Appendix III: Descriptive Writing of a Personal Role Model and Profile Essay

Note: This prompt includes these assignments: a Descriptive Writing of a Personal Role Model and a related Profile Essay.

Audience: a general academic audience interested in your story and background

Point of view: In both papers, you can utilize the first-person point of view.

Part I: Descriptive Writing of a Personal Role Model

Directions: Write a descriptive essay about someone who has been a personal role model for you. This person can be dead or alive. However, this person should be someone you have known personally and in some depth. This person can be a family member, friend, or mentor.

1) In describing this person, remember to use sensory details (touch, taste, sight, smell, and auditory). You want to describe the person’s appearance; the place(s) where you spent time together, such as a home, farm, garden, kitchen, machine shop, etc.; and activities, events, or holidays as occasions during which you were present with this person.

2) Use some dialogue between you and this person to convey aspect of your speech patterns.

3) Describe any key advice that this person gave you.

4) Create scenes in which you show you and this person together. Instead of describing this person with abstract terms, such as being loving, kind, or strong, show how your role model embodies these concepts through specific saying, ideologies, and actions.

5) All people are human. Therefore, show both your role model’s strengths and weaknesses. You do not have to reveal confidential or sensitive information in painting your person. However, your model should be well rounded in order to be interesting to readers and to have a story of universal value.

6) Use strong verbs, avoid clichés, and be creative in your writing.

Word Count: 500 words (approximately 2 pages)

Sources: No sources are necessary for this shorter writing.

Part II: Profile Essay

Directions: The Profile Essay requires that you choose as the subject an important person in your life and then write a description analysis of this subject. As part of this assignment, you will also conduct an interview with that person or someone who can
talk about him or her. You will utilize your Descriptive Writing of a Personal Role Model as part of this larger essay. Your piece should be original, timely or of current interest, entertaining, and informative.

Profile Essay Genre: This assignment is designed to prove your ability to combine personal knowledge and research with multi-modal elements. Find someone who interests you and capture this person in your writing. This essay, by its nature, must combine a description of obvious qualities of the subject (such as the build of a person) and the inward qualities of the subject (such as a description of a person as “witty”). In addition, even though perhaps implied in the essay as opposed to overtly stated, you should make the case with your textual presentation that the person profiled is “worth” the audience’s time and is indeed of some interest. In addition, you must assure your reader that the profile provides depth in a manner about your subject matter that other outside sources on the same topic might be unable to do.

Word Count: 1,500 words, excluding Works Cited Page (approximately 6 pages)

Sources: You need to conduct one personal interview, as well as include at least 3 other sources. This particular essay uses the interview as the primary source of information. Nonetheless, the interview will not be your only source of background information. You will need to rely on your observations and locate information from other sources to fill out your picture of your person profiled. These other sources could include newspapers, magazines, secondary interviews, journals, books, videos, photos, maps, etc., about people, events, or places that that your piece identifies and contextualizes to some extent. These sources do not necessarily have to be scholarly sources. Again, your goal will be not only to present the profile of a person, but also to reach a larger or universal truth that illustrates for readers the value of learning about this person.

Smaller Unit Assignments: With this essay, include a list of 10 questions that you asked your interviewee. (You do not have to include the answers or transcription.)

Essay Design: You will probably want to use a Microsoft Word document and imbed all multi-modal components within it. Layout and placement of text and multi-modal elements are important to consider in terms of the document’s readability and appearance.

Details to Consider in Representing Yourself and Others: You can choose to use real names or pseudonyms, if you wish to provide anonymity. All other details you choose to include should be “real” in the way that good nonfiction is.

Consent Form: Use the consent form on Blackboard for any interviews or film clips in which you video record or audio record people. Each person should be given his or her own consent form. Keep your consent forms. You will scan them and upload them to Blackboard with this assignment.

Extra Credit: For extra credit, you may choose to upload either a tape-recorded or video-recorded copy of the interview with your materials.
Grading Criteria for the Profile Essay

Students writing competent Profile Essays should fulfill the following requirements:

- Demonstrate a satisfactory ability to complete the essay, as you undergo the process of evaluating your essay issue or topic, investigating it further via writing, and then drafting, revising, and editing to create a final product.
- Present a satisfactory genre example of the academic profile essay form.
- Demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of how to construct an essay that features a descriptive organizational thesis and focused, organized paragraphs.
- Offer, in a satisfactory manner, supporting proof or claims to back up general, abstract premises, present a balance of both textual summary and analysis, and synthesize the required sources.
- Evaluate satisfactorily the implicit or explicit audiences for various sources.
- Choose a satisfactory range of reliable, authoritative sources.
- Conform satisfactorily with MLA standards in including citations and composing a works cited page.
- Demonstrate a satisfactory ability to utilize stylistic principles meant to hook and hold the reader’s interest, including variety in language and syntax use.
- Demonstrate a satisfactory ability to write using Standard American English.

While essays deemed average might suffer from one or two egregious errors and/or several less offensive errors, the kinds and numbers of errors should not undermine readers’ ability to comprehend and interact with the content.

Profile Essay and Purpose and Structure

When choosing a subject for this essay, you should make sure that it is not too broad, such as a profile of the St. Louis Cardinals. Instead, you should focus on a subject that you could cover more thoroughly, such as a profile of Mike Matheny, the manager of the St. Louis Cardinals. Once you have a narrow subject, you should then develop a thesis that will define the information included in the essay and limit the focus even further. While much of the essay will consist of descriptive elements about the topic, you should make sure that your thesis is one that focuses on abstract ideas. For example, instead of writing, “Matheny is tall with brown hair” for the thesis, it would be better to say, “Matheny is experienced and innovative.” Incorporating these more abstract characteristics into a thesis will allow the essay to include more complex ideas and information rather than only pure observation. As such, a more abstract thesis will also argue for the importance of the topic and the need for it to be showcased to an interested audience via a profile.

You should also keep in mind that when you are choosing your subject or information to include about that subject, you must pay attention to what may seem like ordinary details. Sometimes this inclusion of seemingly ordinary details can end up revealing the most interesting qualities of the subject. Since the majority of this essay relies on how well you describe your subject and what kind of revelations you can generate for readers, you should try to avoid straight, list-like descriptions. Instead, you should attempt to appeal to the senses of the reader and to use narrative. Another good aspect of writing a profile essay for you to keep in mind is to consider how your subject is viewed or received by others, so that you can avoid either moralizing or
over-sentimentalizing your subject. The goal here with the profile genre is to give the reader a clear view of the subject from all sides.

Other Tips:
1) Provide some biographical information but balance this by including your profiled person’s interests, career, education, and family background.
2) Decide on what is most important to your profile essay and focus on that. You cannot include every detail of the person’s background.

3) Handle your quotes carefully. Do not utilize too many direct or long quotes. Additionally, make sure all quotes are attributed, so readers know who is saying what.

4) Address all big questions in your essay. Conducting peer review should help with this essay.