

## NEWS BREAK

Article: **What happens when a processed food backlash meets rising food prices?**

Section: **THE MIX, E10**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, April 19, 2026**, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

Feel free to adapt this lesson for your students. For instance, some educators may assign this as a homework task, while others might facilitate the reading and discussion of questions within small groups or larger class discussions.

***\*Please take a moment to review all NIE content before classroom use to ensure it is suitable 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.

### **Learning Objectives:**

After reading the article, students will think more critically and realistically about ultra-processed foods (UPFs). The article encourages a balanced approach to nutrition—understanding the complexity of food systems instead of viewing processed foods as purely “good” or “bad.”

### **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 meaning of the word.

“Many Americans are **scrutinizing** their pantries and looking for less-processed options.”

**Scrutinizing Guess:**

**Scrutinizing Definition:**

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. Walk down the aisles of pretty much any grocery store right now and you may notice something new: a new seal, specifically “ \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. Welcome to the ultra-processed food \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Fueled by recent studies trying to pinpoint how UPFs may be affecting health; an aggressive push from federal “Make America Healthy Again” initiatives; and a wave of municipal lawsuits comparing food manufacturers to Big Tobacco, many Americans are scrutinizing their pantries and looking for what? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What are two factors that may complicate the “war on UPFs?”
5. The widely used NOVA classification system defines UPFs as industrial formulations made mostly from substances extracted from foods, often containing what? \_\_\_\_\_
6. I think we all know intuitively that \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ cheese puffs and \_\_\_\_\_ sodas meet that definition.
7. But the definition also traps many nutritious foods that health-conscious consumers consider daily staples-what was listed in the article?
8. This is why painting all UPFs with the same broad brush ignores nutritional \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Lumping a fortified, protein- and fiber-rich nutritional shake into the same category as, say, a convenience store hot dog creates unnecessary what? \_\_\_\_\_
10. For many people, the shift away from UPFs isn’t just a matter of reading labels and making “better” choices — it’s reckoning with rising \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Research from the University of Washington has observed a stark reality over the years-what did they find?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. In contrast, diets rich in fresh, minimally processed foods cost significantly \_\_\_\_\_.
13. Thus, the edict from the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans to “eat real food” presents a \_\_\_\_\_ to many, a burden that falls more heavily on low-income households, especially with food prices continuing to rise and food assistance benefits continuing to be cut.
14. Instead of aiming for eradicating UPFs, focus on your overall dietary pattern-what steps did the article suggest?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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### **Class Discussion Questions:**

- What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
- At first, I thought \_\_\_\_\_, but now I think \_\_\_\_\_?

### **Deeper-Dive “Connect & Explain” comprehension questions for small groups, entire classes or journal entries and/ or essay prompts for extended enrichment:**

1. The article argues that not all ultra-processed foods (UPFs) are the same. How does this challenge the idea that all processed food is unhealthy? Give specific examples from the article.
2. The NOVA system classifies many foods as UPFs. Do you think this system is helpful or confusing for consumers? Why?
3. The author mentions “nutritional nuance.” What does this mean, and why is it important when making food choices?
4. The article states that healthier foods often cost more. How might this impact families with different income levels? Give a real-life scenario.
5. The article calls switching to whole foods “mathematically impossible” for some. What does this reveal about the relationship between nutrition and economic inequality?
6. Think about your own eating habits. How often do you rely on convenience or processed foods? What factors influence your choices (time, cost, taste, etc.)?
7. Have you ever scrutinized (carefully examined) a food label? What did you look for, and did it change your decision?
8. Some lawsuits compare food companies to Big Tobacco. Do you think this comparison is reasonable or exaggerated? Explain your reasoning.
9. The article suggests moderation instead of eliminating UPFs. Do you agree with this approach? Why or why not?
10. How do advertising, trends, and social media influence how people view “healthy” vs. “unhealthy” foods?
11. What is the main message the author wants readers to understand about food choices? Do you agree or disagree?

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