

THE
POLITICAL
SCIENCE
STUDENT
WRITER'S
MANUAL
AND
READER'S
GUIDE

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EIGHTH EDITION

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READ AND WRITE TO UNDERSTAND POLITICS

1.1 READING POLITICS ANALYTICALLY

Getting Started

It doesn't matter how good a reader you are right now, how much you enjoy reading, how often you read, what sorts of texts you like or avoid, how fast you read, or how effective your level of retention is. The fact is that the remainder of your academic career—the remainder, in fact, of your life—would be made richer if you were better at reading than you are now. This book attempts to make you a better reader—first, by offering you tips for improvement and suggestions aimed at enhancing your enjoyment and understanding of any text, and second, by supplying you with exercises to improve your reading in the specific discipline of political science.

But why do we need improvement in writing? It's such a basic skill, something we all learned to do in grade school. Right?

Well, sort of. Our grade school teachers taught us the basics: how to distinguish words in the characters on a page and how to pace ourselves through a sentence or a paragraph to arrive at a coherent meaning. Without these fundamental skills, we couldn't read at all. That's what secondary school focuses on: giving us the basics.

The problem is that there is more to reading than just those first few steps. If there weren't, then we would all be able to read any text pretty much as well as anybody else. It goes without saying, however, that all of us read at different levels of comprehension and with varying degrees of enjoyment, depending on what we're reading. We are all different people, each with our own preferences, a unique set of experiences that resonate with certain stimuli and less so with others.

Think of all the different worlds you inhabit, your favorite pastimes, hobbies, sports, and school subjects. Each is its own world, with its own set of rules and traditions, modes of behavior and thought, and its own language. Do you remember the first time you watched a professional basketball game on television? The action on the court was no doubt dizzying, but so was the conversation by which the sportscasters and commentators explained each play as it happened. What's a "pick and roll"? A "double double"—or, for that matter, a "triple double"? Why do some penalties allow for a free throw or two, while some don't? Basketball is a world with its own rules, its own ways of thinking and speaking. How long did it take you to become comfortable in this world—to become an *insider*?

Okay, so what about politics? If you are a politics junkie, you will understand every word of the following paragraph that a blogger might write to criticize Ted Cruz and some of his followers:

Critics of Ted Cruz decry his pandering to the Tea Party, also known as Baggers—a bunch of disgruntled Kool-Aid drinkers, mostly RINOs and former blue dogs. Recent

studies show they are mostly unaware of the greenwashing that sanitizes their Frankenfood. Looking forward to be rid of the lame duck in the White House, they cling to Cruz, a birther whose own lineage is finally helping him grow in office.

If some of this paragraph is not quite intelligible to you, you have yet to become a *political insider*.

To read well in virtually any subject, particularly in any school subject or profession, it is essential that you acknowledge to yourself, as you begin to read, that you are entering a new world, one inhabited by insiders and one that can be difficult to understand for people who aren't insiders.

Difficult, but not impossible.

It is possible for us to learn how to tailor our reading skills to texts in different disciplines, including those for which we do not have a natural affinity or a set of closely related personal experiences. It requires energy and imagination and, above all, a shift in attitude.

Whether you are reading a textbook chapter, a newspaper or magazine article, an essay in a journal, a book, or a blog, here are some tips to help you master the text.

Read with Patience

Different texts require varying degrees of patience from the reader. When you read a text written in an unfamiliar discipline, be sure you are reading carefully to allow the material—and the world from which it comes—to sink in. Reading with patience means performing certain prereading activities that can help you in mastering the text. Some of these activities are discussed below.

Reading with patience requires making sure to give yourself plenty of time to read the text. If it's a homework assignment, don't start reading the night before it's due. The sense of urgency—if not panic—that attends a rushed reading assignment can drive the material right out of your head before you can master it. Reading with patience also means eliminating distractions—the television blaring in the next room or the MP3 player driving songs through those earbuds you're wearing. Too many people in the apartment? Go find a coffee house with only a few customers or hit the library and find a comfortable chair in the reading room. Would a snack help or hurt your ability to immerse yourself in the text?

To read with patience means arranging your environment to enhance the clarity of your reading experience. The optimal environment is different for each person. What if you actually find television noise or earphone music helpful to your reading? If so, use it, but be honest with yourself about the effect of external stimuli on your reading. The point is to do whatever you can to *reduce your resistance to reading*.

Clarify Your Goals Before You Begin to Read

What is it *exactly* that you hope reading this text will do for you? Are you merely looking for a few facts to shore up a point you are making in a paper? Are you cramming for a test? Are you working to establish a general understanding of a particular topic, or the contours and details of a many-sided argument? Or are you simply

reading to amuse yourself? Whatever the reasons that sent you to the text, remind yourself of them from time to time as you read, comparing what you are finding in the text to whatever you are hoping to find. Be ready to revise your goals depending on what you learn from the text. If, for example, you begin reading an article in the *New Republic* examining Republican Congressional opposition to funding gun violence studies, would you become interested in examining the National Rifle Association's (NRA's) campaign contributions to members of Congress?

