Pretest: **Circle** the number of your proficiency in the following areas.

Posttest: Put an **X** on the number of your proficiency in the following areas.

**Level:** GED  
**Unit:** Evaluating Social Studies Materials

**Standard:** SSP.7.a Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a primary or secondary source document.

**Learning Goal:** Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. The main idea of this passage is that
   (1) equality in voting rights has always been a principle of American democracy
   (2) voting rights have been granted to all groups without struggle
   (3) the right to vote was not won by all citizens at the same time, but over time and with much social conflict
   (4) the Voting Rights Act was the most important legislation of the 1960s
   (5) without the Fifteenth Amendment, women and African Americans would still not have the right to vote

Questions 12 and 13 refer to the following passage.

Many social scientists have linked the changing nature of the American family to the growth of the women's liberation movement. The rights and freedoms won by women have increased their participation in the work force. This has changed child-rearing patterns, as more children attend day-care centers while their mothers work. The increased number of working women has also changed the division of labor between husbands and wives in the home. Many experts link the increased divorce rate to increased job opportunities for women. Jobs allow women to feel more economically secure on their own. Increased job opportunities for women also have caused a decrease in the population growth rate because more women are delaying childbirth or not having children at all.

12. The main idea of this passage is that
   (1) women's liberation has destroyed the American family
   (2) the women's liberation movement has brought about many changes in the American family
   (3) men now take most of the responsibility for child rearing
   (4) women's liberation has had little effect on anyone except children
   (5) the nature of the American family has changed due to the high divorce rate

13. Based on this passage, what principle of social change can you conclude?
   (1) Change is bad for the family unit.
   (2) Change in one aspect of society is unlikely to affect other aspects of society.
   (3) Too much freedom will ruin a society.
   (4) Change in one aspect of society usually brings about changes in other aspects.
   (5) Social changes have little effect on people's daily lives.
Question 14 refers to the following passage.

One of the most important factors affecting home purchases is the interest rate on mortgages. Some economists say that each 1 percent increase in mortgage interest rate makes homes unaffordable to more than 1 million families. The effects of this were clearly seen in 1983. Declining mortgage rates in early 1983 increased home sales very rapidly. The rates dropped in May to around 12 1/2 percent. By August they had climbed to almost 14 percent. Economists said that 2.4 million families could no longer afford to buy homes. This slowed home sales by 35 percent.

14. Based on the details in this passage, you can conclude that a continuing rise in mortgage interest rates would

(1) increase home sales
(2) not affect home sales
(3) not affect the price of homes
(4) cause more homes to be built
(5) decrease home sales

15. The main idea of the cartoon is that

(1) the economy needs tinkering with
(2) taxes will stay where they are until the economy catches up
(3) taxes will get a faster start than the economy
(4) the economy is large while taxes are small
(5) the tax-collecting machinery is always ready to work

16. How would you describe the condition of the U.S. economy as represented by the truck?

(1) large and operating efficiently
(2) small and probably not working well
(3) shrinking in size but working well
(4) large but not working as well as it should
(5) in complete disrepair
1. (1) People who buy things are consumers. The question tells you that the Truth in Lending Act requires that lenders tell the truth to buyers. Therefore, the people protected by this legislation are consumers.

2. (3) The passage indicates that outdated equipment is used. The logical conclusion is that it might not be able to predict storms very well.

3. (4) The second paragraph of the passage says that water power along the Fall Line was put to work for industry.

4. (2) The passage shows that towns grew up along the Fall Line because of industry's need for power.

5. (5) The passage refers to the federal government as having "little power" and as being "too weak" and "ineffective."

6. (1) The third sentence lists the problems faced by the new nation. These problems suggest that survival was at stake. There is no evidence in the passage for the other choices.

7. (3) The last sentence says that "These groups must share power and make compromises to get things done." This sentence suggests that all groups get some of what they want but that no single group dominates.

8. (2) The most money is spent on Social Security, so choice (2) is the best answer. The other choices relate to categories with lower percentages of federal spending.

