BBC LEARNING · Microsoft

MY WORLD LESSON #1

# What's the News?

## Overview

Students investigate the characteristics, roles, and purposes of news. They are introduced to the genre by the BBC *My World* video, "What Is News?" which tracks the history of news, from handwritten manuscripts to digital feeds. Students explore the different categories of news—hard, soft, local, national, and world news—along with specific news subjects or types, including politics, crime, human interest, and celebrity news. Students learn what makes an event newsworthy, its universal appeal to human nature. Finally, they explore the question "What is the purpose of news?" by considering its roles and its benefit as a public service.

**Target audience:** English and Language Arts, Social Studies, Media Studies. Ages 11–14.

**Class time:** 45-60 minutes

**Student handouts:** "What's the News?" Informational article, Guided Practice, Check your media literacy assessment.

**Materials:** Computer or tablet with internet connection.

## Class structure and pacing

1. 5 minutes Class warm-up discussion
2. 10 minutes *My World* video: "What Is News?"
3. 10 minutes Informational article "What's the News?"
4. 5 minutes Whole-class discussion of focus questions
5. 10 minutes Digital Edge / Guided Practice
6. 10 minutes Media Literacy Assessment

## Procedure

1. Begin class with a brief warm-up discussion.
- **Open by asking for a show of hands or examples:**
  - What is a recent news item you read or saw?
  - Why do you think these items made the news?
  - Is the news helpful to people? Why or why not?
- **Explain that by the end of this lesson, they will be able to:**
  - Distinguish news from other informational content.
  - Identify different types of news.
  - Recognize what makes information "newsworthy."
  - Explain the purpose of responsible journalism.

### ⬡ LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**Distinguish** news from other informational content.

**Identify** different types and purposes of news.

**Explore** what drives news or makes events newsworthy.

**Understand** the purpose of responsible journalism.

### 💬 LESSON VOCABULARY

**hard news** *n.* news that reports on a serious matter

**human interest** *n.* a quality that draws attention because it involves the experiences of real people

**journalism** *n.* the writing or producing of news for print, broadcast, or websites

**narrative** *adj.* taking or having the form of a story

**newsworthy** *adj.* significant enough to report to the public

**prominence** *n.* importance, noticeability

**relevance** *n.* significance or close relation to the matter at hand

**soft news** *n.* news that reports on relatively light matters, like celebrities, arts, and human-interest stories

**universal** *adj.* existing everywhere

2. Analyze the concept of news and its purposes by having students read the informational article, "What's the News?" Instructional options are:

- **Read each section as a class. Stop after each section to note and compare the concepts students learned about in the video, such as:**
  - Definitions of news and journalism
  - Examples of types of news
  - Newsworthiness
  - Purposes of news
- Read the entire article in pairs and discuss the question, "What makes something newsworthy?"

3. Present the *My World* video segment, "What Is News?" which discusses how "news" can influence people's thinking and the role of journalism to show all sides of a story.

- **Before screening, write the following bullet points on the board. Ask students to make notes on these points as they watch the video.**
  - How can news influence individuals?
  - What concerns might this raise?
  - What role can journalism play?
- Ask students to share their observations.

4. Guide students' analysis of the topics and concepts in the video and article through whole-class or small-group discussion of focus questions.

- **Ask students:**
  - How has news changed and stayed the same over time?
  - What are some ways we can categorize news?
  - What qualities make information newsworthy?
  - What is the purpose of journalism?
- **Model using critical thinking skills when responding or adding to student answers.**

5. Provide an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned through Guided Practice in categorizing news headlines.

- **Allow students to work individually or in pairs as they search for news headlines online.**
- **Direct students to complete the Guided Practice handout in accordance with what they have learned from the lesson.**

6. Assess what students have learned and provide a chance to express their views about the purpose and value of news media.

- **Direct students to complete the assessment handout.**
- **Allow students to consult their notes if needed for short answers.**

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✎ **TIPS FROM**

**Microsoft Education**

**Create engaging learning experiences tied to this Lesson with the following free Microsoft Education tools:**

**Utilize Flipgrid with this Lesson**

For further discussion of focus questions, post the prompts and students can share their key learnings via Flipgrid. Continue the conversation on Flipgrid!

