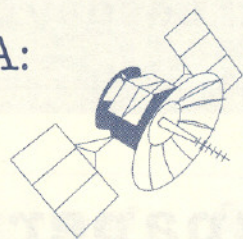


UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA: Studying and Creating a Newspaper

Jayashree Nambiar



The 'newspaper project' is one of a three-part study of the media undertaken by class 8. The two other areas of study are 'advertisement' and 'television and film'. The objective, simply stated, is to make the student a discerning user of the media.

The duration of the project is two weeks: daily, two classroom periods of 40 minutes as well as around 1 hour at home are needed. During this period the daily newspaper provides the text to be studied. Students bring the previous day's newspaper to school everyday. Reading the paper for half an hour everyday is routine homework.

Introducing the project: one question and an exercise

- What do you read in the newspaper?
- Ask three people of different ages and backgrounds why each reads the newspaper and what news s/he finds most interesting.

Follow-up

Class discussion around the information collected reveals that **the newspaper serves a variety of functions and carries a variety of information.**

Activity

- Each student brings in three articles s/he has read and wishes to talk about (stuck in his/her notebook and commented upon)
- Articles are read out, questions are asked, comments and explanations elicited (such a class needs leisure)

Follow-up

Individual students' interests are shared, ways of reading and interpretations are discussed



Activity

- A page-by-page study of a newspaper is made to understand how a newspaper is organised, and the need for organisation.

Follow-up

The students attempt a visual representation of the content of each page, by cutting and pasting headlines in their notebooks

Activity

- The various aspects of the design of Page One of the newspaper is observed and studied: the masthead, the columns, the fonts used, the spacing, the picture, the box and other specific features. Prioritising of news is also studied – two editions of the same paper are compared.

Follow-up

The students collect front pages of different newspapers and put them up for a comparative display

Activity

Two commonly read papers of the same day are read, compared and contrasted, in order to understand the distinction between facts, opinions, bias and interpretation. Questions for discussion include:

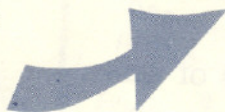
- Why must a newspaper report only facts?
- While reporting facts is bias/interpretation discernable?
- What does 'freedom of the press' mean?

Activity

Discussion on differences, advantages and disadvantages of news in print, on the radio, on television and the net.

Activity

Examination of the three sections of the editorial page – the editorial, the analyses and readers' letters





Activity

Three statements form the basis of a discussion on the role of newspapers:

- The newspaper exposes the reader to realities different from his own.
- The newspaper has a crucial role in a democracy.
- The newspaper is itself a source of history.

(Here one may draw upon one's experiences and understanding, information on the origin of newspapers, a country's constitution and freedom of speech, events in history. Selected articles and the papers of fifty years ago are used as triggers.)

Homework Exercise

About 50 questions are set on the day's newspaper, to be worked on at home. The Exercise expects students to locate and comprehend information in the paper.

Activity: Writing a report

The students learn to write a newspaper report, keeping in mind – headline, dateline, sources, the use of passive voice and the appropriate tense, formal expression, paragraphing of content, ensuring newsworthiness of the story, and accountability.

