



FEATURE COMFORTS

UIL Feature Writing

Alyssa Boehringer, UIL Journalism Director

FEATURE WRITING

Tells the reader a story. It has a beginning (lead), middle and end. It uses quotes liberally and allows the reader to see the story through detailed description and vivid writing.

FEATURE WRITING FORMULA:

LQTQ FORMULA

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LEAD.

END WITH A KICKER QUOTE THAT
CONNECTS TO THE LEAD OR TAKES
US INTO THE FUTURE.

LQTQ AND SO ON UNTIL THE STORY
IS COMPLETE.

Lead

Something interesting that will grab the reader's attention and make them want to continue reading the story. This lead will make or break your story.

Nut Graph

Why is the story important right now? News peg or future event goes here.

Quote

Connects from lead or additional info. More than one sentence. Attribution comes after first sentence. Include opinions and emotions.

Transition

Next important fact, linking the quote above to the next. Transitions can be a fact, an indirect quote or a partial quote. Attribute all info.

Quote

Connects to the first transition. More than one sentence. Attribute after the first sentence. Do not repeat transition info. The quote should elaborate, providing opinion and emotion.

Transition

Next important fact, linking the quote above to the next. Transitions can be a fact, an indirect quote or a partial quote. Attribute all info.

Quote, and so on...

Connects to the previous transition. Keep alternating quotes and transitions until the story is done. End with a strong quote that wraps up the story — the “kicker quote.”

LEADS

LEADS

GRAB THE READER'S ATTENTION

Drop them into the story
using powerful words or
dialogue.

WORD CHOICE MATTERS

Use active verbs and
specific nouns.

ELIMINATE FILLER

Avoid generic adverbs and
adjectives

THE LEAD...

CAN BE MORE THAN ONE SENTENCE OR PARAGRAPH

SHOULD BE SPECIFIC TO THE STORY

SHOULD NOT BE FILLED WITH CLICHÉS

SHOULD BE IN THIRD PERSON

MUST FIT THE MOOD OR TONE OF THE STORY

FEATURE LEADS

WINNING FEATURE STORIES HAVE WINNING LEADS

- Narrative - tells a story
- Descriptive - paints a picture
- Startling statement
- Compare and contrast
- A twist

NARRATIVE FEATURE LEADS

TELLS A STORY

On New Year's Eve, Charles Curzio stayed later than planned at his small TV repair shop to make sure his customers would have their sets in time to watch the King Orange Jamboree Parade.

His kindness cost his life.

NARRATIVE FEATURE LEADS

TELLS A STORY

For 27 minutes, sophomore Kate Tiedke lay on the floor, her gray Nike sweatshirt cut in pieces at her side.

For 27 minutes last December, it didn't matter that the sophomore was ranked first in her class or that she was one of the best soccer midfielders in Texas. It didn't matter that she was funny and kind.

All that mattered was that her heart wasn't beating.

NARRATIVE FEATURE LEADS

TELLS A STORY

The man she loved slapped her face. Furious, she told him never, ever to do that again.

“What are you going to do, kill me?” he asked, and handed her a gun.

“Here, kill me,” he challenged.

She did.

DESCRIPTIVE FEATURE LEADS

SETS THE SCENE

It's 2 a.m. and junior Carter Wade stumbles through his front door. He's hours past his curfew, and 20 milligrams of Xanax past what his body can sustain.

Wade doesn't remember being driven to a rehab center in a cop car. He wasn't aware his body was being loaded into an ambulance after he became unconscious in the backseat. He couldn't process that his heart was about to stop.

DESCRIPTIVE FEATURE LEADS

SETS THE SCENE

JADE SLAUGHTER, LEWISVILLE HS

Cardboard trinkets of a pitchfork and a Big John mascot lay scattered across room D110. Students, wearing aprons littered with splashes of paint and ink, plot how the next maroon and white ribbons should be crafted. Paper flowers cover the gray countertops and a giant teddy bear, dressed in a jersey and a Farmerette skirt, sits off to the side while students are hard at work on, literally, the biggest project of the year.

Fashion design teacher Abby Winston works with her students to break the Guinness World Record of the largest homecoming corsage. Sherry Hall and the Arlington special education department from Arlington ISD hold the current record with a mum measuring 11.073 square meters—nearly 120 square feet—from Aug. 16, 2021. Winston dedicated this project to spreading school spirit and leaving her students with something to be remembered by.

