



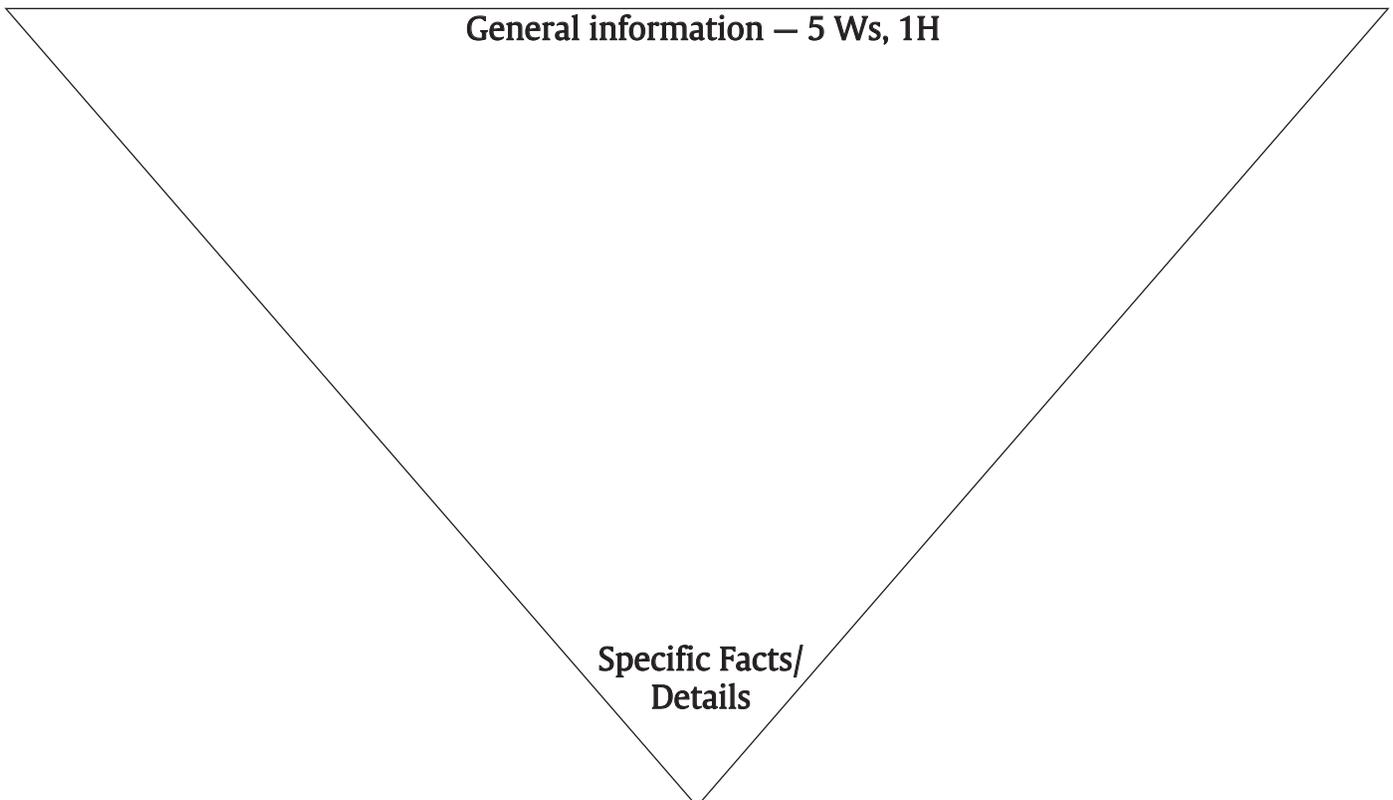
Purpose for reading: To recognize articles' common organizational structure.

Introduction: This lesson will teach you to:

- ▶ Use the inverted pyramid to analyze an article.
- ▶ Recognize the inverted pyramid structure in articles.
- ▶ Figure out where you will find the information you need or want in an article.

When you know how a text is generally organized, you are able to figure out where to find the information you need. For example, I'm sure you have discovered by now that when a textbook bolds information, that information tends to be important and is usually a clue as to what the paragraphs preceding it are about. Since USA TODAY will be one of your "textbooks" for the semester, it is important to know how articles are generally organized. Luckily, all newspaper articles follow the same general structure, which is called the inverted pyramid. Once you learn this structure, you will be able to quickly find information in any article you ever read.

- 1. **As a class**, study the inverted (upside down) pyramid below.



Lesson 3

The inverted pyramid



Student edition

PAGE 2

Purpose for reading: To recognize articles' common organizational structure.

- 2. **With a partner**, find an article that interests you both.

- 3. Read the first six sentences of the article and see if you can find the 5Ws (who, what, when, where and why) and 1H (how) of the story. When you find one, circle and label it.

- 4. Finish reading the article. As you read, underline words or phrases that are important.

- 5. Take a piece of unlined paper and draw an inverted pyramid (make your inverted pyramid as large as your paper will allow).

- 6. At the top of the inverted pyramid, write down the 5Ws and 1H of the story. Beneath your 5Ws and 1H, vertically list the important words or phrases that you found as you read the rest of the article. List them in the order they appeared in the article.

