

Let Me Help You

# Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write  
Articles*

*Lesson 5*

**CONVERSATIONAL  
CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE  
CHRONOLOGICAL REVERSE  
SLICE OF LIFE**

By Professor Dick Bohrer, M.Sc., M.A.

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24 Ways to  
**Sell Your Homework:**  
Articles

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# CONVERSATIONAL

**One of the most difficult of all feature stories to write is one that is only conversation.**

“Come on!” you say. “Anyone can write con—”

Not true. It’s very difficult to write in the real language of the people. You’ve got to get the words right, the inflection right, the rhythm right. You’ve got to have an ear for emphasis, slang, colloquialisms and sentence structure.

You’ve got to listen closely to “people-talk.” We interrupt one another. We pick up what someone else is saying and finish his sentence for him. We flit from topic to topic like a drunken fly.

As you try to write conversation, let inflection guide which words you’ll use. People raise their voice when they want to emphasize something, when they whine, when they’re indignant. We do it without thinking. You, writer, have got to listen for it and learn how to put it down on paper. If you’re tone deaf, you’ll have a real problem getting your conversation to sound natural.

Read this sentence aloud: **“Learn how to put it down on paper.”** Your voice rose when you said the first syllable of “paper.” It has a vowel in it that says its name: “Pay.”

Often—not always—we will inflect

on long vowels. We also inflect when we get short vowels near the liquid consonants--m, n, r and l.

There’s a science here. When a speaker is angry or depressed, he will often emphasize the first syllable of his sentence: **“HOW did I ever get INTO this mess? NObody cares about ME!”**

And when he’s happy, he’ll take a running jump before he emphasizes:

**“I’m so happy I MET YOU. Why, I’m just THRILLED!”**

It’s that kind of listening that you have to learn to do.

Now, what kind of feature story do you use conversation on? A confrontation is good, but you’ve got to limit it to two people or you can get the reader and yourself all mixed up as to who is talking next—especially if you drop any of the tags (he said, she said).

Confrontations are full of surprises. The reader can’t predict who will say what and that’s the strength of this style.

Begin anywhere except at the beginning.

A **“Hello there.”**

**“Yes?”**

**“I wonder if you could fix—”** kind of beginning is too slow.

Start with **“Why can’t you fix this? I just bought it last—”**

Start with **“Don’t you ever creep up on me again! You know I can’t stand people who—”**

Start with **“What do you mean take driving lessons? I’ve been driving since—”**

Start with **“Mother! You’re not going out looking like that!”**

En route through the article, shun adverbs. Don’t tell HOW a person says something. Adverbs tell editors you’re an amateur. Don’t say, **“she said poutingly”** or **“he said angrily.”** Let the verb in the conversational sentence tell how she said it. Let her pout and let him shout. That’s brisk writing.

Don’t invert the tag and write **“said Charlie”** or **“whispered Angie.”** Natural English puts the subject before the verb. Keep it that way. Drop the tag entirely when your people get excited.

Remember to make each change in speaker a new paragraph. That way the reader knows someone else is talking.

Sometimes you need to break the flow of conversation with a declarative sentence. This is a good way to let us know what is going on at the same time as the speaking. It’s the “business” that stage people speak of. It tells what the person is doing with his hands. It describes the body language.

**“Oh?” She leaned forward and raised one eyebrow. “You didn’t tell me that.”**

Use the declarative sentence to tell deliberate action.

**“And I can tell you one more thing . . .” He went over to the mantelpiece and snatched a china bowl. “I’m not going**

**to let your father’s antiques come between you and me.”**

Use the declarative sentence to describe emotional action.

**“Oh, Joey.” She put her face in her hands and began weeping. “How—how could you?”**

Make sure the conversation keeps the story moving. Don’t let it be trivial.

But where do you end your article?

When someone scores a point. When someone leaves the room. When someone gives up in despair. When someone wins.

Pick two people out of this story. Write their conversation. Choose the mother and her mother or the mother and her boy. Choose the lawyer and the superintendent or the mother and one of those.

We want to see indignation, argument, outrage, and defense.

Choose words and word rhythms to convey tone.

Use the dash to emphasize a word: **“You’re not talking about—my—Ryan, are you?”**

Use interruptions and quick changes.

Let them get mad!

**Judge won’t rule on boy AIDS victim’s case**

**INDIANAPOLIS (AP) – A federal judge today declined to rule on whether a 13-year-old AIDS victim should be allowed back into public**

school, saying the boy must first pursue administrative remedies in seeking admission to fall classes.

After hearing arguments on whether he could consider a request for an injunction, U.S. District Judge James Noland announced that he was staying the proceeding until the administrative avenues were pursued.

Ryan White had sought to force the Western School Corp. to allow him to attend classes in Howard County.

Lawyers for the school corporation argued that the case was controlled by a federal law governing access to education for handicapped students. The law sets out a procedure for handling appeals through the school administrative process before judicial review can be granted.

Jeanne White, Ryan's mother, described Noland's action as "silly."

"I think it's ridiculous that the judge didn't have the courage to rule. He wanted to shove the decision on someone else. I felt he was copping out," she said.

Ryan, a hemophiliac, contracted acquired immune deficiency syndrome through a blood transfusion and has been out of school since last December.

In urging Noland to hear the case today, the Whites' lawyer, Charles Vaughn, said the administrative process would drag on interminably.

"In an AIDS case, we cannot toy with time. Time is of the essence like in no other case in the world," he said.

School begins Aug. 26.

The suit alleges the school system violated Ryan's rights to equal protection and illegally discriminated against him as a handicapped person.

Ryan's physicians say he is capable of attending school. Superintendent James O. Smith said he fears Ryan's condition could endanger the health of other students.

(Now, here's a point in passing. Never, ever use the title of your article for your first sentence. Write as if there were no title. Never, ever violate this rule! And a second "never": Never let a letter to an editor or a manuscript go out containing a misspelled word.)

M. Anthony Carr of my Liberty University class in feature writing gave Ryan's story this treatment:

"Don't give me that kind of answer, Smith."

Attorney Charles Vaughn followed School Superintendent James O. Smith into his office. "We need a definite answer. Are you going to bring Ryan's case before the board tonight or not?"

Smith sat behind his desk, lit his pipe, released a puff of smoke and looked at Vaughn. "You gotta understand, man. This is going to take time. It's—"

"TIME!" Vaughn shouted. "Ryan has AIDS, man, not a cold. If you take

much longer, you're going to have a dead student on your hands."

"That's right," Smith shot back, "but it's my responsibility to make sure that no other student gets it."

Vaughn brushed his hair out of his eyes and eased down into the chair across from the superintendent's desk. A wooden paperweight bearing the inscription, "Education For All" topped a stack of disheveled papers.

"Is that motto just a cliché with you or a way of life?" Vaughn muttered.

"What motto?"

"That thing on your desk." Vaughn picked it up and set it right in front of Smith. "Do you really believe it or are there exceptions?"

Smith looked at Vaughn in exasperation. "You just don't seem to understand," he said. "I have three-to-four hundred parents breathing down my neck if I let Ryan in. They've even threatened to boycott classes if he attends. What do you want me to do? Postpone classes?" He looked down and threw his pen across the desk. "I'd like to help, Charlie, but my hands are tied."

