

The Newspaper, the Holocaust, and the Continuing Scourge of Hatred

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Why Use Newspapers in the Classroom? A General Overview

1. Newspapers represent in various ways the social, political, economic and cultural issues of the community in which they are produced
2. Newspapers are relevant. They provide a vital link between the classroom and the outside world
3. Newspapers contain something of interest for everyone
4. Newspapers present different models of writing for different purposes and for different audiences
5. Newspapers are inexpensive and easy to obtain

How to Use Newspapers in the Classroom

1. Before undertaking any work with newspapers, ensure that students are familiar with the structure, purpose, and content of the newspaper and its sections.
2. While it is useful for the teacher to present clippings to serve as examples, multiple copies of the newspaper should be available to students. It is not necessary for every student to have a newspaper. Newspapers may be shared, thus enhancing small group cooperative learning skills.
3. Teachers are advised to assemble files of relevant materials to support their lessons. These may include articles (news and commentary) that relate directly to the topic of study, cartoons, photographs, headlines, obituaries and special supplements (eg – many newspapers produced special supplements or sections marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz).
4. Teachers and students both should consult multiple news sources (newspapers, news magazines, television and radio news reports, and blogs) to see and compare how stories are handled, and to detect bias.
5. Teachers and students need to understand that news collection varies around the globe especially in democratic and in non-democratic societies.
For example - Israel as a democracy enjoys a free press. Journalists, local and foreign, generally enjoy unrestricted access to people and places; most Israelis speak English, therefore interviews are direct with no third-party intervention for translation / interpretation. There is no government interference with either the local or foreign press.

In contrast, in the Palestinian areas, most people do not speak English. As one Canadian journalist said, “if you can’t speak Arabic, you can’t even order lunch, let alone conduct an interview.” Access to places and people is restricted. Therefore the majority of the foreign press finds it expedient to hire a “fixer.” “Fixers” are generally young, well-educated Palestinians who are fluent in Arabic, Hebrew and English. They arrange interviews and facilitate access to people and places. They translate for the journalist, and, in many cases, even pitch stories. Often close friendships develop between the foreign journalist and his / her fixer. Consider the implications of this for “unbiased” reportage.

The Palestinian Authority retains tight control over the local and foreign press. All foreign journalists working in the West Bank and Gaza are well aware of this and are very careful not to say or write anything that might incur the wrath of the PA and hence result in their expulsion.

6. There is no such thing as unbiased reporting: journalists and readers – teachers and students - (how we report and / or comment on an event, and how we read a media text) are influenced by many factors.

The Newspaper, the Holocaust and the Continuing Scourge of Hatred

Has traditional antisemitism been supplanted by isolation and demonization of Israel in the media?

In this workshop, newspapers will be used to explore the social and linguistic dynamics of intolerance.

- Language ultimately has the capacity to produce what it names; through repetition, reportage, commentary and visual representations can either support or disrupt oppressive behaviours.
- Even in instances where escalation does not rise to the level of genocide, intolerance compromises freedom and human rights.
- Reading, discussing and writing about texts that deal with intolerance and genocide help students learn about human deeds of violence throughout history, and illumine parallels existing in human behaviours that make hatred and suffering possible today.
- It is in the English / Language Arts classroom that students encounter linguistic and literary experiences that elevate and debase our humanity. It is through the medium of language that intolerance initially manifests itself. Language is used in propaganda and in influencing public opinion. It is basic to the development of values, the institution of laws, as well as the formation of public policy. Language has the potential to liberate or imprison.
- The aim of the English / Language Arts classroom is to invite informed dialogue on language and literature so that students and teachers examine the ways persons and groups build respect for differences or contribute to the forces of hate.
- Media such as newspapers, films, art, and music can be used to influence human activity. In classrooms, they can be used also to examine the context of an historical event and the factors that helped shape it.
- Students' analysis of media deepens their understanding of the human condition at a given time. It also helps students learn how stories can be framed in multiple ways that have different effects.

Caporino, Grace M. and Rudnitski, Rose A. General guidelines for teaching about intolerance and genocide. (1999). In Judith P. Robertson (Ed.), *Teaching for a Tolerant World K-6*. Urbana, Ill: National Council of teachers of English, 13.

