

TIMELY TIPS

Writing

Finding Fresh Ways to Cover Familiar Topics

OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze common yearbook topics, identify overlooked story angles and create new approaches that make yearbook coverage more engaging and meaningful.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Index cards
- Paper and pencil
- Whiteboard or shared digital document
- Walsworth's *Yearbook Suite*, "Writing: Tell Me a Story"
- Sample yearbook stories or spreads (optional)

PART 1

THE STORY EVERYONE WRITES

Present students with a common yearbook topic:

- Homecoming
- Football
- Fall musical
- First day of school
- Soccer

Ask:

If every yearbook staff covers this event, what usually gets written about it?

As students respond, create a list of **predictable** story angles:

Example for Homecoming:

- Who won the game
- Homecoming court
- Dance attendance
- School Spirit Days

Once the list is complete, ask:

- Which of these stories have readers probably seen before?
- What feels repetitive?
- What stories might be missing?

Discuss how strong yearbook writing often starts by looking beyond the most obvious angle.

PART 2

ANGLE FLIP CHALLENGE

Place students into small groups and give each group a common yearbook topic. Please note that students may need to come up with theoretical information to complete this activity.

Topic	Common Coverage
Homecoming	Homecoming King and Queen results
Football	Final score and key plays
School play	Cast and performance
Spirit Week	Dress-up days
Prom	Theme and decorations

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PART 2

Challenge groups to brainstorm at least five alternative angles and encourage students to think about:

- Students who are usually overlooked
- Behind-the-scenes activities
- Unique challenges for the year
- Traditions and rituals
- Personal experiences from the student(s)
- Unexpected statistics

Have groups share their best angle with the class.

Discuss:

- Which angles would be most interesting to read?
- Which angles introduce voices readers may not normally hear?
- Which ideas could become profiles, Q&As, narratives or infographics for mod packages?

PART 3

STORY ANGLE ROULETTE

Explain that not every story idea is a strong feature story. Before writers begin reporting, editors should test the angle to determine whether it is specific, people-focused and interesting enough for readers. The activity focuses on evaluating story angles before any writing begins.

Round 1: Build the Angle

Place students into small groups and give each group a yearbook topic.

Examples

- Homecoming
- Fall sport
- School lunches
- School musical/play
- Student jobs
- Winter weather
- Prom
- Chemistry lab experiment

Each group must create:

- One theoretical story angle
- A working headline
- Possible interview subjects

Example Response

Topic: Winter Weather

Strong Angle: A student turned the heavy snowfall into an opportunity by plowing neighbors' driveways to raise money for a new transmission for their car.

Working Headline: Clearing a Path Forward

Possible Interview Subjects

- The student who plowed the driveways
- A neighbor who hired the student
- A parent or guardian who could provide context about the transmission and the student's goal

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Round 2: Station Rotation

Groups rotate through stations and evaluate another group's angle.

At each station, students answer one question:

Station Name	Goals
The Already Know Test	Would readers already know most of this information? If yes, what would make the angle more unique?
The People Test	Does the story focus on people and experiences rather than just an event? If no, who else should be interviewed?
The Specificity Test	Would you stop and read this story in the yearbook? Explain your answer.

PART 4

REVISE THE PITCH

After completing the stations, have students return to their original topic and review the feedback from their peers.

Students should revise their:

- Proposed feature story angle
- Working headline
- Possible interview subjects

Remind students they do not need to accept every suggestion. They should use the feedback that makes their angle more specific, people-centered and reportable. Effective peer feedback should guide revision while allowing the original writers to maintain ownership of their work.

Ask each group to share:

- Its original angle
- Its revised angle
- One change made because of peer feedback
- One interview subject who is essential to reporting the story

As groups present, ask the class:

- Does the revised angle focus on a specific person, moment or challenge?
- Would the proposed interviews provide firsthand information?
- Does the headline reflect the angle without giving away the entire story?
- Does the pitch show readers why the story matters?

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RELEVANT RESOURCES

Use these resources to continue building students' yearbook storytelling and design skills.

- **Yearbook Suite Curriculum, "Writing: Tell Me a Story"** – Help students move from broad coverage ideas to focused stories by identifying meaningful moments, choosing useful sources and making intentional reporting decisions before writing.
- **Developing a Story Angle** – Reinforce how writers narrow familiar topics into clear, specific angles that give stories purpose and direction.
- **You Can Find a Story Angle, Even When You're Stumped** – Show students how conversations, questions and school-specific details can uncover original approaches to familiar topics.
- **Mastering the Art of Yearbook Storytelling** – Explore how interviewing and human-centered angles help writers move beyond broad event recaps and identify the individual experiences at the center of a strong story.
- **Interviewing Resources** – Prepare students to ask better questions, conduct stronger conversations and gather the meaningful quotes and details needed to develop their angles.
- **Yearbook Help** – Find additional training videos and copywriting resources.