Vaughn edged his chair toward the desk. "That's a bunch of bull, Jim," he growled. "Your hands are about as tied as those fellows in Alabama during the 60s. It's the same situation here. You're discriminating against a kid with a disease. AIDS isn't at all like the flu; it's—"

"I've read the reports, Charlie. But like I said before, it's going to take time. You have to trust me."

"We've already trusted you and look where it got us." Vaughn sat back in his chair. "Into court."

Smith sighed and wiped sweat from his cheek. Draping his arm over the back of his chair, he said, "Okay, Charlie, say I let Ryan go to classes and another kid comes up with AIDS. Just what the heck am I supposed to do?"

"I don't think that'll happen."

"But you can't guarantee it."

"Nothing is guaranteed, Jim. Kids bring all kinds of germs to school. But do we ban them from classes? No. We live with the risks."

"But—"

"And the risks of another student contracting AIDS is almost nil."

"Charlie—"

"Do you think Ryan is going to be promiscuous with any kids at school?"

"What?!"

"Well?"

"Why, no. But—"

"I guess you think he's going to be running around kissing all the girls and going to the bathroom on the boys, right?"

"That has nothing to do with--"

"It has EVERYTHING to do with it!" Vaughn slammed his fist on the desk. "These germs aren't flying through the air like a flu or chicken

**pox. People get it through intimate contact and Ryan understands that. Your responsibility as the supervisor is to educate the community so they understand it, too.”**

**Vaughn grabbed his briefcase and headed toward the door. “If we have to use the administrative process to get Ryan back in school, then we’ll do it. But if we have to go back to court—” he leveled his finger at Smith—“well, that’s up to you.”**

**Conversation** stops narration. All movement in a story stops while we listen to what the characters say and think.

Good characters and authentic dialog stimulate reader interest. If you find you write good conversation, fill your stories and articles with it.

I’ve had students flounder on narration and fly high with dialog. Really study these examples. Really listen to people talk.

Anthony used some strong words. Should he have?

**Religious writers** have hesitated to “hang the dirty wash on the line” lest unbelievers judge Christ by the actions of some Christians. And that’s a responsible position to take.

But Christians have feet of clay. After all, they’re only converted sinners. They’re the sinners who have given up. They’ve called for help.

And God in His mercy became Man, bore the punishment they deserved and, on the ground of that, forgives.

**Ask any believer, “Do you sin?”**

He’ll admit it. But he doesn’t go back to wallow in his sin. If he were a pig, he would stay in the pig pen; but he’s a son. He returns again to his merciful Father God who is faithful and just and who keeps on forgiving the Christian’s sins as he confesses them.

So do writers ignore all this?

Let’s have realism—but discreet realism. We don’t have to roll over in manure to know it stinks.

We need a sense of the holiness of God. He hates sin!

Okay, back to the topic.

As you read through the article, you found Anthony inserting business now and then. Vaughn brushes the hair out of his eyes, edges his chair toward the desk, grabs his briefcase. Smith sighs and wipes sweat from his cheek.

**I say, “Careful, there.”** Too much business can slow the pace.

I like the briefcase. Some might object to the hair and the chair. But I don’t object.

Note, for an aside, the dictionary limits “disheveled” to messy hair or clothes, not to paper on the desk.

So, what can you do with conversation?

You fill your articles with it. You fill your books with it.

My Aunt Patty told me that when she was a child she read tons of books. She didn’t have time for the text. She read all the conversation.

And our readers are just as sensitive

to action and argument. They love eavesdropping on conversations.

Use the articles that follow to reconstruct conversations you believe occurred as the plots thickened and as the climax occurred.

## Churchgoers fear repeat of attack

LEE, Maine (AP) – State troopers were dispatched to this tiny northeastern Maine town Monday, one day after fundamentalist churchgoers were attacked by townspeople wielding pipes and chains in a display of violence that some said might be repeated.

“I will never rule it out,” said John W. Crooker, 43, who barged into the Lee Baptist Church with at least six other men Sunday evening, setting off a fracas over the custody of his teenage daughter that left several people injured. Crooker said he was not armed.

Debbie Dunphy, the wife of pastor Daniel Dunphy, agreed another confrontation was possible “if anything isn’t done about what’s happening.” Her husband spent the day with his lawyer in Bangor and was not available for comment.

Attorney General James E. Tierney said in Augusta that additional state troopers had been assigned to the Lee area at his request.

“Violence against any Maine citizen will not be tolerated,” Tierney said.

No one was arrested.

Townspeople agreed the incident stemmed from a dispute between Dunphy and Crooker, who is trying to get his 16-year-old daughter, Sheila, out of what he calls a “cult.”

Dunphy faces charges of assault and criminal trespass for allegedly abducting Miss Crooker from a foster home where she had been placed by her parents to try to keep her away from Dunphy.

“I don’t feel sorry for (Dunphy) at all,” said one resident, Tyke MacDonald. “Neither does anybody else in this town.”

Town Clerk Barbara Potts said most members of Dunphy’s congregation are from out of town. She said the pastor has been the object of local talk since he arrived three years ago.

Sunday’s confrontation “has been gaining momentum all the way,” she said.

“The people who’ve been in here today, they feel there will probably be more to it,” said Potts.

## Dummy passenger caught

WASHINGTON – A dummy called “Dolores” had passed for nearly six years as the extra carpool passenger one motorist needed to use a northern Virginia highway. But a state trooper has put an end to Dolores’ driving days.

Before she was pulled over Thursday, Corlis D. Jones of Annandale had driven in and out of Washington on Interstate 66 with the three bodies required to use the road during rush hour.

The “High Occupancy Vehicle” signs “never said it has to be three live bodies,” Ms. Jones said after Trooper J. H. Hampton spotted Dolores in the back seat of her 1978 maroon Pontiac.

Hampton said he was patrolling I-66 eastbound Thursday morning when he pulled Ms. Jones’ car over. He saw two people in the front seat and thought she had violated the three-person requirement for rush-hour commuters on I-66.

As he got closer, he noticed a third face behind the others but realized it “appeared to be a pillow packed with something.”

## Pregnant woman accused of shoplifting basketball

**ARLINGTON (AP) – A woman is suing a sporting goods store for \$600,000, charging she was accused of shoplifting a basketball when she actually was pregnant.**

Betsy Nelson, 33, of this Washington suburb, entered the Irving’s Sports store at a shopping mall in neighboring Falls Church to look for exercise equipment in February when she was nine months pregnant.

According to her lawsuit filed in Arlington Circuit Court last week, a

cashier told one of the store’s managers that Mrs. Nelson had stolen a basketball and put it under her dress.

The suit said Mrs. Nelson was detained at the store for an hour and was given the option of opening her dress or going to the police station.

“I had to disrobe in front of six male security guards and police officers in the store,” Mrs. Nelson said in a telephone interview Thursday. “I had to take off my jacket, sweater and lift up my blouse.”

In the suit, Mrs. Nelson claims she was falsely accused of shoplifting and subjected to “great mental pain and suffering, insult, indignities, humiliation and serious emotional harm.”

A woman who answered the telephone at the store’s offices said no one wished to comment about the suit.

Begin such a story right in the middle of a conversation because you want to hook your reader’s interest immediately. Whether you are beginning a spelling bee or an Oktoberfest, an argument or a plea, jump right in.

Don’t begin with the first and last name of your hero/heroine. That’s the first sign of an amateur!

