

NEWS ANALYSIS SUMMARY

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS THOROUGHLY BEFORE STARTING THE ASSIGNMENT

DUE DATE: Check the schedule for the due date(s) and listen for it to be announced in class.

Start reading and start asking questions! Search out and analyze an excellent article from a newspaper or magazine that addresses an environmental issue. *Be sure to choose an environmental issue that you have great personal interest in.* For extra credit write a letter to the editor or to an elected official based on the article and your analysis of it. The objective is to develop analytical skills, your specific environmental interest and if you'd like to express an opinion to an official or publication. Points will be earned based on: 1) article selection, 2) adherence to instructions, and 3) meeting academic standards of writing (formatting, spelling, writing, and grammar) and following instructions.

Article Selection and Assignment Preparation

- 1) This assignment is to be typewritten and 1.5 spaced. CAREFULLY PROOFREAD your work and MAKE CORRECTIONS before submitting it.
- 2) Select an article that you believe is of interest for classroom discussion. Is it relevant to the course?
- 3) Articles from newspapers, journals or magazines **must** be from within 3 months.
- 4) Additional extra credit will be granted for *published "letters to the editor" or responses from officials or elected person within the semester.*
- 5) I reserve the right to reject your choice of articles if I judge them to be trivial, too short, or from a poor source (i.e. National Enquirer, People)—if you are not sure about your article—ask! Looking for article? Librarians are your friends, ask!
- 6) Attach a copy of the article with your analysis.
 - Type or legibly write a full citation **on the top of the first page of the article.**
 - **Duplication must be of the highest quality**—be sure to maintain reasonable margins. Articles that have been “cut and pasted” must be well organized.
- 7) SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS: Staple (nothing else will do) components of your work together in the following order:
 - a) News analysis assignment (Part 1 as described on the next page),
 - b) Photocopy of the fully cited article
 - c) Extra Credit: Copy of letter (be sure to mail, fax, or email, the original)
 - d) Extra Credit: Copy of a properly addressed and stamped envelope or email.
- 8) Do not use a cover sheet and do not put your work in a folder or an envelope.

PART 1

News Analysis

Complete the following in the exact order. Clearly number each question. Your answers must be **brief, direct, clearly understandable, and to the point.** Do not write prose paragraphs for questions #1-4. These questions merely allow you to clearly identify the information in your chosen article—save your analysis for question #5!

- 1) Title of the article followed by a complete citation. Be sure to include author, title, year, volume (for magazines), number (if any), and page number(s).

- Example: Wall, David. EPA and Public Differ over Major Risks, Wall Street Journal, March 19, 2007.
- 2) Complete this sentence regarding the author's hypothesis or major point:
 - The major point (or hypothesis) of the article is....
 - 3) Complete this sentence regarding the fundamental environmental issue discussed in the article:
 - The fundamental environmental issue(s) discussed in the article is (are)....
 - 4) List FIVE key points that support the **author's** hypothesis or major point.
 - The five major points of this article are:
 - 1.
 2. (Etc.)
 - 5) Explain why you chose this article. It **MUST** be related to a personal or professional interest or your major. (Just a sentence or two will do nicely.)
 - 6) Critique your article and explain your point of view (one half page minimum, two pages **maximum**). Now that you've collected data, analyze your discoveries. Clearly identify what you are analyzing---illustrate your environmental critical thinking skills.
 - Requirements: Present your critique/analysis in a logical, well-organized and well-written manner. Consider the following questions in your analysis:
 - Was the article well researched and unbiased, or incomplete and misleading?
 - Does the article lack some piece of information or knowledge that is relevant to the issue or problem?
 - Is the author's information contrary to facts as you know them? How?
 - Could it have been better written? How?
 - Are the sources convincing or authoritative?
 - What more would you like to know about this issue?
 - Advice: It's a good idea to restate parts of 1-4 in this section, particularly in the introductory paragraph. Think about this carefully!
 - Think of this critique as a "stand-alone" paper, that is, as though it was a critique of the news article. The reason you wrote 1-4 was to collect and collate (organize) data, to prepare for the work of writing. Now have some fun and apply the apply analysis—show off your thinking skills.

Here's some information to help you analyze the article.

SUMMARY OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

- Identify central issues
- Recognize stereotypes and cliches
- Recognize bias, ethnocentricity, propaganda, or emotional factors
- Distinguish between verifiable and unverifiable data
- Distinguish between the essential and the incidental in determining whether facts support a generalization.
- Draw warranted conclusions or inferences by determining validity of soundness of an argument
- Judge whether a statement is over-vague or over-specific
- Classify items according to rational criteria
- Relate cause and effect
- Are there enough facts? Interviews? Representations? Does the story need to show "both sides?" Of course these are merely guidelines.

PART 2—Extra Credit
Letter to the Editor or Elected Official

Decide if you would like to write a letter to the editor expressing your opinion about the article or to write to a government official, such as a politician or agency representative. If you write to the “government,” request something from them, such as their position on the fundamental environmental issue discussed in your article. You may want to request an action on the basis of the article and your knowledge of the issue. *If they respond before the end of the course, you will earn extra credit.* If you write to the editor, *look to editorial section for the correct address, and read a few letters for writing style ideas.* If your letter is published, you will also earn extra credit—just turn in a copy of your published letter! Not sure who your elected representatives are? Call your City Clerk or library and ask or check the internet for addresses of officials, federal and international agencies.

- All letters must be written in appropriate formal letter style, including personal letterhead or return address, complete address to which you are writing to, date of your letter, and your signature. I expect that you know how to do this.
- Be sure to mention the article, its source and date in your letter (if you refer to it in a letter to an elected official--it’s a good idea to include a copy).
- Use information and provide appropriate references from Living in the Environment, to support your opinions.
- You must mail, fax, or email your letter! If you fax your letter put “via fax” below the address.
- Use the information provided below to fine-tune your letter.

Letter Writing Suggestions

Remember: 99% of good writing is rewriting!

- If you choose to write a letter to the editor, read a few examples from the “letters to the editor” to get a feel for the writing style that the publication prefers to publish.
- Plan your first sentence carefully.
- Don’t merely be critical: make constructive suggestions.
- Don’t merely be critical of the news in the story. Discuss the environmental aspects of the story--then you can be critical of the ramification of the news (if it is that kind of an article).
- Don’t expect a journalist in a story to take a position—a true professional is to be objective, not subjective.
- Focus on what your message is. What are you trying to say? Say it!
- Express your thoughts as clearly and concisely as possible. Avoid long drawn out sentences.
- Avoid violent language or sarcasm.
- Supply facts that may be omitted or slanted in the presentation of news articles or editorials.
- Don’t hesitate to use relevant personal experience to illustrate a point.
- Bring moral judgment to bear upon issues confronting your life, your local environment, your nation and/or the world.
- Try to be hopeful and practical.
- Always sign your name and give your address.
- When writing an elected official, ask for a response to the specific item discussed in your letter.