WHAT IN THE WORLD?

LEVEL 2 (GRADES 8 AND UP)

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SAMPLE EDITION
2024/2025: ISSUE 5

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NATIONAL
PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU RESIGNS

The Justin Trudeau era of Canadian politics is over. Mr. Trudeau announced on January 6 that he will resign as Canada's prime minister and as head of the federal Liberal Party. Mr. Trudeau, who has led the country since 2015, said his departure will be official . . .

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INTERNATIONAL
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TO THE TEACHER

WHAT IN THE WORLD?

Level 2, 2024/2025: Issue 5

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HAY'SXW'QA!

LesPlan is grateful to the Lkwungen Peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, on whose unceded land we now live, and do our work.

We welcome your comments and appreciate your suggestions. Please contact us at any time.

MISSION STATEMENT

LesPlan Educational Services Ltd. aims to help teachers develop students' engagement in, understanding of, and ability to critically assess current issues and events by providing quality, up-to-date, affordable, ready-to-use resources appropriate for use across the curriculum.

I have had many parents comment to me about how great they think *What in the World?* is, and they look forward to each month's issue coming home... This is a great resource for a small country school to explore the global issues that affect us all.

K. Camelon, Grade 7/8 teacher

Admaston, ON

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FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

– Los Angeles fires destroy lives, homes, and businesses

BEFORE READING

1. Write the word 'California' on the board.

2. Have students popcorn out ideas that come to mind when they think of California. (E.g., *it's a U.S. state; it's on the Pacific coast; it has warm weather; it has lots of beaches; Hollywood, Los Angeles, San Francisco; Disneyland; etc.*)

3. Next, ask students why California has been a top story in the news during most of January. (*Wildfires have been devastating the area.*)

4. Project the photojournal at this link and scroll through the photos as a group:
https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/la-county-wildfires-week-outlook-1.7429649

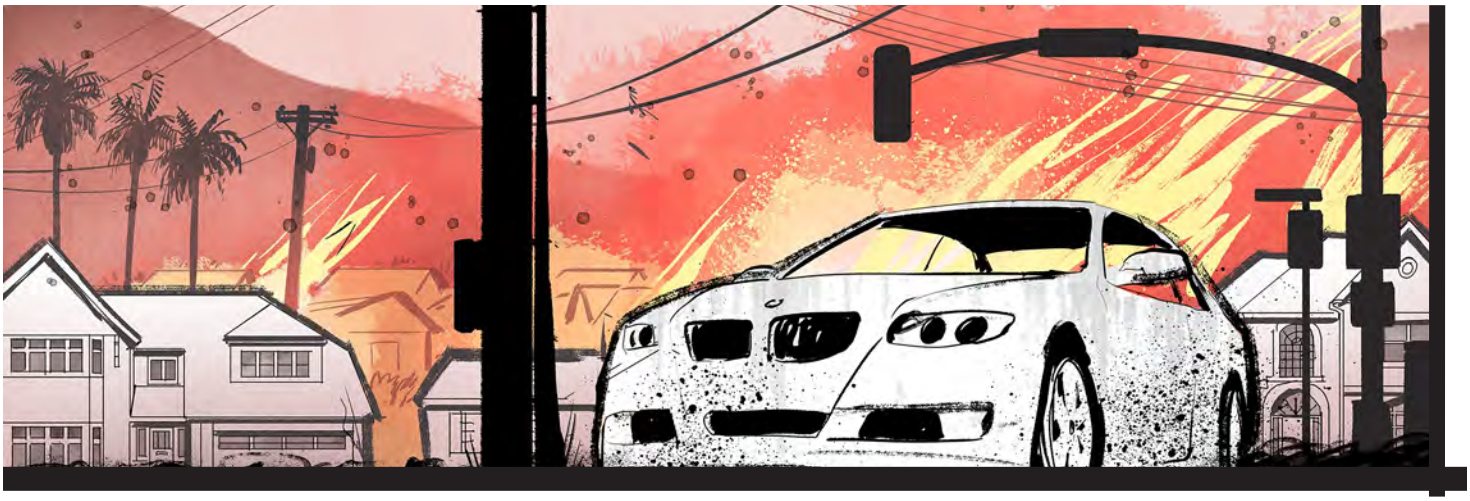
5. Have students turn and talk with an elbow partner about what they observed and share a question that they have about these wildfires.

6. Finally, invite students to set a purpose for reading the article, perhaps using the question they just discussed with their partner, referring to the resource page **Setting A Purpose Before Reading** as needed.

INTERNATIONAL

FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

– Los Angeles fires destroy lives, homes, and businesses



Large areas of southern California were consumed by devastating wildfires that began in early January and continued during the following weeks. Relentless flames, fueled by powerful Santa Ana Winds, high temperatures, and dry vegetation, have consumed lives, homes, and businesses. Officials are still investigating how the fires started.

