**Finding Common themes: synthesis skills**

**Directions:** All of these quotes are from different texts that discuss the *topic* of poverty and inequality. With a partner, read the excerpts and discuss *themes* of discussion (in other words, what things do they all seem to discuss?). Be ready to discuss as a class

**Text 1: Lock “Born Poor and Smart”**

“My mother was smart, and she was poor. She did things that poor people aren’t supposed to do. [...] she read. She read to me when I was young. Later, she always wanted to know what I was reading, and she taught me how to talk about what I was reading. [...] She bought most of her books at yard sales and library sales, and she actually read them” (Locke, 2005, p. 450-451).

“It took me years longer to finish college than it took others whose parents and social class supported them. I paid my own way in between having children and working low-end jobs” it was tough, but it was my only solution to break the cycle of poverty in my family (Locke, 2005, p. 451).

“Success is a given in upper-class families, a habit as nonnegotiable as brushing one’s teeth” (Locke, 2005, p. 451).

**Text 2: Yglesias “A Great Tome to be Alive?”**

“Higher taxes to finance more and better public services is not the only conceivable method of curbing inequality, but it is the best one because it directly tackles the most objectionable aspect of high inequality in the economy -- it’s tendency to perpetuate itself in the form of unequal access to basic social goods and unequal access to opportunities in the next generation” (Yglesias, 2010, p. 465).

“Families should have equal access to medical treatment if they fall ill, to preschool and to decent nutrition for their children” (Yglesias, 2010, p. 465).

“More broadly, a family security agenda centered on assuring the availability of paid family leave and high-quality education has the potential to appeal to the streak of cultural conservatism that runs deep in working-class America” (Yglesias, 2010, p. 466).

**Text 3: The Economist “The Middle of the Class”**

“[T]he correlation between parents’ and children’s income is even closer now than it was in the 1980s” (The Economist, 2005, p. 484).

“Naturally, places with big houses paying larger property taxes have schools with more resources. At university level, the rise in the cost of education has taken Ivy League universities out of the reach of most middle-class and poor families” (The Economist, 2005, p. 484).

“[T]he rich really are different, and not just because they have more money; moreover, these differences are becoming embedded in the structure of the family itself. [...] College graduates tend to marry college graduates” (The Economist, 2005, p. 485).