Genre as a Response: Group Activity

**Introduction:**

I designed this project to address some comprehension issues in my WRTG 120 class during the beginning of Unit 2: Genres in the Wild. Students were struggling to understand the idea that genres are a response to some sort of stimulus and there are certain things (like audience) that need to be considered before choosing a genre as a response. I wanted to create an activity that asked them to make specific choices about genres and then discuss that they recognize these conventions, but just haven’t yet had enough experience identifying them as such.

**Materials needed:**

Index cards in two colors

Something to draw cards out of (I used a small bucket)

**Set-up:**

1.Write a different situation on five index cards

 Examples used:

* The president is visiting the town.
* An interview with a Holocaust survivor
* The Cubs won the World Series.
* You are selling puppies.
* You discovered a new species.

2. Write a different audience on five index cards of the second color

 Examples used:

* High school students
* Parents at a board meeting
* Toddlers
* Nursing home residents
* Scholars at a conference

3. Divide the class into groups (I have 22 students, so I had five groups: three groups with four students, and two groups with five students).

**Activity Instructions:**

1. Each group will receive an audience and a situation to respond to. With your group members, determine which genre best addresses your audience and serves as an appropriate way to respond to the situation. Recall our primary discussion on genre conventions and refer to your reading of Chapter 7 “Going Public” in *Understanding Rhetoric*.

2. Once your group has agreed on a genre, explain your choice to the class. Also consider which genres you definitely **would not** use in this situation.

Purple cards = audience

Green cards = situation

**Reflection:**

This activity ended up working quite well. Students were engaged with the subject matter, came up with excellent, well-reasoned responses to their situations and audiences, and even asked to continue the activity for another round. I had them fill out a reflection worksheet as homework (included below) and upon reading the feedback, I noticed that most of the class made significant changes in their expressed understanding of genres and how they function. They also appreciated the interactive activity to help them understand the class concepts.

**120 Course Outcomes Met:**

Genre conventions: Students are asked to recognize and use genre conventions when determining which genre serves as the best response to a situation and audience.

Multimodal transformation: Students consider how writing might be adapted to best address a rhetorical context.

Reflective practice: Students apply feedback from instructor about their responses to the activity when reflecting on the unit. They consider the ways the activities and materials covered in the unit encouraged them to rethink and revise their ideas about genres as demonstrated in their final essays.

**Pedagogical Support:**

Coe, Richard M. et al.*The Rhetoric and Ideology of Genre: Strategies for Stability and*

*Change*. Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2002. Print.

Freedman, Aviva. “Beyond the Text: Towards Understanding the Teaching and Learning

of Genres”. *TESOL Quarterly* 33.4 (1999): 764–767. *JSTOR*. Web 26. Nov. 2015.

Herrington, Anne and Charles Moran. *Genre Across the Curriculum*. Logan: Utah State

UP, 2005. Print.

Reiff, Mary Jo and Anis Bawarshi. “Tracing Discursive Resources: How Students Use

Prior Genre Knowledge to Negotiate New Writing Contexts in First-Year

Composition.” *Written Communication* 28.3 (2011): 312-337. *SAGE*. Web. 25

Nov. 2015.

Genre Examples Reflection

**Name:**

1. Thinking about the class activities you’ve participated in during this unit, how do you see genre as a form of response to a situation? How is genre a communication event?

2. You brought in a genre artifact to share with your group and then with the class. How does explaining your genre to others help to increase your understanding of how it functions?

3. What was the hardest aspect of this unit? How did you overcome that difficulty? Was there a particular reading or activity that helped your understanding? If you did not overcome that difficulty, explain what methods you tried but were unsuccessful.