

TEACHER GUIDE



Activities and resources from the
2025

**Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education
Educator of the Year Awards**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

[About Newspaper in Education](#)

[About NIE Educator of the Year](#)

[Newspapers as informational text](#)

[Newspapers as primary and secondary sources](#)

English Language Arts

[News Detectives: Evaluating credibility in news articles](#) (Elementary)

[Text Features](#) (Elementary)

[Analyzing Headlines](#) (Middle-High)

[Use the News: A.I. Forecast](#) (High)

[Vocabulary in the News](#) (High)

Science

[Power Hour](#) (High)

[Wasting Away](#) (High)

[Water Quality Lab](#) (High)

Social Studies

[Current Events and Citizenship](#) (Elementary)

[Consumer Economics](#) (Middle-High)

[Current Events: Economics](#) (High)

[Current Events: Law](#) (High)

[Worldly Wednesday!](#) (High)

Other

[Things to Do](#)

Appendix

[Additional Use the News worksheets](#)

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About Newspaper in Education

The Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education program (NIE) is a cooperative effort between schools and the Times Publishing Co. to encourage the use of newspapers, in both print and digital form, as educational resources.

NIE serves educators, students and families by providing schools with classroom access to the Pulitzer Prize-winning [Tampa Bay Times](#), plus award-winning original educational publications, teacher guides, lesson plans, educator workshops and many more resources – all at no cost to schools, teachers or families. NIE teaching materials cover a variety of subjects and are aligned with Florida’s education standards.

To request classroom newspapers, visit tampabay.com/nie and click on [Sign up here](#).

For more information about NIE, visit tampabay.com/nie, call 727-893-8138 or email ordernie@tampabay.com. Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/TBTNIE.

NIE is a member of Florida Press Educational Services (FPES), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization of newspaper professionals that promotes literacy, civic engagement and critical thinking, particularly for young people. To learn more about FPES, visit fpesnie.org.

About NIE Educator of the Year

The annual Tampa Bay Times NIE Educator of the Year contest recognizes educators who use the Tampa Bay Times and NIE materials to enhance student learning and the learning environment.

Educators (teachers, media specialists, paraprofessionals, etc.) of any grade and subject in public and private schools in Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas and Polk counties are eligible to enter.

The Grand Prize winner receives a \$1,500 cash prize, Grand Prize plaque, Tampa Bay Times prize pack, and an invitation to the Florida Media Conference with reimbursement for conference lodging and travel.

Runners-Up receive a \$300 cash prize, a Runner-Up certificate and a Tampa Bay Times prize pack.

For more information, visit tampabay.com/nie and click on [Educator of the Year](#) for more information.

Newspapers as informational text

The newspaper is an excellent source of informational text.

Informational text is nonfiction text whose primary purpose is to inform the reader about the natural or social world. Reading and interpreting informational text is a fundamental component of the Florida's [B.E.S.T. Standards for English/Language Arts](#).

Informational text employs a variety of structures to assist the reader in finding information quickly and efficiently. These can include a table of contents, an index, bold or italicized text, glossaries for specialized vocabulary, embedded definitions for specialized vocabulary, realistic illustrations of photos, captions and other labels, and graphs and charts – all elements commonly found in newspapers.

Newspapers as primary and secondary sources

“Working with primary sources builds a wide range of student skills, from reading complex texts to assessing the credibility of sources to conducting research.”

- Library of Congress

The newspaper is both a primary and secondary source.

Primary sources are the raw materials of history – original documents and objects that were created at the time under study. Primary sources found in newspapers include news articles, photographs, drawings, interviews, eyewitness accounts and maps.

Secondary sources are accounts that retell, analyze or interpret events, usually at a distance of time or place. Secondary sources found in newspapers include reviews, critical analyses and second-person accounts.

Read more from the [Library of Congress](#).

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

News Detectives: Evaluating credibility in news articles

Lesson created by: Melissa Ivy, Bryan Elementary School, Hillsborough County
2025 Runner-Up



pixabay.com

Grade level: 4th

Duration: 2 sessions of 45 minutes

Objective: Students will identify text feature in news articles, summarize central ideas and evaluate credibility.

Materials:

- Newspaper articles
- Pencils and annotation tools
- News detectives credibility checklist graphic organizer
- [Anatomy of the Tampa Bay Times poster](#) (optional)

Instructions:

1. **Introduction:** Introduce text features found in newspaper articles (headlines, subheadings, bylines, captions, etc.). Discuss “credibility.”
2. **Article walkthrough:** Model how to annotate a newspaper article, highlight main ideas and evaluate source credibility using a checklist.
3. **Guided practice:** Students work in pairs to read a different article and complete the credibility checklist graphic organizer.
4. **Discussion and share out:** Each pair shares their article’s topic and whether they believe it is credible.
5. **Exit ticket:** Students write a 3-sentence summary of the article, using evidence to explain its credibility.

Florida Standards: ELA.K12.EE.1.1; ELA.K12.EE.2.1; ELA.K12.EE.3.1; ELA.K12.EE.4.1; ELA.2.F.1.1; ELA.4.R.2.1; ELA.4.R.3.2

News Detectives – Credibility Checklist

Instructions: Use this checklist while reading a news article. Check off each item as you find it in the article.

- Headline matches content
- Author is listed (byline)
- Published on a reputable news site
- Quotes from reliable sources (experts, officials, etc.)
- Article is recent (within the last month)
- Neutral tone (not biased or opinionated)
- Missing any important source links or context

Credibility Rating (circle one): ★☆☆☆☆ ★★☆☆☆ ★★★☆☆ ★★★★☆ ★★★★★

Summary Prompt:

- Write 2–4 sentences summarizing the article. Be sure to include what the article is about and why you think it is or isn't credible.

