

# Feature Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2019



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 500 students in grades 9-12. For many years, social studies teacher Alfredo Valle has been known as the “Barbecue King” of the high school. He cooks at every football tailgate, every club fundraiser, every staff professional development day — basically anytime there is a school gathering. He cooks different types of meats, but smoked briskets are his specialty. Last month, at the urging of his dad, he finally competed in his first barbecue competition — the H-Town BBQ Bust contest — and he took first place for his brisket, winning a four-foot trophy and \$1,000. More than 100 teams entered the brisket competition.

Valle’s two brothers traveled with him to the Houston contest, pulling their dad’s 12-foot smoker. Valle’s dad built the smoker more than 20 years ago.

To celebrate Valle’s win, the mayor will host a barbecue for the entire town at noon this Saturday, Feb. 9, at City Park. Valle’s brisket will be the centerpiece for the barbecue. He will smoke 50 briskets with the help of the mayor, the entire school board and several teachers. The mayor paid for the briskets and wants everyone who is attending to bring a side dish or dessert.

You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Thursday, Feb. 7.

## ■ ALFREDO VALLE, social studies teacher

“I started barbecuing with my dad as soon as I was able to walk. It used to drive my mother crazy. She was certain I was going to burn myself on the smoker, but I never did. My dad always taught safety first.

“Barbecuing was our ‘thing’ — me and my dad. Even after I went off to college, every time I came home, my dad would get out Ol’ Smokey, the grill he built and named, and we’d cook all weekend. My dad loved cooking ribs, but brisket has always been my go-to meat. I created the recipe when I was 15, almost 25 years ago. My dad suggested some unique spices, and we tried them out until I found the perfect mix.

“Two years ago, my dad was diagnosed with cancer. On the day he announced his illness, he made me promise I would enter a barbecue cookoff contest. I agreed because I was not about to argue with him at that time. Honestly, I thought he would forget. My dad was dealing with chemotherapy and radiation. I didn’t think he’d remember that promise. But he did. And at Christmas he gave me the flier for the H-Town competition and told me I better get cooking. I relented and signed up.

“The H-Town contest is huge. I didn’t think I had any chance of winning. Some of the people competing have their own barbecue restaurants. I have a 25-year-old, hand-built smoker and a decent recipe. I thought, ‘No way am I going to win.’ I’m glad I listened to my dad.

“My brothers helped man the pit all night. We smoked the brisket for 14

hours, but the recipe and preparation were all mine. My brothers didn't get the barbecue bug like I did. When the contest directors were announcing the awards, I wasn't even paying attention. I was cleaning up so we could head out. Then, the guy called my name, and my brothers started hooting and hollering. I didn't even realize it was first place until I walked up on the stage. I was blown away. The first thing I did after getting the trophy and check was call my dad. He was so proud that my mom said he teared up.

"This whole town barbecue thing is a little intimidating. The most briskets I've cooked in a single day is 10. We will have a lot of help, but I'm still a little worried. I guess if the briskets don't turn out well, everyone can eat the sides and desserts."

#### ■ **WADE OMAN, mayor**

"The first time I had Mr. Valle's brisket, I was hooked. It was so moist and so flavorful — but unique flavors — like nothing I had ever had before. I've tried to get him to give me the recipe, but he refuses. I know Mr. Valle is nervous about smoking so many briskets, but I have no doubt he will pull off perfection.

"Everyone thought I was crazy to hold a barbecue in February, but I checked the weather a few minutes ago. It's going to be 60 degrees and sunny. You can't beat that — sun and smoked brisket. It will be a perfect day.

"I want the whole town to get a taste of Mr. Valle's brisket, and I want the whole town to celebrate him. With a little more encouragement, we might be able to get him to enter a few more contests. Our little town might just become famous because of him."

#### ■ **CEDRIC PERKINS, sophomore**

"Mr. Valle has made his brisket for the band before Friday night football games. It's delicious, and I don't even like beef very much. I'm really glad the mayor is putting on this barbecue. I don't think anyone would have known Mr. Valle won that contest if the mayor hadn't announced it. Mr. Valle is such a humble guy. He hadn't told any of his students. Man, if I would have won something like this, I would have been shouting it all through the halls. When we finally did find out, Mr. Valle was all like, 'It's no big deal.' But it is."

#### ■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Juan Valle, Alfredo Valle's father, has completed his chemotherapy and radiation. The doctors no longer detect any cancer in his body. The doctors are calling it remission or NED - No Evidence of Disease.

**DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!**

## INVITATIONAL A • 2019

### 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 a teacher who won a barbecue contest.

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.

