

YOU'RE THE FIELD REPORTER #1

(Time Maximum)

Themes from the Top Stories: News around the World

Lesson Sketch

Skills: Students *read* articles about countries around the world; *select* a country to study; *read* recent news articles about the selected country; *identify* basic facts about the country and key points of the articles; and *summarize* basic country facts and key news points in both a *presentation* to the class and in a written *article*.

Grades: 7–8

Time: Five 90-minute classes

Featured Resources: AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com articles Maps, Country Snapshot, Cultural Overview, The People, National Cuisine, Points of Interest, and Language, plus Google News.

Inspirations

"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less." ~Marie Curie

"The reality today is that we are all interdependent and have to co-exist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences and clashes of interests, whether between individuals or nations, is through dialogue." ~The Dalai Lama

"It's not the strongest organism nor the smartest that will survive, but the one that's most adaptable in the face of change." ~Josh Young, VP of editorial and expert operations at Sulia.com, on the future of the news business at the International Journalism Festival 2012

Lesson Overview

Students enjoy brief careers as scrappy international journalists in this collaborative reporting project on world current events. Acting as field reporters for the class, students read about countries and cultures of the world; select a country of interest; read articles on the location, landscape, culture, and political climate; read news stories for the country; and report to their classmates on the country's basic facts and key headlines. Students practice identifying main points and summarizing those points clearly for others in a verbal news presentation and a written news article.

Lesson Steps

Students make a list of countries they are curious about. Students briefly skim articles, and choose one country to focus on. Students complete a prewriting exercise in which they make some

guesses and some predictions about the country they're about to study, then see how their expectations about the country were the same as or different from the country's facts. Students pause to prewrite regarding the essential country facts—if you had thirty seconds to explain this country to a friend, what would you say?—and to share their countries' key facts with each other in small groups. Students read news stories on their countries of choice, and decide which stories are most important for American students to know about. Students prepare brief news reports to share with classmates, first in a verbal presentation, and then in short articles.

Standards Met

1. **Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Reading**
 - a. Key Ideas and Details 1, 2
 - b. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7
 - c. Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10
2. **Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Writing**
 - a. Text Types and Purposes 2
 - b. Production and Distribution of Writing 4,5
 - c. Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7,8,9
 - d. Range of Writing 10
3. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Reading**
 - a. Key Ideas and Details 1, 2
 - b. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7
 - c. Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10
4. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Writing**
 - a. Text Types and Purposes 2
 - b. Production and Distribution of Writing 4,5
 - c. Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7,8,9
 - d. Range of Writing 10
5. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Speaking and Listening**
 - a. Comprehension and Collaboration 1, 2
 - b. Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas 4,6
6. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Language**
 - a. Conventions of Standard English 1, 2
 - b. Knowledge of Language 3
 - c. Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 4, 6
7. **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Standards for the English Language Arts: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8**
8. **National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9**

Supplies

- Computer access for each student
- Access to AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com
- Access to online language references like BBC Languages, Omniglot.com, and Forvo.com
- Dictionaries
- Notebooks, pens, etc.
- Flashcards or other supplies for presentation notes
- Printer access

Instructional Plan

Student Objectives

Students will:

- Improve reading comprehension skills, note-taking skills, abstract reasoning skills, speaking skills, and writing skills.
- Recognize key pieces of information and share them with others in both verbal and written forms.
- Practice the complete writing process: taking notes, prewriting, drafting, seeking peer feedback, and then incorporating these incremental steps into a fully realized formal letter.
- Increase geographic knowledge, geopolitical awareness, and awareness of global interconnectedness.
- Begin to develop a sense of which languages are spoken in what regions, and have a brief encounter with a language other than English.
- Become more sophisticated global citizens able to engage in dialogue with those different from themselves.

Session One

Teacher Introduction

- Introduce the role of the field reporter, and charge students with gathering essential facts about a country to share with classmates.
- Establish that all readings, pre-writings, and discussions are note taking/pre-writing exercises toward a final verbal report and final writing exercise—if students complete all steps along the way, the final assignments will be a snap.
- Using a large wall map or other resource, get students thinking about which countries in the world they are curious to know more about.

Student Directions

Which country would you like to visit? Select a country

- Go to AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com.

- Peruse list of countries.
- Identify three countries you are curious about. Skim materials for these countries: get a quick sense of where the country is, who lives there, and whether you are curious about the place.
- Choose one country to mentally visit for this exercise.

