

Understanding News Media

Graphic Organizers

Created to accompany a nine-part series of features of the same title by:

Mary Miller, Education Services Director
New York News Publishers Association
252 Hudson Avenue,
Albany, NY 12210

Reviewed by:

Professor Stephen Shultz
Center for News Literacy at Stony Brook University

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Lesson 1: Defining Media

Activity 1 – Print vs. Digital Newspapers

Compare and contrast print and digital coverage from the same newspaper for the same day. What differences did you find if any? How are the publications the same?

Print	Similarities	Digital

Follow up: What do you think about your experience with each? Explain.

Lesson 1: Defining Media

Activity 2 – Need vs. Want

List as many media channels of communication you can think of. Then place a check mark in the “need” or “want” column to show which ones you think you need or don’t really need but want to have access to.

Media Channel	Need	Want

Follow Up: Do you and your classmates agree on what belongs in each category? Ask your parents or guardians to complete a copy of this same chart. Is their chart different? Why or why not? Which media channels you have listed as a need did not exist when your parents were your age?

Lesson 1: Defining Media

Activity 3 – Newspapers vs. Other Media

Choose any media channel to compare and contrast with newspapers (print or digital).

Newspaper Characteristics	Similarities	Other Media _____ Characteristics

Follow up: What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of these media channels?

Lesson 2: What is the Message?

Activity 1 – Purpose of the Message

After looking through newspapers (in print or digital), list one media message that appeals to you for each category below. Identify who constructed the message.

Purpose	Message	Who constructed it?
To express opinion or point of view		
To educate using factual content and information		
To persuade to buy or think a certain way		
To entertain		

Follow up: Compare the messages you selected with other students in your class. Why do you think some students selected different messages than yours? Why do you think some students selected different messages? Discuss your conclusions with the class.

Lesson 2: What is the Message?

Activity 2 – It’s all about Me

Select one form of media message from the newspaper - an article, photograph, cartoon, advertisement, etc. and construct your own media message that expresses who you are - your talents and strengths, your interests and hobbies - anything that makes you uniquely you. Use the space below to organize your ideas.

Name _____

Does your name have a special meaning? Were you named after someone else?

Physical Attributes: _____

Talents and Strengths: _____

Interests and Hobbies: _____

Favorites – Food, Colors, Music, etc: _____

Other: _____

Remember to choose a purpose – to express your opinion or point of view, educate, persuade or entertain.

Follow up: Present what you’ve constructed to the class. What, if anything, new did you learn about yourself or others by completing this activity?

Lesson 3: What Makes News?

Activity 1 – Hard and Soft News

Look through the newspaper for examples of hard and soft news stories. On the scale from 1-10, 10 being the highest, rank the news factors for each example you choose.

Hard News Headline: _____

Key facts: _____

Novelty 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Impact 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Timeliness 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Proximity 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Interest 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Conflict 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Soft News Headline: _____

Key facts: _____

Novelty 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Impact 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Timeliness 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Proximity 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Interest 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Conflict 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Follow up: Compare your results with the rest of the students in your class. Do you see any patterns? Discuss why or why not.

Lesson 3: What Makes News?

Activity 2 – Hard News vs. Soft News

Identify 1 hard news and 1 soft news story from the newspaper. Write the headline and brief summary of each below. For each, explain why you think the story you selected is hard or soft news.

Hard News

Soft News

Headline:

Headline:

Summary:

Summary:

Why is this article a hard news story?

Why is this article a soft news story?

Follow up: Now you be a “reporter” and write about something in your school. Is your story a hard or soft news story?

Lesson 3: What Makes News?

Activity 3 – Breaking News

Locate three different news stories in your newspaper. Include at least one national and one local story. Predict whether or not you think the story will have breaking news after the newspaper was printed. Read the story carefully. Think about how it would appear in the online edition of the paper. Select parts of the story that you think should include links to sites that might give you more information about the story.

