

INSIDE JOURNALISM

Volume 1, Issue 2

The Pledge of News

A Look at the Fundamentals of News-Gathering, the Etiquette of Reporting, and Jurisprudence of the Pledge of Allegiance in the Classroom

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An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

The News

KidsPost Article: "Story-Telling: What Goes Into a Newspaper?"

The INSIDE Journalism curriculum guide provides information and resources that can be used on many grade levels and in many subject areas. Here are a few suggestions for using the material in this guide.

Think About It

What is news? Is it what is taking place in our own neighborhood? Is it what is happening north, east, west and south of us? It depends.

What is worthy to be news depends on "readership" or audience. What news do students share when they get home from school? What are examples of good news and not-so-good news? Would that same information be news in the community newsletter? In a Washington Post Metro section? It depends.

Here are some factors to consider when determining news value and worthiness to cover:

Impact or Magnitude

If a bully is picking on one student, it is news in the family and guidance office. If several bullies are picking on random students on their way home from school, a larger group is influenced. If the attacks go from verbal abuse to physical harm, a reporter with a school, hospital or police beat may cover the story. If mold is found in a school kitchen, one school community is concerned. If mold is found in buildings throughout a school system, leadership of that system may be in question, especially if the mold remains untreated.

Proximity

Events that are happening in our homes, community and state get more attention. A 20-car accident on a snowy road may be reported,

but it will be closer to the front page if it occurs in the D.C. area or Hawaii rather than in Colorado.

Other factors in determining newsworthiness include *prominence, timeliness, conflict, newness and unusualness*. Discuss all of these factors with students. You might also discuss "a slow news" day.

Read the headlines and ledes of news stories on the front page of The Washington Post. Do the same for the front pages of Business and Sports sections. Make a list of topics that are news today. Which news values do they illustrate?

Read

Read "Story-Telling: What Goes Into a Newspaper Story?" What information does the first paragraph of a news story provide? What are the five Ws and one H? Compare the headline and the lede of a story. Do they both summarize the article?

Vocabulary

Review the vocabulary of news found in the KidsPost article and the sidebar of this lesson. Have students find examples of a "source," "partial quotation" and "quotation" in a news story.

Analyze the News Story

Give students "How to Write a News Story." Read and discuss. Use "The Inverted Pyramid" diagram to explain the way information is

Vocabulary

Assignment Editor: An editor who keeps track of trends and newsworthiness of stories and makes assignments to reporters

Beat: Area assigned to a reporter for regular coverage

Copy Editor: An editor who is responsible to check news articles for accuracy, consistency and proper grammar, punctuation and spelling

Deadline: When different stages of a story or parts of a paper must be finished to get the paper published on time

News: Information about recent events or happenings

Partial Quotation: Use phrases from a source within a sentence you have written. Quotation marks indicate the words are from another person.

Quotation: The exact words of someone to whom the reporter has spoken

Reporter: A writer for the newspaper who follows a particular beat or has a general news assignment.

Source: A person who gives a reporter information. This can be the person involved, an eyewitness or an authority. Sources have given the reporter permission to use their names and information.

Verification: Determine the truth of the information the reporter gathers or is given.



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organized in a news story. Select a news story to read and analyze. Does the lede summarize and present the main information? Is supporting information arranged from most to least important? Who is quoted? Where does the quotation appear in the article?

Meet the Reporters

What is it like to be a news reporter? Meet two Washington Post Metro section reporters—Christina Samuels and Neely Tucker. You may wish to give your younger students only the Q and A with Ms. Samuels. Yearbook and newspaper students at Herndon (Va.) Middle School wrote the questions we asked the reporters.

Conduct an Interview

Give students “Preparing for an Interview.” It is found in the American Woman curriculum guide (<http://www.washpost.com/NIE>). Discuss the difference between a closed-end question and an open-end question. Have students practice writing questions that will get more than a yes or no response.

Is there someone in your school who could provide students with news? Perhaps the principal, school nurse or the PTSA president can tell of an event. You could provide the basic information so students can prepare questions, but don’t tell the whole story. Part of what students will be doing is verifying the information you have provided.

Write a News Story

Read “How To Begin a News Story.” Ask students to review their notes. Write the lede of the story. Write the news story, including a quotation with correct attribution.

Do the cut-off test.

Share the Lede

Compare ledes. Do students agree on what the news is?

Consider the Constitution

Two law students in the Marshall-Brennan Fellowship Program provide the background and lesson plan to study the Pledge of Allegiance in the time of national crisis. Do students have the right not to recite it? Use the “I Pledge Allegiance to My Flag” handout with younger students.

Enrichment

1. Use “Timeline” to discover the history of The Washington Post from 1890–1900. Select discussion questions, activities and research projects from “A Changing Community, A Changing Role.” Learn more about journalism and understand more about the social, economic, and political changes in D.C. and the country.

2. Read today’s newspaper to find articles about discovery, disaster, government action, everyday life, war, money and sports. Add two more topics to this list. Record the headline, byline, lede and page number. What does the article tell the reader about each topic?

“Story-Telling: What Goes Into a Newspaper Story?” can be found at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/a7843-2002Nov18.html>

“Getting to the Bottom of It” can be found at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A7845-2002Nov18.html>

It’s About News

On the Web

➤ http://www.washpost.com/news_ed/news/index.shtml

News

Learn more about the more than 850 people who work in The Post’s News department. The Post maintains 12 bureaus in Maryland and Virginia, five bureaus around the country and 20 around the world.

➤ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A61734-2002Nov15.html>

“Pulling the Trigger”

Michael Getler, Post ombudsman, addresses the decision to report what the accused juvenile sniper reportedly had told investigators without his lawyer present. Many of the questions posed in his Nov. 17, 2002, column could lead to lively discussion.

