

## MEMORY

# Telling a Real Story

By Media What

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### Lesson Overview

How do journalists get all their information to write news and feature stories? This lesson explores the role of journalists and invites students to consider the challenges that may come with the profession. More focus is placed on feature stories, and person-to-person interviews, and the aim is to enable students to plan their own individual interviews, develop their own question set and conduct an interview with another person.

The lesson plan *Choosing What Story To Tell*, is a natural follow-up lesson, that invites students to consider how the information collected from an interview can inform either a feature story, or a short documentary focused on the person interviewed.

This lesson was developed as part of Your Story project, which was funded by the US Department of State, Alumni TIES and World Learning.

### Lesson Objectives

- To understand the role of journalists
- To understand journalists' code of conduct, ethical concerns and challenges
- To understand journalistic interviewing practices
- To apply interviewing practice in two-person groups
- To reflect on the information collected from the interview

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the role of journalists
- Know journalists' code of conduct, ethical concerns when collecting information
- Be aware of challenges that journalists face
- Have a good grasp of interviewing techniques to facilitate a conversation
- Apply their knowledge to interview a fellow classmate
- Reflect critically on their interview experience to evaluate collected information
- To plan and select their own question set for future interviews

### Key Vocabulary

**Beat** = a specialization on a topic, either on an issue, or a specific area e.g. political beat, education beat etc.

**Code of conduct** = agreed principles that must guide journalists when reporting stories

## Lesson Outline

SLIDES	Lesson Plan Instructions	Duration
<p><b>BEGIN</b> by going over what this lesson will cover. Each section is broken down so students have a mental map of the goals of the lesson.</p>		
<p><b>Why do we need journalists?</b> [Duration: 10']</p>		
#4	<p><b>ASK</b> students to think about what's the job of a journalist and feedback as a group.</p> <p><b>PROMPT</b> them to think more specifically if they respond with reporting the news. For example, how do they get the news? What responsibilities does a journalist have?</p> <p><i>Possible answers:</i> report the news, interview people, tell stories, write, research information, report the news quickly / on deadline, report accurate information, check information accuracy from different sources, find news stories</p>	10'
<p><b>What makes being a journalist hard?</b> [Duration: 34']</p>		
#6	<p><b>ASK</b> students to make a list of possible challenges that they think journalists may face.</p> <p><i>Possible answers:</i> finding news stories, finding information, checking information.</p>	7'
#7	<p><b>Activity</b></p> <p><b>ASK</b> students to investigate a newspaper of your choice. If you have access to a computer or tablets, this can be done by accessing the website, or students can investigate print issues, that you bring to class for this purpose. The aim of this activity is to allow students to understand the breadth of topics covered in a newspaper and the range of expertise that journalists can have, but also to understand the pressures a newsroom faces to deliver so much content, on such broad topics, on a daily basis.</p> <p><b>DISCUSS</b> as a class what students have found while investigating the selected newspapers.</p> <p><b>VOCABULARY:</b> understanding what a journalism <b>beat</b> is.</p> <p><b>VARIATION</b> You can vary this activity by differentiating the types of newspapers e.g. broadsheet &amp; tabloid, or regional &amp; national.</p>	10'
#9	<p><b>ASK</b> if students can think of any more challenges following the activity.</p> <p><i>Possible answers:</i> need to have expertise in specific areas, pressure to write stories quickly, pressure to find a news story to report daily, meeting hard deadlines, need to speak to a lot of sources to validate and support reported information.</p>	7'

#10-12	<p><b>ASK</b> students to individually think about possible rules that journalists may need to follow. Then ask them to pair up with another student and together to make a list of rules of conduct.</p> <p><b>CONNECT</b> students' rules to the journalists' <b>code of conduct</b>, the unwritten rules that journalists need to follow when reporting on a story.</p>	10'
<b>How do you interview someone? [Duration: 6']</b>		
#14-15	<p><b>PLAY</b> the clip from StoryCorps on the best practices for conducting an interview.</p> <p><b>ASK</b> students to note down tips that the video suggests.</p>	6'
<b>Your Turn: Ask like a journalist [Duration: 25']</b>		
#17	<p><b>INVITE</b> students to pair up with someone they don't know very well. Each student will take the role of the interviewer in turns, and should be encouraged to listen actively, write notes on the interviewee's responses, and ask follow-up questions, in order to get as many details as possible.</p> <p><b>HIGHLIGHT</b> the importance of listening in silence when an interviewee is speaking, and not interjecting or providing the answers. Also point out the importance of being open and accepting of interviewee's answers, and not judging or mocking responses.</p> <p><b>DIVIDE</b> student roles in each pair, so one student is Student 1 &amp; Student 2, so that it's easy to understand who's asking the questions during the activity.</p>	3'
#18	<p><b>Activity</b></p> <p><b>BEGIN</b> the activity and keep a timer for each question slide. There are a total of 6 question slides, so each student will get to ask three questions. One of those three, is a question of their choice.</p> <p><b>TIME</b> each question slide, so that each student has 2 minutes per question. Some students may finish before the 2-minute mark, and when this is the case, encourage them to listen actively and to ask follow-up questions to get a more detailed understanding of their interviewee.</p> <p><b>VARIATION</b> The questions are open-ended and reflective, and are meant to encourage an open conversation between students. If you would like to make this topic-specific, these questions can be modified, or alternately, students may brainstorm their own conversation-starter questions and these can inform this activity.</p>	12'
#24	<p><b>REFLECT</b> on the interview activity and ask students to consider what they found challenging.</p> <p><b>ENCOURAGE</b> students to think of ways they could possibly avoid the challenges they mentioned.</p>	5'

#25	<b>INVITE</b> students to go back to their notes and consider what possible stories could emerge from the interview, and how they might ask more questions in a follow-up interview, in order to get more information. Feedback as a group with some responses.	5'
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### Suggested Assignment

**Level 1** Ask students to write up a set of follow-up questions for the person they interviewed in class, based on what they think is an interesting story angle to further investigate.

**Level 2** Ask students to interview a family member and write up a short feature article to be featured in a local magazine, based on an interview (or a series of interviews) that the student conducts. The student must come up with a question set, set a time for the interview, record it, and then write the feature article based on the information collected.

**Level 3** In addition the Level 2 assignment, the feature article must be designed for as a magazine spread, which should include photo, headline, byline, columns etc., in the house style of an existing magazine either selected by the student, or set by the teacher.

### Recommended software for Level 3 Assignment:

1. [Pages](#)
2. [Adobe InDesign](#)
3. [Affinity Publisher](#)

### Additional Resources

Code of Ethics according to each European Country  
<https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes/europe>

Independent Press Standards Organisation (UK regulating body), Editors' Code of Practice  
<https://www.ipso.co.uk/editors-code-of-practice/>

Question bank: Great questions by StoryCorps, organized thematically  
<https://storycorps.org/participate/great-questions/>

Find more lesson plans at [medialearn.mediawhat.org](https://medialearn.mediawhat.org)



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