

The News in Different Places and Times

Lesson Plan

Subjects: social studies, history, language arts/writing

Lesson Summary: Students will learn about the history of news coverage, newspapers, and a particular place through its local newspaper.

Objectives:

The students will be able to:

- 1) Define each and explain the differences among local, national, and international news, as well as human interest stories
- 2) Explain the types of news sources they read, watch, and listen to and explain the coverage for each.
- 3) Explain the reasons for changes in newspapers with the emergence of other media forms.
- 4) Compare and contrast news from various sources.
- 5) Analyze news sources in terms of the presentational format, information provided, and the relation of the news to current events.
- 6) Cite newspapers using the MLA citation format.

Materials:

Each student will need the following:

- 1) Computer with internet access
- 2) Paper
- 3) Pen or pencil
- 4) Copy of a recent newspaper in print
- 5) Copy of the writing assignment instruction sheets, editing form, and [FCAT rubric](#).

Teacher Preparation:

- 1) Print out a copy of the lesson reading and the writing assignment instruction sheets. Photocopy enough for everyone in the class.
- 2) Make sure the computers are ready for the students so there is no lost time. Put the assignment main page up on each computer: <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufdc/UFDC.aspx?c=fdn1>.
- 3) Make sure there are enough copies of the three components of the writing lessons. You can print out and photocopy new ones or reuse the old ones.

Procedures:

- 1) The students start at the reading main page.
- 2) Ask them to read the background information on the news. If they finish early, they can begin reading the newspapers for the writing assignments (20-30 minutes)
- 3) When the students have finished reading, pass out the first writing assignment on the news in different areas and ask them to complete it. (20-30 minutes)
- 4) Pass out the writing assignment on the news in different times and ask the students to complete it. (30 minutes)
- 5) Have the students get out the writing instruction sheet, the editing form, and the FCAT rubric. Using these forms, they should edit their OWN paper. (20-30 minutes)

Total Time estimates:

Two 50-minute class periods

Assessment suggestions:

Assessment for these writing assignments is based on meeting the assignment criteria and on the writing itself. For the assignment criteria, did the students meet the minimum requirements (analyzing two newspapers, listing each of the papers, describing the papers, and then comparing and contrasting the two newspapers)? Did the students write five or more paragraphs, with an introduction, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion? Evaluate the writing based on the FCAT rubric.

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Extension suggestions:

This lesson can be expanded in several ways.

- Students could research a particular day in history in several newspapers to see the differences in coverage to learn more about how history is represented in the current moment and then later on.
- Students could also create their own newspapers to learn more about the news production process. How would they design and layout their own local papers? How would they manage the costs of producing the papers? Would they sell advertisement space? If so, what layout balance would they want to have between advertisements and content (also called news copy). If not, how else could they generate revenue? What type of stories would they cover? Can they find an example of a similar paper in their area?
- Have students read samples of online college campus newspapers, like UNF's *Spinnaker*, UF's *Alligator*, FIU's *The Beacon*, and others.

<http://www.beaconnewspaper.com/>

<http://www.alligator.org/>

<http://www.unf.edu/groups/spinnaker/archives/2007/summer/>

What stories interest them? What school newspaper did they choose? Why?

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Overview: Newspapers: Local, National, International, Human Interest



Union County Times. Lake Butler, Fla. December 29, 2005. [Also online.](#)

Most people are familiar with their local newspapers as well as major newspapers like *The New York Times*. Newspapers can be recognized for their form—newsprint (normally recycled paper not meant to last)—and their common components, which include news coverage by newspaper authors and from news wires like the Associated Press (AP) wire, news photography, illustrations, editorials, advertisements, classified ads, and more. Despite these commonalities, newspapers differ greatly from each other based on several factors.

Different newspapers include different types of information. Some newspapers focus more heavily on local, national, or international news, while others focus more heavily on a particular type of news, like *The Wall Street Journal* with its focus on business and financial news. Larger newspapers tend to focus on national and international news so that they can appeal to a great number of readers. Local newspapers, on the other hand, tend to focus on saturation within an area; with a higher percentage of readers within the local area instead of a higher number of readers in a larger area. Despite their differences in content, all newspapers aid in distributing the news and in creating a record of the news. Local newspapers, in particular, serve as important records of local events and of areas because they include information that may not be covered elsewhere.