➤ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/watergate/splash.html>

Revisiting Watergate

The Watergate investigation brought fame to The Washington Post and the reporting team of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein. At this Web site, you will find a video with Ben Bradlee and Bob Woodward; an archive of Post stories from the period; a photo gallery of Post and other photos and a collection of cartoons from the Watergate era; and a multimedia page including audio from the famous tapes and video clips from famous moments.

➤ <http://homepage.mac.com/jmar/newsies/>

Newsies

Information about the Disney movie. In the history section, links to New York Times and New York Tribune coverage of the 1899 newsboy strike.

The Annotated News Story

Picking apart the news story:

Headline: This should give the story in a nutshell, letting a reader decide whether to read the article. Usually, the bigger the headline, the more important the story.

Byline: The name of the person who wrote the story.

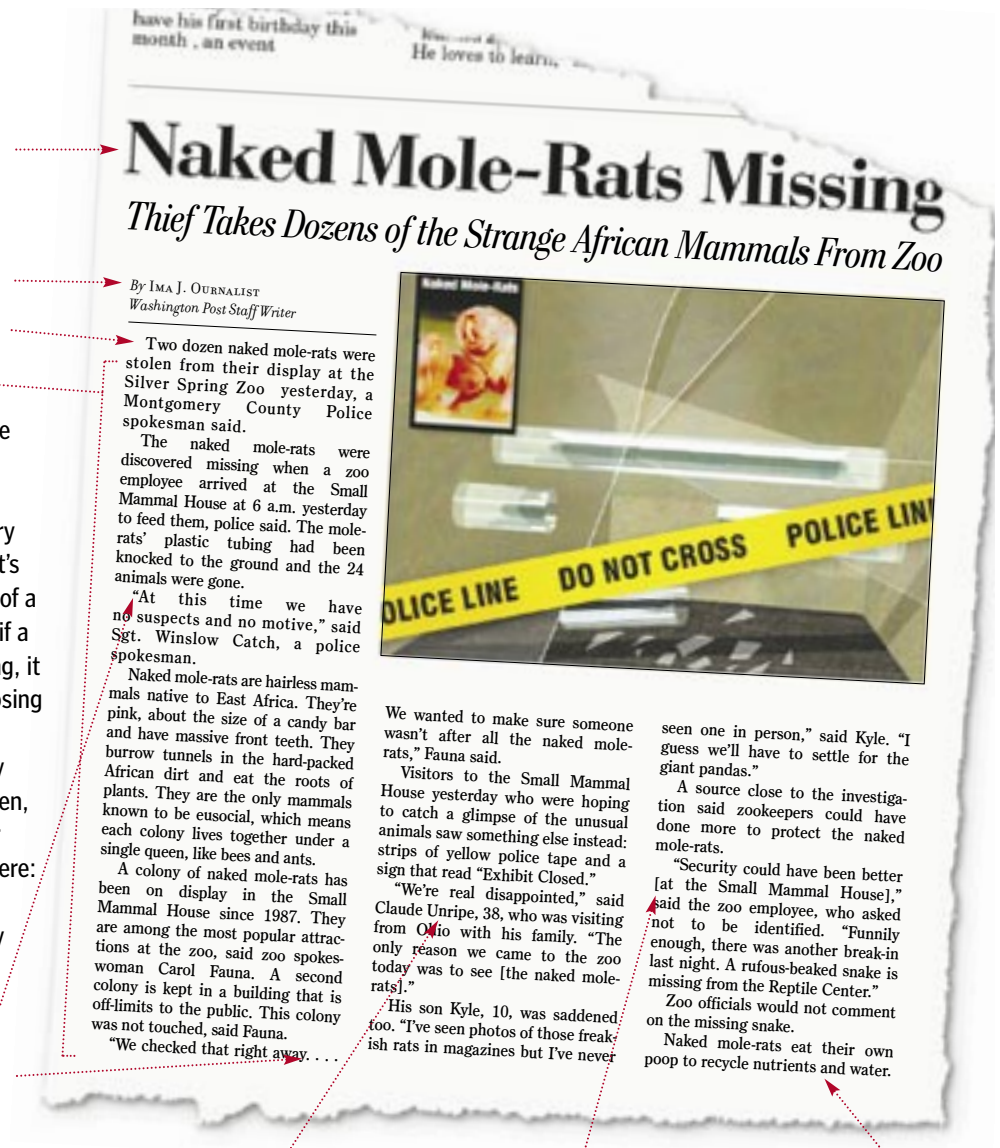
Lead/Lede: This is the first sentence or paragraph of the story. In a news story, it should give the most important information.

Inverted pyramid: “Inverted” means “upside down.” Most news stories are written in an inverted pyramid style. That means the most important information is at the top of the story and the least important is at the bottom. That’s so that busy readers can get the main points of a story by reading just a few paragraphs. Also, if a story has to be shortened because it’s too long, it can be simply cut from the bottom without losing anything too important.

The 5Ws and an H: If possible, a news story should answer the questions Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. Does this one? Who or what: naked mole-rats. When: Yesterday. Where: The Silver Spring Zoo. How: By breaking into the Small Mammal House. Why: No one really knows.

A quote: A quote is the exact words of someone who spoke to the reporter.

Ellipses: Sometimes in a quote you’ll see three or four little dots. These are called ellipses. That means that the person being quoted said something that the reporter didn’t include in the quote. Why not? Probably because the information wasn’t that important, or was repetitive. Here, for example, the zoo spokeswoman might have said “We checked that right away, right after the zoo opened. We wanted to make sure someone wasn’t after all the naked mole-rats.”