Explore the Text's Format

Reconnoiter before diving in. You need to remember that the writer, whoever it is, wants you to understand his or her writing and has used a variety of devices to help you. If the text has headings and subheadings, read through them first to see if they give you a sense of the author's direction and purpose. Note any distinctions among the headings, some of which might use larger type or bold print to underscore their organizational importance. Understanding the relationship among headings can help you determine the shape of the text's argument.

Are there illustrations? Graphs? Charts? Photographs or drawings? If so, a quick study of them will enhance your understanding of the text's goals and its potential usefulness to you.

Keep in Mind the Writer's Goals

Read carefully the first paragraph or the first page of the text looking for the writer's main idea and strategy for presenting it. Even if you don't find a specific thesis statement—a sentence or two explaining clearly the purpose of the text—most writers will find a way to signal what it is they hope their text accomplishes. Often the thesis is in the title, as it was for a December 30, 2015, *New York Times* article by Noam Scheiber and Patricia Cohen with the following, rather long-winded title: "For the Wealthiest, a Private Tax System That Saves Them Billions: The Very Richest Are Able to Quietly Shape Tax Policy That Will Allow Them to Shield Billions in Income." Note how the first paragraph of this article neatly answers the question implied in the title, namely, "*How do these billionaires shape tax policy to suit them?*"

WASHINGTON—The hedge fund magnates Daniel S. Loeb, Louis Moore Bacon and Steven A. Cohen have much in common. They have managed billions of dollars in capital, earning vast fortunes. They have invested large sums in art—and millions more in political candidates. Moreover, each has exploited an esoteric tax loophole that saved them millions in taxes. The trick? Route the money to Bermuda and back.¹

Remember, too, that there is always another goal the writer hopes to achieve: *he or she is writing to change you* by inviting you to step a little further, and at a slightly different angle than before, into the world of the text, whatever that might be: politics, cuisine, sports, fashion design, music, animal physiology, higher mathematics, or film history. The text is the writer's way of asking you to pass through a doorway into an environment with which you may not be familiar but which, the writer is convinced, offers you a worthwhile experience. As you read and understand the text, you are becoming more of an insider in that particular environment, broadening the way you look at the world.

Take Notes

Jot down notes based on your early explorations of text features. Your assessment of critical features—headings, illustrations, the introduction—has no doubt set up expectations in your mind about the direction and content of the text. Quickly listing down those expectations and then comparing them with what you find as you actually read the text can help in setting the text material in high relief in your mind.

Note-Taking Strategies Your goal in taking down notes is to help you remember those elements in the text that will be useful to you, known during your reading. Two prominent strategies for effective note-taking are:

(1) restating the material from the text in your own language and (2) phrasing notes in a way that establishes a dialogue with the text's writer. 3 Highlighters

Translate noteworthy material into your language. Any method of note-taking that requires rewriting the text in your own words requires you to engage the text at its most basic level, that of its language. To restate the text, you must understand it. Merely recopying the text's words doesn't require the level of engagement that restating does.

Similarly, underlining or highlighting text is usually not a very effective way to "own" what it is saying. It's just too easy. You often find yourself highlighting so many lines that the marking loses its effectiveness. Also, by highlighting the text, you do not run the material through your own language-making processes, which means you don't participate in the making of meaning as significantly as you must.

Engage in a give-and-take with the author. Besides recasting the wording of the text into your own language in your notes, you can also enhance your understanding by adopting a note format that actually establishes a dialogue with the author.

Ask questions. Rather than simply finding equivalents for key words or phrases in the text, consider phrasing your note in the form of a question or a criticism aimed at the writer's argument. This sort of give-and-take helps you in clarifying and controlling the range of expectations that occur to you as you read. This is a good way to sharpen your thinking about the text. For example, after reading the *New York Times* article quoted above, you might write:

Why do the wealthiest citizens enjoy special tax privileges that most U.S. citizens don't? Why can't ordinary citizens do what the wealthy do? Why does the general public let the wealthy get away with not paying their fair share of taxes?

It takes very little time to formulate useful questions about the material in almost any text. Never forget the six basic questions: *who, what, when, where, how, and why*. Practice using these questions in the exploratory stages of your reading until asking them becomes almost a reflex as you read. 3 Highlighters

Once you have examined the obvious features of a text and formulated some basic questions, you're ready to read.

Observe How Sentence Structure Aids Understanding

Pay attention to the little words. As we thread our way through the pages of any text, our movement is actually directed by little words, mostly prepositions and con-

junctions. These little words don't actually add facts or narrative information but act as traffic signals, preparing us for a shift in emphasis or direction. Phrases such as "furthermore," "however," "on the contrary," and "nevertheless" reinforce our interpretation of a preceding passage and prepare us to understand how the next passage will fit along with it. There are words that *add* the meaning of the coming passage to the last one: "also," "and," "furthermore," "not only . . . but also," "too." And there are phrases that *contrast* the preceding passage with the coming one: "but," "despite," "nevertheless," "instead of," "rather than," "yet." The phrase "of course" indicates that the next fact follows obviously from the last one, as does the word "obviously." Phrases such as "if," "provided," and "unless" indicate that the truth contained in the passage you've just read may be changed by what the next passage adds to the argument.

You know such little words so well that it's easy to overlook their usefulness as markers. Don't. They are extremely important to your reading, shoring up your confidence line-by-line and preparing your mind for the next passage.

