

# Pittsburgh News: Then and Now

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## **Overview**

I intend to present this unit to my fourth grade classes at Mifflin School where I teach math, science, and social studies. This unit will help the students meet some of the current math, science, and social studies standards as well as some of the cross- curriculum portfolio entries which are now required in addition to the regular portfolio entries. The regular portfolio entries include a personal narrative, a persuasive essay, and a report of information. The students could easily accomplish this while writing newspaper articles. In addition, the students could use some of the books that they use for research as part of the non-fiction genre of their twenty-five-book requirement.

The science and math portions of the unit will be ongoing, as I always maintain a bulletin board of math and science articles found in the local papers. When we study decimals or graphing, I always have the children look for specific examples of each. It's surprising how many they come up with.

I will begin the main portion of the curriculum unit when we reach unit 2 of our Pennsylvania Social Studies book, which involves the history of Pennsylvania. (The first unit concerns itself with the geography of Pennsylvania.) The book actually suggests that the students put together a newspaper reporting

on the people and events that they read about in the text. Since this unit focuses on Pittsburgh, I will encourage the class to center their research on events and people germane to the history of Pittsburgh. Of course, before they begin writing their articles, they will have to have some idea of what a newspaper is. Their Harcourt Language text would be good for this, as it defines some of the main parts of the newspaper, and gives examples of newspaper articles and interviews. It also explains how journalistic writing is different from narrative writing or a research report. I will give the children the history of newspapers in general and relying heavily on Clarke M. Thomas's Front-Page Pittsburgh, the history of Pittsburgh newspapers in particular.

### **Rationale**

I chose to focus on newspapers as opposed to other media for several reasons—the most important being that two of the men who influenced my life the most, my father and my husband, were both newspaper buffs. My father, who was born in 1905, began reading newspapers as a small child. He particularly enjoyed reading the comics. The first newspaper comic appeared in 1907. I have many fond memories of father reading the comics aloud to me before I could read myself. I especially enjoyed *Nancy & Sluggo*, *L'il Abner*, and *Priscilla's Pop*. (No, I have never had a mashed potato sandwich.) Later, my father's interest shifted to the sports page, so of course being "Daddy's little girl," mine did also. I think that I clipped every article about the 1960 Pittsburgh Pirates. The pitching and batting statistics intrigued me. Perhaps this contributed to my strong interest in math, which I currently teach. When I was growing up, we had three newspapers delivered, *The Pittsburgh Press*, *the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and on Sundays only, the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*.

My husband was also addicted to newspapers. One of the first things that he did anytime we traveled to a new city, was purchase that city's newspaper. He even did this in Niagara Falls when we were on our honeymoon. Instead of fighting him, I joined him. We had many conversations discussing the merits of various cities' newspapers, and comparing them to our own. One of the funniest papers that I have read was in Clarksburg, West Virginia, where they printed lists of who took out bank loans, and who was admitted to the hospital. Whenever my children traveled when they got older, they both developed the same habit. They both always brought their father the newspapers from cities all over the globe. This was better than any souvenir that they could have purchased. I personally prefer my Venetian glass beads, but to each his own.

My two children have continued the tradition. My daughter subscribes to both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Times*. My son gets his news the more modern way. He reads *The New York Times*, and other papers daily on the

Internet. He prints articles of particular interest to him. Combining his inherited love of baseball, and newspapers, he often prints out the sports pages of the paper of the particular city that the Pirates are visiting.

As an educator, I find that there is a great deal to be learned from newspapers. They can go into much greater depth and report from more angles than the television or radio. I find it very surprising that some educated people I know never read the newspaper. I feel, as my husband and father did, that my day would not be complete if I didn't at least read one newspaper. Besides, how else would I know what was on sale at Kaufmanns?

### **Objectives**

1. The student will be able to compare and contrast narrative writing and journalistic writing and give examples of each.
2. The student will be able to research an event and a prominent person using the computer and the library.
3. The student will be able to identify the different parts of a newspaper.
4. The student will be able to compare current and past newspapers.
5. The student will be able to draw a newspaper cartoon.
6. The student will be able to write and/or draw a newspaper advertisement.
7. The student will be able to write a letter to the editor.

### **Strategies**

As I mentioned before, I will be using the unit in conjunction with our Scott Foresman social studies text, Pennsylvania. I will begin as I always do by having the class make a list of what they already know about newspapers. We will then discuss what we need to find out before we actually begin producing our own newspapers. The Harcourt Brace Language text lists the main parts as front page, editorial page, and features. The front page contains articles that inform the reader about important news events answering the question *who, what, where, when, why* and *how*. The editorial page tells the opinions of the newspaper's writers. It includes persuasive essays called commentary. Readers' persuasive comments may be included in the letters to the editor. Political cartoons may also be included in the editorial part of the paper. The feature pages have articles on a wide range of topics. They are sometimes referred to as "human-interest" stories. This is where you would find a story about a local hero of the time. Today's papers also include sports, comics, TV and entertainment, classified ads, and obituaries. I will have the children bring in newspapers, so we can identify and comment on what can be found in the various parts. This would also help them to see the various types of writing, and how to do a news interview. I understand that the *Tribune -Review* has a very nice tour for young children, so I will

schedule a visit there before we begin our actual project. After we become more familiar with newspapers, I will give the children the history of newspapers in general and, relying heavily on Clarke M. Thomas's Front-Page Pittsburgh, the history of Pittsburgh newspapers in particular.

