

Newspaper Literacy Unit (Grades 6-9)

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Overall Objectives

During this unit, students should be able to:

- ✓ Identify the parts of today's standard newspaper (Day 1)
- ✓ Identify the differences between newspaper and other media sources (Day 1)
- ✓ Recognize the daily uses of a newspaper (Day 1)
- ✓ Recognize the outside elements (ownership, AP wire) that affect the content of the paper and how those elements might affect content (Day 2)
- ✓ Understand more fully the proportion of advertisements to news in the paper and their purpose and affect (Day 3)
- ✓ Identify the different parts of a news story (Day 4)
- ✓ Understand how the First Amendment works (Day 5)
- ✓ Identify bias in news stories (Day 6, 7)
- ✓ Understand the interviewing process (Day 8)
- ✓ Write a short news story, complete with quotations (Days 7, 8, 9)

Day 1: Exploring the newspaper

Objectives

- ✓ Recognize the daily uses of a newspaper
- ✓ Identify the parts of today's standard newspaper
- ✓ Identify the differences between newspaper and other media sources

Preparing

As a warm up, do a five-minute free-write, using a prompt like:

I use newspapers for... OR I never use newspapers because....

Read from *Nothing but the Truth*, by Avi. This book is a narrative about a boy who causes scandal concerning first amendment rights, includes issues with newspaper bias, reporting issues, and other applicable issues.

Provide the students with the vocabulary words they will need to know in this unit. Warn them they will be quizzed on them on day 6. Here's a partial list: the definitions can be found at http://vocabulary.englishclub.com/20_newspapers.htm

Article

Byline

Critic

Edit

Editor

Editorial

Feature

Front page

Headline

Media

Opinion

Tabloid

Discussion

Attempting an involved discussion, try to cover the following topics:

What media do you use? Why?

What is the difference between newspapers and other media? How do these differences affect its content?

What paper do you read? Why?

What paper do your other family members read?

Why do you think they read them?

What specific sections of the paper do you read? Why?

What sections don't you read? Why?

Activity

Put students into either small groups or pairs. Hand each group a copy of the same newspaper (which hopefully you've had donated to the school or something). Together, they will complete a worksheet that helps them explore the paper.

Something like....

<i>There are _____ sections in today's paper. Fill in the chart below, describing each section's name, letter or number within the paper, and a description of what is included in the section.</i>		
Section Name	Letter/Number	Description <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What types of stories are in this section?</i> <i>(Informative, Persuasive, Entertaining, etc)</i>• <i>How long are the stories?</i>• <i>Is there any color in the section?</i>• <i>How many ads are in the section?</i>• <i>Are there any special features to this section</i> <i>(comics, scorecards, etc)?</i>

Then, as a class, compare the findings in a discussion or by filling out a master chart on an overhead/computer/whiteboard.

Which sections have color? Why?

Which sections have the most advertisements? Why?

Which sections had informative stories? Persuasive? Entertaining?

How would each of these sections be useful? Who would use them? For what purpose?

Homework

Study vocab words for quiz on day 6.

Day 2: Where does the news come from?

Objectives

- ✓ Recognize the outside elements (ownership, AP wire) that affect the content of the paper and how those elements might affect content

Preparing

Start with a 5-minute free write: What is news? What people, places or events do you deem newsworthy? Why?

Read from *Nothing but the Truth*.

Discussion/Lecture with overhead notes

Either hand out papers to pairs of students or have one student in charge of answering questions or look online as a class.

Who writes newspaper stories? Which kinds?

What is the Associated Press? How does the newspaper get their stories?

How might the Associated Press affect the stories in the paper?

Who determines what stories make it into the newspaper?

Activity

Have the students count how many of the stories in the first section of the paper come from the AP wire, how many come from the paper's staff, and how many, if any, have no author listed. Fill in a class chart, discussing afterwards where the majority of the news comes from.

Homework

Study vocab words for quiz on day 6. Bring in an advertisement from a newspaper that is directed toward you as a teenager.

