

Covering Loss: Journalism Ethics and Maritime Remembrance: teacher guide

Teacher guide. Keep separate from student materials.

Grade band	College and adult education
Subjects	Journalism, Media Ethics, History
Towns	Gloucester, Rockport, Essex, Manchester-by-the-Sea
Duration	One 90-minute session (sequence totals 90 minutes)
Prerequisites	Participants have read news stories critically and can tell a fact from an opinion.; No reporting experience is needed.
Essential question	How do we tell the story of people lost at sea truthfully and with care for those they left behind?
Version	1.0, 2026-10-05
Review status	Draft: awaiting classroom teacher review
Lesson ID	CAC - LES - 012

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Participants will be able to identify at least eight ethical or factual problems in a draft remembrance paragraph and explain why each matters.
- Participants will be able to rewrite a remembrance paragraph that uses plain, accurate language, verified names and roles and correct date precision.
- Participants will be able to write one sentence that reports a death honestly when sources conflict, attributing each version.
- Participants will be able to apply rules for privacy, image rights and AI-generated images to realistic scenarios involving historical and recent losses.
- Participants will be able to write a correction line that states what was wrong and what is right without hiding the error.

Massachusetts curriculum frameworks

No Massachusetts curriculum framework governs college courses. Massachusetts adult education programs align to the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education, but specific codes are not cited here because the official document could not be checked. As a reference point only, the session draws on skills named in the high

school News/Media Literacy standards (conventions journalists use to check facts; assertion versus verification); those are not college or adult standards.

Standards checked against the official Massachusetts DESE framework documents on Oct. 5, 2026.

Materials

- Participant handout with readings R1 to R4 and activities A1 to A4
- Highlighters or pens in two styles (for example, underline and circle) for marking the practice paragraph
- Optional: projector to show the Lamson page images on archive.org

Setup

Read the whole teacher section first, including the note that the practice paragraph in R3 is invented. Print the handout. Prepare to name the sensitivity at the start: some participants may have lost someone at sea or recently. Have the scenario cards for A3 cut apart or numbered so each table gets two. Be ready to share the Cape Ann Current standards page (<https://capeanncurrent.com/standards/>) during the corrections segment.

Teaching sequence

10 minutes Opening: How did they write about loss in 1895?

Teacher: Name the topic's weight and invite anyone to step out at any time. Read R1 Part A aloud. Ask: "What does this writer do well? What would a reader today question?" Point to the note about the two widows.

Students: Discuss in pairs and record one strength and one concern.

15 minutes When sources disagree: the Gallatin

Teacher: Walk through R2. Ask tables to write one or two sentences about how the carpenter died that a family member, a historian and a careful editor would all accept. Share two drafts.

Students: Complete Activity A2.

30 minutes Critique and rewrite

Teacher: Tell participants that the paragraph in R3 is invented for practice and the vessel, town and people do not exist. Have them mark problems first, alone, for 10 minutes; then compare in pairs for 5; then rewrite for 15 using only the practice source notes.

Students: Complete Activity A1: mark the problems, then rewrite.

15 minutes Privacy, images and recent losses

Teacher: Give each table two scenario cards from A3. Ask for a decision, the rule behind it and who else they would consult.

Students: Discuss the cards and report one decision to the room.

12 minutes Corrections

Teacher: Read the corrections lines in R4. Show how Cape Ann Current adds a dated correction line. Assign A4.

Students: Write two correction lines and trade with a partner for feedback.

8 minutes Wrap up and assessment

Teacher: Ask each table for the one rule they would post above a newsroom desk. Explain the assessment.

Students: Share a rule and note the assessment task.

Background for the teacher

The paragraph and source notes in R3 are invented for practice. The schooner Thimble Light, the town of Port Alder and every person named (Ivar Halvorsen, Peter Marrow, Tom Quill, Walter Penhallow and Ellen Ostrander) are fictional; the names were checked against the Gloucester Lost at Sea register to make sure no vessel of that name appears there. Make this clear to participants before they start, and do not let the paragraph circulate outside the class without its label. Everything else in the session is real. Lamson's 1895 history (R1) is public domain; its account of the Gallatin differs from the official record, which is the basis of R2. The muster roll and the Treasury letter of Jan. 26, 1892, printed by Congress in 1900, identify the man who died as J. Jacobson, the carpenter, killed by the falling smokestack. Same-day wire reports say the stack killed him instantly and carried his body overboard. Lamson, three years later, calls him "one seaman, a Dane" who drowned. Only some newspapers give the first name Jacob, and only Lamson gives a nationality. No record found shows an inquest or a recovered body. Cape Ann Current's own remembrance story handles this by naming him as the muster roll does, stating that he was the carpenter and saying plainly that the records differ on whether he was killed by the blow or drowned.

