
Action News

by Lawrence Stevens

Grade 5 & Up

**Simulations
About
Writing &
Editing**



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The chief source of information for most people is the television news. The purpose of this kit is to inform students about how the news is assembled.

The exercises and games show the problems that newscasters have with editing and censorship. News on television is part of the entertainment media. It is paid for by advertisers who are interested in ratings. Ratings show how many people watch the program. This affects the programming.

Contents

Teacher's Guide.

TV News Mini-Text. Four reproducible pages.

Student Workbook. Four reproducible pages.

Gatekeeper Game. Five reproducible pages.

Big Story Game. Five reproducible pages and teacher's guide.

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TV News Mini-Text

To introduce the unit the mini-text should be used. The mini-text describes the functions of various members of the news staff and the kinds of decisions they must make.

Students should make the decisions in the case studies either by themselves or in small groups. Then the decisions should be discussed by the entire class.

After completing the mini-text, the students can move on to the workbook and the first simulation.

Answers to Exercises

Exercise 1. As a general rule in good reporting, especially on TV, stay away from those who are highly involved emotionally. Probably the best balance would be obtained by talking to A, C, D and E.

Exercise 2. This is a matter of opinion. Members of the class should compare their selections.

Exercise 3. What is left out will be a matter of judgement. However, you don't have a story without including A, B, F and G.

Exercise 4. The selection of pictures can influence what people think. In this case, A will give a distorted picture of the event but is the most interesting. C would give the most balanced view.

Exercise 5. Narration A is the most balanced. C is the most distorted. All are factually correct.

Exercise 6. Students should compare their answers. The most neutral words are "spoke to," "disagreed with," and using no word.

Exercise 7. Students can read the words chosen. The teacher might demonstrate the extremes on the board, showing the most neutral and emotional words.

(Continued)

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Exercise 8. Each of these is an actual case, and in each the media decided to break the story. The first is the Ellsberg-Pentagon Papers case in which the story was broken by the *New York Times*. The second is the Bay of Pigs invasion story—the plans were revealed by *Nation* magazine. The third is the Daniel Schorr case in which the *Village Voice* released a "secret" Congressional Committee report. Schorr refused to tell Congress how he got it.

Exercise 9. A. In itself this is not news. In the context of a story about the vote on the proposal, it could be used. B. The best thing to do is tell the police. C. Unless this is a widespread problem, this is not news. If it is used as news, you should check with the garbage company to see what they have to say. D. It is definitely news. The question is do you wait to report it. It depends on how much you value your friendship. E. He should report it to the District Attorney.

Student Workbook

The purpose of the student workbook is to provide students with a guide for analyzing actual TV news broadcasts. The data should be brought back to class for discussion.

Gatekeeper Game

This game simulates the construction of a news program. The students are divided into news teams. Each team must select from a series of stories the ones to be read on the news. The objective of the game is to have students realize that there is a great deal of subjectivity in the selection of the news.

The students are given handouts on which 35 stories are listed. From the lists they must select 12 for the news program. Each student on the news team should have a part to read. An important part of the game is that students should evaluate each other's presentations. A rating form is provided in the teacher's guide to the game.

Big Story Game

This game involves the students in the process of writing a news story. The same resource material is given to each team of reporters. From this material the students are to create their stories. The students should compare their stories. The primary objective is to get students to examine the relative reliability of sources, the selection of material to be included in a story and the type of words chosen to describe an event or person.

The student stories should be duplicated. There is an evaluation sheet in the teacher's guide that can be duplicated.



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The TV News

Reporting the news is important in our country. In order for people to decide on issues they must be well informed. The news—whether it is newspapers, magazines, radio or TV—plays an important part in that. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects freedom of speech and the right of the press to inform the public.

Most people get their information from the television news, and most people don't give that too much thought. But you should remember that someone is deciding about what news you will see, how it will be presented, and just how much you will be allowed to know about a subject.

Television news is usually made up of a local news show and a network news show. The three big networks--ABC, CBS and NBC--have half-hour shows in which the news is presented by "anchor" people who are stars and get paid a great deal of money.

The local news show usually has an anchor person or two, a sports reporter, a weather person, and sometimes an entertainment reporter.

What is not seen on TV are the people who make the decisions. The news editor decides what stories will be covered. Then, there is the decision about how much time to give to a particular story.

Beyond that, it is the basic decision of the station owners as to how many reporters there will be and how long the news show will be. More reporters will provide better news coverage, but it also might mean less of a profit for the station.

The people who provide the TV news have many difficult choices to make.

