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**Current Events for
the Current Times**

CURRENT EVENTS FOR THE CURRENT TIMES

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To encourage the reading of current journalism, along with giving the students the tools to critically think about those sources using the skills inherent in reading nonfiction, including distinguishing between fact and opinion, between topic and main idea, as well as reading for tone and forming questions

To encourage students to think about events in happening in their local, state, national and international community as well as give them topics to consider for further research

To give students the opportunity to practice their speech and presentation skills

To have students practice their listening and notetaking skills

To build community, whether in person or virtually, by allowing students to demonstrate expertise in a topic of interest.

FLORIDA STANDARDS

One of the appealing aspects of this lesson is that it deeply covers many standards at once. While I do this in my ELA classroom, it would definitely work just as well in a Social Studies classroom. Science teachers might like it too, but they might want to tailor the articles chosen to STEM topics.

- **ELA Standards:**

- **Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text**
- **Cluster 1: Key Ideas & Details** LAFS.910. RI1.1-1.3 Cite textual evidence, determine central idea, and/or analyze series of author ideas
- **Cluster 2: Craft & Structure** LAFS.910. RI2.4-2.6 Determine meaning of words & phrases, author ideas/claims, & use of purpose/rhetoric
- **Cluster 3: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas** LAFS.910.RI3.7-3.9 Analyze various accounts of a subject/US document & evaluate the argument/claim
- **Cluster 4: Range of Reading & Text Complexity** LAFS.910.RL4.10 Read and comprehend complex literary nonfiction
- **Strand: Writing Standards**
- **Cluster 3: Research to Build & Present Knowledge** W3.7-3.9 Conduct sustained research projects & strategies using advanced searches/sources
- **Strand: Standards for Speaking and Listening**
- **Cluster 2: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas** LAFS.910. SL2.4-2.6 Present clearly, concisely, & logically, use digital media, & deliver formal speech
- **Strand: Language Standards**
- **Cluster 2: Knowledge of Language** LAFS.910.L2.3 Apply & understand knowledge of language, different contexts, and style choices
- **Cluster 3: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use** LAFS.910. L 3.4-3.6 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words, use of context clues

- **Social Studies Standards:**

- SS.912.A.1.2
- Use research and inquiry skills to analyze American history using primary and secondary sources.
- Standard 1 **SS.912.G.1** : Understand how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technology to report information. read more
- Standard 2 **SS.912.G.2** : Understand physical and cultural characteristics of places. read more
- Standard 4 **SS.912.C.4** : Demonstrate an understanding of contemporary issues in world affairs, and evaluate the role and impact of United States foreign policy.
- Standard 1 **SS.912.W.1** : Utilize historical inquiry skills and analytical processes. read more

SET UP

Setting up Current Events is something that only needs to be done once per quarter. There are two methods you can use to set them up. You could either assign students to a date (this is what I typically do, using their gradebook numbers) or allow them to sign up. Either way, you would want students to have their dates well in advance.

Because we are on block, I typically have 2 students present a day. If we were in a 5 day model, I would have one go per day. (I have one larger MSO class and we are doing a few days of 3 people in order to fit everyone in before the end of the quarter.) All you need to do is balance the number of kids in each period with the number of days you have available.

When my classes are balanced, I will just post gradebook numbers on our virtual calendar and on my whiteboard. (Students usually know their gradebook numbers when we are in class.) This year, due to distance learning, I shared a document with everyone's name (first name only) and their date.

NOTE: Most of what I'm advocating discusses using Current Events once per quarter, so four times a year per student, but this is also an activity that could be done just once, perhaps during a quarter where you were also focusing on nonfiction. I choose to do it all four quarters because I like routine and I like watching the students' skills develop over the course of the year.

Once you have the schedule set up, the only thing you need to do is make Current Events part of your daily routine. My class runs on routine – we open each class with a grammar activity and then move on to Current Events before we start our lesson.

IMPLEMENTATION

Before our first Current Event presentation in the beginning of the school, I walk the kids through the Nonfiction Survey, which is a series of questions I created after looking at state tests and their Informational Text questions. I choose an article that is related to something else we will be reading or that is connected to their summer reading and we go through the nonfiction survey together, question by question. There are a lot of skills covered in the nonfiction survey and this does take some time. The more time you spend on it, the better the results will be later on. (Middle School teachers may choose to eradicate some questions or scaffold some questions in later in the year.)