Story Headline	Should it be updated? Why?	What kind of links should be provided?
1		
2		
3		

Follow up: Check your responses with the same stories on your newspaper’s website. Have the stories been updated? Do they have the kind of links you think should be included?

This activity was originally developed for High Five curriculum guide for the Newspaper Association of America Foundation with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Lesson 3: What Makes News?

Activity 4 – Predicting the Future

Predict what information and events from today you think will be featured on the front page in tomorrow’s newspaper. Record your predictions below and check tomorrow’s print or digital edition and record what is actually covered. Place a check (✓) next to the ones you correctly predicted.

Predicted Stories	Actual Stories

Follow up: As a class, discuss any differences between what was predicted and what was actually published.

Lesson 4: What is Journalism?

Activity 2 – Important and Interesting News

News coverage is a mix of stories that are important and/or interesting. Looking through print or digital editions of the newspaper, find articles that you think are important. Write the headline or brief summary of the one you think is the most important in the space below. Now look for a story that you find interesting. Write the headline or brief summary of the one you think is the most interesting below. Compare your selections with others in the class. Do you see any patterns in the type of news coverage selected?

Important	Interesting
Headline:	Headline:
Summary:	Summary:

Follow up: Do you think someone could select the same article to be their most important and the most interesting? Why or why not?

Lesson 5: Informational Graphics

Activity 1 – Understanding the different types of news graphics

Looking through print or digital editions of the newspaper, find examples of informational graphics from the list below. Write a brief description for each and indicate where you found it (Publication name, page number and date) If possible save the clippings to share with your teacher and classmates. Do you notice any patterns in why one type of graphic may have been versus another?

Bar or line graph	Pie chart
Illustration	Cross-section
Map	Flow chart

Follow up: From the examples you've selected, can you think of another way to illustrate the information presented? If so, do you think your concept would work better? Why or why not?

Lesson 5: Informational Graphics

Activity 2 – Picture This

Select one large photograph from the newspaper. In the space below write 10 very detailed statements about it. Read those statements to another student in the class without telling him or her which image you choose. Have them draw the picture from your description. How close did they come? Repeat this activity periodically throughout the school year. Over time, the drawings and the photographs should more closely resemble each other as you and your classmates improve both your skills in descriptive writing and your skills in listening!

1. _____
2. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Follow up: Select two or three photographs that grab your attention from today’s newspaper (print or digital). Clip them out without the caption. Now swap your photos with someone else in the class and write a caption for the image based solely on what you see. Try to limit your caption to no more than ten words. Share what you’ve written with the class. Compare your captions with the original.

Lesson 6: Fact vs. Opinion

Activity 1 – Sorting Out Statements

Select a few articles of interest and evaluate those articles for facts and opinions. As you read list statements in one category or the other. Discuss as a class why the statements you choose to in the facts column are facts. Do the same with what you've recorded under the opinion column.

Facts	Opinion

Follow up: Which was harder to find, facts or opinions? Were there particular areas of the newspaper where you found more opinions than facts? Was it difficult to tell the difference between facts and opinions?

Lesson 6: Fact vs. Opinion

Activity 2 – Analyzing Opinion Writing

Read the editorial page of the newspaper carefully. Select an editorial, an opinion column and a letter to the editor to analyze. Try to find examples of each on the same topic, if possible.

	Editorial	Opinion	Column	Letter to the Editor
What is the topic?				
What is the writer's position?				
What facts are presented?				
What examples are provided?				
What opinions are expressed?				
What words indicate the writer's opinion?				

Which example of opinion writing did you find the most effective? Why?

Did any of the pieces cause you to think more about your own opinion on the topic? Why?