**Facilitate collaborative learning**

Post warm up questions from the lesson into Teams and copy the guided practice into OneNote where students can collaborate, and seamlessly upload articles and videos to evaluate different types of news. Free education collaboration tools are at your fingertips with Office 365.

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# Extend and connect

**ELEMENTARY/PRIMARY**

*(ages 6–10)*

Explain that there are different types of news. Some news is serious or "hard," and some news is fun or "soft." Create a T-chart with the labels HARD and SOFT on the board. Write different news topics on index cards. Give students cards and ask them to place each in the correct column (HARD: crime, conflict, disasters; SOFT: culture, celebrities, sports). Model responses to a few topics, explaining how you categorized them.

**HIGH SCHOOL/SECONDARY**

*(ages 15–18)*

Examine how news is reported around the world. Conduct an internet search to find news videos and websites for news outlets in different parts of the world. What are the similarities and differences of how news is presented? Research the following questions: What does "free press" mean? What does "state-run news" mean? Find examples of each type and share them with the class.

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✎ **EDUCATION STANDARDS**

**Media Literacy**

ISTE 3.b Locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media.

ISTE 5.a Advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology.

**English and Language Arts Reading Information**

RI.6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

RI.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.7.2 Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.7.5.a Analyze the use of text features (e.g., graphics, headers, captions) in public documents.

RI.8.7 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

RI.9.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

**Social Studies**

RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

# What's the News?

It's a good question to ask, especially in our time. What we think of as news has changed significantly, even over the last ten to twenty years or so.

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines news as "newly received or noteworthy information, especially about recent events." It is the process of **journalism** to report events—recent, *factual* events—in a **narrative** form as a news "story." These qualities of being a current and factual story separate news from other information.

### What Kind of News?

People consume different types of news covering different locations and topics. This includes local, national, and world news. It may be news that covers political events or world disasters and conflicts. Some people follow financial and business news. Others seek out **human interest** stories about peoples' personal experiences, and **soft news** stories are also popular, like an account of a lost dog that treks 300 miles to reunite with its family. People stay informed about what is important to them through the news.

| LOCATION | HARD NEWS TYPES | SOFT NEWS TYPES |
|---|---|---|
| Local | Political | Human Interest |
| National | Conflict | Arts and Cultural |
| World | Financial | Entertainment |
| | Disaster | Celebrity |
| | Crime | Sports |

Journalism of the greatest consequence produces **hard news**. Understanding what drives hard news helps us to think and act as informed citizens.

### What Is Newsworthy?

All news should be of interest to the people receiving it. This holds true in a **universal** sense across cultures and nations. The success of news depends on its appeal to people's curiosity, concerns, and feelings. Good journalists take this mission seriously. News informs the public about their concerns, satisfies their curiosity, and addresses their need to understand the world—whether in their own neighborhood or a world away.

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☐ **LESSON VOCABULARY**

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**journalism** *n.* the writing or producing of news for print, broadcast, or websites

**narrative** *adj.* taking or having the form of a story

**newsworthy** *adj.* significant enough to report to the public

**prominence** *n.* importance, noticeability

**relevance** *n.* significance or close relation to the matter at hand

**soft news** *n.* news that reports on relatively light matters, like celebrities, arts, and human-interest stories

**universal** *adj.* existing everywhere

The types of stories that people find interesting may vary but several qualities often drive the news that reporters cover. Many people find stories with these qualities to be **newsworthy**.

| QUALITIES OF NEWSWORTHY EVENTS | |
|---|---|
| **Quality** | **Why it appeals to human nature** |
| **prominence** | The story is about someone or something that is great, famous, or prestigious. |
| **relevance** | The story is relevant to people's lives or to an ongoing issue in which people are interested. |
| oddity | The story covers an event or person that is unusual or rarely seen. |
| importance | The story covers an event in which people have a great stake or interest. |
| conflict | The story is about the struggle or clash between people, nations, or other opposing sides. |
| human interest | The story causes people to admire, sympathize, or be touched by the people or animals involved. |

News editors and executives grapple with hard choices daily. They must consider how newsworthy a story is. Should they run it? Is it a lead story? Getting these answers right requires a firm grasp of the story's facts and impact.