Also, **before** our first Current Event we also talk about good presentation skills. How to stand in front of a room, how to enunciate, how to inflect. (All of these remain true in a virtual environment except, of course, the standing.)

Students are given their schedule and the handout on the last pages of this packet. Note that I do have some parameters on what types of articles they can choose and the caveat that their article needs to be written within a week of their presentation date, aiming to keep the "current" in Current Event.

DAILY IMPLEMENTATION – IN PERSON

On the day a student is assigned to present their Current Event, they will turn in their nonfiction survey, along with a link to the article. You can choose to do this online or on paper. I have typically given the students the choice. I let the day's assigned students volunteer to go first or second and then they go to the front of the room and begin.

The presenter's goal is to clearly convey what the article is about. Students are encouraged to bring bullet point lists to work with (but not required.)

The students still seated will work on their 3-2-1s. As the presenter presents, the listeners are paying attention and taking organized notes. They need to listen for 3 facts, 2 possible opinions, and 1 question not answered by the presenter, something that would be answered by time or further research.

The first few times we have presentations, I will assist them in listening for facts. We will review the presentation together and students will volunteer facts they heard.

Then we will brainstorm opinions. I point out that neither opinion has to be their own opinion and I encourage them to write opposite opinions when there is a controversial topic. My goal with this is teach them how to evaluate both sides of an argument – to think about what the other side would think. Their opinions must have nuance to them – they cannot be simplistic “this is good, this is bad.” This is where I will often interject if need be – I will say, “There are many opinions one could have about this topic. Some would say...” I work very hard not to inject my own opinions. Some articles are hard to find two sides to – there is no controversy – so we talk about different ways one could look at the topic.

For the last section, students need to form a question for further research. I don't tell them this at the time, but I almost always have students do a research paper near the end of the year so my goal with this section is to teach them how to create Guiding Questions for when they create their research topics. (When we get to that unit, I advise them to look back at their questions from their 3-2-1s).

After the last person in the class has gone for the quarter, I collect the 3-2-1s for a grade.

DAILY IMPLEMENTATION – VIRTUAL

There are two options for implementing this unit virtually: synchronously or asynchronously. Both have merits.

Synchronously

If you choose to this synchronously, almost all of the same rules from above will still work. Students do not need to stand to present. I have given the students the option of sharing their screen when they present and some of them have chosen this and created slideshows with pictures of their topic and a bulleted list of facts for their classmates. The advantage to this is they are working on another skill (creating presentations) but the disadvantage is that sometimes they will simply read off their slides and that needs to be addressed.

Because 20-21 began virtually, I am glad we chose this option for this year – it has helped build community because it is a way for students to let others (including me) get to know them individually. Students tend to choose topics that are meaningful to them in some way and it is a good way to foster interaction. When students don't choose to share a screen, I will select the "spotlight video" option so that they are featured on the Zoom screen.

Asynchronously

There are a lot of merits to using this method as well. First you would choose a hosting place where students can post a video of themselves presenting their article. Flipgrid is very easy and integrates well with Teams and Google Classroom. You would want to set up the Flipgrid so that students could watch each other's videos. You should also set up one Flipgrid per period. You will still need to create a schedule, but you could instead create a weekly schedule instead of daily. You will also need to create some rules for their videos including making sure they show their face when they present. You may want to set time limits on their videos.

In this scenario, students would be responsible for doing their 3-2-1s on their own time. Without reminders from you it is possible that a student would wait until the end of the quarter and watch all the videos at once. (You could put some intermediary deadlines to avoid this if you wanted.)

Students enjoy this method because they can watch videos multiple times to get their notes.

ASSESSMENT

I give four grades for this per quarter:

1. Presentation
2. Nonfiction Survey
3. 3-2-1 Quantity
4. 3-2-1 Quality

I give the presentation grade when the student presents. I review what I'm looking for: good pronunciation, clear expression, inflection, eye contact with the audience, not moving in any kind of distracting way. I will do half grades (A-, B+, etc).

