

3

UNIT 3: CRIME REPORTING

Unit Overview

News about crime and violence shapes our understanding of the world around us. Sometimes, crime news can make us fearful or anxious; other times, we can be numbed by its repetition and frequency. Sometimes, it can be a source of valuable information and learning as we see the criminal justice system in action.

In this unit, students will learn how crime news is constructed. Students will see how news formats and frames slant a story and how connotation and selection of details can skew a viewer's perception of what really happened. In completing the activities in this unit, students will compare and contrast TV news with print news to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each medium.

Students stage a panel discussion on crime and the media, role-playing the different perspectives of citizens in the community.

This unit provides an opportunity to explore important concepts in Character Education, including **courage, honesty, fairness, trustworthiness, and responsibility.**

The "essential questions" of this unit are:

- **Why is crime reporting such a controversial part of the mass media today?**
- **How do the sequence, structure, and formats of a news story affect the judgments and interpretations made by readers and viewers?**
- **How does crime reporting shape our perceptions interpretations of the world around us?**



3

UNIT 3: CRIME REPORTING

Examine how the news media's coverage of crime affects our perceptions of reality and our beliefs about the criminal justice system.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

3.1 Crime Reporting

Explore how news affects perception of reality in this critical reading activity.

3.2 Packaging the News

Identify differences in types of news stories in both print and television news.

3.3 The Language of Law

Test your understanding of selected legal terms.

3.4 Experiment with the News

Two groups of students read different versions of the same news story, then compare their perception of what happened and why.

3.5 Real vs. Reel Cops

Examine how the media packages crime stories for television dramas and "reality" shows.

3.6 Comparing Print and TV News

Chart similarities and differences between newspaper and TV news.

PRODUCTION ACTIVITY

Stage a Panel Debate on Crime and the Media

In a small team, students stage a panel discussion on crime with students role-playing hypothetical or real characters with a range of different opinions.

3

UNIT 3: CRIME REPORTING

CONNECTIONS TO MARYLAND STATE CONTENT STANDARDS

The *Assignment: Media Literacy* curriculum has been designed to align with Maryland State Content Standards. Many of the activities and lessons are modeled upon the structure and format used in the MSPAP tests for language arts and social studies.

For each unit, the standards are listed for each subject area. The numbers at the end of each line refer to specific instructional goals identified in the Maryland Content Standards.

Use the chart below to identify the specific instructional objectives developed in each unit of the program.

HIGH SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS

1.12.1	Concepts of Print and Structural Features of Text (all)
1.12.5	Comprehension and Interpretation of Informational Text (all)
1.12.6	Evaluation of Informational Text (all)
2.12.1	Characteristics of Literary Genres (#1,3)
2.12.2	Comprehension, Interpretations, and Analysis of Text (all)
3.12.1	Organization and Focus (all)
3.12.3	Personal Narrative Writing (all)
3.12.6	Informational Writing (all)
3.12.7	Persuasive Writing (all)
4.12.1	Acquisition and Application of New Vocabulary (all)
4.12.2	Comprehension and Application of Standard English Language Conventions
5.12.1	Active Listening Strategies
5.12.2	Comprehension and Analysis (all)
6.12.1	Organization and Delivery Strategies (all)
6.12.2	Oral Presentations (all)
6.12.3	Evaluation of Oral Presentations

HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES

1.12.1	Demonstrate understanding of the meaning, implication, and impact of historical events and hypothesize how events could have taken other directions.
1.12.3	Interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.
1.12.5	Analyze the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.
1.12.7	Analyze an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject.
1.12.8	Synthesize information from multiple sources and make distinctions between sound generalizations and misleading oversimplifications.
2.12.4	Analyze how shifts in regional relationships result from changes in political, economic, cultural, and environmental factors.
7.12.1	Evaluate ways in which the public agenda is shaped and set, including the influence of political parties, interest groups, lobbyists, the media, and public opinion.

HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE

Content Standards

Outcome III	Creative Expression and Production: Expectation A, Indicator 2, 6; Expectation B, Indicator 3, 4, 6.
Outcome IV	Aesthetic Criticism: Expectation A, Indicator 1, 2.

HIGH SCHOOL HEALTH

Outcome # 1	Students will demonstrate an understanding of health promotion and disease prevention concepts. (# 2.4, 2.3, 7.4)
Outcome # 3	Students will demonstrate the ability to identify and practice health-enhancing behaviors. (#3.4, 5.3, 3.5, 7.4)
Outcome # 4	Students will demonstrate the ability to use communication skills to enhance personal, family, and community health. (#1.5, 5.3, 3.5)



TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.1 | CRIME REPORTING

Students analyze patterns in the representation of school violence in the media by learning about press coverage of the school shootings in Jonesboro, Arkansas, in 1998.

Getting Started

View the video to introduce this unit. After viewing, ask students about what they like and dislike about crime reporting. List these different likes and dislikes on the board.

Pass out copies of Activity Sheets 3.1 (A) and (B) and invite students to read the two-page essay. Ask students to pay particular attention to what they might have liked or disliked about the coverage of this important news event as they read.

After reading, pass out Activity Sheet 3.1 (C) and ask students to complete the questions in writing on a separate page. Or you may prefer to use the questions to stimulate large-group discussion or as a homework activity.

UNIT 2 | ACTIVITY 3.1 (A)



CRIME REPORTING

By Catherine Gourley
Excerpted from *Media Wizards*

On March 24, 1998, at 12:35 P.M., the fire alarm in Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, suddenly rang. As students filed from the building into the playground, gunfire exploded from a nearby wood. At first, some students thought the noise was firecrackers. But then, one, two, three students fell as the rapid fire continued. This was no practice drill. It was a deliberately planned ambush by two boys, Andrew Golden and Mitchell Johnson, who had skipped school that morning.

The Jonesboro shooting was breaking news, an event that becomes known even as the story is still unfolding. Breaking news travels fast. Within minutes following the frantic 911 calls from the school, local reporters in Jonesboro became aware of the emergency. A national news agency called the Associated Press (AP) also picked up the story and transmitted it over its wire service to thousands of news outlets across the country. One outlet was the CNN television studios in Atlanta, Georgia, more than 500 miles from Jonesboro. Less than 20 minutes from the time the first shots were fired, CNN announced the shooting through a televised news bulletin.