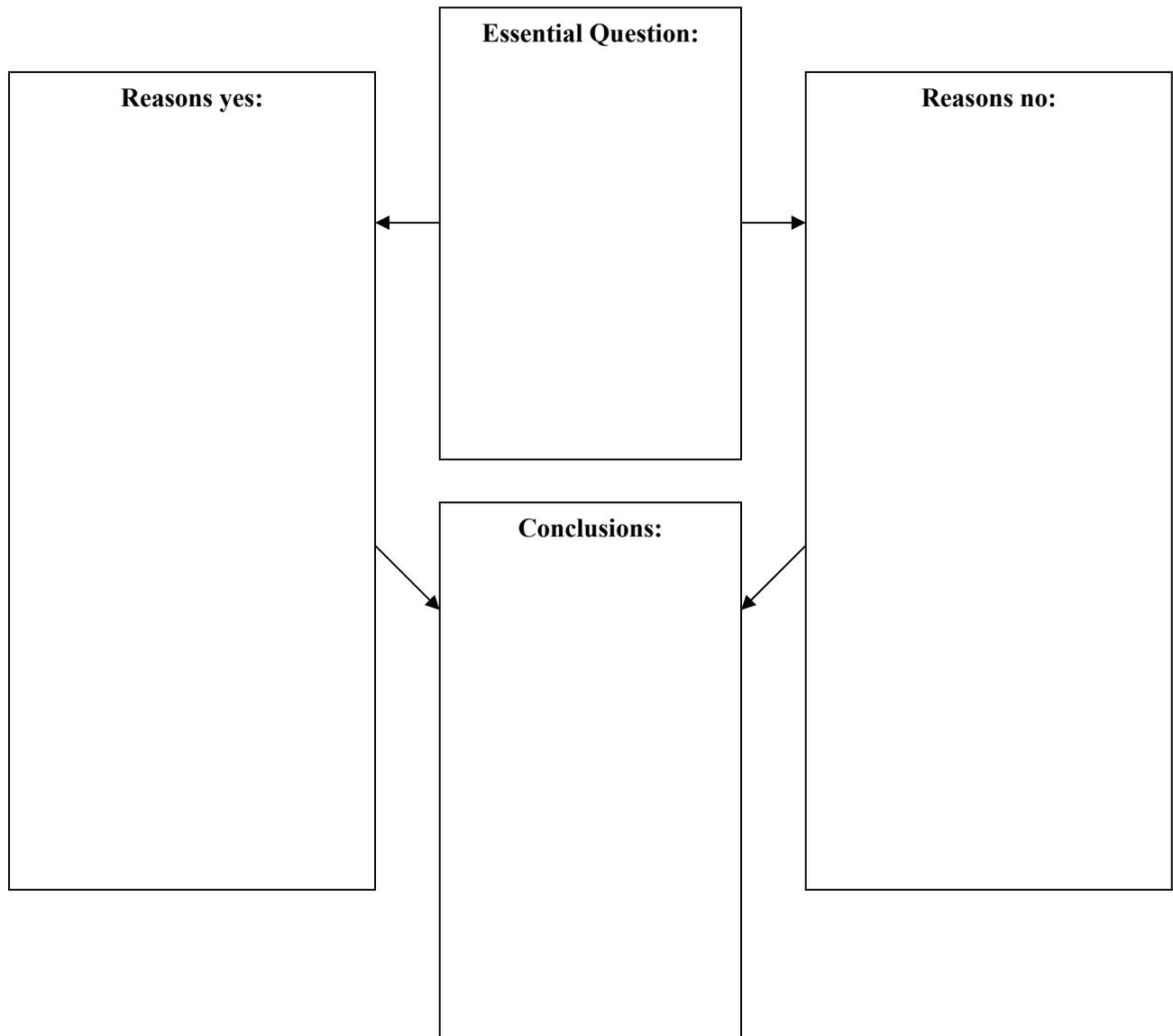
This activity was originally developed for *High Five* curriculum guide for the Newspaper Association of America Foundation with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Lesson 6: Fact vs. Opinion

Activity 3 – Writing an Editorial

Read stories about your community and generate “should” questions based on the reporting and opinions expressed on the editorial pages. Examples: Should the county build its landfill in X area? Should the city allow development in X area?

