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The  
**Sift**®



# Dig Deeper

November 1, 2021

## EDUCATOR GUIDE KEY AND STUDENT PAGES FOR News Goggles

Watchdog journalism: How can journalists shine a light on issues of public importance?

In this document you'll find:

- **Teacher directions for this lesson.**
- **Editable student pages.**
- **An answer key for the student pages.**

Teacher directions:

1. **Make sure each student has a copy of the [featured article](#). Students will need it as they work through the viewing guide.**  
Note: Your students should read or skim the entire article first to get a general sense of what it's about before digging deeper into questions in the viewing guide.
2. **Distribute student copies of the viewing guide in this document (pages 2-5).**
3. **Conclusion:** Have students use their notes from this viewing guide to brainstorm a response to the essential lesson question. Then, discuss as a class. To extend this question further, have students develop their thoughts in several paragraphs or an essay.



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## News Goggles

### Watchdog journalism: How can journalists shine a light on issues of public importance?

**Featured Video:** [“News Goggles: Emily Hoerner, Chicago Tribune.”](#)

**Featured Text:** [“Everybody needs access to bathrooms. Chicago doesn’t provide nearly enough of them.”](#) (Emily Hoerner, Chicago Tribune).

**Directions:**

1. Read the featured text.
2. Watch the featured video, using this viewing guide to take notes about the watchdog role of the press and the process of reporting an investigative piece.
3. Determine how journalists can shine a light on issues of public importance.



*Resource Connection Tip: Complete [Democracy’s Watchdog](#) lesson to learn about the importance of the press acting as a watchdog and explore five iconic examples of investigative journalism.*

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#### PART A: Introduction to Emily Hoerner and this story

##### Determining the story

How did Hoerner come across this story topic? What’s the story behind the story?

Why did Hoerner want to write this piece? What does she mean by “public service journalism?”

- \* **public records request:** formally requesting information from a government agency that is available to anyone
- \* **encampments:** temporary places to live outside, usually with tents or tarps

**PART B: The reporting process**

<b>How did Hoerner investigate this story?</b>	
How did Hoerner find out where free public bathrooms were in Chicago?	Pause the video and add your reaction to/thoughts about this approach.
How did Hoerner find out about ticketing?	Pause the video and find a quote from the article that relates to what Hoerner found. Write it here.
What is your reaction to Hoerner’s process? Did it surprise you how long it took her to write this piece and what was required?	
<b>Craft</b>	
Why did Hoerner begin her article by painting a short scene, or anecdote, related to the topic?	
Why does Hoerner write, “Yet Chicago’s government has failed to provide the public with easy, consistent access to free toilets, and scant information is available about many that do exist”?	



## Standards of quality journalism

Why was it important to reach out to the mayor's office and other government agencies?

What role do public records play in investigative journalism?

According to Hoerner, what is the fact-checking and verification process like for an investigation of this type?

### **Final thoughts: Service journalism and watchdog reporting**

As part of Hoerner's reporting, she also published a [searchable map](#) of public restrooms and a foldable flier. How are these a service to the public?

Why is the watchdog role of journalists important?



**PART D: The article**

<b>Revisit the featured article. Find two parts for which you have additional insight. Write or summarize them below.</b>	
Excerpt #1:	What new insight do you have for this part since viewing "News Goggles?"
Excerpt #2:	What new insight do you have for this part since viewing "News Goggles?"



**Conclusion: How can journalists shine a light on issues of public importance? Try to include details about the watchdog role of the press in your response.**

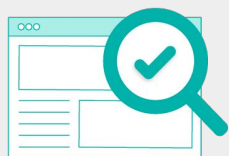


**Extend: Compare these [notable investigative journalism cases](#) throughout history with the featured reading. How are they similar and different from Hoerner's investigation?**



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## News Goggles KEY

### Watchdog journalism: How can journalists shine a light on issues of public importance?

**Featured Video:** [“News Goggles: Emily Hoerner, Chicago Tribune.”](#)

**Featured Text:** [“Everybody needs access to bathrooms. Chicago doesn’t provide nearly enough of them.”](#) (Emily Hoerner, Chicago Tribune).

**Directions:**

1. Read the featured text.
2. Watch the featured video, using this viewing guide to take notes about the watchdog role of the press and the process of writing a watchdog piece..
3. Determine how journalists can shine a light on issues of public importance.