- Students need to know about the Holocaust not only as an unique historical event, but also to provide them with a context for understanding modern-day acts of

genocide and intolerance as well as the socio-cultural environments in which some crimes become possible.

- The term *genocide* is misused and abused on a regular basis. When *genocide* is misused or overused, not only does it distort the true meaning of the term, but it diminishes and minimizes those actions that are truly genocidal in nature. Such misuse and overuse of the term may contribute to blunting some people to the horror of the reality of genocide.
- Use terms such as Holocaust, holocaust, genocide, massacres, pogroms with care and with accuracy. Provide students with correct and complete definitions of each as well as examples so that they can differentiate among them.

Themes to Consider:

“Israel is the new Jew.” Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, former Prime Minister of Canada, in a speech to students at the University of Toronto, 2004.

The progression of intolerance follows four steps...

- Antilocution
- Scapegoating
- Out-group seen as an “outsider” or “other”
- Racist ideology possibly giving rise to genocide

Similarly, the late Emil Fackenheim, Holocaust survivor and professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto, described the three stages of antisemitism thus:

- You cannot live among us as Jews
- You cannot live among us.
- You cannot live.

Journalists and Readers, Teachers and Texts

It is essential to understand that no reader (student and teacher), no journalist and no text is innocent of bias. This is a function of the human condition.

Multiple layers of meaning are embedded in all media texts.

Journalists produce media texts that reflect who they are and how they view the world.

Who they are and how they view the world is a function of:

- age
- gender
- culture
- education
- past experiences
- values
- background knowledge
- attitude
- intellectual, emotional and ethical location

Similarly, readers, including students and teachers bring to the text:

- age
- gender
- culture
- education
- past experiences
- values
- background knowledge
- attitude
- intellectual, emotional and ethical location

Teachers and students need to ask themselves how these factors influence their reading, their meaning-making, and their assessment of a media text.

The Following Principles Provide The Underpinnings For The Teaching – Learning Activities Which Follow:

- It is not enough to do “current events”. Students must encounter and engage the past and therefore develop an understanding of their place and responsibility in a larger world.
- In encountering the past in current newspaper reports, students and teachers also confront the pain and trauma of history. We need to come to terms with the possible reasons why communities choose to represent images/events in certain ways in order to cope with the difficulties of their own histories. Communities, like individuals, build up defences – defences which are shared and understood and have meaning for members in those communities. For example, the French- and English-Canadians do this in telling their versions of Canadian history. How has the multicultural mix of western society impacted this?
- Accounts reported in the press are related to the political, cultural, and social climate in which they are circulated, but they also construct an imaginary ideal of what the society is, and make an appeal to “us” who share this imaginary ideal, while simultaneously defining a “them” who clearly does not.
- What needs and desires are served when an event is represented in one way rather than another?
- Media representations are not simply concerned with telling falsehoods or truths about groups, but are involved in constructing a sense of who “we” are, and who “they” are and how the society in which we live is understood.

Classroom Activities for Teaching and Learning

Reading for Coverage

We know how important and basic reading is, particularly in a newspaper-based teaching unit. Students will benefit little from the process unless they are able to make sense of their reading. Sometimes students need to efficiently skim a large amount of text in order to locate specific information.

Three Approaches for Using the Newspaper

In addition to helping students learn about the role of the newspaper in Holocaust education, these activities have several value-added learnings, which include literacy, research and problem solving, use of technology, critical and creative thinking, organization, initiative, and team work. Such learning goals are reflected in curriculum subjects, in larger goals such as literacy and numeracy, as well as learning skills in both the elementary and secondary grades.

APPROACH #1.

Reading for Coverage with the Newspaper Scavenger Hunt

The newspaper scavenger hunt is an excellent way to:

- introduce the newspaper and all its complexity and variety,
- teach location and reading skills using the newspaper or other print materials,
- provide motivation for studying a particular topic,
- test understanding of concepts,
- teach group and/or problem-solving skills and
- diagnose student difficulties in reading, locating, and comprehending information through observing students at work.

