



MEDIA

Fill the gaps with the words in the block.

ballooning eager foot count nodded pioneering trick per convey sweet

The Curious Case of the Paid-by-the-Letter Reporters

In 17th-century London, journalism was still in its infancy. The London Gazette, the city's _____ newspaper, had just launched. A group of ambitious reporters, _____ to make a name for themselves, gathered at a local pub to discuss their pay.

"We should get paid _____ letter!" one of them suggested, ordering a round of beers. The others _____ enthusiastically. It seemed like a great idea at the time.

The payment system was simple: the more letters, the more money. But soon, reporters found themselves adding extra letters to words. 'Holiday' became 'holliday', 'news' turned into 'newes', and 'report' transformed into 'reportt'. It was a clever _____ to boost their earnings, but not exactly honest."

Publishers caught on quickly. They noticed articles _____ from a few lines to entire columns. Editors scratched their heads, wondering why writers suddenly needed so many words to _____ the same message.

One angry editor decided to investigate. He discovered the reporters' game and put his _____ down. "No more paying by the letter!" he declared.

A new system was introduced: reporters would be paid per article or column inch. It wasn't perfect, but it encouraged short but _____ writing and honest reporting.

Looking back, this episode seems almost comical. But it marked an important turning point in journalism. Reporters began focusing on clarity and quality, rather than quantity. Today, journalists are paid fair salaries or fees for their work. The focus is on storytelling, not word _____.

Discussion questions

1. What payment system did the reporters initially propose?
2. How did reporters abuse this system?
3. What changes were made to the payment system?
4. How has journalism evolved since then?

Teacher's Key

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A few examples of words that had extra letters added:

- author (formerly "authour")
- colour (formerly "colouur" in British English)
- honour (formerly "honourr" in British English)
- traveller (formerly "travellour")
- worshipping (formerly "worshippyng")
- baptism (formerly "baptizme")
- fantasy (formerly "phantasie")
- ghost (formerly "ghoost")