

LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 7 to 10

About the Author: This unit was adapted from lessons created by

Rosalind Ross, David Halliday and John Crocker of the Durham Board of Education in The AML Anthology (1990), produced by the

Association for Media Literacy.

The Newspaper Front Page

Overview

This lesson is part of a unit that explores news journalism across the media. In this lesson, students explore the content and elements of the front pages of newspapers. They begin with a superficial look at typical content found on the front page, and learn the vocabulary associated with newspapers. Once this is done, students conduct more extensive analysis, comparing how front pages from different newspapers report the same day's news, and then analyze and deconstruct the stories and content from a particular front page. Students complete this section with a newspaper project where they design a front page for a special interest publication.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- an understanding of the terminology associated with newspapers
- an awareness of the importance of the front page of the newspaper
- an awareness of the types of stories and elements that typically appear on the front page of a newspaper
- an understanding of the importance of layout and content in attracting and engaging readers
- an understanding of the role played by audience in determining story selection and placement

Preparation and Materials

Photocopy student handouts:

- Newspaper Vocabulary
- News: The Front Page
- Looking At News
- Group Work Log
- Criteria Sheet



Procedure

Day One: The Front Page

Ask students to outline the content and elements to be found on a typical front page. Create a board list of elements which are most likely to be found (this should take approximately ten minutes):

Headline Index Photographs Teasers Masthead Scores

Cartoon Graphics Use of Colour Weather Articles Advertisements

- Distribute Newspaper Vocabulary and discuss it with the class.
- Distribute the front pages of various newspapers. (These may be provided by the students, collected by the
 teacher over the previous week or picked up from the library. It is not important that they be multiple copies of
 the same paper. Students should work in small groups of 2-3, so that only about a dozen front pages would
 be required.)
- Distribute News The Front Page and instruct students to complete it, using the front pages available.
- Analyze the results of this chart exercise and pose the following questions:
 - Which items had the largest headlines? Why?
 - Which items had the smallest headlines? Why?
 - Which stories had photos? Why?
 - Does the position of a story affect the reader's response? (Above the masthead? Above the fold?)
 - Are particular viewpoints represented in the articles? Explain.
 - What proportion of the page is fact/opinion? (It is likely that 99% will be factual.)
 - Which of the papers do you find most accurate?
 - Which of the papers do you find most interesting?

Day Two: Analysis of the News

Using laminated or regular pages from a major newspaper, ask the students to discuss the following guestions:

- What other information does the front page carry in addition to major news reports? (Index, joke or cartoon, "teasers" about stories inside the paper.)
 - How does the extra material affect the readers' attention?
- Do all five W's appear in each front page story? (Who, what, when, where, why.)
 - In what order do they appear? Why?
- What is the source of each story? (Staff writer, news agency.)
 - How impartial or unbiased does the reporter appear to be?



- How much of the story appears on the front page and how much is continued inside the paper?
 - What makes the reader pursue the story into another section?
 - Since any copy in a newspaper is designed to fit around the advertising, stories are written in a way
 that they can be "cut" virtually anywhere after the first few paragraphs. How much information can
 you drop from the end of the story without affecting the essential news content?
- Into what sections is the newspaper divided? What types of information are contained in each? (Hard news, soft news, fillers, human interest, business, sports, advertising.)
 - How does the editorial page differ from the front page? (Comment, political analysis, criticism, effects and implications evolving from hard news)
 - How do colour, photos and headlines affect a reader's response to the news? (Try comparing a tabloid with a more conservative paper.)
- Does the newspaper appear to support any political party or individual politician?
- How does the journalist's style differ from other writers' material? (Short sentences, front-end-load of information rather than building to a climax)

Make board notes or a handout from the answers provided by the students.

Activity

Assign two or three classes for the following assignment.

Looking at the News

- Divide the class into groups of 5-8 students
- Distribute Looking at News and Group Work Log, and review the assignment with the class.
- Review the assessment guidelines from the *Criteria Sheet*.
- Once assignments have been completed, groups will present finished projects to the class. (Group editors
 will explain editorial decisions made by their group.

Evaluation

Groups will be evaluated according to the Looking at the News Criteria Sheet.



