



Lesson Plans

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NewsBrands
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An Initiative from NewsBrands Ireland.



Why News Matters

Pages:

4

5



40-60 minutes



Optional:

Survey

(see PDF for printing/
photocopying)

Material to be used

Pages 4 & 5 set in context why news and news literacy is so important in today's world. Read and discuss.

Optional Activity to help prompt and guide discussion:

This survey can be used before or after reading pages 4&5 of the guidebook.

The survey can provide prompts for use by individuals/ pairs/ groups to deliver feedback on their engagement (or lack of) with the news.

After they have conducted the survey, either in groups or as individuals, they can feedback their responses as follows:

1. Place 4 columns on the board headed with A, B, C, D.
2. Collate their preferences using simple ticks to indicate what the majority of their choices were.
3. Use the points below to open discussion on the results.

Mostly A answers indicates a complete lack of engagement with the news. You could discuss why this is.

Mostly B answers indicates a small amount of interest in the news. You could discuss when and why they engage with certain news stories.

Mostly C answers indicates frequent engagement with the news. Tease out what interests such people and how and why they engage.

Mostly D answers indicates a high degree of interest in the news.

4. You could focus in on the specific answers that people had for questions 6, 7 and 8. There will probably be discrepancies in those answers. These could be explored further.



Why News Matters - Survey



1. I watch the news on tv or online:

- a. Never
- b. Very rarely
- c. Frequently
- d. As often as possible



2. I read news in a paper or online:

- a. Never
- b. Very rarely
- c. Frequently
- d. As often as possible



3. I hear the news on the radio:

- a. Never
- b. Very rarely
- c. Occasionally
- d. Quite frequently



4. I consider knowing what's happening in the news to be...

- a. Completely unimportant
- b. Unimportant
- c. Important
- d. Essential



5. I think what happens in the news in relation to me and my life to be:

- a. Utterly irrelevant
- b. Irrelevant
- c. Of some relevance
- d. Very relevant

6. How often do you think about the source of the news you watch, see or hear?

- a. Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Sometimes
- d. Always



7. How important do you think it is know the sources of the news you watch, read or hear?

- a. Unimportant
- b. Important
- c. Of some importance
- d. Extremely important



8. Which of the following sources do you think delivers the most accurate and trustworthy news?

- a. Twitter feeds
- b. Radio broadcasts
- c. TV broadcasts
- d. Newspapers (online/ Print)



Why news matters

What is news?

We are all interested in news, right? 'I'm not', you say, 'it's boring, I'm not interested'. Well, I bet there are some reading this who are interested in the Premier League, fashion, the GAA, celebrities, rugby, or music, and you want information about those areas that interest you. That information must be new – there is no point in telling you something you knew already – and as accurate as possible – there is no point in having an inaccurate match score. Many of you either come from countries other than Ireland, or your families do: Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, or even next door in Britain. Sometimes you want to know what's going on at home, what's going on in your city, town or village.

All of that is news, and that news must give you an understanding of what is happening, must be true, and must give you information as quickly as possible. And that's not a bad definition of news.

But the issue for many of us, as we look at our phones, our iPads, TVs and newspapers, is that it is so hard to know what is real and what is fake. Those tweets, that Facebook post, the news you hear on the car radio, that video on You Tube, that blogger, what's real? People tell you things and swear they are true. It seems the more we hear and see, the less trustworthy it is.

So can you trust anything or should you just give up, accepting that there

is no way of differentiating. Well no, that would be dangerous, because we make decisions based on what we see and read, everything from what film to see, to how to vote (if over 18-years-of-age) or what subjects to take at school, based on education advice on a newspaper education page. Our views on the courts, the Gardai, politicians, or even footballers, is based on what we read, hear and see, whether on social media or in a newspaper, so knowing who and what to trust is important.

We need to learn how to interrogate all that information out there. What kind of content you are looking at – is it news, a feature, an opinion piece, a sports story, a blog post, a personal post on social



Holding the Party Line by Gerry Mooney

“We need to learn how to interrogate all that information out there.”

media, a rumour, or someone’s opinion? Where did it come from? Is there a name attached? Does the journalist say where the information came from? What’s its source? What was the writer’s motivation? What evidence was provided? Was it fair to all involved?

You need to be able to trust the content you receive. Newspapers, either in print or online have trained journalists in newsrooms and are regulated. Most have signed up to a code of ethics, they try to be transparent, but they are not all the same. Every day, news organisations will offer a range of news but it will differ. The main story might be about the economy in one, a murder in another and the housing crisis

in a third. All three stories are important, and should be reported. Different types of newspapers or radio stations or TV stations, online or not, will give a different account of the world we live in. Look at the different outlets and find the one that you feel most comfortable with.

Understanding how the media works, what it does, how it does it, empowers you, makes you smarter and gives you a better understanding of the world around you.