News Literacy:
Following a Story Over Time

California’s Historic Wildfires:

Article
Questions
Map
Quiz

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Supplementary News
January 2018

A monthly current events resource for Canadian classrooms

Routing Slip: (please circulate)
MISSION STATEMENT
LesPlan Educational Services Ltd. aims to help teachers develop students’ understanding of and ability to critically assess current issues and events by providing quality up-to-date, affordable, ready-to-use resources.

SUGGESTED APPROACH
WHAT IN THE WORLD? is a complete current events program that can be used on its own or to supplement an existing classroom routine. This classroom-ready resource offers ‘something for everyone’ and can be taught as a whole or in parts, in-class, or as a homework assignment.

WHAT IN THE WORLD?:
• ALLOWS FOR DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING
WHAT IN THE WORLD? is available in two levels to meet your students’ varied learning needs.

A Word file containing each month’s articles and questions is also posted online, so you can quickly and easily modify the articles and/or questions to suit your students’ specific needs.

• IS TECH-FRIENDLY
Project each month’s pdf on your Promethean or Smart Board to read articles together. Our pdfs also work seamlessly with assistive reading technology like Kurzweil. Try uploading them to Google Classroom!

• IS EASY TO USE

PUBLICATION SCHEDULE
A publication schedule listing the release dates for each issue is posted on the Subscriber page of our website at:
www.lesplan.com/en/subscriber-issues

Please contact us at any time with your questions or concerns.

GET ARTICLES AND BREAKING NEWS STORIES FREE ONLINE
Articles and supplementary materials for breaking news stories are posted at www.lesplan.com.
Download as many as you’d like!
There are many factors that drive the reporting of a news story, including: human interest; change; magnitude; unusualness; proximity; importance; prominence; conflict; relevance; and timeliness. As consumers of news we trust journalists and news agencies to report objectively and accurately so we can be ‘up-to-date’ and understand the ‘complete story’ regardless of what is driving the reporting.

New technology, the Internet, and social media platforms make the accessing and sharing of information even more immediate. These phenomena have both benefits and drawbacks, especially when news stories are catastrophic or impact a large number of people in deep and widespread ways. We can get moment-to-moment updates, as anyone with a cell phone can post videos, photographs or Tweet, but with this immediacy, accuracy and truth are often jeopardized.

According to TEDEd educator Damon Brown (2014), ‘the more chaotic a story the less you should try and follow it in real time.’ He suggests that in events like natural disasters or terrorist attacks the media attempts to provide continuous coverage, even when no new reliable information is available. These efforts at timeliness can sometimes lead to inaccurate information or false accusations of innocent people. Information may be misleading or biased as the story is often still unfolding.

Brown acknowledges the anxiety we might experience in such events but suggests checking for the latest information at several points throughout the day rather than every few minutes. This allows journalists to get complete details, investigate multiple perspectives, or refute false reports so we get a more accurate account of what is going on.

This lesson demonstrates how facts in a news story change, are confirmed, and/or refuted over time.

3. Direct students to record the date, time, and 5W’s + H on the organizer, in point form, for each news report. Then, ask them to consider what’s important about the facts as they are presented at the time of the report and explain why. Encourage students to notice what facts remain the same, what new information is discovered, and if any facts are refuted.

4. As you review each news report, point out direct sources: photos, video, and audio; documents and records; eyewitness accounts by journalists; and eyewitness accounts by others at the scene. Distinguish these from indirect sources, such as: opinions expressed by politicians like Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, and other European correspondents such as James Glenday and Phillip Williams; reference to a related attack in Nice, France in July 2017; and hearsay. Examine how the reporters explain the context to help the reader/viewer make sense of what is going on. Discuss the importance of receiving accurate, reliable, unbiased information.

5. After all the links have been explored and the organizer is complete, ask students to draw conclusions about the importance of following a story over time by completing the following sentence stems:

   • In following this story over time, I learned…
   • At first, I thought…
   • But now I know…
   • I was surprised…
   • I wonder…
   • It’s important to follow a story over time…

TEST IT OUT

1. Invite students to follow a current newsworthy event – a natural or man-made disaster, a conflict, or other ‘breaking news’ story – over several days, using the organizer to track changes to the events.

