



A set of eight lesson plans,  
activities & assessment  
that utilize the daily newspaper

**take it  
from  
the pros**

**the foundation for both the  
teaching & learning process lies  
in learning from the professionals**





# from the editors

# W

**Welcome to “N the news,”** a set of eight curriculum units that encompass lesson plans, subject content, activities and assessment tools. This project was conceived to utilize the daily newspaper as a teaching tool in the journalism classroom. The Newspaper Association of American Foundation funded this project in hopes of providing journalism teachers, publication advisers and others a comprehensive journalism skills curriculum whose daily newspaper “textbook” was affordable and timely.

What makes this curriculum guide unique is its creation by teachers for teachers. Student teachers enrolled in Ball State University’s journalism education degree program and specifically the Methods and Materials of Teaching High School Journalism (J395) course, wrote and created significant portions of the plans and activities in this curriculum.

The curriculum is not intended to be the instructor’s only resource for teaching journalism. But it does cover journalism fundamentals and utilizes, what we in the newspaper industry and student media hope is, an engaging, timely resource. Every effort has been made to align lesson objectives with National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) standards. Effort was made to insure that activities address a variety of student learning styles. Objectives and aligned assessments are labeled with Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Whether the guide is used as an eight-week course or as a supplemental tool to enhance current curriculum, our hope is that you take advantage of your local newspaper’s Newspaper in Education program (NIE) and use the daily newspaper as the great teaching tool it is.

Happy teaching,

Sandy Woodcock, Director, Newspaper Assoc. of America Foundation

Lori Oglesbee, Curriculum/Development Chair, Journalism Education Assoc.

Mark Herron, Asst. Professor of Journalism, Ball State University

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# acknowledgements

## About NAA:

The Foundation's programs are targeted to students in elementary school through early college. Foundation programs emphasize the use of newspapers by young people, but included the use of and facility with other media as well. Foundation programs are concentrated in three major areas:

**Newspaper in Education (NIE):** A system of cooperation in place at newspapers nationwide, in which newspapers work with schools to promote newspaper use in a variety of subject areas. The Foundation provides resources and training to newspapers on using newspaper in schools; and helps newspapers develop strategic plans for promoting NIE services to educators.

**Youth Content:** The Foundation provides resources and training in youth content development; serves as a clearinghouse on youth readership initiatives; and helps newspapers plan and evaluate youth features and content. The foundation supports the Youth Editorial Alliance, a nationwide coalition of newspapers dedicated to advocating the value of youth-targeted content.

**Student Newspapers:** Collaboration between newspaper and educators to promote student-produced media in middle and high schools. The Foundation provides information and resources to support the production of student media.

The NAA Foundation was established as the ANPA Foundation in 1961 by the Board of Directors of what was then called the American Newspaper Publishers Association. In 1992, it officially adopted its current name.

The NAA Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible and may be made in the form of cash, securities and bequests. There are no membership requirements or dues, and the NAA Foundation represents all newspapers equally.

Programs of the NAA Foundation are supported by an endowment funded by the newspaper industry.



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-Unit 1: Evolution of the Newspaper  
-Unit 2: Law and Ethics  
-Unit 3: Information Gathering  
-Unit 4: Writing News  
-Unit 5: Writing Features  
-Unit 6: Writing Opinions  
-Unit 7: Writing Sports  
-Unit 8: Headlines and Cutlines

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# newspaper evolution

## UNIT 1

### **N**preparation...

#### MATERIALS YOU WILL FIND HELPFUL:

- Transparency of a 1940s newspaper.
- Daily newspaper.
- Copies of a tabloid for each student.
- Copies of a broadsheet for each student.
- Multiple sets of rubber alphabet stamps.
- Computer paper.
- One textbook per group.
- Black liquid ink for rubber stamps.
- Scissors.



### date/week of:

### class/period(s) taught:

### content overview:

During this unit, students will learn about the history and evolution of newspapers.

### goals and objectives:

**Goal:** Students will have an understanding of the history and evolution of newspapers.

**Objective #1:** Students will describe the differences between newspapers created in the 1940s and newspapers created today.

*(Knowledge)*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 9 - Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.*

**Objective #2:** Students will identify the differences between tabloids and broadsheet newspapers.

*(Comprehension)*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 12 - Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.*

**Objective #3:** Students will explain how newspaper production changed with the printing press.

*(Analysis)*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique and discuss print and non-print texts.*

### activities:

**Objective #1:** Students will describe the differences between newspapers created in the 1940s and newspapers created today.

#### Activity 1

Distribute copies of a current newspaper to students. Once they have scanned the paper, show them a transparency of a newspaper from the 1940s. (Use a search engine to find a version of your local newspaper from the Internet.) Have students discuss the differences. Make sure to point out art/photo usage, headline display, color and grid structure differences.

*(Addresses Visual & Auditory Learners)*



# newspaper evolution

## UNIT 1- lesson plan

### **N**due time...

#### 9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives and content overview with timeline and resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and material provided.
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and material provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events or utilize an activity provided for in-class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

#### 18-WEEK EXPANDED

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper..." project and showcase examples from daily paper & assign
- **Day 7:** In-class application of "N your paper..." project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate & discuss "N your paper..." project & what was learned
- **Day 9:** Provide 10 minutes to read the paper focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read & learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment of unit



**Objective #2:** Students will identify the differences between tabloids and broadsheet newspapers.

#### Activity 2

Distribute copies of both newspaper formats to students. Once they have scanned the papers, have students each write down three differences they see between the tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. Then, lead a class discussion about the differences. Make sure to point out size, headlines, colors, photographs, number of stories on a page and content differences.

*(Addresses Visual & Auditory Learners)*

**Objective #3:** Students will explain how newspaper production has changed with the printing press.

#### Activity 3

This activity is designed to give students an idea of how much work went into printing a newspaper before the printing press was invented. Divide students into small groups. Each group will need to select a paragraph from the newspaper and recreate the paragraph using rubber alphabet stamps. Students need to arrange the stamps letters -up, side-by-side, so when ink is applied, a readable print is created. Students need to make sure the letters are in a straight line and there is equal spacing between the lines. A ruler or something similar could be placed between the lines to ensure this. Once the paragraph has been recreated with the stamps, apply liquid ink to the letters. Next, lay a piece of paper over the stamps. Place a textbook on top of the paper to get enough pressure to create a print.

*(Addresses Tactile Learners)*



# newspaper evolution

## UNIT 1

### **content:**

#### **What is the difference between newspapers created in the 1940s and newspapers created today?**

Newspapers created in the 1940s were mostly text-based. The text was laid out on a column grid similar to what newspapers still use today; however, photographs and graphics were rarely used. Color type or images were never used and display headlines were uncommon.

Today, newspapers base their design on the major art element on the page. Some newspapers, such as the Chicago Tribune, include more graphic illustrations, pushing toward a more visual medium.

While the optimum 6-column grid used in the 1940s is still seen in newspapers today, a post-modern 10- to 12-column grid is more common because of the high activity level possible. Many of the newspapers published in metropolitan areas are in full color and most small-town newspapers have at least spot color.

#### **Tabloids vs. broadsheet newspapers**

Public Occurrences, one of the first publications, was designed in a pamphlet format. Tabloids became more popular during the 1920s. Today, the broadsheet is the most common format for newspapers.

Nevertheless, tabloids are making a comeback. The Chicago Tribune now has a tabloid called Red Eye targeted at a younger audience. Its competitor, the Chicago Sun-Times, produces a tabloid called Red Streak.

At first glance, readers can tell a big difference between a tabloid and a broadsheet newspaper. Tabloids are smaller and have bigger photographs than broadsheets. Headlines in tabloids are much larger and the colors make the publication stand out on the shelves.

The front page of a tabloid has fewer stories than a broadsheet front page. A broadsheet may have a 5-story front, while a tabloid may have a 2- to 3- story front. The front page of a tabloid may also contain a large photograph with teasers to the inside stories. Readers can tell a difference in the content. The content is more laid-back and includes not only hard news but also may gossip. Another reason for tabloids making a comeback may be because the small size appeals to more mobile readers who find the format easier to read in transit.

#### **How has newspaper production changed?**

Prior to the invention of the printing press, a typesetter had to set the type, and each newspaper had to be hand-printed, which was a time-consuming process. When the first printing press, the Hobart Mercury, was invented, 80 to 100 newspapers could be printed an hour, by an operator turning a handle.

After the invention of a sextuplet double-decker press and a quadruple press in the early 1920s that printed at a rate of 20,000 newspapers per hour, a four-in-one 80-horsepower press was invented in 1946 that could run 30,000 folded newspapers per hour.

Today, presses are able to print in full color through a multiple-step process. The publication must be run through the press several times, each time receiving a different color.





# newspaper evolution

## UNIT 1

### **NIE definitions:**

**Column** - The arrangement of horizontal lines of type in a news story; also, an article appearing regularly written by a particular writer or "columnist."

**Hard news** - Factual news stories without opinion.

**Headline** - An explanatory title over a newspaper article summarizing the main point for the reader.

**Layout** - The organization of all elements on an ad or page in space.

**Newsstand** - A single copy account that sells the papers over the counter.

**Tabloid** - Taking the standard size of the newspaper and folding it in half, usually stitched or stapled and trimmed.

### **N**your paper...

- Paste examples of images from a recent newspaper (photos, graphs, etc.).
- On the same page, write an explanation of the differences between these images and those found in early newspapers.





# newspaper evolution

## UNIT 1

### assessment:

- 1) Describe the difference between newspapers created in the 1940s and newspapers created today in a short-answer essay.  
*(Objective #1)*
- 2) Give students a copy of a tabloid and a broadsheet from the same day and the same area. Have students, in groups, chart the stories and the coverage given to the top news stories. Each group should make a presentation of its findings and give the reasons behind the differences.  
*(Objective #2)*
- 3) In a broadsheet newspaper, find stories that you consider newsworthy. Take those stories and then design and modify them to be appropriate for a tabloid spread. Use the modified materials to design a tabloid spread that meets the tabloid guidelines you've learned in this unit.  
*(Objective #2)*
- 4) Summarize in 3-5 paragraphs the changes in newspaper production since the printing press was invented.  
*(Objective #3)*



# law and ethics

## UNIT 2

### **N**preparation...

#### MATERIALS YOU WILL FIND HELPFUL:

- Code of Ethics from the Society of Professional Journalists.
- Daily newspaper.
- Copies of the First Amendment each student



**date/week of:**

**class/period(s) taught:**

**content overview:**

During this unit, students will learn about the law and ethics in producing a daily and student newspaper.

**goals and objectives:**

**Goal:** Students will have an understanding of the law and ethics in producing a daily and student newspaper.

**Objective #1:** The student will memorize the First Amendment.

*(Knowledge)*

*NCTE 12 - Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.*

**Objective #2:** The student will list the freedoms protected under the First Amendment.

*(Knowledge)*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 12 - Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.*

**Objective #3:** The student will explain the role of the First Amendment in newspaper publication.

*(Analysis)*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 12 - Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.*

**Objective #4:** The student will apply the First Amendment to high school publication situations.

*(Analysis)*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 12 - Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.*

**Objective #5:** The student will apply ethical guidelines to newsroom situations.

*(Analysis)*



# law and ethics

## UNIT 2- lesson plan

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 12 - Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.*

### activities:

**Objective #1:** The student will memorize the First Amendment.

**Objective #2:** The student will list the freedoms protected under the First Amendment.

**Objective #3:** The student will explain the role of the First Amendment in newspaper publication.

### Activity 1

Create a Lichert scale on the floor of the length of the classroom with tape. 1 means strongly agree. 5 means strongly disagree. Have students move desks out of the way and stand up. Present the following situations. Students should position themselves on the Lichert scale according to their personal beliefs. Make sure they realize that there are no right or wrong answers, only opinions.

1. Congress should pass a Constitutional amendment banning the burning of the American flag.
2. Music played over public airways should be censored to remove curse words, sexual references and any other inappropriate content.
3. A group-led prayer should be allowed at all public gatherings.
4. All movies rated above PG13 should be banned.
5. The Ku Klux Klan should be allowed to have a peaceable rally at the courthouse in your county/parish.

For each situation have students from various places on the scale explain why they are there. After all situations have been completed, have students move back to their desks. Give each student a copy of the First Amendment. Go back over the situations and apply the First Amendment to the situations. See if their opinions change. Discuss. This can become a heated discussion, so the teacher must act as a moderator and remind students to be respectful of others' opinions throughout the process.

*(Addresses Visual & Auditory Learners)*

**Objective #4:** The student will apply the First Amendment to high school publication situations.

### Activity 2

Divide the class in small groups. Provide a copy of the court cases in the content of this lesson plan. Have the students discuss each of the scenarios and then present their findings.

