

Student Resource 4.4

Reading: People Who Love What They Do

Directions: Choose three profiles and answer the questions on Student Resource 4.3. The first profile is for practice.

Practice Profile: Jeanne Trufant, Video Game Reviewer

Jeanne Trufant grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana. Jeanne was a point guard on the basketball team. She also acted in school plays. Being physically active was important to her. She was also very social. She has always been outgoing, confident, and good at talking to people. But her favorite thing to do was to play video games and play around with computers. She'd lose track of time and her mom would tell her to get off the computer! Today, nobody tells Jeanne to stop playing video games, because she reviews them for a living.

Jeanne works for one of the world's best-known gaming websites. She gets copies of games before they are released to the public. She plays them and then writes a review so that gamers know what to expect before they buy a game.

Jeanne didn't study to become a game reviewer. In college, she majored in her favorite subject, history. But Jeanne's job requires many skills that she developed while she was in college. She has to write very well and quickly, because the writers have daily deadlines for producing new articles. She also needs good computer skills. Since she writes for a website, she needs to understand how to publish articles, pictures, and videos to the Internet. Since Jeanne has always enjoyed learning new things as well as working with her hands, she enjoyed developing these skills.

Jeanne has to meet lots of people and do interviews. Sometimes she travels to other countries to research a story about a video game that is being developed. She loves traveling! She needs to be comfortable talking to just about anybody. She has talked to famous athletes as well as game designers that nobody has heard of. She needs good listening skills to conduct her interviews. Jeanne also has to be comfortable talking about her job. She regularly records podcasts or video clips, which are posted on her website. She has to know a lot about games and how they are developed. Sometimes companies ask her advice before they finish putting a game together. Finally, Jeanne is really, really good at playing the games.

Jeanne works long hours, and she could make a lot more money in another line of work. But she gets to try all different kinds of games, meet lots of interesting people, and travel all over the world. She wouldn't trade her job for anything!

Alex Brownstein, Dog Trainer, Guide Dogs for the Blind

If you drive around San Rafael, California, you might see a man with a Seeing Eye dog. But the man isn't blind, and the dog isn't leading him down the street. Instead they are walking and stopping, turning around, and walking some more. The man, Alex Brownstein, is talking to the dog and watching him carefully. He gives the dog lots of treats out of a bag attached to his belt. Alex is a special kind of trainer who teaches dogs how to be guide dogs for blind people.

When a potential guide dog is about a year old, he comes to live at the training center. He is paired with a trainer who works with him every day. At first the dog doesn't know how to do anything. But by the time he graduates, the trainer has taught him how to do a whole lot of different things. Guide dogs even learn to think for themselves! For example, if the dog is leading a blind person and notices a low tree branch up ahead, he steers the blind person around it. Maybe the blind person thinks it's okay to cross the street, but the dog can see a bicyclist coming. If they step into the street, the blind person will get hit by the bicycle. In that case, the dog will disobey a command and keep the blind person out of the street so she doesn't get hit.

Alex is one of those people who is very good with animals. He is patient and calm, observant and thoughtful. Growing up, he loved spending time with animals (sometimes even more than people!). He thought about being a veterinarian one day. During college, he started working as a volunteer at an animal shelter. He taught the dogs basic obedience—to sit, stay, and follow other commands. He worked with the dogs to make them adoptable. Alex realized that he had a talent for training dogs. Alex knows each dog is different, and he has to work with each dog in a slightly different way. He is also comfortable being on his own, without talking to many people in a day. The hardest part of Alex's job is saying goodbye to the dog he has spent so much time with. But Alex can keep his goal in mind: giving a blind person the gift of an amazing companion who can keep her safe and take her anywhere.

Josh Worthington, Elder Care Specialist

Josh Worthington has always had what his grandmother called “a healing touch.” Josh is the oldest of nine brothers and sisters. His parents both worked two jobs just to pay the bills, so Josh was left in charge a lot of the time. His grandmother was the first one to notice how good he was at taking care of people. When a younger brother or sister skinned a knee, Josh could fix it up and get the crying to stop in no time.

Josh loved to visit his grandparents even though they lived in an “old people’s home.” But he noticed that many of his grandparents’ friends never got any visitors at all. He started to visit other people living in the retirement community, and he found that he was good at cheering people up. More than that, he really enjoyed listening to the stories older people told about their lives.

When Josh was getting ready to graduate from high school, his parents didn’t have enough money to send Josh to a four-year college. That was okay with Josh, who wasn’t that interested in college anyway. But he asked his parents if they could help him pay for some classes at the community college.

