



Sorting Out Forms and Genres

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Overview

Topic: Text forms, text features, and genres. Text form, structures, text features and genres are consistently interchanged and create confusion and frustration for students who navigate the various texts they are expected to know, understand, use and even evaluate throughout high school. In this lesson students will use hands-on activities, video, and websites to help them distinguish the elements of text form, text features, and genres and will use the distinctions to hypothesize what they might enjoy reading.

Time Allotment

Two 90-minute periods

Learning Objectives

On completion of this lesson students will be able to:

- Distinguish the terms form, genre, and text features as applied to various texts.
- Speculate the value that can be added to their reading of a piece of text by identifying its form, genre, and structures to clarify the author's purpose.
- Utilize various strategies to identify formats, text structures, and genres.

(This lesson addresses Va. SOL English 9.3, 9.4, 10.4, 11.4, 12.3, 12.4)

Media Components

Videostreamed Examples:

- Explanation: *Journals Through History: Ancient China: Contributions to the World*. Discovery Education. 2006. Retrieved August 29, 2009 from Discovery Education: <http://www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/> Segment 1: Masters of Kung Fu (1:17)

- Procedural: *The U.S. Flag: Proper Rules and Display*. (06:24) SCETV. 2002. Retrieved August 27, 2009 from Discovery Education: <http://www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/>
- Recounting: *Royal Diaries: Cleopatra VII: Daughter of the Nile, Egypt, 57 B.C.* Scholastic. 2000. Retrieved August 27, 2009 from Discovery Education: www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/ Segment 1: King Ptolemy Auletes' Life in Danger (2:20)
- Narrative Prose: *Myths and Legends: Ancient Greece*. Colman Communications. 1995. Retrieved August 27, 2009 from Discovery Education: <http://www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/> Segment 4: Pandora Box, The Myth (4:06)
- Report: *So You Want to Be...Newspaper Editor, Sports Radio Talk Show Host, and Television Reporter*. Champion Entertainment. 2002. Retrieved August 27, 2009 from Discovery Education: <http://www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/> Segment 1: Newspaper Editor (10:09)
- Narrative Poem: *The Time Has Come: Inauguration Day 2009*. Chicago Sun-Times. 2009. Retrieved August 27, 2009 from Discovery Education: <http://www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/> Segment 11: Fulfilling a Dream (3:09)



Sorting Out Forms & Genres

- Exposition: *Ralph Ellison: An American Journey*. California Newsreel. 1992. Retrieved August 29, 2009 from Discovery Education: <http://www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/> Segment 12: Praise and Controversy Surrounding Invisible Man (5:18)
- Functional: *Speeches from History: Robert F. Kennedy*, WPA Film Library. 2004. Retrieved August 27, 2009 from Discovery Education: <http://www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/> Segment 13: Announcement of Candidacy for President (0:54)
- Electronic: *Campaign Essentials: Politics and the Media*. Discovery Times. 2004. Retrieved August 27, 2009 from Discovery Education: <http://www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/> Segment 5: Challenges of the 24-Hour News Environment (6:29)

Websites:

- Megcrame Blog – This site provides a variety of types of text. Students can vote on the type of text. <http://megcrame.blogspot.com/>
- What Book Genre Fits You Best? – Quiz that helps readers figure out what genre fits them the best. <http://www.quibblo.com/quiz/iWrK-m/What-Book-Genre-Fits-You-Best>

Document Examples to print for introductory activity:

- Narrative Prose: The Story of an Hour by Kate Chopin www.vcu.edu/engweb/webtexts/hour/
- Narrative Poem: Theme for English Language B by Langston Hughes <http://www.tesd.k12.pa.us/stoga/dept/barry/barry4/lit/harlem/poetry2.html>
- Procedural: Barbeque Ham Pizza Recipe by STEPHNDON <http://allrecipes.com/Recipe-Tools/Print/Recipe.aspx?RecipeID=23437&servings=12>
- Recounting: Memoirs of a Slave–My Life and Travels (Chapter VIII) by Levi Branham www.murraycountymuseum.com/ms_3_1.html
- Exposition: At School, Technology Starts to Turn a Corner by Steve Lohr www.nytimes.com/2008/08/17/technology/17essay.html? r=1&pagewanted=print
- Explanation: Chapter 6: Energy and Matter (c.) Energy, Temperature, and Heat www.physicalgeography.net/fundamentals/6c.html

