



**You act like this is
breaking news
or something...**

News Writing

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Stephen Green created these lessons as a capstone project for completion of the journalism educator master's degree program at Kent State University. It may be reproduced only for individual classroom teachers in class, but not for any commercial purposes including derivative works.

Choosing Good Stories to Write

NEWS WRITING UNIT

Rationale

Anyone can have an idea for a story. Not everyone can write, justify and critique one for journalism purposes. Knowing the values that make up good news and how to pitch a story idea will go a long way in improving the quality of your work and the publication as a whole.

CLASS GOAL: We will learn how to choose stories for publication that will interest and matter to readers, and know the difference between a story topic and a story idea.

INDIVIDUAL GOAL: I will create a complete story idea that could be used for our school publication.

Goals for Understanding

Students will understand & demonstrate

- All stories should have strong news values. TIPCUP: timeliness, impact, proximity, conflict, uniqueness, and prominence.
- Story ideas can come from beats, assignments, planned & unplanned events and observations. Enterprise stories are those a reporter finds on their own.
- Topics are broad categories that many stories could be about. Story ideas are specific angles to stories.
- Write story ideas as a broad question the reporter will answer in a way that matters to local readers.

Overview & Timeline

This lesson is designed to be completed in two, 45-minute class periods with students split into groups of four, but may be completed in one depending on class length.

Lesson includes

- Warm up activity/pre-activity assessment
- Direct instruction
- Cooperative learning activity
- Closing/post-activity assessment

Materials Needed

- "Nora Ephron Story" for teacher
- "News Value Instructional Cards" cut for group
- "News Value Scenarios" cut for group
- "Choosing Good Stories Instructional Cards" cut for group
- "Story Idea Critique Practice Cards" cut for group
- "Story Idea Development Worksheet" for each student

Day 1

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Show Slides 2 & 3 of the slideshow and have students individually complete the activity silently with a 5-minute time limit. Then, direct students to go around their group explaining and justifying each of their results using the round-robin method for 20 seconds per student. Use a timer application or website to show the students how much time is left. Audibly signal when it is time to switch group members and walk around to ensure everyone is talking. Slide 4 has a suggested answer.

ACTIVITY: Start by reading the "Nora Ephron Story" and having students practice writing ONE sentence they would use for the same situation. The teacher can, alternatively, change up Ephron's story to match their school if it would make more sense to their students. Have students share their sentences with the other members of their group. The group should then develop a consensus on what the best version of all four and why.

Have each group trade with the other groups, reading and comparing the previous group's sentence to theirs. Do this until all groups have read all other group's sentences and come to a classwide consensus of what the one sentence they would use to start this story.

Then, show Slide 5 and have the class compare by each group discussing the differences between the group's and class's sentences, and Ephron's. What did they miss?

Have each group member pull one of the four "News Value Instructional Cards" and read to themselves for 1-2 minutes. Then, have each student spend 30 seconds explaining to the group members the different concepts learned from their card.

After learning the concepts, have students each take one of the "News Value Scenarios" and read the miniature story on each card. They should write down one of the six news values the story uses and why. Then, pass their story to the right and do it again. The next person should add either another news value and why, or add another sentence justifying what the news value the previous person added. Continue until all students have seen every card twice. Then, have groups discuss why some news values were left off each story.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION: Show and discuss Slide 6, which recaps everything students should have learned.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Show Slide 7 and have students complete in a method most appropriate to the teacher. (Students will develop a story idea for their publication and explain which news values it has.)

Day 2

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Show Slides 8 & 9 of the slideshow and have students individually complete the activity silently with a 5-minute time limit. Then, direct students to go around their group explaining and justifying each of their results using the round-robin method for 20 seconds per student. Use a timer application or website to show the students how much time is left. Audibly signal when it is time to switch and walk around to ensure everyone is talking.

ACTIVITY: Have students explain the story idea they wrote individually on Day 1 to their group members. The other group members must add some comment on each story idea verbally — this could be a critique and improvement, or a praise and addition to justifying the story.

Have each group member pull one of the four "Choosing Good Stories Instructional Cards" and read to themselves for 1-2 minutes. Have each student spend 30 seconds explaining to the different concepts they learned on their card.

After learning the concepts, have students each split up the "Story Idea Critique Practice Cards". Each student should read their card aloud, the next member will point out what is wrong with the story idea, the next suggests how to improve it, the final group member will agree or critique the previous member's story idea, and the original member who read the card will write down the ultimate revised version of the card. This continues — roles rotating — until all have read, critiqued and revised every card.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION: Show and discuss Slide 11, which recaps everything students should have learned.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Have all students individually complete the "Story Idea Development Worksheet", or let students brainstorm as a group after completing, work in pairs by critiquing after the sheet is completed. (Students will come up with a story idea for their publication, explain which news values it has and describe how it has been localized.)

References

- Etwell, J., Balmeo, M., Austin, E., & Hamm R. (2021). *Journalism: Publishing Across Media*. The Goodheart-Willcox Company.
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1 Start by Read This

Famous journalist and writer Nora Ephron had a life-altering experience when she was in high school. She recounted:

The best teacher I ever had was named Charles Simms, and he taught journalism at Beverly Hills High School in 1956 and 1957. The first day of journalism class, Mr. Simms did what just about every journalism teacher does in the beginning — he began to teach us how to write a lead. The way this is normally done is that the teacher dictates a set of facts and the class attempts to write the first paragraph of a news story about them. Who, what, where, when, how and why. So, he read us a set of facts. It went something like this:

'Kenneth L. Peters, principal of Beverly Hills High School, announced today that the faculty of the high school will travel to Sacramento on Thursday for a colloquium on new teaching methods. Speaking there will be anthropologist Margaret Mead, educator Robert Maynard Hutchins, and several others.'

2 Students Do This

Silently write how you would start this story off. You have two minutes to complete this. (Put a timer visually for students to see.)

NOTE TO TEACHER: Students may feel self-conscious because they don't know the rules yet. Assure them this is OK and expected.

3 Read This

You just did what Ephron and her classmates did. This is what Ephron said happened next:

We all began typing, and after a few minutes we turned in our leads. All of them said approximately what Mr. Simms had dictated, but in the opposite order ("Margaret Mead and Robert Maynard Hutchins will address the faculty," etc.). We turn in our leads. We're very proud.

4 Students Do This

Read your lede to the story to your other group members. Then, all of you in the group compare sentences and write a new one that represents your whole group. You have five minutes.

ONCE THIS HAS BEEN COMPLETED: Now, we will read every group's out loud and come to a class consensus on one lede you all feel should start this story.

5 Read This

Here's what happened next Ephron said:

Mr. Simms riffled through the ledes we wrote and tossed them in the garbage. He said, "The lead to the story is 'There will be no school Thursday.'

6 Students Do This

Take a moment to compare the ledes against his.

WHEN THIS IS DONE SAY:

In your groups, each person should spend 20 seconds discussing what was different between the lede your group came up with, what the class decided on, and Mr. Simms' lede from Ephron's story.

WHEN THIS IS DONE ASK:

What did you learn? (Let students discuss, assuring one person from each group read.)

7 Read This

Ephron had this to say about the point:

"It was an electrifying moment. So that's it, I realized. It's about the point. The classic newspaper lead of who-what-where-when-how-and-why is utterly meaningless if you haven't figured out what the significance of the facts is. What is the point? What does it mean? He planted those questions in my head. And for the year he taught me journalism, every day was like the first; every assignment, every story, every set of facts he provided us had a point buried in it somewhere if you looked hard enough."

Timeliness & Proximity

NEWS VALUES

News Matters Now

Timeliness is when a story matters now; it can be a new event or an update on an old one. Either way, it needs to matter to people at the present time.

In modern times, most people have already heard old news on social media or online before it could be printed. The news must be fresh for people to care.

Remember: NEW is literally in news.

Finding a Local Angle

Proximity is when a story matters to the people in your area. A plane crash in Colorado is sad and powerful there but not elsewhere.

Unless there is some reason people care locally, your readers can get the same information from national news outlets.

LOCALIZATION: This is when you take a story that lacks proximity and give it an angle that does matter to people locally.

Models

OLD: The debate team won the district tournament two months ago.

TIMELY: The debate team will be attending the state meet next week.

TIMELY: One of those team members was just named the national Debater of the Year.

NOT LOCAL: A debate team won a tournament in England.

LOCAL: The (school's) debate team won a tournament in England.

LOCAL: (School) debate coach Tom Waites led the U.S. debate team to win a tournament in England.

Impact & Conflict

NEWS VALUES

News Hits Hard

Impact is how much a story affects people. Breaking news usually focuses on deaths, injuries and finances — in that order.

However, impact can talk about mental health, a rise in school spirit, or anything that describes how people are being affected.

Impact can also be positive. Fundraisers, school spirit and awards are all positive news events that impact people in a good way.

Butting Heads

Conflict is any time where two parties disagree. Competitions, politics, mental health (internally), economics, superlatives, crime and hirings/firings all involve conflict. Journalism is referred to as the fourth branch of government because it fosters debate, which feeds democracy.

Conflict can also be entertainment (sports, awards, contests) and problem-solving (crime, mental health, employment practices).

Models

NO IMPACT: A couple adopted a puppy from the animal shelter.

IMPACT: If more people don't adopt from the shelter, the shelter will run out of money.

IMPACT: A couple paid for all adoptions from the animal shelter for the year.

NO CONFLICT: A couple adopted a puppy from the animal shelter.

CONFLICT: A couple stole a puppy from the animal shelter.

CONFLICT: Two new rules prevented a couple from adopting a puppy.

Uniqueness & Prominence

NEWS VALUES

So Different

Uniqueness is when a story doesn't happen often. This could be the man-bites-dog story, a feature on a church that turned 100 years old, or a track star setting a state record.

The more unique the event, the more people typically want to read.

NOTE: Do not make the story more unique than reality by adding or leaving out facts.

So Important

Prominence is any time important people, places or things are involved.

It doesn't make the news when you go to prom. When celebrities go to prom with their fans, it does.

It could be when a favorite school tradition gets canceled, an athlete setting a record or a popular teacher retires.

Models

NOT UNIQUE: Student Council will meet.

UNIQUE: Student Council will meet on the roof.

UNIQUE: Student Council will meet for the first time in school history.

NOT PROMINENT: Student Council will meet.

PROMINENT: Student Council will meet with the governor.

PROMINENT: Student Council will decide if the homecoming dance will happen this year.

How Many News Values? & TIPCUP

NEWS VALUES

Remember This

To help remember the six news values, use the acronym TIPCUP: timeliness, impact, proximity, conflict, uniqueness, and prominence.

When you are looking at struggling story ideas and want to improve them, go through the six news values to figure out WHY it isn't good.

How Many Do I Need?

There isn't a great answer because you have to look at each story as a whole. A story can have anywhere from zero to six news values. The more news values it has, the more important it can be. One news value can also be so big that the event becomes a story.

For example, a car crash can be timely, have impact, involve a mayor, lead to conflict, and have a unique story. However, if there isn't a local tie, the story may die. On the flip side, if that same car crash happened here, but didn't involve anyone prominent, it may not make the school newspaper.