A source: A source is a person who gives information. The police spokesman, the zoo spokeswoman and the Ohio tourist are all “named sources.” They told the reporter it was okay to print their names in the paper. Newspapers sometimes use an unnamed source, such as the zoo employee. Why wouldn’t he let his name be used? He might be afraid of losing his job because he talked about problems at the zoo. His information is important to the story, so the reporter included his quote but protected him by not using his name. She also included something about him—he’s a zoo employee—so readers could decide if he knows what he’s talking about.

Brackets: Words in brackets in a quote were not said by the person doing the talking. Reporters add the words to make the quote clearer to readers. Here, the source didn’t say the words “the Small Mammal House” but the reporter knew that’s what he meant.

The bottom of the pyramid: The tiny tip at the bottom of the inverted pyramid isn’t that important to the story. This sentence could be cut and a reader would still know just about everything he or she needs to know.



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Christina Samuels, 31, has been a journalist for 10 years. She became interested in journalism at the urging of a high school English teacher, who liked the essays she wrote in class. She applied for a two-week journalism workshop, where she and other high school students put out a small newspaper. “I loved it,” Samuels said. “I realized I could actually get paid to be nosy.”

Samuels attended Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, majoring in newspaper journalism. She worked on the school newspaper, as a reporter, news editor and editor in chief.

When she graduated from college, she worked at the Miami Herald as a general assignment reporter, covering a variety of topics. Some of her favorite stories included spending a day on a Naval destroyer, the USS *Cole*, which years later was attacked in Yemen. She also reported about scientists who used medical equipment to scan a dinosaur egg—to see if there were fossilized bones inside.

The Washington Post asked Samuels if she were interested in a new job, and she now covers schools in Prince William County, where she has been for the past five years. Her favorite parts about her job include visiting classrooms and meeting new kids and teachers.

“Being a reporter is not an easy job, but it can be exciting and fun. You have to be able to ask good questions and write very fast. When everything comes together well, it’s a great feeling. When it’s not coming together well, you can’t get frustrated; you just try something else. If you think you might want to be a reporter, read the newspaper carefully (every section!) and write a lot. Writing skills and critical reading skills are both very important.”



Meet the Reporter

Christina Samuels

Is it difficult to get the people you are interviewing to cooperate?

“Occasionally, it is difficult. Sensitivity is an important social skill. You try to think about how you would feel if you were in their situation. If they’ve just been through something very sad or very scary, you try to be sensitive to that and not ask a lot of intrusive questions, but just allow people to talk and get their feelings out. Sometimes there’s not enough time to be as nice as you want to be, but usually I find that if I tell people exactly what I’m doing and exactly what I need from them, they’re very helpful. If not, you find someone else!”

How can you ask a person a personal question and not be embarrassed?

“Sometimes you are embarrassed. In that case, I don’t hide it. I say to the person, “It’s difficult for me to ask this question, but I have to do it.” And then I ask. Sometimes I get an answer and sometimes I don’t, but at least I did my job. As time goes on, it gets easier.”

What was your most memorable story?

“I did a story on an 18-month-old who was burned in an accidental fire. Her six-year-old brother was playing with matches and started the fire. For a long time, doctors didn’t know if she would live, but she did. She needed a lot of therapy so that she could do some of

the things she used to do. She had to learn how to use her hands again, for example, because they were very badly burned and she lost some fingers. I did a story about her therapy, and then came back to it several months later. It was amazing to see how much she had grown and changed and improved. And, she gave me a hug and a kiss! That made me feel really great. Though she liked to hug and kiss everyone!”

Has anyone ever wound up in trouble because of an article you wrote?

“Yes. And sometimes I feel bad about it. The only thing you can do is try to be as fair as you possibly can be, and explain to everyone who is going to be in a story what the story is about. You can never, ever lie to a source. It would be wrong, and it would be unfair. If, after you explain everything, they still talk to you, then at least you know they made the decision on their own.”

Are you assigned all your stories? Have you ever gone after a story on your own?

“I am assigned very few of my stories. The vast majority of my stories I come up with on my own, and I think that’s the same for most of my reporter friends. So when you see something in the paper, you can usually count on the fact that it was something the reporter saw on her own and decided was important.”

How did you become a Washington Post reporter?

The easy way to answer this is that the Post offered me a job, and I accepted! But in general, I think that people get to the Post by being good reporters at smaller newspapers. The Post likes to hire people with experience, so you don’t see a lot of students right out of college working there, though it does happen.



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Being a reporter can be very difficult but it is very rarely boring. It also lets you meet people from all different parts of society, if not the world.

I was 20 years old the first time I met someone who actually wrote for a living. That was the late Willie Morris, the famed Southern writer and magazine editor. We were sipping bourbon in Left Field Lounge. This is what people at Mississippi State University call a small hill that lies just beyond the left field fence of the school's baseball field. Everyone barbecues out there on game nights to the extent that play is sometimes halted when the wind shifts and there's so much smoke that neither the batter nor the catcher can see the incoming pitch.

Willie was talking about his stint as the editor at Harper's (when he was editing Norman Mailer and the like) and his experiences in the New York world of publishing.

I found it fascinating, but had scarcely ever been out Mississippi. I was under the distinct impression that one needed a passport the other side of Memphis. But I took Willie's suggestion to write for a newspaper for "a little while to learn a little something." It has been 16 years and 50-something countries since that conversation.

I have found it to be good advice. The first journalism job I had was the Yalobusha County correspondent for the Oxford Eagle, one of the smallest dailies in the U.S; the most recent was working in Europe and Africa for the Detroit Free Press and Knight Ridder, from 1993-2000.