Teacher Introduction

- Set the stage for the series of prewriting exercises by establishing expectations.
- In terms appropriate to existing classroom activities and curricula, explain that these prewriting activities are to be taken seriously as generative writing practices that result in an easier time completing a formal writing assignment, but they are not formal writing assignments themselves. The idea is to get ideas flowing on the page, and for students to leave themselves notes to come back to later when they get stuck, but pre-writing is not the time to worry about writing beautiful sentences or spelling everything perfectly.

Student Directions

Learn about your chosen country: Comparing expectations to reality

- Go to Maps—understand where countries are. Complete the following readings and prewriting exercises for both countries.
- Place your bets: Prewriting #1
 - Based on this country's location, what are your expectations regarding the culture? In what language/s do you guess that people greet each other? Are any of these languages spoken in the US? Do you guess that most residents have their roots in this country, or do you expect a large recent immigrant population? Do you expect that most residents are of the same ethnic background and religion, or do you expect a high degree of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity in this place? What do you suppose is important to residents of this country? Do you imagine an intricate ritual of greeting in this country, or a loose, laid-back greeting style? What role do hierarchy and social status play in the culture? Do you expect that people's experiences of living in this country vary depending upon social status, gender, ethnicity, and/or age? If so, how? How do you expect the cuisine is similar to and different than food in the US? What do you think of the Points of Interest and major tourist destinations? What kinds of businesses are there, and what kinds of things do people do for a living? Overall, how do you suppose this country's culture is similar to and different from the mainstream culture and other cultures found in the US?
- Read the articles Country Snapshot, Cultural Overview, The People, and National Cuisine
- Place your bets: Prewriting #1A
 - So far, how do your guesses before reading compare to the lives of this country's citizens? What is as you expected, and what surprises you?
- Visit The People and Language
 - Which language/dialect of this country would you most like to learn, if you don't speak it already? Why? Which language/dialect would you least like to learn? Why? Do people in your chosen country speak a language or language/s you already speak, or that you know other people in the US already speak? What is the most important word to learn in the local language, if a visitor learns only one word?
 - Which religion, if any, is practiced in this country that you also practice? Are any religions practiced in the country familiar to you, though you do not practice them yourself? Do you see religions practiced in this country that you know are practiced in the US? Overall, what

seems most similar and most different about the religious landscape in your chosen country, relative to the US?

Teacher Introduction

- Invite students to share some highlights of their notes so far.
- Ask students to remain alert to any shifts in perspective they experience while listening to their classmates' responses to the readings—students should be making notes on their prewrite pages or scratch paper regarding any new ideas that occur to them during this discussion—because soon, they will be introducing their classmates' to their countries' key facts.

S e s s i o n T w o

Teacher Introduction

- Direct students to visit Google News for their countries. They can go to <http://news.google.com> and enter the selected country's name in the search field to pull up articles.

Student Directions

- Go to Google News and search for articles about your country. Read three articles that interest you.
- Write down the six main points of each article. Answer the journalism questions Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
 - Who is the story about?
 - What are they doing that is newsworthy?
 - When did they do it, or when will they do it?
 - Where is the story taking place? In a region of the country? In a foreign country with which your country has a positive relationship or a conflict?
 - Why are these events unfolding?
 - How does this story impact American students?
- Choose a news category that interests you—maybe Agriculture, maybe Finance—and read three articles in that category. You can search for them by typing "Belize agriculture" (for example) into the search field of the Google News page.
- Write down the six main points of each article. Answer the journalism questions Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Teacher Introduction

- Ask a few students to share their who/what/when/where/why/how summary of one news story. Invite students to discuss what surprises them and/or confuses them about the stories.
- Prepare students to present their findings to their peers, playing the role of TV news field reporters. Have students visit the Web sites of CNN or a local news organization to watch some Web video clips of field reporters presenting their stories. Discuss a few clips to identify elements of their journalistic style that students can emulate.
- Now students transition from noting the who/what/when/where/why/how of each article they read to deciding which information is most vital for their audience—American students—to know.

- Direct students to prepare a three minute presentation introducing their chosen countries to their peers. Prompt: If your classmates have never heard of this country before, what are the first things they should know? And what about this country has the most impact on them as American students?

