

Inverted Pyramid Story

What is an Inverted Pyramid Story?

News reporters use Inverted Pyramid Stories to relay information quickly to readers. Both newspapers and web writers use this approach. News is written in order of importance. The most essential information is placed in the lead paragraph. The purpose for writing using this method is to give the reader the most important information first. The reader will understand the story even if he stops reading after a few lines.

Invention

Many feel this method of writing was invented shortly after the telegraph. Reporters tried to condense their stories into as few words as possible to keep the cost of sending a story over telegraph wires low. Also if the connection was lost, the most important details would be received.

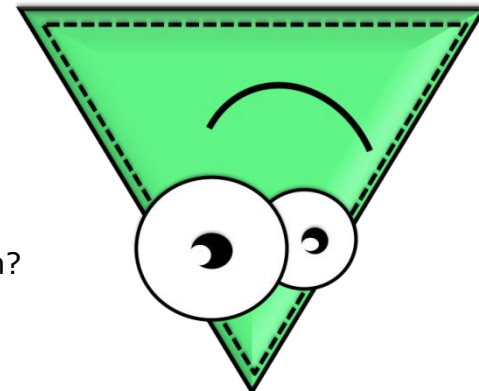
Benefits

Today this method of writing has several benefits.

- Readers can quickly decide if they wish to read the entire article.
- Editors who must cut down articles due to space can cut away the bottom leaving the most essential information intact.
- Readers can stop at any point and come away with the main points.
- Readers can skim through the article more quickly.

The Inverted Pyramid Story Structure

- The writer begins the story by listing the most important details. Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- The next part of the story gives important details.



The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

This evening at about 9:30 p.m. at Ford's Theatre, the President, while sitting in his private box with Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Harris and Major Rathburn, was shot by an assassin, who suddenly entered the box and approached behind the President.

The assassin then leaped upon the stage, brandishing a large dagger or knife, and made his escape in the rear of the theatre.

The pistol ball entered the back of the President's head and penetrated nearly through the head. The wound is mortal.

The President has been insensible ever since it was inflicted, and is now dying.

About the same hour an assassin, whether the same or not, entered Mr. Seward's apartment and under pretense of having a prescription was shown to the Secretary's sick chamber. The assassin immediately rushed to the bed and inflicted two or three stabs on the chest and two on the face. It is hoped the wounds may not be mortal. My apprehension is that they will prove fatal.

The nurse alarmed Mr. Frederick Seward, who was in an adjoining rented room, and he hastened to the door of his father's room, when he met the assassin, who inflicted upon him one or more dangerous wounds. The recovery of Frederick Seward is doubtful.

It is not probable that the President will live through the night.

General Grant and his wife were advertised to be at the theatre...

Read the entire article at [On This Day](#).

Instructions:

This is the actual newspaper article that appeared in *The New York Times* on April 15, 1865. Determine if it is an inverted pyramid story by highlighting 'The 5 W's + H' using six different colors.

Make a key by highlighting the question word in a specific color. Then highlight the answer in the article using the same color.

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?



© Gay Miller

The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln – Answer Key

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© Gay Miller

The Little Horn Massacre

The dispatches giving an account of the slaughter of Gen. Custer's command, published by The Times of yesterday, are confirmed and supplemented by official reports from Gen. A.H. Terry, commanding the expedition. On June 25 Gen. Custer's command came upon the main camp of Sitting Bull, and at once attacked it, charging the thickest part of it with five companies, Major Reno, with seven companies attacking on the other side. The soldiers were repulsed and a wholesale slaughter ensued. Gen. Custer, his brother, his nephew, and his brother-in-law were killed, and not one of his detachment escaped. The Indians surrounded Major Reno's command and held them in the hills during a whole day, but Gibbon's command came up and the Indians left. The number of killed is stated at 300 and the wounded at 31. Two hundred and seven men are said to have been buried in one place. The list of killed includes seventeen commissioned officers.

It is the opinion of Army officers in Chicago, Washington, and Philadelphia, including Gens. Sherman and Sheridan, that Gen. Custer was rashly imprudent to attack such a large number of Indians, Sitting Bull's force being 4,000 strong. Gen. Sherman thinks that the accounts of the disaster are exaggerated. The wounded soldiers are being conveyed to Fort Lincoln. Additional details are anxiously awaited throughout the country....