I also grade the nonfiction survey as they're turning them in. I use the rubric below.

I grade the 3-2-1s at the end of the quarter. I ask that the students number them before turning them in and I give one grade based on quantity. They are not required to do a 3-2-1 for their own presentation, so I factor that into the total count I am expecting. If they were absent I have them write the date and if it was excused, I do not count that against them.

Then I randomly select 3 3-2-1s to grade for quality. I use the same numbers for every member of the class for equity. I can grade them pretty quickly with this method.

NONFICTION SURVEY RUBRIC

Question	Breakdown	Total Points
(1) Article	Title in Quotes (5),	10
	Source Underlined/Italicized (5)	
(2) Author	Name (3)	11
	Qualifications (8)	
(3) Citation	Properly done (10)	10
(4) Summary		6
(5) Topic		3
(6) Main Idea		7
(7) Tone	Identification (5)	13
	Support (8)	
(8) Text Feature	Identification (5)	10
	Knowledge (5)	
(9) Learned Knowledge		10
(10) New Word	Identification (2)	7
	Context Clues (5)	
(11) Well-Written Sentence		5
(12) Key Words (5)		5
Legibility/Grammar		3

CURRENT EVENT ASSIGNMENT

Once per quarter, you are to find an article from a newspaper (paper or online) or a magazine that was published **within a week of your pre-assigned presentation date**. The article may be on any of the following topics: **international news, national news, political news, economic news, science and technology news or an editorial**. If you choose an article on sports or entertainment, the article must focus on business or artistry – **it cannot be a game recap, movie review, or gossip-centered article**. You will lose points if you do the same article as someone who has presented previously to you. (You may do an update of a previous issue, if significant changes have taken place.) Articles must be at least five paragraphs long and allow you to answer all of the below questions. Should you do your assignment on an article not meeting above requirements, **the highest grade you can receive for the assignment will be a D**. **Print out or place a copy of your article in the appropriate Google Classroom Folder (for your period.)**

Read the article, do any accompanying research, then copy and complete the following statements on your own paper. You will turn in the survey and article and give a two-minute talk about the event to the class.

Nonfiction Article Survey

1. The title of the article is ___ (put quotation marks around article titles). I found it in/on ___ (underline the title of the newspaper or magazine you found the article in or name the website).
2. The author of my article is _____. I know s/he is qualified to write about this topic because _____.
3. The citation of this article is: ___ (use MLA style)

Rules:

Provide the author name, article name in quotation marks, title of the Web magazine in italics, publisher name, publication date, medium of publication, and the date of access. Remember to use *n.p.* if no publisher name is available and *n.d.* if no publishing date is given.

Example:

Bernstein, Mark. "10 Tips on Writing the Living Web." *A List Apart: For People Who Make Websites*. A List Apart Mag., 16 Aug. 2002. Web. 4 May 2009.

4. I would summarize the article in one sentence this way: _____. (You may use the one sentence summary - The article begins with ___, continues with ___, and ends with _____.)
 5. The topic of this article is _____.
 6. The main idea of this article is _____.
 7. The author's attitude towards this topic is ___. I know this because _____.
 8. One of the text features I noticed in the article is _____. From this text feature, I knew that _____.
 9. From this article, I learned _____.
 10. A word that I did not understand at first in the article is ___. The sentence I found it in is ___. I can guess the word means ___ because _____.*
 11. The most well-written sentence in the article is _____. I think it is well-written because _____.*
 12. If I wanted to find more information about this topic, I would go to a search engine use the following keywords: _____.
- * Sentences 10 and 11 need to be different.

When other students present their events, you are to complete a 3/2/1 in your notebook.

- 3 facts you learned about the event
- 2 possible opinions (can be yours and the opposing side)
- 1 question you have about the event

You will set each entry up this way:

Date:	Topic:	Presenter:
	3 Facts	
1.		
2.		
3.		
	2 Opinions	
1.		
2.		
	1 Question	
1.		

Your survey and presentation will each receive one grade.

The 3/2/1s will be collected near the end of the quarter for a separate grade.