My first loves are still music, theater and literature. I may well be the only guy from Lexington, Mississippi, to be kissed (on the cheek) by jazz singers Abbey Lincoln and Cassandra Wilson. That alone would have made all the travel worthwhile.



Meet the Reporter

Neely Tucker

I married the girl next door (in Detroit), Vita Griffin. She is, among other things, the namesake and basis for a character in the Elmore Leonard novel, *Be Cool*. We have a daughter, Chip.

What is your typical day like?

I now cover the U.S. Court of Appeals and U.S. District Court in Washington. I come in at 9 each morning. I first check the court's calendar of cases in the clerk's office to see what trials or hearings are being held. Then I go upstairs to the Post bureau in the courthouse. I check the wire agency reports, the New York Times and other papers. And then I'm usually in court reporting cases, or interviewing people on the phone, or digging up files in the clerk's office.

On days I file stories, I have to send the stories to my editor by 6 p.m., so that means I usually start writing by 4 p.m. Then I go over the editing, proofread the story, and that's it. Most days, it winds up being a 10-hour day.

Is it difficult to get the people you are interviewing to cooperate? Do you think that certain social skills are necessary to conduct good interviews?

Sometimes people really want to talk to reporters. Other people, at other times, really don't. I think social skills

are essential, not just important. Every reporter has his style, and the best one is to be yourself because—and this is the phrase to remember—sincerity translates.

It's been my experience that if you make it clear to people that you want to understand their point of view, and you are willing to listen to them explain, and will present that in a story, then people will talk to you. They will not talk to you twice if they feel you misled them. I have been able to write about people's very serious mistakes, while maintaining a relationship with them, because they feel I treat them honestly and with respect.

You should think of little ways that might help people feel more comfortable talking to you. I usually try to dress like the people I'm interviewing—suit and tie when in federal court, a simple pair of pants and shirt when in a working-class neighborhood—to make people feel more at ease.

If the person doesn't talk to reporters very often, I also won't start taking notes immediately because I want to make eye contact with them and try to ease into a conversation.

How can you ask a person a personal question and not be embarrassed?

By making it clear you're there as a professional, not as a friend or a stranger.

Think of going to the doctor—he may be very friendly, but you're not under any illusion that you are in his office because you're good pals. It's something of the same idea when talking to people about sensitive issues. You might work around the subject and hope the person will bring it up. Or you might say, "I know this is a sensitive topic, and I don't want to dwell on it, but I do need



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to know how you feel about it.

For example, if you're talking to a relative of someone who just died, either by accident or violence—and virtually every reporter does this at some point early in his or her career—it is much, much better to ask him to tell you something about the person who died, rather than stick a microphone in his face and ask “How do you feel about your son being murdered?”

Are you assigned all your stories? Have you ever gone after a story on your own?

I am assigned a few stories. But I chose nearly all the stories I do.

Have you ever had to give up on a story or needed assistance?

To write as quickly as reporters must do for newspapers, almost everyone needs help every now and then. The only stories I remember giving up on were vague story ideas that, when I started reporting, it was obvious there wasn't much of a story there. Then you drop it and move to the next one.

What was your most memorable story?

Two answers.

The top of the list was a long story I wrote for the Post about the ordeal of adopting my daughter out of an orphanage in Zimbabwe when I was based there. I wrote the story as a love letter for her to always have. I can't imagine any story ever matching that.

For the second one, I have written

more than 1,500 stories in 50 countries on four continents, so it is difficult to pick out one as the most memorable. But I would say a story I wrote about a man named Alija Hodzic. He was a bus driver in Sarajevo when war broke out in Bosnia. He wound up running the city morgue during the war for four years because his Islamic faith told him that each human being should be treated with dignity, even when he/she died. He came to this job, with absolutely no pay, in terrible conditions and at great risk to his life, until the war ended. His reward for all this was to come into the morgue one day to see his son in a body bag. He had been killed by a blast of shrapnel. Mr. Hodzic took me to his son's grave, and he wasn't ashamed to cry in front of me. I thought he was one of the most principled, decent, heroic people I ever met. I admired him very much and remember him still.

When threatened with imprisonment or contempt of court, would you reveal a source? Why or Why not?

No, I wouldn't. I would not because I would feel that giving up that name would ruin my future credibility with people. I would think they wouldn't trust me.

Would the Post management support you on your decision? Or would they advise you on what to do?

Absolutely, on both counts. If, for some reason, my editors told me

to reveal the source, then I would seriously consider it.

Are there “politically correct” ways to cover a story? How can you tell it so it offends as few people as possible?

The definition of “politically correct” gives me problems. It's usually a derisive term that means a reporter pulled punches or would not state the obvious for fear of offending someone. The proper idea is we report what's true, being tough and fair, but we don't needlessly offend people with stereotypes or derogatory names.

Has anyone ever wound up “in trouble” because of an article you wrote?

Sure. I've written stories that have resulted in people being fired or demoted from their jobs, including a judge, a federal prosecutor and prison officials.

Have you ever placed your life at risk for a story?

Well, not intentionally, but yes. I have covered wars and conflicts in Bosnia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and the Mid-East and, like most every reporter in those areas, I have been shot at, harassed and shoved around. One very good friend of mine was killed, several people I knew professionally have been killed, and I would say half a dozen good friends have been shot or hit by shrapnel but survived.

“ . . . it is much, much better to ask him to tell you something about the person who died, rather than stick a microphone in his face and ask “How do you feel about your son being murdered?”



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How To Write a News Story

Some believe the inverted pyramid style began with the telegraph in 1844. Before transmission might be interrupted, reporters sent the main facts. Telegraph wires crossed the continent by October 1861. Reporters sent stories from Capitol Hill, from Civil War battlefields and California.

