



# Global Voices

## Journalism in the Classroom: A Unit for Elementary Students



Global Voices is made possible by Educators Financial Group and delivered in partnership with the Toronto Star.

## Rationale

This unit will introduce Grade 6 students to the world of print journalism, including the research process and the basic structure of article writing. The experience may also motivate aspiring young journalists to become part of the Global Voices Junior Journalism program where students experience writing as a powerful tool to be active global citizens and change the world. Students may also be inspired to start a class or school newspaper that focuses on social issues that matter to youth, both locally and around the world.

## Unit Objectives

Students will learn about:

1. The types of journalists
2. How journalism differs from creative writing
3. Different types of stories (hard and soft news)
4. How journalists conduct research
5. Conducting an interview
6. How to write a news story

As an introductory unit, it is important to remember that skills related to conducting interviews and writing stories takes time to develop. You may wish to extend the amount of time dedicated to the lessons to allow for additional practice and consider the extension ideas that are provided at the end of each lesson. As well, assessment strategies will need to be tailored to reflect the current skill level of your students.

## Where Does It Fit in the Ontario Grade 6 Curriculum?

### Language:

Writing – Overall expectations (p. 20)

- Produce pieces of writing using a variety of forms, techniques and resources appropriate to the form and purpose, and materials from other media.
- Communicate ideas and information for a variety of purposes (to inform, persuade to explain)

Oral and Visual Communication – overall expectations (p. 45)

- Ask and answer questions to obtain and clarify information
- Communicate a main idea about a topic and describe a sequence of events;
- Express and respond to a range of ideas and opinions concisely, clearly and appropriately
- Analyze media works
- Create a variety of media works

Media Communication Skills (p.45)

- identify the various types of professionals involved in producing a media work and describe the job they do;
- analyse a media work and express a considered point of view about it.
- create a variety of media works

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## Lesson #1 Introduction to Journalism

### Objectives

During discussions and written activities students will:

1. Develop an understanding of print journalism as a profession.
2. Distinguish between different types of news stories (hard news and soft news).

### Materials:

- multiple copies of daily newspapers (e.g., the *Toronto Star*)
- chart paper

**Time:** 60 minutes (based on depth of discussion, this lesson can be extended to include a second 60-minute period).

### Steps:

1. In partners, ask students to first discuss then write a brief job description for a journalist (e.g., what do students think journalists do in their job). In a large group, share ideas.
2. Ask the same partners to brainstorm types of journalists (e.g., newspaper, magazine, wire services, television, radio, internet, freelancers, foreign correspondents).
3. As students share their ideas, the teacher should write the suggestions on the board categorizing them into one of two groups, print or electronic. Do not share your category titles. Ask students if they can name the different types of journalists. Write the categories of journalists at the top of each list. (Note: The focus of this unit will be on print journalists only).
4. Read the definition below:

*Journalism is the profession in which one collects, verifies, reports and analyzes information about current events, including trends, issues and people. Those who practice journalism are known as journalists. They are often categorized as print or electronic media journalists.*

5. Ask students, (1) "Why do you think would a person choose print journalism as a career? Discuss ideas.
6. Read the following quote from a journalist. (Note- this quote is also included as a student handout at the end of this lesson. Alternatively it can be put on an overhead)

*It often comes as a surprise to students that journalism and creative writing are like apples and oranges. All through school, students have learned that a good piece of writing is one with long, descriptive sentences and a clear introduction, body and conclusion. But when they apply those principles to journalism, they are often discouraged to learn that the writing styles are very different. Newspapers require short sentences that describe as much as possible, in as few words as possible, with an entirely different structure. Magazines and websites have their own styles as well. While creative writers write because they love to use their words in an artistic way, journalists write because they love to tell real-life stories and inform their readers. Students who enjoy writing poetry may find journalism quite structured, but those who like writing about people, places and issues will find it exciting and fulfilling.*

7. With the whole group, discuss reactions? Ask students, (a) Is this a surprise? (b) What type of person would you think is best suited to be a print journalist? (e.g., personality type and skill strengths)

### Transition

8. Hand out copies of the daily newspaper (one copy for each pair of students). Ask students to look through the sections of the paper familiarizing themselves with the section names and types of articles included in each section. This should take 10-15 minutes. While familiarizing themselves, students will complete the chart which is located at the end of the lesson (entitled - Parts of a Newspaper).

