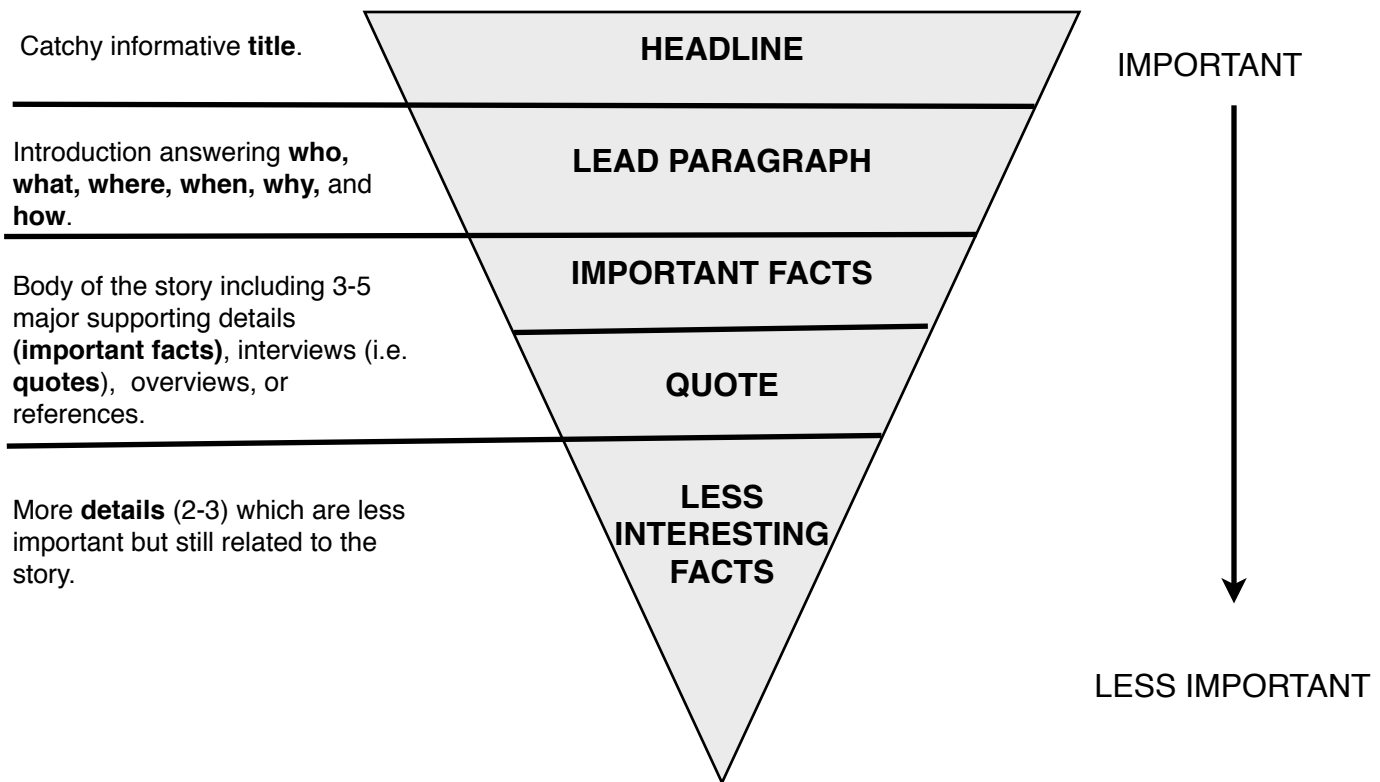


# Inverted Pyramid for News Articles



The majority of news articles are written in this format. This makes it easy for the reader to

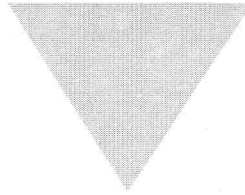
- (1) skim the headline and decide if he or she wants to read more
- (2) read the lead paragraph to get a brief overview of what the story is about before deciding if he or she wants to read more or skip to the next story.

Most people do not read a paper from cover to cover like they do a book. Instead they choose articles which interest them and skip articles which do not interest them.

## Writing a News Report

A **news report** is written to inform people of what is happening. It begins with a **lead**—an introductory section that gives the most important information about the story, answering most or all of the **W5 + H** questions:

**Who?    Where?    When?    What?    Why?    How?**



After the lead comes the **body** of the news report. It provides details that build on the facts given in the lead. Toward the end of the report, the information may be less interesting and important. This is the **inverted pyramid style** of writing. A news report is completed by a **headline** that attracts the reader's attention and informs the reader of the topic.