Day 3: Advertisements

Objectives

- ✓ Understand more fully the proportion of advertisements to news in the paper and their purpose and affect

Preparing

Start with a 5-minute free write: What makes a good advertisement? Are advertisements in newspapers affective for you?

Read from *Nothing but the Truth*.

Activity

Using the same section of the paper for all student groups, hand out rulers and have the students measure how much of each page is committed to news and how much is committed to advertisements. Have them measure in square inches, which might have to be explained. If there is a large class or a small amount of time, split them up into groups and assign each group a page or two.

Discussion

As a class, find the proportion of news to advertisements in the paper.

Why is the proportion of ads so large when this is a newspaper?

What affect might this have on the news that is supplied? Will there be more than needed? Less than needed?

Why are some in color and others not? Which are more affective?

What types of ads are in the hard news section, opinion section, feature sections, sports sections? Why?

Who are the ads in newspapers aimed at? Why?

Homework

Study vocab words for quiz on day 6.

Day 4: Parts of a News Story

Objectives

- ✓ Identify the different parts of a news story

Preparing

Start with a 5-minute free write: Pretend you are a reporter for your favorite paper. You get a lead that there will be a big event at our school. How would you find out about the event? Who would you ask? What would you ask?

Read from Nothing but the Truth.

Discussion

Provide a short introduction about the 5Ws and Hs.

Activity

[from www.highschooljournalism.org/teachersLessonPlan_Display.cfm?Type=L&LessonplanId=250&AuthorId=130 / **Juaquana C. Stewart**, Kennedy High School, New Orleans / **Title:** Shorter is better!]

Objective:

Students will understand how to shorten a story and include all the facts, and represent a story visually.

Goals:

Students will

- Know how to identify important fact
- How to keep reader's attention
- Find a theme and focus in a newstory
- Determine the most important information in a newstory

Time: One class period (This activity may be used as a cooperative grouping assignment.)

Lesson:

- Each student will receive a news story (if doing in a group, each group will receive a news story)
- Students must read the story and complete the 5W and H chart. Students must give the who? what? when? where? and How?
- Students will turn the story into a comic strip. The dialogue in the comic strip must include the 5W and H. Students are only allowed to draw 3 squares. The comic strip must tell the focus of the story and include all the newsworthy information. Each square must focus on a facts and the theme/Assessment

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated on creativity and inclusion of the 5W and H handout. Students will also be assessed on how they included the important facts, theme and focus, and how information is displayed. Also, on the use of grammar, usage, and punctuation in dialogue boxes.

Homework

Study vocab words for quiz on day 6. Finish comic strip if needed.

Day 5: Understanding First Amendment Rights

Objectives

- ✓ Understand how the First Amendment works

Preparing

Start with a 5-minute free write: What does freedom of speech mean to you?

Read from *Nothing but the Truth*.

Discussion

Provide an explanation of the First Amendment.

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances”.

What do you know about the First Amendment?

Why is it important?

To whom does it apply? Does it apply to you?

Activity

[from http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=339]

As you begin this lesson, remind the class that for a case to reach the Supreme Court there must be such good arguments on both sides that questions remain even after the decisions of lower courts have been made. It's the job of the students to figure out what arguments may have been used on both sides of this case. Then students will be asked to take a stand and to reveal what they think the Supreme Court decided. After everyone has taken a stand, reveal the actual outcome of the case.

Distribute or read to the class the following summary of *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* (1988) from the EDSITEMent-reviewed *Oyez, Oyez, Oyez*:

Facts of the Case

The Spectrum, the school-sponsored newspaper of Hazelwood East High School, was written and edited by students. In May 1983, Robert E. Reynolds, the school principal, received the pages ... for the May 13 issue. Reynolds found two of the articles in the issue to be inappropriate, and ordered that the pages on which the articles appeared be withheld from publication. Cathy Kuhlmeier and two other former Hazelwood East students brought the case to court.

Also share with students the following facts from FindLaw a link from the EDSITEMent resource *Oyez, Oyez, Oyez*:

The principal objected to the divorce article because the page proofs he was furnished identified by name (deleted by the teacher from the final version) a student who complained of her father's

conduct, and the principal believed that the student's parents should have been given an opportunity to respond to the remarks or to consent to their publication. Believing that there was no time to make necessary changes in the articles if the paper was to be issued before the end of the school year, the principal directed that the pages on which they appeared be withheld from publication even though other, unobjectionable articles were included on such pages.

