

The Rhetorical Situation – Genre Analysis

1. Look at the genre of restaurant menus as a whole. What do you notice about these menus? What common characteristics are there? What differences do you find?
2. Annotate **one** of the menus, using the large sheet of paper.
3. Examine the menus for the following aspects. Draw conclusions and be ready to support your ideas:

Content and purpose: What *kind* of information is included? What is/are the purpose(s) of that information, i.e., why is that content included? What is valued in a restaurant menu (e.g., accuracy)?

Style and format: Notice the language (words; word order; tone, etc.) and layout (font; visuals; size; paper style, etc.). What conclusions can you draw about the restaurant from the style and format choices? Who writes the menu?

Audience: Imagine the kind of people who would use this menu. Describe them and the situation that would prompt them to eat at a particular restaurant. What assumptions does the menu make about its customers? What expectations do the customers have?

4. Using your collection of menus, determine what audience would match which menu, and support your choice(s).
 - a) A couple wants to celebrate a special anniversary.
 - b) Your sister and her four kids need a place to eat after shopping for school supplies.
 - c) You've just ended a long-term relationship and want to drown your sorrow with food.
 - d) Your wealthy godparents are coming to visit you and will take you out for a meal.
 - e) Meat lover and vegetarian friends are looking for an inexpensive place to eat.

Notes: I sometimes ask students to bring in a sample restaurant menu but also supplement it with ones I've collected to ensure a representative sample.

I've used this activity in 120 & 121.

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