



A set of
nine lesson plans,
activities and assessments
using the daily
newspaper



acknowledgements

Welcome to N the News, a set of nine curriculum units featuring lesson plans, subject content, activities and assessment tools. This project was designed to use the daily newspaper as a teaching tool in the journalism classroom. The Newspaper Association of America (NAA) Foundation supported this project in hopes of providing journalism teachers, publication advisers and others with a comprehensive journalism skills curriculum featuring a daily newspaper “textbook” that is affordable and timely.

What makes this curriculum guide unique is its development by teachers for teachers. Student teachers enrolled in Ball State University’s journalism education degree program – specifically, the *Methods and Materials of Teaching High School Journalism* (J395) course – created significant portions of the plans and activities in this guide.

The guide is not intended to be the instructor’s only resource for teaching journalism. But it does cover journalism fundamentals and uses what we in the newspaper industry and student media hope is an engaging, timely resource. Every effort has been made to align lesson objectives with National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) standards. An effort also was made to ensure that activities address a variety of student learning styles. Objectives and aligned assessments are labeled with Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Whether the guide serves as the basis for a multi-week course or as a supplemental tool to enhance current curriculum, our hope is that you take advantage of your local newspaper’s Newspaper In Education (NIE) program and use the daily newspaper as the great teaching tool it is.

Happy teaching,

Sandy Woodcock, director, NAA Foundation

Lori Oglesbee, curriculum development chair, Journalism Education Association

Mark Herron, assistant professor of journalism, Ball State University

John Cutsinger, creative accounts manager, Jostens Publishing





from the editors

About the NAA Foundation

The NAA Foundation strives to develop engaged and literate citizens in our diverse society through investment in and support of programs designed to enhance student achievement through newspaper readership and appreciation of the First Amendment.

The Foundation's programs and products emphasize the use of newspapers and other media by young people. Foundation support is concentrated in three primary focus areas:

Newspaper In Education — The Foundation maintains a nationwide system of cooperation between newspapers and schools designed to enhance student achievement and appreciation of the First Amendment in a variety of subject areas through the use of newspapers and other media. The Foundation provides resources and training on using newspapers in schools and helps newspapers develop strategic plans for providing NIE services to educators.

Youth content — The Foundation supports the Youth Editorial Alliance, a nationwide coalition of newspapers dedicated to advocating the value of content targeted toward youth. The Foundation provides resources and training in the development of youth content in newspapers; serves as a clearinghouse for youth readership initiatives; and helps newspapers plan and evaluate youth features and content.

Student newspapers — The Foundation encourages collaboration between newspapers and schools to support student-produced media. The Foundation works with scholastic media associations nationwide to provide training and resources, with an emphasis on enhancing appreciation of the First Amendment.

A very special thanks to these students from Mark Herron's J395 course at Ball State University for their hard work, innovative ideas and fresh approach to using the newspaper as a teaching resource:

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N preparation ...

HELPFUL MATERIALS

- Transparency of a 1940s newspaper
- Daily newspaper
- Copies of a tabloid for each student
- Copies of a broadsheet for each student
- Multiple sets of rubber alphabet stamps
- Computer paper
- One textbook per group
- Black liquid ink for rubber stamps
- Scissors

newspaper evolution

date/week of: _____

class/period(s) taught: _____

content overview

In this unit, students will learn history and evolution of newspapers.

goals and objectives

Goal: Students will have an understanding of the history and evolution of newspapers.

Objectives:

• **Students can tell differences between newspapers created in the 1940s and those today.** (*knowledge*)

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 9 — Students develop understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions and social roles.

• **Students will know differences between tabloids and broadsheets.** (*comprehension*)

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 12 — Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.

• **Students can explain how the printing press has changed newspaper production.** (*analysis*)

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 9 — Students develop understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions and social roles.



N due time ...

9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline and resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events relating to unit topic or to utilize an activity provided for in-class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

18-WEEK EXPANDED COURSE

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper ..." project, showcase examples from daily newspaper and assign.
- **Day 7:** In-class application of project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate and discuss project and what was learned.
- **Day 9:** Provide ___ minutes to read the newspaper, focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read and learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment

newspaper evolution

activities and objectives

Activity 1:

Distribute copies of a current newspaper. When students have scanned it, show them a transparency of a newspaper from the 1940s. Have students discuss differences. Make sure to note art usage, headline display, color and grid structure differences. *(addresses visual and auditory learners)*

Objective:

- **Students can tell differences between newspapers created in the 1940s and those today.**

Activity 2:

Distribute copies of tabloid and broadsheet formats. When students have scanned the newspapers, have each write three differences. Lead class discussion about the differences. Make sure to note size, headlines, colors, photographs, number of stories on a page and content differences. *(addresses visual and auditory learners)*

Objective:

- **Students know differences between tabloids and broadsheets.**

Activity 3:

This is designed to let students know the amount of work involved in publishing a newspaper before invention of the printing press. Divide students into small groups. Each group should select a paragraph from the newspaper and re-create it using rubber alphabet stamps. Students must arrange the stamps with letters up and side by side so when ink is applied, a readable print is created. Students must make sure letters are in a straight line with equal spacing between them. Placing a ruler or something similar between lines could ensure this. When the paragraph has been re-created with stamps, apply liquid ink to the letters. Place a piece of paper over the stamps and a textbook atop the paper to produce enough pressure to create a print. *(addresses tactile learners)*

Objective:

- **Students can explain how the printing press has changed newspaper production.**



newspaper evolution

content

Newspapers created in the 1940s were mostly text-based. Text was laid out on a column grid similar to what newspapers still use, but photographs and graphics were rare. Color type or images were never used, and display headlines were uncommon.

Today, newspapers base design on the major art element on a page. Some include more graphic illustrations, pushing toward a more visual medium.

While the optimum six-column grid used in the 1940s is still seen in newspapers today, a postmodern 10-column to 12-column grid is more common because of the high activity level possible. Many newspapers published in metropolitan cities are in full color, and most small-town newspapers have at least spot color.

Tabloids vs. broadsheets

Public Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestic, the first newspaper published in England's North American colonies in 1690, was designed in pamphlet format. Tabloids became more popular during the 1920s, faded as broadsheets gained popularity and now are making a comeback, in part as a way of reducing use of costly newsprint. The Chicago Tribune's RedEye tabloid, for instance, is targeted at a younger audience.

At first glance, readers can see a big difference between a tabloid and a broadsheet. The traditional broadsheet is about 14 to 15 inches wide and 20 to 22 inches long. Fold one in half, and you have a tabloid. Tabloid headlines often are much larger, and their color presentation makes them stand out on newsracks.

The front page of a tabloid generally has fewer stories than a broadsheet front, although to enhance sales, many broadsheets are being redesigned to include elements often associated with tabloids. Page one of a tabloid may also contain a large photograph with teasers to stories inside. Readers will notice a difference in content. Tabloid content is more laid-back and often more concise. Popularity of tabloids also may be increasing because their size appeals to more mobile readers.

How has newspaper production changed?

Before invention of the printing press in 1640 by German Johannes Gutenberg, a typesetter had to set type and each newspaper had to be printed by hand, a time-consuming process. When the first printing press was invented, an operator turning a handle could print 80 to 100 newspapers an hour.

Today's presses are far faster and can print in full color through a multiple-step process. The publication must be run through the press several times, each time adding a different color.



newspaper evolution

N your paper ...

- Paste examples of images from a recent newspaper (photos, graphics, etc.).
- On the same page, write an explanation of the differences between these images and those found in early newspapers.

NIE definitions

Column — vertical arrangement of lines of type in a news story; also, an article regularly written by a particular writer or “columnist”

Hard news — factual news stories without opinion

Headline — explanatory title over a newspaper article summarizing the main point for the reader

Layout — organization of all elements on an ad or page

Newsstand — single-copy vendor selling newspapers over the counter

Tabloid — newspaper format smaller than a broadsheet; fold a broadsheet in half and you have a tabloid

Assessment

1. Instruct students to write short essays describing differences between newspapers created in the 1940s and those today. *(objective 1)*
2. Give students copies of tabloids and broadsheets from the same day and the same area. Have students, in groups, chart stories and coverage given to the top news stories. Each group should make a presentation of its findings and give reasons behind the differences. *(objective 2)*
3. In a broadsheet newspaper, ask students to find stories they think are news-worthy, then design and modify them for a tabloid spread that meets guidelines learned in this unit. *(objective 2)*
4. In three to five paragraphs, students should summarize changes in newspaper production since invention of the printing press. *(objective 3)*



N preparation ...

HELPFUL MATERIALS

- Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics
- Daily newspaper
- Copy of the First Amendment for each student

law and ethics

date/week of: _____

class/period(s) taught: _____

content overview

In this unit, students will learn about the law and ethics involved in producing daily and student newspapers.

goal and objectives

Goal: Students will have an understanding of the law and ethics involved in producing daily and student newspapers.

Objectives:

- **Students will memorize the First Amendment.** (*knowledge*)

NCTE 12 — Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their purposes.

- **Students will list freedoms protected under the First Amendment.**

(*knowledge*)

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 12 — Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their purposes.

- **Students will explain the role of the First Amendment in newspaper publication.** (*analysis*)

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 12 — Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their purposes.

- **Students will apply the First Amendment to high school publication situations.** (*analysis*)

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 12 — Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their purposes.

law and ethics



N due time ...

9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives and content overview with timeline and resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and material provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and material provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events or to utilize an activity provided for in-class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

18-WEEK EXPANDED COURSE

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper ..." project, showcase examples from daily newspaper and assign.
- **Day 7:** In-class application of project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate and discuss project and what was learned.
- **Day 9:** Provide 10 minutes to read the newspaper, focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read and learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment

- **Students will apply ethical guidelines to newsroom situations.** (*analysis*)

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 12 — Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their purposes.

activities and objectives

Activity 1:

With tape, create a Lichert scale on the floor running the length of the classroom. Have students move desks out of the way and stand. Present the situations below and have students position themselves on the scale according to personal beliefs. Make sure they realize there are no right or wrong answers, only opinions.

1. Congress should pass a constitutional amendment banning burning of the American flag.
2. Music played over public airways should be censored to remove curse words, sexual references and other inappropriate content.
3. A group-led prayer should be allowed at all public gatherings.
4. All movies not rated G, PG or PG-13 should be banned.
5. The Ku Klux Klan should be allowed to have a peaceable rally at the local courthouse.

For each situation, have students standing on various places on the scale explain why they are there. After all situations have been assessed, have students return to their desks. Give each a copy of the First Amendment. Review the situations and apply the First Amendment to each. See whether their opinions change. Discuss. This can become heated, so the teacher must act as moderator and remind students to respect others' opinions. (*addresses visual and auditory learners*)

Objectives:

- **Students will memorize the First Amendment.**
- **Students will list freedoms protected under the First Amendment.**
- **Students will explain the role of the First Amendment in newspaper publication.**



N your paper ...

• Make a bulletin board of stories that might have been censored if not for the First Amendment.

law and ethics

Activity 2:

Divide the class into small groups. Provide a copy of court cases in the content section of this unit. Have students discuss each scenario and present their findings. Explain which court cases would help you make a decision in the scenarios below. Answer two of the following.

1. The principal is arrested for driving while intoxicated. A student wants to write about it for the school newspaper.
2. A student wants to write a sexually explicit column using street terms for sex and encouraging students to practice safe sex.
3. A student wants to write for the school newspaper about a protest of the war in Iraq. Your school is near a military base. (*addresses visual and auditory learners*)

Objective:

• **Students will apply the First Amendment to high school publication situations.**

Activity 3:

Download the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics at www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp. Read and discuss. Present the situations below and have students decide in small groups about the ethics involved. Each group should be prepared to say how the decision was made.

1. A staff photographer has a photo of a power line worker who was electrocuted. Most of the city lost power because of this. The photo shows the victim on a gurney covered by a white sheet. Do you run it?
2. Information gathered on the Internet can be used for facts in a news story.
3. If credit is given, a photo may be used in another publication.
4. Undercover reporting is the best way to get a story.
5. When tragedy strikes, the news organization's duty is to capture the story for all. This may include uncomfortable photos of grieving people or of crime scenes. (*addresses visual and auditory learners*)

Activity 4:

Distribute copies of the daily newspaper from different days to groups of four students. Have each group find stories in the national news section reporting information that would be censored if people or agencies mentioned in the story had the authority to censor. Share group findings with the class. Search again to find stories that deal with any of the five freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment.

Distribute copies of the SPJ Code of Ethics to groups of four students. Give each group a different scenario. Students will apply ethical standards and make a group decision to present for class discussion. (*addresses visual and auditory learners*)

Objective:

• **Students will apply ethical guidelines to newsroom situations.**

law and ethics



content

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.”

A 2005 study on high school students’ understanding of First Amendment freedoms from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation revealed the following:

- Nearly 75 percent of those polled said they don’t know how they feel about the First Amendment or they take it for granted.
- Students are less likely than adults to think that people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions or that newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories.
- Seventy-five percent of those polled lack knowledge and understanding about key aspects of the First Amendment and its protection.