2. When students feel that they have a complete picture of what happened, direct them to complete a ‘Then and Now’ comparison, noting relevant facts that were reported when the story first broke and showing how the facts changed over time. A Venn diagram or comparison chart showing the changes to the 5Ws + H might help them organize their thinking. ★
## News Literacy

### Following a Story over Time

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>5 Ws + H</th>
<th>What’s important?</th>
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California has just experienced its worst wildfire season in state history.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, wildfires in this U.S state killed 46 people and destroyed more than 10,000 homes and businesses. They consumed more than 5500 square kilometres of land – the equivalent of about 450,000 football fields. Damage estimates are $13 billion (US) and rising.

**DRY AND WINDY NIGHT**

October is traditionally the peak month for California wildfires. On the evening of October 8, high winds fanned a dozen major fires into life in Northern California. The timing was deadly, said Ken Pimlott, director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

“Starting after 10 o’clock at night, under 80-plus kilometre-per-hour winds, under absolutely dry, dry fuel beds, every one of those fires had a fighting chance to get going long before our firefighters could even [sic] get there.”

**WHY ARE FIRE SEASONS GETTING WORSE?**

Since 1984, the area of California that burns in any given year is up by over 300 percent. Why? The simple answer is too much wind and heat combined with too little rain.

Fires need three elements to ignite: oxygen, heat, and fuel. California’s fires followed a six-year drought that killed or weakened over a hundred million trees. A wet spring followed by more than 250 days without rain first encouraged the growth of vegetation, then made it tinder-dry. One spark – from a lightning strike, a campfire, an ATV, a cigarette butt – is all that it takes to start a fire burning in these circumstances.

However, there are other factors. Climate change is one. Rising temperatures, reduced precipitation and earlier snowmelt all contribute to more and larger wildfires.

Another factor is our reluctance to let fires burn. Fires can be a natural occurrence and they rejuvenate the land. When we prevent small natural fires, the undergrowth builds up, fuelling the growth of giant fires. For this reason, fire personnel sometimes carry out controlled burns that remove the dead trees and undergrowth and create a natural firebreak.

Another third factor that boosts the loss of lives and property from wildfires is where we choose to build. Communities that border on wilderness are at a higher risk from wildfires. Currently there are as many as 600,000 California houses in areas deemed to be at high risk of interface fires – those that start in the forest but spread to developed areas. One study estimates that, by 2050, that number could be as high 2.6 million.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Drought:** a prolonged period of abnormally low rainfall; a shortage of water resulting from this

**Rejuvenate:** make (someone or something) look or feel younger, fresher, or more lively
FIRESTORM
The flames and smoke chased more than 90,000 Californians from their homes. People fled for their lives, driving through showers of embers on flame-lined roads.

“There was no time to notify anybody. These fires came down into neighbourhoods before anybody realized they were occurring,” explained Mr. Pimlott.

Governor Jerry Brown had no choice but to declare a state of emergency in Napa, Sonoma, Butte, Lake Mendocino, Nevada, and Yuba counties.

“This is truly one of the greatest tragedies California has ever faced,” he said.

AFTERMATH
As fire personnel battled hundreds of wildfires, crews from Canada and Australia fought by their side. Air tankers dropped eight million litres of retardant to slow the growth of the fires, while ground crews created fuel-free perimeters to contain them.

Three weeks after the crisis began, almost 9000 homes and buildings had been destroyed by the infernos. Four of the blazes ranked among the 20 largest in state history. The biggest, however, was yet to come.

THE THOMAS FIRE
In December, typically a calmer month as the rainy season begins, dozens of new wildfires erupted in Southern California. Like in October, powerful winds drove the flames and parched vegetation provided the fuel. More than 230,000 were forced to evacuate.

One blaze, however, eclipsed all the rest. The Thomas Fire took off on December 5, blown into a fury by unrelenting winds. The flames raced faster than fire crews could put them out, sometimes travelling the length of a football field in just three seconds.

By the end of the first day, the Thomas Fire had incinerated 255 square kilometres, including 500 homes. By December 7, it had doubled in size. By December 10, it was a monster that sprawled to over 904 square kilometres.

FIRE OF A LIFETIME
Fire captain Tim Ortiz said the Thomas Fire was “like nothing I’ve ever been involved with before” with “winds enough to almost push you over.” Captain Dave Zaniboni called it “the worst fire condition I’ve seen in the last 32 years.”

After two weeks of fanning the flames, the winds subsided. Fire crews finally had a chance to make some headway. By December 22, containment was at 65 percent. But, by then, the fire was already the largest ever recorded in the state.

