PLOSable Assignment

Date assigned:

First draft due for peer review: (Usually 1 – 2 months later)

Final draft due: (Usually 1 month later)

The purpose of this assignment is to make a current journal article accessible to elementary school students. To this end, write a PLOSable article about a recent (Jan 2013-today) article on non-human biology that has been published in either PLOS Biology (<http://www.plosbiology.org/>) or PLOS One (<http://www.plosone.org/>).

Check the list at <http://askabiologist.asu.edu/explore/plosable_list>. You must choose an article from PLOS Biology or PLOS One that has not yet been featured on the PLOSable site, and that has not been used for any other assignment in this class. For those of you who are interested in the biology of mating and sex, keep in mind that PLOSable articles are meant for children in grades 6 to 9.

Before you start writing, please read the following sections from the PLOSable Biology website (<http://askabiologist.asu.edu/author-notes>):

* Why write for Ask a Biologist?
* How to make your writing kid-friendly
* Check your work for grade level readability (and use the readability test tool!)
* Guide for PLOSable articles (including the subsection Making it PLOSable)
* It would also be wise to read a few PLOSable articles before starting your own. Do not panic, many of the posted articles are longer than what will be required for this class.

# Format:

* DO NOT fill out the PLOSable template mentioned in PLOSable author notes. It asks for more content than is required for this assignment.
* Provide a catchy title. Do not include a byline under the title in the first draft (for double- blind peer review), but do include it in the final version.
* In a section titled “Words to Know” provide child-friendly definitions of scientific terms that are required within your article (keep this to six or fewer terms)
* In a section titled “What’s in the Story?” write a 100-200 word, child-friendly introduction to the article. This section must end with a sentence similar to this one: *In*

*the Public Library of Science Biology article, “Insert Title of Article Here,” scientists…*

* For the body of your article (400-500 words), place the topic of the PLOS article in context and provide a kid-friendly summary of the main finding in the article. Provide examples to which children can relate and use catchy headings to break up the text.
* Images and illustrations are required and must be taken from either the original PLOS article or from Wikimedia Commons. Provide a title, caption and URL for each image.

**Submission:**

*First draft for peer review*

* Bring two printed copies of the original PLOS article and two printed copies of your PLOSable article (double-spaced, 1” margins, without a byline) to class on [DUE DATE]. Your article will be reviewed by two peers.
* During the class on [DUE DATE], your article will be evaluated by two peers in a double- blind manner using the reviewer’s guide that is printed on pages 3 and 4 of these instructions. Printed copies of the reviewer’s guide will be provided at the start of the peer review session and will be returned to the authors at the end of the class.

*Final version for grading*

* Submit a **Word file** that contains your PLOSable article to your teacher before the beginning of class on [FINAL DUE DATE]. This version should be single-spaced with 2” margins.
* If you are interested in trying to publish on the Ask A Biologist website ([www.askabiologist.asu.edu/plosable](http://www.askabiologist.asu.edu/plosable)), complete the PLOSable template (found at <https://askabiologist.asu.edu/author-notes>) and contact Ask A Biologist through the volunteer page (<https://askabiologist.asu.edu/contact/volunteer>).

**PLOSable peer review** PLOSable Code:

**Content review:** First, scan the PLOS article. You do not have to read the entire article, start with the abstract, the opening paragraph (or two) of the introduction, and the figures/tables. Read further only if necessary to find the answers to the first three items in this table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The original PLOS**  **article** | **Point-form summary of the original PLOS article** |
| **Context**  (background for the study, including the knowledge gap that will be addressed) |  |
| **Research objective** |  |
| **Primary conclusion**  (most important conclusion) |  |
| **Secondary conclusion** (not required, but allowed) |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The PLOSable article** | **Comment (point-form is okay) on how well the PLOSable author conveyed**  **the following content:** |
| **What’s in the story?**  Places the topic in context  and introduces the research objective |  |
| **Body/Subsections**  Provide background  information & examples |  |
| **Body/Subsections**  Next-to-last item is a summary of the main result of the experiment from the PLOS article |  |
| **Body/Subsections**  Final comments bring the results back to a broader  context |  |

**Style review**: Circle the description that best describes your opinion for each item. Indicate any problem areas directly on the PLOSable article by underlining or circling them. You should not re-write the text but you must give the author guidance regarding the type of problem so that he or she can correct it.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Catchy title** | Boring and/or vague | Okay and/or off topic | Interesting and relevant |
| **Words to know** | Several missing or not needed (provide suggestions) and/or the definitions are too technical | One or two missing (provide suggestions) and/or definitions not very kid-friendly | Complete, no extra words, and definitions are kid-friendly |
| **What’s in the**  **story?**  100-200 word intro (context) | Not kid- friendly and/or is off- topic | Some words not kid- friendly and/or the topic not well introduced | Interesting, kid-friendly and introduces the topic very well |
| includes:  *In the Public Library of Science Biology article, “Insert Title of Article Here,” scientists…* | | No | Yes |
| **Subsections**  Catchy subheadings  Examples and explanations  Spelling and grammar | No  Too few (provide suggestions) and/or not kid-friendly and/or not related to the topic  Lots of mistakes | Okay, but could be more interesting  Okay but could be more kid-friendly and/or have more examples (provide suggestions)  Some mistakes | Yes  Just the right number, all are kid-friendly, all are relevant to understanding the topic  No mistakes |
| **Illustrations**  Choice  Title  Caption  URL | Too few (provide ideas)  Missing  Missing  Missing | Okay but better ones could be included (provide ideas)  Poor wording  Poor wording  Poor wording | Well-chosen and help to make the point  Short and concise Stand alone (for kids) Present |