Teacher Guide

for your yearbook

Coverage
Copy
Captions

By Rob Melton

Curriculum...

Introduction

Writing is one of the most difficult things to do, but it's even more difficult to explain, and practically impossible to teach directly. Journalism, whatever its form, allows writers to focus their information gathering while still in the field in order to create stories readers will enjoy. The stories readers love most usually involve a transformative change by a character in a story, a moment when everything changes for that person, when your character's perception changes in some way and suddenly see something in a new way.

The activities and assignments in this section lay the groundwork for success in telling non-fiction stories, beginning with an awareness of the publication's purpose as well as what each member of the staff brings to the team. They are structured to help students learn the craft of telling stories in print as well as the craft of writing well.

Students should constantly be growing as they take on each new writing assignment for the yearbook. Through reflection on their own work and that of others, they develop the critical analysis skills necessary to grow their own writing. The ongoing nature of new assignments and deadlines gives them the practice under pressure they need to become effective writers and storytellers.

Photographs and words form the backbone of any yearbook, but they are used in the service of telling stories to readers. This section looks at words as an aspect of telling a complete story with photos, captions, headline and copy. Students will learn what is necessary for good stories to make it onto the page through Coverage, Copy, and Captions & Headlines.

This unit begins with a look at how to organize your team to tell stories through words and pictures. Every package, every page, every personality feature, every sports spread is a story. Using a team planning approach, students will learn how to make sure everyone knows their job before heading out to photograph, report and interview. Every piece of story is a planned, specific solution to telling a story.

Writers will gather the kind of information that results in good narrative storytelling, photographers will use shooting and reporting strategies, and everyone else will be ready to complete the job of designing the story.

Techniques to create a personality and develop the theme will help writers establish a narrative voice and a specific point of view and style to help tell the top-level narrative story, while section theme variations and spreads weave a tight narrative line throughout the publication. (If there is a visual theme, there still must be a narrative concept for the copy.)

The unit continues with a close examination of copy that starts with picture nouns and action verbs and continues with a narrative approach that gives the reader selective, concrete details while providing a structure that supports non-fiction storytelling, both traditional and alternative.

The final section examines the workhorse of the yearbook, captions and headlines, and the strategies that help these elements hook readers into the story and intrigue readers to move to other story elements on the spread.

The rest is up to you. Attend workshops and conventions. Invite guest speakers to your classroom. Nurture each other with food, fun and friendship that comes from working as a team. Enjoy and celebrate the journey.

Objectives

Students will:

- use elements of effective reporting and writing
- organize the staff to maximize the quality of reporting, interviewing and writing
- use picture nounaa and action verbs in a sentence
- use adjectives and adverbs effectively in a sentence
- revise sentences to show rather than tell plot elements
- recognize and avoid passive voice construction in most sentences
- develop effective reporting skills
- identify and use GOAL interviewing skills
- gather information, background and quotations for use in a story
- understand the difference between fiction and nonfiction
- write human interest stories involving human emotions and drama
- demonstrate how to craft a narrative that surprises, entertains, informs and intrigues
- develop an effective structure for a human interst story
- Identify the basic SCAM plot elements (Setting, Character, Action, Meaning)
- identify differences between a human interest story and a news story
- identify the purpose and characteristics of a good personality human interest story
- identify the purpose and characteristics of a good sports story
- identify and use appropriate alternative story forms
- choose appropriate alternative storytelling forms for yearbook spreads
- write stories that show instead of tell
- understand the purposes of a caption
- demonstrate effective caption writing techniques
- students will assemble a portfolio of their own work and then analyze it, reflect upon their growth, and set new writing goals

Content standards...

Yearbook students learn, practice and apply national content standards in English Language Arts, Career and Technical Education, and Art. The relevant standards follow:

NCTE English Language Arts Standards:

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Career and Technical Education Standards for Arts and Communication — Level IV Grades 9-12:

Standard 1. Understands the principles, processes, and products associated with arts and communication media

1. Knows skills and techniques used in the commercial arts (e.g., basic drawings, basic design, lettering, typography, layout and design, mechanics, printmaking, illustration, interior decorating, fashion design and display, photography, sign painting, portfolio, graphic design, technical drawing, screen printing, commercial photography)
2. Understands how the elements, materials, technologies, artistic processes (e.g., imagination, craftsmanship) and organizational principles (e.g. unity and variety, repetition and contrast) are used in similar and distinctive ways in various art forms
3. Knows specific techniques and skills used in different art forms (e.g., dance structures and forms; script analysis, casting techniques, staging procedures, set design and construction, and theatre management in theatre; precision movement and controlled tone quality used in musical performance; the principles of design used in visual art)
5. Knows techniques used to publish printed media (e.g., techniques for various journalistic products such as advertisements, newspapers, magazines; components of publication including reporting, writing, headlines, captions, and photography)

Standard 3. Uses critical and creative thinking in various arts and communication settings

1. Understands specific principles and techniques used to solve problems in various art forms (e.g., using the elements of art and principles of design to solve specific art problems; using the design process to address design problems; using the elements of music and theory to resolve problems associated with music composition)
2. Understands that art is created and revised according to artistic decisions
4. Understands the importance of practice in the arts (e.g., its role in improvement of skills; how practice contributes to how well a person learns; how practice makes some skills automatic)
5. Understands the role of criticism and revision in the arts and communication
6. Understands techniques used when engaging in personal and organizational risk-taking in different arts and communication settings (e.g., weighing risks in decision-making and problem-solving; selecting appropriate courses of action; achieving personal goals)
7. Understands how personal experience can influence interpretations of different art forms
8. Knows ways in which different sources are used to produce art forms (e.g., personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings; real and imaginary sources; nature and the constructed environment; experimentation; events; the human senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste)

Standard 4. Understands ways in which the human experience is transmitted and reflected in the arts and communication

1. Knows ways in which different art forms communicate universal concepts (e.g., how love, birth, death, truth, and fear are communicated in the visual arts; how theatre can reveal universal concepts) throughout time and across cultures
2. Knows ways in which different art forms evoke emotional responses (e.g., how musical styles evoke emotions such as sorrow, love, joy, anger, and pride; ways that works of art evoke emotions through the use of selected media, techniques, and processes)
3. Understands how the communication of ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes one uses in various art forms
4. Knows ways in which various media forms throughout history (e.g., broadsheets, photography, newspapers, news broadcasts) have reflected or conveyed human events

Art Visual Arts Content Standards:

1. Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts
2. Knows how to use structures (e.g., sensory qualities, organizational principles, expressive features) and functions 3. Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts
4. Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
5. Understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork and the artwork of others

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Think like the reader...

Coverage

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"Take positive risks. Try new things. Learn from your students. Laugh a lot. Set high expectations. Ask questions. Keep your word. Own your mistakes. Let your students lead the way — they will amaze you."

—Sarah Nichols, Adviser
Yearbook Adviser of the Year

from C:JET magazine EXTRA
Summer 2011, Vol. 44, No. 4

Which are you?

When it comes to writing, it fs useful to know what your staff is capable of doing, and what they can do if you push them a bit. For that reason, have a discussion with your teacher about realistic expectations for your staff when it comes to writing, design, and photography. Which one of the following most closely matches your staff?

Are You Brand New And Don't Know What To Do?

___ You have a small staff or a small publication.
___ You want to make the most of what you have.
___ Not everyone on staff can write like Hemingway, but they're willing to try.
___ Not everyone can take a photo like Henri Cartier-Bresson, but they're willing to try.
___ Everyone can write a caption that identifies the people and the setting of the story, and provide intriguing background information readers don't know.
___ Do you have a couple of courageous photographers?
___ Do you have daring designers willing to try something new?

If you checked four or more, you may be brand new and don't know what to do. Advice: Learn the fundamentals first. Go With The Photo/Caption/Story approach and make it your own. Attend a yearbook workshop to help your staff focus your efforts on your strengths, not your weaknesses, and continue mastering your skills. You're on your way. These four things will govern everything from layout to copy to photographs to organization – you know, the important parts of your execution plan.

Are You Mastering The Fundamentals?

___ You have a couple of years of experience and you're ready to try something new.
___ Your photographers have an eye for taking great photos. You can hand everyone a camera and tell each to shoot a roll – a class, an assembly, a game, an activity. (You'd be surprised how easy it is to spot native talent, which can be developed in a workshop or a with a little guidance.)
___ You love to tell a story through glorious pictures and accompanying copy, captions and headlines.
___ Your writers know what's going on, like being in the middle of things, can focus in the field and gather information, and turn it into a fun story.
___ Your writers are curious. They ask questions. They see, hear, taste, touch and smell and aren't ashamed to use any of the details they fve gathered to make others laugh or react in some way to their carefully crafted story.
___ They see things in ways others don't. They have a fresh take on things – one designed to entertain as well as inform.
___ You have raw talent on staff from several successful years of yearbooking.
___ Your staff are creative folk who can meet a deadline.
___ Enthusiasm and teamwork is your key to success.
___ You attend an advanced yearbook workshop with the rest of your leadership team.
___ On delivery day, your yearbook creates excitement among your readers.

If you checked fiveor more, you have mastered the fundamentals and are ready to go from good to great. Advice: It may be time to stretch your mind, but it's going to take a leap of faith. To go from good to great, you have to be consistently good in many areas. But that's not enough for you; you've set your sights higher. It's not enough to stay current on the trends and fashions in yearbook land. No, you want to be an original, leading the pack. Take a deep breath, because you'll need to approach everything you know in a new way to go from good to great. Lucky for you, there are people out there who are eager to guide you — if you've got the courage.

Are you A Finely Tuned Yearbook Machine?

___ Your team is talented, sassy, and ready to roll.
___ You have made the transition from good to great.
___ Your concept, theme and playbook focusing on your strengths is all your staff will need, along with a little practice before the real deadline, to create the coolest, most awesome book anyone has ever done about your school.
___ Staff opportunities to release some steam after deadlines is the key to celebrating your successes.
___ You take your show on the road to a national convention, and you step up to your leadership potential by participating in a panel discussion or special event.
___ You conduct your own staff retreat or attend summer workshops – the advanced track led by the people doing the cutting-edge work.
___ You all go to different workshops just to get some ideas to take back to your staff retreat, where all important decisions will be made.

If you checked four or more, you may a finely tuned yearbook machine. Advice: Keep the traditions alive that got you where you are. Read the legacy book, written by editors before you about their secrets of success. Learn from them, while striking out in your own original direction. Hard work, creativity and fun are the keys to a highly successful program. You eat new ideas for breakfast. That's why your staff attends so many workshops and conventions. People admire what you have accomplished and wonder how you do it year after year. Congratulations — you've made it!

