

Breaking News

by Feana Tu`akoi

Summary

The school newspaper at Newtown Elementary is floundering, and the editor is trying to encourage her reporters to write new and interesting stories. They all learn their lesson when they ignore a lead to a great news story.

Features of the Text

- Conventions of play scripts
- Text format of play scripts
- Specialized vocabulary – *editor, reporter, angle, contacts, false leads, follow-up story, breaking news*
- Humor
- Two parallel plots

Purpose

Breaking News can be used for the following purposes:

- introducing the ideas and vocabulary in the associated nonfiction title;
- analyzing characters' points of view;
- exploring the plot structure of a play;
- determining the author's purpose.

Guided Reading Summary

Introducing the text

Discuss the qualities of a good news story (current, relevant, written from an interesting angle). Brainstorm events that have happened in your school or community that would make a good news story.

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read to the end of page 5 and to think about the characters' different points of view.

- *What's the problem with the newspaper?*
- *What are the characters' different points of view?*
- *Why might Mr. Chan be walking across the stage with a ladder?*

Ask the students to read to the end of page 9 to identify the parallel plot development. When they have finished reading, discuss the two plots.

- *What are the areas of tension in this play?*
- *Which character is involved in both plots?*
- *Keeping in mind the two plots, what do you think the climax of the play will be?*

The students can now read the rest of the play. When they have finished reading, discuss how the author crafted the two plots.

- *Why do you think the author wrote the play in this way?*
- *How did the parallel plots create humor? (The audience sees both unfolding, but the characters see only one.)*

Following Up

The students can:

- use the blackline master on page 25 to write an outline for a play
- write a newspaper article about a recent event in their community or an event in the story
- write a job description for an editor or a reporter
- design a poster about a missing gorilla.