“What will you study?” his mom asked. Josh showed them a brochure he had picked up. The community college was offering a Medical Assistant training program that specialized in working with the elderly.

“The number of older people in the country is increasing as the Baby Boomers get older,” Josh said. “They need people to look after them—not full-time nurses or doctors, but people to help them in other ways. I could help them get to appointments and do chores for them. I could handle minor medical tasks like taking their blood pressure or giving them medications. The home where Grandma and Grandpa live is always looking for trained workers—I bet I could get a job there. Then I could see Grandma and Grandpa every day!”

Josh’s parents looked the brochure over. The training program was very thorough. Josh would be able to get additional training for things like how to deal with people who have Alzheimer’s. His parents felt relieved. This was something Josh was really excited about, and they knew he’d be good at it. Best of all, he’d be able to really help the older people he took care of—and make them feel special.

Tamara Lampitoc, Political Consultant

If you watch the news, you've probably seen people that Tamara Lampitoc has worked for. Tamara is a political consultant. That means that she helps people get elected to public office. Tamara has worked on local campaigns for mayor and city council, and on state campaigns for governor, senator, and representative.

Tamara's grandfather was a city councilman. She used to go to some of his campaign events and victory parties. As she grew up, she had summer jobs answering phones in his office or going door-to-door to promote his campaign. Tamara's sister and brother hated it. They thought the council meetings were boring. They were embarrassed when their grandfather had fundraisers and asked people for money. But Tamara loved it.

Tamara got very involved with political causes when she went to college. She volunteered on a presidential campaign and helped organize some student demonstrations. She also studied political science in college and started reading up on current events.

Today, Tamara is what people call a "news junkie." She subscribes to three newspapers and several news magazines, and she's always reading the news on her smartphone. She knows about current events all over the world. She can answer questions about the latest bill in Congress or the president's most recent approval ratings.

Tamara is good with people, although sometimes she can be a little bossy. She is confident and speaks well in front of a crowd. She has no problem asking people for money if it's for a cause or a candidate she believes in. Tamara is extremely organized, which is important. One of her responsibilities is to keep track of her candidates' schedules so they don't miss an important meeting or public appearance.

Tamara is also a big fan of social networking sites. She's on Facebook, Twitter—you name it, and Tamara has a profile. She uses these sites to keep in touch with people. She also encourages them to participate in events or causes that she believes in. Tamara is passionate about making the world a better place.

Marc Tourniaire, Medical Device Designer

When Marc Tourniaire graduated from high school, he knew he loved three things—science, art, and surfing. He planned to be a doctor and take art classes as a way to relax. After he got through college and medical school, he would open a medical practice someplace near the beach. That way he could sneak out and go surfing before work each day. But his plans changed dramatically during his junior year of college.

Marc and his buddies had saved up for months to take a surfing trip to Australia. On the third day of their trip, Marc and his best friend, Ben, went surfing early in the morning. Ben went in first, and before Marc knew what happened, a shark had attacked. Ben survived, but his left leg had to be amputated at the knee.

Marc spent a lot of time with Ben, helping him get to all the doctor's appointments. He was surprised by how many different people had to work together to help Ben get a prosthetic leg, and he started thinking. He was having a hard time with some of the really advanced pre-med courses. He still loved science and wanted to help people. Maybe he could work in the medical field without being a doctor.

Marc went with Ben to pick out his prosthetic to replace his amputated leg. Marc was amazed at how many choices there were. Ben was always an athletic guy, and he picked out a very high-tech fiberglass leg that would let him continue to run marathons. But Marc noticed that there really weren't very many options for people who wanted a realistic-looking prosthetic. And that gave him an idea.

Today, Marc works as a medical device designer. His specialty is unique, individualized prosthetics. If a person has lost an arm, she goes to see Marc. First he will take photographs of her other arm. He uses those photographs and his art skills to sculpt an arm that matches—the same skin tone, even the same length of fingernails. Then he does a series of fittings, where the client tries on the arm and practices using it. Marc makes tiny adjustments until it fits perfectly.

In addition to his art and medical knowledge, Marc needs to have good listening skills and be empathetic. His experience with Ben helped him to gain these skills. He understands that he is working with people who have gone through a very difficult experience, and he needs to be as understanding as possible in order to do his job. Sometimes it's challenging, but Marc feels good because he knows his work has truly made a difference in someone's life.

Giovanna Volpi, Wind Farm Technician

Ever since she was a little girl, Giovanna Volpi knew she wanted to be her own boss. She loved the idea of starting up a business and maybe doing something mechanical. In high school, she took welding and automotive repair classes at the local community college. Giovanna said she never wanted to have to rely on anybody else to do work that she could do herself.

