

Writing Profile Articles

[Journalism/Blogging mini-unit]



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Unit Overview

Summary

This week-long unit teaches students how to write a profile article, like one would see in a magazine or newspaper. Students will write their own interview questions, interview a relative, write a profile article, and post their article on the classroom blog.

This unit teaches students how to set up and conduct interviews, practice listening and speaking skills through the interview process, how to write a profile article, and use a blog to post articles and information.

Unit Specifications

This unit would come in the middle of a writing unit or journalism unit. If this unit were found in the middle of a writing unit, it would be along the lines of writing different types of papers/articles, such as express and reflect, inform and explain, evaluate and judge, etc. (Kelly Gallagher, *Write Like This*). If this unit were found in the middle of a journalism unit, it would be found towards the beginning, as this would be a simple article for them to write, yet it begins a lot of the skills needed to be a journalist.

While I was finding some materials for this unit, I came across some things for much younger ages on Scholastic's website. On a lesson plan for first- and second-graders, they had a note or disclaimer that I would also like to put in this unit, especially since it directly applies to the focus of interviewing relatives: “

Note: Be sensitive to different family units. It may be helpful to reach out to parents before beginning this unit to ensure no student feels uncomfortable during the unit. You also may want to adjust the structure of the family interview portion

of the unit to accommodate students with same-sex parents, parents who are divorced, or adoptive or foster parents” (Scholastic).

Scholastic, too, provides a sample cover letter to send home to parents/guardians, which I found to be extremely valuable and insightful. I have attached this in Appendix B. Remember the Scholastic lesson from which this comes from was designed for first- and second-graders, so the materials are simpler but a good reference to adapt.

Unit Objectives

As a result of this unit, students will be able to:

- Construct and post a blog post/online article.
- Synthesize information into a written paper or article.

Class Specifications

This Journalism Profile Unit could be taught to students grades five through twelve, although the younger grades, like five and six, may be a bit young for blogging, though adaptations could be done to this unit. As well, some of the older grades, like eleven and twelve, could develop something bigger like having each of them produce their own blog, rather than post on a collective class blog.

This unit was created with the assumption that classes are 50 minutes in length, and the following lessons are geared for seventh-graders.

Assessments

Summative

A rubric will be used at the end of the unit to evaluate their profile article. This can be found in Appendix A. This rubric evaluates four main categories or questions: Does the student provide interesting information (looking back at ideas/content and their interview questions)? Is

the blog post formatted in a way that's aesthetically pleasing (looking at presentation of the information and is a picture of their subject included)? Is the article and information organized in a logical way (looking at organization)? Is the article written in a narrative form (Does the article tell a story about the subject? Or does it just tell the results of the interview)? In other words, they are being assessed by their ideas, organization, word choice, voice, and presentation.

Formative Assessment

Throughout the unit, constant checking-in with the students and making sure they are participating and truly involved with the unit will be done, especially during days that students work together. This can be assessed by checking student progress with their assignments, activities, and daily work.

Outside of participation and involvement, other formative assessments include having the students turn in a copy of their interview questions and informal outline after creating them to ensure students are on the right track for their articles.

During the unit, students will have two handouts that will be collected after turning in their blog post/article: their peer review sheets and their RADaR revisions. These will be assessed after the project to make sure they each did them as part of the writing process. They will need these while working on the project, which is why they are not collected until the end of the summative assessment. The RADaR revisions handout itself doesn't have anything to be assessed, but students should turn in a draft in which they applied the RADaR revision process (created by Kelly Gallagher, 2011). Their draft should have each aspect of RADaR present.

Example Gradebook (Unit Point Breakdown)

<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Amount of Points</i>
Interview Questions (Day 2)	10 Points
Informal Outline (Day 3 / 4)	10 Points
2 Copies of Rough Draft (Day 5)	5 Points (Completion Grade)
Profile Article / Blog Post (Assessment)	60 Points
Peer Review Sheets (End of Assessment)	10 Points (Completion Grade)
RADaR Revisions (End of Assessment)	10 Points
Participation and Involvement	20 Points
Total Amount of Points for this Unit:	125 Points

Technology Implementation

The technology most focused on for this unit is blogging. This technology continues to be a great resource for writers to spread personal, professional, and otherwise noteworthy information to with world. In this mini-unit, students will get a taste of what a blog does, how to set one up, and post their own article to a classroom blog. In an extended unit, the aspect of blogging would be much more in-depth and individualized. Students would be able to create and tend to their own blog and post articles they write on their own. For this unit, specifically, the blog site that will be used is Blogger (by Google).

