

## Natural Resources Line of Inquiry

### Lesson 4

#### New Readers Press Fracking Articles

*Writing for the GED Test Book 4: Practice Prompts for the RLA Extended Response* (2016). New Readers Press. Used by permission.

### Passage 1: “Fracking: America's Energy Solution”

Live at Five transcript, Lucia Hernandez, February 20, 2014

First, let me explain what fracking – or hydraulic fracturing – means. Fracking is a process that increases output from an oil or natural gas well. Fracking uses water pressure to break rock around a well. Oil and natural gas then pass through the openings in the rock and are pumped out of the well.

Fracking is vital to America's future. It improves our country's energy security. Today, the United States imports the majority of its oil from other countries around the world, such as unstable Venezuela and Iraq. Problems in these countries could disrupt our oil supply, leading to higher energy prices. Increasing domestic energy production means that the United States does not have to rely on uncertain supplies from other countries and can count on its own production.

In addition, there are tremendous economic benefits to fracking. The oil and natural gas industries in the United States support over nine million jobs across the country, equal to over seven percent of the entire U.S. economy! The energy industry provides \$86 million dollars a day in tax revenue to local, state, and federal government. By 2020, it is projected that the energy industry will add 1.3 million new jobs for America's workforce.

Speaking of economic benefits, how about fracking's effect on the manufacturing industry? Cheaper natural gas prices caused by fracking have sparked a manufacturing revolution in America. According to the U.S. Undersecretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment, "The increasing availability of U.S. energy at low prices has made many companies rethink their strategies of locating abroad and others to return to this country." Because of lower energy costs, it is estimated that more than one million manufacturing jobs will be created by 2025.

While some people are concerned about the environmental impact of fracking, there has never been a recorded case of groundwater contamination from fracking. Engineers

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design cement and steel casings in each well to protect local groundwater supplies. About 99.5 percent of the materials used in fracking consist of water and sand and the rest are chemical lubricants. Companies carefully monitor these chemicals and either recycle them or dispose of them according to Clean Water Act regulations. FracFocus, a website set up by energy companies, details which chemicals are used in fracking and how local groundwater is protected.

### Passage 2: “Dangerous Fracking Practices Hurt the Environment”

Letter to the Editor, Salmon City Post, February 22, 2014

Listening to Ms. Hernandez on Live at Five last night made me so angry! While supporters of fracking talk about the cheap energy it provides, they don't mention its real cost. Fracking is dangerous to the environment and should be stopped. It reduces our water supply while polluting our water and air.

Each fracking job requires anywhere from one to eight million gallons of water. With one-half million active wells in the United States, that's 72 trillion gallons of water used per year! This water has to come from somewhere. It likely comes from nearby wells, lakes, or municipal water systems, leaving residents with smaller water supplies or potential water shortages.

Beyond water waste, fracking creates chemical pollution. Up to 40,000 gallons of chemicals are used in each fracking operation, containing a toxic bath of 600 chemicals like mercury and uranium. When the shale rocks surrounding wells are fractured, methane gas and toxic chemicals flow into nearby groundwater. Studies show that methane concentrations are 17 times higher in drinking water wells near fracturing sites. In addition, more than 1,000 documented cases of water contamination next to drilling sites has caused sensory, respiratory, and neurological damage to nearby residents.

There are other pollutants to consider besides chemicals. Each fracked well requires 400 tanker trucks to carry water and other supplies to and from the site, creating air pollution. Fracking also produces waste fluid, which is left in open pits to evaporate. This releases volatile organic compounds into the air, which contaminate the air, soil, and water; make acid rain; and release ground-level ozone.

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Fracking supporters like Ms. Hernandez need to get their facts straight. As I see it, no amount of cheap energy is worth risking our health.

### Prompt

The transcript presents Ms. Hernandez's favorable view of fracking, and the letter to the editor presents an opposing, negative view of the process.

In your response, analyze both *the transcript and the letter* to determine *which one is best supported*. Use *relevant and specific evidence from the articles* to support your response.

This task may require approximately 45 minutes to complete.