The social studies text provides a time line of historical events from prehistoric times as well as a list of notable people from Pennsylvania, from the original Indian chiefs to Governor Rendell. I will divide the children into groups to publish a newspaper. Each group will choose a specific time period. Each newspaper will have a front-page late breaking news story and a feature page pertaining to something occurring during the daily life of the period and/or a prominent person of the time. A mock interview could be included. There will also be an editorial page with one or more letters to the editor. The students may choose to include illustrations or pictures in their paper. They may also include advertisements, a sports section, a political cartoon, or a comic strip. They will print the newspapers in the computer lab, which has several different types of column formats and fonts to experiment with. I plan to provide examples of the kinds of work that I expect the students to complete.

## **Narrative**

A newspaper by definition is a publication that is issued on a daily or weekly basis, the main function of which is to report the news. Many newspapers also furnish special information such as weather reports, television schedules, and listings of stock prices. They provide commentary on politics, economics, arts and culture. They sometimes include entertainment features, such as comics, crossword puzzles, and my favorite, the bridge column.

It is estimated that nearly six out of ten adults in United States read a newspaper every day. Seven of ten read a paper each weekend. By the time one reads the day's newspaper, most people have learned about the breaking news stories on radio or television. Of course, the newspaper can offer more details and give background information and interviews about what led up to an event, and the repercussions of its occurrence.

The staff of a large newspaper consists of editors, reporters, photographers, artists, printers, and salespeople. They work under the constant pressure of deadlines. Modern printing presses can churn out more than 60,000 copies per hour. Most papers are printed on grainy, lightweight paper called newsprint. The news is printed in columns. Most newspapers are published daily, but there are also some that are printed once a week, (I will bring in the *Pittsburgh Courier* as an example of this.) once a month, or even less often. General-circulation newspapers print news of interest to a broad audience, while

special-interest papers target a more specific audience such as a particular ethnic group. (I will bring in the Jewish Chronicle to demonstrate this type of newspaper.) Many of my students have grandparents who receive newspapers written in Italian, German or Polish. *USA Today* has the highest circulation of any general interest paper, with more than 1.6 million copies sold a day. The Wall Street Journal, which targets mainly business people, has an even higher circulation of more than 1.8 million.

Most daily newspapers cover a wide range of issues that appeal to an audience in specific geographic region. People who read the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* generally have no knowledge of what is going on in Saint Louis, Chicago, Cleveland, or any other city unless it is a major story like an earthquake, plane crash, or school shooting. Most daily papers divide their content into separately folded sections. They typically have sections for local news, sports, arts and entertainment, business, and classified advertising. Many newspapers now have color photography. When I was young they just had grainy black and white.

Newspapers publish information that is gathered by their own reporters. There are general-assignment reporters who cover news events and investigative reporters who research topics of special interest such as problems in Pittsburgh Public Schools. There are also beat reporters who cover geographic areas or topic areas such as crime, transportation, or politics. In addition to reports from their own staffs, newspapers get news from wire services such as the Associated Press. My brother-in-law was a writer for the Associated Press. Most newspapers follow roughly the same procedure when putting together an edition of the paper. First, news editors assign newsworthy events to reporters. The reporters research the events and write their own stories on computers. Copy editors edit the stories and write headlines for them. Meanwhile, photographers shoot pictures to accompany the stories and graphic artists create any charts and diagrams that accompany the stories in the paper. Designers assemble all the pieces into the pages we see.

It costs a great deal of money to produce a newspaper. Approximately 65 percent of newspaper revenue comes from advertising, and the other 35 percent comes from circulation. The biggest expense is newsprint, which amounts to about one-third of the total budget. Other expenses include computers and machinery, salaries and benefits for newspaper employees, office space, equipment and supplies, utilities and advertising. My sources report that advertisers spend more of their money advertising in newspapers than in any other medium. I find this very hard to believe, considering the number of times I see Edgar Snyder on television in one hour. Advertisers pay for their ads based on how much space their ad requires. Of

course, the newspaper numbers are inflated by the highly profitable classified ads, which have no counterpart on TV.

The circulation department supervises the distribution of the newspaper. Most newspapers offer home delivery. Both my husband and son were newspaper boys who walked from door to door delivering papers. Once a week, or more, they went door-to-door collecting their payments, and hopefully receiving a generous tip. Nowadays, older people deliver the newspaper in cars. I have the same delivery person for both *the Post Gazette*, and the *Tribune*. I pay with a credit card over the phone, so times have changed. Also, I pay for several months at a time, rather than just one week. Trucks deliver newspapers to newsstands, newspaper dispensing machines, grocery stores, and other businesses.

Before the invention of printing machines, people spread news by word of mouth, written letters, or public notices. As more people learned to read and write, news reports gained added reliability. A printing press that employed movable type was developed in Europe in 1450, and European officials soon began using to publish news. Short pamphlets, called news books, informed the public of royal weddings, victorious battles, or other newsworthy events. News ballads recounted news events in verse form. News books and news ballads were circulated sporadically in Europe and the American colonies, usually when officials wanted to inform the public of important events.