Explain which court cases would help you make a decision in the following scenarios. Answer two of the following.

- The principal was arrested for DWI (driving while intoxicated.) A student wants to write an article for the school newspaper.

## N due time...

### 9-WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives and content overview with timeline and resources introduced
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- **Day 9:** Provide 10 minutes to read the paper focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read & learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment of unit





# law and ethics

## UNIT 2-lesson plan

- A student wants to write a sexually explicit column with street terms for sex encouraging students to practice safe sex.
- A student wants to write an article about a protest of the Iraqi war. Your school is near a military base.

*(Addresses Visual & Auditory Learners)*

**Objective #5:** The student will apply ethical guidelines to newsroom situations.

### Activity 3

Download a copy of the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics at [www.spj.org/ethics\\_code.asp](http://www.spj.org/ethics_code.asp). Read and discuss. Then present the following situations and have students make decisions in small groups on the ethics involved. Each group should be prepared to say how the decision was made.

- A staff photographer has a photo of a power line worker who was electrocuted. Power was knocked out to most of the city because of this. The photo is of the deceased victim on a gurney covered by a white sheet. Do you run it?
- Information gathered on the Internet can be used for facts in a news story.
- As long as credit is given, a photo may be used in another publication.
- Undercover reporting is the best way to get a story.
- When tragedy strikes, it is the duty of the news organization to capture the story for all. This may include uncomfortable photos of grieving people or of crime scenes.

*(Addresses Visual & Auditory Learners)*

### Activity 4

Distribute copies of the daily newspaper from different days to groups of four students. Have each group find stories in the national news section that reports information that would be censored if the people or agencies mentioned in the story had the privilege to censor. Share group findings with the class. Search again to find stories that deal with any of the five freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment.

Distribute copies of the Society of Professional Journalists Ethics to groups of four students. Distribute a different scenario to each group. Students will apply the ethical standards and make a group decision then present for a class discussion.

*Addresses Visual & Auditory Learners)*





# newspaper evolution

## UNIT 2

### content:

#### The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise, thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The Knight Foundation report of high school students' understanding of their freedom in January 2005 reported the following findings.

- Nearly 75 percent of those polled say they don't know how they feel about the First Amendment or that they take it for granted.
- Students are less likely than adults to think that people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions or that newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories.
- 75percent of those polled lack knowledge and understanding about key aspects of the First Amendment and its protection.

#### First Amendment Timeline

- 1215 King John of England signs Magna Carta – the first time that sovereign powers are limited.
- 1641 The First Amendment has its early beginnings when, in 1641, the first broad statement of American liberties is drafted by the Massachusetts General Court, entitled the Massachusetts Body of Liberties containing right to petition and a due process statement.
- 1663 Religious freedom granted in Rhode Island.
- 1689 English Bill of Rights established.
- 1708 Connecticut passes a statute allowing “full liberty of worship” to Anglicans and Baptists.
- 1776 On July 4th, the Declaration of Independence, in its final form, is adopted by the Continental Congress. Virginia passes their state's Declaration of Rights – the first state in America to have a bill of rights as part of its state constitution.
- 1777 Draft of a Virginia state bill addressing religious freedom is completed by Thomas Jefferson, later known as the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.
- 1789 U.S. Constitution is adopted.
- 1791 The first 10 amendments (Bill of Rights) to the U.S. Constitution are adopted on December 15.
- 1868 The Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment is ratified, stating “. . . no State shall deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law. . .”.
- 1907 Supreme Court hears the first free-press case in *Patterson v. Colorado*.
- 1917 With the passage of the Espionage Act, it becomes a crime “to willfully cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States.” or “willfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service” of the U.S.
- 1918 Sedition Act is passed, forbidding spoken or printed criticism of the U.S. government, Constitution or flag. (Repealed in 1921.)
- 1919 Clear and present danger test is established in *Schenck v. U.S.*
- 1940 The Smith Act (a.k.a. Alien Registration Act of 1940) is passed making it a crime to advocate violent overthrow of the government.

### **N**your paper...

- Paste examples of images from a recent newspaper (photos, graphs, etc.).
- On the same page, write an explanation of the differences between these images and those found in early newspapers.





# newspaper evolution

## UNIT 1

- 1957 Supreme Court establishes that “obscenity is not within the area of constitutionally protected speech or press.” Obscenity is defined in *Roth v. United States* as “material which deals with sex in a manner appealing to prurient interest.”
- 1962 Supreme Court determines that a state-mandated non-denominational prayer was “contrary to the spirit and command of the First Amendment’s ban against the establishment of religion.”

### Key Cases involving the high school press

#### Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier

In May 1983, students in the Journalism II class at Hazelwood East High School in St. Louis, Missouri, produced the last issue of the student newspaper, the *Spectrum*. The editors submitted the content to first-year adviser, Howard Emerson. He, in turn, as he had with previous issues submitted the paper to the principal, Robert Reynolds, to review the paper prior to publication.

When Reynolds reviewed the paper, two articles concerned him, one on teen pregnancy including quotes from anonymous pregnant students. The principal felt that even though the names were withheld that enough information was present to identify the students compromising their privacy. The second article was about divorce. Once again, he felt that the families were identifiable even though no names were used and too much personal information about the families from only the students’ viewpoint was included. Sex and birth control were mentioned, and Reynolds did not believe freshmen at the school should be exposed to such topics in the high school newspaper.

Reynolds told Emerson to delete the two pages from the paper since, being the last issue, there was little time for editing. When the paper was printed, the students who wrote the articles and worked on the pages were upset to find two pages missing. More than just the two articles under question were on the pages. The student felt the censorship was a direct violation of the First Amendment rights, so they took their case to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri. The court ruled with the principal. The judges said that school officials might impose limits on students’ speech in activities that are “an integral part of the school’s educational function” as long as their decision “has a substantial and reasonable basis.” The students appealed to the Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. This court reversed the decision of the lower court, saying that the students’ First Amendment rights were violated. In the opinion, the court conceded that the newspaper was indeed a part of the school curriculum but noted that it was also a “public forum.” As a public forum, the newspaper was “intended to be and operated as a conduit for student viewpoint.” The principal or other officials could censor it only when “necessary to avoid material and substantial interference with school work or discipline . . . or the rights of others.”

The school appealed the decision of the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court of the United States who supported the students again. Jan. 13, 1988, the U.S. Supreme Court, with a 5-3 vote, reversed the decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals. The Court ruled that Principal Reynolds had the right to censor articles in the student newspaper if he deemed them to be in conflict with the school’s educational mission.





# law and ethics

## UNIT 2

### **Tinker v. Des Moines**

Mary Beth Tinker and two other students wore black armbands to school in protest of the Vietnam War. School officials had quickly adopted a policy prohibiting students from wearing armbands when they heard of the planned protest. Officials said they wanted to avoid disruption. When the students refused to remove their armbands, they were suspended and sent home. Mary Beth challenged the suspension in court as a violation of her First Amendment rights.

The U.S. Supreme Court in 1969, reversed lower court decisions and ruled: "First Amendment rights, applied in the light of the special characteristics of the school environment, are available to teachers and students. It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

The Court established four criteria for identifying unprotected student speech.

Expression:

- Must not be libelous.
- Must not be obscene.
- Must not create substantial disruption to the school day.
- Must not otherwise invade the rights of others.

This was the standard prior to *Hazelwood* applied to high school press rights.

### **Bethel School v. Fraser**

In a school assembly of 600 students, 17-year-old Matthew Fraser, a student at Bethel High School in Washington, used a list of double-entendres, saying the candidate for student council he supported was " ... a man who is firm — he's firm in his pants ... in his character ... a man who takes his point and pounds it in ... who will go to the very end — even to the climax, for each and every one of you."

Fraser's candidate won the election. Fraser was suspended for two days. The issue was whether or not the First Amendment protected vulgar speech in this type of setting. The Supreme Court said Bethel High School officials in Washington did not violate the First Amendment by punishing Fraser for a campaign speech that was considered lewd. Both of the lower courts had ruled for Fraser because there was no disruption following the speech given in the school auditorium.

Because it was a school-sponsored activity, the Supreme Court said school officials had the right to punish the potentially offensive content of his speech. The Court held, "Under the First Amendment, the use of an offensive form of expression may not be prohibited to adults making what the speaker considers a political point, but it does not follow that the same latitude must be permitted to children in a public school. It is a highly appropriate function of public school education to prohibit the use of vulgar and offensive terms in public discourse. ... The inculcation of these values is truly the work of the school, and the determination of what manner of speech is inappropriate properly rests with the school board." "The process of educating our youth for citizenship in public schools is not confined to books, the curriculum, and the civics class; schools must teach by example the shared values of a civilized social order."

The United States Supreme Court held that it is a "highly appropriate" function of public school education to prohibit vulgar and offensive terms in public discourse and that Fraser's "offensively lewd and indecent speech" was not protected by the First Amendment.





# law and ethics

## UNIT 2

### **NIE definitions:**

**Appropriation** - Using a person's name or identity without permission for commercial purposes.

**Broadsheet** - A "standard" or large-sized newspaper. The measurements of broadsheet newspapers vary.

**Libel** - Publication of material unjustly injurious to someone's reputation.

**Intrusion** - Physical or technological invasion of an individual's privacy.

**Slander** - Spoken communication that damages a person's reputation.



# law and ethics

## UNIT 2

### **assessment:**

1) Write the First Amendment and list the five freedoms protected under it.

*(Objective #1 & #2)*

2) The student will write a letter to the editor explaining the role of the First Amendment in media coverage. Send the letter to the local newspaper.

*(Objective #3)*

3) Divide the class into groups. Each group should generate five or six scenarios of stories that might appear in a school newspaper. Pass that list to another group. Then each group evaluates the scenarios given them to determine if and/or how it should be published.

*(Objective #4)*

4) The student will write an essay about the ethical standards he/she expects the local newspaper to uphold.

*(Objective #5)*



# getting the story

## UNIT 3

### **N**preparation...

#### MATERIALS YOU WILL FIND HELPFUL:

- Daily newspaper.
- List of credible and non-credible Web sites for research & data collection based upon particular story or topic you may assign.
- Computers with Internet access
- Examples of infographics.



**date/week of:**

**class/period(s) taught:**

### **content overview**

During this unit, students will learn about conducting interviews and gathering research for effective and credible stories.

### **goals and objectives**

**Goal:** Students will learn how to conduct effective and credible research by using the Internet, conducting a one-on-one interview or group discussion and conducting opinion polls.

**Objective #1:** Students will check the credibility of a Web site.

*(Synthesis)*

*NCTE 7 - Students conduct research on issues and interests by generalizing ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit the purpose of their audience.*

*NCTE 8 - Students use a variety of technological and informative resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.*

**Objective #2:** Students will prepare for a one-on-one interview and use proper conduct for an interview.

*(Application)*

*NCTE 4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.*

**Objective #3:** Students will hold an organized group discussion.

*(Application)*

*NCTE 9 - Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.*

**Objective #4:** Students will conduct an opinion poll and put it together in a quick and easy to read format.

*(Application)*

*NCTE 12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.*

### **activities**

**Objective #1:** Students will check the credibility of a Web site.

#### **Activity 1**

Each student will be given a list consisting of both credible sites and sites lacking credibility. Instruct students to find one credible site and make a list of why that site is credible. Also, instruct students to find one site that lacking credibility and have them make a list of qualities that make the site not credible. Then conduct a class discussion of how to tell the difference.

*(Addresses Visual, Tactile and Analytical learners)*



# getting the story

## UNIT 3- lesson plan cont.

### **N**due time...

#### 9 WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline & resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events as it relates to unit topic or utilize an activity provided for in class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

#### 18 WEEK EXPANDED

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper..." project and showcase examples from daily paper & assign
- **Day 7:** In class application of "N your paper..." project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate & discuss "N your paper..." project & what was learned
- **Day 9:** Provide (\_\_\_ minutes) to read the paper focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read & learned. Give current events quiz.



**Objective #2:** Students will prepare for a one-on-one interview and use proper conduct for an interview.

#### Activity 2

Students will select one well-known person mentioned in the newspaper as a person they will interview. Have the students research that person and determine:

Subject's job credentials and job title

Personal background

Professional background

From their findings, students must formulate 10 questions to ask that person in an interview.

*(Addresses Tactile and Analytical Learners)*

**Objective #3:** Students will hold an organized group discussion.

#### Activity 3

Divide the class into five groups. Each group will be given a profile. Group one will be low income, group two will be high income, group three will represent ethnic minorities and group four will represent women. The class will be presented with a few topics from the day's newspaper. Each group will discuss the topics from the point of view of their given group.

