

# NewsCurrents

## How NewsCurrents Helps You Meet the Common Core State Standards

### NEWSCURRENTS...

- is a weekly classroom discussion program for students in grades 3-12.
- features important, engaging, and educationally relevant stories in the news.
- provides teachers with all the background information necessary to lead students in a thoughtful, in-depth discussion on that week's current events issues.
- is written on 3 comprehension levels

**Common Core** emphasizes authentic, nonfiction texts and literacy across academic content areas, and a variety of texts, with a special focus on history, civics, and social studies.

### NEWSCURRENTS ALIGNS WITH COMMON CORE

NewsCurrents is uniquely designed to provide opportunities for your students to engage with authentic nonfiction social studies texts and topics.

NewsCurrents supports the Common Core with weekly social studies texts that meet the reading, writing, listening, and speaking strands.

Let's take a closer look at the Common Core State Standards and how NewsCurrents helps to meet them.



## **COMMON CORE STRAND: *Speaking and Listening***

**STANDARD 1:** *“engage effectively in a range of discussion topics...building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.” This standard requires students to follow rules of collaborative discussions, pose and respond to questions, express opinions clearly using their knowledge and evidence from what they learn in discussion, and listen and respond appropriately to opinions from others*

NewsCurrents’s guided discussion format is uniquely designed among programs for the K-12 education market to encourage exactly this sort of discussion. The material in the teacher’s guide asks students to respond to both content questions and more open-ended opinion, thought, and analysis questions related to the news stories presented. Students have the opportunity to engage in discussion, answer and pose questions, listen to alternative opinions, and summarize the ideas of other speakers. They can use the information provided both from the teacher and the engaging onscreen images to back up their statements with evidence from text.

**STANDARD 2:** *asks students to summarize information read aloud, or information presented through pictures, charts, graphs, and so on.*

In NewsCurrents, the teacher’s guide provides all relevant information about the issues. Students are tasked with listening to the information that is read and explained by their teacher and then demonstrating their ability to explain it, answer questions about it, and synthesize it in class discussion. Additionally, the photographs, charts, graphs, and other images accompanying every story provide additional information for students to interpret and analyze.

**STANDARD 3:** *asks students to summarize and evaluate the arguments and positions of other speakers, based on evidence.*

The collaborative discussions at the core of NewsCurrents allow students to analyze and evaluate each others’ opinions about a wide range of important and sometimes controversial issues each week. The provided background information allows students to develop reasoned opinions and to present and evaluate arguments based on evidence, as well as to determine whether or not their peers’ arguments are evidence-based.

**STANDARD 4:** *expects students to present information and opinions in a logical, reasoned, and sequential way, using evidence and speaking clearly.*

NewsCurrents is unique among school programs because it is designed for group discussion. Oral presentation is a key feature of the program. When they are expressing their thoughts, students must make their case clearly, logically, and sequentially, with appropriate eye contact, clarity, and volume, so they are understood by their peers. Teachers can formatively assess all these Speaking and Listening standards in the context of these authentic weekly discussions.

**STANDARD 6:** *requires students to use appropriate language structures and grammar.*

Teachers can evaluate students’ command of English conventions, complexity of sentence structure, and command of formal English and academic language in the context of the NewsCurrents group discussion format.

## **COMMON CORE STRAND: *Language***

*The Common Core Language Standards recognize the importance of using appropriate language structures in speaking. **STANDARD 1** requires students to display a command of English conventions and appropriate grammar forms in speaking. **STANDARD 3** notes students' ability to vary sentence structure, length, pattern, and tone appropriate to the situation to convey meaning and hold listener interest.*

NewsCurrents allows teachers to observe and evaluate students' use of and facility with spoken language forms on an ongoing basis in academic discussion. The NewsCurrents discussion format also allows teachers to assess English Language Learners' command of academic language and English language structures.

***STANDARD 6*** asks that students acquire and use grade- level and content-specific vocabulary.

Each week, NewsCurrents presents stories that relate to a wide range of curriculum areas including history, civics, government, science, geography, the environment, the arts, popular culture, and more. NewsCurrents provides students with relevant vocabulary in context, defining words and creating the background knowledge that allows students to construct and retain comprehension of new vocabulary and concepts. As topics recur in the news over the course of the school year, NewsCurrents provides students opportunities to revisit and reuse content-area vocabulary in new contexts.

## **COMMON CORE STRAND: *Reading Informational Text***

***STANDARD 7*** requires students to read and comprehend multiple information sources, including digital sources, images, charts, and graphs.

Each issue of NewsCurrents features graphs, charts, maps, diagrams, and editorial cartoons along with primary source quotes, and photographs to visually orient students to stories and provide additional information. Analyzing these visual sources helps students gain familiarity and competency with these alternate sources of data and information, allowing students to become informationally literate.

***STANDARDS 8 and 9*** require high school students to analyze and understand foundational historical documents, such as the Constitution, Supreme Court decisions, and so on.

