DYNAMIC ACTIVITIES

FOR FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

96 WAYS TO IMMERSE, INSPIRE, AND CAPTIVATE STUDENTS

EDITED BY

MICHAL REZNIZKI • DAVID T. COAD

Dynamic Activities for First-Year Composition

96 Ways to Immerse, Inspire, and Captivate Students

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Introduction: Why Dynamic Activities?

This book is a unique and exciting contribution to the field of composition studies because it includes hands-on and practical activities for the composition classroom that teachers, both new and experienced, can put into practice right away. It addresses many elements that are at the core of teaching first-year composition: genre, rhetoric, reading strategies, argument, and revision, to name a few. It approaches these topics by providing dozens of successful and accessible exercises and activities that writing instructors from all over the country have been using in the classroom. What is so unique and amazing about this book is that it gives concrete attention to pedagogical practice, expanding on existing materials such as Bean, the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative, Activities and Assignment Archive by *Writing Spaces*, Cohn, and many others. By focusing on and emphasizing pedagogical practices, it strengthens and brings to the forefront the practical in the teaching of writing.

Who hasn't spent hours thinking about and trying to plan classroom activities that will be helpful for students to learn and engage with specific concepts? A big part of being a teacher and especially a writing instructor means spending hours on lesson planning in a class where most of the time is spent discussing readings or ideas in groups. Many of us chat with various colleagues in person and online, seeking insights into their classroom activities. The lengths we go to find and develop quality activities for our classrooms are immense. As two writing instructors who have been teaching in the field for more than a decade, we have had similar experiences and have been looking for a book like this one for a while. This book cuts to the chase: it includes practical and engaging activities and saves you the

time of coming up with and planning new activities. For writing instructors who don't have time to read pedagogical articles or other discourse-heavy resources and then convert them into practice, this book is the practical application with all the steps right up front. It allows instructors to see what their colleagues are doing—dozens of proven successful activities are at your fingertips.

First-year composition (FYC) is a course that requires constant, high-level, creative thinking from instructors about how to engage students in active learning. That is because many FYC courses are discussion based and may become monotonous for the students and the instructor when the same activities are used over and over again. In turn, this repetition makes the learning process boring and less effective. FYC courses are very different from other general education courses and introductory courses in the major; that is, FYC courses are more intense to teach because the main goal of these courses in most cases is to have students practice and learn the skill of writing (in addition to acquiring knowledge about ideas and theories in the field). While some instructors are teaching writing concepts and theories (such as in the Writing about Writing and Teaching for Transfer approaches), those instructors still need to expose students to an abundance of activities in which they have the opportunity to practice that skill. Therefore, this book offers an active learning approach that makes the composition classroom activities more engaging, lively, and diverse—activities that enhance student engagement and learning.

In addition to this book being practical and user-friendly for any writing instructor, it is also an indispensable resource for both new and experienced teachers of writing. On the one hand, it is useful for new teachers and can be used as a textbook to help graduate students who are learning to teach writing develop activities for their future classrooms. On the other hand, it also helps more experienced writing instructors reflect on their classroom practices. It offers ways to revise current approaches to teaching writing and provides ideas that they have likely never thought of before.

Why Active Learning?

Active learning is a concept that has been around for a while (Poppenhagen et al.; Bouton and Garth), and proponents of this approach envision it in contrast to passive learning in which students attend lectures and "absorb" knowledge through listening. The concept of active learning, developed since the 1980s, has become more focused on student engagement, a variety of activities, and active participation. Another definition of active learning includes the idea that learning itself is an activity in which students are engaged participants in their own knowledge production. Students learn by doing and by taking part in a variety of activities, as "learning is not an automatic consequence of pouring information into a student's head. It requires the learner's own mental involvement and doing" (Silberman ix). One of the definitions that represents the values and ideas in the book is the following: "Active learning refers to the idea that students are actively engaged in the learning process, rather than passively absorbing lectures. Active learning involves discussion, problem solving, presentations, group work such as buzz groups, brainstorming, roleplays, debates—anything that gets students interacting with each other and engaging with the lecture material" (Revell and Wainwright 209). In other words, active learning is not just about not being passive; our perception of active learning, as defined above, is about using a variety of activities in a lively manner that helps students better internalize, learn, understand, and apply course concepts as their own.

One of the main reasons to use active learning strategies is because it tremendously benefits our students and their learning. According to Faust and Paulson, using active learning in the classroom increases "students' active participation in the course" (5). It also encourages students "to apply course concepts to wider context as well as explore their own attitudes and values" (5). As instructors, we want students to be in control of their own learning process and to understand course concepts beyond the specific context of the class. Having students be more active in the classroom shifts the responsibility of learning into the students' hands. This shift of power from teacher to

student in the learning process also increases student motivation to learn and to apply the material outside the class.

In addition, several research studies (Faust and Paulson; Johnson) have shown that the use of active learning in the classroom was very effective and beneficial for students. According to a study by Johnson, students in active learning classes had generally more positive experiences from the course, developed cooperation and collaboration, and encountered higher-order thinking challenges that they would likely encounter in the workplace. In addition, Bean indicates that active learning tasks used in the classroom "evoke a high level of critical thinking, help students wrestle productively with a course's big questions, and teach disciplinary ways of seeing, knowing, and doing" (2). Moreover, Johnson also indicated that using active learning in the classroom was more satisfying to teach for the instructor, even though it required more preparation. In that regard, active learning has also been shown to create a more "effective means of communication between instructors and students" (Faust and Paulson 5). Clearly, using active learning tasks and activities is very beneficial and effective both for students and instructors, and it is an approach that undeniably enhances and promotes learning.

The Activities

This book is a collection of active learning activities specifically aimed at the college composition classroom and especially first-year composition. Our contributors come from a variety of institutions: community colleges, research institutions, state universities, and private institutions. Each contributor is actively teaching and contributing one of their most effective activities for engaging students in a thoughtful, active, and pedagogically sound manner. These activities are practical teaching ideas that could be used as a quick exercise to engage students on the one hand but also as a task that fills up a whole class session on the other. All the activities have the potential to transform and inspire your teaching experience as well as your students' participation and engagement, resulting in better learning outcomes.

The activities in this book challenge students to engage in the learning process and to actively participate in their own knowledge making about writing. Activities inspired by speed dating, the heads-up game, and social media phenomena such as memes, emojis, and swiping right all ask students to take the learning process into their own hands, exploring their own attitudes and values in relation to writing. The book is divided into nine sections: "Fun Ways to Teach Genre"; "Dynamic Ways to Teach Rhetoric"; "Inspiring Ways to Teach Composing and Revising"; "Captivating Ways to Teach Argument and Synthesis"; "Exciting Ways to Teach Visual and Social Media"; "Engaging Ways to Teach Reading Skills"; "Invigorating Ways to Teach Research"; "Immersive Ways to Teach Grammar and Language"; and "Thrilling Ways to Think outside the Curriculum."