A WALL OF ORANGE TERROR

Conditions were dry and dangerous because expected winter rains did not arrive, and much of southern California had experienced drought-like conditions. In late January, nine large wildfires were reported across the region. At least 28 people had died as a result of the red-hot infernos sweeping across the region. Over 16,000 structures had been reduced to ash. Some 200,000 residents had evacuated, and many thousands more waited nervously on evacuation alert.

The largest and most destructive blaze, the Palisades Fire in the Santa Monica Mountains, destroyed over 9000 hectares. That's bigger than 23,000 football fields.

CALIFORNIA, A GOLDEN STATE WITH ISSUES

With 39 million residents, California is the most populous U.S. state. Nearly four million people live in Los Angeles alone, making it the second-largest municipality in America after New York City. Known for its TV and Hollywood film industries, LA is where dreams of stardom are made—and often shattered.

California's economy, featuring entertainment, technology, farming, and tourism, is the largest in the U.S. and the fifth-largest in the world. In 2023, its $4-trillion **GDP** was 1.7 times higher than Canada's**.** Silicon Valley, in the northern part of the state near San Francisco, is a global centre for high tech and innovation. It is the birthplace of many tech giants, including Apple, Google, and Facebook.

The state's natural beauty features huge, awe-inspiring redwood trees and sparkling beaches. California is known world-wide for its surfing culture. The climate is varied. Along the coast, warm, mild weather prevails. Inland, deserts and mountains experience more extreme conditions. The state is also a leading producer of milk, dairy products, cattle, almonds, grapes, and many other crops.

The Eaton Fire in the San Gabriel Mountains north of Los Angeles caused nearly as much damage, scorching over 5600 hectares and levelling city block after city block.

In late January, after a week of relative calm, which allowed firefighters to slow the wildfires and build containment lines, new blazes were reported. Authorities issued **red-flag warnings** for most of Los Angeles and Ventura **Counties** as bone-dry vegetation and expected strong winds increased the likelihood of more widespread destruction.

BATTLING THE BLAZES

Los Angeles was at war—and emergency services were stretched thin. Thousands of exhausted first responders and volunteers worked tirelessly to protect lives and property. At the local level, those on the front

DEFINITIONS

COUNTY: an area of a state or country that is larger than a city and has its own government to deal with local matters

GDP - GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT: the total value of all goods and services produced in a country or region in a set time period

RED FLAG WARNING: warning issued when warm temperatures, very low humidity, and strong winds are expected to combine to produce a high risk of fire danger.

FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

– Los Angeles fires destroy lives, homes, and businesses

lines struggled to contain the blazes, often battling extreme conditions in rugged terrain. Fierce winds sent hot embers flying long distances that ignited new blazes faster than the brave men and women could respond.

Aerial tankers dispersed hundreds of thousands of litres of fire retardant to slow advancing fires. Other fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters also dropped huge amounts of water on hot spots.

At the state level, California provided personnel, equipment, and funding. Federally, the U.S. Forest Service contributed firefighting teams, financial aid, and other support.

Help from afar

The world is helping as well. Specialists from Australia and Mexico brought their wildfire management skills to help tackle the infernos. Assistance even came from as far away as Israel, Ukraine, and Japan. Canadian firefighters and water bomber crews, who are experienced working in challenging conditions and understand fire suppression strategies, have pitched in, too.

A terrible toll

Compounding the tragedy is the environmental damage. The fires have caused widespread destruction of ecosystems, habitats, and wildlife, searing forests and brushlands, displacing animals, and disrupting their natural habitats. Vast amounts of carbon dioxide were also released, further contributing to global warming.

The blazes have also filled the air with hazardous levels of fine **particulate** matter, creating a choking haze over the region. The poor air quality posed a significant health risk for vulnerable residents such as children, the elderly, and those with existing health issues.

The economic toll was huge. While the insurance cost of the devastation was estimated to be about $30 billion, other estimates put the total damage at over $250 billion, making this one of the costliest natural disasters in American history.

A challenging recovery

Immediate efforts focused on providing housing for those displaced, offering financial assistance to rebuild, and addressing health needs for those affected. Shelters were set up, and some companies donated thousands of free hotel nights as well.

Going forward, however, restoring communities after the fires won't be easy. California already faces a housing shortage—and building new homes takes time. Residents must also deal with toxic ash runoff and mudslides, which are likely to worsen when predicted rains arrive.

Infrastructure improvements will be key to a successful rebuild. Investments in fire-resistant housing, improved water storage systems, and modernized emergency response capabilities could help LA better weather future disasters.

