**Article of the Week (AoW) Directions**

1. Mark your confusion – either highlighting or underlining.

2. Mark up the text. Annotate the article with comments, questions, inferences, etc. You can use a variety of sentences, phrases, and symbols to show your thinking.

3. Write a developed paragraph response to one of the prompts below.

**Harry Potter's world could cast a spell, lure visitors to Universal Studios**

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela staff 04.14.16

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — Six decades ago, Walt Disney opened what would become the nation’s prototypical theme park, a fantasy land built around Sleeping Beauty Castle, inspired by the classic fairy tale and Disney’s soon-to-be-released animated film. Universal Studios Hollywood has long been considered second-rate compared with its rival. But on Thursday, Universal opened the gates to its own fantasy fortress: a 200-foot-tall Hogwarts Castle, inspired by the popular Harry Potter books and movies.

In the hyper-competitive world of Southern California theme parks, it’s "Game on!" Universal Studios Hollywood’s new Wizarding World of Harry Potter presents the first serious challenge to the preeminence of Disneyland.  “The product offerings at Universal are such a high quality that they are at the same level as Disney in many aspects,” said Dennis Speigel, president of International Theme Park Services in Cincinnati, Ohio. His company designs and develops theme parks around the country.

## Eerie Themes, Opening-Day Glitches

As Thursday dawned, fog machines swirled a gray mist around the archway entrance to Universal Studios Hollywood’s new attraction. Haunting music from the Potter films wafted over the crowd of more than 250 devotees who had been in line since before 2 a.m. There were a few problems, despite the park's technical rehearsals.  The complex 3D-HD dark ride, called Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey, broke down for a few minutes when Sarah Mahony was riding. The projection in front of her froze and then went black, but the seat kept moving as a recorded voice repeated: “Please stay in your seats, everything is all right.” Despite a few nervous moments, she later chalked it up to the attraction’s “first-day jitters.”

## Moaning Myrtle Heard In Bathrooms

Inside the six-acre model of Hogsmeade village from J.K. Rowling’s “Harry Potter” books and films that followed, the varied architecture suggests a place that grew over time. There are signs of faux age, like rust. Props from the films are sprinkled throughout. Moaning Myrtle can be heard in the bathrooms.

This kind of immersive storytelling and attention to detail bring the park into Disney’s league. Experts said the estimated $500 million attraction also could become such a tour de force that it cuts into Disneyland’s business this summer.  Andrew Dinh, roaming the Potter land with his 5-year-old-daughter, Taytum, had already spent about $500 on items including robes, wands, shirts and temporary tattoos.

“It’s both for her and me,” admitted Dinh, 36, a Riverside County deputy sheriff.

## Disneyland Answers With "Star Wars"

When a similar Harry Potter world opened in 2010 at Universal’s Islands of Adventure theme park in Orlando, Fla., attendance jumped 30 percent at that park that year. Nearby, visitation numbers at Disney’s Magic Kingdom nearby dropped 1.5 percent. But Disneyland is not sitting idly by. The park has started construction on the 14-acre expansion based on the blockbuster “Star Wars” films. A completion date has yet to be announced. Strictly by the numbers, Disneyland is packed with more attractions and draws more than twice as many visitors as Universal Studios Hollywood. But Universal Studios Hollywood’s attendance has been increasing its number of visitors and attractions faster.

## Universal's Attendance Grows Faster

Estimates are that Disneyland hosted 16.8 million visitors in 2014, a 3.5 percent increase over the previous year. Universal Studios Hollywood welcomed 6.8 million visitors, an 11 percent increase over the previous year, the study said. From 2010 through 2014, Universal Studios Hollywood saw annual attendance rise by 1.8 million visitors, or 36 percent. During the same period, Disneyland’s annual attendance increased by about 800,000 visitors, or 5 percent. The rapid attendance growth at Universal Studios Hollywood comes courtesy of some new big-ticket attractions. In 2012, Universal Studios Hollywood opened Transformers: The Ride-3D. Then in 2014 it opened the Despicable Me Minion Mayhem ride and Super Silly Fun Land. The park launched Fast and Furious: Supercharged last year as well as Springfield, a city block of eateries inspired by the fictional town in the TV show “The Simpsons.”

Just in time for summer, Universal Studios Hollywood plans to open a haunted maze based on the AMC series “The Walking Dead.” The show’s executive producer and frequent director Gregory Nicotero will oversee the creation of the animatronic zombies.

## Newest Disney Ride Was Buzz Lightyear

Disneyland hasn’t built a major new ride since it added the interactive Buzz Lightyear Astro Blasters in 2005. Disneyland has retooled several attractions to appeal to fans of “Star Wars,” acquired by Disney along with Lucasfilm for $4 billion in 2012. Part of Tomorrowland has been converted into Star Wars Launch Bay, a hall where parkgoers can play “Star Wars” video games, buy merchandise and meet costumed characters from the films. Universal Studios Hollywood started more than 50 years ago as a side attraction to Universal’s television and movie studios. The theme park’s centerpiece had been a tram ride that let visitors glimpse the movie-making process. Stunt shows and exhibits on makeup and special effects were added in the early years.

## "Now Both Are Playing Chess"

The park began to aim for Disney-quality attractions in 1996 with the Jurassic Park ride, based on the blockbuster directed by Steven Spielberg and featuring life-size animatronic dinosaurs.

The park added several other big-ticket attractions in the following years, including a 3-D King Kong to replace an aging automaton ape on the tram ride that burned in a 2008 fire.

The pace of new attractions accelerated soon after the park’s parent company, Comcast Corp., in 2013 announced plans for a $1.6 billion, 25-year makeover of the park and the adjacent studio facilities.

With the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, Universal Studios Hollywood can now crow about a feature that rivals the technology and sophistication of Disneyland, said Dave Koenig, author of several books on Disney. “Universal is back in the game,” he said. “Before, one was playing checkers and one was playing chess. Now both are playing chess.”

**Respond to one of the following prompts. Use the a separate sheet of paper.**

1. If you were going to rewrite or add a heading for a section in this article, what heading would you write and why?
2. How could the opening of the Wizarding World affect Disneyland this summer? Would you likely visit this theme park? Explain.
3. Pick a passage from the article and respond to it.