

Student Profile Photojournalism Project (For Student Use)

Art of the Story - Mrs. Gazin and Mrs. Digges

For the next project, you will be writing an interview profile of a peer who has been selected for you. Before we commence our work, you will read from a selection of profiles written by journalists and authors. The profiles describe chefs, politicians, artists, and musicians and model how to integrate quotations, provide sensory detail, and create a dominant impression. In addition, you will get some ideas about how to structure your work from these writing professionals.

In order to have a complete understanding of your subject, you will conduct several interviews, take photos, and do a site visit. You will also interview a close friend of the subject, as well as a family member.

For the site visit you will travel to your peer's house to receive a more complex understanding of him. It is important to see something in their home, how they've chosen to decorate their room, what the family dynamic is like, etc. It gives the interviewer a more full picture of their subject. This should be an enjoyable process, one where you are able to build a strong relationship with a member of our class.

During this process, we will discuss interview techniques, listen to and watch successful interviewers, discuss and analyze photos and gain tips and suggestions for successful photography.

Your finished product will be a photojournalistic piece on the peer we have selected for you. By the end of this process, our goals for the students are as follows:

1. Plan and develop questions to elicit stories and meaningful dialogue.
2. Learn to be a good listener and engage in organic conversation.
3. Determine "the angle" to create a meaningful character portrait that ties the interview together.
4. Choose substantive quotes to create a meaningful portrait.
5. Make deliberate and strong photographic choices to gain a strong sense of the individual.
6. Match the mood of the writing and photography to obtain a full 360 degree portrait.

Process

I. Profile Reading

- Choose one profile from the OnCampus Topics tab on our class page and print them out.
- Read one Profile, looking up any unknown words, and taking notes in the margins. Summarize the content of these profiles. Do this in one complete paragraph.
- Choose a quotation which resonated with you. Why did this particular quotation resonate with you?

Homework:

- Determine the “angle” of the piece you read. This angle is the basic idea the author seeks to convey. You can state this angle in one detailed sentence.

III. Questions Prep

Once you are given the peer you are paired with, you will create substantive questions for your subject, questions that will elicit stories, insight, and details. You can start with questions that derive from what you already know (or think you know) about that person and then branch out to questions that elicit new information.

1. Interview your subject and record these responses accurately while also using an audio recorder device (your iphone) to help you be more engaged and present in the interview.
2. Create another set of questions for a family member about your subject.
3. Create a third set of questions for a close friend of the subject.

IV. Interviews and Site Visit

While waiting for this due date to approach, we will watch and listen to talented interviewers (i.e. Terry Gross) as well as participate in a photography lesson and photo analysis

- Conduct your interviews:
 - a. Parent / Grandparent / Guardian Interview: Must be conducted in the person's home during the site visit
 - b. Student Interview: Must be conducted in the person's home during the site visit
 - c. Peer Interview: Conducted in any location

- **YOU MUST ASK PERMISSION TO RECORD A PERSON'S VOICE PRIOR TO RECORDING!** An audio recording can also help tell the story in an emotional way. As you listen to the audio, did you catch things you didn't catch in person? Was there a hesitation or pause that gave away some emotion? Listen to the background sounds in their house. What might those say about their life? Figure out a way to pull in the setting.

- Don't just ask the questions you planned and had written down but have an organic conversation with your interviewee. Do their responses elicit more questions? Do you need clarification on a point?

- Silence is okay. Let them think about their answers. Don't be so quick to move on. Let them dig deep.

- Ask "Why" questions. You are like an investigator trying to look for clues, listening to stories, getting to a deeper level to understand more about the individual and their experiences.

- Take note of tone, heavy pauses and body language. These things can be clues to understand more of what they're NOT saying and can be great things to relay in the writing process to add further dimension to your piece.

- Be curious!

V. Photos:

Take a series of photos of your subject. Seek to capture the essence of their personality.

- Be deliberate in your photo choices - set the stage and direct your subject using the interview as inspiration for what shots make the most sense
- Consider the background of each image and why you've selected it.
- Zoom in to fill the frame if your angle is an introspective one - Otherwise consider the setting and have it match up with the person's interests, etc.
- Take more photos than you think are necessary

VI. Quotations and "Angle"

Once you have conducted all of your interviews, create a list of quotations from each interview in which you believe define your subject matter.

- Now, create a well crafted sentence defining the angle you intend to adopt for your profile. Remember the "angle" is the basic idea you that you the author, seek to convey.

VII. Photo Selection

- Select several photos from the site visit that fit the angle you've chosen to write about.
- Filter those photos as necessary to reflect the appropriate mood.

VIII. Outline

- Please turn in a topic sentence outline.

IX. Rough Draft

- You will turn in your rough draft and have an individual conference with your teachers

X. Final Draft

Turn in your final edited draft with accompanying photo.

Portrait Photography

When you're on your site visit, you will be nervous and that's OK! Own your discomfort and grow from it. Here are some tips to help you with taking your photos:

SMARTPHONES:

- A smartphone takes excellent photos!
- If you have a newer Smartphone you can use Portrait mode which changes the depth of field to make the foreground crisp and the background blurry. If you don't have Portrait mode, you'd have to get really close up to the subject for the phone to recognize that it should blur the background.
- Here are some great photography apps that can enhance your photos:
 - A. Snapseed
 - B. VSCO
 - C. Afterlight - feels a lot like Photoshop if you're used to using that
 - D. Instagram filters to effect the mood

SETTING

- Consider what you've learned from your interview when setting up your photo shoot. Where should he be placed? Room? Near the outside basketball hoop? On the couch in his favorite chair?
- Based on the subject's interests, feelings, thoughts, hobbies, home or family dynamic, set up the background of your shots in an intentional way.
- Background should either be neutral (natural background like trees, leaves, etc.) or a simple wall with texture (brick, wood, wall paper, or a wall of books) Please no plain white wall shots. Again, consider the subject when choosing the background
- Natural light ONLY Please have your subject either outside or near a window with good light. Make sure your subject's face is directed toward the light. No backlight!
- Dark photos are an absolute NO!
- A cloudy day is better than a super sunny day

POSES

- Instead of having your subject smiling and look directly at the camera, consider having a conversation while taking photos so it's more candid and less staged.
- Have some good jokes prepared to get your subject laughing. Have a slew of jokes prepared ahead of time to make both you and the subject more comfortable. You'll also get natural smiles.
- Take photos when your subject averts his eyes from you for a second to get a more natural shot. Have their gaze look out a window or look at what they have in their hand, etc.
- Have a conversation while posing your subject.

TAKING THE SHOT

- Consider using a landscape or portrait format. What are you trying to show and make that determination based on the setting.
- Don't center the subject in your frame. Use the rule of 3rds to place the subject slightly off center (right or left)
- Take your time setting up the shot. Remove anything extra from view that doesn't help tell the story. Rearrange furniture. Place furniture near the window. Add something (like a prop) to help tell the story. TAKE YOUR TIME and don't let your nervousness about the process take away from the quality of each shot
- SLOW DOWN - blurry shots are bad shots - When we are nervous, we speed up, even in our movements and if we're not completely still when taking a photos, it's blurry and unusable.
- Take LOTS of pictures! Like 50! Or MORE!