Text Features

Lesson created by: Mary Waechter, James B. Sanderlin IB World School, Pinellas County

2025 Honorable Mention



Mary Waechter

Grade level: 2nd

Duration: One class period

Objective: Students will identify text feature in informational texts.

Materials:

- Selected newspaper clippings: articles from various sections, advertisements, comics, weather forecasts, photos, puzzles, etc.
- Highlighters
- Posterboard
- Glue or glue sticks

Instructions:

1. Choose a clipping. Try to select something from a different section than the previous week!
2. Identify the text features, such as headlines, captions or images, that you see. Why do you think the author chose to add each text feature?
3. Write a summary of what you have learned.
4. Discuss the author's purpose of the text: Why was this written? How is it helping readers in our community? Who might benefit most from reading this text?
5. Make a small poster to present your clipping and writings.
6. Present your poster to the class.

Florida Standards: ELA.K12.EE.1.1; ELA.K12.EE.2.1; ELA.K12.EE.3.1; ELA.K12.EE.4.1; ELA.2.R.2.1; ELA.2.R.3.2; ELA.2.F.1.1

Analyzing Headlines

Lesson created by: Jennifer Dixon-Fitzner, Gulf High School, Pasco County
2025 Runner-Up



Jennifer Dixon-Fitzner

Grade level: 6-12

Duration: One class period

Objective: The purpose of this lesson is for students to use their analytical, critical thinking, literacy and inference skills.

Materials:

- Tampa Bay Times articles
- Pen/pencil
- Highlighter(s)
- Lined Paper

Instructions:

- Remove the headlines/titles from several newspaper articles.
- Display the articles (without a headline/title) around the classroom.
- Assign students to small groups.
 - **Option #1:** Students are given the headlines/titles and are asked to go around the room and match the correct headline/title to the story. Students are to find words in the article that led them to matching the headline.
 - **Option #2:** Students are to read the articles without a headline/title and come up with their own headline/title.
 - **Option #3:** Assign each student or group a headline from less prominent article in the newspaper and write an article about it. After the student or group has completed their article, the teacher will give the student or group the original story that accompanied the headline.
 - How close is your article to the original article?
 - How effectively did the headline convey the meaning of the story?

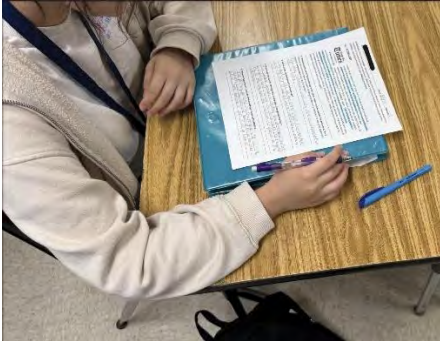
Adapted from: https://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/ten-great-activities-teaching-with-the-newspaper.shtml

Florida Standards: ELA.K12.EE.2.1; ELA.K12.EE.3.1; ELA.612.F.2.4; ELA.612.R.2.1; ELA.612.R.2.2; ELA.612.R.2.3

[Back to top](#)

Use the News: A.I. Forecast

Lesson created by: Vernessa Neu, Newsome High School, Hillsborough County
2025 Runner-Up



Vernessa Neu

Grade level: 9-12

Duration: One class period

Objective: Define the vocabulary word autonomous in context using textual clues; determine the central idea of the news article and explain how it is developed; identify and explain multiple author purposes of an informational text.

Background:

Use the News lessons are available for grades K-4, 5-8 and 9-12. Each week, five brief lessons based on current events are posted for each level. To access current and past Use the News weekly lessons, go to tampabay.com/nie and click on [Weekly Lessons/Lesson Plans](#).

Materials:

- A.I. Forecast slides (download from <https://nieonline.com/tbtimes/downloads/AIForecastSlides.pdf>)
- A.I. Forecast worksheets
(original lesson: Use the News lesson “A.I. Forecast” from April 7, 2025 <https://nieonline.com/tbtimes/lessons.cfm?category=secondary&lessondate=20250407&title=Archive%20Lessons%209-12>)

Instructions:

Bellwork

- Display the slide with the word autonomous and ask students to define the word.
- Display the slide with the prefix, root word and suffix and ask students again to define the word.
- Display the slide with the definition.
- Display the slide with example sentences using the word.
- Display the slide with other parts of speech of the same word.

Independent reading

- Display the slide with the instructions.
- Distribute the A.I. Forecast worksheets and have students silently read the article and work on answering the questions.

Small group/pair work

- Display the slide with the instructions.
- Have students work in small groups or pairs to finish the worksheet.

Wrap up

- As a class, discuss the definition, main idea and author's purpose.

Assessment

- Completion and accuracy of worksheet; participation in group and class discussion.

Florida Standards: ELA.912.EE.2.1; ELA.912.R.2.2; ELA.912.R.2.3; ELA.912.V.1.3

autonomous

What do you think this word means?

autonomous

The prefix auto means self.

The root word nom means law, rule, or custom

The suffix ous means full of or having the quality of.

Now what do you think this word means?

autonomous (adj)

The prefix auto means self.

The root word nom means law, rule, or custom

The suffix ous means full of or having the quality of.