As soon as he could walk, he started barbecuing with his father, and by the time social studies teacher Alfredo Valle was 15, he had perfected his smoked brisket recipe with the help of his dad. Barbecuing was their "thing." It bonded father and son.

So two years ago, when his father was diagnosed with cancer, Valle promised his dad that he would enter a barbecue cookoff contest — something his dad has always wanted him to do.

It was a promise Valle didn't think he would have to keep.

"My dad was dealing with chemotherapy and radiation," he said. "I didn't think he'd remember that promise. But he did. And at Christmas he gave me the flier for the H-Town competition and told me I better get cooking."

Valle listened to his dad.

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**

And he's glad he did. Valle won first place for his brisket and left Houston with a \$1,000 check and a four-foot trophy. To celebrate Valle's win, Mayor Wade Oman is hosting a town-wide barbecue at City Park at noon Saturday. Valle, with the help of the mayor, the school board and several teachers, will smoke 50 briskets for Saturday. Community members are asked to bring a dessert or side.

#### **direct quote**

"This whole town barbecue is a little intimidating," Valle said. "The most briskets I've cooked in a single day is 10."

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 ("Valle said," not "said Valle"). 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**

The mayor isn't worried, though.

**direct quote**

"I want the whole town to get a taste of Mr. Valle's brisket, and I want the whole town to celebrate him," Oman said. "With a little more encouragement, we might be able to get him to enter a few more contests. Our little town might just become famous because of him."

**transition/story-telling**

For the Houston contest, Valle took his two brothers with him to help man the pit all night.

**direct quote**

"The H-Town contest is huge," Valle said. "I didn't think I had any chance of winning. Some of the guys competing have their own barbecue restaurants. I have a 25-year-old hand-built smoker and a decent recipe. I thought, 'No way am I going to win.'"

5. Always use third person. Don't say "our student" or "our own Mr. Valle." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "He is the best cook." 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.

"It's going to be 60 degrees and sunny," he said. "You can't beat that — sun and smoked brisket. It will be a perfect day."

## SAMPLE STORY

As soon as he could walk, he started barbecuing with his father, and by the time social studies teacher Alfredo Valle was 15, he had perfected his smoked brisket recipe with the help of his dad. Barbecuing was their “thing.” It bonded father and son.

So two years ago, when his father was diagnosed with cancer, Valle promised his dad that he would enter a barbecue cookoff contest — something his dad has always wanted him to do.

It was a promise Valle didn’t think he would have to keep.

“My dad was dealing with chemotherapy and radiation,” he said. “I didn’t think he’d remember that promise. But he did. And at Christmas he gave me the flier for the H-Town competition and told me I better get cooking.”

Valle listened to his dad.

And he’s glad he did. Valle won first place for his brisket and left Houston with a \$1,000 check and a four-foot trophy. To celebrate Valle’s win, Mayor Wade Oman is hosting a town-wide barbecue at City Park at noon Saturday. Valle, with the help of the mayor, the school board and several teachers, will smoke 50 briskets for Saturday. Community members are asked to bring a dessert or side.

“This whole town barbecue is a little intimidating,” Valle said. “The most briskets I’ve cooked in a single day is 10.”

The mayor isn’t worried, though.

“I want the whole town to get a taste of Mr. Valle’s brisket, and I want the whole town to celebrate him,” Oman said. “With a little more encouragement, we might be able to get him to enter a few more contests. Our little town might just become famous because of him.”

For the Houston contest, Valle took his two brothers with him to help man the pit all night.

“The H-Town contest is huge,” Valle said. “I didn’t think I had any chance of winning. Some of the guys competing have their own barbecue restaurants. I have a 25-year-old hand-built smoker and a decent recipe. I thought, ‘No way am I going to win.’”

More than 100 people entered the contest.

“When the contest directors were announcing the awards, I wasn’t even paying much attention,” Valle said. “I was cleaning up so we could head out. Then, the guy called my name, and my brothers started hooting and hollering.”

Valle said he didn’t realize he won first place until he walked up on the stage.

“I was blown away,” Valle said. “The first thing I did after getting the trophy and check was call my dad. He was so proud that my mom said he teared up.”

For Valle and his father, barbecuing has always been a family tradition.

“Even after I went off to college, every time I came home, my dad would get out Ol’ Smokey, the grill he built and named, and we’d cook all weekend,” Valle said. “My dad loved cooking ribs, but brisket has always been my go-to meat.”

For many years, Valle has barbecued at every school gathering from football tailgates to club fundraisers.

