

CURRENT EVENTS: REGIONAL REPORTERS

Activities about current events are an excellent way to help students develop an awareness of stories and issues in communities outside of their own. Often, educators may only use an activity in which students examine and summarize news stories once or twice during a course. This week's current events activity is designed so that students regularly monitor and discuss news events from different parts of the world throughout a course or an academic year. Regular attention to global events encourages the development of students' global citizenship.

LEVEL

High beginner to advanced

SKILLS

Reading, writing, speaking, and listening

GOALS

Through this activity, students will be able to participate in the following tasks:

- Develop reading comprehension skills for non-fiction texts
- Understand and reflect on global current events
- Write and present news reports in groups

MATERIALS

- A list of regions or countries that students will be assigned to as reporters
- Access to international news sources online or in print ([Voice of America](#) and [News in Levels](#) are two sites with news stories available for different English proficiency levels.)
- Notebooks or paper and pencils

PREPARATION

- This activity is most effective when it is ongoing throughout the English course. It will work best if you regularly schedule a class period or other amount of time for students to report information and engage in discussion. The frequency of the reporting sessions can vary and can be weekly, bi-weekly, or even monthly. Keep in mind that the more frequently the sessions are scheduled, the more students will have the opportunity to learn about and reflect on news events from around the world.
- Decide on the dates for the reporting sessions and discussion. Again, these sessions can be as frequent as your schedule permits, but the more often they happen, the more students will benefit from the experience.
- Decide how you will group students or if you will allow students to choose their own groups. Ideally, each group would have no more than four members.
 - The number of groups will depend on how much time is available. Each group should have enough time to briefly share news stories from their assigned area of the world during part of the scheduled reporting session.
 - If the class is large, one option could be to have one half of the groups present at one session and the other half present at the next session. In this option, a group would report every other session.
- Create a list of areas of the world that students will be assigned to research and report on. Depending on the number of groups, the areas could be continents, regions, or countries (either one country or a group of countries). Students can also choose their own areas.

PROCEDURE

1. Explain the purpose of the activity to the class by saying, “An important part of being a global citizen is to learn about events that are taking place outside of our own community or country. Knowing about these events and thinking about how they affect people helps us to better understand our role in the world.”
2. Tell students that in order to support this goal, they will work in groups and become reporters for an assigned or chosen area of the world. Say, “As reporters, your group will be in charge of monitoring news stories and events from the part of the world you are assigned. We will have regularly scheduled reporting sessions and class discussions. During this time, your group will give the class an overview of the news from your area. You will also listen to other groups and participate in a class discussion about global events.”
3. If desired, give students an overview of the news sources you plan to use for the activity. You can show them the websites or print materials you would like them to use, and ask if they have any other ideas about where to find news stories.
4. If your students need explicit instructions, you can choose one area of the world and model how to use the news sources to collect information. If needed, provide students with guiding questions, or use a copy of the 5Ws + H Graphic Organizer from [Try This: Current Events](#) in *English Teaching Forum*. You can also choose a news story and model how to record information on this graphic organizer. Otherwise, students can simply take notes about important news stories and the key elements they would like to share during the reporting session.
5. Let students know the dates for the reporting sessions scheduled throughout the course. Explain that they will have to regularly check the news throughout the period of time between reporting sessions in order to stay informed.
 - a. If posting homework on the board or elsewhere, include monitoring the news as part of the homework. Remind students regularly about this part of the assignment.

- b. If students will need to monitor the news at school, periodically provide them time to do so.
6. During the reporting sessions, groups should gather together. Provide time for each group to share news stories from their area of the world. Groups can present in front of the class or from where they are seated.
 - a. Emphasize to students that they cannot share every detail of each news item, but that they should focus on summarizing the key information. Summarizing may take some practice, but asking groups to stick to an allotted amount of time will help.
 - b. Try to leave 15–20 minutes at the end of the reporting session for students to discuss what they have heard.
7. Once each group has had a chance to share current events from their assigned area, you can use the remaining class time in several different ways:
 - **Lead a class discussion about the current events.** The discussion can take place as a whole class or in small groups (either the same as reporting groups or different ones). Questions to ask can include: Which news story do you think impacts you the most and why? Which news story was the most uplifting, devastating, etc. and why? Which news story do you think will cause the most change in people’s lives? Is there a story you would like to know more about or to keep following, and why? Did any common issues or topics seem to appear in multiple areas of the world during this reporting session? If so, what were they?
 - **Ask students to write a reflection.** If you plan to use this strategy often, you may want to have students keep a “News Journal” in a single notebook. They can respond to the questions above in writing rather than as part of a discussion. Another option is to have students imagine they are writing a letter to someone directly affected by the news story or event.

- **Have students choose a news story and make a prediction.** Students can predict what will happen next or as a result of the event. This can be done in writing or as part of a discussion. Students can also create an illustration or comic strip about what they think will happen.
- **Write letters to government officials or the editor.** If students are concerned about an issue or have strong feelings about an event or news story, you may want to guide them to write to the editor of the news source, or even to government officials, if appropriate. Depending on students' experience with this type of writing, you may need to discuss the components of a formal letter and offer them support as they write.

Keeping up-to-date on current events outside of their own communities can help students develop an understanding of common issues affecting people around the world. By reflecting on these issues, having thoughtful discussion with peers, and potentially writing to newspapers or government officials, students begin to understand how their own actions can play a role in the larger global community.