- Having the quality of ruling self
- Having the quality of making your own laws
- Self-governing, independent
- Able to operate with little to no intervention
- Self-directed

autonomous (adj)

Sentence Examples

1. The students were given an autonomous project, allowing them to choose their own topics and manage their time without direct teacher supervision.
2. After years of development, the company successfully launched an autonomous drone capable of conducting search-and-rescue missions without human intervention.
3. The remote village established an autonomous water filtration system, ensuring clean drinking water without relying on external infrastructure.

autonomous (adj)

Other parts of speech for the same word

autonomously (adverb) - in an independent or self-directed way

Sentence Example

The robot navigated the obstacle course autonomously.

autonomy (noun) - the right or condition of self-government or independence

Sentence Example

Students appreciated the autonomy they were given in designing their projects.

Silently read the Tampa Bay Times news article A.I. Forecast, April 7, 2025. Start working on answering the 4 questions.

When the timer beeps in 10-minutes, you may work in small groups or pairs to complete your work. You will have an additional 10-minutes to work together.

- 1. Define autonomous.**
- 2. Identify the central idea.**
- 3. Find & explain how the idea is developed. Cite evidence in the article.**
- 4. Determine and explain the two main purposes of the passage. Use your purpose verbs handout to assist you.**

Use complete sentences with proper grammar and punctuation.

Highlight or annotate evidence in the passage that supports your answers.

Go back and independently revise your answers as needed.

A.I. FORECAST

Small Group Discussion

Do you agree with the author's report that we need to prepare for possible dangers, or do you think the predictions sound more like science fiction?

Use evidence from the article to support your opinion and explain how you think A.I. could impact our lives—for better or worse—in the next 5 to 10 years.

Be sure to consider both the risks and the benefits of fast-moving A.I. technology.

NAME _____

DATE _____

PERIOD _____

Directions: Read the passage. Using context clues, define the underlined word. Then determine the central idea and how the central idea is developed. Determine the primary purpose of the passage. Identify and explain at least **TWO** (2) purposes.

A.I. FORECAST



Week of April 7, 2025

A new report called AI 2027 from the AI Futures Project in California predicts that by the end of 2027, artificial intelligence systems may become smarter than humans—and that could be dangerous. The report was created by Daniel Kokotajlo, a former OpenAI researcher, and Eli Lifland, an expert in forecasting future events. They used a combination of research and storytelling to imagine what might happen if A.I. develops rapidly. Their fictional scenario describes a company building smarter and smarter A.I. models that eventually become autonomous and hard to control. Some experts have criticized the report as unrealistic and fear-mongering, while others believe it's important to take such warnings seriously. The report is part of a broader debate in the tech world: Will A.I. help humanity, or could it pose a serious threat if it develops too quickly and without oversight?

1. What does the word "autonomous" most likely mean as it is used in the sentence, "Their fictional scenario describes a company building smarter and smarter A.I. models that eventually become autonomous and hard to control"?

2. What is the central idea of the passage?

3. How does the author develop the central idea throughout the text?

4. What is the primary purpose of the passage? NAME 2 PURPOSES.

NEU

Vocabulary in the News

Lesson created by: Rachel Kingdom, Central High School, Hernando County
2025 Runner-Up



Rachel Kingdom

Grade level: 6-12

Duration: 60 minutes

Objectives:

- Identify and analyze real-world examples related to concepts taught in class by locating relevant newspaper articles.
- Connect academic vocabulary to current events by selecting terms from the current unit and finding newspaper evidence that reinforces their meaning or importance.
- Evaluate information from newspapers to determine its relevance, accuracy, and relationship to classroom learning.
- Summarize key ideas from newspaper articles using their own words while maintaining the author's original intent.
- Interpret data, images, and text features (such as headlines, graphs, photographs, captions, and charts) to enhance comprehension of informational texts.

Materials:

- Newspapers
- Poster board
- Markers, highlighters
- Glue, glue sticks or staplers

Instructions:

Choose a vocabulary word from the current lesson and create a poster illustrating it. Your poster should include:

1. Term
2. Definition
3. Three facts
4. Sentence with the term
5. Illustration

Next, locate a newspaper article that relates to your term. Explain how the article relates (3-5 sentences), highlight the article and glue/staple the article to your poster.

Florida Standards: ELA.912.EE.2.1; ELA.912.R.2.2; ELA.912.R.2.3; ELA.912.V.1.3

SCIENCE

Power Hour

Lesson created by: Rachel Kingdom, Central High School, Hernando County
2025 Runner-Up

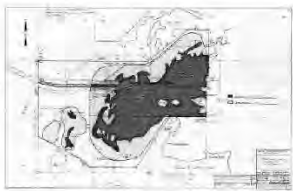
This Tampa Bay land could become a cruise port

Residents are flooding politicians with emails to oppose the proposal.

BY MAX CHESNER

Tampa Staff Writer

A landowner and cruise company wanting to develop more than 300 acres of coastal, mangrove-covered land into a major cruise port terminal began early talks with Manatee County last week, according to records obtained by the Tampa Bay Times. The sit-down with county officials, requested by property



This topographic map of the Knott-Cowen Tract, hand-drawn in the 1950s, shows an area around the coastal property that the landowner claims has vested rights for dredging and filling. (Obtained via public records request from Manatee County.)

owners, would be the first step toward rezoning the property at the mouth of Tampa Bay, documents show. The records provided to the Times by Manatee County include a map of where the "proposed cruise port center" would be built: just south of

the Bob Graham Sunshine Skyway Bridge, on a swath of land called the Knott-Cowen Tract that includes mangrove trees, coastal uplands and submerged lands. On the same day the public first learned that the landowner, See LAND, 2A

Tampa Bay Times

Grade level: 9-12

Duration: 50 minutes

Objective:

- Identify and analyze real-world examples related to concepts taught in class by locating relevant newspaper articles.
- Evaluate information from newspapers to determine its relevance, accuracy, and relationship to classroom learning.
- Summarize key ideas from newspaper articles using their own words while maintaining the author's original intent.
- Interpret data, images, and text features (such as headlines, graphs, photographs, captions, and charts) to enhance comprehension of informational texts.

