

Session 1: What is news?

Outcomes:

- discussed, questioned and determined the difference between news and rumour
- explored the elements that make a story interesting
- deconstructed a news story in detail

1. INTRODUCTION: Breaking the News
2. DISCUSSION: How rumour becomes news
3. ACTIVITY: What is a story? – introduction to eSEQ

1. INTRODUCTION: BREAKING THE NEWS



As an introduction to the project look at how other schools worked with BREAKING THE NEWS for a newday, and the stories they made.

<http://www.channel4.com/breakingthenews/schools/storygallery/default.html>

2. DISCUSSION: HOW RUMOUR BECOMES NEWS



What does it take to turn a rumour into news? Ask students to consider how the source of a rumour might make it more convincing and ways in which a rumour might become more convincing, hardening into a real piece of news.

Ask your students to imagine how a rumour that the parents of a Year 7 pupil in your school had won the lottery might become a hard fact? Consider three ways in which this tale might be substantiated and how reliable these sources of information actually are.



Worksheet 1 introduces ideas of truth and verification, but also offers opportunities for discussion of broader issues including fleshing out a news story and a preliminary consideration of news values. The fact that a member of the media covers the story, it seems, does not of course guarantee that it is true.

Students could also think about the questions they would ask, and to whom, if they were writing up the story a school magazine or filmed news report. They could consider:

1. The child and his/her family
2. The school
3. People outside the school from the community.

If the film or story was under pressure. what questions might have to be sacrificed to meet a deadline? What difference would these 'subtractions' make?

3. ACTIVITY: WHAT IS A STORY?



NB. This activity can be completed over sessions 1 and 2.

What makes a story interesting? Get your students to consider a work of fiction – a film or a book they have seen or read recently – and then explain what made it interesting to them.



Consider the following questions. There are no 'correct' answers. Try to go beyond what students mean by 'interesting' and 'boring' and begin to tease out the 'ingredients' that compelling/entertaining stories share.

1. Is it important that it contains interesting characters? Why? And what makes a character interesting?
2. Is it important to include a person that can be identified or empathised with, or are people that are strange or act for odd reasons more interesting?
3. Is it important that the character is living through or has lived through an interesting time or experience? Why? What makes an experience or an incident 'interesting'?
4. Is it important that the story is happening now?
5. Is it important that the story contains plenty of incidents – a variety of scenes and happenings? Why?
6. What sort of ending occurs in a 'good' story? Do you think stories should have happy endings or should they leave you wanting more, with lots of unanswered questions?

Narrative structure



Television news programmes are made up of lots of stories. Yes - they are based on real happenings in the world, real events, meetings, arguments, conflicts, compromises and agreements – but they have to be packaged and shown to us in a way that is intelligible. They must be shaped so that they can be followed and understood. This shaping involves news programme makers creating interesting and logical narratives.



Most stories on a news bulletin have a simple structure - even those that include several elements including a film report and an interview.

They have an **Introduction**. This will usually answer some of the five key news questions:

Who is involved?
When did it happen?
What has happened?
Where did it happen?
Why did it happen?

Sometimes an introduction will be a bit more sophisticated, telling us the answers to the WHO and WHERE questions, but leaving it up to the main report to answer the rest – WHY? HOW? WHAT?

Then there is the **main body** of the report in which the answers to some or all of these questions are provided and **elaborated**. Part of this elaboration will be contained in the visual images that provide the evidence that the story is genuine.

Then there is the **conclusion**. Here the story is brought to a close and loose ends are tied up. Of course, not all conclusions can be neat – the conclusion may point out that a problem remains to be solved sometime in the future.



Explore the Waveland story:

<http://www.channel4.com/learning/breakingthenews/schools/toolsandresources/trsamplenewsstories.html>



Invite students to identify how the story is structured, the kinds of questions it asks and where it answers them.



In doing so, students will develop a sense of story structure so they feel more confident constructing their own stories.

Worksheet 2 can be used to analyse the story in more depth. The table on the worksheet is divided into four columns. At Key Stage 4, students can complete column three with their views of the function of each of the 11 segments that make up the story. At the teacher's discretion, the analysis of the report may invite dipping into the questions in the fourth column and at the end of the table. These touch on some other key issues concerning representation; the conventions of TV news and also the differing impacts a story can have depending on the audience.

