

Feature Writing

Invitational B Meet • 2018



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 an enrollment of 3,500 students in grades 9-12. During the winter break, freshman Ayden Patoli and his 2-year-old dachshund named Hotdog went to Los Angeles to visit his grandparents for the holidays. While they were touring the city, a movie producer noticed Ayden's dog and struck up a conversation with Ayden and his grandfather, a retired film editor. The producer said he was struck by how obedient the dog was and his unusual coloring. Hotdog has a streak of white hair down his back, somewhat similar to a skunk. The producer, Max Hartwell, then asked Ayden if he would bring Hotdog by the studio so he could evaluate him for a potential role in a movie.

After the audition, Hartwell said Hotdog was perfect for the part and asked if Ayden could return to Los Angeles in the spring to film the movie. The movie is a children's spy movie, and the main character's sidekick is a dog. After clearing it with his parents Ayden agreed to return and the producer drew up a contract and sent it to Ayden's grandfather.

Over spring break, Ayden and Hotdog will return to Los Angeles for two weeks of filming. Ayden will stay only one week, and his grandfather will bring Hotdog home at the end of March.

You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Thursday, March 8. Spring break begins March 12.

■ AYDEN PATOLI, freshman

"It's not unusual for people to recognize my grandfather in Los Angeles, so I wasn't surprised that Max Hartwell struck up a conversation with us. But I was surprised Hotdog was the spark for the conversation. People talk to me all the time about Hotdog because he kind of looks like a skunk, but I didn't think a big-time producer would notice or even care.

"For the audition, Hotdog had to do all kinds of tricks, which he totally aced. He's super-smart and will do just about anything for a treat. The entire crew at the studio fell in love with him.

"I am pumped to return to LA. I've never been on a movie set when something was being filmed. My grandpa used to take me to his office where he edited movies, but that was always after the movie was finished. I will be on the set for the entire week that I am there. The star of the film is Anthony Opperman. He's been in a bunch of kids' movies. I know who he is. I am looking forward to meeting him, but I am psyched to meet the actor who is playing his father — Dwayne Johnson, the Rock. I've seen every movie he's made. I absolutely love him.

"When people meet Hotdog, they often think he went to obedience school for a long time, but he didn't. My dad and I taught him everything he knows. He's smart and loves treats, so it was easy. Several people told me he should do dog competitions, but I am not into that. Hotdog can do all kinds of tricks from

the simple ones like roll over and shake hands to more complicated ones like wave goodbye and take a bow. My favorite trick is when he stands on his hind legs and dances. When he was trying out at the studio, the dog trainer even got him to howl, bark and cry on command.

“The only thing I am not happy about is Hotdog staying in LA for an extra week without me. I thought I could talk my parents into letting me stay, but they assured me my grandpa could take good care of Hotdog. I know he can, but I wanted to stay.

“The other cool thing is I get to be in the movie. It’s not a big part, but I get to be one of the classmates in the first scene of the movie. I even have two lines. I’ve never acted before. I am a little nervous, but my grandpa said he would get me ready.”

■ **JON PATOLI, Ayden’s grandfather**

“Hotdog is definitely a showboater. I think that dog knew he was trying out for a movie. He did everything perfectly. When Ayden told me he was bringing Hotdog with him on the plane, I was a little worried. The only time I had met Hotdog was when he was an 8-week-old puppy. He pretty much whined and barked constantly at that point. He’s definitely grown into a fine young dog. Ayden and my son have trained him well. He can sit through a meal at a restaurant without begging. He takes every command you give him on the leash. I was impressed. I would consider getting myself a dog if I knew he could be as well-behaved as Hotdog.”

■ **MAX HARTWELL, producer**

“When we first picked up this movie, we thought the dog sidekick would be a bigger dog like a Golden Retriever, but after meeting Hotdog, all of that changed. Hotdog is more human than dog, I think. When people around him talk, he listens to every word. I am pretty sure he understands everything. I predict this will be the first of many movies for Hotdog.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Hotdog is a miniature dachshund, weighing a little more than 14 pounds. He is dark brown with a white streak down his back. Neither of his parents had any white hair, and Hotdog’s veterinarian can’t explain the streak. He thinks it might be a birth mark of some sort.

