

# news {..BYTES..}

for eEditions

grades 2-5

## 1 Why Zebras Have Stripes

Scientists believe they may have solved the mystery of why zebras have stripes. Since the geographic area where zebras live overlaps with the geographic range of blood-sucking flies, the stripes may be a bug repellent, according to a theory currently gaining support in scientific circles. Such patterns as the zebra's striped coats confuse the navigational sense of tsetse flies and similar species, so those bugs avoid striped creatures, the scientists report in the journal *Nature Communications*. This allows zebras to avoid many of the diseases blood-sucking flies inflict on other animals. Wild animals change over time and develop features that help them live more effectively. In the eEdition, find a wild animal that has a feature that helps it live. Write a paragraph describing how the feature helps.

Common Core State Standards: Producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task; conducting short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

## 2 1,000-Year-Old Remains Found

A 14-year-old boy who was digging a trout pond in his father's Utah back yard discovered human remains dating back about 1,000 years. Medical examiners confirmed the age of the remains, and a forensic anthropologist is analyzing them to determine the sex, perhaps ethnicity and more about the person. Utah experts believe the remains are of a Native American, and the site is being combed for more archaeological clues. "Humans have occupied this valley for up to 10,000 years," one noted. Remains and artifacts from the past can help scientists learn how people lived in earlier times. As a class, talk about things you could learn from an ancient Native American campsite if you discovered it. Draw a series of comic strips for the eEdition, showing different things you could learn.

Common Core State Standards: Using drawings or visual displays when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or points; engaging effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.

## 3 Earth Day Search

The search features of your eEdition allow you to find stories that interest you. Your eEdition also allows you to search recent editions for related stories. On Tuesday, April 22, the nation celebrates Earth Day. How is your community celebrating? Scan the pages of the eEdition to find stories about Earth Day. Read one story and write a short paragraph summarizing the news and explaining why it interests you. Then use the Advanced Search feature to find other stories about Earth Day and compare them to the one you read. Discuss how having the ability to search for recent stories can help readers have a fuller understanding of the news.

Common Core State Standards: Producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task; engaging effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.

## 4 Musical Poetry

April is National Poetry Month. And poetry is all around you. If you've memorized verses to a rap song, or listened to songs on an iPod, you have experienced poetry. As a class, talk about the different kinds of music you listen to and how the words tell stories or connect with emotions, as poetry does. Then pretend you are a music critic for the eEdition. Write a "review" of the songs of your favorite musical artist, telling how they rank as poetry.

Common Core State Standards: Engaging effectively in a range of collaborative discussions; writing opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

## 5 Space Seeds Bloom Early

Four cherry tree saplings planted after their seeds had orbited the Earth in the International Space Station have sprouted flowers in Japan — a full six years ahead of schedule. They were among 14 saplings that had been expected to take 10 years to bloom in the Asian nation. Astronauts took a handful of cherry tree seeds into space for eight months in 2008, as part of an educational project aimed

at Japanese children. The early blossoming has stunned scientists. Some believe it was due to exposure to stronger cosmic rays in space, while others feel the cause was cross-pollination. Experiments in space help scientists learn about space travel and also about life on Earth. With a partner, brainstorm an experiment you would like to try in space. Then write a letter to the editor of the eEdition explaining why it would be worthwhile.

Common Core State Standards: Writing informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly; citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions.

A Teaching Tool  
for Tomorrow

# news {..BYTES..}

for eEditions

grades 6-8

## 1 Robot Plays Pac-Man

Robots that teach other robots are being developed at Washington State University. So far, they've created one that teaches other robots to play the video game Pac-Man, eventually racking up points faster than the "teacher." "Even a mediocre teacher can increase the speed at which the student learns," one of the computer scientists reports in the journal *Connection Science*. The model has many applications, he noted. One example could be a house-cleaning robot that could train its replacement. Technology has changed a great many things in American jobs and lifestyles. In the eEdition, find an example of technology that has changed the way things are done. Think creatively and write a poem, rap or rhyme detailing how your chosen technology has changed things.

Common Core State Standards: Writing narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events; demonstrating understanding of figurative language; applying knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts.

## 2 Women Earn Less

In the United States women, on average, earn only 77 cents for every dollar a man earns, President Obama has pointed out, which he says is an "embarrassment" to the country. A Paycheck Fairness Act, introduced in the Senate, would add new regulations on how private companies pay employees, but faces stiff Republican opposition. Critics of the administration say the statistics are misleading, and by the same criteria, White House female employees earn only 88 cents for every dollar males earn. Most of the high level officials appointed by Obama to his administration are men, but the overall White House staff is about evenly divided between the sexes. As a class, discuss pay inequality and what steps should be taken to address it. Then write a short editorial for the eEdition, outlining one idea and why it should be tried.

Common Core State Standards: Writing opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information; citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions.

## 3 An ATM Bonanza

A malfunctioning ATM machine at a Maine bank dispensed \$37,000 in cash to a man who thought he was withdrawing \$140. The money was returned to the South Portland bank, even though the man was found stuffing the cash into a shopping bag when police arrived. The police had been called by a woman waiting to use the ATM, when she thought the man in front of her was taking an inordinate amount of time. No charges have been filed. ATM machines have revolutionized banking. In the eEdition or online, find another invention that has changed a business in a big way. Draw a series of comic strips for the eEdition, showing the effects of the invention.

