

# YOU'RE THE FIELD REPORTER #1

(Time Minimum)

## Themes from the Top Stories: News around the World

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### 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; *summarize* basic country facts and key news points in a *presentation* to the class; and *reflect* in writing about their armchair travel experience.

**Grades:** 7–8

**Time:** Three 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.

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### 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*

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### 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, then reflect in writing about their experience.

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## 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, then reflect on their experience in writing.

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## 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. Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7,8,9
  - b. 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
  - 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:**
  - a. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
8. **National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies:**
  - a. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

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## 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

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## 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 a clear verbal presentation.
- Practice taking notes, prewriting, drafting, and then incorporating these incremental steps into a report.
- 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, prewritings, and discussions are note taking/prewriting exercises toward a final verbal report—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

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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 assignment, but they are not formal 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 prewriting is not the time to worry about writing beautiful sentences or spelling everything perfectly.

## Student Directions

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### 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?

## Session Three

### 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.

### Teacher Introduction

- Ask students to gather in groups of four to share their presentations. Students should have notebooks out, and should be taking notes throughout their peers' presentations to prepare for a reflective writing exercise.

### Student Directions

- Put your cub reporter cap on, and present the news to your group!

## Student Directions

- Reflect in writing on your experience in international journalism. What did you learn that surprised you the most? Would you want to travel to the country you studied? Why or why not? Do you feel more or less inclined to travel in general, after preparing your report, than you did before? Why?