

Ninja Writing Exercise

How to Spot a Highly Evolved Journalist

Journalists are found in abundance. Exceptional ones, though, are extremely rare. Even in the most respected news organizations, few can write with the potency and poignancy that wins Pulitzers.

I've worked for some of the best news outfits around. They employ plenty of hacks who are able to cobble together relevant information to create readable news. Only a precious few, however, know how to set sentences on fire and make meaning resonate.

They're a different breed: I call them elite journalists.

This is good news for you. The rarity of exceptional journalists means that by having the right skills it's easy to stand out from the herd. Start incorporating the writing

principles found in this book and in no time you'll rise to the top of the journalism ecosystem.

So unusual is this level of ability that once you acquire it, editors and publishers of big newspapers and online magazines will sniff you out a mile off. They'll compete for you.

You see, the average journalist knows how to assemble facts—to tell a story by stringing together details to give readers some kind of a picture of what news is happening.

An elite journalist creates compelling perspectives around those facts, giving powerful sense to the events being described. The cognitive and emotional impact on a reader is completely different.

Elite journalists have further distinctive traits. They know how to express the facts, explanations and meanings around a news event without ambiguity, so that their ideas are immediately and perfectly understood.

They know how to capture the drama of any piece of news. They understand how to create nuances in their words to reveal the true significance of the latest development. And they know how to steer clear of weak words and expressions that dull their writing.

On top of that, they understand how to write with elegance and flair.

Only a handful of professional journalists can do all of that. There are some who hit upon the formula by accident but, lacking a full comprehension of what they've achieved, find themselves unable to repeat their success reliably.

The writing principles here will help such journalists—as well as those just starting out in the profession—climb the evolutionary ladder to the top of the food chain, where they can finally mutate into an elite journalist.

Whether you're a working journalist aspiring to become more senior, or a newbie eager to get noticed by an editor, you will discover powerful ideas that propel you into the extremely small world of elite journalism.

Understand that it is a skillset only a handful of insiders possess, and even fewer know how to teach. By learning these principles and incorporating them in your writing, you'll begin to notice very quickly how far you have progressed from other, lesser species of journalist.