Here are some suggestions that will help you write an effective **news report**:

- Use **inverted pyramid style**: This means that most factual information is given in the first paragraph or two. This includes the **who, where, when, what, why,** and **how** of the event. The rest of the article, after this factual information is given, is made up of supporting details, quotations, and background information to help the reader understand more about what happened.
- **Paragraphs** in news reporting are usually one or two sentences long. They are much shorter than the paragraphs you would normally be writing of five to seven sentences.
- You may use **quotations** from people who were at the scene, or you may use the **opinions** of experts on the subject. (Of course, for this report, you will have to create these.) This gives your article more credibility since it is not just one reporter's opinion on what happened.
- Use your best **journalistic style**, and pretend that you are writing for a real newspaper. Use connecting words and good transitions between sentences and between paragraphs.
- **Proofread** and write legibly! Your goal is for your audience to understand what happened.

Here's  
How

1-6

## News Article

### Focus Your Learning

- identify and describe characteristics of articles
- use structural features to aid comprehension
- use comprehension strategies: scanning

### What Is a "Free Press"?

A free press is one that can express its own views and opinions and publish what it believes to be in the public interest. It is part of our democratic tradition that all individuals in society have access to facts and information that affect them, and are able to publicly express their own views and opinions. However, journalists cannot say anything they like. A free press is also a responsible press that must ensure its reporting is legal, accurate, and fair.

When you want to know what is happening in the world, one thing you can do is open a newspaper. In newspapers you read the reports and views of journalists who research, write, edit, and publish stories about current or impending events. News stories about prominent national or international events are usually printed on the first or second page of a newspaper. There are, however, many other sections in a newspaper, such as those that focus on local or city news, arts and entertainment, business, sports, science, comics, family, lifestyles, and classified advertisements.

### Characteristics of a News Article

- Journalists bring to the public stories that are both relevant and interesting. Newsworthy events may
  - involve important events and/or people about whom the audience is curious.
  - concern a specific audience, such as an entire city, province, or country.
  - focus on human interest or drama stories about ordinary people in challenging or devastating circumstances.
  - convey news about catastrophes, such as airplane crashes, natural disasters, etc.
  - highlight unusual events that are funny, tragic, or interesting.
  - explore the uniqueness of something that is "a first" or is the biggest, fastest, tallest, etc.
- News stories inform readers about current events. Using clear and factual language, journalists try to represent different points of view fairly so readers can draw their own conclusions.

- Most news stories follow a similar structure and contain many of the same components. The legend that appears with the following article identifies the main features of a news story.

# 1 The Evening Telegram

Volume 119—No. 241 — St. John's, Newfoundland TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1997

75¢ (HST included)

## 2 — Latimer decision angers advocates for disabled

3 — By MARTIN O'HANLON  
4 — The Canadian Press

5 — BATTLEFORD, Sask. — Robert Latimer's long-running legal saga took a dramatic turn Monday when a judge set aside the law and handed him a sentence of two years less a day for killing his disabled daughter.

6 In a precedent-setting decision that outraged disabled rights activists, Justice Ted Noble granted Latimer a constitutional exemption from the mandatory penalty for second-degree murder.

7 The Saskatchewan farmer had faced the prospect of 25 years in prison with no chance of parole for 10 years.

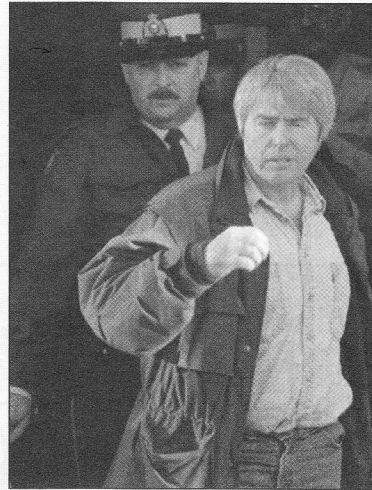
7 Noble said Latimer should serve one year in a provincial jail and spend the remainder confined to his farm in nearby Wilkie. But experts say he will likely be released on parole in a few months.

8 A weary-looking Latimer sat calmly in the prisoner's dock as the sentence was read. He was later whisked away in an RCMP cruiser to begin his sentence.

"Well, things keep improving, I guess," Latimer said.

Latimer's wife Laura seemed relatively pleased by the decision.

"I think Judge Noble was a judge of courage," she said.



9  
10 **Robert Latimer leaves the court house in police custody in Battleford, Sask. Monday.**

Noble agreed with the defence argument that given the circumstances of the case, the minimum sentence would amount to cruel and unusual punishment.

11 "I find that Mr. Latimer's Sec. 12 charter right has been violated and that he be granted a constitutional exemption from the sentence," Noble said.

Please see JUDGE, page 2 12

### Legend

- Masthead: nameplate of the newspaper
- Headline: catches the reader's attention and gives clues to the story's content
- By-line: name of the person who wrote the story
- Wire service: name of the news agency that distributed the story
- Date line (or place line): tells where the story happened
- Lead: introduction to the text
- Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- Body: details and additional information provided in short paragraphs
- Photograph: picture of the main subject
- Caption: tells what the photograph is depicting
- Quotations: quoted dialogue of what someone actually said
- Reference: tells where in the newspaper the rest of the article appears

The case of Robert Latimer was a national front-page story. He was accused of murdering his twelve-year-old daughter, Tracy, who was severely disabled. The original story of Latimer's arrest was followed by related news stories about the trial and sentencing.

