

Civic Education For New York Students



ARTS & CULTURE

Writing, reading can help
people to feel better and heal

Read the sample article that come with instructional resources that provide teachers with supports and ideas for classroom instruction.

Why now?

To be academically and personally successful in today’s literacy- and knowledge-based society and economy, students need to develop advanced literacies, skills and competencies that enable communication, spoken and written, in increasingly diverse ways and with increasingly diverse audiences. New York State strives to implement the following instructional practices for advanced literacy for academic success: 1. engaging texts, 2. rich discussion, 3. frequent writing and 4. academic vocabulary and language.

Why Newsela?

We pair authentic, engaging content with instructional supports and activities that help students build advanced literacy skills in cross-curricular instruction. Curations and instructional resources for teachers help them find the materials they need to cover specific literacy skills and address instructional practices.

HIGHLIGHTS

Provides students with engaging texts and activities

Newsela provides high-interest texts for students. Teachers can use Newsela for reading intervention and differentiation with a range of 5 different reading levels for each article, including power words and standards-based reading comprehension quizzes.

Ensures frequent writing opportunities for students

All Newsela articles have writing prompts with rubrics. Teachers can also create their own writing prompts to build language and knowledge. An annotation tool allows for teacher feedback and teacher/student conversation throughout the writing assignment.

Provides instructional supports and lesson ideas for every text

Newsela ELA includes collections - like the Lucy Calkins Unit of Study Curriculum Complement - with resources to help teachers support students with skills practices and host insightful discussions on engaging topics.

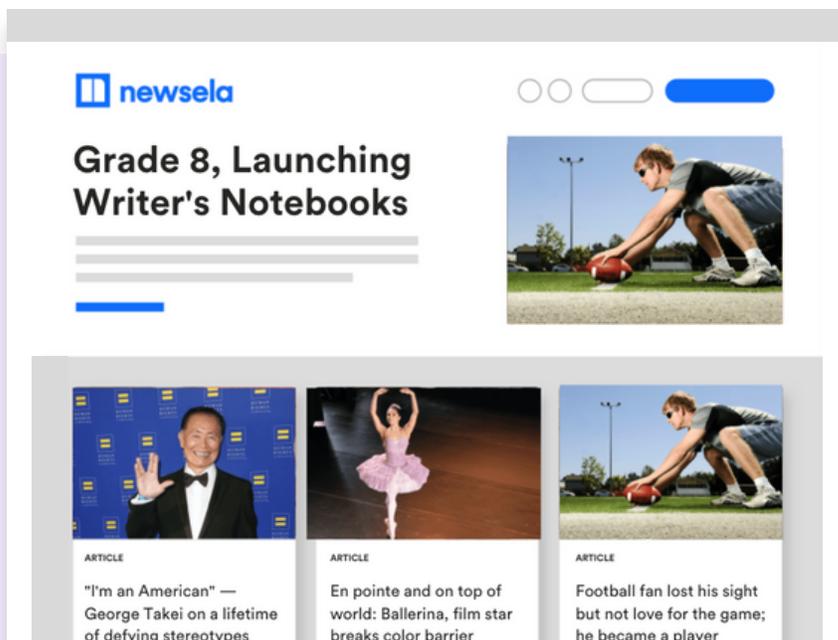
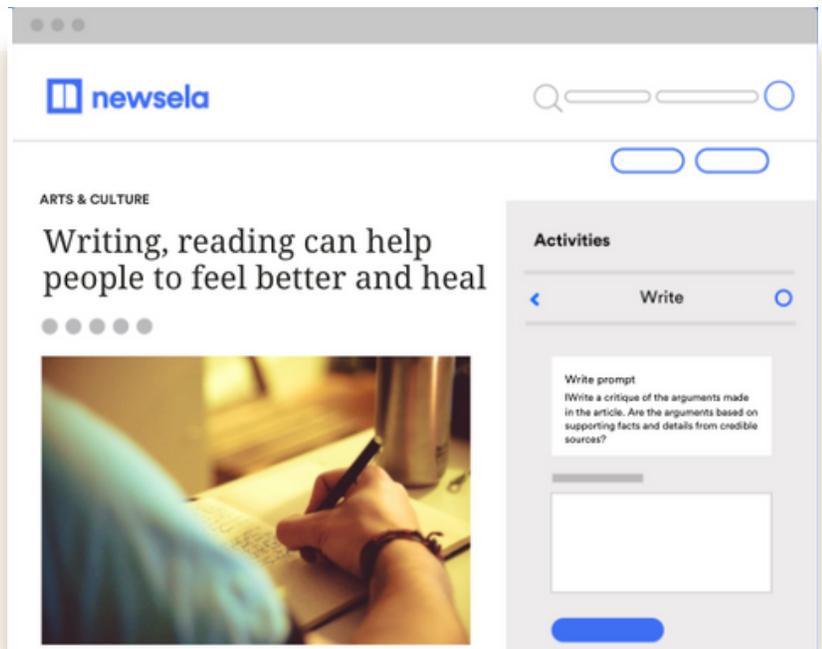


Instructional supports for each article

Robust resources help teachers expand students' learning experience and engagement

Quizzes, Writing Prompts, and Assignments

Teachers can create and share customizable assignments and give students access to reading comprehension quizzes, customizable writing prompts, and annotations.