*Resource Connection Tip: Complete [Democracy’s Watchdog](#) lesson to learn about the importance of the press acting as a watchdog and explore five iconic examples of investigative journalism.*

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#### PART A: Introduction to Emily Hoerner and this story

Determining the story
<p>How did Hoerner come across this story topic? What’s the story behind the story?</p> <p>Hoerner had been thinking about public restroom access amid citywide lockdowns during the pandemic and wondered about it again when she joined the Chicago Tribune. She examined research about cities with a lot of homelessness and how that compared with publicly available restrooms and noticed Chicago wasn’t in the study. She wanted to know where the public restrooms are in Chicago and if there are enough of them to meet the needs of the people in the city.</p> <p>Why did Hoerner want to write this piece? What does she mean by “public service journalism?”</p> <p>She wanted to make this important information accessible to the public. Providing meaningful information to readers is one way that journalism can serve the public.</p>

\* public records request: an act of filing for public information

\*encampments: places where groups of homeless people live “on the streets”

## PART B: The reporting process

How did Hoerner write this story?	
<p>How did Hoerner find out where free public bathrooms were in Chicago?</p> <p>She filed public records requests with different agencies that might operate and maintain public restrooms in the city.</p>	<p>Pause the video and add your reaction to/thoughts about this approach.</p> <p>Answers will vary.</p>
<p>How did Hoerner find out about ticketing?</p> <p>She filed public records requests related to ticketing.</p>	<p>Pause the video and find a quote from the article that relates to what Hoerner found. Write it here.</p> <p>Answers will vary.</p>
<p>What is your reaction to Hoerner’s process? Did it surprise you how long it took her to write this piece and what was required?</p> <p>Answers will vary. It took Hoerner a couple of months to complete her story.</p>	
Craft	
<p>Why did Hoerner begin her article by painting a short scene, or anecdote, related to the topic?</p> <p>She had met Marcus Carter, who had experienced homelessness on and off over the past 13 years. He immediately knew of various locations and information about these locations, such as hours of operation. He was knowledgeable, and his story stuck with her. His experience made the human impact of this issue clear.</p>	
<p>Why does Hoerner write, “Yet Chicago’s government has failed to provide the public with easy, consistent access to free toilets, and scant information is available about many that do exist?”</p> <p>Hoerner says that’s the clear takeaway. People wanted information about where to go, but the information wasn’t available. It’s the big-picture finding.</p>	



## Standards of quality journalism

Why was it important to reach out to the mayor's office and other government agencies?

A key aspiration in quality newsrooms is making sure a story is fair. This includes giving subjects a chance to share their points of view or respond to any assertions or allegations about them. Hoerner didn't want to surprise anyone. The mayor's office and other public officials might be able to tell reporters something they didn't know. Contacting these people allows them to respond.

What role do public records play in investigative journalism?

Public records are often important in investigations, but some aren't available online or through Googling, which is why journalists may file records requests. This includes court records, ticketing information or arrest information.

According to Hoerner, what is the fact-checking and verification process like for an investigation of this type?

It's about going through every word and line and making sure everything is supported by a journalist's reporting. If a reporter has questions about what a source has said, fact-checking sometimes involves calling back sources and making sure they have kept their words in context. It can also involve re-listening to audio-recorded interviews to double check wording as well as fact-checking and spot-checking data work. It's time intensive. It really means going through a story word by word and making sure it's solid and that no errors have been made along the way.

## Final thoughts: Service journalism and watchdog reporting

As part of Hoerner's reporting, she also published a [searchable map](#) of public restrooms and a foldable flier. How are these a service to the public?

They can be used by the public to help solve the problem of where to access public restrooms in the city.

Why is the watchdog role of journalists important?

Journalists and news organizations have the resources to look out for the public's interests and watch the actions of powerful entities, such as the government, for problems like corruption or waste. They also have the power to expose wrongdoing, when they find it, to a large audience.

Sometimes, watchdog reporting means calling attention to issues that people are already aware of, such as the public restroom issue, but that not much has happened around. It can also reveal and expose problems that people aren't aware of or that are happening behind the scenes. Journalists act as watchdogs on the government and examine how systems are working, whether systems are broken and who those systems may be harming. The very presence of a reporter in the room at government meetings is part of the watchdog role.





## PART D: The article

Revisit the featured article. Find two parts for which you have additional insight. Write or summarize them below.	
Excerpt #1: <i>Answers will vary.</i>	What new insight do you have for this part since viewing "News Goggles?"
Excerpt #2: <i>Answers will vary.</i>	What new insight do you have for this part since viewing "News Goggles?"



**Conclusion: How can journalists shine a light on issues of public importance? Try to include details about the watchdog role of the press in your response.**

*Answers will vary but should incorporate key points and details from this viewing guide.*



**Extend: Compare these [notable investigative journalism cases](#) throughout history with the featured reading. How are they similar and different from Hoerner's investigation?**

