

# News Writing

District Meet • 2022



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. From the given information, write a **news 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 **45 minutes**. 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 has 3,400 students enrolled in grades 9-12. On Jan. 10, the school board pulled 10 books from the high school library and banned them from the campus. Teachers may not refer to or use any part of the books for a class. The books are:

1. "Brave Face" by Shaun David Hutchinson
2. "The Handmaid's Tale: The Graphic Novel" by Margaret Atwood and Renee Nault
3. "In the Dream House" by Carmen Maria Machado
4. "None of the Above" by I.W. Gregorio
5. "The Nowhere Girls" by Amy Lynn Reed
6. "Out of Darkness" by Ashley Hope Pérez
7. "Red at the Bone" by Jacqueline Woodson
8. "Flamer" by Mike Curato
9. "Shout" by Laurie Halse Anderson
10. "V for Vendetta" by Alan Moore

Parents who spearheaded the initiative said the books are "too graphic" and "inappropriate" for teens. The books contain themes of LGBTQ+, racism, violence and sex. None of the banned books were used in English classes, but they were in the school library.

After the books were banned, a group of 20 students created Book Freedom to organize and protest the action. Book Freedom is not a student club and meets off campus. Approximately 150 students have joined the organization since its inception.

On Friday, April 1, Book Freedom will host a Read-In during lunch in the cafeteria. Each member will bring one of the 10 banned books and read it silently during lunch. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, March 29.

## ■ LI WEI, senior and president of Book Freedom

"It is a sad commentary on our society that we are still banning books. A few loud parents got the attention of the school board, and it listened to them. It's disgraceful. Book Freedom was created solely to fight this censorship. We may not be as loud as those who wanted these books banned, but we are definitely larger. And our group is growing every day. We had to move our last meeting to the community center because everyone couldn't fit in my backyard.

"All of the banned books deal with either LGBTQ+ issues, sex, violence and/or racism, and they were singled out because of these themes. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I am offended and disgusted.

"The Read-In is only our first step. It's a respectful way for those parents

and school board members to see how many of us support the Book Freedom mission and oppose censorship. Right now, we have 149 members, but many students who are not members asked if they could participate in the Read-In. We welcome all students to join us.

“While this is not a disruptive protest, we are breaking the rules because all of these books have been banned from campus, which is ridiculous. I have informed Principal Bearinger about the Read-In, and she said if we are not disruptive, then she will not confiscate our books. Honestly, I think she supports us, but she can’t say it. Several teachers also have told me they support getting those books back in our library. We don’t want the teachers to join our group, though, because we don’t want them to get in trouble.

“Banning books is a slippery slope. Start with 10 and then the list grows. No one was forced to read any of those books. They were in the library, not on a mandatory reading list. Those books talk about subjects that some students experience on a daily basis. To deny students those books is to deny them their identity.”

#### ■ **BARBARA BEARINGER, principal**

“Li did tell me about the Read-In. As long as the students are not disruptive, we don’t plan to intervene. I know the books have been banned from campus, but my assistant principals have more important things to do than pick up books from students.

“I would rather not comment on the book ban.”

#### ■ **DANIEL GOTHAM, junior**

“I will be participating in the Read-In. I haven’t read any of the banned books, but now I will. The parents who convinced the board to ban these books achieved something English teachers have tried to do for years, and that is getting students to read more. I am not super political and don’t belong to Book Freedom, but I support our librarian and our administrators. A few parents should not decide what is in our library.”

#### ■ **CELIA TAGGERT, parent who organized the book ban**

“Those 10 books have no business being in a public high school. They are graphic and inappropriate. I have a freshman, and I don’t want her accidentally stumbling onto one of the those books. I’ve heard about this Read-In, and the administration needs to shut it down. Those books are not supposed to be in the school, period. If the administration doesn’t act, then the parents will. The school board listens to us.

“That club needs to be disbanded. They should not be allowed to gather at school.”

#### ■ **GIGI BROWN, librarian**

“This has been an incredibly difficult few months for me and my staff. The district has asked me not to comment specifically on the book ban, and I will respect that request.”

