

Teacher's Guide



FROM WRITERS TO READERS

NIE Week 2003

Writer's Workshop

Using the Newspaper



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INTRODUCTION

Newspaper In Education Week

Newspaper In Education Week is a joint program of the Newspaper Association of America Foundation, the International Reading Association and the National Council for the Social Studies. It is observed the first full week of March; for 2003, NIE Week takes place March 3-7. The goal of the program is to reinforce a positive and relevant lifetime reading habit in students by engaging them with an authentic text—the newspaper.

About the Organizations

Newspaper Association of America® Foundation

The NAA Foundation is dedicated to developing future readers by encouraging them to acquire and value information from newspapers and other media. The Foundation will achieve this mission by:

- Promoting and operating programs that encourage newspaper use by young people,
- Forming strategic alliances,
- Bestowing targeted grants to leverage Foundation resources,
- Improving youth literacy through family and community initiatives.

The Foundation supports local Newspaper In Education efforts through curriculum development, consultation, conferences, awards programs, training, a newsletter and computer services. The Foundation works cooperatively with state and local reading and social studies councils and newspapers throughout North America to promote NIE Week.

The International Reading Association

The International Reading Association is an organization of 90,000 members, including teachers, reading specialists, librarians, university professors, administrators, researchers, psychologists and others interested in promoting reading and better reading instruction. IRA serves as an advocate and leader in the universal quest for literacy, and is dedicated to service on an international scale. It has more than 1,200 councils functioning at the national, state and local levels. IRA achieves its outreach through publications, conferences, journals, committees and partnerships.

The National Council for the Social Studies

The National Council for the Social Studies is the largest association in North America devoted solely to social studies education. The NCSS serves as an umbrella organization for elementary and secondary-level teachers of history, geography, economics, political science, sociology,

psychology, anthropology and law-related education. The NCSS has more than 26,000 individual and institutional members in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Canada and 69 other countries. Membership is organized into a network of more than 150 affiliated councils representing professionals such as classroom teachers, curriculum designers, curriculum specialists, university faculty and leaders in the various disciplines that constitute the social studies.

Additional information about NIE Week programs is available from each sponsoring organization:

Newspaper Association of America Foundation

1921 Gallows Road, Suite 600

Vienna, VA 22182

(703) 902-1726

www.naa.org/foundation

International Reading Association

800 Barksdale Road

P.O. Box 8139

Newark, DE 19714-8139

(302) 731-1600

www.ira.org

National Council for the Social Studies

8555 Sixteenth St., Suite 500

Silver Spring, MD 20910

(301) 588-1800

www.ncss.org

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Use the News

An Overview

The following components are included in this teaching guide:

Using From Writers to Readers in Classrooms

This section includes a brief discussion of the Writer's Workshop approach to writing instruction. It shows teachers how to incorporate *From Writers to Readers* activities into a Writer's Workshop program or into traditional programs.

How This Guide Meets Educational Standards

Educational standards related to reading and writing are identified for individual activities in the guide.

Mini-Lessons and Writer's Organizers

This section includes detailed lesson plans and student activity sheets for 10 writing topics.

The **Mini-Lessons** show teachers how to use a newspaper element as a model for writing instruction. The Mini-Lessons also include rubrics for each writing .

The **Writer's Organizer** pages are activity sheets students use to plan, draft and revise their writing.

Additional Mini-Lessons

This section includes brief suggestions for 10 additional writing topics that can be taught using newspapers.

The World of Writing

This section includes ideas for using newspapers to generate alternative and authentic writing products.

Resources

This section includes background information for the teacher:

- Comparisons of news writing and classroom writing
- Writing patterns in newspaper sections
- Professional resources and Web sites

Using *From Writers to Readers*

The activities in this guide are designed to be used in either a Writer's Workshop program or a traditional writing curriculum.

Using the Guide in Writer's Workshop

Writer's Workshop is an approach to writing instruction that focuses on the student as author. Students select their own topics, have extended periods of time for drafting and revising their work, and serve as writing coaches for each other. The components of Writer's Workshop include:

- **Mini-Lessons** (5 to 10 minutes)

Teachers present a lesson about a specific writing skill or topic to the whole class. In some cases, the teacher encourages students to incorporate that lesson into their writing that day. Other times, students keep the notes in their writing journals for future reference.

The Mini-Lessons in *From Writers to Readers* are designed to be used with students at the beginning of a Writer's Workshop session.

- **Work Time for writing and conferencing with a teacher** (35 to 45 minutes)

Students have extended, uninterrupted time to work on a self-selected piece of writing. Students may be involved in prewriting, drafting, revising or editing pieces of writing.

The Writer's Organizer activity pages in *From Writers to Readers* include steps for students to draft a piece of writing, share the writing with peers, and revise and complete the writing.

- **Share Time** (10 to 20 minutes)

Students talk with each other about the work in progress. A single-peer conference may last only five minutes. Group sharing may last longer.

