

B.Com(Prog) IV Sem

English

Feature article

A feature article is much more than a collection of bare facts. It's a special-interest article abounding with details that makes for pleasurable reading. While a hard news article focuses on exactly what happened, when and to whom, a feature article typically adds a dimension of human interest.

Characteristics of Features

Feature articles frequently contain a story line and often have entertainment value. Rather than reciting the plain facts, they go into a topic more in-depth. Background research, descriptions, quotations and personal interviews add interest to features. Because feature articles provide so many details, they're typically longer than hard news stories on a similar topic. Unlike news stories, they also sometimes withhold the main point until the end, keeping up the reader's curiosity.

Feature Types

Although feature stories come in many permutations, many focus on people. For example, human-interest feature articles bring something to life through the experiences of one or several individuals. Profile features focus on one person and open up that person's life and character to the readership. Seasonal features talk about topics of interest at a specific time, such as a holiday or an election. On dates of historical significance, historical features review past events and show their relevance.

A feature article is the main news-related article in a magazine that highlights a particular person, place, or event in great detail. Typically, these nonfiction articles dive deeper into a story than regular articles. If you're in need of some tips on writing a good feature article, get ready to have some fun. You're going to be developing a human interest story that will appeal to a wide variety of readers.

Steps to Writing Feature Articles

Like most articles, a feature story follows a specific format and outline. There will always be a title/headline, deck, introduction, body, and conclusion. A good feature article contextualizes the story so it's relatable and immediately relevant to the reader. Why should they care? What's the angle? What direction are you taking?

In a way, a notable feature article will resemble a short story. You want tension and plot, a sense of progression, with some sort of payoff toward the conclusion. Who are the "characters" in your story? What is the central conflict? For more on that, check out [Get Creative: How to Write a Short Story](#).

1. The Headline

The headline or title of the article should grab the readers' attention quickly so they'll keep reading. It needs to highlight the general topic of the story. If you're featuring a person, don't just use their name as the headline. Include a unique detail that will be uncovered as they read on.

2. The Deck

The deck, also known as a subhead or standfirst, is your second chance to entice readers. While the title of the article will pop with a unique angle, the deck consists of one or two short sentences that'll leave no question in the readers' minds; they must read this article. It should capture the gist of the story. For example:

For years, the people of Nepal lived under a dark cloud of oppression. That is, until David Young instigated a faith movement that would completely reshape their lives.

3. The Introduction

Your ability to "hook" readers into the story continues in the introductory, or first, paragraph. The introduction should tell the reader why this story is important or worth their time, but in a sort of oblique way. This is your last chance to "hook" a reader before they flip the page or click away.

Be sure to keep your sentences short. Use this as an opportunity to say something attention-grabbing or something that'll spark the reader's interest. Always remember - the WHY is important. You establish the tone of your article in the introduction.

4. The Body

The body of the feature should be broken into sections with several headings for easy organization.

This section contains most of the details of the story. It includes names, places, times, and quotes related to the person, event, or organization. The opinions of the writer, those at the location of the story, and experts are presented in the body of the article. This is also

the place to include any pictures that illustrate the story, as well as diagrams, charts, and other visual elements.

5. The Conclusion

The conclusion should leave a lasting impression on the reader and provoke some sort of reaction. It should prompt action on the part of the reader, encourage a change of opinion, or encourage the reader to make a decision.

Useful Feature-Writing Tips

The leeway an author is given in the style of a feature article is much greater than in other types of news writing. Human interest is key. You want to lure readers into a particular setting and allow them to partake in an experience.

Here are some tips to help you achieve that goal.

Be Conversational

A feature article should always be very professional and buttoned-up. However, since this is a human interest story and you want to draw readers into an experience, you don't have to be overly formal or stiff. Consider things like colloquialisms, first-person narratives, and an authoritative yet conversational tone.

Don't Be Afraid of Opinions

Instead of presenting hard-hitting facts as you might in a typical news story, you're able to take on a bit of a persuasive bent and pose a few rhetorical questions in features. Avail yourself of the added freedom

to write a feature that you would want to read if you were on the other side of the print.

Remember You're Still a Reporter

Don't forget to include all the facts and comment on the location of the story. Facts and statistics will add authority and context to your story. Extensive research is critical! You can also sprinkle in relevant jargon to add authenticity to the facts as well as the opinions of those interviewed. The use of quotes from people involved makes your story more personal and real, eliciting an emotional response in the reader.

Paint a Picture

To enhance the relationship with your audience, make use of creative descriptions that will draw on the reader's imagination. Really paint the scene and work to contextualize what you're trying to say.

If you're interviewing a person, describe the setting. If you're describing a major event, relay small details like the wispy pink sky and the smell of cotton candy in the air. The imagery that you create will captivate the reader and hold them with you until the end.

Examples:

Meditating on Mindfulness

HOCUS POCUS OR MIRACLE CURE?

Susan Mullane

Close your eyes. Breathe in. Feel the oxygen flood your core, flow into your limbs and cleanse your mind. Focus your mind, slowly, on your feet... calves... thighs... abdomen... hands... arms... chest... shoulders... neck... head... face. Listen to the sounds in the room. Allow your thoughts to wander and as they appear, let them flow away. Focus on the now. You are, I am, we are. Body. Breath. Sensation.

