



Photo by David R. Neilson

Informational Text in Newspapers

Article of the Week: “Raptors in Bayfield County”

A Close Reading Opportunity

Summary:

“To help build my students’ prior knowledge, I assign them an “Article of the Week” every Monday morning. By the end of the school year I want them to have read 35 to 40 articles about

what is going on in the world. It is not enough to simply teach my students to recognize theme in a given novel; if my students are to become literate, they must broaden their reading experiences into real-world text.”

– Kelly Gallagher

The following lesson plan is based on an article and an event that occurred in Bayfield County to an osprey family in Lake Namakagon. It uses close reading best practices in understanding informational text.

Background to frame the newspaper article

Recent headlines in Bayfield County covered the shooting deaths of two birds of prey, and emphasize that negative attitudes continue to exist towards these birds. In August 2014, headlines were in newspapers as far as 200 miles away about the shooting of an osprey and a barred owl within 15 miles of the Cable Natural History Museum.

Many local stories tell of the historical trapping and killing of birds of prey. There can be a negative attitude toward predators that occurs within our local hunting culture. The history of raptor–human interactions in North America has shown a continuous persecution of raptors, especially after improvements in shotguns and rifles increased along with the popularity of game hunting, particularly in the eastern United States (Hornaday 1914, Bildstein 2001).

Our Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Environmental Education Model Objectives stress the importance of gaining an awareness of the natural world that can lead to attitude changes and better stewardship of our environment, which is a goal the Museum hopes to achieve through our raptor education programs.

Educational Standards

Common Core State Standards: Reading Informational Text

Learning Objectives

After this activity, students should be able to:

- Promote critical thinking, education, and informed citizenship through the presentation of controversial issues.
- Read complex informational texts and respond to them in writing.

Materials List

- Article of the Week: Officials Search for Wisconsin osprey, owl shooter
- Article of the Week Model: Destroying Precious Land for Gas
- Harvard's How to do a Close Reading (optional teacher background)
- Article of the Week (AoW) Overview

Each student should have access to:

- Article of the Week: Officials Search for Wisconsin osprey, owl shooter
- Highlighters/pens

Procedures

Before the activity, the teacher should be ready to:

1. Teacher to read the AoW Overview.
2. Make copies of the Article of the Week (AoW) Handout (Osprey article).
3. Frame the text (i.e., verbally hook students into the content.)
4. Model how to show evidence of close reading (annotate).
5. Explicitly teach some of the tough vocabulary students will encounter.
6. Give students time to get started on the reading task.

With the Students:

1. **Framing the Text to Hook the Reader:** Instruct students to stand on their desk chair if they strongly agree with the upcoming statement, stay in their chair if they agree, or crouch down on the floor if they disagree. Then share the statement with the students: "Ospreys should be hunted because they compete with fishermen for fish in our local lakes."
2. Let a few students share their ideas that represent different opinions.
3. Introduce the newspaper article and ask students to do the following:
 - a. **Mark your confusion.** In other words, mark spots in the text where you get confused. The idea is that **mature readers are not those who can read**

every text perfectly, but instead they are those who know where, exactly, a text is throwing them. Mature readers don't say, "I didn't get it." They say, "I started getting lost in the middle of the article," or "I got thrown when the author mentioned Boko Haram in Nigeria."

- b. **Show evidence of a close reading.** This basically means **annotate**. I tell my students I'm looking for 1-2 thoughtful examples of mature thinking (more on that below). I show them student examples that *do* exemplify this and those that don't.
 - c. **Write a 1+ page reflection.** The goal here is for kids to respond thoughtfully to the article. Gallagher consistently provides 1-3 possible response questions that help kids who are stuck." (Source: www.davestuartjr.com)
4. **Model how to show evidence of close reading (annotate):** Show and go through the annotated article provided named Destroying Precious Land for Gas. (Source: www.kellygallagher.org/resources/articles.html.) Another example can be found at: <http://vms.vale.k12.or.us/sites/vms.vale.k12.or.us/files/u13/example%20paper.pdf>.
5. **Explicitly teach some of the tough vocabulary students will encounter.** Vocabulary that might be challenging in this article may include:
Federally protected birds: The Migratory Bird Treaty Act makes it illegal for anyone to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird except under the terms of a valid permit issued pursuant to Federal regulations.
Euthanized: put to death humanely (specifically a living being, like a dog or cat).
Decomposing: make or become rotten; decay or cause to decay.
Psyche: the mind, soul, or spirit, as opposed to the body. In psychology, the psyche is the center of thought, feeling, and motivation, consciously and unconsciously directing the body's reactions to its social and physical environment.

Resources

For more information on teaching with an Article of the Week, see the following resources below.

<http://www.kellygallagher.org/article-of-the-week/>

This site gives a list and links to articles of the week by author Kelly Gallagher.

<http://www.davestuartjr.com/article-of-the-week-assignment/>

This site has videos that teach ways to implement the articles of the week, a link to all of Gallagher's past articles, and a rubric that can be used for grading purposes.

<http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/how-do-close-reading>

The Harvard College Writing Center on how to do a close reading.

<http://vms.vale.k12.or.us/articles-week>

This is the site of a Middle School that has adopted the AoW and has links to articles along with resources teachers can use.

<http://www.northbergen.k12.nj.us/Page/2853>

This site has a PowerPoint presentation to teach AoW, and several models that offer a grading rubric.

Activity ideas come from the sites listed above. Adapted by the Cable Natural History Museum for "Raptor Discovery: Bridging Literacy Gaps." Produced under a 2015-2016 grant from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board.