The Writer's Organizer activity page includes a step for peer discussion of the work in progress.

- **Student Journals**

Students collect ideas, quotes, experiences, etc., for future writing in journals. An early lesson in this guide shows students how to collect newspaper examples for their individual Writer's Journals.

Using the Guide in Traditional Programs

The Writer’s Organizer activity sheets can be used for traditional writing assignments in a classroom. All students would complete the same lesson.

Stages of the Writing Process and From Writers to Readers

Stage	Strategy	From Writers to Readers
Prewriting	<p>Select a topic.</p> <p>Brainstorm ideas.</p> <p>Collect resources.</p>	<p>Mini-Lessons help the teacher direct this stage of the process.</p> <p>Writer’s Organizer pages help students collect and organize ideas for the writing task.</p>
Drafting	<p>Put ideas on page.</p> <p>Organize thoughts.</p> <p>Incorporate resources into writing.</p>	<p>Writer’s Organizer pages direct students to share initial writing with other students, revise the work and complete the writing .</p>
Revising	<p>Evaluate content and organization of writing.</p> <p>Rewrite for content,logic and organization.</p> <p>Have others respond to writing work in progress.</p>	
Editing	<p>Correct writing for English conventions: spelling, grammar, punctuation and usage.</p>	
Publishing	<p>Present final writing to audience.</p> <p>Share writing with others.</p>	<p>The final publishing or sharing step is determined by the teacher.</p>

Educational Standards

The activities in this guide address the following language arts standards:

Activity	Students use a variety of strategies to determine the meanings of words.	Students comprehend a wide range of text, including fiction and nonfiction.	Students understand the features of a variety of literary forms, including fiction, drama and poetry.	Students write narrative, expository, persuasive and descriptive text for a variety of purposes	Students write with a command of standard English conventions.
Detailed Lesson Plans					
Writer's Scavenger Hunt	X	X	X		
Writer's Journal	X	X	X		
Descriptive Writing	X	X	X	X	X
Collecting Quotes		X	X	X	X
How-to Writing	X	X		X	X
Persuasive Writing		X		X	X
Writing Fiction	X	X	X	X	X
Writing Poetry	X	X	X	X	X
Gathering Data		X			
Organizing Data	X			X	X
Additional Mini-Lessons					
News Story Structure	X	X			
Effective Leads	X	X		X	X
Punctuation		X			X
Expressive Verbs		X		X	
Cutlines and Captions	X	X		X	X
Information Graphics	X	X			
Deconstructing Ads	X	X			
Providing Background and Context	X		X		
Organizational Signals	X	X			
Concise Classifieds	X	X		X	X

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Mini-Lessons

MINI-LESSON

Writer's Scavenger Hunt

This is an introductory activity to help students become familiar with newspaper writing.

A newspaper scavenger hunt generally has students find elements in the newspaper. If you would like to start with a standard scavenger hunt, use the list below. Have students locate:

- A headline
- The name of the newspaper
- A comic strip featuring an animal
- A crossword puzzle or word search
- An editorial
- A news photograph of two people
- An ad for something a parent would like
- The name of a movie playing at a local theater
- A television program that will air at 8:00 p.m.
- A map

The scavenger hunt list on the student's Writer's Organizer page asks students to find specific writing examples. Have students work individually or in pairs to locate the items on the list.

Have students share their lists. Discuss any examples you think are particularly good models for effective writing.

Encourage students to complete the Think Some More activity and share their findings with a small group or with the class.

WRITER'S ORGANIZER

Writer's Scavenger Hunt

Newspaper reporters and editors are professional writers. They must communicate clearly and effectively. Look through the newspaper to find these examples of writing skills. Check off each example as you find it.

- Find a story that answers “who, what, where and when” in the first sentence.
- Find a story that opens with a statistic—a number, such as a price, quantity, percentage, etc.
- Find a sentence that describes a person’s appearance.
- Find a direct quotation.
- Find five vivid, powerful verbs.
- Find a headline that uses a play on words—a word or expression that can have more than one meaning.
- Find a story that tells the reader how to do something.
- Find a piece of writing that represents a writer’s point of view on a current issue.
- Find three different words that indicate something is highly desirable.
- Find a comic strip character who uses an idiomatic or slang expression.

Think Some More

Read three stories from one section of the newspaper—Page one news, sports, entertainment or a special section. Which story did you like best? Why was that story more effective than the other stories?

MINI-LESSON

Writer's Journal

Whether you use a Writer's Workshop approach to instruction or have a traditional writing program, you want students to be alert to possible writing topics. Encourage students to keep a journal in which they record ideas, quotations, events, etc., that may serve as future writing topics. This activity helps students think about the newspaper as a source for writing models and potential topics.