Suggestions for Doing Scavenger Hunts

1. Groups of three or four per paper would be ideal.
2. Items for any scavenger hunt should force students to look in all sections of the paper.
3. Items may involve various levels of difficulty from vocabulary searches and conceptual understandings to making inferences and determining cause-effect relationships.
4. The hunt should take no longer than ten to fifteen minutes. Include from 10-20 items depending on the group.
5. Those who finish first should be encouraged to make up additional questions.
6. Discussion after the hunt should focus on the techniques used by the groups to complete their tasks.
7. Formative evaluation criteria in the form of teacher feedback and group self-evaluation can include:
 - ease and quickness at getting to task,

- methods of organizing to complete the task and
 - roles assumed (leader, recorder, organizer, encourager).
8. Although students may get caught up in the competitive aspect of the hunt, it is important for them to recognize that co-operation within each group is the key to success.
 9. Hunts can be used several times throughout a course with newspapers, book chapters or an entire textbook. Data can be collected using sheets such as the sample provided.

Newspaper Scavenger Hunt

- An example of a stereotype (pictorial or verbal)
- A place where human rights are violated
- A place that does not have a free press
- An example of a group that is presented as “other” (not “us”).
- An example of propaganda
- A news item that is hostile to Israel
- A letter to the editor that expresses an opinion about Israel or one of the Islamic countries
- A headline that is controversial
- An article that gives context or background information to a conflict
- An item with which you agree or disagree strongly

FINISHED QUICKLY? _____ WHAT STRATEGY DID YOU USE? _____

MAKE UP 5 MORE QUESTIONS. _____

Other more specific suggestions might include:

- A photograph that presents Israel or Jews in a bad light
- A misleading headline about Israel or Jews
- The use or misuse of one of the following terms:
holocaust, genocide, massacre
- an example of a headline or story clearly favourable to Israel

APPROACH #2

Clipping Thesis

A thesis is a statement about an issue supported by evidence and based on clear criteria. This can be made a component of the culminating end-of-unit task to be displayed or handed in or used separately if there is an event which has gained the class's interest.

1. Students either individually, in small groups, or as a whole class select a problem or issue in Canada today they wish to explore (see snowball technique below).
2. They collect stories, pictures, or information, about the topic over a three or four week period from the newspaper or other sources.
3. They prepare an analysis which might include such aspects as the following:
 - historical background to the issue (as reported in the newspaper and in the text),
 - the perspective(s) taken by the newspaper or newspapers,
 - a weighting of the different perspectives in order to arrive at a defensible conclusion on the issue in question.

The following are just some of the topics and questions that students may use for developing theses based on newspaper readings.

Topic	Critical Question
Justice and Double Standards	Is Israel held to account or judged by standards not applied to other nations?
Vilification of Israel or Jews	Is Israel likened to the Nazis or to other perpetrators of mass murder?
Conspiracy Theories	Are Jews or Israel subjected to conspiracy theories? -eg. the “powerful Jewish lobby”; Jews control the media etc.
Stereotypes	Do the media perpetuate stereotypes of Jews?
“Us” and “Them”	Are Jews and / or Israel placed in an “us” and “them” dichotomy with the community served by the newspaper?
Propaganda	Is anti-Jewish or anti-Israel propaganda embedded in newspaper items?
Universal Patterns of Genocide	Are the stages of the universal patterns of genocide or Fackenheim’s three stages of antisemitism embedded in the newspaper, either in its reportage, editorializing, or commentary by columnists?
Analysis of a Columnist	What are the views of the selected columnist regarding Israel?
Linguistic Analysis	Does the choice of language by a newspaper or its writers contribute to the “othering” of Jews or Israel?
Context / History of a Selected issue or Event	How does an understanding of the history and context confirm or alter your view of how the newspaper has presented an event or issue affecting Jews or Israel ?
Context / History of the Participants, Stakeholders, or Communities in a Selected issue or Event	How does an understanding of the history and context of the participants, stakeholders or communities in a selected issue or event affecting Jews or Israel confirm or alter your view of how the newspaper has presented it?

Other Possibilities for Clipping Theses Sources

Your local library may have digitally-archived back issues of the local paper.

<http://www.paperofrecord.com/Default.asp>

presents information on other papers in Canada and the U.S.

Talk to your teacher-librarian or local branch about getting a library card. In the 21st century the card offers access to a wealth of on-line databases. If students begin using these in their senior years, they will have some tools for working through university level research.

