



## LESSON PLAN

**Level:** Grades 3 to 8

**About the Author:** "News and Newspapers" was adapted from The AML Anthology, Supplement (1992), produced by the Ontario Association for Media Literacy.

# News and Newspapers: Across the Curriculum

## Overview

---

This lesson offers a selection of questions and activities for integrating newspaper studies into a wide range of subject areas and grade levels. Subject areas include: Primary Grades, Social Studies, Science/Technology, Math, Art, Language Arts, Home Economics and French.

## Preparation and Materials

---

- Have students collect a wide variety of locally-available newspapers and bring them to class.
- If possible, arrange a tour of a newspaper plant (arrangements for such a tour should be made with the local newspaper several weeks in advance).

## Background

---

### Read All About It!

"Stop the presses!" This catchy phrase was first heard in Canada on March 23, 1752, when John Bushnell started the *Halifax Gazette* - the first newspaper in Canada. Before this, the settlers of the areas had depended on Britain and the United States for all the news fit to print.

With the publication of the *Halifax Gazette*, there was now a Canadian newspaper. Since the newspaper depended on government funding, much of the news consisted of government announcements and foreign items. The ads were small and unimaginative. The paper itself was only four pages long, appearing twice weekly.

Although newspapers were news in Canada in 1752, they had existed for centuries. In 69 B.C., a primitive news sheet called *Acta Diurna* (Acts of the Day) described the activities of the Roman senate. This was the first newspaper. Marco Polo revived the concept when he returned from the Orient where he had seen the *Court Gazette*. This Chinese newspaper continued publication until the 20th century and remains the longest continuing paper in history.

Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1450 advanced the technology of newspapers, but they did not become commonplace in Europe until the 1700s.



When settlers came to Canada from Europe and the United States in the 1800s, they brought with them a tradition of newspaper reading. Self-sufficient Canadian editors appeared who got their revenue from advertising instead of from the government. With the achievement of responsible government in Canada in 1841, a new climate of intellectual tolerance and freedom of the press was established. And, as Canada expanded westward, so did its newspapers.

Today, with technological innovations including computers, teletype, telephoto and colour processing, newspapers have become big business. The advent of television and the Internet as important news mediums has meant increased competition, and many newspapers have successfully met this challenge by updating their style to attract new readers and boost circulation.

Questions and activities about news and newspapers can be integrated into a number of grade levels and subject areas:

### Primary Grades

- Suggest important events in the students' lives. Have them compose headlines for these events. Write the headlines on a large bulletin board mock-up of a newspaper called *Classroom News*.
- Cut out pictures from magazines to paste on sample front pages.
- Describe a common household event (e.g., dinner, going to sleep, etc.) from the students' point of view. Then have them pretend they are their mother or father and describe the event again. How did the story change? Why?
- Write a story with the class that begins, "The most important news event in this school last week was..."
- Cut out articles shaped in various rectangles from the newspaper. Have students fit the rectangles in various configurations on large sheets of newspaper-sized paper.
- Read Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham* and discuss why a person would not like something because of what he or she had heard about it.

### Social Studies

- Discuss what the terms news and newspaper mean. What are the purposes of news and newspapers?
- Newspapers have various names in countries around the world. Find out what the following newspaper names mean: Pravda, Journal, Gazette, Mail, Post, Tattler and Telegraph.
- How did the following people contribute to the history of the newspaper: Marco Polo, Gutenberg, Horace Greeley, William Randolph Hearst and George Brown?
- Tour your local newspaper plant. Have students make a list of the people involved in printing the newspaper.
- Choose a newsworthy event (international, national, local or school) and have one student play a person involved in that event. The rest of the class can act as reporters at a news conference, asking questions of the person and noting the answers. Write the results in an article.
- Divide students into groups to write newspaper headlines for famous Canadian historical events such as John Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland, Jacques Cartier's first meeting with the Indians, Confederation, the execution of Louis Riel, World War I and the election of the current prime minister.
- For a great bulletin board, have students research the names of the newspapers in all the provincial capitals. Print the names on small signs and put them on a bulletin board map of Canada.



