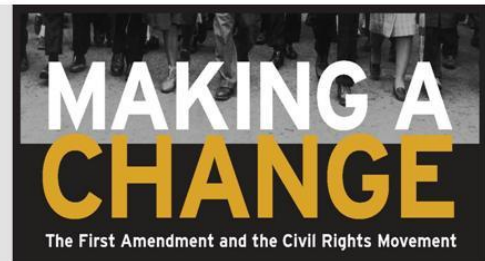


Civil Rights: Reporting Then



Rationale/Main Concept:

Today, news consumers have incredible choice in their information sources. We are no longer limited to the city papers, radio or major television news networks during their scheduled broadcasts. We can access breaking news instantaneously, at any time and almost anyplace. But this breadth of information doesn't mean we get the full story. This lesson plan helps students understand the purpose and components of a news report. Then, using historic newspaper front pages from the civil rights movement as case studies, students identify best practices in journalism. Finally, students discover how context affected journalists' coverage of civil rights events, and in the process, become savvier news consumers.

Essential Questions:

- What does freedom of the press mean? How does it affect people in the United States?
- What is a news report? What purpose does it serve?
- What are the components of a news report?
- What are some best practices of reporting? Why do they matter?
- What factors may have affected journalists' reports during the civil rights movement? How do you know?

Objectives — Through this lesson, students will be able to:

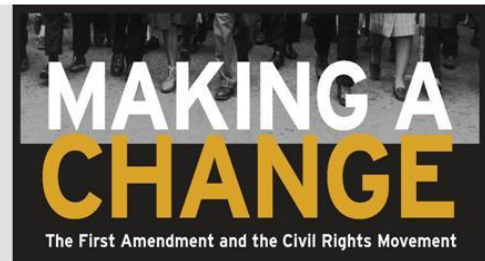
- Define the goals and elements of a news report.
- Define freedom of the press and explain its importance to reporters.
- Identify best practices in reporting.
- Deduce possible causes and effects of choices in reporting during the civil rights movement.
- Compare and contrast news coverage of the civil rights era around the U.S.

Time: 40 minutes of classroom discussion, 10 minutes of independent work, homework assignment and class presentation the following day

Materials:

- Lesson plan
- Internet access for the media map interactive and/or printed copies of front pages
- Internet access for watching the video lesson on historic newspapers (optional)
- "Anatomy of a Front Page" handout
- "Reporting Then: Front Page Comparison" worksheet

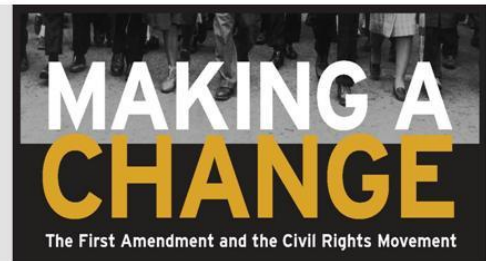
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Procedure:

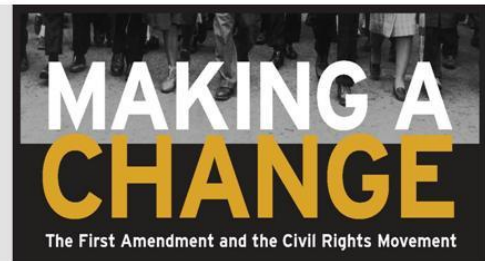
1. Begin by asking students to define a news report. What purpose does it serve? What are some characteristics of a good news report? *A news report should inform readers about events. It should include facts, descriptions and answers to the “reporter’s questions” — Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? It should be accurate, fair and clear; that is, it should be objective as opposed to personal, be easily understood by the audience and tell a complete story.*
2. Next, ask students to speculate why newspaper reports were important to readers and to participants throughout the civil rights movement. *Possible ideas include: Events developed quickly and newspapers could effectively reach many people; newspapers were cheap and common (unlike television, which had only three major networks in the 1960s); they could include photographs (unlike radio); they gave readers a way to know what was going on around the country; they allowed participants to know how their actions were being portrayed to the public, etc.*
3. Tell students they are going to look at news articles from the civil rights movement to better understand both the events that happened and differences in reporting around the country. Ask students to call out the first adjectives that come to mind when you say “Martin Luther King Jr.” Make a list of adjectives on the board: *activist, African-American, brave, leader, powerful, etc.*
4. Show students the front page of *The Augusta Courier* from March 13, 1965. Ask them to read the lead article on the left side. What is this article about? What similarities and differences do they notice between their lists and the adjectives in the article? *The author writes that Martin Luther King Jr. disobeyed federal orders to leave Selma, Ala., a report confirmed by a congressional investigation. The author uses strongly negative adjectives to describe King. He also uses a derogatory religious term (Lucifer).*
5. Ask students if they are surprised. How does this account differ from their knowledge of the Martin Luther King Jr. and the March on Washington? Does the article seem accurate, fair or clear? *No, it is a biased — prejudiced, not objective — account. Why or why not? Create a list of evidence on the board. Examples might include: name-calling, no quotes from King or the people he was working with, no photographs for context, Confederate flag in the banner, question in red in the footer, no quotes from Democratic representatives, use of anonymous sources (the priest, FBI agents), no explanation of why King might have responded that way to the FBI agents.*

