

Feature Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2022



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

From the given information, write a **feature story** as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as **direct or indirect quotes**. You may not change the meaning of a statement. You have **one hour**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School, located in Texas, has 1,500 students in grades 9-12. At the beginning of the school year, government teacher Rana Pandya challenged her students to create a city-wide project that would improve the lives of citizens in the town. Senior Pooja Turman decided to take the challenge and set out to make mobile libraries for students living in lower socioeconomic areas of the city. A mobile library is a mounted container that holds books that anyone in the area can access. The goal was three libraries on the south side of town with at least 30 books in each station for children under 10 years old.

With three other seniors, Pooja designed and constructed the library boxes and stands and also set up book donation boxes at all of the local schools and grocery stores. In mid-November, the library boxes were placed in three residential areas in the south part of town. Each mobile library was stocked with at least 30 children's books. Residents in the area loved the mobile libraries and asked Pooja for a few libraries for teens and adults, so Pooja and her friends built two more library boxes and again asked for book donations. Two weeks ago, they set up the two teen/adult library boxes in residential areas in the south part of town. Each box contains more than 30 books.

At the city council meeting Monday, Feb. 14, the mayor will honor Pooja and her friends with the Love Our Town award. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Friday, Feb. 11.

■ POOJA TURMAN, senior

"When I visited my cousin in Austin over the summer, I saw several mobile library boxes. I thought it was such a great idea to help kids have access to more books. It especially was good during the pandemic when many libraries were shut down. When Ms. Pandya threw out the challenge, I immediately thought of those library boxes.

"A few of my friends also liked the idea, so they helped with the donations and construction of the boxes. It would have been challenging to do it all by myself. I am not a very good carpenter, but luckily Alex [Martinez] loves to build. We jokingly called him 'Mr. Foreman' while we were building all of the boxes. Nina [Widmer], Sammie [Justice] and I painted all of the boxes. They are all super colorful with characters from books painted all over them. We also painted the words, 'Take a Book. Read a Book. Leave a Book.' What we hope is that once kids are done reading the books, they will return them to the box. We hope people will continue to make donations to the boxes. We want these boxes to thrive even after we've left town for college in the fall.

"Last week, Alex and I drove by all of the boxes to make sure they were holding up well, and we met several kids who were returning books and taking new books. This one little girl — her name was Alice — gave me the biggest hug. She

■ **POOJA TURMAN, (cont.)**

said ‘Put Me in the Zoo’ was her favorite book, but she loved all Dr. Seuss books. Her mom thanked me over and over again. She said Alice, who is 3 years old, visits the library at least twice a week. The cool thing was that all of the libraries had new books, and all of them still had plenty of books for kids to take. I think the community has really bought into the idea.

“It surprised me when the mayor called my house to tell us about the award. I’m so honored. This will be the best Valentine that I’ve ever received. I hope the award will bring more awareness about the need for books in all of our communities. The libraries will always need new donations.”

■ **ALEX MARTINEZ, senior**

“When Pooja talked about her idea at lunch one day, I immediately volunteered to help. I love building things. I designed the library boxes to have glass doors so kids could see the books. Those doors were the hardest parts to build, but with a little help from my dad, we managed to get them all completed.

“This project has been the best thing about my senior year. Helping the community has been so rewarding.”

■ **RANA PANDYA, social studies teacher**

“Every year, I challenge my students to create something to improve our world. I am so impressed with Pooja’s project. It will have a lasting effect on this community. These students deserve the Love Our Town award. I couldn’t think of better recipients. Plus, this award will bring even more awareness to the project. I hope the town creates a plan to ensure the libraries will continue to be monitored after the students leave for college.”

■ **SCOTT LIPPEN, mayor**

“We started giving the Love Our Town award five years ago, but this is the first time that we are giving it to teenagers. The library boxes give children, and now adults and teens, in an under-served part of our town access to so many books. They are such a gift to our community. I also saw several kids bring back books and pick out new books.”

■ **VIOLET BAUER, parent of two young children**

“Both of my kids, ages 3 and 4, love the library boxes. We go several times a week. I don’t have a car, so it’s not easy for us to go to the city library. My girls love books, but it wasn’t always easy to get them access to new ones.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Randy’s Hardware Depot donated all of the building material for the boxes.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

INVITATIONAL A • 2022 FEATURE WRITING CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE STORY

Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critique/judging. Also, staple one copy of the contest and one copy of the contest tips to each student's returned entry. The purpose of the tips is to provide immediate feedback to students. However, it is not meant to replace written comments from the judge.

1. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about four students who built mobile libraries and are getting an award from the city.

2. The lead of a feature story must grab the reader's attention. It does not have to be a certain length or include the 5Ws and H. It should set a scene and get the reader into the story. Although you have freedom to describe the scene as you think it might have existed, try to stay as close to the prompt as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

On Feb. 14, Pooja Turman will receive the best Valentine of her life, and it won't be flowers and chocolates.

Instead, it will be the Love My Town award.

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure you include a nut graph. It tells the reader what the story is going to be about. Follow the nut graph with a direct quote and then go into the transition/quote formula.

nut graph

Pooja and three of her friends will receive the award at the City Council meeting for building and erecting five mobile libraries on the south side of town.

direct quote

"The library boxes give children, and now adults and teens, in an under-served part of our town access to so many books," Mayor Scott Lippen said. "They are such a gift to our community."

4. After you get past the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of transition/quote formula.

Be sure you attribute after the quote or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Pooja said," not "said Pooja"). Avoid stacking quotes. Try to avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing some kind of transition between them. Also, make sure transitions provide information to help the action of the story and that the quote does not repeat information in the transition.

transition/story-telling

Pooja came up with the idea of mobile libraries after her government teacher, Rana Pandya, challenged her students to create a city-wide project that would improve the lives of citizens in the town. Pooja saw mobile library boxes in Austin while visiting her cousin.

direct quote

“I thought it was such a great idea to help kids have access to more books,” she said. “It especially was good during the pandemic when many libraries were shut down.”

transition/story-telling

Several of Pooja’s friends, all seniors, offered to help, and the project began — three mobile libraries for children. Alex Martinez designed and led the construction of the boxes, and Nina Widmer, Sammie Justice and Pooja painted them.

direct quote

“They are all super colorful with characters from books painted all over them,” Pooja said. “We also painted the words, ‘Take a Book. Read a Book. Leave a Book.’”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own Pooja.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “She is an awesome girl.” These statements are personal opinions and should not be made in a feature story.

6. Always use the verb “said” as the verb of attribution. Don’t say “says,” “stated,” “feels” or any other synonym for “said.”

7. Finally, look for a strong quote to use as a closing statement or a statement that will bring the reader back to the beginning of the story. It should give the reader a sense of satisfaction or resolution.

Pandya said the seniors deserve the Love Our Town award.

“Plus, this award will bring even more awareness to the project,” she said. “I hope the town creates a plan to ensure the libraries will continue to be monitored after the students leave for college.”

And that’s Pooja’s hope, too.

“We hope people will continue to make donations to the boxes,” she said. “We want these boxes to thrive even after we’ve left town for college in the fall.”

SAMPLE STORY

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Instead, it will be the Love My Town award.

Pooja and three of her friends will receive the award at the City Council meeting for building and erecting five mobile libraries on the south side of town.

"The library boxes give children, and now adults and teens, in an under-served part of our town access to so many books," Mayor Scott Lippen said. "They are such a gift to our community."

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"I thought it was such a great idea to help kids have access to more books," she said. "It especially was good during the pandemic when many libraries were shut down."

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"They are all super colorful with characters from books painted all over them," Pooja said. "We also painted the words, 'Take a Book. Read a Book. Leave a Book.'"

To get books for the boxes, Pooja and her friends set up donation boxes at local schools and the grocery stores. Each library started with at least 30 books.

"Last week, Alex and I drove by all of the boxes to make sure they were holding up well, and we met several kids who were returning books and taking new books," Pooja said. "This one little girl — her name was Alice — gave me the biggest hug."

Pooja said Alice's mom thanked Pooja "over and over again" for the mobile libraries.

"She said Alice, who is 3 years old, visits the library at least twice a week," she said. "The cool thing was that all of the libraries had new books, and all of them still had plenty of books for kids to take. I think the community has really bought into the idea."

In fact, several area residents asked Pooja and her friends for teen and adult mobile libraries, so the group built two of those and set them up two weeks ago.

"This project has been the best thing about my senior year," Alex said. "Helping the community has been so rewarding."

Pandya said the seniors deserve the Love Our Town award.

"Plus, this award will bring even more awareness to the project," she said. "I hope the town creates a plan to ensure the libraries will continue to be monitored after the students leave for college."

And that's Pooja's hope, too.

"We hope people will continue to make donations to the boxes," she said. "We want these boxes to thrive even after we've left town for college in the fall."