

## CONTEXTUALIZATION (JOURNALISTIC)

Typically, when a journalist is researching material for a story, he/she asks several pertinent questions which build into other questions. Hephzibah Roskelly and David A. Jolliffe describe this process in their book, *Everyday Use, Rhetoric at Work in Reading and Writing*.

Journalists typically ask six fundamental questions:

Who?  
What?  
When?  
Where?  
Why?  
How?

When used to analyze/contextualize a text, these questions become more specific to the events within the text, as well as the act of actually writing the text.

+Who was involved?  
+What took place?  
+When did it happen?  
+Where did it happen?  
+Why did it happen?  
+How did it happen?

Each of these questions can be broken down into more specific contexts for analysis. Further, each question may help you to find even more specific questions to ask of a text.

Who was involved? – Pertains to both characters in a text/story or the speaker; and, it pertains to the author.

What took place? – Pertains to the events or processes of a text; and, it pertains to the act of writing the actual text.

When did it happen? – Pertains to the time involved in the text; and, it pertains to the act of when a text was created.

Where did it happen? – Pertains to the question of location/setting with a text; and, it pertains to where the text was written.

Why did it happen? – Pertains to the internal intent/purpose/effect of a text; and, it pertains to the external intent/purpose/causality of the text.

How did it happen? – Pertains to events/processes/causes within the text (internal and/or external).

EXERCISE

Apply journalistic contextualization to the following story:

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THE FARMER AND THE SNAKE

By Aesop

A Farmer walked through his field one cold winter morning. On the ground lay a Snake, stiff and frozen with the cold. The Farmer knew how deadly the Snake could be, and yet he picked it up and put it in his bosom to warm it back to life.

The Snake soon revived, and when it had enough strength, bit the man who had been so kind to it. The bite was deadly and the Farmer felt that he must die. As he drew his last breath, he said to those standing around: "Learn from my fate not to take pity on a scoundrel."

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Answer these questions (Note: Guess if you do not have a clear answer):

Who was involved?

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What took place?

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When did it happen?

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Where did it happen?

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Why did it happen?

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How did it happen?

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