Writers' Workshop

Prewriting Chart to Help You Report

In this Writers' Workshop you will:

- Use a prewriting chart to focus the story and collect all the elements of a strong news story.

Prewriting Chart to Help You Report

Experienced journalists gather everything they need as they report, while developing journalists find themselves going back to their sources and the scene of their first-person reporting many times—or at least wishing they could. Experienced journalists find their focus and mentally compose their lead as they report. They collect the best details and are never tempted to make up details.

This chart will help you collect all the elements you may need to write a strong, journalistic general news story, one that interests and engages your audience. Use it, and you will find you are ready to write swiftly using a writing map.

If you use this chart now, eventually you will find that you collect all this information almost automatically.

Apply It!

Choose a fairy tale, nursery rhyme or fable and turn it into a general news story with a headline and read-out, with one focus per paragraph. Use one-sentence paragraphs and arrange your information using a breaking news, a folo or a general news writing map. Read your draft to your group, receive responses, revise, proofread and publish the story.

Prewriting Chart

A prewriting chart can be found with the Chapter 6 resources on the Journalism website. Use the prewriting chart to help you collect all the elements of a strong news story.

What You Need	What You Have (keywords, names, references to yo...
What is this story about in one sentence? (That is the focus.)	
Why should my audience care? (This is the significance.)	
What is the most compelling and fresh part of this story? (That should come first in a folo or general news story and be the focus of a breaking news story.)	
Five W's lead or a feature-type lead?	
What is the conflict or controversy?	
Who will speak for each side of the controversy?	
Side One: Names, identification, quotations	
Side Two: Names, identification, quotations	
Side Three: Names, identification, quotations	
Who can give a face to the problem? Name, identification, quotations	
Real-time color—anecdote	
Interesting descriptive detail or scene	
What other things does my audience want to know about this? In what order?	
History of controversy?	
Broader causes and conflicts involved?	
Are any quotations from sources especially memorable (potential closing quote)?	