Pay attention to the rhythms of the sentences. Often, writers invite you to anticipate the way a sentence moves, perhaps by repeating a word, a phrase, or a syntactical structure, setting up a rhythmic expectation in your mind that, when satisfied, adds greatly to your grasp of the passage's meaning.

In his brief address commemorating the establishment of a military cemetery at the Gettysburg Battlefield, Abraham Lincoln uses the repetition of a syntactical pattern to stop the forward motion of his speech and to shift its focus from the audience's participation in the ceremony to the sacrifice that has occasioned the need for the graveyard:

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract.

As You Read, Be Aware of Other Language Tools

Your writer will employ a range of devices designed to make you feel comfortable in the world of text. Look for them and allow them to do their work.

- An *analogy* is a comparison between two things that are similar in some important way. Expect to find your writer composing analogies in which some element of the world of the text—unfamiliar to a noninsider—is compared with some element more common in everyday life. Here's an example. On a campaign stop during the 2012 presidential election, President Obama said:

This notion that somehow we [Democrats] caused the [budget] deficits is just wrong. . . . It's like somebody goes to a restaurant, orders a big steak dinner, martini, all that stuff and then just as you're sitting down, they leave and accuse you of running up the tab.²

Analogies can be helpful in clarifying policies and issues. To what extent, for example, is President Obama's steak dinner analogy a valid characterization of the Republican Party's role in driving up government deficits?

- *Concrete details*—those that evoke and engage the senses—can often do more to communicate meaning and intent than the most elaborate abstract description. A powerful example is the campaign ad that Lyndon Johnson ran, just once, on television in his 1964 presidential race against Republican Senator Barry Gold-

water. Instead of offering a spoken appeal for voters to reject what Johnson's campaign was painting as Goldwater's dangerously warlike attitude toward the Soviet Union, the ad simply shows a little girl standing in a field pulling petals off a flower and counting them as they fall, until the girl's soft voice is suddenly replaced by a man's echoing harshly the countdown to a rocket launch and the image of the girl's face is replaced by that of an exploding nuclear bomb.³

Test Your Recollection

It is easy to forget material right after you've learned it, so as you read you must stop occasionally and recollect to yourself the material you have just acquired. Recite it *in your own language* to ensure that you have truly assimilated the content. This recollection is an important part of the reading process but can be dangerous, in that if you stop to recollect too often, you can lose your sense of forward motion through the text. So, no matter how often you find yourself stopping to recollect material, and it may happen frequently in a difficult text, try not to stop for long. Remember that the very next sentence may unravel the difficulty that has induced you to make a momentary stop. *Keep going.*

Reread

The single most effective strategy for mastering a text is to reread it. The first time through you are finding your way, and the text's concepts, facts, and lines of argument are forming themselves in your mind as you read, which means you have difficulty anticipating the text's direction. To use an analogy, reading a challenging text for the first time is like driving down a twisting country road at night, one you have never traveled before, with only your car's headlights to guide you. But once you've experienced that road, you will be able to navigate it again more confidently, anticipating its tricky turns. The same thing happens when you reread a text. Having been there before, you now know where the argument is going and can see more clearly not only what the writer is trying to say but also his or her motives for saying it.

Rereading as an aid to understanding a text is most effective once you have gotten through the *entire* text. Only then will you have experienced the entire shape of the writer's argument and can commit your full attention to clarifying passages that were difficult during your first run-through.

Pacing Is Vital

How can you possibly pay attention to all the reading tips just discussed and get any sense at all out of the text they are trying to help you understand? Practice. Learning how to improve your reading effectiveness takes time. Try one or two of the suggestions often enough to incorporate them into your reading routine, and then move on to others. The more reading you do, the better you'll get at it, and the wider and more interesting your world will become.

: Read & Write 1.1 Analyze a Presidential Address

- : Here is a brief address from Barack Obama made during the last year of his
- : presidency. Read through it and then read it again, looking for the strategies

discussed above for enhancing reader involvement.

Remarks of President Barack Obama

Weekly Address

The White House

January 1, 2016

Happy New Year, everybody. I am fired up for the year that stretches out before us. That's because of what we've accomplished together over the past seven.

Seven years ago, our businesses were losing 800,000 jobs a month. They've now created jobs for 69 straight months, driving the unemployment rate from a high of 10% down to 5%.

Seven years ago, too many Americans went without health insurance. We've now covered more than 17 million people, dropping the rate of the uninsured below 10% for the very first time.

Seven years ago, we were addicted to foreign oil. Now our oil imports have plummeted, our clean energy industry is booming, and America is a global leader in the fight against climate change.

Seven years ago, there were only two states in America with marriage equality. And now there are 50.

All of this progress is because of you. And we've got so much more to do. So my New Year's resolution is to move forward on our unfinished business as much as I can. And I'll be more frequently asking for your help. That's what this American project is all about.

That's especially true for one piece of unfinished business, that's our epidemic of gun violence.

Last month, we remembered the third anniversary of Newtown. This Friday, I'll be thinking about my friend Gabby Giffords, five years into her recovery from the shooting in Tucson. And all across America, survivors of gun violence and those who lost a child, a parent, a spouse to gun violence are forced to mark such awful anniversaries every single day.

