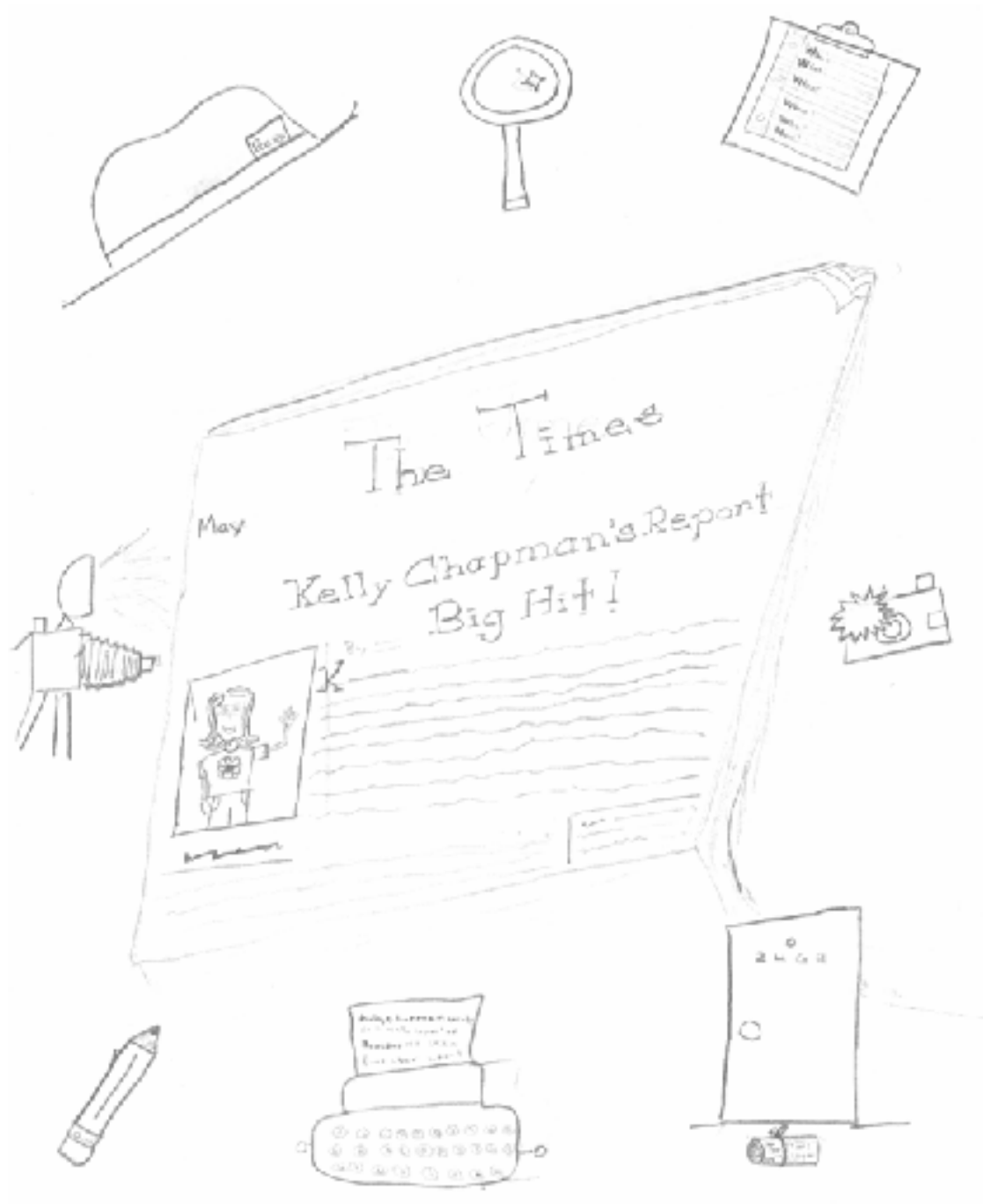


Newspapers

by Kelly Jean Chapman



Fifth Grade Research Report
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Newspapers had to start somewhere, but before newspapers could get going, someone had to invent writing. Writing is not as basic as one might think. It has been with us for thousands of years and we have been able to do many things with it. We could not have magazines without it. We could not have books without it. And we definitely could not have newspapers without it.