*(Addresses Auditory and Kinesthetic Learners)*

#### Activity 3a

Each student will select one topic in the newspaper. After selecting a topic each student will lead a four-to-five-minute class discussion, acting as the moderator of a focus group.

*(Addresses Auditory and Kinesthetic Learners)*

**Objective #4:** Students will conduct an opinion poll and put it together in a quick and easy to read format.

#### Activity 4

Each student will choose a topic in the newspaper and use it to form a close-ended question. Once the students have found a topic, they will make small ballots asking opinions on this topic with answer options of 'yes,' 'no' and 'indifferent.' After the ballots are returned, students will compile the information and report on their findings by making a graph of how many students answered yes, no and indifferent.

*(Addresses Analytical Learners)*



# getting the story

## UNIT 3

### **content:**

Research is the foundation of creating credible and informative material. Today, online research is the most popular because it is easily accessible in schools and at home. However, researching through books, magazines, institutional sources, bound periodicals and newspapers are just as effective if used correctly. Also, conducting one-on-one interviews, holding group discussions and conducting opinion polls can be effective ways to research.

### **Organizing Information**

Before beginning research, you should have a clear focus of your topic. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is the central idea that the article should convey? How can I express that in a clear, active way?
2. What are the major ideas that should be included?
3. What are the details needed to make the theme and ideas clear?

Clearly defining your topic will help you organize your research to find information that is most vital to your reporting. After you've written out the information, review your work, paying close attention to the original ideas and messages you wanted to convey. The following questions can help you edit your work:

1. What literary forms can I use to make a strong story?
2. What was I trying to communicate?
3. How well did I do this?

A well-researched story will include facts and sources to back up all information.

### **Online Research**

Online research is easy and exciting because it provides instant gratification to the informed user. However, Internet research can lower the credibility of a piece of writing if the author does not know how to distinguish what makes a credible source from a non-credible one. There are a few key tips for researching online.

1. Read the 'about us' section of the Web site. If there is no 'about us' section, be wary of the information you find.
2. If a site address is a government site it will end in a ".gov". If the Web site address belongs to an organization it will end in a ".org". If the Web site address belongs to an educational institute it will end in ".edu". These sites are usually trustworthy.

Always remember that just because something was published online does not mean it is true.

### **Something to Remember**

Researching in your local library may seem old-fashioned, but it can also lead you to valuable sources of information. Your local library contains archived issues of newspapers from around the country that you may not be able to find online. Also, the library contains many books, magazines and scholarly journals for your use.

### **Checking Your References**

Since your school may not have a department of researchers to check your source-gathering ability, you need to do this yourself. A good way to ruin your credibility as a journalist is to become sloppy with your facts. Using a tape recorder and taking good notes can help you avoid the costly error of misquoting a source. Tape recorders can malfunction and your memory can fade, so take good notes. Also, ask a tough question in two different ways so you know that you have the correct answer. Be detailed oriented and stay on target.





# getting the story

## UNIT 3- content cont.

### checklist for filing story or assignment:

1. Have you chosen a subject with high interest? What did the person do that was exciting and different?
2. What area did you highlight?
3. Have you done your research?
4. Did you prepare questions in advance? Were they all answered?
5. If they were not all answered, who can you go to for more information?
6. What emotional response did you capture in the story?

#### Interviewing

An interview is another valuable piece of research. When you find the right subject to interview it can be a great source of current information about your topic. However, there are a few things to remember before you conduct an interview.

1. Make sure you get as much information on your topic and your interviewee before the actual interview is conducted.
2. Make an appointment.
3. Do not pressure your source.
4. Be on time.
5. Keep the questions open ended. Open-ended means that you need to ask questions that require more than a 'yes' or 'no' response.
6. If you do not get the answer you need, ask a follow up question.
7. Make sure you have quoted the source correctly.
8. Make sure you can contact your source again.
9. Dress appropriately—do not wear a suit to interview a Taco Bell employee, and refrain from wearing a t-shirt to interview a bank president.
10. The last question you should ask is "Is there anything you would like to add?"

When you take down notes, do not attempt to write down every word your subject says. Come up with your own form of shorthand that you can easily decipher. Once you have completed the interview, review your notes as soon as possible while the interview is still fresh in your mind. This will help you choose the best quotations and quote your subject accurately.

#### Focus Groups

A focus group is a good way to obtain a wide range of opinions through discussion. However, you as the group leader need to be just that, a leader. A good focus group includes a wide variety of people from all genders, ages and ethnicities. This is a good way to get different views on the same issue. When you hold a focus group it is good to remember to:

1. Make sure the group is diverse.
2. Be a leader; make sure you group stays on topic.
3. Give equal opportunity to everyone who speaks and allow opinions to be voiced.

#### Opinion Polls and Surveys

Opinion polls and surveys can be conducted in a variety of ways. They can be conducted in ballot form on paper, interview style or by phone, just to name a few. A poll and survey can be done when a more specific answer is desired, as opposed to a one-on-one interview or a focus group in which you are prepared to take any answer someone gives you. An opinion poll or survey often has a set of pre-selected answers like 'agree,' 'disagree' or 'neutral.' A poll or survey is often copied into print by converting the answers you have received into a graph with percentages so you can provide a quick reference of your findings. When you conduct a poll or survey make sure you remember to:

1. Form questions that require a short answer.
2. Depending on how in-depth you want your poll or survey to be, it never hurts to get the age, gender and race of the person you are questioning.
3. Make sure the questions you are asking are relevant to your story.





# getting the story

## UNIT 3

### **NIE definitions:**

**Five W's** - Who, what, when, where, why (sometimes "H" for how); the major questions answered in the lead of a well-written news story.

**Plagiarism** - Passing off as one's own the ideas and words of another.

**Wire services** - News-gathering agencies such as AP and UPI which gather and distribute news to subscribing newspapers.

### **N**your paper...

- Cut out and paste five examples of poll or survey results found in the daily newspaper.
- Highlight variety of statistics reported in one poll/survey or informational graphic.
- Cut out and paste any front-page story.
- Highlight every source used in the story.





# getting the story

## UNIT 3

### **assessment:**

- 1) Conduct a mock interview with a fellow student about a recent school event he/she was involved in. Continue the discussion with a group.  
*(Objective #2 and #3)*
- 2) Find three Web sites that you think are credible for a story on the "No Child Left Behind Act". Provide link (via email) or url as well as rationale in writing. 1-3 paragraphs per site. Why are they credible?  
*(Objective #1)*
- 3) Select a topic, develop a questionnaire and conduct a survey of at least 35 students and create a graphic to present your information.  
*(Objective #4)*



# writing news

## UNIT 4

**date/week of:**

**class/period(s) taught:**

### content overview

In this unit, students will study the process of writing news stories. They will also study the following different types of news stories: briefs, crime stories, accident/disaster stories and crises coverage.

### goals and objectives

**Goal #1:** The student will understand the basic components of news stories and how to write them.

**Objective #1:** The student will use Associated Press (AP) style.

*(Application)*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*

**Objective #2:** The student will write a news lead using the Five W's and one H (Who, What, When, Where, Why and How).

*(Application)*

*NCTE 5 - 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.*

**Objective #3:** The student will explain the importance of writing concisely and accurately.

*(Comprehension)*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*

**Goal #2:** The student will be able to identify and write four different types of news stories.

**Objective #4:** The student will compare the presentation of information in different kinds of news stories.

*(Comprehension)*

*NCTE 4 - 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.*

**Objective #5:** The student will compare news coverage of similar events in different kinds of newspapers.

*(Comprehension)*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*

**Objective #6:** The student will produce news stories of different kinds and write for different events and audiences.

*(Application)*

### **N**preparation...

#### MATERIALS YOU WILL FIND HELPFUL:

- Associated Press Stylebook (most current).
- Handout of story with AP errors
- Daily newspaper.
- Several copies of other newspapers.
- Glue stick.
- Colored paper.
- Copies of newspaper article covering a major crisis.
- Computers with Internet access.





# writing

## news

### UNIT 4- lesson plan cont.

*NCTE 5 - 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.*

#### activities

**Objective #1:** The student will use AP style.

##### Activity 1

- Prior to this activity, give students a list of AP Stylebook entries with which you would like them to become familiar.
- Create a handout of sentences or paragraphs that have style errors for students to identify and correct. Give students a set amount of time to search for errors and correct them using a list created from a stylebook (time may vary depending on the length of your handout).
- After the time is up, have the students take out their lists again and check the answers.
- Discuss the handout; tell the students what the proper corrections should have been.

*(Addresses Analytical Learners)*

**Objective #2:** The student will write a news lead using the 5 W's and the one H.

##### Activity 2

- Choose five or more stories from a newspaper for this activity.
- Split the class into groups of no more than three students. You should have the same number of groups as stories you are using. Assign a story to each group.
- Give students time to read the lead of their assigned story. As the students are reading, create sections on the board for the following categories: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.
- Ask one student from each group to come up to the board and fill out the information for one of the categories. After one student is finished, another from their group should come to the board and fill out another category for the group's story. Each category should have a list of whos, whats, whens, etc. below the title after all the information has been written on the board.
- After the board is finished, ask each student to individually choose one who, what, when, where, why and how from the board. They should try not to use several that came from the same news story.
- Using the random information they have chosen from each category, each student will write his or her own lead to submit in for a grade.

*(Addresses Visual Learners)*

**Objective #3:** The student will explain the importance of writing concisely and accurately.

##### Activity 3

- Ask the class to write a brief description of any event. This can be a sports event, a made-up crime story or even something as trivial as something that happened to them that day in school.
- Discuss and give examples of how to write concise sentences.
- Have the students peer edit for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. At this point, they should also attempt to rewrite sentences to be more concise. Once





# writing news

## UNIT 4- lesson plan cont.

### N<sup>due</sup> time...

#### 9 WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline & resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events as it relates to unit topic or utilize an activity provided for in class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

#### 18 WEEK EXPANDED

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper..." project and showcase examples from daily paper & assign
- **Day 7:** In class application of "N your paper..." project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate & discuss "N your paper..." project & what was learned
- **Day 9:** Provide (\_\_\_ minutes) to read the paper focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read & learned. Give current events quiz.



students have their own papers back, ask them to rewrite their story as a homework assignment.

*(Addresses Analytical Learners)*

**Objective #4:** The student will compare the presentation of information in different kinds of news stories.

#### Activity 4

- Choose two different types of stories (i.e. one crime story and one accident report) to read aloud to the class.
- Read the first two paragraphs of one story to the class.
- After reading, ask the students to try to recall the main points of the story and write them down.
- Repeat this process with the second story, and have the students write important facts from the second story on the back or on a different sheet of paper.
- Discuss what they remembered; which facts were the easiest to remember? The most difficult? Did anyone remember specifics, like a name or place?
- Discuss which facts came first in the story and why; ask students to explain why they remembered some facts over others.

*(Addresses Auditory Learners)*

**Objective #5:** The student will compare news coverage of similar events in different kinds of newspapers.

#### Activity 5

- Ask students to read a news story about a major event of international importance (i.e. Sept. 11, war story, etc.)
- Discuss the main points covered in the story. Which information is the most important? What did the story leave out?
- Allow students to use the Internet to find another story about the same event from a different paper and with a different angle.
- Discuss why papers with a different target audience may cover the information in another way.
- Have students compare and contrast the order and presentation of information in each story and write a reflection of why they think each paper chose to cover the event as they did.

*(Addresses Global Learners)*

**Objective #6:** The student will produce news stories of different topics and write for different events and audiences.

#### Activity 6

- Divide students into pairs. Each member of the pair will choose a different front-page story to use for this activity. Using scissors, each student will cut their story into strips by paragraph. (Note: strips should be trimmed to no longer fit together like a puzzle.)
- Next, have the students mix up their strips so that they are out of order and trade stories with their partners. (At this point, the rest of the newspapers should be put away.) Each student will now attempt to evaluate the order of the paragraphs in the story based on their knowledge of news writing. Once they have decided on the order, they will paste the paragraphs in order on a colored sheet of paper.
- Give students 15-20 minutes to complete this assignment, with a five-minute warn-



# writing news

## UNIT 4

### Word Choice Examples

(4-1)

Use	Instead of
died	passed away
bruise	abrasion
cancer	carcinoma
man	gentleman
fire	inferno
disaster	catastrophe

Brainstorm with students to add to this list of euphemisms.

ing to ensure that they will have time to finish pasting.

- Ask the students to trade their final products with their partners and take turns reading the original stories to see how close they came.
- Discuss the outcome. Did anyone's story match the original? Were there any surprises? Does anyone strongly believe that the order of information in the story should differ from the original? What have the students learned about the order of information in news?