And yet Congress still hasn't done anything to prevent what happened to them from happening to other families. Three years ago, a bipartisan, commonsense bill would have required background checks for virtually everyone who buys a gun. Keep in mind, this policy was supported by some 90% of the American people. It was supported by a majority of NRA households. But the gun lobby mobilized against it. And the Senate blocked it.

Since then, tens of thousands of our fellow Americans have been mowed down by gun violence. Tens of thousands. Each time, we're told that commonsense reforms like background checks might not have stopped the last massacre, or the one before that, so we shouldn't do anything.

... We know that we can't stop every act of violence. But what if we tried to stop even one? What if Congress did something—anything—to protect our kids from gun violence?

... A few months ago, I directed my team at the White House to look into any new actions I can take to help reduce gun violence. And on Monday, I'll meet with our Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, to discuss our options. Because I get too many letters from parents, and teachers, and kids, to sit around and do nothing. I get letters from responsible gun owners who grieve with us every time these tragedies happen; who share my belief that the Second Amendment guarantees a right to bear arms; and who share my belief we can protect that right while keeping an irresponsible, dangerous few from inflicting harm on a massive scale.⁴

1.2 READING NEWS AS POLITICAL POWER

Political Science: Helping You Perceive and Consciously Respond to Power

A central focus of political science is the study of the mechanisms of power: political, economic, cultural, and social. One of the most important mechanisms of power on the planet is what we commonly call the news. Without a free-flowing supply of news in a country, freedom, democracy, and security are unavailable, and personal vitality and fulfillment for most people are severely impaired. Even with a free flow of news, those who control that flow have enormous influence.

Power Is Deciding Who Shows up on the Radar Screen and the Size of Their Blip Control of the news means controlling what people know and what they don't know. It means controlling who makes the local, national, and international radar screen and who does not. A local news story about a child dying of cancer can produce an immediate inflow of assistance that many other families in similar situations must go without. In some areas of the world, making the radar screen is a matter of life and death for millions of people. At any particular time, tens of thousands of people worldwide face war, disease, famine, and natural disasters. Some get a lot of help, some get moderate assistance, and some get virtually none at all. What determines who gets what?

Politics always plays a role, but publicity can be equally important. "The pen is mightier than the sword," wrote Edward Bulwer-Lytton in his play *Richelieu; Or the Conspiracy* in 1839.⁵ Here are three historical examples of the power of the press . . .

... **to save lives:**

One of the most notable and successful efforts to save lives by exploiting the media radar screen was conducted by Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948). Having developed techniques of nonviolent resistance to racial oppression in South Africa in the 1890s, Gandhi went to India during World War I and began organizing peaceful demonstrations against the British occupation there. His first task was to liberate India from the British without a violent Civil War. Through several prison terms, large-scale protest marches, and well-orchestrated trips to London to see top officials, Gandhi attracted press attention wherever he went. When Civil War between Hindus and Muslims began to threaten India after World War II, Gandhi walked

hundreds of miles through villages of both religions. In so doing, Gandhi not only succeeded in averting a war of independence, saving hundreds of thousands of lives but also averted a Civil War saving hundreds of thousands more. His deep commitment to justice and nonviolence, and his superior management of publicity, helped him save more lives than anyone else in history.

... to defeat racism:

Sometimes lives are saved when the words and actions of certain people are denied making the media radar screen. Atop Magnetic Mountain, overlooking the rolling verdant hills of Eureka Springs, Arkansas, stands a 65.5-foot-tall statue of Jesus, beckoning visitors to *The Great Passion Play*, a dramatic depiction of the last week of Jesus's life. The play and statue are monuments to the energies of evangelist and political organizer Gerald L. K. Smith (1898–1976). A powerful speaker who attracted sizeable crowds, Smith was a Christian nationalist and white supremacist. Virulently anti-Semitic, Smith founded the America First Party in 1946. A firm believer that the Jews killed Jesus and that they have been a primary source of evil ever since, after World War II, Smith preached against Jews at every opportunity while defending Nazis. The Holocaust, in which several million Jews were killed in Nazi death camps, was a fresh memory in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The world over, Jews knew they had to energetically combat anti-Semitism wherever they encountered it, so Smith naturally became a prime concern for the Jewish Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the American Jewish Committee (AJC). Jewish leaders adopted a tactic of "dynamic silence." They asked newspaper editors to first consider the extent to which their coverage was helping Smith draw so much attention. Then they asked the editors to consider whether Smith's hatred-filled rants deserved the free publicity they were getting. They proposed that if the papers stopped covering Smith's rallies, his movement would dry up along with his publicity. The editors agreed and stopped coverage, and Smith's momentum declined. Although Smith continued work on his statue and passion play, his movement never recovered.