While news is often broken into categories based on the area the news relates to (local, national, international) or the subject, major news stories tend to be covered in all news sources. Different newspapers do tend to cover the stories in different ways, however. For instance, small, local papers may discuss national and international events in relation to how those events impact the local area like national recessions that cause people in small towns to lose their jobs and wars where small town residents are soldiers.

Human interest stories further blur distinctions in news types because human interest stories focus on the human angle. Rather than relying primarily on factual information, human interest stories focus on the emotional aspects of a story, like an interview with a survivor from a fatal car accident. Rather than a story on facts—like car design and police reports—an interview with a survivor puts a human face on the events. Human interest stories often garner more interest because they appeal emotionally to readers.

Newspapers also regularly include feature stories. Feature stories may not have news value, but they are on topics that interest readers. Feature stories, human interest stories, topical news, and news related to various areas are just some of the ways that newspapers have appealed to readers.

Newspapers in History

Newspapers have roots that stretch back even before the printing press, to handwritten newsletters and pamphlets. Newspapers developed alongside the printing press and distribution methods like postal systems. As the newspaper evolved, other periodical forms also developed like magazines, journals, newsletters, and others. Newspapers have existed in a more familiar form in the United States since the late 1800's. According to Steven

Mintz's *Digital History* online textbook:

The urban tabloid was the first instrument to appear. It was pioneered by Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*, and E.W. Scripps's *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. These popular newspapers differed dramatically from the upper-class and staunchly partisan political newspapers that had dominated 19th century journalism. They featured banner headlines, a multitude of photographs and cartoons, and an emphasis on local news, crime, scandal, society news, and sports. Large ads made up half a paper's content, compared to just thirty percent in earlier newspapers. For easier reading on street railways, page size was cut, stories were shortened, and the text heavily illustrated. (Steven Mintz, "[Making of Modern America.](#)" *Digital History*)

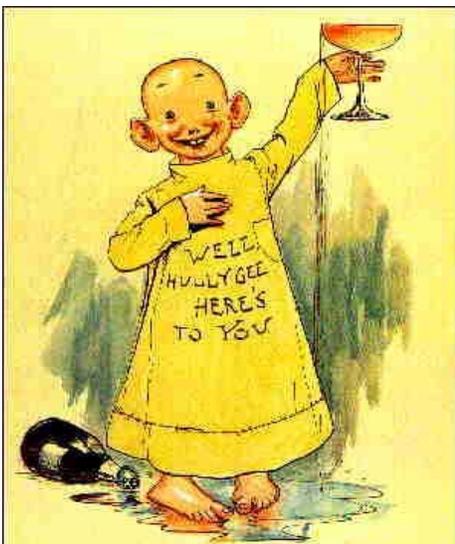
In addition to the changes in format with more illustrations, each of the newspaper pioneers worked to engage a general audience. Pulitzer's papers did so by focusing on contemporary issues (like fraud and corruption) and by enlisting a simple style with illustrations so that it could still be read by people who understood little English. Hearst engaged a general audience by developing the newspaper as an entertainment medium. In particular, Hearst developed comic strips—with classics like *Hogan's Alley* with the Yellow Kid and *Krazy Kat*—as well as special interest sections like fashion and sports pages. Scripps created "a national news service and syndicated feature syndicate that provided all of his newspapers with common material." Scripps also catered to the working class by focusing issues relevant to the working class and by selling papers for less than the other papers.

All of the previous innovations can still be seen today in mainstream newspapers with their splashy graphics, stories from various news wires, simple writing style, and catchy stories. While major newspapers have evolved into massive commercial enterprises, small newspapers have started to serve local interests. Small newspapers can be relatively cheap and simple to produce and distribute. Small newspapers often cover the history and events of a particular community that are not recorded elsewhere. While small and major newspapers differ in their form and content, they both help to distribute information.

