

HOW IS INFORMATION CONSTRUCTED?



1

FACT SHEET

WHAT ARE INFORMATION MEDIA?

OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRICULUM

DISCIPLINE AND LEVEL CONCERNED

English (Elementary – Cycle 3)

- Reading various texts: Identifying some characteristics of explanatory texts (encyclopedia, magazine or journal article, report, journalistic news);
- Writing various texts.

TARGETED DIMENSIONS OF THE DIGITAL COMPETENCY

- Collaborate by using digital tools;
- Create content with digital tools;
- Develop and engage information literacy;
- Communicate by using digital technology.

SUGGESTED DIGITAL TOOLS

- Jamboard;
- Popplet;
- Padlet;
- Google Slides or PowerPoint.

EDUCATIONAL INTENTION OF THE GUIDE

By the end of these activities, the students will be able to identify the characteristics of information media, such as a newspaper, a magazine, a television network, a radio station or a website.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITIES

- Think about a potential subject for an article through an interactive brainstorming exercise.
- Use situational exercises to make important decisions as an editor-in-chief.
- Use a collaborative digital tool to participate in designing a newspaper.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: QUESTIONNAIRE

- Ask the students to list (from memory) what can be found on a newspaper page (headline, article, photo, advertising, journalists' names and photos... of the different theme sections (current events, sports, arts, etc.)
- Ask the students who they think works on producing a newspaper.

WHAT ARE INFORMATION MEDIA?

For this section, the teacher is encouraged to show the students several newspapers, magazines and websites.

Information media inform people by reporting and explaining what's happening around them... whether close to home or on the other side of the world. They can take several forms, such as a newspaper, a magazine, a television network, a radio station or a website.

These media can cover a wide variety of subjects, which they must communicate very clearly to the public.

The journalists who work for information media must tell the truth. They often follow very strict rules that distinguish them from less serious media.

MEDIA THAT AREN'T INFORMATION MEDIA:

To illustrate this section, the teacher may compare the YouTube network of a serious medium and a known YouTuber.

Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and the other social media are not information media. However, social media often use these platforms to share their reports.

THE RULES TO FOLLOW

Journalistic codes of ethics exist all over the world. They are sets of rules to follow when working for information media. These rules ensure that journalists work in the public interest and that the public can rely on them.

Here are some examples:

- **Journalists must verify that the information they report is true**

A journalist receives an anonymous call telling her that a restaurant is serving its customers expired food. Before writing an article, she will have to visit the restaurant and verify the information herself. For example, she may question the employees and inspect the dishes.

- **Journalists may not do advertising for a company or an individual**

A journalist writes an article on mountain bikes. The manager of a sporting goods store asks him to mention the business in its article, because he knows it will be read by many Canadians. He even offers the journalist \$300 for the plug. The journalist refuses because the information is irrelevant to his article. It's also out of the question for him to be paid by the people he mentions.

- **Journalists must be independent, which means they can't have a relationship (family, friend, employment, donation of money) with the subject of their reports**

Tabitha is a journalist specializing in environmental issues. A major climate preservation organization holds a demonstration in her city. Tabitha won't participate, because this could compromise her credibility.

- **In their reports, journalists may not defend an individual or a company**

A journalist writes an article about a conflict between two circus companies that want to set up on the same land. She must listen to the points of view of both companies and ensure the article is divided fairly.

The teacher may choose to tell the students that a fairly divided article isn't necessarily divided half and half. The concept of "both sides" also requires attention. If the article is addressing climate, for example, a climate skeptic's opinion isn't relevant.

- **Journalists must correct their errors**

Jonathan published a report on his local mayor's unusual expenses. Two days later, he learns that he made a mistake regarding the amount of money. He must therefore correct his error very quickly.

JOURNALISM FOR EVERYONE

Journalists categorized their subjects in different ways. Here are some of them:

Proximity

- Local news (school, neighbourhood, city...);
- Regional news (subjects that concern Québec, the regions, the provincial government...);
- National news (subjects that concern Canada as a whole, the federal government ...);
- International news (what is happening in the rest of the world).

Specialty

- Current events;
- Sports;
- Arts;
- Economy;
- Technology;
- Opinion.

WHO WORKS ON A NEWSPAPER?

The information media universe is vast and many people make a career in it. The most obvious example of a medium is a good old-fashioned newspaper. As you can imagine, it takes several people to make a newspaper. Of course, you hear the most about the journalists' work, but many media have a whole team working behind the scenes.