Ask students, "Based on what you have seen in today's paper, what would you guess is the difference between "hard news" and "soft news"? Challenge students to think of an explanation with an example from the newspaper. (Note: It will be interesting to see if there are assumptions made based on the connotations behind the words *hard* and *soft*. For example, will students assume one has more importance? Or, is one type simply more timely?)

9. Share the following definitions: (note: these definitions are on a student handout at the end of the lesson – Types of News Stories)

*Hard News – This is a factual and timely story that provides an account of something that happened. It is design to inform the reader and answer as many of the 5 Ws (who, what, where, when, why) and how questions as possible.*

*Soft News – This kind of article tells a story in greater depth and often in a different style than the straight ahead news story. These stories can include features that tell a more in-depth story about a topic, profiles that tell stories about people or editorials that present a point of view on an issue.*

10. Ask students to read through the entire paper looking for examples of both hard and soft news (features, profiles and editorials). Students can work in pairs and complete the attached worksheet (entitled: News Story Research). In a follow up discussion, share student suggestions and achieve consensus on the article category.

## **Closure**

In a discussion, ask students, "What have you learned about journalism as a career and specifically about print journalists? How do you know when you're reading a hard news story versus a soft news story?"

## **Assessment**

At the beginning of the following class, hand out copies of the daily newspaper and ask each student to select one hard new and one soft news story. Students will cut out the stories and write an explanation of why their examples fit our definitions. Students are to hand in this short assignment.

## **Extension**

Have several copies of the daily newspaper available for students at the beginning of each class. As a warm up, ask students to find and read examples of both types of stories. During informal discussions, ask students to select stories they found to be most appealing. Ask them to describe what made them appealing (e.g., topic, headline, photo etc.).

## Student Handouts

*Journalism is the profession in which one collects, verifies, reports and analyzes information about current events, including trends, issues and people. Those who practice journalism are known as journalists. They are often categorized as print or electronic media journalists*

***Quotation from a Journalist***

"It often comes as a surprise to students that journalism and creative writing are like apples and oranges. All through school, students have learned that a good piece of writing is one with long, descriptive sentences and a clear introduction, body and conclusion. But when they apply those principles to journalism, they are often discouraged to learn that the writing styles are very different. Newspapers require short sentences that describe as much as possible, in as few words as possible, with an entirely different structure. Magazines and websites have their own styles as well. While creative writers write because they love to use their words in an artistic way, journalists write because they love to tell real-life stories and inform their readers. Students who enjoy writing poetry may find journalism quite structured, but those who like writing about people, places and issues will find it exciting and fulfilling."

## Types of News Stories

**Hard News** – This is a factual and timely story that provides an account of something that happened. It is design to inform the reader and answer as many of the 5 Ws (who, what, where, when, why) and how questions as possible.

**Soft News** – This kind of article tells a story in greater depth and often in a different style than the straight ahead news story. These stories can include features that tell a more in-depth story about a topic, profiles that tell stories about people or editorials that present a point of view on an issue.

## Parts of a Newspaper

Newspaper Section Name	Purpose (What types of stories are included?)



## Lesson #2      **How Journalists Conduct Research**

### **Objectives**

Through discussions and activities, students will:

1. Understand the different research sources used by print journalists.
2. Explore the challenges associated with each of the sources.
3. Demonstrate their understanding of a “credible” website if using the Internet.