Newspapers published under the same name on a regular schedule first appeared in Venice, Italy, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Handwritten newspapers called *avisi*, or *gazetta*, appeared weekly as early as 1566. Venetian gazettes established a style of journalism that most early-printed newspapers followed—short sets of news items written under the name of the city they came from and the date on which they were sent. In the early 1600s newspapers spread rapidly throughout Europe. The first newspaper published in the American colonies, *Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick*, was launched in Boston in 1690. The colonial government suppressed its publication after just one issue. Fourteen years passed before another colonial paper was published. Finally, in 1704, John Campbell established the *Boston News-Letter* as the first regularly published colonial newspaper.

In 1721, James Franklin, Ben's older brother, published *The New-England Courant*. In 1722, when Franklin used his paper to accuse the government of failing to do enough to protect the area from pirates, he was arrested and forbidden to publish. He got around this by appointing Benjamin the paper's official publisher. Ben Franklin made the most of this opportunity by publishing humorous social commentary under the pen name Silence Dogwood. He also reported on political events. In 1729, Franklin took control of the *Pennsylvania*

*Gazette* in Philadelphia. Under his leadership, it became the best newspaper in the colonies, with the largest circulation, most pages, highest income from advertising, and the most literary columns.

By 1750, twelve newspapers were being published in the American colonies, which then had a population of about one million. By 1775, the population had increased to two and one half million, and the number of newspapers to forty-eight. Most of these papers were published weekly, contained only four pages, and had a circulation of fewer than four hundred copies. They printed more essays than news. The essays emphasized the importance of individual freedom, anticipating the American Revolution.

In Britain, press freedom was limited by the stamp tax on newspapers. This had the effect of raising the price of papers so high that few people could afford them. In 1765, the British Parliament wanted to place a similar tax on American papers. This would require that all American paper products including newspapers bear a government stamp as form of tax payment. Some newspapers stopped publishing because of this. Gradually they began publishing again. The Stamp Act proved to be unenforceable and was soon repealed, but it had the unintended effect of uniting many editors and publishers in support of independence from Britain. As a matter of fact, it was in the house of newspaper editor Benjamin Edes, of the *Boston Gazette*, that colonists gathered in 1773 to organize the Boston Tea Party. Many well-known patriots such as Samuel Adams were active in publishing anti-British sentiment. Two women, Sarah and Mary Katherine Goddard, published the *Providence Gazette*, another anti-British voice. I was surprised to read that women were able to do this. I hope that it will inspire some of the future female journalists in my class. By 1776, the front pages of colonial papers carried the Declaration of Independence.

During the Revolutionary War, newspapers reported military developments to an increasing number of readers. Businesses generated by the war brought advertising revenue to the papers. There was only one paper, James Rivington's *New York Gazetteer* that took an openly Tory position. After the war it ceased operation. All papers supported the First Amendment to the Constitution, which is the cornerstone of the free press in the United States today.

The *Pennsylvania Evening Post and Daily Advertiser*, the first daily newspaper in the United States, began publication in 1783 in Philadelphia. By 1800, twenty daily papers were in operation. The number continued to increase in the first three decades of nineteenth century as the Industrial Revolution spawned a new working class in the nation's growing cities. Until the 1830s newspapers focused almost entirely on business and political news. Benjamin Henry Day changed this approach in 1833, when he published the first edition of

the *New York Sun*. He filled his paper with reports of local crime and violence, human-interest stories, and entertainment pieces. He sold it for one penny, thus marking the creation of the penny press, which dominated American journalism throughout the rest of the nineteenth century.

The invention of the telegraph by Samuel Morse in 1837 dramatically improved the speed and reliability of news reporting. In the fourth grade Magnetism and Electricity module, we learn to make a telegraph. We also study the Morse code, so Samuel Morse's contributions to the newspaper industry should be of interest to my students. The telegraph gave rise to telegraph wire services, which distributed stories to many different papers. The telegraph enabled people to read news of other cities located many miles away. When the transatlantic cable was completed in 1866, news arrived from Europe with similar speed.

As newspapers competed with one another to increase circulation, publishers sought new methods to attract readers. Publishers Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst began using drawings and comic strips to enliven their newspapers. They also began coverage of scandalous events and sensational stories. By the end of the nineteenth century, typesetting equipment had improved dramatically, and photographs began appearing regularly in 1897. Telephones and typewriters (remember them) changed the way work was done in the newsroom. All of this drove newspaper circulation into the hundreds of thousands. By 1900 daily newspapers in the United States numbered 2,326. Most large cities had several newspapers, and even small cities had at least two. Many communities also had foreign language, religious or other special interest papers. The first Spanish-language paper, *El Misisipi*, was published in New Orleans. The first Native American paper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, was published in 1828, and the first African-American paper, *Freedom's Journal*, was published in 1827.

The number of newspapers in the United States declined in the twentieth century. In many cases, stiff competition from other papers in same city led newspapers to merge with each other. Ownership of many local newspapers was shifted to national chains such as Scripps-Howard. William Randolph Hearst assembled a large news empire. Radio and later television broadcasting posed a new threat to newspapers. They could broadcast news moments after it occurred. The rapid and widespread expansion of the Internet has enabled millions of people to read a variety of daily newspapers online, free of charge. This trend, along with the rise of 24-hour cable television news networks, has caused subscription and circulation rates to decline. Some media experts predict that the printed newspaper will give way to fully electronic information services in the twenty-first century.

