

Day 7: Introduction to Feature Article Writing

NSW Selective Test Preparation - 10-Day In-Depth Intensive Writing Program

Learning Objectives

By the end of today's session, students will be able to:

- Identify and implement the key elements of feature articles: headline, hook, body, and conclusion
- Balance informative content with persuasive techniques
- Develop ethos-driven credibility in writing
- Craft strong paragraph structures with effective topic sentences
- Use descriptive language and imagery to enhance article impact

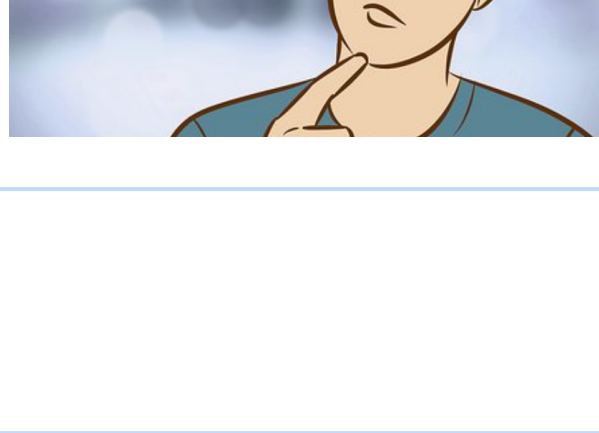
Today's Writing Scenario

Topic: You are writing a feature article for your local newspaper about the increasingly polluted state of the Silverwater Creek, which runs through your community. Once a vibrant ecosystem and recreational spot, the waterway has deteriorated significantly due to industrial waste, littering, and neglect. Your article should inform readers about the situation while persuading them that action is urgently needed.

1. Feature Article Elements

Feature articles differ from news reports by allowing more creative expression while maintaining journalistic integrity. They typically include:

- Engaging headline** - captures attention and summarizes the main idea
- Compelling hook** - draws readers in with an interesting opening
- Informative body** - provides facts, quotes, and description
- Persuasive conclusion** - leaves an impact and often suggests action



2. Engaging Headline Techniques

An effective headline grabs attention while conveying the article's essence.

Headline Types:

Wordplay/Pun	"Creek of Despair: How Silverwater Became a River of Ruin"
Rhetorical Question	"Is Silverwater Creek Becoming Our Community's Toxic Grave?"
Alliteration	"Poison, Pollution, and the Perishing Paradise of Silverwater"
Stark Contrast	"From Swimming Hole to Septic Stream: Silverwater's Tragic Transformation"
Call to Action	"Save Silverwater: Time Running Out for Our Beloved Waterway"

3. Hook Techniques (Opening Paragraph)

Your opening paragraph must grab readers immediately while setting up the article's focus.

Effective Hook Types:

Mini Anecdote Hook:

Ten-year-old Emma Matthews still carries the photograph of herself as a toddler, splashing joyfully in the crystal-clear waters of Silverwater Creek. Today, she stands at its banks, tears welling in her eyes as she stares at what has become a stagnant channel of murky sludge, where floating islands of trash bob grotesquely between chemical foam that hisses and pops like some witch's cauldron. "I can't even recognize it anymore," she whispers, her small fingers crumpling the edges of the treasured photograph. "It smells like death."

Shocking Statistic Hook:

Water samples from Silverwater Creek contain lead levels 23 times higher than safety standards permit—a poisonous cocktail so potent that exposure to its waters now carries health warnings from the Department of Environmental Protection. These invisible toxins silently infiltrate the ecosystem, leaching into the soil along the banks where children once built sandcastles, seeping into the flesh of whatever fish somehow survive in its oxygen-depleted depths, and evaporating into the air that neighboring communities breathe daily.

Vivid Scene Hook:

The surface of Silverwater Creek glistens with an unnatural rainbow sheen, oil and chemicals creating a deceptively beautiful pattern across water too contaminated for any living thing to thrive. Along its banks, withered reeds stand like brittle skeletons, their roots choked by layers of accumulated waste. The once-melodious soundtrack of birdsong and running water has been replaced by

an eerie silence, punctuated only by the occasional hollow thud of another piece of garbage tumbling down the embankment to join the grotesque collection already fermenting below. The stench—a nauseating blend of rot, chemicals, and decay—hangs in the air like an invisible shroud, burning nostrils and clinging to clothing long after visitors flee its vicinity.