Freedom of Speech and the Press

Newspapers also owe much of their growth in the United States to the Bill of Rights and freedom of the press. With the freedom to report on social issues and to provide critical commentary on society and the government, newspapers can report for communities and could also serve as the voice of communities, bringing to light issues of social justice and providing an avenue for social arguments. Not all countries allow freedom of the press. However, the concept remains strong, so much so that many countries that do not allow for freedom of the press still have writers who embrace the concept and write, even when it puts them in danger.

The Yellow Kid, a famous turn of the century comic strip character in *Hogan's Alley*.



Changing Times, Technology, and Costs

In addition to issues of press freedom, newspapers are constantly required to adapt. Newspapers face changes from many different areas, like changes in printing cost, printing format, and more like changes in reader preferences and changes in readers—for instance, from higher literacy rates.

While newspapers began as major news sources, over the years newspapers have had to compete with new media forms and with rising costs. The costs of print and distribution have risen, leading to cuts in the number of stories most newspapers can include as well as cuts in other areas like comics and advertisements. Further, newspapers have had to compete with radio, television, and the internet. With each new form, newspapers have more competition.

Despite the competition, newspapers remain popular because they still serve an important public need.

Further Reading

- Mintz, S. (2007). "Making of Modern America." *Digital History*. Retrieved 28 May 2007 from http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=343.
- The Bill of Rights: <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/funddocs/billeng.htm>.
- For more on issues of press freedom in other countries, read about Hossein Derakhshan's writing after Iran shutdown many of the country's newspapers: <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.06/posts.html?pg=6>.

Writing Assignment: Newspapers and Local History

For this writing assignment, you will write an essay comparing and contrasting the same pages (like the frontpage) of two different papers from different places and slightly different times. The first newspaper is *Star* (Roseau, Dominica), from July 6, 1968, and the second is *Different Drummer*, from August 26, 1968.

Readings:

Star: <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufdc/UFDC.aspx?i=35785>

Different Drummer: <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufdc/UFDC.aspx?c=fdn1&b=UF00027953&v=00001>

Before you begin writing, discuss in groups the historical events in the summer of 1968 that were pertinent to each of the newspapers areas (the southeastern United States and the Caribbean) and discuss what types of newspapers these are. What events were going on nationally and internationally? Then, discuss the papers in groups. What type of papers are they? What was their coverage or distribution area? Who are their intended readers? What else is different about the two papers? How are they printed? What news stories are on the page you've chosen? What is the writing style? What are the significant differences about the two papers and how do the two pages you've chosen exemplify that difference?

Using these questions, write a five paragraph essay (with an introductory paragraph, three supporting paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph) comparing and contrasting the two papers. You can also mention different pages and articles from within each of the papers and from outside sources relevant to 1968.

Resources:

- Remember to provide the citation information in MLA format for each of your sources (including the two newspapers). Information on MLA citations can be found online on websites like: <http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citmla.htm>.
- For more on the 1960's in the United States, see S. Mintz, "Making of Modern America," *Digital History* <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/us38.cfm>.

Writing Assignment

For this assignment, you will read two newspapers from the same day (choose two of the newspapers from February 2005, listed here: <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufdc/UFDC.aspx?c=fdnl1&m=hbtall11&o=1>). After choosing the two newspapers, write an essay comparing and contrasting the same pages (like the frontpage) of two different papers for the same day. Begin by describing each of the papers. What newspapers did you choose and why? What type of papers are they? What was their coverage or distribution area? Who are their intended readers? What else is different about the two papers? How are they printed? What news stories are on the page you've chosen? What is the writing style? What are the significant differences about the two papers and how do the two pages you've chosen exemplify that difference? How do these papers address events outside of their immediate areas?

Using these questions, write a five paragraph essay (with an introductory paragraph, three supporting paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph) comparing and contrasting the two papers. You can also mention different pages and articles from within each of the papers.

Resources

- Remember to provide the citation information in MLA format for each of your sources (including the two newspapers). Information on MLA citations can be found online on websites like: <http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citmla.htm>.