The Newspaper in the Composition Classroom

Fleda Brown Jackson and Dennis Jackson

Matthew Arnold speaks of journalistic writing as "literature in a hurry." Many other critics have since held that it is done in too much of a hurry to be true "literature," and have often used "journalism" as a term of reproach, as a synonym for slovenly writing. The title of an 1890 Lippincott's Monthly Magazine article, "Journalism versus Literature," represents well the antipodal relationship that the two have shared in the minds of critics over the past century. But Archibald MacLeish, in a 1959 Atlantic Monthly essay, argues brilliantly against this idea that journalism and art are "opposites." Journalism and poetry, he contends, are both

> re-creations, different in degree but not different in kind, for the material in each case is our human experience of the world and of ourselves; and not fundamentally different in method or even in purpose, since the method of poetry like the method of journalism is selection from the chaotic formlessness of experience, and the purpose of both is the recording of the fragments selected in a sequence that makes sense.

In short, he condemns the "enormous gulf we have dug" between the concept of journalism and the concept of literary art.

Clearly the goal of our freshman composition courses is to produce writers who select and record fragments of experience in "a sequence that makes sense." The recent trend toward using reportorial techniques as a writing tool for composition students is based on a belief in the close relationship of journalism to other forms of writing. And if journalistic techniques are useful, then it follows that the product--the daily newspaper--can be useful as well. In The Summing Up, Somerset Maugham describes its usefulness as a source: "We read the newspaper now as our ancestors read the Bible, not without profit, either; for the newspaper offers us a part of experience that we writers cannot afford to miss. It is raw material straight from the knacker's yard, and we are stupid if we turn up our noses at it because it smells of blood and sweat." In 35 years (between us) of teaching writing courses, we have become more and more convinced that the newspaper does indeed serve well as "raw material," and at the same time, as a model of perception, collection, and organization for our students. And based on that premise, we have designed a freshman composition course which uses the local newspaper as a model as well as a sourcebook. We also teach journalistic techniques such as interviewing and using copy editing symbols, and encourage the use of standard journalistic reference materials.

Most of the composition readers available today are filled with "literary" prose far more sophisticated than the writing most college students could ever hope--or need--to achieve. An essay examination cannot successfully be written in the style of D. H. Lawrence, nor a job application letter in the style of Virginia Woolf, nor a business communication or technical report in the style of Paul Tillich. And we can hardly expect students to write clearly and forcefully in response to highly complex and often abstract writings by such authors. Most students must struggle simply to understand such material, and thus do not pay enough attention to style or to what such models might teach them about their own process of writing.

And perhaps consequently, an increasing number of composition textbooks and readers over the past decade have included journalistic material: for example, McQuade and Atwan's _Popular Writing in America_ (1985) contains reading selections from magazine and newspaper articles as well as a number of advertisements; Scholes and Comley's _The Practice of Writing_ (1985) and Stevens and Kluewer's _In Print_ (1983) both illustrate traditional rhetorical modes with selections drawn from the popular media.

In our composition classes we have taken that approach a step further: our students use the Wilmington (Delaware) _Morning News_ and the campus newspaper, _The Review_, as the sourcebooks from which they are to draw inspiration and information for their writing projects. Students in our classes subscribe to the local paper at a half-price educational rate for the semester, and pick up their daily papers at a central campus location. So that both students and teacher may make easy reference to past articles, we ask students to maintain a stack of the 30 most recent newspapers.

Since the course is based on a local newspaper, the examples we will give here are naturally concerned with local issues. The examples should be viewed as just that. One of the chief advantages of the course we have designed is that it _is_ localized.

The first assignment given in the course is to begin a journal which is to be kept all semester. Students write five entries per week (roughly 500 words per week), responding in each entry to a specific item in the newspaper and labeling the entry with the article title, date, and page number. They are asked to show variety in their selections, making sure that the entry is always relevant to the newspaper reference. It is to be a journal of focused thought, not feelings--although feelings necessarily are involved. We emphasize that the journal is a place to _try_ writing, to experiment with ideas stimulated by the reading of the newspaper.

