

Unit 4

The Body of News

What Is the Body of News?

The body of news provides more of the background and details of a news story following the headline and lead. The news body could contain **just** one paragraph or more. Each paragraph, however, could be either simple, compound or complex sentences depending on how much information the writer wants to give.

Where Is the Body of News Located in a News Story?

The information from the second paragraph to the last paragraph of a news story is called the body. However, the body of some news stories may have only one paragraph. Similarly, a paragraph may **also** contain **just** one sentence.

The Function of the Body of News

The body of news provides the reader the background and details of a news story. It is an optional part in that it can be eliminated by the reader if they do not have time to skim it or it can be trimmed by the editor from the bottom up if there is not enough space for it, without causing any harm to the news story because the news summary and main idea are already stated in the headline and lead.

How Is Each Paragraph Arranged in the Body?

Since there may be one paragraph or more in the news body, each paragraph is structured to present the news in order of descending importance,' or in the form of an inverted pyramid, not in chronological order as in other types of writing.

The following are some steps in arranging paragraphs of the news body:

Step 1: Use the second paragraph to provide the background by making the story clearer, for example, what had happened before.

Step 2: Introduce direct quotation as the source of news in the third, fourth paragraphs and so on to communicate directly to the audience. However, do not string all the quotations together. Save some for the other paragraphs if there are too many of them.

Step 3: Use transitions when a new paragraph is introduced. There are many kinds of transitions which help smooth every paragraph together. They are:

Numerically- first, second, third, etc.

By time-- at 3 p.m., by noon, three hours later, just half an hour before, etc.

Geographically-- in Bangkok, over India, outside the home, district 3 voters, in Delhi itself, on Ramkhamhaeng University campus, etc.

With words- also, but, once, meanwhile, therefore, in other action, however, below, above, etc.

¹ Itule, Bruce D. and Douglas A. Anderson, *News Writing and Reporting for Today's Media* 3rd ed.. New York: MC Graw- Hills. 1994, p. 103.

Step 4: Do not include any personal opinions because the reporters are the eyes and ears of their audiences. They are just eyewitnesses, not the authors. If they want to express their own opinion, use direct quotations of people involved in the incident. If an adjective is used to describe a person or something, put it in quotation marks, for example, Radio Thailand and TV channel 11, both run by the Public Relations Department have been dubbed “dinosaurs” for producing “dull” and “unattractive” programs. (From *The Nation*, Monday 14, August 1995)

Step 5: Do not end the news report with an ending similar to a short story, novel or play. Make the writing or report stop, but not the news story. An effective way to conclude a news story is with a direct quotation.’

The Development of a News Story

As mentioned earlier, a news story comprises the headline, lead and body. Here are two examples to elaborate these three parts of news stories.

Example 1: (From *News Writing and Reporting for Today’s Media* by Bruce A. Itule and Douglas A. Aderson, p. 103-5.)

A 49-year- old woman dangled upside down outside the 16th floor of her Lake shore Drive apartment for 10 minutes Saturday, saved from falling by a pullover robe that snagged on a window part.

² Itule, p. 106.

The woman, who reportedly had Swallowed sleeping pills and ammonia and slit her throat and wrists before diving out the window, kicked frantically to free the robe and complete the suicide attempt while more than 100 onlookers gathered and firefighters broke down seven doors in trying to find her apartment

“Her body was entirely, totally out of the window,” said 1st Battalion Chief Michael Hughes, who directed The rescue from the ground. “Her head stretched down to the 15th floor.”

The bottom of the woman’s full length, red velvet robe was knotted on an 8-inch metal opening mechanism of a transom-type window, Hughes said. The floor-level window had snapped up as the woman jumped off it, catching the robe, he said.

“My heart was pounding.” He said. “She could have gone at any second. it was a miracle. I’ve been on the job for 31 years, and this was the most dramatic rescue I’ve ever seen. ”

Firefighters were called to the 29-story condominium on North Lake Shore Drive at about 9 a.m. by a boy in a nearby building, Hughes said.

When we got there, the hardest part was telling what floor she was on. At first we thought she was on the 24th. We had about 27 guys search and search until we found the right apartment.”