Who are you?

Background:

There is nothing worse than having the editor come back from a yearbook camp motivated and excited – and no one else understands what he or she is talking about because they weren't there. There's an easy solution: Send the whole leadership team to the workshop or summer camp. The editors and adviser who attend the summer camp will develop and share their work with the rest of the staff.

If you have a large staff, there might be a number of people who must participate: the adviser, the editor, the section editors, the head photographer, the copy editor, the design editor. If you have a small staff, there might be just a few who must participate: the adviser, editor, photographer and copy chief.

Involve everyone in deciding the 3-5 words that will describe your finished yearbook. This set of words, agreed upon by the entire staff as the vision for the publication, will guide all other aspects of the development of the yearbook: the theme, the copy style (text, caption), the photographic style, the layouts, the use of quotations, the use of quick-read facts. From these, you will develop the concept and game plan for the way your publication will look, feel, read, and cover the school year.

There are almost enough ways to approach this as there are yearbooks. You are not after a solution that the school down the block could produce. You are after the book that could only have been produced for your school's community. Whether you are an urban school with 10 other high schools in your city, or the only school for 30 miles, your yearbook should reflect the unique stories and moments of your school year.

Many publication staffs have the opportunity to attend a yearbook camp or summer journalism camp sponsored by their yearbook company or a state scholastic press organization. There are no distractions at workshops and plenty of fun, allowing the staff to vfocus upon making the key decisions that will influence all the work that follows.

Activity #1: Ask the staff at its first meeting: "If you had all the time, talent, money and support from your friends, family, teachers, principal, school board, boss and (add your own network here), what would you do? What would you have? What would you become?

Activity #2: How will you know when you have achieved your goal? What should the publication's personality convey? In a staff meeting, brainstorm 3–5 words that will describe the personality of your publication. List all answers on the board, as you will be adding and subtracting and combining different ideas. You're after 3-5 words that will describe the personality of the publication that everyone can agree upon. Think of words readers would use to describe the publication, and words that represent the ideals of the staff. These words then become the evaluation tool against which you will measure the success of your work. It could be the most important activity you do.

Personality

Every story you tell through words, pictures and spreads must be based on three things:

a great story **idea**
great **material** that will surprise the reader
great words that have **style**

Using these tools will help you tell surprising stories about the people at your school. Readers are a fickle bunch. They are not actively interested in a tsunami in Japan – unless you can personalize the story for them. But if they know a person who is there, someone like themselves, it's front page news.

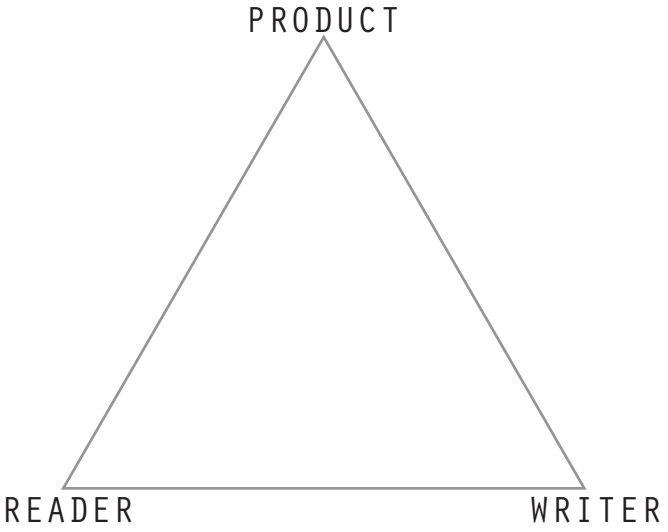
The best story for your yearbook, in other words, will be the one tailor-made for the unique taste and interests of your readers. You and your staff need to know a lot about these readers to get their attention and entertain them.

No two yearbooks should look alike except by coincidence. Each one is customized to the style that will best tell the story of the year about a specific group of readers – your students. In other words, the form follows the function. How do you get there?

Before you can begin telling your story, there are three things you must understand:

What do you know about your **writers**?
What do you know about your **readers**?
What do you know about your **product**, the yearbook?

You, the team of writers/editors/designers/photographers, have to establish a relationship with the reader, interacting through the medium of the yearbook. How you choose to do that for your yearbook readers will depend upon the students at your school. Since you are one of them, it shouldn't be too difficult to talk to them in their own language.



READERS: What do you already know about your readers? What do you have in common with your readers? Can you count on their support? What surprises them?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

PRODUCT: What do you know about your yearbook?

Name _____

Founded: _____

Purpose: _____

_____

_____

Traditions: _____

Color: _____

_____

Deadlines: _____

Printer: _____

Primary audience: _____

Secondary audiences: _____

_____

_____

WRITERS: What do you already know about your staff? What are they willing and able to do? Are they willing to learn and grow as a team? Are they willing to have fun?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Aristotle's triangle...

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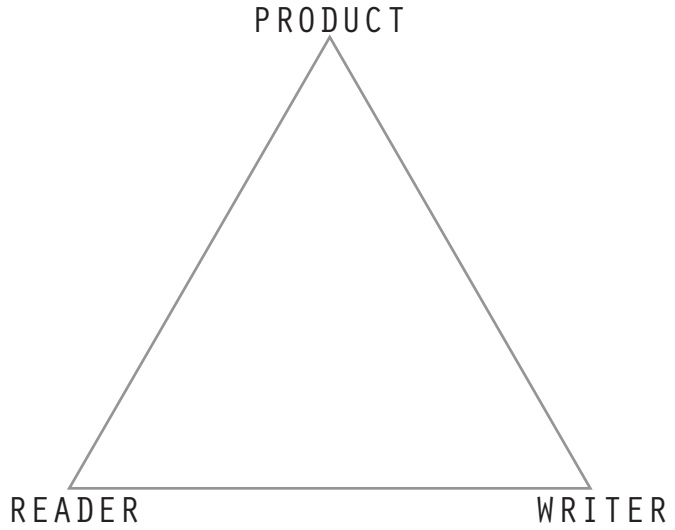

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Reader response

You are an expert about the other students at your school, and the variety of things that they like, dislike, or don't care about. Not everyone agrees, which is why you and your group are going to use this workshet to capture their interests.

You have powerful knowledge about your students, and you are going to shamelessly give your them exactly what they want, a piece of PIE: **Pleasure**, **Information** and a satisfying **Emotional** response (such as satisfaction, joy, surprise, wonder) when they see the stories in the yearbook. So how do you tell stories with photos and words in a way that appeals to your students? Good question.

To be successful, achieve a balance between these three points of view:

The end result, from the reader's point of view: The effect of the toal product as well as each individual part should support your reader's understanding of who they are, the groups they belong to, and their perspective on life. This should be evident in every photo/caption/headline/text/ sidebar/ that is on every spread on every page of the book. You execute this with a compelling idea or theme that is asserted in the ideal manner for the readers of your yearbook. You're telling one story with thousands of different bits and pieces.

The end result, from the writer's point of view: The writer's purpose — why you write — is not to get the reader to read, but to get the reader to react, respond, take action, gain insight, laugh, cry, see things in a new light, or learn something new. Without the anticipated reaction or response, the writer fails in the mission to engage, surprise and delight readers. The writer's understanding of the yearbook's readers will also influence the style, tone, diction, syntax and level of language used in the yearbook. After all, you want them to understand and accept what you're saying, right?

The end result, from the product's point of view: Every writer knows a work takes on a life of its own after it is created. Your yearbook is no different. Your yearbook wants to be held, touched, laughed at, and loved. It wants to provide information to the user down the road. It wants the user to be surprised, interested, informed, and learn something they did not know before consulting it. It wants to be pretty, smart and friendly. It even wants to be visited every now and then when it gets old.

Directions: With your small group, brainstorm all of the things you think you can do to please, inform and evoke a response from your readers. Continue on the back, if needed.

What will you do in your yearbook that will please your readers? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What kind of information will your readers be looking for now? In the future? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What will you do in your stories to evoke an emotional, dramatic response by your readers? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

A point of view

Background: You've probably heard that journalists are supposed to be objective. You know from experience that it is difficult for any human to be truly objective. Back in the day, when it was cool to check facts and build intreptations based on the evidence (i.e., the scientific method), it was decided that journalists and editors should follow the same process of verifying the facts. There is a big difference between being objective and employing a process designed to assure that the facts have been verified.

Many people believe that yearbooks should be objective — a history of the school year. The success of any documentary project, however, depends upon having a strong point of view, says film teacher John Golden, who wrote the book *Reading in the Reel World: Teaching Documentaries And Other Nonfiction Texts*. Think Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth," Michael Moore's "Bowling For Columbine" or Luc Jacquet's "March of the Penguins."

Don't shy away from using an authentic, compelling point of view. Give yourself permission to have a personality, a strong, edgy point of view, that will result in great stories.

Show, don't tell, the story. Imagine your story will be made into a film or television documentary. You are successful when, through showing action and dialogue of a story, the reader reacts. That is the power of story.

Directions: In groups of four, brainstorm how your staff will do the following. Then get together with another group and combine your ideas. Then have groups list ideas. Don't repeat ideas that are already on the list.

What will you do to verify the facts (who, what, when, where, why, how)? _____

Think of three interesting students you know. How would each of them tell the story of the school year? _____

Directions: Take about 20 minutes to develop your own strong point of view that would tell the story of the school year.

continued...

Team strengths

Background: In old movies, a reporter types frantically on a keyboard as the story deadline approaches, but today, hardly anything is created this way. The movies, television shows, advertisements, magazines, web sites, newspapers and yearbooks, are all created by story teams. The entire team is focused on telling a specific story well, working from clearly developed goals, storytelling objectives, and tools. Is your yearbook staff organization a relic of the past? How do you creating successful teams that will produce a dynamite yearbook?

The key to greatness is to focus on building your team around its strengths, not its weaknesses. To begin this process, be honest about what your team can do and has the potential to do well.

Be honest about the strengths and weaknesses of the team you have assembled (or that has been handed to you) and build a game plan to execute on your strenghs.

Include your teacher or adviser in the discussion. Like any good coach, she'll help you design the game around your team's strengths. It really doesn't make any sense to run a lot of passing plays if you don't have a quarterback who can throw the ball or if you don't have a receiver who can catch the ball. And it doesn't make sense to run a ground game when the heaviest guards weigh 140 pounds soaking wet. You can help by Conditioning and training must be designed to get everyone ready to play.

