

## EXPLOITING THE NEWSPAPER IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM

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### Understandings

1. That what one reads in newspapers influences one's opinion.
2. That newspapers serve both utilitarian and cultural purposes.
3. That newspapers may contain both truth and propaganda.

### Values

1. The importance of the newspaper in daily life.
2. A respect for the journalist's skill in reporting or editorializing.

### Abilities

1. To discriminate between truth and propaganda.
2. To think critically and to interpret facts accurately.
3. To skim, scan, or read closely as suits the purpose.

### Suggested Methods of Introducing the Unit

1. A bulletin board about the newspaper may be put up before starting the unit. Some of these suggestions may give the teacher ideas:
  - (a) Line the board with different sections of the newspaper. Identify the different sections of the paper on strips of coloured construction paper with a felt marker: national news, local news, advertisements, feature articles, horoscopes, editorials, comics, sports and a syndicated column. Pieces of yarn can connect the marker strip with the actual section of the paper.
  - (b) Put up the front page of a newspaper, and identify its terminology: headline, date line, lead, national news, science, etc.

2. On the first day the teacher, after distributing the newspapers, should give the pupils time to look through and read their favourite sections. Then lead pupils into a discussion of why they do, or should, read a daily newspaper. List these reasons on the board.
3. Using the bulletin board as a guide, the teacher should point out the different sections of the newspaper and ask the pupils to find these sections in newspapers already distributed to them. Some time should be spent on little details; ask the pupils to find the price of the paper, the date of the paper, the publisher, and the circulation rate.
4. The teacher may lead the pupils into a discussion of their newspaper reading habits or divide the class into small discussion groups. Discussion may be directed to these questions.
  1. Do you read a newspaper?
  2. Which paper do you read?
  3. Why do you read the paper?
  4. Which items or sections of the paper are your favourites? Why?
  5. Which items or sections of the paper hold no interest for you? Why?

The discussions should be summarized either by the group leaders or the teacher.

### Suggested Content and Materials

1. It is essential that each pupil have his own newspaper and that it be today's newspaper.
2. Local weekly newspapers.
3. Several newspapers of national distinction.

### Suggested Activities

1. Establish a routine for the days to be spent on the newspaper unit. Select a 'paperboy' to give out the papers. Each day assign the reading of the weather report, the main headline, or the different comic strips, the cartoons, the horoscope, or other class favourites to different pupils.
2. Begin a vocabulary list of words encountered in newspaper reading. Whenever possible, work on word attack skills such as phonetic analysis and structural analysis, e.g., astronaut and astrology. Wordlists may include such words as horoscope, posthumously, obituary, serial, and syndicated. New words can be added as they are encountered. The teacher may test the pupils on these words.
3. Have pupils clip a humorous comic strip from the newspaper and paste it on a sheet of paper. Under the clipping the pupil should write a short paragraph, telling what is humorous about the situation in the comic strip.
4. Assign pupils to play the different characters in a comic strip. Have the pupils read the lines in today's strip and then act out the outcome as they think it will happen.
5. Read 'Dear Abby' or another advice to the lovelorn column for several days. If the pupils demonstrate sufficient interest, have each write a letter to 'Dear Abby' about an imaginary or real problem. Suggest that the pupils not sign their own names but use false names. Take this opportunity to discuss the parts of a friendly letter. Have the students write the letters in ink on unlined paper, address an envelope, and seal it. Distribute the 'Dear Abby' letters to the pupils in the class, making certain no pupil gets his own. The pupil should read the letter, attempt to help the writer solve the problem, and write his reply. At all times, the best procedures of letter writing should be followed. The letter of reply should then be delivered to the pupil writing the original. Several of these letters and the replies should be shared by the class. The most interesting letters may be displayed on the bulletin board.
6. Read the advertisements in the newspapers. Discuss how much space is taken up in advertising. Look for the different kinds of advertisements: food, banks, movies, theatres, sports, concerts, and furniture. Discuss the wording of the advertisements and ways the words might be used to arouse the emotions of the reader for or against an idea or a product. Spend some time on the classified advertisements. Have each pupil write a 'want'ad. Using the price list quoted in the paper, have each pupil figure out the cost of his advertisement.
7. Invite the class into discussion groups to read and discuss feature articles such as sports, fashions, and recipes.
8. Invite a Commerce teacher to visit the English class and explain the way the stock market exchange table works. Have each pupil in the class choose one or two stocks, such as Am T & T or Coca-Cola, and follow the price changes of these stocks during the week. The pupil could keep a record of his gains and losses.
9. Explain the particular style used in writing a news story. This is called the inverted arrangement of items. The article capsulizes the whole story in the first sentence or two without using particulars so that the reader can easily get the essentials of the story; then it enlarges the capsule by explaining additional details in order of descending importance. Explain to the pupils that a good lead tells who, what, where, when, why, and how.  
  
Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?  
  
detail  
detail  
detail  
detail  
detail

Read several news stories. Then tell the class a human interest story, such as fireman gets kitten from fire to apparent beggar leaves fortune to newspaper boy who was kind to him. The story should be interesting and realistic. Use real names for people and places in the story. Ask the pupils to write the story in newspaper style.

10. Read a human interest story to the class, and ask for the pupils' reactions. There may be several reactions. Explain that the meanings of words depend on how they are used and how they are interpreted. Past experiences can colour one's interpretation of words. A person who has been severely burned will probably associate pain and fear with the word 'fire', but a person who has spent many pleasant evenings around a campfire will have only pleasant associations. Give a word association test, reading a list of words to the class and having each pupil write the first word that comes to his mind. The teacher may choose to use some of the following:

- |            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. red     | 6. yellow   |
| 2. mother  | 7. smart    |
| 3. flag    | 8. enemy    |
| 4. teacher | 9. mouse    |
| 5. music   | 10. England |

11. Discuss the ways news stories may be slanted to arouse the approval or disapproval of the reader. Explain the difference between fact and opinion. Have the class choose headlines from the newspapers and pick out slanted words. The headlines can be rewritten to eliminate or to form opinion.

*Examples:*

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|----------------|---|
| strong opinion | 1. Price Control Strangles American Business  |
| opinion        | 2. Price Control Hurts American Business      |
| fact           | 3. Price Control Influences American Business |

or

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| strong opinion | 1. Inspired New York Jets Overwhelm Sluggish Colts |
| opinion        | 2. New York Jets Overpower Colts                   |
| fact           | 3. New York Jets Defeat Colts                      |

**Suggested Culminating Activity**

At the end of the newspaper unit, have pupils discuss their newspaper reading habits. The teacher should note changes in habits, opinions and attitudes. Discussion may be directed to these questions:

1. Why do you read a newspaper?
2. Which items or sections of the paper are your favourites? Why?
3. Which item or sections of the paper hold no interest for you?
4. What news stories or features have the most real value for you?