Choose and write an “essential question.” Work with classmates who are also interested in the question. Read as many reports as you can locate in print and archived editions of your newspaper. List reasons citizens and leaders give for answering “yes” or “no” to the question. After studying the issue thoroughly, have each classmate write and draw conclusions. Each student should write his/her own answer to the question.



Follow-up: What more do you want to know about the question? Where can you go for more information?

This activity was originally developed for *Communities and Connections* curriculum guide for the NAA Foundation by *Dr. Sandra Cook*.

Lesson 6: Fact vs. Opinion

Activity 4 – Editorial Cartoon

After reading several newspaper editorials, select one you feel passionate about and draw your own editorial cartoon that either agrees with the editorial you selected or disagrees with it. If editorial cartoons are new to you, you might want to learn more about them before you start. Visit the Association of American Editorial Cartoonist's website *Cartoons for the Classroom* at <http://nieonline.com/aec/cftc.cfm>.

Follow-up: Display the finished cartoons on a class bulletin board. Was this assignment harder or easier than you expected it would be? Why?

Lesson 7: Who's Telling the Story?

Activity 1 – Understanding Bias

Directions: Read the sentences below and look for bias in each. Underline the biased words. Rewrite the sentence(s) to make them objective.

1. The Bears overtook their unprepared and hapless opponents. It was a sweet victory for our favorite team.

2. The mayor's wife spoke to the Women's Committee on Monday. Her words were followed by a dramatic speech by Mayor William Smith.

3. Two groups lobbied for the new law—Man's Best Friend, an alternative, hippie organization; and Animals for All, a well-funded, well-organized advocacy institute.

4. Write a sentence about a person, event or organization that is biased.

5. Rewrite the sentence and make it objective.

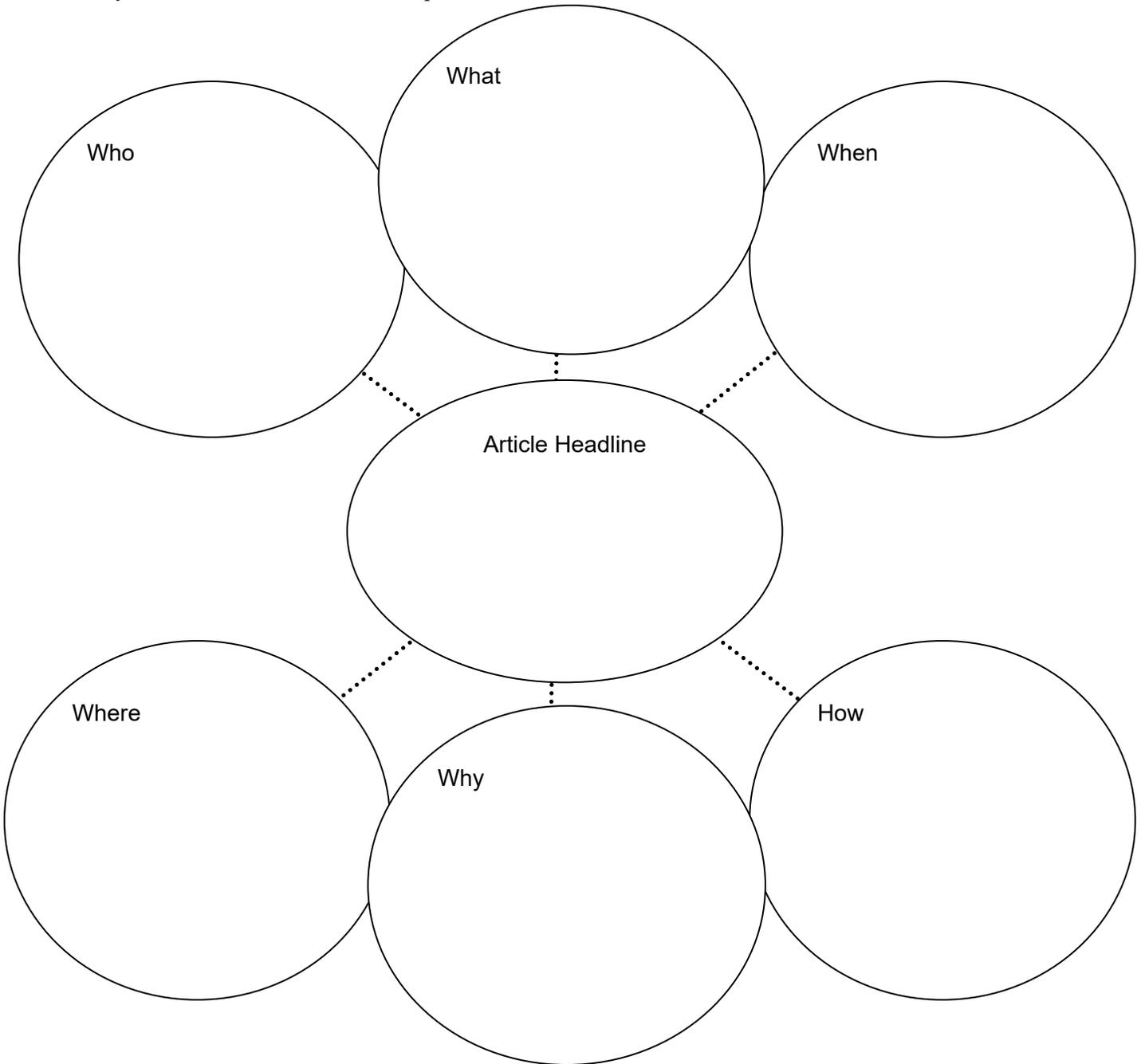
Follow-up: Look for an objective sentence in the newspaper and rewrite it making it biased.

