Profile: Telling a Rich and Compelling Story

5



FIGURE 5.1 Writer Gay Talese (b. 1932) revolutionized both journalism and profile writing. His piece "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold" appeared in Esquire magazine's April 1966 issue and was among the earliest and most influential examples of the "new journalism" movement of the 1960s and '70s. A key element of the movement was journalists' use of literary techniques in longer pieces of media writing, aiming to get at "truth" rather than simply providing facts. Because Sinatra (shown here in a 1960 photo) refused interview requests, Talese built the profile entirely from field observations and interviews with others. (credit: 20th Century Fox/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

5.1 Profiles as Inspiration
5.2 Profile Trailblazer: Veronica Chambers
5.3 Glance at Genre: Subject, Angle, Background, and Description
5.4 Annotated Sample Reading: "Remembering John Lewis" by Carla D. Hayden
5.5 Writing Process: Focusing on the Angle of Your Subject
5.6 Editing Focus: Verb Tense Consistency
5.7 Evaluation: Text as Personal Introduction
5.8 Spotlight on ... Profiling a Cultural Artifact
5.9 Portfolio: Subject as a Reflection of Self

INTRODUCTION This chapter explores the process of **profile writing**. Writers compose these articles or essays to present some essential insight about the subject to the audience; subjects can span a wide variety of topics, including individuals, groups, places, and events. A good profile tells one clear, overarching story, chosen from other possible stories about the subject.

Although the central purpose of a profile is to convey a sense of the subject's significance, a profile may have a more specific goal. Profile writers may simply want to inform audiences about their subjects, or they may aim to inspire audiences with the examples their subjects provide, highlighting something overlooked or underappreciated about them. In all cases, though, the writer's goal is to share a crucial insight about the subject with the audience.

Profiles lie on a spectrum between two related forms: informal interviews and formal biographies. Like interviews, profiles usually depend on direct conversations with living people. Like biographies, they make use of other sources of information about the subject. Profiles such as those published in popular magazines are usually longer and more focused than interviews but considerably shorter than biographies. The material in this chapter will help you develop a profile that will show a new perspective on a subject of your choosing to inform and inspire your readers.

5.1 Profiles as Inspiration

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify characteristics of profile writing.
- Explain how the profile genre has developed.

Beginning with its first issue in 1925, *The New Yorker* magazine has run a regular feature called "Profiles." The earliest of this series of biographical sketches combined the elements still in use for profiles today: anecdotes (brief stories), interview data, descriptions of the subject and their surroundings, and researched information to provide background and context. In the early 1950s, then senator John F. Kennedy (1917–1963) had an idea to develop a similar article about U.S. senators who had shown moral courage in the face of opposition. He asked one of his speechwriters, Ted Sorensen (1928–2010), to research examples of senators who had displayed this quality. As he researched, Sorensen found so much information that he suggested Kennedy write a book about these individuals.

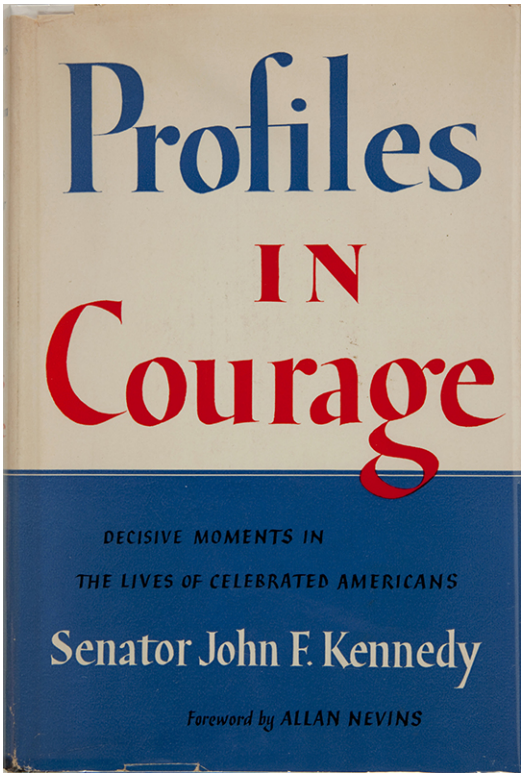


FIGURE 5.2 Cover of Profiles in Courage (credit: "First edition front cover of *Profiles in Courage*" by Unknown

Author/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The 1956 volume, titled *Profiles in Courage*, spotlights eight senators who took unpopular stances against majority consensus; subjects range from John Quincy Adams (1767–1848) to Robert A. Taft (1889–1953). Many of the profiled senators lost political power as a result of their actions. The John F. Kennedy Library Foundation later established the Profile in Courage Award, given to "a public official (or officials) at the federal, state, or local level whose actions demonstrate the qualities of politically courageous leadership" ("About the Award (https://openstax.org/r/abouttheaward)"). Kennedy's book established a connection between the profile genre and the idea of courage, and other writers have continued drawing on this connection.

One such writer is Veronica Chambers, this chapter's trailblazer. In her book *Resist: 40 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up against Tyranny and Injustice*, Chambers includes profiles of individuals who displayed uncommon and often unpopular courage. Although profile pieces do not always focus on courageous people as subjects, that particular focus can provide a strong **angle**—a viewpoint or lens—for profile writing. Like Kennedy and Chambers, profile writers often communicate admiration for some attribute that their subject displays, whether courage or another quality that might provide an example to others.

Although other types of writing can inspire readers to develop admirable qualities, profiles do so particularly well. They are generally short enough to read in one sitting and strongly focus on one main idea for readers to absorb. They are compelling because they combine elements of both storytelling and reporting. Profiles of people who embody certain ideals or principles can provide models for readers to become better at living up to those principles.



5.2 Trailblazer

Profile Trailblazer: Veronica Chambers

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in varying rhetorical and cultural contexts.
- Determine how genre conventions are shaped by purpose, culture, and expectation.
- Comment on the interplay among author, subject, and audience.



"There is not a story where the oppressor wins forever."

FIGURE 5.3 In her profiling work, Veronica Chambers (https://openstax.org/r/veronicachampers) highlights ordinary heroes such as civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer, shown here as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegate at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 1964. (credit: "Fannie Lou Hamer, Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegate, at the Democratic National Convention, Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 1964" by Leffler, Warren K.,/Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Public Domain)

You may know Veronica Chambers (b. 1970) from having read *Mama's Girl*, her 1996 memoir about being raised in Brooklyn by her mother, who had immigrated with her from Panama. You may have seen one of the many books that Chambers has coauthored, such as *Yes, Chef* with Marcus Samuelsson, published in 2013; *Make It Messy*, also with Marcus Samuelsson, published in 2015; or *Thirty two (32) Yolks*, with Eric Ripert, published in 2016. Building on these successes, Chambers—who has served as senior editor at several major publications, including *Glamour*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times Magazine*—has recently focused on developing an array of young adult books highlighting the voices and histories of marginalized people, mainly Black women.

In the expanded paperback edition of *Resist: 40 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up against Tyranny and Injustice*, published in 2020, Chambers delves into the profile genre, covering a variety of well-known and influential subjects dating from as early as 1429 to the present day. While many of her subjects are Black American women, such as civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer (1917–1977) and Georgia politician Stacey Abrams (b. 1973), the collection includes people from around the world and from different cultures, among them Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948), German industrialist Oskar Schindler (1908–1974), and

South African singer Miriam Makeba (1932–2008). In every chapter, Chambers uses the profile genre to highlight one key aspect of each of her subjects' lives.

Paying Attention to the Subject's Voice

Profiles aim to help readers better understand their subject by focusing on one major idea. When the subject is a person, readers can better understand that person by reading their spoken or written words. Chambers uses this technique throughout her book. In the first chapter, Chambers tells the story of French heroine Joan of Arc (c. 1412–1431), centering on the idea that individuals are born for a purpose. Readers can better understand Joan of Arc's singlemindedness because of the chapter's **epigraph** (quotation provided at the beginning of a written piece that indicates how readers should approach the text), attributed to the subject: "I am not afraid.... I was born to do this" (Chambers, *Resist* 9). The profile itself offers an additional direct quote: "All battles are first won or lost in the mind"(10). Other chapters, such as those profiling Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) and former South African president Nelson Mandela (1918–2013), also begin with the subject's words in an epigraph or employ both strategies—epigraph plus direct quotes within the profile. (You may choose to use either or both of these strategies in your profile as well.)

Recognizing the Author's Voice

Profile writers may choose to include themselves in the piece, referring to their own experiences and interactions with the subject. In this collection, Chambers instead speaks in her own voice in the "resist lesson" at the end of each chapter. These "resist lessons" distill each profile's focus into a short phrase, such as "We must speak for the voiceless" (the lesson for the profile of Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, 1879–1919) and "Honor the hands that harvest your crops" (the lesson for the combined profile of American labor leaders Dolores Huerta (b. 1930) and Cesar Chavez, 1927–1993).

Negotiating among Author's Voice, Subject's Voice, and Genre Expectations

The profile genre enjoys considerable variety. While Chambers does not include her own experiences in this collection, other writers do insert themselves into the profiles they write. Yet even without first-person commentary, Chambers clearly communicates her opinions of the subjects with her word choices and "resist lessons." Either choice—including the author directly in the text or not—can be appropriate, depending on the rhetorical situation.

Discussion Questions

1. Now that you have read the information provided in the chapter thus far, what do you think are the differences between a profile and a memoir or biography?
2. Why might you include or exclude your own voice or experiences in the profile you write?
3. Given that many of her subjects are historical figures, how do you think Chambers found the information for the profiles included in her book? How would research on someone who lived in the past differ from research on a living person?
4. How is the profile genre uniquely suited to showcase the idea of courage or some other admirable trait?
5. What profiles have you encountered that have inspired you? How have they done so? If you haven't read any inspiring profiles, what subjects—people, places, or events—would you like to see profiled? Why?