Here is a version of Mrs. Nelson’s story written by Mrs. Bonnilou Lubbers of Holland, Michigan, one of my students. It’s virtually all conversation, heightened by a surprise ending.

**“Hold it right there, little lady. I said stop!” Jacob, the store manager, shouted as he grabbed Tracy’s fore-**

arm just as she stepped over the threshold of Bob's Sporting Goods store.

"Ouch! What is going on? Let go of me!" Tracy complained, struggling to set herself free.

"Come back in here with me. We have a problem."

"What are you talking about? Get your hands off me," she demanded as tears welled up into her eyes.

"Okay, hand over the ball," the manager insisted, clenching his teeth.

"What ball?"

"The basketball you just stole—that's what ball."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Tracy covered her face with her hands, crying softly.

"Look, lady. The police are on the way. Just give me the basketball."

"Are you deaf? I don't have any basketball!" she shouted.

"I'm not blind. Your dress is bulging in front like Mount Vesuvius. Did you really think you could hide a ball like that?"

"My stomach? Why, you numbskull, I'm pregnant!" Unable to believe what was taking place, she shook her head.

"Yeh, right, and so am I."

Tracy jerked her arm, freeing herself. With a toss of her head, she started for the door. "I'm going home!"

"Oh, no you're not," Jacob said, grabbing her by the shoulder and pushing her into a nearby chair.

"Ugh! That hurt! My baby!" she cried, cradling her stomach with her hands.

"Baby, my foot!" he yelled, poking her swollen abdomen with his index finger. "It's hard as a rock—or should I say basketball?"

"Tracy, is that you?" Bentley asked as he came on the scene.

"Oh, Bentley! I'm so glad to see you." Tracy began to tremble with relief. "This man thinks—"

"She stole a basketball and she's going to jail if I have anything to say about it. She says that hump right there is a baby," Jacob said laughing. "Can you beat that?" Again, he jabbed her belly with his finger.

"Ow!" Tracy cried as she bent forward in pain as far as she was able.

"If that's a baby, I'll eat my hat!"

"I am pregnant. Due anytime now. It just might come today."

"If you're pregnant, prove it. Take off your coat, lift up your shirt and show me your belly."

"I will not! Bentley, make him leave me alone! Can't you do something?"

"Look—what's your name?"

"Jacob."

Bentley, standing erect and looking intently into Jacob's eye, said, "Look, Jacob, if she says she's p.g., that's what she is. We can charge you with child endangerment, you know. And

forcing her to strip could be construed as violating her civil rights.”

“Who are you, anyway?”

“I’m Bentley Adams, Tracy’s attorney.”

“Okay,” interrupted a police officer as he entered the store. “What’s the trouble here?”

“This thief stole a basketball. It’s under her shirt,” the manager explained.

“I am pregnant! I didn’t steal anything,” Tracy insisted, clenching her fists.

“Okay, miss. It seems to me that simply taking off your coat and lifting your shirt will solve this problem.”

“I will not!” Tracy protested, eyes wide with fright. “Please don’t make me do it!” She pleaded just above a whisper.

“Did you see her take the ball, Jacob?” the officer asked, hands on his hips.

“Well—ah, no, but there were four on the shelf and now there’s only three.”

“Look, lady, you can either lift your shirt or we’re going downtown. Take your pick.”

“Bentley, can he do that?” she asked.

“I’m afraid so, Tracy. You have to prove you’re not concealing anything. I say let them look under the shirt and we’ll deal with the rest in court.”

Sobbing, Tracy, closing her eyes, removed her coat and lifted her top

showing them her very pregnant, naked stomach.

“Wait, she can’t be—” Jacob said, his eyebrows meeting in the middle.

“Well, that takes care of that,” the officer stated. “Jacob, next time, make sure you have a criminal before you call me, okay?”

“Tracy, come with me. I’ll take you away from here.” Bentley put his arm gently around her shoulder.

“I can’t believe I showed my stomach to a complete stranger. David is the only one to ever see me that way,” Tracy whimpered, rubbing her palms over her abdomen. “Oh, I hurt so badly!”

“I know, dear. We’ll go straight to the doctor’s office and have him check you over.”

Leaving the store with Tracy and glancing over his shoulder, Bentley spoke quietly, hiding a grin. “Good work, Tracy. One letter from the A.C.L.U. and they’ll be begging to pay you off. That was even better than the fall in the Laundromat.”

Tracy wiped the tears from her eyes with the back of her hands and fought desperately to keep from smiling. “Thanks.”

“Hiding that ball behind the shin guards was sheer genius. Looks like little junior there will have a free ride to college.”

*It won’t hurt my kids’ college fund either, he thought.*

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: CONVERSATIONAL

Now Mrs. Lubbers and I are not promoting deceit here. We're just showing that you can reconstitute a news story with conversation. You **MUST** change the names and you have a piece of news fiction.

Did you notice how she inserted ac-

tions along with her "he said/she said" tags? This helps bring the reader right into the story.

Thoughts, like Bentley's, and prayers generally are written in italics.

# CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE

**If you examine your daily newspaper closely, you will find that many front pages and front sections include breaking news in chronological narrative style. Where once, every news story began with an inverted pyramid, that is no longer the case.**

Chronological narrative traces what happens after a point in time. We begin at the beginning and go to the end. That's all, folks. But during that time we've had rising action, suspense, climax, falling action and plenty of plot.

Chronological narrative brings us step-by-step beside someone who faces a crisis and wins—or loses.

**We're with him** as he first hears the footsteps behind him.

We're with him as the chills run up and down his spine.

We're with him as he whirls to face the man with the knife.

And we're with him as he outwits his assailant and runs for his life.

We live it and we love it. It's as if it has happened to us. We can feel it all the way up the legs of our easy chair. We pull our feet up under us as we read, and we look over our own shoulder, sensing someone might be in the room and might get—us!

But several items go on your first page.

- 1. Start the action.**
- 2. Set the scene.**
- 3. Let us know the time of day or night (not necessarily with numbers).**
- 4. Identify the problem.**
- 5. Work in what has led up to your beginning.**
- 6. Hint at the outcome we want for the principal character. That hint may be stated or implied.**
- 7. Then proceed to narrate how the desired outcome does or does not emerge.**
- 8. End with something significant.**

In Bonnilou's story, Tracy was going out the door of the sporting goods store (1 and 2). We know it was daytime because that is when people normally shop (3) although that is not a factor here. She identified the problem (4) because she looked like a thief. What led up to it was the missing ball on the shelf (5). We want her vindicated (6) and she narrated how the desired outcome came about (7). She ended with a twist we didn't expect (8).

**Normally**, we say never tell. Always show. But when you are detailing stage business—"he put his arm gently around her shoulder" or "closing her eyes" or "hands on his hips"—you may freely tell.

You are reporting action. It is not for you to tell us that Tracy has red hair and freckles. Don't tell us that she never did get along with her mother or that Jacob has had it in for her since the first day she shopped there.

If a fact is significant, let a character say it:

**"I've never trusted red-haired women," Jacob said.**

**Hook** the reader with some kind of threat to your character or give the impression the story is being told for an important reason.

If you are writing an article about a county fair and you begin with the sun's rising, you must shine its first rays on something that is newsworthy, something amiss, not ready, wrong. Tell life as it is—or was. Don't contrive something. Don't rearrange facts to fit a plot.

