

Extra! Extra! Journalists and a Free Press

Theme: Belonging

Interdisciplinary Subject: Social Studies

Duration: 2 Class Sessions

Grade Level: 3-5

Lesson Overview: In this lesson, students learn about the crucial role journalists and reporters play in keeping the citizens in a democratic society informed about their community, the nation, and the world. First, students are introduced to the notion of “freedom of the press” from the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and they discuss the role of journalists in reporting the news to us all. Then, students analyze primary sources related to famous journalists while referring to historical context for each in order to understand the important role these journalists played in their time. Finally, students create an issue of their own school newspaper to understand the responsibility they have as journalists to report accurately, fairly, and truthfully.

Overarching Essential Question

- How do our lives connect with others in this country?

Lesson Essential Questions

- Why are journalists important to a free press?
- What important issues do journalists share with all of us?
- How do journalists protect democracy?

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain the importance of journalists to a free press.
- Analyze primary sources for historical context.
- Assemble the components of a traditional newspaper.

Civic Knowledge

- Civic life, politics, and government.
- Roles of citizens in American democracy.

Civic Skills

- Identifying and describing information.
- Explaining and analyzing information.
- Working with others.
- Clearly articulating ideas and interests.

Civic Dispositions

- Developing as an engaged member of society.
- Assuming the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen.
- Promoting the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy.

Materials Needed

- Teacher Guide: Extra! Extra! Journalists and a Free Press
- Primary Source Teacher’s Guide: Analyzing Photographs & Prints
- [PowerPoint: Extra! Extra! Journalists and a Free Press](#)
- Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Tool (one per student): ([online version](#) or [PDF](#))
- [Analysis Chart](#) (optional alternative to the Primary Source Analysis Tool, one per student)
- [Source Pack – “Famous Journalists and Their Work”](#) (one per pair of students)
- [Exit Slip](#) (one per student)
- [Handout A – Creating Your Newspaper](#) (two per every group of four students)
- Access to the Library of Congress or printouts of materials (noted in lesson)
- A sheet of 11” x 17” paper or largest paper available (one for every group of four students)
- A current newspaper

Library of Congress Resources

The sources listed below are contained in the Source Pack. Students will need access to the online bibliographic information. Links are included in the Source Pack.

Primary Source Analysis Tool: <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool/>

Teacher's Guide: Analyzing Political Cartoons:

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Political_Cartoons.pdf

Primary Sources:

- Joseph Pulitzer, -1911. [No date recorded on caption card.] Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, < <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3a49374/>>.
- Bain News Service, Publisher. Upton Sinclair. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, < <https://www.loc.gov/item/2014695726/>>.
- Harris & Ewing, photographer. Tarbell, Ida M. [Between 1905 and 1945.] Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, < <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016859908/>>.
- Harris & Ewing, photographer. *Woman columnist advocates repeal of the Neutrality Act . . .* Retrieved from the Library of Congress < <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016875517/>>.

Additional Resource(s):

- An image of the First Amendment excerpted from <https://www.congress.gov/content/conan/pdf/GPO-CONAN-2017-10-2.pdf>.

Standards

C3 Indicators:

D2.Civ.7.3-5. Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school settings.

D2.Civ.14.3-5. Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.

D2.His.3.3-5. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.

Teacher's Guide

I. Introduction

- A. Project **Slide 1**. Ask students: *Where do you find out about what's happening in your community and the world?* Students may respond that they listen to their parents or other relatives, or they may listen to the radio or watch television news from time to time. They may have a school newspaper, newsletter, or e-news that informs their families about school events.
1. Explain that sources like newspapers, radio news, T.V. news, and Internet news are examples of what we call *the press*, a word which originally meant news that was printed on paper using a printing press. If they hear their parents talking about the news, it is very likely their parents learned about the news from the press.
- B. Project **Slide 2**, which shows the First Amendment. Explain that the First Amendment is part of the U.S. Constitution, the highest law in the nation. The First Amendment guarantees certain freedoms to everyone living in the nation. These are so important, we call them our *fundamental* freedoms. They include freedom of speech (freedom to express an opinion) and freedom of religion (freedom to choose what you believe).
1. Ask students to note *freedom of the press* and then ask them: *What do you think "freedom of the press" means?* Accept reasonable responses. Look for answers that highlight the need for people to know what is going on in the country and the world.
 2. Ask students: *Who makes sure we all know what's happening in our communities and in the world?* Accept reasonable responses. Students may say newspapers and television. Look for answers about journalists and reporters. (You can also ask students: *Do you know of any reporters or journalists on television? Online? In newspapers?*) Tell students that journalists are those people who write about the news, and they broadcast the news on T.V. or the Internet. We all rely on them to keep us informed. That's what this lesson is about.