Long-term recovery will depend on addressing climate change, one of the root causes of disasters like these. Public awareness campaigns are needed to help foster a culture of preparedness, encouraging residents to take proactive steps to protect their homes and communities.

California Governor Gavin Newsom was focussed on the present and the future. "We have got to be thinking three weeks, three months, three years ahead; at the same time, we're focusing on the immediacy, which is life, safety, and property," he stated.

Ultimately, the resilience of Angelinos will play a crucial role in the city's recovery. By coming together to support each other, rebuilding lost neighbourhoods, and advocating for meaningful change, they can ensure that LA emerges better prepared for future challenges. The wildfires may have left a scar, but they also offer an opportunity to rethink and rebuild. ★

How the Santa Ana winds fuel fires

The Santa Ana Winds (also known as Devil Winds) are strong, dry winds that can generate temperatures as high as 32 degrees Celsius. They occur in southern California, usually between October and March, and originate over the Great Basin, a desert region located mostly in Nevada and Utah. As air flows westward from this area, it descends into mountain passes and canyons, gaining speed and losing moisture through compression—a process called adiabatic heating.

Wind speeds during Santa Ana events can exceed 100 kilometres per hour in narrow passes and exposed areas. That makes these airstreams one of the most powerful natural forces in the region. Temperatures often rise by several degrees, and humidity levels can drop below 10 percent, creating extremely dry conditions.

The high-speed winds, combined with low humidity and dry fuel, have hampered firefighting efforts. The winds have intensified the existing blazes, driven destruction across vast areas, and increased risks for residents and emergency responders.

Definitions

particulates: very small particles of a substance, especially those that are produced when fuel is burned.

FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

– Los Angeles fires destroy lives, homes, and businesses

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe California's economy.

2. List at least five other important facts about California.

3. What happened in southern California in early January? Why was the situation so dangerous?

4. How many large fires were burning in late January? Which two were the most destructive?

5. Describe the efforts to fight and contain these fires.

6. What are the **Santa Ana Winds**? Where and when do they form?

7. Explain how these winds affect California.

8. How do these winds fuel wildfires?

FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

– Los Angeles fires destroy lives, homes, and businesses

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. Consider this quote from the article: ***"Long-term recovery will depend on addressing climate change, one of the root causes of disasters like these."***

What is your understanding of this passage? Do you agree or disagree with this passage? Give reasons to support your response.

2. Humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross provide relief for victims of disasters like the California wildfires. What types of support do you suppose victims might need during and after such a major disaster? Explain.

3. Before these devastating wildfires, a number of home insurance companies cancelled policies in high-risk disaster areas like California. Some of these homeowners, about 1 in 7, chose to get insurance through a government-sponsored plan, but many chose not to get insurance at all.

Financial analysts are predicting that there will be an enormous increase to property insurance in California given the estimated $250 billion it will take to rebuild after these devastating wildfires.

As you see it, will these wildfires affect where people choose to live in California? Give reasons to support your response.

INTERNATIONAL FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA – LOS ANGELES FIRES DESTROY LIVES, HOMES, AND BUSINESSES

QUESTIONS FOR ONLINE EXPLORATION

Note: The links below are listed at **www.lesplan.com/links** for easy access.

1. Learn more about the southern California wildfires and the destruction they've left behind:
https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/la-county-wildfires-week-outlook-1.7429649

What questions do you have?

---

2. Check out this timeline of the Eaton and Palisades wildfires in early January:
https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/california-wildfires/timeline-eaton-palisades-fires-la-county/3614940/

What similarities and differences between these two wildfires did you notice?

---

3. Explore these maps and charts that document the impact of the California wildfires:
https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/08/us/maps-visuals-los-angeles-wildfires-dg/index.html

What did you learn?

---

4. Watch this interview with Gavin Newsom, governor of California, as he describes these wildfires, the efforts to contain them, and the long road ahead:
https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=ekEMq5dVZbo [18:19]

What do you believe will be the biggest challenge for Governor Newsom?

---

5. Learn how the Santa Ana Winds contributed to these wildfires:
https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/winds-la-fires-1.7426103 [0:41] [3:38]
https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.6611202 [2:11]

What did you learn?

---

6. Hear from residents who have been affected by these wildfires:
https://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/hollywood-wildfire-los-angeles-1.7425919 [0:14] [1:47] [6:23]
https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.6607988 [0:52]

7. Learn how foreign countries are providing assistance to California:
https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/quebec-british-columbia-wildfires-los-angeles-1.7426060
https://www.factcheck.org/2025/01/canada-and-mexico-are-helping-to-fight-california-fires-contrary-to-meme/

---

8. Meet an LA couple who built a fire-resistant home that withstood these fires:
https://moneywise.com/news/top-stories/los-angeles-wildfires-pacific-palisades-fire-resistant-home

What did you learn?