Newspaper History

Writing may have started in Mesopotamia as early as the 3rd millennium B.C.! The early Mesopotamians weren't that creative with their new skill. We know this because the first writings were temple records showing sacks of grain and heads of cattle. Great literature would come many, many years later. The writings were found on clay tablets from the Sumer. Sumerian people later wrote down their social structure.

But what about paper and ink? We do not use clay tablets to write letters, so how did we get paper and ink? Paper is said to have been created by the Ancient Egyptians, although another source tells us it was invented by the Chinese. Paper was made out of a tall reedy plant called papyrus, hence the word paper. The Egyptians cut the stems into thin strips and laid them next to each other with the edges overlapping. If one layer is put over another in a right angle the result is a great writing surface. Ink was a little easier. Soot and water made an early substance. What could the Egyptian scribes write with? A long reed stick with the ends crushed or cut.

Now that writing was achieved, newspapers could start. The earliest daily news sheet of which we know is Acta Durmia (Daily Events) printed by the Romans. Julius Ceaser wanted people to know about government scandals, executions, treaties, births, and deaths. The Chinese circular Dibao also called Ti-Pao was carved on wooden blocks around A.D. 700. As one might imagine elections, wars, political affairs, and events stir up many different opinions, so it was no surprise that many new newspapers started during the American Revolutionary War either for the Tories or the Patriots. By 1765 the American colonies had more than 20 newspapers. The British didn't like the opinions in most of the newspapers so they passed the stamp act. The stamp act required special tax stamps to be used on newspapers and other writings. No one likes more taxes, especially if another country with whom you are fighting is collecting them. So the Americans protested and kept on printing without the stamps. Because of their bravery the Americans won the war and were free to publish their opinions and thoughts. *See the Freedom of the Press Section on page 5.*

The Inside Scoop on Newspapers

Now that newspapers got started and are part of our daily, weekly, or monthly lives, would one not wonder how the bundle of paper and ink arrives at all those doorsteps and newspaper boxes? Who made the bundle? What is in the newspaper? How is it produced? There are many questions to answer. First, let's talk about the staff that makes the newspaper.

Behind the Scenes of an Newspaper Office

There are three main departments in a newspaper office. Editorial, mechanical, and business. The editorial department is in charge of the features, news, and entertainment in a newspaper. Most of the written work in a newspaper is produced by the editorial department. The Editor-in-Chief is the head of this department. He is in charge of the managing editor who is in charge of the editors. Each editor has a staff of journalists, reporters, photographers, and other workers. Some editors even have a column in which they write their opinions. Someone called an art director helps the editors lay out and choose different photographs and illustrations for the newspaper. Many newspapers also have a place where journalists can research or work, such as libraries and photo processing labs.

The business department has the job of making sure the newspaper is doing well business wise. If not, then they work to attract more subscribers and advertisers, or make the newspaper more interesting. There are three managers to the business department. The first, the advertising manager, is in charge of a staff that sells advertisement space in the newspaper to businesses, people, and clubs or organizations. The advertising department can publish two main kinds of ads: display ads and classified ads. Display ads are sometimes as long as two pages! The circulation manager has a staff that delivers and sells the newspapers. The promotion manager gets people to buy the newspapers and makes the newspapers more attractive and interesting to the public.

