

Analysis of "Must Read Journalists"

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Journalism 310: Writing for Mass Media Lance's List of Must Read Journalists

In the introduction to the Poynter Institute's book "America's Best Newswriting: A Collection of ASNE Prizewinners," the authors write that they know of three ways to grow as a writer:

First you must read good writing. Then you must write. Then you must spend the rest of your life thinking and talking about good reading and good writing.

I tend to agree. While we spend some time in the first half of this course studying the style and grammar of language, you should also focus on what Roy Peter Clark and Chris Scanlan of the Poynter Institute call the "grammar of stories." To achieve this, I encourage you to study the daily writings of a group of people I call "Must Read" Journalists.

I strongly recommend that you actively search for stories written by the journalists below to see how they put into practice the journalism techniques we discuss in class. Perhaps their work may encourage you to strive even harder to become as good. From time to time, I may assign a particular story or journalist for class discussion, or ask you to write a short analysis of a story. These assignments will be announced in class as needed.

To understand the "grammar of stories," Clark and Scanlan recommend you read stories in the following way:

- Read to understand the structure of stories -- how they begin, how they move from one scene to another, how they end.
- Read to discover how the process of writing works for each writer, from the conception of story ideas, to the collection of raw material, to finding a focus, to the creation of order, to clarification and revision.
- Read to hear the voice of the author through the story -- the sum of the strategies the writer uses to create the illusion of speaking directly to you, the reader.
- Read to learn the difference between writing to convey information and writing to create an experience for the reader.

Your analysis should focus on any of the writing lessons we cover in class or the textbook (right-branching sentences, active/passive voice, strong verbs, use of quotes, transitional devices, leads, etc.) or any of the concepts outlined above by Clark and Scanlan. Compare and contrast the concepts across the stories and how they are used by these journalists, using examples from the stories.

You can always find examples of great writing at the Pulitzer Prize Web site.

Reporters

DeNeen Brown (Washington Post)

Search: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/searches/mainsrch.htm>

David Finkel (Washington Post)

Search: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/searches/mainsrch.htm>

Hank Stuever (Washington Post)

Search: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/searches/mainsrch.htm>

Tamara Jones (Washington Post)

Search: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/searches/mainsrch.htm>

Katherine Boo (Washington Post)

Search: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/searches/mainsrch.htm>

Anne Hull (Washington Post)

Search: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/searches/mainsrch.htm>

Former award-winning journalist at the St. Petersburg Times now makes her home with the Post.

Rick Bragg (New York Times)

Search: <http://search.nytimes.com/search/daily/>

Winnie Hu (New York Times)

Search: <http://search.nytimes.com/search/daily>

Stephanie Simon (Los Angeles Times)

Search: <http://www.latimes.com/archives/>

J.R. Moehringer (Los Angeles Times)

Search: <http://www.latimes.com/archives/>

This Pulitzer Prize winning journalist seldom writes anymore, but when he does, the stories are worth reading.

Kevin Robbins (Austin American Statesman)

Search: <http://www.austin360.com/aas/standing/7days.html>

Only the previous week's stories are free. Choose a day, (he usually writes for the Life section), and the best thing to do is scan for Kevin's byline. Stories older than a week, you have to pay for

to retrieve. Using the archive search engine, even if it is for a story within the last week, usually requires payment.

Lisa Pollak (Baltimore Sun)

Search: <http://www.sunspot.net/search/entry/>

Ken Fuson (Des Moines Register)

Search: <http://DesMoinesRegister.com/help/search.html>

Tom Hallman (Portland Oregonian)

Search: <http://www.oregonlive.com/search/>

The search engine is currently experience technical difficulties. In addition to current stories, any of his Pulitzer prize winning features on the boy behind the mask, Sam Lightner, are highly recommended for reading. See the Pulitzer Web site above.

Vanessa Ho (Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

Search: <http://seattlep-i.nwsourc.com/search>

Columnists

You will have no problem finding stories by the columnists each week, as all but Hunter S. Thompson write four to five columns per week. Also note the difference between the columnists and reporters. Columnists are allowed to use their opinions in their work. Reporters are not.

Mitch Albom (Detroit Free Press)

Search: <http://www.freep.com/index/albom.htm>

Joe Posnanski (Kansas City Star)

Search: http://www.kansascity.com/mld/kansascity/sports/columnists/joe_posnanski/

Hunter S. Thompson (espn.com)

Search: <http://espn.go.com/page2/s/thompson/>
Hunter writes a column each Monday for ESPN

David Waters (Memphis Commercial-Appeal)

Search: http://www.gomemphis.com/mca/columnist/0,1426,MCA_646_3123,00.html

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