I was surprised to find out during my research, that the paper now known as the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* was actually the first newspaper west of the Allegheny Mountains. It began publishing in 1786. At that time it was known as *The Pittsburgh Gazette*. At first it was a four-page weekly. Now it is a metropolitan daily with a circulation of more than 243,000 daily and more than 424,000 on Sunday.

The first editor of the *Pittsburgh Gazette* was John Scull. After his retirement in 1828, the *Gazette* passed into the hands of Morgan Neville, who changed the name of paper to the *Pittsburgh Gazette and Manufacturing and Mercantile Advertiser*. Within a year, he sold the paper to David McClean, who changed the name back to the *Gazette*. Neville Craig followed McClean, and brought new life to what had become a stodgy publication. Under Craig, the *Gazette* became a personalized “daily” with many new features and a Washington correspondent. Clarke Thomas’s book, *Front-Page Pittsburgh*, has a wonderful photo of an issue of the *Gazette* as it appeared in 1833. I will happily share this with my students. By 1841, David N. White had succeeded Craig. He gradually made the *Gazette* one of the chief spokesmen of the anti-slavery forces in the North. Under his leadership, the paper became a morning paper in 1844, and in 1851, it was redesigned using larger type, and a larger sheet. At the time, The *Gazette* was known as conservative paper. It had an instrumental role in organizing the Republican Party in Allegheny County and aiding Abraham Lincoln’s election landslide. It was also one of the first newspapers to predict the impending split between the North and the South. White made many other improvements. Instead of a hand press, he used a Napier steam press—the first one in Pittsburgh to print a daily. He also made great use of the telegraph and moved the paper to new three-story offices on Third Street in downtown Pittsburgh. The leading competitors at this time were the *Dispatch*, and the *Post*, which had also acquired a steam press.

In the 1860s there were six papers in Pittsburgh, and competition was quite stiff. In addition to the *Gazette*, there were the *Evening Chronicle*, the *Dispatch*, the *Post*, the *Evening Telegraph*, and the *Sunday Leader*. In 1866, a partnership led by Nelson P. Reed took over the *Gazette*. Reed later acquired the *Commercial*, and the paper became the *Commercial Gazette*. The *Commercial Gazette* was the first paper in the city to report the fatal shooting of President Garfield and it thoroughly covered the Chicago fire in 1871, the railroad riots of 1877, the Johnstown flood of 1889, and bloody Homestead Steel Strike of 1891. By June 1884, there was a new competitor, the *Pittsburgh Press*, that sold for only a penny. Because of innovations in paper stock, the *Commercial Gazette* was also able to lower its price. In 1900, George T. Oliver acquired the paper and restored the old title, the *Gazette*. This did not last long, as Oliver soon merged the paper with the *Pittsburgh Times* to form the *Gazette-Times*. Oliver

added many departments to the paper. They included drama, literature, finance, sports, and society. Each department had its own editor. The paper had the most complete art department in Pennsylvania. There was also increased attention paid to sporting events and women's pages. Advertising from local department stores as well as brand names such as Coca-Cola increased. There was great competition among the city's papers, and news writers switched from paper to paper. Political cartoons became very popular during this period.

In the period following World War I, Pittsburgh was a city with too many newspapers. Publishers banded together, and discontinued the *Dispatch* and *Leader*. Their circulation was divided among the *Post*, the *Sun*, the *Press*, the *Gazette Times* and the *Chronicle-Telegraph*. My father was heavily into reading newspapers by this time, and I'm sure that if he were alive, he would be happy to give me detailed information about each publication. At this time the *Press* had the highest circulation in the city, with the *Gazette Times*, the second highest. In 1924, The *Press* was sold to the Scripps-Howard syndicate, and in 1927, William Randolph Hearst purchased *The Gazette Times* and the *Chronicle-Telegraph*. About the same time, Arthur E. Braun, (no relation) representing the Given estate, which owned the *Post* and *Sun*, was negotiating with Paul Block.

Mr. Block arranged with Hearst to exchange the evening *Sun* for the morning *Gazette Times*. By consolidation, Mr. Block now owned and published the first-ever *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on August 2, 1927. At that time a copy of the PG cost just three cents. I remember it costing five cents when I was a child. Upon the death of Paul Block in 1941, his sons, William and Paul Jr., became co-publishers. Under their leadership, the *Post-Gazette* campaigned vigorously for the legislation that paved the way for the city's renaissance in the 1950s. On April 23, 1960, the *Post-Gazette* purchased the *Sun-Telegraph* from the Hearst Corporation and moved its own operations to the *Sun-Telegraph* building on Grant Street. For 18 months the *Post-Gazette* published a Sunday edition of the consolidated papers, but the Pittsburgh market would not support two Sunday newspapers. On November 12, 1961, to meet the increasing costs of publishing, The *Post-Gazette* entered into a joint operating agreement with the Pittsburgh Press. The agreement allowed the *Post-Gazette* to maintain ownership and control of its news and editorial departments, while having its production, circulation and advertising sales handled by the *Press*.