News—even breaking news—doesn't just happen. It is mediated. The story broadcast over television is not a mirror image of

what happened but rather a constructed interpretation of the incident. Coverage of even a tragic incident like the Jonesboro shooting will vary significantly, depending on the selected news frame.

Episodic reporting is one type of news frame. It focuses on people and events, piecing together journalism's jigsaw puzzle: Who did what to whom and why. The coverage is usually brief and the images accompanying the story are action driven and dramatic: scenes of fires, earthquake damage, flooding rivers, and yes, trembling children in shock after surviving a shooting ambush.

Thematic reporting is a different kind of news frame. It focuses on ideas, exploring broader social issues and patterns behind the news event. The coverage is in-depth and requires more airtime or print space and therefore is presented most often as documentaries or feature stories or books. The images are less action driven. The stories often feature experts—teachers, doctors, lawyers—who share and debate points of view.

On the afternoon of March 24 and in the days that followed, episodic news stories about the Jonesboro shooting flooded both televised and print news. A sampling of headlines from across the country included:

ARKANSAS BURIES ITS DEAD (*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, March 25, 1998)

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.1 (B)

CRIME REPORTING

Page 2 (continued)

WHAT IS JUSTICE FOR A SIXTH GRADE KILLER? (*Time*, March 31, 1998)

The cover of *Time* magazine described Golden and Johnson as “armed & dangerous” and “gun-happy kids.” Inside *Time*, journalist Richard Lacayo wrote a special feature on violent children and asked “How did [America] become a place where kids gun down other kids?” He described a new generation of violent children as “juvenile mass murderers” and “fledgling psychopaths.”

So much coverage might give the impression that the media was doing a thorough investigative report. In fact, they were filling airtime and print space with variations of the same episodic reports. The sheer number of articles about Jonesboro had a stunning effect. The public was frightened. Were America’s schools safe? Were today’s adolescents a deeply troubled generation? Most importantly, why do children kill?

Those questions could not be answered in episodic stories. They required thematic reporting that explores the causes and effects of violence. Unlike episodic stories that travel fast, thematic stories often don’t surface until weeks or months have passed. By then, however, the event has faded from the TV screen. The story isn’t current or “breaking news” any longer. Some other dramatic story has taken its place.

Six months after the Jonesboro shooting, an Arkansas judge sentenced Golden and Johnson for the murders they committed.

On that day, journalist Ray Suarez hosted a 48-minute talk show over National Public Radio. His show had a thematic news frame that focused on the social environments that foster violence in children like Andrew and Mitchell. One of his guests, James Garbarino, shared this insight with the listening audience:

“Each week I sit with kids who are in prison or on trial for murder and I am struck by how often, how very often, you can see a mental health problem in their childhood that was not cared for. By the time the child is eight years old, he has gotten wrapped up in a pattern of very negative, anti-social behavior.”

Garbarino’s comment is idea-oriented. Children who in early childhood were or felt they were rejected don’t operate under the same emotional controls as other children. Most children who kill come from this group. “And that,” stressed Garbarino, “put a different slant on the story of kids who just suddenly show up and are bad.”

Garbarino also pointed out that 90 percent of the children who kill are boys. Why? Attempting to answer that question, he said, can help us get to the root of the problem.

Getting to the root of the problem is what thematic reporting is all about. The way the media frames the news is important because it determines how much and what kind of information the public receives. Episodic news frames aren’t all bad. But without thematic frames to further understanding of the issues behind the news events, balance in the news is like a playground teeter-totter with no one sitting on the opposite seat.

CRIME REPORTING

Questions:

1. What is the purpose of episodic news stories? What is the purpose of thematic news stories?
2. If episodic news stories focus on breaking news, then from whose point of view are these stories likely to be told? If thematic news stories focus on ideas as opposed to events, then from whose point of view are these stories likely to be told?
3. In constructing episodic news stories, why do news media use action-driven images?
4. Why do thematic news stories require more airtime or print space?
5. If viewers only listen to or read episodic news stories, how can that affect their perception of a news event? What information about a news event might be missing from episodic news frames?
6. ABC news anchor Peter Jennings has said, “We now live in a vastly more competitive world. We are all struggling with how to retain audiences—listeners, viewers, or readers.” Which type of news frame—episodic or thematic—gives a news reporter the competitive edge and why?
7. Based on this article, what advice would you give people if they wanted to become “smarter” viewers of the news?



TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.2 | PACKAGING THE NEWS

Students learn about the different formats for print and TV news and identify different types of news media messages by using a local newspaper and a TV guide.

Background

Students often lack the vocabulary to talk with precision about the media. They may use words like “shows” to mean everything from a cartoon to a documentary. Gaining a more precise vocabulary about different types of news programs helps in examining the different formats that are used to present news and information.

This activity uses two activity sheets. Activity Sheet 3.2 (A) presents a list of the names of different formats used for TV and print news. Activity Sheet 3.2 (B) is a worksheet that asks students to use a newspaper and a TV guide to find specific names of programs and news stories.

This is an ideal collaborative learning activity. Ask students to work with a partner to complete the activity sheet.

Getting Started

To use this activity in the classroom, it would be helpful to have a few copies of a daily newspaper and a TV guide available for students to use in collecting examples of the different types of news. If this is not possible, you might want students to complete the activity as homework.

Ask students to read the activity sheet or read the sheet to students aloud. See if they can provide any description or examples of news they have seen or read recently that fits these categories. Ask them to think about how these categories might fit for news on the radio or sports news.

Finding Examples

Using the chart, students work with a partner to find examples of the six types of news. Have students fill in the name of the show and the time and channel using a TV guide. Have students use a newspaper to find examples of specific articles that fit these categories, and ask them to write the article's headline, date, and page number in the spaces provided.

Evaluation

As a check on students' understanding of these different types of news, ask students to exchange activity sheets, and have them review each other's work. Or ask students to present their evidence in a brief presentation to the class and take questions and answers from the audience.

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.2 (A)

PACKAGING THE NEWS

Both television and print news media have a variety of formats through which they present the news. Here are some of the names for the formats commonly used in TV and print news media.