This technology is over twenty years old, starting in 1998. Blogging, a shortened termed from the word *weblog*, has continued to be a source of expression, communication, and connection by people across the world. Blogs allow people to share their own personal experiences, information they know and want to share, or just to find connection with others and the world around them. Popular blog topics today are recipe blogs, travel blogs, art blogs, and technology blogs.

For students, blogs can be a safe and easy way for them to share information with others. Blogs allow students to express themselves and write posts with their own thoughts and ideas. The use of blogging also creates a more tangible example of how writing is communication and the idea of writing for an audience. Blog posts are a link between informal personal writing, as they would do in a journal, and professional, academic writing. The technology allows students to feel comfortable, as many are already technologically savvy, which opens up confidence for their writing.

In this unit, blogging comes at the end, as the students need to plan, build, create, draft, edit, revise, review, and finalize their writing *all prior* to posting it on a blog. Once the writing

has been formulated and polished, then the blogging can begin. When the writing has not been crafted well, then the blog and blog posts aren't as effective communicators and connectors to the viewers or readers.

Blogger is very straightforward to use and makes for an accessible technology for new users. When creating a new blog, Blogger has a set-up wizard that walks users through the creation of the blog's title, URL, and the user's display name. The Blogger platform allows the user to see a list of all the blog posts that have been posted and drafted; statistics of views, followers, and comments; a place where all comments are listed; the different pages and layout within the blog, themes and design, and additional settings. These various aspects make creating and moderating the blog a breeze for new and younger bloggers. Furthermore, these different viewpoints and abilities gives the instructor complete control, should the unit use a classroom blog versus individual blogs. Under the "Settings" tab, the instructor can remain the admin, while students can be added to become authors of the blog. This way they can post and comment freely but cannot manipulate or change the overall blog itself. As well, the author restrictions allow for each class period to have their own class blog that is only done by those within the same class. Even so, the blog and its posts can be shared among classes and commented on by other students within other class periods.

Unit Outline/ Lesson Plans

Day 1:

Lesson: Introduction to Journalism Profiles/Profile Articles

Time: 50 minutes

Standards Addressed:

7.5.5.5: Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of ideas.

7.5.6.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

Learning Objective:

Students will be able to:

- identify features of profile articles.

Materials:

- Examples of Profile articles (either electronic or physical)
- Doc cam and/or projector to display examples

Lesson Outline:

1. Begin by explaining to the students what their new assignment is for this unit, which is the profile article. Go over the assignment sheet and hand out the rubric.
2. Discuss what a profile article is. Per MasterClass, their definition of a profile is:
 - a. "A profile is a written portrait of a person. Often, a profile is published as a narrative non-fiction article in a newspaper, magazine, or website. The story is based on facts discovered through research as well as interviews with the subject and their friends, family, or professional associates. A profile piece is meant to be

informative. It is a portrait of the person through a combination of stories, quotes, and photographs.”

3. As a class, go over examples of what profile articles look like, their layout, and how they are written (POV, organization, wording, etc.). *The New York Times* has a weekly profile that highlights individuals. This can be found in the “World” section, called “The Saturday Profile.”
4. Discuss any questions students have about Profile articles. Make sure you also push the point home that these articles **tell a story**. The students need to write their article in a narrative writing style with descriptive language, dialogue and quotes, and really present who the person they interview is.
5. Their homework is to think about who to interview and set up a time with them the next day after school to do it (either over the phone, Skype/Zoom, or in-person). They can record the conversation if they would like to make it easier to remember parts, instead of writing it all down.

Citations:

MasterClass Staff. “How to Write a Profile Article - 2021.” *MasterClass*, MasterClass, 5 May 2021, www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-profile-article#10-tips-for-writing-a-profile-of-a-person.

“The Saturday Profile.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, www.nytimes.com/column/the-saturday-profile.

Day 2:

Lesson: Developing Interview Questions

Time: 50 minutes

Standards Addressed:

7.9.1.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

7.9.1.1.c: Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.

Learning Objective:

Students will be able to:

- create strong, creative interview questions that evoke thoughtful answers.

Materials:

- Writing utensil and paper / Computer

Lesson Outline:

1. Instruct students what makes a good interview question. You want them to ask questions that are beyond the everyday, simple questions that are quick to answer. Their questions should elicit thoughtful and captivating answers that are interesting to readers. They should consider the person they are interviewing, aspects the student know or would like to know more about their person that the interviewee values, and what kind of things readers would find interesting.

