Jared Bentley

**Introduction:**

As an introduction to the genre unit, I wanted to do something fun and interactive. My Genre in the Elements in class activity is similar to Dr. Chalice Randazzo’s first day assignment. I split the class into five groups of five, and gave each person a role card. I told them that they were not allowed to speak to anyone else about their card. After handing out the cards, I gave everyone five minutes to adhere to their role card.

**Here are the cards:**

Leaf-finder: Take five minutes to go outside and find a leaf unique from any over leaf. Do not come back before five minutes is up.

Genre-chooser: Choose one of the following genres: horror, science fiction, romance, comedy, action, adventure, fantasy. Write a short description. Think about known tropes that might be used, and how this genre can be recognized.

Genre-chooser: Choose one of the following genres: horror, science fiction, romance, comedy, action, adventure, fantasy. Write a short description. Think about known tropes or conventions that might be used, and how this genre can be recognized.

Item picker: choose 2 items created by humankind—any two items at all. Write a small description of each item.

Character-chooser: choose an occupation for a character. Give them 2 traits that have nothing to do with physical appearance. This means use adjectives to describe your character. Examples of adjectives: Brave, cocky, rude, friendly, joyful, intelligent, etc…

Assignment: Incorporate each of these items/genres/character into a single, cohesive story. You have fifteen minutes to create a story that includes each of these elements, a brief description (log line or Twitter post), then act out the story for the class.

**Acting:**

The entire class got involved and moving with this assignment. Each group acted in front of the class for two minutes, and afterward, we identified all the genres used in each “skit.”

**Analysis:**

The timing of this assignment allowed it to serve as a transition from the literacy narrative unit, where we focused on storytelling and audience. Since this exercise uses narrative tactics, I felt my students could transfer their knowledge from unit one into unit two. At this point in the class, students had already received their grades for unit one, had their one-on-one conferences with me, and had already read both “Murder! (Rhetorically Speaking)” and “Navigating Genres.” With these two readings serving as a baseline for their background knowledge of genre, allowing them to act out genres and interact with each other helped them have fun with such a new concept. I also linked this exercise to the quote of the day (a google doc I share with the class with quotes I find relevant or moving).

Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things. Just as it is certain that one leaf is never totally the same as another, so it is certain that the concept “leaf” is formed by arbitrarily discarding these individual differences and by forgetting the distinguishing aspects. This awakens the idea that, in addition to the leaves, there exists in nature the “leaf”: the original model according to which all the leaves were perhaps woven… (Nietzche 1174)

I explained that genres are everywhere, and are used to help classify things, even leaves, since leaves from different trees have different features or conventions. I wanted to use the leaves to help them understand that genres exist in nature, even if it is a human construct to classify or categorize. The timing of this exercise was also dependent on the weather and could not be performed if there was snow on the ground. Luckily, since its place is set in the semester as the first or second day of unit two, it will always be placed in early October.

Students loved acting out the genres they chose, and came up with some funny stories to present to class. I chose to use this exercise as an introduction to genre because I thought that students could easily identify the defining characteristics of genres in movies. Also, by having there be two different genre-choosers in each group, students had to combine two genres to show how they might interact with each other. After the in-class exercise, I introduced uptake, how genres interact, and how almost anything you can think of can be classified as a specific genre. I compared two conversations: 1. a conversation in Church. 2. a conversation at a college party. Students understood that based on the particular context, different language is used, as well as a different approach. Students saw that those two types of conversations are different genres. This also helped them to make sense of how they conveyed their own genres to the class, and helped them to link more knowledge back to the two prior genre readings. I encouraged them to think outside of the box when picking a genre, so there wouldn’t be fifteen essays about horror.

**Scholarship:**

Bitzer, Lloyd F. “The Rhetorical Situation.” *Philosophy and Rhetoric*. 1-14. Print.

Boyd, Janet. “Murder! (Rhetorically Speaking)” Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing. 1.2. 2011. 87-101. Print.

Dirk, Kerry. “Navigating Genres.” *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*. 1.1. 2010. 249-262. Print.

Freadman, Anne. "Anyone For Tennis?" *Genre and the New Rhetoric* : 43-66. Print.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense.” *The Rhetorical Tradition:*

 *Readings from the Classical Times to the Present.* 2nd. ed. Boston: St. Martins, 2001 Trans.

 Daniel Breazeale. Bizzell and Herzberg 1171-1179. Print.