

News and Views
By
Donald Roberts
Frick International Academy

RATIONALE

"News and Views" was selected as the title of this curriculum unit for the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute seminar because it combines news reporting and reaction to that news. This curriculum will supplement a current events activity that I have been doing for several years. Each week my students summarize two news events (one national and one international) and present those written summaries orally to their classmates. My classes will continue to do that, but "News and Views" will expand upon this attempt to make students more aware of both national and international news events. In the process they also will distinguish between opinion and fact when they examine editorials, political cartoons and letters to the editor. While my school is a magnet school that focuses upon International Studies, the emphasis upon both national and international news is fully justified in the Social Studies curriculum of any school. The more intense examination of other portions of the newspaper is a step toward making students more literate interpreters of the news as it is reported in print media.

"NEWS AND VIEWS" IN THE CLASSROOM

Introducing "News and Views" to the Students

In September 1999 when I discuss the eighth grade curriculum with the students there will be an additional piece to add to the mosaic of American history that they will study. The "News and Views" curriculum will be explained and, hopefully, either a newspaper reporter will agree to speak to my classes on the historical role of the newspaper or a cartoonist from the Pittsburgh Post Gazette will give background information on interpreting current events from a cartoonist's perspective. Prior to this, I hope to have students complete a survey on their personal use of newspapers and news magazines. The survey will include opinion type questions regarding the importance of printed news sources. Also, the survey will ask questions designed to elicit what students already know about newspapers (the purpose of editorials, what types of information can be found in the Post-Gazette, what Freedom of the Press really means and so on). There also will be some questions about the frequency of using CNN and network news shows as sources of information.

The Individual and Group Work Required

During the initial class session devoted to "News and Views" the students will be given an explanatory hand-out listing the over-all objectives of this year long unit as well as student responsibilities. This hand-out explains that each student will have an on-going assignment to summarize one national and one international news story each week. There also will be group work. Three times during the grading period there will be a special group report on a specialized topic. The teacher will assign students to a particular group and give each group a topic to research. Later, the groups will present their findings to the class. While the oral presentation

will be in the nature of an investigative report, it will be more of a research summary. In other words, students physically will not go out into the community to find information. They will go to the newspapers, news magazines, and the internet to gather information. At times, they may create opinion surveys for classmates to complete on targeted topics. Students will be given a helpful comparison to make it easier for them to visualize what they are expected to do. They will be told that they should think about the evening magazine programs they have seen on television such as 60 Minutes and 20/20. Students will use some class time to work on-line to find information and will use library resources as well for their more in-depth report of a specialized topic. The actual survey and informative hand-outs may be found in the appendix to the curriculum unit.

The teacher will explain the group work carefully to the class before any work begins. Some class time will be devoted to selecting appropriate and timely topics. The teacher will present a partial list of topics and call for students in the class to add to that list. For example, during the past year the teacher and students might have listed these topics : the Asian Economic Collapse, Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo, the European Union, the Impeachment of a President, New Stadiums for Pittsburgh, Progress in the Treatment of AIDS, and Safety in Public Schools. Then, from the initial list prepared by the teacher and the additional topics added during the class discussion. The teacher will make a final list. The teacher will select topics from that list for specific groups of students and due dates will be assigned. Because of late breaking news, new topics may be added when appropriate. The teacher will use his/her judgment about adding topics during the school year. For example, a new infectious pandemic would certainly merit inclusion as would new situations threatening world peace.

A five person team would be expected to break up the responsibilities for presenting their topic to the class. For example, three students might research and then write about the topic. A fourth student could write an editorial or letter to the editor about it while a fifth student might create a political cartoon on the topic. During the student presentation to the class, he/she would be expected to present the cartoon, and ask for student reaction to it. Any personal opinion that is reflected in the drawing should be discussed at that time. The group would be expected to come up with a format for presenting their work. This would probably take on the characteristics of an in-depth investigative report that has become common on television. They might decide to have anchorpersons and reporters presenting the information with someone giving the editorial and someone else discussing the cartoon. The cartoon could be drawn extra large on butcher paper and attached to the chalkboard.

