

COLLEGE GUILD
PO Box 696, Brunswick ME 04011

CREATIVE LANGUAGE

Unit 2 of 6

Non-Fiction

Journalism

Now let's put all those words from Unit 1 to use. This course will be covering lots of different writing formats, but they will be divided into three categories – fiction, non-fiction and poetry. The first two are PROSE, the ordinary form of spoken or written language.

NON-FICTION covers lots of kinds of writing (biographies, news, essays, letters and speeches, for example), but all are based on true facts.

1) Explain why creativity is important when writing about facts.

Reporters are writers whose work is read all over the country every day. They write NEWS for newspapers, radio, TV, magazines and Internet sites. Good news reporters try to write unbiased articles. Their readers shouldn't even know what their opinions are. The first article on page 4 is written as NEWS, which should mean it's purely factual.

2) What kind of conflicts might journalists have when they have to write objective news?

A good news report covers the five "W's" – when, what, who, where and why. The purpose is to maximize the public's understanding of the event or issue being covered. (In this course, creativity is what's most important, so when you have to write "news", it's OK to make it up – just write in the style of a newspaper reporter.)

Here are 12 topics:

weather	substance abuse	teenagers	immigration
Mt. Everest	Congress	farming	pro sports
health care	UFO's	auto accidents	zoos

3) Pick one of these subjects for a news story. What are the five W's in your story going to be?

4) What is your story's headline, one that will get a reader's attention, but be factual too?

5) Write a "late breaking" news article, the kind you would see on the front page of a paper, or the lead story on the TV news.

Another kind of report you can find in a newspaper is a REVIEW of a book, movie, restaurant, etc. [For example, a restaurant review could include the quality of the food, the variety of the menu, speed and friendliness of service, atmosphere, prices, whether reservations are taken, and what makes the restaurant stand out from others.] Like news, it should also report facts, but end up giving a personal opinion and recommendation. Just the headline alone can tell you how the reporter feels.

6) Write a review as if you were a professional newspaper reviewer, including a headline.

(As with news, you can write about a real movie/book/restaurant or you can make one up.)

In EDITORIALS and ESSAYS, writers use facts to win readers over to their own points of view. You may have experienced that personally. During a trial, opposing sides try to present the most convincing argument possible with the same set of "facts", but only one verdict is returned. The editorial on page 3 is built around facts, but its purpose is to convince, not just inform.

A hint: a good way to lose credibility and turn people off is to exaggerate. No matter how often an injustice happens, not EVERY guard/judge/white person/black person/gay person/lawyer fits into one category. Stereotyping like that is the same as saying ALL prisoners are scum. When you use stereotypes, readers are likely to assume you exaggerate about everything.

A common recommendation for an essay is to have: a short paragraph introducing your subject, one on the issue you'll be discussing, a section explaining and justifying your position, ideas for dealing with the issue, and a closing paragraph tying it all together.

Here are some political/social issues.

affirmative action	reducing environmental protections to save jobs	Congress
the death penalty	increased funding for the space program	euthanasia
the Supreme Court	prisoners wearing their own clothes	welfare
global warming	increasing taxes to improve education	health care

You can argue for or against any aspect of these issues.

7) On a piece of paper, make two columns. On one side, list 3 facts that show your opinion is right. On the other side, list 3 facts someone with the opposite view would use.

To present your view convincingly, you need to know your opponent's and be able to explain why it's wrong. *Example:*

If someone argued that former President Obama is not an American, you could quote the Governor of Hawaii who has seen his Hawaiian birth certificate.]

8) Write an essay to convince your readers that your opinion is the right one.

9) Which kind of journalism (news, review or essay) did you like best? Why?

The LA Times: “Climate change is behind the global heat wave. Why won’t the media say it?”

By Leah C. Stokes (Assistant Professor of Environmental Politics at UC Santa Barbara) | July 15, 2018

Last week’s heat wave brought record temperatures to Southern California. Hot winds blew fire into my community in Santa Barbara County, ripping through a dozen homes and threatening hundreds more.

I tuned into the local news channel, where reporters reminded viewers that we had just finished a record-breaking fire season. They strained to list all the fires we’d had over the past decade. There were too many to recall.

Fires are happening a lot more often across California. You can’t accurately call it a fire “season” anymore. The season is year-round.

But journalists who report on the fires or heat waves rarely acknowledge this reality. Last week, the local newscasters in my area never did, even though it has a very familiar name: climate change.

The same is true of the media at large. Although it reports on each fresh disaster — every fire, every hurricane, every flood — it tends to stop short of linking extreme weather events to global warming, as though the subject were the exclusive province of reporters on the climate beat.

As a result, we’re missing what is arguably the biggest story of all: The climate we knew is no more. We’ve already warmed the planet, whether we deny it or not.

It’s not hard to spot global warming in the news. If you’re looking, its marks are everywhere. Right now, southern Japan is flooded. Two months’ worth of rain fell in five days, a day’s worth in an hour. Mudslides followed. More than 200 are dead, more are missing, millions are displaced.

But to get the larger story about extreme weather events, you have to read between the headlines. There is no sound justification for this. Not anymore. Scientists have been churning out evidence of human-caused climate change for more than a century. Some are figuring out exactly how much to blame global warming for any given weather event. They’re getting really good at it.

