

Feature Writing

District 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 (NOT YOUR NAME) on your paper.

Leaguetown High School has an enrollment of 1,100 students in grades 9-12. In 2016, the school district and the fire department teamed up to offer a five-day junior firefighter training program during spring break. The program trains up to 20 high school students on everything from fire rescue to basic first aid skills, including CPR. In March, sophomore Peter Ruiz completed the course with his older brother Sean.

This past weekend, Peter was shopping at Target when he heard a woman cry for help. Her 10-month-old baby had stopped breathing. Peter ran out of the men's dressing room to see if he could assist. The baby's lips were turning blue, so Peter asked the mother for the child and said he was going to perform CPR. He instructed an employee to call 911 as he laid the child on the floor and began compressions on the baby's chest. In less than a minute, the baby began breathing again. An ambulance with police and EMS arrived five minutes later. The baby was taken to the hospital and now is doing fine. Doctors believe the baby had a brain seizure and are running more tests to evaluate the baby's health.

This Friday, Target will award Peter with an honorary Employee of the Month Award and give him a \$200 gift card. Peter will receive his award at the fire station where he learned CPR. A small reception will follow the award ceremony. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on Wednesday, March 20.

■ PETER RUIZ, sophomore

"I took the firefighter training course because my brother practically begged me. He wants to be a firefighter, but he didn't want to do the course by himself. I thought it couldn't hurt to learn the skills they were teaching. I never thought I would actually use them to save someone's life. I would not have had a clue what to do before that class.

"I was in the dressing room changing back into my shorts when I heard the woman screaming. I wasn't sure what was going on, but I knew it wasn't good. I ran out and saw the woman holding a child who was turning blue. Immediately, my training kicked in. I asked for the child, told an employee to call 911 and started chest compressions. Honestly, I shocked myself with how I took charge and handled the situation, but that's how good the firefighter training course is. They taught us how to be calm during an emergency, and they taught us specific steps to take. Getting someone to call 911 is critical.

"When I started the compressions on the baby, I was worried I might hurt him, but I remembered what the fire chief told us, 'One cracked rib is worth saving a life.' So I put my fears aside and kept doing compressions until the baby started breathing again. I have to say that was the best sound I've ever heard in my life — a few tiny breaths.

"When the EMS showed up, the baby had started crying, and the mother

■ PETER RUIZ (continued)

had calmed down. Before leaving for the hospital, the mother hugged me so tight I thought she might crack one of my ribs. She kept saying ‘Thank you’ over and over again.

“After the ambulance left, the store manager took me aside to thank me and get my name. I thought everything was over, but that night I got phone calls from both the mother and the store manager thanking me again. Then, a week later the manager called to tell me about my award and the gift card.

“I am the one who suggested we hold the award ceremony at the firehouse. I mean, without that course, I would not have been able to help.”

■ MIDGE MASIEL, parent of child

“Peter saved my baby boy’s life. Without him, I don’t think Luke would have survived. I am so grateful for him and for the firefighter training course. My husband and I tried to give him a reward, but he refused to take it.

“When Luke stopped breathing, I went out of my mind. I didn’t know what to do other than scream. I was panicking when this calm young high school student rushes out of the dressing room and takes charge. When Peter took Luke from my arms, I was scared to death, but his calm demeanor helped reset me. After he started compressions, I regained enough control to call my husband.

“Then, I kneeled next to Peter and begged God for help when Luke took his first breath. It was tiny, but I saw it. I prayed harder, and the breaths kept coming. Eventually Luke began to cry, and I knew he was going to be OK. The doctors are still trying to determine what happened. Right now, they are saying it was a brain seizure, but they haven’t been able to figure out the cause. We are going to Houston next week for more tests, but the doctors believe Luke is not in any immediate danger.”

■ ABE WIESEMAN, fire chief

“This incident is the very reason we began this firefighter course. The more students we train, the safer our community is. Peter used the skills we taught him and saved a child’s life. We are beyond proud of him. I know Peter has considered the medical field when he graduates from high school. I hope this experience has revealed to him what a difference he can make.”

■ ANIL KAPOOR, Target manager

“I watched Peter perform CPR on that child. He was calm and professional through the entire incident. When EMS arrived, Peter was even able to tell them how long the child had been breathing on his own. We are honored to award Peter the Employee of the Month Award. No one deserves it more than him. Frankly, I would love it if Peter came and worked for us, too. He will always have a place on our team if he wants it.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Since Peter declined a reward from the Maisel family, the couple donated \$1,000 to the fire station to help fund a CPR training course for teens. Now, in addition to the firefighter course, the fire department will offer free CPR lessons during the summer.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING CONTEST!

DISTRICT • 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 sophomore who saved a child's life using skills he learned in a firefighter training course.

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 copy as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

When sophomore Peter Ruiz signed up for a firefighter training course over spring break, he never imagined that one month later he would use the skills he learned to save a 10-month-old boy.