### **Materials:**

- Access to the Internet (note: lesson is best suited for a computer lab)
- Handouts of “Guidelines for Junior Journalists”

**Time:** 2 – 60 minute periods

### **Steps:**

1. Ask students, “Where do journalists get their information?”
  - Newspaper – hard news stories can be the basis for an editorial, feature or profiles
  - Libraries or other public record collections (located in city hall, archives, etc.)
  - Internet
  - First hand witness to events
  - Interviewing people (Note: This will be the basis for Lesson Three)
2. In small groups, ask students to brainstorm the challenges with using each research source. Make a chart like the one below in their notebooks. To assist students, the teacher may offer the following explanations:
  - Advantages: Why is the source helpful to a journalist? What will that source contribute to the story?
  - Challenges: What makes the source difficult for a journalist to use?
  - Reliability: To what extent can a journalist depend on the information provided by this source?

Research Source	Advantages	Challenges	Reliability
Newspapers			
Libraries			
Interviews			
Internet			
First-hand witness			

- Duplicate this chart on the board or chart paper. Ask students to share their ideas.

### Transition

For many students, the Internet is a common source of information. Depending on their level of experience, they may have encountered websites that do not provide accurate information or provide information with a definite bias or political agenda. Ask students to describe their experiences.

- Hand out copies of "Guidelines for Junior Journalists - Getting Started."
- Read the section "Getting Started" with the group. Ask for feedback. What experiences can students share about using the Internet to research school projects?
- In a large group, brainstorm a list of current issues that are of interest to students (option: students may wish to connect this activity with a research assignment in another class, making this exercise more relevant). Each pair of students can select one topic and search the Internet for five "credible" online sources of information (based on the criteria on the handout). This part of the lesson can be conducted in a computer lab or using laptop computers in a classroom with wireless Internet access.

### Closure

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As a large group, share results. It is important to discuss both unreliable source as well as reliable ones. Even if a site is deemed reliable, what challenges exist (e.g., how often is information updated?). Take this opportunity to advise students to always make a note of the date that the website was used, so they may check for updates before completing any article.

## **Assessment**

Ask each student to submit their list of reliable sources and, beneath each, state what makes them reliable and whether or not they would use this site again.

## Junior Journalist Guidelines

### Getting Started

Before you begin writing an article, research the topic and gather information by various means so that you have a strong foundation of knowledge.

#### The Internet, the newspaper, the library

Although the Internet is an excellent source with a lot of valuable information, you will always need to evaluate the authority of the information you are accessing because there is no overall quality control.



Here are some questions to consider when evaluating the reliability of your online source:

- Is the information part of or linked to a reliable organization's website such as the government, a college or university, an international organization (e.g. United Nations), or a recognized non-governmental organization?
- How current is the content (look for a date when the information was posted or last updated)?
- Are the links on the page active?
- Is there an author? Is there a link to the author's qualifications, home page, etc.? Can you find information about the author by searching the web or from non-Internet sources?
- How comprehensive is the content? Does the content generally agree with what you have found elsewhere, including in books and other non-Internet sources?
- Is there a bibliography?
- Is the page for some purpose other than to provide information (e.g., advertising or expressing an opinion)?

Other sources of background information on a world event can be found in previous newspaper issues at your local library. If the story is political in nature, you can obtain information by contacting the office of your city councillor, MPP or MP.

## Lesson # 3

# Conducting Interviews

### Objective

Through discussions and practice, students will learn how to conduct an interview to research for a news story.

### Materials:

- notebooks
- tape recorders (if available)
- copies of "The Dos and Don'ts of Interviewing" (attached)