Models

LACKS NEWS VALUE: A family got ice cream last month in a neighboring state.

LACKS NEWS VALUE: A family got ice cream last month in a neighboring state and decided to open a new ice cream shop.

HAS SOME NEWS VALUE: A family got ice cream last month in a neighboring state and decided to open a new ice cream shop in town.

HAS A LOT OF NEWS VALUE: A family got ice cream last month in a neighboring state and decided to open a new ice cream shop on campus during lunches.

Scenario 1

NEWS VALUES

Retiring Pharmacist

Imagine this story was written for your school newspaper:

When local pharmacist Charles Cheese decided to call it quits, he wanted to go out quietly. His customers of 56 years had other plans.

HOSA President Janey Jackie and members of the health-occupations club are co-hosting a retirement ceremony with the city next week.

"Every student here has been directly or indirectly impacted by this man," Jackie said. "As the only pharmacy in town, he has single-handedly cured us of the most serious diseases to the sniffles. There's no way we'd let him walk into the sunset without getting to say goodbye."

His assistant, Foz E. Bare, will take over his business when Cheese officially retires next month.

Analyze It!

Write one news value it has and why, then pass to the next person:

Scenario 2

NEWS VALUES

Rivalry Match

Imagine this story was written for your school newspaper:

The tennis team will face its chief rival at a home game in three months. Head coach Homer Carte said they are looking forward to the match.

"We play them every year and it's always tough," Carte said. "Their coach and I have talked. We both enjoy the friendly rivalry."

The last four times the school's clashed, they traded wins and losses. The tennis team is now 2-2 in the series.

Analyze It!

Write one news value it has and why, then pass to the next person:

Scenario 3

NEWS VALUES

NHS Applications

Imagine this story was written for your school newspaper:

Principal Lacey Ghist announced applications to join the National Honor Society last month. The applications are due in three days.

"Recognizing the best of our students is one of the best parts of my job," Ghist said. "I'm hoping all qualified students join NHS."

Applications require three letters of recommendation and an unweighted 3.5 GPA.

"I put my application in last week," junior Dalia Weeks said. "I want to be a part of something like NHS because it will look good on my resume."

Analyze It!

Write one news value it has and why, then pass to the next person:

Scenario 4

NEWS VALUES

Model Visitor

Imagine this story was written for your school newspaper:

The person Model U.N. President Ysela Gutierrez did not expect at the group's first-ever meeting: local U.S. Rep. Nancy McCarthy. The visit came after getting a letter from her congratulating the group for starting.

"When she walks in, there's a gravity about her; people are just drawn in," Gutierrez said. "I want to go into politics, which is why I started the club. Her showing up just shows how much she cares."

McCarthy said she was not going to the meeting at first, but noticed her schedule took her by the school at the exact time the meeting was to begin.

"Getting young people involved in representative government is the only way to keep the American experiment alive," she said. "I'm so glad I could come; you can feel the passion this group has."

Analyze It!

Write one news value it has and why, then pass to the next person:

Where Do Ideas Come From?

STORY IDEAS

Observation & People

When you walk around school: Look at flyers on the wall, listen to conversations at lunch, talk with students about issues important to them, read event calendars, pay attention to changes and anything else that uses your five senses to tell when news is out there.

Beats

Beats are when a reporter focuses on creating stories about certain topics consistently. They become an expert in the topic. They may include the school board, sports, pop culture, religion, food, fashion, federal government, and anything else your audience finds important. Your publication should make a list of important beats and assign people to follow them throughout the year with regular updates.

Assignments

Editors also sometimes assign stories that need to be covered. Sometimes you like these; sometimes not. Either way, you have to do it. The easiest way to avoid being assigned (because you lack stories to write) is to create enterprise stories, which is when you come up with the idea.

Unplanned Events

Life is messy. Unplanned events pop up all the time that overtake whatever plan currently exists. Natural disasters, crime, protests, events you didn't hear about, and other things that have heavy news value but weren't planned in advance become stories. They assert themselves as news and the staff must respond accordingly.

Topics Aren't Ideas

STORY IDEAS

What is a Topic?

"The economy" is not a story idea. There are a thousand stories that fall within topics. When a reporter tells you they want to do a story on (insert noun here), ask "What about it?" What they answer with is closer to a story idea than the original idea they said.

Turn It Into an Idea

Inevitably, a news topic becomes popular on staff. The football team won the state championship; the school flooded from a hurricane; or, the principal suddenly resigned. As a staff, start listing off all the stories that could possibly be done. Start going beyond the initial, surface-level story to explore other possibilities.

Football the state championship stories: Was this expected? How did they do it? How many fans traveled to the game? Do other sports have a shot at the title? How are they going to try to repeat next year? How are they planning to celebrate? How will the school celebrate as a group? Did anyone set any records? Did this help get any students scholarships to college? Each one could be a full story — or even multiple — within the topic.

Write Stories As Questions

STORY IDEAS

Statements Are Biased

Do not just state story idea as a topic. Rather than "dress code", a more intuitive reporter might pitch the idea: "More girls get in trouble for dress code than girls." However, if the reporter uses this as a starting point, they have gone in search of a story with the ultimate answer already in mind. They now have confirmation bias — searching for an answer they assume is true rather than finding out if the assumption is even true.

Questions Get Answered

Writing story ideas as questions helps prevent some bias in the reporting process by starting the newsgathering from a place of inquiry.

For example, rather than "the dress code" or "More girls get in trouble for the dress code than girls", a seasoned reporter will write it as a question with no preconceived ideas: "Is the dress code biased?"

Story ideas should be written as questions to be answered, rather than answers meant to be confirmed. The reporter may very well determine that their gut reaction was true, but they may also be surprised.

Either way, this is a less biased way to approach a story — all stemming from the way the story idea was written.

Expand the Idea

STORY IDEAS

Brainstorm

The first story idea is not always best. Once a story idea is written as a question, you may want to talk with other people to see if other people agree the idea is worthwhile. If no one cares, why pursue the story?

In a school environment, the people on your staff happens also to be people in your readership. Are they interested? Ask people not on staff if they think it might be worth writing about if you are still unsure.

What Else?

The next question you should ask yourself and others is: What else? People naturally have different interests. The more important you think the story will be, the more people you want to talk with before to see if you missed a bigger angle.

This goes for people on and off staff. Don't be afraid to talk out ideas with readers because the story is meant for them.

Story Development Interviews

There is nothing wrong with conducting an interview — that may or may not be used in a story — just to see what issues experts or witnesses feel may have slipped through the crack.

You may think a story on changes to the school lunch program is important, but find the cause of the changes is the bigger fish to try to catch.

Story Idea 1

STORY IDEA CRITIQUES

Story Idea

COVID-19 and its effects on the school.

What's Wrong?

Below, write what the group agreed needed to be improved about the story.

Fix It!

Write a better version of the idea below:

Story Idea 2

STORY IDEA CRITIQUES

Story Idea

Rap music is more mainstream now than it used to be.

What's Wrong?

Below, write what the group agreed needed to be improved about the story.

Fix It!

Write a better version of the idea below:

Story Idea 3

STORY IDEA CRITIQUES

Story Idea

Politics

What's Wrong?

Below, write what the group agreed needed to be improved about the story.

Fix It!

Write a better version of the idea below:

Story Idea 4

STORY IDEA CRITIQUES

Story Idea

Why are so many students at school doing drugs more than they used to be?

What's Wrong?

Below, write what the group agreed needed to be improved about the story.

Fix It!

Write a better version of the idea below:

Story Idea Development Worksheet

NEWS WRITING UNIT

Story Topic

Below, write down a topic you would be interested in actually doing a story on for our publication.

Story Idea 1

Write one story you could do — written as a question — within the topic you wrote at the top.

Story Idea 2

Write one story you could do — written as a question — within the topic you wrote at the top.

Story Idea 3

Write one story you could do — written as a question — within the topic you wrote at the top.

Pick One & Revise

Look at each story idea you wrote above. Pick the one you think has the most news value and reader interest at our school. Then, rewrite the question to make it even better.

IF YOU'RE STUCK: The rewrite could include making the question: more or less broad, removing assumptions, finding a more specific angle, or anything else you think would make the story idea relevant and newsworthy, or improves the ethical nature of the idea by making it have less bias.

Why is this idea better? In the space below, write down how and why you revised your idea in the way you did.

Localize It

Complete this column only once you have finished the instructions on the left.

In the space below, write the local angle of the story. This could include a person at the school impacted or involved in the story, that the event is happening locally, or any other reason you feel people locally will care to read your story.

News Values

In the space below, write down each news value you feel your story has and why. List (one word each) which news values you feel are missing.

What's the Biggest Draw?

In the space below, write down which news value is the one that will make people care about the most and justify why you feel that's the one readers of our publication will care about the story.

Rationale

Breaking news stories are created in what's known as the inverted pyramid. This structure also serves as a fantastic tool to build and understand news structures. It is the most dry version of news writing, but all other styles build off of this structure in some way.

CLASS GOAL: We will understand the inverted pyramid style of news writing.

INDIVIDUAL GOAL: I will critique and edit a story based off my knowledge of AP Style and the inverted pyramid.

Goals for Understanding

Students will understand & demonstrate

- Identifying and writing in the inverted pyramid structure
- How to identify the news peg
- Knowing what can be pushed lower in the story
- Avoiding burying the lede

Overview & Timeline

This lesson is designed to be completed in two, 45-minute class periods but may be done in one class depending on length.

Lesson includes

- Warm up activity/preactivity assessment
- Direct instruction
- Cooperative learning activity
- Closing/post-activity assessment

Materials Needed

- "Inverted Pyramid Instructional Sheets" cut for each group
- "Example Breaking News Story - Inverted Pyramid" for each student
- "Example Reporter Notes - Inverted Pyramid" for each student
- "Copy Editing for Inverted Pyramid Style" for each student

Day 1

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Show Slides 2 & 3 of the slideshow and have students individually complete the activity silently with a 5-minute time limit. Then, direct students to go around their group explaining and justifying each of their results using the round-robin method for 20 seconds per student. Use a timer application or website to show the students how much time is left. Audibly signal when it is time to switch group members and walk around to ensure everyone is talking. Slide 4 shows a suggested answer.

ACTIVITY: Have each student in the group take one of the "Inverted Pyramid Instructional Sheets", read it silently for 1-2 minutes, and spend 30 seconds each going in a round-robin fashion to explain what they read to their classmates.

Have students all now read the "Example Breaking News Story" silently, making notes on their version as they go. Then, in another round-robin format, each student in the group should explain what they thought the news values of the story were and what problems they saw based on the instructional sheets.

Now, have all students mix around the room and sit with other members not from their own group. They should go around their new group and explain, one at a time in 15 seconds each, something their original group noticed that has not already been said. They will go in one more round-robin discussion about what they would do to improve the story. All students should then return to their original groups.

On the side of their sheets, students should independently write the order that the story should go in without rewriting the entire story. They should include the quotes as well — designated by writing the last name of the person who was quoted. This skeleton of the story can be as simple as one word or a phrase per section. Have each group compare before the group come up with a unified story skeleton.

