

NEWSEUM CHOOSE THE NEWS

Unit Overview

We believe that your visit to the Newseum, along with this unit of study on how the news is chosen, will help you and your students better understand the process of the free press and become more informed and critical news consumers.

By actively participating in this unit, including pre-visit lessons and activities, the Newseum experience and post-visit activities, students will come to understand how journalists and editors make decisions about what to include and what not to include in the daily news. Students become editors and reporters, participating in a role-playing news budget meetings and laying out their own newspapers.

Our guiding question in this unit — **How and why is the news chosen?** — engenders a number of additional questions that will be good to keep in mind as you take advantage of your Newseum visit:

**What is news?
Who decides
it's news? And
how? How are
newspapers
designed to give
readers the most
important stories
first?**

- **How does the news affect our daily life?**
- **Who is the audience for news?**
- **Why are some events news in one community but not in others?**
- **How does understanding the news process help us become more critical consumers of news? Why is that important?**
- **Do we always agree that the stories printed in a newspaper or aired on a TV news show are worthy of inclusion? Why or why not?**

We appreciate your willingness to share with your students the benefits of viewing, hearing, reading and touching the elements of the First Amendment through which the Newseum brings history to life.

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National Standards of Learning

National Center for History in the Schools, National Standards for U.S. History (5-12)

Content:	Standard
The student understands contemporary American culture. 7-12 Explain the influence of media on contemporary American culture. [Explain historical continuity and change]	Era 10 Standard 2D

Center for Civic Education, National Standards for Civics and Government Grades 5-8:

Content:	Standard
The public agenda. Students should be able to explain what is meant by the public agenda and how it is set.	III.F.1.

Grades 9-12:

Content:	Standard
The public agenda. Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions about how the public agenda is set.	III.E.1.
Public opinion and behavior of the electorate. Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions about the role of public opinion in American politics.	III.E.2.
Political communication: television, radio, the press, and political persuasion. Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life.	III.E.3.
Forms of political participation. Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions about the means that citizens should use to monitor and influence the formation and implementation of public policy.	V.E.3.

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National Council for the Social Studies, Curriculum Standards for Social Studies Middle Grades:

Content:	Standard
b. explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference	(I) Culture

High School:

Content:	Standard
b. predict how data and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference	(I) Culture
b. identify, describe, and express appreciation for the influences of various historical and contemporary cultures on an individual's daily life	(IV) Individual Development & Identity

National Council of Teachers of English: Standards for the English Language Arts

Content:	Standard
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).	3
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.	4
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.	5
Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).	12

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Pre-Visit Activities

Dear Educator,

We are looking forward to welcoming you and your class to the Newseum for the “Choose the News” school program. These two quick activities will introduce your students to two overarching questions we will explore together in more depth during the visit:

- **What’s news?**
- **How is the news decided everyday?**

We hope these activities help you and your students get excited about your upcoming field trip. We’ll see you soon!

Newseum Education Staff

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Name _____ Date _____

What's News?

1. When deciding whether an event, action or idea is news, reporters apply certain tests. One test might be to ask themselves if the news item would fit into any of these categories:

Firsts, War, Peace, Breakthroughs, Life, Death, Love, Hate, Sacrifice, Freedom.

Below is a list of historic events and actions. Identify the categories into which they may be placed.

- _____ a. Civil rights march in Selma, Ala.
- _____ b. Dr. Christiaan Barnard performs the first successful heart transplant
- _____ c. Abortion rights and anti-abortion protests
- _____ d. Mother Teresa in India
- _____ e. Freed POWs are reunited with their families
- _____ f. Murder at the 1972 Summer Olympics
- _____ g. The world mourns Princess Diana
- _____ h. Neil Armstrong lands on the moon
- _____ i. Hitler refuses to withdraw from Poland
- _____ j. A mother steps in front of an approaching car and pushes her child to the curb

2. Read your local newspaper for five days. Pair 10 news events with the above characteristics. Provide the headline, date of publication, page and a summary of the event, action or idea.

Example: Life/Death

"20 Million Chickens Given Tainted Feed: Birds Held From Market for Study," May 5, 2007; A8. To keep tainted chickens from entering the food supply, Agriculture Department officials in several states have placed a voluntary hold on chickens that consumed melamine-tainted pet food.

Name _____ Date _____

My Community How Is the News Decided Every Day?