Each section focuses on different elements in the composition classroom, elements used and taught in every FYC classroom. The activities our contributors outline in this book aim to meet the different approaches to the teaching of FYC and to supply meaningful solutions to teaching composition in a pedagogically diverse era. The activities here address the teaching of writing from diverse and wide-ranging angles. Each activity focuses on a different element or concept being used in the teaching of writing. These include concepts about rhetoric and writing (Adler-Kassner and Wardle), skills-based learning, Teaching for Transfer (Ebest; Yancey et al.), social justice, digital rhetoric, and many other skills and concepts students need to be successful in the complex twenty-first century world of writing. This book addresses this current context of FYC with activities that meet the needs of FYC instructors today.

Each of the activities includes a very simple and easy to follow structure: "Basic Information," "Step-by-Step Instructions," and "Impressions." The Basic Information includes brief guidelines on how much time the activity takes and how much preparation it requires. The Instructions section is a step-by-step direction on how to conduct the activity, and the Impressions are general thoughts about the activity as well as specific tips and recommendations for implementing the activity successfully.

Finally, what is truly remarkable about this book is that it will not only change the ways in which writing instructors plan and teach in the classroom, but it will also tremendously affect students and the ways in which they learn from, interact with, and experience this foundational course. The different activities included in this collection can increase students' engagement, enhance their learning, and generally improve classroom instruction and teaching. These activities do not call for a complete makeover of a course but are ideas and exercises that can be implemented in any writing course with any reading/writing materials. Our hope is that you will try many activities from this book in your own classroom, using them to leverage student interest and to deepen the material you already use. As you try them, you may want to change them to fit your particular students or institutional needs. This book may give you ideas about new ways to develop activities for your own classroom, and we invite you to find what works best for you and your students. We hope you and your students enjoy practicing active learning through this book in a fun and interactive way!

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Section 1

Fun Ways to Teach Genre

This section includes fun and engaging activities for teaching genre in the composition classroom. Genre is a core concept when teaching composition that includes having students read different genres of writing and composing writing assignments in different genres. Analyzing different genres helps students "develop rhetorical flexibility and [. . .] practice adjusting their writing to different rhetorical contexts" (Bean). In addition, exposing students to different genres also draws out different strengths from students, according to Bean. Since the 1980s, composition studies theorists have been stressing the social dimensions of writing, which means that "each act of writing is seen to be shaped profoundly by its sociocultural context" (Freedman). The activities in this section engage students through exploring their majors, looking at political/historical texts, and playing interactive lively games.

For further reading that can be used in the classroom to teach genre, see *Writing Spaces* articles by Dirk, which explain academic genres using country music and engaging examples. Additionally, Jacobson et al. focus on rhetorical moves analysis and offer a practical approach for students to better understand how writers achieve their goals.

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Activity 1: Thanking an Alien

Jeremy Levine
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Format: Face-to-face
Teacher Preparation: Quick
Estimated Time: 40 minutes
Description: Students learn about and practice different genres and discuss specific rhetorical moves through the imaginative activity of writing a thank-you note to an alien.

Instructions

1. Divide up your students into groups of three or four.

2. Give students the following prompt: "You have been abducted by rather friendly space aliens. They put you in their spaceship and fly across the galaxy to their own planet because they think they have some tools that might help humans confront climate change. These aliens are always like this—they love solving other planets' problems. But, because solving someone else's problems is such a regular part of their lives, they're not so used to gratitude. Still, you can't imagine accepting help from these aliens without expressing your thanks—so you have decided to write them a thank-you note. They have never received a thank-you note before, so they have no knowledge of the conventions or structure of a typical thank-you note. This leaves you free to structure your thank-you note however you like, so long as the aliens feel appreciated for all they have done."

3. Give students five to ten minutes to work on their thank-you notes.

4. After they are finished, pair up groups and have them read each other's notes, and then have students come up to the board (if available) to write down common rhetorical moves or expressions that were found in both notes. Do a recap with the class, being

sure to highlight this big idea: there is sometimes a difference between what we think we are *supposed* to do with a genre and what our audience might *want or need* to hear.

5. Give the students a second prompt. "The aliens were very taken by the generosity of your note. They say that they have never felt like this before, so they want to learn a little something about gratitude from you. You've decided to write them an essay about what gratitude means. These aliens have never seen an essay before either, so you can do what you like with this piece of writing, as long as the aliens learn about gratitude. Let's write just the introduction to this essay."

6. Give the students twenty minutes in their groups to work on this. (If they run low on time, students listing out points for their introduction—without writing them out in full—can work.) When the writing is over, pair up the groups again and have them write some of the common rhetorical moves from their introductions.

7. Now that you have collected this list of common rhetorical moves, help students abstract the moves from the alien-specific situation to a more generalized situation. For example, if students write that "we want to show why gratitude is something they should think about," we might write, "introductions should show why the topic at hand is worth thinking about." Again, reinforce the key point that when we are focusing on our audience specifically, the rules of genres become bendable to the needs of that audience. There are no universal rules or formats.

8. With this abstracted list of rhetorical moves from the introductions on the board, if time allows, give students a chance to think about their introduction for their ongoing work-in-progress in your class. What might go in the introduction based on this list, their knowledge of their topic, and their knowledge of their audience?

Learning Outcomes

The goal of this activity is to help students break introduction-writing habits they might have learned in other writing situations,

such as very general introductions that do not address a particular audience or introductions that do not situate the essay's argument in ongoing conversations. By thinking about writing an introduction for a reader who has never seen one before, students can leave behind these habits and think instead about their audience's needs.

This activity connects to the "WPA Outcomes" section "Rhetorical Knowledge," specifically around how genres "shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes." By discussing with students how our own expectations for what a particular genre should look like affect our writing, we can start to understand the relationship between past writing experiences, readers, writers, and genres.

Impressions

This activity can work for many different genres. I tend to use it for introductions because, at least in my experience, introductions are seen more as obligations and less as part of the essay that can make a serious contribution. By disrupting our usual introduction-writing process, I hope to make introductions more helpful for students.

The whimsy in this assignment is an important part of its character. By doing something that's a little weird, students become willing to suspend disbelief for a moment, which gets them further outside of thinking about what they should write about. I recommend really selling it— try to characterize the aliens, for instance—to give students more material to work with and to emphasize how different this piece of writing can be from normal school expectations.

