*Exploring non-fiction texts and short responses.*

**Characteristics of a Feature Article**

Feature articles:

* Contain depth of characters and/or issues, offering background information about the subject.
* Are usually timeless- they are just as acceptable for publication this week or next month.
* Provide more detail often including more research.
* Provide the reader with an understanding of the writer’s attitude towards his/her subject matter with the careful use of tone.
* Provide a forum for ideas, attitudes, reasons, feelings and background.

**PURPOSE:**

**To Inform**

**To Explain**

**To Analyse**

**To Advise**

**To Persuade**

**Structure of Feature Articles**

The ‘Write-off’ or ‘Stand first’ in a Feature article needs to capture the reader’s attention immediately and then the lead or introduction must maintain it. The elements required to produce a successful Feature article are a lead, a body and a conclusion.

**LEADS**

A successful lead will accomplish three objectives:

1. Attract the reader.

2. Give the reader the central idea.

3. Lead the reader into the story.

**TRANSITIONS**

* Good transitions in feature writing mean that one paragraph moves smoothly to the next one.
* Good transitions work by repeating a word, phrase or idea that has been used in the paragraph immediately before.

**ENDINGS**

* The conclusion often connects with an idea that has been developed in the lead, or it can in some way summarise the main points of the article.
* The conclusion is often structured in the same way as the lead as it refers to the angle presented in the introduction. This technique is referred to as the ‘lead replay’.
* Often at the end of a Feature article the writer will provide relevant information about that subject of the Feature, giving interested readers links to contact groups ‘…opens on Thursday’.

***Types of Leads***

**DESCRIPTION**

Descriptive leads often focus on what it feels like to be at an event by highlighting the sights, sounds, textures, tastes and smells that evoke clear images in the mind of the reader.

**DIRECT ADDRESS**

This is when the writer tries to engage the reader immediately. This can be done by asking questions or asking the reader to imagine something in particular. It is as though the writer is expecting some direct responses from the reader.

**SHOCKING STATEMENT**

* This type of lead is also known as “the teaser”.
* A shocking or striking statement is one that will produce a strong response in the reader. Often it will challenge some accepted belief, or simply be provocative. Statistics are often effective.
* It involves the reader by building suspense before revealing the focus of the story.

**NARRATIVE**

* The narrative lead tells a story.
* Sometimes a short piece, often from the writer’s own experience, will lead the reader into the article.
* Though it is also descriptive, the narrative lead is more like a play with a scene characters and dialogue.

**QUOTATION**

A relevant and effective quotation can introduce the reader to the theme of the article. The quote should compel the reader to go further into the story.

**QUESTION**

Should be used only when the question relates directly to the Feature angle and compels the reader to seek the answers further in the story. Unfortunately, most question leads can be answered with another question.

**LANGUAGE AND GRAMMATICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FEATURE ARTICLES**

**PARAGRAPHING**

Paragraphs of one to four sentences are used in newspaper feature articles.

**QUOTATIONS**

* Inverted commas indicate direct quotations.
* Quotes from eyewitnesses, sources or experts are included in the text.

**REGISTERED**

* Individual speakers who are quoted in a Feature article often use emotive language.
* Feature articles are more creative in the use of language than a news report, often using emotive language.
* Feature articles contain objective material but often appeal to emotions.

**KEY WORDS**

* The vocabulary includes many words that relate to the specific subject discussed.
* An extensive written vocabulary is used.
* Contractions are often used to create a “chatty/informal” person-to-person tone.

**SUBJECT MATTER OF FEATURE ARTICLES**

Feature Articles are usually longer than News Reports and Columns and are written about a range of topics including:

* Society
* Health
* Food
* Politics
* Entertainment
* Individuals
* The Environment
* Sport
* Economics
* Current Issues

**LAYOUT OF FEATURE ARTICLES**

* Each Feature article has a headline.
* Feature articles generally include a synopsis as part of the byline. The synopsis provides the reader with information about the content of the text. It is known as a ‘Write of’ of ‘Stand first’.
* Feature articles include a byline. The byline states the name of the writer. This is often part of the ‘Write off/ Stand first’
* A photograph, graphics, illustration or cartoon usually accompanies feature articles.
* The text is written in column format.
* A BreakOut Box may support feature articles. A BreakOut Box appears next to the news report and provides readers with related factual information about the topic. Information in the BreakOut Box includes the use of technical terms, explanations, graphics and statistics.
* Several types and sizes of fonts are used.
* Colour is often used in either the headline and/or photograph(s).
* Feature articles are usually much longer than news reports and may or may not be linked to a current “hard news” event.