Editorials, Cartoons, and Feature Stories

Students also will read editorials, cartoons, and feature stories to get other perspectives on significant events. They will be asked to identify any bias present in these specialized parts of a newspaper that should not be present in a straight news story. They will gain practice in separating fact and opinion in editorials. For example, there might be an editorial judgment that more tax dollars should be spent on specific public welfare programs. The facts within the editorial might be that a certain number of people are homeless, and hospitals report that a certain percentage of visitors to emergency rooms lack basic health care. The editorial stating that more money should be given to specific programs should be seen as an opinion. It might be

based upon mounds of evidence, or none at all. The facts, both presented and not presented, could lead to other opinions, other proposed solutions. Students will gain experience in evaluating such editorial pronouncements.

Students also should gain practice in interpreting political cartoons. They should come to view them not as news stories but as a reaction to a news story. Professional cartoonists have a point of view and students need to gain experience in identifying that viewpoint. A hand-out in the appendix will help guide them in analyzing the political cartoons in print media. When students create their own political cartoons in the group presentations, they must be able to explain the viewpoint they intended to promote.

Feature stories are significantly different from straight news stories, and students should come to recognize that difference. Feature stories sometimes present a viewpoint, a particular slant, or an out-and-out bias toward a subject. Feature stories humanize the news; they add another dimension. Students need to recognize the difference between feature stories and straight news stories and, in doing so, should gain experience in separating fact from opinion.

The Rules of the Road

The benefits of this curriculum project are more likely to occur when students know the specifics of what they are expected to do. The "do's and don'ts" are important. On a designated day each week the teacher will expect students to bring to class two significant news stories: one national and one international. They will be told to cut these two articles from a newspaper. Then, each of those stories must be attached to a piece of paper. On that paper the student must summarize the news event using the format described on the student handout (answering who, what, when, where, why and how as well as the other items on that handout). The original news story must be attached to the summary so the teacher can check to see that the summary accurately reflects the information presented in the primary source. The teacher will use an ink pen to make a clearly visible mark across the newspaper story. This will identify the story as used that week. Then, a student would not be tempted to use the same story again in the future.

Class discussion time should be spent distinguishing the differences between sensational news tabloids (the National Enquirer, for example) and legitimate newspapers such as the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Tribune-Review and the Pittsburgh Courier. The news stories also may be from out-of-town newspapers such as the New York Times and may come from the Internet as well. For students who do not receive a newspaper at home there are two options. News stories can be downloaded from the Internet at school, or the teacher can cut several major stories from the newspaper and photocopy these for student use.

The word "significant" as it applies to national and international news stories will have to be understood as it applies to this assignment. Class discussion will be needed for everyone to understand what is acceptable and what is not. For purposes of this assignment, significant means stories that have more than passing importance either nationally or internationally. A local crime story certainly is important to the victim of the crime, the relatives of the criminal, and even the neighborhood where it occurred. If the news story places such a crime in the context of violence in America, or even in a trend taking place in Pittsburgh, then it could be

argued that it has significance. If, on the other hand, it is a report of a robbery of a convenience store with no ties to anything else, then, it is not a significant national news story. A story about which team won the football game may be interesting, but has little national or international significance. On the other hand, the teacher might accept the argument that the Super Bowl is a national event and an acceptable story. In any case, the teacher and the students will have to come to an understanding of what is acceptable and what is not regarding local stories.

The national news stories selected each week should have impact either within the United States or in the larger world. Laws passed by Congress have importance both here and abroad. Disasters, either natural or man-made, significantly impact the lives of many. Some stories, such as the international drug traffic, clearly cut across national lines. Other stories such as what national, state, or local candidates for political office have to say about the issues of the day are national stories that may have international connections. The international stories selected each week may be about persons, issues or events in other countries. Those stories may either focus upon things entirely within another country, or they may be international stories affecting several countries, including the United States. When a student selects a story he/she should be prepared to answer these questions: "Why is it important to Americans; why is it significant elsewhere?" If those questions can be answered, the national and/or international story is appropriate for this assignment.

