



Noting to See

Today we're going to learn how to use your *Reporter's Notebook*. You'll notice right away that this notebook is a little different from the plain lined memo-type notebooks other reporters use. Yours follows the coursework, sometimes offering specific questions for a particular assignment, and always using a two-part page format designed to help you think like a reporter.

Your job as a chronojournalist investigating forgotten stories is to ask interesting questions and find interesting (true!) answers. The top third of each front page—the section with a question mark—is where you're going to record questions. These can be questions you want to ask yourself as you research, questions you want to ask an expert, questions that serve as the basis for a story idea, or anything that provokes curiosity and needs to be investigated.



Questions for yourself

Questions to ask others

Story ideas

Stuff to investigate

The bottom two-thirds of the notebook is where you're going to record the answers you uncover. Those answers will fall into one of two categories. They will either be facts or emotions.

Facts are details commonly accepted as true. This is NOT the place for opinion. Just because something seems obvious to you doesn't mean everyone will agree on it. Of course, you are welcome to record your opinions; just put them in the top section. In order for something to be considered a fact and recorded in the bottom section, it needs to be verifiable by at least one respected source. The bottom section of your notebook is for things that can be substantiated as true.

Ironically, this means you can include any sort of quote in the bottom section, as long as someone really said it. The quote itself does not need to be true. When you write down what someone said, you're only recording the truth that the person said those words. You aren't vouching for the truth of the words themselves.



Answers to your own questions

Direct quotes

Observations

Names and dates

Addresses

Background information

Story details

Others' opinions

The bottom section of the notebook is for anything factual. This includes observations, such as your own description of someone's appearance or the setting of a story. It's for data like names and addresses and websites. It's for background information and story details and events that may or may not be related to the subject at hand.

The point of dividing your notes into these two sections is two-fold. First, it will help you notice the difference between fact and opinion in your own thinking and writing. That should go a long way to making you a more balanced and honest reporter. Acknowledging your own opinions and biases is the first step in writing fairly about controversial topics. Second, it will help you structure your stories—a skill we will hone throughout this course.

But the bottom section of the notebook isn't just for facts. It's also for emotion.

FACTS & EMOTION

Stories that don't create emotion are boring. Our job as journalists is not to bore readers. Our job is to inform and to entertain. To write a good story, you need to understand its emotional hooks. You need to understand what makes it dramatic. H.L. Mencken wrote that his job as a journalist was to create villains and then execute them in the court of public opinion. I don't agree with this idea, but it does contain an element of truth. Mencken understood that emotion sells. It doesn't just sell newspapers—it "sells" stories themselves.

To that end, the bottom section of your notebook is where you record anything dramatic. What makes this particular story interesting? Where is the conflict? What are the people involved feeling? Who does it affect most, and why does it matter to them?

These questions are where you'll find the most interest in any given story. Write the answers in the bottom section of your notebook.

One more thing about the notebook: some assignments don't rely on it very much, so it would be easy to leave those corresponding pages blank.

Please don't. Instead, try to carry your notebook around and use it to notice the way life unfolds around you. Write down things that strike you as interesting or odd or profound. Learn to notice yourself noticing things. This is essentially the job of the writer and the journalist.

More than that, it's the dignity of being human. Paying attention will sharpen your mind. Recording your thoughts will teach you to think more clearly and enlarge your capacity for observation. To that end, every blank page is a wasted opportunity.

Assignment One:

Before you practice using the notebook in today's Wyatt Earp assignment, read the story on the next page by cub reporter Ernest Hemingway.

Hemingway found a story (a series of stories, actually) just by going to the local Army recruiting office and making observations and asking questions.

Recruits for the Tanks

by Ernest Hemingway

Kansas City Star, April 18, 1918

A line of men wound from the front room of the third floor of the Army recruiting station, Twelfth and Grand Avenue, through the hall and half way downstairs. Some of the men were jostling and laughing, others looked sober and looked thoughtfully at the posters on the wall. Mechanics in overalls, bookkeepers, stenographers, school teachers who would have difficulty with the physical examination, and athletic college students, all were in line.