On May 17, 1992, the newspaper business in Pittsburgh changed forever. A strike was called by unions working for the Pittsburgh Press Company that effectively shut down The Press for eight long months. Because of the joint operating agreement, that also meant that the *Post-Gazette* was unable to publish. This was a terrible time for my husband and me. He brought home papers from North Hills, Greensburg, and other small communities, but none of them satisfied

our newspaper cravings. By October of 1992, Scripps Howard decided to sell the Press Company. On December 31, 1992, the sale became effective, and the Block family owned both Pittsburgh newspapers. Much to everyone's surprise, the Blocks decided not to print the *Press* and began publishing the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* seven days a week in the morning. Personally, for some reason, I had always preferred the PG, but I was used to reading it at night. Even in the worst weather, either my husband or I would drive to the local newspaper dispenser at 9:30 every evening. It was a relaxing way to end the evening. He always started with the sports section, and I started with the front page. Nowadays, I do enjoy reading the morning paper with my coffee if I am home. The Block family still owns the paper, and John Robinson Block, son of Paul Block Jr., is the publisher. William Block Jr. serves as chairman.

Although the *Pittsburgh Courier* was not the first black newspaper, it was once the country's most widely circulated with a national circulation of almost 200,000. Edwin Harleston, a security guard and aspiring writer established the *Courier* in 1907. The paper gained national prominence after attorney Robert Lee Vann took over as the newspaper's editor, publisher, treasurer, and legal counsel in 1910. (Talk about multi-tasking!) By the 1930's it was one of the top selling black newspapers in the country. From the beginning, The *Courier* called for improvements in housing, health and education, and protested the slum conditions in which black people were forced to live in Pittsburgh and elsewhere throughout the nation. In one campaign it pressed for an increase of black physicians in the Pittsburgh area and the opening of an African American hospital to serve the community's health needs as white facilities were unwilling to treat African Americans.

The *Courier* sought to empower African-Americans economically and politically. It featured a front-page column entitled "The Camera," which counseled African Americans on financial matters. The *Courier* encouraged the black community to support black organizations such as the National Urban League and The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

In 1932, Vann helped influence black voters to shift their political allegiance away from the Republican Party, which was often still thought of as the party of Lincoln, and to support the Democratic candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt. The *Pittsburgh Courier* was one of the first black newspapers to publish both national and local editions. At its height there were as many as fourteen editions. Many of the twentieth century's most well known and influential black journalists and intellectuals contributed articles, columns, and editorials. They included George Schuyler, Joel A. Rogers, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. DuBois and James Weldon Johnson.

The *Courier* protested misrepresentations of African Americans in the mainstream media. In the early 1930's the paper began a nationwide protest against the Amos n' Andy daily radio serial because of its negative portrayal of black people. I don't remember the radio show. I do remember my father telling me that it was one of his favorites because it was so funny. I do remember enjoying the TV show. I certainly never saw it as portraying blacks in a bad light. Of course these are childhood memories. Perhaps my view would be different, if I viewed it today.

Following Vann's death on October 24, 1940, Ira Lewis, who had worked at the paper since 1914 as a sports writer and eventually managing editor, became editor. He had been hand-picked by Vann to be his successor. Under his leadership The *Courier* reached its highest circulation and gained even greater popularity.

Beginning with the February 7, 1942 edition, the paper began a "Double V" campaign, which demanded that African Americans who were risking their lives abroad receive full citizenship rights at home. Many other black newspapers followed the *Courier's* lead, thus making it a nationwide effort. When I was teaching at Lincoln School, I happened to work with Nancy Bolden, who was the lovely wife of Frank Bolden, a legendary reporter of the *Courier* who was one of the first two accredited black war correspondents. I had an opportunity to meet Mr. Bolden, who was a very humble man. I did press him to tell me about some of his experiences, which included being a houseguest of both Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. I was surprised to hear that he had wanted to attend Pitt Medical School, but was turned down because of his race. Mr. Bolden died in August of 2003.

*The Courier* also fought a battle against segregation in professional sports. Wendell Smith, who became the paper's sportswriter in 1938, used his column to denounce segregation in the major leagues. His efforts contributed to Jackie Robinson's signing with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. Sometimes he even traveled with him to arrange his travel and housing itinerary, because in some cities Robinson could not stay with the rest of the team in segregated hotels. I saw Jackie Robinson play in 1949. The Pirates lost the game.

In 1948 Ira Lewis died. The *Courier's* circulation began to decline during the 1950s and '60s, and in 1965, it was sold to John Sengstacke, the owner and publisher of the *Chicago Defender*. Today the *Pittsburgh Courier* is published under the name *The New Pittsburgh Courier* and comes out only twice a week.

## **Activities**

Activity 1 The first activity will be a trip to the Tribune Review. They have a very nice program for children that goes into the process of publishing a newspaper and provides fun hands-on activities for the children. I feel that it would be a valuable experience to visit an actual newspaper, before we attempt to publish our own.

Activity 2 The students will rewrite a personal narrative as a newspaper article. Both the narrative and the article will answer the five W's: who, what, when, where, and why. The newspaper article will have a headline instead of a title, and will be much shorter as it is designed and edited to fit newspaper space.

## Example

### The Shortcut

Often when my mother was too busy or tired to make dinner, my sister Sondra and I would walk to the Hot Puppy Shop, which was on Forward Avenue just down the street from the Squirrel Hill Theater. Getting there was easy, because it was all downhill. Getting home was a different story because we had to walk up two hills. Many times, we took a shortcut.

We didn't think about it at the time, but our shortcut was very dangerous. When we got to the bottom of the second hill, instead of trudging all the way up the hill, we walked across the scaffolding of a billboard that hung over the parkway. We had to balance carefully. Neither one of us gave a thought as to what would happen if we fell. I can't imagine what the drivers below thought when they saw two little girls balancing precariously above them.

