Lesson 2

Identifying newsworthy stories

Learning objective

• To know what makes a story newsworthy

Learning outcomes

• Identify the main categories of news
• Explain how news stories are chosen by desk editors
• Use news criteria to justify why a news story is newsworthy

Curriculum links

• Reading comprehension: identifying the audience and purpose of a text
• Speaking and listening: providing justifications for views, discussing and debating opinions
• PSHE education: exploring and critiquing how information is presented in the media

Journalist Training School context

Journalists must be able to identify newsworthy stories that will be interesting and informative for their audience.

Core knowledge/skills

• When journalists identify news stories to report, they must determine whether the story is ‘newsworthy’ for their publication and audience.
• News companies use News criteria to help them decide if a story is newsworthy for their audience:
  − Subject: who the story is about
  − Time: when the story happened
  − Surprise: whether the story will surprise people or inform them of something new
  − Location: how close or relevant the story is to the audience
• Each day, desk editors choose the most newsworthy stories for their section, then choose reporters to write them. Every morning, journalists attend a daily news conference, where the desk editors share their chosen stories. They also discuss and debate the day’s most interesting topics!
• There are five main news categories: National (news happening in your home country), International (news happening elsewhere around the world), Science & Environment, Entertainment & Culture, Sport.

This lesson focuses on the NewsWise value: interesting.
**Theme 1: Understanding the news**

**Starter/baseline assessment**

**News scavenger hunt:** in pairs, pupils explore a newspaper or news website to find a list of given items as quickly as they can. **Challenge:** pupils find a news report that most interests them. Why did it catch your attention? What makes it interesting? What is it informing you about?

NB: you may want to scan through the chosen newspaper or news site to check that the available content is appropriate for your pupils. You can remove any unsuitable stories from the newspaper.

**Learning activity**

Pupils work in role as desk editors to evaluate the newsworthiness of potential stories. First, decide as a class the type of news publication you are (ie a school newspaper, local, national or international news), as this will tell you who your audience is.

1. Put pupils in groups and allocate each group a section of the news publication: National, International, Science & Environment, Entertainment & Culture or Sport. Each group must choose three newsworthy stories to report (see resources), using the **News criteria** to justify their decision.

2. Hold a news conference where each group presents their chosen stories. As a class, discuss what makes them newsworthy. **What is the story informing your audience about?** What is the purpose of the story? Why would this story be interesting for your audience?

3. Choose the lead story. **Out of the chosen stories, which one should feature as the lead story on the front page?** Why is it the most newsworthy for your audience? **Which story would feature as the next most important story?** Discuss and share the pupils' story choices.

**Plenary**

Ask pupils to consider what the world would be like without news. **What would happen if news companies didn’t exist? What would happen without news? What would people no longer be able to find out?**

**Questions for assessment**

*Why do we need news? What types of news can we read about? How do journalists decide what is or isn’t newsworthy? What makes a story newsworthy? What is the difference between an international, national and local news publication?*

**Online resources checklist**

- News criteria
- News scavenger hunt