

HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

A **human interest story** is a feature story that discusses a person or persons in an interactive (*interview*) and/or emotional way. It presents people and their problems, concerns, or achievements in a way that brings about interest or sympathy in the reader or viewer. Human interest stories may be *the story behind the story* about an event, organization or otherwise faceless historical happening, such as about the life of an individual soldier during war-time, an interview with a survivor of a natural disaster, or profile of someone known for a career achievement. (Wikipedia)

Example 1: Introduction to a human interest story:

How a software engineer tried to save his sister and invented a breakthrough medical device

I meet a lot of Silicon Valley companies but rarely do I come across a story as inspiring as this one. Robert Goldman is the founder of Vascular Designs, a company that just won FDA approval to sell a breakthrough medical device that could save the lives of countless terminally ill cancer patients.

It's a story of Mr Goldman's efforts to try and save his sister, diagnosed with terminal cancer. It's a story of his stubbornness to try and succeed in an area he knew absolutely nothing about, and with experts that told him it couldn't be done.

It's also a story of discovering a calling, to help others.

It all began in the late 1990s after Mr. Goldman had sold key intellectual property to Intellectual Ventures, the IP licensing company founded by Nathan Myhrvold, the former Microsoft CTO. He had enough money that he didn't need to work anymore.

But he was unable to enjoy his early retirement for long because his sister was diagnosed with terminal cancer. (<http://able2know.org/topic/136070-1>)

Example 2: a story written by a student in Kenya

My life as a parent, by an AIDS orphan

By Antony Nyongesa

Every day is a new struggle for me. It may be a little early for me to shoulder the kind of responsibility I bear, but there is little choice.

I am a pupil at Kithimani Primary School, but at times I have to skip classes to do odd jobs. My three sisters have no one else to look up to for food and other provisions. I clean people's compounds, or when the going is tough, just beg from motorists on the Nairobi-Machakos road.

My parents died of AIDS. My mother died first, five years ago, and then last year, my father followed. By the time our father died, he had sold everything the family owned to try to meet his medical expenses and offset other bills. The only asset we were left with is a two-hectare (five-acre) farm, which is not very productive. It has not been plowed for the past three years.

When father died, I was just 15 years old then, and my younger sister, Veronicah Syenie, was 13. My other sisters, Jacintah Mueni, and Jaqueline Nduta, were 8 and 6 years old respectively.

Everybody here in Kwakoko Village of Yatta, Machakos, understands our plight. Some may want to come to our aid but I guess they have problems of their own to take care of.

At times, especially over weekends, we go for two to three days without any food. It all depends on well-wishers and our only relative, Uncle James. But Uncle also has his own worries. He has 10 children, so there is nothing much he can offer us. He works at a poorly paying job with a construction company in Machakos town.

The head teacher at Kithimani has been sympathetic to our plight. He has allowed us to learn without paying school fees. Also, we get free lunch at school, thanks to him.

Still, we hardly have the money for uniform, shoes and books, but we have to make do with what we receive from well-wishers.

The little money we get is often used to buy food and other essential items like kerosene for the lamp. That is the only way we can have light to study by at night. Nduta, my youngest sister, has not begun going to school yet. She remains in the house when we go to school, and she cries day and night. When we look at her, we envy children our age who have both parents to rely on all the time. My day begins at 5 o'clock in the morning. I have to wake up early to cook porridge before washing utensils we used the previous night. By eight, I am on my way to school, four kilometers away. The earliest time I go to bed is 11 o'clock after ensuring that Veronicah and Jacintah have done their homework.

At the end of the day, just before we go to bed, I lead my sisters in prayer. We always pray for the day when things will get back to normal, the way they were when our parents were alive.

Over the past year, I have come to appreciate that my life is not that of any ordinary youth. But I am not losing hope in life.

The above article was written by Antony Nyongesa, and published in The Daily Nation (Kenya).

Further examples can be found at <http://www.unicef.org/romania/reallives.html>