For some, buying into the promise of mindfulness seems like a Volkswagen camper van too far. It's all a bit touchy-feely, hippy-dippy, thanks but no thanks, I'd rather have tea and a scone to relax. For others, it is the infiltration of mindfulness into the popular consciousness that they find unforgivable. If it had remained a minority pursuit, imported after one too many trips to Buddhist temples in Nepal, at least it would have retained some essence of its roots. But, critics argue, divorcing mindfulness from the quest for a moral life makes it an exercise in accepting the status quo, something that plays into the hands of the very forces, mostly corporate, who have popularised it for their own machiavellian purposes. Reducing stress via ten minutes of mindfulness a day boosts your employees productivity and that's a hell of a lot cheaper than hiring extra staff! McMindfulness indeed!

But if mindfulness has made self-help gurus rich, as they pump out books promoting their expensive residential courses, does that in and of itself negate the benefits of a craze that has penetrated so deeply into our communities, reaching into schools, prisons and nursing homes? For me, the logic here is absurd. Just because something is popular, does not make it worthless. Just because it's been adapted from its original form does not make it toxic. It may have made men rich, but perhaps that's because it works.

I spoke to Karen Miles, a staunch advocate of mindfulness and founder of popular website meinmind.ie. “I’ve seen it transform my own life” she enthuses “and that’s why I set up the website. I wanted others to experience the same joy, but I realised that first they’d have to believe it’s worth bothering with”. Trawling her site, facebook page and twitter account, the proliferation of testimonials could well make a believer out of this agnostic. Rather than grandiose claims, simple messages dominate. “I am so glad I did this. It was hard to keep it going by myself at first, but now I practice mindfulness everyday and I find I get a lot less stressed about the small stuff” says Annette, 35 in Louth. “Feeling calm. Have been following the tips on your site for four months and I don’t know myself. Thanks Karen” comments Jennifer on the facebook page. “@seanlala Thanks @meinmind Your site helped me to get through the stress of my exams” tweets Sean, 17. There’s plenty more in this vein, expressing simple gratitude for a coping mechanism that seems to genuinely reduce stress and anxiety in those who need it most.

Nor is mindfulness a new concept, despite what the cynics would have us believe. The earliest reference to mindfulness dates back to 1530 as a translation of the French word *pensée*. Indeed, Pascal’s book of the same name contains ideas which echo the core message of simply being that still resonates so powerfully with people today. “All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone” he maintains. Perhaps the enduring appeal of every approach that embraces the now, from yoga to pilates; and from meditation to massage, is that it allows us to forget our anxieties, our worries, our fears and to enter into that state of flow which allows us to unconsciously feel at one with the universe.

If all of that feels a little saccharine, perhaps now is an opportune moment to turn to science for some truth. Does it work? Or are we

just wasting our time, handing over our hard earned cash to men in expensive suits who simply re-package the wisdom of the ancients for our modern secular age?

Whatever the original source, research by the US Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality concluded in 2014 that mindfulness does indeed have an effect. Following a mindfulness programme reduces many of the most toxic elements of stress, including anxiety and depression. Of course there's a warning about the limitations of its effect. There's no evidence that it alters your eating habits, helps you lose weight or sleep better, they add. It's not better than exercise or behavioural therapies. To which I reply, who cares? Singing daily doesn't make me better at playing the piano but that does not negate the joy of singing in my life. If I can find something that I can work into my daily practice and build into my life, that makes me less anxious, less stressed and less likely to become depressed, then hallelujah, bring it on.

If you can afford behavioural therapies, by all means do that too. Eating healthily and getting exercise remain the cornerstones of a healthy life, but this isn't an either or scenario. 'Everything that helps, helps' my mother used to say and she was a woman full of wisdom. In my teens, as I was prowling the house one day, stressed about my impending mock exams, she suddenly went to the press, hauled out a stack of plates from the very back and said 'would you ever go and smash those. It might calm you down'. She also handed me a plastic bag and a dustpan and brush so I could tidy up after myself. I will never forget the liberating joy of willful destruction I experienced that day. I was aware of my body, aware of my surroundings, caught up in the present moment and relieved entirely of my despair. It didn't last forever, but I got a few days grace from the experience, the memory of which carried me through many future moments with a smile.

Remember, also, that a societal focus on positive mental health is a wonderful development for a country whose wellbeing has been severely challenged by years of austerity, high unemployment and emigration. Embracing mindfulness is not a pretence that all is fine; rather it reflects an awareness that when all is not fine we need to build our resilience; to learn strategies that help us to cope. As we emerge into better, more hopeful times, retaining our hard earned wisdom to stay connected to that which matters should stand us in good stead in the future, provided we remember to focus on the now.

And how does it work?

Close your eyes. Breathe in. Feel the oxygen flood your core, flow into your limbs and cleanse your mind. Focus your mind, slowly, on your feet... calves... thighs... abdomen... hands... arms... chest... shoulders... neck... head... face. Listen to the sounds in the room. Allow your thoughts to wander and as they appear, let them flow away. Focus on the now. You are, I am, we are. Body. Breath. Sensation.