

THIS GUIDE CONTAINS:

- 4 lesson plans
- A list of Resources Cited and Additional Recommended Resources

TIME FRAME:

- 1-2 class sessions

TARGET AGE:

- Grades 10-12

DISCIPLINE:

- LANGUAGE ARTS

**A Study Guide from
Chicago Humanities Festival
2009 SUMMER INSTITUTE
FOR TEACHERS**

JOURNALISM
with Natalie Moore



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NATALIE MOORE covers news and issues in the Englewood neighborhood and surrounding areas for Chicago Public Radio. Prior to joining WBEZ, Natalie worked for the *Detroit News*, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and the *Associated Press* in Jerusalem. Her work has been published widely and she is co-author of the book *Deconstructing Tyrone: A New Look at Black Masculinity in the Hip-Hop Generation*. She teaches at Columbia College Chicago and is the former program chair for the Association for Women Journalists

To talk about journalism in the 21st century, you have to talk about media literacy.

Natalie Moore promotes the uses of other media in school beyond traditional written literature and assignments. She focuses on the need for increased media literacy instruction in school as students encounter many of these forms on a daily basis without a critical lens through which to filter the information. Although many students are extremely comfortable navigating various technologically-based forms of media, they have not necessarily had enough instruction to understand the benefits and drawbacks of each form.

ABOUT THE CHICAGO HUMANITIES FESTIVAL

The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) creates year-round opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic circumstances to explore, to enjoy, and to support the arts and humanities. We accomplish this by presenting programs throughout the year, culminating in two annual Festivals of the Humanities, one in the spring specifically for children and families and one in the fall for the general public. CHF's mission of providing broad access to the humanities—at a low ticket price—depends in part on the generosity of its committed and enthusiastic supporters. www.chicagohumanities.org

#1 LEARNING THE TERMS

PURPOSE: This series of questions should provide a structure that will encourage students to investigate the people, the institutions, and their assumptions about where they are getting their news, information, and entertainment. They may be surprised at what they discover. Prior to any specific assignments regarding media literacy, it is helpful for students to understand the terminology and techniques related to the field. Students should know some of the technical terms within journalism, for example story structure (the upside-down pyramid structure with the story at the top and the details at the bottom, the lead sentence, the kicker at the end to give the reader a treat for making it to the end), to professional terms (like journalists' "beats," or areas of expertise for which they are responsible for reporting). See Resource list on page 4.

- What is a media personality? What is a journalist? What characteristics define the two? Are there similarities? Differences? Can you give examples of people who fit in each category and justify how you came to that conclusion?
- What is bias and what does it mean in journalistic terms? What is fairness and what does that mean in journalistic terms? Does every person or company have a bias? (yes) Does that necessarily imply that content is treated unfairly? (no) Have students try to identify a media outlet or journalist's bias. Does it affect the treatment of story or subject?
- What is dialogical writing? What do we make of the idea there are only two sides to every story? Good journalism incorporates as

many voices and perspectives as necessary to tell the most complete story. Have students select a news article. Can they identify more than two sides or dimensions to the story?

#2 LEARNING THE LANDSCAPE

PURPOSE: The media landscape is a dynamic and ever-changing field. Engaging in conversations and examinations of this evolving landscape should be educational for students and educators alike.

- As of 2009, there are five major media conglomerates. (To stay up to date on media consolidation, see www.freepress.net.) Ask your students to consider: Where do they get their news? and Where do they get their entertainment? These questions will help illuminate for students how few companies comprise the mainstream news and entertainment sectors. Have students look at which parent company distributes the media they follow, for instance, the most recent CD or magazine they purchased. Are they surprised to discover the parent company? Does it seem to make a difference in the content that they are reading or listening to?
- What is media fragmentation? How has the increase in niche or specialized media providers changed the landscape? What are the benefits? What are the drawbacks?

#3 COMPARING FRONT PAGES

PURPOSE: The main purpose of this activity is for students to recognize the bias that shapes a newspaper's approach to news. Students should see the same topic featured as both positive and negative, both important and irrelevant depending on the publication. This will increase awareness about the importance of understanding authorship in regards to being a responsible consumer of media.

- Have students bring in front pages of newspapers from the same day from as many different sources as possible. Try to include local, national, and international news sources to make the activity more complete. (They may need to do some of this online or the teacher may have to be responsible for the resources depending on the students. Also, make sure that newspapers with differing political biases are represented in the collection.)
- Have students analyze the collection of newspapers to determine differences and similarities. Ask them to list those observations, but remind them to pay attention to which newspapers inspired such observations.
- Discuss the findings. Ask them questions about their discoveries. Did all newspapers feature the same stories? How did different newspapers approach the same topic? What biases seem to influence their headlines? What does it mean if news is front-page worthy for one paper but buried on a much later page in another?
- Lead a more general discussion about the implications of such differences. Why is it important for readers to be aware of the factors

that produce differing results in various newspapers? This may also lead itself nicely into a discussion about whether or not it is possible for news to be without bias.

