



Assignment Sheet: Genre Analysis

Chris Friend • ENC1101 • Spring 2014

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to Amy Devitt (1993), “Genres develop ... because they respond appropriately to situations that writers encounter repeatedly. In principle ... writers first respond in fitting ways and hence similarly to recurring situations; then, the similarities among those appropriate responses become established as generic conventions. In practice ... genres already exist and hence already constrain responses to situations” (p. 576, emphasis added).¹

In your educational experiences, you written in various situations only *after* the “generic conventions” have been established by others. The rhetorical situation has been manufactured by teachers or test authors. For your first paper in this class, you were introduced to academic journal articles and told to “mushfake” in that genre. Your school experiences have prepared you to start with the genre and write from there.

For this assignment, you will peel back the conventions to see what’s behind. You will look at what *creates* a genre in the first place as you work 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.

¹Devitt, A. (1993). Generalizing about genre: New conceptions of an old concept. *College Composition and Communication*, 44(4):573–86.

TABLE 1. Genre Analysis Grading Rubric

Great	Evaluates how the relevant DC uses the genre to achieve its goals
Good	Illustrates intertextuality within the genre
Okay	Explains , with evidence from genre samples, the scene of the genre’s use
Poor	States the situation of 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 intrigues you enough to study it 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.