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?

Questions for Classroom Discussion:
• 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?
USE THE FOCUS WORDS  *and alternate parts of speech

**compensation (noun)** something given as payment, or to make up for a loss, injury, or death

*Sample Sentence:* Serena’s family got financial compensation from the government when her father was killed in a drive-by shooting.

*Turn and Talk:* Do you think you deserve compensation for all the time you spend in school?

**financial (adjective)** having to do with money

*Sample Sentence:* After spending her allowance on movie tickets, Tara became aware of her financial situation and started watching movies at home.

*Turn and Talk:* What can you do to make sure that you won’t have financial problems when you are older?

**fund (noun)** a supply of money for a specific purpose

*Sample Sentence:* However, the government created a special fund to give larger amounts of money to families of 9/11 victims.

*Turn and Talk:* What can you do now to establish a college fund for when you graduate from high school?

*fund (verb)* to provide money for a specific purpose

*Sample Sentence:* Lily’s parents funded her school trip to Washington, D.C., but not her trip to the shopping mall.

*Turn and Talk:* Which would you fund first in your community: a new park or a new stadium? Why?

**recover (verb)** to return to normal; to regain strength; to get something back

*Sample Sentence:* These programs help victims recover after a tragedy.

*Turn and Talk:* Talk about a time when you or someone you know had to recover from an injury.

**sum (noun)** amount

*Sample Sentence:* The government gave larger sums to families of 9/11 victims.

*Turn and Talk:* What do you think is a fair sum of money to pay for school lunch?
SHOULD VICTIMS' FAMILIES ALL RECEIVE THE SAME COMPENSATION?

DO THE MATH

Each state has a crime victim compensation program. These programs oversee funds to help crime victims or their families 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 $25,000. The average sum awarded is $6,964.

Option 1: The federal government set up a special victim compensation fund for September 11th victims and their families. This fund awarded an average of $1.8 million to each victim or family. In the state of Michigan, the maximum award a crime victim or their family can receive is $25,000. How many $25,000 awards would it take to total $1.8 million?

A. 7
B. 72
C. 720
D. 1,700

Option 2: The average sum awarded by the federal September 11th victim compensation fund was $1.8 million. The highest sum awarded was $7.9 million. In 2014, the median household income in the U.S. was $53,891. If $50,000 can support an average household for a year, how many years of support would $1.8 million provide? How many years of support would $7.9 million provide? (Hint: To solve quickly, use exponents!)

\[
(1.8 \times 10^6) / (5 \times 10^4) = 36 \text{ years of support}
\]

\[
(7.9 \times 10^6) / (5 \times 10^4) = 158 \text{ years of support}
\]

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?
THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

Ms. Kahn’s class is having a lively debate about the compensation fund for the families of victims after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Ms. Kahn explains that government compensation is meant to replace victims’ income and help families recover financially.

“In a system like that,” says Ms. Kahn, “not everyone gets the same financial compensation. Part of the goal is to replace the future income of the person who was killed or disabled. Therefore, the families of lower earners get smaller sums than the families of higher earners.”

“That’s not fair,” says Alyssa. “Rich people and poor people are worth the same.”

Many of her classmates agree, but Daylen says, “It’s not about what people are worth as human beings, it’s just about replacing the future income that families have lost. And that lost income isn’t necessarily equal.”

“The amount of compensation doesn’t just vary based on someone’s past income,” Ms. Kahn adds. “The type of crime is also considered when deciding how much to compensate a victim or their family. Let’s look at some recent data about how much money the national victim compensation fund has given for different types of crimes.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Category</th>
<th>Total Number of Paid Claims</th>
<th>Total Amount Paid</th>
<th>Average Compensation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>29,369</td>
<td>$119,772,572</td>
<td>$4,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>$446,164</td>
<td>$3,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>132,210</td>
<td>$430,614,819</td>
<td>$3,257</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>17,358</td>
<td>$36,219,991</td>
<td>$2,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault</td>
<td>23,890</td>
<td>$30,699,800</td>
<td>$1,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse</td>
<td>50,216</td>
<td>$48,257,983</td>
<td>$961</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: U.S. Department of Justice, 2015 OVC Report to the Nation

What word in the table indicates that victims of the same type of crime did not necessarily receive the same amount of money? **Average**

Based on this data, Alyssa concludes that victims of terrorism always received more compensation than victims of robbery. Is she correct? Explain.

No. Victims of terrorism received more than victims of robbery on average. Compensation varies, and we cannot conclude that every victim of terrorism received more than every victim of robbery.

Why do you think Ms. Kahn thought it was important to share this information with her students?

Why might more money be given to victims of certain types of crimes than others?
DEBATE THE ISSUE
Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A  ☐  Victims’ families should all receive equal compensation from the government.

OR  ☐  Compensation should vary based on the type of attack.

OR  ☐  Compensation should vary based on the amount of money the victim was making before the crime.

OR  ☐  You make a good point, but have you considered...

OR  ☐  I believe that...

OR  ☐  I agree with you, but...

CREATE YOUR OWN

Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

“Can you show me evidence in the text that...”

“You make a good point, but have you considered...”

“I believe that...”

“I agree with you, but...”
SHOULD VICTIMS' FAMILIES ALL RECEIVE THE SAME COMPENSATION?

TAKE A STAND

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

compensation | financial | fund | recover | sum

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