

Explain This!

**Yes, it's a news story but you
can still help your readers!**

AGENDA

- **Can news and explanation coexist? (Even on deadline?)**
- **‘Write and fix’ vs ‘frame it first’**
- **Explanatory phrases, sentences, sections**

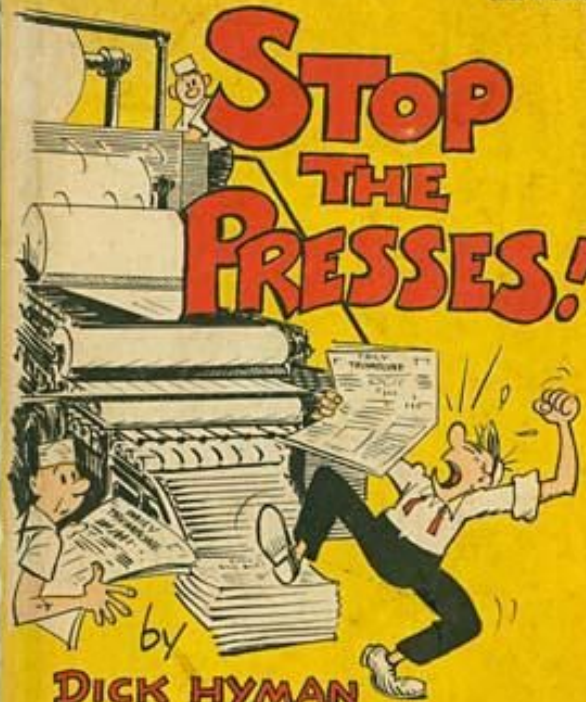
"Hello,
sweetheart,
get me
rewrite!"



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STOP THE PRESSES!



by

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- **Jargon**
- **Basic background**
- **Identification of key people/points of view**
- **Summary of significance**

JARGON

AVOID ... OR EXPLAIN!

- HIMAR
- Title 42
- NFTs
- Aukus
- Leverage
- Covid Zero
- Herd immunity

BACKGROUND

— — —

Forget about the desert island ...

...but help out people who didn't read yesterday's story, or last week's.

A summary sentence or paragraph should include

- What came before today's news (ie, the previous step in the saga)
- When the chain of events began
- A sense of what comes next, if that's known

WHO NEEDS AN ID?

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- Almost everybody who's not president or the equivalent
- How much you say depends on

How familiar they are

How important they are in the story

- The goal is to help readers understand who is important in a story – and why

You should also be identifying the different sides in a conflict or argument.

SUMMARY

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Somewhere in the story, you should give readers a sense of

- What's at stake in the events described – why it matters
- The broader context of the specific news
- What the divisions or arguments are, or whose interests are in play

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WHAT TO CONSIDER AS YOU GET READY TO WRITE

- **What needs explaining**
- **Do you understand it?**
- **Research**
- **Where does it go?**
- **Phrase, sentence or paragraph?**
- **Is there a “nub” that’s especially crucial or hard to explain?**

***Russia's War on Ukraine
Worsens Global Starvation***

NY Times, Jan. 2, 2023

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ISTANBUL — Hulking ships carrying Ukrainian wheat and other grains are backed up along **the Bosphorus** here in Istanbul as they await inspections before moving on to ports around the world. The number of ships sailing through **this narrow strait** plummeted when Russia invaded Ukraine 10 months ago and imposed a naval blockade.

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ISTANBUL — Hulking ships carrying Ukrainian wheat and other grains are backed up along **the Bosphorus** here in Istanbul as they await inspections before moving on to ports around the world. The number of ships sailing through **this narrow strait, which connects Black Sea ports to wider waters,** plummeted when Russia invaded Ukraine 10 months ago and imposed a naval blockade.

— — —

But as deep winter sets in and Russia presses assaults on Ukraine's infrastructure, **the crisis** is worsening. Moscow has restricted its own exports, increasing costs elsewhere. Most important, it has stopped sales of **fertilizer**, needed by the world's farmers.

— — —

But as deep winter sets in and Russia presses assaults on Ukraine's infrastructure, the crisis is worsening. Food shortages are already being exacerbated by a drought in the Horn of Africa and unusually harsh weather in other parts of the world. Moscow has restricted its own exports, increasing costs elsewhere. Most important, it has stopped sales of fertilizer, needed by the world's farmers. Before the war, Russia was the biggest exporter of fertilizer.

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“The effects of this war are hugely, hugely disruptive,” she said. “Putin is pushing millions of people into poverty.”

While increases in the price of food this past year have been particularly sharp in the Middle East, North Africa and South America, no region has been immune.

“You’re looking at price increases of everything from 60 percent in the U.S. to 1900 percent in Sudan,” said Sara Menker, the chief executive of Gro Intelligence, a platform for climate and agriculture data that tracks food prices.

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Before the war, food prices had already climbed to their highest levels in over a decade because of pandemic disruptions in the supply chain.

The United States, Brazil and Argentina, key grain producers for the world, have also experienced three consecutive years of drought. The level of the Mississippi River fell so much that the barges that carry American grain to ports were temporarily grounded.

The weakening of many foreign currencies against the U.S. dollar has also forced some countries to buy less food on the international market than in years past.

SUMMING UP

- **Awareness**
- **Preparation**
- **Phrase, sentence or section?**

AWARENESS

Know what needs to be explained:

- Key terms
- Key people or parties
- Complicated concepts

PREPARATION

- Review recent articles on the subject
- Remember how you've explained these issues before
- Call experts to address holes you're not sure about

PHRASE, SENTENCE OR SECTION?

— — —

Everything wants to be at the top ... but it can't ALL be at the top!

- Prioritize – what do readers need to know near the beginning?
 - what can be explained briefly?
- The longer it takes to explain something, the lower it goes.
- History in depth goes lower down – but can be teased higher up.