*Week 2 – Profile story*

*Task 1*

[*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwunZq1AB4Y*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwunZq1AB4Y)

1. Make notes on the video in order to be able to create a summary of what you heard during the first listening
2. Evaluate with your classmates whether you have the same points or different
3. Listen again, add anything additional

*Task 2*

*In the context of interviewing for a profile story, what do you think are the pros and cons/risks and the implications of interviewing:*

- a young person (your generation) vs. an old person (a generation older)?

- a friend of yours vs. a person you have only met once in your life?

- someone face-to-face vs. over Skype?

- someone in their home?

- someone from a culture rather similar to yours vs. someone from a culture very different from yours?

- a native speaker vs. a non-native speaker?

- taking notes during the interview vs. recording the interview vs. doing both?

*Task 3*

Katie Courie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eOynrI2eTM>

*a/ What does KC say about what makes someone a good interviewer?*

*b/ How does KC prepare for an interview?*

*c/ Why is listening so important?*

**Task 4: Read the profile story below and focus on the following questions:**

**a/ What is the role of the first three paragraphs in the story?**

**b/ What verbs are used to introduce quotes?**

**c/ In what tense(s) is the story told?**

**d/ Which quote would you choose for the title of the profile story?**

**e/ Find sections in which the interviewer comments critically on what the interviewee is telling him.**

**f/ Find sections in which the interviewer observes the interviewee’s gestures, body language, and voice.**

On a chilly morning in December 1988, computer analyst Jack Barsky embarked on his usual morning commute to his office on Madison Avenue in Manhattan, leaving his wife and baby daughter at home in Queens. As he entered the subway, he caught sight of something startling: a daub of red paint on a metal beam. Barsky had looked for it every morning for years; it meant he had a life-changing decision to make, and fast.

Barsky knew the drill. The red paint was a warning that he was in immediate danger, that he should hurry to collect cash and emergency documents from a prearranged drop site. From there, he would cross the border into Canada and contact the Soviet consulate in Toronto. Arrangements would be made for him to leave the country. He would cease to be Jack Barsky. The American identity he had inhabited for a decade would evaporate and he would return to his former life: that of Albrecht Dittrich, a chemist and KGB agent, with a wife and seven-year-old son waiting patiently for him in East Germany.

Barsky thought of his American daughter, Chelsea: could he really leave her? And, if he didn’t, how long could he evade both the KGB and US counterintelligence?

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On an unseasonably warm January afternoon in Atlanta, Georgia, Barsky strides into my hotel and gives me a firm handshake. Now 67, he has lived a more or less ordinary life for the past three decades. But the years spent undercover were hard on him and the people close to him. Only recently has he been able to come clean about his past. His late coming out has provided an overwhelming sense of release, Barsky says. “All those years, I had a little man up here,” he says, pointing to the sandy hair swept across his scalp in a side parting. “He would constantly watch what I was saying, and stop me from going into certain territory. And then the little man got killed off, and it was like an explosion.” These days, he is a garrulous conversationalist who requires little prodding.

Barsky’s story is a timely reminder of the immense resources the Russians were willing to expend during the cold war in their bid to embed agents in enemy territory. Hacking was not an option, and casual travel between Moscow and the west was much harder. “As I’m talking about this stuff, it feels unreal,” he says of his convoluted journey from East Germany to the US. “It feels as if it wasn’t me. But it was.”

Albrecht Dittrich was born in 1949, in a small East German town close to the Polish border. His father was a schoolteacher and a devoted Marxist-Leninist, his mother he describes as an intelligent woman who did not hug him enough. “She sent me away to boarding school when I was 14, and I never missed her.” Soon after, his parents divorced and he lost touch with his father.

An outstanding student, Dittrich took a chemistry degree at the university of Jena. During his fourth year, a man knocked on his dormitory door and asked if he might be interested in a career with Carl Zeiss, the lens manufacturer. The stranger soon gave up the charade: he was from the [Stasi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stasi), the East German intelligence agency. Dittrich was invited to dinner at a restaurant, where he was introduced to another man, Herman, who spoke German with a faint Russian accent; they might, Herman suggested, be interested in preparing him for undercover work. For months, Dittrich studied as normal, meeting Herman every Monday morning, first in the agent’s car and later in a safe house.

Dittrich had graduated and begun work on a doctorate when Herman sent him to East Berlin for three weeks with instructions to look up a man named Boris. After a few weeks’ training, he was driven to a Soviet military base on the outskirts of the city, where he and Boris met someone he assumed was a high-ranking KGB agent. The Soviet Union needed only willing spies, the man told him, and he was free to choose. He was given 24 hours to make a decision.