By December 28, crews had the blaze 91 percent contained. As it continued to smoulder and smoke, a fire crew of 650 were left to monitor the perimeter, cool down hot spots and clean up.

BY THE NUMBERS
The footprint of the Thomas Fire measures 1140 square kilometres, about twice the size of Toronto. It displaced more than a hundred thousand people, destroyed 775 homes, and took the lives of a fire engineer and a civilian.

B.C.’S RECORD-SETTING WILDFIRE SEASON
British Columbia’s 2017 fire season also smashed records.

Over the summer, more than 1300 wildfires charred 12,164 square kilometres. That’s equivalent to about one-third of Vancouver Island.

While no lives were lost, over 65,000 people were forced to evacuate.

About 4000 firefighters were deployed to fight the fires. Crews arrived from other provinces, Australia, New Zealand, and Mexico. They were assisted by hundreds of helicopters and water bombers.

The province declared a state of emergency, which wasn’t called off until September 15.

In all, the 2017 wildfires cost the province an estimated $563 million, making it B.C.’s costliest fire season ever. The previous record was $382 million.

It took 8500 personnel, a thousand fire engines, hundreds of water bombers, 34 helicopters, and 78 bulldozers to bring the monster to its knees.

What will 2018 and beyond bring to these regions of North America? Governor Jerry Brown had one science-driven conclusion to make.

“This is the new normal,” he stated. ★
Answer the following in complete sentences:

1. When do most wildfires in California usually occur?

2. List at least three reasons why recent California wildfires were very severe.

3. Describe the damage caused by wildfires in California from early October to late December.

4. What did the Governor of California announce on October 9?

5. When did the Thomas Fire begin? Why was this unusual?

6. Explain how this large fire behaved and the damage that it caused.

7. What resources were needed to bring this fire under control?

8. Explain how controlled burns can help reduce wildfires.
BETWEEN THE LINES

An inference is a conclusion drawn from evidence. A plausible inference is supported by evidence in the article and is consistent with known facts outside of the article.

What inferences can you draw from the fact that flames from the Thomas fire sometimes travelled the length of a football field in just three seconds?

JUST TALK ABOUT IT

1. Consider this quote from Todd Stone, B.C.’s Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, who declared a state of emergency for the province on July 7 – B.C.’s first in 14 years:

“(Evacuations) are extremely traumatic for people. There are families, lots of kids involved, who are being uprooted and taken out of their homes, and they are driving often hours to evacuation centres not knowing for sure when they go back home, if their home is still going to be there. And all their belongings and pets and livestock and everything else, that adds additional layers of stress on everyone’s shoulders.”

a) What, as you see it, are the responsibilities of the government when evacuations are taking place?

b) What, as you see it, are the responsibilities of citizens when evacuations are taking place?

c) Who else might have a responsibility to help out during an evacuation? Why? Explain.

2. Richard Halsey is a wildland firefighter and director of the California Chaparral Institute, which works to protect the highly flammable shrubs and plant life in Southern California. He believes the state should go further than just warning of the ongoing threat of global climate change and push back against developers looking to build in known fire zones. “It’s a really horrible thing to say and nobody wants to say it, but I think ultimately down the road it’s going to have to happen: people are going to have to move.”

For what reasons could you agree with his opinion? For what reasons could you disagree? Explain.

ONLINE

Note: The links below are listed at www.lesplan.com/en/links for easy access.

1. Watch a segment from the Netflix series “Fire Chasers.” You can find it on YouTube under the title, “Fighting California’s Wildfires: Stunning Footage from the Front Lines” at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32YGGYaUTgE

2. Watch an explainer called “The Science of Wildfires” from the SciShow at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8OrmGA1qI4

3. Watch a PBS report called “Climate Change is Part of California’s Recipe for Intense Wildfires” at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtTzbloB6tA


5. Watch “What’s Made the B.C. Wildfires So Severe?” at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l19TNuWResM

6. Watch “Why Wildfires are Necessary” from TED-Ed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNVZEVq3KzY

7. See an interactive graphic that superimposes the footprint of the Thomas Fire on any city at https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/national/california-wildfires-comparison/?utm_term=.7ca149b4050
Directions:

1. Study the photograph below.
2. Then, complete each quadrant on the Getting Inside the Picture chart. Use as many details as you can.
3. Now, select one of your powerful words. Use this as a springboard for a 5-minute Quick Write. Let your pen flow. A good descriptive paragraph has vivid details and helps the reader “get inside the picture” (experience the event as if he/she were right there).
4. Generate three possible titles for this picture. Then select the one that best captures the essence of the image. Explain why this is the most suitable title.

