

Analyzing Print and Online News

caption: text with a photograph or an illustration that provides key information or explains the image; it appears next to or below the image

copy: printed words of articles and news stories

headline: title or description of a news story that immediately conveys the story's purpose; it appears above the story in large, bold type

interactive feature: Features, such as quizzes, polls, and animated maps, that require users to interact with the content on a Web site

inverted pyramid style: common organizational pattern for a news article in which the most important information comes first and the least important information comes last

lead: beginning of a news story; it consists of the first sentence or few sentences and conveys the most crucial information by addressing the *5Ws* and *H* questions

link: active text on a Web site that allows users to access additional information

subheading: heading that appears below a primary headline or within the text of an article and gives the main idea of a section of the article

sidebar: short article that appears in relation to a larger article; it often covers the same subject from a different point of view or offers a more detailed focus

Analyzing Print and Online News

Analyzing print and online news reports starts with understanding how they are organized. Use these strategies as your guide.

HERE'S HOW

PRINT

Strategy 1: Read the headline. The headline should be compelling and communicate the main idea of the story. Think about what the headline tells you, and consider how the headline was written. How does the headline grab your attention?

Strategy 2: Skim the subheading. Like headlines, subheadings should give readers the major point of the story and entice you to read on. Note the additional information a subheading might provide. Does the subheading support the headline?

Strategy 3: Be aware of the structure. News stories are organized to report the most important facts first.

- Pay attention to the lead. The lead should immediately address the most important questions.
- Understand where information appears. The first two paragraphs of a news story answer the *5Ws* and *H* questions. Background information and details appear at the end of the story.
- Recognize story length. Stories are written in the inverted pyramid style—the least important details appear at the end of the story—so it can be cut to fit the available space without losing essential information.

Strategy 4: Consider the visuals. The photographs, captions, graphs, charts, and tables that accompany a news story should help you further understand the story.

- **Photographs** grab readers' attention and appeal to their emotions.
- **Captions** describe what is happening in the photographs.
- **Graphs, charts, and tables** convey statistics, facts, and other information.

ONLINE

Strategy 1: Explore the links. Most news stories on Web sites are arranged like stories in newspapers. However, online articles have links that connect to other parts of the site or different Web sites. Links offer updated information and additional articles on the subject. Explore links to see how they elaborate on the main story.

Strategy 2: Examine the interactive features. Web sites allow for animation, video footage, interviews, and sound bites. These features make a news story more interesting and provide additional information on a subject. See what else you can learn by exploring the interactive features.

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Directions: News stories are written in the inverted pyramid style so that the most important information appears in the headline, the subheading, and the first few paragraphs. Read the story below and answer the questions that follow.

JURGENSEN WINS MAYORAL ELECTION Cain Concedes but Remains Concerned

TOWN HALL—Mayoral incumbent Al Jurgensen gave his victory speech last night shortly after his opponent, Jim Cain, conceded defeat. Cain's announcement was broadcast on local channels from his campaign headquarters. At the time of his announcement, the final tally was unofficial.

Early this morning, official numbers confirmed the victory. Jurgensen captured 65 percent of the vote; Cain, 30 percent; and other candidates, 5 percent.

Voter turnout was 45 percent, a relatively high turnout for a local election. The major issues of the campaign were education, crime, land use, and taxation, all of which are perennial topics of debate in Center City.

Jurgensen summed up his positions in his acceptance speech. "This city is a great city," he said. "I am honored

to serve as your mayor again. My first priority will be to act on my campaign promises, delivering you better schools, safer streets, more green spaces, and a balanced budget."

Cain was respectful of his opponent's position; however, he continues to have concerns. "I agree with the mayor that education, safety, and green spaces are all good things," he said. "But at what price? As I continue to serve on the City Council, I will cooperate with the mayor, but I will also try to protect the people of Center City from shouldering an undue fiscal burden."

Cain's remarks reflect the feelings of many citizens. A poll taken during the election indicated that while 43 percent of voters consider education the most important issue in local politics, 36 percent are most concerned about their tax burden. Twelve percent are most concerned about crime, 6 percent about land use, and 3 percent about other issues.

1. Does the headline capture the most important information? Explain. _____

2. What does the subheading tell you about the story? Does it make you want to continue reading? Explain. _____

3. Are all of the essential questions answered in the lead? If not, what questions are not answered? Are they answered in the next paragraph? _____

4. Is this story written in the inverted pyramid style? Explain. _____

5. Imagine that your editor tells you this story is too long and needs to be cut. Where would you cut information? Why? _____

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Directions: Once reporters obtain the facts of a breaking story, their first job is to determine the most essential pieces of information. They do that by answering the *5Ws* and *H* questions. Then they create a headline and a lead that will best convey that information and grab the reader's interest.

Below are facts about a fire at a local power plant. With a group, decide which information is the most important, and use it to create a lead and headline. Then decide which other information you would include in the story. Remember, you can't use it all. Finally, suggest a visual to accompany the story.

- Fire at local power plant.
- Blackout across town.
- Plant shuts down for six hours.
- Source unknown.
- Arson not ruled out.
- Three workers critically injured.
- Ten others suffer smoke inhalation.
- Hospitals rely on gas generators.
- Blackout began at 6:37 P.M.
- Restaurants lose thousands of dollars.
- Mayor Al Jurgensen and Giorgio Batta, CEO of the power plant, promise to increase fire safety at the plant.
- "Our prayers go out to the families of the injured men and women. We are working with the chief fire inspector and doing everything we can to find the source of the fire," said Batta. "Our goal is never to let this type of catastrophe happen again."

1. Headline: _____

2. Subheading: _____

3. Additional information for story: _____

4. Visual: _____