Lesson 4
Researching Historic Events of the Gilded Age
(1880 – 1920)

Subject Area: “Famous Events of the Gilded Age”
Creation of a class version of the “Newport Mercury” newspaper
Start this set of lessons after the “Gilded Age Famous People” lessons

Overview Activity: Students will write an article through the interview of a Famous Gilded Age partner. They will interview their famous partner and research a famous event using their partner as a resource.

Grade/Group: Grade 5/6

Time Frame: Flexible; 10 or more periods (45 minutes)

Objectives: The students will:
• identify and research local and national famous events (and people) occurring during and having an impact upon the “Gilded Age” (1880 – 1920)
• research specific events using multiple resources
• create a newspaper account of period

Materials:
• See chronology of the Gilded Age including famous people and events.
• Check out the following website for “teaching students to write a newspaper article”
  http://www.mediaawareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/secondary/broadcast_news/writing_newspaper_article.cfm (These materials are attached to the lesson plan for your convenience.)
• http://www.hcsvt.org/Teams/TomDarling/newspaper.htm
• If possible, obtain software for making a newspaper: PageMaker or QuarkXpress
• ASCD maintains a useful website related to Freedom of Speech and First Amendment Rights as listed:
  http://www.firstamendmentschools.org/freedoms/speech.aspx
• Copies of articles and advertisements from the Newport Mercury [additional items can be obtained on microfiche available from Salve Regina University library].

Learner Factors: Students will have prior knowledge based upon lessons related to historical events, continuous time line, stories, other print resources and the CD (enclosed). The length of the newspaper assignment may be based upon individual abilities. Some students may choose to create a political cartoon or other illustration and caption depicting and event of the times accompanied by a short explanation of the cartoon or illustration. For extra credit, students may want to create an advertisement modeled after samples from the Newport Mercury.

Motivational Activities: Students will interview each other as Famous Persons from the Gilded Age. This could be completed when students dress in costume. The teacher will dress up as a newspaper reporter and will model interviewing a Famous (or not necessarily famous) Person from the Gilded Age. The teacher will model on the
overhead a sample of notes taken, statistics found to include as a part of the article, a graphic organizer, and sample of the article.

**Lesson Development:**
*** Teachers may use 1 or more of the suggested developmental activities included in this week of instruction.

*Creating a Newspaper Article*
1. Outline the purpose of your article
2. Choose an article topic
3. Research the article
4. Write the article
5. Edit the article – have a peer proofread it
6. Rewrite the article and type it on the computer
7. Do a spell check
8. Optional class activity: Use a software program such as PageMaker or QuarkXpress to create a newspaper that will contain all the articles

*Formula for a Well-Written News Article*
1. **First paragraph**
   In your first one or two sentences tell who, what, when, where, and why. Try to hook the reader by beginning with a funny, clever, or surprising statement. Go for variety: try beginning your article with a question or a provocative statement.

2. **Second/Third/Fourth paragraphs**
   Give the reader the details. Include one or two quotes from people you interviewed. (Interview each other as a part of the Famous People lesson plans.) Write in the third person (he, she, it, they). Be objective -- never state your opinion. Use quotes to express others' opinions!

3. **Last paragraph**
   Wrap it up somehow (don't leave the reader hanging. Don't say..."In conclusion" or "To finish..." (yawn!) Try ending with a quote or a catchy phrase.

   - Use active words (verbs that show what's really happening.)
   - Take notes when you interview. Write down quotes!
   - Tell the really interesting info first!

*Procedure*

This set of lessons should take approximately one-and-a-half weeks.

- Freedom of speech – 1 day
- Introduction to school journalism/brainstorming – 1 day
- Research articles – 2 days
- Write/revise – 3 days
Daily Lesson Plans

**Day One** Start out your newspaper series of lessons with a discussion about freedom of speech and what it means. Intermediate school students have many strong opinions on this topic and it gives the teacher a nice opportunity to play “Devil's Advocate.” Begin by asking the following questions:

- Have you heard the term "freedom of speech"?
- Where does this phrase come from? (The First Amendment)
- What is the First Amendment? How did it come about? How does it affect freedom of speech?
- Do you think we have freedom of speech in the USA? Why or why not?
- Should we have complete freedom of speech, so we can say anything we want? Why or Why not?

If the class as a whole seems to agree that "yes, we should have total freedom of speech" ask them:

- Should racist remarks be allowed in the classroom?
- Should a teacher be allowed to swear in a classroom?
- Is it okay to tell lies and spread rumors about other classmates?

If the class as a whole seems to agree that "no, we should not have total freedom of speech" ask them:

- Do you think newspapers should get permission from the person they are writing about before a story is printed?
- What if the person won't give permission?
- What if a story is important and the key person won't give permission? For example, if you found out that the principal was embezzling money from the school, do you think the principal would give you permission to print the story?

*(A good background resource for this discussion would be the teaching lesson* You be the Editor and You Were the Editor, *which presents several fictitious "freedom of speech" scenarios faced by a news editor.)*

Tell students that they will be writing articles for a “Gilded Age” newspaper. They will each be responsible for one article, and may work in pairs to write two articles. They will have an opportunity to interview each other as a Famous Person during the Gilded Age.

**Day Two** Provide a Think Aloud of the Activity to come. Initiate the Motivational Activity; dress up as a reporter. Model a graphic organizer. Interview one of the Famous Gilded Age Persons from the class (in costume). Model process; use overhead. Use this model each day to model each next step. Even have students use sample (and additional samples) to critique using rubric.