But that is exactly what happened last weekend while he was shopping at Target.

"I was in the dressing room changing back into my shorts when I heard the woman screaming," Peter said. "I wasn't sure what was going on, but I knew it wasn't good. I ran out and saw the screaming woman holding a child who was turning blue."

Peter jumped into action. He instructed an employee to call 911 and began chest compressions. Within a minute, the baby was breathing again.

"I have to say that was the best sound I've ever heard in my life — a few tiny breaths," Peter said.

The lead possibilities are endless.

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

For his quick action, Target will honor Peter this Friday at the fire station where he learned CPR. Peter will receive a Target honorary Employee of the Month Award and a \$200 gift card for his actions.

direct quote

"No one deserves it more than him," Target manager Anil Kapoor said. "Frankly, I would love it if Peter came and worked for us, too. He will always have a spot on our team if he wants it."

4. After you get past the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of the 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 (“Peter said,” not “said Peter”). Don’t stack quotes. You need a transition sentence between direct quotes, and that transition sentence should provide facts or data. Also, make sure transitions do not repeat information told in a direct quote.

transition/story-telling

Peter asked for the award ceremony to be held at the fire station because without that course, he believes he wouldn’t have been able to help.

direct quote

“Honestly, I shocked myself with how I took charge and handled the situation, but that’s how good the firefighter training course is,” Peter said. “They taught us how to be calm during an emergency, and they taught us very specific steps to take.”

transition/story-telling

The boy’s mother Midge Maisel said she panicked when she saw that her child wasn’t breathing but calmed down when Peter took charge.

direct quote

“Then, I kneeled next to Peter and begged God for help when Luke took his first breath,” Maisel said. “It was tiny, but I saw it. I prayed harder, and the breaths kept coming. Eventually Luke began to cry, and I knew he was going to be OK.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own Peter Ruiz.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “He is an amazing guy.” These statements are personal opinion and should not be made in a feature story.

6. Use the verb “said” as the verb of attribution unless you have a very good reason not to. For example, if someone asks something, use the verb “asked.” If someone added something, you could use “added.” Otherwise, use “said.”

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

Because he refused the reward, the Maisel family donated \$1,000 to the fire station to fund a free CPR training course for teens during the summer.

“This incident is the very reason we began this firefighter course,” fire chief Abe Wieseman said. “The more students we train, the safer our community is. Peter used the skills we taught him and saved a child’s life. We are beyond proud of him.”

SAMPLE STORY

When sophomore Peter Ruiz signed up for a firefighter training course over spring break, he never imagined that one month later he would use the skills he learned to save a 10-month-old boy. But that is exactly what happened last weekend when he was shopping at Target.

"I was in the dressing room changing back into my shorts when I heard the woman screaming," Peter said. "I wasn't sure what was going on, but I knew it wasn't good. I ran out and saw the woman holding a child who was turning blue."

Peter jumped into action. He instructed an employee to call 911 and began chest compressions. Within a minute the baby was breathing again.

"I have to say that was the best sound I've ever heard in my life — a few tiny breaths," Peter said.

For his quick action, Target will honor Peter this Friday at the fire station where he learned CPR. Peter will receive a Target honorary Employee of the Month Award and a \$200 gift card for his actions.

"No one deserves it more than him," Target manager Anil Kapoor said. "Frankly, I would love it if Peter came and worked for us, too. He will always have a place on our team if he wants it."

Peter asked for the award ceremony to be held at the fire station because without that course, he believes he wouldn't have been able to help.

"Honestly, I shocked myself with how I took charge and handled the situation, but that's how good the firefighter training course is," Peter said. "They taught us how to be calm during an emergency, and they taught us specific steps to take."

The boy's mother Midge Maisel said she panicked when she saw that her child wasn't breathing but calmed down when Peter took charge.

"Then, I kneeled next to Peter and begged God for help when Luke took his first breath," Maisel said. "It was tiny, but I saw it. I prayed harder, and the breaths kept coming. Eventually Luke began to cry, and I knew he was going to be OK."

After the ambulance arrived, the store manager took Peter aside to thank him and get his name.

"I thought everything was over, but that night I got phone calls from both the mother and the store manager thanking me again," Peter said.

Doctors believe the 10-month-old had a brain seizure which caused him to stop breathing, but they haven't been able to figure out the cause.

"The doctors are still trying to determine what happened," Maisel said. "We are going to Houston next week for more tests, but the doctors believe Luke is not in any immediate danger."

Maisel said she doesn't think her son would be alive without Peter.

"I am so grateful for him and for the firefighter training course," she said. "My husband and I tried to give him a reward, but he refused to take it."

Because he refused the reward, the Maisel family donated \$1,000 to the fire station to fund a free CPR training course for teens during the summer.

"This incident is the very reason we began this firefighter course," fire chief Abe Wieseman said. "The more students we train, the safer our community is. Peter used the skills we taught him and saved a child's life. We are beyond proud of him."



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.
- 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.
- **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.