**Codes and Conventions of an Article MELS**

-- Feature, Commentary, Analysis, Opinion Piece --

**Headlines:**

• are striking and attention-catching

• use precise verbs, most often in present tense, but may also be future or past tense

• accurately reflect an (if not the most) important aspect of the article

• may demonstrate humour and wit

• may use devices such as alliteration, metaphor, personification etc.

**Byline:**

• attributes the work to a person, e.g. by Elizabeth Wilson, usually at the beginning,

between the headline and the lead

**The Lead:**

• engages the readers and focuses them on the topic or a specific aspect of the topic

• may be humorous, anecdotal, dramatic, emotional, abrupt, punchy, and/or creative

**The Structure:**

• varies and can be ***linear, circular or a “beaded necklace”*** (Each paragraph is a

bead and the author can experiment with patterns in ideas and language while linking

the paragraphs.)

• involves a clear beginning, development and closing. *(N.B.: For clarity, the word*

*“conclusion” is avoided here because articles do not end with “in conclusion,…” a*

*phrase often found in essays.)*

• closes with references to ideas in the lead or the headline

***N.B.: The structure differs greatly from a news article*** *which focuses on who,*

*where, when, what, why and how and uses the form of an inverted pyramid to present*

*information in descending order of importance.*

**The Development:**

• may have short paragraphs for effect and/or clarity

• is clear and logical; e.g. cause-effect, problem-solution, comparison, chronological

(related to time), spatial (related to location or place), or simply a logical, easilyfollowed

train of thought

• may lead with reference to a specific person; the development will put that person into

a broader context, then expand with information from other sources and a discussion

of implications

• closes with a return to the original person mentioned in the lead

• leads the reader toward an enlightened understanding, a new perspective and/or

taking action

**Language:**

• is clear and crisp

• demonstrates precision in vocabulary, particularly with verbs and nouns

• has a strong voice

• often takes third-person perspective if the writer is not personally implicated in the

subject

• may take first person perspective when the writer is personally implicated in the subject and *if it adds value and interest*, e.g. particularly in an opinion column

• uses a consistent tone whether serious, humorous, authoritative, light, dark, dry,

satirical, conversational, formal, philosophical or whimsical

• may quote people’s spoken words as sources of information or to add “colour” and

human interest, especially in a feature article

• demonstrates ***judicious and appropriate*** use of engaging devices such as: puns,

personification, alliteration, metaphor, onomatopoeia, etc.

• integrates a variety of sentence beginnings and sentence lengths

• may demonstrate judicious and appropriate use of questions and exclamations for

effect

• uses active tense rather than passive

• may be descriptive, sophisticated and/or artistic

**Layout** (optional)**:**

• uses columns

• often includes graphics, photographs, graphs, maps, illustrations, etc., to increase

impact

• may use a “drop cap” to start and, also, to signify shifts in topic during the article (A

“drop cap” is the first letter of the paragraph, a capital, enlarged two or three times.)

• is right-justified (meaning the text is smooth down both sides of the columns, not

ragged on the right-hand side or centred)

• may use the occasional “pull quote,” a pertinent and dramatic sentence from the article

duplicated in larger, bold font (This is a technique to draw readers in as well as a way

to break up a page of text.)