- Provide each student with a notebook in which they can write ideas and save items clipped from other sources. You might use a soft-sided presentation folder with three center brads and pockets on the insides of the front and back covers. Put notebook paper in the center of the folder. Have students write the words "Writer's Journal" on the front of the folder. Let students decorate their folders.
- Model for students how to jot ideas in their Writer's Journals. Write a sentence about an event that happened in the classroom. Tell students that the event could serve as a story starter at a later date.
- Collect some examples of newspaper writing that impress you. Share the items with students. Tell them why you responded to each piece.
- Show the students how to clip the newspaper items and save them in the pocket sections of their folders.
- Give students time to look through the newspaper to find items for their journals.
- Have students share some of the items they've found with a small group or the whole class.
- Encourage students to complete the "Think Some More" activity.

WRITER'S ORGANIZER

Writer's Journal

As a writer, you need to collect ideas for future writing. Sometimes you'll jot down an idea, a quote, a funny experience or a personal observation. Another valuable source of writing ideas is the newspaper. Read the newspaper every day to find items that capture your attention, make you think, or make you smile. Cut them out and put them in your Writer's Journal. When you need a writing idea, look through your journal.

Here are some ideas to get you started on the newspaper items in your journal. Clip and save a newspaper story, photo, ad or comic strip that:

- Reminds you of an experience you've had
- Reminds you of someone you know
- Describes something you'd like to do
- Describes someone you'd like to meet
- Makes you laugh
- Makes you angry
- Makes you think
- Makes you sad
- Makes you see a problem in a new light
- Has an unusual headline
- Has a comic strip character you'd like to meet

Think Some More

Collect stories that demonstrate unusually effective writing—a good opinion column, a powerful description of an exciting event, an unusually touching description of an individual. You may find a columnist whose writing you enjoy or a particular news writer whose style you like.

MINI-LESSON

Descriptive Writing

Newspaper writers are masters of powerful language. The words they use must be precise and effective.

- Select a news story that contains powerful adjectives and verbs. You'll often find expressive vocabulary in sports stories and feature stories.
- Using an overhead projector, share the story with students. Have students identify the words they think are especially effective.
- Have students collect their own examples of expressive language from the newspaper to put in their Writer's Journals.
- Have students write their own descriptive pieces.
- Have students evaluate their own writing using the rubric below.

Writing Rubric

Writing Element	Excellent	Good	Revisit
Is the item being described clearly identified?			
Do descriptive words relate to the senses?			
Are examples provided?			

WRITER'S ORGANIZER

Descriptive Writing

Many readers like newspaper stories that provide colorful descriptions of people, places or items. You'll find examples of descriptive writing in feature stories, lifestyle and food sections, and sports stories. Good news writers use words that appeal to the reader's senses and emotions.

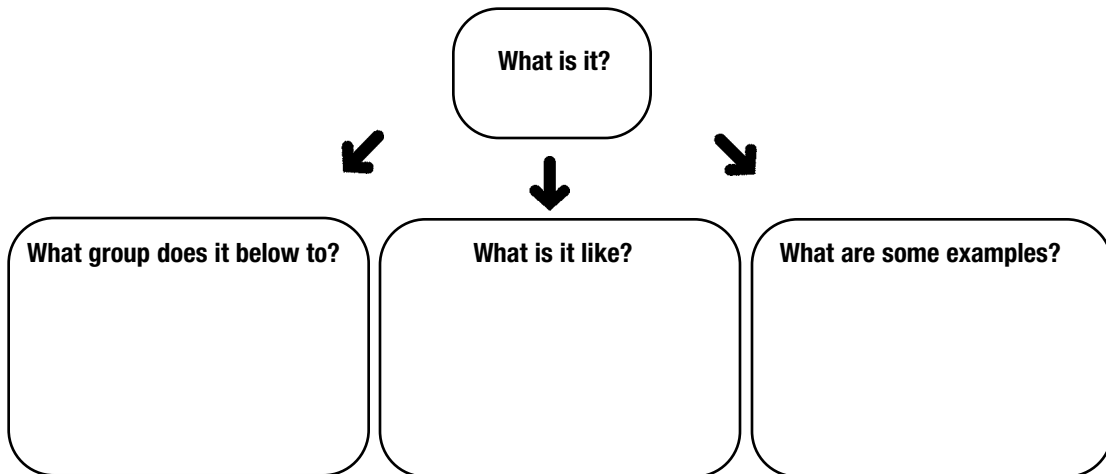
Select an example of newspaper descriptive writing from your Writer's Journal. Examine the way the writer uses descriptive language. Then use some of the same ideas for your own descriptive writing.

1. Use the chart below to analyze the newspaper story from your journal.

Newspaper headline _____

Person, place or item described	Words that appeal to the senses					Words that appeal to emotions
	Sight*	Sound	Touch	Taste	Smell	

2. Plan your own descriptive piece using the organizer below.



3. Write a paragraph describing your person, place or item.
4. Share your writing with a writing partner or group.
5. Revise and complete your writing.

*(size, shape,color)

MINI-LESSON

Collecting Quotes

News writers try whenever possible to let subjects speak for themselves. News and feature stories contain many direct quotes. This activity discusses direct quotes in the context of an interviewing assignment.

