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TEACHER'S GUIDE

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March 4-10, 2007

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*Do your students tend to slack off as the end of the school year nears?*

► This Week's Focus:

## Senioritis

Many seniors have a tendency to slack off at school after they get accepted to college. In most cases, a slight dip in their grades doesn't affect their college prospects. But they may not realize that most colleges require them to maintain good grades even after acceptance, and now at least one major university is turning away students who give in to "senioritis," the subject of our first lesson plan. Also, this is Newspaper in Education Week. Newspapers offer lessons in almost every subject area every day. Our lesson plan offers advice for taking advantage of this resource. You'll also find two related skills sheets. Finally, this week PARADE magazine reports on the soldiers of Iraq's army. Are they ready to take over for U.S. troops?

### Everyday Newspaper Activity

**Activity # 27: Editorial Purpose.** Ask students to read an editorial in the paper. What is its purpose? Does it try to persuade, inform or entertain? Was it written to interpret, praise or give advice? Some editorials are even written to make people laugh. Was this one?

### Coming Up Next Week

- **Should Girls Get a Cancer Vaccine?**
- **Women's History Month**
- **The 10 Worst Inventions**

► **In the News:**  
**Colleges Combat Senioritis;**  
**Newspaper in Education Week p.2**

► **In PARADE: Inside the Iraqi Army p.3**

► **Skills Sheets:**  
**Writing a News Story p.4; History in the News p.5**

## Colleges Combat Senioritis

**Curriculum links:** Current events, civics, education, college prep, critical thinking

**Briefing:** For years, high school seniors who have already been accepted to college have let their grades fall, skipped classes and generally slacked off in school. The phenomenon is known as “senioritis” and in most cases, it has no negative ramifications for the students. But that may be changing. The University of Washington last year rescinded offers of admission to 23 students who had let their grades fall as seniors and sent stern letters to 180 incoming freshmen warning them against a repeat of senior year slacking. Many students may not realize that most college acceptances are, technically, conditional. Schools reserve the right to revoke admissions if they see a significant downturn in senior year grades when they review student transcripts at the end of the school year. UW admissions director Philip Ballinger says that few families dispute the decision. But the timing—some students received the notice in mid-August—can leave them scrambling for a place at another school. With more than 40,000 students, Washington may be the biggest school to combat senioritis systematically. The university claims its move has been applauded by educators. “High school counselors have been asking us to do this for years,” Ballinger said.

**Newspaper activity:** How does your paper cover college admissions? Do you think the articles show what it’s really like for students? Should papers report on where top-ranked local students will go to school, as most papers do for star athletes? Explain.

**Resources:** Books: Michael London and Stephen Kramer’s *The New Rules of College Admissions* (Fireside, 2006) and *The Yale Daily News’ Insider’s Guide to the Colleges, 2007* (St. Martin’s, 2006). Web sites: Find out more from the College Board, Time magazine, and Edutopia.\*

### Classroom Debates

• **Should colleges punish students for senioritis?** Is the University of Washington’s program fair? Explain. Is senioritis common in your school? Is it important to work hard in school throughout senior year, or do college-bound students deserve a break? Does your school take any action to keep seniors from slacking off? If not, should it?

## Newspaper in Education Week

**Curriculum links:** Media literacy, social studies, current events, language arts

**Briefing:** NIE week is March 5-9, and this year’s theme is “Now I Get It! Improving Comprehension With Newspapers.” The NIE concept began in 1795 when *The Portland (Maine) Eastern Herald* ran an editorial stating, “Do you wish your child to improve in reading? Give him a newspaper...Do you wish to instruct him in geography? Nothing will so indelibly fix the relative situation of different places as the stories and events published in the papers...” It went on, describing the relevance of newspapers to teaching goals. Today more than 94% of newspapers with a daily circulation over 15,000 have NIE programs, more than 950 in all.

**Newspaper activity:** Press freedom means that neither the government nor private interests can censor newspapers. Teach the effect of censorship by dividing the class into “special interest groups” representing the U.S.

government, the military, teens, older people, liberals, conservatives, religious groups, oil companies, environmentalists, etc. For one week, each team should “censor” the paper, cutting out everything that might disturb their group. At the end of the week, have each team share its censored papers. How different is each one? Which group cut out the fewest articles? Which cut out the most?

**Resources:** Books: Ian Friedman’s *Freedom of Speech and the Press* (Facts on File, 2005), Sarah Fuller’s *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* (Enslow, 1998), and Norma Mazer’s novel, *Bright Days, Stupid Nights* (Laurel Leaf, 1993). Web site: Visit the Newspaper Association of America Foundation for free resources. Students can get advice on school journalism issues from the Student Press Law Center.\*

### Classroom Debates

• **Why is it important that papers be able to publish without having the government approve their stories?** Are there any circumstances under which the government should be able to censor the paper? Explain. Lately, there have been several cases in which judges have threatened reporters with jail for refusing to reveal their sources. Should reporters have to reveal sources in criminal cases? Why or why not?

