

Feature Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2021



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. Last April during the pandemic, sophomore Avani Bhatia started making masks. However, Avani wanted her masks to be unique. She searched the internet for ideas and finally found a YouTube video that showed how to print photos onto fabric. Her first two photo masks were for her sister and aunt. One displayed a photo of the family dog, and the other showed a photo of the beach in Aruba. After making more than 10 masks for her friends and family, Avani started getting texts and emails in June from friends of friends or friends of family members. They wanted Avani to make personalized photo masks for them.

On June 15, Avani launched her business PPM (which stands for Personalized Photo Masks). For \$30 plus shipping, Avani makes customers personalized masks with the photo they upload to the website. By the middle of July, Avani had so many orders that she hired her sister, aunt and cousin to help sew the masks. The group has made more than 1,500 masks since the summer, and orders continue to flow in.

In late January, the Today Show interviewed Avani about PPM and will run the segment on Wednesday, Feb. 10. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, Feb. 9.

■ AVANI BHATIA, sophomore

“I made my first mask because I was bored and wanted something to do. I had no idea this would be so lucrative. My grandmother taught me how to sew when I was in elementary school, so figuring out a mask pattern and sewing it was not hard. After I got the pattern down, I decided I wanted to do something different with my masks. Anyone can make a mask. I wanted mine to be different. That’s when I saw the YouTube video. I thought it would be cool for people to personalize their masks with their favorite photos. The first one I made was for my big sister. She’s a huge dog lover and loves our family dog, Steve. I found a great photo of Steve and tried printing the photo onto fabric. It worked, and it looked great. Then, I made another mask for my aunt. For that mask, I used a photo of the beach from our family vacation in Aruba. Both my aunt and sister loved the masks. As soon as my friends and other family members saw the masks, they started asking for their own. At first, it was pretty time-consuming, but once I got the hang of everything, it wasn’t too hard. Plus, it kept me busy when we were stuck at home for so long.

“I never imagined making a business out of this, but once people started wearing my masks around, more people started asking for them. My mom suggested I create a website and start charging for the masks. Before then, I only charged for the materials. I didn’t think the website and business would take off, but I was wrong. Within the first week, I had 15 orders, and each week the

orders grew. I couldn't handle it all by myself, so I hired my sister, aunt and cousin to help sew the masks. I still do all of the photo printing to fabric. We work about 20-25 hours a week, and my mom handles all of the shipping for me.

"The funniest mask we've made so far is of someone's nose and mouth. Basically, when that customer wears his mask, people can see his whole face. He sent me a photo of himself with the mask, and it's wild how it almost looks like he's not wearing a mask at all.

"Most people send photos of their animals for their masks. Some people send photos of their grandchildren or favorite vacation spots. A lot of our orders are from other countries right now. We make about a \$12 profit on every mask. I've saved almost all of the money I've made to help pay for college. My sister is doing the same thing. I don't think we will stay in the mask business forever, but it's a fun job right now.

"I was pretty shocked when the Today Show called and asked if they could interview me. Jenna Bush interviewed me, and, at first, I was so star-struck that I could barely speak. But she was so nice that I eventually found my voice to tell my story. After the interview, Jenna ordered two masks for herself and her husband."

■ **NEHA BHATIA, Avani's aunt**

"When Avani gave me my beach mask, I cried. The beach is my favorite place on Earth, but we were not able to take our trip to Aruba last summer because of the pandemic. Avani's mask helped me feel like I was at the beach every day.

"When Avani's website started to blow up, I offered to help. I love sewing, and I wanted to support my creative and driven niece. Plus, I know these masks bring smiles to so many faces, and we need more smiles in our world."

■ **MANSI ABASS, sophomore**

"Avani made me a mask with Shawn Mendes on it. I took this great photo of him when he sang at Lipscomb Stadium about a year and a half ago. Avani had my mom send her the photo, and she surprised me with the mask. It was so cool. I love Shawn Mendes and, apparently, I am not alone. Every time I wear it out, people ask me where I got it. They all want one. Avani's mask business is brilliant and creative. I am so happy she is so successful."

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

INVITATIONAL A • 2021 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 student who started making photo masks during the pandemic.

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.

Sitting at her sewing machine, sophomore Avani Bhatia hears the ding coming from her cell phone.

Another notification.

Ding.

Ding. Ding. Ding.

The notifications keep coming — some from people she doesn't know, some from people in other countries. But there is one thing she does know: they all want her masks.

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

During the quarantine last year, Avani started a business called Personalized Photo Masks (PPM), creating unique masks for customers using their own photos. The more masks she made, the more PPM's popularity rose, forcing her to create a website and hire more workers. Her business grew so large that the Today Show interviewed Avani in late January, and the segment will run tomorrow.

direct quote

“I was pretty shocked when the Today Show called and asked if they could interview me,” Avani said. “Jenna Bush interviewed me, and, at first, I was so star-struck that I could barely speak. But she was so nice that I eventually found my voice to tell my story.”

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 (“Avani said,” not “said Avani”). 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

Avani's mask story began last April when she decided she wanted to make masks, but she wanted her masks to be different. That's when she found a YouTube video teaching her how to print a photo onto fabric.

direct quote

"I thought it would be cool for people to personalize their masks with their favorite photos," she said. "Anyone can make a mask. I wanted mine to be different."

transition/story-telling

Her first mask was for her older sister.

direct quote

"She's a huge dog lover and loves our family dog, Steve," she said. "I found a great photo of Steve and tried printing the photo onto fabric. It worked, and it looked great."

5. Always use third person. Don't say "our student" or "our own Avani." 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.

Avani started making masks because she "was bored and wanted something to do," she said.

"I had no idea this would be so lucrative," she said. "I don't think we will stay in the mask business forever, but it's a fun job right now."

SAMPLE STORY

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"I was pretty shocked when the Today Show called and asked if they could interview me," Avani said. "Jenna Bush interviewed me, and, at first, I was so star-struck that I could barely speak. But she was so nice that I eventually found my voice to tell my story."

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Her first mask was for her older sister.

"She's a huge dog lover and loves our family dog, Steve," she said. "I found a great photo of Steve and tried printing the photo onto fabric. It worked, and it looked great."

Then, Avani started making masks for her friends and family, using photos they shared with her.

"Avani made me a mask with Shawn Mendes on it," sophomore Mansi Abass said. "I took this great photo of him when he sang at Lipscomb Stadium about a year and a half ago. Avani had my mom send her the photo, and she surprised me with the mask."

As her friends and family started wearing the masks out, requests for photo masks grew quickly.

"My mom suggested I create a website and start charging for the masks," she said "Before then, I only charged for the materials. I didn't think the website and business would take off, but I was wrong."

Within the first week, Avani had 15 orders for her \$30 masks. In July, Avani hired three of her family members to help sew the masks. The group already has made more than 1,500 masks.

"When Avani's website started to blow up, I offered to help," said her aunt Neha Bhatia, who was one of the first to receive a mask from Avani. "I love sewing, and I wanted to support my creative and driven niece. Plus, I know these masks bring smiles to so many faces, and we need more smiles in our world."

Most customers send photos of their pets or grandchildren for their masks, Avani said.

"The funniest mask we've made so far is of someone's nose and mouth," she said. "Basically, when that customer wears his mask, people can see his whole face. He sent me a photo of himself with the mask, and it's wild how it almost looks like he's not wearing a mask at all."

Avani and her family members work about 20-25 hours a week making the masks.

"We make about \$12 profit on every mask," Avani said. "I've saved almost all of the money I've made to help pay for college. My sister is doing the same thing."

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