Finally, ask students the question presented to the court (from the EDSITEment resource *Oyez, Oyez, Oyez*):

Did the principal's deletion of the articles violate the students' rights under the First Amendment?

Help the class make two separate lists, showing arguments they think may have been made on either side of the case. Some points to consider: What rights (if any) should students have to publish what they wrote in the student newspaper? Should there be a school policy against certain student writings? Why shouldn't the principal have been allowed to cancel that page in the student newspaper? Why should he have been allowed? Is it fair that some articles got cut from the newspaper, even though they had nothing to do with the case? Is it fair that the divorce article could be cut even though the students were reporting facts? Does it make a difference that the students were not trying to hurt anyone's feelings? Would it be fair to the parents involved to have their story printed in the school newspaper?

Then, using a secret ballot, have students vote which side they think won the case. Give volunteers the opportunity to explain why they voted as they did.

Finally, reveal the outcome of the case in your own words or by sharing the conclusion (from EDSITEment resource *Oyez, Oyez, Oyez*):

Conclusion

In a 5-to-3 decision, the Court held that the First Amendment did not require schools to affirmatively promote particular types of student speech. The Court held that schools must be able to set high standards for student speech disseminated under their auspices, and that schools retained the right to refuse to sponsor speech that was "inconsistent with 'the shared values of a civilized social order.'" Educators did not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control over the content of student speech so long as their actions were "reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns." The actions of Principal Reynolds, the Court held, met this test.

So, not all speech is protected; the school can refuse to sponsor offensive speech and any speech for legitimate educational reasons. Encourage discussion of the decision.

Homework

Study vocab words for quiz tomorrow.

Day 6: Understanding Bias

Objectives

- ✓ Identify bias in news stories

Preparing

Start with a 5-minute free write: What does it mean to be bias? (To influence in a particular, typically unfair direction; prejudice)? Do ever face bias? How does bias affect you?

Vocabulary quiz.

Read from *Nothing but the Truth*.

Discussion

Provide definition of bias and short discussion of its affect.

Activity

[from Heather Johnson, North St. Paul High School www.tc.umn.edu/~rbeach/teachingmedia/module10/2k.htm]

Instead of carrying this assignment out over a month, ask the students to bring in crime articles the next day as homework.

Homework

Bring in crime articles for class evaluation.

Day 7: Creating a Class Newspaper

Objectives

- ✓ Identify bias in news stories
- ✓ Brainstorming article ideas
- ✓ Introduce final project/test options

Preparing

Start with a 5-minute free write: Did you find any bias in your crime story? What was it? OR Make a list of story ideas – they could be feature articles, opinion pieces, news stories, sports stories.

Read from *Nothing but the Truth*.

Activity

In pairs have students classify their articles as indicated in yesterday's activity. Talk briefly about how many articles had bias, what the bias was, why it might have occurred.

Discussion

Introduce the class newspaper. Explain that each student will have to write their own news article. Provide a list of the types of news stories available. Group the class by type of news story and have them brainstorm a list of story ideas. Either assign or have the students choose an editor of each section. That person is in charge of turning in a sheet that states who will be writing what stories.

Give the students the option to either take a final test on this unit or to turn in a final project. Project ideas might include:

- § An analysis of a news story indicating bias
- § A short essay about how the First Amendment affects newspapers
- § An extra news article, showing all steps for completion
- § An analysis of advertisements and their audiences
- § Anything the students can come up with!

Homework

Worksheet on story. (This should ask the students to identify what information they need to know in order to write their stories).

Day 8: Creating a Class Newspaper, Interviewing

Objectives

- ✓ Understand the interviewing process

Preparing

Start with a 5-minute free write: Someone stole the gym teacher's whistle. It's your job to find out what happened. What questions do you need to ask? Who do you need to ask?

Read from *Nothing but the Truth*.