According to the Newseum's *News History Gazette*, by the 1890s city editors expected stories that were "top-heavy with facts." Thus the inverted pyramid style was established. "In 1892, a Chicago Globe editor tells cub reporter Theodore Dreiser the first paragraph must reveal 'Who or what? How? When? and Where?'"

A reporter has to make news judgment. After gathering information, doing background research and interviewing sources, the reporter must decide what goes in the first paragraph, the lede.

- Who or what is the news?**
- Where did it happen?**
- When did it happen?**
- How did it happen?**
- Why did it happen?**

The why and the how may not be known immediately. Follow-up stories may be needed to unfold the rest of the story. The reporter has a responsibility to report what can be verified by more than one source, and her reporting must be accurate. News is not the telling of rumors. Facts are presented in the third person.

After the lede, information that supports the lead information is

reported. This may be presented in a statement by the reporter, a partial quotation within the reporter's telling of the story or a full quotation from a reliable source.

How does the reader know the source of the information? The reporter tells or attributes the source. "According to ..." and "said" are two ways to give attribution. Be sure that quotation marks are used around the exact repeating of the words of the source. A partial quotation may be used to express the main idea if the source is very wordy or an explanation is needed.

After the most important facts are reported, less important details of the story or background is given. If the reader does not have time to read this far, he or she still knows the main information.

Editors and reporters attempt to ensure that no important information is at the end of the story by doing the cut-off test. Can the last or last couple of paragraphs be deleted without removing important information? For the most part, there are no surprise endings or punch lines at the end of a news story.

Why have a cut-off test? This descending order of details helps the layout person. What if there is not enough room for the whole news story? The newspaper has to be finished to go to the pressman to be printed on time. The deadline does not allow time for the reporter to be called to rewrite the article or to decide what part gets deleted. In layout, the story simply gets cut off at the end. Now it fits the space available.

On Writing a Nov. 11 News Story

"After you write several stories, you get an idea of what you need to make it complete—who's involved, what they're doing, why they're doing it, where it's happening and why it's important. You know you need to talk to people on both sides of an issue, so you know you have to have that before you can write. And you generally know how much space you have to tell the story.

So, if my editor wants a 15-inch story about the trial of a police officer (this is what I did Nov. 11), I know I need to show both what the prosecutors said, and then what the defense said. I need to know the judge's name, what the penalties are for a conviction, and how many similar cases there have been to this one. Then I sit down and write.

The key words are practice and persistence. The best teacher I had always told me that if my rear end wasn't in a chair (meaning that I was writing) I wasn't going to get any better at it.

I get information from almost everywhere—court files, interviews, archives on the Internet, newspapers, books, special reports by Congress or other federal agencies, you name it.

And it's rare to have a problem getting enough information for a story. The more common problem is having too much information and knowing how to pluck out the good stuff."

—Neely Tucker,

Washington Post Metro reporter



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How To Begin a News Story

The traditional news story should provide the who, what, where, when, why and how of the event.

Read the ledes on the front page of today's Washington Post. How do they begin? With prepositions ("On the evening of ...," "At 12:30 p.m. on ...") or adjectives ("New drugs to treat and cure ...," "Israeli bulldozers halted ...," "Federal health officials will issue detailed guidelines today ...") or nouns ("Republicans face ...," "Luis Millan Vasquez de Miguel ...")? Do you ever see a verb as the first word? What about a gerund?

Should you begin a news story with a pronoun?

The purpose of the lede is to give the most important information about the topic. It is the summary of the news. Beginning a paragraph, especially the first paragraph in an essay or news article, with a pronoun should be avoided. The indefinite leaves readers wondering who is "he" or "they."

There are times when the pronoun

can be effective. Kevin Sullivan begins his article, "Unlocking the Hidden Hemingway," this way:

SAN FRANCISCO DE PAULA, Cuba—They pushed open the door to the secret basement and shed new light on Ernest Hemingway.

Because of the headline and dateline, readers know *where* is Cuba and *what* is related to Hemingway. *Who* is some unknown "they." *What* is both a concrete action, opening a basement door, letting in sunlight and a metaphoric shedding of light (revealing) on the author's life.

This 17-word lede is followed by a 107-word paragraph. Description and details of a discovery provide the who, what, when, why and how. Read the paragraph to find these elements:

In the musty darkness and tropical humidity, surrounded by the writer's shotguns and stuffed animal heads, a delegation of four Americans found what they described as a jackpot: file cabinets and boxes filled with

thousands of pages of Hemingway's original manuscripts, rough drafts and outtakes from great works, handwritten letters of love and anger, notes in English and Spanish and thousands of photographs. On that day last March, a low-ceilinged room where only a handful of people have been allowed access in the past four decades yielded what scholars say promises to be one of the most important treasure troves in the history of modern American literature.

- What do you know about America's political relations with Cuba?
- Why do you think most people were not allowed in the basement for four decades?
- Who was now allowed access?
- Why do you think these Americans have been given access?
- This article appeared in the October 20, 2002, Post, A1 below the fold. Why do you think it was not published in spring?

Beginning a news story with a pronoun can lead to more questions.



ERNEST HEMINGWAY COLLECTION—JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY, BOSTON

Unearthing original work by author Ernest Hemingway, shown here in 1950, was the focus of a recent Post story that had a gripping lede, or beginning.