*(Addresses Tactile Learners)*

#### content:

Writing news. In news reporting, it is important to understand your audience. Readers want the important information quickly. Depending on the topic of the story, information may be arranged in different ways to ensure easy access to the facts. For example, a story involving a car accident could be effectively written using the inverted pyramid writing style. In this method, the information is ordered starting with the most important and ending with the least important. Although journalists should understand the inverted pyramid style, information can also be arranged in other ways to affect the reader differently.

Writing for news has several style rules that may differ from the rules of writing for an English class. However, learning news writing can enhance writing performance in other subject areas because of its concise nature and focus on the most important facts.

Sentence structure in news stories is brief. A good lead will not typically exceed 25-30 words, and other paragraphs in news stories rarely exceed 50 words. Keep sentences short and make paragraphs one or two sentences.

Unnecessary words should be eliminated from news writing whenever possible. For example, instead of "The drama club will be meeting on Wednesday," a good journalist might write, "The drama club will meet Wednesday." Verb phrases like "will be," "are going to," "have been" and "has been" clutter the sentence. Use adverbs only when absolutely necessary. A strong verb can be much more effective.

News should be available to everyone. Since newspaper readers have varying intellectual levels, journalists should use simple, accurate language whenever possible. (See Table 4-1 for examples). For other important style information, consult the Associated Press Stylebook.

**The Lead.** A lead is the first paragraph of a news story. Its purpose is to draw in the reader and give him or her reason to continue reading the story. In most cases, the lead will summarize the facts of the story. A lead generally answers some or all of the five W's and one H: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How (See Table 4-2).

**Writing briefs.** A brief is a short story dealing with an incident or event. Information for briefs may be reproduced from another paper or press release, or just information gathered from a human source. The writer should include all of the pertinent facts the reader would need to learn about the incident or participate in an event.

**Writing about accidents and disasters.** When writing these types of stories, perhaps the most important advice is to provide every detail that people will need to know. If anyone is injured or killed, it is very important to identify the person and describe injuries. Other information of importance may include any damage to property, the cause, time and duration of the incident, a detailed account of the incident, escapes or rescues and any legal details.





# writing news

## UNIT 4- content cont.

### Lead Information (4-2)

- Who is involved in the occurrence?
- (Who did it happen to, or who did it?)
- What happened? (Brief description)
- When did it happen? (Time, date)
- Where did it take place? (Location in terms of city, state, area)
- Why did it happen? (Explains the action)
- How? (Manner in which the action occurs)

\*Depending on the nature of the story, all six may or may not be included in the lead.

In the case of major accidents, fires and other disasters, the first choice of information to feature in the lead should be the number of persons injured or dead. If no one was hurt, the lead may instead highlight property damage or rescues.

After providing these vital details, the next step is to give the story a human quality. In the former example of the car accident, a good journalist would try to interview and include quotations from police, survivors, witnesses and friends and relatives of the dead or injured.

**Writing crime stories.** One important part of writing crime stories (or any stories based on police records) is knowing the proper legal terms. For example, burglary is entering someone else's property to steal property, while robbery is illegally taking someone else's property by assaulting or threatening the person. Reporters should also be careful not to write that a person has been arrested for committing a certain crime. When a person is arrested, they are only arrested with a charge of the crime. If you have any question as to which terms to use in crime writing, consult the AP Stylebook.

Much like other basic news stories, it is best to present the most important information first. Depending on the importance of the crime committed, newspapers may choose between including a small brief in the paper or a longer story including more information about the situation that local residents would want to know.

**Crisis coverage.** When major, life-changing events take place in our society, a journalist's job is to gather accurate facts and use ethics to be sensitive to those affected. As readers have seen from major events like September 11th, newspapers choose different ways of covering the same events. For example, in addition to a front page story the day after the event, some papers may have chosen to localize the crisis by covering such topics as rising gas prices and commentaries on the thoughts and feelings of different individuals. In addition to providing all of the facts necessary to the reader in a straightforward manner, journalists should pay atten-





# writing news

## UNIT 4

tion to the ways in which the story's topic will affect the reader.

### NIE definitions:

**AP** - Abbreviation for Associated Press, a wire service (see wire service definition).

**Assignment** - A story a reporter is detailed to cover.

**Associated Press Stylebook** - The standard reference for reporters and editors on word usage, label, numbers, titles, capitalization and commonly used words and phrases.

**Beat** - A reporter's regular routine for covering news sources.

**Copy** - All material for publication, whether written stories or pictures.

**Copy editor** - A newspaper worker who corrects or edits copy written by a reporter and writes headlines.

**Cover** - To gather information and get facts for a story.

**Cut** - To shorten newspaper copy; also means a newspaper photograph.

**Dateline** - The line at the beginning of a story giving the place and date of the reported incident.

**Deadline** - A time at which all copy for an edition must be submitted.

**Editor** - A person who directs the editorial policies; or a person who decides what news will go in the paper and where it will appear.

**Five W's** - Who, what, when, where, why (sometimes "H" for how); the major questions answered in the lead of a well-written news story.

**Follow-up** - A story that adds more information to a story already printed.

**Hard news** - Factual news stories without opinion.

**Inverted pyramid** - A method of writing by placing parts of the story in descending order of importance.

**Jump** - To continue a story from one page to another.

**Jumpline** - The line at the bottom of a story indicating on what page the story continues.

**Lead** - The first few sentences or the first paragraph of a news story, containing the summary or the introduction to the story.

**Managing Editor** - The editor who directs the daily gathering, writing and editing of news and the placement of news in the paper; working for him or her are the city editor, the copy editor, etc.

**Plagiarism** - Passing off as one's own the ideas and words of another.

**Proof** - A page on which newly set copy is reproduced to make possible the correction of errors.

**Proofreader** - One who reads proof pages and marks errors for corrections.

**Rewrite** - (1) write a story again to improve it; (2) alter a story that appeared somewhere else; (3) or write a story from facts called in by a reporter.

**Source** - The supplier of information, such as a person, book, survey, etc.

**Syndicated features** - Material such as comics, advice columns, etc., supplied nationally to newspapers by news syndicates.

**Syndicate** - Association which buys and sells stories, features, columns, editorials and other materials for newspaper use.

**Typo** - Short for "typographical error," a mistake made during the production of a story.

**UPI** - United Press International, a wire service (see wire service)

**Wire services** - News-gathering agencies such as AP and UPI which gather and distribute news to subscribing newspapers.

### **N**your paper...

- Collect three different lead examples from news stories and paste onto paper.
- Cut out an example of any front-page story.
- Cut out an example of a crime story.
- Cut out an example of a disaster story.
- Cut out an example of a brief describing an upcoming event.
- Highlight key facts to that story and/or lead.





# writing

## news

### UNIT 4

#### assessment:

1) Identify the 5W's and H in the lead of a front-page news story.

*(Objective #2)*

2) If a newspaper covered a tornado disaster with a brief on the day it took place, what might the staff do to further cover this event the day after?

*(Objective #4)*

3) Using the following list of facts, write a news lead, only using the facts you think are the most important.

*(Objective # 2)*

Who: A local teacher.

What: Ate lunch.

When: At 1 p.m. on April 20, 2004.

Where: In his office.

Why: Because he was hungry.

How: He chewed and swallowed his food.

4) Explain why it is important to write news concisely and present the most important information first.

*(Objective #3)*

5) Given the basic facts of a news story in a list and available quotes, write a news story.

*(Objective #6)*

6) Using an AP Stylebook, proofread the following story for grammatical and AP Style errors:

*(Objective #1)*

Disaster struck at 3:00 pm this afternoon when employees at Carrie's Pizzeria, a local pizza restaurant went on strike. According to April Jones, a manager, the drivers' of the restaurant were tired of only making minimum wage. To get back at the store, the drivers began destroying the pizzas they were supposed to deliver.

"They were throwing them around like frisbees" Jones said. "and I didn't know what to do." Carrie Howell, the owner of Carrie's Pizzeria, decided that the restaurant should rethink some of it's policies.

"We had several people quit because of this incident," Howell said. "I'm taking they're complaints and demands very seriously at this point."

Howell has decided to temporarily close the restaurant to clean up all the pizzas. When the store reopens, the staff will be excepting applications for new drivers.

7) After a major news event have students compare the coverage choices of several local and/or national newspapers. Students should report their findings measuring inches and creating charts comparing common and unique angles.

*(Objective #5)*





# feature writing

## UNIT 5

### **N**preparation...

#### MATERIALS YOU WILL FIND HELPFUL:

- Daily Newspaper
- Sample feature articles taped to white paper.
- A varied sampling of feature sections.
- A box of silly gadgets, such as chattering teeth, a small squeegee, Slinky, etc.
- A stack of age-appropriate, diverse newspapers, targeted at different demographics (ie - Red Eye or Local Arts Paper).



**date/week of:**

**class/period(s) taught:**

### **content overview**

In this unit, students will study feature writing. They will learn how to recognize a feature article and distinguish different types of feature articles. They will brainstorm feature story ideas, structure a story as well as begin, refine and end a feature article.

### **goals and objectives**

**Goal #1:** Students will identify characteristics, types of feature stories and a variety of ways to write and tell a feature story.

**Objective #1:** The student will describe characteristics of a feature story, such as subject matter, rules and style.

*(Knowledge)*

*NCTE 1 - Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.*

**Objective #2:** The student will list and describe types of feature stories.

*(Knowledge)*

*NCTE 2 - Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*

**Objective #3:** The student will develop a list of feature story ideas.

*(Application)*

*NCTE 3 - 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).*

**Objective #4:** The student will identify types of story leads.

*(Knowledge)*

*NCTE 4 - 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.*

**Goal #2:** Students will understand how to write a feature story.

**Objective #5:** The student will use descriptive writing techniques to add depth to a feature story.

*(Application)*

*NCTE 11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.*



# feature writing

## UNIT 5- lesson plan cont.

**Objective #6:** The student will write a feature story.

*(Applicaton)*

*NCTE 4 - students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.*

*NCTE 8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.*

*NCTE 5 - 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.*

*NCTE 12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).*

### activities

**Objective #1:** The student will describe characteristics of a feature story, such as subject matter, rules and style.

#### Activity 1

Collect feature sections from diverse newspapers, such as a community paper, a national paper or local city paper. Take the collection to the classroom and distribute the sections to the students.

Instruct them to look at feature articles offered in a paper. If they don't see anything they like, they can pass the paper to another student. Each person should have a full feature to look through. Have the students read each article and list the type of feature stories they see, as well as writing techniques used and what they like about an article on a sheet of paper.

Have the class move their desks into a circle and instruct each person to share two feature stories with the class. Each person should read the title, tell what the article is about, what type of feature it is, writing style or techniques noted and what they like about each article. After students share, the instructor can begin a discussion about this experience. How do writers handle particular subjects? Any trends? Similarities? What commonalities exist in style? They can begin to compare articles published in the north versus south, etc.

*(Addresses Global, Auditory, Visual and Tactile Learners)*

**Objective #2:** The student will list and describe types of feature stories.

#### Activity 2

Prior to class, the instructor will cut out sample feature articles so that students can identify types. The instructor will briefly describe types of feature articles. Each article should be taped to a piece of white paper. During a 15-minute time period, students will pass around articles and select two that they like. During this time, encourage students to keep passing their articles around the room. The goal is for students to be exposed to as many articles as possible.

Once everyone is done passing clippings, the teacher for the following information: identify the type of lead, sources cited, number of sources, main idea, supporting ideas, and the type of feature article written. Each person should share one article with the class.

*(Addresses Tactile, Global, Visual and Auditory Learners)*





# feature writing

## UNIT 5- lesson plan cont.

### **N**due time...

#### 9 WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline & resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events as it relates to unit topic or utilize an activity provided for in class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

#### 18 WEEK EXPANDED

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper..." project and showcase examples from daily paper & assign
- **Day 7:** In class application of "N your paper..." project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate & discuss "N your paper..." project & what was learned
- **Day 9:** Provide (\_\_\_ minutes) to read the paper focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read & learned. Give current events quiz.



**Objective #3:** The student will develop a list of feature story ideas.

#### Activity 3

In this exercise, students will brainstorm feature ideas. The teacher should provide a stack of magazines and assorted goofy toys for inspiration. Before brainstorming begins, the teacher should explain the right-brain versus left-brain functions, so that they turn off the left side of their brain to let creativity flow.

The instructor will pass around the toys and magazines. The teacher will draw a circle on the board, with lines that are drawn off a point on the circle, like drawing a small sunshine, with long rays extending off the circle. Each line serves as a hub for an idea. Let the brainstorming begin. Each idea is written on a ray of the wheel. Once all the ideas have been written, review each and congratulate them on coming up with feature ideas. They should choose two great ideas to develop. Draw a circle around the idea and begin brainstorming cause and effect relationship with each idea. This will lead to great ideas.

