

Article of the Week (AoW) Overview

So what's an AoW?

An Article of the Week (AoW) is author Kelly Gallagher's way of helping students build prior knowledge, and **it's a great way to add informational texts to your English Language Arts or content-area classroom**. As Kelly says, "You need to know stuff to read stuff." In other words, if you don't know what Al Qaeda is, you're liable to read something mentioning Al Qaeda and ask, "Who is this Al guy?" (This actually happened in one of Kelly's classes.) At Kelly's school, teachers at each grade level select articles each week.

Article of the Week

In the words of Kelly Gallagher, "Part of the reason my students have such a hard time reading is because they bring little prior knowledge and background to the written page. They can decode the words, but the words remain meaningless without a foundation of knowledge."

"To help build my students' prior knowledge, I assign them an "Article of the Week" every Monday morning. By the end of the school year I want them to have read 35 to 40 articles about what is going on in the world. It is not enough to simply teach my students to recognize theme in a given novel; if my students are to become literate, they must broaden their reading experiences into real-world text."

How does it work?

Every Monday, give students a 1-2 page article (see attached examples). They are expected to:

- Show evidence of close reading (i.e., annotate)
 - You must teach this explicitly in the first weeks of the school year using "How to do a Close Reading" from the Harvard Writing Center (see attached article); as a result, students sometimes call this a "Harvard Close Reading."
- Highlight where they become confused in the article.
- Respond with a 1-page reflection. (The reflection assignment asks "What did you think?" In your reflection, you should tell me what you learned from the reading.)
 - Reflection vs. Summary
 - **Reflection:** to think seriously, and express thoughts and ideas about something that is being considered (in this case: the article). Use your sentence starters for ideas on what to write (I think...; It made me feel...; I wonder...; I really agree/disagree because...; This article has changed how I think about the topic by...; This reminds me of...; A question I have...; I could see

myself using this knowledge in my classroom or in an interaction with others in this way...; I don't understand...; or Now I understand...; After this reading I will change...)

- **Summary:** shortened version of something that has been said or written, containing only the main points.

At the beginning of the year, spend time explicitly teaching and modeling each of these skills because the students will use them frequently.

When you hand out the article, spend up to 15 minutes doing the following:

- Framing the text (i.e., verbally trying to hook students into the content)
- Modeling one of the three abovementioned tasks for the students
- Explicitly teaching some of the tough vocabulary students will encounter
- Giving students time to get started on the reading task

No additional class time is given for the AoW prior to Friday when it is due.

On Fridays, students are expected to submit their work, and you can also allot up to 10 minutes for discussion of the issues raised in the article. This is a great chance to practice some **Speaking and Listening** skills, too.

References

Readicide—How Schools Are Killing Reading and What You Can Do About It by Kelly Gallagher (Stenhouse Publishers, 2009)

Kelly Gallagher's Website: <http://kellygallagher.org/>

Harvard College Writing Center.

www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/CloseReading.html

Source: English Language Arts – Article of the Week. North Bergen School District.
<http://www.northbergen.k12.nj.us/Page/2853>