

Independent semester project: Current Events and News Articles Scrapbooks

Throughout the semester, 9th-grade Honors Earth and Environmental Science students will collect News articles that reflect a variety of important environmental issues, global natural events, scientific discoveries, and more currently happening around the world and in our local community. As they find articles, students will submit an online form where they will document the event or story and its importance and connections to what they are learning in class. Then, at the end of each quarter, students will compile a printed, hand-made scrapbook of the articles they have collected and find the connections and themes among them. These articles will be submitted on a weekly basis via the online form and their scrapbook will be submitted by the designated due date before the end of each grading period. Their work will be evaluated based on the depth of its connections and analysis, and not based on how “pretty” it looks.

Step 1: “How do I find my articles?” (Finding a variety of reliable articles over time)

The Earth is constantly “happening,” so important things that impact the Earth are constantly happening too! This includes natural events (like natural disasters, changes in the land or oceans, and even interesting weather patterns), important environmental problems and human impacts (like pollution, threats to living species, and Global Climate Change), observations and discoveries about the Earth from Space or through new research, and the ways we rely on natural resources (like oil, coal, or solar power, or designing cars that require less fuel or crops that require less water). By regularly going to reliable news sites or keeping your eyes and ears open for current events on TV, radio, or online, you can easily find important things happening to the Earth, all around us all the time.

In addition to traditional local, national, and international news agencies (especially their “Science beat”), try National Geographic, Scientific American, Smithsonian.com, Discover Magazine, Science Magazine, ScienceNews.org, ScienceAlert.com, LiveScience.com, technology news sites, and even YouTube. All of these are great places to start, but you won’t be able to just search online for “Science News Article”... You’ll find the best, most up-to-date articles by choosing a few reliable sources and regularly checking them to see what new information they’re posting each week. *Here’s a tip!:* Find a few Science-related newsletters and subscribe via your school email; they’ll send you daily or weekly lists of the best articles from around the internet, almost always from high-quality, reliable sources.

More than just finding articles, you also need to find a variety of different topics, from a variety of different *reliable* sources, that tell about a variety of different local, national, and international events and issues. How do you know your articles are reliable? Check to see if you can easily identify the writer and the date it was published, and the sources that the writer used to get their information. Are they quoting experts? Linking to other reliable sources? Or is it just internet “click bait”) that isn’t actually giving you new, research-based information? (“Top 10” lists or photo lists, for example, are not acceptable.) If you can’t easily tell that the source and its articles are a good source of up-to-date, reliable, information, go find a different article.

***Important!:* Make sure that your articles are all from the past month or less – the more recent, the better! At least one article that you submit each month should be directly connected to North Carolina.**

Step 2: “What do I do after I find an article?” (How to submit your articles each week)

Each week of the semester, you’ll need to find and submit at least one current event article via the online form posted on our class website. You’ll be asked to include the title of the article, the writer, the date it was published, and the organization who published the article. (You’ll also need to submit a link to where you found the article online. If you found the article in a print source, you can link a picture or scan of the article using Google Drive.)

In addition to these basic details about the article, you’ll need to answer a few “thinking questions” to show that you’ve read and understand the article, why it’s important, and how it connects to what we’re learning in class:

- What are the article’s key points? What evidence or information does it use to support these key points?
- Why is this article important? How does it impact the spheres of Earth and/or important environmental issue(s)?
 - How do you know this article and its source are reliable?

Step 3: “How will I share the articles I have compiled?” (How to build your scrapbook)

Near the end of each quarter (twice per semester), students will be expected to organize their weekly articles into a creative scrapbook format that allows Mr. Edwards and others to see the variety of events, issues, and discoveries they have collected. Although this format offers students a chance to use their creative and crafty talents, these quarterly scrapbooks will not be graded based on their “decorative” qualities. Instead, students’ work will be evaluated based on the depth of their written connections and analysis, the variety of topics and reliable sources they have chosen over time, and the quality of their reflection on how these articles represent important issues connected to each other and our class. **The scrapbook must be a single, physical product, organized and complete according to the expectations explained below.** Students are welcome to “reimagine” what exactly a “scrapbook” entails, as long as it meets the following criteria:

Your scrapbook must include a separate page or section for each weekly article submitted over the quarter. For each, a **printed copy of the original article** must be included. If it is not already shown on the printed version, the **article’s complete title, writer, publishing date, and publisher** (News source) must also be included.

