

All That's News

First course, First grading period, Week 5

Whether conveyed by knotted string, smoke signals, a town crier or a rider on horseback, information about people, events, issues and ideas was received with anticipation through the centuries. Establishing freedom of the press in the Bill of Rights, our early leaders supported the notion that citizens have a right to know. News, the foundation of reporting, is information that interests and has an effect on people. In this lesson, students are introduced to news basics and the radio news spot.



Enduring Understanding

The purpose of journalism is to provide people with the information they need to be free and self-governing. The public expects news to be accurate, balanced and fairly reported.



Essential Questions

What is news? How is news gathered for airing?



Objectives and Outcome

Students will gain an understanding of the purpose and attributes of news.



Suggested Time

Three days



Resources and Materials

Copies of several newspapers for students to use to locate news stories and the ledes of those articles.

Kovach, Bill and Tom Rosenstiel. *The Elements of Journalism*, Crown Publishers, 2001.

DCPS Radio Production teachers: "News and Sports," *Writing for Television, Radio and New Media*, pages 120-124, 128-135, 143-145.

"News — policy and practice," *Radio Production*, pages 53-79.



Procedure

1. Ask students where they get their news. After discussion of friends, family, and media (print, television, radio and Internet) sources, time of day and frequency, ask them to define "news." How does community news differ from personal or family news? What traits do they share?
2. Give students "What Is News?" handout. Review the qualities that make information news. Have them provide current examples of each quality.

3. How is news presented in print journalism? Give students copies of newspapers. Ask them to read a news article. At what point could the end of the story be cut without eliminating important information?

Explain the inverted pyramid structure that begins with the traditional news lede and presents information in descending order of importance to the story's essential message. This structure reflected technology: When news was transmitted by telegraph, transmission could be interrupted so the final paragraphs might not be received. Today, it reflects the available time of busy readers and the reality of layout: If one reads only the lede and a couple paragraphs, the basic information is conveyed. If space is not available for the article as originally planned, rewrite is not needed. The folks in layout or makeup can just cut the bottom of the story.

4. What information is included in the traditional or hard lede of a newspaper article? Introduce students to the 5Ws and H of journalism.

Give students copies of newspapers. Ask them to locate the lede of a news story (not a feature, editorial or commentary). Using different symbols or colored pencils, have them identify the "who," "what," "where," "when," "why" and "how" of the story that is found in the lede. Which of these pieces of information are they least likely to find included? Repeat this process several times.

5. Reporters make decisions while gathering and writing the news report. Discuss news judgment, determining what is news and selecting the details that are pertinent to the story. Teachers may emphasize this skill by giving students a list of details from a news article (with a few extra bits of information thrown in). Students are asked to select details and write the lede, then outline what details would follow and which should not be included.

Responsible reporting requires accuracy, balance, clarity of expression and verification of facts. Reporters should use an objective process to gather information. In covering these requirements of the journalists' method of reporting, "The Elements of Journalism", by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, is an excellent resource for teachers.

6. Give students "News Vocabulary" to review the concepts that have been presented. You may wish to give students a vocabulary quiz.

7. Having established the elements of a news story, distinguish the print lede from the radio lede. How do the aural and time constraints of radio, influence the order and information included in the radio news lede?

- Since the listener hears the story once, clarity (of sentence structure and vocalization) is essential.
- Identification of the 5Ws and H is important in both. Since the radio news broadcast may allow time only for the equivalent of the newspaper's headline, subhead and lede, learning to summarize the key facts of the story is an essential skill.
- Any further reporting on the story will focus on more information about the 5 Ws and H. Radio news often does not have time to report the "why" of the story. Public radio often offers more time for longer stories to be broadcast.
- The active voice will often lead to the "who" of the story coming first.

- Both include quotations (actualities in radio) and require attribution. In print, attribution usually follows the quotation; in radio, the voice/speaker must be clearly identified going into the actuality.
- Since time constraints limit the amount of news that can be provided, reporters must make a news judgment: What news is the most essential for the radio audience to receive at this time?
- Radio integrates audio and uses descriptive writing to bring the listener to the scene of the event, especially in on-the-scene reports.

8. Play a radio news spot for students. Have them record the 5Ws and H that were presented. Have students share the information to see if they remembered what they heard and if they are accurate. Play the same news spot again to confirm information that was included.

9. Introduce students to the radio news script format. Provide them samples from your textbook. Give students “My Radio News Script” and practice writing a script in the radio format.



Homework

Ask students to listen to two or more media news sources (print, television, radio and Internet). Using the “What Is News?” list, have them record at least one example of current news in each category (or as many categories as they can locate). Do they notice certain qualities more likely to be provided by one of the sources? This assignment will demonstrate students’ ability to identify the characteristics of news.