The course begins with a quick review of punctuation, including a lesson in copy-editing symbols--not the "correction symbols" commonly used by English teachers to mark student papers, but standard journalistic symbols. The review concludes with an in-class exercise requiring students to use these copy-editing symbols to revise and improve a piece of writing that has been salted with mechanical errors, imprecise word choices, redundancies, and wordy sentences. We use this exercise to encourage students to overcome their conviction that their first draft should be the

perfect one. Thereafter through the semester, we urge students to "pick over" their papers, using these copy-editing symbols as they rewrite. We allow even their "final" drafts to include a generous sprinkling of these symbols, thereby emphasizing that neatness is much less important than sharply worded, smoothly flowing prose. The revision process is stressed all semester: twice during the course, students are required to meet with the instructor to explore possible avenues for revision of two of their papers. Students revise their other major papers with the help of written suggestions from the instructor.

We encourage students to buy a dozen or so manila folders and get into the habit of clipping and filing newspaper items they might use as background to develop their own compositions. As a prewriting activity before several of their assignments (for example, before the "editorial" assignment late in the semester) we ask them to clip related material from the daily and the student newspaper for several weeks. We also ask them to clip all semester long in preparation for their research paper. The idea here is to get the students to adopt a "clip-and-file" habit that most professional writers practice.

As introduction to the regular reading of the newspaper, we spend a half hour talking about how newspaper prose style differs in general from other standard English prose (shorter paragraphs, usually; tendency toward simpler sentence structures; relatively sparing use of modifiers; omission of commas before last item in a series, etc.). We are able to begin talking about prose structure by comparing the inverted pyramid structure of a news story to, for example, the climactic structure of a feature story and the logical development of an editorial. It is absolutely necessary to emphasize early in the semester that the course is a <u>writing</u> course, not a "literature" or a "creative writing" or a "journalism" course: some students feel dismayed when they are not assigned short stories or poems to read or to write. During the semester, we frequently bring duplicated copies of a page of a novel or of an essay by a "famous" writer and spend some time comparing its style with a rhetorically similar piece in the daily newspaper. We also examine the rhetorical possibilities of one topic--for example, we check to see how the volatile issue of the new drunk driving law in our state is reported by a newswriter, a feature writer, an editorial writer, a business writer, a writer of a letter to the editor, as well as by the writers for the campus newspaper [see Appendix A]. We emphasize that a change in rhetorical strategy is accompanied by changes in language and structure.

Donald Murray and Peter Elbow, both prewriting pioneers, consider the writer's initial role that of a sensitive and conscientious reporter. And just as reporters often forget to extend their prewriting explorations to all of the W's and the H--Who? What? Why? When? Where? How?--so do students: the information-gathering techniques of student writers should be virtually the same as those of journalists. The current concern with prewriting techniques is an acknowledgment of the writer's need to perceive well, and then to report well those perceptions before beginning to organize and edit.

The first of six major writing assignments we make is particularly journalistic: we think that students, instead of organizing packaged textbook information into an essay, benefit by gathering their own information in the same way a reporter does before writing a story. In this case, students are asked to interview a person who is at least moderately well-established in a career which they themselves hope eventually to pursue. They are to find out what sort of education this man or woman has had; how he got the job; what training he received for the job; how well he likes the work; what special problems he has experienced in the field; what he does on the job; what he hopes to be doing ten years in the future, etc., and then write a "personality profile" for a fictitious company magazine [see Appendix B]. We lecture briefly on the techniques of interviewing, using suggestions from standard journalism textbooks. We talk about how questions should be posed to elicit maximum information. We talk about the necessity of planning questions before the interview; of questioning in a logical, sequential order; of phrasing tough, intimate questions; and of taking accurate notes and using a tape recorder efficiently. We urge the practicality of such skills by relating comments from a number of business executives: one DuPont Company engineer told us that for every in-house report she writes, she must interview three to a dozen fellow workers.

There is a side benefit to this interview exercise. We also ask students to pose one extra question to their interviewees: "How important is writing in your field, and does anyone evaluate you by what you write?" Reading a large number of the responses in class is most enlightening for freshmen frequently hostile to composition courses.

