

Planetary Reporters

Summary

Students will read about a current event/discovery in solar system science. They will then assume the role of news producers and write a story for as television newscast. The language arts part of the lesson will focus on writing coherent narratives and answering the questions of "who, what, why, when, where, how." There is also a review of summarizing.

Additional Core Ties

English Language Arts Grade 6

[Writing Standard 3 c.](#)

Time Frame

3 class periods of 45 minutes each

Materials

Reading materials for students, some possible resources suggested below:

Books by Seymour Simon on objects in the solar system

Our Solar System; Mercury; Venus; Jupiter; Saturn; Uranus; Neptune; and Comets, Meteors, & Asteroids

Other trade books

Newspaper or magazine articles on solar system objects/research

Kids Discover Magazines *Planets* and/or *Solar System*

- [Pioneer Online Library](#)

World Book Encyclopedia Articles:

[Close encounters with Saturn](#)

[How the Moon Was Born](#)

SIRS Discoverer

EBSCO Host Kids Search Science

Video of Television Science Report--Possible reports listed below:

- [Curiosity photos look curiously similar to Utah scientists](#)
- [Martian rock from Sahara desert unlike others](#)
- [Space junk expected to hit Earth in coming days](#)
- [Astronomer urges world to prepare for asteroids to hit earth](#)

Graphic organizer for organizing important information from reading

(Can be designed by class during story analysis phase)

PQP form or another tool students' providing feedback for each other

Background for Teachers

This is a RAFT activity with the following parameters:

Role

: News Producer/Reporter for TV or Radio

Audience: Other elementary aged students

Format: News report solar

Topic: Systems objects, current events, or research

Because the literacy skills being taught in this lesson are summarizing information and creating a logical narrative the students need to be given a time limit for their report. In real life, news producer actually have a very short time to tell each story so an important part of this activity is the time limit. I suggest giving the students a time limit of 1 minute. The article should not exceed 90 seconds. This also forces students to read and re-read their articles to tighten up language to meet the time limit. This will also help them hear if their article has a logical flow.

Depending on the resources available this may be a very high tech or low tech activity. Classes with limited technology resources, time, or expertise may just set up a table in front of the class and have selected students perform the news program live for the class or another class. If equipment and time are available students may do audio or video recording and then edit the program to show to their class, other classes, or the entire school.

Student Prior Knowledge

Students should have some knowledge of the basic objects found in the solar system, i.e., planets, dwarf planets, moons, asteroids, comets, meteors, and sun. Students should also know the basic principles of summarizing. (Teachers may use the method of summarizing taught in class or explore the ones suggested in this lesson.)

Intended Learning Outcomes

4. Communicate Effectively Using Science Language and Reasoning

c. Use scientific language appropriate to grade level in oral and written communication.

Intended Learning Outcome -- Linked to Standards

Students will gain an understanding of objects in the solar system and the on-going research that is constantly increasing our knowledge and understanding.

Students will practice summarizing complex information.

Students will practice editing written work.

Students will learn principles of writing informational narratives, including use of appropriate transitions words.

Students will communicate orally with their audience.

Instructional Procedures

Explain to students that they are assuming the role of news producer/reporter and will be writing and presenting a story about one of the objects in the solar system. Some of the stories will be selected to be presented in a class solar system news program.

Show students the TV science report and analyze the structure of the report together as a class. Help students come up with a list of basic information that will be needed for the report. Help them focus on the basic questions of who, what, why, where, when, and how. Give them a copy of a graphic organizer use while reading or create one together as a class. (A suggested one is included with this lesson.)

Review summarizing and give the students a strategy for summarizing that works for the materials being used. (I have taught my students to underline or highlight using different colors. For non-consumable resources, we use post-it notes.

Distribute reading materials to students and have them read and mark or notate important details. I suggest finding reading materials on 10-12 different topics. This is a great way to differentiate instruction through the selection of ability

Have students complete graphic organizer with important information so that it is all in one place for them to begin the writing process.

As a class, talk about what makes a good news story. Explain that it must catch the attention of

the watchers or listeners or they will change the station. It must be logical and easy to understand and include all the important facts. It should also be short, usually less than 1 minute.

Have the students write their first script for their story. They should then read it out loud to themselves to time the story. If it is less than 30 seconds, they probably do not have enough details and need to add more. If it is more than 90 seconds, they need to edit to eliminate unneeded words and details.

When story has been edited by the individual student, the students should get with their study buddy or partner and read the stories to each other. This is a time to double check timing and coherence of the story with a partner. Students listening could use a PQP (Praise, Question, Polish) format to evaluate the story (form included) or this form can be saved for use during the group evaluation.

Organize students with the same topic together into groups. For example, all the students reporting a Mars would meet together. Each student should read his or her story to the group. (The PQP could be used at this point instead of with a partner to provide more feedback to the students.) Have the group select the story that they want to represent their group in the class news cast.

At this point the teacher can set up a mock news desk in front of the room and the student selected from each group will take on the role of anchor person and read the story to the class. Remind the students that they are playing a role and that they should make sure to act like a news anchor. (This activity is much more fun if students will really take on the role of news anchor.) (If technology and time is available, you may want video record the presentations and edit the video to create a more professional and permanent final product.)

Provide a chart for students listening to the reports to record information being reported.

Collect the written scripts to use as an assessment tool for determining additional instruction.

Strategies for Diverse Learners

When the reading material is assigned, teachers can select materials that are appropriate for each student.

Students who struggle with writing can be paired with a partner and they can create the news report script together.

Extensions

Produce an actual video program and have students use technology such as iMovie to record and edit their own program.

Assessment Plan

To assess writing, collect the written script and read to determine areas that require additional instruction. Teachers will also listen for areas of weakness in the oral presentation.

To assess science content knowledge, a variety of assessments may be used. This can be things such as games, a quiz, a test, or a student reflection.

Bibliography

[Science News for Kids](#)

Authors

[Candace Collins](#)

[Christian Davies](#)

[Aliese Fry](#)

Amy Koehler

Michelle LaCross

Sharon Miya

Nancy Porter

Britnie Powell

Sarah Ruiz

Matthew Smith

Kristin Snow

Sarah Young