INTERNATIONAL

FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

– LOS ANGELES FIRES DESTROY LIVES, HOMES, AND BUSINESSES

LITERACY FOCUS

1. Do you know what an ***inference*** is? Read the tip below to confirm your knowledge:

> Reporters (and authors) do not tell "all" in their articles. Important information about the 5Ws (and how) is included, but often information is left out. If every single detail were included the piece would be too long and readers would lose interest!
>
> Good readers use their prior knowledge and clues from the article to make a judgment or draw conclusions about what is written (or not written) or to anticipate what is to come. This is known as between-the-lines thinking or inferring – moving beyond what is stated in the text – to draw inferences (educated guesses) about the author's intent or message (what he or she meant but didn't say).

2. To help you draw inferences about the article, complete the **Drawing Inferences** organizer (p. 32). In the first column, list **important facts.** Aim for 2-3 facts in all. Next, record a **question(s)** for each fact – what does it make you wonder? Finally, write **two or three inferences** for each fact – what you think the fact means, why it's important, its impact (positive, negative or interesting). Try speculating **possible answers** to your question(s). For example:

Facts	Questions (*I wonder….?*)	Inferences (*I think…*)
Large areas of southern California were consumed by devastating wildfires that began in early January and were still burning at the end of the month. The situation there is extremely dangerous since southern California has experienced unusual drought-like conditions. Relentless flames, fueled by powerful Santa Ana Winds, high temperatures, and dry vegetation have consumed lives, homes, and businesses. Officials are still investigating how the fires started.	• Why have these wildfires lasted almost the entire month of January? • Why has California been experiencing unusual drought-like conditions? • What are Santa Ana Winds? Why are they so powerful? • How many people, homes, and businesses have been affected? • Why are officials still investigating how the fires started?	This is a really long time for wildfires to burn without being under control. California may need to change some of its policies around building materials, hiring firefighters, buying more equipment to fight fires, etc. Perhaps the fire wasn't started in nature. It will be a long process to rebuild people's lives and structures after this event.

3. Self-Assessment: After completing the organizer, answer the following question at the bottom of the page: *How did asking questions and making inferences help you to better understand the important facts in the article? Explain.*

FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

– Los Angeles fires destroy lives, homes, and businesses

DRAWING INFERENCES

Facts	Questions (*I wonder…?*)	Inferences (*I think…*)

How did asking questions and making inferences help you to better understand the important facts in the article?

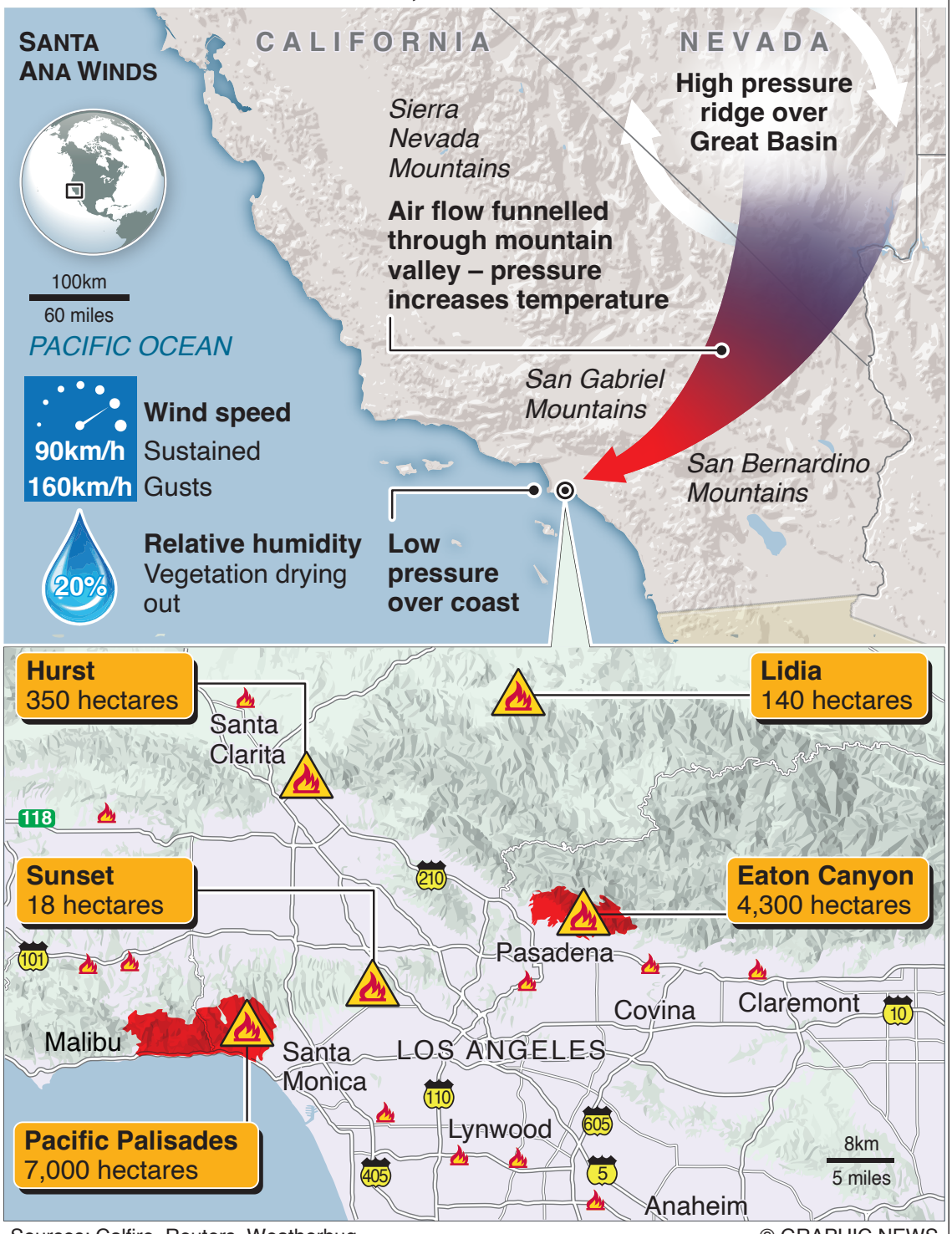
FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