Hand all students the "Example Reporters Notes". They will create another story skeleton based off the notes on the sheet. They will also compare their stories to their group members and justify the differences, coming up with a unified skeleton idea. One group member will then go to the other groups to show and explain their story skeleton until each group "stray" has gone to each other group before returning. Once they return to the original group, the other group members should explain the differences they saw and make any changes they feel they should make. Show and explain Slide 5 to show the students an example skeleton.

NOTE: This skeleton is based off one person's opinion and students may have a good reason for their structure. As long as students can justify it and it makes journalistic sense, they have succeeded.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION: Show and discuss Slide 6, which recaps everything students should have learned.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: Show Slide 7 and have students complete "Copy Editing for Inverted Pyramid Style". NOTE: The teacher may have to explain how to copy edit structure, which works somewhat differently than line editing for style.

Explain they can rewrite, draw arrows and make notes — whatever would help a reporter know how to correct the story.

Day 2

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Have students discuss in groups the notes they made on the "Copy Editing for Inverted Pyramid Style" worksheet and make any corrections they would like.

ACTIVITY: Students could write a 150- to 250-word story based on their skeleton on the "Example Reporter's Notes". Give them 30-minutes to do so. The story should be thin considering the information they have to work with and lack of knowledge about structure. This is to see if the order of information is right, not necessarily structure.

After they have written their stories, have students rotate their papers once around the group. Give students 5 minutes to edit. Rotate again and give another five minutes. Do this until all students have had a chance to line edit for style and order of importance including of their own work. These can be turned in for a grade.

OPTIONAL: Teachers may choose to have students write a new prompt after the edits, rewrite the original story, or report on a real event. In any case, the focus at this stage should be on making sure all students can nail the order of importance.

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- Stovall, J. (2009). *Writing for the Mass Media*. Pearson.

5Ws & H: The Basics

THE INVERTED PYRAMID

Who, What, When, Where, Why & How

The inverted pyramid is based around the who, what, when, where, why and how of the news event. These are known as the 5Ws & H and are the bedrock of all journalism stories. They are just displayed differently depending on the structure.

The origin of the inverted pyramid comes from — according to lore — the Civil War when reporters on the battlefields tried to get information back to their editors via telegram wires. They would start with the most important information in case lines were cut. Regardless if this is the true origin, the story helps contextualize the idea: People want to know who is doing what, when and where? Why? How?

In modern times, the wires being cut is our attention span. People don't have the patience for long stories when it comes to stories the inverted pyramid is meant for — breaking news.

People may only have time to read the first half, the first graf, the first sentence, or even just the headline. In every structure, you must all 5Ws and H in some way.

Start Stories with Most Important

THE INVERTED PYRAMID

What Goes First?

The ultimate concept of the inverted pyramid is to start the first sentence of the story with the most important thing readers need to know. Usually, this is the thing that is most recent in the past or the future. What just happened? If readers already know what happened, what will happen? Strong stories start with a paragraph that weaves the two together.

Imagine you have just one sentence to tell people the basic facts of what will/did happen. What would you say? That's the start to an inverted pyramid story. This is what's called the **news peg**. You must know your audience. You write stories differently for a general audience, than for students, faculty, or the community.

If you bury the news peg deeper in the story, it's called **burying the lede**. This happens when you write a story chronologically — in time order.

EXAMPLE OF BURYING THE LEDE

The boys basketball team is 10–4 on the year after losing three weeks in a row.

"We will end up doing better," head coach Tim Cooke said. "It just takes practice."

Yesterday, the team lost its fourth game in a row, setting them up in a game across town. On the way home from the game, the team was hit by a semi-truck, causing four students to be hospitalized.

What's After the Most Important?

THE INVERTED PYRAMID

Answer the Reader's Next Question

After the first paragraph, the second bit of information should be the next logical question readers want answered.

Once you've written your first paragraph, you need to think, "What would be the first thing a reader would have questions about?" That becomes the question your next paragraph has to answer.

Model

FIRST PARAGRAPH: "Prom is canceled after a 4–3 vote at the school board meeting last night."

NEW QUESTIONS: If this was the first paragraph of a story, what would you want to know as a reader? Most likely, it is, "Why?" That should be the next paragraph either as a quote or information.

SECOND PARAGRAPH: "The vote is the result of a protest against the prom theme: Arabian Nights."

NEW QUESTIONS: Your next question is one of two things: "Why would they not like the theme?/What's the problem?" or "Who would be protesting?" The best story would combine both in the answer.

THIRD PARAGRAPH: "There are a number of Arab American students that go to the school," President Lonnie Price said. "The prom committee refused to change the theme despite the overtly racist stereotypes in the execution and families asking for minor changes."

NEW QUESTIONS: By this point, we not only hit the news peg (prom just got canceled), we also explained why. After this, you should then explore questions like: What were the stereotypes? What were the changes? Who was supporting the theme and why? It's just answering the logical question followed by answering the next logical question.

About the Length

THE INVERTED PYRAMID

How Long Does the Story Have to Be?

This isn't an essay for English class. Writing news is about providing information in a timely fashion. Frustratingly for many first-time journalists, there is not a firm length for news stories. Inverted pyramid stories typically fall in the 300–500 range, but aren't always so. You should write until all of the relevant questions have been answered within the deadline.

Breaking news may require stories that are only three sentences long if the issue is so big it can't wait to be posted online. It's updated later as more information becomes available.

If the story can wait — like results from a golf tournament — it will be longer, but should be published while still timely.

When you go to read a finished story — especially as you're learning how to look for structural issues related to the inverted pyramid — make notes about what major questions you have and mark them off as you read through. If the sentence says, "The City Council will consider purchasing enough mittens for every student in the school," I'm writing "Why?" next to it. Cross that off if the answer is in the next paragraph. If it isn't in the next paragraph but is further down the story, cross it off, circle the area where the "why" is answered and draw a line to the area below the sentence where

it should be and write, "Needs to be higher in story." If the answer to that question is totally absent, the story needs to be longer to answer that question.

Stories can also be too long. If you are write 2,600 words about the results of the last bowling tournament, you better have an incredibly compelling, intensely well written story. If not, Strunk & White's "Elements of Style" makes a fantastic suggestion: Reread your story after it is written and "ruthlessly delete the excess." It could be cutting a single word to entire blocks of a story. Take a machete to stories that are too long. "Is it vital to the story? Is it already said somewhere else? What new does it add?"

Example Breaking News Story

NEWS WRITING UNIT

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the story below. Make notes on why you think this story was written in the order that it was and the inverted pyramid style of writing notes. Be prepared to talk about the news values it has.

Students, faculty trapped in flooded school

About 100 faculty, staff and students were already in the building when the districtwide alert went out canceling classes at 6:50, about 20 minutes before first period was to begin.

"I arrived at about 6:30 a.m. and I thought the sky had actually fallen out," government teacher Joseph Kolache said. "We were stuck there, helplessly watching the water rise and leak into the building. It was terrifying."

Students were held in the upstairs library, playing board games and eating snacks and leftover breakfast that cafeteria workers had already made.

"The teachers really made most of this feel like nothing," sophomore Aaron Broomington said. "I mostly played Monopoly with my brother. It just sucks that we had to be there at all; I don't really understand why I was there."

Teachers were downstairs, picking up computers, books and any other valuables off the ground as the waters began to pour in.

"My car is about the size of a fully grown peanut," math teacher Eric Grimes said. "The other teachers and I had to just watch as the parking lot became a lake and engulfed several vehicles. We tried to pull them inside, but the doors just weren't wide enough."

The school community is asking "why" after students, faculty and staff were trapped in the building for most of Wednesday after Tropical Storm Ivette made a westward turn bringing heavy winds and rain.

"We had been monitoring the weather since about 3 a.m.," Communications Director Ima Goen said in a statement. "The storm was supposed to be a little windy but pass us to the east. We apologize for the inconvenience, disruption, and worry that may have resulted from making a late decision to cancel schools, but we knew it was the right thing to do for the safety of student and staff based on what was taking place in terms of the unprecedented heavy rainfall and quickly deteriorating road conditions."

Many parents want answers from Superintendent Dr. Kurt Noll who makes the ultimate decision on district closures.

"My son has never driven in high water before and damaged the entire front of his car trying to leave the neighborhood," parent Ysela Camileta said. "He was worried he would miss school because the district couldn't get its act together and just cancel school. If the district really cared about safety, it would have called school the night before because a freaking tropical storm was down the road."

Noll said the district plans on changing how it calculates when and which schools to close. Currently, it relies primarily on teachers calling out and watching other school closures.

"We clearly have to take more things into account," he said. "The other schools in the district didn't even get rain. That doesn't make it right that the high school flooded though. We have to do better."

Notes on Story

Make notes about what the reporter got right and wrong in the story.

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the information below that is a collection of facts from a reporter's notebook for the story including quotes. In the space below the notes, write out a list that chunks the story into parts. What is the top of the story? Cross out unimportant or arbitrary quotes & facts.

School Board Meeting Notes

6 PM: School board members call to order and recite the pledge of allegiance. Members approve the last meeting's minutes (attendance record and notes on what happened).

615 PM: Board President David Spearman congratulates longtime secretary Donna Noble on retirement and thanks her for 50 years of service. "We know how hard you work. I hope retirement is as good to you as you've been good to us here in CISD." Noble blushed and thanked board members. "I appreciate it. I'm so embarrassed." The audience laughed. Her family was there in attendance.

632 PM: Members of the public speak.

Parent Lonnie Risso: "I would like to see more physical activity in schools. Kids these days are lazy and don't want to go outside. Please do more about this."

Cub Scout and fourth grader Adam Ant: "Thank you for helping make my school better. My troop made you this to show our thanks for making students learn." The flag is a series of colorful stick figures in front of a hand-drawn school building with the words "Thank You CISD School Board!" in blue marker arched across the top.

Ice cream shop owner Mary Wilson: "Students are too rowdy right after school. They leave school and walk around the corner to the buses and cause all kind of havoc on the way. I have to spend about 10 minutes every day cleaning up the mess they throw on the sidewalk." Wilson's ice cream shop is on the corner right by the school. Students have to walk around the block to the bus holding area the high school shares with the junior high because there is not enough room for all the buses to line up in front of the school.

702 PM: Board unanimously passes Item 1 to make November officially Nurse Appreciation Month and send all school nurses a thank-you card. Board Secretary Tom Tillimaloo: "Nurses work so hard. They keep kids in school and kids can't learn if they aren't in school."

712 PM: Board moves onto Item 2 to purchase the empty lot next to the school to create a bus ramp and additional parking space for faculty. Assistant Superintendent of Operations Eazy Ryder proposed hiring Ripped Construction Crew as the contractor for \$1.5 million and spend \$30,000 on purchasing the lot. The lot is currently owned by a family. However, the family approached the school about buying the land.

Ryder: "You already heard one reason this will help us out. Students are having to walk too far to get on their bus. They can get in trouble along the way. Aside from that, there is the safety issue. The farther students have to walk, the more of a chance they can be injured by traffic, risk being approached by strangers with bad intentions and brave the weather. The proposal is costly, I know, but it is worth it. Faculty are also basically out of places to park. That is not fair to them."