If there is no reason to tell the story, don't tell it—or call it by another name like slice of life which begins and ends at no particular point. It reveals character, action and reaction. But we'll get to that in another chapter.

Now, as you begin, pay particular attention to your first words.

Begin with a startler. Even, "The day started normally enough" contains threat. That's what we want.

One article on a Central American hurricane began:

**In the beginning it was barely noticeable.**

The sentence tells almost nothing. It's as close to a neutral—to as sterile a

beginning as you can get. Yet it does supply a modicum of threat.

Then the rest of the paragraph heaps threat on threat as the author sets the scene. We see it all as he speaks of warm air masses that imperceptibly lift off the **"summer-heated surface"** of the ocean between Florida and mainland Central America.

South of Puerto Rico it began to orbit westward, sucking up the air and moisture as it moved. Weathermen called it only a tropical depression, never dreaming that September 14 that it would turn into one of the century's worst killer hurricanes.

That was Scott Seegers, writing an article for "Americas" magazine. He chronicles a puff of air and in three sentences tells its life story.

The rest of the article will chronicle the damage it does as it hits landfall.

He handles what follows in the same way. He begins with what was going on in villages along the Honduran coast at the same time that that puff of air was meandering off Puerto Rico.

The body of the story details what went on in those villages during the height of Hurricane Fifi. The conclusion begins with:

**Worldwide reaction was quick and generous.**

Then he tells about reaction within the country of Honduras and it focuses minutely on what happened in one of the tiny villages. We sweep to the end on the cost:

**Perhaps no one will ever know how many lives Fifi took.**

After estimating that between 3000 and 5000 died, the author writes:

**More easily assessed is the economic damage.**

Then he tells of the damage to crops and animals, to farm and industry. He follows that with a short account of what is going on to repair the damage. In his last paragraph he refers to a man who is heading out of a relief camp to go work on rebuilding roads.

**As he left, one man looked back at me.**

**“One way or another we will stay afloat,” he said.**

**The style** has been sequential with each twist and turn following in order. The hurricane occurs, the damage is measured and repaired.

The article ends on a note of hope.

Another article by a spear fisherman tells about an incident when he was attacked by a killer shark. It begins like this:

**Kay looked quite miserable standing there as I said goodbye at 6:30 that Sunday morning in December 1963.**

She was expecting their first child. The doctor had told her not to fish. He wishes he'd been told that, too.

**Two hours later, however, found me . . .**

He's in a competition. He has five hours to bag the biggest catch—both by total weight and by the number of

different species of fish.

He explains his equipment and talks about his training. He dallies, knowing the reader is desperate for him to get on with his telling.

We want to find what happens when the shark hits! He talks of sharks in general and then about the weather.

He tells that visibility under the surface near the reef will be quite poor. He's building his suspense and making us squirm.

When he begins telling us that down below surface in the murky twilights a fish can work its way close in toward a diver before he is aware it is even there, this is all we need to start in on our fingernails.

But it gets worst.

And it's the slow, careful way he details everything that happens that heightens the drama.

He tells about this fish he catches and then about that one.

He takes his bag back to shore and goes out for one last try. Somehow, the most dramatic events seem to occur on that one last trip. It's always like that.

He spots his catch and glides down to take it, his spearing gun in one hand and his other stretched out for balance.

Then . . .

**How can I describe the sudden silence? It was a perceptible hush, even in that quiet world.**

Something huge hits him with violent force and thrusts him through the water at high speed.

A shark has taken him in its jaws!

Even here he details what happened. He tells that he lost his equipment. He tells each sensation.

**A queer “cushiony” feeling ran down my right side, as if my insides on my left were being squeezed over to my right side.**

He reaches to gouge out the fish’s eyes when suddenly the jaws relax and he can push free.

In so doing, he rams his arm down the shark’s throat. Every part of his body screams out in anguish from the worse pain he has ever felt.

He calls it **“a blinding burst of agony.”**

He thrashes and kicks away and sees the shark surface nearby, roll over on its side and then begin to come at him for the final charge. He thinks of his wife and baby and he prays . . .

It’s at points such as this, when I tell stories, that I like to tell my listeners, “Oh, I’m sure you don’t want me to frighten you any more with such stories as this. Wouldn’t you like me to tell you about some flowers and little animals of the forest instead?”

This brings—especially from school children—loud cries of “NO.” They want the whole story, and they want it fully told. Now!

The shark unbelievably veers away just at the last moment. It has swallowed part of his equipment, a fish float that was attached to a line from his belt, instead of swallowing him.

The line parts and our fisherman is free. He’s rescued and rushed 34 miles to a hospital. Doctors, scrubbed and ready, put what’s left of him on the operating table and . . .

This writer is superb. He tells everything so simply, so matter-of-factly.

He doesn’t know whether it’s late that night or early the next morning, but he opens his eyes and sees his wife beside his bed.

**I said, “It hurts,” and she was crying. The doctor walked over and said, “He’ll make it now.”**

I don’t what there is about the word “crying.” Whenever I happen on it—someone is crying just past the crushing climax of a story—it gets me. I choke up.

He ends the story with falling action that narrates how he has recovered and what he’s thinking now. He has to go back to the sea so he can leave his fears where he found them.

**But he’s not** entering any more competitions. He’s going to leave the murky waters to the daredevils who’ve never felt a shark’s jaws close around their chests.

Australian Rodney Fox used the chronological narrative to take his readers with him. We relive the experience he narrates.

We were there with him.

We praise God he survived that experience, but we’re glad it happened (if it had to happen) to someone else and not us.

**This is the power** of the chronological narrative.

Now, let's look back. We've discussed the innocent lead and its hint of threat. We come on chronologically and let the middle of the story develop the complication and lead our reader to the climax.

We want the reader to despair because he can't figure out how the hero will ever extricate himself from the problem. The hero does confront his adversary whether it is man or nature or God and then the story ends as it really did end.

In fiction, we can contrive the ending—but not in fact.

**As you write** this kind of article, be conscious that you want to leave your reader with a strong impression.

You may wish to tie the ending to the wording of the opening sentence and repeat a word or phrase that occurred there. That gives the article a sense of unity. But such a device is not all that necessary. Chronological narrative doesn't need that as much as some other structures do.

**But above all**, we want our reader to find "take-away value."

There must be something in our article that will enhance his tomorrow, some significant insight that will make him a better person or that will better enable him to cope with his world or that will heighten his understanding and compassion for other people or for himself or his family, his work, his

government, his world.

One way to do this is to analyze at the outset what you're going to say.

Just because you describe an event chronologically does not make it significant. So you went to the store and parked your car and went in through the automatic doors and selected a cart. You meandered through the produce section and worked your way around to the dairy section and ended up at the deli.

### **So what?**

Your chronicle is not a story. It doesn't have a narrative purpose.

Don't write it.

But if that meandering is preparation for a story of consequence, by all means include it.

Remember also that you want to begin your article with action. Don't set the scene. Let that come through as we see the characters working out the plot. Be free to include description as you need it.

Rodney Fox, in the article on the shark, wrote at one point:

**Its hideous body was like a great rolling tree trunk, but rust-colored, with huge pectoral fins.**

Description lets the reader see what the character sees. It's an essential part of that delaying action of detailing each development in your story.

You want to keep your reader on the edge of his seat and that's why you use suspense. But you want him to relive the experience—to see and hear and feel

every twist and turn, and that's why you describe.

