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WRTG 120

Remediation Activity

**Introduction/Timing:**

This activity was meant as a transition from Literacy Narratives into Genres in the Wild. After assigning a subject-priming questionnaire on genre, I realized that the class was doggedly devoted to what I call “Blockbuster” genre awareness. Instead of viewing the conventional structures of unique genres and sub-genres, students seemed to hold an immobile, all-or-nothing understanding of these broader categories.  Students who suffered from a lack of genre awareness in academic writing (as articulated by the resistance to the literacy narrative, alternative conventions presented by creative nonfiction and memoir, the use of I, etc.) also held the same view towards creative writing. To correct this (and to shift the spotlight from film plots to composition), I spent four sessions assigning free writes which forced students to produce particular arguments using the stylistic  conventions of  distinct poetic, commonplace, and multimodal genres (e.g. crots, block letter, haiku, tanka, Twitter post, news headlines, and 3 varieties of memes) as a way to expand and refine their genre awareness beyond the purely cinematic. The genres listed above are the same options which were provided to students for the remediation activity. Prior to assigning the activity in question, students had read and reflected upon Kerry Dirk’s “Navigating Genres”, posting their critical summaries, paraphrases, questions and connections over the weekend on a discussion thread posted on Canvas.

**Lesson Plan Content:**

For this particular day’s free write prompt, students described their experiences at EMU thus far (it had been a tumultuous year with the appearance of racist graffiti surfacing on campus only days preceding the assignment), reporting what was going well in their new lives as independent students, what was weighing them down, and what was in store for them in the future. Have students hold onto their prompts, as these will be used once more for the culminating activity listed below.

Before embarking on the activity, it would be wise to offer an opportunity to synthesize information from the Dirk article and ensure equal distribution of the guiding concepts (i.e. the rhetorical situation and conscious genre awareness to help guide their enactment and reflection exercise). I recommend assigning an in-class reverse outline produced by dividing the article into six sections for six groups of four. Have each group spend approximately 10 minutes to condense their section’s argument into two statements. Following this, conclude the activity with a group share-out and “recomposition” of the article on a Word Doc presented on the screen. This exercise not only provides review, but allows students to engage scholarly texts in a creative, revisionist mode while emphasizes the use of concision and brevity with respect to generating critical summaries.

I projected our abbreviated, “recomposed” version of Dirk’s article onto the screen. Next, I briefly reiterated the concepts by reading what the students took to be the most salient points along with providing my own addition of the rhetorical situation as a primer for the second exercise. Finally, having paused upon key vocabulary and grounding concepts, I ended with the composition activity requiring students to compose in different genres while reflecting on their writing process.

The remediation assignment is framed as a culminating group activity following the individual free write exercises composed in the previous four sessions. By gradually introducing *written* genres paired with creative prompts, I hoped to facilitate practical reflection on genre affordance and constraint. During this genre sampler phase, I assigned prompts which required students to compose and reflect upon their own writing.  For the writing assignment, students translated their personalized “EMU Experience” from the day’s free write exercise or an interesting topic of their own choosing into 3-5 (entirely contingent on available time) previously explored genres. In this way, students modified their content in accordance with considerations of audience expectation (as a feature of genre functionality) and genre conventions while also quietly bearing in mind multimodal considerations for their remediation. Each genre received approximately 4 minutes followed by time devoted to sharing personal favorites (the memes were by far the funniest, including riffs on campus food and roommate issues along with no fewer than *three* Lil Wayne-themed haikus). While this approach could conceivably reinforce genre as a static category or form, it is important to remember the *timeliness* of the assignment and its ultimate function as an *introductory* exercise meant to transition students from unit 1, to generate reflection on written genres while breaking free of “Blockbuster” genre awareness, and to usher in Bitzer’s rhetorical situation (which will be fully unpacked later in the unit).

**Pedagogical Sources:**

Bitzer, Lloyd F. "The Rhetorical Situation.” *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1992., pp. 1- 14.

Dirk, Kerry. “Navigating Genres”. *Writing Spaces*, vol. 1, 2010, pp. 249-262, [http://writingspaces.org/sites/default/files/dirk--navigating-genres.pdf. Accessed 8 Nov. 2016](http://writingspaces.org/sites/default/files/dirk--navigating-genres.pdf.%20Accessed%208%20%09Nov.%202016).

Losh, Elizabeth M., Jonathan Alexander, Kevin Cannon, and Zander Cannon. *Understanding Rhetoric: A Graphic Guide to Writing*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014. Print.