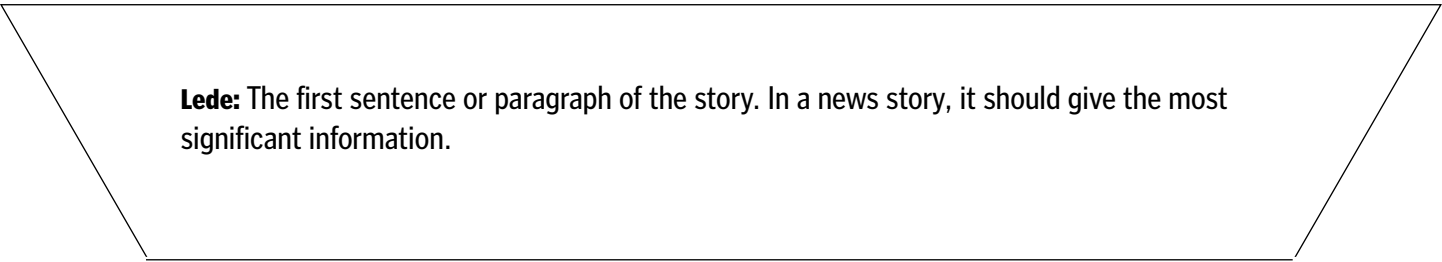


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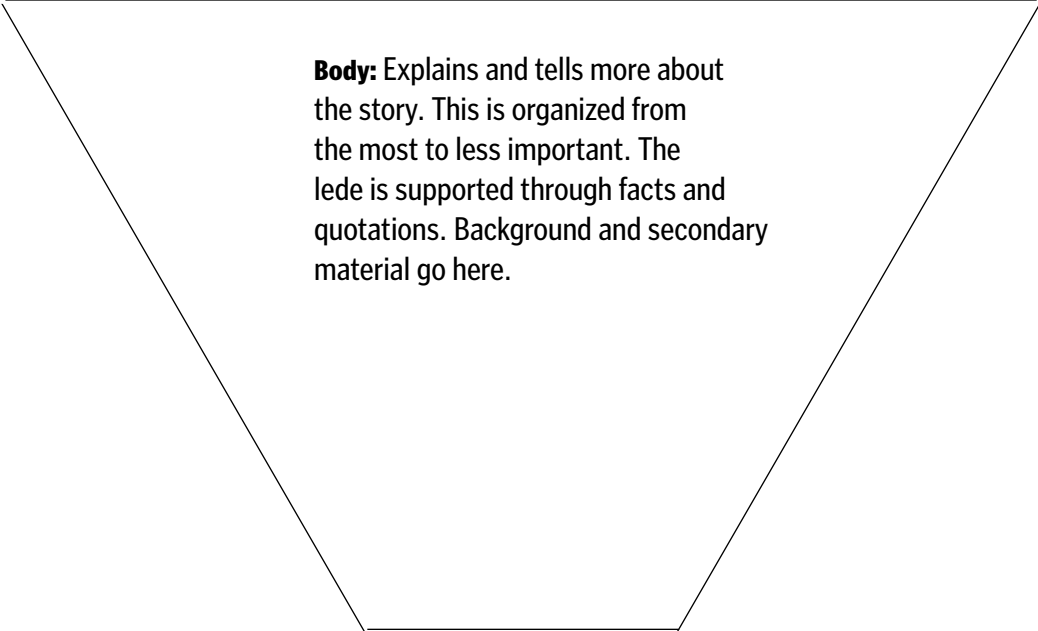
The Inverted Pyramid

News stories use an inverted pyramid structure: News is given from the most important information, to lesser in importance to the least important information. This allows the reader to learn the basic news without reading the whole article.

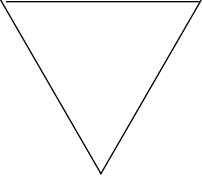
Headline: The story in a nutshell; the summary that appears above the article



Lede: The first sentence or paragraph of the story. In a news story, it should give the most significant information.



Body: Explains and tells more about the story. This is organized from the most to less important. The lede is supported through facts and quotations. Background and secondary material go here.



Cut-off test: Check to see if information at the end of a news story can be deleted, "cut off," without removing important information from the story.



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A Changing Community, A Changing Role

Confrontation, contradictions and cartoons marked the end of the 1800s. Is it possible that the media could make a war, then sink further into unethical reporting and competition to boost circulation and gain control of readers' pennies?

Remember the *Maine*

On Feb. 15, 1898, the USS *Maine* mysteriously exploded in Havana Harbor. Of the 350 men aboard, 266 were killed. The battleship, officially, was in Cuba on a "mission of friendly courtesy."

Through persistent editorials and articles in the newspapers, especially William Randolph Hearst's New York Morning Journal and Joseph Pulitzer's New York World, the phrase "Remember the *Maine*! To hell with Spain" became an American war slogan. Sources are not sure if the cry for retaliation was first overheard by a New York Journal reporter in a bar and then reported, came from Hearst or a politician's speech—or even in a political cartoon.

Learn more about

- William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer
- Hearst sending a cable: "Please remain. You furnish the pictures, I'll furnish the war."
- U.S. interest in obtaining Cuba
- Theodore Roosevelt, a Rough Rider
- Spain ceding Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam to the U.S.
- Newspaper covering war news from the Revolutionary War to the Spanish-American War.
- Adm. Hyman Rickover's 1976 investigation to determine the cause of the explosion

Yellow Journalism

Most of the editorials and articles that appeared in newspapers owned by Hearst and Pulitzer were exaggerated and the headlines sensationalized. After the Spanish-American war began, William Randolph Hearst is reported to have asked, "How do you like the Journal's War?"

Edward L. Gotkin, a columnist at the New York Evening Post, writes, "It is a crying shame that men should work such mischief ... to sell more papers."