STARTLING STATEMENT FEATURE LEADS

SAY “WHAT?” His last meal was worth \$30,000, and it killed him.

(Don't do drugs.)

TWIST FEATURE LEADS

THEY WON'T SEE THIS COMING

When they heard screams, no one suspected the rooster.

TWIST FEATURE LEADS

THEY WON'T SEE THIS COMING

Dechardonae Gaines, 2, was toddling down the sidewalk Monday lugging her Easy Bake Oven when she became the victim in one of the weirder animal attack cases police can recall.

In the cluster of beige houses at Lime Street and Safford Avenue where Dechardonae lives, man and chicken have coexisted peacefully for years in quiet defiance of city ordinance.

That ended Monday afternoon, when authorities apprehended the offending rooster, named Rockadoodle Two, and its sister, named Hen.

TWIST FEATURE LEADS

THEY WON'T SEE THIS COMING

At 21, he is a grizzled thing. Sparse black hair barely covers his liver spots and flaking skin. Glaucoma and cataracts plague his eyes. Flattened hooves slow his gait to an almost crawl.

But in just two days, Potsie will be ready to party.

On Tuesday, assuming he survives that long, Potsie will win the Guinness World Record title as the oldest Vietnamese potbellied pig.

SHOW,
DON'T TELL

IT WORKS.

WRITING DIVICES

REPETITION

**SHORT, PUNCHY
SENTENCES**

USING DIALOGUE

**MIXING SENTENCE
LENGTH**

BREAKING THE RULES

USING DIALOGUE

The end of a simple phrase changed the 13-year-old boy forever.

“Yes it does last the rest of your life,” the doctor said.

On the day of his diagnosis, James Mapes was in the waiting room, grasping his mother’s hand tight, hoping and praying the blood test results would be in his favor.

The physician then broke the news that James had been fearing. He would be stuck with his condition for life. Immediately, questions rushed through his head.

“Why did this happen? What will people think? What will people say?

**OPEN WITH THE SPECIFIC,
THEN GO TO THE GENERAL**

RATHER THAN THIS...

With America engaged in a war in Iraq, many students know U.S. military men who have lost their lives.

Leaguetown lost one of its own last month when Nicolas Barrera was killed in Iraq.

TRY THIS...

When Briana Barrera didn't hear from her son, Nicolas, for a week she knew something was wrong. Maybe it was mother's intuition, but she knew.

And when she saw two officers walking toward her door, her worst fear was confirmed.

“The officers said they were sorry to deliver the news, but Nicolas died with honor,” she said. “Dying with honor? How does that help? My heart was breaking. My boy was gone.”

BASIC INFORMATION

- When senior Patrick Manubay was 10 years old, his mother was diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer. She died four months later.
- Patrick didn't talk about his mother's death and was a quiet and withdrawn child. When Patrick was a sophomore, his aunt gave him a letter from his mother. In the letter, she wrote how she knew he would change the world for the better one day.
- Motivated by the letter, Patrick designed a website for a fundraiser project — Five for Life asking people to donate \$5 for the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund.
- To promote the fundraiser, Patrick made a video — using old videos of his mother and interviewing his sisters and dad. The video went viral with more than 1 million views. So far, Patrick has raised \$500,000.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Death is a tragic event — especially when you lose someone close to you. Patrick Manubay understands this better than most. He lost his mother to cancer several years ago.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Everyone can imagine what it would be like to lose a parent to cancer. You would be lost, sad and withdrawn. You would probably be jealous of your friends who have both parents. You might cry yourself to sleep every night. You might shut down completely.

That is what Patrick Manubay did until he got a letter from his mother that she wrote before she died.

BETTER.

After his mother's death from pancreatic cancer, senior Patrick Manubay was lost. "I was sad," he said. "I was angry. I was jealous of my peers who had moms."

So he lived his life withdrawn, speaking only when he had to. Then, when he was 15, his aunt gave him a letter from his mother, and "everything changed."

"Her words woke me up," he said. "I knew I was wasting my life, and that she would have been disappointed in me."

Disappointing his mother was the last thing Patrick ever wanted to do, so after talking with this father, he jumped into action. Patrick created a website and started a fundraiser project — Five for Life — with a goal that 5,000 people donate \$5 each to the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund (PCRF).

THINGS TO AVOID

NEWS LEADS

FIRST AND SECOND PERSON

CLICHÉS

IMAGINE...