Directions: In groups of four, brainstorm how your staff will do the following. Then get together with another group and combine your ideas. Then have groups list ideas. Don't repeat ideas that are already on the list.

What do you like to do? _____

What are you good at doing? _____

What do others tell you that you do well? _____

What are some things you are willing to do if only you knew how? _____

What is something you will probably never be great at? _____

What is clearly outside your comfort range? _____

Game plan book

Every team has a playbook. (It is also known as the "staff manual" or the "futures book" as it has a calendar, all student and staff names, and other essential information in a place that's easy for staff to use it.) The next step is to work with your teacher to develop it. She already has some materials, or at least some ideas, about what it should include. The "playbook" generally set down on paper all of the operating policies, decisions and other information upon which you will build your book. It may also include your style manual, execution plans and drawings for theme elements, photograph shooting strategies, writing strategies and a staff roster.

The playbook explains how your staff will get the work done. You've got a theme. Can you write it? Photograph it? Headline it? Design it? Elaborate on it? Hook the reader? Draw them into the spread?

In drama, every actor must figure out the "throughline" of their character – the thing that connects one scene to another and may extend beyond the end of the performance. An actor asks what is the character's goal or motivation? A writer needs the same sort of throughline, or narrative story planning, when executing a large thematic project such as a yearbook woven of many threads. The theme needs to be clearly stated and achievable by the whole design team, and the team must be on the lookout for the necessary narrative elements of the main story line as well as how to connect it to secondary story lines.

Your game plan must reflect what your team can deliver under pressure. You need to frequently review your wins and losses and change course as needed to make the wins outnumber the losses by the end of the season.

You also need to build team spirit to keep heads high and to keep the team motivated as you grind through the grueling season ahead. Thought this was about football? Think again. This is the life cycle of student publications.

Directions: Check of the elements you will include. Then brainstorm a list of other essential information the staff will need to execute the plan.

Make a list of the basics that will be included in your playbook:

__staff roster

__list of student names

__list of staff names

__master calendar

__style manual

__theme/throughline

__theme development notes/ideas

__narrative threads to develop

Other:

The First Amendment

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridge freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble; and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

The freedom to worship, speak our minds, print our thoughts, gather together with others, and petition the government for action when we have been wronged are all guaranteed in the Bill of Rights in the First Amendment. Research the First Amendment and then look for four newspaper articles that relate to each part of the First Amendment. Articles are also available on the Freedom Forum's website www.freedomforum.org. In the space provided, write a sentence telling what each story is about. The look at the editorial cartoons, and write the titles of any cartoons that are about First Amendment issues. Your freedom as a student journalist and citizen extend directly from the First Amendment

FREEDOM	***ARTICLE TITLE***	***PUBLICATION***
1. Religion _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
2. Speech _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
3. Press _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
4. Assembly _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Reporting

You're not writing a history for all time; you're writing about a time that will become personal history to those involved. They will want to remember their piece of that history along with a few others. It's a history of the life of you and your friends and your school and community. Sure, bigger things are going on, but your power as a storyteller comes from the small, everyday details of the people whose lives you are chronicling. Good. Now that we've got that out of the way...

You are a hunter-gatherer when you are on the job as a writer. In the field, you have to decide what you want to keep and what you want to throw away. The power of observation and the importance of being there writing it down in your reporter's notebook in person as the eye witness to history — your history — is the cornerstone of reporting. Good writing can't happen without good reporting and interviewing. Improve your human interest stories by doing more reporting. That's the secret.

While reporting and interviewing, you can't rely on your memory for all the information you are gathering. You must write it down in a notebook as you gather it. You must put quote marks around verbatim quotations in your notes. You must put description of the people and places you have visited that are important characters and settings of the story.

Editors will tell you that if they are sued, your notes are their only defense in a court of law. Be thorough and accurate in gathering and checking your facts. What is a fact? It is anything concrete; you can see, hear, taste, touch or smell it.

Once collected and written down, the writer chooses the relevant, significant and meaningful anecdotes, description and quotations to focus. Don't be intimidated because you're documenting history. Focus is the key to writing, and readers prefer narrative writing — and remember it better than any other kind of presentation.

Your next big challenge is to identify the single best character on which to focus the lens of your story. (Focus in the field, the saying goes, and it will save you a lot of time and trouble.) This is the only character who has set a big, interesting personal goal, faces an obstacle, and has undertaken a journey that will result in a dramatic resolution. A good story can be large or small. An intimate story should be just as surprising and interesting as a story about the football team's quest for a state championship.

Find the best point of view from which to tell the story – the one with a character who wants something that she cannot have and what she is willing to do to achieve it – and the right place to start the story, and you're on your way.

Help yourself by getting to know the people at your school in a way you never have before. And remember: Your goal is to tell a great story. You don't have to tell it all by yourself, because you'll have a team of people working on it. When every person on your staff is working in a team on a spread and has the same amount of time to do his or her job – write and design the headline, plan the page, gather information, write the story and captions, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. As the entire team works together on the plan, each of them knows what they need to do to bring the page to life in a fresh, interesting approach, and you can each adjust as you go along to create the peerfect story.

Rudyard Kipling once wrote a poem that sums up the job of gathering information:

"I Keep Six Honest Serving Men ..."

I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

I send them over land and sea,
I send them east and west;
But after they have worked for me,
I give them all a rest.

I let them rest from nine till five,
For I am busy then,
As well as breakfast, lunch, and tea,
For they are hungry men.

But different folk have different views;
I know a person small.
She keeps ten million serving-men,
Who get no rest at all!

She sends 'em abroad on her own affairs,
From the second she opens her eyes
One million Hows, two million Wheres,
And seven million Whys!
—Rudyard Kipling
The Elephant's Child

Activities

1. Students examine several feature stories. Using different pen colors, student highlight:
   - quotations (interviewing)
   - description (reporting sight, sound, taste, touch, smell)
2. Look at one of the stories. Is it a good feature story? How much does the story depend on reporting compared to interviewing? Does it vary from story to story?
3. Think about how the writer went about documenting the facts used from reporting ccompared to interviewing. What was the writer looking for in the field? What kind of descriptive details does the writer use? How did the writer weave together the interviewing and reporting to create a story?

How observant are you?

Directions: Here are some common things you see every day. How many of these questions are you able to answer?

1. On a standard traffic light, is the green on top or bottom?
2. In the Lincoln Memorial, which foot on the statue of Lincoln is in front?
3. The stripes of a man's tie usuallyt slant down in what direction (left or right) from the wearer's point of view?
4. In which hand is the Statue of Liberty's torch?
5. Name the five colors on the Campbell's Soup label.
6. What two letters of the alphabet do not appear on a telephone dial pad?
7. What two digits on a telephone dial pad are not accompanied by letters?
8. On the Amerian flag, is the upper-most stripe red or white?
9. What is the lowest number on an FM radio dial?
10. Which way does the red diagonal slash go on the international no parking or no smoking signs?
11. Which way does the Morton Salt girl face?
12. Which side of a woman's blouse has the buttonholes?
13. Do books have their even-numbered pages on the left or right?
14. On which side of a sink is the cold water faucet?
15. How many sides are there on a standard pencil?
16. Sleepy, Happy, Sneezy, Grumpy, Dopey and Doc. Name the seventh?
17. How many hot dogs are in a standard package?
18. How many hot dog buns are in a standard package?
19. Which direction does the lettering run on a standard pencil?
20. On which card in the deck is the card maker's trademark?
21. On the back of a $5 bill is the Lincoln Memorial. What is in the center of the back of the $1 bill?
22. What symbols are on the buttons of a telephone dial pad that do not have digits on them?
23. Which way does the eagle on the Great Seal of the United States face?
24. In which direction d pieces trvel around a monopoly board?
25. In which direction does a carousel turn?

HOW DID YOU DO?

If you missed up to 5: You are a critical observer of life and all of its details. People probably already tell you you're a great writer and observer of life, and consult you regularly when they can't figure things out for themselves.

If you missed up to 10: While you're not firing on all cylinders in the observation department, you notice enough to stay out of trouble and entertain your friends.

If you missed up to 15: While you have occasional flashes of briliance, it's nots enough to keep you out of trouble. You probably copy the math assignment from a friend because you "just don't get it."

If you missed 20 or more: You're just not paying attention. Wake up and smell the coffee!

Homework: Find the correct answer if you missed any.

A writer gives a reader an experience by providing sensory details. When these details are vivid and precise, says writer Anna Keesey, "the reader falls into a 'dream of reality,' and sees and feels what the story is describing as if it were real. The writer's goal is to make the reader see and feel so powerfully that the reader forgets he or she is reading." The lazy writer tells the reader what to think, she says, while the powerful writer gives the reader an experience.

These experiences, Kersey says, are created for the reader by appealing to their senses, making general words specific, using strong verbs, using metaphors and similes, using physical details, and using behavioral traits.

Magazine writer and novelist Karen Karbo, in her work with high school students in Portland, Oregon, says that in a story, a character is defined by what he or she **looks** like (their physicality, dress, cologne and other details); how they **behave** (what they do and the action of the story); and what they **say** (how he or she speaks, talks, or if not it can be implied). It's all about being selective and choosing just the details that further the telling of the story.

Reporting is observing, with understanding, the significance of the sensory details you gather. Writers use selective concrete details to establish setting and character details. As you become a more powerful observer of life, your writing will become stronger, too. Practice observing every-day details. When they change, ask why. Reporting is observing with your five senses. It is the bedrock of great writing.

Directions: To practice the art of observation, have your entire staff do one or more of the following:

- Cover a big event, and have each staff member Write down everything that they can see, hear, taste, touch and smell, as well as any other concrete description that relates to setting or story. If it's a longer event, such as a game, choose times throughout the event for everyone to record — in writing and on film — what's going on.
- Have every member of your staff participate in a "Day at ... your school" project. Choose seven times during the school day, and have each staff member write everything they see, hear, taste, touch and smell at that time, no matter where they are or what they are doing. Combine them all into an hour-by-hour narrative of the school day.
- Have each member of your staff shadow specific students for a half-day or a day, and write down everything that person sees, hears, smells, touches, tastes, says, does. Be on the lookout for obstacles your person faces throughout the day and how they deal with each challenge. Listen for quotes that will help tell and conclude the story.
- Have your staff members develop their own quiz of everyday things at school that people don't really notice.
- Have each of your staff members posted at a different location at a specific time, and record everything that goes on in that location for 15 minutes.
- Your own variations on the above.