Read the entire article at [On This Day](#).

Instructions:

This is the actual newspaper article that appeared in *The New York Times* on 6/25/1876. Determine if it is an inverted pyramid story by highlighting 'The 5 W's + H' using six different colors.

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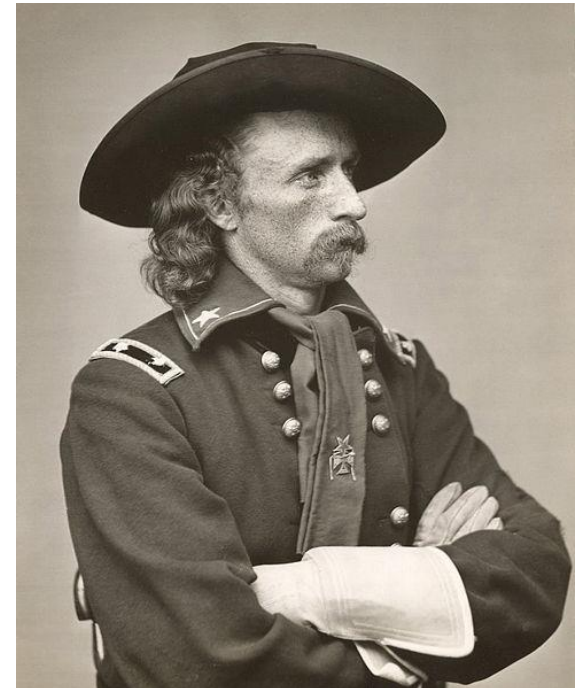
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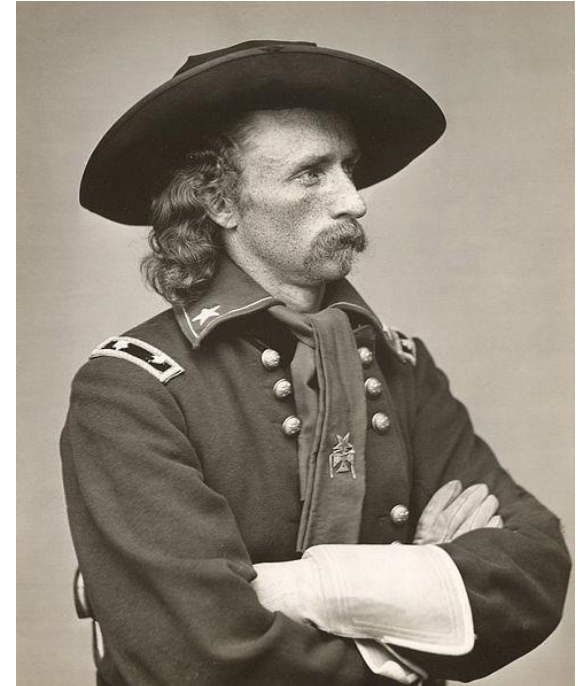
What?

When?

Where?

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How?



Edison's Electric Light

There was no lack of enthusiasm or of confidence about Mr. Edison as he greeted the Times reporter who entered his laboratory at Menlo Park, N. J., yesterday. The inventor, a short, thick-set man, with grimy hands, led the way through his workshop, and willingly explained the distinctive features of what he and many others look upon as an apparatus which will soon cause gas-light to be a thing of the past. The lamp which Mr. Edison regards as a crowning triumph is a model of simplicity and economy. In the lamp the light is emitted by a horseshoe of carbonized paper about two and a half inches long and the width of a thread. This horseshoe is in a glass globe, from which the air has been as thoroughly exhausted as science is able to do. So good a vacuum is produced that it is estimated that at the utmost no more than a one-millionth part of the air remains. The operation of pumping lasts one hour and a quarter. At the ends of the carbon horseshoe are two platinum clamps, from which platinum wires run outwardly through a small glass tube contained within a larger one leading out of the glass globe. The small tube contains air. Within it the platinum wires are met by two copper wires connecting with the conductors of the electricity. The air is left in the small tube, because otherwise the copper wires would be fused by the electric current. The carbonized paper is capable of being made incandescent by a current of electricity, and while it allows the current to pass over it, its resistance to the heat is strong enough to prevent it from fusing.

