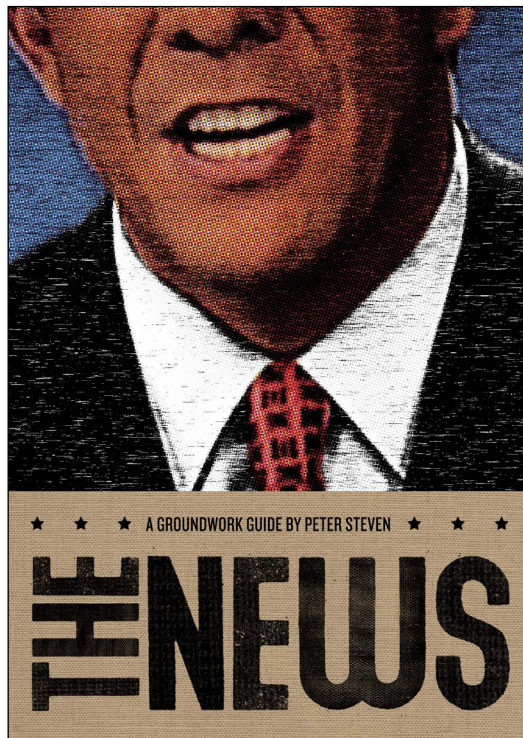




# GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

## The News A Groundwork Guide

*Written by Peter Steven*



**A book about media power, media ethics, media corporations and the need for reliable, unfiltered international news. An excellent introduction to the news for young adults.**

### **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

Ages 14 and up / Grades 9 and up

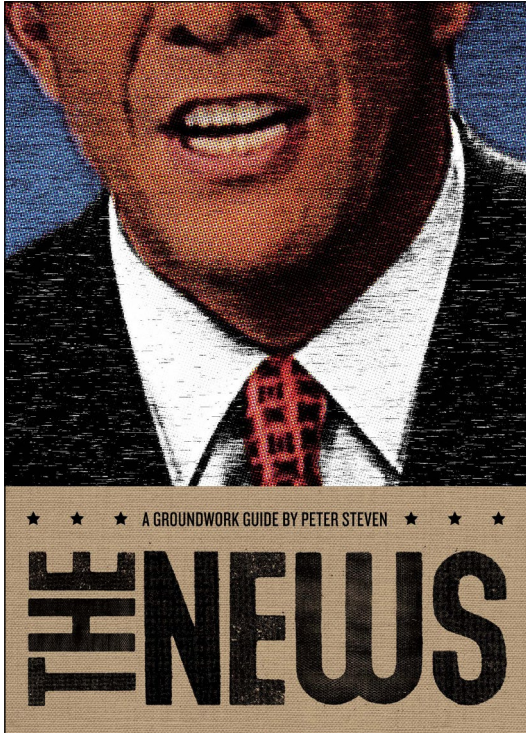
YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION / Media Studies

5 x 7 / 144 pages

Paperback / \$11.00 / 978-0-88899-823-1

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## BOOK DESCRIPTION

This book is about media power, media ethics, media corporations and the need for reliable, unfiltered international news coverage.

The book explores the following topics:

- the importance of free media to democracy
- what news is and how it's presented
- big media — media as big business, and its effects
- characteristics of print, radio and television news
- online news sources
- investigative journalism and war journalism
- the future of news media

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Social Studies (Civics, Geography, History, World Studies)
- English Language Arts
- Business Studies (Economics)
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Arts (Visual Arts, Theater Arts)
- Information and Communications Technology
- Mathematics

## IDEAS FOR GETTING STARTED

Introduce the book and your goals for studying it, and briefly outline the issues the book explores. Tell students that issues-based study raises varied opinions, and that, as a class, you will set some ground rules for maintaining a respectful and safe classroom atmosphere for discussing personal views. Ask the class to collaborate to create a list of expectations, such as “We’ll respect one another’s privacy”; “We’ll listen to one another”; and “We won’t insult one another.” Post the list and revisit it periodically to allow students to make observations and air problems.

Have students complete the questionnaire called *The News: Getting Started Questionnaire* (in this Teachers’ Guide). Have groups of students share and discuss their responses. You can monitor the responses and discussion as a way to assess students’ knowledge levels and areas of interest. After their study of the book, students can review their initial responses and reflect on their learning.

## TEACHING/LEARNING APPROACHES

Read the book as a class, with group or class discussions at the end of each chapter and a culminating activity at the end. You could use a combination of teacher read aloud, guided reading and independent reading.

Have students read the book independently and create their own study project.

Assign groups of students one chapter each and have them read it and present it to the rest of the class.

Have students read the book in groups and then either collaborate on a culminating activity or complete one independently.

Ask students to keep an Issues Journal (in writing or on audio or video) in which they comment on what they have read and/or discussed. Encourage frequent updates throughout the study of *The News*. Let students know from the outset whether the journal is for personal use only or if it's meant to be part of their assessment.

## IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION

Do you agree with the author's statement that the media have become the most powerful institution in many societies today?

How are media and democracy linked?