– LOS ANGELES FIRES DESTROY LIVES, HOMES, AND BUSINESSES

INFOGRAPHIC

Santa Ana winds fuelling California wildfires

Wildfires fuelled by "life-threatening" Santa Ana winds – warm, dry air formed in the Great Basin Desert of America's southwest – are forcing the evacuation of over 100,000 residents in Southern California



Sources: Calfire, Reuters, Weatherbug

© GRAPHIC NEWS

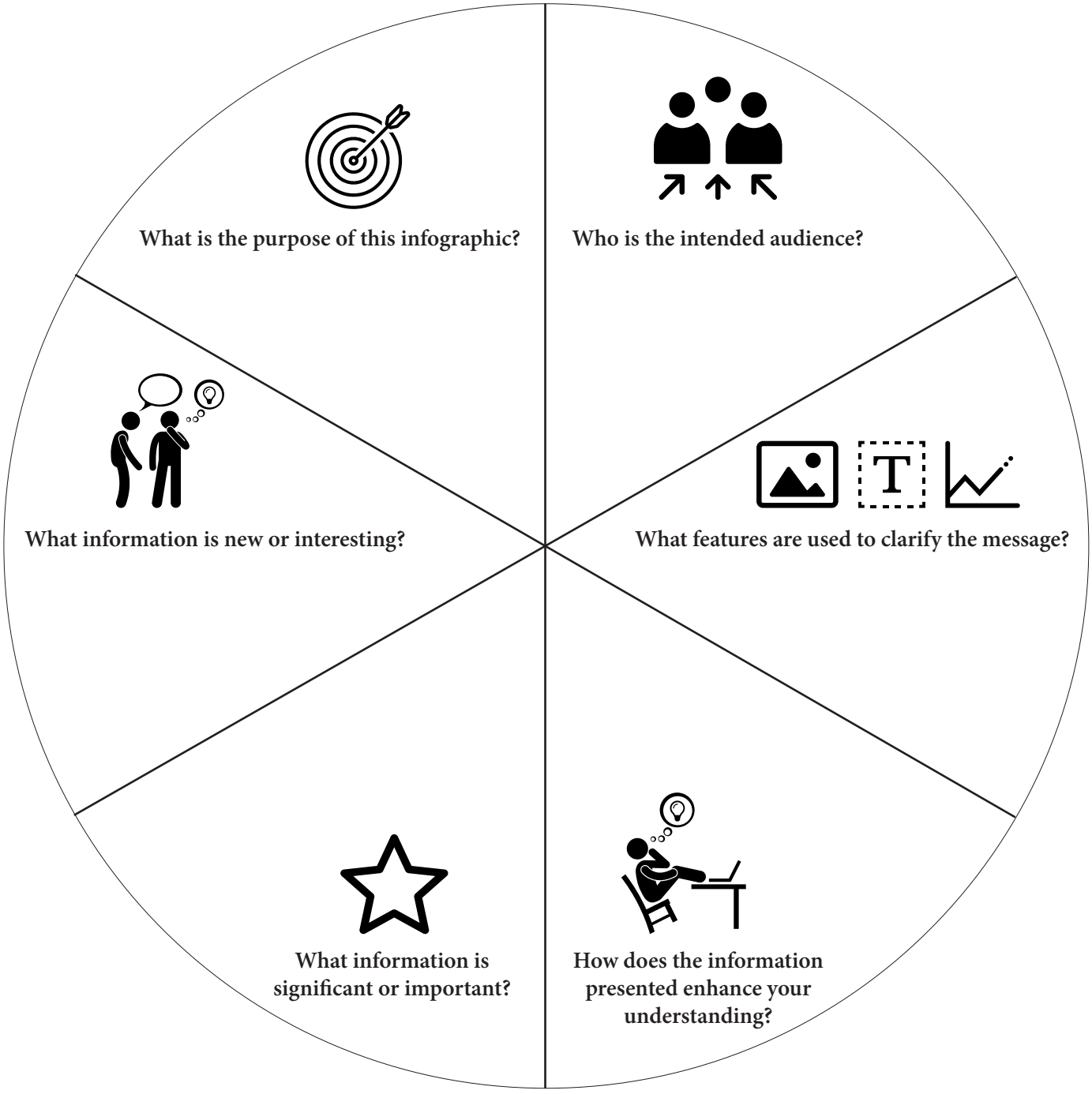
Santa Ana winds are formed when a high pressure ridge forms over the Great Basin and upper Mojave Desert which includes most of Nevada and Utah, in contrast to a low pressure area over the coast. Unlike the typical airflow at this time of year, a "kabatic" wind is generated which flows downhill, over the mountains towards Los Angeles.

