

Lesson Plan: Journalism Investigator - Decoding the News

Materials Needed

- A selection of 6-8 different journalistic articles printed out or available as digital links (include a mix of sports news, sports features, sports editorials; science news, science features, science editorials; and general opinion editorials).
- Highlighters in at least three different colors (or digital annotation tools).
- Journal or notebook for writing activities.
- Computer or tablet with internet access (for finding articles or typing).
- "Journalist's Toolkit" Graphic Organizer (a simple printable chart with three columns: News, Feature, Editorial, and rows for Purpose, Structure, Tone, and Key Features).
- Timer (optional).

Learning Objectives

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

1. **(Cognitive)** Differentiate between news, feature, and editorial structures by correctly identifying the purpose and key features of 3 sample texts with 90% accuracy.
2. **(Psychomotor)** Create a one-page "Journalism Investigator's Folio" containing your own short opinion editorial (200-250 words) on a topic of your choice, correctly applying the persuasive structure.
3. **(Affective)** Articulate the importance of identifying text structures in becoming a critical reader by writing a thoughtful reflection on how this skill applies to your daily life.

Lesson Proper

I. Introduction: The Headline Challenge (10 minutes)

- **Hook:** "Hi Aira Marie! Imagine you're scrolling online and see these three headlines about your favorite basketball team after a big game:
 1. 'Lakers Defeat Warriors 110-105'
 2. 'The Unlikely Hero: How a Rookie's Final Shot Saved the Season'
 3. 'It's Time for the Coach to Go'

Do these articles all sound the same? What kind of information do you expect to find in each one? Let's chat about it."

- **Discussion:** Talk through the predictions. Guide the conversation to the idea that even though they are all about the same event, they have different purposes: one gives facts, one tells a story, and one shares a strong opinion.
- **Stating Objectives:** "Today, you're going to become a 'Journalism Investigator!' Your mission is to learn how to spot the difference between these types of articles. By the end of our session, you'll be able to identify them like a pro, write your own powerful opinion piece, and understand why this skill is a superpower for anyone who reads the news."

II. Body: The EFDT Investigation (45-60 minutes)

Phase 1: EXPLORE - The Article Sort (10 minutes)

Activity: Mission Reconnaissance

1. Lay out 6 different articles (or just their headlines and first paragraphs) on a table or screen. The articles should be a mix of the target types (e.g., a science news report, a sports feature, an opinion editorial, etc.).
2. Your first mission, Investigator, is to sort these into at least three piles based on any patterns you notice. You can create your own category names. Are some just about facts? Do some feel more like a story? Are some trying to convince you of something?
3. Once you've sorted them, explain your reasoning. "Why did you group these together? What clues in the text led you to that decision?" There are no wrong answers here; this is about activating your detective instincts!

(Formative Assessment: This activity reveals your current understanding and thinking process before direct instruction begins.)

Phase 2: FIRM-UP - Building Your Investigator's Toolkit (15 minutes)

I Do: The Briefing

- "Great instincts! Now let's give those categories their official names and tools." Present the "Journalist's Toolkit" graphic organizer.
- Explain the three main text structures clearly:
 - **NEWS REPORT:** Its purpose is to **INFORM**. It uses the "Inverted Pyramid" structure (most important info first). The tone is objective and factual. Look for the 5 Ws & H (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How) right at the top. *Example: The score of the game, the facts of a new discovery.*
 - **FEATURE ARTICLE:** Its purpose is to **ENTERTAIN or PROVIDE DEPTH**. It uses a narrative or storytelling structure. The tone is more descriptive, creative, and can be subjective. It focuses on the human element or the story behind the news. *Example: An interview with the scientist, a day in the life of an athlete.*
 - **OPINION EDITORIAL:** Its purpose is to **PERSUADE**. It has a clear structure: state a claim/thesis, provide arguments with evidence, and give a conclusion. The tone is subjective and biased. It's all about what the writer **thinks**. *Example: Why one tech company is better than another, or why a team needs a new strategy.*

We Do: Joint Investigation

- Let's pick one of the articles from your earlier sort—a clear sports news report.
- "Let's analyze this one together using our new toolkit. Grab a yellow highlighter. Can we find the 5 Ws and H? Let's highlight them."
- "Now let's look at an opinion editorial. With a pink highlighter, let's find the author's main claim. What is the big opinion they are trying to convince us of? Now, let's find the reasons they give to support it."

Phase 3: DEEPEN - The Solo Case Files (15 minutes)

You Do: Independent Analysis

1. Provide three new articles: a science news report, a sports feature, and an opinion editorial. These

are your "Case Files."

2. **Your Mission:** For each Case File, you will:

1. **Identify:** Label the article as News, Feature, or Editorial.
2. **Annotate:** Use your highlighters to find the proof! Highlight the 5 Ws in the news report, descriptive storytelling language in the feature, and the author's claim/arguments in the editorial.
3. **Justify:** In your journal, write a short "Investigator's Note" for each one, explaining your conclusion. Start with: "This article is a [text type] because..." and cite your highlighted evidence.

- **Success Criteria:** You've successfully cracked the case if you correctly identify all three types and provide at least two clear pieces of evidence from the text to support each identification.
- **Differentiation:**
 - **Scaffolding:** If you get stuck, use the "Journalist's Toolkit" graphic organizer as a checklist.
 - **Extension:** Find an article online that you think is a hybrid (e.g., a "news-feature") and explain which elements it borrows from each structure.

Phase 4: TRANSFER - The Editor's Desk (15 minutes)

You Do: Become the Writer!

- **Summative Assessment Part 1 (Psychomotor):** Now it's your turn to write! Choose a topic you are passionate about—a video game, a movie, a scientific topic, a sports team, anything!
- Your task is to write a short (200-250 word) opinion editorial about it. What is your strong opinion on this topic?
- **Your editorial must include:**
 - A catchy headline.
 - A clear opening statement with your main claim/opinion.
 - At least two arguments or points to support your claim.
 - A concluding sentence that summarizes your view.
- This piece will be the main entry in your "Journalism Investigator's Folio."
- **Success Criteria:** Your writing clearly states an opinion, provides supporting reasons, and follows a persuasive structure.

III. Conclusion: Debrief and Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- **Recap:** "Great work today, Investigator! Let's quickly debrief. What were the three main text structures we learned to decode? What is the main purpose of each one?" (Quickly review Inform, Entertain/Deepen, Persuade).
- **Reflection & Assessment Part 2 (Affective):** In your journal, right after your editorial, answer this final question: "**Now that you can spot the difference between a news report and an opinion piece, how does this change the way you will read things online? Why is being a 'Journalism Investigator' an important skill for everyone to have?**"
- **Reinforce Takeaway:** "You've done more than just an assignment today; you've built a critical thinking tool that will help you navigate the world of information more intelligently. You now know how to look beyond the words to understand the writer's purpose, and that is a true superpower. Mission accomplished!"