- Report: Teens Have Good Ideas on Fixing High Schools http://www.mikvachallenge.org/site/files/719/92734/329117/451957/Teens_have_good_ideas_on_fixing_high_schools.pdf
- Functional: Notes of John Q. Student <http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes.html>
- Electronic: Email Thank You–Assistant Account Executive Interview <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobsearchemail-samples/ig/Email-Message-Examples/Email-Thank-You-Message.-61K.htm>
- Computers with Internet access
- Multimedia projector
- Speakers

Materials and Student Handouts

- Set of documents – one per group of three
- Nine large index cards with the nine different forms of text written one per card: Narrative Prose, Narrative Poetry, Procedural, Recounting, Exposition, Explanation, Report, Functional, and Electronic.
- Envelopes – one per group of three
- Sticky notes – nine per group of three

Teacher Preparations

- Print the nine document examples from websites listed above. Make enough copies for one per group of three students. Stack each set of 9 documents and cut into 4-6 pieces so that all documents have the same cut.
- Shuffle the pieces and place them in an envelope with the following directions on the front of the envelope:
 1. As a group remove all the pieces from the envelope.
 2. Turn them all text side up.
 3. Using what you already know about different types of text try piecing the information together.
 4. You should be able to create multiple single page documents.
 5. After you have created the documents, discuss the contents of each, the similarities, and the differences.

6. Come to a consensus on a “name” for each type of document.
 7. Write the name on the post-it note and place it on top of each document.
- Download and preview videos.
 - Preview and bookmark websites. Make sure they are not filtered.
 - Place the nine index cards on the board so that characteristics of the form can be listed below each.

Introductory Activity

1. Focus: As students enter put them in groups of three and hand each group an envelope with the cut-up pieces of text in it. Say: Follow the directions on the envelope to put together several different types of documents. Think about what makes each piece of text similar to and different from the others.

Activity: Students will use to put together several documents from the pieces in the envelopes. They will learn that the pieces are the same for each document so they have to look for other clues. Circulate while students work to puzzle the text back together and then discuss the similarities and differences between the documents.

Follow-up: Circulate again while groups discuss the contents of each document, the similarities, and the differences between documents. Ask: What strategies did you use to put the reports together? Record any pertinent comments you hear to use in the learning activity.

Learning Activities

1. Focus: Ask: What makes each piece of text similar to and different from each other? Give students the opportunity to discuss their observations from the introductory activity. As you work through this next activity, you will consider the different forms of text that you put together and try to put a name to each.

Activity: Have students each get a computer and access the Megcrame Blog website: <http://megcrame.blogspot.com/>. Each student will find the nine pieces of text that they pieced together. There is a poll for each. The students should read

the text and decide which name they would give each piece of text and answer the poll.

Follow-up: Display the results of each poll and discuss the results. Have students justify their selections. Use the following questions to create a list of characteristics on the board that may be associated with each form of text below the appropriate index card: What about the structure of this text makes it different from the other pieces? Was there facts or information that increases your knowledge of a subject? Did the piece lead you through a process? Was there a setting and characters?

Videostreaming

In order to use videostreaming interactively with students, teachers should use pre-segmented clips provided by the videostreaming company. If you wish to conduct a discussion before the clip is over and then resume after the discussion, use PAUSE, as this will cause the media player to remain at the current location in the stream. If the remainder of the video clip will not be used and the teacher wants to return to the beginning of the video clip, then use STOP so that the media player will revert to the beginning of the stream.

