Writing about Science

Special Forms and Techniques

October 3, 2011 Class – STS.034
Forms

• Feature article
  – Tells us about something intriguing or important
  – Aim can be to illuminate, entertain, raise concern
  – Audience is broad – general public

• Op-Ed
  – Asserts an opinion, aims to convince
  – Often reacts to or reflects current events
  – Audience is broad, but often aimed at leaders and changemakers

• Excerpt from educational Book
  – Describes phenomena
  – Aims to instruct and break down primarily
  – Audience is general public, but already interested enough to pick it up
“The Vanishing”

• Themes
  – Science as a mystery to be solved
  – Unveiling the scientific process

• Narrative Approach
  – Use of characters, description
  – Plot & scene-driven, use of suspense

• Stylistic Techniques
  – Structure: sentence variation and “signposts”
  – Punchy & colorful quotes
  – Humor
“A Real Science of the Mind”

• **Classic op-ed approach**
  – Setting context, defining problem
  – Outlining argument, then supporting argument
  – Clearly asserts and repeats main points in intro & conclusion

• **Possible flaws**
  – Terminology and reliance on shifting us to his paradigm
  – Does it convince or just make an argument clear?
“This Essay Breaks the Law”

• **Non-traditional op-ed**
  – Unique structure: obvious statements followed by provocative and surprising fact
  – Point not immediately clear but unraveled

• **Techniques**
  – Exemplary case makes broader point, supported by other examples
  – Use of absurd to persuade
  – Rhetorical questions
  – Self-reflective & self-conscious – personal
Excerpt from *The Canon*

• **Theme:**
  – Science as exciting, intriguing, and decipherable

• **Approach:**
  – Instructive but personal, use of humor
  – Writer as learner
  – Voice – personality on the page

• **Stylistic techniques:**
  – Long sentences, many references
  – Provocative ideas & questions
  – Succinct descriptions of the complex