5.3 Glance at Genre: Subject, Angle, Background, and Description

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify elements of the profile genre.
- Identify research methods for writing profiles.

Profile writing are articles or essays in which the writer focuses on a specific trait or behavior that reveals something essential about the subject. Much profile material comes from interviews either with the subject or with people who know about the subject. However, interviews may not always be part of a profile, for profile writers also draw on other sources of information. In creating profiles, writers usually combine the techniques of narrative, or storytelling, and reporting, or including information that answers the questions of *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.

Potential Profile Subjects and Angles



You can find profile subjects everywhere. The purpose of a profile is to give readers an insight into something fundamental about the subject, whether that subject is a person, a social group, a building, a piece of art, a public space, or a cultural tradition. Writers of profiles often conduct several types of research, including interviews and **field observations**, as well as consult related published sources. A profile usually reveals one aspect of the subject to the audience; this focus is called an **angle**. To decide which angle to take, profile writers look for patterns in their research, then consider their audience when making choices about both the angle and the **tone**, or attitude toward the subject.

Defining Terms and Writing in the Genre



These terms, or **genre elements**, are frequently used in profile writing. The following definitions apply specifically to the ways in which the terms are used in this genre.

- **Anecdotes:** brief stories about specific moments that offer insights into the profile subject.
- **Background information:** key to understanding the profile's significance. Background information includes biographical data and other information about the history of the profile subject. It often helps establish context as well.
- **Chronological order:** information or a narrative presented in time order, from earliest to most recent.
- **Context:** the situation or circumstances that surround a profile subject. Situating profile subjects within their contexts can offer deeper insights about them.
- **Factual information:** accurate and verifiable data and other material gathered from research.
- **Field notes:** information gathered and recorded by observing the profile subject within a particular environment.
- **Location:** places relevant to the profile subject. For a person, location might include birthplace, place of residence, or place where events occurred.
- **Narrative structure:** text organized as narratives, or stories, weaving research into the story as applicable.
- **Quotation:** words spoken or written by the subject or from interviews about the subject.
- **Reporting structure:** structure that relays factual information and answers *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* questions.
- **Show and tell:** descriptive and narrative techniques to help readers imagine the subject combined with reporting techniques to relay factual information.
- **Spatial structure:** used in profiles of buildings, artworks, and public spaces. This structure reflects a "tour" of the space or image.
- **Thick description:** combination of sensory perceptions to create a vivid image for readers.
- **Tone:** the writer's attitude toward the subject. For example, tone can be admiring, grateful, sarcastic, disparaging, angry, respectful, gracious, neutral, and so on.
- **Topical structure:** structure that focuses on several specific topics within the profile.

5.4 Annotated Sample Reading: “Remembering John Lewis” by Carla D. Hayden

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Determine and articulate how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Analyze and evaluate relationships between ideas and patterns of organization in the profile genre.

Introduction



FIGURE 5.4 John Lewis, 2006 (credit: “Rep. John Lewis (D-GA)” by United States House of Representatives/ Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)



FIGURE 5.5 Carla D. Hayden, 2020 (credit: "Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden, 2020" by Shawn Miller/Library of Congress Life/Wikimedia Commons, CC0)

Just two days after the death of politician and civil rights icon John Lewis (1940–2020), Librarian of Congress Carla D. Hayden (b. 1952) published the following profile on the Library of Congress blog. As you will learn from the annotations, she uses a variety of profile genre elements in her piece. While reading Hayden's profile of Lewis, consider how you might use some of her strategies in your own work.

LIVING BY THEIR OWN WORDS

The Power of "Good Trouble"

Angle and Choice of Subject. *Hayden signals her profile's angle in the title, linking Lewis's signature phrase "good trouble" with the idea of power. Additionally, important dates—deaths, current events, or anniversaries of such happenings—often provide the incentive for writing profiles.*

> Few people that you meet truly rouse the best in you. They are walking heroes, living historymakers. Their words and deeds have a thunderous impact on your soul. Congressman John Robert Lewis was such a person for me. I join the world in mourning the passing of this civil rights legend.

Writer's Voice. *Hayden chooses to insert her own voice and experience to connect with her readers. She also expands on the theme of "power" introduced in the title, using words and phrases such as heroes, historymakers, thunderous impact, and legend.*

Tone. *The words she uses to describe Lewis indicate a tone of respect and admiration.*

> The son of a sharecropper growing up in rural Alabama, he said as a little boy he was in constant fear because of signs that said "no colored boys, no colored girls." His parents and grandparents used to tell him "don't get in trouble." Nevertheless, as a young man he was inspired to activism by the Montgomery Bus Boycott that started when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat.

Structure. *This paragraph features a chronological structure, beginning with Lewis’s childhood and creating a timeline from there to the beginning of his activism.*

Theme and Background. *This paragraph also introduces the idea of “trouble,” which drove Lewis’s ideas about how to behave. Thus, it provides necessary background information for the points that follow, giving context for Lewis’s catchphrase of “good trouble.”*



This past December, the Library of Congress opened an extensive exhibition, “Rosa Parks: In Her Own Words,” where the congressman spoke. “Rosa Parks inspired us to get in trouble. And I’ve been getting in trouble ever since,” said Lewis. “She inspired us to find a way, to get in the way, to get in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble.” Over the years, he was able to meet and work with Rosa Parks who taught him about the philosophy and discipline of non-violence. “She kept on saying to each one of us, you too can do something,” he said. “And for people if you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, do something. We cannot afford to be quiet.” You can hear Lewis himself discuss the legacy of Parks (https://openstax.org/r/legacyofparks).

Theme, Quotations, Audience. *This paragraph continues the theme of “trouble,” redefining the idea now in Lewis’s terms. The paragraph also continues the theme of power. This paragraph focuses almost entirely on quoted material from Lewis, giving readers a direct connection to his voice. The embedded video allows readers to see and hear Lewis speaking, reinforcing this strategy. Lastly, Hayden refers to an event at the Library of Congress; this event is relevant to readers of the Library of Congress blog.*

> During the exhibition opening, John Lewis told how he was inspired by Rosa Parks to write to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He was given a round trip bus ticket to Montgomery to meet with Dr. King and upon meeting him was nicknamed, “The Boy from Troy.”

Location. *Hayden places Lewis in different locations; the mention of a location-specific nickname personalizes him further. Hayden also places Lewis at pivotal civil rights events.*

Audience. *This final placement of Lewis in the Library of Congress on several occasions is an effective choice to connect with readers of the Library of Congress blog.*

> He risked his life countless times by organizing voter registration drives, sit-ins at lunch counters and was beaten and arrested for challenging the injustice of Jim Crow segregation in the South. While still a young man, John Lewis was already a nationally recognized leader and was named one of the Big Six leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. He was also the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and his papers and interviews from this time are held at the Library of Congress. At the age of 23, he was a keynote speaker at the historic March on Washington in 1963.

Factual Information, Background, and Context. *This paragraph offers a series of facts to back Hayden’s points. It also provides more background and context for Lewis’s later political efforts. This information is common knowledge, repeated in a variety of credible sources. Hayden takes care to note that Lewis’s papers are housed at the Library of Congress, a relevant detail for her audience.*

> On March 7, 1965, John Lewis led more than 600 peaceful protestors across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma to demonstrate the need for voting rights in the state of Alabama. They were greeted by brutal attacks by Alabama State Troopers that became known as “Bloody Sunday.”

Anecdote and Context. *This paragraph offers a brief anecdote about a defining moment of Lewis’s life, thus strengthening the power of the story and communicating the context of Lewis’s early activism.*

> Despite numerous arrests and physical injuries, John Lewis remained a devoted advocate of the philosophy of nonviolence. He was elected to the Atlanta City Council and then the representative of Georgia’s Fifth Congressional District. He stuck to Rosa Parks’ advice to never be quiet and to continue getting into “good trouble.”

Angle and Secondary Research. *This paragraph continues the writer's angle of "good trouble" and offers information from secondary sources.*

> The congressman was a frequent guest at the Library of Congress. His generous spirit touched everyone he met in the halls of the Library—whether it was reading his graphic novel "March" or speaking at public events—his gentle temperament kept you at ease. His graphic novel allowed him to continue to connect with a new generation of young readers in the hope of inspiring them the way Rosa Parks had inspired him.

Angle, Context, and Field Research. *In this paragraph, Hayden implies that part of Lewis's power came from his generosity and gentle temperament. She also shows readers that Lewis understood his work in the context of Parks's achievements and that he hoped to provide the same context for activists who followed him. Instead of providing direct quotes, Hayden offers details that come from field research.*

> In November, John Lewis celebrated the AIDS Memorial Quilt collection arriving at the Library of Congress. His message of peaceful resolve, perseverance and care still rings loud. "In the height of the civil rights movement, we spoke of love," Lewis said. "On one occasion Dr. King said to some of us, just love everybody. Love them who fail to love you, just love. Just love a little hell out of everybody."

Quoted Material and Field Research. *Using Lewis's own words supports both his commitment to nonviolence and Dr. King's playfulness with language. Hayden was likely present at the event when Lewis spoke; videos of and articles about the event corroborate her report.*

> The world mourns. But we also celebrate a great warrior and fighter of injustice. Let us remember his story and listen to the words he passionately shared for more than a half a century. Congressman John Robert Lewis embodies the best in all of us. Let his legacy and spirit live on. I offer my prayers and condolences to his family and to the grateful people of his district in Georgia.