**Title & Headline**

The headline performs two important functions. An effective headline:

* Grabs the reader's attention and persuades them to read the article
* Highlights the main idea of the article.
* Includes keywords (for online articles).

**Introduction**

The first paragraph outlines the subject or theme of the article. It may also:

* Provoke the reader's interest by making an unusual statement.
* Provide any necessary background information.
* Invite the reader to take sides by making a controversial statement.
* Heighten the drama of an event or incident to intensify its appeal.
* Establish the writer's tone
* Create a relationship between the writer and the reader.

**Details (The Main Article)**

The middle section consists of a number of paragraphs that expand the main topic of the article into subtopics. The usual components are:

* Subheadings.
* Facts and statistics, which support the writer's opinion.
* Personal viewpoints.
* Opinions from authorities and experts.
* Quotes and interviews.
* Anecdotes and stories.
* Specific names, places and dates.
* Photographs, tables, diagrams and graphs.
* **Conclusion**
* The concluding paragraph should leave a lasting impression by:
* Reminding the reader of the article's main idea
* Suggesting an appropriate course of action.
* Encouraging a change of attitude or opinion.
* **Language of Feature Articles**
* A personal tone is created through the use of informal, colloquial (slang) and first person narrative.
* Relevant jargon adds authenticity to the information and opinions.
* Anecdotes help to maintain reader interest.
* Facts validate the writer's viewpoints.
* In humorous articles, exaggeration and generalisation are used to heighten humour.
* Rhetorical questions help to involve the reader.
* Emotive words are used to evoke a personal response in the reader.
* Effective use of imagery and description engage the reader's imagination.
* The use of direct quotes personalises the topic.

***Mark A. Drumbl is the Class of 1975 Alumni Professor at Washington & Lee University, School of Law, where he also serves as director of the Transnational Law Institute. He is author of "***[***Reimagining Child Soldiers in International Law and Policy***](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB8QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.amazon.com%2FReimagining-Child-Soldiers-International-Policy%2Fdp%2F0199592667&ei=AFgIVerHDIeMNrDAgPgB&usg=AFQjCNEp8YmH2ldI0srElshxigRhCGXLng&bvm=bv.88198703,d.eXY)***." The views expressed are his own.***

**(CNN)**Images last week from an ISIS video appearing to show a child executing a hostage were horrific. The very idea of the "cubs of the caliphate," as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria dubs them, is stomach-churning.

But ISIS is far from the first or only group to treat children in such a wretched way. There are tens of thousands of child soldiers under age 18 around the world, from South America to Africa to Southeast Asia to recent conflicts in the Balkans. The Kony2012 video that went viral, for example, featured children in the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda. Boko Haram, in Nigeria, also dreadfully abuses children. Children associated with armed forces and armed groups typically serve as porters, sentries, spies, cooks or cleaners. Many are sex slaves. Some, however, carry weapons on their own, exercise authority over others and commit atrocities against adults and children alike.

There is, though, an oft-overlooked point that also highlights one of the difficulties we face if we are going to tackle the problem of child soldiers. Despite the dominant image of these soldiers as boys, it is estimated that globally as many as 40% of child soldiers are girls. This point, as much as any other, underscores why it is time to rethink how we view child soldiers.

If we are going to develop effective responses to child soldiering, the international community needs to move past two dominant images. These two dominant images cast child soldiers either as passive, helpless victims who have been abused into serving as tools of war or, on the other hand, as bloodthirsty fighters with considerable autonomy who kill with sadism and zeal.

As I have outlined in my book, both images are unhelpfully crude generalizations. Children who end up in armed groups arrive there from along a number of paths and for divergent reasons. And children are, of course, individuals. Hence, they act in different ways once they are in these armed groups. Some children are abducted, drugged, brainwashed and brutalized. Many refuse to kill, some kill to survive, others murder to thrive. Some are brought to armed groups by their own families. Others join willingly, often traveling long distances of their own volition. They deceive their loved ones in order to enlist.

