**Step 1: Analyze the prompt**

In this activity, you will be asked to read a text in order to respond to the following prompt:

**A Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a concept that has received renewed attention in recent years. Not everyone believes that a UBI would be good for society. Read the text and take a position on the question “Would a UBI benefit society?" Use specific details and examples to convince others to support your position.**

Analyze the writing prompt above to establish your purpose for reading the text to come.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Ask** | **Answer** |
| What is the subject that I’ll be writing about? | Universal Basic Income |
| What is my purpose for writing? Look for action words like explain, convince, or persuade. |  |
| What possible stances could I take? List 2–3 answers. |  |
| What details will I look for as I read? |  |

**Step 2: Read the Text**

Highlight key parts of the text that might be used to build arguments for and against UBI. Annotate the text, including notes that name the underlying issues found in the text.

The idea of a **universal basic income (UBI)** is by no means new. A UBI is a system in which all adult citizens of a **geographic region** are given a basic yearly income by the government, regardless of their employment or financial situation. Discussions about whether such a model would work date back to the 16th century when Sir Thomas More mentioned the topic in his **socio-political** **satire**, *Utopia*. Though debated for centuries, a UBI policy has become particularly **relevant** in recent years. This is due to the rise of **artificial intelligence** and **automation** and their **potential** **impact** on many people’s jobs.

Supporters of a UBI believe that the benefit of the model is simple: it would provide all citizens with a base level of income security. This is particularly important as rapid **innovation** and automation mean that more workers may be replaced by machines or computers. Though the risk varies depending on the industry and the skills needed, in 2016 a White House report estimated that individuals making less than $20 an hour had an 83% chance of losing their jobs to automation.[[1]](#footnote-1) For this reason, leaders in the technology industry have promoted the need for a UBI.

Challengers of a UBI argue that concerns about automation are **exaggerated** and that a UBI policy would do more harm than good. In fact, a recent report by the global **consulting** **firm** Accenture found that “the impact of AI technologies on business is projected to increase labor productivity by up to 40 percent and enable people to make more efficient use of their time.[[2]](#footnote-2)” Those opposed to a UBI claim that the greatest risk of such a policy would be to remove people’s motivation to work and thus encourage **idleness**.

**Vocabulary Support**

The definitions below provide just-in-time support for understanding challenging words in the

passage. Use them as needed while you read.

**Artificial intelligence:** The ability of a computer to learn and make decisions in ways similar to humans

**Automation:** A system that allows machines to complete tasks without input from a human operator

**Consulting firm:** Firm that provides professional advisory services

**Exaggerated:** Magnified unrealistically

**Geographic region:** A large area; a community, state, group of states or country

**Idleness:** Laziness or inactiveness

**Innovation:** New ways of doing things

**Potential impact:** Possible effects

**Relevant:** Connected or related in an important way

**Socio-political** **satire:** A literary genre that uses humor to shed light on problems in society and government

**Universal basic income (UBI):** A system in which all adult citizens of a geographic region are given a basic yearly income by the government, regardless of their employment or financial situation

**Step 3: Plan Your Essay**

Use the outline below to plan an essay in response to the prompt. Use the left-hand column to label the parts of your outline (Introduction, Body, Conclusion), and use a few words to describe what you would write for each part.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Part** | **Description** |
|  | [Should include the claim you will make on the issue] |
|  | [Provide 1–3 Reasons for your position] |
| 1) |
| 2) |
| 3) |
|  | [Should restate your claim and conclude] |

**Issues Bank (determining the best order to address issues can help you sort evidence and organize your argument):** income security, the impact of automation, job loss, motivation

1. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/ERP\_2016\_Book\_Complete%20JA.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.accenture.com/gb-en/insight-artificial-intelligence-future-growth [↑](#footnote-ref-2)