

Lesson Overview

How many days are needed to teach this lesson?	3
Grade Level(s)	9-12
Subject(s)	Social Studies
Lesson Summary	Through reading, discussion, and data analysis, students discover why youth disengage from news and explore how local stories and authentic voices can drive change.
Standards	Florida B.E.S.T. Standards ELA (Grades 9–10) ELA.10.R.2.1 – <i>Explain how literary devices and rhetorical appeals contribute to the meaning and impact of a text.</i> - Students evaluate persuasive techniques and media framing in articles. ELA.10.R.2.2 – <i>Evaluate the central idea, implied or explicit, and its development throughout a text.</i> - Applied to the “Hyper-Local News” article and article reflections. ELA.10.C.4.1 – <i>Conduct research to answer a question, drawing on multiple reliable and valid sources and refining the scope of the question to align with findings.</i> - Applies to students’ article investigation and project work. ELA.10.C.1.3 – <i>Write to analyze and reflect on complex texts.</i> - Reflection and short responses throughout all three days. Social Studies Standards – Global Studies / Civics / U.S. Government

	SS.912.C.2.2 – <i>Evaluate the importance of political participation and civic involvement.</i> • Explored through discussion of actionable news and youth engagement. SS.912.C.2.10 – <i>Monitor current public issues in Florida.</i> • Students select articles related to Florida or local news deserts. SS.912.S.3.5 – <i>Identify the impact of mass media on public opinion and behavior.</i> • Central to the graph analysis and media consumption discussion. Media Literacy / Research Standards LAFS.1112.RI.3.7 – <i>Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats.</i> • Students analyze text, graphs, and online databases. LAFS.1112.W.3.8 – <i>Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative sources and assess strengths and limitations.</i> • Used during article and database exploration.
Focus Pulitzer Center news story and news outlet	“I Just Don’t Want To Die’: Black Pregnant Women Are Turning to Midwives for Personalized Care—And a Better Chance at Survival” by Karen Kasmauski and Louis Hansen for <i>Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism</i> (This article was selected by the class. A different class may want to select a different Pulitzer Center article.)
Local / other reporting	“How hyper-local news can win back young audiences - Digital Content Next” by Richard E. Brown for Digital Content Next “Teens Tuning In Local News Initiative” from Northwestern University

	The Expanding News Deserts
Theme/idea/issue connecting the Pulitzer Center article to your community	Gender Equality Health Inequity Racial Justice
Content Advisory (optional)	This lesson contains discussions of Black maternal mortality, medical trauma, and racial disparities in healthcare. Students will encounter real-life stories of childbirth complications and systemic inequities that may be emotionally difficult or triggering for some.
Notes on Context	This lesson was created for high school students in Miami Gardens, a predominantly Black community in South Florida. Many of my students come from families that have experienced systemic inequities in healthcare and education. I intentionally chose a topic that reflects their lived realities and highlights the power of culturally competent care. The lesson is designed to be affirming, discussion-based, and grounded in local relevance. I've created space for students to share personal reflections while providing trauma-informed support.

Lesson Plan Day 1

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
Essential Questions: • Why are younger audiences turning away from traditional news sources? • What role does local and hyper-local news play in making media more meaningful to young people? • How does the way news is presented influence who engages with it? Learning Objectives: • Students will identify key reasons for youth disengagement with traditional news media. • Students will define and reflect on the concept of “hyper-local” news. • Students will analyze how personal interests and social identity affect news consumption.
Focus Pulitzer Center News Story/Stories
Day 1: List of Pulitzer Center Articles Days 2 and 3: “I Just Don’t Want To Die’: Black Pregnant Women Are Turning to Midwives for Personalized Care—And a Better Chance at Survival” by Karen Kasmauski and Louis Hansen for <i>Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism</i>
Introducing the Lesson
This lesson gives students a chance to talk about something they feel every day—how the news often doesn’t speak to them, or even see them. Together, we’ll dive into an article that helps students name what they already know: Much of traditional media feels out of touch with their lives, their communities, and the issues they actually care about. By introducing the idea of hyper-local news, students will see how powerful it can be when stories are told by the people most affected—not just about them. This lesson isn’t just about reading and analyzing an article; it’s about helping students feel seen and heard, and reminding them that their voice matters in shaping the news. Through real conversations and meaningful reflection, they’ll begin to understand how media can better serve their generation—and how they can be part of that change.

