

YOU'RE THE FIELD REPORTER # 2

(Time Middle)

Travel Journalism: Why Country X Is the Next Vacation Hotspot

Lesson Sketch

Skills: Students *read* articles about countries around the world; *select* a country to study; *identify* key facts about the country and key points of country articles as they relate to travel; and *persuade* classmates to travel to their country in a *presentation* to the class, and then in a written *travel article*.

Grades: 9–10

Time: Four 90-minute classes

Featured Resources: AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com articles Maps, Country Snapshot, Cultural Overview, The People, National Cuisine, Points of Interest, Travel Warnings, 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

Lesson Overview

Students enjoy brief careers as scrappy travel journalists in this collaborative reporting project on world destinations. Acting as travel 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 top news stories for the country; and report to their classmates on the country's basic facts and key highlights for travel. After viewing sample travel videos and reading sample articles, students identify their country's travel highlights and use those highlights to persuade others to travel via a verbal news presentation and a written travel 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 travel to this country to a friend, what would you say?—and to share their countries' key travel-related

facts with each other in small groups. Students read news stories on their countries of choice, and decide which stories are most important for prospective travelers to know about. Students view sample travel videos and read sample travel articles. Students prepare brief persuasive pieces to share with classmates, first verbal presentations, and then short travel 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 1, 2, 3
 - b. Production and Distribution of Writing 4, 5, 6
 - 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 1, 2
 - b. Production and Distribution of Writing 4, 5, 6
 - 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:**
 - 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

Supplies

- Computer access for each student
- Access to AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com
- Access to supplemental online language references like BBC Languages, Omniglot.com, and Forvo.com
- Access to supplemental online travel references like Gadling, BBC travel, and Lonely Planet
- 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.
- Connect evidence to assertions and persuade with both logic and emotion
- Practice the complete writing process: taking notes, prewriting, drafting, seeking peer feedback, and then incorporating these incremental steps into a fully realized written piece.
- 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 travel 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 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 prewriting 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 are the most important three words or phrases to learn in the local language, if a visitor learns only a few words?
 - 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?
- Read the article Travel Warnings.
 - Note on your prewriting pages: any threats a traveler should know about?

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.

Session Two

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?
- Which of these unfolding current events in the news would a prospective traveler most need to know about? Make a note on your prewriting pages.

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. Either as a class or in small groups, have students visit the Web sites of BBC Travel or Lonely Planet to view a few short Web video travel features. Discuss a few clips to identify elements of effective journalistic style that students can emulate.
- Now students transition from reading articles to deciding which information is most vital for their audience—prospective travelers—to know. Moreover, students must determine which information is most appealing to prospective travelers. Review with students the power of persuading with both logic and emotion. In class discussion, ask students to suggest country facts that appeal to logic and/or emotion. For example, a country with no current travel warnings posted by the US State Department is a safe bet: both a logical choice and a comforting one. A dangerous country with spectacular scenery might be a less logical choice in some ways, but also a more adventurous and romantic one to visit—and travel costs

could be lower, appealing to budget logic. Encourage students to work with what they've got: every destination has its appeals for a certain kind of traveler.

- Direct students to prepare a three minute presentation introducing the highlights of travel to their chosen countries to their peers. Prompt: If travelers have never heard of this country before, what are the first things they should know that would make travel more appealing?

Session Three

Student Directions

- Prepare to present! You're the travel reporter. Your mission: Convince your viewers that your country is the world's next hot travel destination—and that they should visit first, before the crowds arrive. You have three minutes to convince your listeners to travel to your country. Make your case by identifying key information that appeals to logic and to emotion.
- Using index cards or some other prop suitable for presentation notes, prepare yourself to give a three-minute report to your classmates on the travel highlights of your country.
- Prompt: If your classmates have never heard of this country before, what are the first things they should know about traveling there? What information about your country impacts your classmates most? Consider:
 - Location: Is what the country is near or next to part of its appeal?
 - Climate: Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, is the coldest capital city in the world. Not appealing to those who like luxury, but exciting to adventurous souls. On the other side of the world, Belize's coastal waters provide one of the world's best SCUBA diving locations. If your country has something noteworthy—and appealing—about its physical environment, do share.
 - Political situation: Is the country currently in turmoil? Is the country at peace or war? Any threats a traveler would need to know about? If the country is in a dangerous state, what about it is so appealing that a person would consider traveling there over a safer destination?
 - Language/s spoken: What are the phrases 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? Or, is your country the only one in its region that has never suffered from colonial domination? If there's something in the country's history that would really help your classmates understand its current culture and the appeal of a visit, do share.
 - Major news items: Of the news stories you've read, which would be most relevant to a traveler? Which would be the most appealing to a traveler?
- Write yourself a script for your three minute travel report. Pretend you are a travel reporter preparing video editorials for CNN or your favorite network. As you do so, keep in mind your class discussion of sample travel videos from Lonely Planet, BBC, and/or other sources. What effective techniques have you learned from those examples that you could emulate?

Session Four

Teacher Introduction

- Remind students that these news presentations are the last stop on the way to a written persuasive 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 your travel pitch! 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.

Teacher Introduction

- Remind students that as travel reporters, they create written copy, too.
- Prepare students to transition from presenting their travel pitches to their peers in speech, to addressing readers in an article. Together, read some sample travel articles on Gadling.com, LonelyPlanet.com, and/or BBC.com/travel.
- Analyze the elements that make these pieces appealing, and discuss how students can emulate some of these same techniques. 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. Direct students to draft their articles based on their outlines and the model articles they've read.

Homework

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, and what is appealing about your country, in terms of both logical and emotional reasons for visiting.
- 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 be drawn to travel there? 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.

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.

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 adds up to the reader’s decision to travel to your country?
 - If you had never heard of this country before, would you understand why you might want to travel there? 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.