The second major writing assignment requires a comparison/contrast of the local newspaper and another paper. In class, we take a full hour to compare the National Enquirer (or some other juicy tabloid) and the Morning News, looking at the format (e.g., type face, headline size, use of white space, columnar arrangement, general layout, use of graphics), the types of advertisements appearing in the paper, the style (e.g., tone, vocabulary, length of sentences, paragraphs), the subjects covered in the first three pages of each, and the attitudes/subjects covered on the "editorial" page, if there is one. After this comparison of obviously diverse journalistic presentations (which typically prompts several good laughs), we assign an out-of-class comparison/contrast essay on the Morning News and The Wall Street Journal. Thus, students are asked to make the same judgments on quite different rhetorical levels. They are to consider (1) general format, (2) content, (3) style, and 4) projected audience. We think this assignment clearly superior to other similar ones we have tried: in the past, we have asked students to compare two poems (which requires learned skills and vocabulary that many have not gained), or to choose their own subjects for comparison. Both approaches deflect the focus from method to content, allowing little meaningful followup discussion on the writing techniques. Comparison of newspapers provides great diversity of material within defined parameters. Students are comfortable with the

daily paper, yet they must work to extract the information they need to make a detailed comparison.

Our third major writing assignment is complicated and requires careful preparation, but is worth the effort: the class conducts a survey similar to those sociological/economic surveys frequently reported in the newspaper, and writes formal reports based on the results. Each student is given ten questionnaire sheets (13 questions on each) having to do with the quality of high school education as perceived by public and private high school graduates. Some questions asked: Are you a public or private high school graduate? How well do you think your high school prepared you for college? In what subject(s) do you feel best prepared? Worst prepared? What was the average number of homework hours you spent per week in your last two years in high school? How would you rate the quality of teaching, overall, in your high school? [see Appendix C]

Our students fill out the sheets by selecting at random students on campus and interviewing them, recording their responses to the questions. Most questions require only a, b, or c responses, but a few are short answer, which provides some anecdotal material our student writers may add to their final reports. When all survey sheets are completed, we spend part of a class period tabulating cumulative results (students have individually done preliminary tabulation of their ten sheets before class). Before the next class meeting, we prepare a handout which lists all total numerical results and a generous sample of anecdotal material. From this information, students are to write a report, each assuming the "mask" of a "student researcher" for the Morning News. Each imagines that he or she has conducted all the interviews personally and is responsible for preparing a formal report which will be given to a reporter. This imaginary reporter would then write a newspaper feature story using the report as the sole resource. Students are warned that they are not the feature story writers: they merely prepare a factual report, complete with an abstract, an explanation of the method of the survey, and conclusions.

Several weeks before the report is to be written, students are told to clip sample graphs and tables from the news and business sections of newspapers, and before the report is due, we examine in class various graphic methods of presenting statistical material in as accessible a manner as possible--some written, some graphic or tabular.

The assignment allows practice in logical thought (understanding the figures), interpretation of quantitative material (deciding what the figures mean and clearly explaining that to a reader), and control of emphasis (deciding which facts to illustrate graphically, which to discuss in detail, and which to ignore). Most students, especially those not mathematically inclined, have found the statistical work difficult, but challenging, and have worked hard to present readable and usable material. On the end-of-the-semester survey concerning the various assignments, students have claimed that, next to the research paper, they worked hardest on this assignment. They also ranked it as second only to the research paper in general usefulness in improving

their writing skills. One of the main reasons, we think, that the assignment works so well is that students themselves do the information-gathering: the report becomes the result of their own labors, not simply a re-arrangement of derived information.

The fourth major writing assignment is a process essay such as those found in "how-to" columns of the newspaper. Most students have written similar papers in high school, but we feel that describing a logical sequence of actions is an important enough skill to merit a repetition of the assignment. As preparation, we clip (and ask the students to clip) examples of "how-to" articles from the newspaper. In the spring there are plenty on pruning bushes, planting tomatoes, fertilizing a lawn; in the winter there are columns on woodworking, home electrical wiring, or cabinetry. We look at one or two classic examples in class, noting especially the structures and the voice. Students choose their own topics and audience (e.g., newspaper column, do-it-yourselfer's magazine, instructional pamphlet) at the top of their papers. The paper is evaluated on the basis of how well it speaks to its professed audience.

The fifth major assignment is a persuasion essay in the guise of a newspaper "editorial." We lead up to this assignment with several earlier discussions of persuasive language. Students clip and categorize advertisements according to persuasive techniques; we hand out copies of a Mobil Oil Company "Observations" ad (from a Sunday newspaper supplement) and analyze its persuasive techniques and language; and, we examine a biased news story in a local "yellow journalism" publication, identifying emotionally charged words, connotations, and logical fallacies.