*(Addresses Visual and Auditory Learners)*

**Objective #4:** The student will identify types of story leads.

#### Activity 4

Assign students to cut out story leads from national, local and metro newspapers. Have them place at least 10 leads in a "Get it together" scrapbook. Next to each lead, the student will describe the type of lead found and describe their reaction to the lead. Do they want to continue further into the story? Does the writer peak their interest? Is it a boring lead? Is it exciting? What makes it so?

*(Addresses Tactile, Global, Visual and Auditory Learners)*

**Objective #5:** The student will use descriptive writing techniques to add depth to a feature story.

#### Activity 5

Collect different toys or other items to use for this activity, such as chattering teeth or Slinkies. Before writing, have the teacher describe an item and see if students can guess what the item is.

Their turn! Have each student write a description about his or her item. They need to write a visual representation of an object that makes the reader visualize the item.

After the student has written a paragraph to describe his or her sensory item, have some volunteers read their descriptions. Have students guess which item is being described. This will show students how important descriptive writing is in feature writing.

*(Addresses Tactile, Visual and Auditory Learners)*

**Objective #6:** The student will write a feature story for a high school newspaper.

#### Activity 6

Students will bring their knowledge to a point of a survivor challenge. In this activity,



# feature writing

## UNIT 5

### feature story ideas

- Anything unusual or new
- Interesting or accomplished people
- Stories of personal triumph
- Interesting hobbies
- Fashion or other trends in popular culture

students will go through the process of writing a feature story. Have them work in groups of four people and name their group. They need to work together to identify and research a topic. They need to work on the lead and get the reader to a conclusion. To help students problem-solve, suggest that each student in the group be assigned to a specific task (research, lead writing, editing, etc.).

This activity will take time, but will get them to start and complete the articles. The word limit should be from 100-400 words. This is a small article, but they will have the experience of putting together a feature story in a team. The winning team will be the survivor of the feature challenge.

*(Addresses Analytical and Tactile Learners)*

#### **content:**

A feature story can be written with much more creativity and description than a hard news story. With this style of writing, the student can combine the elements of factual reporting with creative imagery. The inverted pyramid is often sacrificed for the beginning, middle and end of story format.

Feature stories can take on many purposes. They can provide background on the news, explain the significance of an event, recreate an event in history, help the reader confront a problem or teach us how to make something with our hands. The possibilities are endless.

#### **Feature Topics**

Feature stories place a greater emphasis on stories that have human interest. These stories can be tied to a current event or can be timeless stories. A story on a person who makes candles, for example, can be printed at any time.

A feature can concentrate on the mood of an event and capture that essence better than a news story is able to do. The feature story is unlimited in subject ideas. A feature story can be a historical piece, a story that looks at an old subject in a new way or a revival of an event. It can be about a remote place, an unknown restaurant, or an obscure person. Even the manager of the basketball team has a story.

Feature stories can generally be used for publication anytime. It can be used the following week after it is written, unlike a news event story. A news feature is usually tied to a news story and will run the day a story breaks; however, the feature is usually a timeless piece.

#### **Rules of Creativity**

Although feature articles provide freedom to explore topics, throwing out the rulebook is not part of the game. Opinions and speculation are not allowed. The same ethical standards apply in feature writing. The feature story does offer an opportunity to stray from the new writing formula in students can explore their creative writing skills.

#### **TYPES OF FEATURES**

##### **News feature**

Hard news stories often open the door to related feature stories by exploring facets of a news





# feature writing

## UNIT 5- content cont.

### checklist for writers:

- Seek advice and do your research on the topic.
- Entertain, inform and educate.
- Keep article timely/seasonal.
- Be accurate - dates/names/spellings/facts & figures.
- Prepare for interviews by writing questions out in advance.
- Take comprehensive notes.
- Transcribe notes within 30 minutes of interview completion.



story. Four criteria to consider when looking at feature ideas, based from news events:

1. How important is the concept – will readers care?
2. How much time will be involved in researching and writing?
3. How much space will be available in the paper?
4. What kind of impact might the story have on readers or the school?

Sometimes you may find information about a subject and not have the time to compose a feature story, in this case, you can create a sidebar of information to accompany a larger story.

#### **Informative feature**

Informative feature can focus on a variety of subjects. The key is sound research. The goal is to find a subject that will have information useful to the reader. The best features provide information in a clear, honest way.

Avoid factual errors. If a feature discusses a consumer product, an objective approach is a must. Sounding like an advertisement for a product will risk credibility and could prompt other legal and ethical ramifications.

For informative features, consider the following:

1. Use the lead to shift to the news peg and give a logical reason for the story.
2. Develop details in the body of the story.
3. Support all information with quotations.
4. Use direct quotes to avoid editorializing.

#### **Profile feature**

Because people are interested in others around them, the profile is a popular feature style. By telling stories about people, writers can inspire and motivate readers. A profile can feature someone with an unusual talent, someone prominent or someone with a unique job or hobby.

A good profile writer organizes information in a lively, interesting package. Researchers need to be scrupulously accurate in this style of writing. Showing, rather than telling, can create memorable characters. Provide details that create a visual picture in the minds of the readers.

The subject of the profile needs to have a story. Anecdotes best demonstrate the specific character of a subject. A profile does not become a biography of the person's life; rather, it can present a person's point of view, impressions or a unique attribute of the person.

When writing a profile, think about the following points:

1. Has biographical and spelling information been verified?
2. What makes this source interesting?
3. What is the atmosphere like?
4. What do sources close to the subject have to say?
5. Has the person been profiled in other publications, and if so, what facts have emerged?
6. Has this person had to overcome adversity in life?

#### **Personal Experience and Accomplishment Feature**

This story format highlights personal experiences and addresses a host of topics. A triumph



# feature writing

## UNIT 5- content cont.

over adversity, professional recognition and injury and recovery are examples of good personal experience features.

### Three leas to consider:

1. Modesty. The I-did-this-and-that approach can turn readers off from a boastful subject.
2. Newsworthiness. People have experiences everyday – so what? A story needs to be unusual or compelling to be worthy of a news feature.
3. Honesty. Subjects appreciate the truth when a writer is sharing their experiences.

### The Beginning

A story must engage the reader. The first sentence will make the reader want to continue. A descriptive lead needs to paint a vivid picture of the story that you are constructing. The beginning has to be compelling, yet so does the rest of the work. Recounting a suspenseful event is one way to lead the reader to the body of a story. Using a striking statement is another effective tool.

A lead has to be an honest part of the story, but shouldn't be seen as a separate element. The lead has to pull the reader into the story.

Here are common leads:

1. **Striking statement lead** – an attention grabbing statement that arouses curiosity.
2. **Summary lead** – an article that encompasses a number of aspects, that may open with a summary statement.
3. **Descriptive lead** – creating a setting for the story to begin with vivid detail.
4. **Narrative/anecdotal lead** – narration that carries the reader into an article with the appeal of action.

### Refining A Story

A writer has many voices. Students speak to their friends differently than they do to their parents or teachers. In each story, the writer takes on a narrative persona, or character. The writer most likely won't write in first person, but he or she needs to choose the right voice that depicts the story.

The tone of the story should match the content. If the writer is describing a child's daycare, he/she may use a youthful tone in the story. There are unlimited possibilities to finding the right tone. The writer should listen to his/her inner voice and trust those instincts. The information should be organized in a logical sequence.

### Writing Your Feature

Introduce with a good lead that captures the imagination of your reader. State the major idea after the lead is provided. This can be done in the first two paragraphs. The lead establishes a common-thread or theme throughout the story. All quotes and information support the development of this theme

Quotes should drive the story. In a feature, the human element should be the main focus. And





# feature writing

## UNIT 5

that person's voice should be heard early and often in the story.

### **Descriptive Writing**

When you are taking notes on a story, look for the important facts of the story. You may also want to record observations that contribute to the reader's understanding of your topic. However, don't describe people or things that are not important to your story.

Good features use narrative to tell a story. Revealing details, secrets motives and emotions make a story meaningful to the reader. Using narrative throughout your story will help hold the story together and will be an interesting read for your audience.

### **Ending Your Article**

The feature writer has unlimited options in concluding the story. The ending can be related back to the beginning, as if to circle back to the beginning. A powerful quote from the main character in the story also ends a story well. The ending can be powerful and has to follow the same liquid flow of your article.

## **NIE definitions:**

**Assignment** - A story a reporter is detailed to cover.

**Associated Press Stylebook** - The standard reference for reporters and editors on word usage, libel, numbers, titles, capitalization and commonly used words and phrases.

**Banner** - A headline in large letters running across the entire width of the first page.

**Beat** - A reporter's regular routine for covering news sources.

**Column** - The arrangement of horizontal lines of type in a news story; also, an article appearing regularly written by a particular writer or "columnist."

**Copy** - All material for publication, whether written stories or pictures.

**Cover** - To gather information and get facts for a story.

**Cut** - To shorten newspaper copy; also means a newspaper photograph.

**Deadline** - A time at which all copy for an edition must be submitted.

**Editor** - A person who directs the editorial policies; or a person who decides what news will go in the paper and where it will appear.

**Feature** - A story in which the interest lies in some factor other than the news value. Usually to entertain, it might be a story of a lost boy.

**Five W's** - Who, what, when, where, why (sometimes "H" for how); the major questions answered in the lead of a well-written news story.

**Focusing** - reducing a large quantity of material to a usable amount.

**Follow-up** - A story that adds more information to a story already printed.

**Hook** - A detail that draws a reader's attention.

**Lead** - The first few sentences or the first paragraph of a news story, containing the summary or the introduction to the story.

## **N** your paper...

- Cut out story leads from the last 3 days of the newspaper.
- Paste 10 leads into the notebook.
- Next to each lead, describe the type of lead and their initial reaction to it.
- Under each lead answer the following:
  - 1) Does the reader want to continue further into the story?
  - 2) Does the writer peak their interest?
  - 3) Is the lead considered boring or enticing and why?





# feature writing

## UNIT 5

**Persona** - The character taken on by a writer.

**Review** - An account of an artistic event, which offers a critical evaluation, the opinion of the writer.

**Profile** - A character sketch.

**Rewrite** - (1) write a story again to improve it; (2) alter a story that appeared somewhere else; (3) or write a story from facts called in by a reporter.

**Syndicated features** - Material such as comics, advice columns, etc., supplied nationally to newspapers by news syndicates.

**Tone** - Mood of a story.

**Wire services** - Newsgathering agencies such as AP and UPI which gather and distribute news to subscribing newspapers.

### assessment:

1) Name four types of features and write their purpose or definition next to each.

*(Objective #1)*

2) In one - three written paragraphs contrast the news story to a feature story.

*(Objective #2)*

3) Demonstrate your understanding of the profile feature by writing a one page story.

*(Objective #5 and #6)*

4) List and explain five types of feature story leads & support the answer by finding examples from the daily newspaper.

*(Objective #4)*

5) Create a list of 15 feature story ideas from the last 5 issues of the newspaper that could be reworked into a feature story for the school newspaper. List story idea, date of publication and angle in which the school newspaper could approach.

*(Objective #3)*

6) Conduct an interview in class. Take notes for quotes and facts. Write a short feature based on the information collected.

*(Objective #5 and #6)*





the news

# feature writing

UNIT 5





# writing opinions

## UNIT 6

**date/week of:**

**class/period(s) taught:**

### content overview

This unit will cover the basics for writing opinions in a newspaper. The unit will contain lessons dealing with editorial policy, staff editorials, personal columns, letters to the editor and reviews.

### goals and objectives

**Goal:** Students will learn how to effectively write and express opinions in a newspaper setting.

### **N**preparation...

#### MATERIALS YOU WILL FIND HELPFUL:

- Dictionary
- Daily newspaper
- Three different newspapers from your city/county/area
- Access to election results from the past three years (internet)
- Two copies of any given movie that is age and content appropriate
- Other daily newspapers with national focus (ie - USA Today)



**Objective #1:** Given the political history of an area, students will write an editorial policy.

*(Synthesis)*

*NCTE 1 - students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works;*

*NCTE 4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.*

**Objective #2:** After forming an opinion on a given subject, and shown examples of columns and editorials, students will write a personal column.

