

LESSON: News Literacy: Covering community at The Tenderloin Times

Description

Students will learn about The Tenderloin Times, a Pulitzer Prize-nominated publication once called “the first paper to write about homelessness” and “a tip sheet to the major media” about diverse, vibrant low-income communities and the issues they face. Students will examine/analyze an issue, evaluate the various type of news stories, columns, ads and other material published, and discuss the paper’s coverage of community issues.

Objectives

- Students will analyze the various types of stories in the August 1985 issue
- Students will review and discuss sources used in reporting
- Students will draw conclusions about how the Times engaged and served its audience

Common Core State Standards

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1](#)

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1](#)

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10](#)

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

[Partnership for 21st Century Skills — Student Outcomes](#)

- Critical Thinking: Reason effectively, use systems thinking; make judgments and decisions
- Communication and Collaboration: Communicate clearly; collaborate with others
- Information Literacy: Access and evaluate information; use and manage information
- Media Literacy: Analyze media

Length

One 50-minute class

Materials / resources

- Class set of PDF of Tenderloin Times or access to internet for August 1985 issue: <https://archive.org/details/tenderlointimes97unse>
- Post-It Notes (at least two-three per per student)
- Optional/homework: Class set of printout or access to internet for “Last Days of the Tenderloin Times” http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Last_Days_of_the_Tenderloin_Times

Lesson step-by-step (constructivist/prep, read, activity, close and see also differentiation below)

Flipped classroom option: Assign the reading noted in materials above as homework before class.

1. Construct learning and build background using prior knowledge – 10-15 minutes

Start by asking students for examples of issues in their communities that they would expect local journalists to cover either online or in a print newspaper. What types of stories are covered and which stories are not being told? Examples of covered stories could include crime, traffic accidents and weather; examples of untold stories could include poverty, schools and stories that might be best told in another language, for example, psychological services for Vietnamese immigrants. Accept all examples, and push for explanations of why some stories are covered and others are not. Discuss how editors and reporters make choices about what to publish (or not). Talk about the obstacles as well as the upside in talking to various types of people (rich/poor; educated/not; English-speaking/bilingual or native language only) when reporting for a community publication.

2. Read and note – 10 minutes

Give students a copy or link to the August 1985 issue of the Tenderloin Times. This can be silent reading during class or homework before class. If assigned as homework, you may include this story as part of your overall discussion above and proceed more quickly to step 3.

Ask students to use Post-It Notes to jot down two or three stories that stand out to them as ones that they particularly like, that served the community, or that they believe would not be published online or in print today. Choices will vary and could include: Main news story about pedestrian death rate; “Voices” column on “what makes you laugh”; ads for donated clothes or cheap apartments; poetry; a letter from the mayor’s office.

3. Activity and assessment - 15 minutes

Ask students to share and compare their notes in pairs or small groups; if class size and space allow, ask students to post their notes onto a whiteboard, or have pairs/small groups use a desk to rank the stories from most/least favorite or to find common themes. Tell them that they are laying out their version of the Tenderloin Times. Compare and discuss. Why did the Times choose to publish the stories that they did? Why did you pick the stories that you did? What kind of portrait do these stories paint? Would you define the “voices” and poetry as “news”? Why or why not? Is the Tenderloin a sad place, a great community, or something else? Now that you have analyzed and produced your version of the Times, how might you describe this neighborhood to others?

4. Closure – 5 minutes

Ask students to share what they thought of the Tenderloin Times. Discuss how reporters work with community sources to find stories. Draw attention to how advertisements, “voices” columns and poetry provide alternative (though sometimes unverified) points of view. Collect Post-It Notes/handouts or capture group work by taking a photo of a desk or whiteboard.

5. Optional homework: Read/write a reflection or journal entry on “Last Days of the Tenderloin Times.” Does it surprise you to learn that the Times was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1985 for its coverage of community issues? Or that it was the nation’s first newspaper to publish in four languages? Even though the paper had limited resources, what advantages might it have had over its competitors in terms of covering its community?

Differentiation

The teacher or a group leader may read selected headlines and/or point out story types (main news, features, columns, ads, primary documents) to groups of lower-level readers. Instead of the full issue, selected pages from the issue may be used. Providing the issue ahead of time and assigning as homework will provide additional time for slower readers. If using a hard copy of selected pages, pen or pencil instead of Post-It Notes may be used to identify stories for discussion.

Note for San Francisco 2018 spring convention attendees: A visit to the Tenderloin Museum and a guided walking tour of the Tenderloin is available on Thursday, April 13, from 12:45 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. For more information, please see the convention registration book, or contact media tour organizers Kristy Blackburn (blackburnkristy@gmail.com) and Paul Kandell (pkandell@gmail.com).