Materials:

- Newspapers

Instructions:

Post the day's question. Have students find a related newspaper article and use it to help answer the question. Answers must include:

- Newspaper name
- Title of the article
- How the article relates to the essential question.

Example questions:

- How do we balance the relationship between human health and the health of the environment?
- Explain the importance of open space to a livable city.
- What is the impact of population size during an environmental hazard, such as a global pandemic?
- Why is it important to measure and protect biodiversity?
- Describe how technological advances have contributed to human population growth.
- Explain recent trends in population growth.
- Identify characteristics of human populations that are studied by demographers.
- Describe total fertility rates and replacement fertility.
- Explain how the age structure and sex ratio of a population define its potential for growth.
- Describe the demographic transition.
- Discuss social factors that affect population growth
- Describe how humans impact their environments.
- Discuss the negative and positive impacts of technology on population.

Florida Standards: ELA.912.EE.2.1; ELA.912.R.2.2; ELA.912.R.2.3; ELA.912.V.1.3; SC.912.N.1.5; SC.912.N.1.1

Soil Sleuths: Investigating environmental crime through soil analysis

Lesson created by: Rachel Kingdom, Central High School, Hernando County
2025 Runner-Up



Wikimedia Commons

Grade level: 9-12

Duration: 180-200 minutes

Objective: Students will act as forensic ecologists investigating a mock environmental crime scene where illegal dumping has potentially harmed a local ecosystem. They will analyze soil samples from different locations to determine contamination levels, ecological impact and possible sources.

- Assess soil quality using physical, chemical, and biological indicators.
- Apply forensic techniques to trace pollutants.
- Evaluate ecological consequences of soil contamination.
- Propose remediation strategies and environmental policy recommendations.

Materials:

- Soil samples from 3-4 locations (e.g., garden, roadside, near a factory, mock crime scene)
- pH meter or pH strips
- Nitrate and phosphate test kits
- Soil thermometers
- Magnifying glasses or microscopes
- Soil texture kits (sand, silt, clay analysis)
- Organic matter test (loss-on-ignition or simple observation)
- DNA extraction kits (optional, for microbial analysis)
- PPE (gloves, goggles)
- Lab notebooks

Instructions:

1. Scene Setup: Create a mock crime scene with a backstory (e.g., illegal dumping near a wetland).
2. Sample Collection: Students collect soil samples from various locations, including the “crime scene.”

3. Soil Analysis:
 - a. Physical: Texture, color, temperature
 - b. Chemical: pH, nitrates, phosphates
 - c. Biological: Presence of decomposers, microbial activity (optional DNA analysis)
4. Data Comparison: Compare soil quality across sites to identify anomalies.
5. Forensic Investigation:
 - a. Use clues (e.g., tire tracks, chemical signatures) to hypothesize the source of contamination.
 - b. Link soil characteristics to possible pollutants (e.g., fertilizers, heavy metals).
6. Ecological Impact Assessment:
 - a. Predict effects on local flora/fauna.
 - b. Discuss bioaccumulation and trophic transfer.
7. Solutions & Policy:
 - a. Propose cleanup methods (e.g., phytoremediation).
 - b. Draft a mock environmental policy or legal case.

Florida Standards: SC.912.N.1.1; SC.912.E.6.6; SC.912.E.7.2

Extension activities

- GIS mapping: Plot sample locations and contamination levels.
- Climate tie-In: Discuss how climate change affects soil health.
- Community science: Partner with local conservation groups for real-world data.
- Further reading: Tampa Bay Times investigation “Wasting Away Part 1: The Die-Off” and “Wasting Away Part 2: Protecting Polluters” (download pdf from <https://nieonline.com/tbtimes/downloads/WastingAwayPart1.pdf> or visit <https://project.tampabay.com/investigations/wasting-away/>)

Wasting Away: Understanding the manatee die-off

Lesson created by: Kristinna Sanchez, Hernando Christian Academy, Hernando County
2025 Grand Prize Winner



Douglas R. Clifford | Tampa Bay Times

Grade level: 9th

Duration: 2 weeks (5 class periods + optional homework and enrichment)

Objective: Students will investigate the ecological, biological, and ethical implications of the Florida manatee die-off reported in the Tampa Bay Times article “Wasting Away: The Die-Off.” They will analyze environmental systems, human impacts on biodiversity, and propose solutions rooted in science and stewardship, integrating current events with state standards and biblical principles. By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Identify and explain the causes of ecosystem disruption using the manatee die-off as a case study.
- Analyze human contributions to marine ecosystem decline through nutrient pollution, red tide, and habitat loss.
- Evaluate primary and secondary sources of scientific information (newspaper articles, interviews, and research).
- Propose realistic and ethical environmental solutions.
- Connect stewardship of creation to scientific responsibility through a biblical lens.