- Find a news story or feature story that uses many direct quotes.
- Using an overhead projector, share the news story with students. Point out the direct quotes, including the punctuation marks.
- Discuss with students the value the direct quotes add to the story.
- Have students collect news stories that use direct quotes for their Writer's Journals.
- Have students evaluate their own interview questions and quotes using the writing rubric below.

Writing Rubric

Writing Element	Excellent	Good	Revisit
The purpose of the interview is clear.			
Quotes selected are relevant and add interest to the story.			
Quotes are punctuated properly.			

MINI-LESSON

How-to Writing

Newspapers provide many examples of “how-to” writing—from cooking, to gardening and home maintenance. When students write instructions for doing something, they frequently leave out important information the reader needs in order to complete the task successfully.

- Select examples of several “how-to” stories or columns in the newspaper.
- Using an overhead projector, share the examples with students. Point out the specific information the writer provides the reader.
- Give students another newspaper example and have them discuss the way the writer sequences instruction and provides details.
- Have students collect newspaper examples for their Writer’s Journals.
- Have students evaluate their own how-to writing using the rubric below.

Writing Rubric

Writing Element	Excellent	Good	Revisit
The steps are numbered clearly.			
The order of instruction makes sense.			
The instructions include necessary details.			
The instructions provide examples.			

WRITER'S ORGANIZER

“How-to” Writing

One type of writing people encounter throughout their lives involves instructions for how to do something. When you are crafting instructions for something you know very well, it's easy to leave out details that would be helpful to a reader.

Examine a “how-to” newspaper story from your Writer's Journal. Then use this page to organize your step-by-step instructions.

1. What is the topic of your writing? _____
2. Use the chart below to organize your instructions:
 - List the steps.
 - Add details to the steps.
 - Add examples to the steps.

Step		Details		Examples
_____	←	_____	←	_____
		_____		_____
_____	←	_____	←	_____
		_____		_____
_____	←	_____	←	_____
		_____		_____
_____	←	_____	←	_____
		_____		_____

3. Write a draft of your “how-to” story.
4. Ask a writing partner or group to react to your instructions. Ask them to tell you if the steps are clear and the necessary details and examples are included.
5. Revise and complete your writing.

MINI-LESSON

Persuasive Writing

There are many examples of persuasive writing in the editorial pages of the newspaper. The most balanced writing is found in the newspaper's editorial. A good editorial establishes a position, outlines opposing arguments, refutes each argument, then outlines arguments supporting the newspaper's position. Good editorials include supporting evidence and details. The editorial ends with a call to action.

Opinion columns and letters to the editor are also examples of persuasive writing. Opinion columnists usually present just their point of view, but they include supporting details. Letters to the editor vary in quality. Some are reasoned and logical, but many rely on emotion and do not provide objective evidence to support their positions.

- Select examples of good newspaper editorials that include the arguments of the opposing side.
- Select an example of a good opinion column that provides details and supporting evidence.
- Share one editorial with students. Point out the elements of a good editorial.
- Show students a second editorial. Have them identify the editorial elements.
- Share an opinion column with students and discuss the differences between the editorial and the column.
- Have students select several examples of editorials for their Writer's Journals.
- Have students evaluate their own persuasive writing using the rubric below.

Writing Rubric

Writing Element	Excellent	Good	Revisit
Your position is clearly established.			
You provide a clear discussion of the opposing point of view.			
You effectively refute opposing arguments.			
You provide details to support your point of view.			

WRITER'S ORGANIZER

Writing to Persuade

The newspaper contains many good examples of persuasive writing, especially on the editorial page. When you want to convince someone to accept your point of view, it is not enough to write about just your point of view. You must also present opposing points of view and show how your position is better. Select an example of newspaper persuasive writing from your Writer's Journal. Examine the way the writer supports a position with details and logic.

1. Establish the topic you want to write about and the position you want to take about that topic.

Topic _____

Your position _____

2. Collect arguments for and against your position. Write them on the organizer below. Include details that support each position.

Your position: arguments and supporting details	Opposite position: arguments and supporting details
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



3. Write a draft of your persuasive piece.
4. Share your writing with a writing partner or group. Ask the reader(s) to respond to these questions: (a) is your position clear, (b) did you represent opposing positions fairly, and (c) did you address opposing arguments effectively?
5. Revise and complete your writing.

MINI-LESSON

Writing Fiction

Newspapers have long provided subject matter for novelists and short story writers. This activity helps students translate a news story into a fictional story.

- Select a news story you think could serve as the basis for a fictional story.
- Share the story with students. Model your thinking for students. Tell them which story elements you would keep and which you would change for a fictional piece.
- Share three other stories with students. Have them select one to discuss as a potential source for fiction. Let them create the story, orally and extemporaneously, as a group.
- Have students collect news stories or photos as story ideas in their Writer's Journals.
- Have students evaluate their own fictional writing using the rubric below.