**Another** kind of chronological narrative may detail some person's experience of a more or less common nature; but it ends with a twist, a new insight, a regret, a realization, a disappointment.

Mary M. Moore wrote an article just like this a number of years ago chronicling her recovery after she had been badly burned.

Her first sentence in an article called "Sarge" read:

**When I came to, I had no idea where I was.**

We know something dramatic had happened to cause her to lose consciousness. Her first sentence meets our recipe. She has started the action.

The rest of her first paragraph sets the scene (Step 2):

**A hideous chorus of screams and wailings of babies filled the room.**

What she thought at first was a maternity ward was the burn unit of an Army hospital in Texas. She begged to be taken to a quieter spot. Then, as the sedative began to wear off, she felt the excruciating pain of her oozing, deep, near-fatal burns.

Then in the next paragraph she tells of the events that led up to the beginning of her narrative as she identifies the problem (Steps 4 and 5):

**It had all happened eight days before, when I had turned on the shower to rinse off after a bath.**

Scalding water spouted out of the shower faucet. She slipped and fell in the tub. She struggled to find a handhold to pull herself out but couldn't escape the blistering heat

She screamed for her husband who rushed in and pulled her from the tub where she was being literally boiled alive.

Notice the first verb of her flashback began with a past perfect tense verb: "It had all happened."

She then told her story simply and we were right there.

The next paragraph hints at the outcome we want for the principal character—we want her to recover (Step 6).

**I was rushed to the local hospital in Milledgeville, Ga., our hometown. Three days later I was moved . . .**

Then we begin the process of narrating how the outcome, in this case, does come about.

She describes her treatment in detail and she continues to graphically set the scene.

**It is horrifying to hear a fellow human being scream with pain. In the next seven weeks I learned that you never get used to it.**

**Late** one morning, she was wakened by a pleasant voice as a fellow burn victim offered her solace. She said he was a "shocking sight," that "hardly a shred of true skin clung to his body above his pajama pants." He had been burned in a gasoline explosion in Korea.

A fellow southerner, he explained each next step in her treatment and comforted her with a casual familiarity that helped her endure the pain (Step 7).

We come to love his courage and cheer. He snitches illicit coffee for her when she wakes at 5 a.m.

**Together we sipped our forbidden predawn treat and gossiped to lighten the gloom until the rising sun brought the ward to life.**

Her grafts healed quickly and the day of her departure for home approached. That final morning . . .

**We talked about our separate plans for the future—I with my husband and children, he with his wife and radio store. Proudly, but almost casually, he added, “My wife is an educated woman, a schoolteacher.” He named her alma mater, a little school in Alabama.**

“But that’s a Negro school!” I exclaimed. With some hesitation, I asked, “Is your wife a Negro?”

He looked at me in wonderment. Then, after a moment’s silence, he said softly, “Why, yes, ma’am. What race did you think I belong to?”

Earlier, we had learned that “not a shred of true skin clung to his body above his pajama pants.” This is a device we’ll meet again in Week 11 with Plant and Pick Up.

But here it affords us Step 8 where she and we have a realization that skin color makes no difference.

This article appeared in magazines some 40 years ago when skin color brought more of a surprise than it does now.

But all the way through, we have had an illustration of the easy way chronological narratives can be composed and how hearts can be touched by simply showing.

**Realize**, however, that chronological narratives can be written following other patterns. As you gain experience, you may wish to use them.

But for this lesson, I want to stick close to the formula we started with.

“We’re Too Close to the Falls” by James H. Winchester uses its title to identify the problem in his article (Step 4).

He tells the time (Step 3), sets the scene (Step 2), starts the action (Step 1) and identifies the problem (Step 4) in the first two paragraphs.

**It was the first Sunday of last October (tell the time, Step 3), and thousands of tourists crowded both the American and Canadian shores of Niagara Falls (set the scene, Step 2). At the eastern tip of Goat Island, on the U.S. side of the Niagara River, Bill Faust was resting (start the action, Step 1) in the ticket booth at the Prior Aviation sightseeing heliport.**

From where he was sitting, he could see the river rushing to send 100,000 cubic feet of water a second into its showy drop of 161 feet over the Horseshoe and American falls. His day had been busy selling tickets for helicopter

rides over the falls. The plane at that moment was being refueled at Niagara Falls airport.

**Glancing idly toward the Canadian shore, Faust was electrified. Mid-river, already wrapped in spray, a small boat was sweeping toward the lip of Horseshoe Falls** (identify the problem, Step 4). **His first thought: *My God! Nothing can keep them from going over the falls.***

He then works in what has led up to this dilemma (Step 5). He identifies the people in the boat and explains that on their pleasure ride they had not noticed the warning signs of danger as they approached the falls.

**When the boat** was less than a half-mile from Horseshoe Falls, the propeller blade struck a rock and broke loose. Out of control, the boat got caught in the river's accelerating downhill race. Obviously, we want the occupants to survive (Step 6), especially since one of them is a young woman with her 18-month-old son, Michael. The author narrates their adventure (Step 7) as they jump into the river, struggling desperately in the waist-high water to hold back the boat.

**Rescuers** lose their boat and the rescue helicopter crashes in the river. A huge burst of red flame from exploding gas tanks sends sheets of fire to within inches of the desperate people.

Eventually a lifeline reaches them and they work their way slowly back to shore.

**The thousands of tourists who had watched the spectacle cheered wildly. From hundreds of cars on both sides of the river, horns blared.**

A reporter called it "the most involved and dangerous rescue ever made at the falls."

James Winchester ends his article with something significant (Step 7):

**Jo Ann has expressed her thanks to the Niagara Park police. Their reaction: "That's all right. It's part of our job, but *please don't do it again!*"**

A variation of this technique appeared in "No Time for Fear" by Philip Yancey. He began his narration by setting the scene (Step 2) and naming the characters.

**The two young Canadians huddled close to the rusty steel heater. Malcom Aspeslet, 19, and Barb Beck, 18, were on their longest date yet—a hike to Balu Pass, 6700 feet up in British Columbia's Glacier National Park.**

He then introduced Step 5 by telling the event yesterday that had led up to their predicament—they had been caught in a blizzard and had to spend the night in one of the park's mountain cabins. Deep in the second long paragraph, he gave us Step 3 (let us know the time of day or night) by saying the morning of their descent (Step 1, start the action) was the first day of October at the end of the summer season.

**Halfway down,** they met a mother grizzly with two cubs (Step 4, identify the problem). She was charging (Step

6, an implied hint of the outcome we want for the principal character).

Malcolm quickly pushed Barb into a snow bank and ducked a second before the bear with a swipe of its paw knocked him senseless. When he came to, he saw the bear standing on Barb's leg gnawing near the back of her neck.

**He grabbed** his hunting knife and leaped on the bear's back, plunging the blade into her neck. She jerked back, sending Malcolm's knife flying and breaking his wrist. She then hugged him and mauled him, raking his face with her claws.

Thinking it was all over, he closed his eyes and stopped struggling. Once he stopped moving, the bear lost interest, swatted him once more, "then scraped dirt and twigs over him and lumbered away."

Seeing Malcolm a virtual pulp, Barb yelled, "Malcolm, hold on—I'm going for help."

As he waited, "he prayed, and wondered whether he would live, and what he'd look like if he did."