The hot dry air is funnelled through the mountain valleys and canyons of the Sierra Nevada, San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains where the greater pressure increases the temperature. With a relative humidity of under 20%, and with typical wind speeds of 90km/h, gusting at up to 130km/h, the Santa Ana dries out vegetation so it burns more readily.

FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

– Los Angeles fires destroy lives, homes, and businesses

ANALYZING AN INFOGRAPHIC



What questions do you still have about the topic presented?

MAP ASSIGNMENT
CALIFORNIA

Complete this map assignment to better understand the article ***Fighting an Inferno in California***.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Obtain the required resources and read all the instructions before starting.

2. Colour your map **after** all labelling is completed.

3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink.

4. Work carefully and neatly.

Resources Required: pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

Part A Locate and label the following U.S. states in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

California (yellow)
Nevada (pink)

Part B Locate and label the capital of each state and underline each city name.

Part C Locate and label the following U.S. states in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

Oregon (red)
Utah (brown)
Idaho (purple)
Arizona (orange)

Part D Locate and label Mexico in CAPITAL letters and shade it green.

Part E Locate and label the following California cities:

Los Angeles
San Jose
Fresno
Oakland
Anaheim
San Diego
San Francisco
Long Beach
Bakersfield

Part F Draw and label the following rivers and shade them light blue:

Sacramento River
Colorado River
San Joaquin River

Part G Locate and label the following:

Cape Mendocino
Point Arguello
Point Sur

Part H Locate and label the following and shade all salt water dark blue:

Pacific Ocean
Gulf of California

Part I Complete your map with a frame, title and compass. ★

Flag of Los Angeles

California

0 75 150 225 300 Kilometres

FIGHTING AN INFERNO IN CALIFORNIA

– Los Angeles fires destroy lives, homes, and businesses

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

A. Write the letter that corresponds to the best answer on the line beside each question:

_____ 2. **California's economy is ranked as the _____ largest in the world.**

a) second
b) fourth
c) fifth
d) ninth
e) fourteenth

_____ 2. **Which California wildfire caused the most destruction?**

a) the Hollywood Fire
b) the Palisades Fire
c) the Eaton Fire
d) the Ventura Fire
e) the Hughes Fire

_____ 3. **In which two states do the Santa Ana winds form?**

a) Arizona and Colorado
b) Oregon and Idaho
c) Nevada and Utah
d) Wyoming and Montana
e) New Mexico and Texas

B. Mark the statements T (True) or F (False). If a statement is True, write one important fact to support it on the line below. If a statement is False, write the words that make it true on the line below.

_____ 4. **True** or **False?** The population of California is 50 million.

_____

_____ 5. **True** or **False?** California's GDP is less than Canada's total GDP.

_____

_____ 6. **True** or **False?** Gavin Newsom is the governor of California.

_____

C. Fill in the blanks to complete each sentence.

7. Southern California has experienced very unusual _____-like conditions that dried out vegetation.

8. A _____ warning is issued when extreme weather conditions create a high fire danger risk. (2)

9. Hazardous levels of _____ released into the air pose a health risk to some residents.

D. Respond to the following question in paragraph form. ***(Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.)***

10. As you see it, what is the significance of this story? Give reasons to support your response.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Resource page for Students

SETTING A PURPOSE BEFORE READING

There are a number of reasons we read, and setting a purpose for reading – knowing WHY we are reading – helps us to focus on important information and to better understand and remember what we read. It also helps us decide HOW we will read the text.