Current Events in Contemporary Education

Students today, now more than ever, need to know about the larger world. While isolationism may be emotionally appealing because it tends to shut people off from the unpleasantness of economic, political, and social upheavals elsewhere, it is not realistic. People need to know. They need to know what is going on because the world really is getting smaller and smaller. Whether it is the destruction of the Amazon rain forest, ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, or political and social repression in Malaysia, there is an impact throughout the world. Americans can not afford to be indifferent, and our schools have to act responsibly in educating citizens of the world.

This curriculum unit is based upon a recognition that the current generation of students often knows little about the larger world in spite of the explosion in mass media coverage of events near and far. It also recognizes that students today appear to be more indifferent to the plight of others than they should be. The constant bombardment of images showing war ravaged countries and desperate situations may have unwittingly lead to desensitization rather than the opposite. Students need to talk about what is going on in their nation and the world instead of passively hearing the babble of voices on television, or in the classroom, drone on and on about the crisis here or there.

The Opportunity for Incidental Learning

Every teacher knows that student interaction is an effective teaching strategy because it gives students a chance to think aloud. It gives the teacher a chance to correct factual misinformation and the opportunity to do a little teaching along the way. For example, the teacher can insert pieces of history and geography when a topic comes up that is not covered in the curriculum. An

article on Cuban baseball may lead to a discussion of why the United States does not have formal relations with the Castro government, what communism is, how it became established in Cuba, and why the United States has maintained a blockade of that island nation for nearly forty years. Students are more apt to remember things when they are interested in the topic. They usually are more interested if they have selected the story, have read the article, and are telling the class something others don't know.

Students reading a news story need to know what to look for in the story. They need a structured guideline to follow in order to isolate the key factual pieces of the news story. Since news stories contain basic information, students must be directed to read with certain questions in mind (who, what, when, where, why, and how). They need to recognize that the lead paragraph may answer some of these questions, but that the whole article expands upon the significant aspects of these basic questions. In other words, there is more to the article than the first paragraph. They must be required to read the whole article and give proof that they have done so. They also need to recognize that there may be more than one who or what in a story and be prepared to identify all significant players and events that are described.

The Importance of Structure in Summarizing Current Events

The news summary format must be followed consistently by all students. It must have the six basic questions (who, what, when, when, why, and how) listed at the top. Then, there will be a place for the written narrative that summarizes the story. It may expand upon one or more of the significant answers to these questions. It may conclude with a personal reaction to the story, or a statement about the significance, profound or negligible, of the news story to the national or international scene. The news story itself needs to be attached to the written summary. The teacher must be able to read the story being summarized to see that it has not been copied word-for-word in the student's summary. Also, the teacher can check to see that the summary is an accurate representation of what was in the original story.

CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Core Curriculum Frameworks

Content Standards in place for the Pittsburgh Public Schools recognize the importance of student familiarity with national and international news. The nine Communications Standards and eleven Citizenship Content Standards referred to below are found in Appendix A (Communication Standards) and Appendix B (Citizenship Standards).

The Core Curriculum Frameworks, used by Pittsburgh teachers as they create lessons, states in Exit Content Standard # 5 that by the end of Eighth Grade, "All students develop and defend a position on current issues confronting the United States and other nations, conducting research, analyzing alternatives, organizing evidence and arguments, and making oral presentations." In other words, teachers are expected to place some emphasis upon current events in their lessons. The "News and Views" Curriculum supports this effort.

Seven Communications Standards Met

One of the goals of requiring students to write summaries is to have them gain practice in reading for content, identifying relevant information, writing the summary, and then reporting it to the class. The "News and Views" curriculum addresses seven of the ten Content Standards that are designated as Communication (CO) Standards by the Pittsburgh Board of Education. Students will use primary sources in newspapers (CO #1); respond orally and in writing to the information they gather (CO#3); write to inform (CO#4); analyze and make critical judgments, separate fact from opinion, recognize inconsistencies and judge the validity of evidence (CO#5); exchange information orally, ask and answer questions (CO# 6); listen to oral messages (CO# 7); compose and make oral presentations that are designed to persuade, inform or describe (CO# 8).