Spearman questions Ryder if other options were taken into consideration. "You're asking the school to pay almost \$2 million on concrete. I don't see a reason why they can't just walk down there. Kids will be kids and cause trouble. I remember doing that while I was in school."

Ryder reminds Spearman of the freshman hit and hospitalized after falling into the road and being run over by a car. "That's on us. She would not have been there if the buses were connected to the school parking lot." Spearman nods in agreement after listening to Ryder.

Risso shows his support. "I think there are plenty of reasons this is a good idea aside from the obvious. That area could be used for more than just parking. We could hold fairs, band practice and other fun stuff. I see it as a win-win."

745 PM: The board approves the project unanimously. Construction will start on Monday, Jan. 4. The board adjourns the meeting.

Notes on Story

Make notes on, next to and below the story about what you think the most important story from the meeting is, what is unimportant, and who should be quoted and help show the sides of the story.

Rationale

If subject-verb-object is the building block of any sentence, the lede is the building block of anything someone writes. No matter what structure, something resembling a hard-news lede will exist.

CLASS GOAL: We will demonstrate what the function of a lede is and the proper ways to write one.

INDIVIDUAL GOAL: I will write ledes to hard news stories.

Goals for Understanding

Students will understand & demonstrate

- Hard-news ledes should be about 30 words or less
- Ledes should include the 5Ws & H most relevant to readers
- Start with the most important 5Ws & H
- Be specific but without being too detailed

Overview & Timeline

This lesson is designed to be completed in one, 45-minute class period with students split into groups of four.

Lesson includes

- Warm up activity/preactivity assessment
- Direct instruction
- Cooperative learning activity
- Closing/post-activity assessment

Materials Needed

- "Lede Writing Instructional Sheets" cut for each group
- "Group Lede Writing Scenarios" for each student
- "Individual Lede Writing Scenarios" for each student
- "Copy Editing Ledes" for each student

Day 1

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Show Slides 2 & 3 of the slideshow and have students individually complete the activity silently with a 5-minute time limit. Then, direct students to go around their group explaining and justifying each of their results using the round-robin method for 20 seconds per student. Use a timer application or website to show the students how much time is left. Audibly signal when it is time to switch group members. Slide 4 includes a suggested answer.

ACTIVITY: Have each student in the group take one of the "Lede Writing Instructional Sheets", read it silently for 1-2 minutes, and spend 30 seconds each going in a round-robin fashion to explain what they read to their classmates.

Give each group a copy of the "Group Lede Writing Scenarios". Each student should write a lede for one of the four scenarios. Give students 5 minutes to read, analyze, and write their lede.

Then, have students pass their ledes to the left in the group, each person making one edit of any type. If the person sees no error, they can make a note about what they thought the writer did well. However, the teacher should warn students to be extra picky when editing and not to forget to check for AP Style: spelling, capitalization, abbreviations, numerals, word usage and punctuation. They should continue to rotate until all the ledes have passed through each group member twice.

Have the original student write a revised lede using the notes their peers provided. Then, have groups switch papers with another group to revise one another's ledes in the same way as the first — students make an edit on the new lede and rotate until all group members have seen each lede twice before passing the ledes back to the original group.

This can move to the next step or continue with new groups switching until the teacher is satisfied the edits are effective.

Let the entire process above last no more than 20 minutes. Slide 5 recaps concepts.

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT: Give students the "Individual Lede Writing Scenarios" and have them write a lede for each scenario. They should use the feedback they got on the first two ledes to help guide them to well-written ledes on the four in front of them.

EXIT TICKET: Give each student a slip from the "Copy Editing Ledes" that the students should line edit themselves and make suggestions on better ledes. They will turn both individual assessments in.

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Always: Who, What, Where & When

LEDE WRITING

What's in a Lede?

Any lede or paragraph that recaps the big story needs a few pieces of information: Who is doing what, where and when. Regardless of how much space you have, this is key.

When any one of these is missing, the sentence is missing key information VITAL to understanding what's doing on.

Bad Model

MISSING WHO: Someone will be the new principal of the high school Thursday.

MISSING WHAT: Dr. Sanjay Das will important to the high school Thursday.

MISSING WHEN: Dr. Sanjay Das will be the new high school principal.

MISSING WHERE: Dr. Sanjay Das will be the new principal Thursday.

Good Model

Dr. Sanjay Das will be the new principal of the high school starting Thursday.

Sometimes: Why & How

LEDE WRITING

Good to Know

When the who, what, when and where are short enough, it is great to include the "why" of the news event and "how" if it isn't obvious. Sometimes the how and what are the same. ("Football is playing in a game..." is what & how.)

May Be Needed

When the action being taken does not seem obviously newsworthy, the why or how may be a requirement.

Students must wear an ID on school grounds starting Monday (first 4 W's) because of a new policy (how) after an adult posing as a student walked into the building last week (why).

Are the Why & How Vital to Know?

WHO: Principal

WHAT: Banning cellphones

WHEN: Tomorrow

WHERE: At school

HOW: Making a rule

WHY: Because she felt it is necessary for good education

Thoughts?

The reason why probably matters less than what's happening and can be explained later. The how is sort of obvious and would just make the story longer and likely already be in a quote somewhere.

Are the Why & How Vital to Know?

WHO: Track team

WHAT: Holding a parent meeting

WHEN: Tomorrow

WHERE: At school

HOW: Called the meeting last night

WHY: The coaches may dissolve the team due to poor sportsmanship

Thoughts?

The how and why are much more interesting than the fact a meeting is taking place. In this case, they **MUST** be in the lede of the story or you are burying the lede too deep in the story.

Which Goes First?

LEDE WRITING

Lead with the Most Reader Interest

What will people care about? Lead your lede with that and they will want to keep reading on in the story. Imagine this boring start with the interesting end.

FFA adviser Carrie Ann Powers will host a meeting Thursday for all members of the club in the meat-processing lab via virtual reality to watch her dissect an adult swine using VR and AR technology.

BETTER: *To show students an adult-swine dissection through the world of virtual and augmented reality, FFA adviser Carrie Ann Powers will host a meeting for all members Thursday in the meat-processing lab.*

Thoughts?

I have to be 24 words into the first lede before I get to the reason we decided to do the story to begin with. Flip the order of the sentence to start with the why and how, then explain the other W's.

Fix It!

The school board will meet at the administration building at 7 p.m. to take a vote on canceling all sports for the remainder of the season after a series of viral hazing rituals spread across TikTok last month.

Details & Attribution

LEDE WRITING

Goldilocks Rule

Write just enough detail to give the readers the basics without overwhelming them with detail. Otherwise, they may stop reading from being overwhelmed with information. Save some detail for later on.

EXAMPLE: *After three golf team members were busted last week for drinking at a tournament, stealing a golf cart and crashing into a tree, the Mothers Against*

Drunk Driving proposed a lifetime ban from high school sports for students that engage in drug and alcohol abuse at school-sponsored events, which will be discussed at a community meeting being held at the school Monday.

INSTEAD: *After student golfers drank alcohol at a tournament last week, the community will discuss a permanent ban on students caught using illegal at a community meeting Monday.*

Attribute

The information in the lede should be attributed to a source, especially if that information would raise eyebrows. Put the attribution at the end of the sentence.

NO ATTRIBUTION: *The boys bathrooms have been wrecked beyond repair.*

ATTRIBUTED: *The boys bathrooms have been wrecked beyond repair, according to lead custodian Mel Blanch.*

Group Lede Writing Scenarios

NEWS WRITING UNIT

INSTRUCTIONS: Discuss with your group members and decide who will write which lede. Write a lede based off the information below.

NAME _____

Scenario 1

Burglars broke into the high school. Police are still searching for the suspects. The suspects stole 10 laptops, 14 Chromebooks, candy from a teacher's desk, 27 dry-erase markers, and all the hot dogs in the kitchen. The suspects were wearing black masks and hoodies. They knocked over a "Do Not Slip" sign and spray painted an Exit sign black. One was seen on camera laughing at the others. The burglary happened on Thursday, 9/30 of this year about 11 o'clock at night.

Scenario 2

The high school will have a pep rally fundraiser. Only students with tickets are allowed to attend. Tickets are on sale in the cafeteria for \$1. There are a maximum of 900 students who can attend due to limited space in the gym. Previously, no pep rally had ever cost money to attend. The money will go toward senior prom and is being hosted by senior class officers. The pep rally will be Tuesday, 10/7 in Gym B. The theme of the pep rally is "Blackout" and all students are encouraged to bring glow-in-the-dark material and clothing.

Scenario 3

Cityville Police Department held a press conference on Friday, 12/3 at 4 in the afternoon. A hippo walked into the school and broke the kneecaps of 24 students. There were no deaths reported. The feral hippo was raised in town right down the road from the school. The hippo is still on the loose. Police issued a citywide alert. The victims tried to pet the hippo before it tackled them. Damage from the hippo attack totals \$130,000.

Scenario 4

The drill team won the state championship. The state championship was in Cityville last month. There are 45 members and two instructors on the team. The team is judged on performance, technique and creativity. Two dancers had to sit out because they were ineligible. Drill team members now qualified for the national competition. It will be in Orlando next week. The team will fly to the competition and stay in a low-cost hotel.

Lede for Scenario _____

Lede for Scenario _____

Individual Lede Writing Scenarios

NEWS WRITING UNIT

INSTRUCTIONS: Write a one-sentence lede for each story below.

NAME _____

Scenario 1

GudStuf Co. maintains the vending machines, cafeteria and concession stand options. Due to a lack of federal regulations, the teachers lounge has unhealthy, sugary drinks and snacks. Student Council met yesterday. Officers are asking the principal to move the student vending machines to places further from the cafeteria so they may be stocked with items similar to the teachers lounge. Items would cost between 25 cents and \$1.50. Cafeteria lunch costs \$1.25. The money made would go toward the student activity fund. The Future Dieticians Association opposes the idea.

Lede

Scenario 2

Junior Terry Perks built his first computer two months ago. The first action he took was to build a video game, which he released a month later. The game is based on disinformation circulating around social media with the goal of causing the most damage. He got inspiration from similar games about plagues and warfare. A major game developer bought the rights to the game on Tuesday. The contract was for \$1.4 million. Terry plans on donating \$400,000 to the school to set up a scholarship fund and to pay for the computer science program to get a new lab.

Lede

Scenario 3

Students in the honors government class went to Washington, D.C. There are 31 students in the class. The teacher's name is Jacob Schmidt. The class visited the Capital to watch President Joe Biden formally nominate Appellate Court Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the U.S. Supreme Court. The ceremony took place Friday, 2/25. Schmidt got the idea from another teacher in the district who brough their students to the last inauguration. Each student paid \$500 to go.

Lede

Scenario 4

The school library has more than 20,000 books, magazines and reference material. Members of the public have been debating about the appropriateness of some books for high-school students. Topics in question include LGBTQ+ and race relations. A parent group submitted a petition to the school board Wednesday. The petition would ban any book that mentions either subject. The school board will vote on the petition Monday. Board members have not taken a side.

Lede

Copy Editing Ledes

LEDE WRITING

Edit This!

Copy edit the sentence below using your knowledge of lede writing, spelling, capitalization, abbreviations, numerals, word usage and punctuation.