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6. Once you have a list with several examples, point out that some of the evidence comes from format/layout choices (the way information is presented), while other examples are content choices (what information is or is not presented). (For example, missing multiple perspectives is a content choice. The large, bold font for the headline about King is a layout choice.) Help students identify which of their evidence points are content choices and which are layout choices. *See attached sample.*
7. Then, ask the class if they know why the *Courier* was allowed to print this version of the events. *The First Amendment in the Bill of Rights guarantees all people on U.S. soil the right to freedom of speech, press, religion, petition and assembly. Although there are a few limitations on freedom of press that have to do with harm and privacy, in general, that freedom allows reporters and newspapers to publish any information they want. That includes writing reports that only tell some of the facts, that are inaccurate or that interpret an event in ways some readers or subjects might not like.*
8. Look again at the article in the *Courier*. Ask students to imagine they are readers in Augusta, Ga., in 1965. What conclusions would they draw about Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement? How would they perceive the events mentioned in the paper? *Martin Luther King Jr. was a thief and a scofflaw, that he was acting alone or with only a few people, that his goal was to be disruptive, that he did not have a goal for his work and was disorganized, etc.*
9. Use this discussion to emphasize that the content and layout choices reporters and publishers made affected readers' knowledge and interpretation of events during the civil rights movement. For example, headline size, article placement, choice of photograph, etc., give readers clues about the relative importance of the subject that day. The facts and the order in which a reporter tells them in an article influences what readers think is the most important and least important information. Based on the evidence list they brainstormed, ask the class to generalize to create a class list of "do's and don'ts" of journalism, both for content and for layout. *You may wish to show the Newseum's "Anatomy of a Newspaper" short video here, or assign it for homework. See attached example for possible "do's and don'ts."*
10. Explain that the guidelines they came up with are related to content. As the students just saw, the information a reporter includes and the way s/he shares that information affect a reader's understanding of the event. However, layout also can influence how a person interprets a report. What layout choices in newspapers might affect interpretation? How?

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11. Students now have an opportunity to apply this knowledge independently. Distribute copies of the “Analysis of News Reports” worksheet and ask students to choose two front pages from the same year. They should identify the article in each paper related to the civil rights movement, read the articles and then compare and contrast them. *See attached example. Students may wish to check the Newseum’s civil rights timeline for additional information on events covered in their articles.*
12. Guide a class discussion about their findings. Possible discussion prompts include:
 - a. What content and layout similarities and differences do you notice about the newspapers? What similarities and differences do you notice about the articles?
 - b. In terms of the news report best practices we talked about earlier, what are some of the strengths and weaknesses of each report?
 - c. Does the content in each report confirm, deepen or contradict your prior knowledge about the event? How?
 - d. Why do you think the reporters and editors made these content and layout choices? What factors may have influenced these choices?

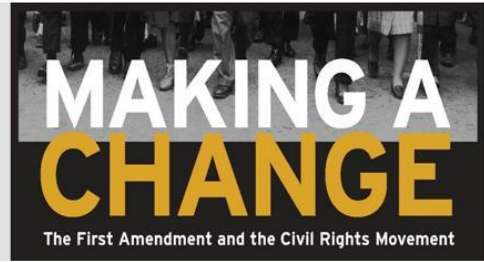
Extension Activities:

Dig Deeper: What are some social, political, geographic or economic factors that may have led to biased — or just inaccurate — reporting during the civil rights movement? Choose one article that shows evidence of a prejudiced, incomplete or inaccurate article. Using the newspaper descriptions as a starting point, challenge students to conduct and summarize research on the reporter, editor, publishers and readers of the paper.

