

Feature writing

Students: Please keep this handout for future reference. Your tutor will go through the different parts of this handout and then you will be required to write one yourself.

What is a feature article?

A feature article is a text that focuses on an important issue, personality, incident or event. It can be **objective**, considering all points of view or **subjective**, only providing one point of view.

What can feature articles be written about?

- Society
- Health
- Food
- Politics
- Entertainment
- Individuals
- The environment
- Sport
- Economics

What does the general layout of a feature article look like?

- Each feature article has a **headline**.
- Feature articles generally include a synopsis as part of the byline. The synopsis provides the reader with information about the content of the text. The synopsis is usually referred to as the 'Stand Out' or 'Write Off'.
- Feature articles include a byline. The byline states the name of the writer.
- A photograph, graphics, illustration or cartoon usually accompanies feature articles.
- The text is written in column format.
- A "Break Out Box" may support feature articles. A "Break Out Box" appears next to the news report and provides readers with related factual information about the topic. Information in the "Break Out Box" may include the use of technical terms, explanations, graphics and statistics.
- Several types and sizes of font are used.
- Colour is often used in either the headline and /or photograph(s).
- Feature articles are usually much longer than news reports and **may or may not** be linked to a current news issue or event.

What are the characteristics of a feature article?

Feature articles may contain the following:

- Contains depth of character and /or issues, offering background information about the subject.
- Are usually timeless - they are just as acceptable for publication this week or next month.
- Provides more detail often including extensive research.
- Provides the reader with an understanding of the writer's attitude toward his / her subject matter with the careful use of tone.
- Provides a forum for ideas, attitudes, reasons, feelings and background.

Structure of a feature article

The elements required to produce a successful feature article are a *lead*, a *body* and a *conclusion*.

Lead

A successful lead will accomplish three objectives:

- Attract the reader
- Give the reader the central idea
- Lead the reader into the story

Body

Transitions or linking words or sentences

- Good transitions in feature writing mean that one paragraph moves smoothly to the next one.
- Good transitions work by repeating a word, phrase or idea that has been used in the paragraph immediately before.

Conclusion

How a feature article can end

- The conclusion often connects with an idea that has been developed in the lead, or it can in some way summarise the main points of the article.
- The conclusion is often structured in the same way as the lead as it refers to the angle presented in the introduction. This technique is referred to as the 'lead replay'.
- Often at the end of a feature article the writer will provide relevant information about the subject of the Feature, giving interested readers links to contact groups.

What are the language features and grammar characteristics of a feature article?

Paragraphs

- Paragraphs of one to four sentences are used in newspaper feature articles.

Quotes

- Inverted commas indicate direct quotations
- Quotes from eyewitnesses, sources or experts are included in the text.

Register

- Individual speakers who are quoted in a feature article often use emotive language
- Feature articles are more creative in the use of language than a news report
- Feature articles contain objective material but often appeal to emotions.

Syntax

Sentence length is varied to avoid monotony in structure, ranging from *short and simple* to *long and complex*.

Tense

- Readers are involved and spoken to directly through the use of second person address.
- Third person narrative is most common, but it is mixed with first person comment.

Key Words

- The vocabulary includes many words that relate to the specific subject discussed.
- An extensive written vocabulary is used.
- Contractions are often used to create a 'chatty / informal' person-to-person tone.

Sample feature article:

We need to talk about Snapchat

06 August 2014

Emma Sinclair, year 11 student

Let me tell you a story. It's a classic story of boy meets girl, girl sends naked photos, boy shares them around to his friends, boy loses girl, boy gets charged with possession of child pornography.

Ok, so it mightn't fit so snugly in a bookshelf alongside *Pride and Prejudice* and *Wuthering Heights*, but this situation and those similar to it have been growing in prominence since the creation of social media, and growing even more since the rise of Snapchat.

Snapchat is the latest social network to take Gen Y by storm. The concept is simple: it's a basic photo sharing application that allows its members to set a time limit (between one and 10 seconds) on how long the photo they have sent is to be viewed for. With this promise of instantaneous self-destruction, many a selfie has been taken, many a chin has been doubled and many a pet has been photographed.

By Snapchat seemingly removing the perceived threat of having these photos "on the internet forever" as we are often lectured about, it has lowered the hyper-vigilance people have of their online footprints. Snapchat has become a green-card for whatever kind of photo-sharing people fancy, without the ramifications of having these images "following you around for the rest of your life".

According to the now-defunct *Today Tonight*, Australian teenagers are hyper-sexualised and out of control. They are intent on destroying society's well established constructs of normality and acceptability and are using Snapchat to do it. Naked photos are being passed around like Tamagotchis in the early 2000's, and there is nothing to be done about it.

Ok, so while we mightn't wholly trust *Today Tonight's* quality journalism, explicit photos are being shared more freely by this generation. Whether this is due to the media's normalisation and saturation of sexualised images or just there being more accessible ways to share images is unclear. Either way, these new norms are dangerous and need to be challenged.

Being in possession of explicit images of people under the age of 18 is a crime, as they are classified as child pornography. Even if the person in possession of the image(s) is also underage, they can be charged and can be placed on the sex offender list.

A quick search of "Snapchat" in the iTunes store brings up four free applications designed specifically to save photos and videos without the knowledge of the original sender. These apps are endangering privacy and people's belief in the confidentiality of Snapchat.

Source: <http://theunderage.com.au/2014/08/06/we-need-to-talk-about-snapchat/#sthash.fHobFyQQ.dpuf>