TELEVISED NEWS

News bulletins—Short, quick news bites on breaking stories; interrupt regularly scheduled programming; range in air time from a half-minute to many minutes.

News breaks—Updates on news stories, generally not breaking news; occur at regularly scheduled times; range from one to two minutes.

Newscasts—Programs of diverse stories, both breaking news and some feature coverage; broadcast daily at regularly scheduled times; limited to one to two minutes per story.

Newsmagazines—Investigative and feature news stories; broadcast daily or weekly at regularly scheduled times; range from ten to twenty minutes per story, with commercial breaks.

Current affairs talk shows—Interviews with journalists and newsmakers who analyze rather than report news; scheduled during regular programming; range from fifteen minutes to an hour.

PRINT NEWS

News briefs—Single paragraph summaries of news developments; appear throughout the paper.

News shorts—Stories of two to five paragraphs; appear in regular news columns throughout the paper.

First-day stories—Event-oriented news stories, including breaking news; generally longer than a few paragraphs; appear on page one of a section of the paper and may have related stories on other pages.

Second-day stories—Follow-up coverage or updates of an ongoing story; vary in length and placement within the paper.

News features—Longer, more developed stories; not necessarily timely or driven by breaking news; often explores a controversy that is interesting to large numbers of people.

News supplements—Entire sections devoted to a particular theme or idea, such as the *New York Times* Education Supplement. Usually contain multiple feature articles on the theme.

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

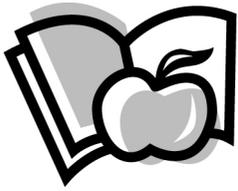
UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.2 (B)

PACKAGING THE NEWS

***Instructions:** Using the worksheet as a guide, work with a partner to find specific TV and print news programs or articles that are examples of the types of news formats listed below. Use a TV guide and newspaper to provide the specific details.*

TELEVISION NEWS	NAME OF SHOW	TIME AND CHANNEL
News Bulletins		
Newsmagazines		
Current Affairs Talk Shows		

PRINT NEWS	HEADLINE AND NAME OF PAPER	DATE
News Briefs		
First-Day Stories		
News Features		



TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.3 | THE LANGUAGE OF LAW

This activity builds students' vocabulary of common legal terms used in crime reporting and strengthens students' use of context clues in interpreting meaning.

Getting Started

Explain to students that just as news stories differ in format and information reported, journalists also have different areas of specialties. Some journalists cover international or political news stories and so must have some expertise in political science. Some journalists cover the education beat; others focus on stories developing in the field of health and medicine. Journalists who cover crime stories will have a working knowledge of common legal terms.

Pass out Activity Sheet 3.3 and ask students to work individually to complete the answers. After students have finished, review the correct answers with students and have them give themselves a score with the number of correct answers.

Questions and Answers:

1. **a.** accomplice; **b.** accessory
2. **a.** felony; **b.** misdemeanor; **c.** misdemeanor; **d.** felony
3. **a.** The police are not releasing an untruthful statement and they are not guilty of libel. Because the driver was intoxicated at the time of the accident, he or she will most likely be found liable.
b. If the candidate does not supply supportive details or evidence to back up his or her charge, he or she most likely will be guilty of libel.
4. **a.** admissible; **b.** admissible; **c.** circumstantial; **d.** circumstantial

Extension

Challenge students to create vocabulary pairs of their own, using additional legal terms they can research in a library. We also suggest this excellent online site: www.nolo.com. Here students can research legal terms in "Everybody's Law Dictionary."

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.3

THE LANGUAGE OF LAW

Instructions: In reporting crime, journalists must have a general knowledge of legal terms. Test your critical reading and thinking skills by reviewing some key legal terms; then answer the questions that follow. Circle the best answer.

1. An **accessory** to a crime is someone who intentionally helps another person commit a crime, either by providing advice beforehand or helping to conceal evidence after the crime. An **accomplice** is a person who is present during the crime and provides assistance in some way.

 - a. Is the driver of a getaway car an accessory or an accomplice?
 - b. Is a person who provides a hiding place for a robber an accessory or an accomplice?
2. A **misdemeanor** is a less serious crime punishable by no more than one year in prison. A **felony** is a serious crime punishable by more than one year in prison or, in some cases, by death.

 - a. Is kidnapping a misdemeanor or a felony?
 - b. Is a fist fight a misdemeanor or a felony?
 - c. Is leaving the scene of an accident a misdemeanor or a felony?
 - d. Is armed robbery a misdemeanor or a felony?
3. **Libel** is an untruthful statement about a person, published in writing or through broadcast media, that injures a person's reputation or standing in a community. **Liable** is being legally responsible for some thing or act, such as a debt or careless behavior.

 - a. An automobile driver strikes and kills a person. Police discover the driver was intoxicated at the time of the accident and they release that information plus the driver's name to the press, who publish it. Are the police guilty of libel? Is the driver liable for the death of the victim?
 - b. A political candidate accuses an opponent of drug use. Under what circumstances would the candidate be guilty of libel?
4. **Admissible evidence** is reliable evidence a jury may consider in judging innocence or guilt. This includes documents, photographs, videos, damaged property, and laboratory reports. **Circumstantial evidence**, on the other hand, is based on inferences or clues that suggest guilt.

 - a. According to an article in the *Baltimore Sun*, a witness saw the armed bandit known as "Dishonest Abe" drive away from a robbery. Is this admissible or circumstantial evidence?
 - b. Police search the home of the alleged "Dishonest Abe" robber and find a silver pistol. Is the pistol admissible or circumstantial evidence?
 - c. In searching the suspect's home, the police fail to find a stovepipe hat or a "Lincolnesque" beard. Is the missing costume circumstantial evidence proving that the suspect is innocent?
 - d. Let's assume the police did find a stovepipe hat in the suspect's home. Would this be considered admissible or circumstantial evidence?





TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.4 | EXPERIMENT WITH THE NEWS

This activity presents two different versions of the same news story so students can discover that the sequence and structure of a crime story may shape their perceptions of the people and events described.

Background

Research shows that people’s moral judgments about crime can be affected by the order and sequence in which information is presented. In this activity, you give students two different versions of a crime story and explore how the differences in structure and sequence of information affect students’ interpretation and judgments.