Pretend you live somewhere else. What if your parents told you that your family was moving to where you live now? What do you want to know about this place, and how would you learn about it? There are several ways to get to know a community.

1. Use the U.S. census

Before moving, you could visit online sources to form a profile of the community. Every 10 years, a census is held. The information is available online at census.gov. Use American FactFinder to provide the following information:

- Population: _____
- Females: _____ % Males: _____ %
- Median age, 18 years and over: _____
- Education, high school graduate or higher: _____ %
- Median household income: \$ _____
- Another piece of information that you find interesting: _____

2. Interview a resident

Individuals who have lived in a community watch the people, buildings and activities change over the years — or remain the same and become a tradition. Interview someone who has lived in your community for more than 20 years. Write five questions to ask this person. _____

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Name _____ Date _____

3. Read the local newspaper

A newspaper covers a community, reflects the readership and provides information that the residents of a community want to know, need to know and should know. Read the front page of your newspaper, and answer the following questions.

How many stories are about an event or action that took place outside of the United States? _____

Focus of the stories: _____

The way in which the stories relate to your community: _____

How many stories are about a national event or action? _____

Focus of the stories: _____

The way in which the stories relate to your community: _____

How many stories are about a state event or action? _____

Focus of the stories: _____

The way in which the stories relate to your community: _____

How many stories are about a local event or action? _____

Focus of the stories: _____

The way in which the stories relate to your community: _____

Post-Visit Activities

Dear Educator,

We hope you enjoyed your recent visit to the Newseum. We anticipate that your students will look at the front page of your daily newspaper with a more critical eye and have more awareness of the decision-making process that resulted in the stories that appear in each day's newspaper.

On the following pages are suggested activities that may extend the experience and allow you to apply concepts that were presented in the Choose the News lesson.

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Post-Visit Activities

1

Invite the managing editor of your local newspaper to visit your class. Prepare for the visit by:

- Reading the newspaper daily and charting the international, national, regional and local stories.
- Noting how stories have been localized.
- Preparing interview questions.

2

Attend a budget meeting of your local newspaper. Read the next day's newspaper to see how it reflects what took place in the budget meeting. Did a breaking news story change any of the content that students were expecting? If your newspaper has more than one edition, compare and contrast the front page and sports coverage of the different editions.

3

Evaluate how your student newspaper operates its budget meeting. How could it be improved to increase coverage of the entire school community? If a budget meeting is not currently held, formulate a plan for instituting this practice. How might it benefit the staff and coverage?

4

Divide the class into two to four groups to produce class newspapers. Each group should select its managing editor, photography editor and arts/graphics editor. Other students could be given beats to cover news, style/entertainment, sports, academics and clubs/organizations. Also, select students for an op-ed section. Students are given a day to brainstorm stories and sources.

The op-ed portion of the staff will hold their own meeting while the budget meeting is taking place. Why do they remain independent from the rest of the staff?

After story ideas have been pitched, the content decision is made. Stories are written. You may include the application of technology, art and photography skills by having students lay out and print their newspapers.

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Name _____ Date _____

In the Newseum

Visit the Today's Front Pages Gallery (Level 6)

The Newseum receives more than 600 front pages daily from newspapers across the country and around the world. Here we display some of these front pages. Some days the stories on the front pages are all very similar; some days they are very different.

Find a newspaper from a state where you have relatives or friends and a newspaper from your home state and compare them:

Home state: _____

Newspaper: _____

Lead story: _____

How many stories are on the front page?

How many of those stories are local?

National? _____

International? _____

How many photos or graphics are on the front page?

Other state: _____

Newspaper: _____

Lead story: _____

How many stories are on the front page?

How many of those stories are local?

National? _____

International? _____

How many photos or graphics are on the front page?

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What kinds of stories are the lead stories? Are they a combination of these types?

Human interest: Appeals to your humanness.

Proximity: How close to you?

Celebrity: How prominent is the person involved?

Timeliness: Recent; event of immediate concern.

Impact: On your community; many people.

Magnitude: Storms; economic impact on the dollar.

Home newspaper: _____

Other newspaper: _____

Pick one story from each of the two front pages that you would not have included if you were the editor and explain why.

Home newspaper: _____

Story you would cut: _____

Why?: _____

Other newspaper: _____

Story you would cut: _____

Why?: _____

Reading these two front pages, what do you think is important to these communities?

Home newspaper: _____

Other newspaper: _____
