

Teaching News Is Elementary

November 11, 2016

Each week, this lesson will share some classroom activity ideas that use the newspaper or other NIE resources. You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a class discussion.

Materials you will need for this lesson: The Seattle Times e-Edition, pencil and paper, online access, dictionary

Additional resources: 'Homes Are Habitats Too': http://nie.seattletimes.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2016/10/SeattleAnimalShelter_10-3-16_Tab2016_final.pdf

Article: "County's letter on pets stirs growls"

Page: News, A1

Date: Wednesday, November 2, 2016

Pre- Reading Discussion Questions:

Do you have a pet? Is your pet licensed? Why is it important to license your pet?

Vocabulary:

Read the following sentences and see if you can figure out the definition of the word based on context.

"Trevor Rain-Water, of Shoreline, didn't like the "almost **accusatory**" tone of a letter he received from Regional Animal Services of King County reminding him of the penalty for not licensing pets."

Accusatory: accusing or blaming someone

"She found the letter **peculiar**."

Peculiar: unusual and strange

"Here's what that means: The county hired a Seattle mailing company named Lacy & Par, which **retrieved** a list of **prospective** pet owners from another data firm."

"You can essentially buy a list for any kind of **demographic**."

Demographic: societies, or groups defined by criteria such as education, nationality, religion, and ethnicity

"Zhang said online browsing, loyalty-card programs, magazine subscriptions and charitable donations are among **myriad** sources of this marketing data."

Myriad: a very great or indefinitely great number of persons or things

Journal Writing Prompts:

Make a list of things that define your demographic. Are you a pet owner? Are you a student? What other things define you?

Discussion Questions:

“Here’s what that means: The county hired a Seattle mailing company named Lacy & Par, which retrieved a list of prospective pet owners from another data firm.

The county took that list of possible pet owners, compared it against an internal database of licensed pets, and — voilà! —had a list of Fido lovers who might be stiffing the county. Out went the letters.”

Why do some people disagree with being contacted about licensing their pets? Do you think that it is a violation of privacy to use information for marketing purposes? How about to encourage people to register their pets? Do you think that there are some cases of privacy violation in which the “ends justify the means”? Is this one?

Small Group Discussion and Activity:

A friendlier tone would help, too, Zhang said. RASKC explained the value of licensing pets in the letter — the licensing fees fund animal shelters and provide medical services for sick or injured pets, and first-time lost pets registered with the county are returned to your home for free — but readers like Rain-Water were initially struck by the “almost accusatory” tone.

Read through the Newspapers In Education supplement, “Homes are Habitats too” to learn more about why registering your pet is important. Write your own letter to people explaining why it is important for them to register their pets. Why is it important? What kind of tone do you use? Why did you choose this tone?