Something else to consider is saving the list of the rhetorical moves from the introductions you come up with for this activity and bringing that list back up in new writing situations. Ask your class whether the moves on the list will suit new assignments or whether they have to be changed for new topics and modalities. This can help paint the introduction as an ever-changing piece that responds to audience needs.

Activity 2: Genre Analysis Activity

Margaret Poncin Reeves
DePaul University

Format: Face-to-face or online synchronous
Teacher Preparation: Requires preparation
Estimated Time: 30 minutes
Description: Students contrast two films to learn the meanings behind the term *genre* and to develop an understanding of genre conventions.

Instructions

1. Ask students to define the term *genre* and write the definition on the board. Then, ask students to list different examples of film genres, for example: sci-fi, romantic comedy, action, documentary, mockumentary, horror, noir, etc.

2. Ask students to choose two contrasting film genres (e.g., horror and romantic comedy) and list the conventions of each while you record them on the board. Then ask students to think of films that broke these conventions to help them see that genres can be dynamic.

3. Explain that most people associate the word *genre* with creative works, but it is a useful concept for lots of types of writing. Then, divide the class into small groups and give each group four to six examples of a short-form everyday genre (alternatively, you could ask students to research examples online). Possible genres include wedding invitations, syllabi, donation request letters, newspaper op-eds, corporate apology statements, job ads, resumes or cover letters, website bios, recipes, restaurant reviews, etc.

4. Ask groups to present their genres to the class. They should explain the following: 1) What are the conventions of the genre? 2) What conventions are optional and which are required? 3) What variations did they see among their examples?

5. Connect the activity with an upcoming writing assignment—for example:

- A genre analysis project. Each student chooses a genre related to their interests or major, analyzes its conventions by researching examples, and then produces one or more of their own version of the genre.
- A rhetorical analysis paper. Students examine the interplay between genre and other elements of the rhetorical situation, like *audience* and *purpose*.
- A research project. If requiring scholarly articles, help students identify the conventions and common rhetorical moves of academic articles.
- An academic essay. Ask students to identify the genre conventions of the academic essay and ask them to compare those to the grading criteria for their next essay assignment.

Learning Outcomes

This activity responds to the "WPA Outcomes" section "Rhetorical Knowledge," particularly understanding genre conventions. By the end of the activity, students will be able to define the term *genre* and articulate its value to writers and readers, identify the conventions of a genre after examining examples, and articulate the ways in which examples of a genre can vary.

Impressions

My goal is to facilitate learning transfer by connecting to the writing students do outside my course. This activity draws on genres with which students are already familiar (film genres) to present a basic introduction. I often use it as a first step to discuss Carolyn Miller's definition of genre as a typified response to a recurrent social situation (Miller) and follow it with the genre analysis project described above.

I've noticed that one key to a successful writing about writing approach is articulating over and over *why* they're learning these

concepts. I frequently tell students that one class cannot cover all the different types of writing they'll need to produce in their lives. What I *can* do is give them analysis tools so that when they encounter an unfamiliar writing situation, they can successfully adapt.

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Activity 3: Elevator Pitch—Present Yourself in a Minute!

Sofia Tarabrina
University of Missouri

Format: Face-to-face or online synchronous (remote scheduled)
Teacher Preparation: Quick
Description: Students practice writing an elevator pitch to learn more about genre and how to explain their research projects to each other.

Instructions

1. Have students read as homework prior to class: the Elevator Pitch section in *Writing Today,* and/or the article by Alison Doyle at The Balance Careers website (see Works Cited for both). Questions to think about: the purpose, use, content, and delivery of an elevator speech/pitch.

2. Conduct a class discussion on student ideas regarding the genre. Pull up on the screen the article by Alison Doyle and discuss with students the main features of the elevator pitch genre. It is helpful to lead this discussion, using the rhetorical situation

terminology—topic, angle, purpose, readers, and context—with which students should be already familiar (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 9–29).

3. Introduce the assignment and discuss Shared Knowledge Conference (or a similar school event): "Draft a 30-second elevator pitch about the research project you are working on in this class. Though you are not feeling ready to present your project to a larger audience, you plan to attend the Shared Knowledge Conference. You will use this speech during coffee breaks while mingling with other conference attendees. Try to make your pitch comprehensive and understandable."

After this, pull up on the screen the elevator pitch section in Writing Today (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 224) and lead a class discussion on the components of the assignment:

- Introduction: say who you are (name and major).
- Use an attention grabber. Here we review the best techniques of good introductions: a startling statistic, a compelling statement, an interesting question, etc. (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 314).
- Briefly formulate the main idea of your project in one sentence. For this purpose, we review the flash fiction genre (Sustana) from the ENGL 101 Personal Writing Genres class. To include in that single sentence, I ask students to say why their research is pertinent, what were the most striking findings they learned from their sources, and name the most exciting result of this research.
- Focus on developing your ethos. Describe your project in terms of what *you* did: how *you* designed the project and why *you* did it in this particular way, how *you* collected data, and what results *you* intend to obtain. Talking about your project with yourself as an indispensable part of it will add more credibility to your pitch (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 387–88).
- Focus on developing logos. Why are you doing it (name only the best reasons) and how does your project stand out (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 386–87)?
- Answer the "so what?" question. Here we review how to draft a good conclusion by asking why this is important. Add strength to your pitch. Based on your project results, what would be the next step to change the world for the better? How can community or society help to improve the situation (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 318–19)?

- Add a personal touch to your pitch: think about saying something catchy about yourself or your department/organization and provide your contact information.
- Remember to write in plain style: avoid passive voice, nominalizations, prepositional phrases, and redundancies and compose sentences that are breathing length (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 322–32).
- Make sure that you sound confident and friendly (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine 507–17).

4. To conclude, emphasize that genres are flexible and evolving, and students can always allow modifications in case the rhetorical situation calls for it. In the context of this assignment and the suggested rhetorical situation, this elevator pitch will most probably be used in a dialogue rather than in a monolog, which means students will want to make relevant rhetorical and grammatical choices.

5. Have students open a new Word document and draft their elevator pitches.

6. Have students split into groups of three and discuss the process of creating their elevator speeches. Ask them how they feel about their current drafts? Was the process complicated or easy?

7. Ask students to reproduce their elevator speech out loud to your groups. Let other group members take notes while they are reading. After they finish, they should let other members share about their speech's strengths and weaknesses with suggestions for improvement.

8. Have students revise their elevator speech based on suggestions from the group and your own considerations. Have them post it on the relevant Forum on their LMS anonymously; they should not mention their names (in the title of their post or the body).