What Is A Reporter?

The job of a reporter is to report the news as fairly as he or she can.

Exercise 1

If you were a reporter, what would be the best source to check on the truth of the following statement?

A City Councilman was involved in a drunk-driving, hit-and-run accident. He was let go by the Police Chief without charges being pressed.

- A.** The City Councilman.
- B.** The Police Chief.
- C.** The person driving the car that was hit.
- D.** The bartender in the last bar the councilman was in.
- E.** A witness to the accident.

Since a single source of information might be unreliable, who would be the next best source to double-check the best source? Who would be the least reliable source of information?

What Is An Editor?

The editor's job is a difficult one. If a reporter has to figure out the "true" facts of a story, the editor must decide which stories to put in and which to leave out of the news program.

Editors have to be careful in selecting the stories they put on. They want to select things that are newsworthy. There are several ways to look at what is newsworthy. Some say that it is those stories that are important to a lot of people or that affect our lives one way or another. Others say that it is the stories that people like to watch. Some people are not interested in stories about politicians, wars and governments. They like to see stories about nice things—"good news", the weather, and sports. Others like stories about crime and violence.

Exercise 2

If you were an editor, rank (with 1 being the most important) those stories that you think should be put on a news program.

- A.** Boy saves dog from burning house.
- B.** Bank robber gets away with \$45,000.
- C.** Local city councilman caught taking bribe from builder.
- D.** Maniac hacks little child to death with butcher knife.
- E.** New park is dedicated to the city.
- F.** Town's largest factory to close doors; will put hundreds out of work.
- G.** Movie star to visit town for movie being made on location.

Why did you rank the stories the way you did? How do your rankings compare with others in the class?

Exercise 3

Editing and selecting become a problem within a news story. If you had to leave out two of the facts in the story below, which would they be?

- A.** Factory is polluting the air with dangerous fumes.
- B.** Factory has been ordered to stop by the pollution control district.
- C.** Factory has not stopped and ignored order.
- D.** The owner of the factory and one of the directors of the pollution control district are cousins.
- E.** One of the directors of the pollution control district owns stock in the company.
- F.** Three people who live close to the factory have had serious breathing problems which doctors say might be caused by the chemicals.
- G.** The owner of the factory says he will shut the factory down if he has to clean up the air. This would result in the loss of hundreds of jobs.

Picture Selection

People are more inclined to look at pictures than they are to listen to words. Television is mostly pictures and people are more interested in seeing pictures of something happening than hearing a reporter tell them about it. People also tend to believe what they see; that is if you can see it, it has to be true. However, one can be fooled with pictures.

Film, like other news, is picked by the news editors. Only about 5 feet out of every 100 feet of film shot for TV is actually shown to the audience.

Exercise 4

You are the editor and you are doing a news program about a teenage rock concert. You only have time to air one short film segment. Your cameraman has provided you with these three segments. Which would you choose?

- A.** This segment shows police arresting a young man. He resists and the police use their clubs to subdue him. They carry him off bodily.
- B.** This segment shows a very young girl, about 13 years old, smoking a cigarette and guzzling from a can of beer.
- C.** This segment of the film shows kids listening to the music while sitting on the lawn in a local stadium. Some kids are smoking cigarettes, some are drinking from cans and bottles. Most are just listening.

The kind of picture you select depends on what kind of impression you want to convey. Will you be fair, or will your own prejudices cause you to slant the story one way or another for the TV viewers?

Exercise 5

If you were an editor, what kind of narration would you pick for the film segment?

A. 50,000 people attended the concert, which was peaceful. Only two were arrested for drug abuse.

B. The concert was attended by 50,000 teenagers. Drugs were a problem at the concert and some people had to be arrested.

C. Violence marked the rock concert attended by 50,000 teens. Dope addicts resisted arrest and had to be subdued by the police.

Picking the Right Word

What words a news reporter—or anyone, for that matter—selects can have a tremendous influence upon what others think was said.

A reporter who describes someone or something must choose his words carefully.

Exercise 6

The following is a series of words that can be used to describe the situation below. Fill in the words from the lists below.

Coach Finnerty (use list A) the referee. Finnerty (use list B) a (use list C) call of the referee.

List A

shouted at
screamed at
spoke to

List B

was angry at
was upset with
disagreed with

List C

bad
(do not insert a word)
terrible

What do you think is the fairest way of writing the report?

Exercise 7

Following is a series of words that can be used to describe a person who was picked up for shoplifting. Try to be as fair as possible. You must plug the words into this news bulletin.