2. Focus: Hand each group nine sticky notes. Say: I am going to play a series of short video clips. For each clip, I will ask you to give a name that best describes that kind of text; for example, if you think it is a story, write “story.” We will be grouping them under the index cards on the board so we can see what type of texts belong under each form, so for now give the clip the name you think is best describes the type of text. Remember everything we have talked about so far, especially the characteristics we listed on the board. We’ll do the first one together. As you watch the clip, think about what name you would give to this kind of text.

Play: *Masters of Kung Fu* from the beginning.

Pause at the end of the segment.

Follow-up: Say: In your group, what name you would give this text? Do not write it on your sticky note yet. Be ready to explain why you selected that type of text.

3. Focus: Say: I am going to play this clip again. What are some of the characteristics of this text that

Sorting Out Forms & Genres

you all noticed the first time? (Allow students to share titles, facts, examples, reasons, etc.) Watch for these things as I play it a second time and see if you notice anything else that will confirm your thought or make you change your mind.

Stop at the end of the segment.

Follow-up: Say: I want you to discuss again what name you would give this kind of text and write your group's decision on a sticky note. Give students several minutes. Say: Did you change your mind after watching the clip a second time? (Accept student responses.) What name did you write on your sticky note? (Accept student responses.) Have each group explain their decision. Say: Now, look at the text forms listed on the index cards on the board. Which do you think this type of text belongs to? (explanation) Discuss student responses and resolve any differences. Have students put their sticky note under the Explanation card.

Note to the teacher: You will follow this same format for the other eight video clips. Replay each clip if needed.

4. Focus: Say: I am going to play another video clip. Again, I want you to give a name to the kind of text it is. Remember everything we have talked about so far, especially the characteristics we listed on the board.

Play *U.S. Flag Proper Rules and Display* beginning at 00:14 when you see a classroom scene and you hear "Our flag is a precious possession..."

Stop at 01:00 when revelry is played and the flag is at the top of the flagpole.

Follow-up: Say: I want you to discuss in your group what name you would give this text. Write your group's decision on a sticky note and then add it under an index card on the board. Be prepared to describe what you saw that made you think it was that kind of text.

5. Focus: Say: I am going to play two short video clips this time to keep thing moving along. When I pause the video, I want you to give a name to the kind of text it is. Remember everything we have talked about so far, especially the characteristics we listed on the board.

Play *King Ptolemy Auletes' Life in Danger* beginning at 00:11 immediately after segment title, Cleopatra is at the door and music is playing.

Stop at 01:27 when the servant enters the King's chamber and you hear "Father's life is in danger if he stays in Egypt."

Follow-up: Say: I want you to discuss in your group what name you would give this text. Write your group's decision on a sticky and set the note aside as I show the second clip.

6. Focus: Say: I am going to play the second short video clip. When I pause the video, I want you to give a name to the kind of text it is. Remember everything we have talked about so far, especially the characteristics we listed on the board.

Play *Pandora's Box, The Myth* from the beginning.

Stop at 01:02 when you see the box in the center of the room and hear "She was curious about its contents..."

Follow-up: Say: I want you to discuss in your group what name you would give this text. Write your group's decision on a sticky note. Put the two sticky notes under the correct index cards on the board. Be prepared to describe what you saw that made you think it was that kind of text.

7. Focus: Say: I am going to play two more short video clips. When I pause the video, I want you to give a name to the kind of text it is. Remember everything we have talked about so far, especially the characteristics we listed on the board.

Play with SOUND OFF *Newspaper Editor* beginning at 01:39 at the transition between woman in orange shirt to a newspaper and you hear "As far as the public is concerned, yes..."

Stop at 01:44 on the transition back from the newspaper to the woman in the orange shirt and you hear, "that name is going to be mine..."

Follow-up: Say: I want you to discuss in your group what name you would give this text. Write your group's decision on a sticky and set the note aside as I show the second clip.

9. Focus: Say: I am going to play the second short video clip. When I pause the video, I want you to give a name to the kind of text it is. Remember everything we have talked about so far, especially the characteristics we listed on the board.

