**LESSON**

# 8

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY COPYMASTER

## Understanding the Basics of News Reporting

Media 8

**above the fold:** area on the top half of the front page of a newspaper; this is the area readers are most likely to see, so editors typically feature the most important stories of the day in that area

**commentary and opinions:** essays and perspectives by experts, professionals, and media personalities

**feature article:** main article on the front page of a newspaper or the cover story in a magazine

**hard news:** fact-based accounts of current events; hard-news stories are more urgent and serious than soft news, and they offer little information about real people or emotions

**interview:** conversation in which the reporter asks questions and the person being interviewed responds

**newsworthiness:** importance of an event or action that makes it worthy of media reporting; criteria for newsworthiness include **timeliness, widespread impact, proximity, human interest, uniqueness,** and **compelling footage**

**soft news:** stories about real people and events that are less current or urgent than hard news but appeal to readers’ emotions; often found in newspapers, on newscasts, in magazines, and on tabloid TV shows

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**LESSON**

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STUDENT LESSON SUMMARY COPYMASTER

## Understanding the Basics of News Reporting

Media 8

By understanding the basics of news reports, you can analyze why some stories are covered and how reporting decisions affect what you learn about the world.

**HERE’S HOW**

**Strategy 1: Consider the type of news.** Reporters, editors, and news directors don’t report every type of news story in the same way. Viewers and readers receive different information based on the type of news the story is. The type of news also affects when

and where viewers and readers receive it.

* Recognize that **hard news** stories are fact-based and reported in an objective, straightforward manner. They usually appear on the front page of a newspaper or lead a newscast. Typically, hard news stories receive more time and space.
* Understand the purpose of **soft news.** Stories about real people capture readers’ attention and appeal to their emotions. Soft news stories often have more quotations, details, and descriptions.
* Remember that **commentaries** and **opinion articles,** such as editorials and movie reviews, only reflect the viewpoints and ideas of the author.

**Strategy 2: Be aware of how news is chosen.** A newspaper and a newscast can feature only a limited number of the day’s events. Editors and news directors must choose which stories to feature, where and when to feature them, and how much time and space to devote to each story. Editors and news directors use the following criteria to help them determine a story’s newsworthiness.

* **Timeliness:** When did the event occur? Hours earlier or weeks ago? Current or breaking stories usually receive the most prominent coverage.
* **Widespread Impact:** Is the story relevant to the world? The country? Your city or town? The more people the information potentially affects, the more newsworthy the story is.

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* **Proximity:** Where is the story taking place? People pay attention to a story that’s unfolding where they live.
* **Human Interest:** Will the story appeal to readers’ or viewers’ emotions? Can they relate to the story?
* **Uniqueness:** Is the story unusual or special? Stories that are different often grab people’s attention and keep them interested.
* **Compelling Footage:** Is the footage gripping? Are the sources exclusive? A story may get more play if the news station or newspaper has shocking or exclusive footage.

Name Date

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Story** | **Would you air the story? When?** | **Explain your decision.** |
| President Delivers  Commencement Speech  at Local College (Ten thousand people attended the ceremony; station has video footage of the speech.) |  |  |
| Woman Robbed at Gunpoint Outside Area Grocery Store (This incident is the fifth grocery-store robbery in the past month; station has a sound bite from the victim.) |  |  |
| Annual Multiple Sclerosis Walkathon Draws a Record Number of Participants (Station has interviews with three participants and the mayor, as well as video footage of participants crossing the finish line.) |  |  |
| State Senator Dies in Plane Crash (Station has exclusive footage of the plane crash and wreckage.) |  |  |
| California Earthquake (Small-scale earthquake  happened this morning. Station has sound bites from victims and the governor of California.) |  |  |

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PRACTICE WORKSHEET A COPYMASTER

## Understanding the Basics of

**News Reporting**

**Directions:** Imagine you are a newscast director at a news station. The chart shows a list

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of the stories your reporters have submitted. You have time to air only three of them, once

weather, sports, and commercials are factored in. Which stories should you air? Which one

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would you slot as your lead story?

Name Date

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Local Paper Stories: | Newsworthiness (1 to 5) | Agree or Disagree? Why? |
| **1.** |  |  |
| **2.** |  |  |
| **3.** |  |  |
| **4.** |  |  |
| National Paper Stories: | Newsworthiness (1 to 5) | Agree or Disagree? Why? |
| **1.** |  |  |
| **2.** |  |  |
| **3.** |  |  |
| **4.** |  |  |
| Comparison: | | |

**LESSON**

# 8

PRACTICE WORKSHEET B COPYMASTER

## Understanding the Basics of

**News Reporting**

**Directions:** Obtain the front pages of a local newspaper and a national newspaper from the

Media 8

same day. Read the headlines and stories from each paper. Use the chart below to record

the names of the paper and the stories that appear on the front page of each one. Rate

each story’s newsworthiness and state whether or not you agree with the editor’s decision

to run it on the front page and why. Finally, compare the news from the each paper. How

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are the stories different?