- To explore media ownership, see which company owns the different newspapers from the capitals of Canada. Look for patterns. What issues may arise based on current patterns of ownership?
- Examine the sections in the local paper. Why are these sections there? What is the difference between daily newspapers and weekend papers? Why is there a difference? How does the newspaper represent the community in which the students live?

### Science/Technology

- Research the process of turning trees into newsprint.
- Research the kinds of printing.
- Invite a local printer into your classroom to explain the printing process.
- Discuss how the computer and the photocopy machine have changed the printing process.
- Write a play about Gutenberg's discovery of the printing process.

### Art

- Examine the front pages of several newspapers. Discuss how they are made up. Include the following terms in your discussion: banner, masthead, lead, caption, byline, placeline, pictures and index.
- Have students create their own front page formats by making up headlines and using pictures cut out of magazines.
- Create newspaper ads for the following products: soap, boutiques, sports stores, sailboats, running shoes and perfume.
- Create sample cartoon strips or political cartoons.

### Language Arts

- Keep a dictionary of newspaper terms.
- Cut out a series of pictures from magazines.
- Discuss where our news comes from. Examine the differences in stories written by reporters, correspondents, feature writers, column writers and news agencies.
- Cut out a series of articles appropriate for your class. After reading an article, have students list words they do not understand and summarize the important ideas in one paragraph.
- Read a series of want ads. Discuss the style of this kind of writing, including the use of abbreviations. Have students write their own want ads.
- Discuss the characteristics of movie reviews. Have students write a review of a movie they have recently seen.



## Mathematics

- From the table of contents of a newspaper (real or teacher created), have students calculate how many pages there are in several sections of a newspaper.
- Phone the local paper and ask for the advertising rates for want ads, birth announcements, small ads and full page ads. Calculate how much it would cost to:
  - Place a want ad for a car for one week.
  - Place a birth announcement for the birth of your seventh baby girl for three days.
  - Place a small ad for a sale at your shoe store for a week.
  - Place a full page ad for a department store sale for three days.
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of metric conversion seen in the food ads. Research the differences between the Imperial and Metric system. Have a debate on the question, "Did converting to metric help anyone?"
- On a chart, keep track of the prices of three stocks over a period of three weeks.
- Research terms such as: stocks, bonds, securities, commodities, stock broker and stock market.
- Discuss the role of the American dollar in the world's economy. Using information from the newspaper, make a chart of the values of five major currencies for two weeks.

## Home Economics

- Pretend students are to be the grocery shoppers for their families for a week with a budget of \$100. Using the food ads, write a shopping list and calculate the costs.
- Write a series of menus for the entire week based on the specials for the week.
- Have students find recipes for their sample menus and put them together in a cookbook format.
- Have students chart differences in costs between various stores' advertisements about the same item.
- You want to buy your father and mother a present but you have only \$20 to spend. Examine the ads to get ideas. Do not forget to calculate tax on your purchases.
- Have students compare the types of foods that are advertised in magazines that are geared to: homemakers, teens, kids, men, seniors. Which magazines contain ads for the most junk or snack foods? Which contain the most nutritional ads?

## French

- Have students write articles for a French-language student newspaper.
- Dramatize an event in French. Then have the rest of the class pretend that they are reporting on the event.
- Learn the French names for the various sections of the newspaper.



### Creative Thinking

- Brainstorm a number of new types of articles that could be written in newspapers.
- Review the idea of freedom of the press. Examine why we have such a freedom and discuss the kinds of problems that might arise as a result of this freedom.
- Compare news reporting on the Internet to traditional news reporting.
- Discuss the changes that have taken place in the newspaper industry because of the Internet.
- Have students write a play about a day in the life of a reporter.
- Consider the statement, "If newspapers had never been invented, then..."

Finish off your study unit by producing your own classroom or school newspaper.

### Extension Activities:

The American Web Site *Education World* Features a selection of "[Twenty-Five Great Ideas for Teaching Current Events!](#)", which includes great ideas for connecting current events to all subjects and many interesting classroom activities.