A (use list A) was (use list B) by the police after a (use list C). The (use list D) is charged with (use list E).

List A

youth
black youth
black female
black teenager
teenager
female
teenage female

List B

apprehended
arrested
stopped
taken into custody

List C

brief chase
an attempted escape
brief scuffle
the culprit tried to resist arrest

List D

person
culprit
youth
kid

List E

a misdemeanor
petty theft
shoplifting
stealing

Compare your words with those chosen by others. Discuss the differences in meaning of the various words in a category.

It is obvious that it is difficult to be fair. Let's say a successful businessman is running for office. He also is divorced. If the reporter does not like him, he might say he is a "divorced businessman." If the reporter likes him, he might say he is a "successful businessman." Both statements are factually correct, but the choice of words can influence how people think about him.

Censorship

There are many kinds of censorship in the news. For example, should a story be published if it threatens the security of our country? You would probably answer no. But the problem is, who decides what is a threat to our country?

Exercise 8

If you are a station manager, which of the stories below, if any, do you broadcast. Assume all of the stories to be true.

A. A former government employee has brought to you classified (secret) government documents that indicate the government has lied about getting involved in a foreign war. The government said the enemy was entirely to blame for the war. The documents indicate that our government did things to help provoke the war.

B. You are brought information about a secret invasion of a nearby country that is being planned by revolutionaries from that country. The story indicates that the United States government is actually running the invasion. The story actually contains the date of the planned invasion.

C. A Congressional Committee conducted an investigation of cover-ups by a government agency, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). The report indicates that the CIA did some things that were questionable and then lied about them to our own government. A Congressional Committee uncovered these lies and decided it would not be in the interest of our country to release the report. You, however, have just been given a stolen copy of the report.

Exercise 9

News casting requires good judgement. It requires self-censorship. You do not report everything you hear and see. You have to be careful of people using you to benefit their own interests. What would you do in these situations? Do you report the information?

A. Councilman Noodleman tells you that Councilwoman Nettleman is a liar and a cheat because she promised to vote for his proposal and then changed her mind.

B. Joey Hood, a well-known criminal, tells you that he thinks that Slimey Esparza is the town's biggest drug dealer.

C. Mrs. Woolstrum didn't have her garbage picked up last week. She phones you to complain. She says the garbage company is crooked. It takes money without doing its job.

D. A good friend, who works in the District Attorney's office, tells you that Joe Spilone, a local politician, will be indicted for taking a bribe in two weeks. The friend tells you not to print the story until charges are actually filed.

E. "Crazy" Eddie Hatfield, the town's most famous car salesman, tells you over lunch that a new car dealership in town is selling used cars that are defective. Some of the cars, he says, are so defective that they are dangerous to drive.

Activity One

Comparing the networks

Directions

In this activity you will compare news broadcasts. Ideally you should work with a partner or two to compare news coverage on news programs airing on the same evening.

Each national network, NBC, ABC and CBS, has a national news program for 30 minutes each weekday. Each local TV station also has a local news program that usually lasts 30 to 60 minutes. Also the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) has a one hour news program.

List the news stories presented on each station on a given date. Keep a record of the amount of time spent presenting each story. Also keep a record of the amount of

Questions

1. Did any of the stories have a particular slant or message? If so, what was it? You may need a separate piece of paper to do this.
2. Did the networks cover the same stories? What differences were there?
3. Was there any difference in how the stories were covered? Were the points the news stories made the same?
4. Was there any difference in the amount of time spent on advertising?
5. How many stories dealt with politics or political issues on the national level?
6. How many of the stories dealt with international politics or issues?
7. How many of the stories dealt with human interest, sports, entertainment, natural disasters and the like?
8. Did the news shows have an editorial comment? What was its point? Again, compare the networks.

Activity One

Comparing the networks

ABC	Time	Story	Time	Story	Time	Story
CBS						
NBC						
PBS						

Activity Two

Comparing local news programs

Directions

Do the same type of comparison with the local news as you did with the national networks. Now you might have more stations involved. Some independent stations have local news and sometimes the public broadcasting station has news. All of the stations should be compared.

1. List the stories that are carried. Using a watch, time the stories. Time only the actual reporting of the story and not the chit-chat that might come before or after the story.
2. Categorize the stories and put down their times.