Recent research by Karen Cerulo at Rutgers University shows that the order and sequence in which stories about violence are presented can shape people’s judgments of the rightness or wrongness of the violence.

She writes, “Storytellers must consider the very real possibility that routine formatting of violent accounts may be constructing social opinion rather than reflecting it.” She notes that violent crime can be organized into four general sequences:

Victim sequences: These stories present violence from the perspective of the injured party.

Performer sequences: These stories present violence from the perspective of the person who commits the act.

Contextual sequences: These stories prioritize the circumstances surrounding a violent act.

Doublecasting sequences: These stories highlight individuals who play a double role—both as victim and perpetrator of violence.

Getting Started

Without telling students they are, in fact, reading two different versions of the same story, pass out Activity 3.4 (A) to half the class and Activity 3.4 (B) to the other half. Notice that the headlines and story length are approximately the same for each version in order not to tip students off that they may be reading different versions. Ask students to read and answer the questions on the sheet provided and to be prepared to discuss their answers with the class. See the answers provided below.

After students have read the article, pass out Activity Sheet 3.4 (C) and ask students to write their answers. Or you may prefer to have students discuss the answers as a large group.

Be prepared to point out the differences in interpretation between students—and at the right time, reveal that the students are reading different versions. Ask them to find a partner and compare the two versions to see exactly how they were structured differently. Encourage students to document the differences and similarities between the two versions.

Questions and Answers:

- 1. What are the facts in this case?** Facts include: two teenagers were arrested; they were found in possession of 170 pounds of marijuana with a street value of \$680,000; there has been an increase in teens smuggling drugs into the country in Texas; federal law does indeed protect the identity of minors.
- 2. What explanation is given for why the two arrested teens agreed to smuggle the drugs across the border?** This is where the two stories begin to differ in slant. Part 1 suggests that the teens are doing this for “easy money.” Part 2 suggests that the drug dealers in Mexico are manipulating or taking advantage of the teens.
- 3. What explanation is given for the increase in teens agreeing to smuggle drugs into the country?** Again, the slant differs. In Part 1, the story suggests that an increasing number of teens are doing this because they know they won’t be punished. Word choice that contributes to this includes “easy money,” “seemed easy enough,” and “view consequences as minor.” Note also the statistics cited by Raymond Kelly. In Part 2, the slant suggests the teenagers didn’t know the seriousness of their actions. Word choices like “mushrooming” suggest this crime is simply exploding or appearing without premeditation by the teens.

4. Who is the victim and who is the villain in this story? In Part 1, the villains are the teens and the drug dealers. The victims are the people of the United States who have to deal with a growing drug smuggling problem. In Part 2, the villains are the drug dealers; the victims are the manipulated teens.

Extension

Students will have strong opinions about whether teen drug smugglers are victims or villains. Encourage them to present reasons to support their point of view on this issue.

Ask students to collect examples of fictional stories from film, TV, and the real-life stories from the news that emphasizes the victim's point of view and news that emphasizes the performer's point of view.

Ask students to take a crime news story from the local newspaper and reorganize it to tell the story from a point of view that emphasizes the victim, the performer, or the context of the situation.

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.4 (A)

EXPERIMENT WITH THE NEWS

***Instructions:** On December 1, 1999, ABC news ran a story about American teenagers who smuggle drugs into the United States. Read the news story below, based on the real facts of the case. Be prepared to discuss details of the story in class.*

TWO TEENS ARRESTED ACCUSED OF SMUGGLING DRUGS INTO COUNTRY

El Paso, Texas—Police arrested two teenagers yesterday and charged them with drug smuggling as they attempted to enter the United States at El Paso from Juarez, Mexico. Wrapped in bundles and hidden under the driver’s seat was 170 pounds of marijuana with a street value of \$680,000, according to border police.=

The 16-year-old driver and her 14-year-old passenger admitted accepting the wrapped bundle from a “stranger” who approached them in Juarez and offered to pay them \$800 if they would transport the drugs across the border in their car. The driver of the car did not know the name of the dealer and insisted she had never met him previously. “We just met him that day,” she said.

The U.S. Customs Service estimates that 400 teenagers have been arrested in 1999. “We are seeing a dramatic increase in teenage drug smugglers at border crossings in Texas,” stated a U.S. Customs Service officer. “As much as a 30 percent increase in one year alone.” Federal law protects the identities of the minors.

The ten-minute ride from Mexico into the United States across the border represents “easy money” for teens who often view the consequences of being caught as minor. In the past two and a half years, only 17 juveniles were sent to prison for drug smuggling.

“In many cases, nothing happens to young people who are caught with a quantity of drugs,” says Raymond Kelly, the commissioner for the U.S. Customs Service. Texas court records show that 98 teenagers received probation and 63 had their cases dismissed altogether.

U.S. Customs officers agree that the light punishment is “a selling point” for the drug cartels who approach the teenagers and entice them into smuggling the drugs across the border. When asked when she agreed to transport illegal drugs into the country, the 16-year-old driver yesterday answered, “It seemed easy enough to drive a car over a bridge.”

The dealer promised payment once the driver delivered the wrapped bundle to a contact in El Paso. The 16-year-old stated she thought the package contained “about 10 pounds” of marijuana.

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.4 (B)

EXPERIMENT WITH THE NEWS

***Instructions:** On December 1, 1999, ABC news ran a story about American teenagers who smuggle drugs into the United States. Read the news story below, based on the real facts of the case. Be prepared to discuss details of the story in class.*

**TWO TEENS ARRESTED
ACCUSED OF SMUGGLING DRUGS INTO COUNTRY**

El Paso, Texas—Two teenagers arrested yesterday at the border in El Paso are evidence of a growing trend in the narcotics trade. One in eight drug smugglers arrested there is now younger than 18, according to the U. S. Customs Service. Seduced by the possibility of fast and easy money, teens have become the target of drug cartels in Mexico who convince the juveniles to smuggle drugs across the border.

The latest arrests were a 16-year-old driver and her 14-year-old passenger who admitted they had accepted a wrapped bundle from a “stranger” in Juarez, Mexico. “We just met him that day,” she said.