Writing Rubric

Writing Element	Excellent	Good	Revisit
The reader can picture the setting.			
The reader can visualize the characters.			
The story captures the reader's attention.			
The writer has made a completely new story from the basis newspaper facts.			

WRITER'S ORGANIZER

Writing Fiction

Many real-life stories in the newspaper provide ideas for writing fiction. You might be intrigued by an individual in the story or you might be attracted to an unusual situation. Select a news story from your Writer's Journal as a starting point for a short story. Use the charts below to organize your story.

- Record setting elements from the news story and indicate how you want to change them.

Setting element	News story	Changes for your story
Location		
Time of year		
Year (date)		

- Record the problem or situation in the news story and indicate how you want to change it to become the plot of your story.

What happened in the news story?	What will happen in your story?

- Identify the people involved in the news story. Then describe the characters in your story. Some of your characters may reflect the actual individuals. Some of your characters may be new.

Individual in news story	Description of news story individual	Description of your character

- Write a draft of your story.
- Ask a writing partner or group to react to your story. Ask them to answer these questions: (a) could they visualize the setting? (b) did the plot pull them in? (c) did the characters capture their attention? (d) did they want to finish the story?
- Revise and complete your writing.

MINI-LESSON

Writing Poetry

The newspaper provides many subjects for poetry. Poetry often deals with strong emotions. There are stories in the newspaper every day that make readers angry, happy or sad. Incorporate newspaper subjects into any type of poetry your class is studying.

- Select several news stories and photos that have strong emotional appeal.
- Share the newspaper examples with students. Have them discuss the emotional reaction they have to each example. Be sure to include some humorous examples as well as some that are serious or uplifting.
- Compose a group poem with students. Use a form with which the students are familiar, such as triplets, cinquain or diamante.

Triplet:	Long straight lines. Lush green turf. Baseball season begins.	Diamante:	Entertainment Musical, emotional Singing, dancing, acting Movie, television, nothingness, calm Dozing, drifting, tiring Blank, dull Boredom
Cinquain:	Community People together Planning, playing, helping Enjoying the happy group Friends		

- Have students select stories and photos that have an emotional appeal for them. Have students save examples in their Writer's Journals.
- Have students evaluate their poetry using the rubric below.

Writing Rubric

Writing Element	Excellent	Good	Revisit
The topic of the poem is clear.			
Language in the poem fits the subject.			
The poetry appeals to the reader's emotions.			

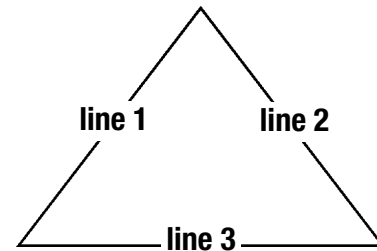
WRITER'S ORGANIZER

Writing Poetry

Newspapers have stories that appeal to many emotions, such as anger, happiness, sadness and confusion. Emotions are the basis of many poems. Select a newspaper story or photo from your Writer's Journal for this activity.

- Select a news story or photo with a subject that causes you to react emotionally in a strong way.
- Make a list of words that relate to the subject. Include nouns, adjectives and verbs.
- Use your word list to create a poem. Try your hand at each of the poetry patterns below.
- Share your poems with a small group.

Triangular Triplets: Write three lines describing your subject. Compose the lines so that they can be read in any order. Write the lines around a triangle.



Cinquain: Write five lines

Line 1: One word—title

Line 2: Two words—describe the title

Line 3: Three words—an action

Line 4: Four words—a feeling

Line 5: One word—refers to title

Diamante: Write seven lines

Line 1: One word—subject, noun

Line 2: Two words—adjectives

Line 3: Three words—participles (-ing form)

Line 4: Four words—nouns, two from subject in line 1, two from subject in line 7

Line 5: Three words—participles for line 7

Line 6: Two words—adjectives for line 7

Line 7: One word—noun, opposite of subject in line 1.

MINI-LESSON

Research: Gathering Data

The next two lessons help students plan a research topic and organize their data.

- Select a newspaper story about a topic that may be new to students.
- Read the story to the students or give them copies to read themselves.
- Ask students what they know about the topic based on what they've read in the newspaper story.
- Ask students what else they would like to know about the subject. Model specific questions if necessary.
- Have students suggest resources they could use to find out more about the topic.
- Remind students that future newspaper stories will provide additional information.
- Have students collect stories that suggest intriguing research topics.
- Have students evaluate their data gathering using the rubric below.

Research Rubric

Research Element	Excellent	Good	Revisit
The topic provides opportunities for research.			
Questions can be used to direct research.			
Resources are appropriate and credible.			
Data relates directly to research questions.			

WRITER'S ORGANIZER

Research: Gathering Data

Newspapers cover a wide range of topics. They introduce readers to many subjects they would like to explore further. Select a newspaper item from your Writer's Journal that you would like to research.