9. After students anonymously post their pitches, ask them to go through all of them and vote for the pitches they liked most except for their own work (by writing something in the reply field, like "I voted" or "+1"). Read aloud the pitches that received the most votes. The winners receive five points of extra credit.

Learning Outcomes

This activity enhances students' rhetorical knowledge by presenting them with a new genre and showing them various rhetorical situations in which they can use it. Students engage in all stages of the writing process during this activity, beginning with brainstorming and culminating in written and oral delivery to the audience. The activity calls for using critical thinking to evaluate the quality of other classmates' elevator pitches and to provide them good feedback.

Impressions

I chose this activity because my students always enjoy it a lot. The lesson is engaging, as it allows students to apply their writing skills and a new genre for a real-life (though still theoretical) situation. In addition to this, students appreciate the competitive component and approach the assignment with humor in trying to impress their classmates with their pitches. The anonymous evaluation makes the lesson even more intriguing, allowing students to be objective in their voting. Finally, it gives students an opportunity to briefly distract themselves from the main project they are currently working on, but, at the same time, to apply it at a new angle, to a new rhetorical situation.

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Activity 4: The Genre Ball Activity

Dana Lynn Driscoll
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Format: Face-to-face
Teacher Preparation: Requires preparation
Estimated Time: 30–45 minutes
Description: Students use actual sports balls to learn about different genres.

Instructions

1. Bring sports balls to class; you will need to gather a collection of different sports balls, enough for two or three balls per group of 3–5 students. Some sports balls should be easily recognizable (basketball, football, soccer ball, dodge ball, cue ball, Ping Pong ball, etc.), and some should be ambiguous (balls not intended for any particular game or intended for multiple games). Small foam balls from a toy store work particularly well. Alternatively ,if you cannot obtain physical balls, you can print images of different sports balls, cut them out, and pass them out to your class.

2. Prepare one-page examples of different genre-based writing: a tweet, the first page of a lab report, a newspaper article, and a college-level research essay, for examples. Prepare a packet of these materials for each student.

3. Place students in groups of three to five. Each group should receive two-to-three balls (or images of balls). Give students 7–10 minutes to discuss the different balls they are given. Ask students to respond as a group to the following four questions: 1) identify the ball game that is played (if known); if not known, make a guess as to what the ball game might be; 2) briefly describe the rules for this game (if known); 3) describe the expectations of audiences/fans of this game; and 4) describe if members of the group have watched or played this game.

4. Return to a full-group discussion and ask students to report what they discussed. Put major points of discussion on the board: 1) the difference between being a spectator and a player of the game; 2) how different ball games have different sets of rules, norms, assumptions, lengths, and activities; and 3) cultural aspects of various ball games (international students may have different interpretations of football or dodgeball, as these are not as well known outside the US).

5. Segue into introducing the concept of genres and written genres. Ask students to return to their groups and give them the packet of written genres. Now ask them the same set of questions, again giving them 7–10 minutes for discussion: 1) identify the genre—what it is and how it is used; 2) briefly describe the typical rules for this genre (length, content expectations, etc.); 3) describe the expectations of audiences/readers for this genre; and 4) describe if members of the group have read and/or written in this genre.

6. Return to a full-group discussion and ask students to report on the four genres they were given. Compare these discussions on the board with their earlier discussion of ball games to see the similarities. Key points for discussion: 1) like ball games, written genres have a set of rules and norms for writing; 2) like ball games, written genres are shaped by the expectations and needs of audiences, which may be implicit or explicit; 3) like ball games, written genres vary widely as to who uses them and/or who reads them, so you can learn a lot through reading and analyzing genres; and 4) like ball games, written genres have cultural expectations and contextualization.

Learning Outcomes

The goal of this activity is to introduce students to genre theory in an accessible and kinesthetic approach. Learning outcomes for this activity include: 1) understanding how genre conventions differ in terms of length, structure, tone, and content ("Writing Process Knowledge," "WPA Outcomes Statement"); 2) gaining experience in analyzing and understanding different genre conventions and

how those conventions are shaped by writers and audiences ("Rhetorical Knowledge," "WPA Outcomes Statement"); and 3) activating prior knowledge and adapting that knowledge to understanding genre theory (which is Teaching for Transfer). If you are using the Adler-Kassner and Wardle *Threshold Concepts* book, this activity also addresses threshold concepts 1.2: "Writing addresses, invokes, and/or creates audiences" (20); "genres are enacted by writers and readers" (39); and "writing involves the negotiation of language differences" (69).

Impressions

This lesson was inspired by David Russell's "Rethinking Genre" piece in which he argues that all genres are specific and that there is no such thing as a general ball (and thus, there are no "general writing skills"). Thus, this lesson responds to Russell's call to move away from generalized writing skills instruction and into genre-specific instruction, a call also addressed in a variety of works within rhetorical genre studies (Bawarshi and Reiff; Soliday). The Genre Ball Activity is also inspired by learning transfer theory, in that it allows students to draw upon their own prior knowledge of ball games (Robertson et al.) and then activate and adapt that prior knowledge to understand the concept of genre.

I use this activity early in my FYW course to introduce many key concepts we will reinforce throughout the term: that genres differ based on the needs and expectations of audiences and writers; that genres have sets of rules and norms; that genres are language and culture-specific; and that you can learn a lot about a genre through analysis before attempting it yourself. This activity is excellent for kinesthetic learners, those who have a wide range of life experience, those who are physically active, and those in classes with a mix of multilingual and L1 (native English) learners. The activity has led to some very rich discussions about cultural exchange as well; for example, a dodgeball has often elicited the richest discussions. Students from the US often have fear-induced stories of playing dodgeball from middle school gym class while

international students have no such contextualization. In sections with large numbers of multilingual writers, this can offer deep insights into the cultural aspects of genre and can enhance cultural exchanges.

I have used this activity in three contexts: teaching first-year writing to introduce genre theory, teaching tutors in the writing center about genre theory, and teaching new graduate assistants how to effectively teach writing. After teaching it to my GAs, many of them borrow my trusty bag of balls stashed in my office for use in their own first-year writing courses. It has worked equally well for all groups and has provided a lasting and meaningful set of instructions on the importance and value of genre and genre theory.

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Activity 5: Genre Heads Up!

Kalila Bohsali
University of New Mexico

Format: Face-to-face
Teacher Preparation: Requires preparation
Estimated Time: 15–30 minutes
Description: Students practice analyzing genres through a game that introduces genre conventions and audience analysis.

