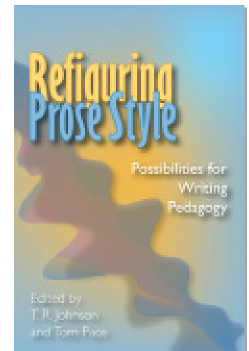
14. RE-PLACING THE SENTENCE: APPROACHING STYLE THROUGH GENRE



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14

RE-PLACING THE SENTENCE: APPROACHING STYLE THROUGH GENRE

Peter Clements

The last decade or so has seen a critical reappraisal of the place of style in composition theory and pedagogy. For some, this reappraisal takes the form of a "what-if" story that questions the field's wholesale rejection of style as a valid concern of writing classrooms in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In "The Erasure of the Sentence," for example, Robert Connors (2000) examines the sentence-based pedagogies of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the "counterforces" that led to their devaluation at the beginning of the 1980s. He ties this devaluation to the antiformalist and antiempiricist attitudes that accompanied the field's attainment of disciplinary status as a subfield of English studies. Connors looks askance at this situation, which he likens to a tornado leaving a trail of destruction (121–22). In a similar vein, Lester Faigley, in the third chapter of *Fragments of Rationality* (1992), offers a tantalizing glimpse of the direction composition studies might have taken if it had not effectively dismissed linguistics as a major disciplinary influence by the end of the 1980s. Faigley speculates on the ways in which composition scholarship might benefit from the insights of critical linguistics—that is, analyses of how specific features of language help to consolidate and reflect sociohistorical relations of power and dominance.

Connors (2000) provides a useful reminder that, despite all the criticism, sentence-based pedagogies were never really proved ineffective; however, his focus on the antiscientism of English departments neglects a more incisive critique that was leveled against the teaching of style in general. One example is Richard Ohmann's 1979 article "Use Definite, Specific, Concrete Language," which takes on the maxims of clarity that were a regular feature of composition textbooks of the time from an ideological standpoint. Such maxims, he argues, push students "toward the language that most nearly reproduces immediate experience and away from the language that might be used to understand it, transform it,

[136.0.111.243] Project MUSE (2025-01-15 06:35 GMT)

and relate it to everything else," thus obscuring social relations, reducing conflict, and maintaining the status quo (396).

Connors himself makes a similar point in his early essay "The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse" (1981), which traces the history of instruction based on rhetorical patterns: the modes of discourse (narration, description, exposition, argument) and their modern counterparts, the methods of exposition (definition, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and so forth). Connors contends that the modes became a popular focus of writing instruction during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries "because they fit into the abstract, mechanical nature of writing instruction at the time" (453), in which writing had become an academic exercise cut off from any meaningful relation with social context. What this has led to in many textbook approaches to composition (particularly those designed for the teaching of academic writing for ESL students; see Spack 1988) is a privileging of form over content, in which students are expected to come up with topics to fit the given mode—in short, an obsession with the how of writing to the almost complete neglect of the why.

These arguments point the way toward a more critical conceptualization of style: one that looks at style as historically situated and ideologically motivated. The question arises, however, as to how to incorporate such a conceptualization usefully into pedagogy. Specifically, how can composition instruction engage student writers with stylistic features and formal patterns while at the same time inspiring them to reflect on and articulate their own positioning? In answering this question, I turn to rhetorical genre theory to flesh out a critical approach to style that reenvisions its relevance as a tool for interrogating discourse and defining writerly choices. My purpose here, following Richard Coe (2002), is not just to present readers with ideas that they can adapt and use in their own classrooms (although I will certainly be pleased if I am able to do so), but to suggest that approaching style through genre urges us "to reexamine certain basic assumptions that have long underpinned how we teach writing and what sorts of writing abilities we encourage our students to develop" (197).