Spartans win golf district

It's a great day to be a Cityville Spartan! On March 19th at the cityville country club, the Cityville Highschool golf taem competed at the district tournament. The team one the championship by 7 strokes over their rivals Townston Titans and advanced to region.

Copy Editing Ledes

LEDE WRITING

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Rationale

There are story formats and complex topics that require more information than a one-line, hard-news lede. To give the reader a sense of context and “why am I reading this now?”, you should provide a nut graf when the situation calls for it.

CLASS GOAL: We will understand when and how to write a nut graf to expand upon a lede.

INDIVIDUAL GOAL: I will write a lede and a nut graf using my understanding of the basic concepts.

Goals for Understanding

Students will understand & demonstrate

- Nut grafts should be used when a lede does not adequately inform readers of vital information about why they are reading a story at that time, or when the lede would be confusing without more information to supplement.
- Nut grafts contain information similar to, but not repetitive of, that which is in the lede.
- Nut grafts can also be historical background that might clue in new readers as to why a story is newsworthy to the community.
- Nut grafts are found in most journalistic stories and are structured similarly to a lede for non-hard-news story structures.

Overview & Timeline

This lesson is designed for one, 45-minute class period with students split into groups of four.

Lesson includes

- Warm up activity/pre-activity assessment
- Direct instruction
- Cooperative learning activity
- Closing/post-activity assessment

Materials Needed

- “Nut Graf Instructional Sheets” cut for each group
- “Nut Graf Practice Cards” cut
- “Example Reporter Notes” for each student. This was also used during the Inverted Pyramid lesson plan.

Day 1

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Show Slides 2 & 3 of the slideshow and have students individually complete the activity with a 2-minute time limit. Then, direct students to go around their group explaining and justifying each of their results using the round-robin method for 20 seconds per student. Use a timer application or website to show the students how much time is left. Audibly signal when it is time to switch group members and ensure everyone is talking. Slide 4 has a suggested answer the teacher can use to preview the lesson.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY: Have each student in the group take one of the “Nut Graf Writing Instructional Sheets”, read it silently for 1-2 minutes, and spend 30 seconds each going in a round-robin fashion to explain what they read to their classmates.

Then, give each student one of the cards from the “Nut Graf Practice Cards”. These are examples of ledes. Students should mix around the room while music plays until the music stops before pairing with a person near them. They will quiz and coach each other until both have it correct. They will continue to do this until all students have circulated or the teacher is satisfied with the results.

Conduct a round-robin format discussion with students going one at a time to explain what they saw, what they did right, and what they did wrong.

Use Slide 5 to explain to students what they should have learned through the lesson thus far.

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING ACTIVITY: Have all students look at the “Example Reporter Notes” that they already attempted to write a story for. They will write a new lede and nut graf — regardless of how well their first attempt went — using the same information as before. They can use their notes from before or complete a new sheet depending on teacher preference.

If time allows, have students go around once in a round robin with each student reading and making a comment about what could be done better with the author’s lede and nut graf.

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Use for Complex Stories

NUT GRAF

More Info, Please

A nut graf is a 5Ws and H paragraph that expands upon a lede that didn't include all the required details. Not all stories need them. A preview of the choir concert is straightforward whereas a discussion over a hotly debated policy change may require another paragraph at the top.

Needs More Info

The library's most popular book may soon be unavailable.

NOTE: The lede is good because it sums up the information with the most reader interest in a concise, easy-to-understand way without being bogged down by detail.

Here It Is

(In a new paragraph after the "Needs More Info" lede.)

After controversy over critical race theory, a local parents group is petitioning the library to remove "All American Boys" from shelves at the board meeting Friday

Answering the Important Questions

NUT GRAF

Wait, What?

If readers are left wondering what exactly they just read after the lede, you hooked them. However, you need to provide them with information they need in a nut graf.

HUH?: Cats closed school this week.

OH OK: A herd of feral cats infested the roof over the weekend, prompting district officials to close classrooms while the cats can be relocated to the animal shelter.

Which Needs a Nut Graf?

The varsity football team is 8–4 heading into a do-or-die match against the Spartanville Hippies next week in Columbus.

The varsity football team will not play football next year.

Thoughts

FIRST LEDE: There's nothing really else we need to know out of this paragraph. Football is going to do football things. Great. We can jump straight into a quote to get to the interesting parts of the story.

SECOND LEDE: HUH? Why? Says who? What happened? Why not? So many questions. A nut graf is 100% needed if this is your lede.

Use in Updates

NUT GRAF

Get It Up, Get It Right

When news is unfolding in real time — the real reason for an inverted pyramid story — throwing news online quickly is a must. Sometimes a story is maybe only three paragraphs at first and gets longer as more information comes up.

Nut graf works well in these scenarios.

ORIGINAL STORY: *Police arrested two parents at school today after bringing weapons and pointing them at students, according to Principal Terry Toma.*

"The two individuals violated state law today by threatening student safety," he said. "We have taken all necessary precautions and police have secured the facilities."

There isn't much information to be had in this story initially. Rumors will spread like wildfire on the internet the longer accurate information is withheld from the public.

Is it nice to have quotes, background, names, criminal backgrounds, police quotes and more? Yes. However, some situations don't allow it until later.

More Information

Eventually, that information comes out and your previous lede will (usually) become all or part your nut graf and the updated information will become a new top (lede) for the story.

Two parents accused of drunkenly waving weapons at students and faculty in the parking lot face state felony charges.

Police arrested Jim and Pam Halpert at the front entrance of the school yesterday after bringing two pistols, pointing them at students and laughing from their car, according to CPD Lt. Don Juan.

Use for Historical Background

NUT GRAF

Let Everyone In On The History

Occasionally news breaks that does not immediately click with younger readers or those not familiar with the area's traditions or history. These require a nut graf to help those readers understand the context. Otherwise, it's a weird inside joke.

EXAMPLE: *Sam Houston State University administrators will hold a funeral service for Tripod on campus Wednesday.*

Who is Tripod? Why would a university hold a funeral service? Why would the funeral service be on the campus grounds? None of this makes sense!

More Information

Depending on the publication (like a statewide publication), it may be more important to focus on who Tripod was than what happened (for the school paper).

FIXED EXAMPLE: *Sam Houston State University administrators will hold a funeral service for Tripod on campus Wednesday.*

The stray, mustard-colored dog has been the beloved, unofficial mascot of the Bearkat community for 14 years — known for his genial nature and school spirit at pep rallies, homecoming parades and football games. He got the name Tripod for his lame left-front paw that veterinarians were unable to heal.

That Makes Sense

Without knowing who Tripod was, it was impossible for an outsider to understand the gravity of the situation for the school community. With the nut graf, they get it.

What Does Your School Care About?

Think about the traditions, history and other unwritten rules your school has.

What would students be upset if the school banned, got rid of, or canceled?

How would you explain that to an outsider?

Card 1

Answer

Needs a nut graf.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 2

Answer

Needs a nut graf.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 3

Answer

Needs a nut graf.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 4

Answer

Needs a nut graf.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 5

Answer

Needs a nut graf.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 6

Answer

Needs a nut graf.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 7

Answer

Needs a nut graf.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 8

Answer

Needs a nut graf.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 9

Answer

No nut graf needed.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 10

Answer

No nut graf needed.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 11

Answer

No nut graf needed.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 12

Answer

No nut graf needed.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 13

Answer

No nut graf needed.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 14

Answer

No nut graf needed.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 15

Answer

No nut graf needed.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 3

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

Walking down the street covered in grime, dirt and wet from rain, junior Adam Savage noticed his ticket out.

Card 2

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

The basketball team may soon get a new gym.

Card 1

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

The dance started — and ended — with a bang.

Card 6

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

City residents might be without water depending on the outcome of a city council decision.

Card 5

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

The curtain rose but the audience was absent. Theater teacher Maddy Bowchu was not surprised.

Card 4

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

Campus administration has one goal: get more students ready for college, the military and careers.

Card 9

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

No students will need to take a final exam after administrators canceled them due to COVID-19 related concerns last week.

Card 8

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

After tripping down the stairs last week, freshman Phil Harmonic got the luckiest break of his life.

Card 7

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

Students should be worried about their privacy on school servers.

Card 12

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

Yearbook delivery may be delayed after a computer error caused all the files to be deleted yesterday.

Card 11

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

Anyone interested for running for a class officer position has until Friday to turn in applications.

Card 10

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

Seniors are ecstatic Student Council will put on the first homecoming dance in three years next week.

Card 15

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

School is closed until Friday after a busted gas pipe led to a leak that flooded rooms with carbon monoxide.

Card 14

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

One student is injured after wrecking their bike into the baseball field after their brakes failed Monday.

Card 13

Does It Need a Nutgraf?

The fishing club won its third-straight, state championship Monday.

Rationale

The lede and nut graf are easy enough. What really separates a story from the others is the quality of quotes and transitions. Transitions are the thread by which we weave the quotes and extra information in to provide context to the reader and make the story flow.

CLASS GOAL: We will understand what a transitional phrase is and the options for how to write them.

INDIVIDUAL GOAL: I will write four different types of transitional phrases based off a set of reporter notes.

Goals for Understanding

Students will understand & demonstrate

- Transitions should link to quotes or informational paragraphs that follow without repeating the quote.
- Transitions can be facts and information, paraphrased quotes, and/or filled with small details that help paint a picture for a reader.
- Transitions should not be paraphrased quotes that would have been better as a direct quote.

Overview & Timeline

This lesson is designed to be completed in one, 45-minute class period with students split into groups of four.

Lesson includes

- Warm up activity/pre-activity assessment
- Direct instruction
- Cooperative learning activity
- Closing/post-activity assessment

Materials Needed

- "Writing Transitions Instructional Cards" for each group
- "Writing Transitions Practice Worksheet" for each student

Day 1

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Show Slides 2 & 3 of the slideshow and have students individually complete the activity with a 2-minute time limit. Then, direct students to go around their group explaining and justifying each of their results using the round-robin method for 20 seconds per student. Use a timer application or website to show the students how much time is left. Audibly signal when it is time to switch group members and ensure everyone is talking. Slide 4 has the suggested answer the teacher can use to preview the lesson.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY: Have each student in the group take one of the "Writing Transitions Instructional Sheets", read it silently for 1-2 minutes, and spend 30 seconds each going in a round-robin fashion to explain what they read to their classmates.

Each group should take a copy of the "Writing Transitions Worksheet". The group will take turns starting with a randomly selected person. The first person will read the selection of text out loud from the lede to the transition. The second person in the group will discuss the link between the transition and quote, then explain why they feel it is strong or weak. The third person should describe if the transition is based on fact, history, a summary of emotion, or a paraphrased quote that should really have been in direct quotes. The fourth person will discuss if it repeats the direct quote or not.

Students will then mix around the room and find a new group. They will reread the transition and quote from the Group Worksheet and write a new transition based on what they learned from their original groups. They should have done their best to change groups. They should discuss the transition as a group until they have a unanimously agreed upon example. They should elect a group leader to explain which type of transition it is and why they chose that. There may be multiple right answers. Assure students there is no perfect way to achieve this. There are ways for a transition to be better than another and for them to be wrong, but not perfect. When they return to their original groups, they will discuss what they ran into issues with in their other group before writing the second transition in the second slot.