Prepare a radio news script. Select and clip three news articles from the newspaper. One of the news stories should be international news. Rewrite the stories in radio news format. Write a paragraph that explains why you chose the 1-2-3 order for the stories.

Read textbook pages that cover news.



Assessment

The second homework assignment that is suggested should be evaluated on students’ ability to re-format news from print to radio requirements. Have the key elements of news been identified and been put high in the story? Do they have a sense of what news is important to and needed by their audience?

Provide students with two to three more challenging passages to read and to rewrite in radio news format. Judge them on their ability to identify the key news elements, use proper radio news format, place information in order of news priority and write for the ear.

Test students on news vocabulary terms. “News Vocabulary” is provided for you to give your students.



Academic Content Standards

Compare and contrast how media genres (nightly news, newsmagazines, documentaries, Internet) cover the same event. (DCPS English Language Arts, 9.M.1)

Compare (and contrast) original text to a summary for accuracy of the main ideas, inclusion of critical details, and the extent to which it conveys the underlying meaning of the original text. (DCPS English Language Arts, 9.I.2)

Summarize main ideas in passages objectively; distinguish between a summary and a critique. (DCPS English Language Arts, 10.I.1)

Read a challenging passage and respond to clarifying questions concerning essential textual elements of expository text (e.g., why, who, what, where, when, how, what if). (DCPS English Language Arts, 9.I.3)



Industry Standards and Expectations

Understand content, technical concepts and vocabulary to analyze information and follow directions. (F02.1.2, Comprehend and use reading strategies to learn meaning, technical concepts and vocabulary, Career Cluster Project: Communications Skills)

Professional electronic journalists should pursue truth aggressively and present the news accurately, in context, and as completely as possible. (RTNDA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.)

Professional electronic journalists should present the news fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance. (RTNDA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.)

Demonstrate professional conduct and a professional code of ethics. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Exhibit knowledge of ethics and legal issues related to journalism and broadcasting, States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

What Is News?

Timeliness	News is now. People are curious and they want to know what is happening today in their schools, their towns, their countries and their world. Some background information may be included to give context or perspective or to tell people what was reported in the initial news reports.
Proximity	People are interested if the event is near their schools, homes or work.
Importance	An event may not be happening nearby, but people want to know if it may influence their lives.
Magnitude	That which is large is noticed. It is news if the rainfall created a flood, if the lack of rain caused a drought; if the number of people who are ill is increasing, if deaths are multiplying.
Prominence	It is news when celebrities, elected officials and well-known individuals are in town or are involved in a new project.
Emotions	Human interest is built on emotions such as love, hate, fear, horror or pity.
Conflict	Confrontations that influence neighborhoods, institutions and countries require attention. Conflicts impact harmony, economy and quality of life.
Progress	A breakthrough in science, medicine or technology or the hope of discovery is news.
Uniqueness	The unexpected, the first, or simply the bizarre can be news. It can reflect changes in society, science and technology.

Source: The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program. Used with permission. For additional journalism lessons, go to www.washpost.com/nie.

News Vocabulary

Actuality	Recording of speaker. Television journalists call it the “sound bite” and print journalists use the best portions of an interview to provide “quotations” in their articles. Use of actualities brings immediacy and credibility into a piece.
Hard Lede	The traditional news lede that provides the 5Ws and H — the Who, What, When, Where, Why and How — of the story.
Lede	The lede (also lead) in a newspaper story is the first paragraph (1-3 sentences) that serves as a summary of the news. It is followed by paragraphs that provide additional details in descending order of importance. In radio, it is the first sentence of the news that concisely provides the main elements of the story, and is not likely to be followed by more than a paragraph of supporting details.
News	Information that is timely and important enough for the community to know. An event or action that has the potential to influence lives.
Newscast	Broadcast of the news
News judgment	Decision making on a range of topics from determining what is news to making editing and ethical calls
Newsroom	A room set aside for the writing and editing of news stories
News spot	Voicer or a wrap
Soft Lead	Open paragraph(s) that set the scene, provide an anecdote or provide human interest before providing the facts of the story. Some consider this type of lede more appropriate for features than for news. Radio news seldom has time for a soft lede.
Spot	A short news report (less than a minute) for inclusion in a newscast; to file a voicer or a wrap
Voicer	News without tape. Also called a “reader.”
Wrap	News with tape (actuality)

My Radio News Script

Write a 30-second news summary (for the ear) to be read on air. Gather information from three newspaper news articles. Clip and attach the newspaper articles to this sheet.