THE PROCESSING OF STYLE

In his doctoral dissertation, William Carpenter (2000) offers a historical sketch of style from ancient to modern times. Carpenter notes that style was originally closely interrelated with the other elements of classical rhetoric, including invention, arrangement, memorization, and

delivery. Basic to this formulation was the view that knowledge is communally constructed. Style in this sense was the means by which rhetors both composed and arranged their ideas according to audience, message, and purpose (3–5). Modern formulations of rhetoric, on the other hand, have been based in a view of knowledge, rooted in Enlightenment philosophy, as originating in the mind of the individual, thus creating a division between thought and language (7). Writing in this view becomes a process of first organizing one's thoughts and then choosing the most effective language to represent those thoughts, making style a pursuit in and of itself. Hence, the emphasis on forms and products that characterized current-traditional rhetoric was part of a tendency to see style as the most directly accessible and measurable aspect of writing (9–10). One can teach good style, but one cannot (necessarily) teach good thinking.

Interestingly, as Carpenter (2000) points out, this division between thought and language not only formed the basis for current-traditional ideas about how writing is produced ("clear writing is preceded by clear thinking"), but was also foundational to the early process movement, which militated against current-traditional pedagogy by emphasizing strategies for invention and revision. In order to validate these concepts, the idea had to be maintained that the writer's thoughts existed prior to their expression in linguistic form, so that invention and revision strategies became the primary techniques for making the written words match the writer's ideas more closely. As a result, concern for style came to be seen as something that could get in the way of the writer's inner process of self-discovery, and was therefore best left to the final editing stages of writing (10–11). This view of style was also symptomatic of the process movement's tendency to dichotomize: product vs. process, style vs. invention, form vs. content. It was not that we shouldn't teach style, but that style became a strictly surface-level phenomenon that was secondary to and separate from issues of voice, audience, and purpose (15). The sort of critique offered by Carpenter is perhaps given its most forceful voice in Sharon Crowley, whose essay "Around 1971" (1998) historicizes the process movement as a reactionary effort that eventually became part of the very establishment that its exponents protested. Current-traditionalism and process, Crowley argues, are the yin and yang of a more general historical phenomenon.

We have to keep in mind, however, that the process movement was not so much a unitary concept as a diverse group of people coming together under the same banner. Besides the expressivism and cognitivism that

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were its hallmarks in the early 1980s, the process movement also brought with it an interest in the socially constructed nature of reality and the ways in which writers function within discourse communities. Often considered a later development of process, the social-constructionist turn in composition, which began to be articulated in the mid-1980s by writers such as James Berlin (1987), Patricia Bizzell (1982) and Lester Faigley (1986), was in fact part of a more general epistemological shift toward a view of knowledge as transactional, created in interactions among individuals. It is in critiques such as those of Ohmann (1979) and Connors (1981), I think, that we can hear early indications of the influence that this shift was to have on composition.

As social constructionism gained currency, inspiring in turn its own lines of inquiry, professional and scholarly attitudes toward style within the field began to shift as well. For many compositionists, the separation of form and content was no longer necessary to process pedagogy; and for some it even became problematic. One example is Min-Zhan Lu (1999), who argues that such a separation depoliticizes assumptions about which forms are most appropriate to express a writer's ideas. In "Professing Multiculturalism" (1994), Lu elaborates the place of style within what she calls "border pedagogy." Through examples from classroom handouts and teacher-student conferences, Lu describes an inductive and collaborative interrogation of students' choices of linguistic features that foregrounds the ways in which their voices conflict with the discourses of academia (173). Language and thought are reunited in that style is no longer a unitary construct, but rather an integral part of the discourses by which communities, disciplines, and institutions create knowledge.

Aside from this questioning of the apparent disappearance of style from composition, several writers have recently called for bringing explicit attention to style back to the center of the writing classroom. In *The Emperor's New Clothes,* Kathryn Flannery (1995) takes up, in a sense, where Ohmann's essay leaves off by examining different kinds of "style talk"—generalized assumptions about what constitutes "good style"—for the particular interests that they support and help maintain (7). The brief pedagogical example with which she ends her book, although it shies away from making specific statements about how style talk might inform teaching, underscores her point that such an examination is crucially important for what compositionists do as practitioners (199–202). Carpenter (2000), on the other hand, takes a somewhat different approach, arguing for a reintegration of style with the other more venerated elements of the

writing process, so that style becomes one of the central components of a fully realized pedagogy.