Do you think that newspapers are doomed?

The author writes, "Information and entertainment go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other." What do you think this means, and do you agree?

What image does the media present of you? Do you think it mostly validates, denigrates or ignores you? If you wanted to change this situation, what recommendations would you have?

What do you think this quote from BBC journalist Martin Bell means, and do you agree? "People tend to think that journalists are where the news is. This is not so. The news is where journalists are." Can you give an example of when you have thought this about a particular news story?

How much does proximity — that is, how much the news directly affects you — play a part in your interest in the news?

Why is being aware of the ownership of media important? How does the author support his statement that concentrated ownership of media, with fewer companies producing the news, is a “bad trend and poses a grave danger to democracy”?

What is your opinion of “happy news” stories on local newscasts?

What problems and promise does the author outline in describing online news?

Why do you think this author devoted a section to war and the news?

According to the author, what are the consequences of the lack of international news?

Would you become a journalist? How has this book affected your thoughts on that career choice?

## IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES

Students look through some sample newspapers, in groups, thinking about what appeals to them and what does not appeal to them and their age bracket. Groups then imagine that they are the editors of one of these newspapers. Their task is to come up with ways to increase the readership among younger readers, ages 16–25. You could assign each group a different section of the paper or have each group cover all sections. Their ideas could be set up as an annotated list of changes and they could also mock up some sample changes. Groups present their ideas and examples to the class and together the class decides on the best ideas and recommendations.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Business Studies (Economics), Arts (Visual Arts), Information and Communications Technology**

Students decide which of the following photos to run (or they choose a different photo) for a local story about a factory opening: shot of the ribbon-cutting ceremony; shot of neighborhood members protesting the factory's potential pollution and noise; shot of a family at the ceremony, including a parent, formerly unemployed, who now has a job at the factory; shot of the factory building. Students discuss their choices and the effects their choice would have on the story.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Business Studies (Economics), Civics, Humanities and Social Sciences**

Ask groups of students to imagine that their school has a daily newspaper and they are the editors. They have to choose what four stories, from the following list, they will run on the front page, which will be their headline story and what photo they will run. Here is the list of stories: student wins city's heroism prize for rescuing a young child in a river; school's math scores are low; theft of money from the school cafeteria; teachers attend conference on antibullying; principal attends school board budget meeting; kitten found abandoned at school entryway; school dance is coming up; Environmental Club's latest campaign has helped reduce school energy usage. Groups present their decisions and reasoning to the class. Afterward, have a class discussion about the activity and the issues it raised.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Business Studies (Economics), Civics**

Ask students to reread the first part of Chapter 2 of *The News* that begins with, "Four standard ingredients seem to be agreed on by journalists and editors around the world: the present tense, big consequences, sudden change, and the story" (pp. 18–22). Students then choose two or three current news stories and analyze them to see if they contain those four elements. They should include a variety of news media in their analysis. They can share their findings in groups or as a class.

**Subjects: English Language Arts**

Students do a comprehensive comparative analysis on a subject of their choice related to an issue that really interested them in *The News*. Here are some ideas:

- compare TV news broadcasts or TV breakfast television shows, including comments on the anchor and reporters, background/set, style of segments, pacing, time per story, grouping of stories, transitions, visual or audio “jolts,” use of music, use of graphics, screen’s visual format (logo, headline crawl, weather, etc.), reliability, diversity, bias and political orientation
- compare two public radio stations
- compare media coverage of the same story in two different sources (e.g., newspapers, television, radio or the Internet)
- compare two corporate media giants
- compare a radio or television news broadcast from decades ago with one from today
- compare two 24-hour news stations
- compare a local television news show with a national one and an international one

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Business Studies (Economics), Humanities and Social Sciences, World Studies**

Students work in groups to propose ideas for establishing an independent, reliable media service in their community. They could research similar initiatives on the Internet and then discuss what they would want to achieve, what principles they would follow and how they might create the service.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Business Studies, Civics, World Studies**



Students work in groups to describe how they would cover the same news story in the three different forms that *The News* describes: (1) straight news and information; (2) feature story, involving research and background; (3) investigative, purposeful story. They don't have to write the three different stories, but they should provide a detailed outline for each story, how they would "get" the story, some sample phrases or sentences they would include, a headline or intro line for each of the three stories, and what, if any, photos/video or graphics they would run with each of them. Have groups share and discuss their work with another group. Have them comment on which story they think would most interest an audience, the one story they think has the least bias and which is the most reliable.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Business Studies (Economics), Humanities and Social Sciences**

Students work as a class to develop a list of interview questions for a journalist based on issues they have read about in *The News* or that their reading of the book has raised. Arrange for the interview, either by having a guest visit the classroom or through an online set up. Two or three students can serve as a panel of interviewers to ask the class's questions.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Business Studies (Economics), Civics, Information and Communications Technology**

Students research one of the following: a famous investigative news story, a well-known journalist or media owner, a war correspondent, any of the people mentioned in *The News*, an item from the timeline or a satiric news show or publication. They present their research in the form of an essay, report, photo essay, PowerPoint presentation, role-playing interview or dramatic monologue.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Business Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, Arts (Theater Arts), Information and Communications Technology**