Instructions

1. Write genres out on notecards. These genres should be simple, have a clear audience, and have a clear purpose. Some examples include a map, a tweet, a recipe, or a prompt. I recommend preparing about twenty-five to thirty cards, depending on your class size. (I generally do five more than my maximum class size, and I keep notecards for subsequent semesters.)

2. At the beginning of class, introduce the rules to the game. (It uses the same rules as Heads Up, so some students may be familiar with the game.) Students will receive a notecard with a genre on it, and they are to hold the card, text facing out, to their forehead without reading it. Instruct students to stand up and use this as an opportunity learn their peers' names if they do not already know them. The rules are: 1) students cannot read their own cards; 2) students can only provide hints in the form of genre conventions of the genre or an aspect of rhetorical situation such as the angle, audience, context of the genre; and 3) only one student may provide a hint at a time

3. After students have guessed their genre, swap them out.

Learning Outcomes

This activity teaches students how to think about genres familiar to them through the lens of rhetorical knowledge, breaking genres down by convention and rhetorical situation.

Impressions

I developed this activity when I realized that students were struggling to learn how to analyze genres in my first-year writing course. This activity makes learning genre analysis fun. By pairing a game with genre analysis, students are able to engage with one another and with the topic as well as develop an understanding of genre outside of the textbook. I also generally allow students to have side conversations, get sidetracked, and discuss material outside of the class during this time, which is why I set aside at least thirty minutes.

Activity 6: Reverse-Engineering Genre

ERICK PILLER
Nicholls State University

Format: In-person, hybrid, or live remote learning
Teacher Preparation: Quick
Estimated Time: 30–45 minutes
Description: Students discuss several texts from the same genre and come up with specific conventions for that genre.

Instructions

1. Identify a genre to introduce to students and gather three texts exemplifying this genre. For instance, before asking students to write a profile of a living person, you might provide students with three examples of profiles.

2. Give students sufficient time to read and consider the texts individually.

3. Divide students into small groups. Ask them to "reverse-engineer" the genre by answering questions such as the following: 1) Based on your review of the sample texts, what would you say is the purpose of this genre? 2) How is a text of this genre typically organized? What sections or key information should it include? 3) What other conventions of the genre can you infer from the samples—for example, length, style, design features, use of evidence, documentation practices, etc.?

4. After five to ten minutes of discussion in small groups, have groups share their findings with the rest of the class, reminding students to support their conclusions with references to the sample texts. Encourage discussion among groups.

Learning Outcomes

This activity asks students to consider real-world examples of a genre in which they will later be expected to write. The process of "reverse-engineering" a genre—identifying genre conventions through careful analysis and comparison of sample texts—promotes active learning and decenters the classroom (imagine a less active, more traditional alternative: a lecture on the genre and its conventions). The activity fosters critical reading and collaboration yet also works toward some of the student learning outcomes listed under "Knowledge of Conventions" in the "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (3.0)":

- Understand why genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary.
- Gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions.
- Learn common formats and/or design features for different kinds of texts.

Impressions

In first-year composition, we often ask students to write in genres with which they are unfamiliar, and certainly, in their writing lives beyond the classroom, students will benefit from being able to identify genre conventions by looking at real-world texts. When I have assigned a profile of a living person ("living" because I want students to conduct interviews), some students have told me that they have only a vague idea of what a profile is and how it should be written. This activity has helped clarify matters for them. It has shown them that, among other things, profiles typically use direct quotations from the subject as well as from other interviewees, include a physical description of the subject, and tell readers about important experiences in the subject's life. But beyond providing students with an opportunity to infer conventions, the activity also reveals to them the flexibility of genre: the space for variation and innovation within a particular genre. For example, one profile may be far more self-referential than the others in the set of samples, with passages about the author arriving at the subject's home and meeting the subject for the first time.

The activity can be modified in several ways. For one, it can be used to help students distinguish between genres. Give students the first pages of several scholarly articles and several popular articles and ask them to group the texts into two categories. Have the groups explain why they categorized the texts as they did, and a productive discussion of some of the key differences between scholarly and popular articles will likely follow more or less naturally. In addition, I have found this activity to be successful in technical and professional communication courses, and I expect that it would work well in other writing courses as well. Finally, for asynchronous remote learning, students can compare texts individually and share their findings in a forum. Depending on your goals, you might look into whether your learning management system allows you to create forums that require students to post before viewing other students' responses.

Activity 7: Analyzing Genre for Your Major

Caroline Webb
Broward College

Format: Face-to-face or online synchronous
Teacher Preparation*:* Requires preparation
Estimated Time*:* 60–90 minutes
Description: Students analyze genres from their major to better understand genre conventions and ways of communicating in their field.

Instructions

1. Show students how to locate an academic article in their major field in an online academic database or with Google Scholar. You may want to demonstrate how to access academic articles in several disciplines, such as the sciences, business, or the humanities. Alternatively, you can invite a librarian to present on the academic research databases offered at your institution.

2. Have students locate an article, read it at home, and bring it to class in paper or electronic form. If there are time constraints, another option would be to provide students with sample articles in their major fields.

3. Divide the class into groups of three or four based upon students' majors. For example, create groups of students who are majoring in the sciences, business, or international relations. Then, instruct students to analyze their articles for the following aspects of genre: purpose of the article, content, audience, structure/organization of the text, types of sentences (i.e., simple, complex, passive versus active tense), metalanguage, and jargon.

4. Have students make notes on their individual articles and note the similarities to other articles in the group. During the group work, you can monitor groups and answer questions.

5. As a follow-up, form new groups of three to four with a combination of students from various majors. For example, a group might have a student each from science, business, English, and history. Have students compare and contrast their observations on genre and then report to the whole class.

Learning Outcomes

1. The goal of this activity is to use a deductive approach to raise awareness of the features of genre in the various academic disciplines students will study in.

2. Students will collaborate with classmates "to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes" ("WPA Outcomes").

3. Students will "gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions" ("WPA Outcomes") by analyzing texts in their own majors as well as learning about the conventions in other disciplines.

Impressions

This activity encourages active learning and collaborative group work. Students will develop an awareness of the features of genre in their major disciplines by analyzing their articles for features of genre. Not only do students analyze several aspects of genre in their own fields, but they learn how genre is constructed differently in other disciplines. In addition, students will learn how to search for academic articles using library databases and Google Scholar, which is a skill that will serve them in all their college courses. There are many opportunities to notice features of genre from the individual analyses, group analyses, and follow-up analyses with students from other majors and from the instructor's input.