Next, type and print a **written summary of the article’s key points and details in your own words**; you should include at least one quote from the original article in your summary. Your summary should be 5 – 10 sentences, depending on the length of the original article. It is always good to use some of the important scientific vocabulary the original article used in your summary.

In each article’s individual section or page of your scrapbook, you should also clearly **show which spheres of Earth and which important global environmental issues the article connects to**. You can show these connections with symbols, words, labels, color-coding, stickers, or another interesting way to help the reader see how the different articles connect to the “big picture” of how the Earth works and the issues facing our planet today. (If you use symbols, make sure to include a key or legend that can be easily found.) The *best* scrapbooks will include short explanations of *how* the article connects to these spheres and issues.

Lastly for each individual article, you will need to use an *online citation builder* or other help tool to type and print a **correct, formal MLA-format citation for the article**, including the date on which you originally accessed it. Make sure this printed citation is clearly visible on each article’s individual page or section.

Now that you’ve organized your individual articles into their own unique sections or pages of your scrapbook, your book needs an *introduction* and a *conclusion*:

For your “introduction,” **write a 2-3 paragraph explanation about the connections you see among your different articles**. What different **spheres of Earth** do they connect to? What important **global environmental issues** do these articles relate to? What **locations around the world** are represented? Are there some issues or events that you see showing up over and over again? Why do you think that might be true? How do you explain these different connections? Type and print your introduction reflection and place it at the beginning of your scrapbook.

For your “conclusion,” **write a 1-2 paragraph explanation of how you know your sources and articles are reliable**. What characteristics do reliable, scientific articles usually have that show that the information they contain is most likely correct, up-to-date, and trustworthy? How do these articles prove their own reliability to readers? What did you look for on the websites to let you know these are all good, high-quality sources of information? (You might also explain what an unreliable source might be like, or use an example of a questionable source you found during your weekly search for articles.) Type and print your reliability conclusion and place it at the end of your scrapbook.

In addition to your written explanations, consider adding **visuals like photos, drawings, diagrams, graphs, or graphic organizers** to different sections of your scrapbook to support the information in your articles. **How can you use the formatting, organization, and design of your scrapbook to more effectively communicate about important scientific information?**

One last note about writing for Science: Everything you write for your scrapbook should be written using complete sentences, with formal and scientific vocabulary, and edited for correct grammar and spelling. (Most scientific writing should be in third person – “*passive voice*.” Ask your teacher for more help with this.) Your writing should include no abbreviations or “text speak,” no contractions, and no symbols or emojis. You show your best understanding of the articles when you use the scientific terms they have used, and you use them correctly – Show your understanding of the articles and the Science behind them.

Step 4: “How will my work be graded?”

Each week, students will receive a *homework grade* for submitting an appropriate article and correctly completing the online form and its “thinking questions.” If the link to the original article submitted in the online form does not work, or the thinking questions have not been completed, the student cannot receive credit for that week’s article. Articles submitted late will only be accepted until the next school-wide “late work deadline,” and will be subject to a “late work penalty” point deduction.

Each quarter, when students turn the articles they have collected over the weeks into their scrapbook, students will receive a *major project grade* (equal to 1 *test grade*) for submitting a complete set of appropriate articles, including their analysis of each individual article, their written reflection (introduction) on the collection as a whole, and their summary of the articles’ reliability (conclusion). This must be submitted as an organized, physical product and cannot be submitted online.

Students who have missed submitting one or more weekly articles will still have the opportunity to earn a full score in this quarterly scrapbook, as long as they include substitute articles to take the place of the missing weekly submissions. (Substitute articles *cannot* be credited back to replace late or missing articles from earlier weeks in the quarter.)

