

# Historical Newspaper Project (Group Activity)

This is a **comprehensive, classroom-ready group activity** for a **Historical Newspaper Project**, designed so students collaboratively create a full front page covering any historical, literary, cultural, or scientific event. This includes structure, roles, writing tasks, templates, and extensions.

**Students design a complete newspaper front page covering a major event, including a:**

- ✓ **Headline**
- ✓ **Editorial**
- ✓ **Interview**
- ✓ **Political Cartoon**
- ✓ **Map**
- ✓ **(Optional) Ads, timelines, weather, sidebars**

## **Works For:**

ANY event across content areas—wars, revolutions, inventions, protests, discoveries, crises, cultural movements, biographies, scientific breakthroughs, literary events.

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## I. Purpose of the Activity

This project teaches students to:

- Summarize complex events
- View history from multiple perspectives
- Write in different journalistic genres
- Use argument, evidence, and point of view
- Synthesize visuals + text
- Think like reporters, editors, and artists
- Engage creatively while staying historically accurate

It's perfect as an end-of-unit summative or a group station project.

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## II. Group Setup

**Group Size:** 4–6 students\*\*

## **Roles:**

1. **Editor-in-Chief**
  - Oversees layout, tone, accuracy
  - Approves final headline
2. **Lead Reporter**
  - Writes the main article (front-page story)
  - Fact-checks interviews
3. **Editorial Writer**
  - Writes opinion piece reflecting period viewpoints
4. **Photo/Map Specialist**
  - Designs map or visual diagram
  - Adds captions + location details
5. **Political Cartoonist**
  - Draws/creates a historically grounded cartoon
6. **Interview Specialist**
  - Writes Q&A interview with an eyewitness or major figure

(Larger groups can add “Copy Editor,” “Graphic Designer,” or “Advertisement Creator.”)

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## **III. Materials Needed**

- Newspaper template (digital or print)
  - Markers, poster board, or printed broadsheet layout
  - Access to historical documents, images, quotes
  - Map outline or blank mapping sheets
  - Rubrics + checklists
  - Optional: Canva, Google Docs/Slides newspaper templates
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## **IV. Choose the Event (5 minutes)**

Students pick any event from your unit, such as:

- Fall of Rome
- Black Death reaches Europe
- Alexander’s conquest of Persia
- Declaration of Independence
- French Revolution begins
- Battle of Gettysburg
- Sinking of the Titanic

- Gandhi's Salt March
- Women win the vote
- The Scopes Trial
- D-Day
- Fall of the Berlin Wall
- Discovery of DNA
- Space Race milestone

OR events from literature:

- Macbeth's coronation
  - The trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird*
  - The death of Piggy in *Lord of the Flies*
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## **V. Full Step-By-Step Process (60–120 minutes)**

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### **Step 1 — Background Research (10–15 minutes)**

Students gather essentials:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- Impact?

Use primary sources, timelines, quotes, maps, images.

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### **Step 2 — Brainstorm & Assign Page Sections (5 minutes)**

Groups sketch a front-page layout:

- Top: masthead + major headline
- Columns: article, interview, editorial
- Sides: political cartoon, map

- Bottom: smaller stories or period advertisements

Editor-in-Chief approves layout.

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### **Step 3 — Write the Main Headline (5 minutes)**

Requirements:

- Short
- Eye-catching
- Captures the event’s significance
- Period-appropriate language

Examples:

- “REVOLUTION ROCKS PARIS!”
  - “TITANIC LOST AT SEA—THOUSANDS FEARED DEAD”
  - “VIKINGS RAID LINDISFARNE MONASTERY”
  - “NEW NATION DECLARES INDEPENDENCE”
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### **Step 4 — Front-Page Main Article (15–20 minutes)**

Lead Reporter writes a **200–300-word news article** answering:

- What happened?
- Why did it happen?
- Who is involved?
- What are the consequences?
- What does this mean for people today (from that time perspective)?

Tone must be factual, not opinionated.

**Include:**

- Quotes (real or plausible, based on sources)
  - Accurate timeline
  - Strong opening paragraph (lead)
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### **Step 5 — Q & A Interview (10–15 minutes)**

Interview Specialist writes in **question–answer format**.

Interview a key figure or eyewitness:

- Soldier
- Political leader
- Merchant
- Victim/survivor
- Revolutionary
- Explorer
- Inventor
- Artist during a cultural movement
- Scientific discoverer

Questions must reflect historical context; answers must use evidence and voice.

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## **Step 6 — Editorial (Opinion Piece) (10–15 minutes)**

Editorial Writer creates a persuasive argument about the event.

Examples:

- “Why Our Nation Must Support the New Constitution”
- “The Industrial Revolution Is Ruining Workers’ Lives”
- “We Must Resist Colonization”
- “The Ming Treasure Voyages Should Continue!”

Include:

- Strong claim
- 2–3 reasons
- Evidence from research
- Concluding call to action

Tone should reflect time period & political perspective.

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## **Step 7 — Political Cartoon (10–20 minutes)**

Cartoonist draws a cartoon using:

- symbolism

- exaggeration
- labels
- irony
- caricature

Should comment on the causes, consequences, or controversy of the event.

Examples:

- Uncle Sam pointing to enlist
- Guillotine representing revolutionary terror
- A factory giant crushing workers
- A ship (imperial power) swallowing smaller nations

Include a caption.

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## **Step 8 — Map Creation (10–15 minutes)**

Photo/Map Specialist makes a **clear, labeled map** of:

- A battle
- A migration route
- A trade network
- A protest march
- A political boundary change
- An empire's expansion
- Disease spread
- Colonization patterns

Map must include:

- Title
  - Scale (simple)
  - Labels
  - Legend
  - Arrows or shading
  - Brief caption explaining significance
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## **Step 9 — Assemble the Newspaper Front Page (10–15 minutes)**

Editor-in-Chief oversees assembly:

- Align columns
- Ensure consistent fonts + headers
- Place map + cartoon
- Include masthead + date + location
- Add period advertisements (optional but fun!)
- Add “Breaking News” sidebars (optional)

This should look like a real newspaper.

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## **VI. Optional Add-Ons**

### **1. “Breaking News Radio Broadcast” Recording**

Groups record a short audio newscast summarizing their page.

### **2. Historical Advertisements**

Students create ads for real products or services of the time.

### **3. Classified Section**

Lost dog ads in 1800s Paris? Jobs for messengers in Cold War Berlin?

### **4. Primary Source Insert**

Feature a real letter, speech excerpt, or artifact photo.

### **5. Newspaper Gallery Walk**

Groups read each other's papers and vote for categories:

- Best Headline
  - Best Cartoon
  - Most Accurate Map
  - Most Convincing Editorial
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## **VII. Assessment Options**

## **A. Newspaper Rubric**

- Accuracy (historical + geographic)
- Quality of writing
- Design + layout
- Originality
- Use of evidence
- Collaboration

## **B. Section-Specific Rubrics**

- Lead: strong hook, clarity, accuracy
- Editorial: claim + evidence + reasoning
- Interview: voice + authenticity
- Cartoon: symbolism + message clarity
- Map: geographic accuracy + design

## **C. Reflection**

Students explain:

- Which perspective they found most challenging
- How newspaper writing differs from textbook writing
- What bias or point of view they discovered