

Headlines AND HIGH WATER

About Headlines and High Water:

In *Headlines and High Water*, you play as a young journalist starting a new job in the fictional town of Twin Lakes, just as the annual Cherry Festival is thrown into chaos by a catastrophic flood. Do you have the journalistic skills needed to gather information and keep yourself and the town safe as the weather turns ugly? Are you able to handle the pressure of a looming deadline? Do you have the ability to navigate local politics, while keeping your editor and your readers happy? Play *Headlines and High Water* to find out...

Target Grade levels: 6-9

Subject Areas: Science, Language Arts, Journalism, Media Literacy, Social Studies

Tech Requirements: Chromebook, PC or Mac running Chrome with Internet access

Length of Play: The game includes six levels. Each level takes approximately 10-20 minutes to play. Most players can complete the game in 2, 45-minute class periods. The game has save states, so players can return to a game that is in progress

Game Play:

In this text-based, choose-your-adventure style game, players take on the role of a journalist in the small town of Twin Lakes. The player is tasked with interviewing locals and writing stories to keep the town informed—all while staying safe during the town's worst flood of the century.

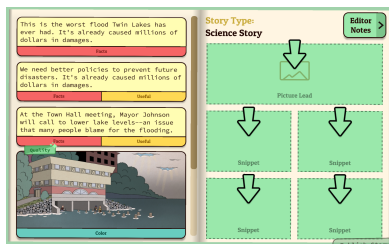


Throughout the game, players build trust with the townspeople and interview a cast of quirky characters—like Birdie, the aptly-named nature conservationist, and Fred Finkler, the gardener

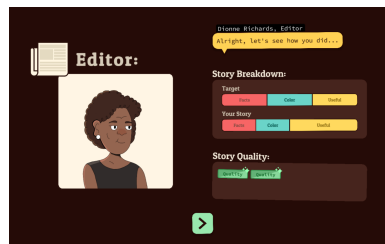
who'll talk your ear off. In the end, the player's reporting will determine if Twin Lakes is still around a year from now, or if future floods wash the town right off the map.

To achieve their goal, the player must write news stories at each stage of the disaster:

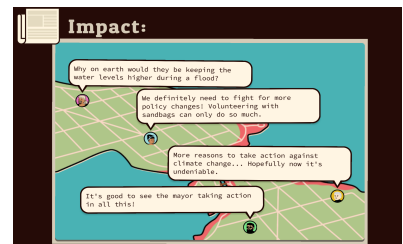
- Breaking news stories that communicate urgent, life-saving information to the public
- Science-based pieces about what causes floods and how to prevent them
- Social issues-focused stories that examine inequality tied to flooding and proposes possible solutions



Players gather quotes, photos, statistics, diagrams, and anecdotes, that they compile into a news story.



After each story, players receive a score based on the quality and breakdown of their piece.



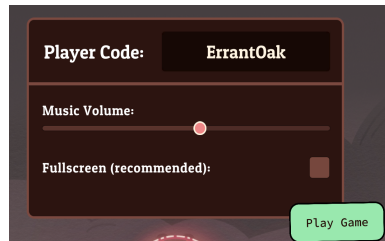
Players see (through art and feedback) the impact their story has on the people living in the town.

Getting Started



Link for starting the game

<https://fielddaylab.wisc.edu/play/headlines/ci/production/>



When players start a New Game, they are assigned a Player Code. Players should record their Player Code, so that in future sessions students they click Resume Game, enter their Player Code, and pick up at their last save state.



Players take on the role of "El", a budding news reporter who just started a new job working for a small town newspaper.

Menu Bar



The menu bar that appears at the top of the screen during the game.

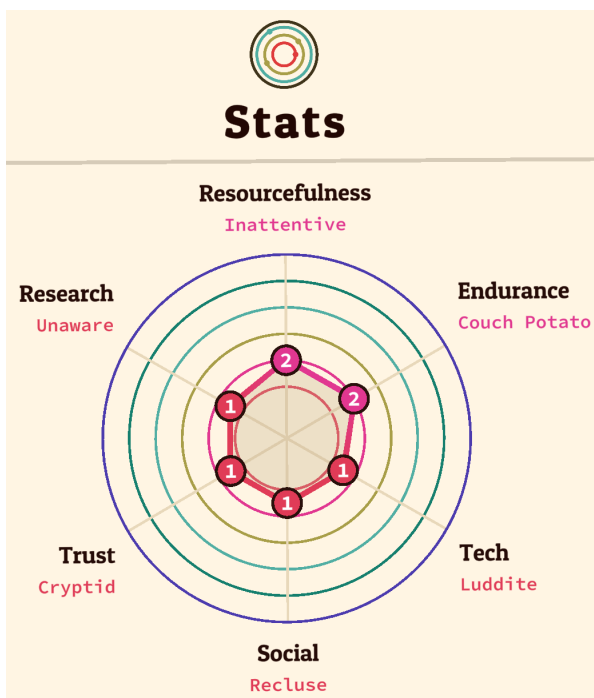
Map - Shows different locations around the town of Twin Lakes. It also shows where the player is located at any given time.