STYLE AT THE MARGINS

In spite of the vehemence of the process movement's denunciations of style, the fact remains that it has continued to be written about and discussed (see, for example, Noguchi 1991). More importantly, however, it has continued to be taught, as can be readily observed from the plethora of textbooks, handbooks, and style guides that are published annually—and that continue to be included on course syllabi as required or recommended texts. Faigley (1992) cites numerous examples of textbooks whose continuing popularity would seem to indicate that even relatively traditional approaches to style retain their adherents. For example, Sheridan Baker's *The Practical Stylist,* first published in 1962, is currently in its eighth edition (1997), while Joseph Williams's *Style,* first published in 1986, is in its seventh (2003). More recently, books such as Kolln's *Rhetorical Grammar* (1999) have offered an updated approach to style that focuses on the effects of specific linguistic choices.

Besides maintaining a presence, however subordinated, within mainstream composition, the teaching of style has continued to be a critical concern in specialized areas of theory and pedagogy residing at the boundaries of composition studies. One of these areas is second language (or L2) writing, which has paid a great deal of attention to the development of techniques for responding to formal errors in student writing (for a review, see Ferris 2002). Indeed, the study of contrastive rhetoric, which was initiated by Robert Kaplan's seminal article in 1966, represents a systematic effort to understand the forms of L2 text as realizations of cross-cultural modes of expression and argumentation. Over the past decade or so, second language writing has asserted itself as a field of inquiry separate from composition in large part through the advocacy of scholars such as Tony Silva, Ilona Leki, and Joy Reid, as well as the founding of the *Journal of Second Language Writing.* A primary aspect of this separation has been a recognition that style and form are simply inescapable for second language writers, and that many of composition's most favored practices are inadequate for L2 writers' needs. Leki (1992) makes this point quite powerfully in *Understanding ESL Writers* when she asks readers to imagine having to freewrite in a second language. Suddenly, the notion that writers can forget about form and let their thoughts flow onto the page becomes absurd.

[136.0.111.243] Project MUSE (2025-01-15 06:35 GMT)

Similarly, the idea that style cannot be ignored has been a defining point in the history of the basic writing movement. In "The 'Birth' of 'Basic Writing,'" James Horner (1999) critically analyzes the discourse of Basic Writing (note the capital letters) as a response to the wider public debates on higher education surrounding the start of City University of New York's open admissions policy in 1969. He describes a catch-22 situation, in which basic writing teachers have to expend all of their efforts on teaching students grammar and mechanics in order to prove that those students can be taught to write—thus leaving little room for the actual teaching of writing (16). These discourses reified the historical moment in which Basic Writing was born, defining basic writing as perpetually behind mainstream composition.

In the late 1980s, however, the necessity of teaching style came to be seen less as emblematic of the problems of Basic Writing, and more as a recognition of students' right of access to institutionally validated discourses. In a now-famous article, Lisa Delpit (1988) accuses process adherents of hypocrisy, contending that focusing instruction on helping students to find a writerly voice expects them to use forms and conventions that they haven't been explicitly taught, thereby denying those forms to students of color. Min-Zhan Lu (1999) frames the issue more specifically in terms of the relationship between thought and language, arguing that Basic Writing has theorized writing as the formal expression of preexisting meanings. The problem with this assumption is that it ignores the fact that changes in form often result in changes in meaning, however subtle. Lu catalogues a range of examples from *Errors and Expectations* (Shaughnessy 1977) that demonstrate how writers' stylistic "improvements" also minimize the conflicts and tensions between home and academic discourses. In this sense, teachers are never just instructing writers in the means and methods for realizing their thoughts more effectively on paper, but rather are coercing students into specific political choices about how to align themselves within various discourses.

