

American Studies
Social Studies Skills and Methods
Worksheet 1

Name _____

Directions: Read the following letters, then answer questions 1-5.

Letter 1

Dear Editor:

I've heard all the argument on the SUVs (sports utility vehicles) and my answer is this: I have a constitutional right to drive what I want, where I want, and to spend as much money on gasoline as I want. Besides, all the data are on my side, no matter what the liberal tree-huggers say. SUVs have been shown by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety to save more lives in accidents than cars. And in I'm going to be in an accident involving a car and a SUV, I'd much rather be in a big, heavy SUV instead of a flimsy car. As for fuel economy, no one complains about the people driving large Sedans, and my SUV gets about the same gas mileage. So, you drive what you want, and I'll drive my SUV.

Ruth Lessnez, SUV owner
Dublin, OH

Letter 2

Dear Editor:

The SUV may be the greatest risk to national security on American roads today. It is a threat to the nation's energy supply, to the lives of the nation's children, and to our sense of fairness. Although all SUVs are subject to the government's fuel economy standards, powerful lobbyists have made sure that the very largest SUVs are considered heavy-duty trucks, and are therefore subject to no fuel economy standards at all. Even the smaller SUVs are classified as light trucks, so they are not subject to the Gas Guzzler tax that buyers of large cars must pay. These loopholes not only encourage Americans to buy fuel-wasting vehicles, they also allow those who can afford these vehicles to avoid paying their fair share of the cost. Contrary to what SUV lobbyists say SUVs are not safe. They're far more likely than cars to kill occupants in a rollover, either when the driver loses control, or in a collision with another vehicle. Occupants of smaller cars hit by SUVs are also much more likely to die than if their car were hit by another car.

Al G. Braist, Staff Researcher
The Earth Protection Fund

1. Which of the following sentences from the passages contains a stereotype?
- A. Besides, all the data are on my side, no matter what the liberal tree-huggers say.
 - B. So, you drive what you want, and I'll drive my SUV.
 - C. All SUVs are subject to the government's fuel economy standards.
 - D. Contrary to what SUV lobbyists say, SUVs are not safe.

2. Based on the passages, which writer is likely to have more reliable qualifications to address issues of SUV fuel economy and safety? Explain your answer.

3. Which of the following statements is inconsistent with the rest of the passage it comes from?

- A. I have a constitutional right to drive what I want, where I want...
- B. ... no one complains about people driving large sedans...
- C. ...all SUVs are subject to the government's fuel economy standards...
- E. Occupants of smaller cars hit by SUVs are also much more likely to die than if their cars were hit by other cars.

4. Which of the following sentences appeals to emotions rather than actual evidence?

- A. The SUV may be the greatest risk to national security on American roads today.
- B. However, since even the smaller SUVs are classified as light trucks, they are not subject to the Gas Guzzler tax that buyers of large cars must pay.
- C. They are far more likely than cars to kill occupants in a rollover, either when the driver loses control, or in a collision with another vehicle.
- D. Powerful lobbyists have made sure that the very largest SUVs are considered heavy-duty trucks, and are therefore subject to no fuel economy standards at all.

5. According to statistics published by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety in November 2002, for every one million cars and one million SUVs that were between one and three years old in 2001, 124 occupant deaths occurred in cars, while 115 occupant deaths occurred in SUVs. However, of all occupant deaths in single-vehicle rollover crashes in 2001, 20 percent were in cars, while 51 percent were in SUVs.

Explain how citation of these figures could both support and undermine each letter's thesis.