Theme and Angle. *Hayden ends by reconnecting to the themes that run through the profile. In returning to these themes, Hayden confirms and completes the angle of this profile.*

Discussion Questions

1. How does the title both focus the scope and signal the angle of this blog post?
2. How effective is Hayden's angle in this piece? Provide evidence for your assessment.
3. In what ways might Hayden, as librarian of Congress, have developed this profile further or differently?
4. How might you revise this piece to fit into a "profiles in courage" collection targeted at a more general audience?
5. How do the first and last paragraphs work differently from the other paragraphs in the text? How do Hayden's choices for these paragraphs affect the cohesiveness of the profile she has written?

5.5 Writing Process: Focusing on the Angle of Your Subject

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Plan a research calendar.
- Conduct primary research, including field observations and interviews.
- Conduct secondary research, drawing on credible academic and popular sources.
- Compose an email that meets professional standards of the genre.
- Synthesize research findings using elements of the profile genre to create a written profile.
- Give and receive constructive feedback in peer review exercises.
- Revise a draft in response to feedback.

Now that you are familiar with the structure and content of profiles, you are ready to write one of your own. This section will show you how to apply the ideas and genre elements presented earlier in this chapter to develop your profile essay.

Summary of Assignment: A Profile in Courage or Other Admirable Trait

For this assignment, you will develop an essay that profiles the courage—or another admirable aspect—of someone or something associated with your college campus. You will create a profile of a person, group, place, or event that exemplifies the admirable aspect as you define it. For your profile, you will conduct the specific kinds of research done by profile writers: interviews, field research, and secondary research from credible sources.

Once you have compiled your research, you will decide on the focus and angle of your piece, then plan and develop your draft. You will also participate in peer review to receive guidance for any needed revisions. Throughout the process, you will focus on developing an essay that shows readers how your subject exemplifies the admirable trait you have chosen.

Another Lens. Another option for this assignment is a group writing project for your class or smaller groups within the class. Your instructor will decide whether the project will be completed by the whole class or smaller groups. With your peers, you will write a collaborative profile in courage of your class or group as a whole, showing how you all exemplify courage together. All students will contribute anecdotes about courage from their own lives in addition to conducting all other research on which profiles are based. The class or group will then work together to organize, draft, revise, edit, and proofread the collective composition.

Defining the Admirable Trait



Before beginning your profile, choose the admirable trait on which you will focus, and then create your own definition of it. This definition will help you select your subject and focus your research. Consider including the definition in your final product as well.

First, to decide on the trait, follow these steps:

- Set a timer for five minutes. During that time, write or record a comprehensive list of traits you admire in other people. Include a wide range of possibilities, such as “humor,” “generosity,” “patience,” and so on. To generate a robust list, think also of the people you admire, and then pinpoint the attributes you admire about them.
- Consider all of the traits you have listed, and select one to focus on for this project.

Next, use one or more of the following methods to begin defining the aspect of the subject that you admire:

- Think about the admirable trait you have chosen, and write down a few words or phrases that you associate with it.
- Assemble a collage of images that make you think of the admirable trait.
- Write brief notes about moments when you have personally shown the trait you are focusing on—or about times you have seen others exhibit this trait.

Looking at all of these notes, write your personal definition of the admirable trait. Your draft definition will probably evolve as you develop your profile. If so, great! That means you have been thinking more about the idea. Here is a sample definition of an admirable trait: *Kindness is grace in action; it shows itself when people are willing to truly listen to others and to understand the world from another vantage point. People embody kindness when they choose to respond gently rather than angrily or when they help others without complaining.*

Choosing a Subject



Now that you have a working definition of the trait you are using to focus your profile, you can choose your subject. Members of the campus community are usually willing subjects: professors, librarians, resident

assistants, alumni, staff, and coaches, to name a few. You might also consider buildings, public spaces, or public art on campus. In addition, the local community may contain potential subjects—for example, business owners, city administrators, and other local individuals, groups, or events peripherally associated with your school. Also consider discussing your project with an archivist if one is available on campus or in your community; these specialist librarians always have interesting subjects to recommend for research. Follow these steps to choose a subject:

- Jot down notes about intriguing buildings, public spaces, pieces of public art, people, events, and groups on or near campus.
- Do a quick online search—perhaps on the campus website—to see what information is available about several potential subjects that most intrigue you. Remember that this research is simply to narrow your options; you will conduct more careful and thorough research after making your final choice.
- Having gathered preliminary information, think about which potential subject best connects to the definition of the admirable trait you have developed. Also, think about which subject most interests you.

Now weigh the factors you have considered here, and choose the subject you would most like to pursue. If you are having trouble choosing between two subjects, discuss your options with your instructor or with someone in the campus writing center. Once you have chosen a subject, you can plan your research. You will need to schedule interviews, field observations, and time for secondary research before you begin organizing your findings and drafting your paper.



FIGURE 5.6 Carmichael Library, University of Montevallo, April 19, 2007. Professor Art Scott Stephens speaks to research students at the Prints and Poems program. (credit: "Prints and Poems 2007" by carmichaellibrary/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

Preparing to Write: Conducting Research

Profile writers learn as much about their subjects as possible. Be sure to take advantage of all available sources of information, and follow up on new leads wherever you find them. After completing your research, you will be able to refine your angle and draft your piece. As you gather your research, keep your target audience in mind, and look for details about your subject that will interest them. For example, Carla D. Hayden included information about events in which John Lewis participated at the Library of Congress. These details would interest Library of Congress blog readers, the audience for this piece.

You will need to complete three kinds of research for your profile: interviews, field research and secondary research; see The Research Process: Where to Look for Existing Sources and The Research Process: How to Create Sources. These types of research are outlined in Table 5.1 for efficient planning and discussed in detail

below.

Plan Your Research Calendar

Interviews

- If you can speak to your subject, find their contact information.
- If you cannot speak directly to your subject, make a list of professionals with knowledge about your subject, and decide which person to contact first. One or two interviews should provide enough information for this assignment.
- In either case, compose a **professional email** (see below) to respectfully ask for a brief phone call, video conference, or in-person meeting. Send these emails as soon as you have chosen your subject so that you have time to schedule the interview before you begin drafting.

Field Research

- If your subject is a person, send a professional email (see below) to ask when you might observe them doing their job.
- If your subject is not a person, decide when to be in the space to make your **field notes**. Be sure to obtain any needed permission to be in the space.
- In both cases, set aside 30 minutes to an hour to make your field notes, using **thick description** (explained below).

Secondary Research

- Set aside time for several research sessions to find credible information about your subject. Refer to Chapters Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources for research guidance.
- If you have trouble finding the information you need, contact one of your research librarians; they would be happy to help.

TABLE 5.1 Research Planning Calendar

Professional Email Standards



Before you begin to do research, you will need to contact people via email about setting up interviews or gathering other necessary information. To come across as a credible researcher, follow professional email protocol when contacting subjects for interviews or other information. Subjects will take you and your requests far more seriously when you follow the protocols in Table 5.2.

Professional Email	
Take care to use professional email etiquette when contacting potential interview subjects.	
• **Subject Line.** Your subject line, like an essay title, should represent your main point.	
• **Salutation.** Open with a polite greeting; use the person's title or honorific (such as Mr., Ms., Mrs., or Dr.).	Subject: Interview Request Dear Dr. Kamau,
• **Introduction.** Introduce yourself to the person. Your name will appear in the signature line; here, offer information that shows the relationship you have to the request.	I am a student in Dr. Liu's first-year composition class, and I am researching the English Language Institute (ELI) on campus in order to write a profile on tenacity in relation to the ELI.
• **Statement of Purpose.** State your purpose clearly.	I am writing to ask for a brief interview with you to find out more about the ELI.
• **Statement of Request.** Make a polite request.	Would you have 15 minutes within the next week to speak with me by phone or videoconference? I hope to hear from you soon.
• **Next Steps.** Say what you would like to happen next.	Thank you for considering this request.
• **Closing.** Include a polite closing line, use a professional complimentary close, and type your full name.	[Best, Regards, Sincerely, Yours] Sylvia Varela

TABLE 5.2 Email Protocols

Interviews

Talking with your subject—or a professional who knows a great deal about your subject—is often the best place to start your research. Interviews generally fall into the category of **primary research**, or research you collect directly for yourself. Try to interview your profile subject directly if the subject is a person. You also may find interviews with or about your subject that journalists have completed and published, though these would not be primary research. If you are unable to interview your subject directly, try to interview someone who has credible information about your subject; such interviews would be primary research as well. People who know, live, and work with your subject can provide additional, helpful background information. Try to set up a few short interviews with these people to deepen your insights.



The easiest way to conduct an interview is to schedule a brief, informal conversation in a comfortable setting. For a successful interview, have questions prepared and be ready to take notes as you talk. Following in Table 5.3 are sample questions you might ask. To add to this list, think about your preliminary research as well as the definition of the admirable trait you are using for your profile.

Note that you will need to cite any interviews you conduct, both within the text and in the Works Cited list. The Works Cited entry for an interview will read as follows:

[Last name of interviewee], [First name of interviewee]. Personal interview. Day Month (abbreviated) Year.

Interview Planning Worksheet

If you are interviewing your subject:	**If you are interviewing someone about your subject:**
• What have you been doing or thinking about recently? • What about your work/hobby/area of focus is most interesting to you? • What aspect of your work/hobby/area of focus has surprised you? • What do you wish people knew about your work/hobby/area of focus? • How might you define [the admirable trait]? • How do you see the idea of [the admirable trait] relating to your work/hobby/area of focus? • As I was preparing for this interview, I learned <WOL>. Could you tell me more about that?	• How did you learn about this subject? • What is the most fascinating part about this subject for you? • What should people know about this subject that may be overlooked? • How might you define [the admirable trait]? • Do you see the idea of [the admirable trait] relating to this subject? If so, how? • As I was preparing for this interview, I learned <WOL>. Could you tell me more about that?