As universities in the United States have begun, however reluctantly, to acknowledge conditions of diversity on their campuses, second language writing and basic writing have garnered a certain amount of institutional support. However, scholars in both areas continue to highlight the institutional dilemmas that their students face—for example, that "nonmainstream" student populations (students of color, international students, "generation 1.5"[1] students, underprepared students—the list goes on) are here to stay; that their needs are not adequately addressed by "quick-fix"

measures such as intensive programs and remedial courses; and that the issues involved in teaching them are not peripheral to composition. From this standpoint, style's compartmentalization within process is analogous to the marginalization of those whose education is deemed nonessential to the main business of the academy. The issue of style thus becomes a crucial one because it forces us to confront as writing teachers the institutional divisions that underlie and inform our classroom practices—divisions that construct student populations according to "special" needs requiring separation and containment.

RHETORICAL GENRE THEORY: FROM APPLIED LINGUISTICS TO COMPOSITION

As a theoretical construct, genre provides a point around which have converged many of the issues at stake in the teaching of academic literacy. For over two decades, genre researchers and theorists have developed a diverse range of approaches to the study of genre, as well as applications to pedagogical issues. Once viewed primarily as a classification system for literary texts, genres have come to be understood as complex discursive structures that instantiate social actions (Freedman and Medway 1994b). An essential aim of much of this work has been to demystify particular genres so as to make them accessible to students. An example of this is the Sydney School, a group of researchers in Australia who developed genre-based pedagogies for the teaching of writing in secondary schools, partly as a reaction to the whole language and process pedagogies that became prevalent there in the early 1980s. As with Delpit (1988) in the North American context, these researchers held that process pedagogies unwittingly favored monolingual middle-class students (Richardson 1994). Although the Sydney School eventually drew criticism for focusing too narrowly on a static conception of genres as text types, its theoretical basis was located in the systemic-functional linguistics of Michael Halliday: a fundamentally social theory of language as a complex relationship between form and function.

In North America, the work of John Swales as well combines a linguist's perspective with practical aims. His *Genre Analysis* (1990), which is an extended study of the research article for second language writers, operates from a sociolinguistically grounded definition of genre as expressing the communicative purposes of particular discourse communities. As with the Sydney School, however, his application of genre is also largely textual, concentrating on close readings and comparisons of genre exemplars

[136.0.111.243] Project MUSE (2025-01-15 06:35 GMT)

for "move structure"—a taxonomy of the typified moves, or rhetorical gestures, that occur within the genre, often in a fairly fixed order. Swales's work has defined the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) movement, in which discourse conventions are seen as primarily instrumental in that they provide access to specific communities for business or professional purposes. The typical ESP student, who is already established in a field of study or profession, is assumed to possess the background knowledge (the "content"), and simply requires the means to express that content in an unfamiliar form.

While linguistic approaches to genre have taken an increasingly contextual viewpoint, researchers and theorists operating within a new rhetorical framework have further problematized notions of genres as static, stable texts that can be studied apart from the social contexts in which they are embedded. A good deal of this work stems from Carolyn Miller's influential article, "Genre as Social Action" (1984), which defines genres as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (159). That is, genres arise as speakers respond in socially acceptable and recognizable ways to situational exigencies that recur over time. According to Miller, these recurring situations are intersubjective phenomena, encompassing both the context of the genre and the social relations of the speakers who use it. Subsequent work has built on Miller's thesis by examining the ways in which genres not only respond to situations but also constitute them (Bawarshi 2003; Devitt 1993), as well as their dialogic nature (Freadman 1994). That is, genres help shape reality even as they are shaped by it, and they respond to other genres within larger intertextual systems.

These theoretical developments, useful though they may be for genre research, also raise serious questions about the potential for genre to inform composition pedagogy in any useful way. Genres, the new rhetoricians argue, represent highly abstract and largely subliminal forms of social knowledge, or "situated cognition" (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1993, 477), which users acquire through repeated exposure within meaningful contexts of actual usage. Moreover, genres are dynamic and evolving; hence, any theory of how a given genre is produced and understood can never be more than a working model (or, in Thomas Kent's terms, a "passing theory") that has to be continually adjusted with each new communicative event. Not surprisingly, therefore, some scholars (for example, Freedman 1994) have contended that explicit teaching of genres and genre features is not only not useful, it may in some cases be harmful in that it can give students a reductive and uncritical view of the

socially constructed power relationships that are realized through communicative events.