Once inside the apartment, Hughes said, firefighters slid a safety belt through an 1&inch opening between the window and the frame and lassoed the woman's leg as she resisted fiercely.

"If we opened the window (any farther), she would have fallen," said firefighters Roy O'Shea, who did the lassoing. Firefighter George Beary helped pull the woman in.

O'Shea, 40, who is 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighs 145 pounds, was selected for the task "because he was skinny enough to fit through the opening of the window," Hughes said.

Below, four civilians joined 11 firefighters in holding out a 16-foot circular safety net

"Right there I had to give them a crash course on how to hold it," Hughes said. "I was yelling for them to keep their feet forward and their arms away from their bodies so they wouldn't break their ribs if she fell."

Hughes said firefighters had Vied to reach the woman with a hydraulic ladder that was too shot, so they had to resort to the lasso maneuver.

As the woman was pulled to safety, applause erupted from the street and other battalion units where firefighters were listening m ordeal, Hughes said.

The woman, described by relatives and neighbors as despondent over a failed second marriage and a life threatening disease, was listed in fair condition Saturday evening in Rush-Presbyterian Hospital.

Example 2:

The headline

Gandhi killed by Hindu Fanatic

The lead/ gist/ main idea

New Delhi, Jan 30—Mohandes K.

An extremist whose act plunged India into sorrow and fear shot Gandhi at close range while he was making his evening devotions.

The Effect

Rioting broke out immediately in Bombay. The seventy-year-old leader whose people had christened him the Great Soul of India died at 5:45 p.m. (7.15 am. East) with his head cradled in the lap of his sixteen-year-old granddaughter **Mani**.

Death scene

Just half an hour before, a Hindu fanatic, Ram Naturam, had pumped three bullets from a revolver into Gandhi's frail body, emaciate by years of Fasting and asceticism.

Ghandi was shot in the luxurious gardens of Birla House in the presence of one thousand of his followers, whom he was leading to the little **summar** pagoda where it was his habit to make evening devotions.

The main incident

Dressed as always in his homespun, **sacklike** dhoti, and leaning heavily on a staff of stout

wood, Gandhi was only a few feet from the pagoda when the shots were fired.

Gandhi crumpled instantly, putting his hand to his forehead in the Hindu gesture of forgiveness to his assassin. Three bullets penetrated his body at close range, one in the upper right thigh, one in the abdomen, and one in the chest.

He spoke no word before he died. A moment before he was shot he said some witnesses believed he was speaking to the assassin- ‘You are late.’”

The assassin had been standing beside the garden path, his hands folded, palms together before him in the Hindu gesture of greeting. But between his palms he had concealed a small caliber revolver. After pumping three bullets into Gandhi at a range of a few feet, he fired a fourth shot in an attempt at suicide, but the bullet merely creased his scalp.

Arrest of assassin

The shots sounded like a string of fire crackers and it was a moment before Gandhi’s devotees realized what had happened. They turned on the assassin savagely and would have tom him to bits had not police guards intervened

with rifles and drawn bayonets. The assassin was hustled to safe keeping.

Gandhi was quickly borne back to Birla House and placed on a couch with his head in his granddaughter's lap. Within a few moments she spoke to the stricken throng, among them Bandit **Jawharal** Nehru, Premier of India: "Bapu (father) is finished."

Shift of scene

Then **Mani** rose and sat crosslegged beside the body of the man whose life was forfeit for the cause of peace and humanity. She began to chant the two-thousand-year-old verses of Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu scripture.

Development of the riot angle

Over India the word spread like wildfire. Minutes after the flash was received in Bombay, rioting broke out with Hindu extremists attacking Moslems. A panic-stricken Moslem woman echoed the thoughts of thousands with a cry: "God help us all."

In Delhi itself, in the quick gathering gloom of the night, the news set the people on the march.

People on the march

They walked slowly down the avenues and out of the squalid bazaars, converging on Birla House. There, by the thousands, they stood

weeping or moaning and wailing. Some sought to scale the high walls and catch one last glimpse of the Mahatama. Strong troop contingents strove to keep order.

Exhibition of the body

Tonight in response to the insistent demand of the people, Gandhi's body was shown to them.

The balcony window of the house opened and the body was borne outside. The people gasped and surged forward as it was placed in a chair facing them. A brilliant spotlight blazed on the wrinkled, brown face. The eyes were closed, the face peaceful in repose. A white sheet covered the bloodstained loincloth.

(From *The Art of Communication*, pp. 50-2.)

Activities

Exercise 1

Arrange the following information into the correct order by writing 1,2,3... in the space provided.

..... Winny is now in the care of foster parents. appointed by the Ministry of Community Developmet, the paper said

..... *Mother gets six years in prison for child abuse*

..... “Offenders who assault defenceless children will not get any sympathy from the court, “Judge Syed Alwee, who sentenced 29-year-old Cindy Candra on Saturday, said in remarks published by *The Sunday Times*.

..... Singapore - A court in Singapore has sentenced a pregnant woman to six years in jail for abusing her five-year-old-daughter so badly for being a slow eater that she became mentally retarded.

..... Chandra, a housewife, was given four years in prison for throwing her daughter Winny Ho on to the floor and two years for burning her ‘with a hair dryer.

..... “By your action, you have caused grave injury and harm to the child physically and mentally,” said Judge Alwee.

..... The abuse began barely two months after Winny, Chandra’s child from her first marriage, arrived in Singapore last year from Indonesia.

. . . The mother, who burst into tears, said in her defence that she was maddened by her daughter's slow eating habits.
(From *The Nation*, Monday, September 30, 1996)

Exercise 2

..... Mr. Amomphan said those found guilty of helping long-neck Karens illegally enter Thailand would be dealt with accordingly.

..... *Long-neck Karens to be sent back.*

..... Mr. Amomphan said Thai authorities will repatriate more than 17,000 Burmese refugees including long-neck Karens in this border province after Burmese troops and minority groups stop fighting.

..... All long-neck Karens in the northern province will be sent back home once fighting in Burma stops, according to deputy governor Amomphan Nimaphan.

. Regarding the racket involving 46 long-neck Karens recently taken from Ban Noi Soy Camp to a tourist spot in Mae Ai district of neighboring Chiang Mai province, the deputy governor said local officials were in touch with Chiang Mai authorities to help return the hilltribe people to their camp in Muang district.

(From *The Bangkok Post* Thursday, October 3, 1996)

Exercise 3

..... Kumpbol Ritthidej said he was a policeman from the Prachachuen station who was assigned to watch four of the poor demonstrators rallying in front of the Government House.

..... **Briefcase keeps nerves on edge**

..... Policeman bomb experts then examined the briefcase with an electronic sensor which immediately gave an alarm. But police said the alarm only indicated the existence of some metallic object.

..... The bomb experts then decided to take the briefcase back with them for a thorough examination.

..... A briefcase left unattended sparked a bomb scare at Government House yesterday.

..... A sniffer dog was brought in but failed to ascertain whether the case contained any explosive device. Police said the dog had just completed its training and was called in to do its job for the first time yesterday.

..... Later in the afternoon, a police lance corporal turned up at the Government House to look for this briefcase.

..... Security guards became suspicious when a black briefcase was found hanging on a wall by an elastic rope near the command building where the cabinet was holding its weekly meeting

(From The Bangkok *Post*, Wednesday February 19, 1997)

Exercise 4

..... Mr. Banharn was quoted as saying Thailand would like to serve as an Asian centre to help development of the Indochina region.

..... *Japanese to help on environment*

..... A Japanese official said that in a meeting with Mr. Hashimoto, Prime Minister **Banharn Silpa-archa** asked for Japan's cooperation in helping to develop Indochina in technology transfer and environmental protection.

..... Japanese prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto said yesterday Japan would help Thailand in any way it could to promote environmental protection technologies for the development of Indochina.

..... Mr. Banharn asked Mr. Hashimoto to help Thailand ensure the Asia-Eu summit goes smoothly.

..... Mr. Hashimoto gave reassurances of continued efforts in promoting bilateral cooperation with Thailand in such areas as cultural and youth exchanges and environmental protection.

Reuters

(From *The Bangkok Post*, Friday March 1, 1996)