Interviewing

We all love to talk about what is important to us, so it should come as no surprise that when people who have been interviewed are asked, more than 80 percent say they would be willing to be interviewed again. That's the power of conversation. Master the art of how to talk with one person at a time to gather facts, details and quotations to create informative, entertaining, and memorable stories.

Be prepared. Good interviewers show up prepared. They have done their background research and planned their questions carefully.

Plan your questions. Great interviewers carefully plan questions to break the ice and to get to know the person they are interviewing. Interviews are not a stilted question-and-answer session; they are an on-topic conversation between two or more people.

Know your goal. Good interviewers have clear goals for what they want and need out of the interview. They share their interviewing goal with their subject to make the most of their time together.

Carol Rich, in her book *Writing and Reporting The News*, suggested the GOAL formula to focus interviews on the questions that will result in the best material for storytelling purposes. Writers don't always have time to ask all the questions they have prepared. They need to keep their eyes on the interview GOAL:

What GOAL has your character set?

What OBSTACLEs does your character face, or will your character face, that may be difficult to overcome?

What ACHIEVEMENT or talent or practice or experience did your character draw on to overcome the obstacle head-on?

What LOGISTICAL pieces are necessary to tell the story? This usually deals with the key chronological events of telling the story along with key descriptive details and quotations that powerfully showcase the march to victory or defeat.

Goals — or top-line narratives — are created at the beginning of the year by the yearbook staff. Knowing these narrative threads, you are always looking for them to weave into your stories. Don't use all the threads in one story, but make sure they are woven throughout the yearbook.

There may be secondary narrative threads in different sections of the book, which you will address when your story team sits down to use the Writer-Editor-Designer planning process. Using such a planning system allows everyone to do their best work.)

Writers need goals to help create a uniquely crafted piece of short writing that reinforces the themes and ideas of the book, the section, and the page while being true to the people and their stories.

Details make the difference. Each story is unique and different from other stories because of the details. That's why interviewers want to meet the person at the place that is the context for the story, whether it's the locker room, the drama room, or the physics lab. That way they can do reporting before, during and after an interview. Such places are rich in descriptive detail, which they observe and write down in their reporter's notebook.

Establish a working relationship. If you don't already know a person, build trust before you get started.

Strategies. First, ask the questions whose answers are essential to craft the story. The most useful questions begin with Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Ask direct and leading questions. Don't ask "yes" or "no" questions. Control the pace of the interview. If you're still furiously writing, don't ask the next question. Let the silence work in your favor. Waiting for more is an effective strategy, as people usually want to provide the information you need to tell their story effectively.

Take good notes. Screen the information you are getting as you talk with your subject, and write down everything that you can about your conversation. Pay particular attention to write down concrete details — numbers, dates, statistics, key words, distinctive phrases and direct quotations. Once you have finished the interview and have left, sit down and write everything else you observed or heard that you didn't have time to write down during the interview. Be accurate. The smallest error can cause embarrassment or even a libel suit. Get the subject's telephone contact information to clarify or fact check once you begin writing your story. Don't use a tape recorder unless the story is for broadcast.

Be sensitive. If there is a sensitive or emotional issue that is at the heart of the story, it should come late in the interview. Leave time to recover from such moments and collect additional information.

Be curious. Ask questions that interest you because these will most likely also interest the reader.

Be provocative. In that spirit, you get to ask some provocative questions and photograph the special moments in the lives of the people at your school. Like a movie, you have a cast of chartacters who are your students, teachers, custodians, food service workers, secretaries, principals, coaches, parents, community leaders and perhaps others. And like most schools, you interact with other schools that have a different cast of characters who are sometimes the obstacle to your students' success.

Common interviewing problems

The most common interviewing problems faced by reporters, according to the groundbreaking research done by reporter and college journalism professor Ken Metzler:

1. Failure to define and state the purpose of the interview.
2. Lack of preparation.
3. Failure to probe behind the answers.
4. Vagueness — lack of concrete details.
5. Carelessness in appearance.
6. Going into the interview with a preconceived notion versus listening to what the respondent is saying and doing background preparation.
7. Convoluted or overdefined questions. Instead, ask precise, probing questions.
8. Insensitivity.
9. Failure to listen.
10. Laziness — the "what's new" question

Interviewing

Activities and Exercises:

1. Each of your questions should begin with one of the following: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. Break into six small groups, one for each of the 5 W's and H. Each group brainstorms as many different kind of questions that anyone on staff could use for their interviews. Present to the class. Have someone type up all the questions on one sheet of paper.
2. With your staff, brainstorm as many questions as you can for each of the GOAL areas. Assemble them onto one sheet of paper for the staff, or hang them on the wall. Then all your writers can use the question bank to prepare for interviews.
3. Search through newspapers and magazines for short human interest stories. Did the writer ask GOAL-style questions? What questions did they ask? Did keeping their eye on the GOAL lead to a better story?
4. Break into groups. Write as many questions as possible for each question type. Organize them on posters, or put them all on one sheet of paper and distribute to the staff.
5. Reverse engineer a story by taking every quote and fact and writing the question that had to be asked to gather the information.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK

Getting useable information from a respondent depends greatly upon asking the right type of questions. In his book *Creative Interviewing,* Ken Metzler identifies and describes the types of questions and strategies interviewers might use.

OPENING QUESTIONS

Icebreakers — A comment or inquiry about a personal effect; talk of current events or weather; talk of mutual interests or acquaintances; use of the respondent's name; use of good-natured kidding or banter.

First Moves — A continuation of icebreakers because they lead to questions you want to ask; report to respondent what people are saying about him or her; defuse hostility; look for humor or irony, if appropriate.

FILTER QUESTIONS—Filter questions establish a respondent's qualifications to answer questions. It it useful whenever you are interviewing a person with unknown credentials. They enhance conversation with highly qualified sources and weaken it with poorly qualified sources.

ROUTINE FACTUAL QUESTIONS—Who, What, When, Where, Why and How

NUMERICALLY DEFINING QUESTIONS—

Statistics, concrete and dynamic—How many? Can you make a comparison (He walked 120,000 miles, a distance equal to almost five times around the world at the equator.).

CONCEPTUALLY DEFINING QUESTIONS—The question is simple: *Why?* The hard part is trying to understand the answer.

PROBES—The probe encourages the source to explain or elaborate. You can be passive ("Hmmmm…I see…."), responsive ("Really! how interesting!), mirroring ("Thirty-three arrests…"), silence, developing ("Tell me more about…."), clarifying ("Does your boss know about them?"), diverging, and changing ("I'd like to move along to another topic….").

SOLICITING OF QUOTATIONS

Quotes are typically shorter than having the reporter explain it. Use quotes like a dash of spice — for something special

What types of quotations should you look for? They should reveal humor of character, humor or homely aphorisms, irony, jargon, authentication, figures of speech used by respondent, authority, argumentation, sharp probes or silence.

SOLICITING OF ANECDOTES—An anecdote is a "storiette." It concentrates on an incident or two. How do you get them? You swap stories with the respondent — one of yours for one of hers. You also play hunches and follow leads.

CREATIVE QUESTIONS—Form a hypothesis, a possible explanation, and drop it into the conversation. Barbara Walters once asked, "If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be?"

Find the narrative POV

IT'S A FACT

The first U.S. attempt to launch a satellite failed.

IT'S AN OPINION

The U.S. should should be the first to put a man on the moon.

IT'S A NARRATIVE POINT OF VIEW

"The ground beneath the reporters' feet began to tremble. It shook. It amplified. Reporters felt the Saturn 5 long before they heard it. All one thousand of them were screaming and yelling, 'Go! Go! Omigod! Omigod!' ... No one was ready for this." When the sound finally hit them, the air crackled like nonstop thunder and roared like 1,000 hurricanes. It was more than noise; it was a force. "Reporters leaned into the shove and craned to watch that omigod rocket pitch over on cue to a straight east heading." When the rocket and its three crewmen were gone, "the reporters looked at each other and shivered."

THE RACE: The Uncensored Story of How America Beat Russia to the Moon, By James Schefter

NOW YOU DO IT.

Choose three stories, the longer the better. (You'll need access to a great many quotes, anecdotes and facts to focus the story and tie in with your narrative theme.) List the facts from the news story. Then choose a character or characters who the reader can relate to and tell the story from their point of view using focus, description, anecdotes, and quotations.

DEAD—**FACTS/STORY:**

READ—**NARRATIVE POINT OF VIEW:**

Character sketch

A character sketch is a representation of subject's distinctive features or peculiarities and are deliberately focused and sometimes exaggerated or distorted to produce a comic or grotesque effect. Character sketches are perfect for every section of the yearbook.

In real life, people are not always what they seem, but in a narrative a character is the way they look, behave and speak. Carefully chosen details about your character's physicality, dress, and smell define who they are for the focus of the story. In addition, how they behave, what they do, the actions that they take reveal the focus of the story to the reader. Finally, what the character says (or doesn't say) as well as how the character says it are used to imply other characteristics about the person.

Find a story in today's newspaper that focuses on the way a person looks, behaves and speaks. (Attach story to this sheet.) It should reveal some aspect of that character's personality.

What do you already know about this person? _____

What is exaggerated? _____

What is the focus? _____

What about the person is left out? Why? _____

Now try it yourself. Focus on an aspect of a person you know well so the reader will better understand what makes that character tick. Get together with four of your classmates and read each other's works. If people smile laugh because it is a delicately drawn portrait that emphasizes some aspect of the person's nature that is important to know, you've succeeded. But if people think you're making fun of the character, then you've gone too far.

Symbolism

A *symbol* is anything that stands for or represents something else. A *conventional symbol* is one that is widely known and accepted, such as the United States flag symbolizing freedom. A *personal symbol* is one developed for a particular story by a particular author.

Look through newspapers and magazines for examples of symbols. Write the symbol on the line to the left. Then explain what is symbolic about it on the right.

Conventional Symbol	Explanation/Meaning

Personal Symbol	Explanation/Meaning

Irony

Irony is the contrast between what is stated and what is meant, or between what is expected to happen and what actually happens. In *verbal irony*, a word or phrase is used to suggest the opposite of its usual meaning. In *dramatic irony*, there is a contradiction between what a character knows and what the audience knows to be true. In *situational irony*, an event occurs that directly contradicts the expectations of the characters, or the reader, or of the audience.

