

[story tips]

You can tell a good reporter by whether he or she has a “nose for news.” That’s how I got the nickname ‘Scoop’ – I always sense a story and get the scoop on the competition. Also, I love ice cream. Having a nose for news means a reporter can tell when a story is about to happen. It means a reporter can figure out an angle, or an interesting point of view, for whatever is happening.

Story tips are ideas for finding that angle. You are welcome to pursue any of these as stories, but they are designed more to get your mind thinking about the kinds of stories you might write about flowers or coffee or bananas. Also, you might want to find out more about international trade relations, global economics or anything else that makes you more curious about what happens in your world.

One thing to note with these tips: some of them are creative. If your teacher approves, it might be fun to create a hypothetical situation – one that exists only in your mind – and report about it.



In 1991, the Andean Trade Preferences Act eliminated tariffs on products grown in several Latin American countries, including Colombia, to encourage them to stop raising crops to sell as drugs. Has it worked? What are the societal, environmental and economic tradeoffs, both in Colombia and in the United States?

Children as young as age 8 work on banana plantations in Ecuador. How does the life of an 8-year-old worker differ from an 8-year-old who does not? Create a daily diary of each.

Banana companies in the early 20th century had a great deal of influence in the countries where bananas were grown. These countries were called ‘Banana Republics.’ How does that compare to similar companies today, such as Nike? How has public opinion affected the way companies do business?





For every pound of bananas consumed, two pounds of waste are created. Growing coffee and flowers also produces a lot of waste, often contaminated with pesticides. What to do with this waste is an environmental and safety issue, because often workers don't know how to dispose of it and leave the waste lying around the plantation. How do waste management policies differ in the United States and Latin American countries? What lessons can be learned from each?

“Interview” a family of orioles who flew north for the summer and returned south to find that their old home in a shade tree at the coffee farm has been torn down. How do they find another home? What else happens because they leave?



Set sail with a shipment of coffee and fly in a load of flowers. What is it like for a transportation worker to bring a load safely to its destination? What are the dangers, the risks, the excitement of visiting other countries?