

39. A 'Good News' Newspaper - Part 1

Preparing to set up a news bulletin board and starting to look critically at existing newspapers

INTRODUCTION

The week before the session explain that the group is going to set up a project to create a **newspaper** (over several weeks) as well as a **news bulletin board**.

Ask these introductory *Questions*:

- What is 'news'?
- What is 'fake news'? [Explain that some people write untrue stories deliberately – either to make themselves or their interests look good, or to make someone else look bad.]
- Does your family take a newspaper regularly (daily/weekly)?
- Does a family member regularly read the news online?
- Does your family watch TV news/listen to news on the radio?
- Do you watch *CBBC Newsround* (before or after school or online)?
- Do you take a children's newspaper or news magazine?

N.B. Does the school library subscribe to any of:

- *The Week* www.theweekjunior.co.uk/
- *National Geographic* www.ngkids.co.uk/subscribe
- *First News* www.firstnews.co.uk or
- *Aquila* www.aquila.co.uk ?

If it does, ask the children have they looked at it/them to learn about what is currently happening in the world?

ADVANCE ACTIVITY (for children)

Ask those whose family takes a newspaper for permission to cut out and bring to school a clipping of an article for the news bulletin board (corkboard + bulletin pins). Explain that this will be updated weekly. Ask for a couple of volunteers to be *Media Monitors* whose task it will be to check that news clippings are kept up to date (or they cease to be 'news!').

(for leader)

Purchase and bring to the first full session a copy of as many different (types of) newspapers *from the same day* as are needed to give one to each of the small groups (e.g. *Guardian, Times, Telegraph, Mail, Express, Sun*, free paper such as *Metro* or local / weekend paper). and look out a short suitable article to illustrate what is meant by 'sensational' writing.

ACTIVITY

Ask those who brought in clippings to read out what they've brought to the rest of the group. Ask the children to vote on which item they found the most interesting / funny - or whatever seems appropriate from what has come in.

Distribute the newspapers, one to each group, and ask a scribe to note down answers to the following *Questions*:

- What is the 'lead' (main, opening) article about?
- What other topics are covered on the first page?
- List six other topics covered in the rest of the paper.
- Count how many pages your paper has in total. Totting up the adverts *very roughly* how many full pages do you estimate are taken up with advertising in your paper?
- Does your paper have an *Editorial* (or even more than one)? What is it about? [Explain that an *Editorial* is usually an article by the editor of the paper giving a personal view on topical matters.]
- Is there a *Letters* page?
- What other features can you spot? (e.g. Is there a Puzzles page / a cartoon / Radio and TV listings etc?)

Ask each group to report back on their findings by reading out a couple of paragraphs from their lead article. Listening to what each of the groups has reported: has anyone got an overall comment/observation to make?

Try to tease out the following:

- Different papers give different slants on the same story.
- Some papers have much more politics/celebrity gossip than others.
- Some papers use longer words/larger print/font sizes/have more pictures than others.
- Some articles are written *sensationally*; some may even be *untrue*.

Explain what *sensational* writing would look like, using your pre-selected item. Ask the children for their views on such questions as:

- Did it seem from your quick look that your paper had more bad than good news or did you feel that there was a fair balance between good news and bad?
- How do newspapers and the wider media get their news?
- What do we call someone who writes for the media?
- How do you think adults decide which newspaper to read?
- From what you have come across so far, which adult newspaper do you think that YOU would choose:

- a) to get the most *balanced* and *accurate* account of something that happened?
- b) to get a *brief, but reliable overview* of something that happened?
- c) for *amusement/entertainment*?
- d) to find out more about what is going on in the *wider world* and the views of a *wide variety of people*?
- e) to make you *think*?

Useful vocabulary for the groups to investigate and note:

Broadsheet, balance, investigative journalist, media, politics, tabloid, bias/slant, newspaper owner/proprietor, a news hack, current affairs, journalist, feature writer, broadcast statistics, editor, editorial, sensational, scoop, newsprint, newshound.

PREPARATION FOR PART TWO

Ask the children to prepare for the next session by finding out about **Fleet Street** and **Wapping**. Other possible cross-curricular research could include: the date of the first British newspaper; the history of paper making; repeal of tax on newspapers (why?); the discovery that in the past a rich person's servant would iron the newspaper before giving it to his master to read at the breakfast table!

Ask them to think about such questions as:

- What questions should you ask yourself when you are watching or reading the news?
- Where there are statistics mentioned – where are they taken from? How reliable are they?
- Are there countries that you never hear about in the news? Why do you think that this might be?
- Are there stories in the news that we never get to hear the end of?
- *Who chooses* from what of the many things happening in the world around us what to give the public as 'news' and *what slant* to give to the story?
- How important do you think it is to keep abreast of the news? Why?
- Is it a good excuse to say (as many grown-ups do) 'It's all so depressing. I don't bother reading about or listening to it.'?