For more about First Amendment studies, visit www.firstamendmentfuture.org.

First Amendment Timeline

- 1215:** King John of England signs the Magna Carta, marking the first time sovereign powers are limited.
- 1641:** The First Amendment has its early beginnings when the Massachusetts General Court drafts the first broad statement of American liberties. Entitled the Massachusetts Body of Liberties, it contains a right to petition and a due-process statement.
- 1663:** Religious freedom is granted in Rhode Island.
- 1689:** English Bill of Rights is established.
- 1708:** Connecticut passes a statute allowing “full liberty of worship” for Anglicans and Baptists.
- 1776:** On July 4, the Continental Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence. Virginia passes its Declaration of Rights to become the first state with a bill of rights in its state constitution.
- 1777:** Thomas Jefferson completes a draft of a Virginia state bill addressing religious freedom. It is later known as the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.
- 1789:** U.S. Constitution takes effect after being adopted in 1787 and ratified in 1788.
- 1791:** The first 10 amendments (Bill of Rights) to the Constitution are adopted on Dec. 15.
- 1868:** The Constitution’s 14th Amendment is ratified, stating “... nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law. ...”
- 1917:** Passage of the Espionage Act makes it a crime “to willfully cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States” or to “willfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service” of the United States.
- 1918:** Passage of the Sedition Act forbids spoken or printed criticism of the U.S. government, Constitution or flag.
- 1919:** U.S. Supreme Court upholds Espionage Act conviction of an antiwar pamphleteer and creates the clear and present danger doctrine: “The question in every case is whether the words used, are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent. It is a question of proximity and degree.” *Schenck v. U.S.*, 249 U.S. 47.

law and ethics



- 1919:** Although the Supreme Court upholds the conviction of another antiwar pamphleteer, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' dissent has a long-lasting impact on First Amendment jurisprudence. "It is only the present danger of immediate evil or an intent to bring it about" that warrants limitations on expression, he writes. *Abrams v. U.S.*, 250 U.S. 616.
- 1921:** The Sedition Act of 1918 is repealed.
- 1925:** Supreme Court rules that free speech and free press clauses of the First Amendment are applicable to states because they are liberties safeguarded by the due process clause of the 14th Amendment. *Gitlow v. New York*, 268 U.S. 652.
- 1931:** Supreme Court rules that prior restraint (prohibiting the press from publishing something) violates the First Amendment except in rare circumstances. *Near v. Minnesota*, 283 U.S. 697.
- 1940:** Passage of the Alien Registration Act of 1940, also known as the Smith Act, makes it a crime to advocate violent overthrow of the government.
- 1942:** Supreme Court rules that the First Amendment does not protect "worthless speech" that includes lewd, obscene, profane or libelous language, and "fighting words: language that by its very utterance inflicts injury upon the listener or tends to incite an immediate breach of the peace." *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*, 315 U.S. 568.
- 1943:** Supreme Court rules that state law compelling students to salute the flag violates the First Amendment. *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624.
- 1964:** To promote free and robust discussion of public affairs, Supreme Court rules that public officials can win libel suits only if they prove actual malice (knowingly publishing falsehoods or having a reckless disregard for truth). *New York Times v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254.
- 1969:** Completing its narrowing of the clear and present danger doctrine, the Supreme Court rules that government cannot punish "advocacy of violence or law violation unless the advocacy is directed to inciting imminent lawless action and is likely to incite such action." *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, 395 U.S. 444.
- 1971:** In a strong endorsement of *Near v. Minnesota*, Supreme Court rules that the federal government cannot stop publishing of the top-secret Pentagon Papers because the government did not prove that publication would damage national security. *New York Times v. United States*, 403 U.S. 713.
- 1971:** Supreme Court narrows the reach of *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire* (1942) by ruling that California cannot criminalize use of a four-letter word. "One man's vulgarity is another's lyric," the court writes. The decision also notes that "fighting words" are limited to direct, face-to-face personal insults. *Cohen v. California*, 403 U.S. 15.
- 1973:** In a 5-4 vote, the Supreme Court reaches consensus on the definition of obscenity. "The work, taken as a whole, must appeal to the prurient interest of the average person; must depict or describe in a patently offensive manner sexual conduct specifically defined by state law; and, taken as a whole, must lack serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value." *Miller v. California*, 413 U.S. 15.
- 1974:** Supreme Court clarifies confusion on when the actual-malice rule of *New York Times v. Sullivan* must be applied. The court rules that public officials and public figures must prove actual malice to win libel suits; however, states may impose a negligence standard on private persons who sue for libel. *Gertz v. Robert Welch Inc.*, 418 U.S. 323.

law and ethics



1974: Supreme Court rules that government cannot tell a newspaper what it can or cannot print. “The choice of material to go into a newspaper — whether fair or unfair — constitutes the exercise of editorial control and judgment,” the court says. *Miami Herald Publishing Co. v. Tornillo*, 418 U.S. 241.

1980: Supreme Court rules that almost all criminal trials must be open to public and press. “We hold that the right to attend criminal trials is implicit in the guarantees of the First Amendment; without the freedom to attend such trials . . . important aspects of freedom of speech and of the press could be eviscerated,” the court says. *Richmond Newspapers Inc. v. Virginia*, 448 U.S. 555.

1981: Supreme Court rules that states may decide whether trials should be televised. *Chandler v. Florida*, 449 U.S. 560.

1989: Supreme Court rules that laws prohibiting desecration of the flag violate the First Amendment. *Texas v. Johnson*, 491 U.S. 397.

1997: In its first look at how the First Amendment applies to the Internet, the Supreme Court gives the new medium the same broad protections enjoyed by print media. The court refuses to apply a broadcast model to the Internet that would have allowed greater government control. *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union*, 521 U.S. 844.

Key cases involving the high school press

Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969)

This landmark decision established the principle that students have constitutional rights while attending public schools.

Mary Beth Tinker and two other students wore black armbands to school to protest the Vietnam War. When school officials heard of the planned protest, they quickly adopted a policy prohibiting students from wearing armbands. Officials said they wanted to avoid disruption.

When the students refused to remove their armbands, they were suspended and sent home. Mary Beth challenged the suspension in court as a violation of First Amendment rights. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed lower court decisions, ruling: “First Amendment rights, applied in the light of the special characteristics of the school environment, are available to teachers and students. It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”

The court said public school officials cannot prohibit a particular expression of opinion by merely saying they are trying to avoid discomfort and unpleasantness that accompany an unpopular viewpoint. “Clearly, the prohibition of expression of one particular opinion, at least without evidence that it is necessary to avoid material and substantial interference with schoolwork or discipline, is not constitutionally permissible,” the court said.

The court found no evidence that school authorities anticipated that wearing armbands would interfere with schoolwork or impinge on rights of other students. The “material and substantial disruption” standard became the legal test applied to high school press rights cases until the *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* decision in 1988.



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Bethel School District 403 v. Fraser (1986)

This case established the legal principle that public school officials can regulate vulgar speech in the school.

In an assembly of 600 students, Matthew Fraser, 17, a senior at Bethel (Wash.) High School, used a list of double entendres, saying the candidate for student council he supported was "... a man who is firm — he's firm in his pants ... in his character ... a man who takes his point and pounds it in ... who will go to the very end — even to the climax, for each and every one of you."

Fraser's candidate won. Fraser was suspended for two days for vulgar speech. The U.S. Supreme Court said school officials did not violate the First Amendment by punishing Fraser for a campaign speech considered lewd. Both lower courts had ruled for Fraser because no disruption followed the speech in the school auditorium.

The court said: "Under the First Amendment, the use of an offensive form of expression may not be prohibited to adults making what the speaker considers a political point, but it does not follow that the same latitude must be permitted to children in a public school.

"It is a highly appropriate function of public school education to prohibit the use of vulgar and offensive terms in public discourse. ... The inculcation of these values is truly the work of the school, and the determination of what manner of speech is inappropriate properly rests with the school board.

"The process of educating our youth for citizenship in public schools is not confined to books, the curriculum, and the civics class; schools must teach by example the shared values of a civilized social order."

The court held that prohibiting vulgar and offensive terms in public discourse is a "highly appropriate" function of public school education and that the First Amendment did not protect Fraser's "offensively lewd and indecent speech."

Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier (1988)

This case distinguished the precedent set in *Tinker* and established a new legal standard for school-sponsored expressive activities.

In May 1983, students in the Journalism II class at Hazelwood East High School in suburban St. Louis produced the last issue of the student newspaper, the Spectrum. After adviser Howard Emerson reviewed the newspaper at the printer, he called Principal Robert Reynolds and described two articles that concerned him. Reynolds told Emerson to delete pages containing the articles.

One article described three students' experiences with pregnancy, and the other discussed the impact of divorce on students. According to the subsequent court record, Reynolds was concerned that the pregnant students might be identifiable although their names were not used. He also thought references to sexual activity and birth control were inappropriate for younger students at the school.

law and ethics



The divorce article concerned Reynolds because he felt that parents of a student quoted should have been given an opportunity to respond to critical comments.

When the newspaper was distributed minus the pages, student editors filed suit in federal court. The U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri ruled that the principal had not violated the students' First Amendment rights. The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the lower court, ruling that students' rights had been violated.

Writing for a 5-3 majority, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron R. White upheld Reynolds' actions. White rejected the idea that Spectrum was a forum for public expression and found that the student newspaper was a laboratory used by students to apply skills learned in journalism class.

White next analyzed the case in the context of *Tinker*, which he said concerned educators' ability to silence student expression that "happens to occur on the school premises." However, White said, Reynolds' right to delete stories from the school newspaper focused on "educators' authority over school-sponsored publications, theatrical productions and other school-sponsored activities ... that bear the imprimatur of the school."

White then declared, "Educators do not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control over the style and content of student speech in school-sponsored expressive activities so long as their actions are reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns."

Morse v. Frederick (2007)

This case established the principle that public school officials can restrict student speech at a school event when that speech is reasonably viewed as promoting illegal drug use.

Deborah Morse, principal of Juneau-Douglas High School in Juneau, Alaska, suspended student Joseph Frederick for 10 days for his actions on Jan. 24, 2002, when the Olympic Torch Relay came through the city. Because the relay was to pass along a street in front of the school, school officials allowed staff and students to observe it.

As torchbearers passed, Frederick and several friends unfurled a 14-foot banner that read "Bong Hits 4 Jesus." Morse confiscated the banner and suspended Frederick, saying the banner encouraged illegal drug use in violation of school policy.

After the school superintendent and school board upheld the suspension, Frederick filed suit, claiming his First Amendment rights had been violated. The U.S. District Court ruled in favor of the school. But the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned that, saying the school had not proved that the speech threatened substantial disruption.

In a splintered 5-4 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the school's actions did not violate Frederick's First Amendment rights. Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., writing the majority opinion, said two basic principles can be distilled from *Fraser* and *Hazelwood*:



law and ethics

1. “The constitutional rights of public school students are not automatically co-extensive with the rights of adults in other settings.”
2. *Fraser* and *Hazelwood* established that *Tinker’s* “substantial disruption” analysis is not absolute since neither decision used that analysis.

Roberts said school officials have an “important — indeed, perhaps compelling” interest in deterring drug usage by students. “The question thus becomes,” he wrote, “whether a principal may, consistent with the First Amendment, restrict student speech at a school event, when that speech is reasonably viewed as promoting illegal drug use. We hold that she may.”

Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr., joined by Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, wrote a concurring opinion, saying he joined the majority opinion on the understanding that “(a) it goes no further than to hold that a public school may restrict speech that a reasonable observer would interpret as advocating drug use and (b) it provides no support for any restriction of speech that can plausibly be interpreted as commenting on any political or social issue.”

Alito added that the court’s opinion did not endorse the school’s argument that public school officials can censor any student speech that interferes with a school’s “educational mission.” “This argument can easily be manipulated in dangerous ways, and I would reject it before such abuse occurs,” Alito said.

On the other hand, Justice Clarence Thomas, in his concurring opinion, said he favored reversal of *Tinker*. “In my view,” he wrote, “the history of public education suggests that the First Amendment, as originally understood, does not protect student speech in public schools.”

What do these cases mean?

Over the years, many media reports have summarized *Hazelwood* as giving principals carte blanche control over content of student newspapers at public high schools. However, a careful reading of the opinion clearly indicates limitations on such control.

The Supreme Court created the so-called “public forum analysis” in 1983 to determine appropriate government control of speech on or in government property. According to this analysis, if a publication is classified as a “nonpublic forum,” the school’s rationale for control of content must only be “reasonable.” If the publication is classified as a “designated public forum,” the school can control content only if a compelling reason to do so exists.

In his *Hazelwood* decision, Justice White first concluded that the school newspaper was not a public forum, saying, “School officials did not evince either by policy or by practice, any intent to open the pages of *Spectrum* to indiscriminate use by its student reporters and editors. . . .

