
Using News Currents in the classroom

1. Preview the issue.

Every weekly issue of News Currents is available for preview as of the previous Saturday. Before your session, skim through the images and the story guide to familiarize yourself with the material.

2. Select the stories.

News Currents stories cover a wide range of topics, including national and international news, developments in science and technology, economics, history, the arts, sports, and more. Most teachers present the entire issue during the week, but you might consider breaking it into two or three smaller sessions so you're not rushing through. Also, if there is a topic or story that you do not think your class is ready to discuss, you can easily skip or postpone it.

3. Choose a discussion level.

There are three story guides available on the website, as many stories are written on multiple levels. "Basic" roughly corresponds to a reading and comprehension level of grades 3-5; "General" corresponds to grades 6-8; and "Advanced" is for grades 9 and up. If you download these guides to a tablet or cellphone, you can easily adjust the level on the fly instead of having to flip through printed paper – and it's better for the environment, too!

4. Keep their heads up with large bold images.

The story guide is for teachers to help moderate discussions. The accompanying images – photos, maps, charts, quotes, graphs, etc. – are visual references for students. Show these images on the largest screen you can, and click on the icon to blow them up to full size. This will help focus their attention on the stories, and help visual learners grasp concepts more easily.

5. Establish classroom rules WITH your students.

Every teacher moderator should have a few fundamental rules about how to listen and speak during a class discussion. These rules will always work better if you get class buy-in first. Students will often come up with surprisingly good ideas on their own!

6. Encourage participation.

In the News Currents format, students are learning background information, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills. But they are also learning to evaluate data and form coherent opinions based on facts as well as feelings. So don't be afraid of going a little bit off the "official" topic if the discussion is going well. And make sure that two or three voices are not dominating the discussion – every student should feel empowered and confident to share their thoughts in class.

7. Paraphrase the discussion guide.

The story texts are there to serve as a guide, not a lecture. Discussions will feel more organic if you are talking in your authentic voice. Don't forget to check in with the class to make sure that everyone understands the important points of each story and the relevant vocabulary terms.

8. Reproduce the activities.

Every issue also contains downloadable activities. Some are academic – the geography feature, the leveled quizzes – while some are more fun. You can use these activities to assess knowledge gains and to make sure that all students get involved!



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