

Writing Assignment: COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Choose an acclaimed piece of investigative reporting from the past five years. In a complete and coherent essay, compare and contrast your chosen piece of reporting to the work of a journalist featured on InvestigatingPower.org. Your essay should include an objective summary about each piece of reporting and should also consider the following questions:

- **How was the purpose of each reporter's work similar? Different?**
- **What common challenges did these reporters face? How were their challenges different?**
- **How did the use of technology differ (ex. in gathering information, in communicating reporting to the public, etc.)?**

Finally, evaluate the impact of each piece of reporting. Was one more successful than the other? Why or why not? Cite specific evidence to support your claim.

Recommended Resources

For choosing a recent piece of investigative reporting:

- Pulitzer Prize Winners and Finalists in Investigative Reporting
<http://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-category/206>
- Investigative Reporters and Editors Awards
<http://www.ire.org/awards/ire-awards/>
- Online News Association: Knight Award for Public Service & The Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award
<http://journalists.org/awards/2016-awards/>
- George Polk Awards
<http://liu.edu/polk>

For choosing a journalist featured on InvestigatingPower.org:

- ⊕ Each journalist's page features a bio, career timeline, video interview, links to original reporting and list of additional resources.
<https://investigatingpower.org/category/journalists/>

Writing Assignment: EXPOSITORY

Mission of The Center for Public Integrity:

To serve democracy by revealing abuses of power, corruption and betrayal of public trust by powerful public and private institutions, using the tools of investigative journalism.

Mission of ProPublica:

To expose abuses of power and betrayals of the public trust by government, business, and other institutions, using the moral force of investigative journalism to spur reform through the sustained spotlighting of wrongdoing.

Over the past 30 years, traditional news outlets have cut back on investigative reporting staff and resources. In response, independent, nonprofit newsrooms have been established to continue the tradition of investigative reporting.

In a complete and coherent essay, **explain why the missions of investigative newsrooms like the examples listed above are necessary and relevant today.** Your explanation should include specific evidence that demonstrates the importance of investigative reporting. Examples may be drawn from both current coverage and precedents set by journalists featured on InvestigatingPower.org. Finally, explain what challenges independent, investigative newsrooms may face in accomplishing their missions in the context of 21st century reporting. Cite evidence to support your explanation.

Recommended Resources

Background:

Journalists create more investigative nonprofits worldwide, despite the risks

By Charles Lewis, Investigative Reporting Workshop

<http://investigativereportingworkshop.org/investigations/new-newsrooms/story/journalists-create-nonprofits/>

Why We Need Investigative Reporting

By Robert Parry, The Consortium for Independent Journalism

<http://www.consortiumnews.com/2005/072905.html>

For examples of investigative reporting:

- The Center for Public Integrity, <https://www.publicintegrity.org/>
- ProPublica, <https://www.propublica.org/>
- The Investigative Reporting Workshop, <http://investigativereportingworkshop.org/>
- The Center for Investigative Reporting, <https://www.revealnews.org/>

Writing Assignment: PERSUASIVE

Imagine you are an investigative reporter and your editor has asked you to pitch a story idea. Think about issues in your school or your community. What is a policy, an event or a decision you believe needs to be investigated? Write a complete and coherent proposal to your editor that addresses the following:

- **What issue you would like to investigate**
- **Why this issue is newsworthy**
- **How you would conduct your investigation** (*What research would you do? What documents or data use? Who would you talk to? What questions would you ask? Etc.*)
- **What you suspect you might discover**
- **What impact this story could have on your community**

Finally, the conclusion of your proposal should connect your pitch to the greater context of investigative reporting. Using relevant examples or evidence, explain to your editor why it is important for your news organization to conduct investigative journalism.

Recommended Resources

Where to find story ideas:

- Talk to people in your school or your community. Find out what concerns them, what policies they disagree with, what questions they have. Not all concerns may have merit, and you will definitely need to fact check, but community members can often provide you with a lead.
- Research investigative stories in actual high school and college newspapers. Stories reported at other schools may be relevant at your campus. Never copy another journalist's reporting, but use their work to spark your own idea.
- Still stuck? Check out *1 Million Story Ideas & Writing Prompts for Student Journalists* by College Media Matters.

<http://www.collegemediamatters.com/2013/11/15/1-million-story-ideas-for-student-journalists-2/>

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Writing Assignment: ARGUMENTATIVE

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

–United States Constitution, First Amendment (1791)

“There is not a crime, there is not a dodge, there is not a trick, there is not a swindle, there is not a vice that does not live by secrecy. Get these things out in the open, describe them, attack them, ridicule them in the press, and sooner or later public opinion will sweep them away.”

–Joseph Pulitzer (1847-1911), publisher of *The New York World*

In a complete and coherent essay, explain how the two above quotes are related, and analyze their significance to journalism and American democracy in the 21st century. Engage in research to develop an argumentative answer to the following question: **Is the modern press fulfilling the role the founders intended it to have in American democracy?**

Your argumentative, research-based essay should include the following:

- Explanation and analysis of quotes provided
- Historical context for the role of the press in American democracy
- Thesis statement or claim
- Multiple pieces of evidence to support your claim
- Acknowledgment of opposing arguments
- Conclusion about the future role of the press in American democracy

Your argument should draw on examples across multiple time periods of American history. Specific evidence must be cited and its relevance must be explained.

Recommended Resources

Historical Context:

- *Muckraking: The Journalism that Changed America* edited by Judith and William Serrin
- *Stories that Changed America: Muckrakers of the 20th Century* by Carl Jensen
- *Mightier Than the Sword: How the News Media Have Shaped American History* by Rodger Streitmatter
- *Reporting the War: Freedom of the Press from the American Revolution to the War on Terrorism*, by John Byrne Cooke

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**Multimedia Assignment:
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