“Instead, they reserved the forum for its intended purposes, as a supervised learning experience for journalism students. Accordingly, school officials were entitled to regulate the contents of *Spectrum* in any reasonable manner.” Later in the decision, that “reasonable manner” became “legitimate pedagogical concerns.”

law and ethics



Based on this language, if a high school publication is designated as a “public forum,” school officials can censor only if they meet the “material and substantial disruption” standard of *Tinker* (a compelling reason) rather than the more lenient “legitimate pedagogical concerns” standard of *Hazelwood*.

Many high school newspapers nationwide are classified as public forums through official publication policies approved by school boards or have become public forums through the uninterrupted practice of student editors determining content. These publications operate under the *Tinker* standard.

In addition, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Washington have enacted statutes that provide greater legal protection for student editors. Advisers and student journalists in those states must clearly understand their state laws.

Even if the *Hazelwood* standard applies to a publication, school officials’ control is not unlimited. Many times, administrators object to content because they disagree with the viewpoints expressed. *Hazelwood* requires an educational reason for censorship, not an “I don’t like the opinion” reason for censorship.

Most administrators seeking to censor will attempt an “educational” rationale for their actions. The question is whether a court will independently review the rationale to determine whether it meets the *Hazelwood* standard.

As Justice William J. Brennan Jr. said in his *Hazelwood* dissent, “This case . . . aptly illustrates how readily school officials (and courts) can camouflage viewpoint discrimination as the ‘mere’ protection of students from sensitive topics.”

At least one federal judge made clear that he would look closely at the real reasons for censorship, writing, “. . . because *Hazelwood* opens the door to significant curtailment of cherished First Amendment rights, this Court declines to read the decision with the breadth its dictum invites. Because educators may limit student expression in the name of pedagogy, courts must avoid enlarging the venues within which that rationale may legitimately obtain without a clear and precise directive.” *Romano v. Harrington*, 725 F. Supp. 687, 689 (E.D. N.Y., 1989).

Thus, school administrators’ control is limited. If the censorship attempt occurs within a public forum, *Tinker* applies, not *Hazelwood*. If the censorship attempt occurs within a nonpublic forum and *Hazelwood* does apply, the reason for the content control must be educationally based, not viewpoint-based.

Hazelwood has no application to publications or activities that are not school-sponsored. School officials who want to punish students for speech beyond school settings must meet the *Tinker* standard.

law and ethics



NIE definitions

Appropriation — using a person's name or identity without permission for commercial purposes

Broadsheet — traditional size of most newspapers, about 14 to 15 inches wide and 20 to 22 inches long

Intrusion — physical or technological invasion of an individual's privacy

Libel — publication of material unjustly injurious to someone's reputation

Slander — spoken communication that damages a person's reputation

Assessment

1. Instruct students to write the First Amendment and list the five freedoms it protects. *(objectives 1 and 2)*
2. Students will write letters to the editor explaining the First Amendment's role in media coverage, then send the letters to the local newspaper. *(objective 3)*
3. Divide the class into groups, each of which should generate five or six scenarios of stories that might appear in a school newspaper. Groups will exchange lists. Have each group evaluate scenarios to determine whether and/or how they should be published. *(objective 4)*
4. Students will write essays about ethical standards they expect the local newspaper to uphold. *(objective 5)*



N preparation ...

HELPFUL MATERIALS

- Daily newspaper
- List of credible and noncredible Web sites for research and data collection based on particular story or topic you may assign
- Computers with Internet access
- Examples of infographics

getting the story

date/week of: _____

class/period(s) taught: _____

content overview

In this unit, students will learn about conducting interviews and gathering research for effective and credible stories.

goal and objectives

Goal: Students will learn how to perform effective and credible research by using the Internet, conducting a one-on-one interview, engaging in group discussion and conducting opinion polls.

Objectives:

• **Students will check credibility of a Web site.** (*synthesis*)

NCTE 7 — Students research issues and interests by generalizing ideas and questions, and posing problems. They gather, evaluate and synthesize data from a variety of sources to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit the purpose of their audience.

NCTE 8 — Students use a variety of technological and informative resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

• **Students will prepare for a one-on-one interview and use proper conduct for an interview.** (*application*)

NCTE 4 — Students adjust use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

• **Students will hold an organized group discussion.** (*application*)

NCTE 9 — Students develop understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions and social roles.

• **Students will conduct an opinion poll and put it together in a quick and easy-to-read format.** (*application*)

NCTE 12 — Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their purposes.



N due time ...

9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline and resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events relating to unit topic or to utilize an activity provided for in-class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

18-WEEK EXPANDED COURSE

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper ..." project, showcase examples from daily newspaper and assign.
- **Day 7:** In-class application of project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate and discuss project and what was learned.
- **Day 9:** Provide ___ minutes to read the newspaper, focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read and learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment

getting the story

activities and objectives

Activity 1:

Each student will be given a list of credible Web sites and sites lacking credibility. Instruct students to find one credible site and list why it is credible, then to find one site lacking credibility and list qualities that make it so. Conduct a class discussion on how to tell the difference. *(addresses visual, tactile and analytical learners)*

Objective:

- **Students will check credibility of a Web site.**

Activity 2:

Students will select one well-known person mentioned in the newspaper as someone to interview. Have students research that person and determine the subject's job credentials, title and personal and professional background. From their findings, students will formulate 10 questions to ask that person in an interview. *(addresses visual, tactile and analytical learners)*

Objective:

- **Students will prepare for a one-on-one interview and use proper conduct for an interview.**

Activity 3:

Divide the class into four groups and give each a profile. Group one will be low-income and group two high-income. Group three will represent ethnic minorities and group four will represent women. Give students topics from the day's newspaper. Each group will discuss the topics from the viewpoint of its given profile. *(addresses auditory and kinesthetic learners)*

Activity 3a:

Each student will select one topic in the newspaper and lead a four- to five-minute class discussion, acting as moderator of a focus group. *(addresses auditory and kinesthetic learners)*

Objective:

- **Students will hold an organized group discussion.**

Activity 4:

Each student will choose a topic in the newspaper and use it to form a close-ended question. Students will make small ballots asking opinions on this topic with answer options of "yes," "no" and "indifferent." After ballots are returned, students will compile the information and report findings by making a graph of how many students answered each way. *(addresses analytical learners)*

Objective:

- **Students will conduct an opinion poll and put it together in a quick and easy-to-read format.**



getting the story

content

Research is the foundation of creating credible and informative material. Today, online research is most popular because it is easily accessible in schools and at home. However, researching books, magazines, institutional sources, bound periodicals and newspapers is just as effective if done correctly. One-on-one interviews, group discussions and opinion polls also can be effective ways to research.

Organizing Information

Before beginning research, have a clear picture of the topic. Ask yourself these questions:

1. What central idea should the article convey? How can I express that in a clear, active way?
2. What major ideas should be included?
3. What details are needed to make the theme and ideas clear?

Clearly defining the topic will help you organize research to find information most vital to the reporting. After you have written out the information, review your work, paying close attention to original ideas and messages you want to convey. These questions can help you edit your work:

1. What literary forms can I use to make a strong story?
2. What was I trying to communicate?
3. How well did I do this?

A well-researched story will include facts and sources to back up all information.

Online Research

Easy and exciting, this provides instant gratification to the informed user. But Internet research can affect credibility of a written piece if the author does not know how to distinguish a credible source. Here are key tips for researching online:

1. Read the "About Us" section of the Web site. If there isn't one, be wary of information you find.
2. If a site address is a government site, it ends in ".gov". An organization site ends in ".org". An educational site ends in ".edu". All are usually trustworthy.
3. Always remember that just because something was published online does not mean it is true.

Something to Remember

Researching in a local library may seem old-fashioned, but it can lead to valuable sources of information. The library contains archived issues of newspapers nationwide that you may not find online. It also contains many books, magazines and scholarly journals.

Checking References

Because your school may not have a department of researchers to check your source-gathering ability, you must do it. A good way to ruin credibility as a journalist is to become sloppy with facts. Using a tape recorder and taking good notes can help to avoid the costly error of misquoting a source. Tape recorders can malfunction and memory can fade, so take good notes [see next section]. Also, ask a tough question two different ways so you know you have the correct answer. Be detail-oriented and stay on target.



getting the story

CHECKLIST FOR FILING STORY OR ASSIGNMENT

1. Have you chosen a subject of high interest? What did the person do that was exciting and different?
2. What area did you highlight?
3. Have you done research?
4. Did you prepare questions in advance? Were all answered?
5. If they were not all answered, whom can you go to for more information?
6. What emotional response did you capture in the story?

Interviewing

An interview is a valuable piece of research. When you find the right person(s) to interview, you may have a great source of current information about the topic. Remember these tips before and during an interview:

1. Make sure you obtain as much information as possible on the topic and interviewee before the interview.
2. Make an appointment.
3. Be on time.
4. Dress appropriately. Do not wear a suit to interview a fast-food employee, and do not wear a T-shirt to interview a bank president.
5. Do not pressure the source.
6. Ask questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” response.
7. If you do not obtain the answer you need, ask a follow-up question.
8. Be certain you have quoted the source correctly.
9. Make sure you can contact the source again if you later determine you need more information.
10. The last question should be: “Is there anything you would like to add?”
11. Thank the interviewee.

When you take notes, do not attempt to write every word the subject says. Develop a form of shorthand that you can decipher easily. Once you complete the interview, review your notes as soon as possible while the interview is fresh in your mind. This will help you choose the best quotes and use them accurately.

Focus Groups

A focus group is a good way to obtain a wide range of opinions through discussion. However, as group leader, you must *be* a leader. A good focus group includes a wide variety of people of all genders, ages and ethnicities and produces different views on the same issue. When you conduct a focus group, remember to:

1. Make sure the group is diverse.
2. Be a leader and keep the group on topic.
3. Give equal opportunity to everyone who speaks and allow opinions to be voiced.

Opinion Polls and Surveys

These can be conducted in a variety of ways, including in ballot form on paper, interview-style or by phone, to name a few. A poll or survey is valuable when a more specific answer is desired, as opposed to a one-on-one interview or a focus group in which you are prepared to accept any answer given.

An opinion poll or survey often has a set of preselected answers such as “agree,” “disagree” or “neutral.” A poll or survey is often copied into print by converting answers into a graph with percentages to provide a quick reference of findings. When you conduct a poll or survey, remember to:

1. Form questions that require a short answer.
2. Obtain age, gender and race of the person being questioned.
3. Make sure the questions are relevant to your story.



getting the story

N your paper ...

- Cut and paste five examples of poll or survey results found in the daily newspaper.
- Highlight the variety of statistics reported in one poll/survey or informational graphic.
- Cut out and paste any front-page story.
- Highlight every source used in the story.

NIE definitions

Five Ws and H — who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how; the major questions answered in the lead of a well-written news story

Plagiarism — using ideas and words of another as one's own

Wire service — agencies such as The Associated Press and Thomson Reuters that gather and distribute news to subscribing publications and Web sites

Assessment

1. Instruct students to find three Web sites they think are credible for a story on 21st Century Skills. For each site, students should provide a link and a written rationale of one to three paragraphs about why it is credible. (*objective 1*)
2. Instruct students to conduct mock interviews with fellow students about a recent school event in which they were involved. Students should continue the discussion with a group. (*objectives 2 and 3*)
3. Instruct students to select a topic, develop a questionnaire and conduct a survey of at least 35 students, then create a graphic to present the information. (*objective 4*)

writing news



N preparation ...

HELPFUL MATERIALS

- Current Associated Press Stylebook
- Handout of article with AP style errors
- Daily newspaper
- Several copies of other newspapers
- Glue stick
- Colored paper
- Copies of newspaper article covering a major crisis
- Computers with Internet access

class/period(s) taught: _____

content overview

In this unit, students will study the process of writing these types of news stories: briefs, crime stories, accident/disaster stories and crisis coverage.

goals and objectives

Goal 1: Students will understand basic components of news stories and how to write them.

Objectives:

- **Students will use Associated Press (AP) style.** (*application*)
NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.
- **Students will write a news lead using who, what, when, where, why and how.** (*application*)
NCTE 5 — Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- **Students will explain the importance of writing concisely and accurately.** (*comprehension*)
NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

Goal 2: Students can identify and write four different types of news stories.

Objectives:

- **Students will compare presentation of information in different kinds of news stories.** (*comprehension*)
NCTE 4 — Students adjust use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
- **Students will compare news coverage of similar events in different kinds of newspapers.** (*comprehension*)
NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

writing news



N due time ...

9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline and resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events relating to unit topic or to utilize an activity provided for in-class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

18-WEEK EXPANDED COURSE

- **Day 6:** Introduce “N your paper ...” project, showcase examples from daily newspaper and assign.
- **Day 7:** In-class application of project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate and discuss project and what was learned.
- **Day 9:** Provide ___ minutes to read the newspaper, focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read and learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment

• **Students will produce news stories of different kinds and write for different events and audiences.** (*application*)

NCTE 5 — Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

activities and objectives

Activity 1:

Before this activity, give students a list of AP Stylebook entries with which you want them to become familiar. Create a handout of sentences or paragraphs containing style errors for students to identify and correct. Give them time to search for and correct errors. Time may vary depending on the handout’s length. When time is up, have students check answers. Discuss the handout and give students the right answers. (*addresses analytical learners*)

Objective:

- **Students will use AP style.**

Activity 2:

Choose five or more stories from a newspaper. Split students into groups of no more than three. Have enough groups to cover the number of stories being used. Assign each group a story.