9. (1) With Social Security representing nearly 20.7 percent of the budget, you can infer choice (1).

10. (4) The third sentence says that it left it to the states to decide voting qualifications.

11. (3) The passage tells you how several different groups gained the right to vote, all at different times. It also describes the obstacles that African Americans faced in exercising this right.

12. (2) The first sentence of the passage gives you the main idea. None of the other choices are stated in the passage.

13. (4) The passage shows that changes in American women's employment patterns have affected child-rearing patterns, division of labor, and divorce rates.

14. (5) When mortgage interest rates rise, fewer families can afford to buy homes, and sales fall.

15. (3) The race car symbol shows that taxes are ready to go—very likely upward—while the economy lags behind.

16. (4) The driver looking under the hood of the truck shows that the economy may need some work. The large truck, however, is still in one piece and none of its tires is flat.

17. (5) The Hispanic child lives in what the graph labels a "blended" family. The percentage of Hispanics in that category is 13.5 percent.

18. (1) Analysis of the graph shows that only choice (1) is correct.

19. (5) A Social Darwinist would believe giving out food stamps was wrong. It would artificially assist those who are not capable of taking care of themselves.
When you read, you **evaluate**, or judge the value or logic of an idea. You often ask yourself if you have enough information to answer a question or solve a problem. You also ask if the information you have is what you need.

For example, when you are thinking about buying a new car, you evaluate your financial situation and your transportation needs before you go out and look for the best deal. You judge to see if various cars are well made, how much they cost, and what features are offered with the car and which ones you will have to pay extra for. You ask which repairs are covered under warranty and what the loan rates are.

You also evaluate information when you read social studies passages, charts, maps, graphs, and political cartoons. You decide if the information is accurate or if it is based on sound logic.

In this section, you will learn how to evaluate social studies materials by:

- distinguishing fact from opinion
- identifying faulty logic
- recognizing tone
- interpreting editorial cartoons

**FACT AND OPINION**

A **fact** is a statement that can be proved. An **opinion** is a personal belief or feeling that cannot be proved. If someone believes that something is true, it still has to be proven to be a fact. Every day you read and hear both facts and opinions. At times you may have to give some thought as to which is which. When you read social studies material, take note of whether a statement you read is fact or opinion. Can a statement be proved? Or is it something the author believes but cannot prove?
One of the following two statements is a fact; the other is an opinion. Write F before the statement that is a fact and O before the statement that is an opinion.

___1. The U.S. Constitution is the greatest political document ever written.

___2. Twenty-six amendments have been added to the U.S. Constitution.

You were right if you thought the first statement was an opinion. The word greatest shows that the writer is expressing an opinion. The second statement is a fact that can be checked by looking at a copy of the Constitution.

EXERCISE 1

Directions: Read the statements below. Write F if the sentence is a fact, or O if the statement is an opinion.

___1. The United States is a democracy in which people elect their government officials.

___2. Democracy is the best form of government.

___3. Local governments mismanage their responsibilities of police and fire protection.

___4. Local governments have responsibility for the public schools.

___5. All citizens over the age of eighteen have the right to register and vote.

___6. The vice president has the most unimportant job in the entire federal government.

___7. If the president dies in office, the vice president becomes the new president.

ANSWERS ARE ON PAGE 300.
EVALUATION OF LOGIC

After reading a passage ask yourself, "Does the writer make sense? Are the ideas logical?" To answer these questions, you must use evaluation of logic. This is another inferential reading skill, in which you make a judgment of the way writers present and use their ideas. When evaluating logic, you may have to draw on any or all of the reading skills you have learned.

Probably the most important part of evaluating logic is judging the writer's logical consistency. Logical consistency means the writer's use of sound reasoning in developing an idea. You should especially be aware of the following two points.

- A writer's facts should support his or her conclusions.
- A writer should correctly apply his or her own ideas.

Read the passage below and put a check in front of the statement that is supported by the passage.