- Local Politics & Economy
- Environment
- Pollution
- Sports/Weather
- Entertainment
- Social/Human Interest
- Advertising

3. What percentage of the time was spent on ads? What percentage of the time was actually spent on news?
4. How many were involved in the news cast? What was their style: did they joke around a lot (happy talk), or were they serious and straightforward? How many times did the newscasters comment about the stories before or after they were presented?
5. How many of the stories were on-the-scene?
6. How many of the stories were interviews with people?
7. In the stories that involved some conflict, did they give only one point of view, or did they give more than one?
8. Did they have any feature stories—if so, what were they about? A feature story is different from a news story in that it is not immediate news. A story about a local artist would be a feature story because it could be done at any time; in contrast would be a bank robbery, which is only of immediate interest.

Activity Three

Comparing TV news with the newspaper

Directions

On a given evening compare your local newspaper and one of the network TV news shows.

- 1. List the stories featured on the TV news.
- 2. List the stories featured in the local paper. Use only the stories in the section covering national and international news.
- 3. Take just one story, a story featured on the front page and featured on the network news. For each story write down the basic facts. Is there any difference in the reporting? Which

Newspaper	Television News

Gatekeeper Game

Student's Guide

Introduction

Most people get their news from the television news shows. There are many newsworthy stories that happen each day. These are usually carried over one of the wire services, which are nationwide companies that spread the news as soon as it is received.

The news editor must decide which stories from the wire services, and which local stories appear on the air.

The news editor helps decide, in effect, what you will know about the world. In this game, you play a member of a news team. You must decide what goes into the news.

Directions

Step One

Everyone in the class becomes a member of a news team. Each team has two anchor persons. These are the main newscasters. There should be at least two local scene reporters. These are the people who cover hometown events. There can also be any of the following: weather person, sportscaster, entertainment reporter, a feature person who covers some special events or subjects such as cooking or ways of saving money.

Step Two

Each team will get a list of news stories from a wire service, some local stories, and a list of feature stories. The news team must select what stories will go on the air.

Since time is limited, each news team can select just 12 stories. The news teams must decide which stories, in what order the stories will be presented, and who will read what stories.

Step Three

The teams will take turns reading their stories.

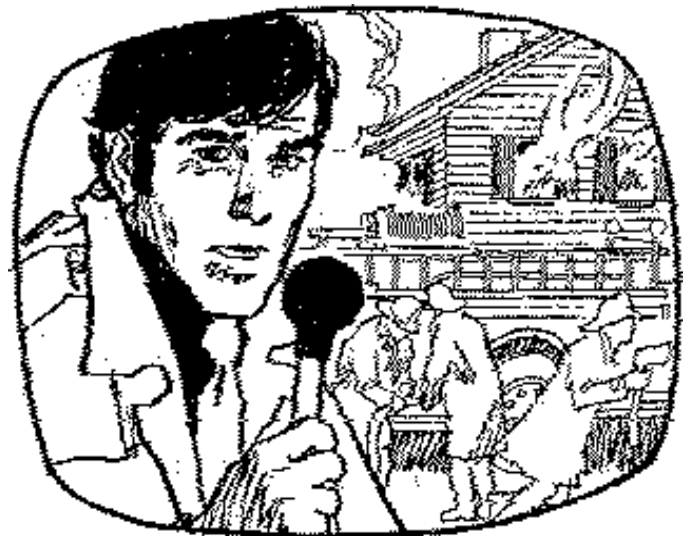
Step Four

Each team will compare its selections with those of the other teams. The class discussion should focus on the following:

1. Differences in their selections of newsworthy items.
2. The problems they had in selecting the news stories.
3. The presentation of each team.

Step 5

Each team will evaluate the other teams' presentations using the evaluation form provided.



Gatekeeper Game Evaluation Sheet

Team Members: _____

Stories: (Write numbers) _____

Presentation

Use this scale. Give 3 points for good, 2 points for average and 1 point for poor.

1. Clarity (____)

Did they read so that they could easily be understood?

2. Smoothness (____)

Did they read without halting or stumbling?

3. Pacing (____)

Were they too fast, too slow or just right?

4. Feeling (____)

Did they vary their voices for emphasis?

Team Members: _____

Stories: (Write numbers) _____

Presentation

Use this scale. Give 3 points for good, 2 points for average and 1 point for poor.

1. Clarity (____)

Did they read so that they could easily be understood?

2. Smoothness (____)

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2. Smoothness (____)

Did they read without halting or stumbling?

3. Pacing (____)

Were they too fast, too slow or just right?

4. Feeling (____)

Did they vary their voices for emphasis?

Gatekeeper Game

Local News

1. John Walters drove his car into a bedroom in a home at 45 W. Flora. The car narrowly missed Valencia Flores who was sleeping at the time. Walters was charged with drunk driving.

