NEWS BREAK

Article: Big employers, including Amazon, McDonald’s, drive up starting pay

Section: BUSINESS, C6

Sunday’s News Break selects an article from Sunday, May 16, 2021 of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some teachers might use this as a take-home assignment and others might read and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

*Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for your students.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Objectives:

Students will talk about whether a minimum wage increase is important to the U.S. economy. They will also discuss why consumer spending is on the rise. Students will talk about causes and solutions of why job openings are surging and why businesses can’t meet demand. They will also talk about the biggest factors for deterring potential job applicants.
Pre-Reading Discussion:

What do you think the article will be about, using only this picture?
Are there any clues?
What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using context clues? A context clue is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

While consumers may begin to shift more of their spending money to services such as entertainment and travel as pandemic fears dissipate, elevated savings built up during the pandemic should also underpin retail demand.

Underpin Guess:

Underpin Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. As the U.S. economy rebounds from the ravages of COVID-19, the country’s biggest corporations find themselves in need of workers, putting upward pressure on what?
2. Which companies are offering higher wages and cash payments?
3. __________________ and ___________________, rarely needed before to fill entry-level, low-wage jobs, are now commonplace.
4. These incentives represent a slow but steady march toward a goal that lawmakers and labor activists have pursued for years, with limited success. What is their goal?
5. McDonald’s announced Thursday it will raise hourly wages by about ____ %, bringing the average wage at its company-owned restaurants to more than $13 an hour. Chipotle Mexican Grill said earlier this week it will set hourly starting wages at $11 to $18. Target and Costco have increased theirs to $15 and $16, respectively.
6. McDonald’s is hiring __________ new employees at its company-owned stores over the next three months alone, and Walmart brought half a million people on board last year.
7. Last month, the U.S. economy added __________ jobs — far short of the 1 million that economists had forecast.
8. The total value of retail sales, while little changed from March, was at a record $________ billion in April, according to data released Friday.
9. The figures support economists’ forecasts for what?
10. While consumers may begin to shift more of their spending money to services such as entertainment and travel as pandemic fears dissipate, elevated savings built up during the pandemic should also underpin what?
11. Companies increasingly are concerned about issues of __________ and are sensitive to criticisms of how much their corporate officers make when compared with the average worker. So, they’ll likely bump up wages just to get ahead of any potential criticism.
12. Rising wages may also add to what?

Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay Questions:

• What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
• At first I thought ______________, but now I think ____________?
• What things did you already know from prior experience?
• Do you think an increase in minimum wage is important to the U.S. economy? Why or why not?
• Why do you think consumer spending is on the rise?

At the same time, the number of job openings is surging and business surveys show employers are increasingly unable to hire enough workers to meet demand as the economy rapidly reopens.

• Why do you think this has become a national problem? What are the causes? Do you see any solutions?

While some executives and Republican lawmakers say generous unemployment benefits during the pandemic are deterring potential applicants, many economists say there are a variety of factors and the mismatch is temporary. Ongoing health concerns, child care responsibilities and the combination of low pay and unreliable hours offered in many service-industry jobs may also be contributing.

• What do you think are the biggest factors for deterring potential applicants?
News Break is posted to the Web on Monday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please register on-line or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.

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