Sniffer dogs at the border detected narcotics in the car. Customs officers found the bundle under the driver’s seat. The package contained 170 pounds of marijuana with an estimated street value of \$680,000. The driver of the car said she thought the bundle contained “about ten pounds.” The dealer promised payment once the driver delivered the wrapped bundle to a contact in El Paso.

When asked why they had agreed to smuggle the drugs, the 16-year-old answered that the dealer had offered her \$800. “It seemed easy enough,” she said, “to drive a car over a bridge.”

Federal law protects the identities of the minors. Customs officials say the exploitation of teenagers “is mushrooming.” “We’re talking about a 90 percent increase from previous years,” says J. J. Lopez of the U.S. Customs in El Paso.

Boys and girls are more easily manipulated and will smuggle the drugs across the border for less money. In addition, many of the teenagers arrested do not receive harsh prison terms. In the past two and a half years, 17 juveniles have been sent to prison for their involvement in smuggling drugs. Ninety-eight received probation and 63 had their cases dropped or dismissed.

Probation officials say kids deserve a chance to learn from their mistakes. “Most of these kids are first offenders,” says Samuel Santana of the El Paso Juvenile Probation Department.

U.S. Customs officials say that light punishment is also a selling point for the drug cartels who lure the teenagers into the narcotics trade.

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.4 (C)

EXPERIMENT WITH THE NEWS

Instructions: Answer the questions below after reading the article.

TWO TEENS ARRESTED ACCUSED OF SMUGGLING DRUGS INTO COUNTRY

I have read 3.4 (A) or 3.4 (B) (circle one)

1. What are the facts in this case?

2. What explanation is given for why the two arrested teens agreed to smuggle the drugs across the border?

3. What explanation is given for the increase in teens agreeing to smuggle drugs into the country?

4. Who is the victim and who is the villain in this story? Explain your answer.



TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.5 | REAL VS. REEL COPS

Students explore the similarities and differences between crime stories that we see on “reality TV” and those we see on prime-time drama. This activity also introduces students to the Venn diagram as a graphic organizer for identifying similarities and differences.

Getting Started

Ask students what the similarities and differences are between reality TV shows about crime (such as *Cops*) and prime-time dramas about crime (such as *NYPD Blue*, *Law and Order*, or *Homicide*).

Pass out copies of Activity Sheet 3.5 and ask students to read it. When students are completed, you might point out the format of a Venn diagram for students who are unfamiliar with it. Demonstrate how to organize similarities and differences using a Venn diagram by writing similarities in the intersection of the two circles and differences on the outer parts of the circles.

Ask students to evaluate and edit or re-write the sentences used to describe *Cops* and *Homicide*. Ask them to write in two to three additional similarities and differences. Share these aloud with the class.

You might tell students the following interesting information about crime shows:

- Commercial breaks are woven into the storyline of television crime shows. Cutting away for a commercial doesn't just happen. Writers purposely increase the suspense just prior to the commercial so that viewers will stay tuned throughout the commercial.
- Crime shows are narratives. In addition to characters, setting, and conflict, the plotline includes theme. In other words, the writers weave values and ideologies into their story.

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.5

REAL VS. REEL COPS

Greg Baerg’s beat is television. In a recent column for About.com, he explained the differences between two popular television shows focusing on law and order, *Cops* and *Homicide: Life on the Streets*.

Cops is a reality show. That means it is unscripted and has no cast of characters. Special effects and specially designed sets are also not part of the show’s format. As a result, *Cops* is less expensive to produce than fictional TV dramas. During the 1996–97 season, for example, the licensing fee for *Cops* was \$350,000 per episode, as compared with \$1.5 million per episode for *Homicide*.

Homicide, on the other hand, is a fictional drama. It is based on a book written by David Simon, a reporter who spent a year with the homicide division of the Baltimore police. While the storylines and character conflicts are based on real crime events, *Homicide* is scripted. A cast of characters return week after week and each scene is action-driven, building in suspense—a key storytelling element.

More importantly, *Homicide* condenses real life into reel life. In other words, says Baerg, “drama writers have the advantage of condensing hours of events into only minutes of air time.”

“*Cops* may have its moments of excitement,” Baerg adds, “but for every encounter that gets your heart rate going, there’s 15 minutes of driving along, with a drunk or two thrown in.”

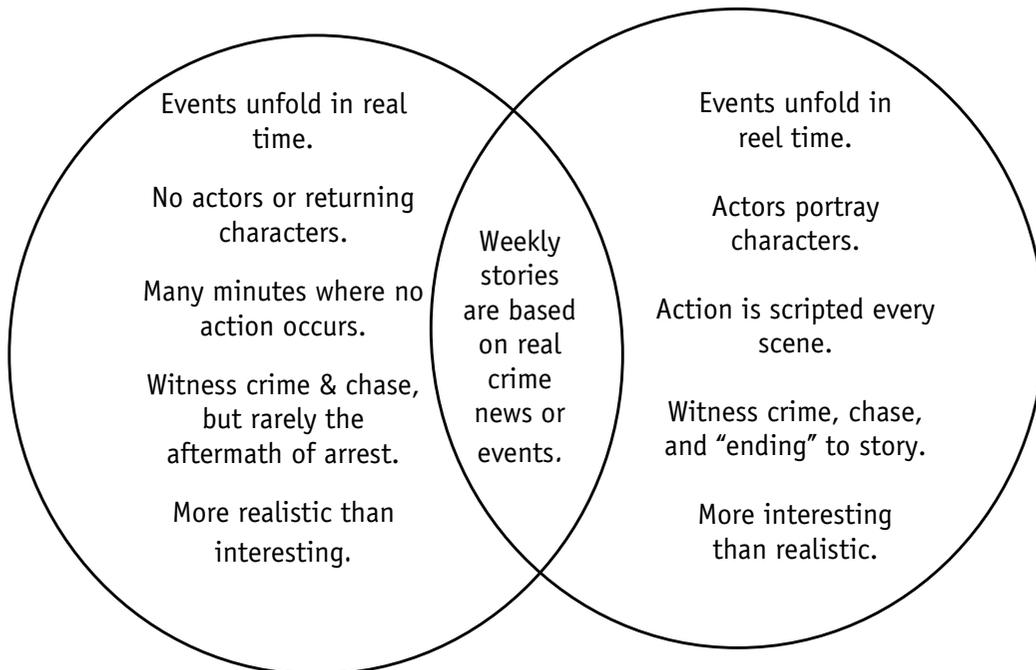
The result, says Baerg, is that *Cops* is more realistic than interesting; *Homicide* is more interesting than realistic.