TABLE 5.3 Interview planning worksheet

Thick Description



Another form of primary research is field observation. If at all possible, observe your subject in their element—watch them (with permission!) during their workday, spend an extended period of time in a related space, or watch available videos of your subject. In all cases, take thorough and detailed notes to create a **thick description**, or a careful record of every sensory detail you can capture—smells, sounds, sights, textures, physical sensations, and perhaps tastes. This thick description can provide meaningful details to illuminate the points in your piece. Meticulously record all sensory information about your subject and their setting, writing in-depth notes about what you see, smell, hear, feel, and taste. Remember to use words that express size, shape, color, texture, and sound. If you are taking notes on a person, describe their clothing, gestures, and physical characteristics. At the same time, take note of the interview setting. If the interview takes place in a neutral space, the setting can provide a backdrop for the profile. If the interview setting is a person's room or apartment, record the details that tell the most about your subject's special interests. If you are not used to

taking these kinds of notes, practice doing so by following the steps in Table 5.4.

Practice Field Notes and Thick Description

Practice creating field notes with a peer. Take about 10 minutes to record as much sensory information as possible.

- What do you hear, close by and farther away?
- What do you feel? Are there specific textures in your surroundings?
- What do you smell? What seems to be the source of the smells?
- Can you taste anything?
- What do you see? Describe the space as well as your peer (without judgment).

When the 10 minutes are up, discuss the experience with your peer. Use these techniques to enliven the points you make in your profile.

TABLE 5.4 Field notes and thick description guide

You will also need to cite your field notes, both within the text and in the Works Cited list. The Works Cited entry for the field notes should be arranged according to this model:

[Your last name], [Your first name]. Field notes. [Name of the department you are affiliated with], [Name of your university], Day Month (abbreviated) Year. Raw data.

Secondary Research and Other Written and Published Information

Profile writers supplement their primary research findings through **secondary research**, or research that others have completed and published. Ensure that any supplemental information you use comes from **credible sources**; these include peer-reviewed journals for academic sources and well-established, highly regarded organizations for public, nonacademic ones. Keep careful records of this research so that you can cite each source appropriately. Use the tools available from the Modern Language Association (https://openstax.org/r/modernlanguage) and in Research Process: Accessing and Recording Information and Annotated Bibliography: Gathering, Evaluating, and Documenting Sources for guidance in researching and managing source material. For more details on citing sources, see MLA Documentation and Format and APA Documentation and Format.

Additionally, ask your subject for their résumé and any writing samples they may have developed. While this type of research may not be available about your subject, as many ordinary people have not published anything, find and read any existing publications by or about your subject. Additionally, you can focus your secondary research on information related to your subject rather than about your subject specifically. For example, Carla D. Hayden, in writing the profile of John Lewis, could have researched Bloody Sunday more generally, or she could have found secondary research about the AIDS quilt to which she refers. To see how authors can use such secondary research, read the sample of student work later in this section as well as the blog post in Spotlight on . . . Profiling a Cultural Artifact.

Synthesizing Research

After you have completed your research, the next step is to **synthesize** it, or put it all together. You can simplify this task by filling in a graphic organizer such as Table 5.5 with your findings and potential angles you might take in your profile.

Synthesizing: Putting Your Research Together

Source	Element	Potential Angle
List your sources by type:	**List the elements you can draw from the sources—quotations, anecdotes, facts, background information, contextual information:**	**List potential angles you could take relating to the information in the other columns:**
Interview(s)		
Field observation location and date		
Sources from secondary research		

TABLE 5.5 Synthesizing table

Quick Launch: Consider the Angle

After completing and synthesizing your research, consider your information carefully to decide on the most compelling angle and supporting information for your audience. While your general angle is the idea of the admirable trait in relation to your subject, aim to develop a personal insight within that focus. Brainstorm different points you can make about the trait that may surprise and engage your audience. Review the table you completed for synthesizing information, and then complete a web diagram such as Figure 5.7 with possible ideas.

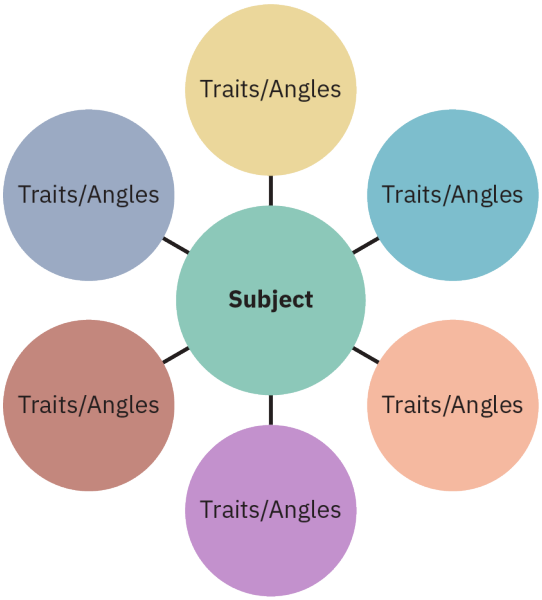


FIGURE 5.7 Planning web (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY NC-SA 4.0 license)

After considering your notes and the completed web, decide which angle will work best. To help you make that decision, think about the information you have gathered so far as well as potential audience appeal. Review the model texts in this chapter to determine how each presents a unique angle on its subject.

Drafting: Finalizing and Supporting Your Angle

Remember that the writing process is **recursive**, meaning you will move back and forth among the steps in the process multiple times rather than progress through each step only once. For example, you may decide to conduct a bit more research while you are drafting or after you have received feedback from peer review. To include this new research, you may need to rearrange the structure of your draft. As you draft, keep focused on your angle at all times. Losing focus and including irrelevant material may weaken your profile and cause readers to lose interest in the subject.

Organization

As discussed in Glance at Genre: Subject, Angle, Background, and Description, profiles can be organized in several ways: chronologically, spatially, or topically. Review the information you inserted in reponse to Table 5.1, along with your admirable trait definition, to decide which organizational strategy would work best for your piece. Then use the following sections to organize the introduction, body, and conclusion of your work. When organizing your draft, think about where to place each piece of information to convey your points most effectively. Rather than using a strict chronological structure throughout your draft, you may find your piece is more effective if you begin with a topical structure and then provide some information chronologically.

Introduction and Thesis

Like introductions in most of the writing you do, the profile introduction establishes some background and context for readers to understand your main point. Think about what readers need to know in order to appreciate your angle, and include that information in the introduction. Some writers prefer to compose their introductions first, whereas others wait until after they have developed a draft of the body. Whichever strategy you use, be sure that the introduction engages readers so that they want to continue reading. Refer to the sample texts in this chapter for models of introductory texts.

Remember, too, that your thesis should appear as the last sentence, or close to the end, of the introduction. For the profile, your thesis would be a sentence or two explaining your angle. For example:

- [Name of subject] showed [the admirable trait] not only in [doing something that shows the trait] but even more so by refusing to [accept or participate in something].
- [Name of subject] plays a unique part in the [history, life, culture] of [place, group] because [reason for angle].

Try one of these models, or a variation of it, as the first draft of your thesis.

Body Paragraphs

Each body paragraph should support the angle you have taken, advancing your thesis, or main point. For suggestions on developing body paragraphs in narrative writing, see Literacy Narrative: Building Bridges, Bridging Gaps and Memoir or Personal Narrative: Learning Lessons from the Personal. For each paragraph, synthesize details—examples, anecdotes, quotations, location, background information, or descriptions of events—from more than one source to support your angle. By including all of these elements, necessary explanations, and a combination of narrative and reporting, you will create the strongest possible profile piece. See the section See the section Spotlight on . . . Profiling a Cultural Artifact to explore examples of how these elements can work in the paragraphs of a blog post profiling a cultural artifact. In each paragraph, consider drawing on the following:

- **Show and Tell.** In balancing between interviews and biographies, profile writers use both narrative and reporting techniques—that is, they both show and tell readers information about the subject. As you read your notes, decide which elements you will use to show readers something about your subject and which elements you will simply report.
- **Quoted Material.** If your subject has said something in a memorable way, present their words directly to

readers. Doing so increases your readers' sense of the subject's voice.

- **Anecdotes.** Very brief scenarios or stories about something your subject has done, or about the subject itself, contribute to readers' understanding. Often, anecdotes reflect field research, showing the subject "in action" or reflecting what others think about the subject. For example, Carla D. Hayden relates anecdotes about John Lewis's actions leading 600 protesters in Selma, Alabama.
- **Background Information.** You may have one or more paragraphs in which you present background information—but only information that is relevant to the profile. If you highlight an individual's success or their contributions to society or a cause, then that person's humble beginnings may be relevant as a contrast. Hayden mentions Lewis's impoverished youth for this reason. Including background information helps readers place the subject in time and within their culture.
- **Location.** Placing your subject in a setting, in either the past or the present, helps readers understand and visualize the subject in a particular context. Be sure to include location in at least one body paragraph.

The sample texts in this chapter provide models for you to use when developing your draft. Use a graphic organizer like Table 5.6 to identify the following profile genre elements in one or more of the model texts featured in this chapter: Annotated Sample Reading, the student sample in this section, or Spotlight on … Profiling a Cultural Artifact. Remember that single paragraphs often synthesize more than one type of information and use more than one strategy.

Strategies Used in This Chapter's Sample Texts	Example of the Strategy That You Found in One or More Sample Texts
Draw the reader in with a brief, compelling description of the subject.	
Offer quoted material.	
Connect to both current and historical contexts.	
Offer background information.	
Use narrative, or storytelling, techniques.	
Use reporting techniques, providing supporting facts and answering questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how.	
Provide a brief anecdote.	
Offer "thick description" from field notes.	
Synthesize information from multiple sources within a paragraph.	