**Time:** 2 – 60 minute classes with homework assignment

### Steps:

1. Review what was discussed in Lesson #3. "Interviews" are a method of research for journalists. Ask students to recall their chart and ask: Why do you think interviews are powerful source of information? What do quotations accomplish in a news story?
2. Ask students to interview a partner about something they did the previous weekend. The only instruction is to ask questions and make notes of the answers.
3. Following the interview, ask students to recall the definition of a hard news story. Ask: Could you write an interesting hard news story based on this information? Why or why not? Ask students to think about the experience of conducting an interview. What was challenging about the experience? (e.g., speed of person speaking, not understanding the story, problems getting down information on paper while someone is speaking, etc.)
4. Distribute the "Do's and Don'ts of Interviewing" handout and read it with the group.
5. Ask students to:
  - look at their notes from the interview and ask themselves, "Do I have enough information to answer the 5 Ws and *how*?" (see handout #4).
  - make a list of the questions they would need to ask their partner in order to answer all 5 Ws (who, what, when, where, why) and how.
  - return to their original partner and re-do the interview, trying to incorporate some of the tips from the handout.

6. Depending on the comfort level of the group, ask for volunteers to conduct an interview with their partner in front of the group. Afterwards, the class can give positive feedback on the extent to which the handout tips were incorporated.

### **Closure**

Ask students: What is the most challenging part of interviewing? (Note: It is important to reassure students that journalists spend years perfecting this skill.)

### **Homework Assignment**

Ask students to conduct an interview with a family member that evening. Suggestions for interview topics:

- what was the most exciting /challenging/frustrating part of your day?
- describe an incident that happened to you today

Remind students:

- the goal is to answer the 5 Ws and *how*
- they should be following the process discussed in class
- write out the questions prior to conducting the interview
- have a checklist of the 5W's and *how* to help guide them

Note: The purpose of this assignment is to provide a chance for students to practice their interviewing skills. Advise students that this interview will provide material for the next few classes. They will eventually be writing an entire news story based on the results from that interview.

### **Assessment**

Assessment can be based on the extent to which students' interview notes answer the 5 W's and *how*. Students will use these interview notes again in Lesson # 4 as they learn how to put a news story together.

Possible enrichment ideas: If there is an enrichment student who needs a challenge, the teacher can direct such a student to do a phone interview with someone from an ongoing local news story (e.g., local politician or school official). Suggest that this student investigate the Global Voices Junior Journalism program. They can start by visiting [www.thestar.com/globalvoices](http://www.thestar.com/globalvoices) and reading the past articles written by youth.



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## A Journalist's Guide to the DO'S and DON'TS of Interviewing

- 1) **Be professional.** Make sure you are polite and friendly. Make eye contact and don't be late! You will get more respect this way.
- 2) **Be prepared.** Do all your research and have your questions ready before the interview. If you sound like you don't know what you are talking about, you will not get good answers.
- 3) **Ask one question at a time.** Take your time and don't ask too many questions at once. This will confuse the person you are interviewing and he/she may not answer all your questions.
- 4) **Ask the 5 Ws—*who, what, where, why, when*—and *How*.** These are the most important questions to ask because they help to explain an issue. Asking these will get you the basic details for your article.
- 5) **Ask open-ended questions.** Ask questions that make people talk, not ones that they can answer with “yes” or “no.” Ask “how was your trip?” instead of “did you have a good trip?”
- 6) **Don't rush.** Give people time to think and answer your question. Sometimes you get the best quotes when you are silent.
- 7) **If you don't understand, ask.** If you don't understand what someone says, it is okay to say you don't understand. If you don't understand something, the people who read your article won't either.
- 8) **Get both sides of the story.** Make sure you interview more than one person. If people disagree on an issue or have different opinions, you should talk to them all.
- 9) **Ask, “Is there anything you'd like to add?”** Finish your interview with this question. If you forgot to ask about something important, the person you are interviewing might talk about it here.
- 10) **Don't be nervous.** Remember, an interview is just like a regular conversation. People are usually very friendly and helpful when you interview them. If you follow these suggestions, you will do a great job!
- 11) **More practical tips for beginners:**

- Using a tape recorder during an interview is a good way to ensure that you will get all of the details and quote a person with accuracy. If you use one, take jot notes at the same time. Don't depend on the tape recorder as your only source.
- Take extra batteries and do a test before the interview to be sure the tape recorder is working.
- Take extra pens and some pencils. If you are interviewing someone outside, certain weather conditions may prevent your pen from working (e.g., cold temperatures).
- It is possible that both you and the other person may be nervous. It is quite acceptable to have a brief unrelated conversation to establish a rapport before the real questions begin.