The head of the line stopped at the door of a room where

a freckled faced young second lieutenant sat at a desk. He nodded, a man was admitted, asked a few questions, sized up by the lieutenant and then either told he was not wanted or given a card to sign.

"It's the spirit of adventure which brings them up here," said Lieut. Frank E. Cooter, of the Tank Corps, the latest branch of the United States Army. "Every man in line there is a potential crusader. They may not have realized it until today. Then they came up to enlist. We do not offer anything easy. The tank corps is no place for those that want noncombatant jobs and desk soldiers needn't apply. But we guarantee quick action, active service, a good chance for a commission and adventure. The tank work is dangerous, of course, but men will al-

ways apply for clean, dangerous work with a chance for quick advancement."

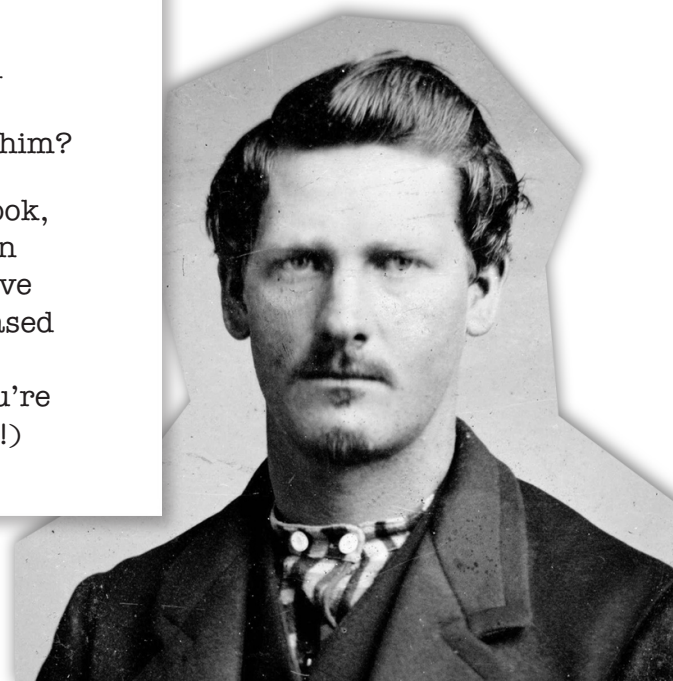
More than fifty men applied at the recruiting office yesterday and Lieutenant Cooter recommended the enlistment of eighteen. Men of mechanical skill are wanted especially but an order from Col. I.C. Welborn, of the tank corps authorized Lieutenant Cooter to accept any men "qualified by soldierly qualities."

Arthur McKnight and Albert Findley, Kansas City newspapermen, enlisted in the new service yesterday. The other men enlisted ranged in occupation from truck drivers to school teachers. Letters and telegrams of application were received from all over the Middle West yesterday.

Notebook:

Imagine you're a seventeen-year-old extra on a Hollywood movie set in 1916. You're sitting in the commissary and talking with Wyatt Earp. What sorts of things do you ask him?

Write down six questions in the top section of your notebook, three fact-based and three emotion-based. Then write down his answers in the bottom section of the notebook. You have permission to make up his answers, but they should be based on research. At the very least, do a little digging online to find plausible responses. (This is one of the few places you're allowed to present speculation as fact. Don't get used to it!)



PERSONALITY HIGHLIGHTS: Throughout this book you'll find weekly snapshots of interesting people who are related to the assigned story in some way.

PERSONALITY

H I G H L I G H T

LESSONS 1-3

Annie Edson Taylor

It's not easy to tell what might make headlines! In her sixties, Annie Edson Taylor, an American schoolteacher, decided that she was going to become the first person ever to travel over Niagara Falls in a barrel. Far from being a thrill-seeker or a budding innovator, Taylor held purely practical motives. As an older woman, she hoped that the money from the inevitable interviews and appearances would allow her to retire comfortably.

Unfortunately, she never found the fame and fortune she was seeking. While she *did* become the first person to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel, and she *did* emerge nearly unscathed, the feat wasn't as lucrative as she had expected. She was only asked for a few speaking engagements, and when her manager stole the barrel and went into hiding, she spent her hard-won savings to track him down.