2. Alberta Muggins, 87 years old, had her purse snatched by two teenagers yesterday. Mrs. Muggins was hospitalized for slight injuries. The teenagers were not caught.

3. A 21 year old woman was raped at 10:00 p.m. as she walked home from work. The attack took place in the 2100 block of W. Poplar St. It is the second attack in a week.

4. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals reported that over 100 abandoned dogs had been caught during the month. If no one claims the dogs by the end of the month they will be put to sleep. People may claim the dogs by paying a small fee for their board.

5. Cynthia Barbarossa was selected homecoming queen at the local high school. Cynthia, 17, is the daughter of Homer and Juanita Barbarossa of 17 E. Maple.

6. The Bee Zee Club, a local social group for teenage girls, has donated over 100 dolls to the local orphans' home. The girls collected and repaired the dolls during the last year. Bunny Schoepenaur is the president of the club.

7. The members of Iron Molders Local 168 are meeting tonight to take a strike vote. Most of the 500 members of the union are expected to be at the meeting. State Iron Foundry is the second largest employer in the community.

8. Eduardo Pulaski, a local barber, has criticized the city council for not taking action to provide more parking for downtown. Pulaski, the head of the Downtown Merchants Association, claims the town is losing business because people can't find parking on the streets. John Foppiano, the mayor, says the city cannot afford to buy land for more parking.

9. The Department of Labor announced that the unemployment rate for the town increased by two percent last month. It is the third straight month that unemployment has increased.

10. The local Women's Rights Caucus has accused the city of discriminating against women. They say that only 25% of the city's work force is female and no female has an executive position.

11. The Moose Lodge annual picnic is scheduled for Sunday, May 25th, in the town park. Everyone in town is invited to the annual event. There will be games and contests for all age groups. A dance will be held in the evening.

12. John Hopkins, 35, one of the town's five policemen, was shot by an unidentified assailant last night. Hopkins apparently stopped a car on Highway 12. He was shot five times in the face. His body was discovered by Jake Jones, a local farmer.

National News

1. The president is flying to Egypt and Israel in an attempt to settle differences between the two countries. The prime minister of Israel and president of Egypt both said that the United States may help bring peace to the area.

2. The army of the Central African Republic has invaded and occupied a portion of the country of Niger. Both countries are located in the Sudan region of Central Africa. The Central African government claimed that it is simply taking over land that rightfully belongs to it. International experts say that the area is rumored to have oil. There has been no comment from the government of Niger.

3. The communist government of Vietnam has asked for full and friendly relations with the United States government. Ngu Diem, a spokesman for the Vietnamese government, said that they are particularly interested in trade with the United States.

4. The Electrical Workers Union president, Allen Schneider, has called for a boycott of Japanese made TV's. He said that the American TV industry is losing jobs because of the importation of Japanese TV sets.

5. Sextuplets were born to Maria and Juan Velasquez of Buenos Aires, Argentina, today. Five of the babies were males and a sixth, female. They weighed an average of 3 pounds. So far all have survived.

6. The U.S. government announced today that \$15 billion would be provided to build a rapid transit system in Los Angeles, California, and Houston, Texas. It was estimated that it would take ten years to build the light rail systems.

7. All of the major rock groups will meet again for a one time concert to benefit the starving children in Africa. It is expected that \$200 million will be raised by the concert. It will be broadcast on TV world-wide.

8. The Pentagon announced the development of a new nuclear warhead that will not destroy any property. It does, however, kill all living things within a three mile radius.

9. The Club of Rome announced that, because of the increasing use of oil, the world will run out of known supplies by the year 1998. Previous estimates had predicted the world had enough supplies to last until the year 2100. The Club of Rome is a group of international scientists who predict the world's future.

10. Senate leaders attacked the President for harboring incompetents. They said the President had failed in his promise to reduce government waste and inefficiency.

11. Peter Frampton, rock music star, was arrested in Palm Springs last night on a drug charge. He was released on bail.

Features

1. Today's recipe from the TV Gourmet is a delightful dish made from cottage cheese. It's called Milanese Mushrooms. It includes 1 pound of mushrooms in melted butter--one cube should do. You need 1-10 oz. package of frozen chopped spinach, cooked and drained. Mix this with 1 cup of cottage cheese. For spices, use 1 clove of minced garlic and 1 teaspoon pepper and 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese. Mix the cottage cheese, spinach and spices together, and stuff into mushroom caps. Bake at 400 degrees for 10 minutes.

