

***Primary Writing:
A Three-Part Series***

**Seminar 3
Teacher's Packet**

A KET professional development workshop for educators approved for Professional Development Training by the Kentucky Department of Education.

© Kentucky Educational Television, 1997

Primary Writing

Seminar 3

Overview of the Seminar

Targeted Audience: Primary teachers

The focus of the third seminar in *Primary Writing* is the feature article. Using classroom examples from upper and lower primary classes at Central City Elementary, host Starr Lewis and presenter Donna Vincent discuss a variety of strategies and approaches for teaching feature article writing to the youngest students.

About This Teacher Packet

In addition to the overview of the series, this packet includes a summary of Seminar 3, an agenda for the program, brief biographies of the host and presenters, and specific materials related to seminar content. You'll find more details in the table of contents on page 4.

Series Format

Each 90-minute program in the *Primary Writing* series includes classroom footage of students and teachers engaged in the writing process. Materials and information needed for participation in the seminars are provided in the videotape and/or included in the teacher packets.

Please note: The blackline masters for Donna Vincent's train analogy, introduced in Seminar 1, may be used again for Seminar 3. These masters are posted on the Web as a separate appendix for this series.

If you need to download a copy of these materials from the Web, you may find that it takes longer than most KET documents to download and/or print. Should this prove impractical for you, call KET professional development at 1-800-432-0951, and we'll mail you a copy of the appendix.

Professional Development Credit

Stage of Participant Development: Practice/Application

The Kentucky Department of Education has approved all KET Star Channels Seminars for professional development credit if schools or districts choose to include them in their professional development plans. Districts or schools may choose to include preparation and/or follow-up time as part of professional development. For example, if a teacher participates in one 90-minute program and spends an additional 30 minutes in related activities, he or she could be awarded a total of two hours professional development credit.

Individual teachers who wish to use these videotapes for professional development credit should check with their school professional development chair or with their district professional development coordinator.

Professional development can also be used to satisfy requirements for the fifth year program. Contact your local university or the Division of Teacher Education and Certification at 502-564-4606 for more information.

Packet Contents

• Seminar Presenters	5
• Seminar Agenda	6
• Choosing the Right Question for the Feature Article	7
• Types of Leads	8
• SPAM (Situation-Purpose-Audience-Mode)	9
• “The Do’s and Don’ts of Magazine Article Writing” by Donald Murray	10

About the Seminar Presenters

For the third seminar in the series, host **Starr Lewis**, director of the Kentucky Writing Program, and presenter **Donna Vincent**, district-wide writing consultant for Muhlenberg County Schools, are joined (via videotape) by three teachers from Central City Elementary—**Debbie Brown, Vickie Hunter, and Lori Tatum**. Both Debbie and Lori teach upper primary students at Central City while Vickie is in her fifth year as a K-1 primary teacher.

Seminar Agenda

Welcome and overview of seminar

Starr Lewis, Host and Donna
Vincent, Presenter

Definition of feature article

Samples of available children’s magazines

Using the train medley in music class (upper primary)

Humanities connection and train analogy

Collaborative ressearch in the lower primary

Writing the feature article in the upper primary

SPAM—Situation-Purpose-Audience-Mode

Identifying leads and presenting skills lessons in the upper primary

Open response in the lower primary

Wrap-up discussion

Donna Vincent and Starr
Lewis

Concluding remarks

Starr Lewis

Materials Needed for Participation in the Seminar

Please bring the following items with you to the seminar:

- Your copy of this packet
- Pencil
- Paper
- Packets & materials from Seminars 1 & 2

Choosing the Right Question for the Feature Article

by Donna Vincent

As you select your questions for your feature articles, consider these things:

- ✓ Is it a higher level question, a how or why question?
- ✓ Is it related to a content area?
- ✓ Is the answer to be found?
- ✓ Is the answer big enough to write about?
- ✓ Do I have an opinion about the answer?
- ✓ Is the answer exciting/surprising for my reader and me?
- ✓ If I have more than one question, are my questions closely related so that I am still focused?

Some possible questions to consider:

- ✓ Which animals have body parts that balloon out and why do they do that?
- ✓ Which animals build their houses in interesting ways, and how do they build them? Why are they the way they are?
- ✓ Why and how do flying fish fly?
- ✓ What games do some wild animals play and why do they play?
- ✓ How do some animals stock up for winter?
- ✓ How do hummingbirds fly? How does their flying differ from other birds?
- ✓ Why do stars twinkle?
- ✓ What does fur do for mammals?
- ✓ Where does frost come from?
- ✓ Where does the wind come from?
- ✓ How does a thunderstorm form?
- ✓ What do birds have in common?
- ✓ How do _____ communicate?
- ✓ How do _____ protect themselves?
- ✓ How are _____ adapted to their environment?
- ✓ How did some animals get their unusual names?
- ✓ Why do we use soap to wash things?
- ✓ How do foxes use their tails?
- ✓ How and why do spiders build their webs and why don't they get stuck in them?
- ✓ Why do bobcats have fur on the tips of their ears?
- ✓ Why do bush babies have such large eyes and ears?
- ✓ What can a bird's legs, feet, and beak tell you?