Rhetorical genre theory thus poses an interesting challenge for the teaching of style: how can explicit discussions of genre features contribute to students' awareness of style as a site of social and institutional struggle? And how can style address the dynamic nature of genres in ways that will be valuable for students as they engage this struggle both within and beyond the writing classroom? Ann Johns provides a point of departure in suggesting that teachers' responsibility is to help students become genre theorists: "to destabilize their often simplistic and sterile theories of texts and enrich their views of the complexity of text processing, negotiation, and production within communities of practice" (2002a, 240). In other words, genres provide rich contexts for getting students to think about how specific stylistic choices position them within competing discourses and communicative situations.

STYLE WITHIN A GENRE-BASED PEDAGOGY

In the first-year composition courses that I currently teach, I conceptualize the use of genre in three general stages: a textual stage, involving close reading and comparison of genre exemplars; a contextual stage, which focuses on the rhetorical purposes of texts as they are realized in specific features and patterns; and, finally, a critical stage, which further extends the discussion to include the typified reading and writing practices, as well as the social roles that genres instantiate. These stages are recursive, usually cycling through several times during the term as the students complete major writing assignments. For the first one or two of these assignments, I have students analyze public genres that are usually familiar and easily accessible to them. News reports and movie reviews have proven particularly useful here because they provide fertile material for application of the ideas in course readings: news reports as a place to examine Jane Tompkins's (2000) claims about the perspectival nature of factual accounts, and movie reviews for John Berger's (2000) exploration of how art is consumed in modern society. More importantly, though, public genres are a good way to start because their very familiarity makes them a challenge for close reading and analysis. During the final part of the course, students complete a research project in which they choose a genre, gather data (for example, textual samples, interviews with and observations of users of the genre), and then write an analysis of their findings.

[136.0.111.243] Project MUSE (2025-01-15 06:35 GMT)

As we are examining and talking about the styles and contexts of these genres, I also try to focus students' attention on the genres of the writing classroom as well. I introduce the concept of genre simply by asking students a series of questions to explore their experiences of the term itself: what they think "genre" means, what constitutes a genre, how genres are distinguished from one another, and so forth. I also ask students about the genres that they are familiar with as readers and writers: what genres they come into contact with at home, and what genres they have previously used in school. Later, we read and discuss essays written by former participants in the course, first for textual features and then for rhetorical context. Finally, we discuss the social roles that are constructed through not only the essays themselves, but the other genres of the writing class: the assignment sheets, the essays in the reader, peer review forms, and so forth. As we continue through this analytical cycle (from text to context to social positioning), my underlying aim is to involve students in closely reading and manipulating texts, and this is where style becomes important.

EXAMINING TEXTS

There are several activities that I have found particularly helpful in getting students to look carefully at textual features. I often start discussions of the course readings by asking students to identify the features in the text that they consider unusual for "formal" academic writing. Observations that typically come up in this regard are things that students are often told not to do in their high school writing classes. Students notice, for example, that the opening of Jane Tompkins's essay is peppered with the first-person singular pronoun, which in turn provides the opportunity to talk about her use of personal narrative in the introduction to her argument. Students also notice that John Berger tends to put coordinating conjunctions at the beginnings of sentences, and also to use single-sentence paragraphs as a means of emphasizing specific points. This is usually a good time to introduce Swalesean move structure by having students divide the text into sections. After we compare the sections that they have identified and reach a consensus on the divisions, I have small groups each take one section and list its most noticeable characteristics, focusing particularly on sentence structure, vocabulary, and transition signals. In this way, we start to talk about stylistic features in terms of their purpose within the structure of the essay. We notice, for example, that Tompkins's essay shifts from past to present tense—a shift that signals her rhetorical use of narrative (in the past tense) to frame her analyses of historians' texts (in the present tense).

