



Literary Journalism

On Storytelling and News Values

THE LEAD

The most important information about an event
Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

THE BODY

The crucial information expanding the topic
Argument, Controversy, Story, Evidence,
Background details

THE TAIL

Extra information
Interesting, related
Items.
Journalist
Assessment

NEWS VALUES

Magnitude

Prominence

Conflict

Proximity

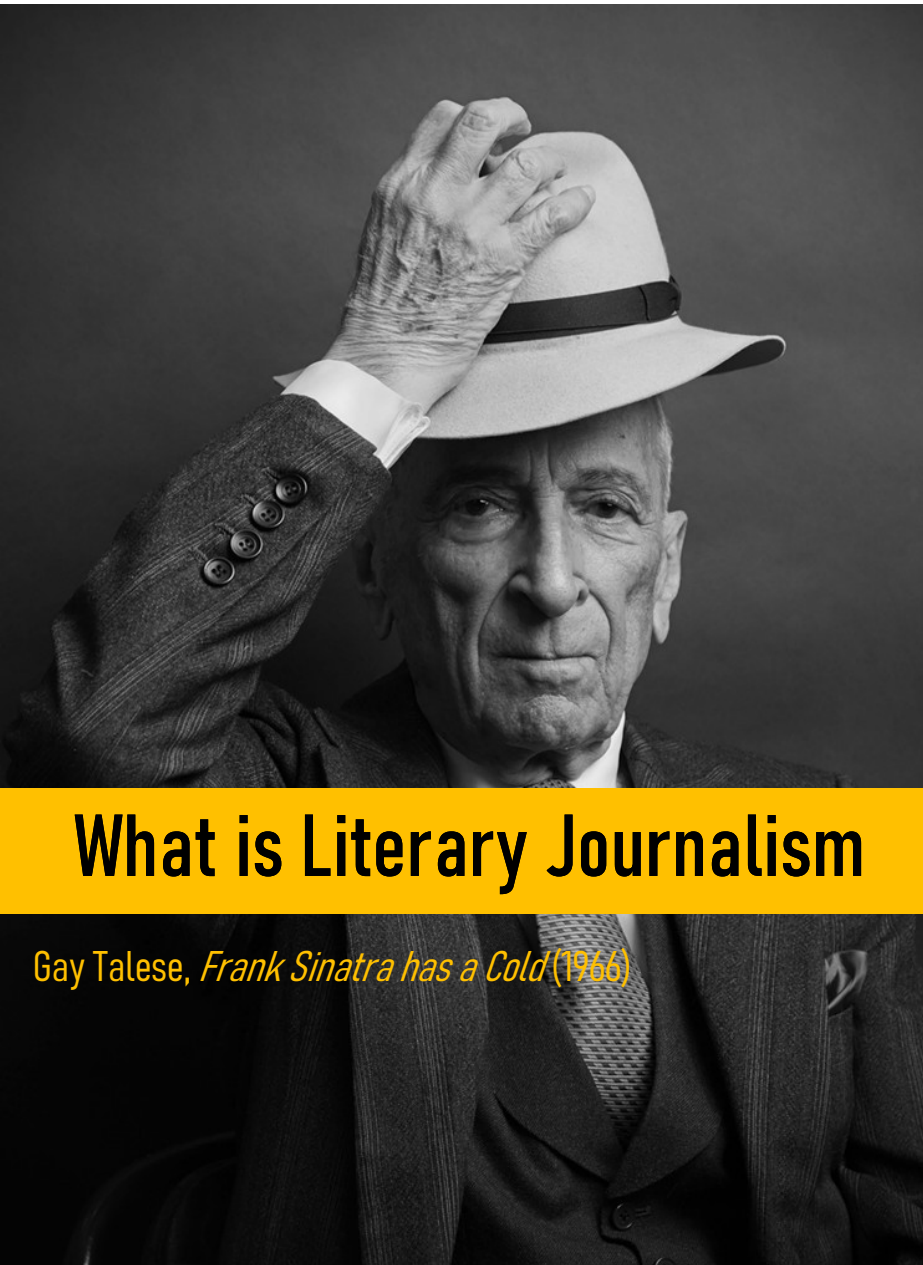
Timeliness

Currency

Unusual

Human Spirit

INVERTED NEWS TRIANGLE / REPORTING FACTS



What is Literary Journalism

Gay Talese, *Frank Sinatra has a Cold* (1966)

Literary Journalism is a form of nonfiction that combines factual reporting with fiction narrative strategies.