Activity 8: State of the Genre (Understanding Real-World Genres)

Samantha Morgan
Western Oregon University

Format: Face-to-face
Teacher Preparation: Requires preparation
Estimated Time: 60–90 minutes
Description: Students select and analyze a State of the Union address to understand it as an example of a specific genre.

Instructions

1. Prior to the activity, have a discussion with students regarding what genre means, specifically as it pertains to writing studies. I use Downs & Wardle's definition of genre from *Writing about Writing* and Kerry Dirk's "Navigating Genres" from *Writing Spaces Volume 1*.

2. In groups, students read their assigned State of the Union address (www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/presidential-documents-archive-guidebook/annual-messages-congress-the-state-the-union) and determine the key features of the genre. They may not need to read the entire address, but they should at least scan it from beginning to end. They will start to notice the change in topics as they scan.

3. To identify the features, have students look for the following: 1) What are the overarching topics being addressed (i.e., the main topics)? 2) What transitions are used (e.g., conjunctive adverbs like "however," entire topic shifts, etc.)? 3) How does the address begin and end? Is there an intro and conclusion? If so, what is in those sections? 4) Is there a clear progression or organization? 5) What is the current state of the country and how does the president address this state?

4. Once they have identified major features of the address, students answer the following questions: 1) Does the speech address the problem it claims to address (based on where it starts and how it ends)? 2) Is the address targeted at an audience who has the power to make change? Who? 3) Are the rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, pathos) appropriate to that audience? Why? 4) Does the president give enough information for the audience to make an informed decision? 5) Does the address attempt to manipulate in any way (by giving incomplete/inaccurate information or by abusing the audience's emotions)? 6) What other subclaims do you have to accept to understand the main claim?

5. Share findings with the class and discuss.

Learning Outcomes

The goal of this activity is to provide students with the opportunity to analyze a genre outside of the traditional "academic essay"; this activity helps students see and understand how genres work and function in different ways and for different purposes. This activity also lays groundwork for students being able to "gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purpose" ("Rhetorical Knowledge," "WPA Outcomes").

Impressions

This activity works very well in face-to-face classes, particularly in the first sequence of first-year composition. Students usually perceive genre as books, movies, or music, and they are often surprised to learn about written genres in the real world. We talk about what genre means and how different rhetorical situations call for different genres. After a discussion on different types of texts that are in the different professions (and even jobs, clubs, and other hobbies), we look at the State of the Union address genre that is mentioned in Dirk's text, "Navigating Genres." This

activity helps students understand genre more fully. They learn that genres are more than books, movies, and music; additionally, they learn about rhetorical analysis and the rhetorical situation, which is necessary for recognizing when to use particular genres. This activity provides students with practice at identifying features in a particular genre. We spend time taking apart different presidential addresses and looking at the specific features each one seems to have. This practice is useful if students are going to be doing something similar on their own. My students interview someone in a profession they are interested in and ask for specific examples of genres that the professional writes and reads for their job. The students then analyze the features of those texts and what the texts reveal about the profession. This activity is a good predecessor to that assignment. It could be adapted for asynchronous or synchronous classes by using a discussion or peer-review feature, since all of the State of the Union addresses are available online. For the in-person activity, I print the specific addresses I want students to look at so that no computers are necessary to complete this activity. By working in groups, students are more engaged in the learning process and are more successful in understanding their next major assignment. It is important, however, to precede the activity with a discussion on genre as well as analysis so that they have some background knowledge coming into the activity. That instruction could happen the same day, depending on the length of the class. The activity could also be adapted to different genres, as the focus is on students learning how to recognize the specific features within different genres.

Activity 9: Detecting Genre Conventions from Country Songs to Recommendation Requests

Zack K. De Piero
Northampton Community College

Format: Any, but probably best as face-to-face or online synchronous
Teacher Preparation: Requires preparation
Estimated Time: 50–75 minutes
Description: Students discuss country songs to learn about genre conventions. The activity includes playing songs and completing a table of characteristics.

Instructions

1. Explain the purpose of this activity: everything that we read or write is some kind of genre, whether it's a literature review, an op-ed essay, or a resume. Learning how to detect the patterns of a particular genre while you're *reading* can transfer over to your *writing* development. Let's begin by building from your existing knowledge of a musical genre: country songs.

2. Introduce the "genre question" to the class: what makes this thing *this thing*? In this case, what makes a country song *a country song*? While students freewrite their predictions, offer additional support questions to spur their thinking. For example, what are the ingredients of a country song? Its features or characteristics? If you were listening to one right now, how would you know that? Think about the lyrics, the sounds, the singer, or even the listener. Jot down any associations that come to mind.

3. Have students swap responses in small groups then report their information to the whole class. Record these predictions in a "Conventions Table" (see step 3), which usually include

certain musical instruments or sounds (e.g., banjo, acoustic guitar, twangy drawl), particular geographic regions (e.g., the American South, Appalachia, farms, the countryside), and themes (e.g., love, labor, patriotism). When necessary, assume the role of a Socratic scribe by asking follow-up questions that tease out overly broad predictions. For instance, if a student claims that "love" is a convention of country music songs, the instructor might respond by asking, "What *kind of* love? Love of what? Love between whom?" In turn, the initial (and overly broad) prediction of "love" can splinter off into "love lost" or "love of family." Similarly, "loss" could become "loss of a loved one," "loss of a job," etc.

4. Introduce the concept of conventions: In the writing studies field, there's a term for all those ingredients, features, characteristics, or patterns that we just brainstormed: conventions. So now let's look at some examples of this musical genre—country songs—to determine whether these conventions are, in fact, present. If we hear the singer reference "love lost," for instance, we'll mark a "Y" (for yes) down in the column. Similarly, "N" will stand for "no" and we'll use a squiggly mark (~) if the convention is somewhat present. Play each song, one at a time, then ask students to fill out the Conventions Table on their own.

Table 1: Testing Our Predictions—The Conventions of Country Songs as a *Musical* Genre

Conventions	**Example #1 "Your Cheatin' Heart"**	**Example #2 "Coal Miner's Daughter"**	**Example #3 "Man o' Constant Sorrow"**
Banjo	n	n	y
Twangy Southern accent	y	y	y
Story about family	n	y	n
Reference to Bible	n	~	~
Love lost	y	n	y
Love of family	~	y	n

5. Discuss which conventions were (and weren't) present in each example. Observe the variation across the table then ask: "Can we all agree that we did, in fact, just listen to country songs?" Class agrees. Explain the difference between "conventions" and "rules": genres are flexible because they're shaped by conventions; genres aren't bound by rules. Emphasize that writers retain a degree of agency in the choices they make when they enact a particular genre.

