

Assignment Prompt

Collaborative Editing Project: Working with Wikipedia

Task: Throughout this semester, we have explored traditional grammar concepts and considered their practical application to academic, professional, and everyday language. Moreover, we have examined connections between grammar conventions and editorial practices, weighing the impact of both following and breaking specific grammar "rules." Our first two major assignments asked you to summarize various points of grammar and identify helpful techniques for teaching and learning grammar concepts. Meanwhile, our third major assignment asked you to apply these grammar concepts to editing strategies found in local periodicals. This final assignment encourages you to refine both the grammatical and editorial skills we have been cultivating throughout the semester as you analyze a Wikipedia page of your choosing. Thus, this assignment asks you to expand and apply your repertoire of grammar and editing techniques to account for a digital, collaborative-written document.

The Wikipedia article you choose to analyze should be a minimum of 7,000 words and have multiple editorial contributions. You will work in editorial teams of four, divide team members into copyeditors and managing editors, and submit a co-written editorial memorandum paper with three sections (see below). Managing editors will focus on the history of editorial contributions and intertextual connections within your Wikipedia article. Copyeditors will emphasize grammar and style-related content. You will present your editorial analysis to the class in a 30-minute presentation as well as lead a 20-minute Question and Answer session.

[This file is supplemental material to Propper, *More than Memorizing Rules: Using Wikipedia to Emphasize Rhetorical Approaches to Grammar Instruction and Collaborative Editing Practices*, prompt 7.2 (2023), doi: 10.31719/pjaw.v7i2.127]

Your paper and presentation should include the following three sections:

Please note: Each group member should present one of these sections. Groups of three will co-present the editorial contribution section; groups of four can have a single group member present the editorial contribution section.

Section I—History: After choosing your Wikipedia page, pay attention to specific patterns/trends in editorial contributions, modifications, or removal of contributions by using the page's "view history" function.

- Grammar-focused questions to consider: Which grammatical choices derive the most amount of attention (i.e. preferences for pronoun usage, active vs. passive voice, verb tense, sentence structure, or point of view)? Are there modifications to proper nouns (i.e. names and titles)? How do contributors work with modifiers? In other words, are there editorial contributions surrounding the addition or subtraction of adjectives and adverbs? Does the page make use of adjectival or adverbial phrases? Do contributions emphasize mechanical concerns surrounding punctuation?
- Content-focused questions to consider: When was the article created? Were there consistent contributions over a long period of time or did contributions to this page come in fluxes and flows? Was there an influx of contributions to a particular section? Were there new headings/subheadings that cropped up and when? Were there old subheadings that were removed?

Write a detailed observation of 3-4 editorial patterns/trends your group noticed. Then, analyze how/why these patterns/trends might exist. How might these trends overlap with a given historical moment, popular trend, or event? For example, let's say you're analyzing a Wikipedia

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page dedicated to a superhero in the Marvel series. Was there an influx in the number of contributions to the page before or after the release of a movie adaptation? Do these patterns/trends dovetail to critical acclaim or concerns?

Section II—Structure/Organization: After offering a detailed observation and analysis of the page's editorial history, your group should observe the page's structure. In describing the page's layout, please consider the following questions:

- How is information organized on the page, chronologically or based on specific findings/trends? What are the titles of headings and subheadings? Are some headings or subheadings more successful than others? Why or why not? Pay attention the page's diction (word choice) and syntax (word sequences). Is this diction and syntax proprietary or professional? Is the diction/syntax informal? Does the page rely on images? How do these images add to or detract from the content of the page? What "story" do the images provide about the content?

After noting these observations, then analyze the impact/effect of such structural choices. Does the structure privilege some content over others? Is there content that is “buried”? If so, why might this be the case? How did the diction and syntax used throughout the page convey information (formally or informally)? How did the overall structure/layout influence the ways in which you read/navigated the page?

Section III—Intertextual Communication: The third section of your paper and presentation should cover the page's intertextual communication. By “intertextual communication,” I mean

the page's use of hyperlinks and outside sources/references. In describing the page's intertextual communication, please consider the following questions:

- How does the page “communicate” with other Wikipedia pages? Does the Wikipedia page link to other Wikipedia pages? If so, what type of content is featured in these pages? Does the page link to outside sources (i.e. content beyond Wikipedia)? How much reference material is included on the page? Does the page use primary or secondary research to support claims? What is the overall ration between hyperlinks and references?

After observing the page's intertextual communication, please analyze the impact/effect of including specific hyperlinks and references. That is, click through the various hyperlinks featured on the page, and narrate how these hyperlinks impacted/effected how you read/received the information. Did the hyperlinks take you down a “rabbit hole,” so to speak, where you lost a sense of your original thread? Did the hyperlinks accent/compliment your reading of specific content? Were you able to access the references cited on the page? Did you find the references helpful in supporting key claims?

Making a Contribution: After observing/analyzing the above criteria, write a small contribution to this article based on the patterns/trends you noticed and revise a section or offer an alternative structure/organizational method. You may make an actual contribution to Wikipedia or propose a contribution you would make to the article. Regardless, you must identify why such revisions are appropriate. How do these edits enhance how the article's content is read, received, and/or archived?

Evaluation: A successful paper and presentation will include the following:

- The editorial team offers detailed observations of the Wikipedia article. These observations should follow the criteria outlined in the above three sections.
- The editorial team supports their observations with specific textual examples/quotations. In other words, don't just tell me the page incorporates specific patterns/trends. Rather, show me where and how these trends operate on the page. Hint: Review the "Integrating Quotations" video on "modules" to familiarize yourself with proper quoting/paraphrasing strategies.
- The editorial team thoroughly analyzes the impact of the patterns/trends they observe, explaining how these patterns/trends shape their individual reading process.
- The editorial team discusses a specific contribution they would make to the article. These contributions could be editing a previous post, adding new content, identifying an additional section to the page, etc. The writers should also deliberate how these new contributions might enhance the material on the page.
- The editorial team presents their work in a 30-minute presentation. Each member of the editorial team (copy editors and managing editors) should participate in the presentation.
- The editorial team will also submit a co-written editorial memorandum, which will serve as the basis of the presentation. The editorial memorandum should be appropriately formatted and written in a style that does not detract from the clarity/meaning of the ideas being presented. This means that the editorial memorandum is written in 12-point font with a formal heading noting the writer's name, professor's name (including title), date, and assignment.

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Purpose/Rationale: The purpose of this assignment is to practice digital editing skills and strategies. Students will not only learn how to analyze a digital text by paying attention to the editing history but also make specific editorial interventions that shape the content, structure/layout, and intertextual communication of a digital space.