Project 1: The Profile
ENGL 1301: COMPOSITION & RHETORIC I

Overview
For this assignment you will write a profile of an ordinary, low-tech object and explore how that object has greater significance to a larger audience. Remember that the goal of writing a profile is to “[present] a subject in an entertaining way that conveys its significance, showing us something […] that we may not have known existed or that we see every day but don’t know much about” (Bullock and Goggin 233). And “[g]ood memoirs explore and reflect on a central theme or question even though they rarely conclude with explicit answers to those questions. Instead, they invite readers to explore and reflect with the narrator to try to unravel the deeper significance of the recounted events” (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 48).

The most important thing about this paper, in addition to having a critical exploration and unique angle for the object you have selected, is to make sure that you ground your profile in a CLOSE discussion of the object, including concrete details and rhetorical strategies to engage the audience. No matter which object you choose to explore (and you have free reign to consider an approved ordinary, low-tech object from any angle you like; there are no “right” or “wrong” interpretations in this course, only stronger and more weakly developed ones), just be sure to connect your main observations and ideas to each other and support them with details that establish a specific impression (stance) that is appropriate for the significance you wish to convey.

Guidelines
Develop a comprehensive and detailed profile of an ordinary low-tech object that interests you and that you feel would be interesting to a general audience and support your discussion by integrating evidence from at least three (3) textual sources and two images. You should focus on the close relationship between the object and its significance, carefully considering your unique angle (so that your profile should be very clear and grounded in interesting details). Write a paper of 4-8 (double-spaced) pages. In addition to the 4-8 pages, you will need to include a Works Cited page that indicates the sources you have selected to complete your assignment. When in doubt, contact me for further guidelines about your chosen object.

Consider the following questions when developing your profile:

- **Purpose:** What is the importance of the object and how will you convey that to your audience? How will this story help you understand yourself and your readers understand you, as you were then and as you are now?
- **Audience:** Who are your readers? Why will they care about your profile? What do you want them to think of you after reading it? How can you help them understand your stance?
- **Stance:** What impression do you want to give, and how can your words contribute to that impression? What tone do you want to project? Sincere? Serious? Humorous? Detached? Critical?
- **Evidence:** What supporting details (concrete, reliable, credible) should be provided to support the purpose and stance?
- **Organization:** How effective is your organization? Is there a narrative or descriptive flow that your readers can follow? Does each step lead to the next with appropriate transitions?
- **Style:** How clear is the language/style/expression?

Organization
Arrange the parts of your profile in the order that will prove most effective with the audience. Your profile should be detailed, subjective, and explore a close relationship between an object and its significance. Keep in mind that a good profile includes a detailed discussion with a stance supported by good reasons and evidence; so, you must select your materials carefully and include rich details. Make sure to give plenty of specific examples from your experience and observations to support your exploration and impression.

**At a minimum, your profile should include the following elements:**

- An engaging title that hints at the profile’s overall significance.
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- An introduction that captures the reader’s interest or sets a scene and indicates the stance that will be developed.
- A complication that must be resolved in some way – a tension or conflict between people’s values and beliefs, or a personal inner conflict the author faces.
- A plot that draws the reader forward as the memoir moves through a series of scenes or stages.
- Intimacy between the narrator and the reader, allowing the writer to speak with readers in a personal one-on-one way.
- Rich and vivid details and dialogue that give the story greater imagery, texture, and impact.
- A central theme or question that is rarely announced or answered explicitly, but that the narrator explores and reflects on with the reader.
- A new understanding or revelation that presents a moment of growth, transformation or clarity in the writer.
- A logical progression of ideas, and evidence and examples to support your ideas.
- A clear presentation and development of topics.
- Sentences that are complete and relatively error free.

**Thesis Statement**

*But where does my thesis statement go?* Memoirs explore and reflect on a central theme or question, but they rarely provide precise answers or explicit thesis statements early in the text. When writing a memoir, put your point in the conclusion, using an implied thesis. In other words, don’t state your main point or thesis in your introduction unless you have a good reason for doing so.

Your conclusion describes, directly or indirectly, not only what you learned but also what your reader should have learned from your experiences. Memoirs often have an “implied thesis,” which means you’re allowing readers to figure out the main point of the story for themselves. Avoid concluding with a “the moral of the story is…” or a “they lived happily ever after” ending. Instead, you should strive for something that suggests the events or people reached some kind of closure. Achieving closure, however, doesn’t mean stating a high-minded platitude or revealing a fairy tale ending. Instead, give your readers the sense that you and your characters are looking ahead to the future.
Whether you choose to state your main point directly or not, your readers should come away from your memoir with a clear sense of what the story meant to you.

**AUDIENCE**

Although this may be an unfamiliar exercise, it is not as complex a task as writing an essay requiring a lot of library research. Your memoir is for a reader who is interested not just in the general characteristics of the experience being described, but also in your critical exploration of personal experience and your presentation of the stance and impression in your writing. Also, don’t assume that just because your instructor and peers will read your essay that they will automatically be interested in what you have to say. Generate reader interest by making clear what is at stake in your memoir and why it is important.

**STYLE (USING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE)**

Write in a style that demonstrates knowledge of your subject and a clear and accurate expression of your ideas. Think critically, understanding that the way you organize and express your ideas can be as important as the ideas themselves. Be credible, providing enough detail and evidence to show that you’ve reflected deeply on the subject and that you can support your claims. Be respectful, showing your readers that your ideas are approachable and thoughtful, not arrogant or insensitive (this may also mean that you consider alternate viewpoints and treat opponents with respect so that you aren’t ignoring or demeaning the opinions of others). And last but not least, be careful, ensuring that your writing is clear and accurate (not generalized, disorganized, or ignorant of writing conventions).