TABLE 5.6 Strategy table

Additionally, tone, a writer's attitude toward their subject, is particularly important in profiles because it conveys authenticity to readers. If you praise a subject but your tone or attitude reflects detachment or lack of interest, readers will notice the discrepancy. Hayden's attitude toward her subject, John Lewis, is one of respect and admiration. If you are writing about someone courageous, then your tone will probably be similar to hers. Remember, though, that you are the narrator, and thus you set the tone. If you insert quotations by people who don't think as you do, make sure that doing so suits your purpose. By including information in the areas covered above and maintaining a consistent and appropriate tone, you will have the basis of a strong and engaging profile.

Conclusion

The conclusion is your opportunity to pull all the points of the essay together. Many writers like to restate the main point they have sustained throughout the essay in the conclusion. Another strong move for the conclusion is to tell readers the **exigency** of the piece—in other words, why the information is important and why they should care about it. After your introduction and body are complete, read through your draft; this process will often give you a sense of what still needs to be said in the conclusion. Refer to the sample texts in this chapter for models of conclusion paragraphs.

Review Your Draft

After you have written a rough first draft, including the introduction and conclusion, read the entire piece three times:

- **Revise.** Read once for the big picture to judge whether you have enough content and whether the content is arranged in a way that makes sense. Revise your work as needed.
- **Edit.** Read a second time for mid-level concerns such as sentence variety, word choice, and consistent use of tenses: Editing Focus: Verb Tense Consistency. Think about whether you need to break some sentences apart or combine some sentences for smoother flow. Follow the chronology of your profile to ensure that the narration stays in the present or past tense and that events are clearly set in time. Read your composition aloud to see whether you overuse some words. Edit your work as needed.
- **Proofread.** After editing, read through a third time with an eye on small details to proofread your work. Change spelling or punctuation as needed to meet the expectations of the rhetorical situation. Check that you have formatted according to the required **style guide**, or standards of writing, such as Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) style.

Revisit these three steps after you have received feedback from the peer review exercise that follows. If you have access to a campus writing center, you may consult with tutors there for support at any stage of your writing process.

Peer Review: Written Responses

After you have developed a solid draft, you are ready to receive feedback from your peers. To prepare for peer review, reread the assignment prompt in Writing Process: Focusing on the Angle of Your Subject and the assessment rubric in Evaluation: Text as Personal Introduction. Then, read your peer's entire profile before giving feedback. In your feedback, strive to be both clear and kind—clearly state the strengths and weaknesses of the text in the most supportive way possible. If you need guidance, use the model sentences in Table 5.7 to structure your feedback.

Peer Review Feedback Model Sentences

- These three aspects of your draft work well: _____, _____, and _____.
- You might consider strengthening your draft _____ by doing these things: _____, _____, and _____.
- As you revise your work, I suggest addressing these three areas: _____, _____, and _____.

TABLE 5.7 Feedback sentences

After reading your peer's profile all the way through, use Table 5.8 to provide thoughtful and detailed feedback.

Date	Review of [peer] by [insert your name]
Profile Genre Element	**Feedback for Your Peer**
Subject	What interests you about your peer's subject? What information could your peer provide to deepen that interest?
Angle	What angle has your peer taken in this draft? What suggestions do you have for refining the angle?
Structure	How has your peer organized the profile? If you would recommend a different structure, what would you recommend, and why?
Paragraph Focus (anecdote, quotes, facts, background, and context)	Has your peer included an array of genre elements in the paragraphs? How could your peer strengthen this aspect of the work?
Tone, Tense, and Description	Is your peer's tone, or written attitude, appropriate for the profile? Why or why not? What suggestions do you have for strengthening or changing the tone? Are verb tenses consistent? If not, how might your peer adjust them? How might your peer show readers aspects of the subject as well as tell about them?
Research	How does your peer's draft show evidence of • interview research? • field research and thick description? • credible secondary research? How can you tell that the secondary research is credible?
Audience	What suggestions do you have for your peer to connect better with the intended audience?
Additional Comments	In what other ways might your peer strengthen the draft?

TABLE 5.8 Peer review guide

Revising: Incorporating Written Responses

After you have received feedback from your peer(s), read it carefully. If you have received feedback from more than one peer, strongly consider addressing comments on which they agree. If you have received comments encouraging you to make revision, editing, and proofreading changes, prioritize revision—making major changes in content, structure, and organization. You may need to add, delete, or rearrange information or the way in which you present the material. You may rearrange information within paragraphs or add topic sentences if needed. Much of the feedback your peers give you based on the form above will probably fit into the category of revision.

Evaluate Yourself

Another way to approach revision is to compare and contrast your work against the rubric for the assignment in Evaluation: Text as Personal Introduction, which guides you through the process of evaluating your work using the standards given in the assignment rubric.

Use the Rubric to Improve Your Draft

- Review the benchmarks for "Skillful" Critical Language Awareness, and then **make notes on your draft in response to the following questions**:
  - Have you carefully proofread your work to check especially for issues of subject-verb consistency?
  - Look at your sentence structures. Do you have sentences of different lengths and complexities in your text? Where might you improve the sentence variety throughout your draft?
  - Do you meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically challenging ways?

- Review the benchmarks for "Skillful" Clarity and Coherence, and then answer the following questions:
  - How might you revise the structure of your draft even more effectively? Should you consider reordering any elements or information?
  - Review your body paragraphs. Do you have a good balance of anecdotes, quotations, location, thick description, and background? If you have overused or omitted any of these elements, revise accordingly, making sure that ideas flow smoothly.
  - Where could you strengthen the use of interview research and field notes? Do you need to gather additional material?
  - Where could your secondary research better support the points you make throughout the draft? Do you need to gather additional secondary research?
  - Do you include elements of narrative, or storytelling, that help readers imagine the spaces or actions you cover? Where could you strengthen the narrative?
  - Do you include elements of reporting, or relaying information to readers? Where does this strategy need strengthening?
  - Have you used appropriate transitions to ensure coherence and connect ideas?
  - Do all your points support your thesis?

- Review the benchmarks for "Skillful" Rhetorical Choices, and then answer the following questions:
  - Think again about your subject choice. You should probably not consider changing your subject at this stage of your project, but do think about this question: Are you presenting the subject in the best light to appeal to your audience?
  - Think again about your angle. Do you need to refine or amend your angle to better connect with your audience?
  - Read your piece out loud to check the tone. Do you need to shift the tone to better reach your audience?
  - Read your piece all the way through, noting places that do not hold your interest as strongly as others. What can you do to make those places more compelling for your reader?

Use your notes from this worksheet to revise, edit, and proofread your work.

TABLE 5.9 Revision guide

Revised Draft Profile Sample

This section provides one example of a revised profile draft written by a first-year college student. As you will read, the admirable quality that Houston Byrd focuses on in this essay is that his subject, a bricks-and-mortar video store, offers "a crucial and important service to its community." You will also see the ways in which Byrd

both "shows and tells" readers about his subject, offering information drawn from each type of required research: interview, field observation, and secondary sources. Byrd has chosen to insert himself and his experiences of his subject fully into this profile. Review Glance at Genre: Subject, Angle, Background, and Description, and then read Byrd's essay to see how well he incorporates the narrative and reporting profile genre elements in his draft.

After Byrd received peer feedback, he decided that his previous draft did not need much revision; he was happy with his structure, and the organization made sense to his readers. One peer suggested that Byrd insert topic sentences in each paragraph, but he ultimately decided not to do so because he thought his paragraphs held together well as written. As you revise your work in response to peer feedback, you may also choose to accept some suggestions while rejecting others.

Byrd paid close attention to peer feedback indicating that his draft had many long, complicated sentences; in the draft below, the originals are noted after the edited sentences. He also acted on feedback about verb tense consistency. Furthermore, Byrd made proofreading changes, such as adding the MLA-required right header and changing the placement of some punctuation marks. As with all writing, this draft could be improved even more with further revision. After reading the essay, discuss with a peer the revision, editing, and proofreading changes you would recommend if you were reading this draft for peer review.

Heaven Is in Toad Frog Alley

> The realm of physical film, if not already dead, is dying. More so than decaying cellulose, the entire medium as an art form is declining. According to *The Guardian*, DVD and Blu-Ray sales were down this past holiday over 30% each (Sweney). Some say that streaming services and on-demand viewing are the culprits. Whatever the case, the answer is not so simple, and the notion is very alarming. The decrease in relevance of physical media is no secret. Mass closures of video rental powerhouses such as Blockbuster Video and Movie Gallery began at the turn of the decade.

The original sentence read: It is no secret that physical media has been on the decline, especially with the mass closures of video rental powerhouses such as Blockbuster Video and Movie Gallery near the beginning of the decade. This example demonstrates a pattern throughout the revised draft in which Byrd broke apart some of his longer sentences and improved their wording. Notice that he changes tense in the last sentence for a reason: the trend is happening now, but video rental stores began closing in the past.

> Though the memory lives on in millennial nostalgia, the world of physical movie sales is not completely irrelevant. Many of the large rental chains have since closed down, but beyond the major highways is an all-but-forgotten world of local video stores. In my home state, one store in particular, called Toad Frog Alley Videos, lives in that world, located in the small town of Cleveland, Alabama. I had the privilege of visiting the store and speaking with its owner, Kandy Little, about her experiences operating in a time when physical media is scarce. Through my visit and conversation, I have come to appreciate the importance of Toad Frog Alley Videos. I truly believe that the store provides a crucial and important service to its community, as well as highlights the nature of physical film and the need for preservation.