Images in the News
CALIFORNIA’S HISTORIC WILDFIRES

Firefighters battle flames in an avocado orchard at the Ojai Vista Farm threatened by the ‘Thomas Fire’ near Ojai, California, U.S., on December 7, 2017. (EPA/MIKE NELSON)
Title:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senses</th>
<th>Images</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What might you hear, smell, taste or touch? What colours, textures, sounds, movements do you experience?</td>
<td>What details in the photograph create vivid pictures in your mind?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What powerful words describe the scene? What might you think, wonder, say if you were there?</td>
<td>What do you feel when you look at this image? What might the people in the photograph be feeling?</td>
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Quick write

Possible titles:

1. ____________________________  2. ____________________________  3. ____________________________

The best title is # _____ because . . .
Complete this map assignment to better understand the article California’s Historic Wildfires.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Obtain the required resources and read all the instructions before starting.
2. Colour your map after all labelling is completed.
3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink.
4. Work carefully and neatly.

**Resources Required:** pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

**Part A** Locate and label the following U.S. states in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

- California (yellow)
- Nevada (pink)
- Arizona (orange)

**Part B** Locate and label the capital city of each state and underline each city name.

**Part C** Locate and label the following U.S. states in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

- Oregon (red)
- Idaho (purple)
- Utah (brown)

**Part D** Locate and label Mexico in CAPITAL letters and shade it green.

**Part E** Locate and label the following California cities:

- Los Angeles
- San Diego
- San Jose
- San Francisco
- Fresno
- Long Beach
- Oakland
- Bakersfield
- Anaheim

**Part F** Locate and label the following and shade all salt water dark blue:

- Pacific Ocean
- Gulf of California

**Part G** Locate and label the following rivers and shade them light blue:

- Sacramento River
- San Joaquin River
- Colorado River

**Part H** Complete your map with a frame, title and compass. ★
CALIFORNIA’S HISTORIC WILDFIRES

Write the letter that corresponds to the best answer on the line beside each question:

1. How long was the drought that affected California before the recent wildfires?
   a) 35 days   b) 3 months   c) 6 years   d) 32 years

2. In which month did the Thomas Fire start?
   a) September   b) October   c) November   d) December

3. How many California homes are at risk of wildfires?
   a) 10,000   b) 90,000   c) 600,000   d) 2.6 million

4. True or False? Fires need oxygen, heat, and fuel to ignite.

5. True or False? The Governor of California declared a state of emergency for the entire state.

6. What do you think Governor Jerry Brown meant when he said “This is the new normal” when talking about the wildfires in his state? Give reasons to support your response.
Students want to know what's happening in their world – but the news can be difficult and time-consuming to teach.

**WE HAVE THE SOLUTION.** (Three, actually.)

### The Canadian Reader Nos Nouvelles
- **Print/pdf** resource
- Clearly written, leveled Canadian current events articles
- Literacy-based lesson plans
- Engaging, original illustrations
- Map assignments

**Product details:** 32 pages, black and white. Available in English and in French for grades 3 and up.

### What in the World? Le Monde en Marche
- **Print/pdf** resource
- National and international news stories
- Key vocabulary
- Background information
- Varied assignments that build content-area knowledge and enhance critical thinking
- Maps and illustrations

**Product details:** 32 pages, black and white. Available in English and in French, and in two reading levels, for grades 5 and up.

### Currents4Kids.com Infos-Jeunes.com
- **Online** interactive resource
- Weekly news stories
- Autograded quizzes
- Comment page for students to respond to the stories
- Links to relevant articles, resources, maps, photos and videos
- Suggested activities and a Word Work assignment

**One subscription** allows all teachers and students access to this site from any Internet-connected device at any time. Available in English and in French, for grades 3 and up.

**1-888-240-2212**  www.lesplan.com

Contact us for a sample copy or free demo.
## Print/PDF Subscriptions

### The Canadian Reader / Nos Nouvelles
- Grades 3 and up: 4 issues (Feb. - May) ($)
  - **English**: $95.00
  - **Français**: $95.00

### What in the World? / Le Monde en Marche
- **Level 1**: Grades 5 and up
  - 4 issues (Feb. - May) ($)
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    - **Français**: $95.00
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  - 4 issues (Feb. - May) ($)
    - **English**: $95.00
    - **Français**: $95.00

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