

# TIMELY TIPS

## Writing

### Storytelling & Source Analysis – “The Long Way”

#### OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze a narrative story to understand how information is gathered, how quotes and facts are used and what must be true behind the scenes for the story to exist. They will learn to question sources and reconstruct the writing process.

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Printed copies of “[The Long Way](#)” by Peter Soto
- [Yearbook Chat with Jim](#) podcast episode
- Pens, highlighters, sticky notes (optional)

#### PART 1

#### INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

Explain that today’s focus is on how stories are built, not just how they read. As a class or individually, read “The Long Way” by Peter Soto.

**Ask:**

“What do you think goes on behind the scenes when someone writes a story like this?”

Emphasize that great stories come from gathering facts, observations, quotes and connecting with interviewees so they feel comfortable opening up. Reinforce that trust, access, follow-up questions and verification all shape what ends up in the final piece.

Listen to [Yearbook Chat with Jim](#) podcast: Susan Massy – Yearbook’s Queen of Storytelling, and consider:

- How reporters gather quotes and details
- How trust, comfort and relationship-building shape interviews
- What makes a story feel complete, credible and human

#### PART 2

#### DIRECT INSTRUCTION (15 MINUTES)

1. Model the process using the opening paragraph of “[The Long Way](#)”: point out where details likely came from – interviews, observation, locker-room access, sideline tracking etc.

2. Highlight the difference between:

- Observed details (quiet bus ride, routines)
- Interview-based quotes (coaches, players)
- Reconstructed scenes (locker-room emotion, celebrations)

3. Pick a line or detail and discuss as a class. Come to a consensus on every angle of that line.

- If it’s a quote, how was it gathered?
- What was the question that produced that quote?
- Was it a question or was it flow of conversation?
- What must be true for that line to exist the way it does?
- If it’s a random detail, how did the writer get that piece of information?

Think your way around that piece of the story until you feel you know exactly how it was gathered and documented.

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#### PART 3

#### GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Divide students into groups and assign a portion of the story for the group to analyze (Jigsaw Method). Students will mark up their assigned section based on the prompts in Part 2.

Groups will read aloud the portion of the story and share their findings.

#### PART 4

#### CLASS DEBRIEF (10 MINUTES)

**Discuss as a class:**

- Which parts relied heavily on interviews?
- Which depended on access or firsthand observation?
- Which moments could be misinterpreted without proper verification?
- How trust and comfort influence whether a subject shares emotional or vulnerable moments.

Lead the conversation towards any additional questions you feel are relevant to the section:  
(Ex: We know the reporter had to be on the bus to set that scene, but how did he arrange to get on the bus? And if we were to try to ride along with a team, who do we talk to to make that happen?)

#### PART 5

#### CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

**Reinforce:**

Every story you write is built from real people, real conversations and real moments. Your job is to honor them by reporting carefully and treating people with respect.

Trust + Accuracy + Curiosity + Careful Reporting = A Great Story