

Sports Journalism Slam Dunk: Crafting News, Features, and Editorials

Materials Needed:

- Notebook or word processor
 - Pen or pencil
 - Access to the internet (for watching a sports clip and viewing example articles)
 - A favorite sports game highlight clip (5-10 minutes long, chosen by Aira Marie)
 - Timer (optional)
 - "Triple-Threat Reporter" graphic organizer (can be drawn by hand - see description in lesson)
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Lesson Plan Details

Subject: Journalism / English Language Arts

Grade Level: 7-10 (Adaptable)

Student: Aira Marie

Time Allotment: 90 minutes

1. Learning Objectives (The 'Why')

By the end of this lesson, Aira Marie will be able to:

- **Differentiate** between the purpose and style of a sports news report, a feature story, and an editorial.
- **Analyze** a single sporting event from three distinct journalistic perspectives.
- **Generate** creative and unique story angles for each of the three article types.
- **Compose** a short, engaging sports article in the style of her choice (news, feature, or editorial), demonstrating her understanding of its specific format and voice.

2. Introduction / Warm-Up: "What's the Headline?" (10 minutes)

The goal is to get Aira Marie thinking about different angles quickly.

1. Ask Aira Marie to think of her favorite athlete.
2. Set a timer for 3 minutes. In that time, her challenge is to write down as many different headlines about that athlete as she can. Encourage her to think beyond just game results.
3. **Examples could be:**
 - "Smith Scores Winning Goal in Final Seconds!" (News)
 - "The Untold Story: How Smith Overcame a Childhood Injury" (Feature)
 - "Why Smith Deserves to Be the Next Team Captain" (Editorial)
4. Briefly discuss the headlines she created. Point out how some are about facts, some are about stories, and some are about opinions. This perfectly introduces the three types of articles for the day.

3. Instruction / Exploration: "Meet the Reporting Team" (20 minutes)

Introduce the three types of sports articles as if they are three different reporters on a team, each with a special job.

- **The News Reporter: "Just the Facts"**

- **Job:** To report what happened, quickly and accurately. Answers the questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why?
- **Style:** Objective, factual, and direct. Puts the most important information first (the "inverted pyramid").
- **Example:** An article about the final score of a game, key plays, and player statistics.

- **The Feature Writer: "The Story Behind the Story"**

- **Job:** To explore the human side of the sport. To make the reader feel something.
- **Style:** Narrative, descriptive, emotional, and often uses storytelling techniques like quotes, anecdotes, and vivid imagery.
- **Example:** An article about a star player's relationship with their first coach, the history of a team's stadium, or the experience of a dedicated fan.

- **The Editorialist/Columnist: "Here's What I Think"**

- **Job:** To present a strong, evidence-based opinion and persuade the reader. To spark conversation and debate.
- **Style:** Persuasive, argumentative, and subjective. Uses facts to support a personal viewpoint.
- **Example:** An article arguing why a certain rule should be changed, why a coach should be fired, or why a team's new strategy is destined to fail or succeed.

(Optional: Spend 5 minutes finding one example of each type of article online about a sport Aira Marie enjoys.)

4. Guided Practice / Main Activity: "The Triple-Threat Reporter" (45 minutes)

This is where Aira Marie applies her knowledge in a creative way.

1. **Step 1: Choose the Event (5 mins).** Aira Marie will select a 5-10 minute highlight clip of a recent or favorite sports game to watch. This will be the single event she analyzes for the rest of the activity.
2. **Step 2: Brainstorm with the Graphic Organizer (15 mins).** She will draw a simple chart with three columns labeled: **News**, **Feature**, and **Editorial**. While watching (or right after), she will brainstorm and jot down potential story ideas for each category.
 - **For News:** What was the final score? Who were the key players? Was there a record-breaking moment? Any injuries?
 - **For Feature:** Was there an underdog player who did well? A player returning from an injury? What's the backstory of the rivalry between these two teams? What was the energy of the crowd like?
 - **For Editorial:** Was there a controversial call by the referee? Is one player overrated or underrated? Should the coach have made a different decision at a key moment? What does this game's outcome mean for the rest of the season?
3. **Step 3: Write Your Piece (25 mins).** Aira Marie will now choose her single favorite idea from her brainstorming chart. Her task is to write a short (2-4 paragraph) article in that style. Remind her to adopt the "voice" of the type of writer she chose.
 - If she chooses **News**, she should start with the final score or the most important play.
 - If she chooses **Feature**, she should start with an engaging anecdote or a descriptive scene.
 - If she chooses **Editorial**, she should start with a bold claim or a thought-provoking question.

5. Closure / Sharing (15 minutes)

1. Aira Marie reads her completed article aloud.
2. Celebrate the work! Discuss what makes her article a strong example of the type she chose.
 - *"I can tell this is a feature because you focused on the player's emotions."*

- *"That's a great editorial opening! It really makes me want to argue with you, which is the point!"*

3. Ask reflection questions: Which type of article was the most fun to write? Which do you think is the hardest to write? Why?

Differentiation & Extension

- **For Support:** Provide pre-written headlines or story prompts in the graphic organizer to help kickstart the brainstorming process. Work together to write the first sentence of the article.
- **For a Challenge:** Ask Aira Marie to write a lede (the first paragraph) for all three article types from her brainstorming sheet, not just her favorite. Or, have her include a fictional quote in her chosen article that matches the tone.
- **Extension Activity:** For homework, challenge Aira Marie to find one of each type of article in the wild (online sports websites, newspapers). Have her highlight the specific words or phrases that signal what type of article it is.