Give students time to read the lead of their assigned story. As they read, create categories on the board for who, what, when, where, why and how. Tell one student from each group to fill out information on the board for one category. After one student is finished, have another from that group come to the board and fill out another category. Continue until each story has a list of the five Ws and H below the title.

After the board is full, tell each student to choose one of the five Ws and H from the board. Students should try not to use several from the same news story. Using random information they have chosen from each category, students will write leads to submit for a grade. (*addresses visual learners*)

Objective:

- **Students will write a news lead using the 5 Ws and H.**

Activity 3:

Have students write a brief description of any event — sports, a made-up crime or even something that happened to them that day in school. Discuss and give examples of how to write concise sentences. Have students trade papers and edit each other for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. They should also attempt to rewrite sentences to be more concise. When students have their own papers back, tell them to rewrite their stories as a homework assignment. (*addresses analytical learners*)

writing news



Objective:

- Students will explain the importance of writing concisely and accurately.

Activity 4:

Choose two different types of stories (i.e., one crime story and one accident report) and read the first two paragraphs of one story to students. Tell students to recall main points of the story and write them on paper. Repeat this process with the second story and have students write important facts from the second story on the back or on a different sheet of paper.

Discuss what they remembered. Which facts were easiest and most difficult to remember? Did anyone remember specifics, such as a name or place? Discuss which facts came first in the story and why. Tell students to explain why they remembered some facts rather than others. (*addresses auditory learners*)

Objective:

- The student will compare presentation of information in different kinds of news stories.

Activity 5:

Have students read a news story about a major event of international importance (i.e., Iraq war). Discuss main points in the story. Which information is most important? What did the story omit?

Have students use the Internet to find another story about the same event from a different newspaper and with a different angle. Discuss why newspapers with a different target audience may cover the information in another way.

Have students compare and contrast the order and presentation of information in each story and write why they think each newspaper chose to cover the event as it did. (*addresses global learners*)

Objective:

- The student will compare news coverage of similar events in different kinds of newspapers.

Activity 6:

Divide students into pairs and have each member of a pair choose a different front-page story. Using scissors, each should cut the story into strips by paragraph. Have students mix their strips out of order and trade stories with their partners.

Put the rest of the newspapers away. Students will now attempt to evaluate the order of the paragraphs in their stories based on knowledge of news writing. When they have decided on the order, they will paste paragraphs in order on paper.

writing news



WORD CHOICE EXAMPLES

Use	Instead of
died	passed away
bruise	abrasion
cancer	carcinoma
man	gentleman
fire	inferno
disaster	catastrophe

Brainstorm with students to add to this list of euphemisms.

Give students 15 to 20 minutes to complete this assignment, with a five-minute warning to ensure time to finish. Have students trade final products with their partners and take turns reading the original stories to see how close they came.

Discuss the outcome. Did anyone's story match the original? Any surprises? Does anyone strongly believe that the order of information in the story should differ from the original? What have students learned about the order of information in news? (*addresses tactile learners*)

Objective:

- Students will produce news stories on different topics and write for different events and audiences.

content

In news reporting, understanding your audience is crucial. Readers want important information quickly. Depending on the topic, information may be arranged in different ways to ensure easy access to the facts.

For example, a story involving a car accident could be written effectively using the inverted pyramid style. In this method, information is ordered starting with the most important and ending with the least important. Although journalists should understand this style, information also can be arranged in other ways to affect the reader differently.

Rules for writing news may differ from rules for writing English class assignments. However, learning news writing can enhance writing performance in other subject areas because of its concise nature and focus on the most important facts.

Sentence structure in news stories is brief. A good lead typically does not exceed 25 to 30 words, while other paragraphs in news stories rarely exceed 50 words. Keep sentences short and make paragraphs one or two sentences.

Eliminate unnecessary words from news writing whenever possible. For example, instead of "The drama club will be meeting on Wednesday," write "The drama club will meet Wednesday." Verb phrases such as "will be," "are going to," "have been" and "has been" clutter a sentence. Use adverbs and adjectives only when absolutely necessary. A strong verb can be much more effective.

News should be available to everyone. Because newspaper readers have varying intellectual levels, journalists should use simple, accurate language whenever possible. (See examples at left.) For other important style information, consult the AP Stylebook.

writing news



LEAD INFORMATION

- Who is involved in the occurrence?
- To whom did it happen, or who did it?
- What happened? (brief description)
- When did it happen? (time, date)
- Where did it happen? (location in terms of city, state, area)
- Why? (explain the action)
- How did it happen? (manner in which the action occurs)

Depending on the story's nature, all of the five Ws and H may or may not be included in the lead.

The lead: As the first paragraph of a news story, the lead is designed to entice the reader to continue reading. In most cases, the lead summarizes facts of the story, generally answering some or all of the five Ws and H. (See list at left.)

Writing briefs: A brief is a short story dealing with an incident or event. Information for briefs may be reproduced from another newspaper, a news release or information from a human source. The writer should include all pertinent facts the reader must know about the incident or to participate in an event.

Writing about accidents and disasters: Provide every detail that people need to know. If anyone was injured or killed, identifying the victim(s) and describing injuries is very important. Other important information may include property damage; cause, time and duration of the incident; a detailed account of the incident; escapes or rescues; and pertinent legal details. In coverage of major accidents, fires and other disasters, the first feature in the lead should be the number of persons injured or dead. If no one was hurt, the lead may highlight property damage or rescues.

After providing these vital details, give the story a human quality. Covering a car accident, a good journalist would try to interview and include quotations from police, survivors, witnesses, and friends and relatives of the dead or injured.

Writing crime stories: Knowing proper legal terms is vital in dealing with police records. For example, burglary is entering property to steal property, while robbery is taking someone's property by assaulting or threatening a person. Reporters must be careful not to write that a person has been arrested for committing a certain crime when that person has merely been charged with the crime. If you have questions about terms in crime writing, consult the AP Stylebook.

Just as in other basic news stories, the most important information comes first in crime stories. Depending on the importance of the crime, newspapers may choose to publish a small brief or a longer story including more information about the situation that local residents would want to know.

Crisis coverage: When major, life-changing events occur, journalists must gather accurate facts and be sensitive to those affected. As readers have seen during major crises such as the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, newspapers choose different ways of covering the same events.

For example, in addition to front-page coverage the day after the event, some newspapers may choose to localize a crisis by covering related topics and commentaries on thoughts and feelings of different individuals. In addition to providing readers all facts in a straightforward manner, journalists must pay attention to ways in which the story's topic will affect readers.

writing news



N your paper ...

- Collect three different lead examples from news stories and paste them on paper.
- Cut out any front-page story.
- Cut out a crime story.
- Cut out a disaster story.
- Cut out a brief story describing an upcoming event.
- Highlight key facts in those stories and leads.

NIE definitions

Assignment — story a reporter is asked to cover

Associated Press — a wire service (see definition on next page)

Associated Press Stylebook — standard reference for reporters and editors on word usage, libel, numbers, titles, punctuation, capitalization and commonly used words and phrases

Beat — reporter's regular area in covering news sources

Copy — material for publication, whether stories or pictures

Copy editor — corrects or edits copy written by a reporter and writes headlines

Cover — gather information and facts for a story

Cut — shorten newspaper copy; also means a newspaper photograph

Dateline — line at beginning of a story giving the place and date of the reported story

Deadline — time at which all copy for an edition must be submitted

Editor — person who directs editorial policies and/or one who decides what news will be published and where it will appear

Five Ws and H — who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how; major questions answered in the lead of a well-written news story

Follow-up — story that adds more information to one already published

Hard news — factual news stories without opinion

Inverted pyramid — method of writing by placing parts of the story in descending order of importance

Jump — to continue a story from one page to another

Jumpline — line at bottom of story indicating on what page the story continues

Lead — first few sentences or first paragraph of a news story, containing the summary or introduction to the story

writing news



Managing editor — usually second-ranking editor in newsroom; often directs daily gathering, writing, editing and placement of news

Plagiarism — using another's ideas and words as one's own

Proof — page on which newly set copy is reproduced so editors can check for errors

Proofreader — reads proof pages for errors and marks corrections

Rewrite — write a story again to improve it, alter one that appeared somewhere else or write one from facts sent from elsewhere by a reporter

Source — supplier of information, such as a person, book, survey, etc.

Syndicate — association that buys and sells stories, features, columns, editorials and other material for publications' use

Syndicated features — material such as comics, advice columns, etc., supplied nationally to newspapers by news syndicates

Typo — short for "typographical error," a mistake made during story production

Wire service — agency such as The Associated Press or Thomson Reuters that gathers and distributes news to subscribing publications and Web sites

writing news



Assessment

1. Ask students to identify the five Ws and H in the lead of a page-one news story. *(objective 2)*
2. Introduce this topic for discussion: If a newspaper covered a tornado disaster with a brief on the day it occurred, what might the staff do to cover this event the next day? *(objective 4)*
3. Instruct students to write a news lead, using only facts among the following that they consider most important. *(objective 2)*
 - Who: a local teacher
 - What: ate lunch
 - When: at 1 p.m. on July 4, 2008
 - Where: in his office
 - Why: because he was hungry
 - How: chewed and swallowed food
4. Ask students to explain why writing news concisely and presenting the most vital information first are important. *(objective 3)*
5. Give students the basic facts of a news story in a list along with available quotes, then instruct them to write a news story. *(objective 6)*
6. Using an AP Stylebook, students should proofread the brief below for grammatical and AP style errors. *(objective 1)*

Disaster struck at 3:00 pm this afternoon when employees at Carrie's Pizzeria, a local pizza restaurant went on strike. According to April Jones, a manager, the drivers' of the restaurant were tired of only making minimum wage. To get back at the store, the drivers began destroying the pizzas they were supposed to deliver. "They were throwing them around like frisbees" Jones said. "and I didn't know what to do."

Carrie Howell, the owner of Carrie's Pizzeria, decided that the restaurant should rethink some of its policies.

"We had several people quit because of this incident," Howell said. "I'm taking they're complaints and demands very seriously at this point."

Howell has decided to temporarily close the restaurant to clean up all the pizzas. When the store reopens, the staff will be excepting applications for new drivers.

7. After a major news event, have students compare coverage choices of several local and/or national newspapers. Students should report their findings by measuring inches devoted to stories and creating charts comparing common and unique angles. *(objective 5)*



N preparation ...

HELPFUL MATERIALS

- Daily newspaper
- Sample feature articles taped to white paper
- Varied sampling of feature sections
- Box of silly gadgets, such as chattering teeth, a small squeegee, Slinky, etc.
- Stack of age-appropriate, diverse newspapers targeted at different demographics (i.e., an alternative newspaper or a local arts newspaper)

feature writing

date/week of: _____

class/period(s) taught: _____

content overview

Students will study feature writing, learning how to recognize a feature article and distinguish different types. They will brainstorm feature ideas, structure a story and begin, refine and end a feature article.

goals and objectives

Goal 1: Students will identify characteristics, types of feature stories and a variety of ways to write and tell a feature.

Objectives:

- **Students will describe characteristics of a feature story, such as subject matter, rules and style.** (*knowledge*)

NCTE 1 — Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

- **Students will list and describe types of feature stories.** (*knowledge*)

NCTE 2 — Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

- **Students will develop a list of feature story ideas.** (*application*)

NCTE 3 — Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

- **Students will identify types of story leads.** (*knowledge*)

NCTE 4 — Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.



N due time ...

9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline and resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events relating to unit topic or to utilize an activity provided for in-class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

18-WEEK EXPANDED COURSE

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper ..." project, showcase examples from daily newspaper and assign.
- **Day 7:** In-class application of project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate and discuss project and what was learned.
- **Day 9:** Provide ___ minutes to read the newspaper, focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read and learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment

feature writing

Goal 2: Students will understand how to write a feature story.

Objectives:

- **Students will use descriptive writing techniques to add depth to a feature story. (application)**

NCTE 11 — Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

- **Students will write a feature story. (application)**

NCTE 4 — Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

NCTE 8 — Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

NCTE 5 — Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

NCTE 12 — Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion and the exchange of information).

activities and objectives

Activity 1:

Collect feature sections from diverse newspapers, such as a community newspaper, a national newspaper or a local newspaper. Take the collection to the classroom and distribute sections to students.

Tell them to look at feature articles. If they do not see anything they like, they can pass the newspaper to another student. Each person should have a full feature section to peruse. Have students read their sections and list on a sheet of paper the type of feature stories they see, writing techniques used and what they like about the articles.

Have students move their desks into a circle so they each can discuss two feature stories from their sections with the class. For each selection, they should read the title, tell what the article is about, describe the type of feature and the writing techniques used, and say what they liked about it.

