

Information on The Side

Trustee: Craig Flournoy
Subject: Civic Education, Journalism, English (writing)
Topic: Media (Print News)
Grade Level: 6-8
Time: 90 minutes



[View how this lesson fits the standards](#)

[View Video for Craig Flournoy](#) or [read the transcript](#)

Materials:

- Computer with internet access, external speakers, and a LCD projector OR access to a computer lab with Internet access and headphones for each student
- Updated Media Player recommended. The Player can be downloaded for free at <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/>
- Copies of various publications rich in graphics (e.g. USA Today and Newsweek)
- A copy of a news article without graphics (as in a print-out version of an online publication)
- Download Lesson Plan: ([MS Word](#), [PDF](#))

Learning Objectives:

Students will

1. identify ways of presenting print information;
2. recognize different effects that modes of information presentation have on audiences;
3. design features to highlight important information in print;
4. defend their choice of graphic support for the text; and
5. practice presentation skills.

PRE-VIEWING (15-20 minutes)

1. Before the class, find an article on a serious topic published with the use of graphics, color, pictures, etc and prepare a text only version of it.
2. In class, show both versions and ask students which one they would pick to read. Listen to 2-3 responses. Tell the students that the text is identical in both cases and deals with serious issues.
3. Ask students what a news story should have to make a difference. Elicit several responses but don't start a discussion yet. Tell the class that they are going to watch a short documentary about a reporter who strives to make a difference with his stories.

VIEWING & DISCUSSION (15-20 minutes)

1. As a class, watch Craig Flournoy's video, which can be accessed at www.americantrusteesproject.org. If you have difficulties accessing the videos, please visit our [Media Help page](#).
2. Discuss the advice Craig gives his students about collecting data for an investigative report. Why does a reporter need to get to the site? What kind of information would s/he be missing without such a visit?

3. The movie mentions two investigative reports – one that managed to produce an effect and the other that did not have a calculated impact. Ask the class what they think contributed to the fate of the reports.

APPLICATION (45-60 minutes)

1. Ask students if the way information is presented helps or hinders getting a point across. Elicit a couple of responses.

2. Tell the class that they are going to explore ways of presenting information to make it reader-friendly. Distribute copies of publications to students (1 copy per a small group of 2-3 people). Ask the group to list various way of information presentation.

3. After groups have reported their findings, draw the class attention to the varieties of sidebars (short written and /or visual information usually placed beside a larger article).

NOTE: Depending on the publications selected for this activity, the students may not have a ready example of all types of sidebars possible. However, due to their ubiquity, it is likely that the class is familiar with most of the following:

- a. pull quotes,
- b. lists,
- c. bio data & mini-profiles,
- d. graphs & tables,
- e. diagrams,
- f. timelines,
- g. dictionary definitions,
- h. Q & A's,
- i. quotes,
- j. survey & polls,
- k. ratings,
- l. step-by-step guides,
- m. maps, etc.

4. As a class, discuss the following questions:

- Why do publications include sidebars with stories?
- What sidebar do you find the most interesting/attractive/informative?
- Which sidebar do you think is the least interesting/attractive/informative?
- Are there any stories that could go without sidebars? If so, which ones?
- Are there any stories that require a particular type of sidebar? If so, which ones (give examples)?
- Are there particular types of sidebars that would go with any story? Why?

NOTE: As the discussion goes on, you may want to document students' answers and suggestions on the board.

5. Distribute a copy of an article having removed/blacked out/hidden/covered all sidebars in advance. If using an online resource, opt for a printer-friendly version for these purposes.

NOTE: If the class meets in a computer lab, it might be easier to clean the text in some word-processing program. The students can then access the file and introduce their own sidebars – the ultimate objective of the activity.

6. Ask the students to read the article and in small groups of 3-4 decide what information to highlight in the article via sidebars. Allow 10-15 minutes for a discussion and allocate the remaining time of the class for project work and presentations.

7. Listen to the presentations. If the groups work on the same article, ask each group to provide justification for their use of form and content of sidebars.

ASSESSMENT

Student may be assessed on:

1. project completion and quality of work;
2. group work; and
3. presentation skills.