

**TEMPLATE FOR CURRENT EVENTS  
LESSON: Class Discussion**

Use this template with [MPR's Morning Edition](#) website to develop a yearlong current events routine.

In this activity, small groups of students follow a set of questions that facilitate a discussion of an event or issue covered by a news story.

Time: 20 – 30 minutes, plus 10 – 15 minutes of initial prep.

**Materials:**

- Computer with Internet connection
- [Real Audio Player 8.0](#) or higher
- Classroom speakers
- Classroom arranged to facilitate student discussion.

**Optional:**

- Printed map or projector for displaying a story's location and other available visuals (see "resources" on the [September 2005 Monthly Feature](#) page).

**Objectives for Middle and High School Students:**

- Connect the events with a student's life and impacts her/his life.
- Compare the points of view in a story's sources.
- Analyze a news report's objectivity and accuracy.

**Correlations to Grades 6 - 8 Minnesota Standards:**

- Grades 6 – 8: Social Studies - Many stories will have connections with the *Geography – Interconnections* strand.
- Grades 6 & 7: Language Arts – Speaking & Viewing – Media Literacy – Benchmarks 1, 2, 3.
- Grade 8: Language Arts – Speaking, Listening & Viewing – Speaking and Listening – Benchmarks 2, 4, 5.
- Grade 8: Language Arts – Speaking & Viewing – Media Literacy – Benchmarks 1 thru 4.

**Correlations to Grades 9 – 12 Minnesota Standards:**

- Grades 9 – 12: Social Studies - Many stories will have connections with the *Government and Citizenship – Civic Values, Skills, Rights and Responsibilities* strand.
- Grades 9 – 12: Many stories will have connections with the *Government and Citizenship – Governmental Processes and Institutions* strand in the 9 – 12 Social Studies standards.
- Grade 9 – 12 Language Arts – Reading and Literature – Comprehension – Benchmarks 2, 5, 7
- Grades 9 - 12: Language Arts – Speaking, Listening & Viewing – Speaking and Listening – Benchmark 1.
- Grades 9 - 12 Language Arts – Speaking & Viewing – Media Literacy – Benchmarks 1 thru 3, 6 thru 9.

PREP:

Estimated time: 10 – 15 minutes

- 1) Access MPR's *Morning Edition* website - <http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/programs/morninged/> to find a national or regional story you want to use.
- 2) Click on the  or  button to launch and load the Real Audio Player with the audio segment.
- 3) Preview the segment, checking that your speaker volume is high enough to reach all corners of your classroom.
- 4) Optional: Consider printing or displaying individual photos or slideshow from the highlight's webpage, if available.
- 5) Optional: Use the links to [Infoplease](#) or [Google Maps](#), provided under "resources" for this month's feature, to locate and display a map of where the story is taking place.

INSTRUCTION:

Estimated time: 20 minutes

- 1) Query students on their awareness of the location for the story and what, if any, significant event or issue is taking place there. Try to include any personal connections you or your students might have to the place or event.
- 2) If using a map and photos, point them out and solicit ideas of what happened.
- 3) Play audio segment.
- 4) After the segment plays, give the students a moment to reflect on the story. Then review the segment's topic, summarizing the event covered and who was affected directly. Add student input to the board.
- 5) Divide students into groups of 3 – 4 students and pose these questions to encourage students to react to the story:
  - 1) What is the most important thing that happened? Why do you think so?
  - 2) How will what happened affect your life or the life of someone you know? Will this be good or bad? Why?
  - 3) What were the points of view, if any, that were covered in the story? Which one do you agree with the most? Why?
  - 4) What part of the story grabbed your attention? Why?
  - 5) What techniques did the story's reporter or producer use to get your attention or emphasize a point?
  - 6) Was the reporter unbiased? How can you tell?
- 6) Review the questions and discuss as a class what they think the final outcome of the story will be and how that will impact who was covered in the story.
- 7) If time allows, play segment again and have the class evaluate the story's objectivity and accuracy of information. Ask for any specific examples of bias, being sure to make the distinction between a source's bias and a reporter's bias.

EXTENSIONS and ADAPTATIONS:

- 1) If students have personal reactions or connections to the story, consider posting them to the [MPR News Forum](http://news.forum.publicradio.org/) – (<http://news.forum.publicradio.org/>)
- 2) Assign students, individually or in pairs, to write a summary for the story using only one of the presented points of view.
- 3) Encourage your students to contribute to the reporting. On the story's webpage, click on the link "Help us cover this story" in the "Respond to this story" sidebar, if available.

## Discussion Questions

- a. What is the most important thing that happened? Why do you think so?
- b. How will what happened affect your life or the life of someone you know? Will this be good or bad? Why?
- c. What were the points of view, if any, that were covered in the story? Which one do you agree with the most? Why?
- d. What part of the story grabbed your attention? Why?
- e. What techniques did the story's reporter or producer use to get your attention or emphasize a point?
- f. Was the reporter unbiased? How can you tell?