S e s s i o n T h r e e

Student Directions

- Prepare to present! You're the field reporter.
- Using index cards or some other prop suitable for presentation notes, prepare yourself to give a three-minute report to your classmates on the key facts and current events of your country.
- Prompt: If your classmates have never heard of this country before, what are the first things they should know to understand it better? What information about your country impacts your classmates most? Consider:
 - Location
 - Climate: Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, is the coldest capital city in the world. If your country has something noteworthy in its physical environment, do share.
 - Political situation: Is the country currently in turmoil? Is the country at peace or war?
 - Language/s spoken: What is the one word a visitor would need to know most in the local language?
 - Major religion/s
 - Major points of history: Is the country a former colony of another country that has left its mark on the culture and cuisine? Did the country just gain independence recently? If there's something in the country's history that would really help your classmates understand its current conditions, do share.
 - Major news items: Of the news stories you've read, which would be most interesting to your classmates? Which impact American students most? For example, does your country have a new contract to provide oil to the US? Is a movie star famous in the US from your country? Is there interesting health research happening in your country? With limited time, share the most crucial highlights of current events in your country with your classmates.
- Write yourself a script for your three minutes of need-to-know country information in the form of a news report. Pretend you are a TV reporter for CNN or your favorite network, and write a script to present your report in that role.

S e s s i o n F o u r

Teacher Introduction

- Remind students that these news presentations are the last stop on the way to a written article. This presentation to peers is like a dry run of the contents of the article.
- Remind students that as they listen to their peers' presentations, this is an opportunity to listen for ideas that they could apply to their own articles. Students should have notebooks out, and should be taking notes throughout their peers' presentations.

Student Directions

- Put your cub reporter cap on, and present the news! Keep track of your script for your own presentation, because you'll use it for the written article you'll work on next. Take notes during other people's presentations in case they inspire you with a great idea.

Teacher Introduction

- Remind students that while listening to other students' presentations, they are not merely resting—they are listening for more ideas for the writing assignment that comes next.

Session Five

Teacher Introduction

- Remind students that as field reporters, they create written copy, too.
- Prepare students to transition from presenting their country reports to their peers in speech, to addressing readers in an article.
- Send students back to the articles they've already read.
- Review with students the parts of a news article. For example, talk about the “hook” for an article, and ask students to share examples of very effective opening lines.
- Ask the class to discuss what makes these opening lines effective. What sort of first sentence will make readers want to know what happens in the rest of the article?
- Ask students to identify the parts of their articles where the writers show who, what, when, where, why, and how the story impacts the reader.
- Ask the students to treat their favorite of the articles they've read so far as their model for writing their own articles.
- Direct students to make article outlines based on their presentation notes.

Student Directions

- Review your presentation notes.
- Remind yourself of the who/what/when/where/why/how elements you've already identified as crucial about your country.
- Now the question is, in what order will you share this information in written form? Imagine that you have never heard of the country in question, and don't know where it is or anything about it. What would you need to know first in order to make sense of the information? Imagining that you are the reader, instead of the writer, will help you decide on an order that works.
- Once you've decided what order your country's information will go in, it's time to cook up a hook. Revisit the first lines of the articles you liked best. How did they capture your interest?
- Brainstorm at least five possible opening lines, or hooks, for your article.

Teacher Introduction

- Direct students to gather in small groups of four. Ask students to compare possible opening lines, or hooks, and to offer feedback regarding which opening lines are most interesting.

Student Directions

- With your group, take turns reading your five possible article hooks.
- Let your classmates know which possible hooks interest you most, and why.
- Listen to your group’s responses to your possible opening lines, and select the best hook for your article.

Teacher Introduction

- Direct students to draft their articles based on their outlines and the model articles they’ve read.

Student Directions

- Time to put it all together: write your piece!
- Use your presentation notes, your outline, your classmates’ feedback, and your model article for inspiration.
- If you get stuck, move past the tricky passage and come back to it later.

Teacher Introduction

- Direct students to review and revise their drafts for completeness, clarity, interest, and flow. Are all parts present and accounted for? If you had never heard of this country before, would the article make sense to you? If you had access to other articles in the newspaper, would you keep reading this one, based on the opening lines?

Student Directions

- Review your draft so far, and revise it based on your answers to the following questions:
 - How’s your hook? Would you keep reading this article?
 - Have you covered who, what, when, where, why, and how this information affects the reader?
 - If you had never heard of this country before, would the article make sense to you? Is there any further information you could add that would make the article clearer to the reader, who is learning this information for the first time?
 - Finally, how is the article’s flow? Read the article “aloud” to yourself by silently reading your way through the piece, moving your mouth as if you are reading it aloud. Anything that sounds clunky to you needs beautifying—make your prose sound great.

Teacher Introduction

- Invite students to reflect on their experience as international journalists. What have they learned that surprised them the most? Do they want to travel more now than they did before, or less? Why? Would they ever want to work as journalists? Why or why not?

Student Directions

- If you liked this exercise, prepare for your career in international journalism!