“I’m really glad the mayor is putting on this barbecue,” sophomore Cedric Perkins said. “I don’t think anyone would have known Mr. Valle won that contest if the mayor hadn’t announced it. Mr. Valle is such a humble guy. He hadn’t told any of his students.”

The mayor said people questioned the logic of having a barbecue in February, but he’s kept his eye on the forecast.

“It’s going to be 60 degrees and sunny,” he said. “You can’t beat that — sun and smoked brisket. It will be a perfect day.”



**Yippee!! You're the director of the journalism contests. To make your life a little easier...**

**WE HAVE ENCLOSED:**

- The contests
- Judging criteria
- A statement to the judges
- A statement to the contestants
- Contest Tips. (Provides examples of how stories/heads should have been written and a sample story. Clip a copy to each entry to provide immediate feedback.)

**NOW, YOU NEED TO:**

- Make certain you have read the journalism section of the *UIL Journalism Handbook*. You can download it free from the UIL website at: [http://www.uiltexas.org/files/academics/Journalism\\_Handbook\\_2018-19.pdf](http://www.uiltexas.org/files/academics/Journalism_Handbook_2018-19.pdf).
- Inventory the contest packet. Hopefully, there won't be any problems. If you find one, please call it to my attention. Call me at work at 512/232-4924, home at 512/740-3463 or e-mail me at [jacton@uiltexas.org](mailto:jacton@uiltexas.org).
- **READ THE ENCLOSED STATEMENT TO YOUR JUDGES.**  
Discuss the judging criteria and clarifications with the judges.
- **Do not give the tips to students.**
- Share the "Tips" with the judges (**BEFORE** they judge) and clip one copy to each contestant's entry **AFTER JUDGING**. Judges should write directly on EVERY student's entry and then attach one copy of the Contest Tips to each entry.
- Thanks and good luck!

# Statement to Judges

## JOURNALISM CONTEST DIRECTOR

***Please copy and distribute the following statement to the judges***

1. Divide papers among the judges.
2. Every paper **MUST** be read and edited by at least one judge. *No paper should EVER be returned without written comments.*
3. Every judge does not have to read every paper. Strive for two readings for each paper. A third reading may be necessary for papers that contend for placing in the top six.
4. Avoid sarcasm or unduly harsh criticism. Remember: these are high school students, not professionals.
5. Please review the “Tips” for each contest. This sheet is consistent with the contest manual and what has been taught at conferences.
6. Realize that the UIL style may differ slightly from what you have been taught, what you practice or your newspaper’s style. If you have serious disagreement, please take them up with the UIL office, not the contestants or the meet director. For example, in the news, feature and editorial writing contests, it is not necessary to identify the school, Leaguetown High School. We create this contest as if students attend Leaguetown High School. Therefore, we assume high school students know the name of their school. Also, since AP style constantly changes, watch simply for writers to follow a consistent style. Some students (and newspapers) prefer addressing people with Mr./Mrs./Ms. title on second and subsequent uses.
7. In the Feature Writing contest, students have the freedom to develop scenes as they feel the scenes *may* have existed. The scenes must be a natural extension of the story. Please read “Contest tips” before judging.
8. In the editorial writing contest, students have the freedom to propose solutions or suggest answers they feel might resolve the problem. They do not have to be those proposed on the fact sheet. Also, they are urged to write in third person, but they may use first person plural on occasion.
9. In the headline writing contest: the main deck of a main/secondary headline combination may contain but does not need a verb. For example:

## Out of Air



# Statement to the Contestants

## JOURNALISM CONTEST DIRECTOR

*Please read the following statement to contestants*

1. Place your number in the upper right hand corner of each page of your entry. Do not put your name or your school's name on any part of the contest entry. If you do, you may be disqualified.
2. Write on one side of the paper only. Write legibly. This is a request, not a requirement.
3. It is suggested that you double space so judges may edit and write comments more extensively on your entry. This is a request, not a requirement.
4. You may use a dictionary and/or a thesaurus (bound or electronic) during News, Editorial, Feature and Headline contest. You may also use an AP stylebook. You may not use a journalism text or other textbook. No resources are allowed during the Copy Editing contest.
5. You may not talk during the contest. If you have a question, raise your hand and the contest monitor will come to you.
6. If you use a computer, you are responsible should it malfunction. You will have the remaining time to complete the contest in longhand, but you will not be given extra time. You must complete the print command before the monitor asks everyone to quit writing. If the computer malfunctions do not make noise trying to fix it. The monitor will ask you to leave if you are causing too much commotion. You may not use a computer in the Headline Writing contest or the Copy Editing contest.
7. Make sure all of your electronic devices (cell phones, ipods, etc.) are turned off. You may be disqualified for disrupting the contest if your devices go off.
8. When you are finished, please turn in your paper and quietly exit.