We don't read all texts for the same purposes or in the same way. For example, we read an instruction manual for a new Blu-ray player for a different reason than we read a book or a website. How we will read it – the strategies we use – will also differ. We are more likely to skim to find the information we need in a manual. Once we find what we need, we might read the instructions carefully to figure out what to do. Then, we stop reading, put the manual down, and carry out the steps. We may have to reread if we get confused or forget what to do.

This is a very different approach than the one we would use to read a book. When we read a book, we usually read cover-to-cover. We read carefully so we don't miss any details because we want to understand the whole story. Sometimes we make connections or create images in our minds as we read to help us better understand what we are reading. Depending on its length, we may put the book down before we finish reading it but we will start reading where we left off.

Good readers are flexible and responsive. This means that they match their reading strategies to their purpose for reading. What types of text do you read? Why do you read them? What strategies do you use to read each of these texts? The chart below is a summary of the main purposes for reading and what each entails.

Purpose for reading	What it looks like
For enjoyment	Usually student-selected. Allows students to choose a variety of genres and forms. Allows students to pursue what interests them while developing reading skills.
To experience something new	Students make connections between their personal experiences and those of people around the world.
To learn more about themselves and others	Students reflect on what they've read and express opinions and perspectives. Students develop a sense of their personal values and make sense of the world around them.
To gain information	Students use the features of informational texts to gather, analyse and apply what they've learned.
To understand issues	Students develop a sense of perspective. Students pose questions, acknowledge other points of view, critique the opinions presented and support opinions with evidence.
To appreciate writing	Students respond to text in ways other than written answers to apply what they've learned in new contexts.
To appreciate use of media to communicate	Students respond to a variety of media formats (e.g., infographics, political cartoons, videos, etc.) and react to how the format supports the meaning of the message.

* Chart adapted from: A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4-6, p. 11.

Resource Page for Teachers

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

This rubric may be helpful in providing students with formative, strength-based feedback and/or assessing students' responses holistically.

	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Extending
Supports thinking	Answers or reflections are brief and include obvious facts/details/ evidence.	Answers or reflections are general and supported with some relevant facts/details/ evidence.	Answers or reflections are clearly supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence.	Answers or reflections are insightful and supported with specific, relevant facts/ details/evidence.
Shows understanding	Responses show a basic understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are thoughtful and show a general understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are thoughtful and show a complete understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are insightful and show a deep understanding the text, topic, issue or message. May synthesize ideas or explain the 'so what'.
Thinks critically	Makes straightforward connections or inferences. Focuses on retelling.	Makes logical connections to self (T:S) and/ or background knowledge (T:S). Inferences are logical.	Makes meaningful connections to self. Considers ideas between texts (T:T). Inferences are plausible.	Makes powerful connections that go between texts and/or beyond the text (T:W). Inferences are plausible and insightful.

Current Events, Clearly Explained

Students want to know what's happening in their world –
but the news can be difficult and time-consuming to teach.

WE HAVE THE SOLUTION. (Five, actually.)

The Canadian Reader

PDF/Word resource

- ✓ Clearly written, leveled Canadian current events articles
- ✓ Literacy-based lesson plans
- ✓ Engaging, original illustrations
- ✓ Comics
- ✓ Map assignments

Product details: 8 issues. 38 pages. Available in English and in French for grades 3 and up (1 reading level).

What in the World?

- ✓ **PDF/Word** resource
- ✓ National and international news stories
- ✓ Key vocabulary
- ✓ Background information
- ✓ Varied assignments that build content-area knowledge and enhance critical thinking
- ✓ Maps and illustrations

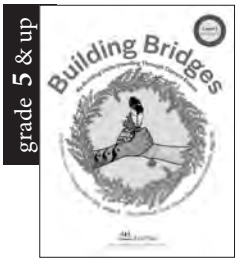
Product details: 8 issues. 60 pages. Available in English and in French, and in 2 reading levels, for grades 5 and up.

Currents4Kids.com
News4Youth.com

- ✓ **Online** and interactive
- ✓ Weekly
- ✓ Auto-graded quizzes
- ✓ Comment page for students to respond to the stories
- ✓ Links to relevant articles, resources, maps, photos and videos
- ✓ Extension activities

Product details: 40 issues. **One subscription** allows all teachers and students access from any Internet-connected device at any time. Available in English and in French. *Currents4Kids/Infos-Jeunes*: Grades 3 and up (1 reading level). *News4Youth/Infos-Ados*: Grades 5 and up (3 reading levels).

