



LESSON PLAN

BROADCASTING 1968

United States History Since 1877, ELA and Reading, English III

OBJECTIVE

The late 1960s is considered by many to be one of the most tumultuous and significant periods of United States history. In particular, 1968 proved a watershed in the civil rights movement, the space race, and more. By that same year, over 90 percent of US households owned a television set and millions of Americans largely learned about the events impacting their lives through broadcasting. A vital resource in understanding this era, too often under-valued in conventional histories, is local or regional news.

This lesson accompanies a web-exhibit, “Broadcasting 1968,” that utilizes Texas newsfilm to consider a range of historic events and cultural trends during the 1960s. With an emphasis on material produced by Houston television stations, “Broadcasting 1968” uses local news to examine the functions of the news media as an intermediary between the people and the events of the day. The exhibit highlights major themes of 1968 and couches them within the context of a local experience.

In this lesson, students are expected to work with teacher guidance, individually, or in groups to look at the carefully selected news stories and to answer questions about the significance of those events. Students will also interpret what it means for a story to be “news-worthy” and how the actual, lived experience of 1968 was likely more nuanced than commonly depicted in conventional documentaries.

The intended audience for this lesson is United States history secondary students. The subjects and themes of the exhibit and featured videos include elements of violence, including assassinations and images of war that can be upsetting to younger students. Students are expected to have a developed ability to think critically about news in a larger context. The associated projects for this lesson are appropriate for English Language Arts students engaged in media literacy lessons who are currently enrolled in or have some understanding of United States history of the modern era.

PROCESS

Prior Knowledge

The following lesson assumes that students:

Have some familiarity with the national and global events that took place in 1968, such as the escalation of tensions surrounding the war in Vietnam, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, and the election of Richard Nixon.



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Understand the role of the news media in selecting and summarizing both local and national events as they unfold.

Have an understanding of the concept of “historical thinking,” or an analytical view of the past that takes into account different sources and perspectives.

Are capable of making and recording observations on lesson material independently or in groups.

Should have the skills to conduct independent research and report on their findings.

Have access to technology that allows them to view streaming video individually or in a group setting.

Hook

Explain to students that they will be beginning a unit on broadcast news from 1968 and will be reviewing newscasts to look at how events from a dramatic year in United States history were reported.

To begin the lesson, ask students to explain what they think it means for something to be news-worthy? Write relevant answers on the board.

After students have explained their criteria for reportable news, ask students to give examples of events or activities that they think of as “news-worthy.” Examples are written on the board. Are they all of national significance? What about local issues? What news is important in their state or community? What role do “human-interest” stories play in the news? Why would those be featured?

Tell students to think about what news is reported on, who is empowered to select such topics, and how news might impact the community in which it is reported as they go through the lesson.

Lesson

Tell students that they will be visiting an online exhibit about broadcast news from 1968. The newscasts featured in the exhibit were produced primarily by stations KPRC and KHOU in Houston, Texas. Students will be looking at how national events are reported locally, what stories local broadcasts choose to feature, and how news broadcast at the time of an event may show a different perspective than how that event is perceived now. Explain that the exhibit features videos from news broadcasts of both national events and local, human-interest stories. Students will be asked to think about why videos may have been featured and how local events reflect a wider cultural mindset.



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Distribute the Broadcasting 1968 Student Exhibit Guide & Worksheets to each student and tell them that they will be using this worksheet packet to answer questions about the exhibit and featured videos. Students will be required to think critically about featured news stories and contextualize those stories with other events in 1968 and later. Let students know that after the exhibit tour, they will use the information they record for independent research and class discussion.

The Exhibit Guide is meant to be partially completed with teacher guidance and partially completed by the students individually or in groups. Students are expected to complete the section In Other News as part of Independent Practice.



Visit the Texas Archive of the Moving Image's web exhibit

Broadcasting 1968

<https://www.broadcasting1968.com/>

Describe each section of the exhibit to your class. Depending on the student's ability to analyze historic works independently and their background knowledge of the events and cultural context of 1968, students can work independently, in groups, or guided by their teacher. The lesson outline is written with the expectation that the teacher will provide an overview with examples, but that student will complete most of the sections in groups or independently. Listed below is an overview of each section, recommended examples, and an explanation of student expectations. Students should be given adequate time to reflect on the material that they are viewing, and follow-up class discussion should encourage students to think critically about the context of the events and activities.

Exhibit Sections

1968 Year in Review

The 1968 Year in Review section of the web exhibit is arranged chronologically from January 1968 until the Apollo 8 launch in December of 1968. Included are events of local, national, and international significance. Briefly go over the featured events with your students and have students make notes regarding how the featured videos answer the following guiding questions:

- Is the event of local or national significance? Or both? How and/or why?
- For events of national significance, how are the local reactions to these events depicted? Are they similar or different to the national response to the same event?



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- What were some of the lasting impacts of the events depicted? Do these events have a greater impact to local or national historic consciousness?
- News is sometimes referred to as the “first draft of history” because it is most often reported as the events occur, outside of the context of a larger history. Do any of the events depicted become more significant over the course of 1968 or into the future? If so, how would this possibly change the questions asked or answered?

A good example to show students that illustrates how the questions can be answered using the event description and the videos featured in the event section of the exhibit is *April 4 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Assassinated*. This example features videos that show both national and local Houston responses.