**Rescuers** find him, rush him to a hospital where he is pieced together. In ensuing months, depressed over his new ugliness, he retreated into himself. When letters from Barb piled up, he ignored them. "How could anybody love a freak?" he asked himself.

Her persistence paid off. A year or so later, they were married (Step 7, the desired outcome does emerge). And to his surprise ("it had never occurred to

him that he could have run and left Barb with the grizzly, and he had never seen his actions as heroic"), gold medals and honors for heroism and bravery and even a personal decoration by the hand of the Queen of England herself came to him.

The article ends with a statement of significance (Step 8):

**Sometimes people ask Barb if she married Malcolm out of a sense of obligation. She says, "I loved Malcolm before the accident and I always will love him. Handicaps should be accepted in life. Scars don't change the person."**

Admittedly, these chronological narratives are all highly dramatic. It is interesting to see that their authors all used this same set of steps to compose their article.

In "Ordeal on Mt. Kenya" by Lawrence Elliott the set appears again. Its first sentence is:

**The afternoon of Saturday, September 5, 1979,** (step 3, time of day) **suddenly cleared.**

We have two Austrian doctors, Gerd Judmaier, 29, and Oswald Oelz, 27, standing on the top of Mt. Kenya in Africa (Step 2, set the scene) looking at the magnificent landscape below them. Few climbers get to see that view so sharply does the mountain rise.

**Just the day before** (Step 5, work in what has led up to your beginning), **a party of four Zambians and two Americans had been turned back**

**from the top by a blizzard.**

Around 2 p.m., the two start down (Step 1, start the action). One of them falls and shatters his right leg (Step 4, identify the problem).

**No need** to search for Step 6, a hint at the outcome we want for the principal character. We want him rescued.

Nearby climbers who tried failed to reach him, the freezing cold, the snow, the slippery ice, the rarefied atmosphere sapping their strength. The injured man's father flew from Austria and signaled an expert rescue team at home to come help his son.

A volunteer helicopter pilot, an American, maneuvering for a landing was "perhaps caught by an updraft." His plane was flung against the mountainside and he was killed.

**Rigging lines**, the Austrians lowered Judmaier's stretcher 130 feet down the sheerest part of the north face. Then they had the backbreaking task of carrying him over ice-encrusted rock and

shale to safety.

Step 7 has narrated how the desired outcome has emerged.

**In one of mountaineering's most astounding exploits, the Austrians had traveled 4000 miles, climbed to the top of Africa's most dangerous peak and snatched from death a man who had lain there crippled and helpless for eight days and seven nights—all in 54 incredible hours.**

The article ends with the something significant (Step 8):

**Perhaps the most meaningful tribute came from his father, who warmly thanked all the volunteers. Then he spoke of Jim Hastings, the dead flier: "I bow my head in deepest respect to this young man who sacrificed his life for the sake of someone he had never seen. His name will never be forgotten in our household."**

# CHRONOLOGICAL REVERSE

**An interesting variation of the chronological narrative occurs mostly in sports reporting. There the final score and the last few minutes of the game, especially when those minutes have determined the winner, appear in the lead paragraph.**

What led up to those last few minutes comes next. What came earlier follows until we rehearse how the game began.

The following story illustrates this method which can be used in all kinds of factual articles. Crashes, epidemics, emergencies, kidnappings, violence of all kinds will have the final outcome in the lead and then what led up to it in reverse chronology.

## **Kramer's bomb leads Minnesota past 49ers**

**BLOOMINGTON, Minn. (AP) – Rookie quarterback Tommy Kramer threw a 69-yard touchdown pass to Sammy White with 1:38 to play Sunday, capping a phenomenal comeback as the Minnesota Vikings edged the San Francisco 49ers 28-27.**

**Kramer's third TD pass of the FINAL QUARTER traveled more than 60 yards in the air and was**

**caught by White at the San Francisco 15 behind 49ers defensive back Ralph McGill. Fred Cox added his fourth extra point to keep Minnesota, 8-4, one game ahead of the Chicago Bears in the Central Division of the National Football Conference,**

**The 49ers, who had a 24-0 lead midway through the THIRD PERIOD, fell to 5-7.**

**The winning touchdown came on the first play after James White recovered a San Francisco fumble at the Minnesota 31.**

**Linebacker Jeff Siemon intercepted a Jim Plunkett pass with 1:14 to play to seal the verdict.**

**Starting quarterback Bob Lee threw a 15-yard pass to Brent McClanahan for Minnesota's first score in the THIRD PERIOD.**

**Kramer, who completed 9 of 13 passes for 188 yards, whipped an 8-yard TD pass to Ahmad Rashad and followed with a 9-yard scoring strike to Bob Tucker. Rookie Dave Williams returned the SECOND-HALF kickoff 80 yards for a touchdown for the 49ers and set up another TD with a 60-yard punt return.**

**Delvin Williams, who gained 153 yards against Minnesota last year,**

went over the 100-yard mark again with 107 yards in 26 carries and scored two touchdowns on short runs.

After a scoreless **FIRST QUARTER**, Plunkett drove the 49ers 72 yards in 12 plays with Williams finding a big hole over right tackled for the final two yards. Ray Wersching kicked the extra point to give San Francisco a 7-0 lead with 4:03 left in the half. . . .

The Vikings were outgained 180-49 in total yardage in the first half and crossed midfield only once. They

drove to the 49ers' 40-yard line after the **OPENING KICKOFF** before punting.

With a crash or act of violence, we begin with the latest news. Then we go back in time to what led up to the latest news and then go back to the origins of the various aspects of the whole event.

Another way of recounting personal experiences is the slice of life.

# SLICE OF LIFE

**It's chronological narrative without a plot. It's just what it's called—a slice of life. It's the no-man's land of feature writing.**

**It can be anything**, do anything, say anything. Here you have no five W's unless you want them.

You don't need to name and identify all the characters. They can come and go at will. You don't need to have a point. You can have one if you want, but you're the judge.

But what looks like the slippery-slide of feature writing actually maws wide as a bear-trap with sharp hooks. Slice of life demands tight writing because you can't dally here. Yes, you come into a scene and take us through until you leave. But what you show and tell us must be significant.

**Has there been** a tragic accident? A grisly murder? A snatcher of life savings? A drug bust? Let there be a slice of life report on how a principal character got involved. Let's see him play his tag and approach, touch the news ingredient, and run away. Show us motives. Show us passion, seizure, fear.

**Show us horror** as a molester woos a child with peppermint candy, a loan shark sweet-talks a grandmother, a

salesman flatters young honeymooners.

Slice of life shows us the action and leaves without forcing a conclusion. But the taste lingers and often sours on our tongue.

And slice of life can bring laughter and joy.

**The essential ingredient** is significance. You can't write about how you get up in the morning and brush your teeth and shower and dress and eat and run for the bus and think anyone will want to buy your article.

If it's a man who fell off a subway platform onto an electric track that you tell about, then you have significance. You can title it: **Man Falls Off Subway Platform and Dies**. And your slice of life will get him up in the morning and take him through his daily ritual until he walks through the turnstile. Go no farther. We know the final outcome from the headline of the story. No need to belabor the point.

**The news story** tells everything. We read it and forget it. Slice of life, used like this, becomes art form.

The feature story opens windows, opens tombs. We see. We believe. We whisper, "Wow!" And we don't forget.

Write like this! We need you. We're being crushed by inverted pyramids. We want heart.

