

Lesson Plan: Differing News Reports (short)

Subjects: Social Studies, History, Language Arts

Time required: 45 minutes

Related links: [Guampedia](#), [Pacific Daily News](#), [Guam Daily Post](#), [KUAM](#), [Pacific News Center](#), [Stripes Guam](#)

Grade-level: Middle [6-8], High [9-12]

Materials required: Printouts of news examples [optional; explained in lesson plan]

Description

In this lesson, students will practice writing news reports about Guam history from opposing viewpoints. By doing so, students will understand the importance of critical media consumption.

Objectives/Skills

- Recap content that has been covered previously in the course (or that is currently being studied).
- Experience, first hand, the possibility for skewing factual information through a self-written historical news report.
- Understand the importance of critically engaging with news.

Questions or Assessment

- Were students able to write news reports from different points of view?
- Do students recognize the possibility for bias and interpretation in news reports, including contemporary events?
- Are students prompted to more critically analyze the information around them?

Procedure

Teacher prep

1. Find examples in the news of different interpretations of the same event. If possible, print out copies for students to see.
2. Select a [time-period of Guam history](#) that has been covered in class. Research and collect basic information about an event during this time-period (use Guampedia).

Overview of Media Analysis (10 minutes)

Explain to students that news reports attempt to remain neutral, but that it is impossible to remove all bias and interpretation from the presentation of information. Provide some examples:

- Headlines from the most recent Super Bowl, World Series, etc. from the respective cities represented in the game. One city's paper will likely say "[Team 1] Won!", while the other city's paper will say something along the lines of "[Team 2] Falls Short". Have students read and understand how the focus of the two articles are different, even though they recount the same event. Examples of these differences can be found online.
- Yahoo news report labeling white Katrina hurricane survivors as "finding food" and African American survivors as "looters."
- Explain to students that people write news reports, and all people have viewpoints, backgrounds, and biases. [News reports](#) are thus not always neutral, and that the same event and factual information may be portrayed in vastly different lights. If time allows, have students briefly discuss any examples of which they may be aware, or to discuss why the knowledge of such biases is important to us as media consumers.

Writing from different points of view (15 minutes)

1. Present to students a specific time-period of Guam history (most likely, this will be a content field the class has recently covered, or is currently learning about). Simply state the time period along with some general background information (to prompt student recall). Next, identify a specific event that the class will be focusing upon.
2. Next, separate the class into two groups. Explain to students that one half will be writing from the point of view of one side of the event, while the other half will be writing from the point of view of an opposing side of the event. For example, if the event was the Japanese invasion of Guam, then one half of the class will be reporters for the Japanese, while the other half of the class will be reporters for the Guamanians (CHamorus).
3. Using information collected from Guampedia or other reputable sources, list some factual information on the board regarding the event (e.g. date, participants, location). Then list additional information that may be up to

interpretation (e.g. impact of the action, importance of the events, etc.). Provide the same information to the entire class.

4. Prompt each student to write his or her own brief news report on the event. Students/reporters should write from the point of view of one side (in accordance to which group they are in). Encourage students to be biased while maintaining a news-worthy tone; the purpose of this exercise is to understand how a news article, though reporting factual information, can still be slanted toward one interpretation or bias.
5. While students are writing, be sure to observe their progress and provide help. Some students may continue to be confused by the prompt. Be sure to further explain that they are to imagine themselves as a reporter writing from a specific point of view.

Sharing (10 minutes)

1. After students complete their news reports, collect and briefly scan through them. Read some exemplary articles out to the class, either in whole or in part. In selecting excerpts to read, choose pieces that demonstrate differing viewpoints.
2. If students are familiar with the concept, identify examples of objective and subjective statements.
3. Have students share their thoughts about hearing a news report written from a different viewpoint than they personally used.

Application (8 minutes)

1. Have students explain how today's lesson can be applied when reading old news articles.
 - Guide students to briefly discuss the importance of understanding an author's point of view, and that even news articles can be biased.
2. Ask students how the understanding of authorship can be applied when reading current events. Prompt students for specific examples.
 - Students will likely repeat their responses from the previous question. It is important to encourage students to draw connections between the lesson and contemporary events affecting their lives.
 - Examples of new topics include: military buildup, elections, political news, or even game recaps of favorite sports teams.

Recap (2 minutes)

Recap what we've done and learned in the lesson:

For advanced students: "Today, we've learned about the importance of understanding an author's point of view. We all have viewpoints or biases, though it's sometimes hard to identify them; the same applies to news articles. While news reporters attempt their best at remaining neutral, it is impossible to anyone to remain completely dispassionate (or, in other words, unbiased). For this reason, it is important to always consider the viewpoint of the author when reading a news article. Even if it's difficult to know what the author is thinking or feeling, we can look for clues, including the subjective comments (comments that are opinions) or the type of information that is being published (or not published). This exercise was just an introduction into the range of ways an historical event may be portrayed. Hopefully this will aid you in becoming more aware and critical media consumers."

For younger students: "Today, we learned how the same event can be portrayed in different ways. Half of you were reporters for [name side], while the other half were reporters for [name side]. You both had the same information, but your news articles were very different in tone. By doing this exercise, we've learned how different news articles can be, and we've learned that it's important to always be aware of the tone of a news article."

Ask students for their favorite parts of the activity.