Unlocking the News: Decoding Op-Eds, Sports, and Tech Articles

Materials Needed

- Access to news websites (e.g., Newsela, BBC News, or local newspaper sites)
- Three printed or digital sample articles: one Opinion Editorial, one Sports report, and one Science/Technology piece
- Highlighters (three different colors)
- The "Journalism Detective" Graphic Organizer (can be drawn on paper)
- Sticky notes or digital comment tools

Learning Objectives

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

- Identify the unique purpose and structure of Opinion, Sports, and Science/Tech articles.
- Differentiate between subjective (opinion-based) and objective (fact-based) writing.
- Analyze how journalists use specific vocabulary (jargon) to target their audience.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a headline in summarizing a story.

1. Introduction: The Headline Hook (10 Minutes)

The Scenario: Imagine you are an editor for a major news site. Three stories just landed on your desk, but the labels are missing! One is trying to convince you to change your mind, one is describing a fast-paced event, and one is explaining a new invention.

The Hook: Read these three "Mystery Headlines" and guess which genre they belong to:

1. "Why We Should Ban Smartphones in Middle Schools Starting Tomorrow"
2. "Local Underdogs Secure Victory in Final Seconds of Overtime"
3. "New AI Breakthrough Allows Scientists to Translate Whale Songs"

Discussion: What "clue words" helped you decide? (e.g., "Why we should," "Victory," "Breakthrough"). Today, we're going to learn how to look under the hood of these different types of writing.

2. Content & Practice: The "I Do, We Do, You Do" Model (45 Minutes)

Part A: The Three Flavors of News (I Do)

The instructor explains the three distinct styles using the following talking points:

- **Opinion Editorials (Op-Eds):** These are "The Persuaders." The author isn't just reporting; they are trying to make you agree with them. They use "I" or "We" and include emotional language.

Success Criteria: Look for a "Call to Action" (telling the reader to do something).
- **Sports Articles:** These are "The Storytellers." They use action verbs (sprinted, crushed, pivoted) and lots of stats. They often follow a narrative—a beginning, middle, and end of a game.
  Success Criteria: Look for quotes from players/coaches and specific scores or data.
- **Science & Technology:** These are "The Explainers." They take complex ideas (like black holes or new GPUs) and make them easy to understand. They use "Jargon" (technical words) but usually define them.
  Success Criteria: Look for facts, data, and interviews with experts or "doctors."

Part B: The Feature Hunt (We Do)

Using a shared article (a Science piece is recommended for this part), let's hunt for features together:

- **The Lede:** Find the first sentence. Does it give us the "Who, What, Where, When, Why"?
- **Expert Testimony:** Find a quote. Who said it? Why does their opinion matter more than a random person's?
- **The Visuals:** Look at the photo or graph. How does it help explain the text?

Part C: The Journalism Detective (You Do)

Now, it's your turn to investigate. Take your three articles and use your highlighters to mark them up:

- **Color 1:** Highlight **Opinions** (Thoughts, feelings, "should" statements).
- **Color 2:** Highlight **Hard Facts** (Dates, names, numbers, locations).
- **Color 3:** Highlight **Action/Tech Words** (Sports verbs or scientific terms).

The Challenge: Fill out your "Journalism Detective" table by listing the "Vibe" of each article (Exciting? Serious? Angry?) and the "Main Goal" (To inform? To entertain? To persuade?).

3. Conclusion: The "Pitch Meeting" Recap (10 Minutes)

Summary: Every piece of journalism has a "job" to do. Op-Eds change minds, Sports articles capture the thrill of competition, and Science/Tech articles help us understand our changing world.

Recap Activity: "The 30-Second Pitch." Pick one of the articles you analyzed. You have 30 seconds to explain to the "News Board" why this article is a great example of its genre. Use at least two pieces of evidence from your highlighting.

Assessment: How We'll Know You've Got It

- **Formative Assessment:** During the "Feature Hunt," can the student correctly identify a fact vs. an opinion?
- **Summative Assessment (The Rewrite):** Choose one "Hard Fact" from your Science article. Now, rewrite that fact as an "Opinion" sentence for an Op-Ed. (Example: "The rover landed on Mars" becomes "The landing on Mars is the most important human achievement of the century.")

Differentiation & Adaptability

- **Scaffolding (For learners needing more support):** Provide a "Word Bank" of common

journalistic terms (e.g., bias, objective, source) to use during the analysis. Use shorter, "Kids News" versions of articles.

- **Extension (For advanced learners):** Find two articles on the *same* topic (e.g., a new video game)—one a Tech Review and one an Op-Ed about the game's impact on society. Compare how the tone changes even though the subject is the same.
- **Kinesthetic Option:** Instead of highlighting, cut the articles into physical paragraphs and sort them into piles labeled "Fact," "Expert Quote," and "Emotional Language."