In this introductory paragraph, Byrd establishes the stakes for his profile subject, offering both background and context for understanding the video store's importance to its community. He also makes some editing and proofreading changes to strengthen the draft and presents his main point, or thesis, here at the end of the introduction.

> Miles off of I-65, a major Alabama interstate, Toad Frog Alley stands, an almost well-kept secret. The idea of such a welcoming business being hidden saddened me—and still does—but in turn gave the illusion of adventure. Driving through winding county roads to get there, I could feel the world almost disappearing into unexplored territory.

Original: There is a moment, winding through country roads, where the world seems to disappear into unexplored

territory. Byrd corrected the sentence to get rid of a "there is" construction, a dangling modifier, and inconsistent verb tenses.

> Suddenly, there were no street names, no lines on the pavement, and sometimes no pavement at all. At the end of one of these "not much of a road" roads stood Toad Frog Alley Videos.

Byrd changed the underlined verb from is to stands for a more vivid verb. He then changed it to the past tense to maintain consistency with the verbs he uses in relating his visit to the store.

> My first impression stepping inside was awe. Shelves lining the walls reached from floor to ceiling, each packed full of titles, perfectly alphabetized and separated by genre.

Original: Lining the walls were shelves that reached from floor to ceiling. Each shelf was completely full of titles, which were perfectly alphabetized and separated by genre. In this case, Byrd combined, rather than separated, sentences to avoid repetition, substitute more active verbs, and vary sentence structure.

> Between the walls were standalone shelves, organized in the same fashion. I expected a kind of personal collection, but I felt as if I had actually traveled back in time to the major rental stores of old (or rather of ten years ago). To community members, the setup meant another option for Saturday night, but for a film lover like me,

Original: for me, a film lover,

> this place was heaven.

In the body of his draft, Byrd advances his thesis, drawing on information from each of the required types of sources.

> After my initial feelings, I was hit with a second wave, one that can only be described as abysmal. At the front of the store was a counter, being worked by one employee. The register was clunky and archaic, which made

Original: something that makes

> a public library look like the headquarters of Google. In the center of the store was a foldable table that read "FOR SALE." On the table lay DVDs, either damaged or unwanted, strewn about with no rhyme or reason.

Original: The table was filled with DVDs, some damaged and some unwanted, strewn about with no rhyme or reason like the rest of the store.

> Aside from me, there was only one patron, a middle-aged woman, shopping as if she had been there before but did not know what she wanted. I started to become depressed. I was not sure exactly what I had imagined, but I knew this place was nowhere close. I had convinced myself I was on a journey to find the "last great video store," an oasis of film, flowing with patrons renting *Milk* and *American Honey*.

Original: I did not know what exactly I had imagined, but with my passion for physical film and rental stores alike, I had convinced myself I was on a journey to find the "last great video store," an oasis of film, flowing with patrons renting Milk and American Honey. This sentence is another example in which Byrd broke a longer sentence apart and polished the wording.

> Only when

Original: It was not until

> I took a breath and began looking around was I able to see Toad Frog Valley for what the store

Original: it

> was. Every blank wall space featured posters, equally sporting Oscar winners and underground art-house films.

This sentence provides a solid example of revising a "there were" or "there are" sentence construction; the original

read: There were posters on every blank wall space, not just of each year's Oscar winner, but underground art-house films as well.

> The endcaps of each standalone shelf were filled with top picks, recent releases, or staff choices.

Here, Byrd revises for varied word choice; the original read: top picks, recent releases, or staff picks.

> A television in the corner softly played a film of the employee's choice. Toad Frog Alley

Original: This

> may not have been the perfect haven for cinephiles and collectors that I had hoped, but it showed an undeniable element of care. The store was something of a museum, one that lets people borrow the items they love. I left with a smile on my face and a movie in my hand.

> I want to believe that everyone has experienced a similar video store moment. If that were true, though, why did so many close in the first place?

Original: I want to believe that if everyone could experience a moment of awe in a video store, then the demand would resurface, but if that were true, why did so many close in the first place?

> Why also are stores like Toad Frog Alley still operating? Back in 2010, when rental chains were beginning to close doors indefinitely, many entertainment news sites noticed a trend. Among them was *The Hollywood Reporter*, which noted that over 35% of independent video stores had tanning beds. They reported the trend, saying, "[Independents] use every niche they can think of to survive and be respected in their communities" (Bond). While tanning beds may look like the supplemental savior for many locally owned stores, this notion

Here, Byrd defines the word this by inserting the word notion.

> is not necessarily the case, says Kandy Little. Kandy is the owner of Toad Frog Valley Video Store and has been since 1995.

The tense shifts to present when Kandy Little is discussed but returns to the past when Byrd relates her background.

> Ironically, Kandy bought a tanning salon in hopes of opening a video store. At the time, there was a much higher demand for rentals in almost every community, and Toad Frog Alley was no exception. Though she admits tanning has increased over the years (with rentals, of course, declining), to Kandy, tanning was not the savior. "[Toad Frog Alley Videos] is still open because I work it myself most of the time," she says. "No one else will take care of your business as well as you do." With an inventory of over 5,000 films, Kandy believes that physical media is important for her community. Local business is important for creating jobs and city revenue, and Kandy provides both through her love of movies.

> Even though Toad Frog Alley is doing well, the scarcity of rental stores is something to consider. In the digital age, media is accessible to practically everyone. Streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu have made media available for viewers without requiring them to leave their homes. For physical rentals,

Original: As far as physical rentals go,

> nationwide kiosks called Redbox are set up in major grocery stores and pharmacies. In largely populated areas, these services have contributed to the downfall of video stores. In small towns across the country, however, many stores like Toad Frog Alley are still alive.

Original: In largely populated areas, these services have contributed to the downfall of video stores, but in rural America, many stores like Toad Frog Alley are still alive. This revision heightens the contrast between populated areas and small towns.

> In 2018, the *Harvard Political Review* looked into why rural areas are struggling socioeconomically. The research concluded that the problem comes from the inability to keep the attention of a younger generation. The idea of the "American Dream" is largely accompanied by main streets, small towns, and mom-and-pop shops. Unfortunately, countryside communities are suffering, despite featuring many of these elements.

Original: Though the idea of the "American Dream" is largely accompanied by main streets, small towns, and mom-and-pop shops, rural communities have seen drastic population decreases even while holding many of these. The revision breaks the original sentence apart and makes stronger, clearer word choices.

> Farming, a large majority of pastoral industry, has become increasingly mechanized with technological advancement. On top of that, failing education and inadequate healthcare in underfunded areas have contributed to population loss as well. Many young people are unwilling to live in rural America,

Original: in these rural areas,

> and thus jobs

Deleted: , one of the largest incentives in most communities,

> have become scarce. The *Review* states that "ultimately, the only way citizens will be attracted to small towns is if the quality of life is attractive and sustainable… [but] the growing demand of the U.S. economy will continue drawing people toward… [a] quality of life often deemed synonymous with urban living" (Elkadi). This cycle leaves many rural settings unappealing, not only to residents but also to businesses like Internet providers. In many cases, rural areas are deemed unprofitable for modern services. Descriptions so negative contribute to the lack of digital services available to communities. Businesses

Original: Stores

> such as Toad Frog Alley thus provide a necessary service for a town that may have little access to digital content.

> All of these factors raise

Original: This raises

> a question: Is physical media doomed to a state of limbo in rural communities? Some believe film was meant to die, and should. Following the controversial shutdown of the "classic films" streaming service FilmStruck, Professor Katherine Groo shared a perspective in *The Washington Post*: "The collapse of FilmStruck might go some way toward reminding us of the fundamental *virtuality* [sic] of film and film spectatorship" (Groo). Groo goes so far as to ask "whether [FilmStruck's catalog listings] are the works we need to rescreen or urge others to discover." Groo does not lament the death of FilmStruck as film "erosion" or "erasure."

In the original, the previous sentence occurred later in the paragraph; Byrd moved it here in the revision to present the information in a way that made more sense for readers.

> She mentions different film archives, like the Library of Congress and Kanopy, doing open-access experimentation, but overlooks an important factor. Groo asserts that only the privileged are able to access a paid service, but she neglects rural areas and others that cannot access archives, paid or free.

Deleted: For people like Kandy Little,

> Toad Frog Alley remains important for the enjoyment and education of people in the town that film provides. As technology keeps progressing, archaic forms of media consumption are necessary for areas that do not yet have access to the new technologies. Kandy predicts this, and more, when asked about the digital age and the coexistence of physical and online media:

Original: Kandy predicts this, and more, when I asked her how she felt about the digital age, and the coexistence of physical and online media:

> "Studios are already giving exclusive rights to different cable companies. Once the avenues are spread out, customers will have to pay more for accessing media. The video store is here offering better prices and more media in one place." To her, the transition back into physical media is only a matter of time.

> As a proponent of physical media, I am thankful that Kandy and Toad Frog Alley exist. Though nothing is wrong with enjoying the luxuries of streaming, and digital film preservation is admirable, the market is becoming saturated. Saturated markets lead to higher prices and necessitate multiple subscriptions just to access desired films.

Original: Though it is not wrong to enjoy the luxuries of streaming, and digital film preservation is admirable, the market is becoming saturated, which leads to higher prices and necessitates multiple subscriptions just to access desired films.

> Though people in rural communities are still able to rent videos, they would be left behind in the case of film becoming solely digital. Video stores provide important business and atmosphere to communities. Even though digitizing film is more affordable and accessible to many people, it may not be what is best for both films and consumers.

In the original, these sentences were combined with , and.

> For those like me, with a passion for film, the only reciprocity for the love that video stores instill is to show love in the form of support. As Kandy eloquently said at the end of our interview, "I really don't have a favorite film. I just love films."