6. Close the feedback loop by asking students: Now that we analyzed a few examples, did you spot any new conventions, ones that you didn't initially predict? After listening to "Coal Miner's Daughter," for instance, students might notice conventions like blue-collar labor or a do-it-yourself mentality. Add students' new responses to the existing table then emphasize the point: the more examples of a genre you examine, the more conventions you'll be able to detect.

7. With students' existing genre knowledge (of one *musical* genre) activated, the focus pivots to the ultimate goal of this activity: developing a systematic strategy for analyzing *textual* genres. Repeat steps #1–5, beginning with the "genre question": What makes a recommendation request *a recommendation request?* That is, what are the conventions of this genre? The table below offers an example of what this activity might wind up looking like.

TABLE 2: Testing Our Predictions—The Conventions of Recommendation Requests as a *Textual* Genre

Conventions	Example #1 Anna	Example #2 Brian	Example #3 Chris	Example #4 Daniella
Expressing gratitude *(thank you, I appreciate)*	y	n	y	y
No commands *(you should, send it by)*	y	y	y	y
Explanation of the recommender's impact on you *(why this particular teacher?)*	n	n	~	y

continued on next page

Table 2 continued

What the rec is for *(a scholarship, college admission, job/ internship, transfer)*	y	y	y	y
Academic or professional accomplishments *(GPA, part-time job, campus involvement)*	n/a	n	n	y
Multiple paragraphs separated by function	y	~	n	y
Acknowledgement of due date	y	y	n	y
Salutations *(e.g., "Dear," "Sincerely")*	y	y	y	y
Now that we've analyzed some examples of this textual genre, ask yourselves: which conventions, if any, did we miss?				
An initial "catching up" comment				
Sent two+ weeks before the rec is due				
No spelling errors or typos				
In your opinion, which student wrote the best *recommendation request?*				
	0	0	2	16

Learning Outcomes

This activity addresses the "WPA Outcomes" section "Knowledge of Conventions": "Conventions are the formal rules and informal guidelines that define genres, and in so doing, shape readers' and writers' perceptions of correctness or appropriateness. Most obviously, conventions govern such things as mechanics, usage, spelling, and citation practices. But they also influence content, style, organization, graphics, and document design."

Impressions

This activity activates students' prior knowledge about genre and, in the process, heightens their ability to detect (and evaluate)

genre conventions. Its pedagogical value extends to scaffolding genre-focused assignments, negotiating rubric criteria, and guiding students toward making reading-writing connections. Throughout this two-part activity, I pose what I refer to as our "genre question" to the class: "what makes this thing *this thing*?" Part 1 connects this question to students' existing knowledge about musical genres by listening to country songs ("What makes a country song *a country song*?"). Part 2 pivots to studying textual genres by analyzing examples of former students' requests for a recommendation ("What makes a recommendation request *a recommendation request*?"). At the conclusion of this activity, students have a firmer grasp of the Writing Studies concept of conventions and its relationship to genre, along with a strategy for evaluating "good writing."

I pair this activity with Kerry Dirk's "Navigating Genres" *Writing Spaces* piece. Dirk's essay opens with a joke about country songs (which formed my initial inspiration for this activity), so when students read "Navigating Genres" following this activity, it hopefully 1) reinforces the activity, 2) sends a message that everything we do is connected: class activities, assigned readings, assignments, etc., and 3) heightens students' motivations to complete our assigned readings.

I can confidently say that this activity is a crowdpleaser. (In fact, I've repurposed this activity for my teaching demonstration at job talks!) Virtually every student participates, there's lots of laughter, and it creates a low-stakes opportunity for students to engage with each other. This activity is especially effective early in the semester because it sets the bar for active learning during our class time and students seem to appreciate being "heard"—that is, they appreciate knowing that their prior knowledge is valued (and relevant) and that their ideas will be used to drive our in-class discussion. In these ways, this activity builds an engaging and collaborative classroom culture.

A logistical suggestion: Due to the free-flowing nature of whole-class activities, it can be tricky to record a tidy account of this activity in real time, so once class ends, I post a polished version of this activity. I upload an annotated compilation of students' recommendation requests, and in that document, I name numerous conventions, color-code their presence in students'

letter of recommendation requests, and offer a one-sentence explanation about how each convention does rhetorical work for this particular genre.

Activity 10: Analyzing and Creating Greeting Cards

Sarah Elizabeth Adams
Berea College

Format: Face-to-face (and easily adaptable to an online course)
Teacher Preparation: Requires preparation
Estimated Time: 30–45 minutes
Description: Students analyze greeting cards to see how genres work in a fun, hands-on way.

Instructions

1. Bring to class example greeting cards, scissors, markers and/or colored pencils, glue and/or tape, colored paper and/or cardstock.

2. Analyze greeting cards. In teams of two or three, students should answer the following questions about an example greeting card that the teacher provides: 1) What can you figure out about the receiver of this card? What type of person would be given this card? 2) What can you figure out about the giver of this card? What type of person would give this card? 3) What is the message of this card? Is there more than one message? If so, can you identify a primary message, a secondary message, etc.?

3. Share answers and reinforce vocabulary. Student teams share their answers with the class. During these brief presentations, the teacher references vocabulary related to the rhetorical situation (e.g., audience, purpose, context, etc.) and complicates students' initial reactions to the card (e.g., "yes, this is a birthday card, but what message about gender/race/age is the card sending?").

4. Generate rhetorical situation "ingredients." Students generate a list of different genres of greeting cards (e.g., birthday, sympathy, thank you, etc.) and various possible specific audiences (e.g., Batman, Olivia Rodrigo, a celebrity local to their campus, etc.).

5. Create a greeting card. In teams, students draw one genre of greeting card and one audience out of a hat and use the provided supplies to design a greeting card for that specific rhetorical situation.

6. Report on rhetorical decision-making. Students present their cards to the class, explaining how they made design choices based on their given rhetorical situation.

To adapt this activity for an online class, consider having a forum post dedicated to finding an ecard online and analyzing it. Then, students can work synchronously in breakout groups on designing an ecard together or can work asynchronously and independently on creating an ecard. If you plan to use any design software or platform later in your class (e.g., Canva), this could be an opportunity to introduce that software in a low-stakes situation.

Learning Outcomes

This activity extends students' knowledge of the rhetorical situation. As they analyze a greeting card, they identify the essential parts of a rhetorical situation, like audience and purpose. When designing a greeting card of their own, students must adapt their card to their assigned rhetorical situation, making decisions about "voice, tone, level of formality, design . . . and/or structure" (CWPA 1) based on the genre and audience provided to them. This assignment also introduces students to conventions, particularly those of the greeting card (e.g., cards often include a brief snippet of poetry or a message on the inside). Students must consider the "common formats and/or design features" of greeting cards as they make their own (CWPA 3).