The mechanical department creates the newspaper. There is a single manager in this department. The production manager directs the operations and “goings-on” in this department. Some workers create layouts of the newspaper. Others set the type. Still others produce the printing plates on which the newspaper is printed. The press operators direct and operate the printing press. The details of how the printing press works are very interesting. Artists prepare a layout of each page in a newspaper. Computers are usually used since they are much faster than doing it by hand. Then the printing press operators and workers print the newspaper using offset lithography. Offset is done on rotary presses which have cylinders that hold curved printing plates. The plates never touch the paper. Instead the ink is transferred to a rubber “blanket” cylinder that prints on paper. Finally mail room employees fold and assemble the newspaper which is then passed on to the Circulation Department. The high cost of printing equipment and expenses leaves many newspapers bankrupt and out of business. To solve that problem, many new newspapers are going online and are available to paying subscribers. This type of online journalism is called a weblog or blog. Blogs are much faster than any source of news and can deliver news every few minutes if desired.

As can be seen, all the departments are vital to a newspaper. The editorial department writes the newspaper, the mechanical department prints the newspaper, and the circulation department distributes the finished newspapers. The business department is there to make sure everyone in the community reads and enjoys their local newspaper.

News Services, Freedom of the Press, and The Jobs of a Journalist

A helpful feature to some newspapers are news services. News services send their reporters all over the world. The news services give their articles to small and large newspapers all over the country and world. Some news services are very famous and very large with many different reporters such as the Reuters News Service and The Associated Press.

The media acts irresponsibly and one-sided lots of times. The management of many newspapers is conservative but most journalists have liberal ideas. Some reporters are insensitive to people who have just gone through a tragedy and they often ask too many questions. Many people get offended by the fact that the press makes something big out of something little when they could be focusing on something else. The journalists argue right back about the freedom of the press. Sometimes the argument they hold is true and sometimes it is false.

Journalists mess up, but lots of times they can help solve problems, clear up mysteries, or simply inform the public on certain events and news. The four main jobs a journalist can perform without government interference are informing, entertaining, influencing opinion, and investigating a crime. When reporters are informing the public they are letting people know about current events. When a reporter attends an event, he or she writes about it in a way that people who didn't attend would understand. When journalists write to entertain they write for different sections such as book, movie, and play reviews, the travel section, puzzles, comic strips, and humor columns. Reporters

influence opinion through editorials, political or opinion cartoons, and commentaries. These features express people's views on different topics or issues such as elections, construction, scandals and events.

One of the most important jobs of a journalist is investigating crime. Many crimes that were investigated by reporters have been solved. An example of one of the most famous crimes the press has ever been a part of was the Watergate scandal. Most reporters feel responsible for safeguarding the rights of citizens. They research crimes such as cruelty, counterfeiting, abuse, stealing, lying, and dishonesty. Then they expose it to the public. All of this can help the police track down a suspect.

In the past, many countries did not allow freedom of the press, but over time it became less common. Now government controlled nations are allowing more and more freedom.

Newspaper Odds and Ends

The printing press was invented by Johann Gutenberg in 1447. In the first half of the 17th century newspapers began to appear as regular publications and in 1940-1990 there was a sharp decline in the circulation of newspapers since more and more people were turning to television. Despite this newspapers tried again, this time making their covers look like a television screen.

Some of the words used by journalists and reporters are listed below:

- Beat- A news field to which a reporter is usually assigned such as parks and recreation or city hall.

- Masthead- Includes the title and the name of the publisher and editor.
- Lead- Opening paragraph of a news story.
- By-line- The name of the reporter or columnist who wrote the article.

The by-line is usually located underneath the headline.

The Importance of Newspapers

The three most important points that were covered in this report are the following:

A newspaper would not be possible without writing. It could not be made without a staff of editors, journalists, and other workers. The press can often be wrong and it may insult the public at times. Thomas Jefferson once said “Were it me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government I should not hesitate to prefer the latter.” It's quite possible to see why the president would say this. Our people need the newspapers. They have helped clear up government scandals and other crimes, they have stood up for our country, they have entertained us, and have let us practice our rights. Surely one would agree that newspapers are a benefit to man's life.

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