1. What topic will you research? _____.
2. Ask several writing partners to meet with you to brainstorm questions you might explore about the topic. Record your questions on the lines below.
3. Questions:

4. Collect information about your topic and record it on the data chart below. Identify each resource and the data you collect from that resource. Use the newspaper as one of your resources.

Resource 1 Newspaper	Resource 2	Resource 3	Resource 4	Resource 5

MINI-LESSON

Research: Organizing Data

Newspapers provide excellent models for organizing large amounts of information.

- Select a news story with many facts and details.
- Using an overhead projector, show the story to students .
- Have students identify individual pieces of information—facts, details, etc. Underline each fact found by students.
- Have students examine the story to see how it is organized. How are facts grouped in paragraphs? How are the paragraphs sequenced in the story?
- Show students how to use a web organizer to classify data.
- Have students evaluate their own organizational skills using the rubric below.

Writing Rubric

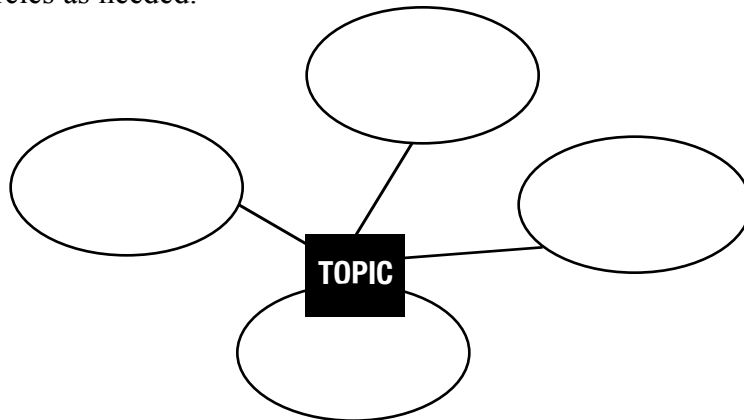
Writing Element	Excellent	Good	Revisit
There is a topic sentence that introduces the subject.			
Related data are presented in individual paragraphs.			
Paragraphs flow in a logical order.			
Research covers the topic effectively.			

WRITER'S ORGANIZER

Research: Organizing Data

After you have gathered information about a topic, you must organize it so that your final research report communicates the facts clearly.

1. Organize the data you've collected on a web. Start with the web below. Add additional lines and circles as needed.



2. Write a sentence introducing your topic. Finish your introductory paragraph.
3. Write one paragraph for each of your web circles.
4. Share your finished draft with a writing partner or group.
5. Revise and complete your research report.

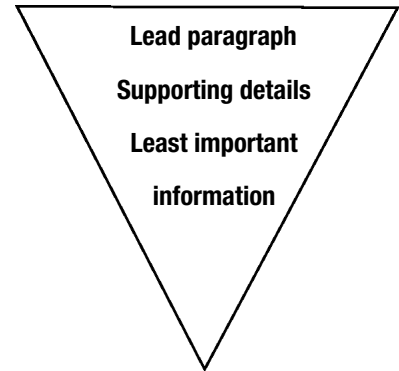
ADDITIONAL MINI-LESSONS

News Story Structure

The traditional news story is written in an “inverted pyramid” style. The most important information is placed at the beginning of the story. The information becomes less important as the story progresses. This enables readers to get the main idea of the story in the first few paragraphs. International and national news stories usually follow the inverted pyramid format.

Select several stories that demonstrate the inverted pyramid format. Have students identify the newspaper W’s—who, what, where, when, why and how—in each story. Read one of the stories aloud to students to demonstrate the way information flows in the story.

Have students select news stories with the inverted pyramid format to add to their Writer’s Journals.



Effective Leads

Hard News Lead

The lead is the first one or two paragraphs of a news story. You’ll find the traditional “hard news” lead on straight news stories. The lead contains the essential elements of the story—who, what, where, when, why and how. International and national stories, which are produced by wire services, are usually written with a hard news lead. Sometimes local news stories are written with a “soft news” lead.

Select several news stories that have clear hard news leads. Show the leads to students, using an overhead projector. Read the leads to the students. Have students identify the who, what, when, and where of the story. Sometimes, the why and how of a news story are in the lead. Other times, those questions are answered later in the story.

Provide your students with these steps for writing a good lead:

1. Select a strong subject and an active verb.
2. Add a time reference.
3. Add some descriptive words or phrases that emphasize the importance of the news.
4. Delete unnecessary words.

Soft News Lead

On local stories and feature stories, a news writer may use a “soft” lead. A soft lead “hooks” readers and pulls them into the story. It is usually one sentence long. Generally, the second sentence of the story then contains the who, what, when, where, why and how. Identify three stories with soft leads and share them with students. Have them discuss the way the news writer gets attention. Here are some typical soft leads:

- Plays on words
- Questions
- Quotations
- Description
- Surprise fact
- Anecdote

Have students collect stories with different leads for their Writer’s Journals.

