

Profiles

In each of the essays in this section, students carved out distinctive approaches to the assignment—approaches that permitted them to explore exceptional elements found in the local culture surrounding them. As you read these essays, note the ways in which the writers attempt to allow the profiles’ subjects to teach you about their accomplishments (such as conducting HIV research), about activities in which they have a personal investment (including music, yoga, and improvisational comedy), and about their chosen vocations (entering the priesthood, becoming a professor).

You will soon find that this assignment challenges you to synthesize multiple texts and viewpoints: including your analytic response to your interviewee’s work, the interview itself, and, when appropriate, your own experiences and responses. In addition, you must account for and write to an audience that does not have knowledge of your essay’s subject matter. In other words, you need to give the reader your unique “insider’s perspective” about your profile subject.

Your instructor will set limitations and offer guidance in terms of the kinds of topics you can choose. Some instructors select a theme—i.e. the environment, media, local culture—and ask students to interview people who work within this area, while others simply ask them to use this assignment to become better acquainted with an aspect of someone’s life. Conducting an effective interview is essential for this sequence because your interviewee’s vantage point needs to be fully depicted, so you will need to devise provocative questions that allow your subject to give fully developed and detailed responses. In effect, your profile subject needs to speak *with* you as a writer, not *for* you.