TOO MUCH DRAMATIC DESCRIPTION

RAMBLING

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Patrick Manubay raised \$500,000 for the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

We are proud of Patrick Manubay for raising \$500,000 for the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund. Way to go, Patrick!

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Every day, millions of people wake up, go to work or go to school. But some days, they don't.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Before the sun even rises, 17-year-old senior Raymond Buster pushes back the his checkered comforter on his twin bed and drags himself to the shower. He quickly washes his light brown hair and puts on his shorts, black running shirt and neon green running shoes.

As he walks out the door to head to his cross country practice, he grabs a strawberry Pop Tart and waves goodbye to his mother.

BETTER.

5 a.m. The alarm blares and senior Raymond Buster drags himself out of bed after only a five-hour slumber.

The mornings come early for this 17-year-old cross country competitor, but he says it's worth it.

“I want to get to the State Meet this year,” he said. “And that means, I run early and I run often.”

Feature Writing

State Meet • 2024



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 has 648 students in grades 9-12. This year, sophomore Alfonse Delgado joined the culinary arts program after years of observing and helping his mom in the kitchen. The class is double-blocked for students to prepare and serve meals for catering jobs and box lunches to faculty and staff on Fridays.

During winter break, Delgado applied to be cast in a new Food Network show called “Home Chef Champions.” In February, he received a call to audition via Zoom, and a few weeks later, the casting director notified him that he was selected to compete on the show. The Food Network will fly Delgado and one family member to Los Angeles May 25 to film his episode and compete to win \$15,000. Delgado will compete against three other amateur chefs in three different rounds: appetizer, entree and dessert. During each round, contestants will receive a box of three surprise ingredients they must use to create their plate. Judges will eliminate one contestant during each round, and the last chef remaining will be named Home Chef Champion. His episode is scheduled to air in the fall.

To help him prepare for the competition, the school will have a practice day May 17 when people and groups can present Delgado with their own surprise ingredient boxes to allow him to practice using different ingredients before the show taping. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed May 15.

■ ALFONSE DELGADO, sophomore

“I’ve spent my whole life watching my mom in the kitchen. My dad died when I was little, so it’s just been the two of us. To save money, we never ordered pizza or went out to eat. We learned how to make delicious meals with the ingredients we had in the pantry. Fried chicken, enchiladas, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy, all kinds of roasts — comfort foods. That’s what I think of when I think of cooking at home. For the past year, I’ve been the main chef of the house. It feels pretty good to take what my mom has taught me and do my part to contribute to the household. Each week, I plan a menu and make a grocery list. I love doing it.

“We spent all winter break binge-watching the last season of ‘Home Chef Champions’ before my mom finally convinced me to see if they were taking applications. The Zoom audition was a little awkward. They had me set up my computer in my kitchen and talked to me while I prepared a tamale casserole. My mom came on-camera and tasted my creation at the end of the audition. She took a bite and actually started crying. The casserole was OK. It needed cilantro on top. I think she was just proud to taste the dish that might get me on TV. It must’ve worked.

“I was preparing to season a pork roast when I got the phone call from

■ ALFONSE DELGADO, continued

the casting director. I dropped a jar of apricot preserves on my foot and screamed. I was so thrilled and proud to be doing something special with my cooking. My episode will feature me and three other high school students from around the country. At this point, I don't care that much if I win or lose. I just want to make my mom proud. Don't get me wrong. It would be great to get \$15,000 and put a down payment on a new car for my mom. I'm bringing her with me to film the episode in L.A. She would do anything for me. I hope I get the chance to celebrate her for teaching me everything I know that got me here.

"I'm going to use all the skills from my mom and all the training I've had in culinary arts. It's tough because I have no idea what the surprise ingredients will be. Could be Skittles, peanut butter, pomegranate or Cap'n Crunch. I have no idea. But Ms. Day said to make sure I have salt, fat, acid and heat on each plate and that I taste my food as I go. I think if I follow her words of advice and keep thinking about doing this for my mom, victory could taste pretty sweet."

■ GLADYS DAY, culinary arts teacher

"On the second day of school, I gave students a chicken breast, access to seasonings and a stainless steel pan, just to see what students would come up with. Most of them didn't even get the chicken cooked through. Alfonse tenderized his chicken and seasoned it well. I didn't even need to eat lunch because I finished eating his assignment. We'll be pulling for him when he's in L.A. I've only taught Alfonse for one year, but if I've ever taught any student who can pull off something like this, it's him. I'm sure he'll put together some delicious food for those judges.