- a. For example, asking a grandparent to describe life stories to them is too broad (as an entire life of 50 to 90+ years is a lot to cover), too impersonal (it doesn't show knowledge or interest in the person being interviewed), and too boring (not everyone is interested in grandma's ramblings about the 1940s). (Sorry, Grandma.) Also, they should be things that the interviewee values, too. Asking a parent what World War II was like when they weren't alive to experience it is not relevant or direct experience for them.
 - b. Instead, a student could talk to their grandfather about experiencing or being part of the Civil Rights movement or Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s. This is specific, as it addresses one aspect of the person's life; it's directly personal with the interviewee and shows a focus for the interview; and this topic is strong and one that others find fascinating.
2. In the activity, students can work together or on their own to come up with what they are going to ask their relative. Keeping in mind the three elements they need to provoke in their article (addressing one aspect or era of the person's life, discussing something the interviewee values and can expound upon, and focusing on topic that others will enjoy) may help them think of interview questions.
3. At the end of class, they will turn in a copy of the interview questions for grading.
4. Their homework is to conduct their interview and either record, type, or write all the interviewee's answers. Preferably, they would record their interview for later so they have all the details and conversation to refer back to, as they will start to forget details as time goes on.

Assessment:

- Students will turn in a copy of their interview questions at the end of class for a quick grade. The questions will be evaluated using a 1 through 10 scale to determine creativity and originality of questions. A lower score indicates that the questions were simple or mundane. A high score indicates thoughtful questions that will provide a thought-provoking answer.

Day 3:

Lesson: Synthesizing Interview Data

Time: 50 minutes

Standards Addressed:

7.7.2.2.b: Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate developed listening and speaking skills by conducting an interview.
- synthesize the information gathered from their interview into a useable source for their article.

Materials:

- Interview questions with responses from family member
- Computer
- Graphic Organizer Blocks handout (inspired by *Reflections* by Kathleen McWhorter)
- Informal Outline reference page (inspired by *Reflections* by Kathleen McWhorter)

Lesson Outline:

1. To begin today's lesson, start by handing each student multiple copies of the graphic organizer. This organizer is a smaller sheet that the student will write one question they asked their relative and the answer (or details) they got in response. They will do this for each question from the interview they feel they want to still use for the article.

2. When they've completed putting the questions and details on the graphic organizers, they can now use them to piece together an outline, of sorts. They will want to make sure that ideas on the sheets are put in an order that flow into one another.
3. Allow students to ask questions or give time to clarify any points and work on forming an idea of what their article may look like, information-wise. When they have a good idea of the order in which they place their questions and details, have them then type up an informal outline of their article. (Basically, you'll have them type up their graphic organizer blocks into an outline.)
4. Homework would be to continue working on their outline, if needed, or starting to write their article.

Assessment:

- They will need to turn in a copy of their informal outline by the end of the next class.

Attachments:

- Graphic Organizer Blocks
- Informal Outline Printout

Citation:

McWhorter, Kathleen T. *Reflections: Patterns for Reading and Writing*. 1st ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013.

Day 4:

Lesson: First Drafts

Time: 50 minutes

Standards Addressed:

7.7.5.5: With some guidance and support from peers and adults, use a writing process to develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, drafting, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- use an informal outline to create a first draft of writing.

Materials:

- Filled-out informal outline
- Computer

Lesson Outline:

1. Student will work on their informal outlines, if they have not finished them.
2. Once students have completed their informal outlines, they can begin drafting their first drafts of their profile article.
3. Homework: Bring in or get an electronic copy of a photo of the person they interviewed by Day 6. Continue working on rough drafts.

Assessment:

- Students will have to bring two copies of their first draft to class the next class period as evidence they have completed it, as they will be working with others tomorrow.

Day 5:

Lesson: Peer Review Day

Time: 50 minutes

Standards Addressed:

7.7.5.5: With some guidance and support from peers and adults, use a writing process to develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, drafting, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- provide constructive feedback to peers on their work.
- implement feedback to improve their writing.

Materials:

- First drafts of article
- Peer Review Questions

Lesson Outline:

1. Make sure students have printed out two copies of their articles. Homework check to verify that everyone has a draft to review. If they have not started a first draft, they will have to sit out from groups and work on it. If they have *something* that can be reviewed, any feedback can help. Those who did not have a draft or aren't ready for review can make up their peer review either with the teacher or by another classmate at a different time.

