

TOPIC: BROADCAST FEATURE WRITING



Objective: Students will plan, organize, and write focused featured stories for print and broadcast using style rules appropriate to audience, purpose and focus.

Broadcast Feature stories are between 3 and 7 minutes long about things that have happened in the past. The ideas and pictures for feature news stories are usually planned out on a storyboard. Completing a storyboard involves explaining how the audio (sounds) and the shots, (visual details) will present the researched background facts and information.

Different methods of writing a feature story for broadcast include writing a story and taking shots to accompany the story, writing the story to work with existing video footage, and the ideal method includes writer and videographer collaborating to combine words, shots, and interviews to convey the message of the story.

Background: Feature Stories are creative and give the writer the opportunity to delve into a topic of interest with more detail. Feature stories may entertain, but may also inform the viewer of an event, situation, or aspect of life.

As a write of feature stories, be observant, react to what you observe, and think about what you observe before you write. Good journalists observe their environment and notice stories in everything. Any topic, encounter, experience can lead to a story with the right angle.

Once you think of a topic or your story is assigned. Consider your purpose, your audience, and think of an angle.

Some Types of feature stories:

- Human interest
- Sights and sounds
- Personality profile
- Historical feature
- Informative feature
- Personal experience
- Photo feature
- How to feature topic
- Consumer report

Once you have an idea, follow these guidelines:

- Research! Interview people or read articles and books about your topic. Be sure internet sites are reliable.
- Focus—narrow down the topic by focusing on one aspect and decide on your "angle".
- Listen to broadcast feature stories and observe what makes a good story
- Describe: appeal to the senses.
- Remain unbiased—let the words and shots tell the story.

Standards/Anchors:

1.5.10.B: Develop content appropriate for the topic.

Gather, organize, and determine validity and reliability of information.

Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.

Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus

C.E.1.1.1: Write with a sharp controlling point and an awareness of the audience and expository task.

- Include statistics if possible to impact your story and validity.
- Gather more facts than you need. Be selective with the facts, but tell the complete story.
- Prepare for interviews in advance (see broadcast interview lesson)
- Localize your story, especially for our school program purpose. Be sure the feature concerns your audience and use students, faculty, and community members for information.
- Play on emotion. Make readers tear or evoke a chuckle.
- The best feature stories are written in third person point of view. First person works for personal narrative, but is not suitable for other types.
- Leave no questions unanswered. Make sure all points are covered.
- Be positive about your writing. Avoid qualifiers such as *rather*, *slightly*. Make specific, definite statements and you will be more dynamic and credible.
- **Be interested in life.** To be a successful feature writer, know, understand, and be interested in what makes people react as they do to certain situations. Not only will you see a focus in every story, but you will also know what works for your audience.
- Have thorough knowledge of the English language. Know how to use words to write a phrase that will grip the reader.
- Use an effective lead. (see news writing lesson)
- Avoid using anonymous sources
- Remember that all good features should be emotion-arousing and the best feature stories cover unique experiences.
- If possible, link the beginning to the ending.
- Find new angles to cover old topics.
- Be brief as possible, just because it is a feature story does not mean you should overwrite. Long stories bore an audience.
- Be clear, concise.
- Write conversational, writing your story as you might tell a friend.
- Write an effective conclusion: anecdotes are incidents with a point and can be amusing or amazing. Try to obtain anecdotes from interviewees. Anecdotes make good conclusions for feature stories.
- Rewrite, Rewrite, Rewrite until you get it right!

Use the same conventions as the **broadcast news writing lesson** to write your broadcast feature story incorporating the attributes from the list.

Sources:

"Media Toolkit For Youth Tip Sheet ." Media Awareness Network. N.p., n.d. Web. 6 Sep 2010.

<http://www.mediaawareness.ca/english/resources/special_initiatives/____tool_kit_resources/tipsheets/writing_news_story.cfm

Hall, Homer L., *High School Journalism*. Rev ed. New York, NY; The Rosen Publishing Group. 2003 140-164. Print.

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A few Broadcast Style Rules:

Avoid starting a lead with a name. Most listeners are half-listeners and the name will be missed. Use pronouns sparingly as its hard for the listener to refer back to the person referred to. The best attribute is "said" Avoid words like *insists*, *admits*, *charges*; they border on opinion. Avoid saying "a thousand" because it sounds like eight thousand. Use only familiar abbreviations such as UN for United Nations, US=United States and MCA © Signal that a quote is coming up. Quotes slow a story, but add color to a story so proceed with caution. Use informal time references: Today, Tomorrow, and Yesterday are better than Tuesday, Wednesday, or Monday.

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