Newspaper Vocabulary

font: style and size of type

headline: extra large font across top of front page, placed above or below the masthead

wire service: a news agency or organization that gathers news and transmits it to individual subscribing newspaper (AP, CP, Reuters)

tabloid: a smaller format 1/2 broadsheet folded, often preferred by publishers of local papers or commuter papers and the sensationalist press (*National Enquirer*)

broadsheet: full-size newspaper, averaging six columns to a page

column:

- the vertical divisions of a page
- opinion or comment expressed by a regular writer

masthead: information about the newspaper, such as the name of the publishing company, names of the officers of the company, location of editorial offices, editorship and distribution facts, all usually found at the top of the editorial page

hard news: up-to-the-minute news and events that are reported immediately

soft news: background information or human interest stories

paparazzi: international press corps who compete for stories, usually of a sensational nature

reporter: a person hired to rush to the scene and phone back information as soon as possible or to key the report into a word processing terminal at the newspaper office

layout: the position of stories, advertisements, photos and graphics on a page

morgue: the newspaper's collection of clippings, photos, reference materials and microfilm

deadline: the assigned time for stories to be submitted in order to make the issue going to press



News: The Front Page

The following chart is designed to show the differences in approach to the news in three newspapers. Choose three papers (preferably one local, and two major). Looking at the front page only, fill in the information requested on the chart. You may have to exchange front pages with another group to complete the chart.

	PAPER # 1	PAPER # 2	PAPER#3
Name of paper, date			
Headline (lead story, size, position, type of story)			
Other articles: size, position			
Proportion of local, national, international stories			
Photography, artwork, graphics. Proportion, purpose			
Use of colour, proportion, purpose			
Index Yes/No			
Miscellaneous cartoons, weather, ads, etc.			

Looking At News

This assignment will require groups of 5-8 students. When the groups are first chosen, responsibilities should be allotted to the group members as follows:

- an editor should be chosen to organize the exercise, edit copy and contribute an editorial
- three reporters should be chosen to do the research and the writing of copy
- a production person should be chosen to be responsible for layout and physical assembly of the finished product

Once assignments have been made, this editorial group will decide on the nature of the paper and its leadership, and also decide what story items will be of interest for that audience. The group will then research and write 4-6 stories, prepare the stories for production, and prepare the shape and graphics of the paper's front page. Some suggestions follow:

- Prepare a front page based on the activities of your school.
- Prepare a front page based on a novel which you have studied in class.
- Prepare a front page of a community newspaper.
- Prepare a front page of a national newspaper.
- Prepare a front page of a newspaper in an old folks' home.
- Prepare a front page for a paper in a nursery.
- Prepare a front page for a sports paper.
- Prepare a front page for a music paper.

When the page has been completed, it should be displayed in the classroom and a brief oral presentation should be prepared for the class by the editor. It should include the following points:

- What is your target audience?
- What criteria were involved in your editorial selection process?
- What criteria were involved in your decisions regarding the design and layout of your page?

EVALUATION

Group participation 10 marks

Finished product 20 marks

Oral presentation 10 marks



Group Work Log

	DATE	TASK ASSIGNED	WORK DONE	EVALUATION
Editor-in- chief				
Reporter 1				
Reporter 2				
reporter 2				
Reporter 3				
Layout & copy				
Facilian				
Freelance				

EVALUATION

- 1 2 3 4 5 work complete
- 1 2 3 4 5 good content
- 1 2 3 4 5 good quality
- 1 2 3 4 5 good mechanics
- 1 2 3 4 5 on time

ENTER TOTAL PER PERSON ABOVE.

Criteria Sheet

2.

3.

4.

•	Has the paper been clearly identified and is it appropriate for the target audience?/5			
•	Has the work been completed on time and does it contain all of the requirements called for?/5			
•	Have the various story items been interesting and consistent with good journalistic style? /10			
•	Has the placement of the copy on the page been effective graphically? Has it been placed logically? Is it attractive on the page?/10			
•	Have the normal rules of grammar, spelling and sentence structure been observed?/5			
•	Has the use of language shown some Imagination and flair? /540/2=20 marks Total			
ORAL PRESENTATION				
1.	The target audience has been identified clearly/10			

The editorial selection process was explained clearly. _____ /10

The design/layout criteria were explained clearly. _____/10

Questions from the class were handled capably. _____/10