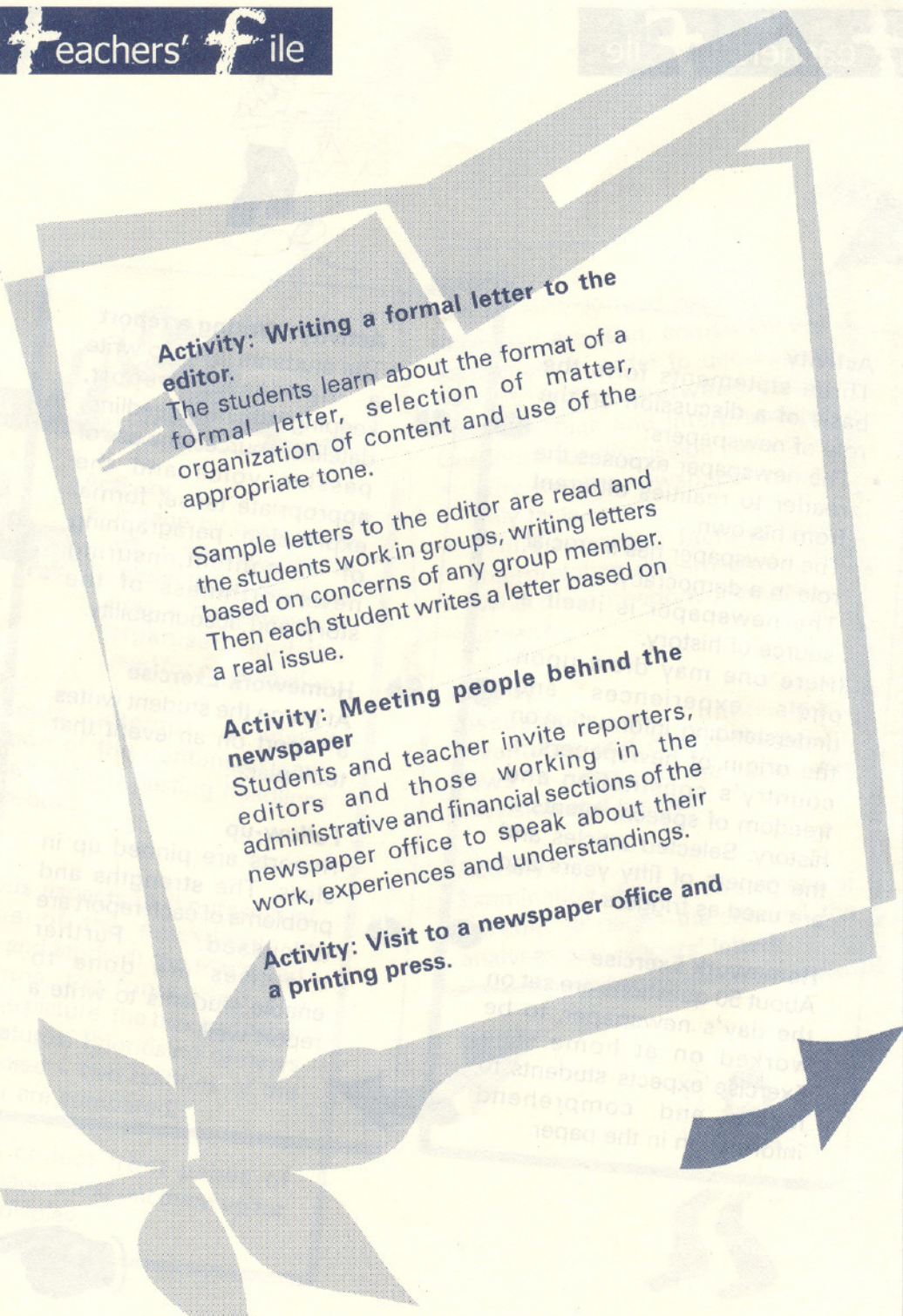
Homework Exercise

At home the student writes a report on an event that took place.

Follow-up

Reports are pinned up in class. The strengths and problems of each report are discussed. Further exercises are done to enable students to write a report well.





Activity: Writing a formal letter to the editor.

The students learn about the format of a formal letter, selection of matter, organization of content and use of the appropriate tone.

Sample letters to the editor are read and the students work in groups, writing letters based on concerns of any group member. Then each student writes a letter based on a real issue.

Activity: Meeting people behind the newspaper

Students and teacher invite reporters, editors and those working in the administrative and financial sections of the newspaper office to speak about their work, experiences and understandings.

Activity: Visit to a newspaper office and a printing press.

Thursday Enquirer

Class Eight's Newspaper

Number 100 - 1000

FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 1997

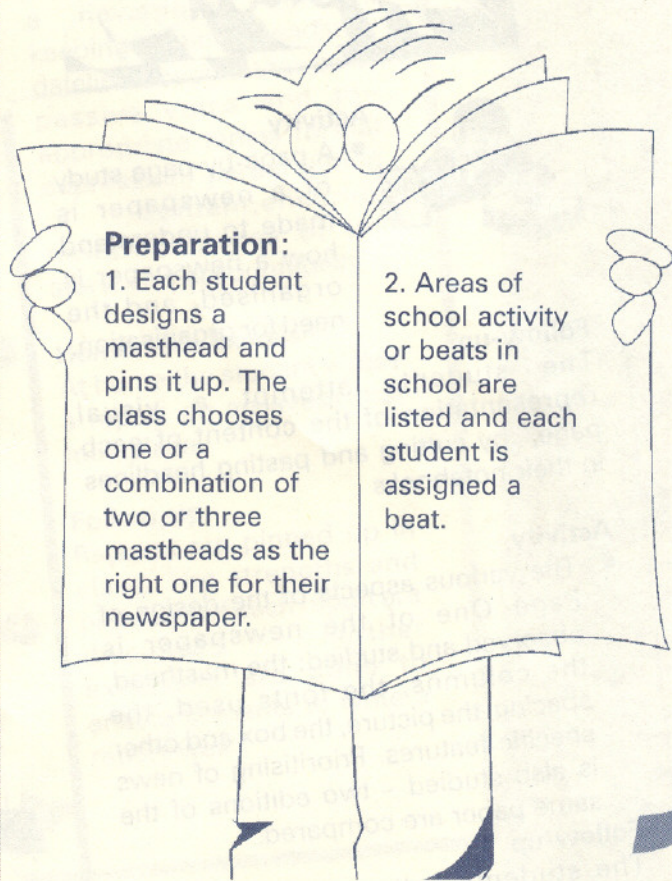
Crucial questions to be considered

(towards the end of the course):

? How is it that all newspapers, by and large, consider the same articles newsworthy and prioritise articles similarly?

? Do you think that newspapers give a correct record of human life in the present? If the newspaper were to be read as history at a later period what kinds of information would we not have?

? Why is the news of an air crash killing twenty front-page news while a bus accident killing a hundred is third-page news?

Creating A N

Tuesday Reporter

THE ANNUAL CLASS 8 NEWSPAPER

4 pages, Pichay Chinnai

The School B.P. Chennai, August 25, 1998

Shri. P. S. E. S. S.

Newspaper

Day one

- The reporters report on various incidents in their areas or beats. These reports are rewritten to the writer's satisfaction.
- Events that happen in and around their homes are also reported upon in the evening.
- The students attempt cartoons and comic strips of their own.
- Letters to the editor are invited from the class that attempted the study the previous year.

Day two

- The reports are sorted and classified into home and school news, front-page news and into the three other pages.
- These reports are read through, edited, selected from and finally, a page layout is made. The same is done with 'letters to the editor'. The selected items are then keyed into the computer and taken out in discs. (Every student has an article in the newspaper)

Day three

The page is laid out by the student on the page-maker with a professional, edited finally, and a copy made. Photocopies are also made for each student to take home the next day.