Punctuation

Use newspaper stories to illustrate appropriate use of punctuation. Collect several stories for each punctuation rule you want to discuss with students. News writers and editors are professional writers who use punctuation appropriately.

Have students clip newspaper stories and columns and look for use of commas, semicolons, apostrophes, and single and double quotation marks.

Note: There is one variation in the use of double quotation marks in the newspaper. Newspapers will use single quotes around a direct quotation in a headline instead of double quotes because double quotes clutter the graphic look of the page. Double quotes are used in the body of the story.

Expressive Verbs

Reporters are trained to use precise language. They use strong, expressive verbs in their stories. Collect several stories that use strong verbs. You’ll find powerful verbs in news stories as well as on the sports pages.

Share the stories with your students. Have students suggest synonyms for the verbs in the stories. Have students find stories they like that use precise and effective verbs. Have them highlight or underline the verbs and then add the stories to their Writer’s Journals.

Cutlines and Captions

Students often like to illustrate a piece of writing. They can improve the communication value of their pictures if they add captions. Major newspaper photos are accompanied by a “cutline,” which provides many essential elements of information—who, what, when, where, why and how. The term “cutline” dates from early days of newspapers when illustrations were created

from woodcuts. Today, reporters and editors refer to the information accompanying a photo as a “cut.” In traditional texts, the information accompanying a photo or illustration is called a “caption.” A discussion of the terms “caption” and “cutline” can show students that different professions have their own precise vocabularies.

Have students collect photos from newspapers. Gather them in small groups to discuss the cutlines of their photographs. Newspaper cuts do not generally repeat information already in the news story. A photo can stand on its own with a good cut.

Have students put good examples of cutlines in their Writer’s Journals. Encourage them to add captions to their illustrations.

Information Graphics

Students’ writing can be enhanced with the addition of informational graphics and illustrations. Newspapers contain graphics, such as maps, charts, tables, cut-away views of objects, and flow charts to help readers understand stories. Most newspapers have extensive weather maps, accompanied by columns of statistics which allow readers to find information quickly.

Collect several examples of informational graphics from the newspaper. Discuss the examples with students. Have them identify the purpose of the graphic and identify specific information presented. Have students collect their own examples of newspaper graphics for their Writer’s Journals. Encourage them to add different graphics to their informational writing.

Deconstructing Ads

Newspaper ads are a genre unto themselves. They use graphics and design elements to attract a reader’s attention. They use white space and type fonts as part of their message. Their strength, however, lies in their use of precise language. Because most newspaper ads use few words, those words must be exact. Ad creators design ads following a formula with the acronym “AIDA.” The letters in the acronym stand for:

- Attract attention—usually with graphics, white space and type font.
- Create Interest—with language and art.
- Create Desire to have the product—with effective descriptive language.
- Create a need to Act—with persuasive language.

Select several different newspaper ads to share with students. Have students look for the AIDA elements of the ad that make it effective. Have students collect ads for their Writer’s Journals.

Providing Background and Context

When a major news story breaks, newspapers are quick to provide the information readers need to understand events. For example, if a war breaks out in another country, the newspaper provides maps, descriptions of the population, timelines of events that led to the war, and brief

biographies of key players. If a scientific invention provides a breakthrough, the newspaper will print detailed drawings of the device with all the important parts labeled.

Collect newspaper pages that provide important historical background, informational text and graphics about a specific topic. Have students identify the different ways information has been presented: maps, graphs, schematic drawings, timelines and sidebar stories. Discuss with students the effectiveness of each information format.

Have students collect examples of special focus sections in the newspaper for their Writer's Journals.

Organizational Signals

Newspapers, like other informational texts, use specific words that signal the organizational pattern of the writing. Collect examples of newspaper stories that use signal words. Share your examples with students and help them identify the words that indicate the organization of the writing. Look for these words:

- Listing—to begin with, first, secondly, next, then, finally, most important, also, for instance, for example
- Time sequence—on (date), not long after, now, before, after, when
- Compare/Contrast—however, but, on the other hand, either...or, while, although, similarly, yet
- Cause/Effect—because, since, therefore, consequently, as a result, this led to, so that, nevertheless, thus

Have students collect their own examples of the different organizational styles of news and feature writing. Have them highlight the signal words so they can use their examples as models in future writing.

Concise Classifieds

News writers and editors face the daily challenge of making every word count because newspaper space is a valuable commodity. The most concise language, however, is found in the classified ads. Readers who advertise in the classified section pay by the word or line. You'll find heavily abbreviated words and telegraphic messages.

Select several classified ads from the newspaper. Using an overhead projector, show one to students. Have students identify the abbreviations in the ad and try to determine the meaning for each abbreviation. Help students see the sentence shorthand used in the ads. As a practice in word reduction, have students take a regular ad from the newspaper and reduce it to a classified ad.

The World of Writing

Newspapers are authentic texts that contain a variety of different writing formats. There are many other real-life projects that require talented writers. Here are some unusual formats in which students can demonstrate their writing abilities:

Travel or Tourism Brochure

Use information from the travel or entertainment section of your newspaper to create a travel brochure or a visitor’s brochure for a cultural or historic site.