One day, while we were taking our usual shortcut, the police stopped us! Both Sondra and I thought that we would be arrested on the spot. Worse than that, we didn't want our mother to find out. The police made us promise never to take that shortcut again. We never did, and my mother never did find out. When I think about it now, I know that I used poor judgment to jeopardize the safety of me and my sister that way. We were both lucky not to have been injured or worse.

## Two Girls Teeter Perilously Above Parkway

By Doris Ann

Yesterday evening police stopped two young sisters walking across a billboard above the Penn Lincoln parkway near the Squirrel Hill tunnel. The girls explained that it was a shortcut to their home. They were warned to never walk there again and were released.

The students should recognize the following from both stories:

Who?	Two young sisters
What?	A stop by the police
Where?	A billboard above the parkway
When?	Yesterday evening
Why?	They were taking a shortcut.

Activity 3 The student will report on a famous event from the era they chose for their newspaper.

### Example

## The Whiskey Rebellion

By Henry Greibach

On August 1, 1794, President George Washington ordered 13,000 troops to Pennsylvania, where farmers were violently protesting against the tax on whiskey. An angry mob marched on collector John Neville's house in Washington County. They had a shootout with him and his slaves, and eventually burned down his home. The mob also stole the mail from a post rider leaving Pittsburgh. Luckily, Neville escaped the grasp of the crowd, and the mob dispersed when the militia arrived.

Activity 4 The students will use a biography of a famous person, and rewrite it as an interview. I have chosen Thomas Mifflin as an example because not only was he the first governor of Pennsylvania, he is the man for whom Mifflin School is named. I never knew that until I began the research for this unit. The language handbook makes the following suggestions for interviews:

- 1) Find out as much as you can ahead of time.
- 2) Ask questions to find out who, what, where, when, and how
- 3) Avoid questions with yes or no answers.

## Example

# Meet Governor Mifflin

By Simon Braun

*Mr. Mifflin, How does it feel to be the first governor of the second state?*

It is certainly something to be proud of. Perhaps, they'll name a street or even a school after me some day.

*Can you give us a little of your background?*

I was born In Philadelphia in 1744. I attended the College of Philadelphia where I majored in business.

*I know that you were born a Quaker and ousted from your sect for fighting in the American Revolution. Do you regret this?*

Absolutely not! I felt that I had to stand up for my beliefs. I was firmly opposed to British rule. I was proud to serve as chief aide to George Washington in the Continental Army.

*What made you interested in running for governor?*

I was fortunate to represent Pennsylvania at the Constitutional Convention where other great patriots such as Sam Adams and Ben Franklin inspired me. I feel that I can do my part to help Pennsylvania get off to a good start.

*You certainly defeated General Arthur St Clair by a huge margin. Do you intend to run again when your term is over?*

The Pennsylvania Constitution allows for three terms. If the people will have me, I intend to stay in office for three terms.

*What are some of your goals as governor?*

I would like to keep taxes low, and move the capital from Philadelphia to a more central city in the state.

*Good luck to you. Thanks for your time, and I hope you achieve your goals.*

Activity 5 The students will write a letter to the editor about an issue from their time period. Each letter should have an opening sentence stating the writer's opinion. The writer should then persuade the reader to agree with his/her opinion by writing several effective sentences that capture the reader's interest. Finally, the writer should restate his opinion in different words. The student should keep in mind the following points:

1. The purpose for writing.
2. The audience (Who will be reading this letter?)
3. What are you trying to persuade the reader to do?

### Example

#### Small Farmers Taxed Unfairly

General John Neville may think light of it, but my fellow small farmers and I think that it would be intolerable if country stills were subjected to all the regulations of large town distilleries. My family would suffer considerably if I were forced to pay this unfair tax. My grain is my livelihood. It is much easier to transport the whiskey made from the grain over the mountains than the grain itself. Mr. Neville has failed to take this into account. Please repeal this tax immediately, or the small farm community will be forced to take action.