TAKING IT FURTHER: This activity can provide teachers with a great opportunity to allow English Language Learners or bilingual students to enhance the lesson. If they have access to newspapers from their native countries or from countries that speak other languages, they can bring in those papers and translate them for the class. This would allow the entire class to get a sense of how issues are viewed by other countries.

This assignment can also be a much longer and more in-depth activity, and it can work with forms of media other than newspapers. Students can follow one newspaper for one week and then switch to a differing bias for the week that follows. This would give them the opportunity to see how news is portrayed over time and in sections other than the front page. Also, students could follow one news story from multiple sources including blogs, cable and network news shows, websites, magazines, and other forms of media.

#4 WHAT IS SATIRE?

PURPOSE: The numbers of people who say that they receive their news from satirical sources continues to grow, yet many students have a very limited understanding of what satire is. For students to watch satirical news shows critically, they must have a solid understanding of how satire works and how it differs not only from traditional news sources, but also from other literary ideas like comedy, parody, stereotyping, and hyperbole. This activity should offer students a very approachable introduction to that conversation. As students improve their abili-

ties to distinguish between satirical and real news sources, it may be interesting for students to watch a show like "Weekend Update" on *Saturday Night Live* that combines satire with real but outrageous stories to see if your students can distinguish between the two.

- Find a clip of a satirical news show like *The Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report* and a clip featuring the same topic on a network or cable news show.
- Play both clips back to back for your class and ask them to take notes on the differences and similarities of both clips.
- Discuss the observations. How does satire use traditional forms of news? How does it differ? Why do those differences and similarities matter? Is one form more accurate than the other? Is it OK to get your news from satirical sources like *The Onion* or the *Daily Show* alone? Is it OK to get your news from one traditional news show alone?
- Define the elements of satire that appear to be necessary to the clip. Are those necessary to other forms of satire as well? Try to create a working definition of what satire is.

TAKING IT FURTHER: The best way to understand how satire works is to make one. After students understand the definition and components related to satire, ask them to make their own satire. Your class could make its own satirical newspaper or groups of students could make their own newscasts.

WORKS CITED

Free Press: www.freepress.net

Free Press is a national, nonpartisan, non-profit organization working to reform the media. Through education, organizing and advocacy, they promote diverse and independent media ownership, strong public media, quality journalism, and universal access to communications.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Beachwood Reporter:

www.beachwoodreporter.com/politics/

Columbia Journalism Review:

<http://www.cjr.org/resources/>

The Freedom Forum: www.freedomforum.org

The Freedom Forum, based in Washington, DC, is a nonpartisan foundation dedicated to free press, free speech and free spirit for all people. The foundation focuses on three priorities: the Newseum, the First Amendment and newsroom diversity.

Hopkinson, Natalie and Natalie Y. Moore.

Deconstructing Tyrone: A New Look at Black Masculinity in the Hip-Hop Generation. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2006.

Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones:*

Freeing the Writer Within. Boston: Shambala Publications, Inc., 1986, 2005.

Lamott, Annie. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life.*

New York: Anchor Books, 1995.

Lerman, Liz and John Borstel. *Liz Lerman's*

Critical Response Process: A method for getting useful feedback on anything you make, from dance to dessert. Available at: <http://www.danceexchange.org/performance/criticalresponse.html>

[danceexchange.org/performance/criticalresponse.html](http://www.danceexchange.org/performance/criticalresponse.html)

McChesney, Robert. *The Problem of the Media:*

U.S. Communication Politics in the Twenty-First Century. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004.

McSweeney's, especially [Issue #31](#) (March 2009) on Form.

National Public Radio Ombudsman: <http://www.npr.org/ombudsman/>

Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism: http://www.journalism.org/resources/j_tools

Postman, Neil, "Future Schlock" from *Conscientious Objections: Stirring Up Trouble About Language, Technology and Education.* New York: First Vintage Books, 1992, pp. 162-174.

Poynter OnLine: <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=45>

Prose, Francine. *Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for People Who Love Books and for Those Who Want to Write Them.* New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

Racialicious: The intersection between race, news and pop culture: www.racialicious.com

Society of Professional Journalists Ethics Code: <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

Teachers and Writers Collaborative:

www.twc.org

Teachers & Writers Collaborative (T&W) seeks to educate the imagination by offering innovative creative writing programs for students and teachers, and by providing a variety of publications and resources to support learning through the literary arts.

SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS (SIT)

Each year, the Chicago Humanities Festival offers the Summer Institute for Teachers (SIT). This three-day workshop is designed for educators interested in personal and professional growth with lectures, workshops, and discussions from presenters who work in professional fields related to the yearly topic. The 2009 SIT theme was Creative Writing: Innovative Approaches to Writing & Reading in the Classroom. Presenters included cin salach on POETRY, Lawrence Weschler on NARRATIVE NON-FICTION, Stuart Flack on PLAYWRITING, Josh Elder on GRAPHIC NOVELS, Natalie Moore on JOURNALISM, and Bayo Ojikutu on FICTION.

This lesson plan and comprehensive bibliography were developed by SIT's Master Teacher, Greg Wright, from Walter Payton College Preparatory High School, and CHF staff based on Ms. Moore's presentation at the 2009 Summer Institute for Teachers.