

**“It’s News to Me!” Teaching with Colorado’s Historic Newspaper Collection
Model Lesson Format**

Lesson Title:

Have Your Say: Examining Historical Perspectives and Community to write Letters to the Editor

Subject and Grade Level:

Language Arts and American History and Grades 9-12

Essential Questioning:

1. What current issues do you see in today’s newspapers?
2. What makes these issues newsworthy?
3. Why is it important to take a stand on these current issues?
4. What issues or concerns do you expect to find by examining Colorado’s historic newspaper collection?

Focus of Lesson: A brief explanation of what students are to learn in this lesson (content and/or skills). What is the purpose of the lesson?

Students will learn what issues and concerns were relevant from the 20th Century that may still be relevant in the 21st Century: Issues such as water, technology or invention/advancement, or environmental issues. (A sample of an invention issue has been provided from Telluride Journal (Telluride, San Miguel County); Date: Jan. 18, 1906): “Edison on the Future of Electricity”

Students will have the opportunity to access the website: www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org and choose an article they feel strongly opposed to or an article they strongly agree with. They will write a letter to the editor in standard business format. Advanced students will have the opportunity to research and investigate issues that were relevant in the past and examine through comparison and contrast the relevancy of linked issues today. Resource students will have the option of choosing an article from the Denver Post and write a letter to the editor on an article of their choosing.

Standards Assessed: Which standards will you be assessing in this lesson? Identify the content area, the standard number and any key components or benchmarks that are applicable.

History Standard 2.3: Students apply knowledge of the past to analyze present-day issues and events from multiple, historically, objective perspectives.

Information Literacy 3.1: Organizes information for practical application.

Information Literacy 3.2: Integrates new information into one’s own knowledge.

Information Literacy 3.3: Applies information in critical thinking and problem solving.

Information Literacy 3.4: Produces and communicates information and ideas in appropriate formats.

Reading and Writing Standards 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Reading and Writing Standards 2.3: plan, draft, revise, proofread, and edit written communications

Reading and Writing Standards 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Reading and Writing Standards 3.1: know and use correct grammar in speaking and writing

Reading and Writing Standards 3.2: apply correct usage in speaking and writing; 3.3 use correct sentence structure in writing

Reading and Writing Standards 3.4: demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Reading and Writing Standards 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Reading and Writing Standards 4.3: recognize, express, and defend points of view orally and in writing.

Assessment: Explain the assessment. (Include the formal ‘assessment assignment’ and any forms, worksheets, etc, in the materials section.)

Rubric

Issue example Publication: Telluride Journal (Telluride, San Miguel County); Date: Jan 18, 1906 from www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org

Example: Block Style Letter; Project Checklist (found on following pages).

Time: The number of class period required for the lesson, as well as the length of class period.

5 days—90 minutes classes

10 days—45/50 minutes classes

Materials/Teacher Preparation Section: List the technology, handouts, chart paper, text resources, etc. needed to complete the lesson. Include what you need to do to prepare ahead of time for your students to complete the lesson.

Graphic example of correct letter format.

Project checklist with the website

Example of article and how to link a historic issue that is still relevant today, however, the issue may have changed form.

Historical background about how news was derived and what would have been news in the 20th Century and why water, technology or invention/advancement, or environmental issues are still relevant today and need to be addressed.

Example of a letter to the editor.

Possible Procedures: Enumerate the procedure teachers can follow to teach the lesson to students. Provide the URL for the digital primary sources that you will use.

Day 1: Introduce students to the procedure that papers were printed and marketed. (May want to show a clip from the Newbies or Newsboys. (also research photowest.org for pictures of printing presses.)

Explain that newspaper printing, too is an example of technology/invention advances that has improved the quality and quantity of media sources. Have students research editorials at www.PostNewsEducation.com

Day 2: Introduce them to the website (www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org), pass out the project packets and address assignment completion and expectations. Teach students how to use the website to do their research. Let students begin their research.

Day 3: Continue research and print necessary copies, approve topics discovered. Give more background information if necessary relevant to topics being explored.