The Venn diagram below illustrates the differences between these two types of crime shows on television. The area in which the two circles overlap is the element that both genres share in common. “When you take a look at all the cop shows on television,” says Baerg, “it’s evident that almost any plot line can be traced back to a real event.”

Show Title:
Genre:

Cops
Reality show

Homicide: Life on the Streets
Drama





TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 3 | ACTIVITY 3.6 | COMPARING PRINT AND TV NEWS

Students compare and contrast a crime news event as depicted on local TV news and in a newspaper. This activity includes TV news and print news versions of different types of crimes and accidents for students to analyze.

Getting Started

Ask students about their perceptions of the differences between TV news and newspapers. List their ideas on chart paper or the blackboard and introduce this idea by explaining that it's important to compare and contrast TV news to newspapers by looking carefully at both.

The video for this lesson contains two TV news stories about a robbery and a fatal car accident.

Start with the first news story and use this activity as a model to demonstrate the process of comparison-contrast. This is an important learning experience before asking students to do it themselves.

Play the first video segment on the Abe Lincoln robbery. Then have students read Activity Sheet 3.6 (B), the print news article about the same crime. Draw the Venn diagram model shown on Activity Sheet 3.6 (A) on the blackboard or chart paper.

After students have read the print news story, explore these questions:

- Which facts and information were included in both versions? On chart paper or the blackboard, place these ideas in the center of the Venn diagram.
- Which facts and information were included only in the print version? Place these in the circle marked “Print News.”
- Which facts and information were included only in the TV news version? Place these in the circle marked “TV News.”

Student Teamwork

Divide students into small groups or pairs. Play the video of the second TV news story, the fatal car accident. Pass out Activity Sheet 3.6 (C) and ask students to work with their partners to complete the Venn diagram. Encourage them to identify at least three differences and three similarities.

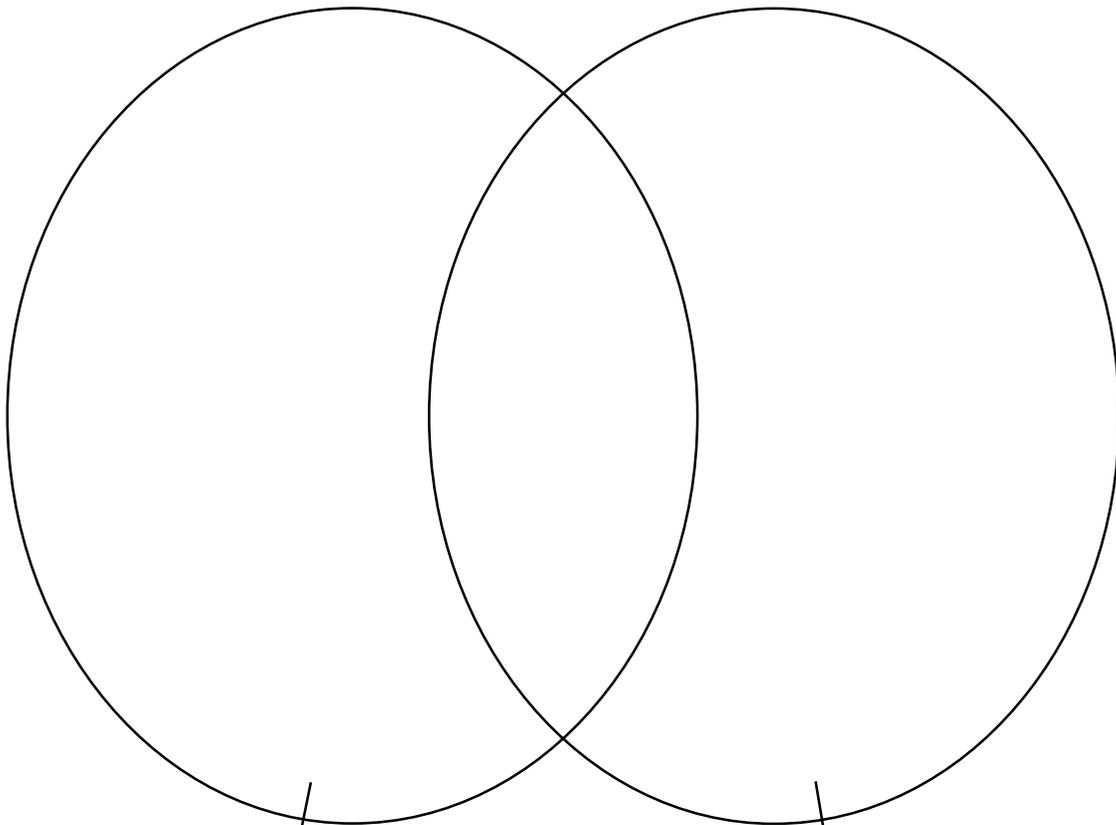
When students are completed, you might want to discuss the results and post students’ work for others to see.

Extension

Encourage students to interview a police officer to learn the similarities and differences between the real-life experience of being a police officer as compared with the way a police officer is represented on a reality show like *Cops*. Students could prepare a Venn diagram showing the police officer’s opinions of the similarities and differences between real life and the TV show.

COMPARING PRINT AND TV NEWS

Instructions: Select one of the three news stories. Watch the story presented on the video and read the same news story in print. With a partner, construct a Venn diagram that identifies the specific similarities between the two versions of the event. Write these in the intersection of the two circles. Then identify at least four unique characteristics of both the TV and print news story and place on the two circles.