In going through a story in detail, students will gain invaluable insights concerning story structure and the relationship between script and image. Newscasters make meanings and guide the viewers' interpretation. This is certainly happening in the Rugman story about Waveland, where we are frequently told how to interpret someone's behaviour or judge a scene in the reporter's voice over.

Using e-SEQ



The e-SEQ tool contains raw video footage from ITN that can be used to make a news story. Ensure that students understand how to use e-SEQ.

<http://www.channel4.com/learning/breakingthenews/schools/toolsandresources/treseqeditingtool.html>



Students will need to:

- sequence these rushes clips into a two and a half-minute story
- write a narration script for the story

Note that the e-SEQ server will be updated with new footage on a regular basis so that different stories can be created.

This activity can be continued in the next session.

Worksheet 1

A rumour is going around school that a Year 7 student's parents are now rich thanks to a win on the National Lottery. How long do you think it would take that rumour to spread around the entire school?

The first question to ask is why such a story is interesting? List your reasons for listening to the rumour.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Compare notes with your classmates and write down any other good reasons why this is an interesting tale. In doing this you are starting to consider what makes a story newsworthy.

Consider the following 'sources' of information that you could turn to in order to verify the story about this suddenly super-rich pupil. Use the table below to consider the trustworthiness or otherwise of each piece of evidence. Provide a reason to believe and a reason not to believe each of them.

Evidence	Trust?	Distrust?
The news is repeated to you by several members of your year group from different classes.		
The younger sibling of a person in your class tells you that the story is true and involves someone in their tutor group.		
At break you see a big crowd around a young child in the playground – people are making fun of him/her; asking for things, claiming to be their best friend, etc. The teachers have to break it up.		
There is an announcement in assembly about the child's good fortune and the need to give them space and treat them with kindness.		
A photographer from your local newspaper is standing at the school gate and, with the parent's permission, takes some shots of the child being picked up from school.		

Worksheet 2

The Waveland Story – analysing the narrative elements

You are going to study a news story broadcast on Channel 4 News on September 6, 2005. It was one of many 'aftermath stories' that followed the Hurricane Katrina disaster. In this first exercise, you will explore what makes this a satisfactory story.

Whether foreign or domestic, the same principles apply when it comes to making your coverage coherent and interesting.

First viewing

After you have watched the sequence, try to reflect on the key elements it contained as a story.

Who fills in the back story to the Waveland tale, providing context? Who is identified as the key **protagonist** in the tale? Is there one?

Here's the cast:

- Jon Snow – main 'New Orleans segment' anchorman
- Jonathan Rugman – ITN reporter in Waveland
- President, George Bush
- Brian Mollere (Waveland resident)
- Brian's armed friend and neighbour
- Phil Reynolds – the Wal-mart pharmacist in Waveland
- Susan St Amant – homeless Waveland resident.

Clearly, Hurricane Katrina is the '**agent of change**' that has threatened the individuals and community, but what are the main **problems** that the story picks out amid the devastation?

What **allies** does the story suggest exist that might help tackle the problems Waveland faces?

What **hurdles** or **forces of opposition** do the people of Waveland face in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane?

What **solution** does the story offer, if any, and what **loose ends** does it leave dangling?

Second viewing

Watch the Waveland story again. This time you have a detailed storyboard to refer to. This asks a number of questions that should help you get closer to the narrative of the story. It also starts to raise others which will get you thinking about the subtext underlying the story in terms of the language used and the images selected.

When describing the function of each element do not repeat the content of the script. Instead, try to explain the job that piece performs to help our understanding of the story.

Does it provide context?

Does it answer one or more of the five Ws (who, what, when, why, where) or how?

Does it set up some of the problems?

Does it introduce key protagonists?

Does it introduce allies or hurdles – likely to tackle or add to the problems already identified?

Does it offer solutions?