Contrast Hook:

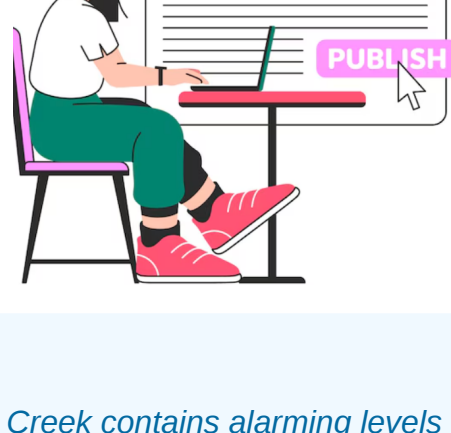
Just five years ago, Silverwater Creek pulsed with life—children shrieking with delight as they swung from rope swings, elderly couples strolling hand-in-hand along grassy banks dotted with wildflowers, and families gathering for weekend picnics beneath the dappled shade of ancient willows. Today, the rope swings hang like forgotten nooses above water too toxic to touch, warning signs have replaced picnic tables, and the only visitors are environmental scientists in hazmat suits who extract samples with grim expressions, their protective gear a stark testament to the creek's lethal transformation. Where life once flourished, now only contamination thrives—a waterway not merely polluted but desecrated, not just damaged but dying.

4. Ethos-Driven Credibility

Establishing credibility (ethos) is crucial for persuasive feature articles. This involves using authoritative sources, expert opinions, and demonstrating knowledge.

Techniques for Building Credibility:

- Citing expert sources and studies
- Including precise data and statistics
- Incorporating multiple perspectives
- Using appropriate technical terminology
- Acknowledging limitations and complexities



Credibility Example:

Laboratory analysis conducted by the State Environmental Agency reveals that Silverwater Creek contains alarming levels of benzene, trichloroethylene, and polychlorinated biphenyls—industrial chemicals linked to cancer, neurological damage, and birth defects. Dr. Elaine Westbrook, aquatic toxicologist at Central University, who has studied the waterway for over a decade, describes the contamination as "among the most severe cases of freshwater pollution I've documented in my 25-year career." Her research team's latest findings, published in the Journal of Environmental Toxicology, indicate that the creek's ecosystem is experiencing what scientists term a "cascading collapse," where each species' disappearance triggers further deterioration. Local physician Dr. Marcus Chen has reported a 47% increase in respiratory complaints and unusual skin rashes among children living within one kilometer of the creek—data he calls "deeply troubling" and consistent with exposure to industrial pollutants. "We're essentially conducting an uncontrolled chemical experiment with our children as the test subjects," he explained during last month's town council meeting, his voice straining with professional concern.

5. Balanced Argument (With a Persuasive Lean)

Feature articles should present multiple perspectives while subtly guiding readers toward a particular conclusion.

Balanced Argument Example:

Proponents of maintaining the current industrial activity along Silverwater Creek argue that environmental regulations would threaten local jobs and economic stability. "We employ over 200 people from this community," states Michael Harrington, spokesperson for Riverside Manufacturing. "Additional filtration systems would cost millions and potentially force smaller operations to close."

However, these economic arguments overlook the devastating long-term costs already being inflicted on the community. The medical expenses for treating conditions linked to water contamination have burdened families with crippling debt. Local mother Sarah Jenkins describes watching her six-year-old son endure painful rashes that erupt like angry red constellations across his skin after brief exposure to creek water during a school nature walk. "He scratches until he bleeds, then cries himself to sleep," she recounts, her voice breaking. "No parent should have to witness their child suffering when it could be prevented."