This latter point was underscored most recently by the case of three British schoolgirls who are alleged to have left the United Kingdom last month in an effort to join ISIS. The girls -- all midteens -- appear to have shown significant enterprise in traveling from London to Turkey and then to the border with Syria.

Why do these misconceptions about child soldiers matter? Well, in the case of girl soldiers, the fact is that existing policies stemming from stereotypes serve them particularly badly. By focusing on boys, the specific challenges of reintegrating girl soldiers can be overlooked, notably girls who suffer sexual violence before and after recruitment.

Should a civilian who has been tortured, raped or had a limb amputated by a child be denied a remedy to what would otherwise be a war crime? If someone's family has been wiped out by a group of child soldiers, should he or she be refused justice because of the age of the perpetrators? The international community is reluctant to prosecute child soldiers. While this move may be readily understandable, is it productive to insulate such children from involvement in restorative processes such as truth commissions, community service or traditional reintegration ceremonies?

How should a trained soldier fight a child in the event that nightmare comes to pass? What are the appropriate rules of engagement? Rules must of course respect international law and seek to protect children, but they must also recognize the realities of self-defense.

While mental health therapies are important after conflict, it is also important not to underestimate the resilience of young people and their ability to bounce back from adversity if policymakers are equally willing to invest more in their education, training and conflict resolution, among other things.

The crude images of psychological devastation (the victim) or psychological deviance (the demon) divert attention away from what former child soldiers may most acutely need. With this in mind, if the international community really wants to assist, then it must move beyond clicktivism, shock-value and convenience. It must be willing to tackle difficult truths head on. Long-term prevention and healing require coherent answers to tough questions. We can't simply deny or wish away awkward realities.

Once a conflict ends, child soldiers have just as much right as adults to be reintegrated into communities. Society owes them a chance to contribute to peaceful transition and build their lives. But how is it best to do that? For certain child soldiers, a healthy path to transition may involve them fulfilling some kind of obligation to society. Dismissively (and patronizingly) telling them their violent actions weren't their fault isn't helpful. Neither, of course, is locking them away in prison -- this is especially the case for children who have suffered horrid brainwashing as is the case for ISIS and Boko Haram.

All this suggests the shortsightedness of bunching child soldiers -- and the challenges they create -- into a single category that doesn't take fully into account the radically different nature of their individual experiences in conflict. Instead, we should recognize the diversity among child soldiers -- not helpless victims or demented perpetrators, but as individuals with promise, potential, entitlements and reciprocal obligations.

Until we make these changes to our thinking, we will hinder our own efforts at preventing something we all ultimately want to stop: children ending up in war.

Write a 100 word summary on the above piece:

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Q: How have returning soldiers been depicted in the following passage?

**The following extract is taken from the Canberra Times website entitled – *The Silent War*.**

# When the war comes home

#### By Scott Hannaford

IT WAS around midnight when Nicholas Hodge stepped into the middle of the road, lay down on the white line and placed his identity card on his chest. A passing taxi driver was the first to spot him and pulled over. The driver picked up the card on Hodge's chest, reached for his phone and began dialling.

Soon, a police patrol arrived and two officers made their way towards to the large, powerfully built figure lying face-up on the bitumen. One of the officers recognised Hodge: a factor, he says now, that – combined with the way ACT Policing handled him that night – probably saved his life.

Under the gaze of nearby diners in the trendy Canberra restaurant district of Kingston, Hodge begins to sob. "I was hoping a car would run me over," he explains. "I just started bawling my eyes out, saying, 'I need help, I need help'."

Hodge clamps his eyes shut as he tells the story and he freezes momentarily in his chair. After a long pause his tightly clenched face eases a little and he lets out a low sigh, as if waking from a trance. "Sorry, it's this medication I'm on. It makes me twitch and close my eyes every so often."

Today is a good day for Hodge. A fortnight ago he asked a friend to call and postpone our interview. Hodge had been overwhelmed by an anxiety attack after getting into a shouting match with a passing motorist while riding his bike. Now he's leading me down the corridor of his home to the "war room" – the label his wife has given it.

In one corner of the room hangs a blue United Nations beret. In another, the butt of a MAG 58 machine gun is mounted on a board. Plaques, glass-framed certificates, awards, photos and scraps of newspaper articles adorn every wall.

