Headline News: The Mystery of the Missing Meadow

Learning objective: To identify and explain the structural and language features of a newspaper report.

Read the following newspaper report carefully. Think about why the journalist has chosen specific vocabulary and how they have structured the information to engage the reader.

LOCAL PARK BAFFLES BOTANISTS: MYSTERY OF THE VANISHING FLOWERS

By Kit Fox, Senior Reporter

Residents of Oakwood are in a state of confusion this morning after a spectacular display of wildflowers in Willow Brook Park disappeared overnight. The vibrant meadow, which was planted by local school children last spring, was found completely bare at dawn on Tuesday.

'I walked my dog here every day,' said local resident Mrs. Higgins, 'and the colours were magnificent. To see it empty is truly heartbreaking.'

Botanists from the city council were called to the scene early this morning. While some suggest a rapid animal migration, others are stumped by the lack of uprooted soil. 'It is as if the plants simply decided to pack their bags and leave,' remarked one lead scientist.

Local authorities have cordoned off the area to conduct a full investigation. They are urging anyone with information—or perhaps a night-owl with a telescope—to come forward immediately. A reward of £50 has been offered by the community centre for any clues that lead to solving this botanical puzzle. For now, the meadow remains a mystery, leaving the town wondering if the flowers will ever return to their home.

Word bank: Headline · Lead paragraph · Journalist · Objective · Witness · Sensationalism · Inverted pyramid

1. What is the name of the journalist who wrote this report and what is the reward offered for information? (2 marks)

2. According to the text, what specific detail makes the botanists believe this was not a normal animal incident? (2 marks)

3. Why might the journalist have included a quote from a local resident like Mrs. Higgins? (2 marks)

4. What does the phrase 'cordoned off' tell us about how the council is handling the situation? (2 marks)

5. Do you think the newspaper report is written in a formal or informal tone? Justify your choice using evidence from the text. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a newspaper front page featuring the headline 'MYSTERY OF THE VANISHING FLOWERS'. Include a space for a photograph of the empty meadow and a small caption underneath.

Extension challenge: Imagine you are a detective investigating the case. Write a short paragraph (50 words) from the perspective of a witness who saw something strange in the park at midnight.