Play *Fulfilling a Dream* beginning at 01:20 when you see a black and white picture of birds in the sky and hear "decades ago..."

Stop at 00:33 when you see a color picture of crowd and hear “Where he himself is free...”

Follow-up: Say: I want you to discuss in your group what name you would give this text. Write your group’s decision on a sticky note. Put the two sticky notes under the correct index cards on the board. Be prepared to describe what you saw that made you think it was that kind of text.

10. Focus: When I pause the video, I want you to give a name to the kind of text it is. Remember everything we have talked about so far, especially the characteristics we listed on the board.

Play *Praise and Controversy Surrounding Invisible Man* from the beginning.

Stop at 01:09 on the newspaper headline when you hear “Not the last criticism launched at Ellison...”

Follow-up: Say: I want you to discuss in your group what name you would give this text. Write your group’s decision on a sticky and set the note aside as I show the second clip.

11. Focus: When I pause the video, I want you to give a name to the kind of text it is. Remember everything we have talked about so far, especially the characteristics we listed on the board.

Play *Announcement of Candidacy for President* from the beginning.

Stop at the end of the segment.

Follow-up: Say: Discuss with your group what kind of text this is. Say: I want you to discuss in your group what name you would give this text. Write your group’s decision on a sticky and set the note aside as I show the third clip.

12. Focus: Say: I am going to play the third short video clip. When I pause the video, I want you to give a name to the kind of text it is. Remember everything we have talked about so far, especially the characteristics we listed on the board.

Play *Challenges of the 24-Hour News Environment* from the beginning.

Stop at 01:11 when you see the CNN anchor and hear “Howard Dean the winner of his home state...”

Follow-up: Say: I want you to discuss in your group what name you would give this text. Write your group’s decision on a sticky note. Put the three sticky notes under the correct index cards on the

board. Be prepared to describe what you saw that made you think it was that kind of text.

13. Focus: Once all of the sticky notes are up on the board and grouped under the nine labels you have posted, review the categories again. Say: I want you all to look over the groups, characteristics, and labels. Do you see anything you want to change or add?

Activity: List any additional characteristics for the various categories that students might identify. Give students the opportunity to make changes in the postings.

Follow-up: Say: Think of a piece of text that you thought was particularly well-written. What form of text was it? Elicit student responses and discuss which types of texts student prefer to read.

Culminating Activities

Focus: Say: Think about the texts you encounter every day. What forms are you most familiar with? (Allow student responses.) What form do you see in school the most? (Allow student responses.) What form are you least familiar with? Have you ever heard “text forms” called anything else? (Introduce the term genre if students do not come up with it.) What genre and/or form best matches you and your reading preferences?

Activity: Have students take the on-line quiz “What Book Genre Fits You Best?”

(<http://www.quibblo.com/quiz/iWrK-m/What-Book-Genre-Fits-You-Best>)

Follow-up: Do you agree or disagree with the results of the quiz? Remember that you can identify better with a different form of text (other than Literary-Narrative Prose). Which form or genre do you wish school would use more of? Why?

Assessment

- Observation, the sticky notes, and discussion will be used to assess student understanding of literary forms.

Community Connections

- Students can work with a library or librarian to create sections of the library appropriate for high school students that are designed around the various forms of text, and then genre.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

Students can work with Math, Science, and Social Studies teachers to bring all the various forms of text into the different contents in order to increase students' exposure.

- **Science:** Many science texts include laboratory/experiment/career sections. Have students identify the different forms in the science text so that student can associate a purpose for reading various sections of the textbook.
- **Art:** Compare the types of illustrations that you may find for the different forms of text.

About the Author

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MegCarolyn M. Remesz has been teaching for 17 years and is currently an Instructional Technology Resource Teacher for Charlottesville City Schools. She has taught 5-8 grade social studies, language arts, journalism and speech/drama, as well as, 9-12 Upward Bound study skills and test preparation. MegCarolyn has a B.A. in photojournalism and an M.A.T in Elementary Education. Her interests in education currently include reading, gifted, and curriculum and instruction.

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