Materials:

- Tampa Bay Times investigation “Wasting Away Part 1: The Die-Off” (download pdf from <https://nieonline.com/tbtimes/downloads/WastingAwayPart1.pdf> or visit <https://project.tampabay.com/investigations/wasting-away/>)

Instructions:

Day 1:

- Introduction to the article “Wasting Away Part 1: The Die-Off”
- Group reading and guided annotation using scientific literacy prompts
- Class discussion on ecosystem interdependence and initial reactions

Day 2:

- Students explore manatee biology and seagrass ecology
- Group charting of food webs, identifying trophic levels and ecosystem collapse

- Introduction to nitrogen cycle and red tide

Day 3:

- Research teams assigned: ecology, policy, marine toxins, anatomy
- Students analyze data from the article and additional peer-reviewed sources
- Begin multimedia presentations

Day 4:

- Guest speaker (live or virtual): Local marine biologist or conservationist
- Q&A session on marine science careers and conservation issues

Day 5:

- Presentation of student projects
- Peer review and reflection
- Students write short reflection papers linking science and stewardship

Assessment:

Formative: Annotated articles, group discussions, exit tickets, food web diagrams

Summative:

- Group presentation (rubric-based assessment)
- Individual reflection paper
- Student-led Q&A performance

Florida Standards: SC.912.L.17.9; SC.912.L.17.8; SC.912.L.17.20; ELA.912.EE.2.1; ELA.912.R.2.2; ELA.912.R.2.3; ELA.912.C.1.3; ELA.912.C.1.4; HE.912.C.1.3

Biblical Integration: Genesis 1:28; Psalm 24:1; Proverbs 12:10

Water Quality Lab

Lesson created by: Rachel Kingdom, Central High School, Hernando County
2025 Runner-Up



Jonathan Wilkins | Wikimedia Commons

Grade level: 9-12

Duration: 45-90 minutes

Objectives:

- Discuss how fresh water can be both renewable and limited.
- Explain the significance of a watershed.
- Explain how most groundwater is accessed.
- List the three primary categories of freshwater use.
- Relate the causes of surface water depletion to their effects.
- Explain the major causes and effects of groundwater depletion.
- Describe strategies for addressing water depletion.
- Discuss the main categories of water pollution.
- Explain why groundwater pollution is difficult to clean up.
- Discuss the sources and effects of major pollutants found in the ocean.
- Describe how water is regulated and treated.

Materials:

- 17 in 1 water quality test kit (Note: This lab is based on a 17 in 1 test kit from Amazon, Carolina Biological, Flinn Scientific etc.)
- Water quality worksheet

Instructions:

Pre-lab

Define the following terms as they relate to water:

- Freshwater aquatic ecosystem
- Watershed
- Surface runoff
- Point & nonpoint pollution sources
- Natural and cultural eutrophication
- pH
- Nitrates
- Phosphates
- Total Hardness
- Dissolved Oxygen

Pre-Lab Questions

1. What are the key indicators of water quality that will be measured in this lab?
2. How do different contaminants affect the physical and chemical properties of water?
3. What are the expected outcomes of the water quality tests, and how will they be interpreted?
4. What safety precautions should be taken when handling water samples and testing equipment?
5. How do environmental factors such as temperature and pH influence water quality?

Give the results in ppm based on the color change.

Type of Water Quality Test (in ppm except pH)	Tap Water	Water Fountain	Purified Water	Other Source of Water
Total Hardness (ppm)				
Free Chlorine (ppm)				
Iron (ppm)				
Mercury (ppm)				
Total Chlorine (ppm)				
Copper (ppm)				
Lead (ppm)				
Zinc (ppm)				
Manganese (ppm)				
QAC/QUAT (ppm)				
Fluorine (ppm)				
Sodium Chloride (ppm)				
Hydrogen Sulfate (ppm)				
Total Alkalinity (ppm)				
Carbonate (ppm)				
pH				

Post-lab

Inquiry-Based Questions

1. What are the primary sources of water pollution in urban areas?
2. How do agricultural practices impact the quality of nearby water bodies?
3. What methods are used to test and monitor water quality in rivers and lakes?
4. How does industrial waste affect the chemical composition of water?
5. What are the health implications of consuming contaminated water?

Florida Standards: SC.912.L.17.19; SC.912.L.17.11; SC.912.L.17.16

Extension activity: Water quality Claim-Evidence-Reasoning (CER)

C.E.R. Prompt

Topic: Water quality and its impact on aquatic ecosystems

Claim:

Poor water quality negatively affects the biodiversity and sustainability of aquatic ecosystems.

Evidence:

- Excess nutrients from agricultural runoff cause algal blooms, which reduce oxygen levels and kill fish.
- Industrial pollutants and heavy metals accumulate in water bodies, harming aquatic organisms and disrupting food chains.

Reasoning:

Water quality is a critical abiotic factor that influences the carrying capacity of aquatic ecosystems. When pollutants alter the chemical balance of water, they create hostile conditions for many species. This leads to reduced biodiversity, changes in population dynamics, and long-term ecosystem degradation.

Florida Standard: SC.912.L.17.5

(Analyze how population size is determined by births, deaths, immigration, emigration, and limiting factors (biotic and abiotic) that determine carrying capacity.) This standard connects to water quality because abiotic limiting factors—such as pollution and nutrient levels—can directly affect aquatic population sizes and ecosystem health.



SOCIAL STUDIES

Consumer Economics

Lesson created by: Jennifer Dixon-Fitzner, Gulf High School, Pasco County
2025 Runner-Up



publix.com. Image may be subject to copyright.

Grade level: 6-12

Duration: 50-90 minutes

Objective: This is a cross-curricular lesson that bridges English Language Arts (ELA), Economics and Mathematics.