## Terms and Techniques

For more information on news terminology, see *Terms and Techniques* on page 219.

**Lead** The first sentence or two of a news story which generally contain answers to the W5H questions.

**W5H** Refers to the facts of an event: *who, what, when, where, why, and how.*

**Hook** The part of the lead that is meant to grab the readers' attention and encourage them to read on. The hook might be a controversial statement, a question, a surprising fact, or a quotation.

**Bias** The opinions or prejudices of a journalist (or newspaper) which attempt to influence the readership.

Bias may be evident in what is reported as well as in what is excluded.

**Slant** The point of view taken by the writer of a news article. The writer selects and arranges the facts to express a particular slant on a story. The same story can be, and often is, reported from different slants.

**Feature Article** A type of news story that provides more in-depth coverage than a factual account. Feature articles have a clear point of view and may try to entertain or persuade as well as inform the reader. Often, a feature article will focus on an investigation of complex issues.



The strategies used to read a newspaper article can be applied to electronic news as well.

## How to Read a News Article

When you look over a newspaper, you rely on your initial previewing strategies to decide what you will and won't read. If you are searching for specific information, you will approach a newspaper differently than if you were reading it for enjoyment. The following strategies can be helpful when reading a news article.

- Preview the selection before you read, looking at the headline, the photographs, and the captions. The headline is meant to get your attention and to give you an idea of what the text is about.
- Prepare questions based on *who, what, when, where, why, and how* (W5H) to guide your reading.
- Keep the organizational pattern of news stories in mind as you read. Most news stories follow an **inverted pyramid structure**. The basic facts—who, what, when, where, why, and how—begin the story. Supporting details, in order of importance, follow these facts. This pattern allows the editor to delete from the bottom if a story is too long for the space allowed in the layout.
- Most of the details you read in the rest of the text will expand the W5H but are not essential to the story. The body of a news story may include quotations, descriptions, and background information.
- The conclusion may add an interesting point or question that you might like to consider. Read it even if you are only skimming the article.

## Responding Critically to a News Article

Your assessment of a journalist's writing will rely on a careful analysis of the facts provided, as well as on the way in which the author presents the information.

- What is the writer's purpose? To inform? To persuade? To entertain?
- What is the tone of the piece?
- Is the writing style clear and concise? Are paragraphs short, unified, and concise?

For information on viewing television and print news, see page 217.

For information on  
loaded words,  
see page 143.

- ☞ Determine the slant taken by the journalist. What has been included or excluded in the writer's telling of the story?
- ☞ How can you determine whether the writer is telling the truth? Can the information be validated? Are there direct quotations in the selection?
- ☞ Can any bias be detected in the article? Are any loaded words used?

### Try It

**Discuss or write a critical response to the following news article. Use the questions and suggestions included throughout this mini-lesson to help you develop your critical response.**

#### Teen crusader turns to writing

by Amber Rider

Calgary Herald

Craig Kielburger, the Toronto teen who became a much publicized crusader against child labour, has now taken on the role of author.

His book—Free The Children—is to be released today. It tells the stories of children he's encountered working in sweatshop conditions.

"I wanted to give something back to all the children who have inspired me by telling their stories in this book," said Kielburger, who was in Calgary Friday on a promotional tour.

All proceeds from the book are being used to fund projects established by Free The Children, also the name of his foundation.

The aim of the book is also to encourage people, both young and old, to get educated and active about the reality of international child labour, Kielburger said.

"I hope the book inspires people because the stories of the children, their hopes and their dreams, inspired me so much."

Kielburger was inspired in 1995 by reading about Iqbal Mahish, a 12-year-old Pakistani activist who was murdered for telling the world his experiences as a carpet weaver.



This spurred him to create the youth organization which has blossomed into chapters of young activists throughout North America and the many Asian countries he has visited to learn about child slavery.

Kielburger, at age 13, took a seven-week trip to Asia in 1995 and early 1996 to study child labour, garnering major media coverage when he confronted Prime Minister Jean Chrétien who happened to be visiting India.

Chrétien announced soon after that he wanted Canada to consider tighter import restrictions to keep out products made with child labour.

Kielburger will visit three other Canadian cities in the next week to do book signings, slide shows and interviews about the publication.

### For Review

- ✓ What is the news article about?
- ✓ How is the information presented?
- ✓ How does the organization of the information suit the purpose of the article? How does it appeal to the intended audience?
- ✓ Is the writer stating facts or personal opinions? Are they appropriate to the form of news being written?
- ✓ Is the headline appropriate and effective?
- ✓ What techniques has the writer used to maintain the reader's interest (e.g., an effective lead, descriptive language, direct and indirect quotations, interesting photos and captions)?