This activity was originally developed for *High Five* curriculum guide for the Newspaper Association of America Foundation with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Lesson 7: Who's Telling the Story?

Activity 2 – Who, What, When, Where, Why and How?

Select an article of interest from the newspaper. Identify the main idea or essential message from the story. Fill out the 5Ws and H in the space below.



Follow-up: Is the reporter's point of view objective? How do you know this? (Find specific words and phrases.) Are the main points of the article clearly stated?

Lesson 7: Who's Telling the Story?

Activity 3 – Reporting After an Interview

Teacher Notes: Select someone from your community who is involved with a topic of interest to your students. (Examples: The head of the local parks commission or DMV, a veterinarian or the head of the cafeteria to discuss nutrition.)

Invite that person to come for a “news conference” with your students: A presentation on a new project, development or policy, followed by a question-and-answer session. Arrange to have your guest provide students with a “press release” – a three or four paragraph summary of the topic – ahead of time.

Following the news conference, have students write a news story of no more than 250 words about the topic of the conference, using at least two direct quotations. Remind them that these are news stories, and should be objective, providing the main facts readers need to know about the topic of the conference.

Have students read their news stories or post them on a bulletin board for comparison. Discuss:

- Points common to all (or most) stories
- Points mentioned by some writers and not by others
- Selection of quotations, and comparison of wording when a quote is chosen by multiple writers.

Discuss what might have caused the differences, since everyone had access to the same information.

- Did some students have personal knowledge of the topic, or do research on their own? How did they use this additional information?
- Would some students be more directly affected by, or interested in, the topic under discussion? Would some be completely unaffected? Did this change the parts of the conference they paid more attention to? Did it appear to influence their choice of quotes?
- What differences appeared to be random?
- How did the length requirement affect student choices?

Wrap up by discussing how, with or without personal interest in a topic, different choices are made by different observers. Is this "prejudice," "bias" or simply the effect of having news relayed by others instead of experiencing it first hand?

What does this suggest to them about the importance of:

- Attending school board, zoning board and similar public meetings?
- Reading and listening to more than one news source?

Lesson 7: Who's Telling the Story?

Activity 3 – Reporting After an Interview

Review the “press release” supplied by the person your class will be interviewing. Prepare two or three open-ended questions you would like to ask if you’re given the chance. Open-ended means that you need to ask questions that require more than a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response. Use the grid below to help organize your notes. Write an objective news story of no more than 250 words about the topic of the conference, using at least two direct quotations.

