

Learning activity

What is news?

Learning outcomes

Must:

All students will identify what is and is not news.

Should:

Most students should be able to identify the 5Ws of a news story.

Resource checklist

- ✓ **What is news?** slides
- ✓ Newspaper, news reports or website to look at stories
- ✓ **What is news?** worksheet
- ✓ **Additional activity: Newspaper/news website scavenger hunt** worksheet

Useful knowledge for supporting teacher/adult

- There is more than one definition of news. This activity focuses on news that relates to current events and is of interest to a wider audience than the person it has happened to.
- People can find out about this type of news via newspapers, radio, television, news websites, and increasingly via social media.
- Whether or not something is news can depend on a lot of factors. A newspaper for a small town will feature different stories than a TV broadcast for all of the UK.
- News stories contain the 5Ws, typically at the very beginning of the stories, because this is the most important information. This is usually the same for written stories and ones on TV or radio news.
- The ‘who’ might not be a single person. Is there a group of people the story is about (eg a football team, the government, students in England)?
- The ‘when’ might not be a specific date, but a more general time period (eg ‘since the last election’) or it may be implied: because most news is reported very soon after the event has happened, the actual date is sometimes not included.
- The ‘why’ is about what caused the events in the story. Sometimes this could be obvious (eg the thieves robbed the bank because they wanted the money; people had to flee because of a natural disaster) but can sometimes be very complex (eg a war between two countries often has very complex reasons behind it).



Outline

These activities are intended as a framework you can adapt to suit individual students' needs. They can be used as standalone activities or as part of a sequence of work on news literacy.

- **5-10 min starter activity** - Activity 1
- **20 min extend activity** - Activity 1 and 2

Activity 1

Use **What is news?** slides

Slide 2: Discuss how students would define news and compare their responses to the dictionary definition.

Slides 3-9: Take students through the examples and decide whether they are news or not.

Who might be interested in this news? Would someone want to hear about this even if they were not involved in the event? Would it be more important to people who live near the event? Why? Who else might be affected by the story? Why would other people be interested? If there are more people involved in the story is it more interesting/important? Why?

Slide 10: Discuss where students get their news from. Prompt students to think of a wider definition of news - not just current affairs, but other issues that may interest them such as sport, music or gaming news.

Activity 2

Use **What is news?** slides, **What is news?** worksheet if using, and newspaper, news reports or website to look at stories

Extend the learning:

Slides 11-14: Explore the 5Ws with students and explain that these are the most important facts in any news story. Read the news story aloud and ask students to feed back each of the 5Ws one at a time. Next, students choose or are given a news story, and they pick out the 5Ws themselves using the worksheet provided, highlighting in the text, or answering orally.

Plenary

Slide 15: Ask students to imagine they are the editor for a UK news website (the person in charge of picking which stories get covered). What questions would they need to ask before they reported on the story? Remind students to think about the 5Ws.

Additional activity

A scavenger hunt using a newspaper or news website (using prompts provided or your own).