Students are given three weeks before the actual writing of their editorial to choose a topic of some local, national, or international importance and clip newspaper articles which will provide background information for their argument. The assignment is to write an editorial for the campus newspaper, The Review. We provide a list of suggestions--issues frequently in the news (e.g., the concept of "Star Wars"; the conflict over apartheid in South Africa; the question of whether American universities should keep their large investments in South African businesses; tuition hikes; violence against women). We examine several newspaper editorials in class, identifying the necessary ingredients of an argument according to Cicero. All clippings are to be handed in along with the editorial, thus making it possible to appraise what information each student has chosen to include, as well as his accuracy in quoting. Students who write exceptionally good editorials are encouraged to submit their work to The Review for possible publication.

The sixth major assignment is the research paper. Unlike typical research paper projects, this one is designed to elicit the students' semester-long attention: the paper is to be based largely on their reading of the Morning News and The Review. The list of possible topics is drawn from current news and feature items--for example, "Computers and Our Society," "Troubles on the Small Farm in America," "American-Russian Relations," "Hunger in Africa," and "Teenage Alcohol Use." Students must choose three topics early in the semester. After several weeks, they will

have an idea which topic yields the most information from the newspaper and which one interests them the most. During the remainder of the semester, they clip, organize, and save items relating to their chosen topic. Further, we encourage them to let their journal do double duty--to respond occasionally in their daily journal entries to items relating to their research project. The journal thus serves as an important part of the prewriting process for the research paper.

We require library work as well. We encourage our students to use references which receive heavy traffic from journalists: The New York Times Index, Facts on File, the annual Statistical Abstract of the United States, various almanacs and Who's Who encyclopedias, to name a few. We put on reserve in the library William L. Rivers' Finding Facts: Interviewing, Observing, Using Reference Sources (Prentice-Hall, 1975)--a useful little book listing central sources of information and reference books for many specialized fields, engineering, electronics, social science, communications, psychology, medicine, etc. A corollary library orientation program includes a library tour, a PLATO library research lesson, and an assignment of further library research. Students are required to find at least two books and two magazine/journal articles to use as sources for their papers along with the newspaper clippings. Normally, such references yield background statistics, historical information, or another point of view.

Several newspaper-related exercises preparatory to the research paper are interspersed with the major writing assignments during the semester. A paraphrase exercise requires students to read a 400-word interview or speech duplicated from The New York Times and condense it to fifty words. We require that students keep a couple of direct quotations from the original, but rely largely on paraphrase. The followup discussion is on condensing, rewording source material, and punctuating source material. An alternative to this assignment is to ask students to choose a breaking news story (page one of the newspaper for several days), follow it for a week, then summarize the event or situation in 250 words. Another preparatory exercise--a very popular one with students--is a notetaking assignment. We give students a blank half-sheet of paper and ask them to take notes on a newspaper feature story, one we have duplicated (we make sure it has lots of statistics and quotations). This is done in class with a time limit imposed. We collect the notes and the newspaper article at the end of the time limit. Then, three weeks later, we spring the half sheet of notes on the students again and ask them to reconstruct one lengthy paragraph based on their notes. This is subsequently checked against the original newspaper story, especially for accuracy. Students are chagrined and amused by the inaccuracy of their transference of quotations and facts from the source to their final paragraphs. Some of our funniest moments have been those in which the whole class searches for the right quote in the original and points out to a classmate that he or she has--however innocently--grossly misrepresented the facts. This assignment closely precedes students' actual writing of the research paper and serves to warn them of the necessity of accuracy in that paper.

We require students to turn in all drafts of the research paper with the final one, as well as all clippings--those actually used as well as those not used. Sections paraphrased or quoted in the research paper must be underlined in the clippings. It is then easy for the instructor to trace inaccurately represented source material--and since the students know this, most are more careful to be accurate. We do not require bibliography cards or note cards on the newspaper clippings (as we do on other source material); all newspaper references, of course, must be footnoted in the paper.

