

Essay 3: Profile of a Place

A profile is driven by a question: if I look closely at this [place], might I gain insight about people?

---Bruce Ballenger

WHAT'S THE ASSIGNMENT?

You'll write an essay where you profile a place using details you get from interviews, observations, and research to examine "what this [place] say[s] about social situations, trends, or problems" (Ballenger 143). Your paper should **1) connect the physical place to themes and ideas that show what makes this place significant and 2) convey stories that help reveal this significance and show why this place is important** (you'll incorporate visuals to enhance your essay). The profile of a place isn't "simply an objective picture...but an effort to use a portrait to say something" (143).

A successful profile of a place:

- ✓ **Focus/Purpose/Genre:** Has a controlling idea that shares a larger theme or idea about the place being profiled; the controlling idea is supported through specific, insightful details, stories, and visuals (rhetorical conventions of the genre); the controlling idea is complex rather than too obvious or cliché. Demonstrates what stories of this place might say "about social situations, trends, or problems" (Ballenger 113).
- ✓ **Support:** Includes primary research (interview and observation) and secondary research (history of the place) that is smoothly integrated as a part of the essay rather than inserted into the piece; visuals (two required) and hyperlinks are well-placed to enhance controlling idea. Purposeful details and insightful specifics—histories and stories—demonstrate the controlling idea, as well as any applicable history or context.
- ✓ **Style and conventions:** Primary research and visuals correctly cited in MLA format; the writing uses rich details to bring the narrative to life on paper, uses sentence variety, and has a sense of the writer's "voice" as appropriate to the writing situation; follows conventions of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Course outcomes met:

- ❖ *Write in a range of genres, using appropriate rhetorical conventions*
- ❖ *Demonstrate the ability to employ flexible strategies for generating and revising your writing (such as: invention, drafting, revising, recording, and editing)*
- ❖ *Demonstrate competency in reading, quoting, and citing sources, as well as competency in balancing your own voices with secondary [and primary] sources*

HOW DO I APPROACH THE ASSIGNMENT?

With a partner from class, you will decide on a place to write about, and to learn about that place you will: 1) conduct at least one interview; 2) observe the place; 3) research the history of the place; and 4) draft your paper with a partner from class (more on that below). Together you'll be profiling a place you both can observe (so local is best). Sample ideas: distinctive neighborhoods, restaurants, or landmarks (i.e.: [Cowgirl Museum](#), [Magnolia Avenue Restaurant Row](#), etc.) Wherever you select, you'll focus on the histories, stories, and people that connect to that place and what these tell us about the significance of your place and what it says "about social situations, trends, or problems" (Ballenger 113). Of course, you also need to take care not to generalize. It is up to you, as an ethical writer, to find some kind of balance. Don't let your preconceived notions (we *all* have them) shape your essay; rather, the evidence you gather should shape your essay. We will talk more about these issues in class.

Think beyond just text for this piece to help your place come alive for readers: you should insert hyperlinks for audio or supporting links, and you'll include at least two visuals you take of this place. You'll build upon Essay 1 by incorporating narrative and details that convey meaning, and you'll do

research as with Essay 2, but in addition to researching the history, you'll be doing your own research (called primary research) by observing the place you're profiling and interviewing someone connected to or knowledgeable about that place. Then you and your partner will work together to draft a profile that you'll turn in for class. See the grade sheet to see how you and your partner will be assessed for the assignment as a pair.

Drafting with a partner:

For this piece, you'll conduct your interview and observations with a partner from the class, *and* you'll draft your piece together as well. We'll talk more in class about writing with someone else, but you'll work with your partner to negotiate how you'll best collaborate (each working on parts and putting them together, drafting it all together, etc.), then you'll write one essay together and submit one portfolio. (If there are troubles along the way with the collaboration, come see me early so we can get you back on track.) When you submit your portfolio, you'll 1) write a collaborative author's note detailing who did what work for the assignment and what you learned about writing collaboratively; 2) you'll also write an individual reflection, given separately to me, that explains any issues you may have had with writing with your partner (positive or negative) and a reflection on what you learned in writing with a partner and how the ideas that emerged from your primary research may have impacted your thinking.

Unless there are serious issues with collaboration and you've informed me before the assignment is due, you'll receive the same grade for the portfolio; you'll only be eligible to revise this essay if both partners agree and create and submit the revision plan together and revise the portfolio together OR if one partner gives written consent for the other partner to submit a revision on her/his own.

Final Draft: 1,600-2,100 words (approx. 5-7 pages), plus author's notes, MLA citation, and two visuals.

First Draft Due	W/TH Oct 19/20
Second Draft Due	To determine later if we will conduct a 2nd peer review.
Pencil Grade Draft Due	W/TH Oct 26/27

*We'll go over the process of conducting interviews, but you want everyone you speak with to know who you are and why you are talking to them. You'll need to get permission to use their words in your paper, and you'll need to have a works cited where you include their contact information. You'll also, of course, want to be as safe as possible, not putting yourself at any kind of risk to garner an interview with someone.