Critics of government assistance programs for the poor often claim that such aid does not work. However, nationwide studies show that students who participated in pre-school Head Start programs showed improvement in their school performance in later grades.

___(1) Increased spending on education does not improve performance.

___(2) Early help in education has no relation to later performance.

___(3) Pre-school children do well in later grades without these programs.

___(4) Early help in education can affect later academic performance.

The details in the passage support statement (4). The passage states that children who participated in pre-school Head Start programs showed improved school performance in later grades. The details in the passage do not support any of the other statements.
EXERCISE 2

Directions: Read the passage below and put a check in front of the correct answer to the questions that follow.

The Rising Crime Rate

The soaring crime rate affects everyone in the United States. One explanation for the rise in crime is that society offers too many rewards for the criminal and too few reasons for people to do honest work. Many people turn to crime because they think of it as a quick way to get what they want. Crime must be made less desirable and work more attractive.

Another explanation is that most crime results from economic and social conditions. These conditions affect men and women who are unable to better their lives. They feel hopeless in a society that promises an equal chance for everyone.

1. Which conclusion is supported by the details in the passage?
   ___(1) Crime does not pay.
   ___(2) The rise in the crime rate has more than one cause.
   ___(3) Getting rid of poverty would mean an end to crime.
   ___(4) The crime rate is rising because society is too easy on lawbreakers.

2. According to the passage, different views of the causes of crime reflect different ideas about
   ___(1) work
   ___(2) the influences of society
   ___(3) law enforcement
   ___(4) the criminal justice system

ANSWERS ARE ON PAGE 300.
A writer uses tone to influence the reader’s reaction to a situation. *Tone* refers to a writer’s own bias or opinion about a subject. Feelings such as delight or anger sometimes can be detected in a piece of writing. However, not all writing gives away the author’s feelings. Many writers are straightforward and objective.

To recognize tone in writing, you must analyze the way a selection is written and the feeling that underlies it. Pay careful attention to the writer’s choice of words. Look at the two paragraphs below.

**Paragraph 1**

Starvation is rampant, and hunger haunts the humble hovels of the needy. Will nothing be done about this? How can people continue to support a government that ignores the needs of the poor?

**Paragraph 2**

Not long ago, concern about hunger focused on the world’s poorer nations. Lately, hunger has become an issue in the United States. Many people accuse the government of making the problem worse by cutting back on programs that help the poor. The government denies these charges, saying that it has always provided assistance to the needy.

In paragraph 1, the writer’s tone is angry. Notice the writer’s words. “Starvation is rampant”; “hunger haunts the humble hovels” (not homes) of the poor; the government “ignores the needs of the poor.” The goal of the first writer is to make the reader angry and upset about the hungry poor.

Paragraph 2 has an objective tone. The writer’s own feelings are not clear. The words “hunger,” “the issue,” and “the needy” are not charged with emotion. The writer simply reports the opinions of two different sides on the subject of government responsibility for hunger.
EXERCISE 3

Directions: Read the following passage and put a check in front of the correct answer to the questions that follow.

We could see the two principal characters approaching the Senate chamber from opposite directions. The senator from North Carolina strode briskly and with confidence toward the Senate floor. He chatted amiably with reporters about strategy for the debate. Meanwhile, the senator from New York darted into sight and scurried down the hallway. He paused briefly to huddle nervously with his assistants about maneuvers in the debate.

1. Based on the passage, the writer
   ___(1) does not admire either senator
   ___(2) likes the North Carolina senator but dislikes the New York senator
   ___(3) has no feeling about either senator
   ___(4) dislikes the North Carolina senator but likes the New York senator

2. Which word has a positive feel to it?
   ___(1) darted
   ___(2) scurried
   ___(3) amiably
   ___(4) nervously

ANSWERS ARE ON PAGE 300.

EDITORIAL CARTOONS

Cartoonists make fun of individuals, governments, and businesses by drawing them in a humorous or ridiculous way. Editorial or political cartoons express an opinion and bring attention to a social or political problem. Cartoonists make great use of irony—showing things in a way that is the opposite from the way they really are. Editorial or political cartoons have a main idea. They express the opinion of the artist.

