

THE STORYBOOK GAZETTE

Press Corps

CIVICS

JOURNALISM

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

MEDIA LITERACY

DIGITAL MEDIA

AT A GLANCE

GRADES 9-12 (adaptable for younger students)

TIME Four sessions, each 30 minutes long. Best taught alongside any lesson that produces events to cover (Committee Hearing, Floor Debate, Elections, Court of Appeals). The Supporting Documents include a stand-alone "event feed" if no other lesson is running.

HANDOUTS 1. Press Corps Roles and Shot List; 2. News Story Frame; 3. Interview Sheet; 4. Fact Check Card; 5. Storybook County Event Feed

THE STORY PROBLEM

Storybook County has a Legislature, a Governor, a court and an election, and not one honest newspaper. The Storybook Gazette launches today.

► THE PROCESS PRACTICED

The Press Corps. At a YMCA Youth and Government conference, Press delegates led by an Editor in Chief and Press Supporting Officers cover every branch: they report on committee and chamber action, photograph candidates and signings from a shot list, produce a nightly broadcast and an end-of-conference slideshow, run social media, and ask the questions at the General Election press conference. The historic NY Press Corps also published a conference newspaper, The Dialectic. Students learn to report fairly and fast on a government they can see.

► LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be able to write a short news story in inverted pyramid form (lead with who, what, when, where, why; most important facts first) that is accurate and attributed.
- Students will be able to conduct a two-minute interview with prepared and follow-up questions and quote the source accurately.
- Students will be able to distinguish news from opinion and produce one of each.
- Students will be able to plan coverage with a shot list and deliver a two-minute "nightly broadcast."
- Students will be able to fact-check a claim made in debate and label it accurately.

► MATERIALS:

- Handout: "Press Corps Roles and Shot List" (Supporting Document 1)
- Handout: "News Story Frame" (Supporting Document 2)
- Handout: "Interview Sheet" (Supporting Document 3)
- Handout: "Fact Check Card" (Supporting Document 4)
- Handout: "Storybook County Event Feed" (Supporting Document 5) for use when no other lesson is running
- Phones, tablets or cameras if photos are allowed; paper if not
- A simple layout tool (slides, a shared document, or paper and tape for a wall newspaper)

► PRE-PLANNING:

- **Assign Roles:**
 - **Editor in Chief** (1 student): assigns stories, approves copy, decides the front page, anchors the broadcast.
 - **Press Supporting Officers** (2 students): Managing Editor (deadlines, fact checks) and Photo and Layout Editor (shot list, slideshow).
 - **Reporters** (most students): assigned to a beat: Legislature, Governor's Office, Court, Elections, Features (profiles of characters).
 - **Broadcast Team** (2-3 students): script and deliver the two-minute nightly broadcast.
- If another lesson is running, reporters cover it live. If not, the Editor in Chief releases items from the Event Feed every ten minutes.

SESSION 1 WHAT THE PRESS IS FOR

30 MINUTES

- 5** **Hook.** Read two headlines about the same event. "Assembly Passes Wall Safety Act 24-3" and "Egg Tax Rammed Through by Anti-Egg Majority." Ask which is news and which is opinion, and how you can tell.
- 10** **The Three Rules.** Accuracy (if you cannot confirm it, you cannot print it), attribution (who said it), fairness (both sides get asked). Then the inverted pyramid: the first sentence carries the five W's; details follow in order of importance; the story can be cut from the bottom.
- 10** **Beats and Shot List.** The Editor in Chief assigns beats. The Photo Editor walks through the shot list: candidates, sponsors at the podium, the Governor signing, the Chair with gavel, the Justices in session, delegates in debate, a feature portrait.
- 5** **First Assignment.** Each reporter writes a lead sentence for an item from the Event Feed (or the lesson under way) in under three minutes. Read several aloud; check for all five W's.

SESSION 2 REPORTING AND INTERVIEWING

30 MINUTES

- 5** **Interview Technique.** Prepare three questions; ask one follow-up; write down the exact words of the one quote you will use; read it back to the source. Never clean up a quote into something the person did not say.
- 15** **Field Work.** Reporters interview two sources each (sponsors, legislators, the Governor, candidates, witnesses from the stories: Humpty Dumpty's household on the wall bill, the Wolf on the building code). If no other lesson is running, students in character answer from the Event Feed.

10

Draft. Reporters write a 120 to 180 word story using the frame. The Managing Editor begins fact-checking claims.

SESSION 3 FACT CHECKS, OPINION AND BROADCAST

30 MINUTES

10

Fact Check. Each reporter takes one claim made in debate or an interview ("The straw house was the first to fall") and checks it against the source story, labeling it Confirmed, False, or Needs Context, with the evidence, on a Fact Check Card.

10

Editorial vs. News. Half the room writes a 100-word editorial (the Gazette's opinion, clearly labeled) on one bill; the other half writes a letter to the editor in the voice of a character. Both must be labeled Opinion.