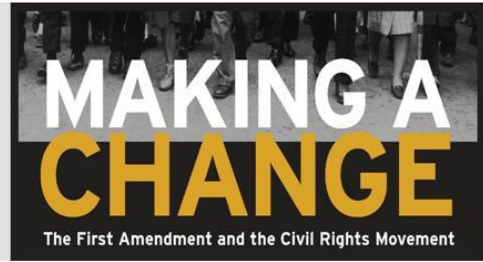
Take Action: Many of the newspapers included on the media map are still printed today; some have the same name, while others have merged or changed ownership. Ask students to find out if one of the newspapers they’ve examined still exists, and if so, how to contact the news or op-ed editors. Students should use the information from their worksheets to write letters to the editor that explain their reactions to the news report. They may wish to include the strengths and weaknesses they noticed, the effects of the content and layout choices on readers, and why the paper should acknowledge the students’ response.

At the Newseum: Visit the “Civil Rights at 50” exhibit. Ask students to choose a front page from the exhibit that stands out to them and answer the following questions. What

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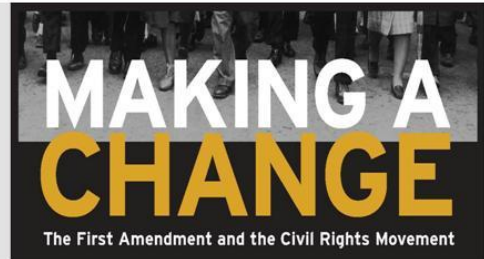


drew you to this front page? How is this front page the same as and different from the other front pages displayed in this exhibit? As far as you can tell, is the front-page story about the event featured in the exhibit accurate? Fair? Clear? Based on what you learned in this exhibit, how was news coverage of important events 50 years ago the same as or different from news coverage today?



Example: Press Choices

Content Choice	Layout Choice
Anonymous sources	Large size font in title
Adjectives describing Martin Luther King Jr.	Bolded title
No days or times	Red font for lead headline
No description of Selma events	Placing the article on the top-right side
Article lead — makes an argument, directly addresses readers	Lots of space dedicated to article — only three articles on the front page
Congressional report details come later in the article, on the inside pages of the newspaper	No photo or illustration



Example: Do's and Don'ts of Journalism

Do's — Content:

- Strive to be accurate, fair and clear
- Interview multiple sources
- Cite sources
- Answer the reporter's questions (5W's + H)
- Include supporting details (quotations from sources, visuals or audio effects)

Don'ts — Content:

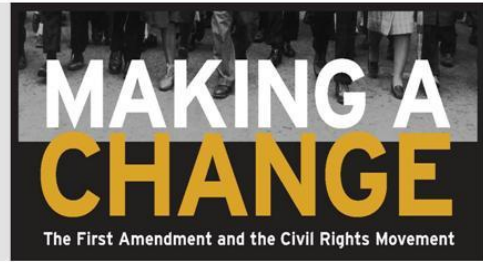
- Plagiarize
- Be sloppy in reporting (take research shortcuts)
- Let personal or professional bias affect the report
- Deceive readers
- Cover a story when you have a conflict of interest
- Exercise poor news judgment (publishing stories of little value)

Do's — Layout:

- Strive to be accurate, fair and clear
- Include visuals and/or audio that add more information to the story
- Use fonts and colors that are easy to read
- Put the most important stories on the front page

Don't — Layout:

- Use color, font type or font size to show personal opinion
- Crop photographs, illustrations, etc., to tell only part of a story or its context
- Bury a story on an inside page because you don't like the content

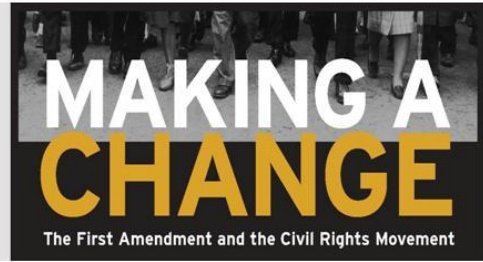


Analysis of a News Report (Compare/Contrast)