- 7. **As a class**, share some of your inverted pyramids. As you look at your list of words and phrases, do you find that the information becomes more and more detailed? Do you think the information at the top or bottom of the pyramid is most important? Why do you think reporters put the general information first and then the details?

- 8. Discuss how knowing where information is generally found can help you in skimming or reading future articles. How can knowing a text's structure (whether it is an article, a book chapter, a textbook, a poem, etc.) help you better comprehend what you are previewing, skimming or reading?

Lesson 3 - The inverted pyramid

Time Requirement:
55 minutes

Teacher edition

Page 1

Lesson 3: To assist students with recognizing organizational structure, this lesson introduces the inverted pyramid structure – including the “5 Ws and 1H” – generally found in the first paragraphs of news articles.

Standards:

- ▶ Identifying details/facts
- ▶ Identifying main idea/essential message
- ▶ Identifying methods of development (text organization)

To ensure student understanding, it is best to read aloud the italicized instructions embedded in the lesson.

1. Direct instruction: Explain the inverted pyramid structure of an article. Tell students that the general information of a story is told first (hence the large end of the pyramid), followed by the details and facts of the story. The further down information is found in an article, the more specific (and potentially less important) the data (the narrowing of the pyramid to the point). Of course, this narrowing detail structure does not include the last sentence or two of an article, which usually provides a summary and/or a poignant or punchy finish. Ensure students understand this basic structure. Then, explain (or review) the 5Ws and 1H of journalistic writing:

- ▶ Who is involved?
- ▶ What happened?
- ▶ When did it happen?
- ▶ Where did it happen?
- ▶ Why did it happen?
- ▶ How did it happen?

You may want students to write down what the 5Ws and 1H stand for on the inverted pyramids in their version of the lesson. Let them know that they can usually find the 5Ws and 1H in the first few sentences of any article.

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PAGE 1

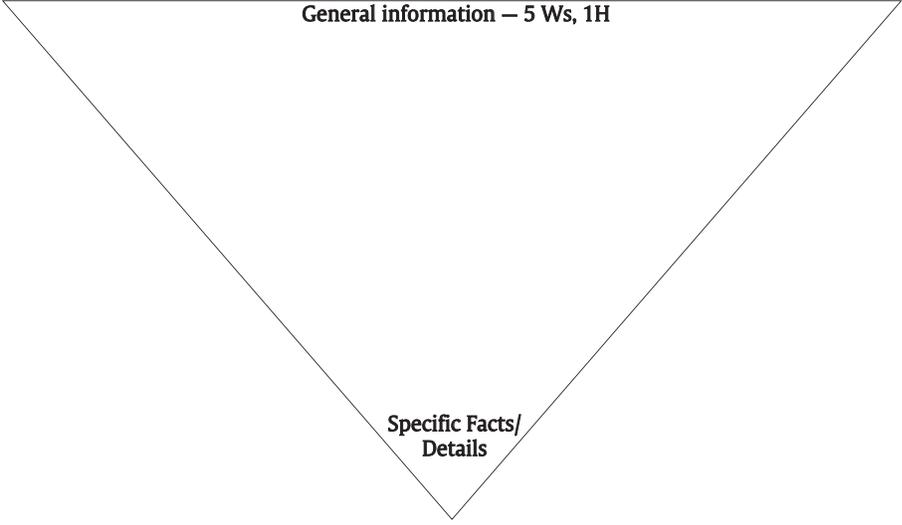
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Remind them that reading comprehension improves significantly when readers know where to look for the information they want to find. This is one of the main reasons why reporters always put information in the same general

place of any story – they want the article structure to be like “an old friend” – familiar and comfortable so readers can focus on and enjoy the facts and information. Allow 8 minutes.

Lesson 3 - The inverted pyramid

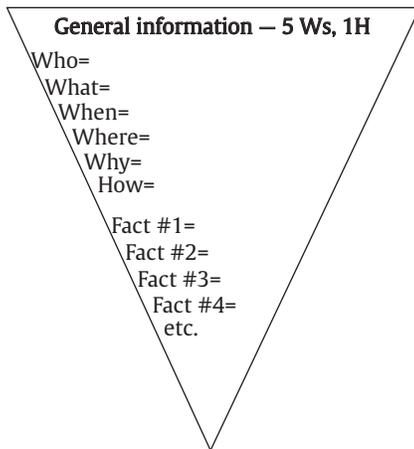
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Page 2

2-4. Monitor: Ensure students select articles that can be read in 20 minutes. Allow 20 minutes.

5. Model: On the board or overhead, show students what their inverted pyramid, with their 5Ws, 1H and list of important information, should look like.



5-6. Monitor: Gain formative assessments on your students by peering over shoulders to discover how well they have mastered the organizational structure of an article. Allow 10 minutes.

7. Allow 10 minutes.

8. Reflect and apply: Ensure students see the connection between the benefits of knowing the structure of an article and the benefits of knowing the structure of any text they are attempting to tackle. Previewing a text is key to discovering a text's general structure. Allow 7 minutes.

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