THE WEEK Junior EDUCATION

November 20, 2026
Issue 344



Page	Title	Summary and Discussion Points	Content Area
2	Ukraine peace talks resume	On November 10 and 11, meetings about ending the war between Ukraine and Russia were held after a nine-month halt in negotiations. Why did the conflict begin, and why did negotiations halt? How does this conflict impact the United States and the rest of the world?	Social Studies
4	More midterm races are decided	The results of many midterm races have continued to be called since the polls closed on Election Day. The decisions further secured the Democratic Party's control of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Why did some races take longer to call? What do you know about the election results in your state?	Social Studies
5	Giant pandas make their US debut	Thousands of people flocked to Zoo Atlanta in Georgia as two 6-year-old giant pandas made their public debut. What is "panda diplomacy"? How, if at all, could this gift impact relations between the US and China?	Science
5	Toys inducted into Hall of Fame	The National Toy Hall of Fame has selected its 2026 inductees. Care Bears, Bingo, the Pokémon Trading Card Game, and the playground slide were chosen from 12 finalists. What criteria do you think are used to determine which toys are Hall of Fame-worthy? Which toys would be in your Hall of Fame, and why?	Science/Social Studies
10	Hope for the planet's wildlife	The World Wildlife Fund's latest "Living Planet" report found that several animal populations are recovering more quickly than experts previously thought. Why do you think that scientists track animal populations? What actions can you do to protect endangered animals?	Science

FEATURE OF THE WEEK JUNIOR: Book club ... (pages 22 and 23)	
Invite students to look at this week's feature and answer the questions.	1. What are book reviews, and why do people write them? 2. What elements are part of a book review? 3. Do you find book reviews helpful? How might a book review help you decide whether or not to read a book? 4. Which featured book would you be most likely to read, and why? 5. Read one of the featured books, and write your own review.

	DEBATE	CONNECT
ARTICLE	“Toys inducted into Hall of Fame” (page 5)	“Native American Heritage Month begins” (page 5)
VOCABULARY	inducted, finalists, popularity, sustained	heritage, indigenous, ancestor, culture
ACTIVITY	Tell students that the National Toy Hall of Fame honors toys with a lasting impact, and that the class will choose the next inductee through a tournament. Have small groups propose three criteria a toy should meet to be Hall of Fame-worthy. This could include staying popular for decades or sparking creativity. Then debate as a class and vote on a final list of three. Next, have each group choose a toy not yet in the Hall of Fame (check the current list first) and write a one-minute speech in the toy's voice that addresses all three criteria. Pair up toys in a tournament bracket, with both toys giving their speeches followed by a 30-second rebuttal from each team. Student judges score each match against the criteria, and the winner advances. Before the final round, add a twist such as “Toys must work without batteries.” To finish, have students reflect on which argument was most convincing and whether the criteria helped them judge fairly.	Explain that peace talks often rely on mediators, neutral parties who help two sides find common ground, and that the US served in this role during the November talks in Abu Dhabi. Have small groups act as a mediation team and create a three-column chart labeled “Ukraine wants,” “Russia wants,” and “Both want,” filling it in using evidence from the article. Examples include Ukraine’s ceasefire offer and NATO goals, Russia’s demands about territory and NATO, and both sides’ desire for guarantees against surprise attacks. Next, have each team identify the one disagreement it considers the hardest to solve and explain why. Brainstorm one small step both sides might accept, similar to the prisoner exchange the two countries agreed to. Invite teams to present their ideas, and invite classmates to ask one question about whether each side would realistically agree. To finish, lead a discussion about why peace negotiations take so long and why even small agreements matter, and have students reflect on what qualities make someone a good mediator.
EXTEND	View the entire toy collection at the Strong Museum of Play.	Identify conflicts around the world using this conflict map.

	PROPOSE	CREATE
ARTICLE	“Giant pandas make their US debut” (page 5)	“Giant pandas make their US debut” (page 5)
VOCABULARY	flocked, breeding, panda diplomacy, offspring	native, endangered, extinction, reserves
ACTIVITY	Explain that “panda diplomacy” is China’s practice of sending giant pandas to other countries to build friendship and cooperation. Ask students why an animal might make a powerful symbol of goodwill. Guide them toward ideas like pandas being rare, beloved, and closely tied to China’s identity. Have groups imagine that the US wants to send a “diplomacy gift” to another country. Challenge them to choose something that represents the US or their state, such as an animal, plant, tradition, or invention, and create a one-page proposal explaining what it is, why it’s meaningful, and how it would build friendship. Encourage groups to think about practical details, such as how long the gift would stay and who would be responsible for it, just as the panda agreements do. Have groups present their proposals, and invite the class to vote on which would best strengthen international ties.	Ask students why a zoo would invest in a brand-new space for its animals and what might happen if a habitat didn’t meet an animal’s needs. Have students research what giant pandas need to stay healthy, such as their bamboo diet, space to climb, cool temperatures, and quiet places to rest. Then have small groups design their own panda habitat, sketching a labeled map that shows how each feature meets a specific need. Require groups to include at least one feature that helps visitors learn about pandas without disturbing them, such as a viewing window or an interactive sign. For an added challenge, give each group a constraint, such as a limited budget, a hot climate, or a small space, and have them explain how their design solves it. Invite groups to share their designs in a quick “pitch” to an imaginary zoo board, and have classmates give feedback on which features would work best. Close by discussing how zoos balance animal well-being with visitor experience, and which is more important when the two conflict.
EXTEND	Learn about the history of giant pandas in the US.	Meet Ping Ping and Fu Shuam and view pandas at the National Zoo.