Directions: Look through newspapers and magazines for examples of irony. Write the irony on the line to the left. Then explain what is ironic about it on the right.

Verbal irony

Explanation/Meaning

Dramatic irony

Explanation/Meaning

Situational irony

Explanation/Meaning

Main idea

The *main idea* is not usually stated in words. It is communicated through the narrative focus, anecdotes, selective descriptive, and quotations. The main idea is the meaning the writer wants you to walk away with after you've examined the story.

Directions: For this exercise, you will need to choose three stories and write down what you think the writer is trying to communicate.

Writer _____ Title/Headline _____ Subject _____

Main Idea: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Writer _____ Title/Headline _____ Subject _____

Main Idea: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Writer _____ Title/Headline _____ Subject _____

Main Idea: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Allusion

Allusion is a reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or work of art. Writers and artists often make allusions to stories from the Bible, to Greek and Roman myths, to plays by Shakespeare, to political and historical events, and to other information known by readers. By using allusions, writers and artists can bring to mind complex ideas simply and easily.

Writer _____ Title _____ Subject _____

What two things are being compared?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In what way are the two things alike?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does the allusion help us understand the story better? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Writer _____ Title _____ Subject _____

What two things are being compared?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In what way are the two things alike?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does the allusion help us understand the story better? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Comparison

Analogy is a comparison between two unlike things. The purpose of an analogy is to describe something unfamiliar by pointing out its similarities to something that is familiar. A *simile* is a simple comparison between two unlike things using *like* or *as*. A *metaphor* is an extended comparison between two unlike things.

Look through newspapers and magazines for examples of analogy, simile, or metaphor. Find good examples of similes, metaphors and analogies — examples you might use in your own writing. (Your teacher may ask you to attach the stories.) Then reflect upon how you could use each in your own writing.

Find 10 good similes. Write them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Find five good metaphors. Write them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Find five good analalogies. Write them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5 _____

As a writer, reflect upon which are most common? Which are most effective? Which are most memorable? Which might be easiest to collect and use? _____

The humor triangle

Know what your humor is about, who you are telling it to, and why..

THE HUMOR TRIANGLE

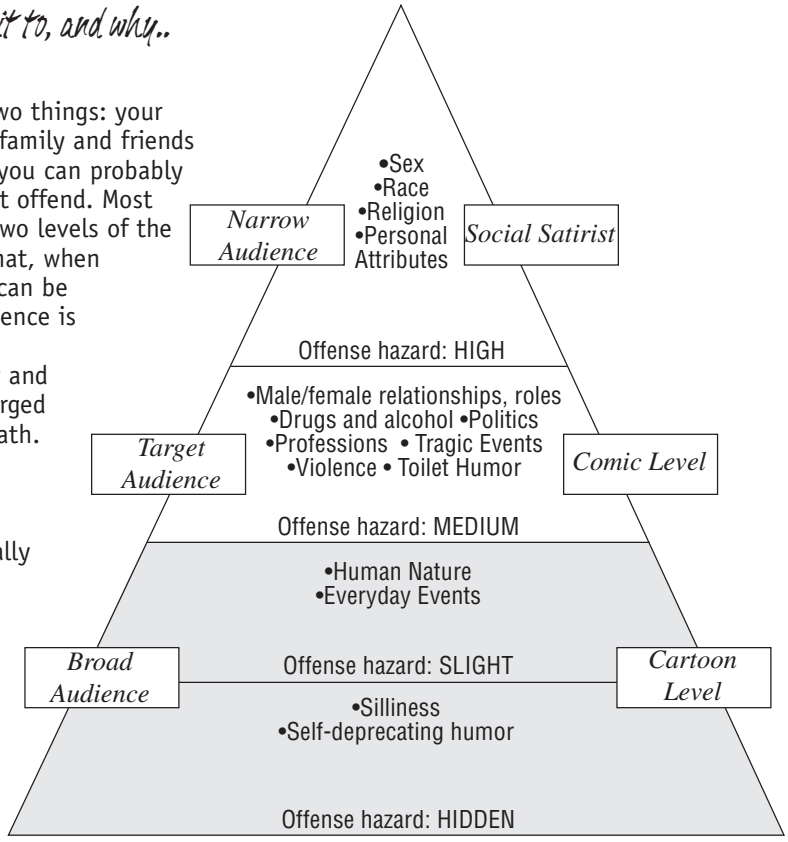
When writing a humor column for print, consider two things: your audience and your comic ability. If you are among family and friends or you have the sophistication of a social satirist, you can probably joke about topics at the top of the pyramid and not offend. Most writers should stay in the safe zone—the bottom two levels of the pyramid. In the middle of the pyramid are topics that, when presented at the comic level to a target audience, can be humorous without offending. Since the school audience is broad in scope, however, this is risky.

Level 1 **SOCIAL SATIRIST—**Appropriate only for family and friends. These are fighting words—emotionally charged topics that fuel hate and cause violence and/or death.

Level 2 **COMIC LEVEL—**Appropriate only for a target audience. These are meddling -in-other-people's-business words. Depending upon who, what, when, where, why, and how, these topics can be emotionally charged.

Level 3 **CARTOON LEVEL—**Appropriate for a broad audience. Fair game is human nature and everyday events. Highlighting the characteristics we all share is fair game.

Level 4 **CARTOON LEVEL—**Appropriate for a broad audience. When you poke fun at yourself or are just being silly for the sake of silliness, you don't have to worry about offending others because you have no targets.



PRE-PERFORMANCE HUMOR CHECKLIST

1. WHO are the actual or symbolic targets of your humor? Are these truly things to laugh at in your setting?
2. WHAT is the rating of your humor? (G? PG-13? R? M?) Is the rating appropriate for the setting and audience?
3. Does humor perpetuate hurtful stereotypes regarding race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic condition?

Joe Fenbert spent several years researching humor and separating it into levels. Originally developed to assess the appropriateness of assembly skits planned by student government leaders in Washington state, it also provides a method for student editors and journalists to determine the suitability of humor columns for print.

DIRECTIONS: Find three humorous stories. Identify where on the humor pyramid the content falls. Evaluate whether each one would be appropriate to use in a school newspaper, yearbook or web site. Explain your reasoning and the risks and rewards at stake.

Talking about art

Proficiency in the arts includes creating, performing or presenting art, recognizing artistic qualities in works of art and understanding the historical and cultural contexts in which art is created. The arts include music, visual art, dance, theater, cinema and writing. Art education emphasizes response, explanation and analysis of art based on technical, organizational and aesthetic elements. This is the foundation of the movement known as Discipline Based Art Education. It gives students the tools to discuss artwork and learn how others approach their work. The DBAE critique model presented here is designed to methodically introduce students to the process of examining art, whatever its origin.

The critique session is a chance for young artists to learn how to critique their own work and the work of other artists with you as their guide. As you begin the critique, stress the importance of constructive criticism. When working with student artwork in the classroom, avoid comparing two entries with each other or ranking the entries while the students are present. With the first several works, guide them through the four-step Discipline-Based Art Education critique method. (Point out that judgment is withheld until the very end, and point out how difficult it is to suspend judgment as you work through the first several entries.) It's an opportunity for you and the students to collaborate and learn how to critique Art. Notice how much thinking goes into it before you ever evaluate it? Here is the discussion guide format:

DESCRIBE IT

Quite literally. "It consists of black lines, three men wearing hats, ties and vests, with teardrops at the corners of their eyes" or "The seven dwarfs are pictured marching in a line rendered in Disney style. Above each character is his name...." You get the idea.

ANALYZE IT

In other words, explore how it is organized. "The cartoon contains three elements—the three men of different statures. It directs the reader's eye first to the tears in the men's eyes, then to their clothing, and finally labels which identify the men...."

INTERPRET IT

That is, discuss its meanings. A work may have complex or subtle meanings, and it may be interpreted in more than one way. "The tradition of Neoclassical principles of logic, order, and discipline as represented by the columns is in stark contrast to the overwhelmingly emotional tones of the rest of the image...." Or it can be simple: "The puppy and the girl juxtaposed in this way clearly conveys the idea of puppy love."

JUDGE IT

First on ***technical merit***, then on ***aesthetic merit***. Technical execution is a fairly objective assessment of the skill level and technique of the artist. Aesthetic judgment is your own emotional response to the work—whether you like it or not, no-questions-asked.

Talking about art

Choose a detailed story to examine closely. Answer the following questions.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS
As you glance at the narrative, what is your first, quick, off-the-cuff reaction?

_____

_____

DESCRIBE IT
Literally, what images do you see in your mind's eye?

_____

_____

_____

_____

ANALYZE IT
How is it organized? What are the parts? How do they relate to each other?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

INTERPRET IT
What does it mean? Are there multiple interpretations possible? What are its subtle meanings?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

JUDGMENT CALL

Technical _____

_____

_____

Aesthetic _____

_____

_____

ATTACH
STORY
HERE

Talking about art

Read your story and examine it closely. Answer the following questions.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS
As you glance at the narrative, what is your first, quick, off-the-cuff reaction?

_____

_____

DESCRIBE IT
Literally, what images do you see in your mind's eye?

_____

_____

_____

_____

ANALYZE IT
How is it organized? What are the parts? How do they relate to each other?

_____

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_____

INTERPRET IT
What does it mean? Are there multiple interpretations possible? What are its subtle meanings?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

JUDGMENT CALL

Technical _____

_____

_____

Aesthetic _____

_____

_____

ATTACH
YOUR
STORY
HERE

Name _____ *Period* _____ *Date* _____

Find a partner to coach you once you have finished your research. Write down your

Narrative Story _____

Type of Narrative_____

In one sentence, tell what you are trying to communicate in this narrative. What does the character want? Why can't they have it now? How will they set about getting it?

What focus, description, anecdotes, quotations and obstacles will the narrative contain? Put a star next to the most important point.

1.

2.

3.

How will the character overcome obstacles and achieve et what he or she wants?

List written and oral sources below. You should have at least three:

1.

2.

3.

The feature story

Which of the following will make a better story for the yearbook:

A. The school district adopts a new policy banning soda machines in the building and students have a variety of reactions to the change.

B. Five health occupations students faced what seemed like insurmountable obstacles on their two-year quest to reduce teenage obesity by banning the sale of soda on campus.

Two different points of view are represented. Answer A is the story you would see in many high school yearbooks, but the better story is Answer B.

Now that is a story worth telling.

Your readers want to follow, up-close-and-personal, the surprising drama and humor – large and small – of the people they know, even if they don't agree with them. Beginners make the mistake of writing about things rather than people.

