

Journalism/Creative Writing Extended Project Non-Fiction Track

Step One: Types of Articles

Over the next several weeks you're going to be dedicating your time to creating a longer non-fiction piece. When it's all said and done, your piece should be **at least** seven to ten pages, but can be longer if you wish. Through handouts, I'll be walking you through each step of creating this piece. Some stuff is stuff we've learned previously in class. Some things will come naturally; others will be more difficult for you. Stick with it. You'll end up with a fantastic piece you can be proud of.

For this first day, I'll outline different types of articles that you can choose from. You may already have an idea of a topic in mind you'd like to work on. That's fine. Still have a look through these different types of articles and think about the best way to present your ideas. Once you've read through the options, chose which type you'd like to write over the course of this project.

Features

- **News Features:** often accompany hard news stories. If the hard news story is the "breaking news" explaining a prominent news event, a news feature is what explores the facets that may otherwise go unnoticed. News features cover material that readers care about and find interesting, will be well researched and written, be in depth enough to cover the amount of space needed, will have the ability to affect the reader.
- **Informative features:** can focus on many different subjects, but the key to all of them is sound research. Informative features provide useful information to reader who may not realize something about the topic being covered otherwise. The best features present information over a given topic in an honest, efficient manner. Be careful to avoid factual errors or the omission of important information. Readers must not be led to view the article as an advertisement under the guise of legitimate story.
- **Profiles and Human Interest Features:** people are inherently interested in the lives of those around them; one of the popular features is the *profile*. A profile typically focuses on someone who has made a notable impact on the lives of others, someone from the community who has become unusually prominent or simply someone with a unique hobby or talent. By recounting stories about people. Feature writers can uplift, inspire, and motivate readers. Profiles are fun to read, but from a writing standpoint, they must be well researched. The writer would probably want to include basic biographical information, interesting parts about the person, inclusions of interviews (if possible), what those closest to the source have to say, what

the person is planning for the future, what adversity the person has overcome, etc.

- **Personal Experience and Accomplishment Features:** by drawing on the journalist's personal experience, these stories address many subjects, from injuries and adversity to personal triumphs and professional rewards. An article may chronicle a week in an abusive household, while another may focus on a serious injury and how it was overcome. Journalists have chronicled their travels to exotic locales and written of turning points in their lives, all the while informing and inspiring readers. Three things to consider when writing a personal experience feature are: 1) Modesty: you as the writer must pay special attention to staying modest. An "I-did-this-and-I-did-that" approach tends to bore readers and makes the writer seem boastful and dumb. 2) Newsworthiness: A strong personal experience story touches on something greater than the writer. It uncovers a subject readers identify with, placing them right "within" the story. People have experiences every day—so what? To be worthy of a feature a story needs to be unusual or compelling. 3) Honesty: When you are writing about something that happened to you remember that readers appreciate honesty from a writer. Above all else, tell the truth.

Editorials

- **Interpretation:** By taking a complex topic, breaking it down, and crafting a coherent editorial, writers provide a valuable service to readers. Try picking something that is frequently talked about in our society, but it is so complex that most people don't understand the ins-and-outs of it. It is then your job to both inform the reader of the topic, break down the complexities, and offer your explanations and insight.
- **Criticism and Persuasion:** Anytime there are national issues at hand, people have their own opinions of what's happening. Journalists can use their writing platform to explain their position. In these articles, journalists are trying to persuade readers to agree with their viewpoints.
- **Entertainment:** Some of the best opinion writers use humor to make a point. It's a way to speak your mind but not offend. Humor can let you reach readers who disagree with your ideologies.