

Profile Essay Assignment

WRTG 3020, 077

Fall 2023

Objective:

To practice writing in narrative form, which emphasizes storytelling and use of vivid descriptions for settings, characters, and actions to support a central message.

Length:

1000-1500 words (4-6 double-spaced pages, 12-point font, 1" margins); include a memorable title that announces both topic and purpose.

Prompt:

Interview your partner using the conversation starters as a beginning from which you may develop your own questions if you wish. [Note: Questions in **BOLD** must be asked, but you can choose whether to use the information in your essay.]

Use your interviews to develop a thematic biographical story. **This story should have a specific focus and meaning.** Rather than simply relaying a chronology of your partner's life, the profile essay should offer an anecdote that helps readers become better acquainted with your partner's experiences and identity. Themes related to generational experience and the American Dream are encouraged.

Profile Interview

- Develop a biographical story that has a **single main point**. Use specific examples from your partner's Profile responses to identify a theme for the story you're telling. [For example, if you interviewed me, you might write a Profile story about how certain experiences from my life inspired me to become a humanist educator, or why I didn't end up pursuing a career as a rock guitarist, or how growing up with hippy parents influenced my worldview as an adult.]
- Read Profile essays from previous classes. These are posted below.
- **SHOW** your audience the intended meaning of the Profile you've written rather than telling them what to see. [For instance, it's a lot more interesting to read a vivid anecdote about me facing down authority in public school than to simply be told that this happened.]
 - Using dialogue is a powerful tool for biographical writing; refer to the rules and tips guide for formatting examples.
- Revise your paper after you've reflected on what you've said:
 - think about your main idea and how you've articulated it for readers;
 - consider making an appointment with the Writing Center; and
 - read aloud to catch word choice and sentence style problems.
- Proofread for typos, spelling, and punctuation errors once you've completed all revisions.

Conversation Starters [required questions in BOLD]

- The purpose of these questions is to get you started—to help you get to know each other and through their narrative, learn what is important to your partner.
 - We hope that as you hear each other’s stories, experiences, and personal points of view, you will be able to write an interesting, accurate and poignant profile of your partner. Be creative.
 - Feel free to use some or all of the conversation starters; I encourage you to come up with your own questions as well.
 - You may want to record your interviews so you can go back to capture nuances you may have missed during your interview.
1. What was your childhood like?
 2. Educationally, what areas of study do you enjoy?
 3. Tell me about the experience of one or more challenges you have overcome—personally and/or professionally.
 4. Tell me about a turning point in your life, an experience that may have changed the direction of your life.
 5. If you had a million dollars to give to a cause you care about, what would that cause or causes be and why?
 6. What is important to you in 2022—given rising issues like Black Lives Matter, COVID-19, unemployment and rising cost of living, threats to democracy, national and local leadership crises, etc.?
 7. What is your understanding of the ‘American Dream’ and how it relates to your life? (Discuss how each of you, from different generations, experience this in similar or different ways.)
 8. How do you hope to make life better for yourself and/or others?
 9. What question haven’t I asked that I should have? What else is important for me to know that describes you?
 10. **What do you see as the biggest challenge facing your generation or all of us collectively as a society?**
 12. **What is happening in the world (or not happening) that you care deeply about. e.g., something that you think is unfair, unjust, or just downright disturbing? Tell me a story that explains why this matters to you.**
 13. **If you had the power and/or influence to change for the better something in the world, what would it be? Be as specific/concrete as possible.**