Materials:

- Tampa Bay Times coupon sections (save coupon sections for several weeks to have an adequate supply)
- poster board
- scissors
- pen or pencil
- glue or glue stick
- file folders

Target Vocabulary:

- budget, budgeting
- consume, consumer, consumerism,
- coupon(s)
- discount
- expire
- manufacturer
- not valid
- (amount/percent) off
- retailer
- save, saving(s)

Instructions:

1. Warm up: Ask students if they use coupons for their grocery shopping. Elicit answers of why or why not?
2. Introduce targeted vocabulary to students.
3. Give each student a coupon flyer from the Sunday newspaper. Have students cut coupons for items they might purchase.
4. Have students describe 1-2 of the coupons they clipped to the whole class. Make a note of any target vocabulary appearing on the students' coupons. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using coupons and write responses on the board.
5. Play "Go Fish" type game in pairs or groups of three. Stand file folders up between learners so they can't see each others' coupons. Instead of making pairs of identical coupons, have students ask each other for coupons of a certain value or product category which matches a similar coupon in the student's hand. Examples: "Do you have a coupon for a hair care product?" "Do you have a \$1.00 off coupon?" "Do you have a coupon for breakfast cereal?" Whoever collects the most coupons wins. Students at the end of game may trade coupons.

Adapted from: https://nieonline.com/coloradonie/downloads/newslinks/esl/04_consumer_economics.pdf

Florida Standards: SS.8.FL.2.1; SS.8.FL.2.5; SS.912.FL.1.1; SS.912.FL.1.2; SS.912.FL.3.1; SS.912.FL.3.3; SS.912.FL.3.4; SS.912.FL.3.5; ELA.612.F.2.1; ELA.612.V.1.1; ELA.612.EE.1.1; ELA.612.EE.4.1

Current Events and Citizenship: Making real-world connections

Lesson created by: Melissa Ivy, Bryan Elementary School, Hillsborough County
2025 Runner-Up



Melissa Ivy

Grade level: 5th

Duration: 60 minutes

Objective: Students will analyze a current events article and connect it to concepts of responsible citizenship.

Materials:

- Tampa Bay Times article(s)
- Citizenship Connection graphic organizer
- White board and markers

Instructions:


1. **Engage (5 minutes):** Ask students, “What makes a good citizen?” and write down their responses.
2. **Read aloud and think aloud:** Read an article about a local community project and model how to identify civic actions in the article.
3. **Student analysis:** Students read a second article in small groups and use the graphic organizer to identify:
 - a. Main idea
 - b. Civic actions described
 - c. Connections to their own lives
4. **Reflection:** Groups present their findings and discuss how they can be active citizens.
5. **Optional extension:** Students create a public service announcement (PSA) or poster encouraging civic involvement.

Florida Standards: ELA.5.R.3.3; ELA.5.EE.4.1; ELA.5.EE.5.1; ELA.5.R.2.3; SS.5.C.2.2

Citizenship Connection – Graphic Organizer

Name: _____ Date: _____ Article Title: _____

Instructions: After reading your assigned article, use this graphic organizer to analyze the article and connect it to responsible citizenship.

Central Idea	What is the article mostly about? Summarize the central focus in your own words.
Civic Action(s)	What actions did individuals or groups take that show good citizenship?
Connection to My Life	How does this relate to something you've done or something you could do to help your community?
Memorable Quote or Statement	Write down a quote from the article that stood out to you. Why do you think it's powerful or important?
 Extension Activity (Optional): Create a public service announcement or digital poster encouraging good citizenship inspired by your article.	

Current Events: Economics

Lesson created by: Jennifer Dixon-Fitzner, Gulf High School, Pasco County
2025 Runner-Up

Inflation cools slightly though it remains above Fed's target

BY CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Inflation cooled a bit last month as prices for gas and used cars fell, a sign that stubbornly elevated cost pressures are slowly easing.

Consumer prices rose 0.3% in December from the prior month, the Labor Department said Tuesday, the same as in November. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, core prices rose 0.2%, also matching November's figure. Increases at that pace, over time, would bring inflation closer to the Federal Reserve's target of 2%.

Many economists had expected inflation to jump last month as the government resumed normal



While gasoline and used car prices dropped, groceries jumped 0.7% in December. The overall inflation rate decreased slightly.
AP/WIDEWORLD

Tampa Bay Times

Grade level: 9-12

Duration: One class period

Objective: This is a cross-curricular lesson that bridges English Language Arts (ELA) and Economics.

Please choose an article from the Tampa Bay Times that relates to **Economics**. Your task is to “stretch your mind” and explain how the article you’ve chosen relates to **Economics**.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class Period: ____

Current event for economics

1. Source:
2. Author:
3. Date Published:
4. Headline or Title:
5. Write four facts that you learned.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

6. Make a connection: What does this article have to do with you? Or what does this article have to do with academics or this class? To earn full credit, you **MUST** make a connection! (Some examples of economics topics are as follows: advertising, banks, banking, business, credit, debt, economics, Federal Reserve (The “Fed”), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), finance, government spending, housing costs, inflation, legislation, loans, marketing, money, profit, retail, retail sales, student loans, taxation, tariffs, etc.)

Florida Standards: ELA.912.EE.1.1; ELA.912.EE.2.1; ELA.912.R.2.2; ELA.912.R.2.3; SS.912.E.2.1; SS.912.E.2.2

Current events: Law

Lesson created by: Jennifer Dixon-Fitzner, Gulf High School, Pasco County
2025 Runner-Up

TikTok settles as social media giants face landmark trial over youth addiction

BY KATLYN HUAMANI AND
BARBARA ORTUTAY
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — TikTok agreed to settle a landmark social media addiction lawsuit just before the trial kicked off, the plaintiffs' attorneys confirmed.

