Human Interest Story

The purpose of a human interest feature is to engage readers emotionally. Human interest is a very broad feature category. Basically, any feature topic that can interest people is considered a form of human interest feature.

Human interest features are written to inform, entertain or involve readers emotionally. Immediacy, in human interest features, is replaced by reader interest.

Structure

The most common feature structures are the BME (beginning, middle and end) and the Hourglass.

BME

The BME is best suited to stories that are chronological or narrative. In this style, the writer begins his story, narrates the events in a time-order sequence, then presents or reinforces the point in the conclusion.

A BME uses one of the seven feature endings:

- A SUMMARY ending summarizes the points made in the story. It usually keys on impact, effects or outcome.
- A TIE-BACK ending plants a fact, idea or scene in the lead and completes it at the end.
- A WRAP-UP ending ties up loose ends, answers questions or solves problems posed in the lead.
- A CLIMAX ending provides a natural ending to a story told in chronological order.
- An UNENDING ending leaves a key question unanswered. It is used to stimulate reader thinking -- to get the reader involved with the situation posed in the story.
- A STINGER ending is a surprise ending designed to jolt the reader.
- A COMBINATION ending combines two or more of the above.

Hourglass

When a story is made up mostly of facts and information, with little or no action, hourglass is the best structure. (EXAMPLE: A story about someone's hobby, a unit feature, seasonal stories.)

The hourglass body should be organized, using one of the following patterns:

- TOPICALLY -- the most common organization pattern and related topic-by-topic.
- SPATIALLY -- Information is explained according to physical arrangement -- left to right, top to bottom, front to back.
- GENERAL TO SPECIFIC -- Especially good when introducing the reader to something new or technical. General background information is written so the reader can easily understand.
- FUNCTIONALLY -- Tells what something does and relates it to a larger function.
- DESCENDING ORDER OF IMPORTANCE -- Used most often with feature stories that have a strong news peg.
- In an hourglass ending, the writer usually can go back to the reason the story was written.