Handling sensitive topics

This session is about death and grief. Say so at the start, invite participants to step out at any time and avoid asking anyone to share personal losses. The practice paragraph deliberately includes sensational language and a recent loss in a fictional family; remind participants it is invented. Keep the discussion of the real Gallatin carpenter brief and respectful, and do not speculate about his injuries or his final moments. If a participant has lost someone at sea, especially recently, let them choose a different scenario card.

Discussion prompts

- Is a remembrance story ever finished? What should a newsroom do when a family shares new information years later?
- Lamson named two living widows in 1895. Would you name living relatives today in a story about a loss 100 years ago? 10 years ago?
- When does a dramatic word become inaccurate, not just unkind?
- Who owns a family's story: the family, the community or the historical record?
- What should a reader be able to see in a story to check it for themselves?

Formative checks

- After the opening, each pair names one strength and one concern in Lamson's writing.
- During A1, check that each marked problem has a reason, not just a mark.
- Each table reports one scenario decision and the rule behind it.
- Partners check each other's correction lines for what was wrong, what is right and the date.

Assessment

Submit three items. Part 1 (10 points): your final rewrite of the practice headline and paragraph, with a numbered list of at least eight problems you fixed and why. Part 2 (5 points): your sentence about the Gallatin carpenter's death, with a short note explaining each choice. Part 3 (10 points): a one-page newsroom policy for anniversary and memorial stories covering language, names and roles, dates, conflicting sources, families and recent losses, images and corrections.

Points: 25

Answer guidance

A1

- Headline: 'Doomed' is sensational; 'victims' is wrong for survivors and implies something no source documents.
- 'One hundred years ago tonight, on ... March 3': the register gives only March 1926 and the newspaper says the gale of March 3 and 4. The day is not known.
- 'Plunged to the bottom with all hands': no one saw her sink, and two crew members survived, so 'all hands' is false.
- 'Eleven' and 'all twelve' conflict; the crew was 12, of whom 10 were lost.
- 'Brave,' 'watery graves,' 'horrific final moments' and 'the terror the men must have felt' are drama and speculation about feelings.
- 'Cook and captain Peter Marrow' confuses roles: Marrow was the cook; Ivar Halvorsen was the captain.
- Survivors are counted as victims; they should be named as survivors.
- 'Port Alder natives': the register shows the captain was born in Norway, the cook in Nova Scotia and only 3 of the other 10 in Port Alder. Residence, birthplace and homeport are different things.
- 'Halvorsen' and 'Halverson' in one paragraph; two contemporary sources agree on Halvorsen.
- 'Foolishly ignored storm warnings, according to people in town' and 'everyone knew the old boat was unsafe' are unattributed, unverified blame of a dead man; no source gives a cause.
- The Facebook post was quoted without contact or consent, and it exposes a recent loss in the family. Remove it or contact her first and respect her wishes.
- The image is AI-generated and presented as a photo of the real event; it must not run. No real photo is known.

- 'They will never be forgotten' is a cliché; optional fix.
- A model rewrite: 'Schooner Thimble Light remembered 100 years after its loss. PORT ALDER. In March 1926 the schooner Thimble Light did not return from the fishing grounds. Ten of the 12 men aboard were lost, including Capt. Ivar Halvorsen and the cook, Peter Marrow. Two crew members, Tom Quill and Walter Penhallow, were picked up by a passing steamer. A newspaper at the time said the schooner was believed lost in the gale of March 3 and 4; the exact day is not recorded.' Any version that uses only the notes and fixes the problems earns full credit.

A2

- Agree: a man died, struck by the falling smokestack. Differ: name (J. Jacobson; Jacob Jacobson in some papers; unnamed in Lamson), role (carpenter in official records and wire reports; seaman in Lamson), nationality (only Lamson says Dane), cause (killed by the blow in official and news records; drowned in Lamson).
- The muster roll and Treasury letter are official and close in time, and the wire reports are same-day. That settles his role and supports the cause, but no record of an inquest or a recovered body exists, so whether he was killed instantly or drowned cannot be proved.
- Model sentence: 'The ship's carpenter, listed in the official muster roll as J. Jacobson, died when the smokestack fell as the crew lowered the boats. The Treasury Department reported that he was killed by the falling stack; Manchester's 1895 town history says he was knocked into the water and drowned.'
- Do not call him a Dane or Jacob as fact; both rest on limited sources. They may be mentioned as what one source says, if useful.

A3

- Card 1: Family ownership of a print is not the same as copyright. Ask about the photographer and age; a photo published before 1931 or with no known restrictions may be usable. Credit as the family wishes and label it as a family photo.
- Card 2: Decline. AI images must not show real events, people or places, and Cape Ann Current's standards forbid it.
- Card 3: Do not publish the name until it is officially released or confirmed with the family. Verify through official sources; do not repeat social media.
- Card 4: Do not use it. A museum image needs permission; link to the museum's record instead if appropriate.
- Card 5: Do not alter the historical quotation silently. Consider whether the detail was needed; if it was not, it can be removed with an editor's note, or context can be added. Weigh the family's request seriously.