2. Today we have an interview with Harry Lobart who raises rabbits for a living.

Reporter: How many rabbits do you have, Harry?

Harry: About 5,000.

Reporter: What do you do with them?

Harry: We sell them for food and for their fur coats. Rabbit coats are very popular in France.

Reporter: Thank you, Harry Lobart.

3. Today we have an interview with the first woman plumber in our town, 22 year-old Melba McAfee.

Reporter: How do you like plumbing, Melba?

Melba: A whole lot. I'm very mechanical.

Reporter: How did you get into plumbing?

Melba: I learned the plumbing business from my Uncle Joe. He's a plumber.

Reporter: How do the other plumbers like having a lady around?

Melba: Well, they don't seem to mind.

Reporter: Thank you, Melba, for this very informative interview.

Weather

1. Tomorrow a rain storm is expected. Today's temperatures were a high of 76 degrees and a low of 57.

2. A tropical storm is expected to strike the East Coast bringing heavy amounts of rain. Flooding is a possibility in some low-lying areas.

3. While some parts of the United States are suffering from a drought, the same thing is happening in West Africa with disastrous results. It is estimated that 700,000 have died from starvation in that area. It is all due to a shifting pattern in the world's weather.

Sports

1. Major league baseball players voted today to go on strike. Matt Finley, Director of the Player's Association, said that the chief issues are a minimum salary and increased retirement benefits.

2. Gina Poquita, who weighs 83 pounds and is 13 years old, won a major tennis tournament. She is the smallest and youngest player ever to win a major tournament.

3. Jack Lockridge, a virtual unknown of the professional golf tour, won the Master's Tournament by hitting a record-setting three consecutive hole-in-ones.

4. The NCAA announced that the college that wins the next NCAA basketball tournament will take home \$4 million.

5. The local high school has hired Jack "Killer" Killebrew as its head football coach. Killebrew was a former NFL linebacker whose reputation for disabling quarterbacks led to his being banned by the NFL.

6. ESPN, the sports cable network, announced today that it was buying the National Football League in order to gain exclusive TV rights to NFL games. The purchase price is rumored to be 10 billion dollars.

The Big Story

Teacher's Guide

This is a simulation about reporting the news. The objectives are (1) to give the students a concrete experience in selecting news sources and evaluating them, and (2) to provide a situation whereby comparing stories the students will see how bias, ineptitude, distractions and rushing against deadlines can influence news stories.

Two stories are provided the teams of reporters. The first has to do with a terrorist holding hostages in a local bank. The second has to do with a strike in a local factory.

Each team must report on both stories. It is recommended that students work in groups of three. Each team should be prepared to have its stories copied. The students must work within certain guidelines.

1. They must be good reporters and cover the 5 W's and the 1 H.

Who was involved?
When did it happen?
Why did it happen?
Where did it happen?
What happened?
How did it happen?

2. Because of space limitations, the stories are limited to 150 words.
3. Because of deadlines, the student reporters must have time limits. The time frame is provided below.
4. The stories should be prepared so that copies can be made for the entire class. There is an evaluation check sheet that students should use in rating the stories. Since this is a noncompetitive simulation, stories will be rated on criteria for good reporting.

Teams will be composed of:

1. A reporter who will take the notes and write the rough draft of the story. The others can help by pretending they are the ones being interviewed.
2. The second person is the rewrite person, who keeps the story within 150 words, corrects spelling and grammar.
3. The third person is the proofreader/editor, who corrects errors and makes sure the story makes sense.

Sequence of Events

First Day

1. The student booklet is handed out to the students. They are told to choose one of the two stories. They are given 30 minutes to do the investigative part of the story. They must read through the interviews and take notes.

2. The game is introduced to the students. They should be told they will be news reporting teams that must report on a big story. The teams should be selected and their functions explained. The scoring system should be explained and a copy of the score sheet should be distributed. This will have to be duplicated.

3. The 5 W's and 1 H will have to be explained.

Second Day

4. Students will spend this period writing the stories. The reporter, ideally, will have written the story the night before and the rewrite person and the editor can work on it during this period.

5. It is absolutely necessary to finish the story by the end of the period because the paper has to go to press.

6. The teacher will collect the stories and have them copied for distribution the following day for evaluation.

Third Day

7. The evaluation/score sheet will be distributed along with the stories. It would be a good idea for each team to read its story. Give out the original sources so that stories can be compared to the sources.