Rubric for weekly Current Events and News Articles:

(1 time per week, ~10 times per quarter)

Criteria	Description of successful work	Points possible
Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The article is submitted correctly, via the online form. 	<i>4 points</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the article was accessed online, a working weblink is submitted. If the article was accessed in print, a working weblink to the online version of the same article is submitted OR a working link to a photo or scanned version of the original version via Google Drive is submitted. (See your teacher before the due date if you need help with how to do this.) 	<i>4 points</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All basic details about the article's publishing and access are correctly submitted: title, author, publisher, date published, date accessed, and format. 	<i>12 points</i>
Appropriate selection and quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The article was originally published within the past 30 days before the weekly due date. 	<i>10 points</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The original source of the article is a reputable, reliable source of high-quality content, News and current events, or scientific information. The article is appropriately complex for a High school student (clearly not targeted for young children or overly simplified). 	<i>10 points</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The article's main idea is focused on concepts and ideas connected to Earth and Environmental Science. The article discusses natural events, important environmental problems and human impacts, observations and discoveries about the Earth from Space or through new research, the ways we rely on natural resources, or other clearly relevant topics. 	<i>10 points</i>
Analysis and Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Summary:</i> In at least 3-5 complete sentences, the summary gives a relevant, correct explanation of the main idea, key details, and most important scientific concepts included in the original article. The summary is written in the student's own words, but correctly uses scientific vocabulary or 1 or 2 carefully selected quotes to connect back to the original text. The summary demonstrates the student has a clear understanding of the information shared in the original article. 	<i>20 points</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Connections:</i> In at least 2-5 complete sentences, relevant, correct, thoughtful connections are made between the original article and the concepts and ideas of Earth and Environmental Science. The importance of the information, its relevance to one or more different spheres of Earth, or connection to important global environmental issues is identified and explained. The explanation uses Critical Thinking, scientific vocabulary, and information from the original article to demonstrate the student has a reasonable understanding of relevant scientific concepts. 	<i>15 points</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Reliability:</i> In at least 1-2 complete sentences, specific aspects of the original source or details from the article or how it was published are referenced as reasonable evidence of the original article's reliability. The student evaluates the information and how it was shared in order to validate that it is correct and trustworthy. 	<i>10 points</i>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writing is clear, correct, and thoughtful. There are no (or very few) spelling, grammar, or mechanics errors that interrupt the ability of a reader to understand the intended meaning. 	<i>5 points</i>

Rubric for quarterly Current Events and News Articles Scrapbooks:

(1 time per quarter, 2 times per semester)

Criteria	Description of successful work	Points possible
Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scrapbook is submitted correctly, as a single, organized, physical, hand-made product. The scrapbook is reasonably organized so it has a clear “start” and “end,” and functions easily so it does not distract the reader or limit understanding. The scrapbook contains at least the minimum number of articles (at least 1 per week of the quarter), each with its own individual section or page. 	<i>15 points</i>
Organization, completion, per article	<p><i>For each article:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A printed copy of the original article is included and easy to access or read. All basic details about the article’s publishing and access are clearly shown: title, author, publisher, and date published. A correct MLA-style citation is included for the article based on its original publishing and access details. The citation is clear and visible. 	<i>For each article:</i> <i>1 point</i> <i>1 point</i> <i>1 point</i>
Connections, per article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 2 connections to spheres of Earth, important global environmental issues, or other themes related to Earth and Environmental Science are shown (in word or symbol form). A brief, relevant explanation of these different connections may be included. 	<i>2 points</i>
Analysis and Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Introduction – Connections and Themes:</i> In at least 2-3 well-written paragraphs, the introduction identifies a variety of relevant, correct, thoughtful connections among the different articles and their main ideas. The importance of the information in the different articles, their relevance to different spheres of Earth, and how they represent important global environmental issues are referenced throughout. The introduction reflects on the importance of these connections and attempts to explain why they exist. The reflection uses Critical Thinking, scientific vocabulary, and information from the original articles to clearly demonstrate the student understands the relevant scientific concepts, including the value of “everyday” communication of scientific information. <i>Conclusion - Reliability:</i> In at least 1-2 well-written paragraphs, the student explains how they are able to evaluate and determine the reliability of scientific information they find in News articles and other sources. The conclusion refers to specific aspects of the original sources or details from different articles and how they were published as reasonable evidence of their reliability. The reflection uses Critical Thinking to demonstrate a clear sense of how to judge a source’s correctness, bias, trustworthiness, and validity. 	<i>20 points</i> <i>20 points</i>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writing throughout the scrapbook is clear, correct, and thoughtful. There are no (or very few) spelling, grammar, or mechanics errors that interrupt the ability of a reader to understand the intended meaning. 	<i>5 points</i>



What is my environment?

and What is my impact?

earth and environmental science.