"We've been advertising his practice day like a 'Stump the Chef' kind of event. We had different classes and groups sign up for different blocks of time. People will come down to our kitchen and give Alfonse 30 minutes to make something with whatever they put in the box. I know the admin team is planning to bring in some plant-based hamburger meat, American cheese and popcorn. Who knows what he'll make out of these things. I'm sure students will come up with some pretty creative ingredients, and by the time he gets to L.A., he'll be ready."

■ JENAI DELGADO, Alfonse's mother

"When Alfonse was a toddler, I would sit him up on the counter with me when I was gathering ingredients to cook. He would grab the herbs and spices and smell and taste them. He's always been my little assistant in the kitchen. At some point when he was in eighth grade, his cooking got way better than mine. Since he's gotten older, he's taken over all the cooking. His enchiladas are better than any I've ever made. He's also just so funny and creative. While I was surprised he got a call for an audition, I wasn't surprised he was chosen. Of course, I'm a little biased.

"We've never been to California before. We plan to stay a couple extra days and see some of the sites and take a few studio tours. I'm so grateful to have Alfonse, not just because he's such a good cook. He's a fantastic son."

■ ADRIANA SANCHEZ, senior

"My friends and I are putting together a box with a cucumber, Red Vines and shrimp. I'm not sure I'm going to want to eat whatever Alfonse comes up with, but it will at least be interesting to see what he does. I was in his culinary arts class, and Alfonse was so far ahead of the rest of us. He spends most of the class time just experimenting and trying new techniques out of our textbook. We're all excited for him to represent Leaguetown on the Food Network."

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Tune in this fall as sophomore Alfonse Delgado gets things cookin' on Food Network's hit show "Home Chef Champions."

BETTER.

The unseasoned pork roast sat on the counter. Preparing the seasonings, he picks up a jar of apricot preserves when the phone rings. He answers the call and hears the news as the glass jar slips from his fingers and hits the floor.

WHAT'S NEXT?

A STRONG NUT GRAPH

A SUMMARY OF WHAT THE STORY IS ABOUT

**THE 5 W'S AND THE H THAT YOU DIDN'T GET INTO
THE LEAD**

THE NEWS PEG

THE FUTURE EVENT

A STRONG NUT GRAPH

After being selected to compete in a Food Network show called “Home Chef Champions, sophomore Alfonse Delgado will fly to Los Angeles May 25. In the meantime, the school will host a practice day May 17 where people can present Delgado with surprise ingredients to help him prepare for the show.

WHAT'S NEXT?

QUOTE/TRANSITION FORMULA

“I’ve spent my whole life watching my mom in the kitchen,” Delgado said. “To save money, we never ordered pizza or went out to eat. We learned how to make delicious meals with the ingredients we had in the pantry.”

After watching the show during winter break, Delgado’s mother convinced him to apply. In February, he received a call to audition via Zoom.

“The Zoom audition was a little awkward,” Delgado said. “They had me set up my computer in my kitchen and talked to me while I prepared a tamale casserole. My mom came on-camera and tasted my creation at the end of the audition. She took a bite and actually started crying.”

**YES,
YOU CAN**

**USE THE FIRST NAME ON THE SECOND REFERENCE IF
THE STORY IS ABOUT A STUDENT**

HAVE A LEAD LONGER THAN ONE PARAGRAPH

PUT DIALOGUE IN YOUR LEAD

NO, YOU SHOULDN'T

USE A NEWS LEAD

WRITE IN PASSIVE VOICE

**USE TOO MANY ADVERBS AND ADJECTIVES INSTEAD
OF SPECIFIC NOUNS AND POWERFUL VERBS**

HAVE MESSY HANDWRITING

STACK QUOTES

AVOID QUOTES

**MAKE THINGS UP TO MAKE YOUR STORY MORE
EXCITING**

ON CONTEST DAY

READ THE PROMPT

**SEE WHAT QUOTE STANDS OUT TO YOU THE MOST AND
MAKE THAT YOUR LEAD**

**READ THE PROMPT AGAIN AND HIGHLIGHT POWERFUL
QUOTES AND UNDERLINE GOOD INFO FOR TRANSITIONS**

MARK YOUR NUT GRAPH (THE NEWS PEG) IN THE PROMPT

CIRCLE OR STAR YOUR KICKER QUOTE

WRITE

FEATURE COMFORTS

Alyssa Boehringer

UIL Journalism Director /ILPC Director

aboehringer@uiltexas.org