Here are six occupations related to journalism:

Editor-in-Chief

The editor-in-chief is the journalists' boss, the person who makes the decisions. He or she has to find and approve subjects for original reporting and ensure the quality of the information.

Journalists

When the subjects are decided, it's the journalists' turn to take over. They may conduct interviews, meet people, do research or visit locations, all depending on what they cover. After gathering and checking all the relevant information, they write their articles. Sometimes journalists have specialties, such as sports, arts, politics or science.

Press Photographers

If a news item requires pictures, press photographers take charge. They take photos that are good illustrations of the subject for an article.

Copy Editors

The copy editors lay out the newspaper. This means they place the articles and photos on the pages to ensure everything fits. They also choose the headlines and the photos that will go with them.

Proofreaders

Once the page is completed, the copy editors give the articles to the proofreaders, who correct all the spelling and grammatical errors.

Desk Editor

The desk editor oversees the copy editors. At the end of the day (in the case of paper editions), the desk editor rereads the entire newspaper and gives final approval. As needed, the desk editor asks for last-minute changes. Once the newspaper is revised, the desk editor sends it to the printer.

Most newspapers are sent to the printer very late in the evening. By operating this way, the media ensure they can integrate all the last-minute news into their pages. The copy editors, the proofreaders and the desk editor are often the last people to leave the newsroom.

EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1

Draft of an article (no editing)

The students are invited, as a team or individually, to choose a potential subject in their school or neighbourhood for an article for each of these three categories:

- Current events;
- Sports;
- Arts.

For each subject, the students must identify two people to whom they could ask questions, and explain their choices. These people must be able to provide relevant information to cover the subject.

Then, for each subject, the students will have to develop two or three questions to ask the people they will have chosen.

Of course, the teacher may choose to continue the exercise by having the students write an article about one of the three subjects they selected! The subjects and the people involved may vary according to the class's interests or the time provided to complete the exercise.

EXERCISE 2 – SITUATIONAL EXERCISES

1. Each student is the editor-in-chief of a reputable newspaper. They must therefore make important decisions to retain their readers' confidence. What would they choose to do in the following situations? The students must briefly explain their answers.

- A reader calls to denounce a department store for not paying its employees for the past two months. Must an article be published on the subject right away and thus ensure the paper is the first to report the news? Why?
- How could the journalist fact-check the news?
- A reader announces that he is cancelling his newspaper subscription because he can obtain information free on Facebook and YouTube. What arguments can he be given to convince him to stay.

2. A copy editor asks the students for help to find headlines for the following two articles. They must be short and catchy.

- Ms. Nguyen's dog escaped from her yard Friday evening, frightening some young children who thought they saw a wolf! The police and the firefighters were able to catch the dog before it got too far.
- Mohammed Abdella, the star player on the Regina basketball team, broke his ankle yesterday morning during a practice. His injury occurs two days before the interprovincial basketball final. The team doctors told us it would take at least two months until he is back on the court. Can the team win without its star player?

EXERCISES

EXERCISE 3

Who does what on the newspaper?

- | | | | |
|--------------------|----------|----------|--|
| Copy Editor | a | 1 | Takes pictures to illustrate the articles |
| Proofreader | b | 2 | Chooses the subjects and ensures the quality of information |
| Editor-in-Chief | c | 3 | Chooses the headlines and puts the newspaper together |
| Press Photographer | d | 4 | Checks the spelling and syntax of the articles |
| Desk Editor | e | 5 | Writes articles |
| Journalist | f | 6 | Checks the entire newspaper before sending it to the printer |

ANSWER KEY

1.

N/A

2.1

- a) No. First a journalist must check the facts reported by the reader.
- b) The journalist could talk to some employees of the department store and see if the news is true.
- c) Facebook and YouTube aren't information media. An information medium helps the public understand what is happening around them. It can cover a wide variety of subjects. The journalists who work for information media often must follow strict rules (code of ethics) to maintain the public's confidence.

2.2

N/A

Many subjects important to the city or the neighbourhood won't be seen on the reader's Facebook feed, because his friends didn't share articles on these subjects, or because these subjects are less popular. Journalists are professionals who are paid to find and fact-check information, while we don't always know the source of the information arriving on our Facebook or YouTube feed.

3.

- a-3
- b-4
- c-2
- d-1
- e-6
- f-5