
LEARNING THROUGH THE NEWS

NEWSPAPER SCANNING FOR LETTER-WRITING

SUGGESTED TIME: The entire activity might be broken into three lesson segments as noted, and the time required will depend on the skill level of the class. (The activity is recommended for grades three and up depending on content and language complexity.) It is suggested that at least an hour be set aside for the word-locating exercise alone.

AIM: The students will:

- Practice the reading skill of scanning.
- Practice communicating accurately.
- Practice writing a friendly or business letter.



MATERIALS: Teacher-generated transparency of letter, newspapers, scissors, glue, notebook paper and pencils

PROCEDURE:

1. Be sure that students have the following skills in order to fully participate in this activity:
 - Reading levels adequate for the newspaper.
 - An understanding of newspaper-page numbering.
 - The knowledge of vocabulary for sharing location within the newspaper, e.g., column, upper/lower half; paragraph; line; “from the bottom,” left/right; caption, above/below.
2. Prepare an overhead transparency showing a letter using correct friendly- or business-letter form, using words likely to be found in the newspaper.
3. Begin the lessons.

Lesson A

1. Introduce a letter-writing format (friendly or business) identifying the specific elements of the letter and its purposes.
2. Place teacher-generated letter transparency on overhead; read together if needed.
3. Have class copy the heading, inside address and greeting on notebook paper, leaving the rest of the page blank.

Lesson B (allow at least one hour)

1. Discuss the difference between reading every word and scanning for a particular word.
2. Distribute newspapers.
3. Ask students to find words from the letter in the newspaper.
4. When a letter-word is found have the student describe the location of the word in the newspaper using the appropriate vocabulary.
5. While other students are finding and marking the word, teacher should write the page number above the word for later reference if needed,
6. Continue until all words are located. (You may offer incentives for locating an especially challenging word.)

Lesson C

1. When all the words have been marked, students can cut out and glue them on to their notebook paper to form the body of the letter. Remind students to use punctuation and to draw capital letters if necessary to complete the letter.
2. Students hand write (or cut out individual letters) to form the closing, then
3. Sign the letter.
4. Review the purposes of the specific elements of the letter.

EXTENSION: Follow-up discussion could include: comparing/contrasting scanning and reading; possible motivation, purpose and audience for this particular letter; what items of interest were noticed while scanning; content specific to the letter, etc.

— by *Jill Johnston, Instructor, Grades Three and Four, Vader (WA) Elementary School. (Used with permission.)*

Learning Standards Addressed:

Language Arts #3 Application of ... strategies to comprehend ... text ... drawing on ... knowledge of word meaning ... *#4* Adjustment of the use of spoken, written and visual language ... to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences. *#6* Application of the knowledge of language structure ... to create, critique and discuss print and nonprint texts. *#12* Use of spoken, visual and written language for ... learning, enjoyment, persuasion and the exchange of information. (*National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association List of Standards for the English Language Arts, 1996.*)

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