- Read more about the Yellow Kid, and cartoons of that era.
- Learn more about yellow journalism and the battle of journalistic ethics against enormous egos during this period.
- View *Citizen Kane*, a classic fictionalized movie of this era's publishing giants.

Circulation Chaos

In 1899 The Evening World and Evening Journal in New York would not reduce their price from 60 to 50 cents per hundred copies. In July the newsboys went on strike against the two newspapers.

- Read "All about the newsboys' strike!" (or watch the movie, *Newsies*)
- Do you think employees and contractors have the right to strike?

Washington Post Timeline

1891: Weekly "Good Reading for the Little Folk" begun. One or more pages for children to read were in each Sunday's Post.

1893: Post cartoonist George Y. Coffin creates "The Post Boy," which becomes the paper's longtime emblem.

1893: The Post moves into its fourth home at 1339-41 E St. NW, where for 57 years crowds often gather outside the building to follow breaking stories as well as sporting events.

1894: Frank Hatton dies, leaving Beriah Wilkins sole owner of The Washington Post until his death in 1905.

1898: The USS *Maine* mysteriously explodes in Havana Harbor. Of the 350 men aboard the Maine, 266 are killed. In a front-page cartoon by Clifford K. Berryman featuring Uncle Sam on a battleship, The Post gives Americans a famous rallying cry for the subsequent war with Spain: "Stout hearts, my laddies! If the row comes, **REMEMBER THE MAINE**, and show the world how American soldiers can fight."



Illustration of "The Post Boy," a longtime mascot for the newspaper.

BY GEORGE Y. COFFIN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

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An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

YOU and YOUR RIGHTS

Neutrality in Times of National Crisis: Is there a Need to Protect the Pledge of Allegiance?

Background Information About the Pledge of Allegiance

In 1892, a Baptist minister named Francis Bellamy wrote the Pledge of Allegiance to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. Millions of children recited the pledge for the first time on Columbus Day that year. The students extended their right arms with their palms facing upward as they said: "I pledge allegiance to my flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Since its creation, the pledge has changed in many ways, often as a result of changes in national politics and international development. In 1924, "my flag" was changed to "the flag of the United States," and "of America" was added the following year. After World War II, the salute to the pledge was changed to the now-familiar placement of the hand over the heart because the old salute reminded many people of the Nazi Party salute during Adolph Hitler's reign in Germany. In 1954, the words "under God" were added after an extensive campaign by the Knights of Columbus—and with the strong endorsement of President Dwight Eisenhower. Once again, the change was related to politics of the day. Eisenhower wanted to add the words to distinguish America, which he considered a Christian nation, from the communist Soviet Union, which was officially an atheist state. An atheist does not believe God exists.

Did you know in the 1930s, most states required public school students to pledge allegiance to the flag, even if they did not want to do so? This law was intended to promote civic pride in



ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Bush is joined by Secretary of Education Rod Paige and students from East Literature Magnet School during the Pledge of Allegiance at a Pledge Across America event at the school in Nashville on Sept. 17.

America during a difficult time for most Americans—the Great Depression—but also oppressed religious minorities such as Jehovah's Witnesses, who could not pledge allegiance to the flag because they thought it was a graven image. The Supreme Court addressed the constitutionality of these statutes twice. In a 1940 case called *Minersville v. Gobitis*, the Supreme Court ruled that Jehovah's Witnesses did not have a First Amendment right to refuse to pledge allegiance to the flag based on their religious beliefs. Just three years later, however, in *West Virginia v. Barnette*, the court overturned the *Minersville* decision and ruled forcing public school students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance was a form of "compelled speech" prohibited by the First Amendment. Anyone could refuse to pledge allegiance to the flag if they wanted to, the court ruled, whether

their reason was religious or not. The *Barnette* case set a new standard for the First Amendment rights of students and introduced the concept (still accepted by the court today) that forcing someone to speak violates a person's right to free speech as much as forcing someone not to speak.

More recently, a panel of judges from the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals (one of thirteen federal appellate courts, second only to the Supreme Court in authority and prestige) ruled this past summer in *Newdow v. U.S. Congress* that the phrase "under God" could not be used when leading a class in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance at a public school. The judges reasoned that the use of the words "under God" violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which prohibits the government from making "any law respecting an establishment of



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religion.” The judges ruled that leading students in a pledge that contained the words “under God” would send a message to students that the school believed in God. Leading students in reciting the pledge subtly coerced students to recite the pledge, the court ruled, because students would feel pressured to go along with their teachers and fellow students. This kind of “coercion” or “endorsement” from the school would violate the First Amendment under the Supreme Court’s current interpretation of the Establishment Clause.

The *Newdow* decision caused a lot of controversy. So much, in fact, that the panel of judges decided to withhold the order making their decision into law until all the judges on the Ninth Circuit could reconvene to decide the case as a group in what is known as *en banc* review. Many people feel the Ninth Circuit panel overstepped its bounds by striking down a phrase that has been repeated millions of times by elementary, middle and high school students for the past 50 years. Indeed, several congressmen in the House of Representatives circulated a draft for an amendment permitting the use of “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance in response to the *Newdow* decision.

For a lot of people, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the words contained within it, have special significance, especially as the country faces a “war against terror” after the events of

Sept. 11 as well as possible war with Iraq. The Pledge of Allegiance, like the flag, stands for everything that makes America such a great nation. For these people, cutting out certain parts of the pledge is an intrusion on their rights to recite the pledge. But no court has ever said that a person could not recite the Pledge of Allegiance with the words



The U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.

FILE PHOTO—THE WASHINGTON POST

“under God” included on his own. *Newdow* only prohibits schools from directing students to say the pledge with this language included.