The clippings can be included as a portfolio, cited in an essay or utilized in a powerpoint presentation, a docudrama, or other type of presentation.

The Importance of Powerful Questions

Theses and good research come from powerful critical questions. These questions should:

- be engaging to students,
- be connected to important curriculum goals and
- require an informed, reasoned answer based on evidence and clear criteria for making a judgment.

Here is one way to help your students develop good questions to use when developing their clipping thesis.

Snowball

1. Individually each student writes down three questions they would like to answer about the topic.
2. Students pair and compare questions. They come to agreement on three questions they both consider important to answer.
3. The pairs combine with another pair. The groups of four come to a consensus on four questions they want answered.
4. The groups of four combine and come to agreement on five important questions.
5. Each group puts their questions on the board.
6. With the teacher's help the class comes to an agreement on 5-6 important powerful questions they want answered about the topic. As individuals, pairs, or small groups they begin a clipping file on one of these questions in order to develop a thesis to share with the class.

APPROACH #3

Target Day

Target Day is a skills-based current affairs lesson using newspapers and/or the Internet. The approach and skills are applicable to a variety of subject areas. It works as follows:

1. Set a Target Day. It could be a day at random or one around a specific event such as Holocaust Remembrance Day, April 25. The on-line version of Target Day assumes that

students have access to computers and know how to search for specific information on the web. The on-line version of this activity can be completed in one seventy-five-minute class, including the research.

Note that any of the topics listed in the Clipping Thesis activity might also be the subject of a Target Day.

Note: Some on-line editions of newspapers are free, some are free with registration, and some charge for registration. Be sure to check the net before giving an on-line assignment (this advice goes for ALL online work).

If the assignment is based on headlines only, even papers requiring a paid subscription display headlines and selected articles.

2. The teacher organizes the class into equal-sized groups of three or four.
3. Students draw randomly for on-line versions of one of selected newspapers.
4. Students locate the home page of their on-line paper and skim it.
5. Students answer questions about their paper's home page such as the following:
 - What are the main stories featured?
 - How many of these relate to local, regional, national or international events?
 - How many of these stories relate to political events?
 - How many relate to non-political events?

In the case of Holocaust Remembrance Day, the questions may include:

- How was Holocaust Remembrance Day reported?
- How much coverage was given?
- What section(s) of the paper gave coverage to Holocaust Remembrance Day?
- How does the coverage of Holocaust Remembrance Day in your on-line paper compare to the coverage in your local newspaper?

6. As a whole class, students generate a set of categories for comparing the newspapers before discussing their answers for #5. Then, on a scale of 1 (totally different) to 10 (identical), students predict the degree of comparison among the papers across the country. Students must justify or explain their predictions. Finally, they put their answers for #5 either on chart paper or on the chalkboard so that the class as a whole can compare newspapers based on the contents of the on-line home page editions.

7. Student groups compare and contrast their findings for all of the papers using the categories they identified. These should include:
 - similarities,
 - differences and
 - regional or local "bias" of the stories.

8. Students judge the degree of comparison among papers on the 1-10 scale, compare this to their original predictions, explain why their predictions were correct or incorrect and account for any differences.

Teachers can conduct their assessments through observation and feedback on such criteria as:

- group-generated criteria for comparing papers,
- group summaries (on charts or the chalkboard) and
- quality of student analysis and reasoning.

Extensions / Follow-Up

Teachers may wish to have students extend this task by exploring the on-line paper, clicking on specific topic-related stories and reading them. When groups using different papers find common stories, they should extend their comparisons by answering the following questions:

- Which facts are used in each paper to express its point of view?
- Do these papers use the same facts or have they selected different ones?
- How can we explain the differences?

Modifications (Non-Internet Version)

Teachers should have students write a letter to other cities to obtain hard copies of their daily newspapers published on the Target Date. Students should, with teacher instruction, write proper business letters to the Circulation Manager or Educational Services Coordinator of their chosen paper. It is probably a good idea for them to include a nominal sum for shipping and handling costs. When the papers have arrived, each student can compare their paper's coverage of the event with coverage of the local newspaper under such categories as:

- headline and front page coverage,
- editorial and / or editorial cartoon coverage and
- special features relating to the topic in general.

Which paper seems more conscious of the importance of the topic, the student-selected target paper or the local newspaper?