- Card 6: Honor the request in most cases, especially for a recent loss; discuss with an editor and do not publish material a grieving source withdraws unless there is an overriding public interest.
- Card 7: Avoid, or caption clearly as a representative vessel photographed about 30 years later, never as the vessel itself.
- Card 8: Report both spellings and the sources; do not choose silently. Note the memorial spelling as how the community records the name.

A4

- Model: 'Correction, Oct. 12, 2026: An earlier version of this story called J. Jacobson a seaman and said he drowned. The official muster roll lists him as the ship's carpenter, and the Treasury Department reported he was killed by the falling smokestack; a later town history says he drowned.'
- Model: 'Correction, Oct. 12, 2026: An earlier version of this story said the crew members were born in Gloucester. The city's Lost at Sea register records all 10 as born in Nova Scotia.'

Rubric

Criterion	4	3	2	1
Finding problems	Identifies ten or more distinct problems with accurate reasons, including privacy and image issues.	Identifies eight or nine problems with accurate reasons.	Identifies five to seven problems or gives weak reasons.	Identifies fewer than five problems.
Rewrite	Uses only supported facts, correct roles, places and date precision, plain language, and no private or AI material.	Mostly accurate with one minor slip.	Several unsupported claims or dramatic words remain.	Repeats most of the original problems.
Handling conflicting sources	Attributes each version clearly, states what is known and unknown, and avoids unsupported details.	Attributes versions with a minor gap.	Chooses one version without saying the records differ.	Adds unsupported details or misstates the record.
Policy	Specific, usable rules for all seven areas, including recent losses and corrections.	Covers at least six areas with specifics.	General rules or several areas missing.	No usable policy.

Differentiation

Multilingual learners

- Provide a glossary: attribute, verify, sensational, consent, homeport, correction.
- Let participants mark problems first in a shared language with a partner, then rewrite in English.
- Offer sentence frames for the rewrite: 'In [month and year], the [vessel] ...' and 'According to [source], ...'

Students with disabilities

- Provide the practice paragraph in large print or a screen-reader-friendly file; allow marking with symbols or a list instead of highlighting.
- Let participants dictate the rewrite or submit it as audio with a typed problem list.
- Avoid color-coded marking; use underline and circle, or numbered notes.

Advanced learners

- Compare Cape Ann Current's published remembrance of the Gallatin with this session's sources and evaluate how it handles the conflict.
- Draft a family outreach script for a reporter contacting relatives before a 100th anniversary story.
- Research how the City of Gloucester accepts corrections to its Lost at Sea register and compare it with a newsroom's corrections policy.

Print, low-bandwidth and extension options

Print: Print the handout. The session runs fully on paper.

Low bandwidth: No internet is needed. Read the Cape Ann Current standards quotations from R4 instead of showing the page.

Extensions:

- Write a full 400-word anniversary story about the Vesper using only Lamson's public domain account, and list what you would still need to verify.
- Interview a local memorial organizer about how they decide what names to include.
- Draft a newsroom checklist for publishing a photo with a historical story.

Google Classroom: ready to paste

Assignment title: Covering Loss: Rewrite and Newsroom Policy

Student instructions:

Open your copy of the handout. During the session, mark the invented practice paragraph, rewrite it with a partner, write the Gallatin sentence and the correction lines, and discuss the scenario cards. Then submit the three parts described in the assessment section.

Suggested points: 25

Attach:

- **student-handout.docx:** Make a copy for each student

- **slides.pptx:** Students can view file

Never attach the teacher guide to student work. See [how to use this lesson in Google Classroom](#).

Citations and rights

- D. F. Lamson, History of the Town of Manchester, Essex County, Massachusetts, 1645-1895 (1895), pages 110 and 358. <https://archive.org/details/historyoftownofm00lams>. Public domain (published 1895)
- U.S. House of Representatives, Report No. 1830, 56th Congress, Sufferers by Wreck of Revenue Cutter Gallatin (1900). https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/SERIALSET-04027_00_00-075-1830-0000. Public domain (U.S. federal government work)
- "Wreck of a Cutter," Morning Journal and Courier (New Haven, Conn.), Jan. 7, 1892, page 3. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn82015483/1892-01-07/ed-1/?sp=3>. Public domain (published 1892); Library of Congress, Chronicling America
- Pawtucket Tribune and Waterbury Evening Democrat, Jan. 7, 1892 (first name reports, from Cape Ann Current's checked research notes). <https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn92064071/1892-01-07/ed-1/?sp=1>. Public domain (published 1892); Library of Congress, Chronicling America
- Society of Professional Journalists, Ethics Committee Position Papers: Reporting on Grief, Tragedy and Victims. <https://www.spj.org/spj-ethics-committee-position-papers-reporting-on-grief-tragedy-and-victims/>. Copyrighted; summarized in our own words, not quoted
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