Impressions

For this activity, students should already be familiar with rhetorical situation-related vocabulary (e.g., purpose, audience, genre) so they can review and apply those concepts.

The first steps of this activity ask students to use their knowledge of rhetoric to analyze a greeting card. In my class, for example, students examine a card and immediately identify the receiver (father), sender (child), and genre (birthday card). However, when students study the card's images and text, they reach deeper conclusions. The card is decorated with sports paraphernalia and tools, and the message reads, "A special wish, Dad, for all the things that bring you happiness and contentment—not just on your birthday, but through the whole year! Have a Nice Day." When considering questions like "what brings this dad contentment?" and "do your fathers find happiness in hedge clippers?" students realize that the card communicates a rather narrow view of masculinity and fatherhood. The final line, students also note, is a perfunctory platitude, revealing that the sender of this card may not have a close relationship with the receiver. In analyzing the card, students learn how complex a seemingly simple text can be.

The last few steps of this activity ask students to use their knowledge of rhetoric to create a greeting card. With only the receiver, genre, and medium provided, students work with a team to choose their cards' color, arrangement, and word choice. In a recent class, for example, students had the receiver of teen popstar Olivia Rodrigo and the genre of Valentine's Day card. While they designed a card that adhered to many of the conventions of a Valentine's Day card (e.g., pink hearts for decoration), they also imagined a complicated rhetorical situation in which Rodrigo received the card from her ex-boyfriend's new girlfriend. The students repurposed song lyrics from Rodrigo's recent breakup album within the card, imagining that the new girlfriend was rubbing her relationship with Rodrgio's ex in Rodrigo's face. The students' final product demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of audience and purpose, their ability to work within the constraints of a genre and medium, and their capacity to work in teams.

I usually end this activity by telling students that writing an essay is like designing a greeting card. Both tasks involve writing a message for a particular audience with a specific purpose in mind, and both tasks are more fun when they involve creativity and collaboration.

Work Cited

Council of Writing Program Administrators. "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition." *The Council of Writing Program Administrators*, 17 July 2014, wpacouncil.org/aws/CWPA/asset_manager/get_file/350909?ver=3890.

Activity 11: Misjudging and Reevaluating Genres through "The Crush"

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Format: Face-to-face or online synchronous
Teacher Preparation: Quick
Estimated Time: 30–55 minutes
Description: Students develop a list of common characteristics of a genre and then examine an example of that genre that might use or break away from those conventions. Specifically, this activity focuses on the genre of a comedy or romantic comedy.

Instructions

1. Ask students to pair up or break into small groups and develop a list of conventions common to romantic comedies or comedies in general.

2. Have each group share with the class some of the characteristics they thought of. Classes often think of some of the main conventions: boy-meets-girl, conflict between boy and girl, a blocking figure, reunion between boy and girl, and a final celebration.

3. Explain to students that the class will watch a short romantic comedy. Ask students to keep a list of how the film breaks or meets the common conventions of the genre.

4. Then, play Michael Creagh's short film "The Crush": youtu.be/bTN3q_NjuWs.

5. Ask students to pair up with someone in the class and discuss the film. They should share their experience of the film and explain the ways the film relied on or broke away from the genre conventions. Students might also consider *why* the film relied on or broke away from those conventions.

6. Ask the groups to share their findings with the class.

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand and negotiate variations in genre connections ("Knowledge of Conventions," "WPA Outcomes").

2. Understand how genre conventions are related to other elements of the rhetorical situations; that is, understand how writers break away from or utilize genre conventions to advance the text's overall purpose ("Rhetorical Knowledge," "WPA Outcomes").

Impressions

Showing "The Crush" in first-year composition can offer a low-stakes way to discuss genres and genre conventions with students. The film focuses on a young boy who has a crush on his teacher. The boy finds his advances rejected by the teacher because she has a fiancé (and, of course, because she is the boy's teacher). After a conflict between the boy and the fiancé, the teacher learns about

the fiancé's dubious cruel character and thus rejects the fiancé. By the end of the film, the normal teacher-pupil relationship is restored between the boy and the teacher. "The Crush," then, plays on the boy-meets-girl convention by including an actual romantic relationship between the teacher and her fiancé and the boy's crush on his teacher. The film uses these conventions to surprise viewers when the blocking figure is actually the teacher's fiancé rather than an outside figure, like the boy. Even more surprising is that, by the end of the film, the boy and the teacher reunite with the boy's crush transformed into an appropriate teacher-pupil relationship.

Students are familiar with romantic comedies and the stereotypical conventions of the genre. They tend to be familiar with the boy-meets-girl plot, the conflict, the blocking figure, the reunion, and the final celebration. Because they're familiar with these conventions, they have an easier time recognizing when the genre conventions are upheld or broken. After showing and discussing "The Crush," I have found it easy to transition into discussing other genre conventions. For a short activity after showing "The Crush," for example, you might bring in brochures from around campus and ask students to identify common conventions of a brochure based on those handed out in the class.

It might be wise to preview to the class that "The Crush" has some moments of gun violence (the gun, viewers find out, is only a toy gun, but the film's shock value relies on the audience initially not knowing that the gun is a toy).

This collection of activities for the composition classroom includes dozens of practical, useful, successful, and accessible exercises that have been developed and implemented by writing instructors from all over the country. Editors Michal Reznizki and David T. Coad have assembled a collection of tried-and-proven teaching activities to help both novice and experienced teachers plan, prepare, and implement writing instruction in college. As two educators who have been teaching writing in the field for more than a decade, they have created the resource they wished they had.

The book addresses many elements that are at the core of teaching first-year composition, providing engaging and inspiring ways to teach

- Rhetoric
- Composing and revising
- Argument and synthesis
- Visual and social media
- Reading skills
- Foundational research
- Grammar and language

It also provides ways to think outside of the curriculum to engage students in active learning that goes beyond the class syllabus. By focusing on and emphasizing pedagogical practices, this book strengthens and brings to the forefront the practical to transform how students learn from, interact with, and experience first-year composition instruction.

Michal Reznizki is a lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley, where she teaches accelerated reading and composition. She is the author of numerous scholarly articles published in the journal *Currents in Teaching and Learning* and *College Composition and Communication.*

David T. Coad is a lecturer at Santa Clara University. He has taught composition at a range of institutions, including community colleges, state universities, and research universities. He has published in *Kairos* and *Computers and Composition.*

National Council of Teachers of English