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**EXPLANATIONS OF GENRE**

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Genre is only the visible realization of a complex of social and psychological dynamics.

--Charles Bazerman

I really like thinking about genre using the "lens" metaphor. We know that genres are constructed by society and culture. They reflect complex truths about our world that are otherwise difficult to record, understand, verbalize, or even see. When we look through these genre lenses, we can learn things about ourselves, culture, and societies, that we would otherwise not have access to. Genres provide the necessary distancing that humans need in order to process these complexities, they make the content manageable. Genres are also the only way we have to preserve these elements of our world. Because we know that culture and society change across space and time, we know that genres reflect those changes and grow and develop with those forces. They work to fit the specific needs of society. As different outlets for escape and different elements of our reality become more relevant for reflection, genres adapt according.

Importantly, understanding genre and validating its significance allows readers/audiences to be more self-aware, to have a greater understanding of the times and conditions they are living in, and to have a greater respect and understanding of the conditions that exist(ed) for people in other cultures and other times. In these important ways, genres allow people to come together in ways that would be otherwise impossible. They also perform an important function in our world by recording and keeping this unique evidence of culture accessible.

--Kelsey Denney

Genres develop [ . . . ] because they respond appropriately to situations that writers encounter repeatedly.

--Amy Devitt

Genre is the framework writers/producers use to make meaning in their art. This includes a system of truth effects and formal features that readers/audience understands as part of a system of making meaning. Readers/audience can plug into this system/framework to access a familiar world which allows them to understand the metaphors the art uses to express its themes.

What is gained by understanding genre is the removal of a filter between the art and the audience. By perceiving the framework we see the content in a new way and come to perceive content that we did not notice before. For example by noticing conventions and variations in genre we are led to explore what aspects of our culture and beliefs led us (both the author and reader) to make those choices and assumptions in the first place. This perception opens the possibility of a greater cultural awareness.

Understanding Genre allows us to begin to perceive the forest, not just the trees.

--Nissa Freed

[F]ar from being merely 'stylistic' devices, genres create effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility, which are central to the different ways the world is understood in the writing of history or of philosophy or of science, or in painting, or in everyday talk. These effects are not, however, fixed and stable, since texts – even the simplest and most formulaic – do not 'belong' to genres but are, rather uses of them; they refer not to 'a' genre but to a field or economy of genres, and their complexity derives from the complexity of that relation.

--John Frow

The word *genre* comes from the French language (originally Latin) meaning 'kind' or 'class.' Its principle task has been to divide the world of literature into categories, however this classification has no neutral or objective procedure because categories cannot be clearly defined. Genres are fluid and change over time and are always historically relative.

Although genre presents us with ambiguity and some controversy, the benefits outweigh the hindrances. We subconsciously classify things into certain genres providing us with the needed influences surrounding the text. This way when we read it, our responses are within the textual and social contexts, underlining the social nature of the literature. It counteracts the tendency to treat individual texts in isolation from others, allowing the reader to locate meaning and open their eyes to the cultural contexts and historical perspectives.

--Amanda Gladding

Understanding genre helps to allow people to deal with life by showing it in another way. Genre helps people explore ideas that might seem too controversial or hard to think about so it is important for people to understand what genre does for them because without this knowledge they can not understand the full value of genre fiction.

Genre as said in class today is nothing without the readers and meaning makers that use it as a medium to express what is happening within a society. And it is through genre that people are able to understand metaphors used in a text to explain what is happening in their world.

--Melissa Grimmer

Genre in literature is a system of meaning making writers use to explore common conventions, ideals, and societal issues through rhetoric, themes, and formal organization. As a reader the understanding of what is responded to in a writing is limited by previous experiences that may overlap with the new information read.

--Rebecca Harris

Genre is about communication between someone else and myself. In the medium such as print, speech, video, or one of the many other forms out there, part of the medium itself is genre. I know this is a weird example but lately I've taken a bunch of math here at the UWB and so it will help me explain myself.

You have parentheses, and order of operations and rules that math follows. Math like Sci-Fi is a genre, because someone is communicating ideas to someone else. As we are all aware no one can jump in and do advanced math with out leaning the basics. We start out with  $1 + 1 = 2$  and we now have the basics of what is 2 so that we can move on, just as we start out with "See Spot run" and move on to Frankenstein then on to Battlestar Galactica. In math you have parentheses that allow you to focus on small sections at a time. Just like in the books we read a sentence holds a bit of a love story, political commentary or what ever and then combines with the rest of the sentences to make a better fuller understanding. In the genre of math I don't need to come out and explain the history and function of a plus (+) symbol, just as with Sci-Fi the symbols have been developed and may be used out of normal context but they allow me to jump forward and tell my story or get my point across with out a in depth history lesson. My understanding of the history and what not from the other person spills over artificial category walls of genre and creates understanding. Those artificial walls are very useful

to make communication fast and efficient just as math has modules to do the same but they are not the point of genre, we use them but the point is communication.

--James Heighton

Genre is a way to bring meaning to almost everything that surrounds us. By using certain conventions it fills people's need to deal with their present problems. I really like the idea of describing Genre as looking through different lenses. Genre changes because people's needs change. It allows producers and readers to communicate through written or visual work and also aids in every day communication among people. Without these people making meaning, genre would not exist.

--Natalie Irwin

Genre is sort of a window for looking into contents. Genre speaks for what is going on at the time and uses different conventions to describe it and give examples. I like to think about the example of the Russian dolls, there can be so many layers to a particular genre and it's not always that simple to explain.

--Ashley Judah

Genre seems to be unique to each book/media we see. Each of them combine different features, romance, fear, reality, space travel, alien invasion, etc. to give us an original piece of work. In these works we notice the different features it possesses because we recognize them from previous books and movies. When a genre is so far off from what we have ever seen before, it seems to create a new genre so we are able to identify it if we see those features of a work in the future. We naturally categorize everything so we can find a place for them in our memory, by creating genre we can find a place for them and store them in our own personal filing systems that can assist us for better understanding of things as we continue life

--Kate Leroy

Genre is like that popsicle picture frame that we might have made as kids and then decorated with stuff that matched whatever picture was going to go inside.

--Klaudina Pasko

Genre is more influenced by the culture. As we read a text our culture helps us decide what type of genre it is and how we interpret what we have read. Also genre is not limiting. Just because we are reading Sci-Fi it does not mean that this is all that you are going to be getting from this book. Authors are able to use different genres in order to present their idea. Different genres work together and are not separate. Not only are the authors mixing genres, but the reader as well. Our experiences and knowledge help us interpret the text and help us understand the ideas that the author is presenting. We as humans try to give each item a category to help us in understanding what we are seeing. Without genre it might be harder to relate different texts with each other. Genre is how we make sense of what we are reading. Genre is knowledge that aids us understanding what we are reading, and helps us give meaning to it.

--Emily Phillips

Trends/Styles and Genres would seem to go almost hand in hand - ever changing, re-classifying, re-emerging - its a social property. Genres are formed by the times and how they are a changin'. Their popularity and proliferation is based on our social need for it.

--Nate Schelin