Trends

This section of the exhibit is broken down into four categories of cultural or political trends that were dominant in news cycles in 1968. Students are expected to answer questions related to the captions and videos featured in the exhibit that are found in their Exhibit Guide. These questions ask students to look at the perspectives of participants and communities who are involved in events and activities related to these themes, as well as relate the videos to one another and to the larger context of these events/activities in history.

Presidential Election

A collection of local news and White House press coverage that documents the developments surrounding the election of 1968. This section includes campaign footage from candidates, reporting on national party conventions, and statements from coalition members.

Vietnam War

Features a collection of news footage related to the on-the-ground experience of troops in Vietnam and to national diplomatic actions. Additionally, the impact that the Vietnam War had on the home front, from protests to the return of veterans is also featured.

Civil Rights

Videos and text depict local responses to the Civil Rights movement. The news stories selected chronicle civil rights happening including public demonstrations, minority initiatives, and community relations programs across Houston.

Gun Control

A collection of videos depicting how Houston television news tackled the polarizing topic of gun control. Arguments for and against are presented.



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Local Reporting

Depicting human-interest stories and day-to-day life from in and around the Houston area. Students will review the videos and captions and complete the worksheet asking about why these events may have been selected and what elements of community they feature.

Behind the Camera

Videos created by news teams that show what life behind the camera is like, as well as changes in technology that have transformed news reporting. Students will be asked to answer questions about what changes were talked about and how those changes affected the way the news was collected, reported, or broadcast. Students will then be asked to list modern developments to news reporting and how those developments may have changed news reporting for the better or worse.

Independent Practice

Students individually or in groups will select a video of news clips from the Texas Archive of the Moving Image's KHOU Collections, <https://texasarchive.org/taxonomy/term/116720>. After reviewing the series of features on the video, students will analyze the national and local events and human-interest stories to determine their significance culturally and/or politically and whether the stories are of national or community significance, or both.

Please note: some videos contain silent clips that the anchor would speak over. Tags and captions should provide information for videos that do not feature audio.

After completing their review of the videos, students will use their textbook and online sources to determine if there is additional contextual information about the events presented that will deepen the understanding of the events depicted.

Extended Learning

Students will create a script and storyboard for their own newscast from a day not featured in the "Broadcasting 1968" exhibit. Students will use their textbook or online sources to select and research a historical or event or activity in 1968 that was not depicted in the "Broadcasting 1968" exhibit. Some examples of events that students may choose are listed below:

- major events in Vietnam, such as the Tet Offensive or the My Lai Massacre
- Yale University announces their intent to begin to admit women
- the Olympic Summer Games
- newly established government programs such as the School Breakfast program or the Truth-In-Lending Act



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After students have selected an event of national significance, additional research should be done to determine what human-interest stories, cultural events, movie or music releases, or “local flavor” may have occurred around the same time to report upon.

Students should report on a total of five stories and should include both national and local impacts of events and/or activities.

Worksheets

[Student Exhibit Guide & Worksheets](#)

TEKS

United States History Studies Since 1877

2 D – History. Explain the significance of 1968-1969 (Martin Luther King Jr. assassination and U.S. lands on the moon) as turning points.

8 E –History. Analyze the major issues and events of the Vietnam War such as the Tet Offensive and the escalation of forces,

8 F – History. Describe the responses to the Vietnam War such as the role of the media and the anti-war movement.

9 B – History. Describe the roles of political organizations that promoted civil rights.

9 F – History. describe presidential actions and congressional votes to address minority rights in the United States.

9 G – History. Describe the role of individuals such as Alabama governor George Wallace and groups, including the Congressional bloc of southern Democrats, that sought to maintain the status quo.

9 H – History. Evaluate changes and events in the United States that have resulted from the civil rights movement.

23 A – Citizenship. Identify and analyze methods of expanding the right to participate in the democratic process, including non-violent protesting and amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

23 C – Citizenship. Explain how participation in the democratic process, including making educated voting choices, reflects our national ethos, and civic responsibility as well as our progress to build a "more perfect union."

29 A – Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including using a variety of both primary and secondary sources to acquire information and to analyze and answer historical questions.



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29 B – Social studies skills. Analyze information by categorizing, comparing, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations, drawing inferences, and drawing conclusions.

29 E – Social studies skills. Evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the source, including points of view, frames of reference, and historical context.

29 G – Social studies skills. Identify and support with historical evidence a point of view on a social studies issue or event.

29 H – Social studies skills. Use appropriate skills to analyze and interpret social studies information such as speeches, lectures, and political speeches.

30 A – Social studies skills. Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

English Language Arts and Reading, English III

12 A – Reading/Media Literacy. Evaluate how messages presented in news media reflect social and cultural views in ways that are different from newspapers or formal texts.

12 C – Reading/Media Literacy. Evaluate the objectivity of coverage of the same event in various broadcasts – local and national.

12 D – Reading/Media Literacy. Evaluate changes in formality and tone across various media for depending on the audience, subject, and purpose of the broadcast.

21 A – Research/Gathering Sources. Follow the research plan to gather evidence that addresses the student’s chosen topic. Evidence and research on events should be from experts on the topic and texts written for informed audiences in the field, distinguishing between reliable and unreliable sources and avoiding over-reliance on one source.

21 B – Research/Gathering Sources. Systematically organize relevant and accurate information to support central ideas, concepts, and themes, outline ideas into conceptual maps/storyboards, and separate factual data from complex inferences.

23 C – Research/Organizing and Presenting Ideas. Students are expected to synthesize the research into an extended presentation that develops an argument that incorporates the complexities of and discrepancies in information from multiple sources and perspectives while anticipating and refuting counter-arguments.