*(Synthesis)*

*NCTE 1 - students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.*

*NCTE 4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.*

**Objective #3:** After observing examples, students will form a policy on letters to the editor.

*(Synthesis)*

*NCTE 5 - 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.*

*NCTE 11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.*

*NCTE 9 - Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.*



# writing opinions

## UNIT 6 - lesson plan cont.

### **N**due time...

#### 9 WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline & resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events as it relates to unit topic or utilize an activity provided for in class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

#### 18 WEEK EXPANDED

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper..." project and showcase examples from daily paper & assign
- **Day 7:** In class application of "N your paper..." project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate & discuss "N your paper..." project & what was learned
- **Day 9:** Provide (\_\_\_ minutes) to read the paper focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read & learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment of unit



**Objective #4:** Following illustrations, students will write a movie and/or book review.

*(Synthesis)*

*NCTE 3 - 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.*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate.*

### activities

**Objective #1:** Given the political history of an area, students will write an editorial policy.

**Activity 1:** Write an editorial policy for a student newspaper.

- Write a brief definition of each of these terms: Column, editorial, editorial page, editorial policy, masthead, point-counterpoint, subjective writing.
- Write a brief definition of each of these terms: Column, editorial, editorial page, editorial policy, masthead, point-counterpoint, subjective writing.
- Research and answer the following question: What is the major political philosophy of the area/school? Note all of the research you have done.
- Find three editorial policies from newspapers in your city/county/area. Note the differences/similarities in each.
- Write an editorial policy for the student newspaper.  
*(Addresses Visual and Global Learners)*

**Objective #2:** After forming an opinion on a given subject, and shown examples of columns and editorials, write a personal column.

**Activity 2**

- Compare the editorial pages of your local newspaper, the Wall Street Journal, and the USA Today. What are the differences/similarities? Is there more than one page used? What types of columns/editorials appear? Chart a graph and write a brief analysis of the differences and similarities you find.
- Make a list of editorial summary sentences on which you would like to write. Submit the ideas to your instructor, who will select one of the topics. Write the column.  
*(Addresses Visual and Tactile Learners)*

**Objective #3:** After observing examples, students will form a policy on letters to the editor.

**Activity 3:**

- Find 5 examples of policies on letters to the editor from 5 different newspapers. Write a brief analysis of the differences and similarities you find.
- With three classmates, write a policy that a student newspaper might be able to use.  
*(Addresses Visual and Global Learners)*



# writing opinions

## UNIT 6

**Objective #4:** Following illustrations, students will write a movie and/or book review.

### Activiy 4

- Read a review from your local newspaper. Write a summary of the review.
- Read same review from a national newspaper. Write a summary of the review and how it differed from your local newspaper.
- Compare/contrast the two reviews. What did you like that the authors did? What did you dislike?
- Watch any two chosen movies. Set up panels (depending on class size) to discuss the similarities and differences from each movie, noting direction, special effects, dialogue, and acting.
- Watch a film on your own, and write a review.

*(Addresses Auditory, Visual and Global Learners)*

### content:

When thinking of editorials, one immediately assumes the word “opinion.” That is certainly true in the newspaper business as much as it is anywhere else. While all of the media expresses opinions at one point or another, the newspaper has a unique way of expressing opinions through the editorial page, or in some cases, the editorial section. The main parts of the editorial page in a newspaper generally consist of the editorial policy, editorial columns and writings, letters to the editor and reviews. While each part of the editorial page consists of relatively different components, they all have one thing directly in common: opinion.

### Editorial Policy.

Before any editorial opinions can be stated, the newspaper must develop a policy on how it will handle letters to the editor, columns by its writers, and reviews. To form a policy, the newspaper’s editors generally come together and decide on the wording of the policy. The editorial policy is generally “a statement of what the newspaper believes are its privileges and responsibilities.”

Writing an editorial policy should take place before the first issue of a newspaper. It should say something about the moral, legal, and ethical standards of the paper. It should also include some sort of policy about letters to the editor, including how the paper cannot reprint every letter it receives, only the ones it finds pertinent, and it reserves the right to edit letters for grammar and space.

The statement may also contain an item that states the paper’s view on how the opinions expressed by the columnists don’t directly reflect the paper’s position. With an editorial policy in place like this, readers know what to expect when writing a letter to the editor, as well as what to expect when reading the editorial page or section.

### Writing Opinion.

While there are different styles to writing opinion, there are also some guidelines every writer must follow. According to Eric Stern, political columnist of the Waterloo (Iowa) Courier, there are six tips every opinion writer must follow: “Don’t use the word I, avoid sarcasm, the sky is not falling—don’t exaggerate, challenge authority, not personality, don’t put away your reporter’s notebook—interview, and think big picture.”

1. Don’t use the word I. “Your life is not interesting. Your personal experiences are tiresome. Using the first person also sounds preachy and righteous, which





# writing opinions

## UNIT 6- content cont.

alienates readers. Strive for humility—your mug shot on the column should provide enough of an ego boost.

2. Avoid sarcasm. “The odds are you aren’t very funny, despite what your lunch table says. Too much sarcasm comes off as immature and can ruin your credibility.

3. The sky is not falling—don’t exaggerate. “It makes you seem too emotional and irrational. You can effectively motivate or inspire your readers without a call-to-arms hyperbole and three exclamation points.”

4. Challenge authority, not personality. “Attacking the principal or the coach simply to generate letters to the editor is reckless. But attacking their ideas, policies, or actions is terrific fodder for a column.”

5. Don’t put away your reporter’s notebook—interview. “It’s obvious if you pull a 500-word column out of the air. A column is not a venue to spout off what you think about the issue of the day. So avoid cliché topics. You are not going to convince someone to change their stance on abortion. Tell a story. Use quotes.”

6. Think big picture. “Use the column to get into the gray analysis between the black and white. Compare apples and oranges.”

While Mr. Stern’s thoughts are true, there are many other things to consider when writing an opinion piece. Students must be aware just one word or phrase can change the entire meaning of the piece. Although the editorial or column itself may offend some readers with opposing beliefs, opinion writers should carefully choose words and write in a manner that will not offend readers. Most importantly, the topic should be well researched to include facts that support the opinion.

### **Research.**

This is very important in editorial writing. Just as Mr. Stern states a columnist should never put away his or her notebook, it is important to do the proper research so an opinion is based on fact. Most editorials are based on news stories, and it is important, just like any reporter, for an opinion writer to get his or her facts straight. However, interviewing isn’t the only way to get facts.

Many journalists rely heavily on the library for research. Nowadays, with the flow of information close at hand by way of the Internet, it is even easier to research. Internet libraries make it convenient for journalists to investigate the facts without leaving their desks. Proper research can make it easier to write opinion pieces.

### **Writing Columns.**

An editorial column has three basic parts. First comes the lead, which is a statement of opinion or the position of the editorial. The first paragraph should contain information that gives the reader the knowledge of what that columnist’s stand is going to be. The second part of the editorial column is the body, where the writer presents the facts to support the stand. Finally, the conclusion wraps up the column by restating the writer’s position and includes a solution or call to action.

### **Types of Columns.**

There are many types of columns, including profile columns, satirical columns, fashion and fad





# writing opinions

## UNIT 6- content. cont.

columns, praise columns, moralizing columns, criticism columns, endorsement columns and question and answer columns.

**1. Profile Columns.** This type of column focuses on an individual in the community and includes that person's views on a current topic. It also includes information on the person to help the reader learn more about the background of his or her opinions. The profile column allows the writer to draw conclusions that would not appear in a news or feature story.

**2. Satirical Columns.** This is a very common type of column. In this type, the writer must take a lot of time and work for it to be effective. There must be a valid reason to write and publish this type of column.

**3. Fashion and Fad Columns.** This type of column is not written very often, as fashion and fads change rapidly in today's society. However, it can be effective if done correctly. Many times, this type of column is used in a special issue.

**4. Praise Columns.** Pointing out the merits or superior qualities of an idea or person can be beneficial to a newspaper. This is similar to the profile column, but does not go into the personal qualities of a person. The newspaper should be balanced with criticism columns.

**5. Moralizing Columns.** These try to get readers to adopt higher standards of conduct or to develop a better attitude. They often deal with common topics and can be ineffective because they tend to sound "preachy".

**6. Criticism Columns.** When criticizing something, it is important to offer a solution. This type points out weaknesses and errors of the situation, then proposes a solution.

**7. Endorsement Columns.** A paper or a writer has the ability to take the side of a person or idea. This is similar to a praise column, but it doesn't just praise the person or idea. The writer actually can take the views of the person or idea and write about how and why they are good, and take them on as his or her own.

**8. Question and Answer Columns.** These common columns are when people of the school or community write in and ask questions to the columnist about concerns in the person's career, personal life, or community. Answers to these types of columns must always be serious and carefully answered.

One of the most important things to remember is there is a difference between editorials and columns. An editorial expresses a view of the entire newspaper staff. Although a column expresses the view or views of an individual on the newspaper staff, few papers run columns that do not agree politically with their editorials.

### Letters to the Editor.

To be successful and credible, an editorial page must have a place where readers can express their opinions along with the editorials and columns of the paper itself. While this needn't be a huge portion of the section or page, it certainly needs to be part of it. As stated in the editorial policy, a paper simply cannot print every letter it receives from readers. Also, it is wise





# writing opinions

## UNIT 6- content cont.

for a newspaper to not print letters that are libelous, in bad taste, or anonymous. Letters that are printed must be responsible, based on fact, and signed by the writer, similar to editorials or columns. It is also wise to keep all letters to the editor on file for several weeks, even those not printed. With e-mail, this becomes both easy and substantial. Papers may get many, many responses from readers with the ease of e-mail. When this happens, it may be wise to put a statement like "many other letters received sharing this opinion" at the bottom of the letters section.

### **Reviews.**

Reviews fall into the editorial and column genre because they are also opinion-based. A review writer must use skills such as observation, detailed descriptions and using quotes. Reviews provide a medium for readers to find out if the book, movie or music is worth the money. Readers can also find out if reviewers share their own opinion, or just read reviews for entertainment.

There are many kinds of write reviews, such as comparison reviews, fulfillment of intended purpose, itemizing strengths and weaknesses, and performance reviews.

1. Comparison Reviews. These are reviews comparing one or more products or services. Examples include comparing restaurants and the products and services they provide.
2. Fulfillment of intended purpose reviews. "If you are writing about a new product or service this kind of review comes in handy. This review is intended to let the audience know how well it fulfills its intended purpose. The evaluation should be based on characteristics that will have meaning to the reader."
3. Itemizing strengths and weaknesses reviews. It is possible to review the strengths and weaknesses of a product or a service. In this type of review, the good points and bad points of the product or service are discussed.
4. Performance reviews. This type of review is set aside for public performances, such as plays or concerts. They may involve comparing the performances of actors, directors or musicians to previous performances.





# writing opinions

## UNIT 6

### **NIE definitions:**

**Column** - The arrangement of horizontal lines of type in a news story; also, an article appearing regularly written by a particular writer or "columnist."

**Copy** - All material for publication, whether written stories or pictures.

**Deadline** - A time at which all copy for an edition must be submitted.

**Editor** - A person who directs the editorial policies; or a person who decides what news will go in the paper and where it will appear

**Editorial** - An article expressing the opinion of the newspaper regarding a certain subject.

**Five W's** - Who, what, when, where, why (sometimes "H" for how); the major questions answered in the lead of a well-written news story.

**Layout** - The organization of all elements of an ad or page in space.

**Libel** - Publication of material unjustly injurious to someone's reputation.

**NIE** - Newspapers in Education. Program that brings papers into the classroom.

**Review** - An account of an artistic event, which offers a critical evaluation, the opinion of the writer.

**Source** - The supplier of information, such as a person, book, survey.

### **N**your paper...

- Cut out example of editorial policy
- Cut out an example of a column and a staff editorial
- Cut out example of a letters to the editor policy
- Cut out a book review & highlight key components
- Cut out a a movie review & highlight key components
- Cut out a restaurant review & highlight key components





# writing opinions

## UNIT 6

### assessment:

1) Write a brief definition of each of these terms: column, editorial, editorial page, editorial policy, masthead, point-counterpoint, subjective writing.

*(Objective #1 and #3)*

2) Write a personal column on an opinion topic. Use a current news event and form an opinion and develop it with supporting details.

*(Objective #2)*

3) In groups, write an editorial policy for the school newspaper.

*(Objective #1)*

4) Analyze three editorial policies (1 from daily paper & 2 from online newspapers). What is the political history behind each?

*(Objective #1)*

5) After listening to an assigned CD, write a review of the collection.

*(Objective #4)*

6) Write a policy for letters to the editor submitted to the school newspaper.

*(Objective #3)*



# writing sports

## UNIT 7

**date/week of:**

**class/period(s) taught:**

### content overview

In this unit, students will study and understand the different forms of sports writing and how sports stories can come in four different forms: sports news, game results, profiles and opinion pieces. As with all journalistic essential functions in this unit will be to educate, inform, educate and influence the audience.