Nine Citizenship Content Standards Addressed

The discussion of national and international news events may, and often does, cover more than the specific event in the news story. In many ways the incorporation of an on-going, systematic discussion of current events appears to be an ideal way to address a majority of the Content Standards. It is worth noting that nine of the eleven Content Standards grouped together under Citizenship may be cited to justify the importance of addressing current events within the eighth grade Social Studies curriculum.

The News and Views Curriculum provides the teacher with a way to help students make connections between the newspaper story and other topics either studied in the past or currently being studied. It is an opportunity to reinforce and expand knowledge and skills. Often the discussion of a news event leads to an examination of past events leading to that specific event. A story about Boris Yeltsin's firing of yet another premier can be the introduction to an examination of the political and economic woes of post Communist Russia, and may even lead to an exchange of opinions about why Communism fell in the first place. News stories very often make references to side issues that call for discussion. For example, a news story on Dr. Jack Kevoorkian might mention the Hemlock Society. Students add a new piece of information about the world around them when they acquire general knowledge.

Other ways in which the Citizenship Exit Content Standards may be related to a discussion of current events should be mentioned. Some news stories focus upon natural disasters (floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and other natural phenomena). This can lead to students locating where the event happened on the map. A broader discussion may ensue dealing with recurring themes and patterns of geography (Citizenship Content Standard #2) such as the impact of erosion upon economic activity and even such things as the shifting of tectonic plates leading to earthquakes. The effect of El Nino and La Nina upon weather patterns as well as an increasing hole in the ozone layer leads students to discuss what they have learned in science and relate it to the very human problems of living on this planet.

Often news stories deal with problems facing communities, the state, nation and world (Citizenship Content Standard #4). Public education is a problem looking for a solution. The delivery of a quality education is recognized as necessary, but the problem is to determine what

is the best way to do it. Students are somewhat aware of the debate going on about the future of public education in America. When they begin reading the newspaper in earnest, they will note news stories about vouchers, the creation of charter schools, and funding for public schools. A current events discussion helps students examine various viewpoints on such topics. International news stories add another dimension to the discussion when students consider how students are educated elsewhere. Armed with more knowledge, students will have better informed opinions about the future of public education in the United States.

The economic system of the United States and other nations is a regular part of many significant news stories about issues of employment, trade deficits, the economy's strengths and weaknesses, as well as other related topics (Citizenship Content Standard #6). For example when students read, summarize, and discuss stories about the European Union, they inevitably look at what it will mean not only for Europe, but also for the United States. A stronger, competitive Europe will be good for Europe, but what will it mean for the United States? Obviously, there are many conflicting arguments about this. Students will have a chance to use the facts and opinions they read to reach conclusions. The Social Studies teacher can use the opportunity afforded by such a discussion to teach the meaning of economic terms used in the news story (GDP, for example). Also, the teacher can use the news story as a platform on which to build an explanation of basic market forces. In the classroom discussion of their written summaries, students can express themselves and learn from others while the teacher has the opportunity to effortlessly insert knowledge and correct misinformation. News stories on the American economy look at everything from Wall Street to budget surpluses and trade deficits. A booming United States economy accompanied by ever increasing trade deficits has meaning that students will have a chance to think about as they read, write, and talk about the news.

Citizenship Content Standard #3 states that students are expected to be able to describe the development and operations of political, legal, governmental and economic systems in the United States and their own relationship to those systems. Newspaper stories deal with politics and politicians as well as their interaction with the government and economy. Students will read about candidates running for office, the issues debated, scandals uncovered, and accomplishments either claimed or achieved. News stories about employment trends have special meaning for students trying to determine a career path to follow. Court cases show how the legal system operates. For instance, the arrest of an alleged criminal, imprisonment, possible parole, and subsequent trial followed by appeals show the American criminal justice system in action. Some news stories, such as the downing of Pan American Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland highlight not only international terrorism but also the politics behind the legal system. Discussions in which students are able to cite facts, form opinions, and express reasoned judgment about these stories help insure that students are meeting Content Standard #3.

