

# 1A — WHAT MAKES A GOOD NEWS STORY?

## **Introduction**

Students will be introduced to the five news criteria, which determine what makes a good news story.

## **Rationale**

Most students have read, or at least seen, parts of the newspaper. Yet students are unclear about what makes a good news story, how news is organized, and in what section of the paper they might find news. Learning to answer the question “What is news?” is the first step in gathering information and writing a news story — or a book report, memo, or research paper. News is meant to inform, engage and entertain the reader, which is why journalism is a good model for many other forms of writing.

## **Objective** **A+**

Identify the five criteria that define news.

## **Teaching Materials**

√ Transparency 1A News Criteria (Samples 1-3)

### **EALR Benchmarks**

Reading: 1.1, 1.2., 1.3., 1.5,  
2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.3

Communication: 1.1, 1.2,  
1.3, 2.4, 3.1, 4.3

### **Background**

A news story should meet at least one, if not all, of five criteria:

1. The story is **current/timely**.
2. The story is **important/it has impact**.
3. Readers can **identify** with the story, even if it does not directly impact them.
4. The story is **sensational** — that is, it has a dramatic or unexpected twist.
5. The story treats a **conflict**.

## **In the Classroom:**



**Ask: Who reads the newspaper? What kinds of things do you read about?** (Many students will say that they read the comics. Students may also say that they read the sports section. If not, prompt students: Does anyone read the sports section?)

**Write** students’ responses on the board.

## **Teach**

**Ask: What kind of information could you find in today’s sports section?**

**Listen:** Students should say, “*The latest basketball, baseball, soccer, tennis, or other sports information.*”

*EALR Reading 2.2 states:*

The student understands the meaning of what is read, expanding comprehension by analyzing, interpreting and synthesizing information and ideas.



**Ask:** Do you read today's newspaper to find out about last week's [name of home team] game?

**Listen:** Students should say, "No, we read today's paper to find out about the most recent game."

**Explain:** A story is news if it is current, timely, or happening now.

**Write** on the board or overhead:

**1. TIMELY/CURRENT**

**Ask:** Why do newspaper readers care whether [name of home team] wins or loses?

**Listen:** Students should say, "Because the team represents our town, city, or region."

**Explain:** A story is news if it shows information that is important to the reader, or impacts the reader.

**Write** on the board or overhead:

**1. TIMELY/CURRENT**  
**2. IMPORTANCE/IMPACT**

**Display Transparency 1A, revealing only Sample #1 (Boy Scouts) by covering the rest of the transparency with a sheet of paper.**

Have students follow along as you read the story aloud.

**Ask:** Do you find the beginning of this story interesting? Why?

**Listen:** Students should say, "Yes, because the story is about kids."

**Explain:** A story is news if a reader isn't directly impacted, but can identify with people or events in the story.

**Write** on the board or overhead:

**1. TIMELY/CURRENT**  
**2. IMPORTANCE/IMPACT**  
**3. IDENTIFICATION**



**Display Transparency 1A, pulling paper down to reveal Sample #2 (Britney Spears)**

**Ask: Do you find this story interesting? Why?**

**Listen:** Students should say, *“It involves a celebrity doing something unexpected.”*

**Explain:** This story involves a celebrity. It has a dramatic twist and describes a surprising change. It may not be important, or directly impact the reader, but it is entertaining for the reader. We call this sensational.

**Write** on the board or overhead:

1. **TIMELY/CURRENT**
2. **IMPORTANCE/IMPACT**
3. **IDENTIFICATION**
4. **SENSATIONAL/DRAMATIC, UNEXPECTED, INVOLVING CELEBRITIES**

**Display Transparency 1A, pulling paper down to reveal Sample #3 (soy milk)**

**Ask: Do you find this story interesting? Why?**

**Listen:** Students should say, *“It involves a fight between a mom and the National Dairy Council.”* (They might also mention that for students, it is important, and students can identify.)

**Explain:** This story presents a conflict between a mom and the National Dairy Council.

**Write** on the board or overhead:

1. **TIMELY/CURRENT**
2. **IMPORTANCE/IMPACT**
3. **IDENTIFICATION**
4. **SENSATIONAL/DRAMATIC, UNEXPECTED, INVOLVING CELEBRITIES**
5. **CONFLICT**

### **Practice**

Call on volunteers to read aloud the five news criteria as other students follow along. Have students write the criteria in their journalism notebooks. Tell students that this is good practice for taking notes as newspaper reporters. For younger students, allow extra time for note taking.

### **Follow-up Activities**

- √ Every day (or several days each week), have students scan a local newspaper. Tell students to bring in one or two stories that interest them. Call on volunteers to summarize their stories, identify the news criteria that the stories meet, and explain why the stories meet those criteria.
- √ Before teaching Lesson 1B, you may wish to quiz students on the five news criteria.
- √ This lesson may be taught in conjunction with Lesson 1B. Combined teaching time should take one hour.



## TRANSPARENCY 1A — NEWS CRITERIA

### **SAMPLE #1:**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – After wandering from a campground in the Florida Everglades and getting lost for two days, 11 Boy Scouts and their troop leader turned up safely, according to police.

### **SAMPLE #2:**

LOS ANGELES – In a surprise move, popular singer Britney Spears has given up her career to become a Catholic nun. Robed in a black and white habit, the only concerts this former pop diva will perform from now on will be songs sung to praise God.

### **SAMPLE #3:**

WASHINGTON – Because her son is allergic to dairy, Marybeth Johnson thought she could convince his school lunchroom to offer soy milk.

She figured wrong.

Despite the growing number of reported dairy allergies among elementary school students, it's a federal law that milk be the primary offering in school lunchrooms. And the National Dairy Council wants to make sure it's the only choice.