There are special advantages in this newspaper-oriented approach to a composition course:

- Newspapers offer such an enormously varied selection of readings that students cannot fail to find something that interests them; the use of local town and campus newspapers engages students on a more immediate level than most composition readers, and the very impermanence of the local daily newspaper encourages students to think of their own writing as subject to change.
- Newspapers can easily be used to illustrate the various rhetorical strategies, all the forms of discourse: narration can be found in the news and sports stories; description in features (personality profiles and travel pieces); exposition all over the paper, in consumer reports, process descriptions; and argument and persuasion in editorial and op-ed pages and in advertisements.
- Problems with plagiarism are significantly reduced. Virtually every project assigned involves students' direct responses to something they have read in the newspaper during the semester, and they are asked to submit clips along with their papers. We seldom have to worry about students borrowing from the fraternity's essay file or copying from library books. What this has meant, for us, is that we have been able to assign a much broader variety of topics for the research paper without having to worry that students will plagiarize.
- We much prefer writing assignments that call for students to adopt a particular "mask" and write toward a specific audience (e.g., "write this editorial for the student newspaper"). An electrical engineering student learns more about writing--about the interaction of style and audience--by doing a "profile" of an electrical engineer for a house organ than in composing a general essay on "Why I Chose Electrical Engineering." Such essays usually wind up with students directing the energies in their writing toward the teacher, a nebulous target at best. So we don't hesitate to ask our students to direct many of their writing assignments toward the readers of the Morning News or The Review. To write well for this newspaper audience, students must learn to write simple, clear, concise prose--that is, the sort of prose they will need to write throughout their careers and beyond.
- Finally, students benefit from studying style in good newspaper writing. Newspaper models allow students to see in simple form the characteristics of language that are employed in far more complicated ways in "literary" models of conventional composition readers. And the immediate juxtaposition of mediocre and good writing in the newspaper provides a chance to examine both

side-by-side to discover _why_ good is good. Although the old axiom that "today's news wraps tomorrow's mackerel" accurately describes the necessary evanescence of newspaper writing, we contend that a good number of local contemporary newspaper writers are--in the face of the traditionally despotic journalistic constraints of time and circumstance--producing good quality prose, worthy of study by our composition students.

University of Delaware

APPENDIX A

RHETORICAL STRATEGIES

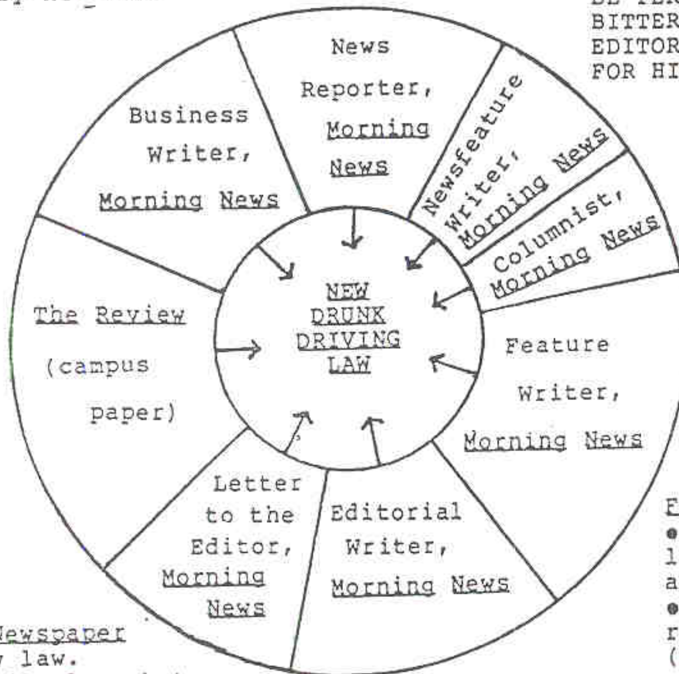
COMPARISON OF RHETORICAL STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES, AND LANGUAGE BY WHICH VARIOUS NEWSPAPER WRITERS WOULD APPROACH THE SAME SUBJECT.

News Reporter, Morning News
State legislature passes tough new drunken-driving law (at urging of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, and others). OBJECTIVE, NEUTRAL. LIKELY IN "INVERTED PYRAMID STRUCTURE."

Newsfeature Writer, Morning News
Article contrasting views of lone state legislator who voted against the law with those of the legislator who proposed the bill. STILL "TIMELY," LIKE "NEWS STORY." DOESN'T NEED TO FOLLOW "INVERTED PYRAMID" STRUCTURE.

