

Break Down a Text

Identifying Audience and Author's Purpose

2-3 classroom periods, 4th-5th Grades

In *Break Down a Text*, students will **collaborate to identify key words and phrases in historic newspaper articles** that either **inform or persuade readers** about a new invention. They will then use the key words and phrases to create an advertisement for this invention, in this case Thomas Edison's storage battery.

1. Hold up a battery and ask students to brainstorm **how this item impacts our lives today?**
2. Let students know that they will be looking at newspaper articles from early 1900's to learn more about the first storage battery and **how newspapers writers share words and phrases to inform and persuade** readers. They will then **create a newspaper advertisement** of that time for Thomas Edison's storage battery.
3. Share one or two **focus questions**¹ that will help students stay on task as they study two newspaper articles: "How do newspaper writers inform and persuade their readers?" and "How and why did Thomas Edison use newspapers to promote his invention?"
4. Assign **small groups** of 3 or 4 students to **identify words and phrases that inform or persuade** readers. **Model and explain** that words and phrases that inform are factual. Words and phrases that invoke feeling are used to persuade the reader.

Highlight text (words or phrases) which:

For example, persuade- pink highlighter and inform- green highlighter

5. **Code the first article**, "Edison Triumphs; Finds Rare Power" (10 minutes).
6. **Each group will share out a couple of examples.** As each group shares, students in other groups are to share a **thumbs up/down** if their group had coded the same text similarly.

**Tip: Thumbs up and thumbs down allows for more active participation and listening as groups report out.*

7. **Repeat steps 5 and 6** for the **second article**, "Storage Battery Is Invented by Edison" (10 minutes).

Analyze and Synthesize, Going Deeper

8. In a **whole class discussion**, sit in a circle with both newspaper articles in hand and discuss who the audience for each article is? Ask students to offer evidence from the text to support their answer.
9. Have students **"turn and talk"** to a partner to answer the following question, "Who's article was more persuasive and why?" (2 minutes). Have several students share out.
10. **As a whole group discussion**, discuss the **focus questions** in #3 above to pull it all together. Ask students to offer evidence from the text to support their answer.
11. **Individually or with a partner**, students will **create an advertisement** that will **persuade the people of Edison's time to buy Thomas Edison's storage battery**. Share additional newspaper clippings with images of Thomas Edison and the storage battery. Students will need to use the words and phrases from the articles to help them create their advertisement, and they may benefit from seeing advertisements of other products of that time.

¹ A **focus question** helps focus students' thinking and inquiry of a primary source(s), is open-ended and relates directly to the primary source(s).

Assessing for Understanding

The advertisement should use persuasive techniques (words, phrase, and/or images that evoke feeling) and should integrate language of Edison's time.

Extension

Have students consider other objects that affected change (lights, cell phones, computers, etc.). Students, on their own or with a partner, will create a commercial of a new product or invention to remedy a problem of today.

5th Grade Common Core State Standards met by the activity:

CCSS.5.RI.3 Key Ideas and details: Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical text based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.5.RI.4 Craft and Structure: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

CCSS.5.RI.8 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

CCSS.5.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.5.SL.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Library of Congress Primary Sources

"Edison Triumphs; Finds Rare Power." *The Minneapolis journal*. (Minneapolis, Minn.) 1888-1939, October 22, 1906, Image 1. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045366/1906-10-22/ed-1/seq-1>

"Storage Battery Is Invented By Edison." *The St. Louis Republic*. (St. Louis, Mo.), 24 Feb. 1901. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020274/1901-02-24/ed-1/seq-1/>>

"The Founding of a Dynasty." *Goodwin's weekly : a thinking paper for thinking people*. (Salt Lake City, Utah), 17 Dec. 1910. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/2010218519/1910-12-17/ed-1/seq-52/>> (Picture of Thomas Edison sitting next to his invention of the storage battery.)

"Twelve Years Ago." *New-York tribune*. (New York [N.Y.]), 08 Oct. 1922. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1922-10-08/ed-1/seq-95/>> (Picture of Thomas Edison in car with small paragraph.)

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