Images	Script	Function	Detailed questions
<p>SEGMENT ONE Jon Snow in New Orleans.</p> <p>Map showing the Mississippi and Louisiana coastline and New Orleans and Waveland.</p> <p>Split screen showing Rugman and Snow in their respective locations.</p>	<p>"Now, its hard enough to imagine the rebuilding of New Orleans, but one small town, just down the coast, has been wiped off the map, virtually flattened – left with no power, no water, no phones, no way out! 97% of its homes and businesses were destroyed when the eye of the storm passed right through it – as our correspondent Jonathan Rugman found out. He joins me now from nearby Gulfport."</p>		<p>What elements of the script inject a sense of the scale of the destruction in Waveland?</p> <p>What makes the town's name so poignant – and do you think that may have had an influence on the choice to go there rather than other devastated Gulf Coast towns?</p> <p>"No way out" – is this hyperbole? Spot how this makes reference to a part of the story near the end of the 'package'. How does this link help contribute to the story's overall shape/architecture?</p>
<p>SEGMENT TWO Jonathan Rugman in Gulfport – behind him troops entering a HMMWV military vehicle.</p>	<p>"John – the centre of Waveland looks much as the American South looked after the Civil War. It has been levelled to the ground. Many of its occupants are now sleeping under canvas, still stunned by what has happened to them. In a moment my report from Waveland, but first President Bush speaking today about Waveland and clearly shocked by what he'd seen there.</p>		<p>While much of the southern states were in a pretty poor state after the American Civil War 1861-65, Rugman may be making an indirect reference to the aftermath of the Northern Army of General Sherman marching in 1864 through North and South Carolina burning everything in its path.</p> <p>What does this historic reference suggest about the audience that watches Channel 4 News? Would anyone consider this comparison as a bit insensitive? Why?</p> <p>Rugman makes clear reference to the fact that what we are watching is a 'constructed story'. Can you spot where and what this evidence of story 'construction' might be when we watch the misery of the Waveland populace later on?</p>
<p>SEGMENT THREE President Bush sitting next to Secretary of State, Donald Rumsfeld, at a press conference.</p>	<p>"And you know, I was with the mayor of Waveland the other day – Mississippi - his town was completely destroyed. What I'm interested in is</p>		<p>The report begins with President Bush but what is the effect of his appearance? Is what he says reassuring? Could an alternative reading suggest he is far-removed from the disaster – cut off almost? Rugman told us President Bush was 'clearly shocked' - is there</p>

	<p>helping that man and that community get back on its feet. That's where my focus is."</p>		<p>evidence of this in this press conference? Where?</p> <p>The sequence feels a bit as if it could have been an afterthought – an event that occurred once the main report was done and had to be added on at the last minute. What is your view?</p>
<p>SEGMENT FOUR</p> <p>A series of shots showing the scale of devastation in Waveland.</p> <p>A shot of collapsed houses at dawn.</p> <p>A view up a road – collapsed houses on both sides – the road curiously clear.</p> <p>A travelling shot taken from a vehicle showing more destruction beside the road.</p> <p>A view up the road showing a group of dogs barking amid the wreckage.</p>	<p>Jonathan Rugman voice over: "It's the dawn of a new day in Waveland – once a seaside town of 7,000 – now flattened, ripped to shreds, wiped off the map...</p> <p>...entire avenues reduced to rubble...</p> <p>...at least 50 dead here – some of them found clinging for safety from the branches of trees...</p> <p>...a few hungry pets now searching for owners who have fled."</p>		<p>The key thing to note here is the close relationship between the script and the images.</p> <p>Notice the narrative arc in this one section that begins with images of a dawn, takes in shots of broken homes, features a journey into the town and ends with abandoned dogs. Why show the set of images in that order?</p> <p>What is the mood or pulse of this opening? Is it respectful, dramatic, awed, fearful, sad, poignant?</p> <p>At this point is this report entertaining, reminiscent of an adventure film in any respects?</p>
<p>SEGMENT FIVE</p> <p>Interview with Brian Mollere – Waveland resident in the wreckage of his home.</p> <p>Medium shot of Mollere.</p> <p>Close up of his feet and a broom – as he sweeps his concrete floor.</p> <p>Long shot of tattered blue canopy surrounded by wreckage.</p> <p>A long shot of a tattered, unfurled Stars and Stripes flag.</p> <p>Mollere holds Rocky up to his shoulder.</p>	<p>Brian Mollere: "Beautiful morning!"</p> <p>Jonathan Rugman voice over: "But Brian Mollere is staying put... ...keeping as tidy as he can what survived the storm...</p> <p>Brian's mother died in the storm...</p> <p>His dog Rocky didn't.</p>		<p>What is your reaction to this sequence?</p> <p>Why do you feel the general report about Waveland has now shifted to this tale of one resident's experiences?</p> <p>What makes Brian Mollere a fantastic find? Consider the range of possible reactions there might be to this section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a man in deep shock clinging to the wreckage of his life and trying to maintain a little order to prevent collapsing into grief. • This is a man that well illustrates the strength of the human spirit in adversity. • This is a man engaged in an almost surreal set

