

Lesson Plan: Rain-rich, faucet-famine: The irony of Boulder Creek's ongoing water woes



Reading comprehension

Grade Level: 9-12

Lesson time: 30 minutes

Overview

Lookout's News Quizzes are a great way to get students interested in local news in an easy and quick way. These quizzes test reading comprehension while getting students more informed on issues and happenings in the community.

How best to use this in your classroom

Quizzes are sorted by date and headline and updated frequently. Choose an article related to one of your current teachings. Have students read the article, answer the 10 questions and then share any observations. This is a great reading comprehension and media literacy activity. It could also be a great way to give students extra credit opportunities in your class, a lesson to share when you have a substitute teacher and/or a great icebreaker to connect students with local issues.

LESSON PLAN

- Share this article with your students and have them read it. This can be assigned as homework or done in class (10 min)

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- Share the questions with your class and have them answer the questions, either individually or in small groups. Find our Questions doc for a printable or shareable document (10 min)
- Using the answer key, you can either grade this quiz or have a class discussion around it (10 min)

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Read through this article and answer the questions below.

Shandra Hunt of Hillhouse Farm says the problems she's endured through Big Basin Water Company have cost her half of her typical business over the past year.

Question 1: Which utility company originally serviced Boulder Creek and what problems did customers have to deal with?

-Big Basin Water Company. Customers did not know if water would come out of the faucet, having to boil water often, poor communication with consumers, brown water, and water outages.

Question 2: What caused the water treatment center and utility's offices to be inoperable?

-The CZU fire.

Question 3: What company is now servicing the Boulder Creek area?

-Law firm, Irvine-based Silver & Wright LLP

Question 4: Before the CZU fire, what was Big Basin's main water source? What was the main source after the fire?

-Before: "Surface water from the San Lorenzo River watershed, thanks to a treatment plant that filtered river water into drinking water" After: "In the years since, the utility depended entirely on a single emergency well, known as Well #4."

Question 5: Why has Well #4 been unreliable and what are the effects of its unreliability?

-Well #4 has been unreliable because the low production leads to diminishing water pressure. This led to more regular outages and boil notices. And, "without adequate pressure, water struggles to climb and touch the farthest reaches of the system."

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Question 6: How much money did the new company servicing the Boulder Creek area spend leading up to the November 2nd community meeting? What was the money used for?

-They spent nearly \$240,000 from a state grant to "truck in outside water for consumers"

Question 7: Give an example of an action a resident of the Boulder Creek area did to maintain their water supply.

-"Bradley Brown spent \$8,000 rigging a new 5,000-gallon water tank on the property to create a buffer during outages, as well as thousands of dollars on a water pump"

-"During that two-week outage in August, Brown spent another \$500 to truck in water -just to keep the winery operational."

-"One resident told me they put a 5,000-gallon tank on their property to buffer against the outages"

-"Another said they spent \$10,000 on a high-tech filtration system that uses reverse osmosis and ultraviolet treatment (similar technology is used in utility-scale filtration systems) to guard against the unpredictability of boil-water notices."

-Or "The four 250-gallon water tanks Shandra Hunt installed on her property at Hillhouse Farm. She estimated the cost to be \$3,000 to \$5,000."

-"At Hillhouse Farm, Hunt installed four 250-gallon water tanks."

Question 8: Give an example of how the lack of water is affecting local businesses.

-Hillhouse Farm had to cut certain foods they usually sell and "the outages throughout the summer cut her small farm's production in half."

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Question 9: What are your thoughts on the, "pay-what-you-can model," that Shandra Hunt's Hillhouse Farm instituted even when the lack of water makes them less productive? Why?

-Opinion-based, answers could mention: the "pay-what-you-can model," cost of living, food prices, profit, or lack of profit. And their opinion, what they think is best, and a reason.

Question 10: Should the company servicing the Boulder Creek area pay reimbursements to the people who set up their own method of water supply? Why or why not?

-Opinion-based, answers should mention: their opinion, what they think is best, and a reason.

Open Ended: Do you think the company servicing the Boulder Creek area should subsidize the companies being affected by their spotty water services?

-Opinion-based, answers should mention: their opinion, what they think is best, and a reason.