... to make policy, not always for the better:

Finally, sometimes the radar screen is purposely distorted in the interest of particular news media. By the late 1880s, Cuba was a prosperous Spanish colony whose sugar plantations sweetened American muffins, piña coladas, and Coca-Colas. But American-owned Hawaiian plantations became sufficiently powerful to gain import-tax advantages from Congress. Its main market for its primary product gone, Cuba's economy collapsed. Penniless and hungry, the plantation workers revolted. Spain responded by sending troops who rounded up thousands of protestors and herded them into *concentrado* camps, a name borrowed by the Nazis for use in the Holocaust. A decade of unrest followed, which, unfortunately, was useful to newspaper czar William Randolph Hearst, who wanted to create news to outsell his competition, and to Assistant Secretary of the Navy (later President) Theodore Roosevelt, who wanted to increase America's image as a world power. Pumping up false charges against Spain of cruelty (in what became known as *yellow journalism*), and blaming the sinking of the American battleship USS *Maine* in Havana Harbor, America declared war on Spain in 1898 and wrested control of Spanish territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Read & Write 1.2 Compare the Slants of Front Pages

A “slant” is a repeated emphasis of one viewpoint as opposed to another or of one type of content as opposed to another. This writing exercise is relatively simple. The online versions of major newspapers contain much more content than printed versions because web pages provide more space for links to many more articles than appear on printed front pages.

When you visit the home pages of the online versions of the *New York Times* (nytimes.com) and the *Wall Street Journal* (wsj.com), you will find a “Today’s Paper” link immediately under the masthead.

Start by visiting the home pages of both of these papers, and select the “Today’s Paper” link on both of them. Here you will find the most recent news that is featured in their print editions. Copy into a Word file the titles of the half dozen or so bold-print articles you find on each page. In a page or two, describe what you infer about the character and aims of each paper from the article titles in each newspaper. How do the priorities of the two papers differ? What are the political implications of that difference? Is there an obvious political slant to the articles selected? To what do you attribute the slant(s) you find, if any?

1.3 SKILLFUL READING TECHNIQUES: HOW TO READ NEWSPAPERS AS A POLITICAL SCIENTIST

Because political scientists spend a lot of their time reading newspapers, it is vital for them to know how to read skillfully—how to understand and evaluate newspaper material accurately and quickly. Learning how to do so requires the mastery of certain reading techniques that people may not typically apply to the reading of their local paper. This chapter offers tips that can help you read a newspaper like a political scientist.

Understand the Task

Besides entertainment and advertising, the content of any newspaper includes news and opinions, and because these two categories can be easily and even intentionally confused, and because accurately differentiating them is essential, let’s take a quick look at them.

News is composed of two types of data: information and analysis.

- *Information* is composed of facts, specifically, accounts of events and background. The title of an account of an event could be “Conservative Christians Hold ‘City on a Hill’ Conference.” A background statement could be “This is the third time this year that Conservative Christians have met in Washington, DC.”
- *Analysis* comprises interpretations of the information rendered in the news story. After observing the goings-on at the “City on a Hill” conference, the reporter interprets what he or she has witnessed there: “A primary purpose of the conference seems to have been to encourage Conservative Christians to develop a new strategy to restrict abortions.”

Opinions are evaluations of the information reported in newspapers and are composed of editorials, op-ed pieces (opinion pieces written by named authors who are not on the newspaper's staff), opinion columns, blogs, and other contributions such as transcripts of interviews. An opinion concerning the "City on a Hill" conference, published in one of the newspaper's editorials, might read, "Once again conservatives seek to consolidate their weakening power by angering a variety of social constituencies." Clearly, the line between analysis and opinion is a thin one.

A Conundrum On a daily basis, renowned newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* attempt to clearly identify and separate news from opinion. Their integrity and credibility depend on their success. Their articles are clearly identifiable as news or opinion, and usually their news articles have a high degree of objectivity. Opinion is opinion and is persuasive to the extent it seems reasonable or appeals to a certain prejudice. Intelligent readers rarely confuse opinion with news.

But "news" suffers from a congenital defect. No matter how objective a reporter tries to be, perfection is intrinsically beyond reach. Philosopher Karl Popper (1902–1994) was fond of starting courses with a simple command to his students: "Observe." He would stand quietly and wait until a student broke the tension with the question "Observe what?" "Precisely," was Popper's retort. His point was that no observation is purely objective and value-free. The moment we try to observe, we necessarily choose what to observe, and that choice is always full of values.

When editors assign stories, their selections are affected by not only their experienced sense of importance but also their perceptions of the prospective author and their estimate of what sells as well. Therefore, although "objective reporting" is the hallmark of a good newspaper, good reporters understand and exploit the tension between "news" and "opinion," allowing, at least to some extent, their quest for relevance to temper their thirst for facts.

Read the Front Page

Daily newspapers are much like highway maps, providing thousands of bits of information, which together form a coherent web that can be imagined as a compact image of life on this planet, or on part of it, on any particular day. The newspaper's front page is the symbol key to that map. Start reading your newspaper by noting both what is included on the front page and what is not. Here is your front-page analytical checklist:

Content What gets premium front-page coverage tells you what the newspaper's priorities and biases are. Here are the front-page stories of the *New York Times* on December 15, 2015:

- Top News: All Los Angeles Public Schools Closed After Bomb Threat
- Jurors in Freddie Gray Case Say They Are Deadlocked
- U.S. Prosecutors Expected to Charge Two Venezuelans
- Experts Were Wrong About Where Health Care Costs Less
- Do Areas that Spend Less on Medicare Also Spend Less on Health Care Overall?
- Curing Hepatitis C, in an Experiment the Size of Egypt
- Where the Candidates Stand on 2016's Biggest Issues

