

How To Write Special Feature Articles

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How To Write Special Feature Articles CONTENTS How To Write Special Feature Articles A Handbook for Reporters, Correspondents and Free-Lance Writers Who Desire to Contribute to Popular Magazines and Magazine Sections of Newspapers By the author of: "Newspaper Writing and Editing," and "Types of News Writing"; Director of the Course in Journalism in the University of Wisconsin PART I I. THE FIELD FOR SPECIAL ARTICLES 3 II. PREPARATION FOR SPECIAL FEATURE WRITING 14 III. FINDING SUBJECTS AND MATERIAL 25 IV. APPEAL AND PURPOSE 39 V. TYPES OF ARTICLES 52 VI. WRITING THE ARTICLE 99 VII. HOW TO BEGIN 131 VIII. STYLE 160 IX. TITLES AND HEADLINES 170 X. PREPARING AND SELLING THE MANUSCRIPT 182 XI. PHOTOGRAPHS AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS 193 PART II AN OUTLINE FOR THE ANALYSIS OF SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLES 201 TEACH CHILDREN LOVE OF ART THROUGH STORY-TELLING 204 (Boston Herald) WHERE GIRLS LEARN TO WIELD SPADE AND HOE 206 (Christian Science Monitor) BOYS IN SEARCH OF JOBS (Boston Transcript) 209 GIRLS AND A CAMP (New York Evening Post) 213 YOUR PORTER (Saturday Evening Post) 218 THE GENTLE ART OF BLOWING BOTTLES (Independent) 233 THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYHOUSE (New York World) 240 THE SINGULAR STORY OF THE MOSQUITO MAN 242 (New York Evening Post) A COUNTY SERVICE STATION (Country Gentleman) 248 GUARDING A CITY'S WATER SUPPLY (Detroit News) 260 THE OCCUPATION AND EXERCISE CURE (Outlook) 264 THE BRENNAN MONO-RAIL CAR (McClure's Magazine) 274 A NEW POLITICAL WEDGE (Everybody's Magazine) 281 THE JOB LADY (Delineator) 293 MARK TWAIN'S FIRST SWEETHEART (Kansas City Star) 299 FOUR MEN OF HUMBLE BIRTH HOLD WORLD DESTINY IN 305 THEIR HANDS (Milwaukee Journal) THE CONFESSIONS OF A COLLEGE PROFESSOR'S WIFE 307 (Saturday Evening Post) A PARADISE FOR A PENNY (Boston Transcript) 326 WANTED: A HOME ASSISTANT (Pictorial Review) 331 SIX YEARS OF TEA ROOMS (New York Sun) 336 BY PARCEL POST (Country Gentleman) 341 SALES WITHOUT SALESMANSHIP (Saturday Evening Post) 349 THE ACCIDENT THAT GAVE US WOOD-PULP PAPER 356 (Munsey's Magazine) CENTENNIAL OF THE FIRST STEAMSHIP TO CROSS THE ATLANTIC 360 (Providence Journal) SEARCHING FOR THE

LOST ATLANTIS 364 (Syndicate Sunday Magazine Section) INDEX 369 Book Excerpt: This book is the result of twelve years' experience in teaching university students to write special feature articles for newspapers and popular magazines. By applying the methods outlined in the following pages, young men and women have been able to prepare articles that have been accepted by many newspaper and magazine editors. The success that these students have achieved leads the author to believe that others who desire to write special articles may be aided by the suggestions given in this book. Although innumerable books on short-story writing have been published, no attempt has hitherto been made to discuss in detail the writing of special feature articles. In the absence of any generally accepted method of approach to the subject, it has been necessary to work out a systematic classification of the various types of articles and of the different kinds of titles, beginnings, and similar details, as well as to supply names by which to identify them. A careful analysis of current practice in the writing of special feature stories and popular magazine articles is the basis of the methods presented. In this analysis an effort has been made to show the application of the principles of composition to the writing of articles. Examples taken from representative newspapers and magazines are freely used to illustrate the methods discussed. To encourage students to analyze typical articles, the second part of the book is devoted to a collection of newspaper and magazine articles of various types, with an outline for the analysis of them. Particular emphasis is placed on methods of popularizing such knowledge as is not available to the general reader. This has been done in the belief that it is important for the average person to know of the progress that is being made in every field of human endeavor, in order that he may, if possible, apply the results to his own affairs. The problem, therefore, is to show aspiring writers how to present discoveries, inventions, new methods, and every significant advance in knowledge, in an accurate and attractive form. To train students to write articles for newspapers and popular magazines may, perhaps, be regarded by some college instructors in composition as an undertaking scarcely worth their while. They would doubtless prefer to encourage their students to write what is commonly called "literature." The fact remains, nevertheless, that the average undergraduate cannot write anything that approximates literature, whereas experience has shown that many students can write acceptable popular articles. Moreover, since the overwhelming majority of Americans read only newspapers and magazines, it is by no means an unimportant task for our universities to train writers to supply the steady demand for well-written articles. The late Walter Hines Page, founder of the *World's Work* and former editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*,

presented the whole situation effectively in an article on "The Writer and the University," when he wrote: The journeymen writers write almost all that almost all Americans read. This is a fact that we love to fool ourselves about. We talk about "literature" and we talk about "hack writers," implying that the reading that we do is of literature. The truth all the while is, we read little else than the writing of the hacks--living hacks, that is, men and women who write for pay. We may hug the notion that our life and thought are not really affected by current literature, that we read the living writers only for utilitarian reasons, and that our real intellectual life is fed by the great dead writers. But hugging this delusion does not change the fact that the intellectual life even of most educated persons, and certainly of the mass of the population, is fed chiefly by the writers of our own time.... Special feature stories and popular magazine articles constitute a type of writing particularly adapted to the ability of the novice, who has developed some facility in writing, but who may not have sufficient maturity or talent to undertake successful short-story writing or other distinctly literary work. Most special articles cannot be regarded as literature. Nevertheless, they afford the young writer an opportunity to develop whatever ability he possesses. Such writing teaches him four things that are invaluable to any one who aspires to do literary work. It trains him to observe what is going on about him, to select what will interest the average reader, to organize material effectively, and to present it attractively. If this book helps the inexperienced writer, whether he is in or out of college, to acquire these four essential qualifications for success, it will have accomplished its purpose.

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