The key to a great feature is extensive reporting and interviewing. You're writing the story because people are interested in your subject, which means they already know something about this person. Good stories tell us what we need to know, but great stories also tell us what we don't know and wish we had known. It's your job to find out the rest of the story.

While reporting and interviewing, you can't rely on your memory for all the information you are gathering. You must write it down in a notebook as you gather it. You must put quote marks around verbatim quotations in your notes. You must put description of the places you have visited that are important settings of the story. Editors will tell you that if they are sued, your notes are their only defense in a court of law. Be thorough and accurate in gathering and checking your facts. What is a fact? it is anything you can see, hear, taste, touch or smell.

Think back to your lesson on reporting and interviewing. Focus your story in the field by gathering information and asking questions. Your questions are designed to efficiently reveal the GOAL: Goal, Obstacle, Achievements, Logistical elements. There's only one perspective that can be made into a successful narrative.

Practice GOAL every day by trying to find the center of the story — the one person around whom a story revolves.

Getting your photographers and writers to document such stories as a team is a critical part of documenting the school year. Every package, every page, every personality feature, every sports spread is a story. There is a setting full of descriptive detail to use, characters with their own conflicts and challenges large and small, and in storytelling there is always an epiphany, insight or resolution that arises from following specific characters from beginning to end. Every piece of writing is a planned, specific solution to a unique set of circumstances. First-hand reporting rounds out a story.

How do you tell stories your readers will like? First, listen to them tell their own stories. How do they set it up and get their audience's attention? How do they keep the audience's attention? What kind of details delight and surprise their audience? How do they bring the story to a satisfying conclusion? It's so easy it's like child's play. Your readers, if you listen carefully, will actually show you what they like and how they like it. Just study the successful forms of oral storytelling among your students, and use those same strategies in your writing.

Aristotle, more than 2,000 years ago, said that every story needed the correct balance between ETHOS, PATHOS and LOGOS. From the reader's point of view, ethos is about right and wrong, pathos is about the emotions the reader experiences while hearing the story, and logos is a logical ordering of the story so it makes sense to the reader. He also advised writers to start in the middle of things, as far into the story as possible, to create drama, tension, excitement, and surprise.

News is IMPORTANT, while features are INTERESTING and FUN. Newspapers cover what's important and new, while yearbooks tend to focus on what happened from a human interest perspective. New research shows readers read more and remember more when stories are told in a narrative form.

Newspapers offer updates to important stories of the day, as a rule. They are meant to be read and trecycled on a regular schedule. News focuses on the facts by answering the most recent who, what, when, where, why and how of a story. It is the first draft of history. They also offer interesting and fun features for variety.

Yearbooks, on the other hand, are published once a year, and are meant to last a lifetime. Great care must be taken to assure that everything in the book is a factually accurate and entertaining documentary that represents the people, the times, and the place. As the years pass, the importance of the vivid description, quotations and detail become more important to readers, freezing a moment in time. Feature writers craft their stories with a few basic tools.

The four tools used by successful feature writers are Focus, Description, Anecdotes, and Quotations. Use these tools to craft a well-designed, well-written story that will surprise and delight your readers. Some stories capture the color and drama of an event or a season.

Other stories will focus on one individual who, because of their drive and passion, are of interest to readers. What they say, what they think, and what they do are closely examined, described, and quoted while also telling that person's story. These are called profile stories.

Through the writer's application of focus, selective concrete description, anecdotes and quotations, and using a narrative story structure like GOALS, create features readers will love.

A good story practically tells itself. After all, no one cares whether the window curtains are lace or the floor has wall-to-wall carpeting when there's a man with a gun crawling through a doggie door and an old woman in a rocking chair with a gun pointed right at him.

That's a great place to start telling a story.

Feature checklist

Feature story checklist:
__ Is the lead designed to hook the reader, and is it different from a straight news story lead?
__ Does the story have unity, coherence and emphasis?
__ have transitions been used between sentences and paragraphs?
__ Is the story interesting and entertaining?
__ Does each sentence either interest the reader or add pertinent facts to what has already been said?
__ Have all of the trite, redundant words been edited out?
__ Has variety been achieved through the use of punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structure?
__ Does the story have one main focus?
__ Does the story answer any questions the reader might have?
__ Does it have a focus, lead, a body, transition, and ending?
__ Has the story ended once the story has been completed?
__ Are sentences, paragraphs, and the entire story short?

There are five basic types of feature stories. Which is yours?
__ Straight Feature—From a straight news story, it's a good, basic stock feature that could be used anywhere
__ News—Based on an event, but covers the warmth, sentiment, local color, pathos, drama or uniqueness of the event.
__ Profile—Word portrait of a person which reveals the person's unusual experiences, occupation, hobbies or eccentricities.
__ Interpretative—An analytical feature, the writer studies the subject or event deeply to understand motivations, probable effects and cultural significance.
__ Brite—The most-read of all features, it is usually short and humorous.

There are many other types of features. Which is yours?
__ Human interest
__ Autobiographical
__ Personality—focuses on an individual who has an interesting aspect to his or her life
__ How-to-do-it—spotlights a project or accomplishment a person has completed
__ Historical
__ Explanatory
__ Informative
__ Color story—written for the benefit of an audience who missed a big event
__ background—takes a deeper look at experiences which may be overlooked or taken for granted
__ Interview or speech
__ Weather
__ Humorous
__ Event

There are five basic types of feature leads. Which is yours?
__ Summary—A brief introductory summary of the subject of the feature which is informative and interesting, not just a recitation of the 5W's and H.
__ Narrative—Uses storytelling technique to begin the lead, whets the appetite of the reader while in an informal, direct and informative style.
__ Descriptive—Particularly effective for events, persons or places with unusual characteristics, it sets the scene and focuses on relevant details.
__ Quotation—It better be good to lead with a quote, which must be interesting and pertinent to the rest of the story.
__ Question—Can be used if it logically introduces the focus of the feature, but often done poorly.
__ Direct Address—Talking directly to the reader as "you" is risky, and effective only on informal features.
__ Teaser—Almost always used in humorous features, it gets the reader's attention without telling too much about the story, which usually ends with a surprise element or twist to the story.

Guidelines for writers:
__ Did you write about people?
__ Did you look for and write about the problems or challenges of people?
__ Did you use vivid images and pictures to tell the story?
__ Did you use the most interesting perspective to tell the story?
__ Were you brief in telling the story?
__ Did you write naturally?
__ Were you clear?
__ Did you revise, rewrite and recheck?
__ Did you avoid personal opinion?
__ Were you bold and active, using active tense whenever possible?

Transitions

Good storytellers use transitions that work. If your friends say you are a good storyteller, you probably already know how to keep adding new elements to keep it interesting, and how to rev up the drama to keep their attention. In terms of using them in your writing, there are really just two ways to think about transitions. Some transitions are fast, while others are slow and take their time to develop. Knowing when to go slow and when to go fast is the mark of an experienced writer.

Go fast

When you are quicking jumping from one subject to the next, like a pebble skipping over the surface of a lake, you need trasitions that can turn on a dime.

The old rhyme goes "and, but, for, however, therefore, or." These six transitions are the glue that ties together ideas and facts. There are, of course, literally hundreds of words that can function as transitions, and an internet search for "word transitions" will reveal many excellent sites. Students, however, will especially benefit from a free web site called "Study Guides and Strategies." It has a useful section on functional word and phrase transitions organized by purpose. Transitions show the relationships between ideas.

Use words and phrases to make connections. For example, (did you notice that short but effective transition?) words such as " also, again, furthermore, and in addition" can be used to add ideas or facts. Words such as "as a result, consequently or therefore" can be used to show consequence. You can also use words and phrases to show contrast or comparison, directions, diversion, emphasis, exception, illustration, similarity, sequence or to exemplify.

Go slow

Sometimes, however, you want to take a more leisurely approach to developing a segment of the story. Readers enjoy stopping to smell the roses. Imagine a childhood memory and freeze that moment in time. Allow the movie camera to move forward a few frames at a time. While the frame is frozen, write as much as you can remember. Take your time and introduce plenty of details. These details will come back in different forms throughout the story. This is a narrative form of using transitions.

Imagine for a moment that a friend is weaving you a string bracelet. The bracelet make look different depending upon the way your friend weaves it. One bracelet may be a solid color. Another bracelet may weave together six or eight different colors. A third might use sixteen threads that weave together in an intricate pattern. Your story works the same way.

Every time you mention the certain character, a certain type of event, or certain kinds of descriptive words, you are weaving together a pattern. If you take your four-page story and tape it together vertically, you can find the weave in your work. First, go through and circle all the related words or phrases. Use different colors for different related threads. Then link all the related words together. What you'll notice among good writers is that one idea is introduced as another idea tapers off. If you're really good, you'll notice short and long threads that are woven and connected throughout your story. Some threads might run through part or all of your story, while others are shorter.

You've figured out by now that when it comes to writing human interest stories for the yearbook, you should prefer the narrative transition to the more formal transitions of logic and debate. Keep weaving new elements into your story while letting others go, always keeping in mind the one or two threads that run through the entire story.

activities

1. take your best story and tape it together vertically. First, go through and circle all the related words or phrases. Use different colors for different related threads. Then link all the related words together. Are there long threads? Short threads? As you weave together story elements, is there one thread that runs through the entire story?
2. Rate your transitions. Do you use a few narrative transitions or many? Do they also provide facts or fun for the reader? Do they function strictly as a transition, or do they also serve some other purpose in your narrative?
3. Compare your story to others in the classroom. Do you notice similarities or differences?
4. Read someone else's story and mark it up for them. Be generous in identifying themes, ideas, facts, emotions or other elements that you see running throughout the story. Sometimes it is more difficult to analyze your own work and having a second pair of eyes helps you to see things from someone else's point of view.

Short story outline

You should be able to pitch the essence of your story in, oh, about 55 words. The four required elements of every great short-form story: Setting, character or characters, conflict, resolution. Now pitch your feature story to the editor using these four elements in 55 words.

There are over 950,000 words in the English language— All you have to do is send us 55 of them. Steve Moss created 55 fiction, and if you think your story is good enough — even if it's nonfiction — you can enter the annual competition on the web.

What's 55 Fiction?

- It's storytelling at its very leanest, where each word is chosen with utmost care.
- It's not as easy as you might think.
- It's fun, which is exactly what reading and writing are supposed to be.

It's also great practice for structuring your feature story.

A haiku poem is short. So is a quarterback sneak. But nobody thinks they're simple to execute — it's just that the people who do them well make it seem that way.

