

Feature Stories

By Angie Tonucci

Feature stories are integral to any publication. They not only offer newsworthy information, but they also bring focus to the human elements of the news. Features have a lot in common with hard news stories. The difference between them is in their emphasis. While hard news stories typically contain only the relevant facts of the news, features generally contain more detail and description, and they often center on people involved in the stories (Stovall, 101). Therefore, feature stories are not defined by their subjects so much as by the style in which they are written (Rogers).

Feature stories tend to differ from hard news in structure. For example, a hard news lead is a short paragraph summary of the story that follows it. It typically answers the “who, what, when, where, and why” questions about the story in a single sentence (Rogers). A feature lead, however, may be several sentences or even multiple paragraphs long without answering all or even any of those questions (Stovall, 103). Features also tend to be significantly longer than news stories because of the greater amount of detail and description included as well as their more relaxed, story-teller style. But it is important that feature writers and news writers share the same goals: “to tell a story accurately and to write well” (Stovall, 102).

Feature stories appeal to today’s audience because they are more compelling reading than straight news. A feature’s detailed descriptions of the actions, people, and places involved in the story paint a more interesting picture than a news story that contains only basic facts. And because the writing style is casual and the content is people-focused, features are more entertaining (Stovall, 102).

Though feature writers are not bound by a specific set of rules regarding how to structure their stories, features generally contain four regular parts: the lead, the engine paragraph, the body, and the ending (Stovall, 103). Because feature stories are long compared to the bullet-point-type information so prominent in today's modern, internet-driven society, and because people have ever-decreasing attention spans, it is extremely important that a feature capture the reader's attention from the very first sentence. While the lead may be spread over several paragraphs, the first few words should "give the reader some information of substance." The engine paragraph that follows the lead gives the story context and explains why the rest of the story should be read. The body contains the most detail and answers all questions proposed in the lead. It "should fulfill every expectation that the lead raised within the reader" (Stovall, 103).

The ending is especially important for a feature story. Hard news, which contains only straight facts about the events involved, does not often need a conclusive paragraph. A feature story, however, should contain an ending that may summarize important lessons from the story or make a final point (Stovall, 103).

In conclusion, features can be about any subject, but their leisurely style, descriptive details, and human-centric focus set them apart from hard news. By emphasizing the activities and interests of real people, feature stories provide readers with relatable information that may entertain, enthrall, and inspire readers.

Works Cited

Rogers, Tony. "Journalism: What Is a Feature Story?" *www.journalism.about.com*. Web. 5 Oct. 2015. <<http://journalism.about.com/od/writing/a/whatarefeatures.htm>>.

Stovall, James Glen. *Writing for the Mass Media*. 9th ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 2015. Print.