10

Broadcast Prep. The Broadcast Team drafts a two-minute nightly broadcast script: the top three stories in one sentence each, one quote, one "tomorrow at the Capitol" preview. The Editor in Chief approves copy.

SESSION 4 DEADLINE AND PUBLICATION

30 MINUTES

15

Layout. The Photo and Layout Editor assembles the front page (top story, second story, photo or sketch, fact check box, labeled opinion column) in the chosen tool. Reporters file final copy; the Managing Editor applies the three rules to each piece.

5

Broadcast. The Broadcast Team delivers the nightly broadcast to the class, standing, with the Editor in Chief anchoring.

5

Social Post. Each reporter writes one social post of thirty words or fewer on their beat with a suggested image, labeled News or Opinion.

5

Wrap-Up. The class reads the front page. Discussion: did any story make a legislator look worse or better than the facts warranted? What would you cut if you had half the space?

► ASSESSMENT

News Story	30
Lead carries the five W's; facts accurate; at least one attributed quote; no opinion in the news copy; within length.	
Interview	15
Prepared questions; one follow-up; quote read back and accurate.	
Fact Check	15
Claim identified; label correct; evidence from the story cited.	
Opinion Piece	15
Clearly labeled; takes a position; uses at least one fact from the news coverage.	
Broadcast and Layout	15
Two minutes; three stories; clean front page; shot list followed.	
Teamwork and Deadlines	10
Copy filed on time; roles honored.	

► DIFFERENTIATION

Support

Provide a completed sample story on the Wall Safety Act. Allow stories of 80 words. Let reporters work in pairs.

Challenge

Require a second-day story that follows up on a first-day story, or a profile of a Presiding Officer that uses three sources. Ask the Press Corps to write the questions for the Elections lesson press conference.

PRESS CORPS ROLES AND SHOT LIST

Editor in Chief: assigns, approves, anchors, decides the front page. **Managing Editor:** deadlines and fact checks. **Photo and Layout Editor:** shot list, slideshow, front page. **Reporters:** beats. **Broadcast Team:** nightly broadcast.

Shot list: each candidate at the podium; each bill's sponsors; the Chair with gavel; the Governor signing (with sponsors); the Justices seated; a wide shot of debate; one feature portrait per district; the Press Corps at work.

NEWS STORY FRAME (120 TO 180 WORDS)

Headline: Specific and neutral. "Assembly Passes Wall Safety Act 24-3."

Lead (sentence 1): Who did what, when, where, and why it matters.

Sentence 2-3: The most important detail and a quote from one side, attributed by name and role.

Sentence 4-5: A quote or position from the other side.

Sentence 6-7: Background (what the law said before; what happens next).

Last line: The next step (goes to the Governor; override vote Friday).

INTERVIEW SHEET

Source name and role: _____ Beat: _____

Question 1: _____ Answer: _____

Question 2: _____ Answer: _____

Question 3: _____ Answer: _____

Follow-up: _____ Answer: _____

Exact quote to use (read back and confirmed): " _____ "

FACT CHECK CARD

Claim: " _____ " Who said it, where: _____

Source checked: _____ (story, bill text, Clerk's journal)

Label: Confirmed / False / Needs Context

Evidence: _____

STORYBOOK COUNTY EVENT FEED (RELEASE ONE ITEM EVERY TEN MINUTES WHEN NO OTHER LESSON IS RUNNING)

1. The Committee on Housing and Hazards reports the Wall Safety Act and the Beanstalk bill favorably; the Porridge Act fails 3 to 9 after the Three Bears' Papa Bear called it "an invitation to burglary."
2. During debate, a member from the Deep Woods claims "the brick house also fell." Papa Pig disputes this.
3. Robin Hood files to run for Governor on the platform "Fair Shares for Storybook." The Tortoise files the same afternoon.
4. The Governor vetoes the Porridge Act, citing the burglary defense. Sponsors vow an override.
5. The Court of Appeals schedules Wolf v. Storybook County for Thursday. The Attorney General says the trial judge "let a confession in that never should have been heard."
6. Humpty Dumpty's household delivers 400 signatures supporting the egg tax. The Egg Producers Cooperative delivers 410 against.
7. Mr. Toad is seen driving a new motorcar past the Capitol during the Riverbank Motorcar bill debate.
8. The override of the Porridge Act fails, 17 to 10, short of two-thirds.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Storybook County Lesson Plans use public domain stories to practice real YMCA Youth and Government processes: bills, committees, debate, courts, elections, service, and proposals. Every lesson is three or four 30-minute sessions, and all of them live in one folder:

drive.google.com/drive/folders/1MieLDxVzKNq7QTWjw2EPFDqgMOaaJ2US. Part of the YMCA Youth and Government Educator Toolkit at nysyag.org. Questions: Drew Caldwell, dcaldwell@ymcanys.org.