

Writing Feature Stories

No. 46 in the Writing Center Handout Series

A feature story is the highlight of a newspaper or magazine. It presents the stories behind the news and treats its subjects in depth. A feature is a research paper written for a popular audience. In a feature, the writer has the opportunity to walk around a subject and view it from all sides. A feature should also represent an original take on the subject matter that comes about because the writer puts together the information gleaned from all kinds of sources in a unique and compelling manner.

A feature story

- is the news behind the news;
- is longer than most news stories;
- is well researched, complex;
- is connected to current events (Why this? Why now?);
- covers the subject in depth, includes background, brings us up to date;
- includes quotations from principle characters, experts, a variety of sources;
- may use photographs, charts, graphs, sidebars or boxes, drawings, diagrams, etc.;
- takes time to interest us, makes us see the complexity of the story;
- brings life and color to the subject

Varieties of the feature story and examples

- News behind the news (Who are the Taliban? How did they attain power?)
- Travel article (hiking the Appalachian trail)
- Profile (extended interview)
 - What makes Queen Latifah tick?
 - Issue-related profile (President Mary Brown Bullock on women in science and ASC's new science building)
- Soft news background story (how school vouchers are working in Ohio)
- Entertainment feature (the making of the film *Adaptation*)
- Science story (Ron Calabrese's recent work on the leech heartbeat)
- Business feature (Microsoft is changing its corporate structure)

A feature story must include

- Research, background, depth, information from different kinds of sources;
- Quotations, a variety of perspectives, views of participants and experts;
- Connection to current events or some other compelling answer to Why This? Why Now?

For more information on writing Feature Stories, see
Professional Feature Writing (3rd ed), Bruce Garrison
Writing Features and Interviews (2nd ed), Christine Hall
<http://www.ramiroburr.com/FeatureWriting.htm>



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