

Profile Handout

The purpose of a profile is to create a significant dominant impression about a person, place, thing, etc.

Genre Characteristics:

- Largely dependent on narrative with some description to help create the significant dominant impression.
- Often based on interviews (the person being profiled, friends, family, etc.).
- A snapshot, rather than a biography, which is a longer view of a life.
- Requires a thematic and/or metaphoric common thread for organization.

Audience:

- The audience varies quite a bit for profiles depending on what is being profiled and what the focus or theme of the profile is.
- For English 120 students, teachers and peers will often be the audience.
- If the teacher asks them to pretend they are publishing it, the audience will often be some combination of the publication's regular readers, people who are interested in the person, place, or thing being profiled, and people who are interested in the focus or theme of the profile.

Style:

- Profiles are usually mid-level style (a combination of 1st and 3rd person).
- Everyday vocabulary.
- Relaxed tone with room for humor.
- Often visually inviting with different formatting, pictures, etc.

Organization:

- Top-down, culminating, and open form all work for profiles.

Good Examples:

- A Surgeon's War on Breast Cancer by Molly O'Neill in *Call to Write* pages 216-220 is pretty good.

Things Students Struggle with:

- Writing a biography instead of a profile. Suggest a key theme they could focus on and only include details or events connected to that theme.
- Telling rather than showing. Profiles are largely narrative, but some description is also involved to help readers get to know the profile subject. Suggest ways students can use sensory details to show what the subject is like.
- The "So what?" question. Students often end profiles without making it clear why readers should care about their subject or what they wrote about in their profile.