Today, Giovanna runs a wind farm—a collection of windmills that generate power. Giovanna went to school to learn how to operate the machinery. Then she started out working as an assistant on a wind farm. She had to climb inside the windmill and maintain the machinery or fix it if it broke down. It's a good thing that Giovanna is athletic and not afraid of heights, because the windmills can be 100 feet tall!

After several years, Giovanna was able to get some investors to help her start her own wind farm. She manages it, and the investors get a share of the profits. Giovanna recently signed a big deal for her wind farm. Her farm will provide electricity to the utility company that provides power to San Francisco! At first, Giovanna had to maintain all the equipment on her own. But now that the wind farm is making money, she has hired a few employees. She still climbs into the windmills every now and then, just to make sure she remembers how to fix them.

In addition to her mechanical skills, Giovanna has learned through experience how to run a business. In fact, she's thinking about going back to school and getting an MBA, or a master's degree in business administration. With investors and budgets and payroll and insurance, there's a lot to think about! Giovanna works hard, and she's invested a lot of her own money in the business. So if something goes wrong, she'll have to start all over from scratch. But she loves the fact that she's her own boss, and she's definitely doing something unique, just as she always said she would.

Victor Costales, Scenic Painter

Victor Costales is a scenic painter. He creates the murals and wall décor you see in hotels, restaurants, and other public buildings.

Victor was the sort of kid who would rather draw pictures on his homework than answer the questions. He graduated from high school and went to art school instead of a traditional four-year college. Victor loved doing nothing but art in his classes, but he thought his classmates were kind of snobby. Their paintings were weird and hard to understand. Victor wanted to find a way to make art easy to understand. He wanted to bring beauty to everyday places.

After art school, Victor was waiting tables at a little Italian café and trying to figure out what to do with his life. One day he heard the owners complaining about how dingy and run-down the café was looking. That gave Victor an idea. He offered to repaint the café for them. But not just paint it—redecorate it by creating a mural of Italian scenery along one wall. The owners were doubtful, but Victor sketched out a small version of the scene he could paint. The owners decided to let him do it. Victor's mural turned out beautifully, and the owners were thrilled. Pretty soon, Victor was getting phone calls from restaurants and shops all over town.

Today, Victor is in demand by businesses all over the world. He has painted murals that are reproduced in nationwide chain restaurants like The Olive Garden. His murals also cover the walls of several famous Las Vegas hotels. In addition to his obvious artistic talents, Victor needs to have good communication skills. Often a business owner has an idea of what she wants in a mural, but she can't draw or paint. So she describes it to Victor, and he has to turn that description into a work of art.

Victor is a big success now and can choose the jobs that really interest him. He has made friends with some other younger artists, and he passes jobs onto them if he's too busy or not interested. He also has time to devote to working on public murals to make inner-city neighborhoods more beautiful. Best of all, Victor has finally succeeded in making art something that that you don't have to go to a museum to enjoy.

Plan Ahead Lesson 4

My Values and Place in the World

Sara Ann Garcia, Organic Farmer

Every morning, Sara Ann Garcia is up before sunrise. She is the third generation of her family to run the Garcia Farm. It's hard, physical work, but she wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

Sara Ann spends her days outside. She does a lot of work herself, but she also has a number of student interns who work for her part-time throughout the year. Even when it's raining or very hot, you'll find Sara Ann and the students outside with the crops.

Most of Sara Ann's training came from working alongside her parents as they ran the farm. Like them, she is kind of quiet but very focused. She notices every small change in the weather, the soil, and the crops. She prefers to get things done than to hang out or watch TV. She is restless and doing something physical feels right to her—especially if it's outside. But she also went to college and got a degree in agricultural science. She studied biology and ecology and even chemistry, so she understands how to use fertilizers and pesticides.

After studying all those pesticides, Sara Ann decided to make the Garcia Farm organic. That means that she only uses natural products to fertilize the soil and keep insect pests down to reasonable levels. Growing organic food is even harder work, but Sara Ann likes knowing that she's doing something that is better for the earth. Organic food is also healthier for people to eat. Now that she has stopped using chemical pesticides, birds and ladybugs are starting to appear. They are natural pest controls.

Sara Ann sells her produce to two main clients. One is an organic grocery service, which delivers organic produce to people's houses. Sara Ann's other client is the local school board, which buys her fruits and vegetables to serve in the school cafeteria. Next school year, she hopes to organize farm tours for elementary school classes so that younger kids can learn more about the source of their food. Sara Ann feels good about the fact that her food helps people be healthier. She loves waking up each morning, knowing that she can spend the day quietly working away on the farm, enjoying the fresh air and the beautiful scenery around her.