**What's the Point?**
Journalists report events that impact people's lives. News covers conflict, exposes wrongdoing, reports disasters. News also reports positive stories such as sporting or scientific achievement. Whether negative or positive, news satisfies our curiosity, offers relevant information, and resonates with our thoughts and emotions.

There's an old saying in the news business: "If it bleeds, it leads." It reflects the fact that news covers unpleasant stories. Unfortunately, some people commit crimes, abuse power, and hide questionable actions. The news exposes these people, often to society's benefit. In this sense, journalism at its best provides a crucial public service.

**Directions:** Search online for examples of news to complete the chart below.
Note why you think each choice is newsworthy. (The first row provides sample answers.)

| Headline<br>*Write headline and describe subject.* | Type of News<br>*Hard or Soft News?* | Scope (Location)<br>*Local, National or World News?* | Source<br>*Name of news organization?* | Why is it newsworthy?<br>*What qualities would make the story of interest?* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *"Somali Soldiers Fire on Protesters"*<br>*Political* | *Hard News* | *World News* | *The New York Times* | *Importance, Conflict* |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

**1.** What characteristics distinguish news from other types of informational content?

    **a.** important, current, brief
    **b.** current, factual, narrative
    **c.** current, violent, colorful
    **d.** important, exciting, relevant

**2.** What is the term for the process of writing, gathering and creating the news?

    **a.** authoring
    **b.** journalism
    **c.** broadcasting
    **d.** innovation

**3.** Identify three platforms, or means of delivery, in which news is consumed in the 21st century.

_____

**4.** Name the three divisions in the scope, or location, of new events. (HINT: Think global, act local.)

_____

**5.** For each headline below, identify the news category (hard news or soft news) and the type of news.

| **TYPES OF NEWS** | crime     conflict     disasters     financial news     politics |
| --- | --- |
| | culture     celebrities     sports     human interest     entertainment news |

                                     **CATEGORY**                    **TYPE**

Congressman accused of corruption     _____     _____

Woman walks across United States     _____     _____

Utah man found guilty of murder     _____     _____

Etna's eruption buries Sicilian town     _____     _____

**6.** Certain aspects of evens interest people across all cultures. Name four qualities that often make an event newsworthy (of interest to people).

newsworthy quality _____     newsworthy quality _____

newsworthy quality _____     newsworthy quality _____

**7. REFLECT** Think about the purposes of journalism. Consider how it can be an important public service. Then write a paragraph explaining what this means to you. Provide examples.

_____

_____

_____

# Answer key

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**1.** What characteristics distinguish news from other types of informational content?

    **a.** important, current, brief
    **b.** current, factual, narrative
    **c.** current, violent, colorful
    **d.** important, exciting, relevant

**2.** What is the term for the process of writing, gathering and creating the news?

    **a.** authoring
    **b.** journalism
    **c.** broadcasting
    **d.** innovation

**3.** Identify three platforms, or means of delivery, in which news is consumed in the 21st century.
***Answers will vary. Possible answers: online, print, TV, radio***

**4.** Name the three divisions in the scope, or location, of new events. (HINT: Think global, act local.)
***Local, national, world***

**5.** For each headline below, identify the news category (hard news or soft news) and the type of news.

| **TYPES OF NEWS** | crime    conflict    disasters    financial news    politics<br><br>culture    celebrities    sports    human interest    entertainment news |
| --- | --- |

|  | **CATEGORY** | **TYPE** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Congressman accused of corruption | *hard* | *politics* |
| Woman walks across United States | *soft* | *human interest* |
| Utah man found guilty of murder | *hard* | *crime* |
| Etna's eruption buries Sicilian town | *hard* | *disaster* |

**6.** Certain aspects of evens interest people across all cultures. Name four qualities that often make an event newsworthy (of interest to people).
***Answers will vary. Possible answers: prominence, relevance, oddity, importance, conflict, human interest***

newsworthy quality _____    newsworthy quality _____

newsworthy quality _____    newsworthy quality _____

**7. REFLECT** Think about the purposes of journalism. Consider how it can be an important public service. Then write a paragraph explaining what this means to you. Provide examples.
***Answers will vary. Accept answers with reasons and examples to support opinions.***