# Inside the Iraqi Army

**Curriculum links:** Current events, political science, social studies

**Briefing:** In this week's PARADE, author and former Marine infantry officer David Danelo profiles the men of the Iraqi Army. President Bush has said, "As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down." In other words, Danelo writes, the fate of America's armed forces is in the hands of Iraq's soldiers. Are they ready to take control of their country? The soldiers Danelo met at Al Qaim, an outpost near the Syrian border, are "a mosaic of the Iraqi people." A 20-year-old private says that he likes serving his country but still plans to quit in a few months and use his pay to open an Internet café. (Soldiers do not serve for specific lengths of time in Iraq—even if they had such contracts, they would be unenforceable.)

Unfortunately, he's been waiting for pay for three months. According to one U.S. official, as many as 40% of Iraqi soldiers are not being paid. A lieutenant at Al Qaim, 25, was in his second year at the Iraqi Military Academy when the U.S. invaded in 2003. Angry and cynical, the officer complained to the American reporter, "Before you came here, no one cared who was Sunni or Shia—everyone was Iraqi." He has lost two nephews in the crossfire between U.S. soldiers and insurgents, and three uncles are being held in a U.S. military prison suspected of ties to insurgents. "There would be no insurgency if you were not here," he says. Another officer, 38, fought for Iraq against Iran in 1987, and against the U.S. in the first Gulf War. He says he still dreams of finishing his college education, though he doubts he ever will.

**Newspaper activity:** How does your paper cover the Iraqi army? Scan the paper for a week for articles about the progress or setbacks in building up Iraq's military. What challenges do the Iraqi troops face? How well are they working alongside American soldiers? In general, do the articles offer a positive or negative outlook for Iraq's future?

**Resources:** David Danelo's *Blood Stripes: The Grunt's View of the War in Iraq* (Stackpole Books, 2006), Bing West's *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah* (Bantam, 2005) and George Sullivan's *Journalists At Risk: Reporting America's Wars* (21st Century, 2004). Web sites: Learn more from U.S. Cavalry ON Point, CNN, and the *New York Times*.\*

## Classroom Debates

- **When, if ever, will Iraq's army be able to take over security for their country?** How are the soldiers Danelo met similar to or different from typical U.S. troops? Why do you think they stay with the army even though they rarely get paid? Do you support United States policy in Iraq?

## ASK MARILYN

### Count Your Chickens

**Question:** A reader asks, "If a farmer has a total of 30 cows and chickens, and the animals have 74 legs in all, how many chickens are in the coop?"

**Answer:**  $x$  (number of cows) +  $y$  (number of chickens) = 30 (total animals). Cows have 4 legs and chickens have 2, so we can also say that  $4x$  (number of cow legs) +  $2y$  (number of chicken legs) = 74 (total legs). This is the same as  $2x + y = 37$ . Since we know  $x + y = 30$ , then we also know  $x = 30 - y$ . Substitute this information in the equation  $2x + y = 37$ , and we find that  $2(30 - y) + y = 37$ . Or,  $60 - y = 37$ . So there are 23 chickens in the coop.

**Interact:** Send questions to Ask Marilyn, 711 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017, or to [marilyn@parade.com](mailto:marilyn@parade.com).

### Answer Key:

## INTELLIGENCE REPORT

### Young and Uninsured

**For class discussion or writing assignment:** Many young Americans are taking a major risk by living without regular health insurance. Almost a third of them say they don't expect to get any health insurance until they land a job with benefits. But when even a simple visit to an ER for the flu can cost more than \$500, their risk may not be a wise one. A new Web site, [allaboutthebenefits.com](http://allaboutthebenefits.com), is designed to help young adults make sense of health insurance information and make smart decisions about their own care, including how to find a health plan and how to budget for its payments. Do you think it's worth the risk for young people to go without health insurance, even for a short period? What do you think is an appropriate price for a young adult to pay for monthly health insurance?

**Find out more:** To find out more, visit [allaboutthebenefits.com](http://allaboutthebenefits.com).

**Writing a News Story (p. 4):** Answers will vary. **History in the News (p. 5):** Answers will vary.



## History in the News

**Journalism is often called the “first draft” of history.** But there are many references to history in the pages of almost every daily paper. Scan some recent copies of your paper for today’s take on the past, then answer the questions below.

1. Read the front section of the paper. Are there any articles about the past—American or local history, new historic or archaeological discoveries, events honoring people or events from the past? What are the articles about?

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2. Scan the rest of the paper—local news, arts and entertainment, science, sports, fashion, business—for other articles that focus on history. How are people, trends, or events from history affecting news events today?

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3. Read the editorials or op-ed columns for several days. Choose one editorial or column that focuses on history, or on the lessons we should learn from history. What is the column about? What historical events or people does it focus on? Do you agree with its main points?

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4. One section of the paper that always has a historical focus is the obituaries, which review the lives of famous or accomplished people. Read the obituaries in your paper for several days. Then pick out the person who lived the longest.

When was he or she born? \_\_\_\_\_ Where did he or she live? \_\_\_\_\_

Write three facts about this person’s life: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name three important historical events that he or she must have lived through.

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What three questions would you have asked this person, if you had the chance?

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