- How Trump Could Win, and Why He Probably Won't
- Setting Sights on Cruz, and Pondering a Tricky Target in Trump
- Trump to Meet Donor Sheldon Adelson Before Debate
- A Refugee Crisis, a Greek Debt Showdown, Russian Aggression and Terrorism in the Streets: How 2015 Has Threatened the E.U.
- Towers of Secrecy A "Starship" and a Shell Company Stir Resentment
- In the Booming, High-end Market of Los Angeles, One House Stands Out
- New Scrutiny of New York Prison Diversion Programs: Some Aid to Afghans Ends Up Helping Taliban, United States Says
- International Atomic Agency Ends Iran Inquiry
- Fabled Nazi Gold Train Looks Like a Fable
- New York City Homelessness Chief Is Leaving
- "Shamed and Victimized for Life": Rape in India

By contrast, here are the articles on the cover of *New York Post* for December 15, 2015:

- Catching Fish: Brilliant Beckham Lifts Giants
- Sleazy Riders: Subway Sex Crimes Skyrocket
- Cosby Sues Seven Accusers

And here are the front-page stories of the *Wall Street Journal* on December 15, 2015:

- Fed Poised to Mark The End of an Era
- Stocks Rise Ahead of Fed Decision
- L.A. Officials Defend Decision to Close Schools After Threat
- E.U. Officials Settle on Privacy Law
- Second-Tier Hopefuls Face Off in GOP Debate
- Republican Presidential Candidates Are Gathering in Las Vegas on Tuesday Night for the Fifth Night of Presidential Debates. Here Is Our Live Blog of the Event
- Analysis: Seven Insights About the Republican Field
- The Inevitable Cruz-Rubio Collision
- Trump Supporters in Nevada Struggle With Caucus Process
- Poll Finds National Security Now a Top Concern
- U.N. Experts Say Iran Missile Firing Violated Sanctions
- Iran's Firing of a Medium-Range Ballistic Missile in October Violated U.N. Sanctions Banning the Islamic Republic from Launches Capable of Delivering Nuclear Weapons, U.N. Experts Said in a New Report
- IAEA Board Agrees to Close File on Iran's Past Nuclear Activities
- Jurors in Baltimore Police Officer Trial Say They Are Deadlocked
- Jurors in the First Baltimore Police Officer Trial in Connection with the Death of Freddie Gray Last April Told the Judge Tuesday Afternoon They Were Deadlocked. The Judge Told Them to Continue Deliberations
- U.S. Boosts Online Scrutiny
- U.S. Graduation Rate Rises
- Meet Your Child's New Partner
- Ousted Cheniere Energy CEO in Line for Big Payout

What assumptions about the character of each newspaper's can you make by comparing the contents of their front pages?

Layout The position on the front page indicates the editor's estimate of the importance of the article. A banner headline is big-time news. Traditionally, newspapers are in the habit of placing the lead article in the upper-right corner of the front page because when they are displayed on old-style newsstands, the papers are folded in the middle and arrayed so that the upper-right part of the paper is visible. The second most important story appears on the upper left. The bigger the title font, the more important the article.

Everything about the front page of a newspaper is done on purpose. Did you ever notice that when you enter Walgreens to pick up a prescription, the pharmacy is in the rear of the store? Try getting to the pharmacy without getting distracted, if ever so slightly, by the candies, cosmetics, cuticle clippers, coffee cups, crayons, and birthday cards. The front page of a typical newspaper is organized a bit like the aisles in Walgreen, offering something for everyone.

Structure of an Article Every article in a newspaper has three jobs to do:

1. Get your attention.
2. Tell you the story's bottom line.
3. Tell a convincing story in a very short time.

To meet these goals, the news articles must follow a standard format known as the *inverted pyramid*. While literary stories start with small details and build to a climax at the end, news articles do the opposite. The article title is the "bottom line." It tells you the punch line of the story right up front. Details follow in descending order with the most important ones appearing first. Background and incidentals come last.

: **Read & Write 1.3** Critique a Lead News Article

: Read the following article from the *Washington Post*, a highly reputed newspaper, and examine, in a response of approximately 500 words, the hierarchy of flow within it. Is it an inverted pyramid? Explain.

: Actor Sean Penn Secretly Interviewed Mexico's 'El Chapo' in Hideout
: *The Washington Post*
: By Joshua Partlow, January 10 at 12:15 AM

: CULIACAN, Mexico—The Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán story could hardly
: have seemed more unbelievable, with its multiple prison breaks, endless sew-
: ers and tunnels, outlandish sums of money, and feverish manhunts. And then
: Sean Penn entered the story.

: While Guzmán was the world's most wanted fugitive, dodging Mexican
: military operations and U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration surveillance,
: he was secretly meeting with the Hollywood movie star in an undisclosed
: Mexican hideout and has now provided what appears to be the first public in-
: terview of his drug-running career, published Saturday by Rolling Stone.

Among the revelations in the article, Guzmán, who was captured Friday morning in his home state of Sinaloa, bragged to Penn about his prowess in the drug trade.

"I supply more heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and marijuana than anybody else in the world," Guzmán said. "I have a fleet of submarines, airplanes, trucks and boats."

The Associated Press reported that a Mexican law enforcement official said the Penn meeting helped authorities locate Guzmán in Durango state in October.

Escaped Mexican drug lord 'El Chapo' recaptured

The leader of the Sinaloa cartel, who had been locked up in what has been described as the country's most impenetrable prison, was recaptured in western Mexico after a shootout that left five dead.