8. Tabulate the scores that each team received from the other teams.

9. Debrief the students. The following questions might be useful in comparing stories.

- A. Did you see any differences in the stories?
- B. What caused the differences?
- C. Did you think your personal feelings entered into it?
- D. Did the time factor influence your story? In what way?
- E. Did your failure to take good notes influence the story?

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Evaluation/Scoring Sheet

Dear Student:

This is not a game with winners and losers. This is a game about how good a job you do. In this case, it's reporting the news. Below is a product evaluation. It tells you a little bit about how to evaluate. You will evaluate each others' work.

1. Deadlines

First of all you must get the job done on time. Reporters have deadlines to meet. Just getting the story done on time gives you 50 points.

2. Basic Facts

Every good reporter is supposed to cover the following. (5 points each)

What happened?-very important.

Who did it?-could be especially important if the people are famous.

When did it happen?-news is instant.

Where did it happen?

Why did it happen?-very important.

How did it happen?

3. Style

This is very important. You want people to read your story. You have to make it interesting. (5 points).

4. Bias

You are going to have your own biases and feelings about the story. This may affect your writing. You can't help that, but are you fair? Do you try to really understand everyone's point of view? (5 points)

5. Clarity

Is your story easy to understand? (5 points)

6. Technique

Are the words spelled correctly? (5 points)

Maximum score is 100 points.

The Big Story

Story One

The Bank Hostage Story

Write a 150 word news story using the information on these two pages.

Note Sent By Alberto Dutra To The President Of The Bank

I demand that \$1 million be delivered to the poor people of this town. This bank has ripped them off long enough.

It is time to pay your debts to society. Failure to deliver the million dollars to the Poor People's Relief Fund will mean that I will kill the hostages.

You have 24 hours to act.

Interview With The Bank Teller's Mother

Reporter: Have you had any opportunity to speak to your daughter?

Mother: No.

Reporter: How did you find out that she was a hostage?

Mother: When she didn't come home, I phoned the bank. That awful man in there answered the phone. That's when I found out.

Reporter: How do you feel?

Mother: Terrible. I don't know what to do.

Reporter: Do you think the bank should give the million dollars to the poor?

Mother: I don't know. I just want my daughter to be safe. I don't know what they should do.

Interview With A Hostage

Reporter: Do you think he'll kill you?

Hostage: Yes. He probably would. He's scary.

Reporter: How has he treated you?

Hostage: Fine, but I'm afraid.

Reporter: What makes you think that he'll kill you?

Hostage: He seems very committed to helping poor people. I think he'll do anything to help the poor people.

Reporter: Do you think the bank should pay the \$1 million?

Hostage: Yes. Dutra is right. The bank should do more to help the poor.

Reporter: Do you agree with Dutra?

Hostage: He does have some good points to make, and this is the only way he can make them.

Interview With Dutra's Mother

Reporter: How old is your son?

Mother: 27. I don't know what has got into him. He's really a nice boy.

Reporter: He's threatening to kill the people in the bank.

Mother: That's not like him. I don't think he could ever do anything like that.

Reporter: What does he do for a living?

Mother: Nothing. He's been in mental hospitals most of the time since he graduated from high school.

Interview With Bank President

Reporter: Have you decided what to do yet?

Bank President: No comment.

Reporter: Do you think that the gunman will carry out his threat to kill the hostages if you don't pay?

Bank President: I'm not prepared to comment on that.

Reporter: Is it true that the bank has collected the \$1 million that the hostage has asked for?

Bank President: I'm not prepared to say anything about this at this time. We'll issue a statement at a time we think is appropriate.

Interview With Dutra

Reporter: Could you tell us why you are holding people hostage?

Dutra: I don't wish to harm anyone. I'm only trying to help the poor starving people that this bank has ripped off.

Reporter: What do you expect to accomplish by this?

Dutra: The poor people are going to get something.

Reporter: Would you really kill the hostages?

Dutra: Yes.

Reporter: But you say you want to help people.

Dutra: What is a life or two? My life or theirs. What difference does it make? How many people have died because of the exploitation of the bank? Tell me that.

Interview With Police Captain

Reporter: What is the situation in the bank?

Policeman: As far as we know there is a man in there holding three hostages.

Reporter: Do you know his name?

Policeman: Yes, his name is Alberto Dutra.

Reporter: Do you know why he's in there?

Policeman: No, I don't.

Reporter: Do you know who the hostages are?

Policeman: I understand two of them are bank tellers and one of them is the manager.

Reporter: Do you know their names?

Policeman: Off hand, I don't.

Reporter: When did this happen?