In the movie, Hotdog’s name was supposed to be “Rico,” but the producer and director like “Hotdog” so much that they kept it.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

INVITATIONAL B • 2018 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 freshman whose dog will be in a movie.

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.

Every hero has a sidekick.

Batman had Robin. Han Solo had Chewbacca.

The latest sidekick?

Hotdog — a 14-pound dachshund owned by freshman Ayden Patoli.

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure to 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

Hotdog will star in a children's spy movie, which will be filmed in Los Angeles in March. Hotdog got his big break when movie producer Max Hartwell noticed the dog while Ayden was visiting his grandfather, a former film editor, in LA over the winter holidays.

direct quote

"It's not unusual for people to recognize my grandfather in Los Angeles, so I wasn't surprised that Max Hartwell struck up a conversation with us," Ayden said. "But I was surprised Hotdog was the spark for the conversation."

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 ("Ayden said," not "said Ayden"). 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

Hartwell said he was struck by how obedient Hotdog was and by his unique coloring. Hotdog is dark brown with a white streak down his back. After talking with Ayden and his grandfather, Hartwell asked if Hotdog could come by the studio to audition for a potential role in a movie.

direct quote

“When we first picked up this movie, we thought the dog sidekick would be a bigger dog like a Golden Retriever, but after meeting Hotdog, all of that changed,” Hartwell said. “Hotdog is more human than dog, I think.”

transition/story-telling

For the audition, Ayden said, Hotdog aced all of the tricks the dog trainer had him do.

direct quote

“He’s super-smart and will do just about anything for a treat,” Ayden said. “The entire crew at the studio fell in love with him.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own Ayden.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “He is so cool.” 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.

“I predict this will be the first of many movies for Hotdog,” Hartwell said.

SAMPLE STORY

Every hero has a sidekick.

Batman had Robin. Han Solo had Chewbacca.

The latest sidekick?

Hotdog — a 14-pound dachshund owned by freshman Ayden Patoli.

Hotdog will star in a children's spy movie, which will be filmed in Los Angeles in March. Hotdog got his big break when movie producer Max Hartwell noticed the dog while Ayden was visiting his grandfather, a former film editor, in LA over the winter holidays.

"It's not unusual for people to recognize my grandfather in Los Angeles, so I wasn't surprised that Max Hartwell struck up a conversation with us," Ayden said. "But I was surprised Hotdog was the spark for the conversation."

Hartwell said he was struck by how obedient Hotdog was and by his unique coloring. Hotdog is dark brown with a white streak down his back. After talking with Ayden and his grandfather, Hartwell asked if Hotdog could come by the studio to audition for a potential role in a movie.

"When we first picked up this movie, we thought the dog sidekick would be a bigger dog like a Golden Retriever, but after meeting Hotdog, all of that changed," Hartwell said. "Hotdog is more human than dog, I think."

For the audition, Ayden said, Hotdog aced all of the tricks the dog trainer had him do.

"He's super-smart and will do just about anything for a treat," Ayden said. "The entire crew at the studio fell in love with him."

Hotdog can do simple tricks like roll over, shake hands and more complicated ones like waving goodbye and taking a bow. He can even stand on his hind legs and dance.

"When people meet Hotdog, they often think he went to obedience school for a long time, but he didn't," Ayden said. "My dad and I taught him everything he knows."

When Hotdog returns to LA over spring break, Ayden will be on set with him for a week, and then his grandpa will take care of Hotdog the final week.

"Hotdog is definitely a showboater," Ayden's grandfather, Jon Patoli said. "I think that dog knew he was trying out for a movie."

Hotdog isn't the only one acting; Ayden will get a part in the movie as well.

"It's not a big part, but I get to be one of the classmates in the first scene of the movie," he said. "I even have two lines. I've never acted before. I am a little nervous, but my grandpa said he would get me ready."

The star of the movie is Anthony Opperman. Ayden said he is looking forward to meeting him, but he's even more excited to meet a particular actor in the film.

"I am psyched to meet the actor who is playing his father – Dwayne Johnson, the Rock," he said. "I absolutely love him."

Although the sidekick dog in the film was originally supposed to be named "Rico," producers liked "Hotdog" so much they kept it.

"I predict this will be the first of many movies for Hotdog," Hartwell said.