

Dive into Feature Writing: Captivate with Every Word

Exemplar: Dive into Feature Writing: Captivate with Every Word

Introduction

Feature writing is the art of crafting in-depth, compelling stories that go beyond basic news reporting. It requires a blend of journalistic skills, creative writing techniques, and the ability to engage readers from the first word to the last.

Narrative Outline

1. Crafting Attention-Grabbing Openings
2. Developing a Narrative Arc in Non-Fiction
3. Mastering the Art of Description
4. Incorporating Dialogue and Quotes Effectively
5. Closing with Impact: Memorable Endings

Breakdown

****1. Crafting Attention-Grabbing Openings****

****Techniques:****

- Using anecdotes to draw readers in
- Starting with a provocative statement or question
- Setting the scene with vivid description

****Exemplars:****

1. "Begin with a powerful anecdote: 'The first thing Sarah did after winning \$140 million in the lottery was to call her boss and quit. The second thing she did was far more surprising.'"
2. "Open with a provocative question: 'What would you do if you knew the exact date of your death? For the residents of Ikaria, Greece, this isn't a hypothetical question – it's a startling reality.'"
3. "Set the scene immediately: 'The air in the underground bunker was thick with tension and the acrid smell of too many cigarettes. Around a circular table sat twelve men who held the fate of the world in their trembling hands.'"

****2. Developing a Narrative Arc in Non-Fiction****

****Strategies:****

- Structuring the feature like a story with a beginning, middle, and end
- Using tension and conflict to drive the narrative

- Weaving in background information without disrupting the flow

****Exemplars:****

1. "Create a narrative thread: 'John's journey from homeless addict to successful entrepreneur wasn't a straight line. It was a labyrinth of false starts, hard-won victories, and devastating setbacks.'"
2. "Build tension: 'As the clock ticked down, the team of scientists knew they were in a race against time. If they couldn't contain the outbreak within 48 hours, the consequences would be catastrophic.'"
3. "Blend background seamlessly: 'While Maria prepared for the biggest fight of her career, her mind drifted back to the tiny gym in Bogotá where she first laced up a pair of boxing gloves at the age of seven.'"

****3. Mastering the Art of Description****

****Approaches:****

- Using sensory details to bring scenes to life
- Employing metaphors and similes for impact
- Balancing description with action and dialogue

****Exemplars:****

1. "Engage multiple senses: 'The night market was a feast for the senses – a cacophony of sizzling woks and haggling voices, the air heavy with the aroma of spices and grilled meats, while a kaleidoscope of colourful fabrics and twinkling lights dazzled the eye.'"
2. "Use unexpected comparisons: 'The ancient redwood forest was nature's cathedral – towering trunks like pillars supporting a canopy so high it seemed to touch the heavens, while shafts of sunlight pierced through like divine beams.'"
3. "Balance description with action: 'As Ahmed carefully extracted the fragile artifact from the sun-baked earth, his heart raced. This small clay tablet, no bigger than his palm, could rewrite history as we know it.'"

****4. Incorporating Dialogue and Quotes Effectively****

****Techniques:****

- Using dialogue to reveal character and advance the story
- Integrating quotes smoothly into the narrative
- Capturing the unique voice of each speaker

****Exemplars:****

1. "Reveal character through dialogue: "I didn't set out to change the world," Sarah said, her eyes fixed on the distant horizon. "I just couldn't stand by and watch it burn.""

2. "Integrate quotes smoothly: 'The gravity of the situation wasn't lost on Dr. Patel. "We're not just fighting a disease," he explained, his voice heavy with the weight of responsibility. "We're fighting fear, misinformation, and time itself.'"

3. "Capture unique voices: "Ain't nobody ever got rich by playin' it safe," Old Joe chuckled, his weathered face creasing into a map of hard-earned wisdom. "You gotta risk big to win big.""

****5. Closing with Impact: Memorable Endings****

****Strategies:****

- Bringing the story full circle
- Leaving readers with a thought-provoking idea
- Ending with a powerful quote or image

****Exemplars:****

1. "Come full circle: 'As the sun set on the vineyard, Maria raised a glass of the wine her grandfather had first crafted seven decades ago. In that moment, she wasn't just tasting grapes – she was savouring history, family, and the sweet fruit of perseverance.'"

2. "Provoke thought: 'As we stand on the brink of interplanetary travel, one question looms larger than ever: are we explorers, or colonisers? The answer may determine not just the fate of Mars, but of humanity itself.'"