The first place visited was the room in which the furnace for carbonizing the paper is situated. The furnace is of the ordinary pattern, and on the coals rested a horseshoe mold, in which the bristol board to be charred was placed. Over each horseshoe a piece of tissue paper was placed and the whole was washed until all the material of the card-board, except the carbon, was taken away. When the filaments were taken from the mold they resembled pieces of black thread. The particles hung tenaciously together, however, and the black horse-shoe was easily placed in the platinum clamps of the globe of the lamp....

Read the entire article at [On This Day](#).

Instructions:

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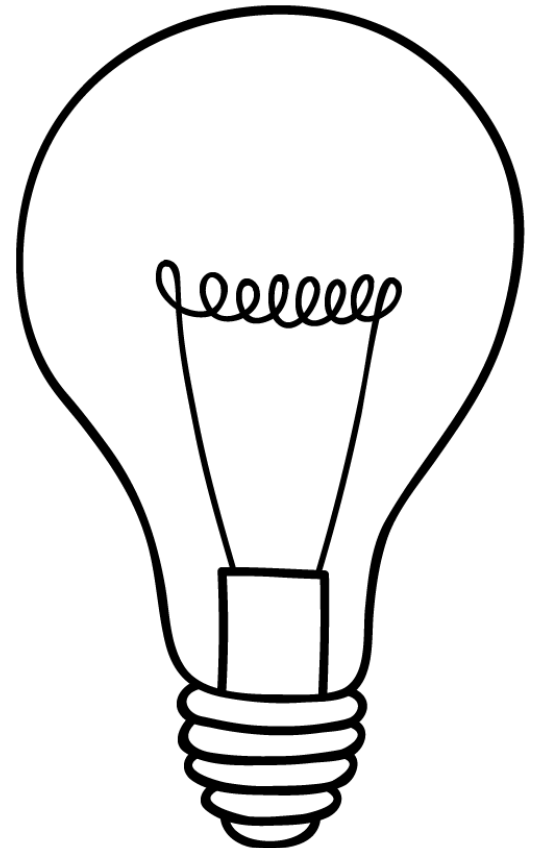
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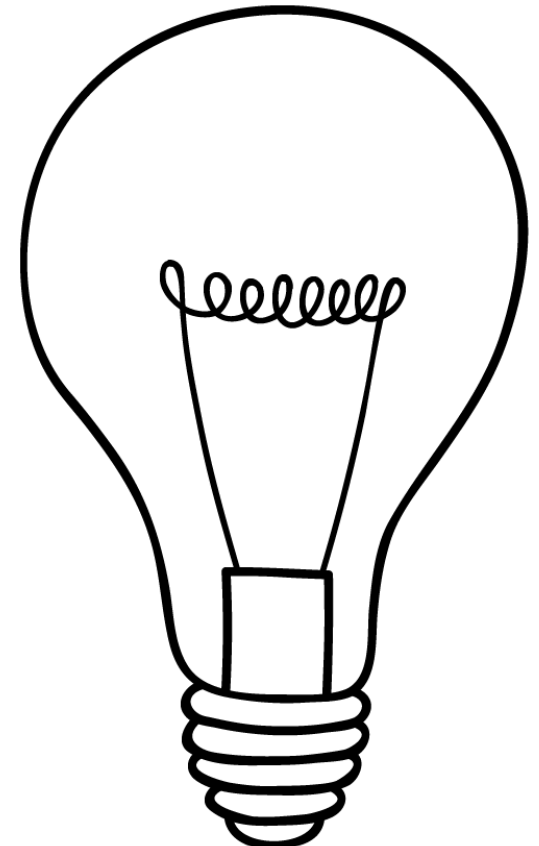
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How?



Hundreds of Lives Lost

Pittsburg, May 31 -- An appalling catastrophe is reported from Johnstown, Cambria County, the meagre details of which indicate that the city of 25,000 inhabitants has been practically wiped out of existence and that hundreds if not thousands of lives have been lost.

A dam at the foot of a mountain lake eight miles long and three miles wide, about nine miles up the valley of the South Fork of the Conemaugh River, broke at 4 o'clock this afternoon, just as it was struck by a waterspout, and the whole tremendous volume of water swept in a resistless avalanche down the mountain side, making its own channel until it reached the South Fork of the Conemaugh, swelling it to the proportions of Niagara's rapids.

The flood swept onward to the Conemaugh like a tidal wave, over twenty feet in height, to Johnstown, six or eight miles below, gathering force as it tore along through the wider channel, and quickly swept everything before it. Houses, factories, and bridges were overwhelmed in the twinkling of an eye and with their human occupants were carried in a vast chaos down the raging torrent.

The water began flowing over the dam or abutment at the weakest part of the mountain lake at about 1 o'clock, when Johnstown and people down the valley were warned by messengers to look out for a flood as the result of a waterspout. Three hours later the whole end of the lake gave way, sweeping everything before it, railroads, bridges and telegraph lines included.

The scene of the disaster is cut off entirely from all manner of communication and has been since 6 o'clock this evening, and fragmentary details of the character and extent of the calamity only have come to hand from various places in the valley.

About 6 o'clock Superintendent Robert Pitcairn of the Pennsylvania Railroad telegraphed from [text unreadable] Hollow, at the gap in the Laurel Ridge Mountains west of Johnstown, that he had seen about two hundred persons afloat on gondola cars, shanties, & amp;c., and that the disaster was appalling.

One telegraph operator says he counted sixty-three bodies in twenty minutes floating past his office....

Read the entire article at [On This Day](#).

Instructions:

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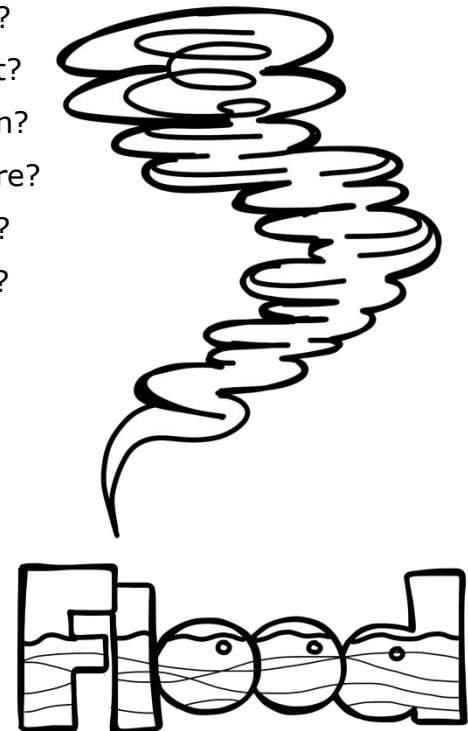
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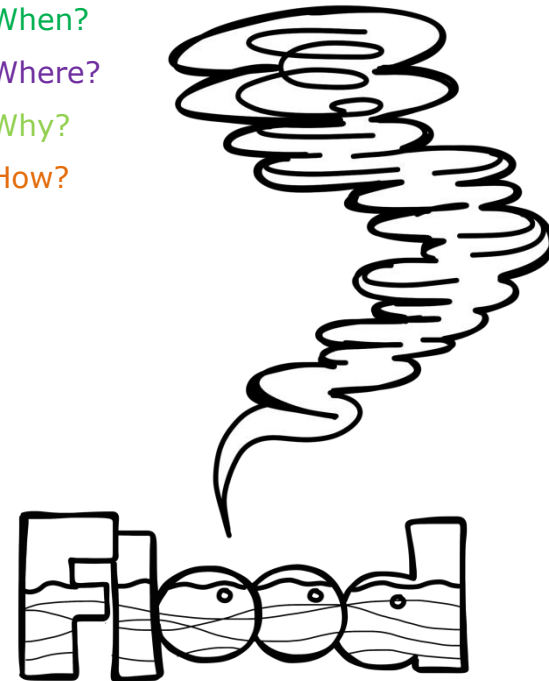
What?

When?

Where?

Why?

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Who? _____

What? _____

When? _____

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How? _____

Important Details

General Info

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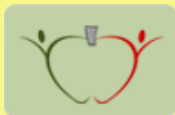


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