**Day Three** Distribute *Creating a Newspaper Article*

Lay out a big sheet of bulletin board paper on a table in the middle of the room. Ask students to form a circle around the paper. Talk about creating a newspaper as if it were the “Gilded Age.” Have students look at microfiche or copies of articles from the *Newport Mercury*. In pairs, considering their role as a Gilded Age Famous Person,
brainstorm ideas for “Gilded Age” newspaper article topics. Students should write an article from their perspective as a Gilded Age Famous Person. Topics will have to be approved. List potential article topics and kinds of articles possible as students share. Look at current newspapers to determine article types.

Once the list of possible articles is finished, allow students to sign up for topics and form pairs if they wish. Limit the number of feature articles. Explain to students that space in a newspaper is an issue. Space costs money and we only have so much money, therefore, we only have so much space.

Provide a graphic organizer for how to write a newspaper article. Distribute the handout Formula for a Well-Written Article. Describe and provide examples illustrating the 'lead' as the opening to their article and describe how the opening should hook the reader. The opening paragraph should answer the 5 W's: Who, What, When, Where, Why (and sometimes How). Tell them about the inverted pyramid. This means that articles should be written with the most important information first and the least important last.

**Day Four** Share the Rubric below. Share two newspaper articles written by the teacher. Have students use the rubric to score a good and poor article. Students will summarize the differences in the articles and show they understand the evaluation criteria.

**Day Five** Read (and share a visual copy of) a short article that includes facts or statistics; this could be done at the school library. Explore with students how the facts or statistics support the article. Ask them where they think the reporter found these facts or statistics. Tell students they must try to find two or more facts or statistics to support their topic. This gives them practice in research and adds substance to their article. Allow students time in pairs to begin to map out ideas for specific articles and allow time to explore what statistics they could use as a part of their article. Model for students how to get started with a graphic organizer using a Famous Person from the Gilded Age.

**Days Six and Seven** Continue researching and writing news articles. Tell students they will be due in two days. Other possible idea: share copies of articles from the Newport Mercury from the late 1800’s or early 1900’s.

**Day Eight** Have students exchange news articles and ask them to check that the 'lead' paragraph answers the 5 W's. Ask them to answer the questions, "Did this article 'hook' you into reading more? Why or why not?" Allow the students to have time to self-assess using the rubric, below. Ask students to revise their articles if it is necessary. Allow time for peer editing as well.

**Evaluation**

- Completed articles, including peer edited drafts.
- See Rubric below
WRITING A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: FUNNEL METHOD

Submitted by Kimberly Olstein, North Haven Middle School, July 2001

T I T L E

First Paragraph:
2. Hook the reader with a funny, clever, or surprising statement.
3. Go for variety! Begin with a question or provocative statement.

Second, Third, Fourth Paragraphs:
1. Give details!
2. Include quotes
3. Be objective (write in 3rd person)

Last Paragraph:
Wrap it up!!! (don’t leave the reader hanging.)

Don’t say…“in conclusion” or “to finish”

See Rubric
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pulitzer Prize (above standard)</th>
<th>Newport Daily News (standard)</th>
<th>Lining the Bird Cage (below standard)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hook</strong></td>
<td>• Grabs reader and informs.</td>
<td>• Appropriately grabs reader.</td>
<td>• No hook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Does not grab or dull.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who?</strong></td>
<td>• Participants are fleshed out: 3-D.</td>
<td>• Complete names (i.e. Jane Doe).</td>
<td>• No names.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Names have significance.</td>
<td>• Incomplete names (i.e. Tom).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Organization(s).</td>
<td>• Lists of names.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What?</strong></td>
<td>• Significance of event is the focus of article.</td>
<td>• Event is identified.</td>
<td>• Event not identified or misidentified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If appropriate, statistics of the period are woven into the article to provide relevant detail and highlight significance of event.</td>
<td>• Significance of event (i.e. an accurate event from the Gilded Age, 1880-1920) is clear in the article.</td>
<td>• No significance given to event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Details are accurate (4 or more are provided).</td>
<td>• Few (1 or 2 or 3) or no details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Statistics of the period are provided to lend detail.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where?</strong></td>
<td>• Location adds to overall focus of article.</td>
<td>• Location given.</td>
<td>• Vague or no location given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Description allows reader to imagine setting.</td>
<td>• Location has no real link to article.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When?</strong></td>
<td>• Same.</td>
<td>• Specific date and time.</td>
<td>• Vague or no time given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Significance given (i.e. last game of the season).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why?</strong></td>
<td>• Shows several dimensions to story’s importance.</td>
<td>• Tells us why this is news and important.</td>
<td>• No explanation of why event is news or important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How?</strong></td>
<td>• Shows connection between prior events and story’s focus.</td>
<td>• What made this event happen (i.e. through parent support….)</td>
<td>• No idea how event happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Techniques</strong></td>
<td>• Quotes show extra dimension to story.</td>
<td>• Quotes.</td>
<td>• Meaningless or no quotes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Varied, meaty vocabulary.</td>
<td>• Solid vocabulary.</td>
<td>• Bland, repetitive vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>• Conclusion adds to overall article.</td>
<td>• Conclusion linked to event’s significance.</td>
<td>• No conclusion, it just stops.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Day Nine and Ten**  Decide if you want to put together a Gilded Age newspaper format. Assign editor and publisher positions (multiple students).

**Closure:**  Read and enjoy the class created Gilded Age Newspaper

**Follow-Up Activities:** Students will continue participating in the activities of the Gilded Age unit.

**Student Assessment:**
1. Evaluation of written assignment using writing rubric.
2. Evaluation activities by students…. Warm positive feedback….. cool criticism and feedback; suggestions for improvement.