Lessons, Curations, and Customizations

Teachers can use Newsela to teach to the standards and priorities of their school and district. Create custom activities, search for content by standard, curate Text Sets, and control the reading levels students see.

ARTICLE

Arts & Culture

Writing, reading can help people to feel better and heal

By Dallas Morning News, adapted by Newsela staff. Published: 05/31/2020 Word Count: 842
Recommended for: Middle School - High School. Text Level: 7



Reading and writing can be a form of medication and healing.

Allison Adelle Hedge Coke had to deal with many difficult experiences in her life. She lived with a mother who had schizophrenia, a serious mental illness. Coke also grew up in several foster homes, fought cancer and struggled with drug abuse.

"I really didn't believe I would make it through childhood, but the act of writing brought me through," she says.

Now 61 and an award-winning poet, Coke teaches writing as a way of healing. Her students are cancer patients, children struggling with problems, doctors, families and just about everyone else.

Writing can be a way of thinking deeply, Coke says. It is a process that helps us understand both the good and bad things that happen to us.

Reading is also healing, she says.

Reading, Writing Are Good For Your Health

We learn through the experiences of the characters we read about, Coke says. Because we empathize, or feel what others are feeling, we expand our understanding of other people in other situations. We are also less bothered by our own misfortunes.

Coke points to books such as Frank McCourt's "Angela's Ashes." In that book the author writes about growing up poor in 1930s and '40s Ireland. Reading books like that makes us feel a little less alone, a little less troubled, she says.

Humans have told stories to feel better through the ages. For example, think of fairy tales that teach moral lessons. Or religious texts that wrestle with valleys of despair and mountains of hope, or poetry that cleanses the writer's soul. Recently, doctors and psychologists— who study the mind—have begun looking at the health effects of reading and writing.

Using Our Imaginations

Raymond Mar is a professor at York University in Toronto. He studies the effect reading fiction and nonfiction has on our ability to understand what others are feeling. He found that children and adults who have read stories their whole lives were more likely to correctly identify the feelings and thoughts of others than those who do not read regularly.

In other words: People who read stories are better at sharing and understanding other people's feelings.

Why? Because when people are reading fiction, they are imagining what it is like to be in these stories, Mar says.

Trying to understand these characters exercises the same mental muscle that helps us understand people in the real world. It teaches us to put ourselves in someone else's shoes. The better we are at that, the more likely we are to treat others well, he says.

For adults, it doesn't appear to matter what you read, says Mar, so long as you are reading.

With children, however, it's important to discuss what they are reading. Those conversations help them to understand the story and empathize with its characters.

Reading stories is a chance for children and adults to talk about the complicated parts of life, Mar says.

Mental Health Also Benefits

Some doctors have also begun to see storytelling as a way to improve mental health.

A movement called narrative medicine has been growing. It comes from the idea that both writing and reading literature can help doctors and patients to communicate better. Together they can discover meaning in the illnesses they battle.

Dr. John Harper of Texas Health Presbyterian Dallas, supports this movement. He started the annual Literature and Medicine Conference at the hospital five years ago.

Each year, an author is asked to speak, teach writing

classes to hospital staff and run an essay contest about how literature influences medicine.

Harper says doctors who read stories are more understanding and, therefore, more compassionate or caring, more willing to listen to their patients' stories. It also helps doctors to communicate better, he says.

The tiny differences in meaning in poetry and writing can communicate emotion far better than any scientific explanation, he says.

"The sound of a coffin hitting the earth is a sound utterly serious," Harper says, quoting one of his favorite lines from Antonio Machado's poem, "The Burial of a Friend."

He uses the line to communicate the depth of his intent to patients and family members facing deadly diseases. Saying something beautiful and full of meaning like that shows how serious he considers their illnesses and his sympathy for their suffering, he says.

Write It Down To Move On

Writing is also healing, says Harper, who teaches other doctors that writing about their experiences is a way to release their emotions.

"If you have an experience and you sit down and write about it, you can pour that emotion out," Harper says. Getting rid of these thoughts and emotions helps to find meaning in the death or the survival of a patient — and then allows you to move on with your life, he says.

That is the same message Coke teaches her writing students.

Writing it down allows that quiet, thoughtful process that we need as human beings to unravel the things in our life. Or enjoy the things we are having fun with fully, she says.