Citizenship Content Standard #1 calls upon students to understand major events, cultures, groups and individuals in the historical development of their state and nation as well as in other nations of the world. Students also are called upon to describe themes and patterns of historical development. News events are often major events in the history of either our nation or other nations. Cultures, groups and individuals are the focal point of these major news events. Discussions of news makers and significant events tend to put things into an historical perspective. For example, the on-going crisis in Kosovo is covered in a variety of news stories

and students will, no doubt, summarize many of these stories. The classroom discussion of Kosovo allows the teacher to enter a broader discussion of the historical background of the area. The fact that Yugoslavia became a somewhat independent Communist dictatorship under Marshal Tito after World War II is an historical fact that may help to explain what happened after Tito. The fact that Yugoslavia itself was created from diverse ethnic groups with conflicting land claims will help students understand the current crisis. In other words, the use of current events via the newspaper provides a great opportunity for teachers to insert historical background to an attention-getting contemporary story.

Citizenship Content Standard #9 calls upon students to demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of prejudice. Students are encouraged to relate their knowledge of this topic to current issues facing communities, the United States and other nations. Those current issues are covered in the newspapers. It is instructive to pay attention to the sources quoted by newspapers covering this type of story. Some stories are related to racial incidents that typically range from murder to job and housing discrimination. Others are gender based and often come to public attention in court cases. The enforcement of laws forbidding ethnic intimidation generates news stories while any activity by the Ku Klux Klan provokes a public response. The position of the Congressional Black Caucus, the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Organization of Women and other prominent groups make news. Stories on these topics can often lead to a classroom discussion of the background of Civil Rights Movement, and the Feminist Movement. Students who read and discuss the current issues become more informed citizens on this topic.

Finally, Citizenship Content Standards # 7 and 8 call upon students to demonstrate communication skills while working and cooperating with others. To achieve these standards the "News and Views" curriculum unit calls upon students to work individually in preparing and orally presenting news summaries, but it also has a component in which students work together in a cooperative group. The exact way this is structured in the classroom was explained earlier in this curriculum.

The News and Views Curriculum Supports Content Standards

The "News and Views" curriculum is a good fit with the Communications and Citizenship Content Standards identified by the Pittsburgh Board of Education. As stated earlier nine of the eleven Citizenship Content Standards and seven of the ten Communication Content Standards are addressed by this curriculum. Eighth grade students learning about national and international news events will not just be adding some facts to their store of knowledge although there is value in that. There is even greater significance to what they potentially will gain from adding this unit to their study of United States history. Their written and oral news summaries, their interpretation of political cartoons, and their examination of editorials as well as letters to the editor will contribute to the growth of literate, informed citizens.

"News and Views" is a curriculum project that provides a structured way for students to discuss current events while giving the opportunity for some in-depth reporting as well. It sets up a procedure to follow during the school year that gives clear guidelines to follow in selecting and then summarizing national and international news events. It also will cause students to examine

the newspaper for more than just the facts in the news stories. They will use their newly acquired knowledge to complete weekly assignments. In addition students will work together in a collaborative effort on group research projects. Hopefully, the assigned routine of reading the newspaper will become a life-long habit.

News and Views
Appendix A

Pittsburgh Public Schools Communications Content Standards

- C1 Use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
- C2 Read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex text.
- C3 Respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
- C4 Write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform and persuade, in all subject areas.
- CS Analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
- C6 Exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately and promoting effective group communications.
- C7 Listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure and use.
- C8 Compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform, or describe.
- C9 Converse, at a minimum level of "Intermediate Low," as defined in the oral proficiency guidelines developed by the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages, in at least one language other than English, including the native language if other than English, under Sec. 5.215 (c) (relating to languages).
- C10 Communicate appropriately in business, work, and other applied situations.