Furthermore, property values within two kilometers of the creek have plummeted by an average of 32% over the past three years according to county assessment records—a financial blow far exceeding the cost of implementing proper waste management systems. The economic argument, while understandable, ultimately presents a false choice between prosperity and health when evidence increasingly suggests the community can and must have both.

6. Emotive Language

Feature articles can employ carefully chosen emotional language to engage readers while maintaining journalistic integrity.

Emotive Language Example:

The transformation of Silverwater Creek from community treasure to toxic liability represents nothing less than an environmental tragedy unfolding in slow motion. Residents speak of their beloved waterway with a profound sense of grief and betrayal, their voices often catching as they describe what has been lost. "It feels like watching a dear friend waste away from a preventable illness," explains lifelong resident Eleanor Simmons, 73, who remembers when the creek served as the community's vibrant heart.

The creek's deterioration has carved a wound in the community's identity, leaving behind a festering reminder of corporate negligence and regulatory failure. Children who should be inheriting a natural playground instead receive a contaminated wasteland, their birthright of clean water and healthy wildlife cruelly snatched away by decisions made in distant boardrooms where profit margins eclipse human welfare.

On particularly warm days, the creek exhales a miasma of chemical fumes that drift through neighborhoods like ghostly tendrils, forcing residents to retreat indoors, windows sealed against the invisible threat. The water itself—once so clear that pebbles on the creek bed gleamed like underwater jewels—now resembles thick, oily broth, bubbling occasionally as pockets of trapped gas escape from the contaminated sediment below.

7. Topic Sentences + Strong Paragraph Structure

Well-crafted paragraphs with strong topic sentences create a coherent, persuasive article.

The PEEL Paragraph Structure:

- Point** (Topic sentence that states the main idea)
- Evidence** (Facts, examples, or quotes that support the point)
- Explanation** (Analysis that connects evidence to the point)
- Link** (Transition to the next paragraph or connection to overall argument)



Strong Paragraph Structure Example:

Topic Sentence The industrial contaminants flowing into Silverwater Creek have decimated what was once a thriving ecosystem rich with biodiversity.

Evidence Environmental surveys conducted in 2018 documented 27 fish species, 18 types of aquatic plants, and a healthy showing of amphibious throughout the waterway. Last month's assessment found just four fish species remaining, all showing signs of physiological stress, while 89% of plant life has vanished entirely. The once-common chorus of frogs that announced summer evenings has fallen completely silent, their eggs unable to develop in the contaminated water.

Explanation This catastrophic collapse represents more than just numbers on a scientific report—it marked the systematic extermination of an entire ecological community. Each species lost creates a tear in the intricate web of life that sustained this waterway for centuries. The chemicals responsible for this mass dying don't simply kill, they distort and deform, creating grotesque mutations in surviving organisms that struggle to reproduce, ensuring the damage extends and deepens, generations yet unborn.

Link The ecological devastation visible below the water's surface serves as a stark warning of what may await the human community that depends on this watershed unless immediate remediation efforts begin.

8. Persuasive Conclusion

An effective conclusion reinforces your main points and leaves readers with a call to action or thought-provoking final message.

Conclusion Example:

As sunset casts long shadows across Silverwater Creek, the contaminated water reflects the fading light in unnatural hues—purples and greens that no natural waterway should display. The chemical cocktail flowing through our community continues its silent journey, seeping ever deeper into soil, spreading further into groundwater, and working its way inexorably into our bodies through the water we drink and the air we breathe.

The children of Silverwater Heights grow up never knowing what was stolen from them—the cool embrace of a healthy stream on hot summer days, the wonder of catching tadpoles in cupped hands, the simple joy of skipping stones across a clean water. Instead, they inherit a poisoned legacy, their small bodies increasingly bearing the toxic burden of our collective failure to protect what should have been their natural birthright.

We stand at a critical juncture where difficult decisions can no longer be postponed. The cost of inaction has already been paid in ecosystem collapse, declining health, and community heartbreak. The path forward—though challenging—is clear: industrial accountability must replace negligence, regulatory oversight must replace willful blindness, and community determination must replace resignation.