After students share, begin a discussion. How do writers handle particular subjects? Any trends? Similarities? Style commonalities? Students can begin to compare articles published in the North versus the South, etc. (*addresses global, auditory, visual and tactile learners*)

Objective

- **Students will describe characteristics of a feature story, such as subject matter, rules and style.**



feature writing

FEATURE STORY IDEAS

- Anything unusual or new
- Interesting or accomplished people
- Stories of personal triumph
- Interesting hobbies
- Fashion or other trends in popular culture

Activity 2:

Before class, cut out sample feature articles and tape each on white paper so students can identify types. Briefly describe the types. During a 15-minute period, students will pass around articles and select two that they like. During this time, encourage students to keep passing articles around the room. Let them see as many as possible.

When everyone has finished passing clippings, tell students to identify the type of lead, sources cited, number of sources, main idea, supporting ideas and the type of feature article. Each student should share one article with the class. *(addresses tactile, global, visual and auditory learners)*

Objective:

- Students will list and describe types of feature stories.

Activity 3:

Students will brainstorm feature ideas. Provide a stack of magazines and assorted goofy toys for inspiration. Before brainstorming begins, explain right-brain/left-brain functions so students can “turn off” the left side of their brains to let creativity flow.

Pass around toys and magazines, then draw a circle on the board with lines off a point on the circle, much like a small sun with long rays extending from the circle. Each line serves as a hub for an idea. Begin brainstorming, writing each idea on a spoke of the wheel.

When all ideas have been logged, review each and congratulate students on producing feature ideas. They should choose two promising ones to develop. With each, circle the idea and begin brainstorming cause-and-effect relationships. This should lead to great ideas. *(addresses visual and auditory learners)*

Objective:

- Students will develop a list of feature story ideas.

Activity 4:

Instruct students to cut out story leads from national, local and metro newspapers. Have them place at least 10 in a “Get It Together” scrapbook.

Next to each lead, students will describe the type of lead and their reaction to it. Do they want to continue further into the story? Does the writer pique their interest? Is the lead boring? Exciting? What makes it so? *(addresses tactile, global, visual and auditory learners)*

Objective:

- Students will identify types of story leads.



feature writing

CHECKLIST FOR WRITERS

- Seek advice and research the topic.
- Entertain, inform and educate.
- Keep article timely/seasonal.
- Be accurate on dates, names, spelling, facts and figures.
- Prepare for interviews by writing questions in advance.
- Take comprehensive notes.
- Transcribe notes within 30 minutes of completing interviews.

Activity 5:

Collect different toys or other items to use, such as chattering teeth or a Slinky. Before writing, describe an item and see whether students can guess what it is. Have students write descriptions of their items. They need visual representations that make readers visualize the items. After students have written a descriptive paragraph, have volunteers read theirs. Have students guess which item is being described. This will show them how important description is in feature writing. *(addresses tactile, visual and auditory learners)*

Objective:

- **Students will use descriptive writing techniques to add depth to a feature story.**

Activity 6:

Students will bring their knowledge to a survivor challenge. In this activity, students write a feature story. Have them work in groups of four and name their groups. They must collaborate to identify and research a topic, then work on the lead and bring the reader to a conclusion. To help students problem-solve, suggest that each member of the group be assigned a specific task, such as research, lead writing, editing, etc.

This activity takes time but gets them to start and complete articles. The word limit should be from 100 to 400, allowing them to experience finishing a feature as a team. The winning team is the survivor of the feature challenge. *(addresses analytical and tactile learners)*

Objective:

- **Students will write a feature story for a high school newspaper.**

content

A feature story can be written with much more creativity and description than a hard-news story. With this style of writing, students can combine elements of factual reporting with creative imagery. The inverted pyramid is often sacrificed for a format emphasizing the beginning, middle and end.

Feature stories have many purposes. They can provide background on the news, explain significance of an event, revisit a moment in history, help the reader confront a problem and teach people how to make something by hand. The possibilities are endless.

Feature Topics

Feature stories place a greater emphasis on topics that have human interest. These can be timeless or tied to a current event. A story on a person who makes candles, for example, can be published at any time.

A feature can concentrate on the mood of an event and capture that better than a news story. The feature is unlimited in subject matter. It can be historical, looking at an old subject in a new way, or a revival of an event. It can be about a remote place, an unknown restaurant or an obscure person. The manager of the basketball team has a story.



feature writing

N your paper ...

- Cut out story leads from the last three days of the newspaper.
- Paste 10 leads into a notebook.
- Next to each, describe the type of lead and the initial reaction to it.
- Under each lead, answer the following:
 - 1) Does the reader want to continue further?
 - 2) Does the writer pique reader interest?
 - 3) Is the lead boring or enticing? Why?

Unlike a news event story, features generally can be published anytime, perhaps even a week after being written. While a news feature is usually tied to a news story and runs the day a story breaks, the feature is usually a timeless piece.

Rules of Creativity

Although feature articles provide freedom to explore topics, throwing out the rulebook is not part of the game. Opinion and speculation are not allowed, and the same ethical standards apply. The feature offers students the opportunity to stray from the news formula and explore creative writing skills.

Types of Features

News: Hard-news stories often lead to related features by exploring facets of a news story.

Consider these criteria when looking at feature ideas based on news events:

- 1) How important is the concept, and will readers care?
- 2) How much time will be involved in research and writing?
- 3) How much space will be available in the newspaper?
- 4) What kind of impact might the story have on readers or the school?

Sometimes, you may find information about a subject and not have time to compose a feature. In this case, create a sidebar of information to accompany a larger story.

Informative: This can focus on a variety of subjects. The key is sound research. The goal is to find a subject with information useful to the reader. The best features provide information in a clear, honest way.

Avoid factual errors. If a feature discusses a consumer product, an objective approach is a must. A story that sounds like an advertisement for a product risks credibility and could prompt other legal and ethical ramifications.

For informative features, consider the following:

- 1) Use the lead to shift to the news peg and give a logical reason for the story.
- 2) Develop details in the body of the story.
- 3) Support all information with quotes.
- 4) Use direct quotes to avoid editorializing.

Profile: Because people are interested in others around them, the profile is a popular feature style. By telling stories about people, writers can inspire and motivate readers. A profile can feature someone with an unusual talent, someone prominent or someone with a unique job or hobby.

A good profile writer organizes information in a lively, interesting package. Researchers must be scrupulously accurate in this style of writing. Showing, rather than telling, can create memorable characters. Provide details that create a visual picture in readers' minds.



feature writing

The subject of the profile must have a story, and anecdotes best demonstrate the subject's specific character. A profile should not become a biography. Rather, it can present a person's viewpoint, impressions or unique attributes.

When writing a profile, consider these points:

- 1) Has biographical information been verified? Spelling?
- 2) What makes this source interesting?
- 3) What is the atmosphere like?
- 4) What do sources close to the subject say?
- 5) If the person has been profiled in other publications, what facts have emerged?
- 6) Has this person had to overcome adversity?

Personal Experience/Accomplishment Feature: This format highlights personal experiences and addresses many topics. Triumph over adversity, professional recognition and injury and recovery are examples of good personal experience features.

Three Ideas to Consider:

- 1) **Modesty** — The I-did-this-and-that approach by a boastful subject can aggravate readers.
- 2) **Newsworthiness** — People have experiences every day. So what? A story must be unusual or compelling to be worthy of a news feature.
- 3) **Honesty** — Subjects appreciate truth when a writer is sharing their experiences.

Beginning a Feature

A story must engage the reader from the very first sentence. A descriptive lead must paint a vivid picture of the story. The beginning must be compelling, and that holds true for the rest of the work. Recounting a suspenseful event or using a striking statement are effective ways of leading the reader to the body of a story.

A lead must be an honest part of the story but not as a separate element. It must pull the reader into the story. These are common leads:

- 1) **Striking statement** — an attention-grabbing statement that arouses curiosity
- 2) **Summary** — an article that encompasses several aspects may open with a summary statement
- 3) **Descriptive** — creating a setting for the story to begin with vivid detail
- 4) **Narrative/anecdotal** — narration that carries the reader into an article with the appeal of action.



feature writing

Refining a Story

A writer has many voices. Students speak differently to friends than to parents or teachers. In each story, the writer takes on a narrative persona, or character. The writer most likely will not write in first person but must choose the correct voice for depicting the story.

The story's tone should match its content. If the writer is describing a child's day care arrangements, a youthful tone may be used. Finding the proper tone offers unlimited possibilities. The writer should listen to his or her inner voice and trust those instincts. Information should be organized in a logical sequence.

Writing a Feature

Begin with a strong lead that captures the reader's imagination. State the major idea in the two paragraphs after the lead. The lead establishes a common thread or theme throughout the story. All quotes and information support development of this theme.

Quotes should drive the story. In a feature, the human element should be the main focus, and that person's voice should be heard early and often.

Descriptive Writing

When taking notes, look for important facts. You may also want to record observations that contribute to the reader's understanding of your topic. But do not describe people or things that are not important to the story.

Good features use narrative. Revealing details, secret motives and emotions make a story meaningful. Using narrative throughout will help to hold the story together and create an interesting read.

Ending the Article

The feature writer has unlimited options in concluding the story. The ending can be related to the beginning, as if to circle back. A powerful quote from the main character also ends a story well. The ending can be powerful and must follow the same liquid flow of the article.



feature writing

NIE definitions

Assignment — story a reporter is asked to cover

Associated Press Stylebook — standard reference for reporters and editors on word usage, libel, numbers, titles, punctuation, capitalization and commonly used words and phrases

Banner — headline in large type across entire width of the first page

Beat — reporter's regular area in covering news sources

Column — vertical arrangement of lines of type in a news story; also, an article appearing regularly by a particular writer or "columnist"

Copy — material for publication, whether stories or pictures

Cover — gather information and facts for a story

Cut — shorten newspaper copy; also means a newspaper photograph

Deadline — time at which all copy for an edition must be submitted

Editor — person who directs editorial policies and/or one who decides what news will be published and where it will appear

Feature — story often dealing with why and how, and in which interest lies in a factor other than news value; usually written to entertain

Five Ws and H — who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how; the major questions answered in the lead of a well-written news story

Focusing — reducing a large quantity of material to a usable amount

Follow-up — story that adds more information to one already published

Hook — detail that draws a reader's attention

Lead — first few sentences or first paragraph of a news story, containing the summary or introduction to the story

Persona — character assumed by a writer

Profile — character sketch

Review — account of an artistic event that offers a critical evaluation through the writer's opinion



feature writing

Rewrite — write a story again to improve it, alter a story that appeared somewhere else or write a story from facts sent from elsewhere by a reporter

Syndicated features — material such as comics, advice columns, etc., supplied nationally to newspapers by news syndicates

Tone — mood of a story

Wire service — agency such as The Associated Press and Thomson Reuters that gathers and distributes news to subscribing publications and Web sites

Assessment

- 1) Ask students to name four types of features and write the purpose or definition next to each. *(objective 1)*
- 2) In one to three written paragraphs, students should contrast news and feature stories. *(objective 2)*
- 3) Ask students to demonstrate understanding of the profile feature by writing a one-page story. *(objective 5 and 6)*
- 4) Instruct students to list and explain five types of feature story leads and support answers with examples from the daily newspaper. *(objective 4)*
- 5) Ask students to compile 15 feature story ideas from the last five issues of the daily newspaper that could be reworked into a feature for the school newspaper. Students should list each story idea, date of publication and angle the school newspaper could use. *(objective 3)*
- 6) Instruct students to conduct an interview in class. They should take notes for quotes and facts, then write a short feature based on information collected. *(objectives 5 and 6)*



N preparation ...

HELPFUL MATERIALS

- Dictionary
- Daily newspaper
- Three different newspapers from your city/county/area
- Internet access to election results from the past three years
- Two copies of any movie that is age- and content-appropriate
- Other daily newspapers with national focus (i.e., USA Today)

writing opinions

date/week of: _____

class/period(s) taught: _____

content overview

In this unit, students will learn basics for writing opinions in a newspaper. The unit will contain lessons dealing with editorial policy, staff editorials, personal columns, letters to the editor and reviews.

goals and objectives

Goal: Students will learn how to write and express opinions effectively in a newspaper setting.

Objectives:

- **Given the political history of an area, students will write an editorial policy.** (*synthesis*)

NCTE 1 — Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

NCTE 4 — Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 8 — Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

- **After forming an opinion on a given subject and seeing examples of columns and editorials, students will write a personal column.** (*synthesis*)

NCTE 1 — Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

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NCTE 8 — Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.



N due time ...

9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline and resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events relating to unit topic or to utilize an activity provided for in-class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

18-WEEK EXPANDED COURSE

- **Day 6:** Introduce “N your paper ...” project, showcase examples from daily paper and assign.
- **Day 7:** In-class application of project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate and discuss project and what was learned.
- **Day 9:** Provide ___ minutes to read the newspaper, focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read and learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment

writing opinions

• **After observing examples, students will form a policy on letters to the editor.** (*synthesis*)

NCTE 5 — Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

NCTE 9 — Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions and social roles.

