

SCIENCE NEWS AND THE SCIENCE CLASSROOM

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GOALS IN SCIENCE CLASSES

Science teachers have many goals

- learning science content
- learning problem-solving
- building positive attitudes towards science
- understanding what science is and how it works

SCIENCE NEWS

- Biweekly newsmagazine summarizing recent science discoveries
- Short, 15-20 pages a week
- Lay language, not technical language
- Physics department got a copy each week for each student with Learning Access funds



THE ASSIGNMENT

- Every other week, students pick up the current issue of *Science News*
- Each week: Students choose one article
- Write a very brief summary of the science in the article
- Write a brief statement on why the article interested them
- Write a brief statement about societal implications and / or what the article shows about scientific culture

THE RESPONSE: STUDENTS

- Easy to do (10-20 minutes each week)
- Fun to read
- Applicable to their lives
- Often had trouble choosing just one article
- Often read most or all of the magazine

THE RESPONSE: TEACHER

- WOW! Best assignment I have ever developed
- Very easy to grade
- Actually fun to grade!
- Gave me interesting insight into students' lives
- Students reading more than assigned

IN THE STUDENTS' WORDS

- I have found articles relating to my life and things in general. I have found articles related to me as a man, an asthma sufferer, a consumer, fisherman, and a student with A.D.D.
- I learned something new every week that I completed a Science News assignment, so I would say this is a very beneficial assignment in terms of experiencing the different kinds of science.
- I thought the information I got out of it was cool, I even found myself walking around questioning people if they knew about my newfound knowledge.

EXAMPLE PAPER #1

I chose this article because there happened to be a little picture with a heading about “Stronger than a diamond” and seeing a diamond is a girls best friend, I was curious to what it was that was beating out my girlfriend. It happens to be that researchers in Germany and France made this substance with special machinery that simultaneously squeezes and heats a powder of carbon molecules... So, it might be that a girl’s new best friend is now a carbon plug, instead of the weaker diamond!

EXAMPLE PAPER #2

After scientists closely examined dinosaur poop--just kidding--feces, they discovered five different types of grass. This provided them with the first known information on grass dwelling dinosaurs, and the diversified grasses from long ago.

Traces of silica called phytoliths indicate the grasses presence, and each types of grass produces distinct shaped pytholiths, they use the preserve to indicate the mix of grass that once grew back then. The discovery of the fossil wasn't much older than the previous, but they were excited to find such diversity at that time. This grass may open doors and give clues to different species of dinosaurs, and other interesting facts.

This article astounds me, because you can find so much information from such an old piece of feces.

EXAMPLE PAPERS #3&4

- The thing that changed in my life came from the article about smoking that I read. I made my girlfriend read it witch [sic] lead to her quitting smoking. That has made me very happy.
- I saw [the smoking] article and thought to myself about my bad habit and decided that I should read the article and try to influence myself not to smoke.

SUMMARY

- This is a fantastic assignment!
- Students and teacher agree it is worthwhile
- Students learn about the variety of and fascination with science
- Students learn that there is science they are interested in
- Provides me with research data

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Journal of College Science Teaching 36(3), 30-33.