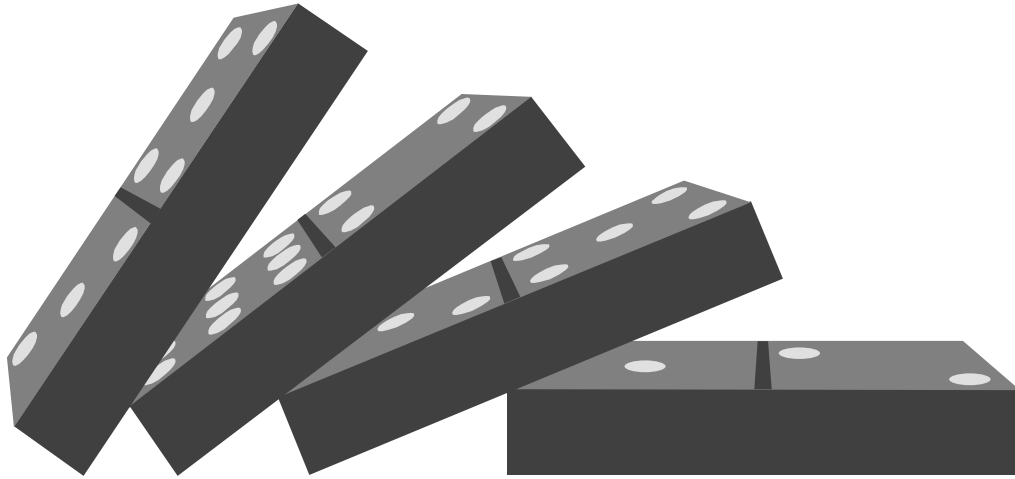
Sincerely,  
J. R. Distiller

Activity 6 The students will create an advertisement germane to the period of their newspaper. Since advertisements use pictures and/or words to convince a person to buy a product, the student may use either or both. Children of the late eighteenth century actually played with some of the same toys that I was familiar with as a young child. They had many spinning toys such as tops. They had rolling hoops, which strongly resemble the hula-hoop of my era. They had dolls. They had wooden dice and wooden marbles with a bigger shooter just as the children in my class have. However, my students' dice are plastic, and their marbles are glass. A domino is a game that originated in China in ancient times, but it was not introduced in Europe until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the century they had arrived in America.

### Example

## Great New Game

Be the first in your county to own the latest European import-- Dominoes!



You and your family will enjoy hours of fun playing Dominoes. It is a game suitable for adults as well as very young children. Complete instructions are included with each set. Each set includes 28 pieces and may be purchased for six pence at Dolly's General Store on Fifth Avenue.

Activity 7 The students will choose either to create a sports page or a political cartoon that would match their time period. The three spectator sports that were popular during the 1790s were cockfighting horse racing and bull baiting which involved unleashing a pack of dogs to enrage a bull. The poor dogs usually ended up severely injured or dead. All of these sports involved heavy betting. The colonials enjoyed hunting contests and bowling. In my research I found a first hand report of a cockfight, which I have adapted as my sports page example.

### Example

## **Eyewitness to a Cockfight**

By Robert Beverly

Last evening a cockfight was held behind Paul Braun's Pub. Betting was high and so were tempers when it was discovered that some of the cocks were given brandy to enhance their confidence, and others had their beaks coated with garlic to repulse their opponents. The cocks were trained to kill and equipped with honed steel spurs to speed their work. They appeared to be well trained and not

the least disconcerted by the crowd or shouting. They stepped about with great apparent pride and dignity; advancing nearer and nearer, they flew upon each other...the cruel and fatal gaffs being driven into their bodies, and at times directly through their heads. Frequently one, or both, were struck dead at the first blow, but they often fought after being repeatedly pierced, as long as they were able to crawl, and in the agonies of death would often make abortive efforts to raise their heads and strike their antagonists.

I am not particularly adept at drawing political cartoons, but I did manage to locate one drawn by Paul Revere depicting the Boston Massacre.



As a culminating event, the students will present their finished newspapers, and add them to their portfolios as a part of the speaking, viewing, listening requirement.

## Bibliography

### Books

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Collins, Mark, and Kimmel, Margaret Mary, Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1996. *Mr. Collins gives a nice background of Mr. Rogers' life and the history of his TV neighborhood.*

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Farr, Roger C., and Strickland, Dorothy S., Harcourt Language, Harcourt, Boston, 2002. *This book is useful for introducing fourth graders to the journalistic style of writing.*

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Kovach, Bill, and Rosenstiel, Tom, The Elements of Journalism, Crown Publishers, New York, 2001. *This book was concerned with the reasons for journalism and its relationship with maintaining a democracy.*

Meyer, Philip, Precision Journalism, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973. *This book dealt mainly with the effect of journalism on the social sciences.*

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Thomas, Clarke, Front-Page Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 2005. *This book gives a marvelous history of the **Post-Gazette** and its place in the city of Pittsburgh.*

Young, Sue, *Writing with Style*, Scholastic, Inc., New York, 2000. *This book is a good guide to the four basic steps of the writing process: plan, produce, polish, present.*

### **Microsoft Encarta Sites**

“Dominoes,” ®Encarta®, 1993-2001, Microsoft Corp. *This article gave a good history of the game dominoes and explained how to play it.*

“Journalism,” ®Encarta®, 1993-2001, Microsoft Corp. *This article gave a good general history of journalism.*

“Newspapers,” ®Encarta®, 1993-2001, Microsoft Corp. *This article gave a good overview of the history of newspapers.*

“Whiskey Rebellion,” ®Encarta®, 1993-2001, Microsoft Corp. *This article gave background as to the causes of the Whiskey Rebellion.*

“Thomas Mifflin,” ®Encarta®, 1993-2001, Microsoft Corp. *This was a brief biography of Thomas Mifflin.*

### **Web Sites**

<<http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/news-bios/courier.html>> 4/18/2005. *This site gave a comprehensive history of the Pittsburgh Courier.*

<<http://history.acusd.edu/gen/recording/television.html>>4/18/2005. *This site gave good insight into the history of television as media.*

<<http://www.historybuff.com/libraryrefcolonial.html>>4/18/2005. *This site gave a good history of newspapers during the colonial period.*

<<http://www.historylives.com/tooysandgameshtm>>4/18/2005. *This site had good information and pictures of early toys and games.*

<<http://www.nps.gov/frhi/whisreb.htm>>4/18/2005. *This site gave insight into the causes and repercussions of the Whiskey Rebellion*

<<http://odur.let.reg.nl/~usa/B/mifflin/mifflin.htm>>4/18/2005. *This site gave a more detailed biography of Thomas Mifflin, the first governor of Pennsylvania*