Warm-up/Opening

Begin with a few whole class discussion questions. Consider sharing the questions directly with students on index cards so that quiet students also have an opportunity to share their thoughts.

Discussion questions:

1. Where do you get your news from?
2. What makes you trust that source?
3. What's one news story, local or global that has stuck with you recently, why?

Preparing to Engage with the Focus Resource(s)

Students will be introduced to the term “hyper-local news” and brainstorm what it might mean.

Teacher provides a working definition:

“Hyper-local news” refers to journalism that focuses on small communities, neighborhoods, or specific identity groups—often highlighting stories overlooked by larger news outlets.

Before reading the Pulitzer Center articles, students will briefly learn about the Need for Gratification Theory in media studies: people choose media that meets their needs—such as entertainment, information, or connection.

Here is more information on the Need for Gratification Theory: “[How hyper-local news can win back young audiences - Digital Content Next](#)” by Richard E. Brown for Digital Content Next.

Exploring the Resource(s)

Students will use the [Day 1 Graphic Organizer](#) to analyze a series of articles about teen attitudes towards local news.

1. Students work with a partner to answer the following questions using their analysis of the article, “[How hyper-local news can win back young audiences - Digital Content Next](#)” by Richard E. Brown for Digital Content Next:
 - a. Why do you think younger audiences are turning away from traditional news sources? (feel free to give your personal opinion as well) How does the Need for Gratification Theory help us understand this shift in news consumption?

- b. What are the consequences when the news media fails to cover the issues that matter most to younger generations, such as climate change, healthcare, and social justice? How might this affect civic engagement and trust in institutions?
 - c. The article discusses the power of hyper-local storytelling. Can you think of a local issue in your own community that would be more meaningful if it were reported on using authentic voices and multimedia formats? What would that look like?
 - d. What does it mean for news to be “actionable,” and why might this be especially important for younger audiences? Can you think of an example of a news story that empowered you or someone you know to take action?
 - e. How can news organizations balance the need for factual reporting with the demand for engaging, relatable, and emotionally resonant content? What are the risks and benefits of this approach?
2. Next, students will review the article, “[Teens Tuning In | Local News Initiative](#)” from Northwestern University and analyse the three graphics in the article.
3. After that, students define the term, “news desert” and compare their definition to how news deserts are described by [the University of San Francisco](#). Students then evaluate if they are living in a news desert using [this website](#). Students then discuss the following questions:
 - a. What do you think would happen if no one reported on local issues in your town or city?
 - b. How would it feel to not know what’s happening in your school district or local government?
 - c. How could students like you help share important news in places that don’t have local newspapers?
 - d. Who owns your newspaper? If a big company owns lots of newspapers, how might that change the kinds of stories they tell?
 - e. Based on the graph in the article, what three states have the largest concentration of “ethnic voices” news outlets? What is the reason for this?

Processing the Resource(s)

Introduce students to the [list of Pulitzer Center-supported news articles from multiple U.S news outlets](#). After the students look through the Pulitzer Center articles, they will answer the following questions and decide together which article they are most drawn to:

- What stood out most to you from this article? Why?
- What types of news would you want to see more of in your community?
- Do you feel represented in the news? Why or why not?

Lesson Plan Day 2

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)

Essential Questions:

- Why are younger audiences turning away from traditional news sources?
- What role does local and hyper-local news play in making media more meaningful to young people?
- How does the way news is presented influence who engages with it?

Learning Objectives: Questions:

- Students will identify key reasons for youth disengagement with traditional news media.
- Students will analyze a Pulitzer Center-supported article and evaluate how the themes of the article connect to issues in their own communities.
- Students will conduct research on what would motivate more youth engagement in local news.