In referring a past event while he narrates in the present tense, Byrd uses the past tense.

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5.6 Editing Focus: Verb Tense Consistency

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply various editing strategies to a draft in progress.
- Implement consistent use of verbs in a draft in progress.

When you edit, you make changes at the sentence level: phrasing, grammar, mechanics, and wording. Read your paper aloud to check for needed editing. Alternately, you could have your device read the paper to you if it has that feature. As you read or listen, if you notice that something does not sound quite right, your draft probably needs editing at that point. Additionally, if your electronic draft shows blue underlining, check whether you should accept the changes suggested by your software. Once you have thoroughly reviewed each sentence in your draft, read aloud or listen to the entire piece again to see how it flows, making any additional

needed changes as you go along.

English Varieties and Verbs

This section focuses on English verb tense consistency when editing. Every English speaker converses in one or more forms of the language. In the past, people have referred to these forms as *dialects*. Today, linguists more commonly call them *English varieties*. Every **English variety** uses verbs, as do most languages. Verbs are the words that express the action in a sentence. Their most distinguishing feature is that they change according to tense—that is, they take on different forms to express action that happened in the past, happens in the present, or will happen in the future.

As you edit your profile, you will need to match the English variety you use to the expectations of your audience. If your instructor is your only reader, you will probably need to use an English variety appropriate for an academic setting. If the instructor has asked you to write a profile to appeal to another audience, think about how the English variety you choose might connect better with that audience.

In every English variety, the form of the verb changes to indicate whether something is happening currently or has happened already. These changes that indicate time differences are called **verb tenses**. If an action or description occurs now or occurs regularly, in the present time, writers use the **present tense**. Conversely, if the action occurred in the past and no longer occurs, writers use the **past tense**.

Present tense: She walks to class.
Past tense: She walked to class yesterday.

In simple sentences such as these, choosing a verb tense is fairly straightforward. The author decides when to place the event in time and chooses the corresponding verb form. Although people easily use different verb tenses every day, getting them right in writing can be tricky at times. Writers may accidentally change from past to present tense within a text—or even within the same sentence—for no particular reason. Consider these examples:

Sentence 1: I lost a glove on my walk, but I find it later.
Sentence 2: I lost a glove on my walk, but I found it later.

In Sentence 1, the verb *lost* places the action in the past; the present-tense verb *find* is not consistent with that pattern. The revision in Sentence 2 places all of the action in the same time frame: the past. Because changing the tense for no reason can confuse the audience, be sure to use the same verb tense throughout, whether events happen in the past or they happen in the present.

However, you *do* need to change tenses to indicate a difference in time, and such differences occur often. This situation is why choosing verb tenses in writing can sometimes pose challenges for writers. If you are using the present tense in writing but you want to tell about something that happened in the past, you need to change tenses to make that time difference clear. Look at these sentences:

Sentence 1: The artist **uses** bright colors in her paintings. She **says** that when she **is** a child, these colors **attract** her.
Sentence 2: The artist **uses** bright colors in her paintings. She **says** that when she **was** a child, these colors **attracted** her.

The writer is discussing the artist in the present tense, and the artist is speaking in the present tense. However, she is telling about her childhood, which took place in the past. Therefore, she and the writer use both past and present tense to make the time distinction clear. To put all events in the present tense would not make sense in such cases. Look at the verb tense consistency revisions Houston Byrd made to his essay in Focusing on the Angle of Your Subject. When he tells about his trip to the store, describes it, and refers to his interview with the owner, he generally uses—or has revised to use—the past tense, whereas most of the essay is written in the present tense.

Proofreading

Another type of editing is proofreading. When you proofread, you check for small details, such as typing mistakes, that need fixing. If your instructor has asked you to follow a given style guide, such as MLA or APA, make sure your draft is formatted according to those guidelines. If any words are underlined in red on your electronic document (indicating a misspelling), address those issues as you complete your draft. Lastly, read each sentence individually, starting at the bottom of the draft, to make sure your spelling and punctuation meet the requirements for the genre and audience.

You may feel that you are not yet a strong enough writer to edit or proofread on your own. If so, take advantage of your instructor's office hours or your college's writing center for support in developing your work.

Practice with Verb Tense Consistency

Depending on your writing context, you may be asked to write mainly in either the past or the present tense. For example, MLA style asks writers to refer to textual materials in the present tense, even though they have already been written.

With a peer partner, practice choosing the most effective verb forms in the following sentences. Complete the exercise twice—once for a text written mainly in the present tense, and once again for a text written mainly in past tense. Because events happen at different times, you may have a combination of tenses.

1. Carla D. Hayden (writes, wrote) _____ about John Lewis's courageous stance against injustice when he (led, leads) the Selma protests.
2. People throughout the country (admire, admired) _____ John Lewis and (mourn, mourned) _____ his death.
3. In 1995, Hayden (receives, received) _____ the Librarian of the Year Award, and in 2016, she (is, was) _____ listed by *Fortune* magazine as one of the world's 50 greatest leaders.

To check your draft for verb tense issues, read your profile aloud to a peer partner. If you notice that some verbs are in the past tense and some are in the present, make them all one consistent tense throughout the text—*unless* they indicate a change in time, which they often do. Making your verb tenses consistent will help clarify your ideas for readers.

5.7 Evaluation: Text as Personal Introduction

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Apply profile genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics to a draft in progress.
- Evaluate your text according to a given standard.

One way to think about a profile is this: you are personally introducing your subject to your readers. When making introductions in everyday life, people generally highlight preferences that will help the people being introduced relate more easily to one another. For example, you might mention a specific shared video game interest when introducing gamers, or you could mention an appreciation for a particular musician shared by the people being introduced. In a similar way, include information in your profile that will connect your subject to your audience.

In addition to making a personal introduction, you are striving to meet the standards of the profile genre. The following rubric will help you assess your use of interviews, field research, and secondary research. It will also help you evaluate how well you have organized, written, and revised the draft. Lastly, the rubric will help you determine whether your draft meets the criteria for the profile genre, including subject, angle, and tone. Aim to revise your draft to meet the "Skillful" criteria for each area of focus.

Rubric

Score	Critical Language Awareness	Clarity and Coherence	Rhetorical Choices
5 **Skillful**	The text always adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—verb tense consistency, as discussed in Section 5.6—and employs a variety of sentence structures. The text also shows ample evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	The text presents robust interview research, carefully noted field research, and both credible and applicable secondary research. The profile reflects a thoughtful balance of narrative and reporting techniques through which the subject is clearly depicted. Effective and appropriate transitions help create a unified whole. Anecdotes, quotations, location, thick detail, and background flow together seamlessly and create a full and engaging profile.	The subject, angle, tone, and content have been carefully chosen and remain consistent throughout. Mastery of these elements powerfully holds the interest of the target audience throughout the piece.
4 **Accomplished**	The text usually adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—verb tense consistency, as discussed in Section 5.6—and employs a variety of sentence structures. The text also shows some evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	The text presents strong interview and field research and both credible and applicable secondary research. The profile usually reflects a thoughtful balance of narrative and reporting techniques through which the subject is depicted. Generally effective and appropriate transitions help create a unified whole. Some anecdotes, quotations, location, thick detail, and background flow together and create a generally engaging profile.	The subject, angle, tone, and content have been carefully chosen but may not always be consistent. Control of these elements generally holds the interest of the target audience throughout the piece.
3 **Capable**	The text generally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—verb tense consistency, as discussed in Section 5.6—and employs some variety in sentence structures. The text also shows limited evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	The text presents fairly thorough interview research, competent field research, and reasonably credible and applicable secondary research. The profile may reflect a balance of narrative and reporting techniques through which the subject is depicted, but it may tend toward too much reporting. Some effective and appropriate transitions connect ideas, but more are needed for a unified whole. Some anecdotes, quotations, location, thick detail, and background create an inconsistently engaging profile.	The subject, angle, tone, and content have been inconsistently chosen. The writer occasionally loses focus in one or more of these areas. Some control of these elements holds the interest of the target audience in parts of the piece.

TABLE 5.10

Score	Critical Language Awareness	Clarity and Coherence	Rhetorical Choices
2 **Developing**	The text occasionally adheres to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—verb tense consistency, as discussed in Section 5.6—and employs little variety in sentence structures. The text also shows emerging evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	The information is frequently disorganized and reflects a minimal, if any, overall plan. Research is haphazard and usually undocumented. The writer shows little or no balance between narrative and reporting techniques and included only a few of the following: anecdotes, quotations, location, thick detail, and background. Some transitions may create unity in parts, but in general, the paper lacks effective and appropriate transitions. The uneven text ultimately creates a minimally clear profile.	The subject, angle, tone, and content do not appear well chosen. The writer frequently loses focus in one or more of these areas. The interest of the target audience would be lost in many parts of the piece.
1 **Beginning**	The text does not adhere to the "Editing Focus" of this chapter—verb tense consistency, as discussed in Section 5.6—and employs little to no variety in sentence structures. The text also shows little to no evidence of the writer's intent to consciously meet or challenge conventional expectations in rhetorically effective ways.	The information is consistently disorganized and reflects minimal, if any, overall planning. Research, if any, is haphazard and usually undocumented. The writer shows little or no balance between narrative and reporting techniques and has included only one or two of the following: anecdotes, quotations, location, thick detail, and background. The paper lacks effective and appropriate transitions and is, therefore, incoherent. The uneven text ultimately creates an unclear and unengaging profile. .	The subject, angle, tone, and content appear poorly chosen if they are present at all. The draft lacks focus and consequently holds little or no audience interest.