<<http://www.pitt.edu/~press/books/frontpagepittsburgh.html>>4/18/2005. *This was a review of Front-Page Pittsburgh by Clarke Thomas*

<<http://www.post-gazette.com/aboutpghistory.html>>4/18/2005 *This site gave a good history of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette.*

## Student Reading List

### Books

Berry, Flynn, Calhoun, Lauren, Cofell, Ashley, Fykes, Morgan, Hedberg, Katie, Larsson, Elizabeth, Mendoza, Priscilla, Peters-Axtell, Julia, and Sterm, Caitlyn, New Moon Writing, Crown Publishers, Inc., New York, 2000. *This book gave children and would be suitable for fourth graders.fun writing tips for young*

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<<http://www.historylives.com/tooysandgameshtm>>4/18/2005. *This site had good information and pictures of early toys and games.*

<<http://www.post-gazette.com/aboutpghistory.html>> 4/18/2005. *This site gave a good history of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette.*

### **Materials for Classroom Use**

Computers  
Newspapers  
Textbooks  
Scissors  
Crayons  
Markers  
Pencils  
Glue

## Appendix

### **List of Suggested Important Events**

- 1609 Henry Hudson explores the Delaware Bay for the Dutch
- 1639 New Sweden, the first European settlement was established in what is now Pennsylvania
- 1655 Dutch troops from New Netherlands (New York) capture New Sweden
- 1751 Dr. Benjamin rush founds the first hospital in the colonies in Pennsylvania
- 1777 Washington camps at Valley Forge
- 1780 Pennsylvania frees all blacks born in the state.
- 1787 The constitutional convention is held in Philadelphia
- 1787 Pennsylvania becomes the second state (Delaware, which was originally part of Pa. Was the first.
- 1794 The Whiskey Rebellion took place in Pittsburgh

- 1812 Harrisburg is named state capital
- 1829 The first Pennsylvania commercial railroad
- 1834 The law is passed that establishes free public schools
- 1881 The Pittsburgh rail strike leads to the formation of the AFL
- 1889 The dam bursts that floods Johnstown and takes 2,000 lives
- 1920 KDKA in Pittsburgh becomes the first radio station to broadcast regular programming
- 1940 The Pennsylvania turnpike opens
- 1952 Jonas Salk develops the polio vaccine at the University of Pittsburgh
- 1979 The Three-Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant disaster
- 1988 The biggest inland oil spill in U.S. history when an oil storage tank collapses near Pittsburgh, pouring 1 million gallons of oil into the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers
- 1993 University of Pittsburgh doctors transplant a baboon heart into a human.
- 2002 Catherine Baker Knoll become Pennsylvania's first female lieutenant governor.

The above are just suggested topics. I'm sure that some of students would prefer to write about any time that the Pirates won the World Series, the Steelers won the pennant or when the Penguins won the Stanley Cup.

### **List of Notable Pennsylvanians**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Louisa May Alcott, writer</li> <li>Marion Anderson, singer</li> <li>John James Audubon, painter</li> <li>Samuel Barber, composer</li> <li>George Benson, musician</li> <li>Guion Bluford, astronaut</li> <li>Daniel Boone, explorer</li> <li>James Buchanan, president</li> <li>Andrew Carnegie, entrepreneur</li> <li>anthropologist</li> <li>Rachel Carson, environmentalist</li> <li>Mary Cassatt, painter</li> <li>George Catlin, painter</li> <li>Wilt Chamberlain, basketball player</li> <li>Dick Clark, TV host</li> <li>Perry Como. Singer</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gene Kelly, dancer</li> <li>Grace Kelly, actress</li> <li>Gelsey Kirkland, dancer</li> <li>S.S. Kresge, retail executive</li> <li>Tara Lipinski, skater</li> <li>Dan Marino, football player</li> <li>George C. Marshall, general</li> <li>George McClelland, general</li> <li>Margaret Mead,</li> <br/> <li>Andrew Mellon, financier</li> <li>Dennis Miller, comedian</li> <li>Joe Montana, football player</li> <li>Joe Namath, football player</li> <li>Arnold Palmer, golfer</li> <li>Robert Peary, explorer</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

Bill Cosby, comedian  
Stuart Davis, painter  
Walter Diemer, bubblegum inventor  
filmmaker  
Tommy Dorsey, musician  
personality  
Dwight Eisenhower, president  
W.C. Fields, comedian  
Stephen Foster, composer  
Robert Fulton, engineer  
Richard Gere, actor

Jeff Goldblum, actor  
Martha Graham, dancer  
Alexander Haig, public official  
Oscar Hammerstein, composer  
Henry Heinz, food manufacturer  
Marilyn Horne, singer  
Lee Iacocca, auto executive  
Reggie Jackson, baseball player  
Michael Keaton, actor

William Penn, Pa. founder  
Pink, singer  
Man Ray, painter and

Fred Rodgers, television

Betsy Ross, seamstress  
Benjamin Rush, physician  
Jonas Salk, physician  
Edith Sampson, judge  
Thomas Starzl, physician

B.F. Skinner, psychologist  
Will Smith, actor  
Gertrude Stein, writer  
James Stewart, actor  
Sharon Stone, actress  
Tamanend, Indian leader  
Ida Tarbell, writer  
Jim Thorpe, athlete  
John Updike

This is just a suggested list. If the students find any other notable Pittsburgher or Pennsylvanian to write about, that would be fine with me.