When looking at an editorial or political cartoon, pay attention to the following features:

- the title or caption
- the characters (may be real people or symbols such as Uncle Sam for the United States)
- any labels or conversation (shown in balloons with the words printed inside)
Study the editorial cartoon shown below and put a check in front of the correct answer to the questions that follow.

1. What does the large bulldozer represent?
   _____ (1) large business
   _____ (2) a construction company
   _____ (3) the federal government
   _____ (4) city hall

2. What can you infer about the cartoonist’s beliefs?
   _____ (1) Small businesses will stay open no matter what the tax is.
   _____ (2) Unfair taxation will hurt small businesses.
   _____ (3) High taxes are fair for small businesses.
   _____ (4) Small businesses will sweep away taxes.

For question 1, the bulldozer represents choice (3), the federal government. The bulldozer is labeled “taxes.” The size of the bulldozer is much larger than needed to tear down the small business. The federal government determines the largest share of the taxes that people and small business pay. So the bulldozer represents the federal government.

For question 2, statement (2) is the best choice. The cartoonist believes that unfair taxation will hurt small businesses. The label “Fairness Construction Co.” represents the government that levies the tax. The cartoonist uses the name “Fairness” to mean just the opposite, unfairness.
EXERCISE 4

Questions 1–3 are based on the following passage.

(1) The best political system ever developed is the two-party system of the United States. (2) Since the Civil War, no third party has been able to threaten the political power of either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. (3) Every president of the last one hundred years has been a member of one of these two parties. (4) No third party has been able to gain control of either house of Congress. (5) The country has been spared the chaos that results when there are more than two parties. (6) And the people have not had to endure the tyranny of one-party rule.

3. Which statement best describes the tone of the passage?
   (1) The passage is completely straightforward and objective.
   (2) The passage reflects the author's bias for the two-party system of the United States.
   (3) The passage starts out being objective, then changes to an emotional tone.
   (4) The tone of the passage is angry and hostile.
   (5) The passage is bias-free.

Question 4 is based on the cartoon below.

4. What is the main idea of this cartoon?
   (1) Smoking is bad for your health.
   (2) Only people who live far away from other people should be allowed to smoke.
   (3) There are getting to be far fewer areas where people are allowed to smoke.
   (4) Automobile exhaust and cigarette smoke pollute the air.
   (5) Smokers won't bother anyone in the desert.
Questions 5 and 6 are based on the cartoon below.

5. What is the main idea of this cartoon?
   (1) People have a hard time cashing their Social Security checks.
   (2) The national debt is higher than ever.
   (3) Bankers have a hard time deciding on good credit risks.
   (4) People should stay away from banks.
   (5) People are worried about the Social Security system going broke.

6. You can infer that the cartoonist
   (1) feels that the nation's economy is strong
   (2) has once worked as a banker
   (3) has little faith in the Social Security system
   (4) opposes loans to the federal government
   (5) feels that the Social Security system should be done away with

   ANSWERS ARE ON PAGE 301.

WRITING ACTIVITY 4

Find an editorial cartoon in a newspaper or a magazine. What is the main idea of the cartoon? What symbols are used in the cartoon? Is the cartoon effective in getting its point across to you? Explain why or why not.

ANSWERS WILL VARY.
Question 1 is based on the following information.

1. Geographers often look at the places they study in terms of regions. A region does not have distinct boundaries or an exact population. It is simply an area of land with certain characteristics. Suppose a geographer studies precipitation patterns in the Pacific Northwest. Which of the following would best define this region?
   (1) changes in altitude from the coast to the mountains
   (2) a high annual rate of rainfall
   (3) the state boundaries of Washington and Oregon
   (4) the Pacific Northwest Railroad
   (5) the greatest amount of cultivated farmland

2. Joe and Ida Williams find that every month their money just seems to disappear. They can never save for any long-term goals. The first thing they should do to correct this situation is
   (1) increase their monthly income
   (2) draw up a family budget
   (3) buy some life insurance
   (4) try a few get-rich-quick schemes
   (5) apply for a credit card

Questions 3 and 4 are based on the following table.