Focus Pulitzer Center News Story/Stories

Day 1: [List of Pulitzer Center Articles](#)

Days 2 and 3: “[‘I Just Don’t Want To Die’: Black Pregnant Women Are Turning to Midwives for Personalized Care—And a Better Chance at Survival](#)” by Karen Kasmauski and Louis Hansen for *Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism*

Warm-up/Opening

Introduce the article that most students felt drawn to on Day 1. (When this lesson was taught in spring 2025, the article that most students selected was, “[‘I Just Don’t Want To Die’: Black Pregnant Women Are Turning to Midwives for Personalized Care—And a Better Chance at Survival](#)” by Karen Kasmauski and Louis Hansen for *Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism*.)

Preparing to Engage with the Focus Resource(s)

Before looking at the article with the class, students use a graphic organizer to make predictions about the content and local connections to the article. [Here is a sample graphic organizer](#) centering the article, “[‘I Just Don’t Want To Die’: Black Pregnant Women Are Turning to Midwives for Personalized Care—And a Better Chance at Survival](#)” by Karen Kasmauski and Louis Hansen for *Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism*. [This slideshow](#) can also be used to introduce additional context for that article.

Exploring the Resource(s)

As students read the article, they use a graphic organizer created for their selected piece to respond to analysis questions.

When students who engaged with this lesson in spring 2025 analyzed the article, [“‘I Just Don’t Want To Die’: Black Pregnant Women Are Turning to Midwives for Personalized Care—And a Better Chance at Survival”](#) by Karen Kasmauski and Louis Hansen for Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism, questions included:

- What specific factors does the article mention that contribute to the higher rates of pregnancy-related deaths among Black women? How are these linked to systemic issues? (Cite evidence from the article)
- What role do midwives and doulas play in helping Black women feel safer and more heard during pregnancy and childbirth? What makes their approach different from traditional hospital care? (Cite evidence from the article)
- The article includes powerful personal stories from women like Amoni Thompson-Jones and Raynesha Sharpe. How did their experiences help you understand the emotional and physical risks they face?
- How does racism—both interpersonal and systemic—show up in the healthcare experiences of the women featured in this article? What are some examples?

Processing the Resource(s)

1. Students use the graphic organizer, to evaluate local and personal connections to the article.

When students who engaged with this lesson in spring 2025 analyzed the article, [“‘I Just Don’t Want To Die’: Black Pregnant Women Are Turning to Midwives for Personalized Care—And a Better Chance at Survival”](#) by Karen Kasmauski and Louis Hansen for Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism.

Questions included:

- a. What do you think are the pros and cons of choosing midwifery or home birth over hospital care? Would you feel comfortable with this choice if you or a loved one were expecting a child? Why or why not?
- b. The article talks about the importance of representation—having more Black midwives and healthcare providers. Why does that matter in this context? How might it improve health outcomes?
- c. If you were in charge of creating a public campaign or policy to help fix this issue, what would you focus on first? What solutions does the article suggest?

d. After reading the article, how has your understanding of maternal health—especially for Black women—changed? What's one takeaway you think everyone should know?

2. Students are then tasked with finding three videos/articles/newspaper stories on the topic. In the graphic organizer, students include the link and a brief summary of what was included in the three local articles they analyzed.
3. Students apply their analysis of the articles in the lesson to creating a visual that captures key details and their own connections to the articles.
4. If there is time, the educator and students can work together to explore ways to engage with this issue locally. When I taught this lesson, I connected with a local university in Florida that is conducting research on maternal mortality to explore ways that students could support their work.

Performance Task(s)

1. Students develop and conduct a survey of their peers to better understand how they engage with news and what topics they think are important. [Here is an example of a survey](#) developed in partnership with students in Miami Gardens, FL who participated in this lesson in spring 2025. It also includes a script students developed to introduce the survey to their peers.
2. Students share survey results and engage in a conversation.