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## Lesson #4

# Writing News Stories

### Objective

Through discussions, research and writing activities, students will understand the different parts of a news story (the lead, the nutgraph and the body).

### Materials:

- copies of "Writing Your Story" (enclosed)
- several copies of the daily newspaper

**Time:** 3 – 45 minute periods

### Steps

#### *Period One: The Lead*

1. Introduction: Hand out copies of Writing Your Story. Read the first section defining the term, lead.
2. In partners look through the daily paper to look at examples of leads. Based on the criteria for a good lead (listed in the article), ask students to find examples of the best leads of that daily newspaper. Which one engaged them into wanting to read further?
3. As a group, share examples.
4. Practice writing leads in small groups. This list of topics may help guide your students or, they can generate their own topics.

#### Possible topics:

- Opening of a new community centre
- School team wins the basketball season
- Dog found in girl's change room
- Students protesting the lack of nutritious fruit and vegetables in the cafeteria.
- First female student honored as co-ed hockey team MVP

Share results and give feedback based on the criteria for a good lead (Note: It will be helpful to post the criteria on the board or chart paper for student reference). The best leads can be written on chart paper and saved for use in Period Two.

5. Ask students to:

- return to their notes from the interview assignment and write a lead that could start that particular story
- share their lead with a partner and offer feedback to one another.

Closure: Review criteria for a good lead.

### *Period Two: The Nutgraph*

1. Review the term “nutgraph” from "Parts of a News Story". Ask students to read articles from the daily paper to find the nutgraph. Note: It is important to remind students that both leads and nutgraphs may be more than one paragraph in length.
2. As a group, select one of the topics from period one. Based on the lead written for the topic, write a nutgraph together. As students make suggestions, the teacher can transcribe the paragraphs onto chart paper.
3. Using their leads (from period one), ask students to individually write a nutgraph—one paragraph to explain what their article is about. When students are finished, ask them to share their work with a small group. Other students will give feedback based on the extent to which the nutgraph clearly explained what the article is about.

### **Closure and Assessment**

Ask for volunteers to share their lead and nutgraph. Based on the feedback, students can be given the chance to revise or rewrite the nutgraph and hand it in for assessment. The criteria are the same as the group discussion, the extent to which the nutgraph clearly explains what their article is about.

### *Period Three: The Body*

1. Read the rest of the "Writing Your Story" handout. Explain to students that the rest of the article is meant to tell the whole story. Quotes and research will give credibility and depth to their article. Review and discuss the advice to the young journalist: "Show don't tell."
2. Ask students to return to their own story (now with both a lead and nutgraph) and take out the notes from their interview.

3. Students can take the balance of the class to put their entire story together. The length of the story is at the discretion of the teacher and should reflect the skill level of the group.
4. Provide time for students to share their story with a partner. Partners can give feedback on the ability of the entire story to (a) engage the reader, (b) explain what the story is about (c) provide enough detail (including quotations) to answer all of the 5 Ws and how.

### **Closure**

In a large group discussion, ask students: How is this experience different for you than creative writing? Considering the fact that print journalists produce news stories on a daily basis, what insight are you gaining into the life of a print journalist?

### **Assessment**

The final draft of the story can be handed in for feedback and assessment. Since this is the first attempt at a complete story, a numerical evaluation is at the teacher's discretion.

## Junior Journalist Guidelines

### Writing your story

There are no simple rules that determine what is news and which facts, out of an entire collection of facts, are most important. *News judgment* is the sense or the skill of knowing what makes news and what is newsworthy.

To determine what is more important over what is of lesser importance, check to see which facts answer the 5Ws.