Business Writer, Morning News
Interpretation and analysis of effect of new law on local businesses. Interviews liquor store owners and restaurant owners whose businesses will likely be affected by new law.

Columnist, Morning News
Strong attack on legislator who opposed tougher law. COLUMNIST CAN BE PERSONAL, HUMOROUS, WHIMSICAL, BITTER, SATIRIC, IN A WAY THAT THE EDITORIAL WRITER CANNOT. SPEAKS FOR HIM/HERSELF, NOT FOR PAPER.



Feature Writer, Morning News
- Profile of local M.A.D.D. leader who has lost a child in accident caused by drunk driver.
- First-person account by reporter who drinks alcohol (under supervision of experts) and traces effects of liquor on motor skills. FEATURE STORY NOT AS "TIMELY" AS NEWS STORY. WRITER CAN BE MORE SUBJECTIVE, CAN "PLAY" MORE--WITH HUMOR, WORD PLAY. WRITER FREE TO USE FICTIONAL TECHNIQUES SUCH AS SCENE SETTING, CREATION OF CHARACTER, DIALOGUE. WRITER MORE CONSCIOUS OF "ENDING," DOESN'T HAVE TO FOLLOW "INVERTED PYRAMID."

The Review, Campus Newspaper
- News story on new law.
- Editorial supporting law, but complaining that it applies only to drivers who live in the state, not to out-of-state drivers. Urges a "national" law.
- Feature on how local tavern patrons are using breath analysis machines in "chug-a-lug" contests.

Editorial Writer, Morning News
Writer applauds the new law, & the legislature that passed it. EDITORIAL WRITER OFTEN HAS TO DO SUBSTANTIAL RESEARCH (CLIPS IN MORGUE, A.A. CHAPTER, STATE HIGHWAY PATROL, YEARBOOKS AND ALMANACS, CARD CATALOGUE, READERS GUIDE, ETC.). WRITER OFTEN SPEAKS FOR NEWSPAPER ("WE"-"OUR").

Letter to the Editor, Morning News
Writer complains about controversial roadblocks set to catch drunken drivers on weekend.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT

STEP 1: Interview one person in your chosen field (or at least in a profession you are interested in). Preferably, this person should be over 25 years old, someone who has achieved at least some status in the profession. Do not choose someone you know well. This can be an in-person interview or a telephone interview. Be prepared--have your questions ready, in hand and rehearsed; have pen and paper, and/or tape recorder ready.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS (you should add your own, according to your interests and needs):

- Did you get a college education? Where? Degree in what major field? What minors?
- Did you work during college? What work? How many hours per week during school terms? Were the jobs career-related? Did you do field-work internships?
- What three or four courses did you study in college that helped most to prepare you for your professional work?
- How did you get your start in this profession? When did you first know that this was what you wanted to do? How did you get your initial full-time job?
- Would you trace your career for me, briefly, telling me names of companies you have worked for, the years, and the job titles you have held?
- What are your job responsibilities?
- What about your job do you most like? (maybe two or three things)
- What about your job do you most dislike? (a couple of things)
- Envision yourself 10 to 15 years from now. What are you doing, what sort of work are you doing? (In short, what are your goals in your career, in your life?)
- How much money should a person entering this profession expect to make during the first year? What do the best people in this profession make as a yearly salary?
- What advice would you give a young person interested in joining your profession?

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* How important are good writing skills in your job? How often do you have to write in your profession, and how often is what you write evaluated by someone else, in terms of its effectiveness?

STEP 2:

Assume that you are employed by a firm which has a monthly house organ, and that this company magazine typically features a "profile" and photograph of someone in your profession. Assume that you've been asked to write one of these "profiles" for next month's magazine. It should be 350-500 words long, and should be about the person you've interviewed. It might begin something like this:

Betty Sue Smith first decided to become a lawyer when she was 13 years old and saw an old "Perry Mason" show on television. She later studied political science at Sesame University, and took her law degree in 1971 at Kermit State University in Oregon. During college she worked ten hours a week as a clerk.