Day 4: Finish research, continue to approve topics, and students will write their rough draft letter to the editor.

Day 5: Students write final letters to the editor, go over their checklists, and turn in completed projects.

Created by Odell J. Ruybalid, Grand Mesa Youth Services Center, Grand Junction, CO

Use information from www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org to challenge or defend an issue relevant to the previous time period that can be compared or contrasted with issues relevant in today's society.

Possible: 24 Pts

Total	4	3	2	1	0
Comments	Competent-Mastery	Minimally Competent-Acceptable	Not Competent Unacceptable	Not Competent Highly Flawed	Non-Response Illegible or Off the Point
	Standard Block Business letter form maintained	Standard Block Business letter form maintained	Little concept of Block Business letter form	No concept of Block business letter form	
	Contains relevant issue Specific and excellent challenge or defense that expresses thoughts, impressions, and ideas.	Contains relevant issue non -specific or irrelevant challenge or defense and lacks expression of thoughts, impressions, and ideas.	Lack of a specific or relevant issue and little or no challenge or defense with little or no personal thoughts, impressions or ideas.	Lack of necessary information	
	Ideas well Organized and communicated clearly and concisely	Ideas sufficiently organized and communicated	Ideas not sufficiently organized and or communicated /wordy	Ideas unorganized Does not show how issue compares or contrasts	
	Excellent business professional or business letter language that defends or challenges specific issue with fewer than two grammatical errors	{2-5} Minimal number of grammatical errors with language that is appropriate and attempts to defend or challenge issue.	Language inappropriate for a business letter and grammatical errors are over 5-10. Gets lost in defense or challenge or issue	Language inappropriate for a business letter and grammatical errors are over 10 with no specific view point.	
	Correct use of punctuation, underlining and quotation marks no errors	Correct use of punctuation, underlining and quotation marks with 1-2 errors.	Incorrect use of punctuation, underlining and quotation marks with more than 2 errors	Incorrect use of punctuation, underlining and quotation marks with more than 5errors	

	Correct information about newspaper and issue that provides evidence of use of website and excellent research.	Incorrect information about newspaper and issue lacking evidence of use of website and adequate research.	Incorrect information about newspaper and issue lacking evidence of use of website and inadequate research.	Lacks information about newspaper and issue provides little evidence of use of website research.	
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An Example of a Block Style Letter

(Your Name)
(Your Address)
((City, State Zip Code)
Current Date

[3 to 4 lines between your inside address and recipient's address]
(Recipient's Name)
(Recipient's Address)
(City, State, *no zip code--why?*)

Dear Editor:

In your paper dated _____, I would like to respond to an issue (state the issue(s) specifically).

In the next paragraph explain further why you are challenging or defending the position on the specific issue.

Offer a better solution, a deeper insight, or other imperative information that will help the paper's readers to understand your position of the issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Sign your letter in the 4 lines provided

Your first and last name

Project Checklist

Name: _____

Date: _____

Media Source Information (www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org) (10 pts possible)

- Name of the newspaper _____ 1 pt
- City and county where newspaper is located: _____ 1 pt
- Date of publication(s) _____ 1 pt
- Page number(s) of article _____ 1 pt
- Issue that will be addressed in your letter. _____ 2 pts

- Will you defend or challenge the issue? (Circle your viewpoint.) 1 pt
- Have you linked the issue with a relevant issue today? YES/NO (2 pts yes/1 pt no)
- Copy of article stapled to the back of this sheet? 1 pt

Total: _____

Publication: Telluride Journal (Telluride, San Miguel County); **Date:** Jan 18, 1906 Section: None; Page Number 6.

Essential questioning?

How has electricity changed the lives of civilization?

Has electricity changed our lives for the better or has it caused further problems?

Is the cost of power cheaper or are we seeing a cost in energy prices with no alternative solutions for people on fixed incomes? What effect does electricity have on our environment?