Building Bridges



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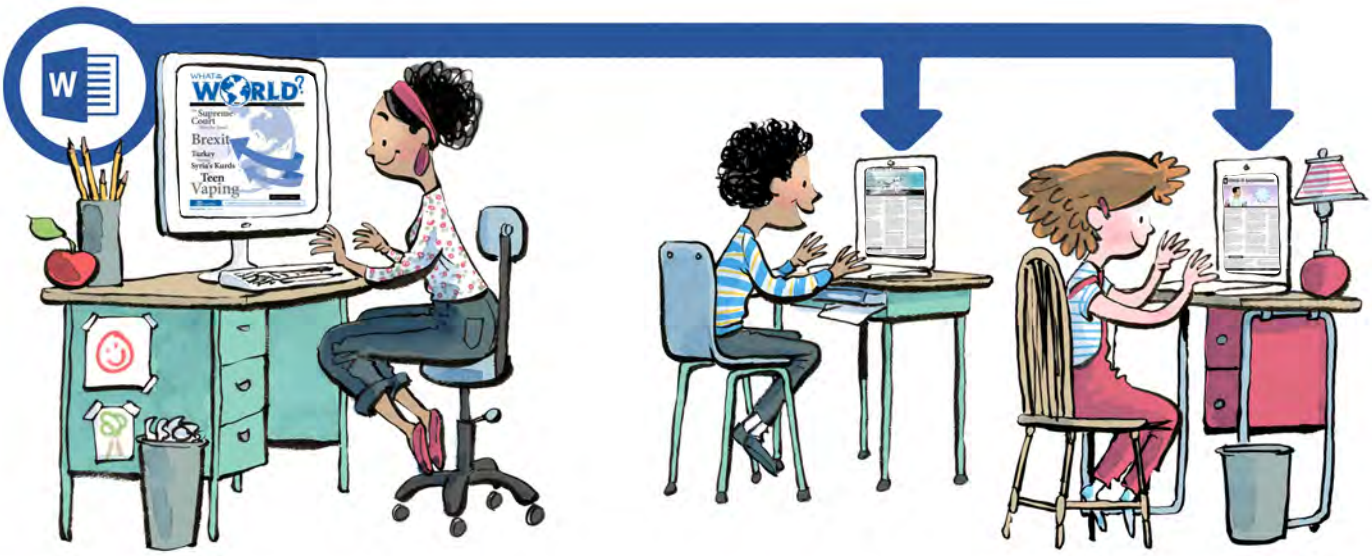

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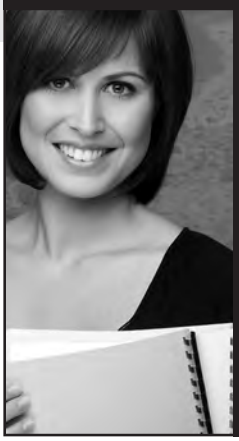

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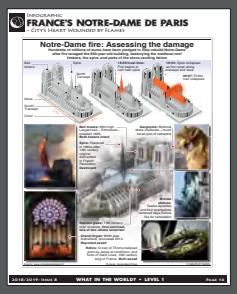

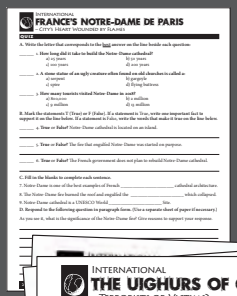

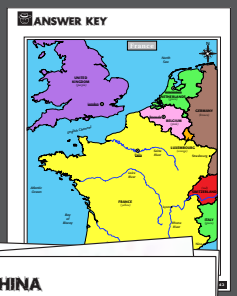

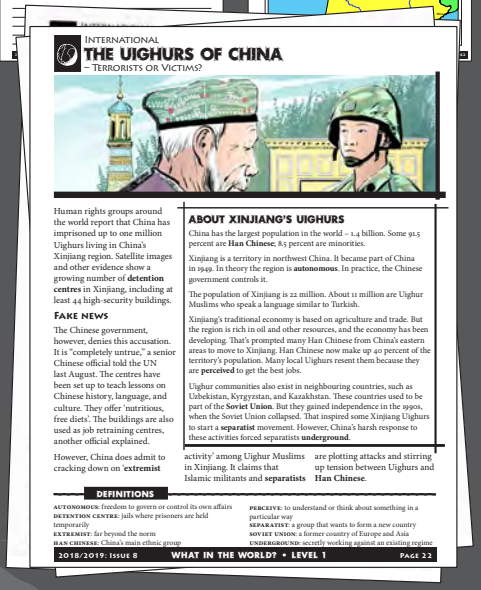

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