We can now link many recent disasters and weather events to climate change. We know, for instance, that more than three-quarters of moderate heat waves are connected to warming. We also know that, were it not for climate change, fires in the West would have burned half as much land since the 1980s. Scientists have been documenting the increase in extreme rain events in Japan since the early 1990s.

The science is clear. Journalists need to start using it.

There are reasons they haven’t. Reporters are trained to distinguish weather from climate. They are also conditioned to avoid the appearance of political bias, and a decades-long campaign to sow doubt about global warming has cast a partisan aura on the facts.

But with a bit of nuance, journalists can carefully identify the pattern. Any weather event has multiple causes. More and more, climate change is one of them, and its share of blame is growing.

The public is not entirely in the dark. In fact, research by Peter D. Howe, a geographer at Utah State University, shows that 60% of people in 89 countries correctly perceive that temperatures where they live have warmed over time. According to a study by the political scientists Matto Mildenberger and Dustin Tingley, most Americans underestimate how many people share their belief that climate change is real. Most of us know this is not a drill, and most of us want our government to do more.

We all need to do more. Countries around the world need to go beyond the commitments made in Paris. We need more wind and solar energy. We need states to keep nuclear plants open when they are safe, because they already produce clean energy. We need to stop rolling back renewable energy laws, as my research has documented in Ohio, Texas and Arizona.

But we won't do any of this until we can see what's happening. Journalists play a critical role in helping the public to make these connections. They need to start telling the whole story.

USA Today: "3,500 structures at risk as wildfire rages near Yosemite National Park and temperatures soar"

By Trevor Hughes | July 23, 2018

Firefighters near Yosemite National Park are racing to contain the deadly Ferguson Fire as hotter temperatures raise the danger for thousands of homes potentially in its path.

Six firefighters have been injured and one killed battling the 51-square-mile fire in rugged terrain near the national park's west side. Evacuation orders are in place for the small communities dotted through the area, and more residents are on evacuation alert.

Yosemite remains open, but one of its scenic routes, Glacier Point Road, was closed to the public so firefighters could get through. Nearly 3,500 structures – homes, stores, vacation lodges and power lines – are listed as threatened. Temperatures are expected to hit nearly 100 degrees every day this week.

"Weather forecasts are calling for hotter and drier air throughout the week as conditions align for critical and extreme fire weather in the coming days," fire managers said in an update early Monday. "The fire is 13 percent contained and one non-residential structure has been reported destroyed but dozens more have been saved because of the efforts of crews throughout the fire area."

Firefighting airplanes and helicopters have been pounding the fire with retardant and water drops, and more than 3,000 firefighters were on the ground.

Experts say it's possible the fire could spread far enough north to reach the burn scar left by the 2013 Rim Fire, which scorched more than 400 square miles. The Rim Fire, one of California's largest, burned into portions of the national park and left behind terrain that is now far less likely to burn intensely, which gives firefighters a better chance to control the flames.

The terrain now burning is so rugged it took firefighters several days to recover the body of firefighter Braden Varney, 36, a married father of two who was killed when his bulldozer rolled over July 14.

Letters

In this age of e-mail and telephones, writing a letter seems more and more outdated – but not for prisoners. You are one group who quickly learns how much it means to receive a letter. The letters you write back can be equally meaningful. It is not only the time taken and the effort to write and mail a letter that makes each one a unique gift, but the thoughtfulness invested in finding the right words to share. (Please sign only your first name in these assignments.)

A letter may be a better way to communicate than a face-to-face discussion if the person you want to talk to could get defensive or angry.

10) Write a letter to your teenage nephew who is suddenly cutting school and lying to his parents.

Sometimes letters are written to support and comfort during difficult times. Unfortunately, not knowing what to say keeps some friends from writing at all.

11) Write a sympathy note to your 74 year old neighbor whose husband of 50 years has just died.

There is no shortage of letters written to advice columnists like Dear Abby. People are always asking for and giving other people advice on how to run their lives. If "Dear Abby" were around in other centuries, do you suppose she got letters like this....?

From the cave man era:

Dear Abby,

My husband is a good provider (we have a freezer full of mammoth) and barbecues a terrific steak. But, Abby, I have a confession -- I think saber-toothed tigers are really cute (except the one that ate our friend in the next cave) and I want to tell my husband to stop killing them. Do you think it would work if I served a nice salad instead?

Saber-Tooth Sally

12) Write a letter to Dear Abby from a person living in another time, (before 1960).

13) How would Abby reply?

One CG student takes us back in history with this idea:

14) Write a letter to an historical figure (from over 100 years ago).

15) Write a reply to your #14 letter.

Some letters are sent to hundreds, even hundreds of thousands of total strangers. One purpose is to advertise a product. Here is a CG student's idea to get you thinking about product promotion.

16) Make up an exciting new product that uses your own (first) name.

Example: Mike's Magnificent Motorcycles!

17) Write a marketing letter to convince the recipients to buy your product.

Another kind of letter reaching huge numbers of strangers is that sent by people running for political office. Let's say that's YOU, (and feel free to make up a position to campaign for).

18) What office are you running for, and what is the major issue you are running on?

19) Write a campaign letter to convince recipients to vote for you.

Now turn yourself into a reporter who is part of the press corps following this candidate around.

20) Write an editorial stating your opinion of the candidate and the issues s/he is running on.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes