

Interdependence

Guidance for Adaptation Main Assignment: Writing an article

Your task is to research the subject of adaptation and to compose an article, for example for a quality newspaper supplement, a science magazine or a science website, explaining to an interested reader:

- how living organisms are well adapted to their natural environments,
- why the theory of evolution by natural selection is a successful model to explain how adaptation happens.

Guidance for teachers

To prepare for this task, students need to see examples of the genre in which they will be writing – the science feature article. The *New Scientist* could be an obvious place to start for exemplar science magazine articles, with their website www.newscientist.com demonstrating what a science website could look like.

Once you have gathered some exemplar material, students then need to spend a lesson examining this in order to draw out conventions and codes of the genre. You could give students a list of questions or features to pick out, or a grid to fill out comparing two or more articles.

Students should focus on:

Presentation

- Layout: how does the article look on the page? Is it written in columns? What additional text/information is there on the page apart from the main body of the article?
- Headings: what's the headline, and how does it 'hook' readers in? What use is made of sub-headings? Is there a 'sub-headline' which gives more information about the article?
- Illustrations: what photographs or other images are used? What is their purpose (e.g. to illustrate an experiment or scientific concept)? Do they give added relevance to the story or highlight what is being discussed? What do the captions say?
- Font: what use is made of size and colour of fonts to emphasise different sections or arguments?

- Byline: where and how is the name of the author written?
- Insert boxes: are there additional boxes (often shaded a different colour to distinguish them from the main text) to give further information?
- How will the presentation change depending on whether you're writing a newspaper or magazine article or a web page?

Audience

Newspaper science features or magazines such as *New Scientist* have to cater for a mixed audience. Some readers will be dedicated scientists, but others will be interested lay people. How does the style and tone of the article reflect the diversity of its audience? For example, how much scientific terminology is used? Does the author try to make the article more 'relevant' by tying it into a current event or issue?

If you're exploring newspaper feature articles, how is the audience of a particular newspaper reflected in the content of the article? For example, would you expect the *Daily Mail*, *The Times* and *The Guardian* to treat a contentious issue (e.g. designer babies, the science curriculum in faith schools or global warming) in the same way?

Content

- What is the purpose of the article: what is it trying to explain or what information is it trying to get across?
- How does the opening paragraph introduce the article?
- Examine the structure and sequencing of the article. It might be helpful for students to identify a topic sentence in each paragraph to see how the argument is built up.
- What evidence does the author use to back up their points?
- What use is made of expert opinion and quotes from specialists?
- Does the article concentrate on one point of view, or does it seem to be a balanced, unbiased exploration of the issue?
- Is the closing sentence/paragraph effective? Why/why not?

Guidance for students

Before your students start writing, remind them of the key questions they need to consider:

- Who are you writing for and how will this affect the style and tone of your writing? (Your audience may be a mix of professional scientists and interested members of the general public. This means that while you must be scientifically accurate you must also communicate your ideas clearly, in a way that a non-scientist will understand.)
- Where is your article going to be published? If you are writing for a particular newspaper, how will this affect its content, tone and layout?

- How are you going to hook readers into your article? Think of an intriguing headline which also gives some indication of your subject.
 - How will you introduce your subject in the opening paragraph? Your opening paragraph needs to summarise the context and content of your article.
 - Is there a current news item you could tie your article into, to make it more relevant?
 - What's the purpose of your article? What does your audience need to know and in what order should you present the information?
 - Do you have some quotes from experts to back up your argument? Whose research will you refer to and what evidence do you have?
 - If you are writing for a science website, what other elements should you include on the page (e.g. navigation bars, links to other parts of the site, etc.)?
 - How will you close your article? Do you want to leave your reader with a particular thought or question?
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