My young friend, Anne Grau of Evanston, Illinois, wrote the following

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slice of life, giving a report of her two weeks at asthma camp when she was in junior high.

## **Comic Relief In Just 15 Seconds**

By Anne Grau

I knew right away that she would be my counselor. She was stiff, serious and, worst of all, she was from Canada.

Great. Just wonderful. I'm stuck here with some prepped-out woman who will sweet-talk my parents into childlike trust.

I was right. She was my counselor. She waved goodbye to my blissful parents who were driving away.

"My name is Jane Van Hausen," she explained to us campers. "You must call me Miss Jane." A few of the snotty girls in the back giggled. An evil (and I mean Stephen King all the way) glare shot from Miss Jane's eyes and smothered the giggles abruptly.

"You girls are to be under my care for two weeks, and I will be sure that Asthma Camp will benefit you greatly. OK. There are NO Primatene Mists allowed. Please hand them over."

I thought I was going to die. Life for me without my Primatene was sheer torture. What would I do? I began to cough and shake. Panic took over. I felt hot tears come to my eyes.

She went around the room with an off-green pillowcase and collected a variety of blue, pink and other assorted bottles of wonder drugs.

When she got to me, I told her that I had left my Primatene at home anyway. She looked at me and laughed and then tossed her way through my duffle bag. When she had snagged my bottle of life, she continued on to the next victim.

We left the infirmary, where all of this had been going on, and headed up the hill. I got about 38 steps when the first attack began. A girl, obese, ugly but friendly looking, had collapsed a few steps behind me, wheezing and coughing.

"Miss Jane!" I called.

"Yes? What is it?"

What is it! How could she miss this fat girl making farm-animal noises and heaving like a steamship? I pointed.

"Oh. What's the matter with her?"

Great. I was at Asthma Camp, stuck with a counselor who thought this poor girl was trying to be funny. After we told Jane wolfbane what was wrong, she told me and another girl to get her to the infirmary.

We started down the hill; and, as soon as Ms. Van Hausen was out of range, a girl (not the steamship) produced an inhaler from somewhere and we passed it around.

"Hi, I'm Lisa."

I inhaled for a second or two (her inhaler was prescription! What luck!) exhaled, and said, "Hi, I'm Anne."

It took the other girl a little longer to catch her breath; but, when she did, she smiled and said, "I'm Beth."

We were still in the infirmary when the boys (our age) dragged in. A symphony of wheezes reached our ears as some college man announced, "The \*&%# air conditioners aren't working!"

The doctors looked horrified and their faces turned white.

"Just our luck," I heard the respiratory technician say, as he aided Beth at the phlegm machines. "A camp full of asthmatics and no air conditioning. What are they gonna do? Spend the night here?" (The air conditioning in the infirmary worked fine.)

At that moment Jane's scary face walked in the door. Her body slithered in after her, along with the rest of the campers, hot and needing epinephrine.

The night progressed. Dinner was served, and we all returned to the infirmary for a good night's sleep. Lisa was the only other normal girl besides me and another girl, Dee.

We became close friends and spent the evening talking about what drugs made us vomit and how many times we've been rushed to the hospital. But the majority of the conversation was about the three cute guys sitting across the room.

Somehow, after all of our evening inhaling, pill-popping and phlegm treatments were over, the boys had gotten their sleeping bags next to ours. We then spent all night talking about what kind of pills make us dizzy, how many times we've been rushed to the hospital and how peanuts make our faces break out in hives.

Before I fell asleep, I had practically overdosed on Lisa's Vancellin (the inhaler we all used) and had fallen madly into infatuation with the seventh grade redhead with the black scorpion T-shirt. Best of all, I had witnessed a spider lay its eggs under Miss Jane's chair.

The next two weeks went by quickly. The redhead had a really bad case of the wheeze so he was always in the infirmary. Since that was the only place I could see my true love, I had the doctors convinced that I had some freak case of asthma. They put me on a drug that I became literally addicted to for the rest of the summer.

Despite all my effort, I never said as much as five words to HIM, even though Lisa was the belle of the camp.

It was the last night of camp. Miss Wolfbane was fast asleep (we had slipped about five antihistamines in the Koolaid we made for her), and it was time for the girls to pull their pranks

We all dressed in dark clothes and headed through the woods to the boys' cabin. By this time Lisa's pink

spray had long since given out, and we all had to sit down and rest every five minutes.

**By the time we reached the boys' cabin, we were all wheezing so loudly that we woke up the boys before we could play our tape of 'An American Werewolf in London' and scratch on their window panes.**

The next morning, bright and early, we descended on the infirmary, gathered our drugs and said goodbye. I saw the redhead on the phlegm machine and ran over and got his address.

**"Boy! What a romance I've had this summer!" I thought as we drove home, past the trees where Jane was still trying to collect all her lingerie.**

**"Goodbye, Jane," I screamed out the window. Boy, had I learned a lot at asthma camp.**

We scream with her, having all met our own Jane Wolfbanes.

Anne's story is merely two weeks at camp. Admittedly, it has a beginning and an end—the first day and the last day of camp. But it's a story of her experiences with colorful people. There's no real plot apart from children yearning to survive. But we come away laughing at how much fun even challenged children can have.

William Ashley Anderson wrote a Christmas story that simply told the story of a boy who goes to church to take part in a pageant and comes home.

**After dinner Bruce had come down-**

stairs dressed in a long white nightgown and purple cloak. In one hand he held a tall crown of yellow pasteboard and tinsel and in the other an ornate censor. He was wearing thin, lapping sandals.

All he wanted was a ride to church, but the car broke down in the snow.

Bruce said nothing. His eyes were fixed on a distant star.

**I realized that he was praying. He had made his promise, too, and he was praying that nothing would keep him from being one of the Three Wise Men on this magic Christmas Eve.**

While his father struggled with the car, he began walking.

When the car started, the father overtook his boy who had taken a short cut to where their road entered town. He had lit a fire in the censor to keep warm.

At the service, his father was struck with an uneasy awe at his son's intense devotion.

**Something stronger than a promise, I knew, had brought him through the bitter night to this sacred pageant.**

As they drove home, the lad showed his father the short cut he had taken past two houses where in one a lonely old grandmother mourned a son lost in war and in the other the family yearned over their oldest boy who had recently died.

**Next day, a visiting farmer's wife told in astonishment how the old**

widow had seen a vision of a wise man, plain as day.

**He was a-walkin' along the hill with a gold crown on his head, a-swingin' one of them pots with smoke in them.**

To corroborate the fact, she said the Thompson children had rushed to the window. They had heard him first—

**. . . a singin' 'O Come, All Ye Faithful' plain as day. They went runnin' to the window, and they seen the Wise Man, gold crown and robes and all!"**

She affirmed it was a comfort for both families to see and believe.

The article ends as the father explains that he hadn't seen a vision that night. What he had seen was "a flesh-and-blood small boy with a promise to keep, following over a trackless countryside the same star that led the Wise Men to Bethlehem."

**And it was not for me to deny the courage and the faith I saw in my son's eyes that night.**

Your task is to take events like that in your life and look for significance. Be impressed with interesting things that happen at home. Write them down in a small spiral notebook and date them so that, when you've time and you think back, you'll remember how old your children were when that happened.

Many magazines contain slice of life stories.