Slide 5 has a recap of the concepts.

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING ACTIVITY: Students should complete the bottom half of the "Writing Transitions Practice" worksheet as a formative assessment of individual understanding of transition writing before turning it in.

References

- Etwell, J., Balmeo, M., Austin, E., & Hamm R. (2021). *Journalism: Publishing Across Media*. The Goodheart-Willcox Company.
- Froke, P., & Bajak, F. (2020). *The Associated Press Stylebook*. Basic Books.
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- Stovall, J. (2009). *Writing for the Mass Media*. Pearson.

Go with the Flow

WRITING TRANSITIONS

Make Transitions & Quotes After Relate

Transitions (paragraphs between quotes) should relate to the quotes that follow.

Stories should flow, which means the story easily moves from one paragraph to the next. Stories shouldn't feel like a disjointed list of information.

Bad Model

The Cityville Fair & Rodeo will take place this week and feature food, fun and family activities.

"The prices of food are too high," Mary Jo said. "I wouldn't go to the fair because of that."

Good Model

While the fair features rides, games and snacks, the expense is off-putting to some.

"The prices of food are too high," Mary Jo said. "I wouldn't go to the fair because of that."

No Juice; Just Facts

WRITING TRANSITIONS

Factual Transitions

Transitions (paragraphs between quotes) are the place for putting hard facts in stories, not quotes. The quotes after factual transitions should be a person's thoughts related to that fact, which could include analysis, anecdotes or an opinion.

Fact-based quotes are BORINGGGGG.

Multiple Transitions

In particularly data-heavy stories, you can use multiple transitional paragraphs to explain it in **reader-friendly language**. Experts tend to use lots of jargon (industry-specific words) that readers do not understand. Do not limit your writing to a formula of one paragraph then one quote ad nauseum. Do what makes sense.

Model

The new policy bans all shorts that are shorter than 2 inches past fingertip length.

"That's unfair," Bobby Boi said. "I have freakishly long arms."

Details, Details, Details

WRITING TRANSITIONS

Give Me the Details

Solid transitions (paragraphs between quotes) provide the details that help understand or imagine.

Readers need necessary details to paint a picture in their mind, understand how two actions relate, and how past events play into current events. Details matter.

Weak Model

The girl was very happy when her parents bought her some things including a lot of stuffed animals.

"She is so cute and fluffy," Kim Schmidt said. "I love her so much."

Better Model

The girl, 7, was ecstatic when her parents, Bob and Karen, bought her 47 stuffed animals including a white lion she named Linda.

"She is so cute and fluffy," Kim Schmidt said. "I love her so much."

Looking Back to History

WRITING TRANSITIONS

Historic Transitions

There are stories that very much matter, but new readers would not understand context because they are either too young, new to an area or unfamiliar with the topic.

Use transitions (paragraphs between quotes) to fill in gaps for readers who may not fully understand why the story matters.

Weak Model

Some people do not like the proposed change to the driving requirements.

"All of us old folk are heavily impacted," John Greo said. "I cannot support it."

Better Model

Some remembered a similar, 1950s policy that prevented most 60-plus year olds from driving.

"All of us old folk will be heavily impacted," John Greo said. "I cannot support it."

Summarize It For Me

WRITING TRANSITIONS

Paraphrased Quotes

When most people talk about their analysis or opinion, they begin with a sentence summarizing their thoughts and/or facts that can be used as transitions (paragraphs between quotes).

Paraphrasing is where the writer rewords what the person said in a similar way without losing the context or repeating what is already in the quote.

Example Quote Block

Firefighter Patty Milt: "The new fire truck is amazing. (summary of opinion) It has space for six crew and tank of 10,000 gallons. (fact) I can't wait to see how many more houses get saved because of this. That's the point. (good quote)"

The summary & fact can be my transition, leaving the better part to directly quote.

Model

Firefighter Patty Milt said she is amazed by the new fire truck including the space for six more firefighters and a 10,000-gallon water tank.

"I can't wait to see how many more houses get saved because of this," she said. "That's the point."

Writing Transitions Worksheet

NEWS WRITING UNIT

Instructions

Below is an example of a lede, nut graf, first quote, and transition to a second quote. Your group will analyze the second transition to think about the different ways a nut graf could go wrong to see where the error is located.

Endangered bats infest cafeteria, forcing weeklong lunch shutdown

Lunch will take place in classrooms after a colony of rare bats has taken up its home in the ceiling above the cafeteria.

About 125 little brown bats — an endangered species native to the northern area of the United States — will have to be moved to a safe location and the area be sanitized before students can safely return to the cafeteria.

“The bats must love our school as much as we do,” Superintendent Daniel Brown said. “Unfortunately, their status as an endangered species means we cannot quickly remove them in the same way we might remove less rare types. It is pretty cool to see the process of how they remove them to protect the species though.”

There are a lot of very small details the district had to do for the bats to move to the place, according to animal control officer Lisa Pikes.

“There are lots of very tiny details and red tape the district has to cut for the bats to move,” Pikes said. “When you are dealing with a protected population, you have to be careful not to disturb the colony. The sheer number of these animals makes this an amazing find, even if it is an inconvenience.”

FFA set for first city fair since pandemic struck

FFA members will compete this weekend in the Cityville Fair & Rodeo for the first time since 2020.

“COVID-19 really took its toll on agriculture,” sponsor Jessica Smith said. “Students had to cull animals that would otherwise have been sold at the fair for scholarship money. These kids had to start over almost immediately in order to be ready for this move.”

(Write four different transitions for this paragraph below using the additional information provided about the event.)

“All our hard work is about to pay off when I never thought it would,” senior Patricia Clarke said. “So many of my friends were devastated by the sudden canceling that happened because of COVID-19. I get to go to college now because of this girl.”

Story Information to Help Construct Ledes

Cityville Fair & Rodeo consistently provided scholarship opportunities to students by allowing donors and business owners to purchase animals from the show. In 2020, the fair ceased operations right before the livestock show. This was the first year the fair had enough entries to start the youth show back up. Sponsor Jessica Smith said more than 40 Cityville High School students are showing animals. The categories students entered include animals like cows, ducks, sheep, chickens, goats and rabbits. Senior Patricia Clarke: “My heifer, Bacon, and I have been hoping this moment would come. All our hard work is about to pay off when I never thought it would. So many of my friends were devastated by the sudden canceling that happened because of COVID-19. I get to go to college now because of this girl.” Bacon is a 4-year-old Hereford with the distinct red body, and white face, underline and legs.

Historic Transition

Detailed Transition

Fact-Based Transition

Paraphrased Transition

Rationale

People are not always the best interview subjects. Most people are nervous and most reporters feel the same. As a result, people resort to boring quotes to get in and get out. That's a fast way to get a boring publication. Choose good quotes only and people will want to read.

CLASS GOAL: We will learn types of quotes to avoid and those to seek out.

INDIVIDUAL GOAL: I will use my knowledge of quote and information selection to analyze a transcript to choose good information to include in a story, then write the story and edit another person's work.

Goals for Understanding

Students will understand & demonstrate

- Good quotes are emotional, opinionated or provide eyewitness testimony — all of which in a way that would lose its flavor if a reporter paraphrased the quote.
- Boring quotes focus on facts or are a summary of how they feel.
- Avoid choosing information or quotes that were already said or included somewhere else to avoid just using filler words and information.

Overview & Timeline

This lesson is designed to be completed in two, 45-minute class periods with students split into groups of four, but may be completed in one depending on class length.

Lesson includes

- Warm up activity/preactivity assessment
- Direct instruction
- Cooperative learning activity
- Closing/post-activity assessment

Materials Needed

- "Choosing Good Quotes Instructional Cards" cut for each group
- "Choosing Good Quotes Practice Cards", printed front and back, cut for class
- "Sample Reporter Notes — Vending Machines" for each student to use

Day 1

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Show Slides 2 & 3 of the slideshow and have students individually complete the activity with a 2-minute time limit. Then, direct students to go around their group explaining and justifying each of their results using the round-robin method for 20 seconds per student. Use a timer application or website to show the students how much time is left. Audibly signal when it is time to switch group members and ensure everyone is talking. Slide 4 has the suggested answer the teacher can use to preview the lesson.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY: Have each student in the group take one of the "Choosing Good Quotes Instructional Sheets", read it silently for 1-2 minutes, and spend 30 seconds each going in a round-robin fashion to explain what they read to their classmates.

Then, give each student one of the cards from the "Choosing Good Quotes Practice Cards". These are examples of quotes a student might use in a publication. Students should mix around the room while music plays until the music stops before pairing with a person near them. They will quiz and coach each other until both have it correct. They will continue to do this until all students have circulated or the teacher is satisfied with the results.

Conduct a round-robin format discussion with students going one at a time to explain what they saw, what they did right, and what they did wrong.

Use Slide 5 to recap what students should have learned.

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING ACTIVITY: Have students read through the "Sample Reporter Notes" silently and independently. They should label each sentence of the quotes as either: "stating fact", "summary of opinion", "boring", or "could be used".

Day 2

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Have students discuss with their group which quote statements in the transcript they believed were good quotes and why.

PRACTICE ACTIVITY: Have students write a 200-word-minimum story in 30 minutes using the facts and interviews provided to them. They should have at least one, fact-based transition using details and information pulled from a quote, and at least one paraphrased transition using summarized opinion from the quotes.

NOTE: This should go much faster than the first time they wrote a story. Assure students that 200 words is not an insurmountable task in 30 minutes.

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING ACTIVITY: Have students trade with another student and copy edit each other's work after printing out the stories, or trade hand-written papers. Editors should primarily focus on quote choice, but not forget all the AP Style and grammar from before. (Note: Students should get used to typing on a keyboard. Some choose to write by hand because they are scared of not knowing how to operate actual computers.) Once the work has been copy edited, the teacher can either have the edited work turned in, or have students make corrections.

References

- Etwell, J., Balmeo, M., Austin, E., & Hamm R. (2021). *Journalism: Publishing Across Media*. The Goodheart-Willcox Company.
- Froke, P., & Bajak, F. (2020). *The Associated Press Stylebook*. Basic Books.
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- Strunk, W., & White, E. (2000). *The Elements of Style*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Stovall, J. (2009). *Writing for the Mass Media*. Pearson.

So Emotional

CHOOSING QUOTES & INFORMATION

Find Emotion

Avoid quotes that summarize a person's emotion and look for moments where someone's words are emotional.

Humans relate to other human emotion: anger, disappointment, joy, excitement, sadness, mourning, loss, optimism. This makes readers understand.

Weak Model

"I was excited," Larry Plopper said. "We had fun and a good time."

BORING. What was specifically exciting? Was it what you were expecting? What is fun? What made it fun? What was the good time? What made it good?

No one feels the same excitement he did.

Better Model

"The roller coasters made my heart pound as I walked closer to them," Larry Plopper said. "I thought my chest was going to burst when we reached the top of the coaster. The adrenaline rush was so intense I felt like I was walking on air."

In My Their Opinion

CHOOSING QUOTES & INFORMATION

Explaining Opinion

Quotes that focus on opinion should not just be a summary of opinion. Save that for a transition or leave it out. The quote should make the reader obviously know how the person interviewed felt about the topic.