Penn provides a lengthy account of how he met the elusive criminal. Penn tried to protect his communications using burner phones and encryption and anonymous email addresses. The meeting was brokered by the Mexican actress Kate del Castillo and took place at an undisclosed location in the Mexican mountains.

Penn reportedly spent seven hours with Guzmán and then did follow-up interviews by phone and video, including one posted on the Rolling Stone website of Guzmán in a paisley blue shirt speaking in front of a chain-link fence.

Guzmán, who in the past has denied participation in the drug trade and portrayed himself as a peasant farmer, spoke unapologetically and serenely about his lucrative trade.

Where he grew up, in the mountains of Sinaloa state, "the only way to have money to buy food, to survive, is to grow poppy, marijuana," he said, and he began at a young age.

"It's a reality that drugs destroy. Unfortunately, as I said, where I grew up there was no other way and there still isn't a way to survive, no way to work in our economy to be able to make a living."

Despite the deadly wars his Sinaloa cartel has fought with other gangs and authorities, Guzmán described himself as not a violent person.

"Look, all I do is defend myself, nothing more," he said. "But do I start trouble? Never."

The interview with Penn may have helped authorities finally recapture Guzmán, who was arrested Friday after a military raid on a house in the coastal city of Los Mochis. Guzmán fled in a sewer and carjacked a getaway vehicle but was stopped on the highway.

Mexico's attorney general, Arely Gómez González said on Friday night that authorities zeroed in on Guzmán after movie producers and actresses made contact with him.

Penn met with Guzmán in early October, just before a military operation targeting Guzman in a ranch in the town of Pueblo Nuevo in Durango. Mexican

authorities said Guzmán got away because a helicopter didn't want to fire at him because he was fleeing with two women and a girl.

Guzmán wrote to Penn that eight helicopters pursued him and the "marines dispersed throughout the farms. The families had to escape and abandon their homes with the fear of being killed. We still don't know how many dead in total."

Guzmán said his injuries were "not like they said. I only hurt my leg a little bit."

A senior Mexican official, who could not confirm whether Penn's interview contributed to Guzmán's arrest, described the interview with Penn as "an act of propaganda" that contributed to Guzmán's outsized myth.

"Nothing that appears in the interview changes that he is a criminal who has assassinated many people and trafficked in drugs that resulted in the deaths of many people," the official said.

The Penn interview was the latest twist in the wild "El Chapo" saga that included his dramatic arrest on Friday.

In the pre-dawn darkness, Mexican marines quietly surrounded a little white house in Los Mochis where the druglord was staying.

But the elusive Guzmán—who had escaped twice from federal prison—did it again. He vanished down an escape hatch and into the sewer. It wasn't until he popped up four blocks away, stole a car, and sped out of town that Mexican authorities finally captured him on the highway and ended six months of national humiliation for letting the world's top drug lord escape.

Guzmán was later flown to Mexico City and returned to Altiplano prison, the facility he escaped from in July.

Guzmán's capture was celebrated by law enforcement officials in Washington because Guzmán runs a drug-trafficking network with vast international reach that has been dumping tons of cocaine and heroin into U.S. cities for years. But more than that, it represented a massive vindication, at least symbolically, for a Mexican government that has often seemed incapable of alleviating the brutal drug war violence that has left some 100,000 dead in the past decade.

After two prison escapes, many expect the Mexican government to extradite Guzmán to the United States. The Mexican attorney general's office said in a statement Saturday that extradition procedures would begin. But that could take weeks or months, as the accusations against Guzmán must be reviewed and a judge needs to recommend a course of action.

"There are a series of things that could take months," one official said.

Joshua Partlow is the *Post's* bureau chief in Mexico. He has served previously as the bureau chief in Kabul and as a correspondent in Brazil and Iraq.⁶

Reading News Reports To accurately read a news article, you have a lot of work to do. Happily, as time goes on, you become familiar with the publications, the journalists, their sources, and other matters, but it takes practice. Here is a news article appraisal checklist:

- *Reputation.* What does the reading public think of the newspaper? What does

the quality of the front page tell you? Earlier in this chapter you were invited to compare front pages of the *New York Times* and *New York Post*. Which of these two newspapers would you rather cite as a source for information in your own term paper?

- *Author*. What are the credentials and reputation of the author of the news story? Does he or she have the background to accurately report the news? A newspaper's website normally provides the credentials of its reporters.
- *Information sources*. What sources of information does the author use? Are they credible? Are they recognized individuals or institutions? Is the information source appropriate for the article's topic? Is the topic timely, and is the information it provides up to date? Does the author include multiple sources to support his or her statements?
- *Writing quality*. Is the article well written? Is it clear and cogent? Does it use a lot of jargon? Can you understand it? Does it employ many adverbs? In general, adjectives and adverbs tend to be "opinion-words" rather than "news-words." For example, is the adverb in the following sentence questionable? "Morgan *willfully* ran over my bicycle in the driveway."
- *Quantity of information*. Is the article sufficiently comprehensive to substantiate its thesis? Does it answer the proverbial questions who? what? when? where? and why?
- *Unsupported assumptions*. Beware of statements like this: "Statistics prove that children in traditional two-parent households are happier than children in other households." What statistics? Does the article identify them?
- *Balance*. If you are reading a *news* article about a controversial subject, the article should include information from more than one side of an argument. Also, a well-written *opinion* article normally identifies the content of opposing views, even if only to discredit them.

