

This Week's Focus: Review Writing

Reviews are a great way for news staffs to provide a valuable service to readers. And anything is fair game to review — movies, books, video games, restaurants and more. If you can use it, you can review it.

But learning to write a review can take time, especially when you consider the time it takes to assess the source material (i.e. to read the book, watch the movie, etc.). To combat this problem, I have students complete a shorter review project involving children's picture books.

THE LESSON: WRITING A CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

For this assignment, I take my students to the media center and have them select a children's picture book. This could be a childhood favorite or something new to review. The audience for this project is caregivers like babysitters, nannies or parents — people who would have the opportunity to read books to children, in other words.

Then, using [this form](#), students write a quick outline of their review. Because the source material is so short, students can really focus on the structure of a review. From the form, then, I can see if students struggle with certain areas — providing too much plot summary and not enough actual review can be a big area of concern — and give them feedback.

This assignment serves as a formative precursor for a longer movie review we do after the children's book review is complete, and students can use the same form for their movie review if they choose.

FIND IT AT JEA.ORG:

Evaluating website credibility

Description

Students will learn the key questions they should ask in order to determine the credibility of online news websites.

Objectives

- Students will understand the key questions for determining a news website's credibility.
- Students will apply the key questions of online credibility to popular news websites.
- Students will analyze the credibility of popular news websites based on their application of the key questions.
- Students will evaluate news websites based on key credibility questions and make recommendations for how news websites could improve their credibility ranking.



The link

The link to the full lesson is [HERE](#).

NOTE: This lesson is available free to **everyone** during the dates listed at the top of this page. If you're not a member yet, consider joining JEA today for access to all of the resources.

Team Builder

Carrie Teller, Ed W. Clark High School, Las Vegas, Nevada

REINFORCING SKILLS

For yearbook, I have students complete a photography scavenger hunt. They are given a checklist which includes all of the photography techniques and various subject matter. For journalism, I have the students create their own online news magazine using Google Sites.

My favorite JEA lesson

I really liked the lesson where students have to look at the reliability of news websites. It has made a difference in how they think about and approach their writing.



ADVISER ADVICE

The final product doesn't have to be perfect. Take the time and get to know the kids who are on your staff and let them know they can trust you. It will make a huge difference in the long run.

You've Got Style

Suggestions from Cindy*

LEGISLATIVE TITLES

On first reference, use *Rep.*, *Reps.*, *Sen.* and *Sens.* as formal titles before one or more names. Spell out and lowercase *representative* and *senator* in other uses. The use of a title such as *Rep.* or *Sen.* in first reference is normal in most stories. It is not mandatory, however, provided an individual's title is given later in the story.

Spell out other legislative titles in all uses. Capitalize formal titles such as *chair*, *city councilor*, *delegate*, etc., when they are used before a name. Lowercase in other uses.

Add *U.S.* or *state* before a title only if necessary to avoid confusion.

Do not use legislative titles before a name on second reference unless they are part of a direct quotation.

* Style pro Cindy Horchem, CJE, is a retired adviser and the current JEA business and projects coordinator