

Forget the Facts Get the Memories

When I talk to most yearbook staffers about copy they are quick to tell me that the people at their school want less of it. I think what they really mean is that the copy in their yearbook is basically BORRRRIIIINNNNGG!

But ask any student how many pages of writing their best friend wrote to them last year when signing their yearbook and they will probably tell you anywhere from half a page to three or four pages. And if you pursue this they will tell you, "but our friends were writing about our memories."

Well, that's the point. Stop writing year-

book copy that is mostly fact-based and start writing copy that is memory-based.

It's the difference between listing the teachers who teach science in your academic section and writing about how gross it was to cut open a frog in biology class.

It's the difference between telling me the plot of the senior class play and telling me the crazy stuff that occurred while your school staged that play. One is fact, the other memory. People are bored by facts alone, but they are delighted by their memories.

The 3-minute rule

The average high school student should be able to read good yearbook copy in three minutes or less. It is the same basis that USA Today writes in their newspaper. High school yearbook readers will just not invest hours in reading your copy but they will read short and sweet QuickReads. If you are not familiar with the term QuickRead it refers to a type of feature common in magazines, newspapers and yearbooks that allows a reader to get involved with a story in a very short amount of time.

Some examples of QuickReads might include:



feedback



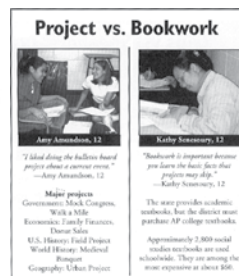
"FCA is really fun because I enjoy the fellowship with God and with my friends. I also enjoy the guest speakers that speak at the meetings."

[Anna White, 10]

Individual Quote boxes



Man in the street interviews



Point/Counterpoint

To write great copy, learn to do group brainstorming

The best copy you can write will happen because you did a group interview. A group interview is nothing more than brainstorming a subject with a group of people who have a shared experience.

For example, when you have to write about



homecoming, sit down with a bunch of people who experienced the dance or the game, or worked decorating or cleaning up and ask them what their memories are of homecoming. Then shut-up and write down what they say. Check your quotes for accuracy later.

If you can't seem to get your brainstorming session started, try one of the three magic brainstorming questions:

- 1) What is the (place superlative here) that happened in (place activity here)? ie. the funniest thing in football.
- 2) What one thing about (place activity here) do you think you will remember most in 10 years?
- 3) If you could, what one thing would you change about (place activity here)?