

Defining Angle, Topic, and Purpose

1. What is the chosen topic?

The profile will focus on the play-by-post Legend of the Five Rings role-playing game Shadows over Naishou: Painted City.

2. What personal angle can be presented on the topic?

Role-playing games are generally under-studied, and games other than Dungeons & Dragons receive even less attention; working on another game entirely inherently offers new information. Also, I helped to administer the game, so I have access to more material than is normally publicly viewable.

3. What is the purpose for writing?

I have long treated role-playing games in my academic and related work. I hope to add to my body of treatments of that work, as well as to advocate for the gaming community of which I am and have long been part.

Analyzing Readers

The “local” community in the present case likely refers less to physical locality (since the event being treated is one that occurred wholly online) and more to the community of those who play role-playing games and the proximal, overlapping communities of tabletop gamers and science-fiction and fantasy fans. Although international, commonalities other than of interest can be found among them. Geographically, most are in Northern or Western Europe or the Americas, and, by report, most are in the middle socioeconomic strata. Many are or have been labeled as “nerds” or their cultural equivalents, and they exhibit the enthusiasm for material, attention to detail, and legacy of abuse concomitant with that label.

While such an audience is likely to be familiar with gaming terms, generally, members of the audience will likely not be familiar with specifics of setting or mechanics. As such, general gaming terms can be passed over without comment, but game-specific terms will need definition. Given the generally high reading level of most gamers, though, the definitions will not likely demand much reduction in complexity of vocabulary or diction. Playfulness of language and reference will also likely go over well; the profile is about a game, after all, so a ludic approach may work well with readers interested in the event and similar events.

Reflecting on the Role of Writer

As noted above, I helped to administer the event the profile will treat. As such, I was intimately involved with its development and deployment, having invested significant time and effort into making it run well and smoothly. The event ended not so long ago, so it is still fresh in mind. I am also in line to help with future installments in the series of which Painted City is part, so I am invested in its success.

Presenting the event favorably will help me to recruit others into future, related events. In effect, it will help me to continue to enjoy parts of a long-held hobby, specifically as it has focused on a global gaming community of which I’ve been part throughout my adult life. And, as

is also noted above, I have done some scholarly and semi-scholarly work on role-playing games; the work has appeared informally on my personal and professional blogs, as well as in conference presentations and in at least one capstone experience during my course of formal study. Continuing in that line serves a minor research agenda for me, and one to which I am pleased to return from time to time.

Further, as something of a meta-level concern, I am interested in providing useful examples for my students and others. Treating seriously what seems a flippant topic can help with that. For one, my doing so makes the example itself less potentially intimidating. For another, treating a small-scale, seemingly frivolous topic opens up the possibility that students will do the same. By treating such things, they will likely have better success in their work for the class and, it is to be hoped, in the writing they do after their formal schooling is done.