Dittrich was a committed Communist, but Barsky admits that ego and a romantic sense of what spying might involve played a greater part than ideology in his decision to agree. “I considered myself an intellectual and smarter than almost everybody,” he tells me, fiddling with black-framed reading glasses. “The appeal to my greatness played a big role in getting me over the line.” Most of the time, he sounds pure east coast American, though when I listen back to my tapes, a more Germanic intonation creeps in as the hours pass. Occasionally, a full-blown teutonic R escapes from the back of his throat. Rroom. Rruminate.

[…]

His route to the world of high-level policy-makers looked like a long and winding one. “They never really told me how I was supposed to infiltrate these circles,” Barsky smiles. “The assumptions behind it were very strange.” He took a job as a bicycle delivery man as a way to get to know the city. A man with a self-declared oversized ego, who graduated top of his class and went through years of elite KGB training, was now biking parcels around New York: wasn’t the enforced humility hard to take?

Barsky scratches gently behind his ear and smiles. “I remember this good-looking young lady screaming, ‘The messenger boy is here!’ It didn’t bother me. I never really thought, ‘Oh man, if you just knew.’” But if the memory is so clear nearly four decades later, I wonder if this is entirely true

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING A PROFILE STORY Spring 2022**

**Write an original profile story of 600+ words. This is going to be our first major assignment and will be part of the final evaluation. Therefore, pay attention to the following tips:**

*During the interview:*

* Observe and interpret the interviewee’s gestures, body language, and voice. Use colourful adjectives.
* Explore inconsistencies in what your interviewee is telling you to get a deeper understanding of his/her thinking.
* Focus on details. Show instead of telling: “Use all five senses when you interview someone. What are they wearing? Are they fiddling nervously with their pencil? Is there a chocolate smudge on their shirt? Is their hair stylishly spiked,“ (<http://journalism-education.cubreporters.org/2010/08/how-to-write-profile-story.html>). Remember that you are the reader’s eyes, ears, nose etc. and that your impressions and comments are important for the reader to be able to interpret the character of the interviewee.

*After the interview:*

* Write a profile story that tells an interesting story of your interviewee with obstacles on the way that s/he has (hopefully) overcome. Think about the transition that your interviewee has undergone: who was s/he at the beginning? Who is s/he now?
* **Use (online) dictionaries, Google tools and a spell checker to write grammatically correct sentences which contain rich and colourful vocabulary.**
* Avoid ending up with a list of your interviewee’s achievements, and little more. A profile story is not a CV. Identify your interviewee’s motivation for his/her actions.

*More tips from The New York Times:*

## How to Write a Profile Feature Article (adapted from <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/learning/students/writing/voices.html?mcubz=1>)

**1. Know the rules of attribution.** You must identify yourself as a reporter before beginning any conversation with a source. If you don't, his or her comments will not be considered "on the record" -- and therefore they will not be useable in your article. A source cannot retroactively take his or her comments "off the record" -- so if a source says at the end of an interview, "but that was all off the record," that person is out of luck.

**2. Ask open questions, be a good listener, and probe for anecdotes.** Get a source talking by asking questions that begin with "how" or "why." Once a source starts talking, try to keep him or her going by asking follow-up questions like, "What do you mean by that?" or "Can you give me an example?" ***Retell an anecdote which the source told you.***

**3. Prepare for your interviews.** Come to any interview armed with a basic list of questions you hope to ask. If the conversation goes well you can (and should) toss your questions and go with the flow, but if you have a terse source your questions should be a big help in keeping the conversation going.

**4. Write for your audience.** Realize who your readers are and what information is interesting for them.

Once you're ready to write:

**5. Decide on an approach.** Outlining your story is the best way to start. This means reviewing your notes, marking the most interesting or articulate quotes, making a list of important points, and creating a structure into which you can fit your information. Spend extra time on the beginning of your story. Readers will decide whether to proceed based on the capacity of your lede to grab their interest.

**6. Focus on what's most compelling.** Before you start writing, think through all the information you have and all the points you plan to make. What's surprising? What's important? What's useful?

**7. Show, don't tell.** It is tempting to describe a room as messy or a person as nice. But carefully-observed details and well-chosen verbs make a much stronger impression than adjectives.

**8. Don't overuse direct quotes.** Sometimes you can best capture a mood with your own prose. Think of direct quotes as icing on a cake -- they enhance, but they shouldn't form the substance of your story. The quotes you do use must be attributed, always. The reader should not have to guess who is talking.

**9. Fill holes.** Are there questions raised by your story that you have not answered? Ask a friend, teacher, editor or fellow reporter to read through your story and tell you what else he or she would want to know.

**10. Triple-check for accuracy.** Spell names right. Get grade levels and titles right. Get facts right. If you are unsure of something and cannot verify it, leave it out. Before you turn in your story, ask yourself these questions: Have I attributed or documented all my facts? Are the quotes in my story presented fairly and in context? Am I prepared to publicly defend my facts if they are questioned?

**11. Proofread.** Do not turn in a story with spelling or grammatical mistakes. If you're not sure of grammar, consult a copy of Raymond Murphy's *English Grammar in Use*