Stats - Shows the player their score in each of the six skill areas. [See below for more information on player statistics].

Notes - Tracks the “snippets” (quotes, photos, and information the player collects). It also helps the player record their targets or goals for the articles they write (e.g., what type of article is it and what components should be included?)

Time - Shows the player how much time is remaining until they have to submit their article to their editor.

Player Stats



Based on decisions they make in the game players can develop or build their skill in six different areas: Resourcefulness, Endurance, Tech, Social, Trust and Research.

Players start the game with a score of one in each of the skill areas. Their level or score in each of these areas subsequently goes up or down throughout the game based on decisions they make. For example, taking time to eat will build their endurance.

A player's skill level can also impact how the game unfolds. For example, a low Tech score may result in the player taking poor quality photos or a low Trust score may make it hard for the player to get possible sources to talk with them.

Using the Game in the Classroom

There are many ways to use **Headlines and Highwater** (and other games) in the classroom. Below are a few ideas for how to use the game in different contexts.

Discussion and Reflection prompts

One way to use games is to develop discussion and reflection prompts directly tied to the actions, themes and content in the game. This is very similar to how you might integrate a book into your curriculum. This approach can be used before, during or after students play the game.

Sample “before playing” prompts

- This game is about being a journalist. What types of things do you think you might do in the game?
- As part of the game you can develop different skills associated with being a journalist. What skills do you think journalists need in order to do their job well? Why might these skills be important?
- The game takes place in a town where flooding is an issue. What types of issues or problems do you think people face when flooding happens?
- What things do you think a town can do to prevent flooding or reduce the impact of flooding on the people who live there?

Sample “while playing” and “after playing” prompts:

- What skills areas are shown in the Stats display? Why do you think each of these skills is important for a journalist to develop?
- Which of these skills do you think you have in real life? How does the skill benefit you as a student? With your friendships? In other aspects of your life?
- What do you think makes a high quality snippet vs. a poor quality snippet in the game?
- In the game you build stories that mix together different components such as “facts”, “useful” and “color”.
 - What do you think each of these components means?
 - Which of these components is most important when writing a breaking news story about a pending flood and why?

Connecting to other parts of the curriculum:

Rather than being played as standalone activities, many teachers make connections between games and other activities they are doing in the classroom. Here are some ideas for other curriculum areas that might complement **Headlines and Highwater** and vice versa:

- Contested issues - looking at a community issues from multiple perspectives
- Community planning

- Flood management and the impact of flooding
- Wetland ecology
- Links between extreme storm events and climate change
- Journalism/ News writing
- Photojournalism and the role of photography in journalism

Additional Connections - Activity Ideas:

Invite a journalist to visit your class in person or online. Have students pre-generate questions to ask the journalist about their job. Discuss similarities and differences between the game and what the students learn from the journalist - e.g., around what skills are needed or what a typical day looks like.

Have students read an article (either one you share or one the students locate) about a contested issue in your local community or elsewhere. Have them identify the issue and the different perspectives around it. Then, have them identify and discuss their own views on the issue.

Have students read an article (either one you share or one the students locate) about flooding. Ask them to identify which of the article types from the game best describes the article (breaking news, science-based, social-issues focused). If the article includes an image, ask them to explain what message the image communicates. If it does not include an image, ask them to think of an image they would run alongside the story.

Have students look at the images that run alongside different news stories. Have them analyze a specific image and describe how it relates to the article and what message it communicates - e.g., why did the photographer and/or editor choose this particular image, how does it add to the story, what other images could the photographer have taken to accompany the story?

Invite a local politician to visit your classroom to share about their job. Ask them to discuss a contested issue in the community and have them articulate the different perspectives around it.