Good luck.





## **JUDGING CRITERIA**

### **SPRING MEET JOURNALISM CONTESTS**

In an effort to standardize judging procedures statewide, the League office has compiled a list of journalism contest judging guidelines. This list of guidelines will be included in each district and regional contest packet and will be available to State Meet contest judges. It is the responsibility of each journalism contest director to see that all contest judges are familiar with and adhere to these guidelines.

#### **■ HEADLINE WRITING (30 minutes) NEW TIME FOR 2019!**

1. Within count. **Note:** All letters, digits, punctuation marks, spaces, grammatical marks count as one (1).
2. Wording specific, accurate; unnecessary wording omitted.
3. Verb needed in main, secondary or both decks. At times, though, a verb is not necessary in both the main and secondary head.
4. Emphasis on active verbs.
5. Past tense avoided.
6. Split phrases (modifiers, verbs) avoided.
7. Redundancy in wording avoided.
8. Does not sacrifice accuracy for creativity or cuteness.
9. Main headlines not dependent on secondary headlines.
10. Secondary headlines emphasize significant aspect of news.
11. Grammar, spelling, punctuation correct.
  - A. It is permissible to use upstyle (ALL CAPS) or downstyle headlines.
  - B. Students need not complete all six headlines to win. It is possible that five good headlines will win over six mediocre ones, or four excellent heads will win over six poor headlines. The final decision rests with the judges, but no contestants shall be disqualified solely on the basis of not completing all six headlines.

#### **■ EDITORIAL WRITING (45 minutes)**

1. Introduction presents problem, provides staff stance.
2. Lead grabs reader's attention.
3. Evidence provided to support stance taken.
4. Direct quotes avoided unless absolutely necessary.
5. Writing tight. Wording active, precise.
6. Other viewpoints presented and evidence is shown to refute those viewpoints.
7. Conclusion recaps staff position and contains call to action and/or solution.
8. Third person emphasized, although first person plural may be used occasionally.
9. Editorial tone fair, mature.
10. Secondary consideration given to:
  - A. Grammar
  - B. Spelling
  - C. Neatness

## ■ FEATURE WRITING (60 minutes)

1. Lead grabs reader's attention and fits mood of story. It is permissible for students to set a scene for the feature prompt. The scene may include details that are not in the prompt.
2. Writing tight. Wording active, precise.
3. Slang, cliches, jargon avoided.
4. Facts presented in logical sequence.
5. Smooth transitions.
6. Quotes, paraphrasing used effectively.
7. Persons identified fully, accurately.
8. Feature theme fully developed.
9. Utilizes time peg (if necessary)
10. Secondary consideration given to:
  - A. Grammar
  - B. Spelling
  - C. Neatness

## ■ NEWS WRITING (45 minutes)

1. Sound news judgment in lead selection.
2. Facts presented in descending order of importance.
3. Information flows. Smooth transitions.
4. People identified fully, accurately.
5. Quotes, paraphrasing used effectively.
6. Extraneous information omitted; writing tight.
7. Wording active.
8. All news questions answered. Newspaper style incorporated.
9. Editorialization avoided.
10. Secondary consideration given to:
  - A. Grammar
  - B. Spelling
  - C. Neatness

## ■ STYLE/TITLES

- ✓ Newspaper style includes the option of using titles of Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. with names of adults. Students should be identified fully at first mention and by last name thereafter (1st use - senior Jeanne Acton; second and subsequent uses - Acton or Ms. Acton). It is permissible to use first names only on the second reference in feature stories. AP style calls for adults to be identified by full name at first mention, and then with appropriate title and last name thereafter. Be aware of deviations from AP style. If a contestant is consistent in the use of their style, it is not recommended you penalize the contestant for not following strict AP style. We ask that you look for consistency and understandability in the use of a contestant's style.

## ■ SECONDARY CONSIDERATIONS

- ✓ Journalistic proficiency shall be the standard by which entries are judged. In papers of similar journalistic quality, secondary considerations of grammar, spelling and neatness may be used to determine contest results. The contest does not intend, however, to test grammar or spelling skills, and each entry should be judged on its journalistic merit before other considerations come into play.

## ■ COPY EDITING (15 minutes) NEW CONTEST FOR 2019

- ✓ A key to the Copy Editing Contest will be included with your material. Part III is graded only to break ties.