Think: Why do they feel that way? If the quote doesn't give insight, it's weak.

Weak Model

"I do not like the idea of vaping," Jose Alfonze said. "I just think it's bad for you."

WHO CARES? Many people don't like vaping. What makes this opinion so special? Why does he think it's bad?

Better Model

"Vaping is one reason I can never use the bathrooms between class periods," Jose Alfonze said. "Too many kids are piled up in the stalls smoking that I have to wait to pee until class starts. Then, I can't always go because of the teacher."

Eyewitness Testimony

CHOOSING QUOTES & INFORMATION

A Story Only They Can Tell

Quote interviewees who have such a way with words that the quote would lose its unique vibe if the reporter wrote it. It's like cleaning a chocolate-covered peanut so much before eating that most of the chocolate falls off. It's still a peanut, but with less flavor because you sanitized it.

Story Told By Quote

"We were eating dinner when we heard a bang so loud, I thought one of our guns went off. It shattered a window and knocked pictures off the walls. It wasn't until about an hour later that we realized it was from the plant blowing up."

Story Told By Reporter

The man first heard the explosion while eating dinner. He did not find out the factory blew up until an hour later.

BORING: The quote loses the series of events and way he describes the sound and what he witnessed. When people talk like that, let them tell the story.

Cut the Boring & Irrelevant

CHOOSING QUOTES & INFORMATION

No. Boring. Quotes.

Quotes are not filler words. They exist to tell stories.

Do not ever include a quote "just because" or because it is the only one you have.

Quotes add that little extra spice that humans sprinkle on the facts and figures of the human experience.

Weak Model

"The game was good," coach Barry Peye said. "We worked hard and played as a team."

Good for you, coach. The other team did, too. Why did they lose/win? What did the result mean for the team? Was there any strategy that didn't work? So DULL.

Better Model

"Our offensive line really stepped up its game tonight," coach Barry Peye said. "Tonight's win can be attributed to those guys plowing through defense. We'll make playoffs if they keep this performance up."

Don't Be Redundant

CHOOSING QUOTES & INFORMATION

You Already Said That

When picking quotes and information, choose new perspectives, information and emotions the reader has not already seen.

If an idea gets repeated, delete or replace with a new side of the story that hasn't been seen. This is especially true of quotes that repeat what was said in transitions: One has to change.

Weak Model

Junior Carrie On loves the new dress with six pockets.

"I really love that new, six-pocket dress," she said. "The company finally understands what we say about functionality of dresses."

Better Model

CHANGE THE TRANSITION: Junior Carrie On is one of many people planning on buying the dress.

"I really love that new, six-pocket dress," she said. "The company finally understands what we say about functionality of dresses."

OR, DELETE THE REPEAT: Junior Carrie On loves the new dress with six pockets.

"The company finally understands what we say about functionality of dresses," she said.

Card 1

Answer

Good quote. It would lose meaning if the reporter paraphrased it.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 4

Answer

Good quote. It would lose meaning if the reporter paraphrased it.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 7

Answer

Good quote. It would lose meaning if the reporter paraphrased it.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 10

Answer

Good quote. It would lose meaning if the reporter paraphrased it.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 13

Answer

Good quote. It would lose meaning if the reporter paraphrased it.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 2

Answer

Boring quote. It is a summary of emotion.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 5

Answer

Boring quote. It is a summary of emotion.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 8

Answer

Boring quote. It is a summary of opinion.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 11

Answer

Boring quote. It is a summary of opinion.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 14

Answer

Boring quote. It is a summary of emotion.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 3

Answer

Boring quote. It is just a statement of fact.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 6

Answer

Boring quote. It is just a statement of fact.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 9

Answer

Boring quote. It is just a statement of fact.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 12

Answer

Boring quote. It is just a statement of fact.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 15

Answer

Boring quote. It is just a statement of fact.

Remember To Coach

If your partner is struggling, help them to find the right answer WITHOUT giving away the right answer at first. Let them struggle some.

Card 3

Good or Bad Quote?

I walked down the road to the store
and fell in a puddle along the way. My
pants got muddy.

Card 2

Good or Bad Quote?

It made me really happy.

Card 1

Good or Bad Quote?

The bolt of lightning shot through me
and lit me up. My hair was fried from
tip to tail.

Card 6

Good or Bad Quote?

My mom and dad are 15 years apart
in age. They met after she left college
and they started working together.

Card 5

Good or Bad Quote?

We all played well as a team and
worked hard today.

Card 4

Good or Bad Quote?

Without teachers like her, students
like me would still be wandering the
halls looking for a safe space.

Card 9

Good or Bad Quote?

She gave out homework all last week.
We had to write these essays over
the start of World War I.

Card 8

Good or Bad Quote?

The policy is a good idea. I like it.

Card 7

Good or Bad Quote?

The horrendous bill would be a
travesty of historic proportions. We
will be paying for it for generations.

Card 12

Good or Bad Quote?

My mom bought me this little brown
hat I wore in the play. It was on sale
at the store next door.

Card 11

Good or Bad Quote?

I don't like seeing that type of
language on TV.

Card 10

Good or Bad Quote?

I cannot imagine what those poor
souls are going through in the darkest
of dark situations. My heart weeps.

Card 15

Good or Bad Quote?

I told her I wanted the toy. She
bought it for me the same day.

Card 14

Good or Bad Quote?

Seeing that makes me emotional and
want to cry.

Card 13

Good or Bad Quote?

My life is better off for having known
the joy of cooking. Hopefully I can
spread that happiness myself.

Sample Reporter Notes — Vending Machines

NEWS WRITING UNIT

INSTRUCTIONS: Go through each quote under each source's name. Mark each sentence as either F for "stating fact", S for "summary of opinion", B for "boring", and put brackets [] around the quotes that you would use as direct quotes in a story.

Story Information

Cityville High School has a school population of roughly 1,650 students in grades 9-12. The school is serviced by the GudStuf Co. for cafeteria, vending machine and concession stand options. Due to federal regulations, the student vending machines located near the cafeteria can only be stocked with healthy, and what many consider overpriced, snacks and drinks. The teachers lounge has no federal regulations and is stocked with popular snacks and drinks that have a lot of sugar and no healthy options.

The CHS Student Government came forward with a petition to move some vending machines to other locations in the school to allow for less-healthy, more-popular options for students. The proceeds from vending machines goes toward the general student activity fund. The student legislators argue that adding popular options can net more money for campus events and boost school pride. Other student groups have opposed the measure. Vending machines must abide by federal health guidelines. The cafeteria workers refill the machines twice a week after school is over. The Student Council says students should go to its website to read more about the petition and leave comments. The website is www.CityvilleStuGo.hs.

The student government will make its pitch to the school board Friday, March 4 at 7 p.m. You are writing for an edition of The Cityville High School Bugle to be distributed Tuesday, March 1.

Kyle Bannor, student government president

"Kids love unhealthy food. Considering the options we have in the vending machines, many students prefer to just bring a backpack full of snacks from home for less money. We're losing money unnecessarily simply because of vending machine placement and vendor contracts."

"Letting us move the machines to allow for more popular options keeps student money inside the building at competitive prices. This could allow us to use that money for more school-sponsored events. There's a sense of irony that Oreos can help students out at schools. I get that. But, it is true. We've heard from many students who'd rather just be able to have lots of options to eat because they already hate what we have."

"There has been a 40 percent drop in vending machine sales in the last nine years since the machines were moved to the cafeteria. That is \$8,600 a year in lost revenue that could have gone back to us."

Peter Gunn, president of CHS Future Dieticians Association

"This is another example where the dollar wants to trump student health. There's a reason the federal government restricts where and when unhealthy food can be had in a school environment. America is the fattest nation in the world. Heart disease is the leading cause of death. We live in one of the least healthy states in the nation. This proposal is well-intentioned but a very poor use of efforts. There are other ways of making money."

Cheryl Rappon, principal

"I am not taking a position on this issue for a specific reason. Our students have taken an issue to heart and there is a vibrant, well-mannered debate going on in our school. Both positions abide by the law and would both have good and bad consequences. I want this school environment to be created, fostered and led by students. What they eat and how they garner and spend student funds is just as important part of school culture as anything we adults can do. In my view, this is their situation to resolve among themselves."

China Limon, parent of a student

"When I was in school, we could eat whatever we want. I want my daughter to have the same choices I did. This country is based on the free market system. If we want to eat foods that clog our heart, so be it. I should have the choice."

Josh White, senior

"We've had terrible options in the vending machines since I was a freshman. I don't bring money to spend in the vending machines because there's nothing good to eat. I'd rather spend \$20 at Walmart for a weeks worth of snacks than spend a dollar on a bag of cardboard chips."

Carolyn Proxy, sophomore

"I don't mind what we have in the vending machines. We still have lunch and we're at school for about eight hours anyway. If they complain about it, just wait to go home and get something to eat. Or, you could sneak into the teachers lounge like I do. They have the better stuff anyway. Both of them are always unlocked."

Rationale

"How am I supposed to end the story?" is a question beginning journalism students ask with the reliability of a Swiss watch. Stories can't just end at any point in the story; otherwise, it won't feel

CLASS GOAL: We will learn techniques for finding a stopping point for stories.

INDIVIDUAL GOAL: I will write different types of endings for the same story, as well as write and edit a story using all of the news writing tools.

Goals for Understanding

Students will understand & demonstrate

- Stories should feel complete when they are done. Readers shouldn't be looking for the rest of the article.
- Stories can end on quotes that have a forward look and sometimes those that circle back to the past.
- Stories can end by providing contact information or other types of reader help to provide more information.
- Stories should not end by cheerleading or summarizing.

Overview & Timeline

This lesson is designed to be completed in two, 45-minute class periods with students split into groups of four, but may be completed in one depending on class length.

Lesson includes

- Warm up activity/pre-activity assessment
- Direct instruction
- Cooperative learning activity
- Closing/post-activity assessment

Materials Needed

- "Ending a Story Instructional Sheets" for each group
- "Example Story Ending" for each student & "Sample Reporter Notes — Vending Machines" from the quote selection lesson
- "Sample Reporter Notes — COVID Petition" for each student
- Class set of AP Stylebooks, physical or web-based. This lesson was designed using the 2020-2022 Associated Press Stylebook.

Day 1

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Show Slides 2 & 3 of the slideshow and have students individually complete the activity with a 2-minute time limit. Then, direct students to go around their group explaining and justifying each of their results using the round-robin method for 20 seconds per student. Use a timer application or website to show the students how much time is left. Audibly signal when it is time to switch group members and ensure everyone is talking. Slide 4 has the suggested answer the teacher can use to preview the lesson.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY: Have each student in the group take one of the "Ending a Story Instructional Sheets", read it silently for 1-2 minutes, and spend 30 seconds each going in a round-robin fashion to explain what they read to their classmates.

Then, hand each student a copy of the "Example Story Ending". They should read the story, then discuss the missing paragraph at the end. Each of the group members should write a different type of ending to the story (that they determine beforehand) using the "Sample Reporter Notes — Vending Machine". Once they finish, they should pass their papers around the table, writing the same ending.