2. Give students expectations on feedback. We all want to have something we need to work on and things that worked well. “Good Job” doesn’t help us grow. Etc. (10 minutes)
3. Have students get into groups of two or three, depending on number of students ready to peer review.
4. Every student should have Peer Review Questions for each of their group members to fill out and provide feedback. Have the student being evaluated read their draft out loud, as they should hear how it sounds, as well as catch any hiccups that appear from reading it. During the reading, students can mark-up the draft. After, they should fill out the Peer Review Questions handout for that group member. Once they have filled out that form, they can give the drafts and Peer Review Questions to the author and move on to the next group member.
5. Homework over the weekend: Work on drafts and revising the article. (40 minutes)

Assessment:

- Go around and make sure students are giving feedback and staying on track.
(Participation and Involvement)
- Students will be required to turn in their Peer Review forms they received from their partners as part of their grade at the end of the unit.

Attachments:

- Peer Review Questions

Citations:

Milligan, Katherine. *Questions for Peer Review*, The University of Pennsylvania - Department of English, www.english.upenn.edu/graduate/resources/teachweb/kmpeerrv.html.

Day 6:

Lesson: Final Revisions Day

Time: 50 minutes

Standards Addressed:

7.7.5.5: With some guidance and support from peers and adults, use a writing process to develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, drafting, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- employ revision skills to better their own work.

Materials:

- Current draft of article
- Computer
- RADaR Revisions Handout (inspired by *Write Like This* by Kelly Gallagher)

Lesson Outline:

1. Today is just a workday so students can work on their articles. They should be revising and editing their work. They can have others or the teacher to help them or give them more feedback if they need to, but students are encouraged to try revising their own work as much as possible.
2. As a tool to guide them with self-revisions, there is a RADaR Revisions handout based off of Kelly Gallagher's *Write Like This* that will be of use for the students, as it walks them through different areas of revision and what to look for when revising.

3. Homework: Make sure articles are ready for posting the next day.

Assessment:

- Go around and make sure students are giving feedback and staying on track.
(Participation and Involvement)
- Students will be required to turn in a copy of a draft using RADaR revisions, as specified on their RADaR Revision handouts, after the summative assessment has been turned in.
This will be graded by assessing that students applied each of the four RADaR areas while revising their article: Replace, Add, Delete, Reorder.

Attachments:

- RADaR Revision Handout

Citation:

“Chapter 8: Polishing the Paper.” *Write like This: Teaching Real-World Writing through Modeling & Mentor Texts*, by Kelly Gallagher, Stenhouse Publishers, 2011, pp. 203–222.

Day 7 (Full-Scale Lesson Plan with Technology):

Lesson: Publishing a Blog Post

Time: 50 minutes

Standards Addressed:

7.9.8.8: As an individual or in collaboration, create an artistic or entertaining multimedia work or piece of digital communication or contribute to an online collaboration for a specific purpose.

7.9.8.8.b: Publish the work and share with an audience.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- post an article on a blog.

Materials:

- Completed Profile Article (Final draft)
- Computer / projector
- Blogger.com

Lesson Outline:

1. Students should have their completed profile article ready to publish/post onto the class blog.
2. In front of the class, demonstrate how to set up a blog with Blogger. (Students will not do this individually, as this would be extremely difficult to grade, as there would be so many links and issues to tend to. In an extended unit, this would be more feasible.) Show the students how setting up a blog works, setting a theme, and make it ready for its first posts. (15 minutes)

3. Next, show students how to put their article on the blog with the picture of their subject.
(10 minutes)
4. Once blog has been set up, give students permission to post their articles on the blog by adding their email addresses to the authorized authors. (5-10 minutes)
5. Once students have access, they can post their article to the class blog. (10-15 minutes)

Assessment:

- *Profile Article Blog Post Rubric*
 - Because this is a more creative piece along with creative technology, students will have a bit more freedom with form and organization. Although there is more leniency, they are still expected to have key criteria met. (See rubric for more details.)

Appendix A

Name: _____

Profile Article / Blog Post Rubric

Profile Article:

Ideas: The content of the article is specific/focused, relevant to the interviewee, and provides interesting information.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Organization: The thoughts, information, and content are in an order that makes sense and transitions well from one idea to the next	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Word Choice / Sentence Fluency: The words used are creative and captivating. The way they are used paints a picture in the reader's mind. As well, the way the words and sentences flow are smooth and easy to read through.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Conventions: Grammar and spelling mistakes are kept to a minimum. Mechanics are also few and do not distract from the overall readability of the article.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Blog Post:

Presentation: The blog post was uploaded and appears in a clear, clean format and style. The presentation is open and easy to read.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Picture(s): One picture of the subject/ interviewee is required and is present on the blog post.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Additional Comments:

Score: _____ /60

Name: _____

Graphic Organizer Block

My Interview Question:

Response Details:

Block Order #: _____

Name: _____

Peer Review Sheet

With a partner or partners, they will read aloud their rough draft. Reading the draft aloud will allow yourself and others to get a better sense of how it actually sounds, which we sometimes miss when only reading it in our heads. The following questions will help you provide constructive feedback to assist them in revising and editing their essay. (Make sure you answer all ten questions!)