Walking into the room feels like stepping into a monument to a cherished, lost way of life. So how did it all unravel so quickly? How did this promising career, hallmarked by a rapid rise through the ranks, end by the age of just 37?

Hodge, a veteran of multiple deployments with both the army and the Australian Federal Police, is one of the hundreds of Australian soldiers who, on returning home, find themselves haunted by post-traumatic stress disorder.

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**Pre- read the online article - First of her kind – on SEQTA**

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/thefeed/feature/first-her-kind-afghan-refugee-australian-soldier>

**Use the following extract to answer the question below:**

Q: How have particular ideas about soldiers been explored in this text?

**In the heat** of February, Kbora Ali is being inducted into the Army.

A pre-enlistment fitness test ensures her body mass index is within the acceptable range. She’s given the standard-issue Army Disruptive Pattern Camouflage Uniform (DPCU) and field equipment.

She’s learning to march, turn and salute; to circuit train and endurance march with gear twice her weight.

An F88 Austeyr rifle is the first weapon she will hold, and learn to use.

“The first day I will never forget,” she says. “At first, I thought it was the wrong decision. I doubted myself the whole week and it was very hard to accept the challenge ahead of me, and being with new people from all of Australia that I didn’t know, get used to them, accept them as part of my new family.”

“It was hard to transition to such a culture shock of waking up early, being told what to do.”

She is the smallest soldier some of her superiors have ever seen. Special boots have to be ordered in to fit her tiny feet; Halal food is set aside; she is given time to pray.

Kbora says the early days were tough. She found it difficult to physically keep up with her fellow recruits.

“Sometimes I hoped for a shoulder to cry on... the first week was hard,” she says. “I did cry, I admit, but everyone goes through that phase saying, ‘it’s hard, but we can all get through it’.”

As homesickness took its toll, Kbora felt trapped.

“She was telling me, ’I’m looking at the wire – how can I escape?’” says sister Razia. “It was like a prison for her during the first week.”

At the end of each week, new recruits are handed back their phones to use.

“When she called, that’s when I think it hit her really hard and badly,” Razia says. “Because emotionally, she was really upset. Physically, she said she could cope, but emotionally, it’s the hardest job she can do.”

“You’re being trained from a civilian to a soldier,” says Kbora. “So it’s definitely an intense three months to train, physically and mentally. It was definitely harder for me, just finishing Year 12 and moving out.”

On the phone to her family, she cried while they talked. But her father, who had begged her not to leave, now changed tact.http://www.sbs.com.au/news/sites/sbs.com.au.news/files/shorthand/13375/media/spacer_nibpnzd.gif

“When she started her training, she called me,” Sultan says. “She said she missed us and was crying. I told her, ‘Well now you’re there, don’t miss us. You didn’t listen to me, so you should stay there. It’s one issue [that] you went; it will be 1000 issues if you come back and quit. You have to be patient.’

“I told her this because I wanted her to achieve what she wanted. I didn’t want her to become defeated.”

The directness of his words speaks more to his matched experience of testing work and separation from family than disapproval of Kbora’s decision.

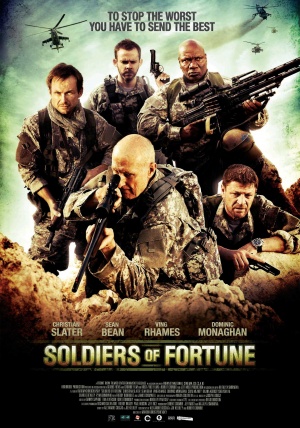
“[I listened] to my dad saying how he sacrificed everything from his life being away from his family,” remembers Kbora. “He said, ‘I came to Australia, I didn’t speak any English, I worked alone for seven years picking oranges. If I can do it, you can do it as well.’”

“That was definitely a boost in motivation. Every time I wanted to give up, I remembered him saying that and it really helped me to work harder.”

Kbora's initial distress did not go unnoticed by her superiors. They, and the local chaplain, wrote to the Ali family to express their concern – and support – for her. In spite of this, Razia worried about the impact of the experience, and knew that if Kbora decided to return home, she would blame herself. She’d be a failure.

Kbora pressed on.

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| **Finally:**  **Compare the representations of soldiers in the following image to the Kbora Ali article.** |

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