### goals and objectives

**Goal:** Students will be able to identify and analyze the different forms of sports writing and the elements that characterize them.

### **N**preparation...

#### MATERIALS YOU WILL FIND HELPFUL:

- Daily newspaper
- Sports Illustrated Magazine (optional)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Construction paper

**Objective #1:** The students will list the elements of a sports lead and be able to identify them.

*(Knowledge)*

*NCTE 2 Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions of human experience.*  
*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print text.*

*NCTE 12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).*

**Objective #2:** The students will identify a sports news story.

*(Comprehension)*

*NCTE 1 - Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.*

*NCTE 8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.)*

**Objective #3:** The students will identify a game results story from a newspaper.

*(Comprehension)*

*NCTE 1 - Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.*

*NCTE 8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.)*

**Objective #4:** The students will identify a sports profile story.

*(Comprehension)*

*NCTE 1 - Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of*





# writing sports

## UNIT 7- lesson plan cont.

### **N**due time...

#### 9 WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline & resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events as it relates to unit topic or utilize an activity provided for in class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

#### 18 WEEK EXPANDED

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper..." project and showcase examples from daily paper & assign
- **Day 7:** In class application of "N your paper..." project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate & discuss "N your paper..." project & what was learned
- **Day 9:** Provide (\_\_\_ minutes) to read the paper focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read & learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment of unit



*society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary work.*

*NCTE 8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.*

**Objective #5:** The students will identify a sports opinion story from a newspaper. *(Comprehension)*

*NCTE 1 - Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.*

*NCTE 8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.*

### activities

**Objective #1:** The students will list the elements of a sports lead and be able to identify them.

#### Activity 1

Have students work in groups and consider the sports pages of different newspapers. Have each group cut out the leads from 4-6 different sports action stories. As a group, students should identify the five Ws of the lead. *(Addresses Global and Analytic Learners)*

**Objective #2:** The students will identify a sports news story.

**Objective #3:** The students will identify a game results story from a newspaper.

#### Activity 2

Have the students use the daily paper and find the following:

- scores for the most recent NBA or NFL game nearest your home town
- tournament play outcome for any sport in season
- score and leading scorer of your school or nearby rival school

*(Addresses Tactile Learners)*

**Objective #4:** The students will identify a sports profile story.

#### Activity 3

Set up a mock interview with you as the athlete that has just set a school record for the most points in a basketball season. You are the first person to break this record since 1945 and the first in the history of the school to break the record with more than half the season left to play. Your brother is also a basketball player and your father is the coach. You also run track as a varsity athlete. You currently don't have any intention of playing basketball once you graduate as you hope to get an academic scholarship and pursue a career in teaching and coaching high school. Once the interview takes place, have the students write a lead. Share with the class. Then have them write a profile story (2-3 pages). *(Addresses Kinesthetic Learners)*

**Objective #5:** The students will identify a sports opinion story from a newspaper.



# writing sports

## UNIT 7

### Common Errors in Sports Writing

1) According to the AP style-book you only capitalize formal titles when they directly precede the name. So, you write "Head Coach Red Auerbach," but DO NOT write, "Red Auerbach, Head Coach." Rather, you write "Red Auerbach, head coach."

Lowercase occupational titles and descriptions – such as the names of company officials, unions and sports teams – are lower case. This means that you write "head coach" and not "Head Coach."

2) Do not use "mens" or "womens" when writing a phrase like, "the women's soccer team at the University of Lethbridge." Men is the plural of man, women the plural of woman. There is no mens – a plural of a plural – or womens.

Use "women's" or "men's" when you are dealing with possessives.



### Activity 4

Before class, find a variety of profile/opinion/game results/sports news pieces (10-15). Begin the lesson by showing examples of what a profile/opinion/game results/sports news piece is and then show a variety of examples of non-profile/opinion/game results/sports news stories to the class, asking the students to identify what type each story is.

*(Addresses Visual and Auditory Learners)*

### content:

The world of sports reporting is full of clichés, bad metaphors and meaningless statistics. Right? Not necessarily. Sports journalism can be dynamic, interesting, informative and original. For student journalists who aspire to become professional sports reporters, university and collegiate athletics provide an excellent opportunity to develop reporting skills by covering organized, high-level sports. Moreover, good sports reporters at student newspapers can become authorities in the sports they cover, which can be a distinct advantage when they want to sell their work on a freelance basis.

Even if students want to contribute one or two articles to the paper's sports section, it is important that they handle the basics of sports writing. This guide will tell you everything you need to know to get started – from hatching an idea to submitting articles to your sports editor – and remind you of the basics when you need direction.

The main elements of a good sports story are a catchy lead, clear focus and lots of quotes. Often you'll find that good sports stories combine background and statistical information with the writer's paraphrasing of a source's quotes in a seamless fashion. If an article flows smoothly and tells the story, the reader may not even notice the writer. This is good: the story should always be more prominent than the person who writes it.

Keep your paragraphs short, since newspaper columns are thin and long paragraphs can be hard on the eyes.

Sports writing is full of devices that can be tough to master, but can be very effective.

Sports coverage can be divided into four kinds of stories: sports news, game results, profiles and opinion pieces. A quick scan of the sports section in the nearest daily tabloid will tell you that sports stories rarely fall into any other classification. If you end up covering a particular team or writing a lot of sports stories, you will probably get to try each kind of article.

These stories should be balanced and be written in an "inverted pyramid" style: the important information at the top of the article and the less important background at the bottom. This way, the editor can cut from the bottom of the story if it is too long rather than taking time to find the right paragraph to delete.

About 500 words is usually an adequate length for a sports news story, but length can be adjusted depending on how much treatment you want to give to an issue. Some examples of sports news stories are: hiring of a new coach, changes in the athletic budget, stories on university facilities and drug use among campus athletes.

Make sure your quotes add to the story. Do not use a quote that can be turned into text, like a coach saying what the team record is. And avoid anything that remotely smells of, "We gave



# writing sports

## UNIT 7

### GAME RESULTS

This type of article summarizes a game and gives a few post-game quotes from the players and/or coaches. They are very time-sensitive. If the article is not run immediately after the game, it is old news. Because most student newspapers are published weekly or even monthly, game results articles are old hat when we get around to printing them; for that reason try to avoid them, reserving them only for especially important games.

### PROFILES

Profiles are feature-style articles that highlight the story or achievements of a particular athlete, coach or team. They tend to be longer than regular sports stories – somewhere between 700 and 900 words – and require more research than in sports news stories. While sports news stories are written in the past tense (e.g. “The field was horrible,” said Smith), profiles are written in the present tense (e.g. “I always trained on that field,” says Smith).

### OPINION PIECES

Some student newspapers have sports columnists, while others accept opinion submissions from writers-at-large. Either way, opinion pieces are a good way to inject color and life into a sports section. If you get called upon to write an opinion piece, it should be between 400 and 600 words long and focused on a specific issue relevant to the athletics your paper covers. Too often there is a danger of opinion pieces rambling on, but if you read up on opinion writing you should be able to apply the fundamentals to your sports opinion pieces.



110 percent,” or “We will fight to the end.” If it is a cliché, discard it. Instead, aim for quotes like this one from a Carillon story.

“This was a game you regret the money you spent on the officials,” said Hillis.

The person quoted is James Hillis, a University of Regina Basketball coach who is speaking after his team suffered a terrible loss.

By now you should know which of these types of stories you will be writing. Keep in mind, however, that you need to go through a series of steps before writing out any sports article. These steps are: research, interviewing, outline and writing. Let’s begin with research.

Begin by discussing your article with the sports editor. He or she will give you a deadline and suggest story length, who to talk to and what angle to pursue. After talking with your editor, be prepared to investigate your topic. In some cases, that’s as easy as reviewing news releases, game results and statistics the editor might have handy. These days, websites are indispensable resources for research, and contain in-depth statistics and large archives of sports information. Hopefully, your sports editor will know of a few websites with athlete, team, and league information. If not, just try using a web search engine.

Another good person to talk to during the research stage is the athletic department’s Sports Information Director (SID). He or she will give you all the basic facts about your varsity sports topics, such as athlete bios and team stats and schedules. Careful, though: SIDs are there to help reporters the information teams want to release. If you’re trying to dig up dirt you won’t get much from them.

Many times you will not be the first person to have written an article on your subject, and back issues of your student paper or other local newspapers will be full of useful facts. Mostly, though, you should read about the team or athlete you are covering just to get a background in the subject. There’s nothing more embarrassing than writing about a subject you know nothing about and getting the most basic facts wrong. Research will prevent this from happening and show that you are prepared and professional when you conduct interviews.

Of course, no form of research is as much fun or as valuable as seeing the subject in action. If you cover a team on a regular basis, go to the games or practices and follow the results. Obviously, the more you read about or see a team, the better prepared you will be when you write profiles of athletes on the team or other articles about them. Investing time in a team or sport will pay off when you find yourself scrambling to meet a deadline.

After you’ve gathered the facts and transcribed the interviews, look over what you have and make sure you still want to approach the story from the same angle. If you don’t, think about what the new angle could be and see if you have enough information. If not, go back to your sources for more comments or do more research. Write a working outline for the story so you know what main points you need to give.

Review the AP Stylebook for specialized styles for reporting sports scores and terms.



# writing sports

## UNIT 7

### **NIE definitions:**

**Lead** - the introductory sentence of any news story featuring the five Ws.

**Profile** - a biographical essay presenting the subject's most noteworthy characteristics and achievements.

**Opinion piece** - a story clearly stating the opinions of the author about a subject

### **N** your paper...

• Collect one of each type of sports writing.

- 1) News
- 2) Opinion
- 3) Profile
- 4) Game Results

• Highlight facts in each that make them worthy of that kind of sports story.





# writing sports

## UNIT 7

### **assessment:**

1) Identify the five main elements (5w's) in the following lead from a sports results story:

*Kobe Bryant led the Lakers with 49 points in a 107-71 trouncing of the Houston Rockets Wednesday night at Staples Center.*

*(Objective #1)*

2) Summarize the differences between the four types of sports stories in the form of a collage of sports articles from newspapers representing the different types of stories, a written paper explaining these differences, or a speech explaining the differences verbally.

*(Objective #2, #3, #4 and #5)*

3) Write a sports story, the format of your choosing, on an upcoming or recent sports event at your school.

*(Objective #2, #3, #4 or #5)*



# headlines & cutlines

## UNIT 8

**date/week of:**

**class/period(s) taught:**

### content overview

In this unit, students will learn the different types of headlines and cutlines or captions. They will learn to write strong primary, secondary, and sub headlines by giving an accurate and specific guide to the contents and importance of the story. Students will also learn the guidelines to writing the four different cutlines, which are identification, summary, information, and quote.

### goals and objectives

**Goal:** Students will know the three different types and styles of headlines and four different cutlines.

### **N**preparation...

#### MATERIALS YOU MAY FIND HELPFUL:

- Daily newspaper.
- Cut out or scanned into Powerpoint presentation of various headlines from other papers or magazines (good and bad examples).
- Various pictures clipped from papers to practice cutline writing (type out the names and scenarios for each photo so that students have all the necessary information).
- Two articles photocopies for entire class without headlines.



**Objective #1:** Students will write primary, secondary, and sub headlines.  
(Application)

*NCTE 4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.*

*NCTE 5 - 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.*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, (e.g. spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.*

*NCTE 12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.*

**Objective #2:** Students will identify the design styles of headlines; hammers, wickets, kickers, slammers, banners, labels, sidesaddle, and tripods.

(Knowledge)

*NCTE 5 - 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.*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, (e.g. spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.*

*NCTE 11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.*

**Objective #3:** Students will list/identify the characteristics of different headline types.  
(Knowledge)

*NCTE 5 - 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.*

*NCTE 6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, (e.g. spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*



# headlines & cutlines

## UNIT 8 - lesson plan cont.

*NCTE 11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.*

**Objective #4:** Students will identify the differences between and write identification, summary, information and quote cutlines.

*(Comprehension, Synthesis)*

*NCTE 5 - 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.*

*NCTE 6 Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, (e.g. spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.*

*NCTE 11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.*

### activities

**Objective #1:** Students will write primary, secondary, and sub headlines.

#### Activity 1

- Give students a list of 10 sentences, three news stories, and three leads from stories and ask them to write headlines. Varying these will give students the chance to create more than just one-line headlines.
- After discussing in class, give them a list of instructions of how to write primary, secondary, and sub headlines with examples of each.
- Ask students to create primary headlines for the sentences, sub headlines for the stories, and primary and secondary for the leads.

