

Sports Journalism Skill Module

On-the-Scene Reporting

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Understand the techniques of on-the-scene reporting
- Use on-the-scene reporting to add vividness and authenticity to your stories

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

- *You Try It!* Student Worksheet – On-the-Scene Reporting: You are There!

Additional Online Support:

- www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com
- www.BlueNoseEd.com

Teach the Skill

1. Introduce On-the-Scene Reporting: Tell the students that one of the best parts about sports journalism is that sportswriters get the best seats in the house. During basketball games, sportswriters are right by the court. During football games, sportswriters are in the pressbox, with a bird’s-eye view on the action. Tell the students, however, that on-the-scene reporting requires more than simply being “on the scene.” It requires reporters to take note of the sensory details and insider knowledge that only a direct witness to a game can experience.

2. Teach On-the-Scene Reporting:

- Tell the students that the key to good on-the-scene reporting is choosing and introducing sensory details into their writing. The term for writing that contains sensory details is **imagery**. Explain that imagery is writing that appeals strongly to the senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. When writing sports, students should include specific sensory images that will make their stories spring to life.
- To illustrate this, have students re-imagine the situation described on the left side of the table, and, based upon the provided example, re-write it in a way that includes more imagery.

EXAMPLE

Basic Situation	With Better Sight Imagery	With Better Sound Imagery	With Better Smell, Taste, and/or Touch Imagery
The running back Rossi broke free for a moment, but was pulled down from behind by Jameson, the cornerback.	Streaking into the secondary, the hashmarks blurred under Rossi’s feet until, appearing out of nowhere, the cornerback Jameson dragged him down from behind.		

- As well as including sensory details, good on-the-scene reporting features **insider knowledge**. Insider knowledge can include technical information, behind-the-scenes emotions, jargon, even inside jokes. What specific knowledge does a sportswriter have access to that an ordinary fan does not have access to? Tell the students that including such information in their stories will increase their sense of authenticity and immediacy. To help them become more aware of insider knowledge, work through the following exercise with the class. Ask class members to volunteer information about sports they play or know a lot about, making lists of tidbits that other members of the class do not know.

EXAMPLE

Sport	Tidbit of Insider Knowledge
Softball	
Track	
Golf	
Basketball	
Tennis	
Swimming	

3. Apply the Skill: Hand out copies of the You Try It! Worksheet, “On-the-Scene Reporting: You Are There!” This is an exercise that requires them to do the work out of class. Have the students go on the scene, then work through the exercise. When they are done with the exercise, have volunteers report on their work.

QUICK SKILLS CHECK Ask the students to tell you what imagery is. Then have them give you examples of how they can include imagery and insider knowledge in their stories.

YOU TRY IT!

On-the-Scene Reporting: You Are There!

GOAL

On-the-scene reporting is not only fun, it is the best way to make your sports stories more vivid by including sensory details and insider knowledge. If you are looking for a way to energize your entry into the Blue Nose Sportswriting Contest, on-the-scene reporting can't be beat.

DIRECTIONS

Go to a game or match. As you watch the game, write down sensory details and insider knowledge from the scene in the organizer below. Finally, write the paragraph or two for a story based upon this game, using some of these authentic details.

Sports Event: _____.			
Time and Place: _____.			
Final Outcome: _____.			
<i>Sight Imagery</i>	<i>Sound Imagery</i>	<i>Smell, Touch, and Taste Imagery</i>	<i>Tidbits of Insider Knowledge</i>
<i>Now, Write a Paragraph or More Which Makes Use of the On-the-Scene Details You Have Gathered:</i>			

Self-Check

Review the sensory details and insider knowledge you collected during your on-the-scene reporting. Would you have been able to gather such vivid information without actually going physically to the scene? Remember, for a reporter, there is no substitute for actually being where the action is.