Throughout the school year, NewsCurrents covers many issues in the news related to historical and foundational principles of the United States. Using these current events as a lens, NewsCurrents explores the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, U.S. Supreme Court cases, and many other important documents, allowing students to analyze and understand the nuances of these critical historical works, along with the arguments centered around how they are interpreted.

# Common Core Strand: Literacy in History/Social Studies

The Common Core literacy strands for history and social studies require students to understand and analyze a series of historical events or explain a process related to history or social studies.

NewsCurrents provides the background knowledge necessary to understand complex history, social studies, and science content. NewsCurrents goes behind the week's news events, providing in-depth explanations of the history and processes important to understanding the news; processes such as how a bill becomes a law, the workings of the electoral college, and so on. This background information helps students construct knowledge so that they can retell and explain these complex events and procedures, in their own words.

## Assessment Tools

Each issue of NewsCurrents includes supplemental activities to extend and assess student learning, including comprehension quizzes on that week's stories, for all three levels.

**NEWS NAMES**  
Bela Lugosi  
Bram Stoker  
Cabinet  
Mitik  
Sojourner Truth  
Yingluck Shinawatra

**NEWS PLACES**  
Alaska  
Brooklyn, New York  
Burma  
China  
Puerto Rico  
Thailand

**NEWS WORDS**  
command  
folk tales  
monsoon

**The life of a monarch**  
egg  
larva (caterpillar)  
pupa (chrysalis)  
adult

**electoral votes needed to win**  
Romney 206

**Hama massacre**

**The Assad family has been in power since 1970.**  
Hafez al-Assad

**Somalia's 21st century pirates**  
Recent incidents have turned the world's attention to this desparately poor, unstable country.

**BASIC**  
In the last few weeks, there have been a lot of news stories about Somalia. Where is Somalia? (In eastern Africa.) For many years, Somali pirates have threatened ships off Somalia's coast. What is a pirate? (Someone who attacks and robs ships at sea.) Somali pirates are heavily armed with guns and other weapons. Much of the world's oil and other valuable shipments go through the Gulf of Aden near Somalia. So far this year, pirates have captured more than 40 ships. The pirates approach a ship in small boats with ropes and ladders. Once they take over the ship, they take the crew as hostages and demand money from the ship's owners. This money, called ransom, is sometimes dropped to the ship from a helicopter. Somalia is very poor, and the money helps some of its people. But the pirates also make Somalia a more violent, unstable country. NEXT

**GENERAL**  
Over the past few weeks, there have been a lot of news stories about events happening off the coast of Somalia. Where is Somalia? (Eastern Africa.) These stories involve modern-day pirates taking over ships in Somalia's waters. The definition of a pirate is the same now as it was hundreds of years ago. What do you think a pirate is? (Someone who attacks and robs ships at sea.) For several years, Somali pirates have threatened ships off Somalia's coast. Much of the world's oil and other valuable cargo is shipped through the Gulf of Aden, north of Somalia. So far this year, more than 40 ships have been captured. Pirates approach ships in small boats, usually at night, and use ropes, ladders, and hooks to climb aboard. They hold the crew hostage, demanding money from the ship's owners. Who knows the word for money paid to kidnappers? (Ransom.) Most of the time, the owners pay the ransom, and the money is dropped by helicopter to the pirates. Why do you think the owners pay the ransom? (Some of the pirates are former fishermen who say illegal fishing by other countries forced them out of business. But now piracy is big business in Somalia, an otherwise desperately poor country. Some Somali people use the pirates as heroes.) But others say the pirates have made their country more violent, dangerous, and unstable. And the countries whose ships travel near Somalia are trying to figure out what to do about the problem. Let's find out more about Somalia. NEXT

**ADVANCED**  
Over the past several weeks, you may have noticed a lot of headlines about events off the coast of Somalia. Since the start of 2009, Somali pirates have captured or tried to capture more than 40 ships. Last year, there were more than 100 attempted hijackings. Lately, the pirates have expanded their range beyond the Gulf of Aden south into the Indian Ocean. Where is the Gulf of Aden? (Between Somalia and Yemen.) About 30 percent of the world's oil is shipped through the Gulf of Aden. The pirates are heavily armed, possessing assault rifles and rocket launchers. Some of them claim that they are not pirates, but part of Somalia's unofficial coast guard. Originally, many of the Somali pirates were fishermen who began arming themselves to fight rans pay poaching by other nations. They began to stop fishing boats and demand a fee for using Somali waters. Then, as they realized that their own government could not stop them, the fishermen escalated their activity. Some pirates also allege that European companies have long been illegally dumping toxic waste on Somalia's shores. Some accuse local companies of accepting payments from these pirates in return for dumping rights. Piracy has brought new money to parts of the otherwise desperately poor country, and in some quarters the pirates are hailed as folk heroes. Others say the pirates are making Somalia a more violent and unstable nation. What do you think is the best way for other countries to deal with the piracy problem? NEXT

**Leaning Obama 68**  
**Toss-up 85**  
**Leaning Romney 45**  
**Strongly Romney 161**

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## NewsCurrents fits with the Common Core

NewsCurrents connects your students to the world around them, and also provides them with the necessary skills and tools they need to succeed in a competitive educational and global environment.