EDISON ON THE FUTURE OF ELECTICITY

Saving Now Waste Energy in Coal We Burn the Great Problem

Thomas A. Edison in an interview published in the New York World gives prophecies on the future of electricity. Following are his views in condensed form:

Electric plants will be established at the mouths of the coal mines, and the power will be transmitted by wire instead of the coal being carried by railroad.

Electric light will be cheaper than gas; great trunk railways will operate all their trains by electricity as soon as their owners find it is cheaper.

Electricity will take the place of horses: It will solve the traffic problem in cities and save \$200,000,000 a year in stable rent in New York city alone.

By wireless telegraphy, we shall communicate with any ship in any sea; all the water power of the country will be used in generating electric power.

I expect to see airships flying before my death; ships will cross the Atlantic in three days: power will be cheap and so easily distributed that a multitude of new industries—impossible now because of the cost of labor—will spring into existence.

But, he declares, the first thing to do is to discover the means of making electricity direct from coal saying,

“From a practical standpoint the most tremendous thing in the problem of electricity is the fact that we only get about 15 percent of the energy of the coal

we burn. Eighty-five percent goes up the chimney,”

“Now, if we could find a way to get the energy out of the coal by some direct process, without wasting 85 percent of it, it would so multiply and so cheapen electric power as to inaugurate a new epoch in the history of the world. It is practically impossible to exaggerate, the consequences of a discovery that would produce electricity direct from coal, or in any way to avoid the waste consequent upon the use of boilers and engines.”

“Is such a discover within the range of reasonable possibility?”

“It is. I expect to see it done. I have done it myself, and so have others; but not in a way to make it commercially valuable.

“How?

“I have burned carbon and Chilean saltpeter together in an electrolyte and have thus produced electricity direct. But that was merely a scientific success. It would cost too much to produce power in that way, and the conditions would not be possible in the production of power for commercial purposes.

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Section: None; Page Number 6. continued

EDISON ON THE FUTURE OF ELECTICITY

“There are other ways, too, of producing electricity by direct process. Heat applied to the juncture of certain metals—bismuth and antimony, for instance—will do it.

“Last summer we rigged up a little experiment here, and by applying the heat of a small oil lamp to the juncture of metals we got sufficient power to run an electric fan.

“But all the discoveries so far have failed to give us the secret we are looking for. We need a process, simple and inexpensive, that will save the 85 percent of lost power.

“It will come, I am confident of that. There are about 300,000 scientific men at work in the world, digging out, testing, and analyzing.

“What the world needs are not facts so much as correlators. We want men who can bring the facts together, compare them, and work out the law.

“We want men like that wonderful Russian chemist, Mendeleeff, the author of a periodic system of chemistry, who deduced from correlated facts three unknown metals, which we have today, their salts and sulphines, their weight, structure and melting point.

“Some day the great discovery will be made. A man will discover one fact in one part of the world and that will set some fellow at work on another fact in some other part of the world, and presently a lot of men will be working on the true path; and one day it will be

announce to the world that electric power can be produced directly from coal.

“But we may all be dead then, Mr. Edison,”

“Nonsense. I believe that you and I will both live to see it. It will come in our time. It is in the air. We are on the very threshold of another wonderful era.

“The direct process will give the world electricity at such a low cost, that electric light can be used by everybody, and railways can be operated at a fraction of their present expense. The city of New York could be lit as brilliantly in the night time as in the day time, without any addition cost.

“The human race may well look forward with hope toward the day in which the discovery will be announced, for after that the world will be greatly transformed.

“It is all a matter of understanding what energy is. I remember saying to DuBois Reymond, the great professor of physiology in the University of Berlin, “What makes my finger move?”—Mr. Edison held up his forefinger and wagged it—“and he answered, ‘I don’t know; I have worked in vain for thirty years to find out what form of energy that is.’

“When you wind up a clock you transform the energy of beefsteak into mechanical energy stored in a steel spring. But who can tell you how the one form of energy was converted into the other form?

“I have tried hard to get at the secret through which the energy stored in coal must be transformed into electricity. It is too much for me. I am stumped. I don’t know enough. But the man who does know enough will appear before long.”