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Divorces</th>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *World Almanac, 1994*

3. This table tells you the
   (1) number of marriages that ended in divorce
   (2) percentage of the population that married or divorced
   (3) number of marriages and divorces for every 1,000 people
   (4) percentage of change in the marriage and divorce rate from 1930 to 1992
   (5) statistical evidence of social decline

4. Based on the information in the table, you can conclude that
   (1) twice as many marriages as divorces took place for each year shown
   (2) between 1980 and 1992, the number of marriages and the number of divorces fell
   (3) the baby boom has affected the divorce rate
   (4) the divorce rate has always been at the same percentage as the marriage rate
   (5) there are now more divorces than marriages
Question 5 refers to the following passage and cartoon.

Many Americans are shocked about the large number of deaths caused by guns and want strict gun control. Other Americans are equally determined to have the right to own guns. They point to the Second Amendment for constitutional support. It clearly states that "the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

![Cartoon Image]

5. Which of the following might best sum up the cartoonist's view of the Second Amendment?

(1) favors it
(2) wants it done away with
(3) believes it no longer goes along with the Founding Fathers' intent
(4) believes it has run into disfavor with the gun lobby
(5) causes too many Americans and their pets to lose sleep

Questions 6 and 7 refer to the following graph.

![Graph Image]

6. Which of the following groups has the greatest number of deaths from firearms?

(1) males 75 and over
(2) females 65 to 74
(3) males 45 to 64
(4) males 25 to 44
(5) females 25 to 44

7. From the fact that half of all children 16 years old and under injured in a handgun accident were shot in their own home, you can infer that parents

(1) failed to store handguns properly
(2) had no control over curious children
(3) forgot to lock gun cabinets
(4) have become lax in disciplining children
(5) should tell children to play outside the home
1. (2) The annual rate of rainfall most closely defines the region of the geographer's study: rainfall (precipitation) patterns.

2. (2) Joe and Ida Williams need to set up a budget to have control over where their money goes. The budget will give them some guidelines. None of the other choices are sure to help them save money.

3. (3) The title and subtitle of the table give you this information.

4. (2) Only choice (2) is supported by the facts in the table. The information does not support any of the other answers.

5. (3) The man in bed says that the Second Amendment has backfired. This probably represents the cartoonist's viewpoint that the right to bear arms no longer is in keeping with the views of the men who wrote the Bill of Rights to the Constitution and who believed citizens had the right to have guns to protect themselves from the tyranny of the British government.

6. (4) The graph clearly shows that nearly 13,000 males in the 25-44 age group had the greatest number of deaths from firearms.

7. (1) From this statement, you can infer only that parents failed to keep handguns out of reach, thus contributing to accidents. While the other answers might apply to some parents, it cannot be said that they apply to all.

8. (5) The passage tells you that older tribal ceremonies served certain social purposes that are now served by sports.

9. (5) The passage tells you that day nurseries were run by wealthy women who feared that the children of working mothers would be left at home alone.

10. (2) The passage tells you that critics of day nurseries felt that mothers should stay home with their children. From this information, you can hypothesize that this concern has led to grants of aid to mothers with dependent children.

11. (3) The definition of direct initiative tells you that it is appropriate for citizens to draft and present laws themselves.

12. (5) A political party's candidate for public office, including governor, must be first selected from a list of candidates in that party in a primary election.

13. (4) Voters can remove an elected public official from office before his or her term expires through the recall process. In this case, a majority of voters in an election must approve of Governor Wilson's removal.

14. (4) Germany was able to gain territory in Europe in the 1930s. England and France were not willing to fight Germany on this issue. You can infer that England and France must have compromised in disputes over territory that Germany wanted.

15. (4) The first sentence says that consumer co-ops are controlled by their members.