Silverwater Creek can be reborn. Cleanup technologies exist. Pollution can be reversed. But these solutions require what has so far been missing: the collective will to demand better stewardship of our precious natural resources. The question is no longer when we can save Silverwater Creek, but whether we will choose to save it—and in doing so, save something essential within ourselves.

Practice Activities

Activity 1: Headline Creation

Create five different headlines for the Silverwater Creek article, each using a different technique (wordplay, rhetorical question, alliteration, stark contrast, and call to action).

Activity 2: Hook Development

Write an opening paragraph for the Silverwater Creek article using one of the hook techniques discussed. Include at least one example of painful imagery and one example of physically descriptive language.

Activity 3: PEEL Paragraph Construction

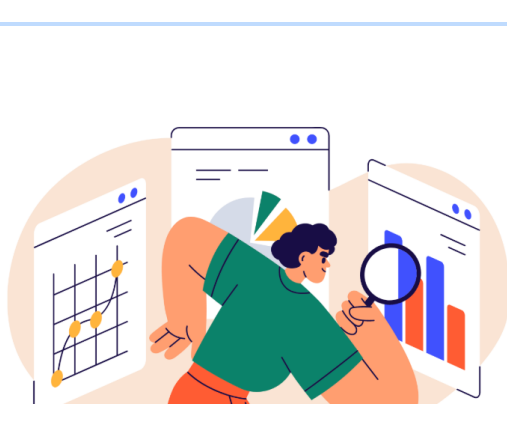
Using the PEEL structure, write a paragraph about the economic impact of the polluted creek on the local community. Incorporate emotive language while maintaining journalistic credibility.

Activity 4: Ethos Building

Create a paragraph that establishes credibility through the use of expert opinions, data, and balanced reporting on the health effects of the creek pollution.

Assessment Criteria

- Headline Impact:** Creates interest while accurately reflecting content
- Hook Effectiveness:** Engages readers immediately and sets up the article's focus
- Source Usage:** Incorporates credible sources, data, and expert sentences
- Paragraph Structure:** Follows PEEL format with clear topic sentences
- Descriptive Language:** Uses vivid imagery and sensory details effectively
- Balanced Approach:** Presents multiple perspectives while maintaining a clear position
- Conclusion Impact:** Reinforces main points and provides a meaningful takeaway

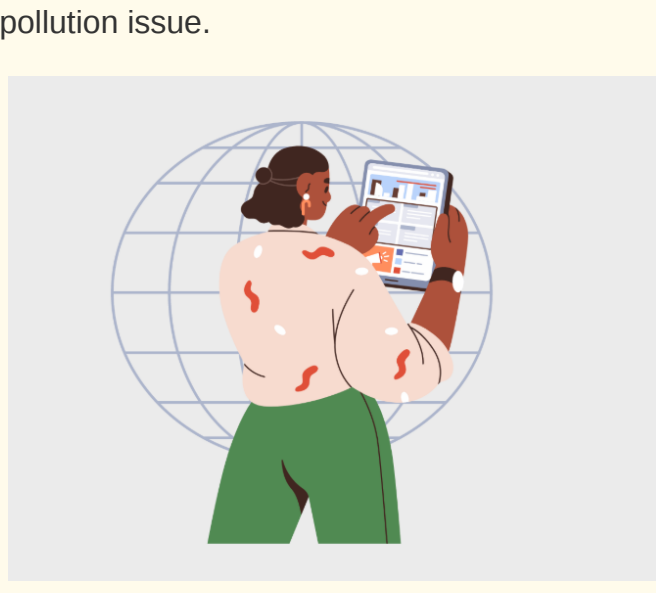


Homework Assignment

Write a complete feature article (800-1000 words) on the Silverwater Creek pollution issue.

Your article must include:

- An engaging headline
 - A compelling hook
 - At least two paragraphs that follow the PEEL structure
 - Incorporation of ethos-building elements (expert quotes, data)
 - Balanced presentation of perspectives with a persuasive lean
 - Vivid descriptive language and imagery
 - A persuasive conclusion with call to action
- 500-600 words



Be prepared to share and discuss your article in the next session.