TABLE 5.10

5.8 Spotlight on … Profiling a Cultural Artifact

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Read in the profile genre to understand how conventions are shaped by purpose, language, culture, and expectation.
- Read one of a diverse range of texts, attending to relationships among ideas, patterns of organization, and interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements.
- Analyze a composition in relation to a specific historical and cultural context.

If you would like to profile a subject other than a person, you may be unsure of how to make such a focus work. This section features a profile of a cultural artifact and discusses how the elements of profile writing work within the piece.



First, here is some background to help you better understand the blog post: On December 7, 1941, Japanese

fighter planes attacked the United States military base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, damaging or destroying more than a dozen ships and hundreds of airplanes. In direct response to this bombing and to fears that Americans of Japanese descent might spy on U.S. military installations, all Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans living on America's West Coast—about 120,000 men, women, and children in all—were detained in internment camps for the remainder of the war.

As you will read in the profile, people living in the camps created newspapers for fellow detainees; the subject of this profile is the newspapers themselves. Author Mark Hartsell published his profile of the newspapers, Journalism, behind Barbed Wire (https://openstax.org/r/barbedwire) , on the Library of Congress blog on May 5, 2017. Look at these notes to find out how profile genre elements can work when the writer focuses on a cultural artifact such as these newspapers.



FIGURE 5.8 Roy Takeno, editor of the Manzanar Free Press, reads the newspaper at the internment camp in Manzanar, California, 1943. (credit: Ansel Adams/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

As you find when you click on the link above to visit the blog post, Hartsell uses images to show his subject to readers. Providing images can be a particularly strong choice for profiles of places or cultural artifacts.

> For these journalists, the assignment was like no other: Create newspapers to tell the story of their own families being forced from their homes, to chronicle the hardships and heartaches of life behind barbed wire for Japanese-Americans held in World War II internment camps. "These are not normal times nor is this an ordinary community," the editors of the *Heart Mountain Sentinel* wrote in their first issue. "There is confusion, doubt and fear mingled together with hope and courage as this community goes about the task of rebuilding many dear things that were crumbled as if by a giant hand." Today, the Library of Congress places online a rare collection of newspapers that, like the *Sentinel*, were produced by Japanese-Americans interned at U.S. government camps during the war. The collection includes more than 4,600 English- and Japanese-language issues published in 13 camps and later microfilmed by the Library. "What we have the power to do is bring these more to the public," said Malea Walker, a librarian in the Serial and Government Publications Division who contributed to the project. "I think that's important, to bring it into the public eye to see, especially on the 75th anniversary.... Seeing the people in the Japanese internment camps as people is an important story."

Although the blog places almost every sentence in its own "paragraph" for easier online readability, the first four sections function as a cohesive opening paragraph as presented here. Notice how the author supports his points with information synthesized from a variety of sources: quoted material from both the newspapers and one of the project's curators, background, historical context, and other factual information.

> Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order that allowed the forcible removal of nearly 120,000 U.S. citizens and residents of Japanese descent from their homes to government-run assembly and relocation camps across the West—desolate places such as Manzanar in the shadow of the Sierras, Poston in the Arizona desert, Granada on the eastern Colorado plains. There, housed in temporary barracks and surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers, the residents built wartime communities, organizing governing bodies, farms, schools, libraries. They founded newspapers, too—publications that relayed official announcements, editorialized about important issues, reported camp news, followed the exploits of Japanese-Americans in the U.S. military and recorded the daily activities of residents for whom, even in confinement, life still went on. In the camps, residents lived and died, worked and played, got married and had children. One couple got married at the Tanforan assembly center in California, then shipped out to the Topaz camp in Utah the next day. Their first home as a married couple, the *Topaz Times* noted, was a barracks behind barbed wire in the western Utah desert.

This section offers additional background information and information from secondary research, woven with specific details to help readers imagine the backdrop for the newspaper writing. Hartsell offers a brief overview of typical content found in these newspapers; this description indicates that he has reviewed primary documents. The section concludes with a brief anecdote to show the human face of the original camp newspaper audience.

> The internees created their publications from scratch, right down to the names. The Tule Lake camp dubbed its paper the *Tulean Dispatch*—a compromise between *The Tulean* and *The Dusty Dispatch*, two entries in its name-the-newspaper contest. (The winners got a box of chocolates.) Most of the newspapers were simply mimeographed or sometimes handwritten, but a few were formatted and printed like big-city dailies. The *Sentinel* was printed by the town newspaper in nearby Cody, Wyoming, and eventually grew a circulation of 6,000.

After covering background and context, Hartsell turns to focus on his profile subject. He discusses specific details of naming and producing the newspapers; he also includes information about the writers and their decisions regarding newspaper content.

> Many of the internees who edited and wrote for the camp newspapers had worked as journalists before the war. They knew this job wouldn't be easy, requiring a delicate balance of covering news, keeping spirits up and getting along with the administration. The papers, though not explicitly censored, sometimes hesitated to cover controversial issues, such as strikes at Heart Mountain or Poston. Instead, many adopted editorial policies that would serve as "a strong constructive force in the community," as a *Poston Chronicle* journalist later noted in an oral history. They mostly cooperated with the administration, stopped rumors and played up stories that would strengthen morale. Demonstrating loyalty to the U.S. was a frequent theme. The *Sentinel* mailed a copy of its first issue to Roosevelt in the hope, the editors wrote, that he would "find in its pages the loyalty and progress here at Heart Mountain." A *Topaz Times* editorial objected to segregated Army units but nevertheless urged Japanese-American citizens to serve "to prove that the great majority of the group they represent are loyal." "Our paper was always coming out with editorials supporting loyalty toward this country," the *Poston* journalist said. "This rubbed some... the wrong way and every once in a while a delegation would come around to protest."

People reading these newspapers in current times may be surprised that such newspapers often featured content with a focus on loyalty to the United States. While Hartsell does not dig deeply into alternative views held by internees, he does indicate that some disagreed with the emphasis on such content. Readers are often interested in learning surprising or counterintuitive information about a profile subject.

> ... (section removed)

> As the war neared its end in 1945, the camps prepared for closure. Residents departed, populations shrank, schools shuttered, community organizations dissolved, and newspapers signed off with "–30–," used by journalists to mark a story's end. That Oct. 23, the *Poston Chronicle* published its final issue, reflecting on the history it had both recorded and made. "For many weeks, the story of Poston has unfolded in the pages of the Chronicle," the editors wrote. "It is the story of people who have made the best of a tragic situation; the story of their frustrations, their anxieties, their heartaches—and their pleasures, for the story has its lighter moments. Now Poston is finished; the story is ended. And we should be glad that this is so, for the story has a happy ending. The time of anxiety and of waiting is over. Life begins again."

Hartsell closes with a chronological structure, concluding his piece with the closing of the internment camps and their newspapers. He allows the voices of the editors to have the last word.

Publishing Your Profile

Because your individual profile is about someone or something related to campus, once you have developed your final draft, you may want to share your work with others at your school. Here are some suggestions:

Group Publication

One option for sharing your work is to create a class book that includes the profiles each student has written. As an alternative, each class member might contribute their own autobiographical profile in which they highlight a moment when they witnessed or enacted an admirable trait. When the individual pieces are complete, class members will work in teams to collect, compile, introduce, and produce the essay collection. The instructor or one of the class teams might compose an afterword to explain the project. The final project could be housed in the campus archives or linked on the campus website.

Campus Newspaper

Another option is to work either individually or in a small group to build on your profile about someone or something of interest to other students, faculty, or staff at your school. Check with the editor of your campus newspaper to learn whether they have suggestions for a revised angle, if needed, and whether they would be interested in publishing your completed profile.

5.9 Portfolio: Subject as a Reflection of Self

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Reflect on the development of composing processes.
- Reflect on how those processes affect your final product.

As you develop a writing portfolio over the course of the semester, you will also reflect on your experience and writing process for each project. This section guides you in reflecting on your experience as you developed your profile.

Reflective Task



Take a few moments to jot down notes—by hand or electronically—in response to the following questions:

- What have you learned about yourself in researching and drafting this profile?
- What did you learn in your research that surprised you?
- What challenges did you face in gathering your primary research from interviews and field observations?
- What challenges did you face in gathering your secondary research from academic and other credible sources?
- Do you now think differently about the trait you focused on in your profile? If so, how has your

understanding changed? If your thinking about that trait has not changed, how was it reinforced in this project?
- If you were to begin this project again, how would you approach it differently?
- With whom would you like to share your finished project? Why?
- What other audiences might be interested in this piece?

After reflecting on your writing process and experience, organize your thoughts thematically. For example, if some parts of the process were more challenging for you and other parts were less so, you could organize your reflection around those two ideas. Or you could separate your reflection into sections according to the parts of the writing process that were familiar and the parts that were new to you in this project.

Once you have organized your notes into sections focusing on coherent themes, draft a professional email to your instructor to report the insights you have gained from your reflection. Find out from your instructor whether you should actually send the reflection via email or if you should attach it to your final profile document instead.

Further Reading

With their signature blend of narrative and reporting, profiles can be found in all sorts of media, including blogs, magazines, and podcasts. Once you start looking for profiles, you will find them everywhere. Here are several places to find profile writing:

- *Esquire (https://openstax.org/r/esquire)*. This magazine routinely runs profile features.
- *Humans of New York (https://openstax.org/r/humansofnewyork)*. Originally a photography project, this blog presents photographs of, interviews with, and short stories about people who live in New York. Although the pieces are not all profiles, many of them meet the criteria for this genre.
- *The New Yorker (https://openstax.org/r/thenewyorker)*. This magazine still runs profiles in each issue.
- *This American Life (https://openstax.org/r/thisamericanlife)*. This weekly public radio program focuses on storytelling about compelling people.

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