TV News

Print News



Thank you for using NewsLibrary

THE BALTIMORE SUN

No lie, '*Dishonest Abe*' makes robbery rounds; Disguised as Lincoln, bearded bandit steals cash from 9 stores

Friday, November 5, 1999

Section: LOCAL

Edition: FINAL

Page: 1B

Illustration: PHOTO(S)

Candus Thomson and Kris Antonelli
SUN STAFF

ROCKVILLE -- An armed bandit who disguises himself as Abraham Lincoln has held up nine suburban Maryland stores in the past seven months.

Dressed in a stovepipe hat, long dark coat and fake beard, the bandit has made his mark in Howard, Anne Arundel, Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

Police call him "*Dishonest Abe*."

"We've had serial robbers, but dressing up is not something that happens often," says Montgomery County police spokeswoman Joyce Barrow.

Peter A. Gullotta, of the FBI office in Baltimore, says most robbers don't bother with a disguise, but an outrageous one can distract a victim from taking note of any details.

While this *Abe* might get points for creativity, he's probably hastening his capture, says a nationally known criminologist.

"It's not what you'd call a good technique," says Richard Moran, a professor of sociology at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Mass. "Most robberies are successful because they contain an element of surprise. Once this guy gets out of his car, he can't surprise anybody. He can't even stop in traffic with the beard on."

Abe's inaugural appearance was April 29 at a Friendly's restaurant in Kings Contrivance Village Center in Columbia. He walked into the shop between the lunch rush and dinner crowd, opened his coat to show the cashier a gun and took money.

He drove off in a decidedly unpresidential, stolen blue Camry, which was found about a block from the restaurant.

Exactly two months later, he robbed an Exxon station on Washington Boulevard in the Prince George's portion of Laurel.

Two days later, on July 1, he struck again in broad daylight at one of Montgomery County's busiest intersections. A clerk at a Freestate gas station in Wheaton told police a Lincoln-esque man helped himself to money from the cash register and drove off.

The next day, he hit an Amoco station in Falls Church, Va., followed by the Parkway Exxon on

Fort Meade Road in Anne Arundel on July 14.

Switching from gas stations, **Abe** robbed the Linens and Things store on Cherry Hill Road in College Park on July 22, then waited exactly two months before visiting the Waccamaw pottery store at Baltimore-Washington Parkway and Route 198.

By his next appearance -- in Howard County Oct. 7 -- **Abe** had a running mate, described by police as a male, 5 feet 10, dressed in a gray suit, gloves and fake beard. The pair robbed the Upton's store on Dobbin Road in Howard County.

In real life, **Abe** could be an otherwise upstanding citizen holding down a steady, legitimate job, police say. "He could just be supplementing his income," says Sgt. Karen Shinham, head of the Howard County Police Department's Robbery Unit.

Abe has been quiet and polite in the Howard robberies -- calmly asking for the cash before leaving the store. And while witnesses have caught a glimpse of his getaway cars, he has been smart enough to use stolen cars that police have not been able to trace back to him.

"He's a challenge all right," Shinham says. "But we will catch him, no doubt about that."

Perhaps running low on supplies, **Abe** and a partner struck again Oct. 12 at the Cosmetic Center in Rockville. But the robbery was foiled when the clerk locked herself in an office and refused to come out.

By **Abe's** next stop five days later, at an Exxon station on Route 3 in Bowie, he was solo again.

This is not the first time in suburban Maryland merchants have been threatened by presidents. In 1993, bandits in Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan masks struck three restaurants and a bank in Anne Arundel County during a nine-day period.

Police arrested two suspects, but a federal jury acquitted them of the bank robbery charges. They were never charged with the restaurant crimes.

Montgomery officers have a photo of **Abe** in action at the Freestate gas station, and the county's Crime Solvers program is offering a \$1,000 reward for the tip that leads to an arrest and indictment.

"We've had really good luck in the past when we've released the photo and the public calls in," says Barrow. "We put one out on a bank robber once and, within 24 hours, his mother recognized him and turned him in."

The FBI's Gullotta offers this advice: "I would be mildly suspicious if anyone came walking in my store as **Abe** Lincoln."

In action: A bandit, dubbed "Dishonest Abe" by police for his disguise, is caught on camera at the Freestate gas station in Wheaton.

All content © 1999 THE BALTIMORE SUN and may not be republished without permission.

All archives are stored on a SAVE (tm) newspaper library system from MediaStream Inc., a Knight Ridder, Inc. company.

	Search	Passport Signup	Billing Options
--	--------	-----------------	-----------------



Family: Brandi Lynn Forney, 20, and her daughter, Kelsi, were killed Friday in an accident with an Anne Arundel police cruiser. They are seen here with her husband, Eric Forney, who has consulted a lawyer.

Husband consults lawyer in fatal crash

NOV. 23 '99

Collision with police car killed his wife and child

By DEVON SPURGEON
SUN STAFF

A Glen Burnie man grieving the deaths of his wife and young daughter after a collision Friday evening with an Anne Arundel County police cruiser was making funeral arrangements yesterday and has consulted a lawyer.

The accident in Millersville killed Brandi Lynn Forney, 20, and 19-month-old Kelsi, whom Forney had picked up minutes earlier from her mother-in-law's home.

It occurred a few blocks from Old Mill High School, which Forney and her husband, Eric, 22, had attended. They began their relationship there as high school sweethearts, a relative said yesterday.

The driver of the police car, Officer Stephen C. Perron, 23, a two-year veteran of the county police force, was rushing to a reported armed robbery at a florist shop when his cruiser and the Forney vehicle collided.

Since the accident, Perron has been home on sick leave. "He feels terrible," said Deputy Chief Gary Barr of the county Police Department, "devastated and emotionally distraught."

Yesterday, officers posted encouraging messages for him on an unofficial county police Web site.

The passenger in the police car, Marc T. Gilbert, a Bell Atlantic executive who was riding with Perron as part of a community and business leadership training program, was unhurt, authorities said.

Griff Hall, executive director of the Leadership Anne Arundel program, said his organization plans to review its policy of having participants ride with county police. Hall said Gilbert "is thankful that he is OK" and "certainly feels for the family of all the victims involved in the accident."

Gilbert, who lives in Severna Park, did not return telephone calls, and the officer could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Eric Forney declined to discuss the accident yesterday as he left his home in Glen Burnie accompanied by a friend.

His attorney, Edward J. Baines, said yesterday that he is "helping the family get through a difficult time" and waiting for the police to finish their investigation before deciding whether to file a lawsuit.