NCTE 11 — Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

• **Following illustrations, students will write a movie and/or book review.** (*synthesis*)

NCTE 3 — Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies and their understanding of textual features.

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 8 — Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate.

activities and objectives

Activity 1: Instruct students to do the following:

1. Write an editorial policy for a student newspaper.
2. Write a brief definition of these terms: column, editorial, editorial page, editorial policy, masthead, point-counterpoint, subjective writing.
3. What is the major political philosophy of the area/school? Note all research done.
4. Find three editorial policies from newspapers in your city/county/area. Note differences and similarities in each.
5. Write an editorial policy for the student newspaper. (*addresses visual and global learners*)

Objective: Taking into account the political history of an area, students will write an editorial policy.

Activity 2: Instruct students to do the following:

1. Compare editorial pages of the local newspaper, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today. What are differences and similarities? Is more than one page used? What types of columns and editorials appear? Chart a graph and write a brief analysis of differences and similarities.
2. Make a list of editorial summary sentences describing topics you would like to explore. Submit ideas to the instructor, who will select one topic. Write the column. (*addresses visual and tactile learners*)



writing opinions

Objective: After forming an opinion on a given subject and being shown examples of columns and editorials, students will write a personal column.

Activity 3: Instruct students to do the following:

1. Find five examples of policies on letters to the editor from five different newspapers. Write a brief analysis of differences and similarities.
2. With three classmates, write a policy that a student newspaper might use. *(addresses visual and global learners)*

Objective: After observing examples, students will form a policy on letters to the editor.

Activity 4: Instruct students to do the following:

1. Read a review from the local newspaper and write a summary of it.
2. Read a review of the same event from a national newspaper. Write a summary of the review and how it differed from that of the local newspaper.
3. Compare and contrast the two reviews. What did you like that the authors did? What did you dislike?
4. Watch any two chosen movies. Depending on class size, you and your classmates will split into groups to discuss similarities and differences from each movie, noting direction, special effects, dialogue and acting.
5. Watch a film on your own and write a review. *(addresses auditory, visual and global learners)*

Objective: Following illustrations, students will write a movie and/or book review.

content

When thinking of editorials, one immediately assumes “opinion.” That is certainly true in the newspaper business as much as anywhere else. While all media express opinions at one point or another, the newspaper has a unique way of expressing them through the editorial page, or in some cases, the editorial section.

Main parts of the newspaper editorial page or section generally consist of the editorial policy, editorials that represent the newspaper’s positions on various issues, personal opinion columns, editorial cartoons and letters to the editor. While each consists of relatively different components, all have one thing in common — opinion.

Editorial Policy

Before editorial opinions can be stated, the newspaper must develop a policy on handling letters to the editor, columns by its writers and reviews. To form a policy, editors generally meet and decide on the wording.

An editorial policy must be in place before the first issue is published. It should discuss moral, legal and ethical standards of the newspaper. It should also include guidelines for letters to the editor, stating that the paper cannot publish every letter received — only those it finds pertinent — and that the paper reserves the right to edit letters for grammar and space.



writing opinions

The policy also may contain a statement that opinions expressed by columnists do not necessarily reflect the paper's position. With such an editorial policy, readers know what to expect when writing a letter to the editor and when reading the editorial page or section.

Writing Opinion

While opinion writing utilizes different styles, writers must follow guidelines. Eric Stern, former political columnist at The Courier in Waterloo, Iowa, offers six tips every opinion writer must follow:

- 1. Do not use the word "I."** "Your life is not interesting. Your personal experiences are tiresome. Using the first person also sounds preachy and righteous, which alienates readers. Strive for humility. Your mug shot on the column should provide enough of an ego boost."
- 2. Avoid sarcasm.** "The odds are you aren't very funny, despite what your lunch table says. Too much sarcasm comes off as immature and can ruin your credibility."
- 3. The sky is not falling — do not exaggerate.** "It makes you seem too emotional and irrational. You can effectively motivate or inspire your readers without a call-to-arms hyperbole and three exclamation points."
- 4. Challenge authority, not personality.** "Attacking the principal or the coach simply to generate letters to the editor is reckless. But attacking their ideas, policies or actions is terrific fodder for a column."
- 5. Do not put away your reporter's notebook — interview.** "It's obvious if you pull a 500-word column out of the air. A column is not a venue to spout off what you think about the issue of the day. So avoid cliché topics. You are not going to convince someone to change their stance on abortion. Tell a story. Use quotes."
- 6. Think big picture.** "Use the column to get into the gray analysis between the black and white. Compare apples and oranges."

Many other things must be considered when writing an opinion piece. Students must be aware that one word or phrase can change the entire meaning of the piece. Although the editorial or column may offend some readers with opposing beliefs, opinion writers should carefully choose words and write in an inoffensive manner. Most important, the topic should be well-researched to include facts supporting the opinion.

Research

Doing proper research is very important so that opinion will be based on fact. Most editorials are based on news stories, and like any reporter, an opinion writer must get the facts right. Interviewing is not the only way to find facts. The Internet brings research tools directly to the journalist's desk, and proper research can make writing opinion pieces much easier.

Writing Columns

An editorial column has three basic parts. First is the lead, a statement of opinion or the editorial's position. The first paragraph should contain information telling the reader what the columnist's stand is. Second is the body, in which the writer presents facts to support the stand. Finally, the conclusion restates the writer's position and includes a solution or call to action.



writing opinions

Types of Columns

1. Profile. This focuses on an individual and his/her views on a current topic. It includes information about the person to help readers learn more about the context of his/her opinions. It allows the writer to draw conclusions that would not appear in a news or feature story.

2. Satire. To be effective with this very common and difficult type, the writer must invest considerable time and work. Writing and publishing a satirical column requires a valid reason.

3. Fashion and Fad. Seldom written because fashion and fads change rapidly, this type can be effective if done correctly. Many times, it appears in a special issue.

4. Praise. Citing merits or superior qualities of an idea or a person can be beneficial to a newspaper. Similar to the profile, the praise piece does not detail the writer's personal qualities. The newspaper should be balanced with criticism columns.

5. Moralizing. These call on readers to adopt higher standards of conduct or a better attitude. They often deal with common topics and can be ineffective because they tend to sound preachy.

6. Criticism. This type notes weaknesses and errors of a situation and proposes a solution.

7. Endorsement. Similar to a praise column, this type does not just praise a person or idea. The writer can adopt the views of the person or idea as his/her own and write about how and why they are good.

8. Question-and-Answer. This common type involves queries by people in the school or community about career, personal or community concerns. Answers must always be serious and carefully written.

A very important thing to remember is the difference between editorials and columns. An editorial expresses a view of the entire newspaper staff. Although a column expresses the view or views of an individual on the staff, not all papers run columns that do not agree politically with their editorials.

Letters to the Editor

To be successful and credible, an editorial page also must have a place where readers can express opinions. However, it does not need to take up a huge portion of the page. As stated in the editorial policy, a paper cannot publish every letter it receives. Nor should a newspaper publish letters that are libelous, in bad taste or anonymous.



writing opinions

Letters must be responsible, based on fact and signed by the writers. It is wise to keep all letters, even those not published, on file for several weeks. With e-mail, this becomes easy and substantial. Papers may receive many responses from readers via e-mail. When this happens, a statement such as “many other letters received shared this opinion” may appear beneath the published letters.

Reviews

Reviews also are opinion-based. A reviewer must use observational skills, detailed descriptions and quotes.

Reviews provide a medium for readers to determine whether a book, movie, musical compilation, restaurant, performance, etc., is worth the money. Readers can learn whether reviewers share their opinions, or they can simply read reviews for entertainment.

Types of Reviews

- 1. Comparison.** This compares products or services – for instance, restaurants and the products and services they provide.
- 2. Fulfillment of intended purpose.** This evaluates products and services on how well they meet their objectives.
- 3. Itemizing strengths and weaknesses.** In this type, good and bad points of a product or service are discussed.
- 4. Performance.** This type deals with public events such as plays or concerts and may involve comparing the work of actors, directors or musicians to their previous efforts.



N your paper ...

- Cut out an example of an editorial policy.
- Cut out examples of a column and a staff editorial.
- Cut out an example of a letter to the editor policy.
- Cut out a book review and highlight key components.
- Cut out a movie review and highlight key components.
- Cut out a restaurant review and highlight key components.

writing opinions

NIE definitions

Column — vertical arrangement of lines of type in a news story; also, an article appearing regularly by a particular writer or “columnist”

Copy — material for publication, whether stories or pictures

Deadline — time at which all copy for an edition must be submitted

Editor — person who directs editorial policies and/or one who decides what news will be published and where it will appear

Editorial — article expressing the newspaper’s opinion regarding a certain subject

Five Ws and H — who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how; the major questions answered in the lead of a well-written news story

Layout — organization of all elements of an ad or page in space

Libel — publication of material unjustly injurious to someone’s reputation

Newspaper In Education (NIE) — program that brings newspapers (print and online) into the classroom

Review — account of an event, product or service that offers a critical evaluation; i.e., the writer’s opinion

Source — supplier of information, such as a person, book or survey

Assessment

1. Instruct students to write a brief definition of these terms: column, editorial, editorial page, editorial policy, masthead, point-counterpoint, subjective writing. *(objectives 1 and 3)*
2. Instruct students to write a personal column on an opinion topic. They should use a current news event, form an opinion about it and explain that opinion with supporting details. *(objective 2)*
3. Organize students in groups and have them write an editorial policy for the school newspaper. *(objective 1)*
4. Ask students to analyze one editorial policy from a daily newspaper and two from online newspapers. What is the political history behind each? *(objective 1)*
5. After listening to an assigned CD, students should write a review of it. *(objective 4)*
6. Ask students to write a policy for letters to the editor submitted to the school newspaper. *(objective 3)*

writing sports



N preparation ...

HELPFUL MATERIALS

- Daily newspaper
- Sports Illustrated magazine (optional)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Construction paper

date/week of: _____

class/period(s) taught: _____

content overview

In this unit, students will study and understand different forms of sports writing and the four forms of sports stories — sports news, game results, profiles and opinion pieces.

goals and objectives

Goal: Students will be able to identify and analyze different forms of sports writing and elements that characterize them.

Objectives:

- **Students will list and identify elements of a sports lead.** (*knowledge*)
 - NCTE 2** — Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions of human experience.
 - NCTE 6** — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint text.
 - NCTE 12** — Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion and the exchange of information).
- **Students will identify a sports news story.** (*comprehension*)
 - NCTE 1** — Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
 - NCTE 8** — Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
- **Students will identify a game results story from a newspaper.** (*comprehension*)

writing sports



N due time ...

9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline and resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events relating to unit topic or to utilize an activity provided for in-class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

18-WEEK EXPANDED COURSE

- **Day 6:** Introduce “N your paper ...” project, showcase examples from daily newspaper and assign.
- **Day 7:** In-class application of project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate and discuss project and what was learned.
- **Day 9:** Provide ___ minutes to read the newspaper, focusing on the unit topic. Discuss what was read and learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment

NCTE 1 — Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

NCTE 8 — Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

• Students will identify a sports profile story. (*comprehension*)

NCTE 1 — Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

NCTE 8 — Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

• Students will identify a sports opinion story from a newspaper. (*comprehension*)

NCTE 1 — Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

NCTE 8 — Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

activities and objectives

Activity 1:

Have students work in groups to analyze sports pages of different newspapers. Have each group cut out leads from four to six different sports news stories. As a group, students should identify the five Ws and H of the lead. (*addresses global and analytic learners*)

Objective:

- **Students will list and identify elements of a sports lead.**

Activity 2:

Have students use the daily newspaper to find the following:

1. Scores for the most recent professional game nearest your hometown
2. Tournament play outcome for any sport in season
3. The leading scorer of your school or nearby rival school.

(*addresses tactile learners*)

writing sports



COMMON ERRORS IN SPORTS WRITING

1. According to the AP Stylebook, you capitalize formal titles only when they directly precede names. So, you write "Head Coach Doc Rivers" but not "Doc Rivers, Head Coach." Rather, you write "Doc Rivers, head coach."
2. Occupational titles and descriptions, such as names of company officials, unions and sports teams, are lowercase. Write "head coach," not "Head Coach."
3. Do not use "mens" or "womens" when writing a phrase like "the women's soccer team at the University of North Carolina." Men is the plural of man, women the plural of woman. Use "women's" or "men's" when dealing with possessives.

Objectives:

- Students will identify a sports news story.
- Students will identify a game results story from a newspaper.

Activity 3:

Conduct a mock interview with you (the instructor) as the athlete who has just set a school record for most points in a basketball season. You broke a record set in 1945 with more than half the season left. Your brother also is a basketball player and your father is the coach. You also run track as a varsity athlete. You do not intend to play basketball after graduation because you want an academic scholarship. Your goal is to pursue a career in high school teaching and coaching. After the interview, have students write a lead and share with the class. Then have them write a profile story of two to three pages. (*addresses kinesthetic learners*)

Objective:

- Students will identify a sports profile story.