Distinguished by other forms of Creative Nonfiction by research

"Observation, the art of watching, is one of the most underrated elements of reporting, especially in newspaper journalism. The natural impulse is to ask questions. Sometimes that is wrong. It makes the reporter the focus of attention. Be humble. It honors the person you're trying to observe. Think like a photographer. Watch. Change location. At a family dinner, change your place around the dining table. Keep moving, keep shifting your point of view, and keep quiet. Try not to interrupt the flow of events."

ANNE HULL IN TELLING TRUE STORIES: A NONFICTION WRITERS' GUIDE

Immersion

Literary journalism is often called "immersion reporting" due to the amount of research it requires of the author. Writers must research, evaluate and assess all aspects of the story they wish to tell, omitting nothing that alters the truth. This immersion allows the journalist to step fully into their subject's world.

Truth

Literary journalists must commit to "sticking to the facts". While other forms of nonfiction give writers flexibility within the narrative, literary journalism is rooted in factual reporting – their work cannot be labeled as journalism if details and characters are imaginary.

Nonfiction with fiction flare

Although literary journalism must subscribe to several conventions of the nonfiction form, its best qualities rest in the creativity of the writer. Writers can employ fiction techniques like plots and scenes in order to give a nonfiction story life.



Characteristics of Literary Journalism



Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (1966)

"For starters, be conscious of the distancing language that inhabits most newspaper stories. Set a goal for intimacy. As a reporter, be physically present to witness and absorb, if even for three hours. Have all your sensory pistons firing: seeing, hearing, smelling, etc. In trying to convey the nuances of a culture or neighborhood, the drama is in the small observed or spoken exchanges, and one needs to be there to see it unfold."

ANNE HULL, THE INVISIBLE REPORTER

The Feature Article

Portrayals of scenes from real life
Information and experience
Explorative: A step into the unknown
Subcultures, distant places, alternative angles
Emotions and moods
Identification

Literary Techniques

Plot or Storyline
Narrative Point of View
Characters
Dialogue
Scenes
Interpretations by the journalist
Inferences by the reader
Zoom in – Zoom out

Narratives of Immersion

Anne Hull, *Una Vida Mejor* (1995)



“Frank Sinatra, holding a glass of bourbon in one hand and a cigarette in the other, stood in a dark corner of the bar between two attractive but fading blondes who sat waiting for him to say something. But he said nothing; he had been silent during much of the evening, except now in this private club in Beverly Hills he seemed even more distant, staring out through the smoke and semidarkness into a large room beyond the bar where dozens of young couples sat huddled around small tables or twisted in the center of the floor to the clamorous clang of folk-rock music blaring from the stereo.

GAY TALESE, “FRANK SINATRA HAS A COLD”



New Journalism and Beyond

Malcolm Gladwell,
The Strange Tale of the Norden Bombsight (2011)

Literary journalism dates back to the 19th century. But this particular form of writing mainly developed in the 1960s.

Many magazines at the time did not have money to sponsor deep investigative nonfiction, so many writers began turning their research into novels.

Writers like Truman Capote and Gay Talese pushed the boundaries between journalism and nonfiction with their factual writing.

Capote's nonfiction thriller *In Cold Blood*
And Talese's longform article "Frank Sinatra has a Cold"
are both masterpieces of the genre.

More recently writers like Anne Hull and David Foster-Wallace have pushed the genre even further while the internet has brought new forms of "interactive immersive longform storytelling" and audio narratives like

This American Life, *Serial* and *Have You Heard George's Podcast*



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