Name: _____

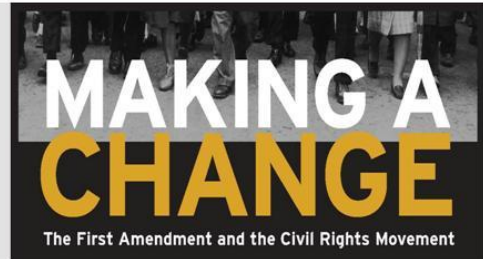
Article 1	Information	Article 2
	Newspaper	
	Date of Publication	
	Place of Publication	
	Article Headline Note details: size, font, etc.	
	Placement on page	
	Photo included? Caption?	
Content		
	What happened? Two sentences	
	Who was involved? Names of people or organizations, if available	
	When did it happen? Yesterday? During the last two weeks?	

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	Where did it happen? City, state	
	Why/how did it happen? Was it an accident? Did someone react?	
	Sources included Anonymous people? Government experts?	
	Is this report accurate? Are all the facts right? Give specific examples.	
	Is this report clear? What happened? Give specific examples.	
	Is this report fair/unbiased? Can you tell if the writer has an opinion about the event? Give specific examples.	
	Strengths What did the writer do well?	
	Weaknesses What could the reporter have done better?	

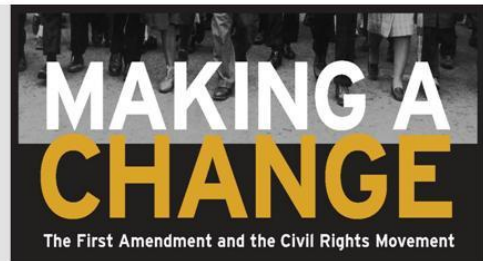
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Example: Analysis of a News Report

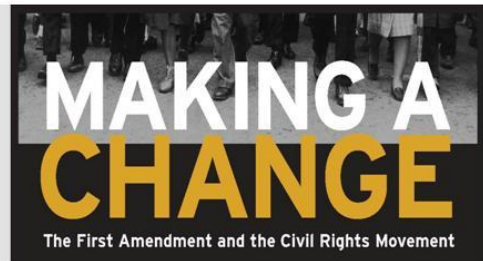
Article 1	Information	Article 2
<i>The Chicago American</i>	Newspaper	<i>Forrest City Daily Times-Herald</i>
9/4/1957	Date of Publication	9/25/1957
Chicago, Ill.	Place of Publication	Forrest City, Ark.
<p>'Troops Bar Negro Students Guards Ring Dixie School'</p> <p>Large font; headline goes all the way across the paper</p>	<p>Article Headline Note details — size, font, etc.</p>	<p>'Integration Enforced by Hard-Eyed Paratroopers on Ike's Orders Begins Today in Capitol City of Arkansas'</p> <p>All words in capital letters, three-line headline, stretches across the whole paper</p>
Right side, above the fold	Placement on page	Right side, above the fold
<p>Yes — guardsmen in foreground, students in back</p> <p>Caption — "Troops enforce segregation as Little Rock, Ark., students return to school."</p>	<p>Photo included? Caption?</p>	No

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	Content	
Called off scheduled integration; Faubus ordered National Guard to surround school	What happened?	Military brought nine Negro students to Central High School
Gov. Orval Faubus Local school board Nine Negro students	Who was involved?	Military Local citizens
9/3/1957 School's opening for the new year	When did it happen?	9/25/1957
Central High School Little Rock, Ark.	Where did it happen?	Central High School Little Rock, Ark.
Order of the governor — Gov. Faubus said it was to preserve peace and order since there was an indication to forcibly integrate	Why/how did it happen?	Order of the president to integrate
AP; Gov. Faubus quoted; Supreme Court's public school decree referenced	Sources	Injured men identified but not quoted
Mostly — missed some information, like the names of the students, but you know the other 4W's and H	Is it accurate?	Doesn't tell any wrong information, but also doesn't tell the whole story – why the university was integrating or why the

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		troops were there
Yes — no racial slurs or adjectives that show an opinion	Is it fair/unbiased?	No — vocabulary “hard eyed,” “hate-filled struggle,” “clubbed”
Yes — the order of information makes sense, language is easy to understand	Is it clear?	Not really — some of the 5W’s are answered, but not all, and the story ends abruptly
Article included additional information on peaceful integration accomplished in Greensboro and other cities.	Strengths	We know who was involved, where it happened and when it happened
Didn’t include students’ names	Weaknesses	Bias, no specific sources identified