And then you would continue to trace Betty Smith's career. Your profile would include some interesting direct quotations, though it would likely contain a lot more paraphrased material narrating her life, describing her office or her personal demeanor, and recording her attitudes about the profession. Perhaps a good ending would be a direct quotation offering her advice to young people thinking about entering the field. This would be one way of doing the "profile." But you are free to determine your own approach and structure in writing the piece. Make it accurate. Make it interesting, lively.

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*NOTE: The professional's comments about "writing skills" may not fit properly into your profile. If not, write up an extra paragraph recording the person's response to that question and bring this sheet to class.

APPENDIX C

ASSIGNMENT: SURVEY ON "HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION"

PART 1: THE INTERVIEWS

You are to take the ten Survey Sheets given you in class and conduct ten interviews. In seeking respondents, try to mix some upperclassmen with freshmen and sophomores, some public high school graduates with graduates of private or parochial schools, and some out-of-staters with Delawareans.

In conducting each interview, you should:

- identify yourself and your project;
- read each question aloud, and give the respondent time to think;
- avoid giving any impression of your own attitudes, and ask your respondent to be as fair-minded as possible;
- emphasize that these questions refer only to high school academic matters, not sports, clubs, etc.;
- record the person's responses accurately.

PART 2: THE TABULATION

You will submit the ten Survey Sheets in class. We will work together to tabulate some of the results of the survey. The instructor will complete the tabulations, prepare a sampling of the responses to Questions 8 and 13 on the Survey Sheet, and

return the raw data and quotations to you in a later class.

PART 3: THE REPORT

You are then to assume that you have personally compiled these statistics (that is, that you have conducted all the 400+ interviews). Assume that you are a student researcher employed part-time by the Wilmington MORNING NEWS, and that your boss on the news desk has asked you to (1) conduct this survey and (2) prepare a report (500 to 800 words) for use by a reporter who will base a newspaper story on your "survey."

Your report should:

- describe the method you have used to conduct the survey--how you chose respondents, asked the questions. Indicate that this was not a scientifically selected sample. (Assume that you conducted all the 400+ interviews involved in the survey.)
- present the findings of your survey in clear, intelligible English. Emphasize the statistics that seem most impressive, worthwhile. Use tables, graphs, charts, any sort of graphics that help you present your material clearly, simply. (But don't merely present your reader with stacks of numbers, and leave it to him/her to figure out their significance.) Offer some illustrative quotations (from Question 13) which the reporter might want to include in the article. Be sure, as you write your report, to give emphasis to what you consider the most important results of your survey, and draw some conclusions--do all you can to help your reader, the person who must use your report as the basis for his or her newspaper article.

SURVEY SHEET

Check one: ______PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE
______PRIVATE OR PAROCHIAL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

1. (check one) Graduate of a high school in this state______
Graduate of a high school outside this state______

2. Classification (freshman, soph., jr., sr.):________Major________

3. Sex (check): male_____ female_____

4. How hard did you have to work in high school, academically, over-all? (a) hard or very hard_____(b) medium_____
(c) not hard_____

5. How challenging were the courses for you in the following areas?

SUBJECTS	CHALLENGING	MILDLY CHALLENGING	SLIGHTLY
English	____	____	____
Foreign Language	____	____	____
Laboratory Science	____	____	____
Mathematics	____	____	____
Social Sciences	____	____	____

6. In which of the subject areas in Question 5 did you get the best preparation?

7. How much, if any, of your time was spent taking non-basic courses for credit that you now consider to be trivial or a waste of time? (If the subject names some of the basic courses above, do not comment--just record the response. Also, if the student asks for examples, say "cheerleading," "yearbook preparation," "Beginning Pottery," etc.)

   a. a lot of time____ b. a moderate amount ____c. very little____

8. If you did have such courses, name some: ______________________________
   ____

9. What course do you wish you had spent more time on, in high school? (Name one).

10. What was the average number of homework hours (including study-hall work) you spent per week in your last two years of high school?

    a. 9 hours or more ___ b. 4-8 hours ___ c. 0-3 hours ___

11. How would you rate the quality of teaching over-all, in your high school?

    a. good/excellent____ b. fair____ c. poor/very poor____

12. How well do you think your high school prepared you for work at this university?

    a. very well ____ b. fairly well ____ c. poorly ____

13. If you could redesign your high school curriculum for the benefit of a younger brother or sister, what would you do?