Mine - 7	Yours - 3	no

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

Supported

What evidence supports your conclusion?

Answer: In all three cases where the divider was unfair, the deciders said “no.” In other words, when the split was unfair, the deciders always chose to have no cookies at all rather than let the dividers enjoy an unfair share.

How would you make this a better experiment?

Encourage students to consider sample size, number of trials, control of variables, whether the procedure is a true measure of the question, whether the experiment can be repeated by other scientists, data collection and recording systems, and other potential explanations for the outcome. Students should understand that these simple experiments represent the beginning of an exploration, not the end. If time permits, have students suggest how the experiment could be strengthened, emphasizing the use of the target words in the discussion.



Should victims' families all receive the same compensation?

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

Focus Words

financial | compensation | fund | sum | recover

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Ask students to write a response in which they argue a position on the weekly topic.

Put the writing prompt on the overhead projector (or the board) so that everyone can see it. Remind students to refer to the word lists in their Word Generation notebooks as needed.

[illegible]

A tool to help you think about your own writing!

Remember you can use focus words from any of the WG Units.

Check off what you accomplished:

Good Start

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

Pretty Good

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1-2 focus words

Exemplary

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2-5 focus words

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.