

# Project 1: Writer Profile

## Goal

**This project asks you to select a writer currently working in the media landscape and compose an essay profiling their professional writing and writer identity.** A profile is more than a celebrity Wikipedia page; it tells the story of its subject from a compelling angle. Your job is to present your writer from a unique angle that highlights their writing and writer identity in a new light.

## Background

This project is the culmination of the Media Shadow activity that spans Unit 1. You have shadowed a media outlet for four weeks, and now you must profile a specific writer. The writer **does not** have to write at the media outlet you chose to shadow. This profile should synthesize what you learned from shadowing a media outlet and our class discussions about the changing and new media landscape, as well as research on the individual writer. Social media, particularly Twitter, is often the best way to stay current with writers, so I would suggest beginning there.

The profile is a common written genre. From Latin meaning “to draw a line,” a profile outlines or sketches its subject, normally a person. Your profile will of course contain basic summary and biographical information about your writer, such as their education, place of employment, signature publications, etc., but your profile should also identify something unique or not totally obvious about your writer, ideally something about their writing or how they approach their craft.

Remember that not all writing and not all writers are the same. Journalists, for example, cover different “beats,” such as crime, politics, technology, or sports; pundits have various areas of interest and discursive responsibilities; public intellectuals often focus on particular subject areas and write for specific audiences. As you research your chosen writer, be sure to get a sense of the areas and subjects they tend to write on and their overall opinions on those subjects, as well as how they are perceived among their peers. (Are they contrarian or consensus?) Read a wide sampling of their work, and investigate any outlets or publications they have written for. These details will help deepen your profile beyond simply a Wikipedia entry. Finally, your profile should have a singular thesis/message/main idea. It may help you to think of your profile as a story, and the thesis/message/main idea as the point or lesson of the story, the punch line, if you will.

## Nuts and Bolts

- 3-4 pages double spaced
- Include a creative and relevant title and subtitle that helps frame the piece
- Include a picture of your writer, if possible
- Select pull quotes/images to help contextualize your writer and their work

Criteria	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Work
<b>Genre</b> Profile Analysis	The profile offers a unique perspective on the subject, going beyond summarizing biographical information to analyzing and presenting the writer's work in a compelling narrative and situating the writer in a larger rhetorical and media context.	The profile shows moments of analytical depth, but makes use of too much description or summary. Some details and examples are described.	The profile fails to raise and answer any critical and analytical <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> questions. The essay sheds no new analytical insight on the topic.
<b>Structure &amp; Organization</b> Paragraphs Flow Arrangement	Essay content is clear, in-depth, and logically organized. The paragraph is the unit of the essay. Each paragraph explores a particular and singular topic. Transitions between paragraphs facilitate clear reading.	Essay content features some unclear organizational decisions that make the logic hard to follow. Some paragraphs are either too long or too short. Ineffective transitions between paragraphs.	Essay content features little to no organizational structure. There are no transitions or topic sentences. There is no discernible logic to the sequence of paragraphs.
<b>Depth, Class Concepts, Theme</b> In-depth Original Content	The essay content is in-depth, original, and inventive, not a surface level report or summary description. The profile draws on class concepts relevant to our discussions of the media and public discourse. The writer's identity and professional writing style/content is detailed and analyzed according to a discernible theme/thesis.	Essay content is adequately detailed and focused, incorporating some class concepts. But the profile fails to go beyond surface description or summary and simply reproduces "generic discourse." The theme is underdeveloped or somewhat incoherent.	No evidence of class concepts or in-depth and original analysis. The profile lacks any kind of unifying thesis or theme and there is no cohesion.
<b>Mechanics, Style, Grammar</b> Syntax Punctuation Usage, style, tone	The essay uses complex sentences with minimal grammatical and punctuation errors. The essay wears a deliberate style for a rhetorical effect.	The essay contains some recurring grammatical and usage errors that at times prevent the reader from understanding the writing.	The essay frequently features grammatical and mechanical issues that prevent the reader from understanding the writing.
<b>Drafting/Revision</b> Completed drafts Significant revision	The writer completes and turns in on time a first draft, participating in peer review. The profile contains the formal required aspects outlined in the assignment sheet: title, subtitle, image, appropriate formatting.	Fails to participate in either part of the peer review. Missing one or more of the format requirements. Revision from first to final draft is minimal or surface level.	No revision or first draft complete. Not formatted according to assignment sheet..



# Do *More* What *You* CAN'T

## The Creative Mind of Casey Neistat

Known to most as the guy who ran his bike into most of Lower Manhattan, or as the man who challenged Apple's battery replacement policy, Casey Neistat has made an impact on the internet. With over 12 million subscribers on Youtube, 3 million followers on Instagram, and 2 million on Twitter, Neistat's footprint on the internet can not be understated. And while many know him from his videos like "iPods Dirty Secret" and "Bike Lanes by Casey Neistat" he is best known for his Daily Vlog series. But before all of that, there were much humbler beginnings.