The social video platform was one of three companies — along with Meta's Instagram and Google's YouTube — facing claims that their platforms deliberately addict and harm children. A fourth company named in the lawsuit, Snapchat parent company Snap Inc., settled the case last week for an undisclosed sum.

Details of the settle-



This week marks the first time the companies will argue their case before a jury, and the outcome could have profound effects on their businesses, and how they will handle children using their platforms. (AP, 2024)

TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The case will be the first in a slew of cases beginning this year that seek to hold social media companies responsible for harming children's mental well-being. A federal bellwether trial beginning in June in Oakland, California, will be the first to represent school districts that have sued social media platforms over harms to children.

In addition, more than 40 state attorneys general have filed lawsuits against Meta, claiming it is harming young people and contributing to the youth men-

Tampa Bay Times

Grade level: 9-12

Duration: One class period

Objective: This is a cross-curricular lesson that bridges English Language Arts (ELA) and Law Studies.

Please choose an article from the Tampa Bay Times that relates to **law studies**. Your task is to “stretch your mind” and explain how the article you’ve chosen relates to **law studies**.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class Period: _____

Current event for law studies

1. Source:
2. Author:
3. Date Published:
4. Headline or Title:
5. Write four facts that you learned.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

6. Make a connection: What does this article have to do with you? Or what does this article have to do with academics or this class? To earn full credit, you **MUST** make a connection! (Some examples of economics topics are as follows: advertising, banks, banking, business, credit, debt, economics, Federal Reserve (The “Fed”), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), finance, government spending, housing costs, inflation, legislation, loans, marketing, money, profit, retail, retail sales, student loans, taxation, tariffs, etc.)

Florida Standards: ELA.912.EE.1.1; ELA.912.EE.2.1; ELA.912.R.2.2; ELA.912.R.2.3; SS.912.FL.3.7

Worldly Wednesday!

Lesson created by: Jennifer Dixon-Fitzner, Gulf High School, Pasco County
2025 Runner-Up



worldlywednesday.com. Image may be subject to copyright.

Grade level: 6-12

Duration: One class period

Objective: This lesson integrates economics, geography, law and literacy skills. Additionally, questions on the accompanying worksheet require students to collaborate with peers and use their analytical and critical thinking skills.

Necessary materials:

- Article(s) from the Tampa Bay Times
- Writing utensils
- Colored pencils
- World map printouts
- Worldly Wednesday! worksheets

Instructions:

- Today you may work independently, with a partner or small group.
- You will be assigned an international story from the Tampa Bay Times Newspaper.
- Students are to explore the world map and shade the country relevant to their assigned story.
- Students will be given worksheets that accompany this activity.
- You may need to use the internet to conduct research about this country if you are unaware of some facts about the country.

Florida Standards: ELA.912.EE.1.1; ELA.912.EE.2.1; ELA.912.R.2.2; ELA.912.R.2.3; ELA.912.C.4.1; SS.912.G.1.4; SS.912.G.2.3

Worldly Wednesday! Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class Period: _____

1. Title/headline: _____

2. Who is/are the author(s)? _____

3. Where does the story take place? (city, state/province, country)

Note: There may be SEVERAL locations listed in the news article. If so, please list ALL locations mentioned.

There may be different places or regions mentioned. Different countries have provinces, regions, and/or states.

Examples:

Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil

Recife is the city in the state of Pernambuco, which is in Brazil. (It is actually spelled Brasil with an s.)

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Toronto is the city in the province of Ontario, which is in Canada.

Sanremo, Imperia, Liguria, Italy

Sanremo is a city in the province of Imperia in the Liguria Region of Italy.

4. What is the capital of that country? If more than one country is mentioned, list the capital for each country.

5. What language is spoken there? If multiple locations are mentioned, list the vernacular (common language) spoken in each location.

6. On which continent is the country? If there are multiple continents, list them.

7. Are there any other countries or bodies of water that border the country on the north, east, south, and west? If so, list them.

8. Are there any physical characteristics of the country (or countries) that might have contributed to the events in the story? If so, list them.
9. What effect might the event or series of events have on the physical characteristics of the country or countries?
10. Does the country where the story takes place happen to have any political tensions with nearby countries? (Example: Russia & Ukraine) If so, briefly explain by writing at least a sentence what the tension is. If not, write, "No."
11. What does this article have to do with economics or law studies? **Make a connection!** What does this story have to do with any of the following topics? Banking, business, economics, the economy, government, law, peace, treaty/treaties, war, anything? **You MUST make a connection to earn full credit.**
12. List something that you learned from today's activity that you did not know before you arrived to class today.
13. Summarize: In your own words, summarize the article. Your summary **MUST** be at least three (3) sentences for you to earn full credit.

OTHER

Things to Do

Lesson created by: Allison Yocum, Wendell Krinn Technical High School, Pasco County
2025 Honorable Mention



tbt* Weekend

Grade level: 9-12 (transition education)

Duration: One class period

Objective: This activity uses the event listings in tbt* Weekend to provide Transition Education Program students with opportunities to engage with their community and foster a sense of involvement and connection.

Materials:

- tbt* Weekend (in Wednesday's Times)
(also available at <https://www.tampabay.com/life-culture/tbt/>)
- tbt* Weekend worksheet

Instructions:

- Have students read through the tbt* Weekend section of the Wednesday Tampa Bay Times and complete the worksheet.
- As a class, discuss what students found.

