



Leading the Way!

Newspaper journalists are people who listen for a story, find the facts, write the story, and deliver the story to us. Journalists write about many different types of stories; national news, local news, sports, weather, special events, etc.

Most articles written by reporters begin with something called a "lead." A lead to the story is the first few sentences. In the lead you can find all the important details of a story (who, what, when, where, and how). Unlike other types of writing, where details can be delivered throughout the piece, newspaper articles commonly use a lead to begin the story.

There is a good reason for this. Newspaper journalists discovered that people who read the paper tend to be busy and want to quickly pick out the stories they want to read. They also want the facts of the stories quickly. They do not want to read through a long story to get the basic facts. If a newspaper is not printing stories that deliver the facts quickly, the reader will purchase a different paper that will.

So newspaper journalists make it a point to write detailed leads. If the lead is interesting, the reader will continue to read the story. If the lead is not interesting, at least the reader will find it out quickly and will move on to another story.

Find a newspaper in your school or home. Pick any story and read the lead. As you read the lead, write down the following information:

Who-

What-

When-

Where-

How-

Why-

(sometimes the "why" is left out of the lead-this intrigues the reader and tricks him in to reading more) You should be able to find most of the information in the first few sentences. Try it again with a different news story.

Something to think about: Why isn't a lead used in regular story writing?

This lesson plan was prepared by New York Middle School teacher Terry Burton.

The Assignment

In this lesson you will go to a page of news stories that were written from January 1, 1911 to March, 10, 1922. Read the articles, and find the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" of each article. Be aware that sometimes, you may not be able to find all the information. When you are ready to begin, use the text below.

January 1, 1911

The first Annual Iditarod Sweepstakes Race was held today over a course approximately 20 miles in length. The race started at 11 a.m. in front of the Miners & Merchants Bank in Iditarod. The route was along Front Street to Willow; then straight out to the Summit Roadhouse; then on the Boulder Trail down Boulder Creek to Discovery Otter; along the cut-off trail on the left limit of Otter Creek to Discovery Otter; through Flat City; then back on the government trail to the Summit Roadhouse and back to the starting point. The temperature was up around zero but there were very high winds which reached near blizzard velocity along some parts of the trail.

Claude Shea, driving his own team of 5 dogs, took first place with a time of 2 hours 28 minutes and 54 seconds and first prize of \$350. Dan Campbell, driving the Northern Commercial Company Team, had trouble with the leader but placed second at 2:58:29 and \$100. Winner of the \$50 third prize was Slim McRae, driving the Northern Saloon Team for a time of 3:12:19. Sam Adams placed fourth and Tom McMahan fifth, both out of the money.

F.E. Decker was starter for the race. Chris Antonison and Robert Simpson were timekeepers. The judges were Charles Ross, C. J. Hurley, and Jack Baird of Iditarod; Frank H. Chew, J. J. Jean and George Bishop at Summit Roadhouse; Arthur A. Shonbeck, Karl Thiele and Jack Ryan at Discovery Otter, and Frank Stanley, Jack Connolly and Bert Moore at Flat City. Marshals were Captain Donovan, Isadore Goldstein, Ike Bayles, Joe Smith, Doc Kemp, George Auten and Martin Sickinger.

March 1, 1914

Oscar Gill, the mail carrier on the route from Seward to Knik and Susitna Station, left Seward with one of the largest loads of mail ever to go out by dog team. He carried first class mail and some newspapers and small parcels for camps and roadhouses all along the trail as well as for the post offices at Knik and Susitna.

January 21, 1916

The first sled dog race in Anchorage was staged under the auspices of the Anchorage Kennel Club, of which Arthur A. Shonbeck was president. The 54 mile course started in front of the Crest Hotel on Fourth Avenue in downtown Anchorage and the teams raced to old Knik, near the head of Knik Arm, and return. Frank Dixon, with a 5 dog team, was the winner in 7 hours, 52 minutes. Walter Howard of Knik, driving 7 dogs, placed second. He was 7 minutes behind Dixon. William Greer, driving Way

Bowker's team of 6 dogs, made the distance in 8 hours, 40 minutes, while Albion Gustafson, with 5 dogs, took 9 hours and 30 seconds.

January 9, 1917

The gold train from Iditarod, in charge of its veteran captain, R. H. "Bob" Griffis, reached Seward late in the evening and just in time for the gold to be loaded aboard the steamer MARIPOSA. The train left Iditarod on Sunday morning, December 10, with 46 dogs. The gold, valued at \$650,000, represented the recovery in the Iditarod area between the last steamboat shipment, about October 1, and the end of the mining season in late November. It was packed in iron-bound wooden boxes with a total weight of 2,600 pounds and made the trip on four sleds.

With Griffis were W. C. Mitchell, Harry Whittemore, Siegfred Wiig and Alex Alexson. They reached Anchorage on January 2 and rested there a couple days before journeying on to Seward. Griffis brought through his first gold shipment from the Iditarod in 1910 and has made a trip each winter since then. He drove stage coaches in several western states before he came to Alaska, and was mail carrier in the Nome area for several years before he moved to the Iditarod Country.

March 10, 1922

Establishing a snowshoeing record expected to endure for many moons, J. J. Meherin, Alaska traveling man, covered the 38 miles from Ophir to Fritz's Roadhouse in 9 hours and won a bet. It was a heavy trail and Meherin left Ophir just ahead of Henry Martella's big dog team and beat it to the roadhouse by two hours.