News and Views
Appendix B

Pittsburgh Public Schools Citizenship Content Standards

- C1 1 Demonstrate an understanding of major events, cultures, groups and individuals in the historical development of Pennsylvania, the United States and other nations, and describe themes and patterns of historical development.
- C1 2 Demonstrate understanding of themes and patterns of geography, know the location of major bodies of water, land masses and nations, and describe the relationships between geography and historical, economic and cultural development.
- C1 3 Describe the development and operations of economic, political, legal and governmental systems in the United States, assess their own relationships to those systems, and compare them to those in other nations.
- C1 4 Examine and evaluate problems facing citizens in their communities, state, nation and world by incorporating concepts and methods of inquiry of the various social sciences.
- C1 5 Develop and defend a position on current issues confronting the United States and other nations, conducting research, analyzing alternatives, organizing evidence and arguments, and making oral presentations.
- C1 6 Explain basic economic concepts and the development and operation of economic systems in the United States and other nations and make informed decisions about economic issues.
- C1 7 Demonstrate their skills of communicating, negotiating and cooperating with others.
- C1 8 Demonstrate that they can work effectively with others.
- C1 9 Demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of prejudice and relate their knowledge to current issues facing communities, the United States and other nations.
- C1 10 Demonstrate an understanding of the various roles they can play as citizens through participation in a community service project.
- C1 11 Demonstrate the ability to resolve conflicts in peaceful ways, including, but not limited to, peer mediation, anger management, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving.

Appendix C

Handout #1

News and Views: A Student Over-View

The Objectives of This Newspaper Unit:

As an eighth grade student of American history, you will become a regular reader of both newspapers and news magazines. You will develop an approach to learning about our country that includes an appreciation of the significance of both national and international news events. You will have a method to follow when you record the key points in any news story. Also, you will begin to look at a newspaper as a place where more than facts are given. Editorials, political cartoons, feature stories, and letters to the editor will attract your attention as you read to learn what is going on, and what it all means.

Student Responsibilities:

Your responsibility each week will be to summarize two news stories (one national and one international). The news summaries must follow the format established by the teacher. Also, once every three weeks you will work cooperatively with four other students to present to your class an in-depth look at a specific topic.

How You Will Be Graded:

Each news summary will be graded as a regular assignment worth five points. Two news summaries will be worth ten points. The special group report will not be given a group grade. Each student will be graded separately and given points for the work completed. Bonus points are possible for work that is above and beyond what is required. For example, if a student takes the time and effort to construct a student survey and then graphs the results, or in some other way enhances the presentation, the teacher would reward that effort.

Appendix D

Handout #2

News and Views: A Survey

Directions: These questions are to find out how much typical eighth grade students read newspapers, how much they know about newspapers, and what they think about them.

1. How do I usually get the news: _____ A) either ABC, NBC, or CBS television news; B) CNN; C) magazines such as Time and Newsweek; D) the radio; E) the newspaper.

2. How often do you read at least part of a newspaper? _____
A) never; B) maybe once or twice a month; C) at least once a week; D) two or three times a week; E) every day.

3. When I pick up a newspaper to read, the first thing I want to read is: _____
A) the front page national and international news; B) the state, regional and local news; C) entertainment news; D) the sports page; E) the comics; E) something else

4. Where can you find the index each day in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette? _____

5. What is the purpose of an editorial? _____

6. Name at least five things that you think can be found in the daily newspaper (other than news, sports, comics, and entertainment). _____

7. A few years ago there was another daily newspaper in Pittsburgh that is no longer published. What was the name of this newspaper? _____

8. What do you know about the Pittsburgh Courier? _____

9. What is the name of the prize given annually to the writers of outstanding newspaper stories in America? Helpful hint: Photographers, poets, novelists, historians, and playwrights also get them. _____

10. Why do you think more people don't read the newspaper? _____

11. Does Freedom of the Press give you the right as an American to say (write) anything you want in a newspaper? (Yes or No, and Explain your answer.)

12. Do you think there will always be newspapers? Why or Why not? _____

Appendix E

Handout # 3

News Summary

Directions: Give a brief answer to each of the basic questions on your news story. Then, expand upon two or more of those questions in your written summary.

National News

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Why:

How:

The News Summary: My national story this week is about ...

My personal reaction to the story is ...

International News

Who:

What:

When:

Where:

Why:

How:

The News Summary: My international story this week is about ...

My personal reaction to the story is ...