#### Lead with a lede

The *lead* (or *lede*) is the very first sentence or couple of sentences of the article. The lead must accurately summarize the most important parts of the story. It should be interesting enough and a well enough written piece that engages and draws in the reader.

Usually the lead will answer several, though not all, of the 5Ws and *how*. If you try to answer all 5Ws and *how* in the first sentence, it may make it long and awkward. There is no perfect length for the lead, but most journalists agree that shorter is better.

#### Establish the point

A *nut graph* is in the story to tell readers what the story is about because it would not necessarily be obvious from the lead. The nut graph is usually one paragraph that states the focus or main point of the story, providing the gist or the essence of the article. It often tells the reader why the story is timely and includes material that helps the reader see why the story is important.

Background information is also important to any story, but it should come after the point of the story has been well established. Think about what background your readers will need. For example, on the issue of child labour, you will answer the following questions:

- What is child labour?
- How many children are affected?
- What laws are in place to protect children?

## Add colour with quotations

*Quotations* add colour, emotion and credibility to any story. They also provide breaks for readers, giving them variety within the article. Always ensure that the quot says something instead of just being in the story.

At times, journalists can paraphrase or reword quotations. You would still attribute the indirect quotation to your source so that readers know from where this particular fact or point has come. When you paraphrase, it is very important that you do not distort the meaning of what has been said.

Use direct quotations:

- to back up the lead and/or other points of the story and to support or lend credibility to the story
- when they succinctly and accurately describe the events/story better than you can
- if they express emotion better than by paraphrasing
- when the statement is or could be considered controversial
- the words spoken are so forceful, they should not be altered in any way by the reporter

Do not use direct quotations:

- that repeat what has already been paraphrased
- just because you have not used a quotation in several paragraphs
- when it does not have anything to do with the story, even if it is a really good one
- if it is really long or has nothing in it that enhances the story, except for a word or phrase—in this case, just use the parts you want, in quotation marks, in an otherwise paraphrased sentence
- as the lead of your story

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You can work some more colour in to your story by describing people (who are providing quotes), the environment, etc. While the extra colour helps to take the reader to the place, do not go overboard.

### WRITE

- You've got a lead, now order a sequence in telling: organize.
- Write quickly and stay on track – you can go back and tweak.
- As you write, periodically ask yourself: Who cares?
- When you finish, go back and edit—cut words and sentences.

## Attribution and Plagiarism

A cardinal rule in journalism is that you always give the source for facts and never represent other people's work as your own. When using facts you should always include the source; if you are quoting someone or rewriting material from another report, you must name the original source of the information, for example, the "*Toronto Star* reported..." or "according to the UNESCO website...."

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## Culminating Activity: **Putting the Pieces Together**

### Objective

Students will demonstrate their understanding of each part of a news story - from research (including interviewing) to writing.

### Materials:

- access to a computer lab for Internet research
- notebooks or a computer to write the news story

**Time:** 2 or 3, 60 minute periods (depending on student need)

### Steps:

1. Explain to students that they will be writing a news story. They have the choice of a hard or soft news story and the topic should have meaning to them. Depending on the level of independence of your students, you may choose to brainstorm a list of issues within the school or community that affects them as youth.
2. Review
  - definitions of *hard* and *soft* news stories
  - Do's and Don't of interviews
  - issues related to research
  - definitions of a lead, nutgraph and background on using quotations
3. Students will then research and write a news story. Criteria for assessment may include evidence of:
  - research (reliable internet sites or library sources listed)
  - at least one interview (as demonstrated by the use of quotes)
  - an effective lead, nutgraph and body of a story.

Note: The length should reflect the writing ability of your class.

### Closure

Once assessed and evaluated, completed stories can be displayed or reproduced as student contributions for the school newsletter.

### Unit Extensions:



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As described in the introduction, students with an interest in print journalism can visit [www.thestar.com/globalvoices](http://www.thestar.com/globalvoices) for more information on how to become a Global Voices Junior Journalist. Students may also explore the potential to create a class or school newspaper.