Another useful point of entry into a discussion of textual features is to present students with texts that have been altered or manipulated in some way. For example, I have presented students with a parody "workplace" article from the *Onion,* which begins as follows:

> SANTA FE, NM—When Santa Fe–area marketing and sales professionals are looking for an office-management consultant with a nose for improving productivity and cost-effectiveness, they turn to Jim Smuda. For the past six years, this pitiful little man has served as senior field consultant at VisTech, one of Santa Fe's leading service-support companies.
>
> "I provide office solutions," the sniveling, detestable Smuda said. "Whether you need help with digital networking, facilities management, outsourcing, systems integration or document services, I have the experience and know-how to guide you through today's business maze."
>
> "If you've got questions," the 41-year-old worm added, "the team of experts at VisTech has got the answers." ("'I Provide Office Solutions'" 1998)

The story, which looks in every way like a normal article, is accompanied by a photograph that further juxtaposes the almost vacuous normality and self-presentation of the business consultant with a sardonic caption that begins, "Spineless nonentity Jim Smuda . . .". I give this article to students with the publication information removed, as if it were an actual news article. Then, once they realize that it is a parody, I ask them to figure out which features tell them so. This helps to make a simple point about the close relationship between form and content, as students can see that the grammatical function of modifying phrases such as "the sniveling, detestable Smuda" and "the 41-year-old worm" are completely appropriate to an actual news article, while the content is just the opposite.

In the unit on movie reviews, I often present students with a review of a popular movie that has been scrambled so that the paragraphs are in random order. Working together, students unscramble the paragraphs, and then we discuss the specific words and phrases that indicate the order of the paragraphs, paying attention as well to paragraphs that appear to fit in more than one place. This discussion helps to connect grammatical and lexical elements with the move structure of the review, and also to get students to talk about possible variations in the order of moves.

Students can also be asked to manipulate texts themselves, either within or across genres. One way to do this is to have the class suggest a recent event that many of them might have attended (for example, a party), then have everyone write two "letters home"—one to an older relative (such as a

[136.0.111.243] Project MUSE (2025-01-15 06:35 GMT)

parent or grandparent) and the other to a best friend, but without naming the person in the letter. After they have done this, students exchange letters and try to guess, based on the style of each letter, which person it was written to.[2] The following discussion can focus on the decisions that students made as they wrote their own letters, as well as the clues that helped them to determine the addressees of other letters. Activities like these are, of course, nothing new to composition; however, by focusing on genre, issues of audience, purpose and voice can be explicitly connected to stylistic features. (See Caudery 1998; Kroll 2001 for further examples of activities.)

INTERROGATING CONTEXTS

Once students have gained some facility with picking apart specific texts, the next stage is to facilitate what Terence Pang calls "contextual awareness building," which "highlights speaker intent and encourages learners to analyze the speech event and the situational variables underlying genres" (2002, 146). I have found it useful at this point to use a series of genre analysis questions formulated by Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff (2004; also included in Bawarshi 2003, 159–60), which are divided into the following steps:

1. Study the situation of the genre.
2. Identify and describe patterns in the genre's features.
3. Analyze what these patterns reveal about the situation.

These questions ask students to first gather information about the context (participants, setting, topic) of a genre, and then study its specific formal features (typical sentence structures, vocabulary, format). The final step is to make connections between features and context. Although we use these questions to a certain extent for all of the genres we discuss in class, I tend to wait until students have spent some time talking and writing about the stylistic features of at least one public genre before asking them to concentrate on the connections between genre patterns and scene. I want students to spend plenty of time working with the details of style before they start to articulate inferences about how those details realize rhetorical situations, because I find that this will encourage them to avoid reaching overly simplistic conclusions about the genre.

The following example serves to illustrate some of the directions discussion can take. During one course, I had students read a newspaper report of the 1993 FBI raid on the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. The report begins as follows:

> The compound where cult leader David Koresh and 95 followers holed up for 51 days burned to the ground today after FBI agents in an armored vehicle smashed the buildings and pumped in tear gas. The Justice Department said cult members set the fire. A White House official said FBI agents were doing everything possible to rescue the 95 cult followers from the compound, and at least 20 people had left it. (Brown 1993)