	<p>Mollere: "He held onto me like this. Rocky was on my arm as we swum out – he couldn't swim, his legs are too short. He made it - through the whole ordeal. Rocky say 'hello'."</p>	<p>of behaviours – going through the motions of playing host despite the devastation around him. Hurricanes and other natural disasters do have the power to make our presence on the planet seem puny and absurd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an intrusion into this man's life at a time of grief. • This is a great illustration of the vulnerability of so many in America, the poor who appear to have been forgotten – until, that is, when the cameras reached them. • This is highly sentimental – human interest, but not news.
<p>SEGMENT SIX</p> <p>Close up of Mollere heating water on a camping hob.</p> <p>Shot of shelves containing groceries.</p> <p>Shot of SUV buried in rubble and mud.</p> <p>Mollere in close up – pointing to a point in mid air.</p> <p>Shot from Mollere's point of top of canopy.</p> <p>Mollere in close up.</p>	<p>Mollere: "Getting ready to make some more coffee here..."</p> <p>Rugman voice over: "Christian groups have given Brian food and he now camps beneath the stars – still marvelling how he survived a surge of ocean water 25 feet high."</p> <p>Mollere: "I think I survived. I was above – up to the top of that pole – I would say 25 feet." Unseen interviewer: "What were you doing there?"</p> <p>"I was swimming – I had my little dog under my arm and I'm paddling with the other – going with the current. Trying to stay away from debris</p>	<p>The story of Brian Mollere continues. What is the effect of seeing him trying to be hospitable to the reporter and camera crew? Presumably, the coffee is for them.</p> <p>We learn of an ally for Brian in his time of need. Some support has reached him, as have the ITN TV crew, but still no sign of a Government response, despite what the President said at the start of the package.</p> <p>What is your reaction to the items on the shelves? How might it underline Mollere's vulnerability?</p> <p>Do you feel this might be just one of those occasions? Is Rugman, asking the kinds of questions, we as the viewing public would ask Mollere if we were there?</p> <p>Mollere is a big man, hardly a victim under normal circumstances. Is seeing a person like him in extremis (strung out) like this particularly powerful?</p> <p>Consider this when you encounter more traditional</p>

	and houses and whatever was piled up..."		'victims' later in the package.
<p>SEGMENT SEVEN</p> <p>Close up of rifle being loaded.</p> <p>Shot of Brian's 'friend' with rifle.</p> <p>Long shot of further devastation – Brian's home in ruins.</p> <p>Shots of Brian sweeping, then combination of close up shots of Mollere and long shot views of him clearly out in the open.</p>	<p>Jonathan Rugman voice over: "Brian shares a gun with a friend to protect themselves from looters..."</p> <p>Friend: "He protects himself with that..."</p> <p>Voice over: "Brian had no property insurance – his family couldn't afford it. But, he's still house proud and up beat.</p> <p>Question: "You're sweeping the floor today. Why are you doing that when you haven't any walls?"</p> <p>Mollere: Well – this is home. We like to keep it nice and clean. This is where we live right now – nowhere else to go. We have company come by all the time so we like to keep it presentable."</p>		<p>How does the story change at this point?</p> <p>Does your view of Mollere alter in any way?</p> <p>Do you feel this section exposes something of America or is the kind of fear and implied aggression in this segment the kind of reaction that would affect anyone caught up in these terrible circumstances?</p> <p>What do you make of this portrait of paranoia and seeming courage and resilience? What is your response to the sweeping up that Mollere's engaged in?</p>
<p>SEGMENT EIGHT</p> <p>Establishing shots of tents.</p> <p>A series of long shots of soldiers distributing food and unloading supplies from a vehicle.</p>	<p>Jonathan Rugman voice over: "One mile back and Brian's neighbours are living in tents in the car park of a shopping mall –</p>		<p>Again, assess the effect here as we see the focus on one individual expand to show dozens like Brian Mollere.</p> <p>We also encounter something about the rescue response – a</p>

