

# Writing Feature Stories

No. 46 in the Writing Center Handout Series

*A feature story is the highlight of a newspaper or magazine. It presents the stories behind the news and treats its subjects in depth. A feature is a research paper written for a popular audience. In a feature, the writer has the opportunity to walk around a subject and view it from all sides. A feature should also represent an original take on the subject matter that comes about because the writer puts together the information gleaned from all kinds of sources in a unique and compelling manner.*

## A feature story

- is the news behind the news;
- is longer than most news stories;
- is well researched, complex;
- is connected to current events (Why this? Why now?);
- covers the subject in depth, includes background, brings us up to date;
- includes quotations from principle characters, experts, a variety of sources;
- may use photographs, charts, graphs, sidebars or boxes, drawings, diagrams, etc.;
- takes time to interest us, makes us see the complexity of the story;
- brings life and color to the subject

## Varieties of the feature story and examples

- News behind the news (Who are the Taliban? How did they attain power?)
- Travel article (hiking the Appalachian trail)
- Profile (extended interview)
  - What makes Queen Latifah tick?
  - Issue-related profile (President Mary Brown Bullock on women in science and ASC's new science building)
- Soft news background story (how school vouchers are working in Ohio)
- Entertainment feature (the making of the film *Adaptation*)
- Science story (Ron Calabrese's recent work on the leech heartbeat)
- Business feature (Microsoft is changing its corporate structure)

## A feature story must include

- Research, background, depth, information from different kinds of sources;
- Quotations, a variety of perspectives, views of participants and experts;
- Connection to current events or some other compelling answer to Why This? Why Now?

For more information on writing Feature Stories, see  
*Professional Feature Writing* (3rd ed), Bruce Garrison  
*Writing Features and Interviews* (2nd ed), Christine Hall  
<http://www.ramiroburr.com/FeatureWriting.htm>



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