



Digital Media Virtual Learning

Grades 9-12/Writing a Good Feature Story

April 17, 2020



9-12/Digital and Advanced Digital Media
Lesson: **April 17, 2020**

Objective/Learning Target:
Students Will Be Able to Identify and Write Good Features
Story

Let's Get Started:

Think About the Last Feature Story You Have Read (You can find one online as well if you don't remember). These are a little longer, more descriptive, and more in depth. They can be serious, inspirational, emotional, or even fun.:

1. What was the story about?
2. What key facts did the story include?
3. Did you feel any facts or information was missing from the story?
4. What is your first impression of the way a feature story is written?
5. How is this writing different from what you may turn in for an English or History report?
6. How is it different from a news story?

What is a Feature Story?

Most people think of a feature story as something soft and puffy, written for the arts or fashion section of the newspaper or website.

But in fact, features can be about any subject, from the fluffiest lifestyle piece to the toughest investigative report.

Features are found in every section of the paper, from news to business to sports. Feature stories aren't defined so much by subject matter as they are by the style they are written in. In other words, anything written in a feature-oriented way is a feature story.

What is a Feature Story?

Key Ingredients - Hard news stories are typically an assemblage of facts. Some are better-written than others, but they all exist to fulfill a simple purpose: to convey information.

Feature stories, on the other hand, aim to do much more. They do convey facts, but they also tell the stories of people's lives. To do that, they must incorporate facets of writing often not found in news stories—ones that are often associated with fiction writing, including description, a greater use of quotes, anecdotes, and sometimes extensive background information.

Feature Ledes - Hard-news ledes need to get all the important points of the story—the who, what, where, when, why, and how—into the very first sentence.

Feature ledes, sometimes called delayed ledes, unfold more slowly. They allow the writer to tell a story in a more traditional, narrative way. The objective, of course, is to draw the reader into the story, to make them want to read more.

What is a Feature Story?

Different Kinds of Feature Stories - Just as there are different kinds of hard-news stories, there are different kinds of features. Some of the main types include:

- The profile: An in-depth look at a newsmaker or other personality
- The news feature: A hard-news subject told in feature style
- The trend story: A breezy look at a current cultural phenomenon
- The spot feature: A quick, deadline-produced story, usually a sidebar to a hard-news story that gives another perspective
- The live-in: In-depth piece of a place and the people who live or work there

What You Should Use and Leave Out - Beginning feature writers often wonder how much of each ingredient to include. In hard news writing, the answer is easy: Keep the story short, sweet, and to the point.

But features are meant to be longer and to tackle their topics in greater depth and detail. So how much detail, description, and background information is too much—or too little? The short answer is if something helps support or amplify the angle of your story, use it. If it doesn't, leave it out.

What is a Feature Story?

Use Verbs and Adjectives Wisely - Most editors will tell you that beginning writers need to use fewer adjectives and stronger, more interesting verbs. Here's why: The old rule in the writing business is, "Show, don't tell." The problem with adjectives is that they don't show us anything. In other words, they rarely if ever evoke visual images in readers' minds; they are just a lazy substitute for writing good, effective description. Editors like the use of verbs because they convey action and give a story a sense of movement and momentum. Too often, though, writers use tired, overused verbs.

Producing Great Profiles - The personality profile is an article about an individual, and profiles are one of the staples of feature writing. Profiles can be done on just about anyone interesting and newsworthy, whether it's the local mayor or a rock star. Too many reporters think they can produce quick-hit profiles where they spend a few hours with a subject and then bang out a story. That won't work. To really see what a person is like, you need to be with them long enough that they let their guard down and reveal their true selves. That won't happen in an hour or two.

Feature Lede Examples - Some Good Story Intros

Feature Ledes are a little longer, more descriptive and more creative. It is not the basic news lede with all the key info. It does its best to tell a story and to get the reader's attention.

Evaluate these ledes below. Are they strong? What could you do differently? What is missing?

1. It may be one of the smallest pieces of real estate that you will ever buy, but chances are that your cemetery plot will also be the most expensive.
The price of cemetery property goes up at least 10 percent a year, said Robert Neel, president of Woodlawn Memorial Park. The current starting price for a 5- by 10-foot plot is between \$1,200 and \$1,500 at most cemeteries.
2. There was no hesitation. The bowler picked up his ball and smoothly let it roll down the alley. Nine pins fell, leaving just one standing. Alfred Hershey took careful aim and knocked that one down too.
Perfectly ordinary.
Except that Hershey is blind.
3. "How about if I just sit in the floor with you?" asked Judge Clarence Dubreff after a child complained that he "always sits higher than anybody else."
The juvenile court judge took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves and sat on the classroom floor.
4. Twenty teenagers plan their own curriculum and live and work at Freedom House School. All 20 are from welfare families, and most have police records.
5. The student governments at most universities in the state are having problems.

Resources/Other Important Articles on the Subject

[Secret to Writing Strong Feature Stories](#)

[Tips For Writing Features](#)