	<p>picking through Salvation Army boxes for clothes that might fit...</p> <p>Three months ago, these soldiers were driving convoys across Iraq – now they are forming an outdoor supermarket checkout – the food free and donated by Wal-mart – every day the feeding of at least 3000.</p>	<p>combination of troops just returned from Iraq and donations by one of America's biggest supermarket chains - Wal-mart – associated with low pay, and underselling its rivals.</p> <p>Clearly this section has various undercurrents – discuss the subtext associated with mentioning Iraq and America's military commitments there; the response of Christian charities and the use of the phrase 'the feeding of at least 3000'.</p>
<p>SEGMENT NINE</p> <p>Close up of man in tent interior - baseball cap and dark glasses. He is giving advice about injections.</p> <p>A close up of him writing prescriptions (scripts in US English).</p> <p>A low angle shot of him taken to include the camouflage trousers of a soldier and a rifle butt.</p>	<p>Jonathan Rugman voice over: "And this is the local chemist – a medicine man so vital – his drugs have to be protected from desperate looters.</p> <p>Q: "What kind of medical problems have you encountered?"</p> <p>A: "Most people lost all their medicine. If you look over at the store, we had over 15 feet of water here and so anyone who lived from here to the Gulf, their homes were completely underwater, destroyed. So they have no medicine for heart, blood pressure, diabetes..."</p>	<p>What kind of picture does this segment present of the emergency response to the crisis? Does it give you cause for hope or not? Explain your view with evidence from the segment.</p> <p>Notice this quite artful shot – capturing both the humanitarian effort of the doctor but suggesting the harsh reality of living in such a place – the need for a military presence.</p> <p>We have heard a lot about looters and seen a lot of guns but what, so far, has the evidence been in this report that such looting is a real danger?</p>
<p>SEGMENT TEN</p> <p>A curious shot showing a shadow on a tent.</p> <p>Then a slow pan across the chaotic interior of the tent.</p>	<p>Jonathan Rugman voice over: "But shortage of medicine isn't Susan St Amant's problem – it's how to fit her family of six inside this tent with another four</p>	<p>Susan St Amant represents a second face of the crisis in Waveland – what evidence does the film segment provide visually of her miserable situation?</p> <p>Why do you feel the artful shot</p>

<p>Close up of Susan St Amant.</p> <p>A shot of the tent exterior and of groceries and possessions piled up in a supermarket trolley.</p> <p>Close up of Susan St Amant weeping.</p>	<p>relatives arriving tonight."</p> <p>Susan St Amant: "It's hard – I thought I had it hard raising three kids on my own, but it's harder now, because they don't understand what's going on, they don't understand we have nothing."</p> <p>Jonathan Rugman interview question: "How are you going to pick yourself up – you've no job, no house? You're living in a tent."</p> <p>Susan St Amant: "I don't know... I don't know..."</p>	<p>of Susan's shadow on the tent was used rather than just cutting straight to her?</p> <p>Do you feel that Susan St Amant is more of a victim than Brian Mollere? Does the fact that she comes second suggest how much worse her situation is? Does the segment seem to imply a hierarchy of suffering?</p> <p>What is your reaction to the reporter's questions and the fact that the camera continues to film her even though she is clearly distressed?</p> <p>Notice how sound – the beginning of Rugman's questions to St Amant - begin while we are seeing exterior shots of the tent. Using sound to 'bridge' a cut in the film is a good technique that makes the sequence flow better – but is such technical excellence and the general 'slickness' of this film segment curiously out of step with the chaos that it catalogues?</p>
<p>SEGMENT ELEVEN</p> <p>Exterior long shot of blonde child in nappies wandering around the car park in between the piles of groceries and possessions.</p> <p>Long shot of damaged railway lines.</p>	<p>Jonathan Rugman voice over: "And so this is life in all its grim reality in Waveland..."</p> <p>...a town so devastated that its railway tracks don't know where they're going.</p>	<p>The report is winding up now – what evidence is there in the report that it is being brought to a neat, if not comforting, end?</p> <p>What is your reaction to the railway track shot and comment? Is this just cleverness or does it add to our understanding of the plight of those in Waveland?</p>
<p>Jon Snow – medium shot. Behind him, from his vantage point above them, the flooded streets of New Orleans.</p>	<p>"Jonathan Rugman from the very sad town of Waveland.</p>	<p>The return to Jon Snow should not be ignored. It injects a sense of continuity and familiarity after the problems and suffering we have been</p>

	<p>We'll be back later, but first..."</p> <p>REPORT ENDS</p>	<p>witnessing. We may never hear of Brian Mollere or Susan St Amant again, but Jon will be back with us soon and there's another story coming up. Do you feel this is a cynical view? After all we need Jon to link the stories from across a vast region affected by Katrina, but what are the consolations of seeing him again at the end of the Waveland piece?</p>
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