Questions	Direct Quotes	Important Facts

Follow-up: Read your report to the class. Compare the similarities and differences in each report. What might have caused the differences?

Lesson 8: The First Amendment
Activity 1 – The “Public Watchdog”

Look through the newspaper, print or digital, for examples of the news media acting as the “public watchdog.” These stories could be at the national, state or local level. Select stories about each of the levels of government listed below. Explain why it is important for citizens to know about the news reported in the stories.

Government official/group	Which story?	Why citizens should be informed
National elected official (The President or a member of Congress)		
State elected official (The governor, state lawmaker)		
Local elected official (Mayor, city council representative, etc.)		
Local governmental group (Zoning commission, waste authority)		
Tax supported service agency (Human service agencies)		

Follow-up: Look at the information on your chart. Which of the articles is most important to you as a citizen? Discuss your ideas with another student.

This activity was originally developed for *Citizens Together: You and Your Newspaper* curriculum guide written by Sherrye Dee Garrett, Ed.D. and Beverly S. Morrison, Ph.D. for the Newspaper Association of America Foundation.

Lesson 8: The First Amendment

Activity 2 – Freedoms of Speech and the Press

People make their voices known in our government directly such as in congressional hearings, and indirectly through letters to their representatives in Congress. Other indirect methods to influence change include the use of newspapers and other media. Letters to the editor, political cartoons, press releases and even newspaper advertising are all vehicles used to sway public opinion and potential voters. Select one of the newspaper methods listed and create a persuasive argument based on a local issue in the news. Be sure to use facts to strengthen their point of view.

Follow-up: Select an interesting editorial from the newspaper and write a new editorial expressing the opposite point of view.

Lesson 9: News Consumers and Creators in the Digital Age

Activity 1 – Analyzing Online Content

Select a website you’d like to use for research. Answer the following questions to determine whether you think the information is accurate and credible.

URL _____

<p>Authorship/Publisher Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the author/publisher? • Does the author provide contact information? • What are the author's credentials? • Is the site created or sponsored by a reputable organization? 	
<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the site's purpose: to persuade, inform, or entertain? • Is the information on the site objective or biased? • Does the site provide thorough coverage of the topic? • Is the information on the site well written without misspellings or grammatical errors? • Does the site provide a works cited page? • Does the site include multimedia elements that help explain the topic? 	
<p>How is the information organized?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the site organized and easy to navigate? • Does the design suit the purpose? • Are there ads that might distract me? 	
<p>How current is the information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the site indicate when it was first created and last updated? • Do the links work, or do they lead to error messages, such as “Page Not Found”? 	
<p>Why should I use/not use this site?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the extension in the URL? What, if anything, does the extension tell me about the source of the site? • Do the resources on this site meet all my needs? • Is the information verifiable, in-depth, and up to date? • Why is this website better than some of the other sites or resources available? 	

Follow-up: Do you think it is important to determine the credibility of online information? Explain why or why not. Do you think information available on newspaper websites is reliable? Why or why not.

Lesson 9: News Consumers and Creators in the Digital Age

Activity 2 – Creating a News Story

Whether in print or online, and regardless of the medium you use, your story need to be “newsworthy.” Fill in the information below to help guide you to complete a news item other students in your class will want to read and share.

Subject of the story _____

The story is important because: (check all that apply)

- It is about something that is happening now
- It is happening here or close by
- It is about something unusual
- It is about an important person
- It affects a lot of people
- Other

Basic information about the story:

Who is the story about? _____

What happened? _____

When did this happen? _____

Where did this happen? _____

Why is it important? _____

Some relevant details about your story

Lead paragraph of the story

Supporting paragraphs of the story (Use the back and more paper if necessary)

This activity based on one originally written for the curriculum guide *Creating a Classroom Newspaper*, NAA Foundation.