The *Newdow* case did not explicitly consider the political crisis facing America at this time in making its decision. But other cases have addressed similar issues. In an infamous case from the 1940s known as *Korematsu v. United States*, the Supreme Court upheld the detention of Japanese-Americans in internment camps on the grounds that the detention was necessary to safeguard the well-being of the country from possible Japanese spies during World War II. On the other hand, in the so-called Pentagon Papers case, the Supreme Court refused to allow the Nixon administration to prevent the New York Times and the Washington Post from publishing certain

confidential documents referencing the Vietnam War. Similarly, in *Tinker v. Des Moines School Board*, the Court protected public school students who wore armbands to school in protest of the Vietnam War from a school suspension on the grounds that the suspension violated the students’ First Amendment rights.

Perhaps the best precedent for deciding how we should think about the Pledge of Allegiance during times of national crisis comes from the *Barnette* case. By the time the Supreme Court decided the case, America was in the middle of World War II, which would last for another two years.

The Court had every reason to believe national unity and pride was paramount in deciding whether students could be required to recite the pledge. But the Court, inspired by the outbreak of violence against Jehovah’s Witnesses in the wake of *Minersville*, instead ruled America’s greatness comes from its commitment to freedom of thought and speech. Justice Jackson, who wrote the opinion for the Court, said:

“To believe that patriotism will not flourish if patriotic ceremonies are voluntary and spontaneous instead of a compulsory routine is to make an unflattering estimate of the appeal of our institutions to free minds ... If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion ...”

YOU and YOUR RIGHTS

The Marshall-Brennan Fellowship Program at American University’s Washington College of Law trains talented upper-level law students to teach a unique course on constitutional rights and responsibilities to hundreds of students in Washington, D.C. area public high schools. For more information about the program, please contact Michelle Carhart, program coordinator, at mcarhart@wcl.american.edu. For curricular information or information on how to get involved, please contact Maryam Ahranjani, academic coordinator, at mahranjani@wcl.american.edu.



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YOU and YOUR RIGHTS

Neutrality in Times of National Crisis: Is there a Need to Protect the Pledge of Allegiance?

Divide the class into groups. Assign each group to represent one of the following viewpoints:

First Viewpoint: an atheist (someone who doesn't believe in God) who thinks that religion is a "drug for the masses."

Second Viewpoint: a devout Southern Baptist.

Third Viewpoint: a devout Jehovah's Witness.

Fourth Viewpoint: a self-professed "punk" who thinks that "America is under the thumb of corporate scum" and believes in "pure anarchy, with survival of the fittest, pure and simple."

Fifth Viewpoint: a member of the school's JROTC program whose

Have each student write a page-long journal entry from their assigned perspective on the following questions:

1. Should there be a national pledge of allegiance?
2. Assuming there is a national pledge of allegiance, should it be taught to students in public schools?
3. Should the pledge contain the phrase "under God" within it?
4. Should public school teachers lead students in reciting the pledge of allegiance every morning if it contains the phrase, "under God?"
5. Should schools force students to say the pledge of allegiance every morning?

After the students have written their personal responses, discuss the responses from the various viewpoints. Take a vote on each question and then compare the majority's answers with a single viewpoint to see how that group feels about the final outcome.

Keeping your students within their

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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father fought in the Vietnam War and whose grandfather fought in World War II.

Sixth Viewpoint: a libertarian who believes that government should interfere with people's lives as little as possible.

Seventh Viewpoint: a devout Muslim who believes that legitimate authority must derive from God.

Eighth Viewpoint: an economically disadvantaged, devout Catholic who believes that the government must show compassion towards its subjects and strongly believes in "social justice" for all members of society through government aid.

assigned groups, have them write a proposed school pledge of allegiance. Make sure that each group includes the following information in the pledge: (1) the values of the school; (2) the view of the students toward the school (i.e., do they like it?); and (3) the duties owed to the school by the students. After each group has completed its draft, have the following groups "trade" their pledges: First Viewpoint with Second Viewpoint; Third Viewpoint with Seventh Viewpoint; Fourth Viewpoint with Fifth Viewpoint; and Sixth Viewpoint with Eighth Viewpoint. Ask each group how they would feel if they had to recite the pledges given to them by the other group. Then discuss how the students feel personally about these pledges. Would they feel comfortable saying them? Do they think these pledges would be found constitutional?

Enrichment

In a recent state court decision,

Sierra v. Kanawaha County Board of Education, a West Virginia court held that a student had a First Amendment right to start an "anarchy club." The student intended the club to be a form of protest against United States domestic and foreign policy. However, other courts have allowed schools to fire teachers who encourage students to form such clubs. Is there a difference between a student wanting to form a club that might be perceived as disrespectful and dangerous to "traditional" American values and a teacher wanting to form a club that might be perceived as disrespectful to America? If so, why doesn't that difference prevent teachers from leading students in the Pledge of Allegiance? Is the influence of the teacher any less in one situation as opposed to another, or is the agenda of the teacher simply less legitimate in one instance?

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To Recite or Not To Recite

I pledge allegiance to my Flag,
and to the Republic for which it stands:
one Nation indivisible,
With Liberty and Justice for all.

1. How has the Pledge of Allegiance changed from its first version? What words were changed or added? What ideas were expressed with each change?
2. What five rights are guaranteed in the First Amendment?
3. Is the First Amendment only for adults? Do you think students have guaranteed First Amendment rights?
4. What Supreme Court decision determined that students do have First Amendment rights?
5. Do you think students have a right not to recite the Pledge of Allegiance in the classroom?
6. What should students do if they do not wish to recite the Pledge of Allegiance?