1.4 ANALYTICAL READING TECHNIQUES: HOW TO READ EDITORIALS AND OP-ED ESSAYS

Reading Opinion Articles: A Tale of Two Journalists

Conservative author and commentator David Brooks and liberal economist Paul Krugman have both been op-ed columnists for the *New York Times* for more than a decade. In July 2015, each wrote a *Times* column on recent proposals to raise the minimum wage.

In his article "The Minimum Wage Muddle" (July 24, 2015), David Brooks, in a typical conservative manner, reveals once again his distrust in government intervention in the economy in general and proposals to raise the minimum wage in particular. Brooks states, "Some economists have reported that there is no longer any evidence that raising wages will cost jobs."⁷ Brooks may well have had in mind a *New York Times* article by Paul Krugman, titled "Liberals and Wages" (July 17, 2012), which states, "There's just no evidence that raising the minimum wage costs jobs, at least when the starting point is as low as it is in modern America."⁸ Both Brooks and Krugman cite multiple studies as evidence for their arguments opposing (Brooks) and supporting (Krugman) minimum wages.

If you open the *New York Times* website and read both articles (select the "Colum-

nists" link in the "Opinion Pages" section), you will find that each columnist focuses on different, if overlapping, slices of the effects of raising the minimum wage. Each article provides an interesting, well-supported education in certain aspects of the issue, one that will inspire many studies before the political debate subsides.

But here we can learn an important lesson: What is the central point, the *thesis* of each article? From Brooks, we have a bold and unsupported further assertion: "Raising the minimum wage will produce winners among job holders from all backgrounds, but it will disproportionately punish those with the lowest skills, who are least likely to be able to justify higher employment costs."

We have already quoted Krugman's thesis that there is no evidence suggesting that raising the minimum wage will cost jobs, "at least when the starting point is as low as it is in modern America." Krugman continues his argument with an unsupported conclusion, asserting that the market for labor isn't like the market for, say, wheat, because workers are people. And because they're people, there are important benefits, even to the employer, from paying them more, such as better morale, lower turnover, and increased productivity. These benefits, says Krugman, largely offset the direct effect of higher labor costs, so that raising the minimum wage needn't cost jobs after all.

At this point, it is evident that if you want to adequately examine the arguments of each columnist, you must read their articles and examine the evidence they provide. But the important lesson here is the relative authority of the authors on the subjects they are discussing. Consider the two columnists' credentials.

According to his biography on the *New York Times* website, David Brooks also appears on *PBS NewsHour*, NPR's *All Things Considered*, and NBC's *Meet the Press*. He has authored three books: *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), *On Paradise Drive: How We Live Now (And Always Have) in the Future Tense* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), and *The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement* (New York: Random House, 2011), a "No. 1 *New York Times* best seller." He also teaches at Yale University.

Paul Krugman is Professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton University. He has taught at Yale, Stanford, and MIT, and has authored or edited 27 books and 200 academic and professional papers. A founder of "new trade theory," a substantial revision of international trade theory, he has received the American Economic Association's John Bates Clark Medal (1991) and the Nobel Prize in Economics (2008).

Which author is better qualified to draw general conclusions about effects of the minimum wage from his research? Paul Krugman, the economist, is far better qualified to draw conclusions, and owing to the enormous amount of research he has done in economics, he is far more credible *on this topic*. If you read numerous columns by David Brooks, you may well conclude that they are well written, entertaining, and contain much well-documented support for his theses. But if you read closely, you will find that he often oversteps the bounds of his professional credibility. This does not mean that Krugman is obviously correct on this particular issue. But it strongly suggests that if you want to test Krugman's assertions, you must find an equivalent authority: a solid conservative economist.

Political scientists are predisposed to be suspicious of journalism, rolling their eyes at factual errors and inaccuracies. A healthy skepticism is part of their job. But they understand that, while they have the luxury of digging deep over a substantial period of time, a journalist must often get a story and get it straight within a matter of hours. And when all is said and done, the academicians do not hesitate to affirm that nothing is as essential to the vitality of democracy as a vigorous, capable, and dedicated news media.

: **Read & Write 1.4** Respond to an Editorial

: Perhaps at this point you are ready to launch into the real world of public
: discussion of national issues. One way to do so is to respond to an editorial. It
: is probably best to start with the newspaper in your hometown. Most news-
: papers, if not all, provide detailed information on submitting such a letter. To
: write a letter to the editor of the *Washington Post*, for example, click the “How
: to Contact the Newsroom” link in the “Opinion” section:

: [http://help.washingtonpost.com/link/portal/15067/15080/
: ArticleFolder/80/How-to-Contact-the-Newsroom](http://help.washingtonpost.com/link/portal/15067/15080/ArticleFolder/80/How-to-Contact-the-Newsroom)

: Be sure to ask your instructor before submitting your letter. Newspapers
: can be very selective about the letters they accept for publication, and you may
: be up against a lot of competition. Your instructor will be able to provide some
: suggestions that will increase your chances of success. Follow the paper’s di-
: rections exactly.

: Good luck!