Academic Content

Headlines and High Water incorporates crosscutting concepts that can be applied to a variety of content areas in social studies, science, language arts, media literacy and journalism.

Media and News Literacy Connections:

The game introduces players to the process of journalism and news literacy, including how journalistic knowledge is created. Players are exposed to different types of news stories and

how they are constructed. That also engage in the practices associated with crafting a news story, including:

- Interviewing experts
- Interviewing bystanders/citizens
- Doing online research
- Making on-site/field observations
- Taking photographs
- Fact checking

Through their choices, players are able to witness the consequences of cutting corners and failing to check their sources, ranging from losing public trust to getting fired from their job.

Science Connections:

The game, and especially the third and fourth news stories, explores topics of flooding, land management, wetland ecology, and climate change. Players learn about the factors that have contributed to flooding in the fictional town of Twin Lakes. This includes the impact of wetland destruction and increased rainfall brought on by climate change. In the course of writing their stories, the player interviews limnology researchers, wetland ecology experts and conservationists.

Social Studies Connections:

The game serves as a case study for how some public policy decisions are contested. The player meets different characters in the game who provide differing perspectives on issues related to land management, town planning, and housing equity. As a result, the game provides a context for discussing contested issues, consensus building, equity, and town planning.

Academic Standards

Social Studies [Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies]

Content Area: Social Studies Inquiry Practices and Processes (Inq): Inquiry Practices and Processes can and should be used within all social studies disciplines and, as such, is an “umbrella strand” covering all content strands.

- Standard SS.Inq3: Wisconsin students will develop claims using evidence to support reasoning. Inq3.c: Elaborate how evidence supports a claim - SS.Inq3.c.m Analyze the extent to which evidence supports or does not support a claim, and if it does not, adjust claim appropriately.
- Standard SS.Inq3: Wisconsin students will develop claims using evidence to support reasoning. Inq3.b: Cite evidence from multiple sources to support a claim - SS.Inq3.b.m

Support a claim with evidence from multiple reliable sources representing a range of media (electronic, digital, print, and other mass media).

- Standard SS.Inq4 Wisconsin students will communicate and critique conclusions. Inq4.b: Critique conclusions [SS.Inq4.b.m] Analyze and evaluate the logic, relevance, and accuracy of others' claims, taking into consideration potential bias.

Content Area: Geography (Geography)

- Standard SS.Geog5: Wisconsin students will evaluate the relationship between humans and the environment. SS.Geog5.a: Human environment interaction. SS.Geog5.a.m Analyze how technology interacts with the environment and how increased use of technology affects the burden and use of natural resources.

Science Standards [Wisconsin Standards for Science]

Science: Crosscutting Concepts (CC) – Systems and System Models [SCI.CC4.m] Students understand systems may interact with other systems: they may have sub-systems and be a part of larger complex systems.

Science: Crosscutting Concepts (CC) – Stability and Change [SCI.CC7.m] Students explain stability and change in natural or designed systems by examining changes over time, and considering forces at different scales, including the atomic scale. They understand changes in one part of a system might cause large changes in another part, systems in dynamic equilibrium are stable due to a balance of feedback mechanisms, and stability might be disturbed by either sudden events or gradual changes that accumulate over time.

Science: Science and Engineering Practices (SEP) – Analyze and Interpret Data [SCI.SEP4.m] Analyze and interpret data to provide evidence for explanations of phenomena.

Science: Science and Engineering Practices (SEP) – Construct Explanations and Design Solutions [SCI.SEP6.A.m] Students construct explanations supported by multiple sources of evidence consistent with scientific ideas, principles, and theories.

Science: Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCI) – Earth and Space Science 2 (ESS2) – Earth's Systems - Weather and Climate [SCI.ESS2.D.m] Complex interactions determine local weather patterns and influence climate, including the role of the ocean.

Science: Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCI) – Earth and Space Science 3 (ESS3) – Earth and Human Activity - Natural Hazards [SCI.ESS3.B.m]

Patterns can be seen through mapping the history of natural hazards in a region and understanding related geological forces.

Science: Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCI) – Earth and Space Science 3 (ESS3) – Earth and Human Activity - Human Impacts on Earth Systems [SCI.ESS3.C.m]

Human activities have altered the hydrosphere, atmosphere, and lithosphere which in turn has altered the biosphere.

Additional Resources

PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs - <https://studentreportinglabs.org>

The National Association for Media Literacy Education - <https://namle.net>