

Teaching Handouts: Assignment Sheet

A Multi Genre Report

In 1982 Richard Larson, a former editor of the college composition journal, called into question, the notion that there is one, clear research paper format that should be taught to students. Certainly, many of the formats used for writing in school limit if not distort what can be said. For example, I find the typical argumentative essay particularly offensive; namely, asking students to present pro and con arguments about complex social issues like abortion trivializes personal, ethical and religious issues to a simple yes/no decision. Composition teachers should discuss essay formats that can expand rather than limit the possibilities for analysis.

One author who argues passionately for alternate forms is Tom Romano. Tom asks students to meld fact, interpretation, and imagination to write about a topic of their choice. Allowing students to write in other genres can both enhance their commitment to the project and improve the quality of their writing.

Multi-genre reports can contain all the required elements of a traditional research paper such as quotations, works cited, definition of terms, presentation of information, analysis, and future implications. However, these elements must be presented using more than one genre: poetry, prose, drama, memoir, news reports, parody, fictional dialogues, songs, monologues, electronic presentations, web sites, pastiche posters, children's books, etc. Interviewing people personally affected by an issue can help to ground reports in daily life experiences rather than only in media representations. Multi-genre reports are more interesting to read and share with the whole class. Often, these reports will demand an audience wider than the classroom.

Topic Options for the Multi Genre Report:

Multi genre reports can be done about any category of topic that the teacher selects. Your reports will be from one of these three general areas:

- Family Stories
- Community History
- Peer Group Identity

It is my hope that you will select a topic that will be personally meaningful to you.

We will make use of both primary and secondary information. Primary information is first person information gained from interviews. Secondary information is reported information in books, newspapers, web sites, etc. written by other people. You must be sure to select people for your interviews who are readily available to you, who will be cooperative, and who will spend the time that you need on this project in the next four weeks. You can interview people through E-mail, over the telephone, in person, and in groups. Your project may be a model for an assignment that you might ask your students to do.

Requirements:

Your report must have at least five written documents that total approximately ten or more double-spaced typed pages. You also must have at least one visual. This report should have a real audience of one or more people who would be interested in it. You will keep a process journal about your progress, and you will prewrite, draft, revise, conference, and proofread your work.