Newspaper source: _____

Headline: _____

Date, page: _____

Good _____ . I am _____
with the _____ o'clock news.

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Writing For The Ear

First course, First grading period, Week 5

Radio is an oral medium. You cannot re-read a paragraph. Time moves on as the report is heard. For the listener to grasp what is being said in real time, the producer must write for the ear; in other words write the way we speak. There are specific rules on how to do this well.



Enduring Understanding

In order for the listener to grasp what is being said in real time, the producer must write for the ear.



Essential Question

How do you write for the ear and do it well?



Objectives and Outcome

The student will be able to write using the basic rules of radio writing style.



Suggested Time

One to two days



Resources and Materials

Newspaper news article and radio news piece or news wrap (tape and script preferred)

List of writing for the ear rules

Writing examples to talk about and or play for the class

Writing exercises for in-class use and for homework

“Writing for the Ear and Eye,” Writing for Television, Radio and New Media, pages 55-59

“Writing for the Ear,” Radio Production, pages 46-52.

“Pointers for Effective Presentation, Announcing, pages 165-166.



Procedure

1. Begin class with two news selections of the same story, one written for the newspaper and one for radio. (Have a recording of the radio news piece or wrap and a paper transcript would be helpful.)

Read the newspaper account to students. After you have finished reading the first six to eight paragraphs, ask them to record the main point of the article, the individual(s) quoted and any other information they gained. You may not read the article a second time. This exercise is to see what they retain.

Play the radio selection. Have students record the main point of the news, who was interviewed and any other information they gained.

Discuss which was the easier news to listen to and understand. Explain that at the heart, it is a difference in conventions. Both print and radio journalism have the same expectations of the news-gathering process, but it is conveyed in different styles. Radio is conversational or written for the ear. Radio news is meant to be heard once. Print can be read again and again.

2. Review “Rules of Writing for the Ear.” Explain the 10 rules in detail giving examples. Use an overhead projector to show written examples and compare them to how print stories are written. Play taped examples of good radio writing.

3. Have the students rewrite several newspaper paragraphs into radio style. Have each student read what he has written aloud. Does it flow off the tongue, that is, is it easy to say? Does it sound understandable and interesting on the first pass through when it is heard? Could you change the language to make it easier to understand?

4. Critique several paragraphs before the class. Pick the best ones and talk positively about them. Students are bound to be nervous this first time their writing is shared with their peers. It takes time to learn to write for the ear well.



Homework

Ask students to rewrite a series of print story paragraphs for the ear.

Each student should also write three paragraphs describing either:

- What he ate for dinner. Begin with the act of walking into the kitchen and sitting down. “I walk into my kitchen or dining room at six in the evening. On the table there is/are” Make it into a short story in one paragraph ending with the student leaving the room. (What was for dinner? How did it taste and smell? What did it look like?)
- What is it like to walk from class to class in the school hallway? It may begin: “When I walk into the school hallway every morning, I see...” end with students arriving at their next class.

This is an on-going exercise. The principles should be continuously stressed and critiqued; the rules posted in the classroom and referred to constantly. All future radio copy for any assignment should be critiqued for these rules.



Assessment

Give a quiz on the rules of writing for the ear.



Academic Content Standards

Compare and contrast how media genres (nightly news, newsmagazines, documentaries, Internet) cover the same event. (DCPS, 9.M.1)

Analyze visual or aural techniques used in media message for a particular audience and evaluate their effectiveness. (DCPS, 9.M.2)



Industry Standards and Expectations

Develop and deliver formal and informal presentations using appropriate media to engage and inform audiences. (F02.4, Career Cluster Project: Communications Skills)

Demonstrate writing audio scripts for various types of programs. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Apply Knowledge of equipment and skills related to audio production, States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

Distinguish between different forms of media and their specific applications. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Explore career opportunities in Journalism and Broadcasting, States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

Rules of Writing for the Ear

Radio is an oral medium. Listeners cannot “re-read” a paragraph. Time moves on as the report is heard. For the listener to grasp what is being said in real time, the producer must write for the ear. In other words, write the way we speak.

There are specific rules on how to do this well:

1. Write how you talk in your best English.
2. Write in the active voice.
3. Each sentence should have only one thought.
4. Use present tense verbs.
5. Round off numbers unless there is a crucial reason not to use a whole number.
6. Use everyday words.
7. Do not use clichés.
8. Be descriptive. The listener cannot see what you see unless you describe it.
This is radio, not television.
9. Read what you write out loud. If you cannot say it, rewrite it.
10. Write as if you are telling someone else the story in person.