Two things that students pointed out right away were the use of the past tense and the long, densely packed first sentence. These were fairly quickly connected with the genre's purpose of relating an event that is assumed to have already occurred, as well as the expectation that the report communicate the most relevant information about the event within the first paragraph. Students also noted that an important aspect of this genre is to maintain an "objective" tone. To follow up on this, I focused attention on clause structure and agency by asking students to enumerate the verbs, who was performing them, and whether each subject-verb construction occurred in a main or subordinate clause. This started a discussion of how reported speech is often the most concrete and verifiable kind of fact in a news story; thus, most of the main clause actions attributed to people are statements. Actions other than speaking are embedded within subordinate clauses, usually following a verb like "say." I then asked students to read the passage again, and, according to the information presented there, state who they think started the fire. With few exceptions, students answered Koresh or his "followers" or the cult. This allowed us to explore the ways in which news reports like this one "spin" events so that specific causal connections are easier to make. Not only is the reader given "just the facts," but also a simple choice for who or what caused the event to occur.

Contextual awareness can make for some particularly revealing discussions of student writing as well. About two-thirds of the way through the term, I have students apply the genre analysis questions to the argumentative essays that they have to write for the course. By this point, students have usually completed at least one major writing assignment, involving multiple drafts, peer review, and teacher commentary, and have seen samples of previously submitted papers. Thus, they have plenty of direct experience with the demands of the genre, as well as my expectations, and they can quickly produce a list of "typical" features and moves (usually based on instructions in my assignment sheets). In discussing the context of the genre, students usually note, understandably enough, its

[136.0.111.243] Project MUSE (2025-01-15 06:35 GMT)

largely instrumental purpose—that one of its functions is to display an understanding of and engagement with the course readings, as well as to demonstrate the use of conventionalized aspects of language in the construction of an academic argument, to receive a grade, and pass a writing requirement. It often takes some careful questioning, however, to get students to make connections between the features of style and the situation of the genre.

A good example of this has to do with what is commonly referred to as the "road map"—that part of the essay that signals the structure of the argument. I encourage my students to include a road map—indeed, assignment sheets and peer review forms often mention road maps; moreover, I try to provide students with varying examples of how to construct a road map. In a recent discussion, however, several of my students reacted negatively to a former student's essay in which the road map was explicitly stated in a form similar to "In this essay, I will argue that . . .". This led to a discussion of the stylistic shift of the student's road map, which, they argued, sounded overly formal and pedestrian in comparison with the rest of the essay up to that point. Students pointed particularly to the writer referring to himself and the argument that his essay was making ("I will . . ."). I asked the class to consider the issue in terms of the context of the assignment—for example, what would happen if the road map were simply omitted. In this sense, I suggested, the road map is a kind of contract between student and teacher in that it represents the writer's metadiscursive claim as to what the argument of the essay is, so that the instructor can evaluate that claim, provide guidance for revision, and eventually assign a grade. Thus, we were able to consider how the multiple purposes of the genre can conflict with one another so that, as in this instance, the need to be explicit can lead to what was perceived as an awkward-sounding style. We concluded by talking about other ways in which the writer could have handled the road map—by, for example, integrating the road map sentences with other sections of the essay, rather than presenting it as a bald statement of purpose, or alternatively by restructuring the "I will . . ." sentence so that there would be less emphasis on the writer.

ANALYZING SCENES

The final stage involves investigating social roles as they are constituted through genres. For the research project, in which students select a genre to study and analyze on their own, I encourage students to choose genres related to their academic or career goals, although I allow them

to choose any specific genre that interests them.[3] Students' choices of professional and academic genres have included law reviews, medical research reviews, floral arrangement articles, chemistry lab reports, and psychological research reports. Other choices have included newspaper editorials, sports columns, album reviews, and job application forms. While students are choosing a genre, I have them read a methodological text such as Anthony Paré and Graham Smart's "Observing Genres in Action" (1994) or Susan Peck MacDonald's "The Analysis of Academic Discourse(s)" (2002). Then I have them brainstorm some of the ways that they can research the genres that they are thinking of analyzing—how to obtain samples, other types of data that might be relevant, and so forth. Although many students, for various reasons, choose to focus their final paper on a textual analysis of their exemplars, several have gone a step further by interviewing readers and writers of the genre. One student I worked with, for example, looked at floral arrangement articles because she had her own floral business. She contacted an older, more established florist and interviewed her about how she used the articles to get ideas for her own arrangements.