Appendix F

Handout #4

Political Cartoons

A political cartoon is not a news story. It is a reaction to a news story or event. Look at the six basic questions listed below (who, what, when, where, why, and how), and answer as many as you can when you are interpreting a cartoon. You need to think about the subject of the cartoon and describe what is being targeted. Also, pay attention both to the way things are drawn, and the words that are said.

The two political cartoons were taken from the May 17, 1999, issue of Newsweek. Due to copyright restrictions, the cartoons are not shown, but can easily be obtained at your local library. They cover different subjects, and differ in complexity. The who, what, when, where, why, and how questions are not all answered in the two examples. Also, the cartoonist assumes you already know something about the subject. In the first example the cartoonist has the Hollywood entertainment proclaiming its innocence. The famous Hollywood sign has been reworded to say, "NOTOURFAULTYWOOD". Innocent about what? You probably know that many current news stories tie Hollywood's production of violent movies, videos, and lyrics to the increased violence in our society. The cartoonist shows Hollywood boldly stating that violence in entertainment is not responsible for violence in society. Do you think the cartoonist believes Hollywood is innocent?

Cartoon A

Who: The entertainment industry
What: Produces violent forms of entertainment
When: Currently
Where: In Hollywood
Why: For profit
How: In various forms of media

What I think about this cartoon: I think the cartoonist is trying to show that the Hollywood entertainment industry is trying to cover up their guilt because ...

Cartoon B

Who: Refugees in Kosovo
Americans waiting in a theater line
What: A comparison between the above
When: Currently
Where: In Kosovo and the United States
Why: Desperation (real and imagined)
How: Does not apply

What I think about this cartoon: I think the cartoonist is making fun of the Americans who are acting in a desperate way when their cause is trivial compared to that in Kosovo. ...

Political Cartoons

Basic Facts about the cartoon:

1. It appeared in this newspaper _____
2. It appeared on this date _____
3. The cartoonist was _____
4. The basic questions answered were:
 - Who _____
 - What _____
 - When _____
 - Where _____
 - Where _____
 - Why _____
 - How _____
5. What news event was the cartoon based upon? _____

6. I think the cartoonist was trying to say _____

7. I agree or disagree with the message of this cartoon. Why? _____

Reading List for Teachers

Bennett, Clifford T, A Political Cartoon History of the United States

Callahan, Christopher, A Journalist's Guide to the Internet: The News as a Reporting Tool (Allyn & Bacon, 1999).

Fallows, James, Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy (Vintage, 1997).

Hamill, Pete, News Is a Verb: Journalism at the End of the 20th Century (Ballantine, 1998) Part of the Library of Contemporary Thought series.

Kerrane, Kevin ed., The Art of Fact (Touchstone, 1998).

Kurtz, Howard, Media Circus: The Trouble with America's Newspapers.

Marschall, Richard E., "The Century on Political Cartoons," Columbia Journalism Review, May/June 1999, pp. 54-57.

Paine, Albert B. and Aaron, Daniel, Thomas Nast: His Period and His Pictures.

Scanlan, Christopher ed., 1998 Best Newspaper Writing. (Bonus Books, 1998).

Reading List for Students:

Newsweek Magazine, current issues.

Students will use contemporary news stories, feature stories, editorials, letters to the editor, columnists, and cartoons.

Pittsburgh Courier.

Students will use local, state and national stories from an African American perspective.

Pittsburgh Post Gazette

Students will use local, state, national and international news stories as well as editorials, letters to the editor, columnists, feature stories and political cartoons.

Time Magazine, current issues.

Students will use contemporary news stories, feature stories. editorials. letters to the editor, columnists, and cartoons.

Tribune -Review.

Students will use local, state, national and international news stories as well as editorials, letters to the editor, columnists, feature stories and political cartoons.

U.S. News and World Report, current issues.

Students will use contemporary news stories, feature stories. editorials. letters to the editor, columns, and cartoons.

Best Web Sites:

AJR Newslink (<http://www.ajr.newslink.org/searchn.html>)
Excellent source for newspapers and magazines.

United States Government
(<http://www.libraries.colorado.edu/ps/gov/us/federal.htm>)

www.nytimes.com