GENRES THAT WORK IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

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What do you write?
Genre makes a difference

“Describe your room, and explain why it’s a good place to study.”

“Write an estate-agent’s listing for your flat or dormitory room.”

“Compare you and your best friend.”

“Write an email to the Curriculum Committee comparing your experience with print textbooks and e-books.”
Writing is transitive

We don’t just write

We write something to someone for some purpose

We write in genres
Understanding Genre

• easily recognised by members of a community
• a social purpose
• recurring way of using language

(Hyland, 2007)
“Teachers need to create opportunities for students to write *different types of texts* and help them focus on *how those texts are most effectively constructed* so that students can *extend their repertoires* and make register choices that realize *new and more challenging genres.*”

(Schleppegrell, 2004)
Theory to practice

Teaching/Learning Cycle

“Guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience.”
(Martin, 2009)

Great little radio!

ATMOS-FEAR 3000
Weather Radio

Finally, a small emergency\(^1\) weather radio that really works! I’ve owned many radios in this category, but they are all terrible compared to the ATMOS-FEAR 3000. A good emergency radio needs to work even if you don’t use it for a long time. It also needs to receive radio signals\(^2\) from a wide area. The Atmos-Fear gets it right. It has a solar panel\(^3\) on the top and a flashlight on one end.

It has a hand crank\(^4\) for manual power, or it can run on batteries\(^5\) or an external power source. The radio starts easily and charges fast. Its reception\(^5\) is excellent; I can hear the weather report from anywhere in my house. The display is easy to read, too. The Atmos-Fear 3000 comes with a power output for a cell phone, so you can charge your phone if you lose power. The only feature I didn’t like was the charging indicator light. It’s too bright, so I don’t want it near me at night. Apart from that one small problem, I highly recommend this great little radio.
# Deconstruction: Product Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Attract attention</td>
<td>Not a sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Establish <em>ethos</em></td>
<td>Present perfect verbs, Use of “I”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Inform readers</td>
<td>Adjectives, Present tense verbs, Coordinating conjunctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations</td>
<td>Express opinions</td>
<td>Evaluative language, Relative (adjective) clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Reasons</td>
<td>Persuade readers</td>
<td>Subordinating conjunctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation and stars</td>
<td>Call to action</td>
<td>Adverbs, Modal verbs</td>
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“Guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience”

(Martin, 2009, p. 15)

Joint Construction (Collaborative Writing)

1. Write a short text in pairs/groups
2. Rewrite a bad text/paragraph
3. Put jumbled sentences in order
4. Write a text from notes
5. Information gap
6. Whole-class Joint Construction

(Feez, 1988)
Why do Collaborative Writing?

• “Languaging” (Swain, 2006)
• “Collaborative scaffolding” (Donato, 1994)
• “Cognitive apprenticeship” (Daiute & Dalton, 1996)
• Compared to individual writing, CW is often:
  • More complete
  • Higher quality
  • Somewhat more sophisticated
  • More accurate
  • Shorter

(Storch, 2005, 2013; Storch & Wigglesworth 2009)
Let’s write a product review!

Short and sweet, but not very Scottish
As a true Scot, I’ve tasted a wide variety of shortbreads starting with my granny Morag’s famous recipe. Tesco’s finest All-Butter Shortbread Fingers fall somewhat short of this high standard but may be an economical and welcome addition to your biscuit tin if you don’t have time to bake your own.

The shortbread arrives in a smart but rather generic black plastic tray that is deceptively deep. The biscuits are pleasant but quite dry and crumbly rather than buttery. Despite claims to the contrary on the outer box, they do not melt in the mouth, but the taste is satisfyingly sweet.

Overall, Tesco’s shortbread looks better than it tastes. It’s just not my cup of tea because it lacks authenticity despite its alleged origin.
What happens during Joint Construction?

- Reviewing the genre stages
- Eliciting words, phrases, and sentences
- Recasting sentences
- Expanding on sentences
- Explaining language choices
- “Languaging”
- Developing strategies

(Caplan, 2017; Dreyfus, Humphrey, & McNaught, 2008)
Independent Writing: Genre-Based Assignments

• Not every assignment is an essay (Johns)
• Not everything is an argument
• Rhetorical modes are not genres
• But they are still important
• Writing is “goal-directed” (Martin)
## From Mode to Genre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetorical Mode</th>
<th>Genres</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Company profile, Observation report, Information pamphlet, Architecture review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Personal narrative, Research paper (methods section), Movie synopsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Fundraising letter, Business proposal, Argument essay (thesis-driven), Discussion, Challenge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Genres Across the Curriculum

- **Intermediate**: Possible purposes for writing include: story, description, journals, email, personal letters, reports, short magazine/newspaper articles, single-paragraph answers to questions, and short essays, answering reading comprehension questions in complete sentences.

- **High Intermediate**: Possible purposes of writing include: essays, reports, email, personal letters, letter to the editor, newspaper/magazine articles, business correspondence, and creative writing.

(From the University of Delaware ELI Writing Curriculum, 2012)
• **Low advanced**: Newspaper/magazine articles, reports, business correspondence, case analysis, reviews, critical responses, creative writing, and essays.

• **Advanced academic**: (auto-)biography, critique, arts review, scientific report (food diary), rhetorical analysis, advert analysis, literature review, data commentary, documented argument, editorial, observation report
Genres in your classroom

For each writing assignment, ask yourself:
- What is the genre?
- Who writes texts like these?
- Why are they written?
- How are they written?
- How does language work in the genre?

Try the Teaching/Learning Cycle
- Analyse exemplars with your students
- Study the staging
- Expand linguistic resources
- Write the genre together
- Students write when they are ready
- Continue to use writing processes
- Connect to other genres
In Summary ...

**GUIDANCE**
- Models! Textbooks, Authentic sources, Teacher-created, Joint Construction, Former students

**THROUGH INTERACTION**
- Collaborative writing
- Asking questions and negotiating answers
- Making thinking visible

**IN THE CONTEXT OF SHARED EXPERIENCE**
- Write about the coffee shop we visited
- vs. write about your hero
Writing is transitive:
we write *something* to *someone* for *some purpose*
Thank you!

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