

Genre within a Genre
Student Activity
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ENG 101

1. **CHOOSE!** Choose a “nontraditional” genre of writing- something you might not think of when you hear the word genre. Examples might include post it notes, recipe cards, text messaging, thank-you notes, nutritional food guides, CD inserts, postcards, grocery lists, instant messaging, etc. These name just a few, but you may certainly pick something else along these lines that is unique.

2. **THINK!** Examine what defines this genre. Maybe do some research into how it has developed, and/or describe the parameters and “secret language” of it. Think critically and analyze what distinguishes this genre from any other form of writing. Perhaps even make some notes on what you have discovered.

3. **DO!** Then, demonstrate your understanding of the genre by actually using the genre to present some part of what you have learned about it. Use the elements of the genre, but also be creative and clever in your presentation. This part will be an example of the genre itself, but created/used by you to present your analysis.

Example: For example (and you can't use this now, because it is the example) if I were going to do this assignment and select voicemail as my genre (which isn't exactly written, so that is why I'm using it).

I would first think about and research what defines voicemail, probably breaking this into several categories such as 1) how audience plays an important element- aka, who people leave a message for determines what kind of a message it is; 2) the formality of tone or casual nature of language in voicemails; 3) typical reasons voicemails are left; 4) what kinds of “leave it at the beep” messages people use and why; and finally, 5) how people are uncomfortable or at ease in leaving messages and what that sounds like, and what you can tell about a person by how they leave a voicemail. I'd make a bulleted outline/list of what I thought about, and mention a few sources to support some ideas I had.

Then, I'd record maybe three examples of voicemail messages, both the “you've reached...” part and the actual message. The voicemail messages themselves would somehow be about voicemail, but also reveal what I've learned. So, I might make one formal message from a nervous employee to a boss, paying attention to have my tone match what I've uncovered in my analysis, but the content of the message would be about voicemails themselves...maybe saying that I've discovered this new information, and well, I thought it would be useful to send as a memo to the other employees, but I am really going to leave that up to the expertise of my boss, and if he has any questions, he can contact me at this number, and... you get the idea.

Notes for In-Class Activity:

Objective: Examine nontraditional and social writing modes to expand the concept of all written texts as genres. Begin a consideration of genres as more than features, but also context.

Circle up. Each person shares their nontraditional genre, explaining it in about one minute. Then, in response, one person must volunteer one of two things: 1) something that can be said about society because of the nature of the genre, aka, what conclusion can be drawn or 2) why the genre is the way it is (connecting purpose/audience to features)

The catch: everyone has to respond at one point, and the person who responds also goes next. The idea is that this forces participation from everyone, and limits each person to one time. However, they can also help out each other.

If there is extra time on the second day, make sure to talk about what we take away from this—the context, trajectory, multimodality of genres.