Activity 4:

Before class, find a variety of 10 to 15 profile/opinion/game result/sports news pieces. Start by showing students what you find. Then, show them examples of non-profile/opinion/game results/sports news stories and ask them to identify each type. (*addresses visual and auditory learners*)

Objective:

- Students will identify a sports opinion story from a newspaper.

content

The world of sports reporting is full of clichés, bad metaphors and meaningless statistics. Right? Not necessarily. Sports journalism can be dynamic, interesting, informative and original. For student journalists aspiring to become professional sports reporters, high school and collegiate athletics provide excellent opportunities to develop reporting skills by covering organized, high-level sports. Moreover, good sports reporters at student newspapers can become authorities in sports they cover, a distinct advantage if they want to sell their work on a freelance basis.

Even if students want to contribute one or two articles to the sports section, they must perfect sports writing basics. This guide tells what you must know to get started – from hatching an idea to submitting articles – and reminds you of the basics when you need direction.

Main elements of a good sports story are a catchy lead, clear focus and lots of quotes. Often you will find that good sports stories combine background and statistical information with the writer's paraphrasing of a source's quotes in a seamless fashion. If an article flows smoothly and tells the story, the reader may not even notice the writer. This is good. The story should always be more prominent than the person who writes it.

writing sports



GAME RESULTS

This type of article summarizes a game, giving post-game quotes from players and/ or coaches, and is very time-sensitive. If the article is not published immediately after the game, it is old news. Because most student newspapers are published weekly or even monthly, game results articles are old when published. Try to avoid them, except for especially important games.

PROFILES

These are feature-style articles highlighting the story or achievements of a particular athlete, coach or team. They tend to be longer than regular sports stories, perhaps between 700 and 900 words, and require more research than sports news stories. While sports news stories are written in the past tense (e.g., "The field was horrible," Smith said), profiles are written in the present tense (e.g., "I always train on that field," Smith says).

OPINION PIECES

Some student newspapers have sports columnists, while others accept opinion submissions from writers-at-large. These are a good way to inject color and life into a sports section. An opinion piece should be between 400 and 600 words and focus on a specific issue relevant to sports the newspaper covers. Too often opinion pieces ramble, but if you study opinion writing, you should be able to apply the fundamentals to opinion pieces. To maintain their credibility and objectivity in readers' eyes, reporters should avoid writing columns and opinion pieces.

Sports writing is full of devices that can be tough to master but very effective. Sports coverage can be divided into four kinds of stories — sports news, game results, profiles and opinion pieces. A quick scan of the sports section in the nearest daily will show that sports stories rarely fall into any other classification. If you cover a particular team or write a lot of sports stories, you will probably try each kind of article.

These stories should be balanced and written in an inverted pyramid style with important information at the top of the article and less important background at the bottom. This way, the editor can cut from the bottom if the story is too long rather than take precious time to find the proper paragraph to delete. Keep paragraphs short, because newspaper columns are thin and long paragraphs can be hard on the eyes.

About 500 words are usually adequate for a sports news story, but length can be adjusted depending on how much treatment an issue requires. Examples of sports news stories include hiring a new coach, changes in the athletics budget, upgrades to facilities and drug use among athletes.

Make sure quotes add to the story. Do not use one that can be turned into text, such as a coach saying what the team's record is. Avoid anything that remotely smells of "we gave 110 percent" or "we will fight to the end." If the quote is a cliché, discard it.

Instead, aim for quotes such as this one from James Hillis, basketball coach at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada, speaking after his team suffered a loss: "This was a game you regret the money you spent on the officials."

By now, you should know which of these types of stories you will be writing. Keep in mind, however, that you must complete a series of steps before writing any sports article. These are research, interviewing, outline and writing.

Begin by discussing the article with an editor, who will set a deadline and suggest story length, what angle(s) to pursue and potential sources. Then be prepared to investigate the topic. In some cases, that is as easy as reviewing news releases, game results and statistics. Web sites are indispensable for research and contain in-depth statistics and large archives of information. Your sports editor will probably know of Web sites with information about athletes, teams and leagues. If not, search the Internet.

Another good source in the research stage is the athletic department's sports information director (SID). He or she can provide basic facts about the school's sports topics, such as athlete biographies, team statistics and schedules. Be careful, though. SIDs give reporters information that teams want to release. If you are trying to dig up dirt, they will not be much help.

writing sports



Many times, you will not be the first person to have written an article on the subject, so back issues of the student newspaper or local newspapers may provide useful facts. Mostly, though, you should read about the team or athlete you are covering just to get a background in the subject.

Nothing is more embarrassing than writing about a totally unfamiliar subject and having the most basic facts wrong. Research will prevent this and show that you are prepared and professional when you conduct interviews.

No form of research is as much fun or as valuable as seeing the subject in action. If you cover a team regularly, attend games and practices. The more you read about or see a team, the better prepared you will be when you write profiles of its athletes or other articles about them. Investing time in a team or sport will pay off when scrambling to meet a deadline.

After you have gathered facts and transcribed interviews, review the material and make sure you still want to approach the story from the same angle. If not, think about a new angle and see whether you have enough information.

You can return to sources for more comments or do more research. Write a working outline for the story so you know what main points you need to include.

Review the AP Stylebook to become familiar with the specialized styles for sports scores and terminology.

writing sports



N your paper ...

Collect one of each type of sports story (news, opinion, profile and game results) and highlight aspects of each that are unique to that particular type.

NIE definitions

Lead — introductory sentence of any news story featuring the five Ws and (sometimes) H

Profile — biographical essay presenting the subject's most noteworthy characteristics and achievements

Opinion piece — story clearly stating the author's opinions on a subject

Assessment

1. Ask students to identify the main elements (five Ws) in the following lead from a sports results story:

Kobe Bryant led the Lakers with 49 points in a 107-71 trouncing of the Houston Rockets Wednesday night at Staples Center. (*objective 1*)

2. Have students summarize differences between the four types of sports stories in the form of a collage of sports articles from newspapers representing the different types, a written paper explaining these differences, or a speech explaining the differences. (*objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5*)

3. Instruct students to choose one of the four types and write a sports story about an upcoming or recent sports event at your school. (*objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5*)



N preparation ...

HELPFUL MATERIALS

- Daily newspaper
- Various headlines, good and bad, from other newspapers (or magazines). Clip or scan them for projection.
- Various newspaper photos for cutline writing practice. Provide names and scenarios for each photo so students have basic information to use as a starting point.
- Two articles without headlines. Provide photocopies for the entire class.

headlines and cutlines

date/week of: _____

class/period(s) taught: _____

content overview

In this unit, students will learn about the different types of headlines and cutlines, or captions. They will learn to write strong primary, secondary and subheadlines (subheads) by giving an accurate and specific guide to contents and importance of the story. Students also will learn guidelines to writing the four types of cutlines: identification, summary, information and quote.

goal and objectives

Goal: Students will know the different types and styles of headlines and cutlines.

Objectives:

• **Students will write primary, secondary and subheadlines.** (*application*)

NCTE 4 — Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

NCTE 5 — Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 11 — Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

NCTE 12 — Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.

• **Students will identify design styles of headlines: hammers, wickets, kickers, slammers, banners, labels, sidesaddles and tripods.** (*knowledge*)

NCTE 5 — Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 8 — Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

NCTE 11 — Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.



N due time ...

9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline and resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events relating to unit topic or to utilize an activity provided for in-class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

18-WEEK EXPANDED

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper ..." project, showcase examples from daily newspaper and assign.
- **Day 7:** In-class application of project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate and discuss project and what was learned.
- **Day 9:** Provide ___ minutes to read the newspaper, focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read and learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment

headlines and cutlines

• Students will list/identify characteristics of different headline types.

(*knowledge*)

NCTE 5 — Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 11 — Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

• Students will identify differences among cutlines and write identification, summary, information and quote cutlines. (*comprehension, synthesis*)

NCTE 5 — Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

NCTE 11 — Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

activities and objectives

Activity 1:

Give students 10 sentences, three news stories and three leads and have them write headlines. Varying these will give students the chance to create more than just one-line headlines.

After class discussion, show them how to write primary, secondary and subheadlines with examples of each. Ask students to create primary headlines for the sentences, subheads for the stories and primary and secondary headlines for the leads. (*addresses visual and analytical learners*)

Activity 2:

Distribute newspapers and discuss effectiveness of page-one headlines. Organize students into groups of three or four, so they can rewrite the headlines and present them to the class. Students should discuss what makes each headline work and why. (*addresses visual and analytical learners*)

Objective:

- Students will write primary, secondary and subheadlines.



headlines and cutlines

GUIDELINES FOR GOOD HEADLINES

- Put the major news in the first headline.
- Use a verb in every headline, deck or kicker.
- Avoid the “be” verb. Do not use passive verbs, predicate nouns or adjectives.
- Use present tense.
- Use a last name only for a well-known figure. Otherwise, use full names.
- Use numbers, but spell out one through nine.
- Capitalize first words and all proper nouns.
- Use specifics.
- Avoid abbreviations, using only well-known ones.
- Do not use a, an or the.
- Do not separate grammatical phrases (subject/verb, prepositional phrases).
- Avoid being redundant.
- Avoid overdoing alliteration.

Activity 3:

Use a collection of headlines to discuss different styles, such as hammers, wickets, kickers, slammers, banners and tripods. You may want to use a projection method to analyze samples in class discussion. You may want to type 15 headlines in different styles for distribution and a self-quiz. Ask volunteers to explain their answers. This serves as a self-assessment and helps you determine what depth to make lectures and examples.

Distribute newspapers to students. Give them a list of headline styles to identify and cut out. Tell them to label headlines, identifying each type and how each works with the design of the package.

Give students three articles without headlines. Tell them to create their own headlines using styles they have learned and to use a different style for each story. After giving students enough time to complete the activity, assign groups to discuss the headlines. Students should comment on grammar, spelling, design, style, etc.

Give students three news articles and assign three styles in which they are to write headlines for them. Have students type headlines on the computer and cut and paste them over the articles. Then have them present their headlines to the class. (*addresses visual, auditory, tactile and analytical learners*)

Objective:

- **Students will identify headline design styles: hammers, wickets, kickers, slammers, banners, labels, sidesaddles and tripods.**

Activity 4:

Ask students to bring three to five headlines they like from the previous day. When class begins, tell them to write why they like these headlines and think they are effective. After five to 10 minutes, put students into four groups.

Ask groups to select one student to record the discussion and another to report to the class. Have them compile a list of what makes a good headline. When groups are ready, have students who are reporting write lists on the board for discussion. Add any they may have missed (*conversational, have verb, present tense, active voice, summarizes story, attracts attention, uses short words, etc.*).

Using the same groups, give each two stories from a newspaper and tell them they will compete to create the best headline for each. You may want to provide an incentive. Each group will submit headlines to the class for analysis. Students should share responses and vote on the best.

Take groups' headlines and give them a copy of the originals. Tell them to compare the originals to the new ones for five minutes and then discuss which they think work best, and why. Questions they could answer include:



headlines and cutlines

TIPS FOR WRITING CUTLINES

- Avoid stating the obvious.
- Be creative. Do not start every cutline the same way.
- Identify all people easily seen in the photograph and include their titles or school grade affiliations.
- When identifying more than five people, name them as a group.
- Start with the most important information, then give more details as space permits.
- Provide date and location.
- Include athletes' jersey numbers.
- Identify sports opponents by people's names, not just school names.
- Be sure to interview subjects and those who know the subject to gain additional information not seen in the photo.
- Always include a photo credit.

1. Why is this one better than another?
2. What do they have in common — or not?
3. Which fits the story better?
4. How would they change their headlines? (*addresses tactile, visual, auditory and global learners*)

Objective:

- **Students will list/identify the characteristics of headlines.**

Activity 5:

From the local newspaper, cut out enough photos to give each student two. Provide basic information about the photos that students can use to write cutlines. Model different types of cutlines. Students will write an identification, summary, information and quote cutline for each photo. (*addresses visual, auditory and tactile learners*)

Objective:

- **Students will distinguish among identification, summary, information and quote cutlines.**

content

Why are headlines and cutlines (captions) important?

Because they are read more frequently than other newspaper content. Most readers skim headlines when deciding what to read. Headlines should sum up the story so the reader can assess the basic idea without reading the story. A good headline makes the reader want to read the entire story.

The best headlines are clearly written in active voice, have subjects and verbs, and focus on a single action, thought or idea. They give an accurate, specific guide to the story's contents and importance.

The main headline should contain the principal thrust of the story; all other decks should follow in descending order of importance. Students should *always* check spelling, grammar, names and numbers.

What are the four types of cutlines?

Almost everyone has heard that "a picture is worth a thousand words," but also important are the words selected to describe photos. Knowing how to write good cutlines is important so the reader fully understands a photograph's significance.

The first type is the **informative or expanded cutline**. This gives a full explanation and understanding of the activity or event. Written in a more in-depth manner, it includes who, what, when, where, why/how and a direct quote.

A **summary cutline** gives the five Ws and H first and all other information in descending order of importance.



N your paper ...