Discussion/ Notes

What goes into an interview. Preparing, asking, repeating, follow-up questions, open-ended versus closed questions.

Activity

[from http://www.highschooljournalism.org/teachers/LessonPlan_Display.cfm?Type=L&LessonplanId=255&AuthorId=135]

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Title: Interview scenario

Summary

This activity is designed to have students create open-ended questions, conduct a good interview, listen carefully to others, and write a good solid news story. It also allows students to be creative and make unique situations come alive.

Objective

Students will be able to conduct interviews and write news stories based on “fake” situations.

Materials

Handouts for each student (see related link, Interview Scenario Handout) <http://www.highschooljournalism.org/teachers/AuthorArticles.cfm?articleId=185>

Activity

- Students will receive the cover page of the actual assignment explaining that they will be involved in writing news stories based on a unique scenario.
- They will then each be assigned a different character sheet explaining the role that he or she will play in the scenarios. Each student should receive a different character.
- Then, students find the other two students involved in their scenario. The students in those groups of three will then create a story line that is developed from the scenario sheet for the scenario each is involved in. They will come up with specific facts that happened during that incident to be used later when people interview them about the happenings.
- After all groups have their facts straight, pass out a different scenario to each student. It must be different than the one they wrote facts for.
- It is each student’s responsibility to seek out the characters they will need to interview to get the facts for their story. Each student will conduct interviews with at least two characters in the scenario and write a factual news story on the happenings.

Assessment

Be sure to have students turn in fact sheets, interview questions, and typed stories so you can check their facts.

Homework

Prepare a list of 8 questions you need to ask for your story. Indicate to whom you would ask these questions.

Day 9/10/11: Creating a Class Newspaper

Objectives

- ✓ Set up/conduct interviews
- ✓ Work on story

Discussion/Notes

Explain proper use of quotations in a story. Include punctuation and verb usage. Provide a model in notes.

Work Days

Each student needs to finish an article. The article needs to be edited by a classmate, who signs it, then handed in for teacher editing, handed back for revision and handed in.

Each article must have the following:

Headline (6 words or less)

By line

5 W and H

2 Quotations

If the world were perfect, each student would be able to type their story on a computer and hand in a disk with their final copy.

***Students who finish first can create an editorial board that will begin to brainstorm ideas about title of newspaper and other design elements.

Homework

Write/edit/finish news stories. Due end of Day 12. Study guide for test on Day 13 or work on final project.

Day 12: Bringing it together

Objectives

- ✓ Finish paper stories
- ✓ Create banners for sections of paper

Preparing

Start with a 5-minute free write: Write down three different ideas for the title of the class newspaper. Create an argument for each name.

Activity

Take all suggestions for newspaper names and have the class democratically choose an appropriate name. Once this has been decided, have the students break into their original editorial groups. The groups should then create the page banner for their respective sections. (If you have enough time and resources, this would be an excellent chance for the students to learn about page layout and design principles. There are many lessons out on the internet. If you have the time to teach these layout principle, and to teach the software on which they must be used, have the students create their respective sections. Otherwise, if they can create the banner, the stories can all be cut and pasted on a piece of 11x 18 sheet of paper.)

Homework

Study for test or work on final project.

Day 13: Review/Loose Ends

Objectives

- ✓ Finish paper stories
- ✓ Finish *Nothing but the Truth*

Preparing

Start with a 5-minute free write: What did you learn about newspapers over the last couple weeks? OR What newspaper articles have you read lately? What were they about? Why did you read them?

Read from *Nothing but the Truth*. (hopefully finish)

Discussion

By way of review of newspapers, list as a class, characteristics of the newspaper you've been studying. Then, compare it to other types of papers.

Online See link <http://newslink.org/tootypes.html>-

Foreign

Small Market

Large Market

“Free” Papers

Specialty

Break the students into groups/pairs, depending on the number of “other” papers you've come up with. Have them find the differences and similarities between the paper you've been studying and the “other” paper.

Discuss reasons for differences.

Homework

Study for test Day 14.

Day 14: Test/ Final Projects Due. Any other loose ends.