Common Core State Standard: Using drawings or visual displays when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or points.

## 4 Earth Day Search

The search features of your eEdition allow you to find stories that interest you and to search recent editions for related stories. On Tuesday, April 22, the nation celebrates Earth Day. Earth Day is a day that reminds us to pay attention to how we treat our planet, but since it's only one day, it's up to us to remind ourselves the rest of the year. Use the search features of the eEdition to find stories about activities and events people are organizing for Earth Day. Read one story and write a short paragraph summarizing the news. Then use what you have found to create a poster showing five things kids your age can do to help the environment all year long.

Common Core State Standards: Conducting short research projects that build knowledge about a topic; producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task; using technology tools to enhance learning.

## 5 Flies More Agile Than Jets

Tactics similar to those of a fighter pilot under attack are employed by the common fruit fly, when trying to evade a predator. Recent research shows that the flies alter their yaw and pitch motions much like a high-performance pilot. What's more, they do it at full speed, faster than humans can comprehend. Fruit flies flap their wings at an incredible 200 beats per second, the researchers note, roll their bodies like

an aircraft making a banked turn, can alter course 50 times faster than we can blink and have even been observed flying upside down. Scientists are baffled at how such a tiny brain can process such astoundingly complex calculations. Insects and other wildlife have developed talents and abilities that help them survive. In the eEdition, find a story about a species of wildlife with a special talent. Use what you read and additional research to design an informational poster highlighting the talent.

Common Core State Standards: Integrating information presented in different media or formats to develop a coherent understanding of a topic; conducting short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

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# news {..BYTES..}

## for eEditions

grades 9-12

### 1 'The Good Grammar Bandit'

A man who has been robbing banks in Denver, Colorado, has been dubbed "The Good Grammar Bandit" by the FBI. The spelling and punctuation in his written demand notes have been perfect. The robber is described as a tall, slender black man, wearing a hooded sweatshirt, hat and sunglasses. He is believed to have robbed three banks this month, fleeing on foot. The FBI will not disclose how much money he has stolen — but his nouns and verbs agree. Knowing correct grammar will help you throughout life, in job applications, consumer communications or any career that requires writing. Practice by writing a letter to apply for a job you find in the Help Wanted section of the eEdition classified ads. Include a summary of your qualifications, skills and goals. Exchange with a classmate and check each other's grammar.

Common Core State Standards: Identifying multiple language conventions and using them; recognizing nouns, verbs and modifiers; producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task.

### 2 Wrong Hancock

"On the Cover of the Rolling Stone" was a popular song years ago, but it's back in the news because Julia Louis-Dreyfus has caused controversy for being on the front page of the magazine. It's not because the actress appears nude (which she does), but because of a faux tattoo on her naked back. It's supposed to be part of the U.S. Constitution, with John Hancock's famous signature at the bottom. Except that Hancock didn't sign the Constitution; he signed the Declaration of Independence. On the TV series "Veep," Dreyfus plays a bumbling vice president. The Constitution sets up the U.S. government and in the first 10 amendments outlines some of Americans' most important rights. As a class, discuss the rights in the first 10 amendments. Then find examples of the rights in the news stories of the eEdition. Pick one example and write how the amendment involved affects daily life.

Common Core State Standards: Producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task; conducting short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

### 3 Section Fronts

Your eEdition allows you to quickly move from section to section to see what the top stories are. In the toolbar at the top or side of the page, pull-down menus allow you to look at the front page of each section to see what stories interest you. Find the pull-down menu that lets you move through the eEdition section by section. Look at the front page of three sections and write down the story in each section that is given the biggest display. Write a sentence for each explaining why it was displayed the way it was. Finish by writing a short paragraph explaining how having the ability to look quickly at section fronts helps readers find what they want to read.

Common Core State Standards: Conducting short research projects that build knowledge about a topic; producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task; using technology tools to enhance learning.

### 4 More Dollars For Sports

Spending on instruction and research has declined or stayed flat, but most colleges and universities continue to increase spending on sports, the American Association of University Professors reports. "The ... priority accorded to competitive athletics too easily diverts the focus ... from teaching and learning to scandal and excess," the report, "Losing Focus," declares. College sports receive a lot of coverage in eEditions and other news media. Find stories about college sports in your area in the eEdition or online. Then write a short editorial or letter to the editor describing what value you think sports bring to a college.

Common Core State Standards: Writing opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information; citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions.

### 5 What a Turnaround!

Talk about doing double duty! Not long ago, opera singer Kristine Opolais was awakened by a phone call on a Saturday morning at 7:30, just a few hours after she had sung the title role in "Madama Butterfly" for the first time at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Could she return that afternoon to do the lead role of Mimi in "La Boheme?" The scheduled soprano was sick. The lead roles in

Common Core State Standards: Producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task; writing opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information; citing specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions.

"Butterfly" and "Boheme" are two of the most tiring and difficult in opera. But without rehearsal, Opolais took the stage before the Met's 3,800 matinee attendees and a radio and movie-theater audience of 300,000 and played Mimi, a role she had done elsewhere, but not at the Met. Performers often give audiences "something extra" when they perform. In the eEdition, find a performer you like who is known for "extra" effort. Write a review of this performer, detailing why you like him or her.

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