Born March 25, 1981, Casey grew up in Gales Ferry, Connecticut. Growing up, Casey's father worked, and his mother took a very hands-off approach to raise him and his three siblings, describing it as "wonderfully unsupervised." At 15 years old, Casey left home and moved in with his soon-to-be girlfriend and her friend. Neistat and his



girlfriend ended up moving to Virginia, only to move back to Connecticut a few months later after finding out she was pregnant. At the age of 17, Neistat dropped out of Highschool to take care of his newborn son, Owen. While vacationing in New York City, Casey made a home video and edited it on his brother Vans iMac (dubbed the neiMac). Upon returning to Connecticut, he promptly maxed out his credit card to buy himself a computer so he could continue to make and edit short films. For three years, he worked as a line cook and dishwasher at a seafood restaurant to help raise his son. His girlfriend ended up dumping

IPOD'S UNREPLACEABLE  
BATTERY LASTS ONLY  
18 MONTHS.  
10,000 songs in your pocket. More iPod.

# Casey Neistat



him, however. In June 2001, he decided to make a change. With 800 dollars in his pocket and a place to stay for three months, Neistat moved to New York City to pursue his goal of storytelling.

“iPods Dirty Secret” was Casey’s first big breakthrough on the internet. It all started with Neistat’s iPod battery dying, and Apple not offering a replacement program for the battery, instead suggesting that he just fork over the several hundred dollars and buy an entirely new iPod. Unsatisfied with the policy and Apple’s actions, Neistat took to the internet to expose the secret, becoming something of a technology vigilante. Two weeks and millions of views later, Apple unveiled a new iPod battery exchange plan. While the company claims the plan was in the works months before the release of Casey’s





video, the timing of the events is very suspicious. After the breakout success of “iPods Dirty Secret,” Neistat continued to make films, including a TV show called *The Neistat Brothers* and other vigilant type videos like “Bike Lanes by Casey Neistat.” However, neither of those projects garnered Casey 12 million Youtube subscribers: *The Daily Vlog* did.

Neistat’s daily vlog series has a unique feel to it in the space of YouTube. Each Vlog followed Casey throughout his day as he exercised, met up with a friend, commuted to a meeting on a boosted board, shared a camera hack, stayed in a fancy hotel suite, or flew in the Residence on an A380. Audiences were drawn in by the style of the vlog. It felt real, raw, unedited, and like you were there for the whole day,

even though the vlogs were, on average, only 15 minutes long. When interviewed about his creative process Neistat said. “I only edit chronologically—start with the first frame of the video and don’t stop or review until I’ve made it to the end. Then, I backtrack and can rearrange and all that. I find editing scenes first to be confusing. I love discovering the story by forcing it to reveal itself this way. Technically, I’m pretty boring. I almost only use straight cuts, I seldom color correctly, and it’s even rarer for me to put any digital effects into my work. I find the rawness of the edit lends itself to my style of storytelling. Rather than cover up any scars or evidence that this video was made by one person, I embrace those flaws—often embellish them. Leaning into the imperfections is a way for me to say to my audience that I







**Work Harder**  
- Casey Neistat

am not a pro, I am just a regular guy trying to tell a story." The key to his success is one sentence: "I am not a pro, I am just a regular guy trying to tell a story." People want to be able to connect with what they are watching, and sometimes it can be hard to do that because of edits or the way the person acts, but with Casey's vlogs, it is different. Leaving the imperfections and blemishes shows his audience "I'm human too." Because of that, the audience connects with his work on a deeper level, leaving them more satisfied and wanting to come back the next day and watch the vlog again. It is an amazingly simple idea that works wonders for storytelling and allows Casey to tell the story in a real way.

Casey also has this undeniable raw work ethic to him. "Work Harder." "Do More." Neistat has both of those phrases tattooed on his body as a reminder to do just those things. Looking at his past, it can be challenging to see how Neistat made it from being a high school dropout to one of the most successful YouTubers and filmmakers there is. The answer lies in his work ethic. "You realize that you'll never be the best-looking person in the room. You'll never be the smartest person in the room. You'll never be the most educated, or the most well-versed. You can never compete on those



levels. But what you can always compete on, the true egalitarian aspect to success is hard work. You can always work harder than the next guy.” Work more, do more, be more. That’s Neistat’s philosophy on how to grow and become better, and it has worked for him. From his humble beginnings to becoming one of the most famous filmmakers in the world because of his drive to work harder and tell stories.

It’s that central idea of storytelling as well: “I think that being true to your passion, abiding by an unspoken understanding that if YOU find it interesting that someone else will also find it interesting, that then you will ultimately find your audience.” Create what you want to create, and someone else will find it interesting or entertaining too. When looking at his work, it is clear how much emphasis Neistat places on telling the story he wants to tell. But at the same time, with the daily vlog, he does not force it to happen a certain way, rather letting it flow like a river does, and reach its end naturally, which in itself is a masterful way of telling a true story. And that is what Casey is all about; telling the real stories that happen to him and other people without needing to rely on the effects or transition to make it entering, but just on a good story because a good story has the ability to capture an audience like nothing else.

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By  
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