Web resources:

American Society of News Editors (ASNE) – created an archive of lesson plans for media and news literacy which can be found at www.schooljournalism.org/journalism-lessons/

Cartoons for the Classroom is a joint effort between the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists and NIEonline to provide lesson plans based on political cartoons - www.nieonline.com/niecftc/cftc.cfm

Center for Media Literacy – educator resources - <http://www.medialit.org/educator-resources>

Common Sense Education K–12 Digital Citizenship Curriculum is a set of online lessons and student handouts organized into grade bands and several different topics: self-image & identity, relationships & communication, digital footprint & reputation, cyberbullying & digital drama, information literacy, internet safety, privacy & security and creative credit and copyright - <http://cybersmartcurriculum.org>

Daryl Cagle's Professional Cartoonists Index provides political cartoons from many different sources - <http://www.cagle.com/>

Digital Resource Center for News Literacy - sharing the accumulating wisdom and materials of the News Literacy teaching community, which works to strengthen democracy by teaching students to pluck reliable information from the daily media tsunami - <http://drc.centerfornewsliteracy.org/>

Evaluating Information found on the Internet – Johns Hopkins University, The Sheridan Libraries – a complete collection of what to consider - <https://guides.library.jhu.edu/evaluate/internet-resources>

High Five – an integrated, three-unit curriculum that includes reading, writing, journalism, grammar, linguistics and visual literacy. The curriculum uses the daily newspaper as a textbook and information source. (Created by Newspaper Association of America Foundation – which merged with American Press Institute) - <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/youth-news-literacy/resources/news-literacy-curriculum/high-five-2012/>

Journalism Education Association (JEA) – JEA has created lesson plans — nearly 200 weeks worth — across 11 content areas, complete with classroom materials, learning outcomes, assessments and models. This is a member only resource - <https://curriculum.jea.org/wp/>

- ♦ JEA Digital Resources - Digital media includes, but is not limited to: Web sites, podcasts, blogs, broadcasts, social networks, etc. - <http://www.jeadigitalmedia.org/>

The Learning Network: Teaching and Learning with the New York Times – Journalism - <http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/13/teaching-and-learning-about-journalism/>

Mastering the Message – an NIE curriculum guide designed to help students gain control of media messages by analyzing them and then creating messages of their own (Newspaper Association of America Foundation) – www.nynpa.com/docs/nie/niematerials/MasterMessage.pdf

MediaSmarts - a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization for digital and media literacy. Our vision is that children and youth have the critical thinking skills to engage with media as active and informed digital citizens - <http://mediasmarts.ca/>

Media Education Lab at Temple University - multimedia educational resources and curriculum materials for educators, parents and students - <http://mediaeducationlab.com/>

The News Literacy Project - a national education nonprofit offering nonpartisan, independent programs that teach students how to know what to believe in the digital age - <https://newslit.org/>

The Newseum - free resources to cultivate the First Amendment and media literacy skills essential to civic life. Learn how to authenticate, analyze and evaluate information from a variety of sources and put current events in historical context through standards-aligned lesson plans, videos, primary sources, virtual classes and programs - <https://newseumed.org/about-newseumed>

Project Look Sharp - a media literacy initiative of the Division of Interdisciplinary and International Studies at Ithaca College, working in collaboration with local school districts, New York State BOCES, the National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) and other national media literacy organizations. The project is designed to promote and support the integration of media literacy and critical thinking into curricula at all grade levels and across instructional areas, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of media literacy education in the schools. <https://www.projectlooksharp.org/>

The Student Press Law Center works at the intersection of law, journalism and education to promote, support and defend the rights of student journalists and their advisers at the high school and college levels. The SPLC is the only organization in the U.S. devoted to providing free legal information and free or low cost educational materials to student journalists and their advisers. <https://splc.org/>

Watching TV News: How To Be a Smarter Viewer - 3 hour self directed course online at the Poynter Institute developed by Stony Brook University School of Journalism, Center for News Literacy - <http://www.newsu.org/courses/watching-tv-news-how-be-smarter-viewer-0>