1. What is the main idea or focus of this essay (Ideas)?
2. Do the events or ideas make sense in the order that they are in (Organization)?
3. Are there any parts or paragraphs that seem confusing or out of place (Organization)?
4. Are the writer's word choices appropriate and descriptive (Word Choice)?
5. Were there any parts, while reading aloud, that sounded awkward or messy (Sentence Fluency)?
6. Does the author leave you with too many questions, an appropriate amount of questions, or no questions at all (Ideas)?

7. What questions do you still have about the content of the essay?
8. Please note any big grammar or mechanical errors you see but remember to focus more on content (Conventions).
9. What did you like most about the essay?
10. What would you like to see more of and/or less of?

Name: _____

Informal Outlines

Informal outlines use important words and phrases to list the main points and subpoints. With informal outlines, there isn't necessarily a specific number-and-letter format. This is an example of what you can do with your informal outline. As long as it works for you, and it truly does lay out your essay, then please take advantage of this style of outlining, as long as a formal outline is not required.

Thesis:

- Learning how to cook has given me a stronger connection with my family.

Paragraph 1:

- When I was little, grandma taught me how to cook whenever I had dinner at her house.
- Our favorite thing to make together was baked beans.
- Now that grandma is older, I cook for her.

Paragraph 2:

- Spending time seeing how my dad, who went to culinary school, cooks and makes really good food.
- Learning how to make homemade Italian food with my family, whose recipes have been passed down from my great-great-grandparents, who came from Italy.

Paragraph 3:

- As I became a teenager, I was left to make my own dinners after school, so I got a lot of practice.
- Eventually, I started cooking for my family. They loved my cooking and rather I be the one to make dinners.
- Now I cook for myself and others all the time and try new recipes to add to my rotation.

Conclusion:

- Cooking started with family connection, and now, each dish I make for my family builds a better bond.

Name: _____

RADaR Revisions

Revising requires you to “re-vision” your paper. When you revise, it is important to make sure you take the time to focus on the different traits of writing (ideas, organization, sentence fluency, word choice, voice, and conventions) as well as implementing RADaR, which are four stages of revision that will assist you in making your essay shine.

R	A	D	and R
<i>Replace...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ words that are not specific.▪ words that are overused.▪ sentences that are unclear or vague.	<i>Add...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ new information.▪ descriptive adjectives and adverbs.▪ rhetorical or literary devices.	<i>Delete...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ unrelated ideas.▪ sentences that sound good but create unity problems.▪ unwanted repetition.▪ unnecessary details.	<i>Reorder...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ to make better sense or to create a better flow.▪ so details support main ideas.

Examples of Each Revision Stage:

Replace:

Before: My mom drives a red car, which drives really fast.

After: My mom drives a speedy, cherry-colored sports car.

Add:

Before: The ocean is so big, it's scary.

After: The enormous size of the ocean seems never-ending.

Delete:

Before: The teacher talked about the concerns about the assignment and the concerns that the students brought up about the assignment.

After: The teacher spoke about the students' concerns they brought up about the assignment.

Reorder:

Before: When coming inside from a long walk, enjoying the really nice breeze outside and calm, you'll want to make sure you lock the door, as it's nighttime.

After: Enjoying a walk outside with a nice breeze can be calming, but because it's now nighttime, you'll want to make sure you lock the door after coming inside.

Appendix B

Dear Parents,

In social studies our class has been learning about the fact that our nation is made up of people who came here from many different countries. The class knows how Native Americans crossed a land bridge to the New World. We also discussed how slaves were brought to America. Students know that immigrants have arrived here by boat, airplane, and on foot.

Today I am sending home two interview forms so your child can ask you about your families. There is one form for each side of your family. Please let me know if you would like more forms.

I hope that you and your child can fill in the forms together, with your child doing the writing. Please return the forms to school by

_____.

Thanks very much for your help.



SCHOLASTIC

<http://scholastic.com>

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