Taking a great story concept and developing it within such a limited space is a little like carving a beautiful sculpture from a tiny block of wood. The working range is truncated and intimate, but the goal is not different than if you were creating on a much larger scale. You're trying to perfectly merge various elements into a coherent whole that ultimately makes people say, "Wow, that's really great!"

The Rules

Must be nonfiction or fiction, not essays or poems or errant thoughts.

Must contain elements of the following:

1. setting
2. a character or characters
3. conflict
4. resolution

No more or less than 55 words.

Hyphenated words can't count as one word.

Contractions do count as single words.

Title is not included in word count, but can be no longer than seven words.

Initials count as single words.

Acronyms count as one word.

Numbers count, too. If spelled out and hyphenated, see above.

Punctuation does not count as a word.

The Assignment

1. Write at least three stories, following the rules above. Due at the end of class. Homework: 5 more stories.
2. After reporting and interviewing for your story, write the 55 fiction version of the story to pitch to your editor.
3. In each sentence, underline the picture noun once, and the action verb twice. Circle all pronouns. Put a box around passive voice verbs. Are you writing sentences with muscle? What can you improve about your writing? As you look at your three stories, which do you think is your best work? Second best? Least best? Why?
4. First practice writing fictional stories to understand how it's done. The shorter a piece, the more memorable and weird it must be. Then, when you're ready, try organizing your real stories using this approach, then expand them to full-fledged stories.

Examples:

DEVELOPMENTAL REVENGE

Richard steps through the door. The smell of whiskey touches off memories of his father's hand across his younger face. He is surprised he found the house still standing. He had willed it gone.

Richard picks up a rock.

"For You, Dad."

A window breaks. The walls will soon follow.

His mini-mall will stand here.

SHIFT WORK

"You're still here? Where's Dr. Jones?"

The Emergency Room is busy. I'm angry at my missing replacement.

"He's late again," I say.

"Hey, Doc! Face versus windshield — better come quick!"

Cursing to myself, I yell at the charge nurse: "Page Dr. Jones again!"

As I intubate, I hear Jones' pager — on the patient's belt.

AT THE AUTOPSY

"Victim's blood is completely drained, apparently through two small puncture wounds in the neck," said the coroner.

"Hey, you don't suppose it's, you know, the real deal?" asked his assistant.

"No, just some psycho."

"You sure?"

They stared at each other for a moment, then burst out laughing — but stopped when the corpse laughed, too.

Alternatives...

HEAD
Organize your thoughts so your reader will understand where you are going with your idea. Start with the cartoon or current event that caught your attention. Then state the problem or issue you are going to write about.

COPY

Name _____ *Period* _____ *Date* _____

Directions:
Circle the number on the scale which corresponds most closely to the statement you agree with. You may circle a number half way between the two statements.

Multiply the number circled by the number to the right of the bar and enter the total on the line.

Add the totals on each line to determine how well you did.

90–100	**Great**
80-90	**Needs work**
70-80	**Major problems**
Below 70	**Try again**

Does the feature have a clear, well-developed focus?

1	2	3	4	5	X 3_____
Focus is unclear		Focus is somewhat clear		Ideas are easily understood	

Do story elements allow readers to relate to the character?

X 2_____

1	2	3	4	5
Narrative is not relevant to audience		Narrative could be relevant to the audience		Narrative is appropriate for the audience

Does the feature show adequate research and thought?

1	2	3	4	5	X 1_____
Shows lack of research		Needs more research		Has appropriate research	

Is the type of feature appropriate for the subject matter?

1	2	3	4	5	X 1_____
Wrong type of editorial		Editorial could be adapted to correct form		Editorial type is appropriate for the content	

Does the feature make three or four major points?

1	2	3	4	5	X 1_____
Needs more or fewer points		Points are sufficient		Points are clear and easily found	

Does the main character overcome obstacles?

1	2	3	4	5	X 3_____
Does not offer solutions		Solutions are unclear or vague		Solutions are specific and constructive	

Are there any grammar, spelling or style errors?

1	2	3	4	5	X 2_____
Four or more errors		One to three errors		No errors	

Does the feature have any narrative structure pitfalls?

1	2	3	4	5	X 3_____
More than one pitfall		Only one pitfall		No pitfalls	

Does the overall narrative approach achieve its purpose?

1	2	3	4	5	X 4_____
I was not convinced by this editorial		I could be convinced by this editorial		I was inspired or stirred to action	

Total_____

Captions

The first thing a reader does is to look at the dominant photo, then they look under the photo for the words. If you've planned well, the next thing they'll do is look at the headline and read the story and sidebars, too. When it comes to copywriting, captions are the work horses of the book. Every single photo must have one, and it must quickly tell the reader what the picture itself cannot say: Names, stories, dates, places, significance. In fact, you could tell your story through captions only.

Captions that tell and intrigue

When someone looks at a picture, they'll look at the caption for the specifics (name, place, context), but every caption should also intrigue in a way that makes them look back at the picture because they just learned something they didn't know before they read the caption. If the picture and caption work well together, they'll look at the headline and then the story.

National Geographic captions are excellent examples. As a strategy, the captions work from either specific to general, or general to specific. They intrigue you, and make you want to read the story. BINGO! People look at the photograph first, then the caption, then back to the photo as they become intrigued, and then to the story. And the story better be ready to reward them immediately for taking a chance and glancing at the first paragraph or two.

Finish the picture story with words

You have an opportunity with every caption you write to complete the picture. There are some things a picture is great at showing (at its best, action/reaction), and some things it can't tell you (the 5W's and H) such as listing names, grades, classes, teams, titles, places, dates, significance of event, context. Great pictures deserve great copy, but they complement each other. Each has a role to play, and together the overall effect of the combination is what's important. Also, use captions and texts to extend the basic story.

Strip the story

Strip the story down to its essence by moving story elements not essential to the immediate story to the captions and sidebars.

Captions are great places for those bits and pieces that got left on the cutting room floor during editing, or that are not essential to the primary narrative.

Make the cutline work for a living. Use prepositional phrases, and recast the lines until you have picture nouns and action verbs. Let caption information move the story forward. Focus on the action, and kep the action going with each new phrase, clause and sentence.

Intrigue the reader

Cutlines should inform, surprise, delight and intrigue readers. Here's what readers do: They look at the biggest picture on the page, then look under it for a caption and read it. So far so good. The caption should be written to offer tantalizing insights that make the reader look back at the picture to completely understand it. At this point, they have invested a little effort and been rewarded with some intriguing information.Now they want to know more, so they look at the headline, then the first couple of paragraphs to see if the rewards will continue. If you don't start with your best material, you'll lose them before they get into the story, sidebar elements, or even other photos. Reward readers by revealing new insights and informations with every few paragraphs. When they finish the spread, they'll know they're smarter than the average bear, because they know the inside story.

Writing Captions

- Do not begin with the words *a, an* or *the*.
- Use present tense to describe action in a photo.
- Give readers information they cannot get from just looking at a photo.
- A caption should complete the photo. The reader should not have to look at the story, but should want to look at the story.
- Write captions so they go from specific to general or general to specific.
- Do not begin a caption with names.
- When identifying members of a group, write "from left," not "from left to right."
- "Above" and "pictured here" are unnecessary.
- Captions should not repeat information contained in the lead.
- Name people only if they are important to the picture.
- Vary the way you begin captions:
  –prepositional phrases
  –infinitive phrases
  –participial phrases
  –adjective phrases
  –questions
  –exclamations
  –play on words

Activities

1. Cut out pictures from magazines and newspapers that set a mood or seem to tell a story. Practice writing story captions for these pictures.
2. Review copies of National Geographic captions and discuss how much of the information identifies what is in the photograph, and how much of the information extends beyond the photograph to other elements of the story.
3. Have the staff cut out photos with captions that are good models. Keep them in a notebook or post them on the bulletin board. Analyze what makes each one effective and interesting.

Headlines

If you look at the cover of magazines on the newstand, they promise you that in 28 days you can have the "bikini body of your dreams," ten foods to eat to go from "flab to fab" or "six-pack abs in six weeks."

There is a big difference between such magazines and your yearbook. The magazine headlines are designed to move you to action; that is, to pick it up and buy it at the checkstand. Most yearbooks are presold, and you have the luxury of using your headline to help tell the story of the school year rather than using it to sell your publication. You can tone down the screaming and actually spend more time writing headlines that tie together the spread as a package while developing the topline narrative and secondary narratives for each section of your book.

Occasionally, the stories in the magazine don't live up to the promise of the headlines, and that disappoints readers. If the headline is clever and witty, a reader might expect the story and spread to offer up more of the same. The promise is that the reader will receive a benefit in exchange for their valuable time. Your story must deliver on that promise.

Never take the reader for granted. You should still "sell" the story of the package to your reader. Readers are timid, and they should be rewarded when they stop on the spread and engage. That, of course, is what you really want — a reaction — and then interaction with the carefully planned bits of the story you have presented.

So if the headline on a spread is the promise for what should be delivered, shouldn't you create the promise first, and then write the narrative? That's why you sit down with your WED spread team to plan the whole package or spread. This assures that when you make a promise, you can deliver. As the story changes and morphs into something else, you all have to keep up with it. Otherwise, it's back to the drawing board or another team meeting.

Purposes of the headline

- A headline summarizes what the spread is about.
- A headline teases, tantalizes and creates anticipation for what's next.
- Show, don't tell.
- A headline sells the story to readers.
- A headline helps direct the reader's attention so they know where to start.
- A headline reflects the style and personality of the publication
- A headline connects with readers' emotions to create a sense of drama and consequence

How to write a headline

Because headline type is big, you don't have much space to get your point across. There are some habits, grammatically speaking, that will save space and use words economically:

- Write in present tense. It uses fewer words than past tense.
- Use active voice. It uses fewer words and is more action-oriented.
- Use picture nouns and action verbs. They create imagery in the reader's mind.
- Don't split from one line to the next: a noun and a verb, a verb and an adverb, a noun and an adjective, or split a prepositional phrase.
- Don't use the school's name or initials in headlines.
- Keep it short and simple.
- Write headlines like sentences: Capitalize the first letter of the first word, and proper nouns. Nothing esle.
- Don't state the obvious.
- Don't repeat the lead or introduction to your story.
- Tell the truth. Be accurate.
- Be creative, but don't distort the story.
- Avoid the familiar. Lead with unusual details.
- Capture the feeling or emotion of the moment.
- Focus the headline tightly on the unifying idea of the spread.
- Having trouble writing the headline? Then you probably need to rewrite the story.

