



# Assignment Sheet: Genre Analysis

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## 1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In your educational experiences, you have worked in writing situations after the “generic conventions” have been established. The rhetorical situation is always predetermined and familiar, at least to your teachers. In this class, you have been introduced to academic journal articles and told to “mushfake” in that genre. All your experience has prepared you to start with the genre and write from there.

For this assignment, instead of figuring out how to fit with an already-established genre, your goal is to peel back the conventions and see what’s behind them. We are going to look at what creates a genre in the first place. You are trying to answer this question: **What are the origins, contexts of use, affordances, and constraints of a particular genre?** By analyzing the genre’s origins, you will focus on the recurring rhetorical situation that created the genre you are examining.

TABLE 1. Genre Analysis Grading Rubric

<b>A</b>	<b>Evaluates</b> how the relevant discourse community uses the genre “in the communicative furtherance of its aims” (Swales, 472)
<b>B</b>	<b>Illustrates</b> intertextuality within the genre, drawing from the collected samples as evidence
<b>C</b>	<b>Explains</b> , using evidence gathered from genre samples, the scene of the genre’s use
<b>D</b>	<b>States</b> that the genre is used in a specific situation but fails to support the claim
<b>F</b>	<b>Omits</b> a discussion of the scene leading to the genre’s use

## 2. REQUIRED READING

For this assignment, you will need to read “Generalizing about Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept” by Amy Devitt, available through Webcourses, plus “Intertextuality and the Discourse Community” by James Porter, found on pages 86–96 of your writing about writing (WAW) text.

## 3. PROCEDURE

Before you write your draft:

- (1) Select a genre to study based on your in-class brainstorming. What are you interested in enough to study in depth?
- (2) Collect samples of the genre. The more, the merrier, but you need at least three separate samples.
- (3) Identify the scene and describe the situation in which the genre is used. Include discussions of the setting, subject, participants, and purpose of your genre. See the Genre Analysis handout for specific questions to help with this analysis.
- (4) Identify and describe the genre’s features. Refer to the Genre Analysis handout.
- (5) Hypothesize what those elements reveal about the genre’s scene/situation of use.

In your paper:

- (1) Make a claim about what the genre you have chosen tells us about the people who use it and the scene in which it is used.
- (2) Support your claim with the evidence you gathered above.

To make your paper exceptional:

- (1) Identify, based on your samples, the intertextual characteristics and content specific to this genre.
- (2) Evaluate how well the genre you chose meets the needs you identified. Consideration of affordances and constraints will be helpful here.