- Cut and paste on separate sheets stories containing only a primary, a primary and secondary, and a primary, secondary and subheads.
- Label each for reference.
- Cut out each of these headline styles: kicker, wicket, hammer, tripod, slammer, banner.
- Label each headline style.
- Cut out at least three different photos and their cutlines.
- Label each as identification, summary, information and quote.

headlines and cutlines

An **identification cutline** gives only a brief description of the person or group.

A **quote cutline** can be used for the human-interest aspect, with someone in the photo or involved with the event giving information and insights.

What makes a good cutline?

Writing these involves knowing all the five Ws and H. Who is in the photograph? What are they doing? Why? How does this photo relate to the story? A good cutline tells a story by itself. Here are basic rules for writing cutlines:

- Avoid stating the obvious.
- Identify all people and objects.
- Be creative in the way you begin the cutline. Catch someone's attention.
- Compose a lead-in for the cutline if it stands alone.
- Use two or three sentences, if possible, to describe the photo.
- Use quotes.
- Write in present tense.
- Do not forget a photo credit.
- PROOFREAD.

What should be in a headline?

The best headlines capture the story's key parts in a lively and interesting manner. But most important, they must be accurate. Headlines must be spelled correctly because they are the most readable items in the newspaper. Occasionally, the best way to write a headline is to summarize the lead. It should contain the principal information, with all other information in descending importance in decks.

The first deck should say what the main headline could not and also could state reaction to the main headline. The headline should be in present tense and follow subject-verb-object style. Avoid the obvious when writing headlines. Puns can be overdone. Cleverness is good to a point, but do not overdo it. Do not use acronyms beyond those everyone knows, such as IRS, CIA, NASA, etc. Avoid abbreviations. If an entire word fits, use it.

Use country names in full unless room is a problem. Do not give away a surprise ending in a column or steal something from the lead. Just try to lure the reader into reading the full story.

What are the three types of headlines?

The main headline is the **primary**, which should reveal the story's importance in a few well-selected words.

Next is the **secondary**, which is short, catchy and adds specific detail to information in the main headline or reaction to it.

A **subheadline**, or subhead, is set between paragraphs or written within the body of the story.



headlines and cutlines

Be aware of design styles for these headlines. A **kicker** is a one-line secondary headline set above the primary. It provides specific facts and sometimes reads into the main headline. A **wicket** is a multiline secondary headline set above the primary headline, sometimes containing a quote. A **hammer** is a primary/secondary combination with the primary set above the secondary. A **tripod** is a combination of primary and secondary headlines presented side by side.

How do I begin writing a headline?

Read the story, then brainstorm words and phrases to highlight its key aspects. List 10 to 15 of these key items on paper. Brainstorm rhyming words and other literary devices for those keywords. Then spin those keywords into inspiring phrases that tell the story creatively.

Not all headlines follow the familiar format. Occasionally, a headline can be very effective as a "label," a phrase with no subject, verb or object.

Another way to write a catchy headline is to study the dominant photo for opportunities to tell the story. This also will tie the photo to the story. After writing the primary headline, read the story a second time to find more information for the secondary.

How can I make headlines more visually appealing?

Using typography that blends type fonts, sizes, alignment, spacing and capitalization can give headlines more personality. Placing a single box around the headline attracts attention and brings information into a package. Adding a second color or tint can highlight the headline.

Photos and art can invite the reader into a story. Electronic enhancers add dimension to the headlines. Dress up a headline. Play with words by using everyday tools more creatively.



headlines and cutlines

NIE definitions

Alliteration — repetition of same or similar consonant sound in words close together

Antonym — word of opposite meaning

Banner — headline in large type across entire width of the first page

Cliché — common word or phrase, often a figure of speech

Hammer — headline whose top line is a large, boldfaced word or phrase to attract attention; a smaller, lighter headline stretching across the width of the story

Homonym — word that sounds like another but has a different meaning

Kicker — short phrase above and sometimes leading into the main headline; usually underlined, the size of the main headline and one-third as long; can be set in heavier or lighter weight but looks best in the same font

Labels — noun and its modifiers, set apart in very large type and sometimes part of a graphic

Onomatopoeia — use of sound to echo word meaning

Primary headline — should reveal importance of the story in a few well-selected words

Pun — play on words based on multiple meanings

Rhyme — repetition of vowel sounds in accented syllables

Secondary headline — short, catchy and adds specific detail to information in main headline or reacts to main headline

Sidesaddle — headline placed beside the story

Slammer — opens with a boldface word or phrase followed by a colon; the main headline follows on the same line in the same size but a lighter weight

Subheadline (subhead) — written between paragraphs or within body of the story

Synonym — word with the same meaning as another

Tripod — three-part headline starting with a large, bold word followed by two lighter, smaller lines beside it at the same height as the bold word



headlines and cutlines

Assessment

1. Ask students to list the three types of headlines and find examples of each. *(objective 1)*
2. Using a news story lead on page one of today's newspaper, students should rewrite five possible headlines and use at least three kinds. *(objectives 1 and 2)*
3. Given the following information, students should write a cutline for the sports section in three of the four cutline types.
 - Bobby Jones, 12
 - steals home plate with the winning run
 - advances varsity baseball team to regional playoffs
 - first time in 10 years that team has made it this far
 - April 25 at 5:15 p.m.
 - played Central Wolverines
 - final score 10-9
 - fifth time this season Jones has stolen home with tying or winning run*(objective 4)*
4. Have students cut stories and photos from the newspaper. Students should write headlines in groups, then share and compare with the story's original headline. *(objective 4)*
5. Instruct students to cut 10 examples of headlines from a newspaper, then identify one of each kind — e.g., kicker, wicket, hammer, tripod. *(objective 2)*



N preparation ...

HELPFUL MATERIALS

- Daily newspaper
- Computer lab with Internet access and printing capability
- Variety of sample story packages and designs precut and mounted on paper or scanned into PowerPoint presentation

packaging the history

date/week of: _____

class/period(s) taught: _____

content overview

In this unit, students will study basics of page design and informational graphics relating to presenting news, features and sports sections of a newspaper.

goal and objectives

Goal: Students will study basics of newspaper design and layout.

Objectives:

- **Students will explore the different types of readers and how to use visual elements to complement stories.**

NCTE 3 — Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies and their understanding of textual features.

- **Students will understand and identify basic principles of design, including proportion, balance, contrast, hierarchy, rhythm, unity and form.**

NCTE 4 — Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

- **Students will understand the importance of writing, editing and design, and how they work together in journalism.**

NCTE 6 — Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language and genre to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts.

- **Students will understand how to decide which stories should be featured on page one.**

NCTE 4 — Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

activities and objectives

Activity 1:

Find several examples of text-based stories. Place students in groups of two or three and give each group a different story. Have groups read their stories and discuss which facts are most prominent.



N due time ...

9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline and resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events relating to unit topic or to utilize an activity provided for in-class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

18-WEEK EXPANDED

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper ..." project, showcase examples from daily newspaper and assign.
- **Day 7:** In-class application of project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate and discuss project and what was learned.
- **Day 9:** Provide ___ minutes to read the newspaper, focusing on the unit topic. Discuss what was read and learned. Give a current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment

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Each group should list ideas for photo assignments or other graphics that could have made their stories stronger by providing additional information with maps, tables, graphs or other sidebars.

Have each group present ideas to the class and lead a class discussion about what visual elements could have made each story stronger. (*addresses visual and analytical learners*)

Objective:

- **Students will explore how to use visual elements to complement stories.**

Activity 2:

Provide students with definitions of each basic design principle and a wide variety of newspapers, magazines or other publications. Randomly assign each student to one design principle.

In a given amount of time, each student should find examples of his/her principle. Find a place in the classroom to display examples found. (*addresses visual learners*)

Objective:

- **Students will understand and identify basic principles of design, including proportion, balance, contrast, hierarchy, rhythm, unity and form.**

Activity 3:

Have students produce daily story ideas as a class. List them on the board and choose one to use as an example.

Take suggestions from the class on these questions: How could this story be covered? Who are possible sources? What kinds of sidebars or other visual elements could be included on the page? How long should the story be? How should the story and visual elements be arranged?

Based on students' suggestions, create a dummy of the page on the board. Explain how writing, editing and design contribute to the overall package. Have each student choose a topic and draw a dummy using the same process.

For a more advanced project, place students in groups of three with a writer, an editor and a designer. Set guidelines for each role. After creating a dummy, students should replicate the page using publishing software. (*addresses tactile and visual learners*)

Objective:

- **Students will understand the importance of writing, editing and design and how they work together in journalism.**



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Activity 4:

Have students visit www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/default.asp, which features hundreds of front pages from the United States and many other countries on a daily basis. Students should choose five different front pages and find out more about each newspaper (location, circulation, areas served, etc.).

Show the pages to the class and discuss the characteristics of each. What is the main story? Headline? Dominant image? What other stories appear on the front? Why might the newspaper have chosen to display these on page one? Did this newspaper favor local or national news on the front? Why?

Assign each student randomly to one of the five pages. By the end of class, each student should list every item that appears on the front of his/her newspaper. Next to each, students should write why this item deserved to be on the front. *(addresses visual and global learners)*

Objective:

- **Students will understand how to decide which stories should be featured on page one.**

content

Design is everywhere – in clothes, computers and everything seen on television. In the newspaper business, design is in the way information is presented. Readers want news in an attractive, easy-to-follow format. Newspapers realize this and are striving to present news in interesting ways that appeal to readers.

Types of Readers

People bring their Internet and television viewing habits to newspaper reading. Therefore, newspapers must provide new ways of telling stories for media-savvy readers. Below are the three types of readers, based on which parts of the newspaper they commonly read.

- 1. Reader** – reads the newspaper cover to cover
- 2. Sampler** – depending on the story, generally reads some parts of the story but only if interested
- 3. Scanner** – just scans for headlines and other types of visual elements, such as photos and cutlines, graphics and sidebars.

WED

Putting a newspaper together can be summed up in a simple concept – WED, or writing, editing and design. This is what many newspapers use to package stories.

A reporter can incorporate the concept into writing by thinking visually. If you have a list of numbers in your story, is there a better way to present it? By thinking of information beyond a textual format, a reporter can give a reader information in an easy-to-read presentation.



N your paper ...

- Choose one package from a features page; cut out and paste on paper.
- Choose one package from a news page; cut out and paste on paper.
- Choose one package from a sports page; cut out and paste on paper.
- Create a list of positive aspects of each package.
- Create a list of common elements from each section/package.
- Create a list of package elements that make them unique to their section or type of package.

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By marrying words and images, a newspaper staff can present information much more dynamically than by presenting each item in isolation. If your story is about growing flowers in the spring, what types of images can you use? More than likely, the images will be bright, colorful and full of life. If you use a dark and dreary photo, the images will not match the tone of the story.

Basic Design Principles

Visual messages are more quickly read and easily remembered than textual ones. By learning more about the following basic design principles, you can “see” ways to present information more easily.

- 1. Balance.** Using balance on a page projects a well-planned look. Balance is asymmetrical or symmetrical. Asymmetrical balance is informal, while symmetrical balance is much more formal and commonly used in magazine design.
- 2. Contrast.** Having two or more contrasting images on a page helps the reader see the differences rather than have to rely just on text.
- 3. Rhythm.** This attracts attention and directs the eye to parts of the page. Having something break rhythm and cause “tension” on the page really attracts readers.
- 4. Focus.** Having a clear focus for story, artwork and design can bring the newspaper more in tune with the reader.

Alternative Print Storytelling Formats

- maps
- quizzes
- informational graphics
- flow charts
- Q and A
- photo collections
- how-to graphics
- listing of facts
- quote boxes for feelings of subject or about subject

Alternative Forms of Storytelling

Before starting any project or story, ask yourself, “What’s the best way to tell the story?” Maybe a 20-inch written version is not best. Would a Web-friendly format work better?

Is the story more visual, lending itself to an illustration or photo slideshow? Are there audio capabilities? What about video? If these options are available, consider using multimedia to tell stories better. Not only will the user have a more enhanced experience, but the storytelling possibilities also are endless.



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NIE definitions

Banner — headline in large type across the entire width of the first page

Broadsheet — traditional size of most newspapers, about 14 to 15 inches wide and 20 to 22 inches long

Budget — list of news stories scheduled for the next day's newspaper

Column inch — space measurement, one column wide by one inch deep

Dummy — diagram or layout of a newspaper page, showing placement of stories, headlines, photos and advertisements

Folio — line on each page that often includes the date and page number

Put the newspaper to bed — newsroom signs off on all pages and the newspaper goes to press

Tabloid — newspaper format smaller than a broadsheet; folding a broadsheet in half creates a tabloid

Assessment

1. Have students interview five people who read any newspaper. Students should ask what parts they read and how they read the newspaper, then use the information to identify what type of reader each is. Next to each, students should describe that type of reader. *(objective 1)*
2. Using a set layout, text and graphics provided by the teacher, students should create a front page. *(objectives 2 and 3)*
3. Instead of featuring news about a current international struggle on page one, the local newspaper features a story about a local law to be voted on today. Why? *(objective 4)*
4. Have students identify each of the basic design principles in today's newspaper. *(objective 2)*