Eric Forney, who manages a Jackz Grocery store, and the former Brandi Condon married two years ago. Brandi Forney had been working at the Three B's Bakery & Lunch in Pasadena, Baines said.

Friday evening, Brandi Forney's white Pontiac Grand Prix was struck on the driver's side by the police car — its lights flashing and siren activated — as she was entering Old Mill Boulevard from Old Mill Road, authorities said.

When rescuers arrived, Forney was unconscious and pinned against the steering wheel. Kelsi, strapped into her child safety seat, was in cardiac arrest in the back seat. Emergency workers cut apart the wreckage to free them.

The mother died Friday night at Maryland Shock Trauma Center; her daughter died Sunday morning at Johns Hopkins Hospital Children's Center.

Police said the cruiser was exceeding the 30-mph limit on Old Mill Boulevard as Perron responded to the robbery call at Saunders Florist on Old Mill Road.

Under department regulations, an officer must be "reasonable and prudent and use due caution" when responding to an emergency.

County police and the state's attorney's office were investigating the crash yesterday.

Visiting hours for the Forneys are planned for 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. today; and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. tomorrow, when services will be held, at McCully-Polyniak Funeral Home, 3204 Mountain Road in Pasadena.



TEACHER NOTES



UNIT 3

ROLE-PLAY A PANEL DISCUSSION ON CRIME AND THE MEDIA

Stage a panel discussion on crime with students role-playing hypothetical or real characters with a range of different opinions about crime and the mass media.

This activity involves your students in a formal panel discussion where they role-play different kinds of people with a range of viewpoints on the issues of crime and the mass media.

By using some of the activities in this unit, students should be able to define what is controversial about crime and the media and recognize the differing viewpoints that will enhance the discussion and debate of the topic.

You may want to conduct this activity as a whole class project, or you may want to divide the class into two or more teams. This will depend on how effectively students are able to work together, and the level of supervision necessary to complete the activity.

Review the Checklist

Pass out the Production Activity worksheet and review the steps in the process needed to complete the activity. Encourage students to check off the steps by using the circles in the left margin. Establish a realistic deadline and monitor students' work during the process.

Selecting Characters to Role-Play

Students can role-play a number of different people who are likely to have strong opinions about crime and the mass media. These might include:

- Parents and teachers
- Children and teens
- Print journalists
- Elderly citizens
- Broadcast journalists
- Community leader
- Writer for television or film
- Local district or county prosecutor
- Criminal attorney
- Public defender
- Victims of a violent crime
- Family members of a deceased crime victim
- Former criminal who has served prison term
- Perpetrators of a crime now serving time in prison

In gathering information, encourage students to interview people in the community to get a better understanding of their point-of-view.

Establishing Deadlines and Monitoring Student Work

You might want to set firm deadlines for the completion of various components on the activity checklist. It's important to encourage students not to reduce their characters to stereotypes—otherwise, the panel discussion will be predictable, boring, simplistic, or ridiculous.

You might consider staging this as an event that is open to the public. Many people in the community have strong opinions about the role of crime in the media and students might enjoy the opportunity to “perform” their roles in front of a public audience.

Evaluation

You might want students to evaluate each other's work using the Evaluation Rubric or you might want to use this as an evaluation tool yourself.

Even better would be to stage the debate as a public event and invite parents and community members to observe and participate. Students could design their own flyer for the event and distribute it to the local news media. The challenge will be for students to stay in character when answering questions!

ASSIGNMENT



UNIT 3

ROLE-PLAY A PANEL DISCUSSION ON CRIME AND THE MEDIA

(**ASSIGNMENT:** In a small team, stage a panel discussion on crime with students role-playing hypothetical or real characters with a range of different opinions.

CHECKLIST TO COMPLETE THIS ACTIVITY:

Define the topic.

- Brainstorm a list of various issues or topics on crime and the media.
- Collect and read at least five sources of information about the topics you identified. Share information with your team members.
- Select and write down at least three important controversies and the different possible perspectives of key groups: citizens, police, print journalists, TV news reporters, victims, criminals. Phrase these as questions to be answered by different panel members.

Select the panelists and assign students to role-play parts.

- Decide the six types of panel members you need to effectively discuss the controversies you have selected. Develop specific character names and identities for each.
- Assign students to role-play the panel members. Assign one student to be a moderator.
- Each student should plan his or her "positions" on the three controversies.
- Each student on the panel should write a one-paragraph "biography" about his or her character.
- The moderator is responsible for creating a handout with the three controversial questions and the character names and biographies.

Perform your role-play in class or on video.

- The moderator should introduce the session and briefly explain the controversial questions, then introduce the characters on the panel.
- Each panel member should speak about the questions for three minutes.
- The moderator should lead a discussion after the brief presentations and may take questions and answers from the audience.

EVALUATION



UNIT 3

ROLE-PLAY A PANEL DISCUSSION ON CRIME AND THE MEDIA

Student Name: _____

Important controversies are identified.

4	The panel discussion explores a meaningful topic on the issue of crime and the media and key controversies are identified. Panel members represent diverse points of view on the issues.
3	The panel discussion explores a topic on the issue of crime that is not especially meaningful or relevant. Key controversies are identified and panel members represent diverse points of view on the issues.
2	The panel discussion explores a topic on the issue of crime that is not especially meaningful or relevant. Key controversies are not identified or panel members do not represent diverse points of view on the issues.
1	Little effort has been made to identify important controversies.

Panel members are prepared and present their points of view effectively.

4	All panel members and the moderator present their points of view effectively, using specific examples and speaking in the first-person voice as their character. Vocal performances are strong. The handout sheet contains the three controversial questions and all the character bios.
3	Most panel members and the moderator present their points of view effectively, using specific examples and speaking in the first-person voice as their character. Most vocal performances are adequate. The handout sheet contains the three controversial questions and all the character bios.
2	Some panel members and the moderator present their points of view effectively, using specific examples. Some characters do not speak in the first-person voice. Vocal performances are weak. The handout sheet is missing information.
1	Little evidence that panel members are prepared and/or handout sheet is missing or sloppy.

Comments:

Grade: