

A News Story

Aim: To help students produce writing with a higher occurrence of lexical variation, complex sentences and appropriate use of passive structures.

Time: One hour plus homework

Materials:

- 1) Your Own Version – worksheet.
- 2) Original News Story
- 3) & 4) Language Analysis – How to write a good news story
- 5) Complex Sentences – a chart
- 6) Homework
- 7) & 8) Answer Key

Teacher's Notes:

If you're teaching this as a "one-off" you may want to provide some form of introduction. Give a quick warm up / orientation to newspapers. Depending on your style of teaching you might consider one of the following:

- a) Question – "What's white and black, but "red" all over?"
Answer – A newspaper.
- b) Collect together six newspaper headlines. Black out one word in each. Put the class into two teams and one by one hold/flash up the headlines. The team who guesses the closest word gets the point etc.
- c) A quick discussion on the merits of newspapers versus television or radio.
- d) Scramble the short sentence in step one on the board and let the students unscramble it to make the story.

Lesson Steps

- 1) Write the short first sentence from the worksheet [Your Own Version](#) on the board (*A youth was sentenced for driving a stolen car*). Explain that this is a news story and ask how it could be more interesting. (Elicit the answer "more detail!")
- 2) Give out '**Your Own Version**' and allow 15 minutes (more if necessary) for answering the questions and writing the story. Emphasise that they will be making the story more interesting by adding detail. You could give the option of doing this in pairs.
- 3) Change the pace by getting pairs to tell each other their versions. They can use any means necessary to keep their audience's interest, but hopefully they will do it by including relevant details and animated telling.

- 4) Give out the **'Original News Story'** and allow time for them to compare for differences. Round off this step by sharing some of the differences in an open class discussion and then move on to asking open class questions about the language used in the original news story. Notice the following:
 - a) The variety of vocabulary;
 - b) The use of some passive sentences;
 - c) Long complex sentences – sometimes one sentence for a whole paragraph.
- 5) Tell your students that these features (a,b,c) help make a good news story. Give out the **'Language Analysis'** (2 sheets) and explain that working through these will help them identify the language you are talking about. Monitor and check as you desire and get students to compare their complex sentences to answers in the original news story.
- 6) You can give out **'Complex sentences – a chart'** either to help with step 5 or afterwards for future reference for their homework.
- 7) Give out their **'Homework'**.

Your Own Version

When writing or telling a news story you need to include relevant details in order to make the story come to life.

Here is a news story with no detail included.

A youth was sentenced for driving a stolen car. He was spotted and chased by police and finally caught and arrested.

Answer the following questions with your own ideas and write your own, more exciting version of the news story.

- 1) How old was the youth?
- 2) Where did he come from?
- 3) Where was he sentenced?
- 4) Where did he steal the car from?
- 5) When did he steal the car?
- 6) What kind of car was it?
- 7) What was he doing when the police spotted him?
- 8) Was he with anyone?
- 9) How many police spotted him?
- 10) What did he do when he saw the police?
- 11) How fast did he drive the stolen car?
- 12) How did the police catch him?
- 13) Did the police catch anyone else connected to the incident?
- 14) What did the youth say in court?
- 15) What did the judge say about him?
- 16) Did he get fined for anything?
- 17) How long was he sentenced for?

Go with another group and tell your stories. Try to keep your audience's interest and include as much detail as possible.

Original News Story

Compare your story with the original

Youth Sentenced After Car Chase

A teenager, who was chased by police while driving a stolen car, was sentenced yesterday to 10 months detention.

The youth stood in the dock, hanging his head in shame, as the jury heard how the 16-year-old, from Abingdon, Oxfordshire, had stolen car keys to a thirty thousand pound Lexus, during a burglary that took place in February this year.

The young offender was having lunch with three friends in a Banbury fast food establishment, when police spotted the stolen vehicle parked on double yellow lines nearby. Detective sergeant Squires and Officer Dibble, of the local Banbury police force, waited opposite the stolen automobile in their unmarked police car until the gang returned, at which point they got out of their blue Rover in order

to question the driver. On seeing the police, however, the four boys jumped into the hot sports car and sped off, travelling at speeds of up to 70 mph in 30 mph zones, before pulling into a lay by where all four juveniles got out and sprinted off in different directions.

After a short chase on foot the youngster who had been driving the car, was caught and arrested. Police are still searching for the other three passengers.

The young man admitted to dangerous driving, burglary and handling stolen goods.

Judge Albert Trump described him as a young tear-away and sentenced him to 10 months at a detention centre. The lad was fined £40 for parking on a double yellow line.

Language Analysis

How does a journalist write a good story?

A) In this story the journalist tries to keep his readers' interest by avoiding repetition of the same vocabulary.

1) Underline all the words he uses as an alternative to the word "youth"

2) Underline all the words he uses as an alternative to "car"
(the stolen car and the police car)

3) Underline all the words he uses as an alternative to "the youth's friends".

B) The journalist makes his writing style more concise (shorter and clearer) by using some passive sentences. There are two main grammatical patterns which the writer follows. The sentences either:

1. Omit the subject because it is already known.

Or

2. Put the object first because it is more relevant to the story.

Transform the following active sentences into more concise passive sentences.

- 1) The crown court tries such cases.
- 2) The police will arrest his friends.
- 3) The judge is going to sentence him.
- 4) The police were chasing him for fifteen minutes before they caught him.
- 5) The judge sentenced him to 10 months detention.
- 6) He had stolen the car in February.

Is each of the above sentences passive for reason one or reason two?

C) A journalist has to fit a lot of information into a short space. To do this he or she uses 'complex sentences' – ones that link together simple sentences by using appropriate words or grammar.

Try linking the following sets of simple sentences together into one complex sentence. Then look back at the article to compare your answers.

- A teenager was sentenced to 10 months detention.
- He was chased by police.
- He was driving a stolen car.
- There was a short chase.
- The youngster was caught and arrested.
- He had been driving the car.
- The young man was having lunch.
- Police spotted the stolen vehicle.
- The vehicle was parked on double yellow lines.
- They saw the police.
- They jumped into the car.
- They sped off.
- They were traveling at speeds of up to 70 mph.
- They pulled into a lay by.
- All four juveniles got out.
- They sprinted off in different directions.
- The youth stood in the dock
- He hung his head in shame
- The jury heard
- The 16 year-old had stolen car keys to a thirty thousand pound Lexus.
- He came from Abingdon in Oxfordshire.
- A burglary took place in Headington, Oxford.
- The burglary took place in February this year.

Complex Sentences

The following chart outlines the phrases and grammar words which link together simple sentences into complex sentences in the news story. You may know some words and structures and others you may need to learn. Try to use some in your writing and add more to the list as you learn.

Time markers	Relative clauses	Participle clauses
yesterday on seeing as during when until at which point before after still	Who Where (When) (That) (Which)	She left the room, <u>holding</u> her head high. She left the room, <u>disgusted</u> at the news. The girl, <u>laughing</u> as she went, left the room. The girl, <u>disgusted</u> at the news, left the room.

Homework

Choose one or more of the following tasks to practice what you have learnt in this lesson.

- 1) Buy a newspaper on the way home and look for complex sentences which include the features listed above
- 2) Rewrite your original news story about the youth and the stolen car, trying to include more varied vocabulary and more complex sentences.
- 3) Write another news story based on one of the following headlines, trying to include varied vocabulary and complex sentences.

“Thieves flee in stolen car as police arrive”

“Youth saves eighty-year old from flood”

“Car chase ends in village pond”

“Painting recovered after cat burglar blunder”

“Robbers seen off by old lady and a broom”

Answer Key – A & C

The different fonts and correspond to those used for each question in the lesson.

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Answer Key – B

- 1) Such cases are tried by the Crown Court.
- 2) His friends will be arrested.
- 3) He's going to be (get) sentenced.
- 4) He was being chased for fifteen minutes before he was caught.
- 5) He was sentenced to 10 months detention.
- 6) The car had been stolen in February.