Policeman: We got a phone call about 3:30 that he, Dutra, had taken the hostages and locked himself in the bank.

Reporter: What do you plan to do?

Policeman: We're taking him at his word. Right now we are trying to figure out a way to talk him out. If that doesn't work, we can try to take him by force.

Reporter: Do you think the bank will pay the million dollars?

Policeman: That's up to the bank. Personally, I don't think we should give in to a terrorist's demands.

Story Two

The Coal Mine Story

Press Release From The Coal Operators' Association

Today, the Coal Miners' Union walked out of negotiations for next year's contract. The coal operators wanted to prevent a strike, realizing how the public depends on coal for heat and light.

The Coal Operators Association offered a significant salary increase and fringe benefits which the miners rejected.

The Coal Operators believe that a strike at this time would be harmful to the country.

Press Release From The Coal Miners' Union

Officials of the CMU rejected the latest offer of the Coal Operators Association as unsatisfactory. The Coal Operators described it as their final offer.

The current contract expires at midnight tonight. The CMU is asking for a 10% salary increase.

The Association is offering 3%. CMU President, Artie Jones, described the offer as ridiculous and way below the increase in the cost-of-living.

Interview With Coal Miner

Reporter: Do you want to go on strike?

Coal Miner: No, sir. You don't get paid when you're striking.

Reporter: Are you going to cross the picket lines?

Coal Miner: No way. I don't want to strike, but I will.

Reporter: Why are you willing to strike? The operators are offering 3%.

Coal Miner: Simple. Safety. They don't want us to have the right to refuse to enter an unsafe mine.

Reporter: They wouldn't want you to enter an unsafe mine, would they?

Coal Miner: They sure would, and I ain't going to.

Interview With Coal Mine Inspector

Reporter: Artie Jones says the key issue in the strike is safety. Are the mines really unsafe?

Inspector: No. We inspect them on a regular basis. If there are safety violations, we report them. Safety is not a big problem.

Reporter: You don't think the workers have a legitimate complaint?

Inspector: I don't know about that. I'd rather not comment on that.

Reporter: But you say the mines are safe?

Inspector: I'm not scared to go in them.

Health Department Report: The U.S. Mine Safety Commission

In conclusion, we have determined that black lung is a serious and widespread condition among miners. Improved safety conditions in mines have not reduced the incidence of pneumonoxilicosis.

It is found that 47% of the miners under the age of 30 who have been mining for less than 10 years have incipient cases.

Among miners who have been mining for more than 20 years there is a 15% rate of serious cases. 75% of the miners show symptoms.

It is apparent that a much greater effort must be made to cleanse the air in the mines.

Interview With Artie Jones, CMU President

Reporter: Mr. Jones, are the miners going out on strike?

Jones: We follow the principle of no contract, no work, and the contract expires at midnight.

Reporter: Would a strike hurt the country right now?

Jones: I don't know. I can't worry about that. The miners elected me to worry about whether or not they're going to have enough food on their tables. I'll let the President of the United States worry about the country.

Reporter: Senator Hoffa called the strike irresponsible.

Jones: The Senator doesn't even know what responsibility is. If he did, he would do something about protecting the health of the miners.

Reporter: What is the key issue in the strike?

Jones: I would say safety is the key issue.

Interview With Mine Doctor

Reporter: How serious is the problem of accidents and black lung among the miners?

Doctor: Well, I won't try to fool you. Mining is a dangerous occupation. That is why miners are well paid. But being a policeman or fireman is more dangerous.

Reporter: How serious is the problem of black lung?

Doctor: Not as serious as some would make you think. A few have serious problems. I think those problems are serious because they smoke or

drink too much. Most miners don't have a serious problem with it.

Reporter: But the miners say that it is a big problem.

Doctor: I think they exaggerate. I don't see black lung as being any more serious than, let's say a falling rock. You have to remember that some of these people are trying to collect workmen's disability so they're trying to make it look worse than it really is.

Interview With the President of the Coal Mine Operators' Association

President: We called this press conference to inform the public that we have done our best to avert a strike. The responsibility for this strike falls directly on the leadership of the union.

Reporter: The union leadership says that they are doing what the members have asked for.

President: I have it on good authority that many of the workers think our offer is a good one.

Reporter: Many of the miners seemed to be concerned about safety in the mines.

President: Let's just say the mines are as safe as we can make them. I can't promise that there won't be accidents.

Reporter: What about the black lung disease?

President: We are willing to give the miners masks to wear. Hey, we're not bad guys. We're doing everything we can to protect the miners.