Read the Bible for an anthology of slice of life stories. From the very beginning you get short segments of fascinating lives.

**We're in the Garden** and a beguiler is talking Eve into eating a piece of fruit. He lies to her and, though she knows better, she listens. She plucks the fruit and eats it and takes it to her husband and he eats it. What could be more harmless and natural? But judgment is immediate and final. The results are devastating.

And, as with much slice of life, there is more here than meets the casual eye. Eve knew God had strictly forbidden her to eat of the fruit of that certain tree. He had told Eve that she was to be Adam's helpmeet. She chooses to believe the devil.

**She commits** a willful act. She takes the fruit to her husband who, out of love and loyalty to her, eats also. They have reversed roles. Adam was the one to make decisions and Eve, the one to respond in love. God judges that as well as their disobedience.

Slice of life can be merely reportorial. But it can be symbolic.

Through the early books of both the Old Testament and the New, you have a succession of slice of life stories. Here violence, treachery, triumph and glory, death and grief stalk a family and then a nation. Ordinary people do ordinary things, but irony, symbolism and levels of meaning make this a Book of Books for all people and a marvelous resource for writers.

**Use the following** news story to create a slice of life narrative. In this case, you'll have to fabricate what you think

was the order of his day. I'll let you do it just this once—for practice. Make him come alive. We want to see his humanness so that we grieve all the more when he takes his fatal step.

Tell the story simply and keep it moving.

You might also wish to take a story from your own life and treat it this way. Let it show the warmth and color that are really a part of—you.

## Man electrocuted in subway mishap

**CHICAGO (AP) – An unidentified man in his 20s was electrocuted at the Clark and Division streets stop on the Howard-Jackson Park subway Saturday after he apparently exited on the wrong side of the train and fell on the electrified third rail.**

Witnesses told police the man entered the southbound train at the North and Clybourn station and attempted to exit at the next stop. Police said the man pulled the emergency exit cord, then fell through the door onto the third rail.

Fire department paramedics attempted to revive the victim, but he

**was pronounced dead at Henrotin Hospital.**

**Bill Baxa, Chicago Transit Authority spokesman, said the electricity to the rail was shut off within 30 seconds. He said 640 volts of electricity flow through the rail.**

Use this following one as another practice lesson.

## Teen injured as night- gown catches fire

**GRANTS PASS, Ore. (AP) – Nancy Sue Swearingen, 18, Grants Pass, was flown to a Portland hospital Monday morning after she was severely burned in an accident in her home.**

Sources said she suffered first, second and third degree burns when the full-length nightgown she was wearing burst into flames.

She was burned on 50 to 60 percent of her body.

The accident occurred at 8:15 a.m. as she was standing near a space heater.

She was flown to Portland by Mercy Flights of Medford.

# GRAMMAR

Item: Nouns and pronouns have ten functions in a sentence:

1. Subject (nominative case)
2. Direct object (objective case)
3. Indirect object (objective case)
4. Subjective complement (nominative case)
5. Appositive of a subject (nominative case)
6. Object of a preposition (objective case)
7. Noun of address (nominative case)
8. Subject of a gerund (possessive case)
9. Subject of an infinitive (objective case)
10. Object or complement of a verbal (objective case)

Overwhelmed? Don't worry. Nouns are clowns. What could be easier? Just ask these little questions:

1. To find the subject of the verb, ask **who?** or **what?** before you say the verb.

Lord Nosh stood upon the hearthrug. **Who stood?** Lord Nosh.

2. To find the direct object of the verb, ask **whom?** Or **what?** after you say the verb.

The dogcart entered the avenue. Entered **what?** The avenue.

3. To find the indirect object of the verb, ask **to whom?** Or **for whom?** Or **to what?** or **for what?** after you say the verb.

He gave Gertrude the flowers. Gave **to whom?** Gertrude.

4. To find the subjective complement, ask **who?** or **what?** after a linking verb. Linking verbs are like equal

signs.

The new governess is Gertrude. Is **who?** Gertrude.

5. To find the appositive, look for a noun that renames the noun it follows (there will be a comma on each side of the appositive phrase (exceptions: my sister Jeanne).

Gertrude, the new governess, watched every move Lord Ronald made.

6. To find the object of a preposition, ask **whom?** Or **what?** after you say the preposition.

Was this the dawn of love? Of **what?** Love.

7. Nouns of address name the person being addressed. If the noun comes at the beginning of its sentence, a comma follows it; in the middle, a comma on both sides; at the end, a comma before it..

Ronald, you should marry this girl,

his father said

8. To find the subject of a gerund, say whose? Before you say the gerund. The subject of a gerund is always in the possessive case. Editors are awed when you use this correctly

He responded to her loving him. *Whose loving him?* Her.

9. To find the object of a verbal, ask **whom?** Or **what?** after you say the verbal.

He wanted to marry the sweet maid

of his heart. To marry *whom?* Maid.

See? Grammar is really simple. A few short questions help you grasp all there is to know.

I'm trusting you to keep these in mind so that your grammar, as you write, will be correct and professional.

Professor Dick

*P.S. Now take the test on the next page and see how well you do.*

# GRAMMAR

*Answer the following questions about each sentence given.*

1. On the beach, after the storm subsided, many unusual, prehistoric dinosaur eggs which had been rolled up from kelp beds deep under the sea were discovered by the seagulls.

- a. Is the sentence simple? \_\_\_ compound? \_\_\_ complex? \_\_\_ compound-complex? \_\_\_
- b. If it has an adverb clause, write it: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. If it has an adjective clause, write it: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Write the subject and verb of the main sentence: \_\_\_\_\_
- e. How many prepositional phrases does the sentence contain? \_\_\_\_\_

2. The violent, world-shaking hurricane, devastating in its intensity, had swept across the Pacific Ocean, opening gigantic crevasses in the ocean floor and delivering giant sea mammals held in subterranean caves since ancient times.

- a. Is the sentence simple? \_\_\_ compound? \_\_\_ complex? \_\_\_ compound-complex? \_\_\_
- b. If it has an adverb clause, write it: \_\_\_\_\_

c. If it has an adjective clause, write it: \_\_\_\_\_

d. How many participles are in the sentence? \_\_\_\_\_ Write them: \_\_\_\_\_

e. How many participles have direct objects? \_\_\_\_\_ Write them: \_\_\_\_\_

f. How many prepositional phrases are in the sentence? \_\_\_\_\_ Write them \_\_\_\_\_

3. The dinosaur eggs, refrigerated for thousands of years, washed up on the shores of several continents where they were placed by tidal waves high on rocky slopes and buried by the kelp and sludge swept up with them.

- a. Is the sentence simple? \_\_\_ compound? \_\_\_ complex? \_\_\_ compound-complex? \_\_\_
- b. Does it have an adverb clause? \_\_\_\_\_ Does it have an adjective clause? \_\_\_\_\_

c. Write the subject and verb of the main sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: 1a complex b after the storm subsided c. which had been rolled up from kelp beds deep under the sea d. eggs were discovered e. 4 2. a. simple b. none c. none d. 5 world-shaking, devastating, opening, delivering, held e. 2 opening crevasses, delivering mammals f. 5. in its intensity, across the Pacific Ocean, in the ocean floor, in subterranean caves, since ancient times. 3. Complex. b. adjective clause (trick question because clauses that tell "place where," "time when," and "reason why" are adjective clauses. c. eggs washed.