One Canal, Three Stories

How a news lead shapes the story readers see

SS24.CWI.1 "Explain how cultural, geographic, political, and social points of view can influence media descriptions of current international events..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the facts that all three news leads could report. Circle a phrase in each lead that shows what its writer wants readers to notice first.

A Drought, a Shortcut, and the News

1 In early 2024, low water levels in Panama's Gatun Lake limited how many ships could pass through the Panama Canal each day. The canal crosses Panama, between Costa Rica and Colombia, and links the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Its locks use fresh water from the lake to raise and lower ships. When crossings are limited, a shipping company may wait, pay more for a scarce slot, or choose a longer route. Those choices could eventually raise costs for a grocery shopper and delay goods for businesses far beyond Panama. This geography helps explain why a drought in one country becomes international news.

2 Consider three invented news leads about these same 2024 limits. A Panama City neighborhood paper begins, "Families worry that shipping income and water supplies may pull in different directions." A shipping industry bulletin begins, "Fewer canal slots threaten delivery schedules for global customers." A conservation newsletter begins, "Drought puts the water needs of a major trade route in the spotlight." These are examples, not quotations from actual outlets. Each lead reports on the canal limits, but each starts with a different concern. A reader who sees only one lead might miss other ways the limits affect people.

3 Perspective is not automatically bias or error: location, livelihood, and purpose can shape what an editor puts first. Someone in Panama might find the neighborhood lead urgent, while a retailer in another country might focus on delivery dates. Evidence about lake levels and ship crossings could help readers check each account. The canal opened in 1914, creating a major shortcut between two oceans. Earlier droughts also forced limits on shipping, so the 2024 story fits a longer pattern of trade depending on reliable water. On a map, Panama lies between Costa Rica and Colombia, with a coast on each ocean.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Compare the neighborhood paper's lead with the industry bulletin's lead. How might each shape what readers see as the main problem?

2. What concern shapes the conservation newsletter's lead? Which fact in the passage helps explain that concern?

3. How could fewer canal crossings affect one person in Panama and one person outside Panama in different ways?

4. How does the canal's location help explain the international reach of the 2024 limits? How does its opening in 1914 add historical context?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine flooding closes an international rail crossing for one week. Write two different news leads, one for people living near the tracks and one for exporters across the border. Then write two sentences explaining how the leads could shape readers' views.

ANSWER KEY

One Canal, Three Stories

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the facts that all three news leads could report. Circle a phrase in each lead that shows what its writer wants readers to notice first. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare the neighborhood paper's lead with the industry bulletin's lead. How might each shape what readers see as the main problem?	**The neighborhood lead may make readers focus on families' water needs and shipping income. The industry lead may make them focus on delayed deliveries to customers.**
2	What concern shapes the conservation newsletter's lead? Which fact in the passage helps explain that concern?	**It emphasizes water use. The canal's locks use fresh water from Gatun Lake, whose low levels limited crossings.**
3	How could fewer canal crossings affect one person in Panama and one person outside Panama in different ways?	**A person in Panama could worry about shipping income or water supplies. A shopper outside Panama could face higher costs, or a business could receive goods late.**
4	How does the canal's location help explain the international reach of the 2024 limits? How does its opening in 1914 add historical context?	**The canal links the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, so limits can affect trade far beyond Panama. Its 1914 opening shows that the route has been an important shortcut for more than a century.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Local lead: Flooding closes an international rail crossing for a week, leaving nearby residents with questions about the area around the tracks. Trade lead: Exporters face a week without a rail link across the border after flooding closes the crossing. The local lead directs readers toward concerns close to home. The trade lead makes delayed shipments seem like the most important effect.

Accept other reasonable effects and interpretations supported by the passage. For Your Turn, look for two distinct leads about the same imagined closure and an explanation of how their different emphases could influence readers.