Magazine covers focus relentlessly on the looking at everything from the reader's point of view. Rather than ask "What do I want the reader to know?" the headline writer puts herself in the reader's shoes. The answers to two questions provide the raw material for your package:

- Why should I care?
- What's in it for me?

You should have at least three different answers for each question. Make sure the answers are addressed in the headline, story, captions, photos, sidebars and graphics. Readers will figure out what you were doing, and they'll tell you in various ways how much they appreciate you thinking of them in the preparation of your yearbook.

Activities

1. Cut out headlines from magazines and newspapers that set a mood or seem to tell a story. Analyze what makes each one effective and interesting.
2. Review human interest stories in magazines for interesting headline ideas. Discuss how the headline slows the reader down and draws the reader into the story angle. Discuss how the headline intrigues the reader and provides hints of what is to come. Develop a list of guidelines for how to write such headlines.
3. Have the staff cut out headlines that are good models. Keep them in a notebook or post them on the bulletin board. Analyze what makes each one effective and interesting.

Sports Writing

In some ways, writing a sports story for the yearbook uses the same skills and techniques as writing for any other section of the yearbook. Everything you have learned so far about writing human interest stories still applies.

Most sports stories are written for newspapers or radio or television, and they capture the day-to-day drama and action of teams people like to follow. The best advice for sports writers is to feature the future, but in a yearbook the season is long over before the reader ever sees the spread.

While entire books have been written about how to write sports for daily and weekly sports pages, relatively little exists about how to present a sports story in a yearbook. It might help to understand how sports reporting began to understand what a yearbook sports writer should do.

History Lesson

Before television, the newspaper sports page was the only place a serious sports fan could go to relive the thrill of the game. Red Smith was one of the best sports writers of the 20th century. He won a Pulitzer Prize for his sports writing. He said "I've always had the notion that people go to spectator sports to have fun and then they grab the paper to read abut it and have fun again."

Purpose of the yearbook sports spread

That is great advice for the yearbook sports team. The purpose of your sports spread is to help the reader relive the moments, experience the drama, and rekindle the emotions like it just happened yesterday. In other words, it needs to be fresh.

There's only one way to do that. Your sports writers must follow the team week by week and month by month, recording and observing as much as possible. You already know a good feature story requires extensive reporting and interviewing. You know some of the GOALs when you start the season, but you won't know the achievements or outcome of the story until the season is finally over.

It will take perseverance and, not surprisingly, teamwork to cover the season of a team at your school. Documentaries have been made about one season in the life of a football team, capturing the drama —on the field and off — that occurred during one year. Your coverage shouldn't start with the first game, but with the first practice. A lot of what you will do is observe. The interviews will be less formal and probably during the school day.

Because you will only know which narrative thread you were developing will be the one to pay off, you will have to document multiple threads during the season, then decide how to piece together the story, photos and sidebars that will do the best job of telling the story.

Another technique is to have the entire staff SWARM (Staff-Wide Army of Reporters on Mission) an event and cover it from different perspectives minute by minute. Like a TV feature reporter, they'll have to search out the story during the event, covering it at the same time. Teams of writers and photographers should collaborate in real time to generate sidebars on the spot. With that much reporting, interviewing and photographing, you'll have the basic ingredients for a great spread.

You can also cover important events such as long-standing rivalries, games of consequence, or the special events, competitions or field trips. It's all a part of the story. Just make sure to capture the drama, emotion, excitement and fun of the event so readers can relive the experience through your spread.

Ethics and the process of verification of facts

Media ethics are discussed and debated regularly, despite the fact that most publications publish the story first and then debate the ethics of whether they should have published it later. Editors go out of their way to assure their reporters are impartial in their coverage. If a reporter is involved in the civic life of a community, such as on the school board, another competent (if not knowledgeable) reporter can usually step in and cover the story.

While people have been told the goal of reporting is objectivity, the truth is that back in the early 20th century, when facts and the scientific method were still important, they decided there should be a process of verification of the facts. With that in mind, let's examine the classic dilemma facing a high school news staff when it comes to who should cover and write the story.

Who should write the story?

The best yearbook sports story is probably going to be written by someone who:

- understands the sport
- knows how it is played
- knows and understands the local people involved in the sport (coaches, players, parents, boosters, cheerleaders and fans)
- understands the consequences for your team from play to play or game to game

Most publications have athletes on staff. They tend to be the type of people who like doing things, not surprisingly. They are probably the best ones to understand and cover the school's teams. They frequently join newspaper or yearbook staffs to write about sports.

There little reason to worry about conflict of interest in having a yearbook staff member who is an athlete write the sports copy for the yearbook spread. Even if the person happens to be the quarterback of the football team or the captain of the volleyball team, there's not a problem as long as the editor can, at her discretion, consult the coach and other members of the team to verify facts and perspectives. Most athletes are team players anyway, and they care about what their teammates will think about the story they wrote.

The JV and Freshman Teams

Some, or maybe all, varsity coaches discourage coverage of the junior varsity and freshman level teams. They say they want their players to focus on developing the skills that will get them to varsity. Indeed, some players do move up to varsity from junior varsity during the season, but not that often.

Here's the problem: The folks on the freshman and junior varsity team are readers who may have purchased the yearbook, and they expect coverage, even if it isn't as thorough and detailed as varsity.

Here's the solution: Team photos are required, and stories focused on players who develop real potential over the season on those teams deserve some recognition, as well as a narrative story showing how a goal-oriented aproach to conditioning, practices and weekly games pays off for them, their team, and the future of varsity athletics at their school. Fight to tell their story. Document their progress with camera and notebook in hand. Interview coaches and players and the fans who show up to their games.

HUMAN INTEREST NARRATIVE RUBRIC

Name_____

Period_____ Date_____

	Weak **1**	**Better** **2**	**Best** **3**	**Score**
Focus on character development, central idea, POV	Story has no clear central idea, angle, character. Not relevant to audience	Story generally sticks to central idea, but wanders occasionally from angle.	Story focuses on best central character, idea, point of view with an identifiable angle and is limited to significant facts, relevant to audience	
Research Interviewing, reporting that lead to anecdotes, quotations	Summarizes some sources without attribution. No localization of subject matter. No first-hand interviews. Develops unimportant points and/or irrelevant material. Directly includes writer's opinion.	Reflects interviewing, reporting, but lacks in-depth quotations or observation. Some attempt at localizing. Leaves some obvious questions unanswered. Attributes some information to sources.	Uses first-hand interviews, reporting. Relates subject matter to local area. Reflects sound interviewing techniques and attributes informtion or opinion to sources. Anticipates audience concerns and selects and develops important points.	
Word Choice Description Selective concrete words and images	Words are often dull or inapporpriate for audience. No significant quotes are used. Includes reporter in the story by using Q&A format or phrases such as "When asked..." Uses inappropriate person or passive voice.	Words are generally appropriate to audience and topic. Direct quotes are sometimes used when indirect would be clearer and as interesting. Uses orphan or buried quotes. Some attempt at color and life. Few cliches or trite statements are used.	Selects words to add color and life. Uses appropriate person and active voice. Uses correctly a combination of direct and indirect quotations choosing significant statements to quote directly. Chooses words appropriate to audience.	
Organization Structure	Faulty or inadequate sequencing of ideas. Does not use paragraphing successfully. Inadequate movement from beginning to end. Length inappropriate for topic.	Understandable sequencing of idea. Usually divides topic effectively into paragraphs. Adequate movement from beginning to end.	Appropriate sequencing of ideas. Divides topics effectively into paragraphs that are short and effective from beginning to end. Length appropriate to topic.	
Lead Narrative hook	Uses abstract question as a lead ("Have you ever wondered...?) Does not introduce topic. Uses trite or cliché opening.	Introduces topic but no "hook" for reader attention.	Uses lively lead with "hook" that creates an angle. Avoid rhetorical questions as opening statement.	
Ending on character development, central idea, POV	Leaves reader in the air.	Summarizes story.	Leaves reader with a finished feeling without summarizing. Ending is essential and often ties back to lead ""hook."	
Usage: Grammar, Sentence Structure, Paragraphing, Syntax, Agreement, Conventions	Writes run-on or fragmented sentences. Misplaces modifiers. Makes serious errors in subject/verb, pronoun/antecedent agreement. Does not vary sentence forms. Consistently fails to observe usage conventions. Uses long paragraphs with repetitious beginnings.	Usually uses clear syntax, appropriate modifiers and a variety of sentence forms. Some errors in usage. Little variety in paragraph length or bginnings, but generally uses short paragraphs.	Uses correct grammar, complete sentences and conventional subject/verb, pronoun/antecedent agreement. Uses clear syntax, appropriate modifiers and a variety of sentence forms. Usage is clear and acceptable. Uses paragraphs that are generally short, but varied in lengths. Begins paragraphs with a variety of workd choices.	
Conventions: Capitalization, Punctuation, Spelling	Does not use correct punctuation consistently. Misuses quotation marks and other punctuation in direct quotes. Makes many spelling errors.	Usually uses all punctuation according to standard usage correctly. Uses quotation marks in direct quotations, but sometimes misplaces other punctuation in direct quotes. Makes few spelling errors.	Uses all punctuation according to standard usage correctly. Uses apostrophes in contractions and to show possession. Uses quotation marks correctly and places other punctuation marks correctly in diret quotations. Makes no spelling errors.	
Stylebook	Does not abbreviate, hyphenate, capitalize or use titles as indicated in the stylebook or often even as in standard English usage. Does not use stylebook preferred choices.	Usually abbreviates, hyphenates, capitalizes and uses titles as indicated in the stylebook. Usually uses stylebook preferred choices.	Abbreviates, hyphenates, capitalizes and uses titles as indicated in the stylebook. Usually uses stylebook preferred choices.	

Story_____ Name_____

Evaluated by_____

_____ I. Central idea

Why?

Suggestions

_____ II. Research

Why?

Suggestions

_____ III. Woord Choice

Why?

Suggestions

_____ IV. Organization

Why?

Suggestions

_____ V. Lead

Why?

Suggestions

_____ VI. Ending

Why?

Suggestions

_____ VII. Grammar, usage, Sentence Structure, and Paragraphing. Identify words, sentences and paragraphs that need work on copy.

Identify errors on copy

_____ VIII. Capitalization, Punctuation and Spelling

Identify errors on copy

_____ IX. Stylebook

Identify errors on copy