Types of Leads

- **question**
- **story or anecdote**
- **quotation**
- **fact or statistic**
- **command**
- **description**
- **comparison**
- **dialogue**
- **list**
- **riddle**
- **onomatopoeia**
- **situation**

SPAM

- Situation:** What is happening which creates a need to communicate with others
- Purpose:** The reason for communicating
- Audience:** The person or group being addressed
- Mode:** The kind of communication used—determines the format

Do's and Don'ts of Magazine Article Writing

by Donald M. Murray

A Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist, **Donald M. Murray** writes a popular weekly column, "Over Sixty," for *The Boston Globe*, and is the author of several widely used books on the craft of writing: *The Craft of Revision* (Harcourt, Brace); *A Writer Teaches Writing* (Houghton Mifflin); and *Writing for Your Readers* (Globe Pequot Press), among others. He is now Professor Emeritus of English at the University of New Hampshire. Several earlier articles by Mr. Murray have appeared in *The Writer*, most recently, "The Craft of Telling," in the June 1994 issue.

Editor's note: This article first appeared in *The Writer*, Volume 109, Number 3, March 1996, on pages 9-10 and 44. It is reproduced with permission of the author.

There are exceptions to every rule in writing: The best writing often occurs when the experienced writer cuts across the grain of tradition. Most of us, however, have to know the "rules" and traditions to bend or break them. Here are some of the basics of magazine article writing that should be mastered *before* you bend them or break them.

- *Point of view*

Your magazine article should have a strong point of view, express a vigorous opinion, important news, a revelation, an argument, an edge that answers the readers' questions: "Why should I bother to read this?" In writing magazine articles—unlike writing news stories—you shouldn't try to be on all sides of the subject, but should make clear to the reader what side you're on. Everything in your article should reflect that view.

- *The lead*

A good magazine article doesn't need an introduction, so don't begin with the background of your subject, how you happened to get interested in it, why the reader should read it, or how you obtained the basic information for it. Begin your article with a conflict that produces tension, often revealed by including a brief example or anecdote and problem that will be resolved at the end. It's a good rule to start as near the end as possible and then plunge your reader into the central tension. When you've involved your reader in this way, weave in background facts or information as you think the reader needs it to understand the purpose and point of your piece.

- *Authority*

Early in your article, you should—briefly—establish your authority by revealing your connection with the theme of your article, including some specific, accurate information that will persuade your reader that you know your subject and have the right to be heard and trusted. A calm, confident voice will help you achieve this and will make the connection with the readers so they will say, "Yes, that's the way it is."

- *Voice*

The voice of your article should be conversational: It's not a lecture, a sermon, or an attack, but rather, the voice of a friend discussing an issue you want to share with the readers. The intensity and tone of your voice is tuned to the subject and to your readers.

- *Selection and development*

Don't include all the facts you've gathered in the course of your research, but make a careful—and ruthless—selection of details that will fulfill the promise of your lead. Then develop your lead fully so your readers will recognize its significance. You can't get away with writing "it was a disturbing experience," but must explain in detail what disturbed you, how and why and what it means in the context of your article. You have to do more than summarize: You must show why and how it was disturbing and what is the importance of the shock or surprise.

- *Exposition and pace*

Keep readers moving forward so they won't lose interest, but slow the pace when you feel that the readers need time to absorb

and reflect on what has been written. You can achieve this variety of pace by weaving necessary exposition into the text, tucking factual sentences into your paragraphs. But don't ladle the facts or information you think necessary onto the readers in huge servings; dole it out in spoon-sized portions.

- *Sequence*

Through your narrative, take your reader on a journey from lead to ending. The sequence or order of your narrative depends on your knowing how to make the article most effective. This will not necessarily follow the order in which you experienced the events or story you are relating. Magazine articles distort time for effect. If you are using chronological order, you should not record what you say evenly—sixty minutes to the hour, twenty-four hours to the day. Sometimes you have to recount the events of a war, for example, describing weeks of boredom, punctuated by seconds of terror. As an article writer, you should skip over the boredom—unless *that* is the subject—and develop and expand the moments of terror.

- *Transitions*

Use as few transitions as possible. Give readers the information you think they need when you think they need to know it. Anticipate and answer the readers' questions when you feel they would be raised. I used to write articles a paragraph to a page, and later rearrange them in the order the reader would need to know them. I never had to write a transition like, "Meanwhile, back at the ranch . . ."

- *Faces*

Readers like to read about people who express ideas, theories, concepts, issues. They walk on the page, talk, confront each other, engage in dialogue; they reveal themselves through physical actions—not "he was fat," but "the floor sagged when he stepped into the room," and vocally through direct quotes: Not, "he talked about the problems of school funding," but, "I was learned by chalk and blackboard. I don't need no computer to help my kid graduate from high school."

Sources

Use live as well as written sources. When you bring those authorities on the page, they speak directly to your readers and help convince them of the validity of your article's theme.

- *Endings*

Don't end your article with a formal conclusion that tells readers what you've said, what the article means and how they should react. It's too late at this point to explain the significance of your article, too late to command readers to think or feel a particular way. The most effective ending gives readers information—a quotation, a statistic, a fact, a scene, an anecdote—that will make them think and feel.