#### ■ **ANDRIA GREEN, senior**

“I am not part of Book Freedom, and I won’t be participating in the Read-In. I’ve read a few of the books on the list. They are pretty graphic, but I don’t think they need to be banned. Maybe they shouldn’t be on the regular library shelves, or maybe students should have to be 17 to check them out. Banning books is never the answer.”

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

## **DISTRICT • 2022**

### **NEWS 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. As a general rule, open with a future lead. Here, the story comes out before the Read-In protest.

To protest the school board's book ban, Book Freedom, a student group that opposes censorship, will hold a Read-In Friday in the cafeteria. Members of the group will each bring one of the 10 banned books and read it silently during lunch.

2. Use direct quotes early in the story. After you introduce quotes, use the transition/quote formula. Be sure you attribute after the quote. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Wei said," not "said Wei.") Avoid stacking quotes. Avoid putting two or more quotes from different people together without placing a transition between them. Also, make sure transitions provide information and the quote does not repeat information revealed in the transition.

#### **transition**

The school board banned the 10 books after a group of parents said the books were "too graphic" and "inappropriate" for teens. None of the banned books were used in English classes, but they were in the school library.

#### **direct quote**

"All of the banned books deal with either LGBTQ+ issues, sex, violence and/or racism, and they were singled out because of these themes," Wei said. "As a member of the LGBTQ+ community I am offended and disgusted."

#### **transition**

Celia Taggert, the parent who spearheaded the book ban, said the administration needs to shut down the Read-In.

#### **direct quote**

"Those books are not supposed to be in the school, period," she said. "If the administration doesn't act, then the parents will. The school board listens to us."

3. Use third person. Don't say "our students" or "our principal Barbara Beringer" or "Some of our students ..." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "The books are so graphic ..." without attributing that quote to someone.

4. Note how in the earlier example of transition/quote, each quote is its own paragraph. Don't be afraid to use one or two-sentence paragraphs.

## SAMPLE STORY

To protest the school board's book ban, Book Freedom, a student group that opposes censorship, will hold a Read-In Friday in the cafeteria. Students will each bring one of the 10 banned books and read it silently during lunch.

"While this is not a disruptive protest, we are breaking the rules because all of these books have been banned from campus, which is ridiculous," senior Li Wei, president of Book Freedom, said.

The school board banned the 10 books after a group of parents said the books were "too graphic" and "inappropriate" for teens. None of the banned books were used in English classes, but they were in the school library.

"All of the banned books deal with either LGBTQ+ issues, sex, violence and/or racism, and they were singled out because of these themes," Wei said. "As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I am offended and disgusted."

Celia Taggart, the parent who spearheaded the book ban, said the administration needs to shut down the Read-In.

"Those books are not supposed to be in the school, period," she said. "If the administration doesn't act, then the parents will. The school board listens to us."

Wei said she informed Principal Barbara Bearinger about the Read-In.

"She said if we are not disruptive, then she will not confiscate our books," she said.

"Honestly, I think she supports us, but she can't say it."

Bearinger, who declined to comment on the book ban, said her administration does not plan to intervene in the Read-In.

"I know the books have been banned from campus, but my assistant principals have more important things to do than pick up books from students," she said.

Book Freedom has 149 members, but Wei said other students have asked if they can join the Read-In.

"We welcome all students to join us," she said.

The organization was formed solely to fight the book ban, Wei said.

"A few loud parents got the attention of the school board, and it listened to them," she said. "It's disgraceful. We may not be as loud as the parents who wanted these books banned, but we are definitely larger. And our group is growing every day. We had to move our last meeting to the community center because everyone couldn't fit in my backyard."

Junior Daniel Gotham said he plans to participate in the Read-In, but he's not a part of Book Freedom.

"I am not super political, but I support our librarian and our administrators," he said. "A few parents should not decide what is in our library."

Librarian Gigi Brown said the past few months have been difficult for her and her staff, but she cannot comment on the book ban.

Banning books is a slippery slope, Wei said.

"Start with 10 and then the list grows," she said. "No one was forced to read any of those books. Those books talk about subjects that some students experience on a daily basis. To deny students those books is to deny them their identity."