

40 Ways to Use the News in Secondary Language Arts

- 1) Find a news article written in the past tense. Clip it out of the newspapers and then rewrite it in present tense.
- 2) Find five sets of antonyms in the newspaper. Clip them out and then double-check your answers with a dictionary or thesaurus.
- 3) Create, for the index of your newspaper, a sentence summary of five news or feature stories you think would be of special interest to readers.
- 4) Make a list of unfamiliar words in each week's newspaper. When you have 20 words, define them and make a crossword puzzle. Try submitting it to your newspaper for publication.
- 5) Find newspaper pictures that illustrate moods. Clip them out and write a free verse poem, haiku or cinquain about each. You could also use the picture as the basis for a short story.
- 6) Write an obituary for the main character in your book, after reading the obituary column in your local newspaper. Try writing an epitaph for the character as well.
- 7) Find, keep and classify examples of figures of speech found in the newspaper. Make a poster illustrating your findings.
- 8) Do timed readings using newspaper articles.
- 9) Read the editorials in each week's newspaper and keep them. Decide if the writer logically constructed the piece, or if it tends to be emotionally constructed. Classify the editorials as being persuasive, praiseworthy, critical, entertaining, persuasive or a combination.
- 10) Select a feature story from the newspaper and then compare and contrast it with the style of a short story.
- 11) For impromptu writing assignments, use the "pick-a-plot" method. Cut out names, places, dates (motives, weapons, situations and other items as needed), and put each grouping in a paper bag. Choose one of each and use them as the basis for creating a short writing assignment.
- 12) Imagine you are the main character in a novel you are currently reading. As the character, place a classified ad, write a letter to the editor and submit a news story to the teacher.
- 13) Choose a news or feature photo from today's paper and pretend that it's the year 2200. Try to explain the contents of the picture and what ideas it gives you about the society of the real time period.
- 14) In small groups, write two different television commercials based on a product advertised in the newspaper. For one of your commercials be sure to use the same persuasive technique used in the newspaper.
- 15) In a news story, draw arrows from all pronouns to their antecedents.
- 16) Clip an editorial out of the newspaper. Divide a piece of paper into two columns, labeling one "fact" and the other "opinion." List the information from the editorial in the appropriate columns, and then compare your work against that of another student.
- 17) Find a news story in the newspaper, and then read it carefully, identifying the sentence types in it. Choose your answers from simple, compound, complex and compound/complex.
- 18) Find all the gerunds and participles in a sports story.
- 19) Using a straight news story, circle all the direct objects in blue, all the indirect objects in red and all the objects of prepositions in green.
- 20) Write new headlines for three news articles from your newspaper. Then write new leads for each, perhaps changing the emphasis from "when" to "who," and using a new grammatical approach.
- 21) Select a sports story of interest to you and rewrite active voice sentences into passive voice and passive voice to active voice.

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- 22) One the front page of the newspaper, circle in red all forms of the verb "to be," and in blue, all forms of the verb "to have."
- 23) Newspaper headlines sometimes have dual meanings accidentally (or on purpose). Over the period of several weeks, clip any headlines that you feel could have more than one meaning and tell why.
- 24) Set up a classroom debate team and discuss the pro and con side of the issue presented in an editorial.
- 25) Find a feature article that is particularly well-suited for interpretive reading. After practicing it, present it to the class.
- 26) Find examples of different newspaper ads that deal with the same product or service, such as grocery stores, restaurants or automobile repair shops. Compare and contrast the ads in terms of layout, prices, claims and the like. Choose the ad in each category that you prefer and state your reasons.
- 27) Read an editorial and then try to write a one-sentence summary of the author's views and feelings.
- 28) Have students select from the newspaper five articles with headlines that clearly present the main idea of the articles. Each student should use a different part of the newspaper. The student cuts the headlines from the articles, place all 10 pieces in an envelope and trades envelopes with another student. The reading task to reunite each story or article with its headline.
- 29) Students will note that most headlines give the main idea of the article and are in fact usually brief sentences with articles and connectives omitted. What words in the headline are left out which you might use if you were telling the story? Why are they left out? Has omitting these words made the headline harder to understand?
- 30) Students might also be given stories and asked to write suitable headlines. They should be told to make their headlines as short as possible. These would then be compared to the originals.
- 31) News stories or editorials can be rewritten in shorter form.
- 32) Classified ads can be written for a product or service the student wants to sell, an item or service he or she wants to buy or for something to give away.
- 33) Students can write news or features stories of their own about local or school events. They can then be instructed to make another copy, leaving out a prescribed part of speech. These can be exchanged, the blanks filled in and then compared to the original.
- 34) Take four articles of three or four paragraphs each. Subtract verbs from one article, leaving underlined blanks. Subtract nouns from another, modifiers from another and articles from the fourth. Ask students to rewrite the articles by filling in each blank with a logical verb, noun, modifier or article. When student work is completed, distribute copies of the original articles. For discussion: Which part of speech gives the most meaning in a sentence? Which of the four articles was the hardest to reconstruct?
- 35) Write advertisements for real school events.
- 36) Write real letters to the editor of the local newspaper on subjects of school or community concern.
- 37) Scan the front page of the local newspaper and see how many phrases of attribution you can find.
- 38) Turn to the sports section of the newspaper. Clip all the synonyms for "win" and "lose" you can find. Paste these onto a sheet of paper.
- 39) Find two examples of each of the four kinds of sentences: interrogative, declarative, exclamatory and imperative. Clip and paste onto your paper.
- 40) Find examples of editorials that are written to 1) inform the reader; 2) interpret the news for the reader; 3) entertain the reader; and 4) influence the reader.