As with the previous assignments in the course, I have students apply Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff's (2004) steps for genre analysis to their samples, again focusing on connections between features and situation. Here, however, I try to draw attention specifically to the roles of reader and writer as they are constructed by the genre. Questions pertinent to this goal include:

1. How is the subject of the genre treated? What content is considered most important? What content (topics or details) is ignored?
2. What values, beliefs, goals, and assumptions are revealed through the genre's patterns?
3. What actions does the genre help make possible? What actions does the genre make difficult? What roles do its users perform?
4. Who is included in the genre, and who is excluded? (from Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff 1994, 93–94).

Style is crucial here because it gives students concrete ways of drawing conclusions about the how well the texts that they are looking at fit into a genre, as well as how readers and writers are constituted through the genre: how texts fulfill readers' expectations, how they assert specific forms of authority, and how they signal affiliation with discourse communities.

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One student, for example, analyzed the lesson columns that appear in magazines such as *Guitar* and *Guitar Player* offering readers tips on playing techniques. He identified two specific features: the relatively simple syntax of the articles (employing, for example, a conversational style that refers directly to "you" the reader) and their use of music theory terms, which he then connected to the genre's positioning of the writer as a kind of specialist. Writers of the genre have to show that they are professional musicians, that they possess knowledge and skill far beyond the amateur players who are assumed to read the column; at the same time, they have to be able to take musical techniques and present them in lay terms—so that it sounds like virtually anyone could learn them with a little practice. In other words, the genre posits a gap between lay knowledge about guitar playing and professional knowledge, and it is in the style of the article that that gap can most clearly be seen.

As students are completing their projects, we revisit our discussion of classroom genres and extend it to the other genres of the course, as well as to reader/writer roles. A stylistic issue that we usually talk about at this point, because it is one that arises consistently in drafts, is how to refer to course readings and other sources in support of a written argument. As with the road map issue mentioned earlier, students seem to grapple with a tension between, on the one hand, pedagogical and ethical requirements that they cite their sources correctly and distinguish their own ideas from those of, say, Jane Tompkins; and, on the other, the need to maintain an orderly and cohesive progression of ideas (a notion that many students refer to with the elusive term "flow"). Once again, style becomes the tangible material around which this tension is addressed: how to restate a writer's argument with specific action verbs ("Tompkins argues"; "Berger asserts"); how to make quoted material fit grammatically with the sentence structure of the draft; how to paraphrase.

I have found it fruitful to frame this issue by having students consider how the various documents of the course—assignment sheets, essay drafts, comments, and so forth—construct the teacher as reader of student writing. Students note from assignment sheets, as well as my comments on their drafts, that they are expected to "introduce" sources to their reader "as if the reader has never read them before." I ask students what this suggests about how I read their texts, which leads us into a discussion of the institutional functions that student writing performs, and the ways in which it constitutes a social relationship between teacher (or reader) and student (writer). The requirement to clearly explicate sources can

be seen, on the one hand, as a means for the teacher to check that the student has done the reading and has understood how it relates to the argument of the paper. On the other hand, it can be seen as part of the expectation that the teacher read student writing from the standpoint of a generalized academic audience. In this way, specific stylistic concerns can be discussed and clearly related to the ways in which they position students within the writing course and within the university.

As I hope the above examples show, genre can be used to talk about style in a range of different ways: to get students to look closely at style in the texts that they read and write, to draw out into the open their assumptions and questions about specific aspects of style, and, perhaps most importantly, to help them see writing styles and conventions as the realization of what Carolyn Miller describes as "the abstract yet distinctive influence of a culture, a society, or an institution" (1994, 70). By encouraging students to reflect on the particular forms that this influence takes, we can, I would suggest, increase students' awareness of how writing positions them within the discourses of the academy, and guide them toward informed choices in their own uses of language, thereby re-placing style within the structures that give it meaning.