Trading Cards

Use news and feature stories to gather information about a special person, animal, invention or event. Illustrate your subject on one side of the trading card. List facts on the back of the card. Create a series of cards.

Cereal Boxes

Use news and feature stories to gather information about a special person. Create a cereal box that features that individual. Put illustrations and information on the back of the cereal box. List additional facts on the sides of the box.

Vanity License Plates

Use news and feature stories to gather information about a person, group or topic. Create a series of vanity license plates that use letters and numbers to create messages about your subject.

Menu

Use grocery store ads and the food pages of the newspaper to find foods from the different areas of the food pyramid: grains, fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy, sweets and fats. Use the foods you find to create a menu for a restaurant that promotes healthful eating.

Placemat

Use news and feature stories from your favorite section of the newspaper to gather information about a subject of your choice. Use illustrations and informational text to create an exciting placemat that features your subject.

Retail Store Bag

Use newspaper ads for products you like to design a store bag. Use illustrations or graphic designs and specific words that describe that store’s products or image. You might design a bag for an electronics store, a jewelry store or a clothing store—you decide.

Public Service Radio Spot

Use news stories, editorials and opinion columns to research a current issue. Write a 60-second radio script that promotes your position on the issue.

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Newspaper Modeling for Writing Activities

The newspaper offers excellent examples of professional writing. Newspaper writers must research stories, write effectively and work on a very tight schedule. Use the wire service and local stories as models for students. Remind students that different sections of the newspapers reflect different writing styles. Hard news stories are tightly written with many details. They register at 10th-grade to professional readability levels. Feature stories are more informal and easier to read. Writing sports articles often requires shorter, punchier sentences. There are some differences in usage and style that can confuse students. Many newspaper stories follow the AP (Associated Press) Stylebook. Here are some common differences in presentation and usage:

Element	English Class Conventions	Newspaper Style
Sentence structure	Sentences express complete thoughts. Compound and complex sentences are used carefully.	News writing has long and complex sentences with many pieces of information.
Paragraphs	Paragraphs contain several sentences that address the same topic.	Paragraphs are often one sentence long because newspaper columns are narrow and paragraphs consisting of several sentences are difficult to read. Journalists refer to paragraphs as “grafs.”
Titles	Titles are usually written with all major words capitalized.	Headlines: The first word and all proper nouns are capitalized. Other words are lowercased. This style makes headlines easier to process visually on the newspaper page. Students get confused because newspaper “titles” don’t follow school rules. A headline is not a title. It is a headline, with its own rules.
Punctuation	Standard usage	Standard usage except in the case of quotations marks in headlines. If a direct quote is used in a headline, it is set off by single quotes, not double quotes. The single quotes in headline type are easier to process visually and create less clutter on the page.
Grammar	Standard usage	Standard usage. Some minor situations may vary, such as hyphenation, abbreviations, etc.

Where to Find Writing Elements in the Newspaper

Newspaper Section	Writing Element
News stories	Hard news leads Informational text and graphics Direct quotes Strong verbs High-level vocabulary Inverted pyramid organizational pattern
Feature stories	Soft news leads Descriptive writing Direct quotes Varying organizational patterns Informational graphics How-to writing
Editorial pages	Persuasive writing Informational text Graphics: editorial cartoons
Entertainment pages	Descriptive writing Persuasive writing: reviews Direct quotes
Sports pages	Informational writing Descriptive writing Informational graphics: charts, tables Sequential organizational pattern
Comics pages	Dialogue Informal language Plays on words Time sequence organizational pattern
Weather page	Informational text Informational graphics: maps, charts, tables
Ads	Descriptive language Persuasive language Graphic elements Abbreviations: classified ads
Weekly special focus sections: business, science, arts, etc.	Informational text Informational graphics Interview and direct quotes Varying organizational patterns

Writing Resources

Books

- Atwell, Nancie. (1998). *In the Middle*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton-Cook.
- Calkins, Lucy McCormick. (1994). *The Art of Teaching Writing*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Elbow, Peter. (2000). *Everyone Can Write: Essays Toward a Hopeful Theory of Writing and Teaching Writing*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Fletcher, Ralph & Portalupi, JoAnn. (2001). *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Graves, Donald. (1994). *A Fresh Look at Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Portalupi, JoAnn & Fletcher, Ralph. (2001). *Nonfiction Craft Lessons: Teaching Information Writing K-8*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Tiedt, Iris McClellan. (2002). *Tiger Lilies, Toadstools, and Thunderbolts: Engaging K-8 Students with Poetry*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Wood Ray, Katie. (2001). *The Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts (and They're All Hard Parts)*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Web sites

ABC Teach Network

www.abcteach.com

Free Federal Resources for Educational Excellence

www.ed.gov/free

ProTeacher!

www.proteacher.com/