**USING “I”**

The essay should be written in the personal authoritative voice. This means that you *should* use first-person references (“I,” “me,” “my,” etc.), but cautiously. Review the example memoirs from your textbook and the additional resources provided.

Draw on the lessons you have previously learned about writing and work to understand purpose, audience and tone as well as conventions of style, format, and documentation. The memoir essay gives your instructor a chance to know you better—not just your ability to write, but also the way you express yourself.

**USING DIALOGUE**

Dialogue is an important part of memoir writing. Allow the characters in your memoir to reveal key details about themselves through dialogue rather than your narration. Use dialogue strategically to revel themes and ideas that are key to understanding your memoir. Here are some guidelines for using dialogue effectively:

- **Use dialogue to move the story forward.** Dialogues between characters should be reserved for key moments that should move the story forward in an important way.
- **Write the way your characters speak.** People rarely speak in proper English. Take advantage of opportunities to show how people really talk.
- **Trim the extra words.** In real dialogue, people often say more than they need to say. To avoid drawing out a conversation too much, craft your dialogue to be as crisp and tight as possible.
- **Identify who is talking.** The readers should know who is talking, so make sure you use dialogue tags (e.g., *he said*, *she said*, *he growled*, *she yelled*). Not every statement needs a dialogue tag. If you leave off the tab, make sure it’s obvious who is speaking.
- **Create unique voices for characters.** Each of your characters should sound different. You can vary their tone, cadence, dialect, or style to give them each a unique voice.

*What if you cannot remember what people actually said?* As long as you remain true to what you remember people saying, you can invent some of the details of the dialogue.
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Formatting and Writing Conventions
Papers should be typed in a legible (ex: Arial, Times New Roman), 12-point font and double spaced (with space between paragraphs removed). All other formatting should adhere to MLA standards (see resource in D2L for MLA formatting help). Additionally, you’ll want to make sure you proofread your paper carefully to avoid errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics.

Essay Checklist
With your essay in hand, go through the checklist below, noting where you have met the assignment criteria (these are the areas that I’ll be evaluating). If needed, re-read the guidelines for clarification.

| I have written a memoir that is 4-8 pages long (not including images and Works Cited), double-spaced, and in MLA formatting. |
| I have written a well-developed memoir, and my specific stance and impression are supported by details, description, dialogue, imagery, and other appropriate strategies. |
| I have written a title and introduction that engage my audience, and they set up the complication as well as the stance and significance of my discussion. |
| I have included description and background information so that my reader will better understand my experience, and in doing so, I have also further clarified my stance and begun developing the complication for my memoir. |
| I have included an evaluation of the complication in my memoir, considering how myself and other characters reacted using rich details, dialogue, and other appropriate strategies. |
| I have included details, dialogue, imagery, and other appropriate strategies that help create a critical and detailed exploration of the complication and develop the stance and purpose. |
| I have integrated my details effectively, introducing and explaining the significance (and citing them when appropriate). |
| I have selected appropriate sources (1 image minimum). I have integrated and cited it correctly within my writing. |
| I have written a conclusion that provides a sense of completion, reflection, and/or summation, making a point that could not have been made in the introduction, and reminding the reader why it is important to critically consider my memoir. |
| I have written in a style that is appropriate for a memoir – both in using first person narrative and in the dialogue I have chosen to include. |
| I have created a Works Cited page. |
| I have written sentences that are complete, clear, and relatively error free. |
| I have proof-read my essay, and it is coherent and well-organized. |

Submission of Final Draft
Upload your assignment to the appropriate dropbox in D2L before the assignment deadline.

Works Cited
This guideline draws inspiration and pieces from the following resources:


"A day will come when the story inside you will want to breathe on it’s own. That’s when you’ll start writing.” – Sarah Noffke
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**NEED MEMOIR HELP?**
The following resources can be found on D2L and in your textbook:

- *The Norton Field Guide* Chapter 33 “Beginning and Ending”
- *The Norton Field Guide* Chapter 34 “Guiding Your Reader”
- *The Norton Field Guide* Chapter 40 “Describing”
- *The Norton Field Guide* Chapter 43 “Narrating”
- *The Norton Field Guide* Chapter 65 “Memoirs”
- Tips for Writing in First Person (handout)
- *Handling the Truth* by Beth Kephart (handout)
- Purdue OWL: The Personal Memoir (website)

*Note: Additional Resources may be posted in the D2L module.*

**OTHER WRITING PROCESS ACTIVITIES FOR PROJECT 1**

- Invention Exercises – This includes any and all exploratory activities that help you clarify your purpose, develop a clear picture of your place, and cultivate the unique angle that you’ll explore in this project. These activities help you organize and develop your ideas.
- Outline – Even more than the invention activities, an outline helps you construct your approach to the project. After completing invention exercises, you should be able to create a detailed structure of your paper that includes your supporting points with evidence.
- Rough Draft – Completing a rough draft gives you the opportunity to receive feedback and gain help from several sources. Rough drafts should be 4 pages or more with a completed Works Cited (if applicable) in MLA format. NOTE: You must submit a Rough Draft to participate in Peer Review Activities.
- Peer Review – Peer review helps you critically consider the writing of others as you are working on a similar assignment. While you are not expected to be an English teacher, you are expected to understand the major requirements of the assignment, and you should be able to provide critical feedback on the writing of others.
- Reflection Exercises – These activities require you to reflect on the advice given to you by your peers and/or reflect on the process and what helped you develop your project. These exercises will give you an opportunity to indicate what you feel was done well and where you would like to improve your future writing (in a final draft of this project or on future assignments).