Reread this sentence from *The News*: “The news media reflect the biases of the organizations that own them and the people who work in them. Thus, very few media outlets in the world reflect the diversity of peoples in their societies.” To explore this statement, students analyze a number of newspapers and television news shows for content and, for television news, its presenters and reporters.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Civics, Humanities and Social Sciences, World Studies**

Provide students with a list of films about the newspaper or news media business (or have students find lists on the Internet). Ensure that films from previous decades are included. Try to locate some of these films and have students watch two or more of them to write a comparative essay about themes, media issues, styles and representation of the news media. Or have different students view one film and have group discussions about the variety of films they watched, using the criteria listed above as discussion points.

**Subjects: Visual Arts, English Language Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

To learn more about photojournalism, students study the work of some of the photojournalists mentioned in *The News* or of other photojournalists. They then produce their own photo-documentary project. They take a series of still photographs of a subject of their choice to richly convey the subject and the experience to the viewer. Students should also submit a written or oral explanation of their photo documentary describing their subject, why they chose it and what they were trying to achieve with their project. Ensure parental approval before students begin their project and/or accompany the students on the photography outing.

**Subjects: Visual Arts, Information and Communications Technology, Civics, English Language Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

Students have a discussion, debate or write a paper on what they think the future of the news media will be. Here are some idea-generating questions: Will the news media become more or less reliable? Will it become more international? Will the quality of journalism decline or improve? Will there still be newspapers? What will the state of ownership be? Will news be free on the Internet?

**Subjects: English Language Arts, Business Studies, Civics, World Studies**

## CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER GROUNDWORK GUIDES

See *Empire* and *The Betrayal of Africa* for themes of American influence internationally, racism, and global economics and power.

See *Democracy* for themes of repression and freedom.

See *Oil* for issues of imperialism, and global economics and power.

Have students select other books in the series for independent study.

## THE NEWS: GETTING STARTED QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How knowledgeable would you say you usually are on the news of the day?

- ☐ extremely knowledgeable: I always know what's going on in the world
- ☐ fairly knowledgeable: I usually know the big stories about what's going on in the world
- ☐ somewhat knowledgeable: I sometimes hear about what's going on in the world
- ☐ not knowledgeable: I usually have no idea about what's going on in the world

2. What's your biggest complaint about the news media?

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3. What is your highest praise for the news media?

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4. Do you think you know when you are hearing a biased news report?  
Why or why not?

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5. What is your favorite news source: Hard-copy newspaper? Online newspaper? Online social networking sources (blogs, Facebook, YouTube)? Radio? Television?

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6. Which source of news do you think is the most reliable?

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7. Do you know who owns your local newspaper? Do you know who owns the radio station or TV station you listen to or watch for news?

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8. Can you name three well-known journalists?

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9. How do you think your news sources get their information?

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10. What personal goals do you have for learning about the news?

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## STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT: ISSUES-BASED LEARNING

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	NO	SOME- WHAT	YES	COMMENTS
I have a solid understanding of the information presented in this book.				
I did an in-depth, thoughtful analysis of information for the project I did for this book.				
I made connections between information in the book and real-life events. I understood the relevance of the book.				
I used critical-thinking skills, problem-solving skills and inquiry skills.				
I communicated information and ideas effectively and I listened to others' ideas thoughtfully.				

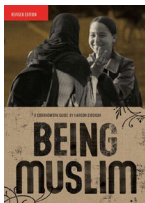
## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**Peter Steven** teaches media studies at Ryerson University in Toronto, and he is the author of *The No-Nonsense Guide to Global Media*. His writing has appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, *Le Devoir*, the *New Internationalist*, *Jump Cut*, the *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* and the *Beaver*. He holds a PhD in Radio/TV/Film from Northwestern University in Chicago. Peter lives in Toronto, Ontario.



## GROUNDWORK GUIDES



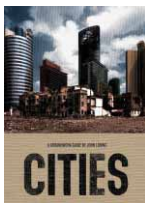
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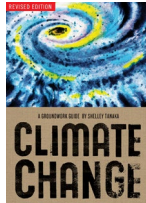
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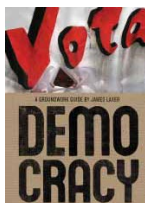
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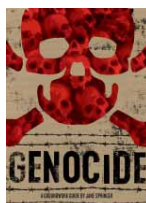
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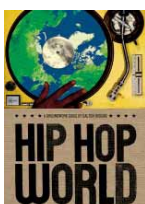
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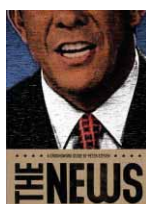
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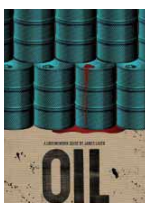
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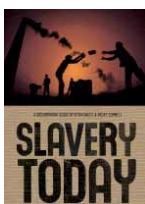
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