TELEVISION NEWS: STORY STRUCTURE AND SCRIPTING

TELEVISION STORY STRUCTURE

A structure is the general outlook. There are main or basic structures for television news:

1. Inverted pyramid
2. Narrative
3. Hour glass (inverted pyramid and narrative)

INVERTED PYRAMID

It is the most popularly used structure to television news stories and the most important information is always t the beginning while the least important one is at the bottom.

It was developed during the civil war when newspapers relied heavily on telegraph machines. These machines were at risk of saboteurs who often cut the telegraph lines, so in order to avoid distortion of information people using the telegraph transmitted important information first thus the inverted pyramid.

Who-What –When-Where-Why

Important information

Other details

Lesser details

Advantages

1. Relays information quickly
2. Tells the readers quickly what they need to know
3. Helps the reporter sharpen their news judgment skills

Disadvantages

1. Important information doesn’t encourage creativity or creative writing
2. Many stories do not have a proper conclusion crafted by the author they just end
3. There is no suspense
4. Reporters tend to lose interest and energy with time
5. Writing with this style is casual at best and poor at worst

NARATIVE STRUCTURE

Narration or story-telling, it uses scenes, anecdotes and dialogue to build a climax. The story has a beginning, middle and an end; quotations sound like real speech and the words and actions of the characters reveal motives. In this story structure, people are important because you have to give emphasis to the human face.

Narrative is an account of events and has to follow chronological order and in most cases ends with a resolution.

Exposition (scene, introduce characters, background information)

Development (situation development)

Complication

Climax

Resolution

HOUR GLASS

This combines the best elements of both inverted pyramid and the narrative. It consists of three parts:

1. The top

Summarizes the story

Three or four paragraphs to answer the readers’ questions

Give basic news enough to satisfy a time –pressed reader

1. The turn

It is usually a transition phase to narrative and contains attribution.

Advantages

1. Gets the news high in the story
2. Satisfies editors who support traditional news writing as well as impatient readers
3. Satisfies the reader who wants a more complex story
4. The hour glass serves the need for news and their natural desire for a story

SCRIPTING

1. Broadcast writing is shorter and concise. Television scripts are no more than 30-60 seconds.
2. You write the way you talk
3. Use one idea per sentence
4. Use short active words
5. Put attribution at the start of the sentence
6. Don’t start with a question r a quote
7. Identify the speaker before what he said
8. Leave out ages, middle initials, addresses unless they are important.

WRITING FOR THE ANCHOR

1. Write all in capital letters
2. Spell things out phonetically
3. Hyphenate words that go together
4. Spell out numbers up to eleven
5. Use words for big numbers
6. Spell out signs and symbols