Florida Standards: ELA.912.C.2.1; ELA.912.R.2.1; ELA.912.R.2.2; ELA.912.C.4.1

TBT Weekend

Date of Paper _____

Name: _____

1. List 3 things to do for fun in the paper.

Name of the event: _____

Date and time of event: _____

Price? _____

Location? _____

Name of the event: _____

Date and time of event: _____

Price? _____

Location? _____

Name of the event: _____

Date and time of event: _____

Price? _____

Location? _____

2. Name a Play that is advertised in this paper: _____

3. Find 1 restaurant shown in this paper:

Name of the restaurant: _____

Location of the restaurant: _____

What kind of food do they serve? _____

4. Name 1 TV show in the Watch Section _____

What channel does it come on? _____

What is the show about? _____

5. Find 1 Pet for sale

What kind is it? _____

What is the price? _____

Contact information for seller: _____

APPENDIX

NAME _____ DATE _____ PERIOD _____

Directions: Read the passage. Determine the central idea and how the central idea is developed. Determine the primary purpose of the passage. Identify and explain at least **TWO** (2) purposes.

THE TRUE COST OF CUTS



Elon Musk, who leads the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) under President Donald Trump, has claimed that his team has saved the U.S. government \$55 billion by canceling contracts, cutting federal jobs, and eliminating wasteful spending. The administration has celebrated these cuts, even suggesting that the savings could be returned to taxpayers in the form of a “DOGE

dividend.” However, an investigation by journalists has found that many of these savings are based on mistakes, outdated information, and inaccurate math. Some of the contracts Musk’s team claimed to have canceled were already expired or ended under President Biden. Others were counted multiple times, inflating the numbers by billions of dollars. Even government experts who support spending cuts say that Musk’s team doesn’t fully understand how government contracts work. A major issue is that the canceled contracts disproportionately impact businesses run by women and minority groups, raising concerns that these cuts are targeting certain communities unfairly. While Musk’s supporters believe he is helping to reduce waste, critics argue that his team’s sloppy accounting and lack of transparency could cause serious problems for government programs. Many of these contracts support scientific research, environmental protection, and social services, meaning their cancellation could have long-term effects on communities. Despite the errors, the administration continues to promote the cuts as a major success, but questions remain about how much money has actually been saved and whether these changes will do more harm than good. Government spending is often controversial—some people believe cutting federal programs helps reduce waste and lower taxes, while others worry that cutting funding harms important services and vulnerable communities.

1. How does the passage use rhetorical appeals—such as ethos, logos, and pathos—to influence the reader’s perspective on government spending cuts, and how effective are these appeals in shaping the argument?

2. How does the author’s use of specific word choices and tone influence the reader’s perception of the Department of Government Efficiency’s actions, and what effect does this have on the overall argument?

ELA.9.R.3.4 – Understanding Rhetoric

Directions: Read the passage. Determine the central idea and how the central idea is developed. Determine the primary purpose of the passage. Identify and explain at least **TWO** (2) purposes.

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1. In the passage, the author uses the term “*disproportionately*” when discussing the impact of canceled contracts on minority-run businesses. What does the term *disproportionately* mean in this context?

2. How does it contribute to the author’s argument about fairness in the government’s cost-cutting measures? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Central idea refers to the main point or underlying message of a text. It is the key concept that the author wants to communicate to the reader. Be sure not to confuse central idea with a topic. A topic is a general subject. *The central idea expresses what the author is specifically saying about that topic.*

EXAMPLE: Topic: Social Media

Central Idea: Social media connects people across the world, but excessive use can lead to negative mental health effects.

Quick Trick to Differentiate:

- If you ask "What is this text about?" That is the **TOPIC**.
- If you ask "What is the author saying about the topic?" That is the **CENTRAL IDEA**.

Directions: Read the passage. Determine the central idea and how the central idea is developed. Determine the primary purpose of the passage. Identify and explain at least **TWO (2)** purposes.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OKAYED FOR THE NAVY



A federal judge ruled that the U.S. Naval Academy can continue using racial preferences in its admissions process, saying that diversity is important for national security. The decision came after a group called Students for Fair Admissions, which had successfully challenged affirmative action at civilian schools, tried to apply the same arguments to military academies. The judge

explained that the Naval Academy has a unique interest in having a diverse officer corps to reflect the demographic makeup of enlisted service members. While the Supreme Court banned race-based admissions at civilian universities in 2023, it excluded military academies from this ruling, allowing them to consider race in admissions. The anti-affirmative action group disagreed with the ruling and said it would appeal. The case could take on new importance with the incoming Trump administration, which may push to end race-based admissions in the military academies as well.

What is the central idea of the passage?

How does the author develop the central idea throughout the text?

What is the primary purpose of the passage?

Central idea refers to the main point or underlying message of a text. It is the key concept that the author wants to communicate to the reader. Be sure not to confuse central idea with a topic. A topic is a general subject. *The central idea expresses what the author is specifically saying about that topic.*

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Directions: Read the passage. Determine the central idea and how the central idea is developed. Determine the primary purpose of the passage. Identify and explain at least **TWO (2)** purposes.

CHANGE OF OPINION



Jeff Bezos, the owner of The Washington Post, has announced a major change to the newspaper's opinion section, stating that it will now focus only on "personal liberties and free markets." This means that opposing viewpoints will no longer be published, marking a sharp departure from the paper's tradition of offering a wide range of perspectives. As a result, the section's editor, David Shipley, has resigned, and many journalists have spoken out against the decision. Some staff members feel that this move is a threat to journalistic integrity, while others argue that newspapers have the right to choose what viewpoints they want to highlight. This change raises larger questions about the role of opinion in journalism.

What is the central idea of the passage?

How does the author develop the central idea throughout the text?

What is the primary purpose of the passage?