*(Addresses Visual and Analytical Learners)*

#### Activity 2

- Hand out newspapers to students and discuss the effectiveness of the headlines on the front page.
- Organize students into groups of three or four and re-write the headlines and present them to the class. Students should discuss what makes each headline work and why.

*(Addresses Visual and Analytical Learners)*

**Objective #2:** Students will identify the design styles of headlines; hammers, wickets, kickers, slammers, banners, labels, sidesaddle, and tripods.

#### Activity 3

- Take a collection of headlines and discuss the different styles such as hammers, wickets, kickers, slammers, banners and tripods to your class. You may want to use an overhead so that you can analyze samples in class discussion. You might want to type up 15 headlines in different styles to pass out and give a self-quiz. Then you can ask volunteers to explain their answers. This serves as a self-assessment and helps you determine to what depth you give lecture and examples.
- Distribute newspapers to each student. Give them a list of headline styles to identify in the papers and cut out. Ask them to label the headlines and tell what



# headlines & cutlines

## UNIT 8 - lesson plan cont.

### N due time...

#### 9 WEEK SHORT COURSE

- **Day 1:** Goals, objectives, content overview with timeline & resources introduced
- **Day 2:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 3:** Content presentation using daily newspaper and content provided
- **Day 4:** Use of daily newspaper to discuss current events as it relates to unit topic or utilize an activity provided for in class assignment
- **Day 5:** Assessment

#### 18 WEEK EXPANDED

- **Day 6:** Introduce "N your paper..." project and showcase examples from daily paper & assign
- **Day 7:** In class application of "N your paper..." project
- **Day 8:** Evaluate & discuss "N your paper..." project & what was learned
- **Day 9:** Provide (\_\_\_ minutes) to read the paper focusing on unit topic. Discuss what was read & learned. Give current events quiz.
- **Day 10:** Final assessment of unit



type each is and how each works with the design of the package.

- Give the students three articles without headlines. Ask them to create their own headline using the different styles they have learned.
- Tell students to use a different style for each story. After giving students enough time to complete the activity, assign groups to discuss the headlines. Students should comment on grammar, spelling, design, style, etc.
- Give students three to four news articles and assign three styles in which they are to write headlines for the articles. Have students type the headlines out on the computer and cut and paste them over the article. Then have them present their headlines to the class.

*(Addresses Visual, Auditory, Tactile and Analytical learners)*

**Objective #3:** Students will list/identify the characteristics of headlines.

#### Activity 4

- Ask students to bring in 3-5 headlines that they like the day before from a newspaper.
- When class begins, ask students to write why they liked these headlines and thought them effective. After giving them five to 10 minutes, put them in four groups. Ask them to select one student to record the group's discussion and one person to report to the class. Ask them to compile a list of what makes a good headline. When the groups are ready, have the student who is reporting write them on the board for discussion. Make sure you add any they may have missed. *(Conversational, have verb, present tense, active voice, summarizes story, attracts attention, and uses short words, etc.)*
- Using the same groups, give the groups each a copy of two stories from a newspaper. Tell them that they will be competing to create the best headline for each story (you may want to provide some kind of incentive). When they finish, each group will submit its headlines to the class for analysis. Students should share their responses and then vote on the best one.
- Take the headlines that the groups wrote and give them a copy of the original headlines. Ask them to compare them in their groups for five minutes and then discuss which one they think works best and why.

Some questions they could answer:

- Why is this one better than another?
- What do they have in common or not in common?
- Which one fits the story better?
- How would they change their headline?

*(Addresses Tactile, Visual, Auditory and Global learners)*

**Objective #4:** Students will list the differences between identification, summary, information and quote cutlines.

#### Activity 5

Using the daily local newspaper, cut out enough photos to hand out two per student. Provide information about the photos from which students can write cutlines. Model the different types of cutline. Students will write the cutline for each photo as an identification, summary, information and quote.

*(Addresses Visual, Auditory and Tactile learners)*



# headlines & cutlines

## UNIT 8

### GUIDELINES FOR WRITING GOOD HEADLINES

- Put the major news in the first headline.
- Place a verb in every headline, deck, or kicker.
- Avoid the “be” verb when writing headlines. No passive verbs, predicate nouns or adjectives.
- Use present tense.
- Use last name only if it is a well-known figure. Otherwise, use full names.
- Use numbers, but spell out one through nine.
- Capitalize first words and all proper nouns.
- Use specifics.
- Use only well-known abbreviations.
- Don’t use “a,” “an,” or “the.”
- Don’t separate grammatical phrases (subject/verb; prepositional phrases).
- Avoid being redundant.
- Avoid over-doing alliteration.



### content:

#### Why are headlines and cutlines important?

Writing headlines and cutlines are important to your publication because they are read more frequently than other content in the newspaper. Most readers will skim the headlines to decide what they want to read. Headlines should sum up the story so that the reader can get the basic idea of the story without reading the copy. A good headline will make the reader want to read the entire story. The best headlines are clearly written in active voice. They have subjects and verbs and focus on a single action, thought or idea. They also give an accurate, specific guide to the contents and importance of the story. The main headline should contain the principal importance of the story and all other decks in descending order. Students should ALWAYS check spelling, grammar, names, and numbers.

#### What are the four types of cutlines (captions)?

Everyone knows that “a picture is worth a thousand words,” but what’s important are the words selected to describe them. Knowing the guidelines to writing good cutlines is important so that the reader fully understands the significance of the photograph. The first type of cutline is the **informative or expanded cutline**. This gives a full explanation and understanding of the activity or event and is written in a more in-depth report including all of the five Ws and one H as well as a direct quote. A **summary cutline** gives the most important five Ws and one H first and all other information in descending order of importance. An **identification cutline** gives only a brief description with the person or group identified. A fourth type of cutline is also available and that is a **quote cutline**. This can be used for the human interest aspect with someone in the photo or involved with the event giving information and insights.

#### What makes a good cutline?

Writing good cutlines involves knowing all the five Ws (who, what, where, when, & why) and one H (how). Who is in the photograph? What are they doing? Why are they doing it? How does this picture relate to your story? A good cutline will tell a story by itself. Below are some basic rules for writing cutlines:

- 1) Avoid stating the obvious.
- 2) Identify all people and objects in photos.
- 3) Be creative in the way that you begin the caption-catch someone’s attention.
- 4) Compose a lead-in for the cutline if it stands alone.
- 5) Use two or three sentences, if possible, to describe the photo.
- 6) Use quotes.
- 7) Don’t forget a photo credit.
- 8) Don’t forget to write in present tense.
- 9) PROOFREAD.

#### What should be in a headline?

The best headlines capture the key parts of the story in a lively and interesting manner, but more importantly, should be accurate. You have to make sure that headlines contain correct spellings because a headline is the most readable item in the newspaper. Sometimes the best way to write a headline is to summarize the lead of the story. It should contain all of the principal importance of the story, with all other information descending from importance in decks. The first deck should say what the main headline could not say. The deck could also state the reaction to the main headline. Make sure that the headline is in present tense and should follow the subject-verb-object style. Always avoid the obvious when writing headlines. Puns can be



# headlines & cutlines

## UNIT 8

### TIPS FOR WRITING CUTLINES

- Avoid stating the obvious.
- Do not start every cutline in the same way. (ie - Names, Gerund Phrases) Be creative.
- Identify all the people and their title or grade affiliation (for school) in the caption that are easily seen.
- When identifying more than five people in photo name them as a group.
- Start with the most important information first and then give additional information.
- Be sure to give date and location.
- Include sports players jersey #.
- Identify sports opponents by name not just as school name.
- Be sure to interview subjects and those who know the subject to gain additional information not seen in the photo.
- Always include a photo credit.

overdone. Cleverness is good to a point, but don't overdo it. Don't use acronyms beyond the ones that everyone knows, such as IRS, CIA, NASA, etc. Also avoid abbreviations. If there is room enough for the entire word, then the entire word should be used. It is always good to type out country names in full, unless there is not enough room. Be careful not to give away a surprise ending in a column or steal something from the lead, just try to lure in the reader to read the full story.

#### What are the three types of headlines?

The main headline is the **primary headline**. This headline should reveal the importance of the story in a few well-selected words. Next is the **secondary headline**. This headline adds to the information in the primary headline. It is short and catchy and adds specific detail to information given in the main headline or reaction to the main headline. A **sub-headline** or subhead is set between paragraphs or written within the body of the copy. There are also design styles of these headlines that you should be aware of. A **kicker** is a one-line secondary headline set above the primary. It provides specific facts and sometimes reads into the main headline. A **wicket** is a multi-line secondary headline set above the primary headline, sometimes it contains a quote. A **hammer** is a primary/secondary combination with the primary set above the secondary. A **tripod** is a combination of primary and secondary headlines, presented side-by-side.

#### How do I begin writing a headline?

First of all, read the story. Then you can brainstorm words and phrases to go along with key aspects of the story. List 10-15 keywords on a piece of paper. Next, brainstorm rhyming words and other literary devices for those keywords. After doing this, you can transition those key words and phrases into inspiring phrases that creatively tell the story.

Another way to write a catchy headline is by studying the dominant photo for opportunities to tell the story. This will tie the photo in with the story as well. After writing the primary headline, read the story a second time to get more information for the secondary.

#### How can I make the headlines more visually appealing?

By using typography blending type fonts, faces, sizes, alignment, spacing and capitalization and give headlines more personality. By placing a single box around the headline, it draws the reader's attention and brings the information into a package. Adding a second color or tint can highlight the headline and draw the reader's attention. Photos and art can invite the reader into a story. Electronic enhancers are treatments that add dimension to the headlines. Dress-up a headline. Play around with words and using the same tools you use everyday in a more creative way.





# headlines & cutlines

## UNIT 8

### **N** your paper...

- Cut and paste stories containing only a primary, a primary and secondary, and sub headlines on separate sheets.
- Label each for reference.
  
- Cut out each style of headline style:
  - 1) kicker
  - 2) wicket
  - 3) hammer
  - 4) tripod
  - 5) slammer
  - 6) banner
- Label each headline style
  
- Cut out at least 3 different photos and their cutlines
  
- Label each as identification, summary, information, and quote cutline.



### **NIE Definitions:**

**Alliteration** - repetition of the same or similar consonant sound in words close together.

**Antonyms** - a word of opposite meaning

**Clichés** - common word or phrase, often a figure of speech

**Homonyms** - words that sound alike but mean different things

**Onomatopoeia** - the use of sound to echo word meaning

**Pun** - play-on-words based on multiple meanings

**Rhyme** - repetition of vowel sounds in accented syllables

**Synonyms** - one of two or more words with the same meaning

**Primary headline** - should reveal the importance of the story in a few well-selected words.

**Secondary headline** - adds to the information in the primary headline. It is short and catchy and adds specific detail to information given in the main headline or reaction to the main headline.

**Sub Headline** - between paragraphs or written within the body of the copy.

**Banner** - a headline that stretches across the top of the page.

**Slammer** - opens with a phrase or word set in boldface followed by a colon. The main headline follows on the same line in the same size but in a lighter weight.

**Kicker** - a short phrase that leads into the main headline. It is usually underlined, the size of the main headline and 1/3 as long. Kickers can be set in a heavier or lighter weight but look best in same font (usually phrases, not sentences).

**Hammer** - the top line is a big boldfaced word or phrase to attract attention. A smaller, lighter headline stretches across the width of the copy.

**Tripod** - a 3-part headline with a big, bold word at the beginning, followed by two lighter, smaller lines beside it at the same height as the bold word at the beginning.

**Raw wrap** - does not cover entire story, but remains in first column.

**Labels** - a noun and its modifiers, set apart on a page, in extremely large type size and sometimes part of graphic.

**Sidesaddle** - a headline placed beside the story.



# headlines & cutlines

## UNIT 8

### assessment:

1) List the three types of headlines and find examples of each.

*(Objective #2)*

2) Using a lead from a recent news story on the front page of today's newspaper, rewrite five possible headlines. Use at least three different kinds.

*(Objective #1)*

3) Given the following information, write a caption that would appear in the sports section of the newspaper. Write it in three of the four kinds.

- Bobby Jones, 12
- steals home plate for the winning run
- advances the varsity baseball team to the regional play-offs
- first time in 10 years that team has made it this far
- April 25 at 5:15 p.m.
- Played the Central Wolverines with a final score of 10-9.
- Fifth time this season Jones has stolen home plate for a tying or winning run

*(Objective #4)*

4) Cut stories and photos from the paper. Students will write a headline in groups. Share, then compare the original headline on the story.

*(Objective #1)*

5) Cut 10 examples of headlines from a newspaper. Identify one of each kind of headline in the 10. (kicker, wicket, hammer, tripod)

*(Objective #2)*