

Lesson Plan: Exploring Writing Genres through Music

By Keolanani Kinghorn

Materials

- Grade Level: High School or College
- Duration: 60-90 minutes
- Materials Needed:
- Article: "Understanding Discourse Communities" by Dan Melzer (or excerpts)
- Article: "Navigating Genres" by Kerry Dirk (or excerpts)
- Access to various genres of music (streaming services, CDs, etc.)
- Whiteboard or chalkboard
- Writing materials (paper, pens/pencils)

Procedure

1. Introduction to Discourse Communities (15 minutes):

- Begin by introducing the concept of discourse communities using excerpts from "Understanding Discourse Communities" by Dan Melzer.
- Discuss with students what a discourse community is and how it influences communication and writing within specific contexts.
- Highlight key points such as shared goals, specialized language, and communication practices within discourse communities.

2. Introduction to Genres (15 minutes):

- Next, introduce the concept of genres using excerpts from "Navigating Genres" by Kerry Dirk User.
- Define what genres are and how they are used to categorize different types of writing based on form, purpose, and audience.
- Discuss how genres provide frameworks for understanding and producing texts within various discourse communities.



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3. Genre Exploration through Music (20 minutes):

- Divide the class into small groups.
- Provide each group with a list of different music genres (e.g., rock, jazz, hip-hop, classical, country, blues, pop, folk, etc.).
- Instruct each group to choose one genre from the list and listen to a few songs that exemplify that genre.
- As they listen, ask students to note down the characteristics they observe in the music, such as tempo, instrumentation, lyrical themes, mood, etc.

4. Comparison Discussion (15 minutes):

- Reconvene the class and ask each group to share their observations about the characteristics of the music genre they explored.
- Facilitate a discussion on how these characteristics relate to the concepts of discourse communities and genres discussed earlier.
- Encourage students to draw parallels between the characteristics of music genres and the characteristics of writing genres within specific discourse communities.

5. Connecting Music Genres to Writing Genres (15 minutes):

- Using the characteristics identified for each music genre, brainstorm with the class how those characteristics might translate into different writing genres.
- Encourage students to consider how different writing genres reflect various discourse communities' values, goals, and communication practices.
- Make connections between music genres and writing genres on the board, drawing on concepts from both readings. For example, if rock music is characterized by loud instrumentation and rebellious lyrics, what type of writing might share similar characteristics? (Possibly persuasive essays advocating for social change or energetic fiction with themes of rebellion.)
- Make connections between music genres and writing genres on the board.



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6. Make a Playlist: (10 minutes)

- Have every student in the class contribute at least one song to a class music playlist on Googlesheets, trying to identify the genre of music the song they contributed is—make sure it is anonymous, but do ask them to make sure their contributions are more the most part not offensive songs.
- If a student is unsure about a genre, listen to that song as a class and see if you can determine the genre together. Some songs may be a combination or hybrid. Tell them that is also true in academic writing; sometimes, genres blend.

7. Application Activity (20 minutes):

- Assign students to individually choose a writing genre and write a short piece (paragraph or two) emulating the characteristics of a music genre they explored earlier in the lesson.
- Encourage students to consider the discourse community associated with their chosen writing genre and how it influences their writing style and content.
- Provide time for students to share their writing with a partner or the class, discussing how they incorporated the characteristics of the music genre into their writing.

8. Reflection (5 minutes):

- Conclude the lesson with a brief reflection discussion. Ask students to share what they learned about writing genres by exploring music genres and the readings.
- Encourage them to reflect on how understanding discourse communities and genres can enhance their writing skills and help them navigate different writing contexts effectively.



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9. Assessment:

Assess students' understanding through participation in class discussions, group activities, and the application activity.

Evaluate students' written pieces based on their ability to effectively emulate the characteristics of a chosen music genre in their writing while considering the discourse community associated with their chosen writing genre. Let students have fun.

Example playlist:

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/4aFPS1WqBxZThUMJd6X5nQ?si=a40887dac12040dd&fbclid=IwAR3lDifYGFH2hW0xVfbSR0WHcWyeNZg4nepEOJPRsX_jcYJ1kMQfeUF12Lg&nd=1&dlsi=a32dc9f54a384638