3. "End with a powerful image: 'The last polar bear padded slowly across the shrinking ice floe, a lonely sentinel of a vanishing world. In its eyes, if you looked closely, you might see the reflection of our collective future.'"

Exercise/Activity

Choose a local event, person, or issue and write a 500-word feature article. Focus on crafting a compelling opening, developing a clear narrative arc, using vivid description, incorporating effective dialogue or quotes, and ending with impact. Remember to balance creativity with journalistic integrity.

Vocabulary List

1. Lead: The introductory section of a news story that summarises the most important aspects of the story
2. Nut graf: A paragraph, particularly in a feature story, that explains the news value of the story
3. Kicker: A catchy concluding remark in an article
4. Vignette: A brief evocative description, account, or episode

5. Anecdotal lead: An opening to a story that uses a brief, interesting story to set up the main topic
6. Colour: Descriptive details that add interest and atmosphere to a story
7. Human interest: A story that focuses on an individual or group and appeals to emotion
8. Soft lead: An indirect, creative, or anecdotal opening to a story
9. Hard lead: A straightforward, factual opening to a news story
10. Panoramic lead: An opening that provides a broad view of a situation or setting
11. Scene-setter: A descriptive passage that vividly depicts a location or situation
12. Delayed lead: An opening that withholds the main point of the story for several paragraphs
13. Narrative hook: A literary technique in the opening of a story that "hooks" the reader's attention
14. Dek: A phrase, sentence, or short paragraph that appears under the headline of a feature story
15. Sidebar: A shorter, related story that accompanies a longer article
16. Pullquote: A key phrase, quotation, or excerpt from an article that is highlighted in a larger typeface
17. Dateline: The line at the beginning of a news story that tells where and when the story was written
18. Backgrounder: A feature that provides background information on a current issue or event
19. Evergreen: A story with long-lasting appeal, not tied to a specific time or event
20. Longform: An in-depth, lengthy article that explores a topic in great detail

Exemplar Response to Exercise

[Note: This is a fictional feature article for demonstration purposes.]

The Whisper of Wings: Butterfly Whisperer Transforms Urban Jungle

In the heart of downtown Millbrook, where the cacophony of traffic and the glare of neon usually reign supreme, an unexpected oasis of fluttering serenity has taken root. Every Saturday, as the sun peeks over the city's skyline, Eddie Chen unfolds a rickety card table on a small patch of green nestled between two towering skyscrapers.

"People think butterflies don't belong in the city," Eddie says, his weathered hands gently cradling a vibrant Monarch. "But they're wrong. Nature finds a way, and sometimes, it just needs a little help."

For the past five years, Eddie has been that help. Known affectionately as the "Butterfly Whisperer" by local residents, this 67-year-old retired biology teacher has made it his mission to bring these delicate insects back to the urban landscape.

The transformation of this once-neglected space is nothing short of miraculous. Where there was once only patchy grass and discarded cigarette butts, now bloom carefully cultivated nectar plants – a kaleidoscope of colours that seems almost out of place amid the monochrome of concrete and steel.

"It started with just a few milkweed plants," Eddie recalls, his eyes twinkling behind thick-rimmed glasses. "I'd come here to eat my lunch, and I thought, 'Why not make this place a little prettier?'"

That small act of guerrilla gardening has blossomed into a community phenomenon. Every weekend, a diverse group of city dwellers – from wide-eyed children to jaded office workers – gather around Eddie's makeshift butterfly sanctuary.

"It's like magic," whispers 8-year-old Lily, her face a picture of wonder as a Painted Lady butterfly alights on her outstretched finger. "I didn't know butterflies could live in the city!"

But Eddie's work goes beyond mere aesthetics. In an era of alarming insect decline, his urban oasis serves as a vital waystation for migrating butterflies and a breeding ground for local populations.

Dr. Sarah Mendez, an entomologist at the nearby university, emphasises the importance of Eddie's work. "What Mr. Chen has created here is not just beautiful – it's ecologically significant. These small pockets of habitat can make a real difference for butterfly populations."

As the morning wears on, the crowd around Eddie's table grows. He patiently answers questions, hands out packets of milkweed seeds, and shares his contagious enthusiasm for these fragile creatures.

In a world often characterised by environmental doom and gloom, Eddie Chen and his flutter of urban butterflies offer a glimmer of hope. They remind us that even in the most unlikely places, with a little care and dedication, nature can thrive.

As the sun climbs higher and the city fully awakens, Eddie begins to pack up his table. But the magic he's created lingers, embodied in the delicate dance of wings against the urban sky – a whisper of wild beauty in the heart of the concrete jungle.