After each student writes an ending, have them edit another person's work, coaching and critiquing them on what to improve. They should rotate the papers around with each student having time to critique and edit every other student's work.

Slide 5 has a recap of all the concepts.

EXIT TICKET/CLOSING ACTIVITY: Hand each student a copy of the "Sample Reporter Notes — COVID Petition". Explain they will be writing a full story using everything they have learned. Give the groups time to read the prompt and explain to each other in a round-robin format what they think the lede should be. All students should then write their ledes.

Day 2

WARM UP ACTIVITY: Have students swap ledes from the day before with another student and critique.

PRACTICE/CLOSING ACTIVITY/EXIT TICKET: Students should write the rest of the news article using the information they learned from the whole unit.

OPTIONS: Students should be able to edit one another's work and have a chance to revise their work before turning in what should be a clean piece of copy. The teacher may impose a shorter time and word limit on the article, extend the assignment to multiple days for editing and revising, or other methods that would allow students to be able to coach, edit and revise. The goal would be for the students, not the teacher, to do all of the coaching and correcting before the teacher ever touches a news article.

References

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Quotes About the Future

ENDING A STORY

Look Forward

A quote from someone involved that talks about future plans, hope, optimism, goals or any other thought about the future could be one way to end a story.

NOTE: The quote should be on feelings about the big picture of the future, not just their plans for grocery shopping.

Weak Model

"I am glad the doctors were able to save my life," she said. "They said I could go home as early as tomorrow or the next day."

Because the second sentence is a fact, the story would end on a flat note.

Better Model

"I am glad the doctors were able to save my life," she said. "They have inspired me to go into the medical field myself. If I can save one person's life like my situation, it will be worth it."

Quotes About the Past

ENDING A STORY

Look Back

Quotes about the past can end a story if they are powerful and discuss something that has not already been told or is doing so in a new way. Otherwise, readers will feel the redundancy.

Generally, try to use these to circle the story back to the tone of the beginning.

Weak Model

"The last time we had an earthquake like that was 1947," Gerry Atric said. "I learned a lot. It was the worst thing that happened to the city."

Better Model

"The last time we had an earthquake like that, I remember the tragedy the city felt," Gerry Atric said. "Although, the lessons I learned at that time still stick with me to this very day. Bittersweet, yes, but invaluable."

For More Information

ENDING A STORY

What Else?

When writing stories about events, business, entertainment and other topics that have more relevant information for people interested than could ever fit in a story, you can drop a paragraph at the end letting people know where they can go find more information for themselves.

Why Not More?

Some stories may be missing a key piece of information for good reason or tell readers what the publication is doing to find that extra piece of information that is missing. A paragraph explaining that is helpful, especially in breaking news.

Models

For more information, call 555-555-5555 or visit its website at www.CityvilleThreads.com.

The school board declined to comment for this story.

Don't Summarize nor Cheer

ENDING A STORY

Don't Repeat Yourself Don't Repeat Yourself

There is never a reason to restate what has already been stated. Unlike public speaking where summary ends are common, readers can go back to read what you wrote. Do not provide "In conclusion..." or "All-in-all..." endings.

Don't Cheer Them On

Stories will never end with "Go Panthers!" or any sort of hype statement meant to cheer on a team, person or school.

The cheerleaders have their job. Let them do it. Your job is to tell people what is going on in an unbiased manner. Yes, you are a part of the school and community, but objectivity is key.

Bad Models

The team will play Livingston next week. We wish them good luck!

As already stated, the Cityville City Council will meet next week to discuss the budget.

It's Over Already?

ENDING A STORY

Should Feel Complete

When you complete a story, read it top to bottom. As you finish reading, see if you are expecting for it to continue. If the story randomly ends, you can feel it.

Your reader should never ask the question: Where's the rest? Is that it?

If so, use another type of ending.

Weak Ending

The academic decathalon team will have their next match in Cityville on Saturday.

"I'm ready to go compete," Gabby Falcky said. "Last time, I missed a question on biochemistry."

Better Ending

The academic decathalon team will have their next match in Cityville on Saturday.

"I'm ready to go compete," Gabby Falcky said. "We want to prove to everyone we have what it takes."

INSTRUCTIONS: Write a 300- to 500-word news story using the inverted pyramid style of writing with a hard news lede. **NOTE:** Information written in the reporter notes below may not be written in AP Style.

Story Information

Cityville High School has a school population of roughly 1,500 students in grades 9-12. In the two weeks after winter break, nearly half of all faculty, staff and administrators were home sick with the Omicron variant of COVID-19. During the third week, 68% of students were absent compared to an average of 4% the year prior to Covid-19, according to attendance records. Throughout February, absentee rates dropped to the lowest point in school history with only 10 students, faculty and staff absent on average due to any illness. About 40% of students have received the first COVID-19 vaccine, according to a survey of 550 students conducted by the Bugle staff members at lunch.

As a result, a group of students is circulating a petition to remove all vaccine requirements going forward. Those students formed an unofficial club last week called Students for Reason that meets off campus at one of their houses. The group cites low absentee rates as a sign that vaccine mandates prolong exposure to viruses and that students have no say in control over what goes in their body. HOSA members have contested the new group's claims, saying the high school got lucky with how the virus spread to cause absentee rates to drop and that the science behind their petition is flawed. The petition has yet to be formally presented to the school board. Being an officially recognized group would allow Students for Reason to meet on campus with an adult adviser, have a school bank account, fundraise, advertise and recruit on campus, and use school materials for club functions.

Students for Reason's officers filed a request with campus administrators to become a fully recognized student organization. HOSA — a student group of future health care providers — issued a statement advocating the group's petition be denied. Principal Juana Guzman will make the decision about the new group's status Thursday, March 10.

You are writing for the next edition of The Bugle, which will be distributed Wednesday, March 9.

Kevon Bakin, Students for Reason president

"Kids love unhealthy food. Considering the options we have in the vending machines, many students prefer to just bring a backpack full of snacks from home for less money. We're losing money unnecessarily simply because of vending machine placement and vendor contracts."

"Letting us move the machines to allow for more popular options keeps student money inside the building at competitive prices. This could allow us to use that money for more school-sponsored events. There's a sense of irony that Oreos can help students out at schools. I get that. But, it is true. We've heard from many students who'd rather just be able to have lots of options to eat because they already hate what we have."

"There has been a 40 percent drop in vending machine sales in the last nine years since the machines were moved to the cafeteria. That is \$8,600 a year in lost revenue that could have gone back to us."

Juana Guzman, principal

"This is a tricky situation for anyone to be in. Either way, I end up being the bad guy. My job is to facilitate learning and educational activities across the campus. I have now been forced to make a decision that will hurt students in some way."

"Students have a Constitutional right to free speech and to form a club as much as any other student. I may not agree with what Students for Reason believes, but they do have the right to say it and let the debate happen. However, school's also have a legally protected duty to look out for the health of our student body. The risk is that Students for Reason's speech could feed misinformation and cause more death and disease. I'm allowed to rule in either way on this and that makes it tough. There is no clear answer to this problem I'm left to solve."

Lara Rader, HOSA president

"That petition is so misguided. I get what they're going for and how they got there logically. What they are leaving out is that of the 68% of students who were out sick, 88% were unvaccinated. Only 12% of vaccinated students got sick and they were much less sick than everyone else. Now, apply that to other serious diseases like measles. You're going to have a very, very sick campus. It's unsafe and no one would be able to learn. Our town also doesn't live in a bubble and antibodies do not last forever. Even if you assume a big wave of illness happens and we all aren't sick for a while, that wave will come back and it will be worse."

That is exactly why Principal Guzman should not allow this group to be a campus. I'm all for the right to free speech, but even free speech has its limits like every other amendment in the Constitution. This group would be using school resources to promote an ignorant, anti-science agenda in the name of personal freedom. The school has a duty to protect its students and should do so by denying this group."

Joey Pouch, junior

"I'm unvaccinated and got sick right after we came back. Mrs. Windy had Covid and spread it to the whole class. That's how I got it. To be honest, it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be - not much worse than the flu I had before."

I signed the petition because it just makes sense. Instead of fighting this thing all the time, let's just get it all at over with at once. People believe science is full of answers, but scientists disagree all of the time. If we're all getting sick already, there is no harm in testing out this idea. Once they become a group, I will definitely be joining. The school makes a lot decisions that just don't follow common sense. It's about time students took change into their hands."

Paisley Rose, freshman

"My parents brought me to get my vaccine because I asked them to. I have all three shots I can now. While I did get sick after winter break, it only lasted a day and wasn't anything more than a runny nose and a slight fever. I would hate to see what would happen if the whole school didn't have any vaccines. I would probably stop going to school altogether and do homeschooling."

I used to believe in the same thing Students for Reason does. While it does make sense if you look at one time in one place, but they aren't taking how viruses work into account. As soon as viruses mutate or weaken, your antibodies end up being worthless. Ironically, I learned that in science last year. If this group had its way, the school would end up in a constant battle with really sick students. Recognizing that group would make the school just as guilty for people who get sick."

Paisley Rose, freshman

"Vaccine mandates are one of those moral issues that is hard to answer. Medicine and control over any virus is really about taking personal responsibility. Vaccines and masks are not 100% effective without people behaving responsibly as well, even with mandates. I encourage everyone to listen to the disease experts and talk with your doctor. Making medical decisions is never easy, but they will help you best."

Example Story Ending — Vending Machines

NEWS WRITING UNIT

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the story below. Work with your group to write four different possible endings to this story. **NOTE:** Ending on a quote also requires another transition as to not stack quotes.

Sweet petition seeks to fatten up snack, drink machines for students

By R. E. Porter
The Bugle Staff

Campus vending machines could feature less healthy options for students if Student Government's pitch to the school board Friday goes its way.

Student legislators circulated a petition to move some vending machines away from the federally regulated cafeteria to provide more popular snacks and drinks similar to those in the faculty lounge. The move would also provide more money to the general student activity fund.

"Letting us move the machines to allow for more popular options keeps student money inside the building at competitive prices," the group's President Kyle Bannor said, noting students bring backpacks filled with snacks to avoid school offerings. "... There's a sense of irony that Oreos can help students out at school. I get that, but it is true."

Bannor said vending machine sales dropped 40% in nine years since they were moved to the cafeteria, which falls under federal law preventing certain unhealthy snacks from being sold. Future Dieticians Association President Peter Gunn said that is exactly the reason he is against the proposal.

"This is another example of where the dollar wants to trump student health," Gunn said. "There's a reason the federal government restricts where and when unhealthy food can be had in a school environment."

Some school community members are making the choice about personal responsibility like parent China Limon.

"When I was in school, we could eat whatever we want," she said. "I want my daughter to have the same choices I did. This country is based on the free-market system; if we want to eat foods that clog our heart, so be it."

Others, like sophomore Carolyn Proxy, do not mind what is available to students because there are more food options like the lunch and because school only lasts eight hours.

"If (students in favor of the petition) complain about it, just wait to go home and get something to eat," Proxy said. "Or, you could sneak into the teachers lounge like I do. They have the better stuff anyway."

(Insert ending here.)

Ending 1

Ending 2

Ending 3

Ending 4
