



Digital Media Virtual Learning

Grades 9-12/Writing a Good Feature Story

April 20, 2020



9-12/Digital and Advanced Digital Media
Lesson: April 20, 2020

Objective/Learning Target:
Students Will Be Able to Identify and Write Good Features
Story

Let's Get Started:

Think about some people around you that might make a good feature profile.

We are going to be exploring profile writing today.

Profile Writing is another form of feature writing.

How to Write a Good Profile?

A profile is a type of feature story and usually focuses on a person and what's important or interesting about that person at the moment. For example, the journalist Gay Talese did a famous profile of Frank Sinatra, called "[Frank Sinatra Has a Cold](#)" and spoke to the singer's entourage since Sinatra would not grant an interview.

Although profiles usually focus on people, like celebrities, journalists also can profile entities like sports teams or companies. It's also not necessary for subjects of profiles to be public figures. They can be anyone who might make an interesting story that readers can relate to. Profiles are popular in magazines, but you also will see profiles in newspapers and other publications.

The focus of profiles should be:

- News angles or aspects of the subject's personal or professional life
- Explanations for why the subject is newsworthy, relevant, and interesting
- Based on interviews with the subject
- Include major elements of hard news stories, but also provide readers with details that capture the essence of the subject being profiled

How to Write a Good Profile?

Tips for Writing Compelling Profiles

Writing a compelling profile involves a few different components. Research and preparation is always the most important part of writing, and for feature profiles, the interview often is the most important step in putting together a strong story. When sitting down to write the profile, care with putting pen to paper will help you bring the person to life, in a way that is genuine, believable, and interesting. To put this together in the form of a compelling feature, consider these 10 tips for writing better and more compelling profiles:

Focus on Narrative, Not Quotes

Feature stories, such as individual profiles, are much different than hard news stories. Part of your job is to weave a narrative for readers. When interviewing subjects, focus on getting the details of the story accurate and don't worry so much about taking down everything they say verbatim. Certainly, if someone says something worth quoting, that must be accurate—but an abundance of quotes is not what drives a good narrative.

Show, Don't Tell

Most writers remember this cliché from their creative writing classes, and it is especially valuable when writing feature stories. Set a scene for readers, build tension, make them feel as if they are right there in the story, alongside your subject.

Be Clear About Why the Subject Is Newsworthy

Perhaps the individual being profiled did something or experienced something uncommon. Or, perhaps the subject had an experience or is involved in something that serves as a microcosm of a broader news story that is relevant at the time. Make it clear to readers as soon as possible why the individual is worth reading about.

How to Write a Good Profile?

Create an Outline

Once you're ready to write, review your notes and mark down the most interesting points and quotes you would like to use to shape your story about this person. Consider what was most surprising and build your story's structure around the peaks and most compelling parts of the conversation.

Spend Extra Time at the Beginning of Your Story

Readers will decide whether to keep reading based on your lede and how much you have piqued their interest.

Write With Verbs Versus Adjectives

Don't describe someone as bitter or an office as sterile, instead describe the details you observed and let the reader envision that person's actions or the characteristics of that office themselves.

Be Strategic With Quotations

It can be hard to capture a mood with direct quotes only, so use your own prose and then interject relevant quotes to enhance your point. Be sure to always provide attribution for the quotes that you do use as the reader shouldn't have to ever wonder who is talking.

Watch for Gaps

Are there gapping holes in your story or questions that you have not answered? Ask another wordsmith to read your story and tell you if they are left with more questions than answers at the end of reading your piece.

Check Out a Few of These Famous Profile Stories

[7 Award-Winning Features](#)

[2017 Best Profile Pieces](#)

[Pulitzer Prize Winning Features](#)

[Sports Features By Gary Smith](#)

Writing Practice

Now it's Your Turn:

1. Please make sure (unless a family member in the home) you do this interview by phone (at worst electronically) for social distancing purposes.
2. Pick someone you might want to write a feature profile about. This is not a biography. It should be creative and focus on something that makes the person newsworthy or interesting.
3. Interview the person, and potentially others that know them) and then write a short profile story.

Resources/Other Important Articles on the Subject

[Secret to Writing Strong Feature Stories](#)

[Tips For Writing Features](#)