



# Teaching with newspapers – Case

# study: US elections and transition

Teachers are always looking for authentic texts for their students and newspapers provide the best, widest and most versatile tool to teach with authentic material. First of all, newspapers are much more updated than any course book, secondly they give the possibility to speak and work on every single possible topic from science to football, matching the interests of students. Last but not least they provide material for all levels from A1 to C2.

It is commonly believed that newspapers are only for pros but in this article various activities for various levels will be presented.

## WORKING WITH PICTURES

### A1 – A2

For lower levels activities with pictures are one of the best ways both to practice speaking and to boost vocabulary.



### Describe the picture (the Guardian 19/01/2021)

Give 5 mins to your students to brainstorm the vocabulary they want to use to describe the picture and then let them speak. You can introduce words and expressions such as **In the background/foreground; At the top/bottom of the picture; In the picture I can see; Maybe it's a.** You can also use the picture to revise **prepositions.**

### B1-B2

**Compare and contrast the two pictures (Washington post 14/11/2020 and Los Angeles Times 21/10/2020)** Help your students boosting their vocabulary introducing expressions such as **The first picture show...while the second...; On the one hand..., on the other hand; I would say it was taken when...; The photos are both similar but...; In terms of the**

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## difference between them...

This is a good exercise to practice skills for FCE exam. After describing, comparing and contrasting you can ask your students what they know about the last presidential campaign and let them speak about current affairs. You can also read some headlines with them to outline the situation.



C1-C2



IF JOE BIDEN CALLED YOU TO  
ASK WHAT THE GOVERNMENT  
SHOULD SPEND MONEY ON,  
WHAT WOULD YOU TELL HIM?

**Describe the picture** (The Guardian 20/01/2020) **and then answer the question.** (New York Times 20/01/2020)

Let your students speak and help them revising if-clauses. Ask them to explain the reasons why they would suggest a specific issue to invest money on.

## WORKING WITH ARTICLES

There are some activities that can be done for various levels such as letting your students choose an article they like, read and summarize it and choose 5 new words they want to teach their classmates.

### A1-A2

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/19/us/politics/field-of-flags-national-mall-inauguration.html> **'Field of Flags' on the National Mall represents the people who cannot attend the inauguration.** (New York Times 19/01/2020) This is a really short article that describes the way the ceremony is being organised. Start with a warm up activity such as describing the pictures given and prepare an exercise to give your students some of the new words they'll find in the article.

After reading the article concentrate on the 50 states that form the USA. You can practice with your students expressions such as **in the North/South/East/West; its capital city is...; ...is bigger/smaller than...**

### B1 – B2

Journalist for a day

After reading articles/watching digital content write the review of the inauguration ceremony

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/01/21/it-wasnt-just-speech-there-were-plenty-big-moments/> (Washington post 21/01/2020)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-2UQvaavW4> Inauguration day in 3 minutes (Washington post 21/01/2020)

Revise/Teach **how to write a review** and after that work on the inauguration day using the **vocabulary** your students have learnt in the previous exercise with pictures. This is a good exercise to practice skills for FCE exam.

### C1-C2

Read the article <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/17/us/kamala-harris-doug-emhoff-family-inauguration.html> **Kamala Harris Will Make History. So Will Her 'Big, Blended' Family.** (New York Times 17/01/2020)

Concentrate with your students on the different "first times" for the US with Kamala Harris.

Ask your students to speak about issues with racism in the US and if you want you can speak about the movement Black Lives Matter. Here you can find more material on [race and racism](#)



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<https://www.newyorker.com/tag/race-racism-essays-commentary> in the US. (The New Yorker)

If the main goal of the lesson is improving reading skills, use the article to create a reading comprehension. If the main goal is writing ask the students to write an essay or a column on a related topic.

The New York Times offers a special section for teachers, to help them working with newspaper articles.

<https://www.nytimes.com/section/learning> So, what are you waiting for? Tomorrow will be the perfect day to start teaching with newspapers!