II. Lesson Tasks

- A. Divide the class into pairs. Distribute one [Source Pack](#) to each *pair*. Distribute a source analysis tool to each *student*. You can choose to use the **Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Tool** or the [scaffolded Analysis Chart](#) depending on your students' needs. Tell students they are going to learn about a few famous journalists (or reporters) and what these journalists achieved.
1. Project **Slide 3** – Joseph Pulitzer. Have students examine the image in their Source Pack and discuss the OBSERVE questions on their analysis tool for Source 1 (Joseph Pulitzer). Have each student jot down their answers to each of the OBSERVE questions in the appropriate box on the Primary Source Analysis Tool. As students work through each primary source, you might help get them started by asking them:
 - Describe what you see.
 - What do you notice first?
 - What else do you notice?
 - What is interesting?

2. Repeat Step 1 above for the remaining **Slides 4 through 6** (Source 2 (Upton Sinclair), Source 3 (Ida Tarbell), and Source 4 (Dorothy Thompson), respectively).
 3. Ask students if they think the four people shown have something in common. If so, what is it? (They are all journalists or work in journalism (Pulitzer became a newspaper publisher).)
- B. Explain that students will look one more time at each source. This time, they will know a little more about the sources.
1. Project **Slide 7**. Read the information to students on Slide 7. Have students examine the image again in their Source Pack and discuss the REFLECT and QUESTION sections on their analysis tool for Source 1 (Joseph Pulitzer). Have each student jot down their answers to each of the REFLECT and QUESTION questions in the appropriate boxes on the analysis tool. As students work through each primary source, you might help get them started by asking them:
 - What can you learn from examining this photo? (REFLECT)
 - When do you think it was made? (REFLECT)
 - Why do you think it was made? (REFLECT)
 - What do you wonder about... Who? What? Where? When? How? (QUESTION)
 2. Repeat Step 1 above for the remaining **Slides 8 through 10** (Source 2 (Upton Sinclair), Source 3 (Ida Tarbell), and Source 4 (Dorothy Thompson), respectively).
- C. Distribute the [Exit Slip: What I Learned](#) to each student for assessment of this part of the activity. Students should take a few minutes to complete the three sentence prompts on the exit slip:
1. *One important issue that journalists have reported about in the past is . . .*
 2. *A free press is important because . . .*
 3. *Journalists are important to a free press because . . .*

III. Closure

- A. Show the class a current newspaper. All they need to see is the front page. Point out to them how neatly the articles are laid out in straight lines, and how the articles are separated by neatly drawn straight lines, as well. Point out how an image (likely a photograph) is prominent.
- B. Group the pairs so that students are now in groups of four each. Explain that each group is now the journalist staff of a newspaper. They are going to report on what has been happening at their school recently.
 1. Distribute [Handout A](#), two per group (so pairs within each group can share), and distribute one 11" x 17" sheet of blank, white paper to each group. Read through Handout A's instructions with students. Check for understanding of the instructions.
 2. Students will divvy up their tasks according to the instructions on Handout A. They will need access to the materials to create their school newspaper.

- C. Display the students' finished products in the classroom under a banner titled "Freedom of the Press" as a final assessment.

This lesson is part of a larger initiative, Citizen U, which aims to integrate civic learning across the curriculum for students in grades 2-12. For more lessons like it, in Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies, or to learn more about related creative, community, and professional development opportunities, please visit our [Citizen U website](#)