The Multigenre Research Paper

English 2 Honors

“The best way I can describe a multigenre paper is to say that each piece in the paper utilizes a different genre, reveals one facet of the topic, and makes its own point. Conventional devices do not connect the pieces in a multigenre paper, nor are the pieces always in chronological order. The paper is instead a collage of writing and artistic expression with an overarching theme that engulfs and informs the reader.”
Not a traditional Research Paper

- Unlike the research conducted for a traditional paper, research for a **Multigenre paper** often does not begin with a working thesis.
- That is, whereas traditionally a researcher begins with a premise and looks for evidence to support it,
- The **multigenre researcher** begins with an **interest** and discovers a **unifying element** along the way. It is this emergent theme that often suggests a thread with which the writer may create cohesion among the separate pieces of writing.
Multigenre: anything but traditional

- You’ll have lots of freedom here. **You may choose your own subject**—one you are really interested in—and decide how you will write about it: poetry, editorials, comic strips, recipes, and many more!
- You might even—if it helps to convey your message better—misspell words, write in fragments, experiment with different fonts, include pictures and graphics, create a videotape or CD. . . . Well, really you’re only limited by your own imaginations.
- Your project should reflect not only what you learned about your subject and your enthusiasm for it, but also your own personality as well.
Another noticeable difference between the multigenre research project and the traditional research paper is the writer’s relationship with the subject. In order to establish and reflect lack of bias, the traditional researcher/writer is required to stay at a distance. The writer stands clearly outside, examining with the cold objectivity of a scientist and reporting with measured, well-organized logic.

In contrast, since the multigenre researcher attempts to enter the world of the subject, the creative pieces produced may be anything but objective. Though the multigenre project may present a kind of objectivity overall, the individual pieces may reflect strong biases, each one taking different points of view.
# What’s the difference?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Research Paper</th>
<th>Multigenre Research Paper</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>single, extended prose piece</td>
<td>cohesive series of pieces in variety of genres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>begins with a thesis</td>
<td>begins with an interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohesion imposed from the start</td>
<td>cohesion developed along the way</td>
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<tr>
<td>writer remains dispassionate about subject</td>
<td>helps researcher recover lost voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approaches topic from a single perspective</td>
<td>writer personally engaged; opinions encouraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follows conventions of formal prose writing</td>
<td>takes many angles on topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usually consists of only text</td>
<td>broadens the range of acceptable writing styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usually done as a solitary individual assignment</td>
<td>artwork, graphics, design and packaging accompany text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handed in to teacher</td>
<td>involves much small-group work, peer response, and sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes viewed as drudgery by students</td>
<td>often becomes students’ favorite and proudest achievement</td>
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What do we do?

- In the Multigenre Research Project, the student selects a topic and does research as if it were a traditional research paper: collecting information and recording it, synthesizing the information, then presenting it through writing.

- Instead of the single, extended prose piece of a traditional research paper, though, the Multigenre paper consists of a number of creative pieces—poetry, advice columns, diary entries, news articles, lists, artwork, graphics, and alternate styles of writing.

- In a nutshell: “Imaginative writing based on fact”
Student Sample #1--Kathryn

Multigenre Topic: **Raves**

- Kathryn read about Raves in an article in *Newsweek & Time* and was curious
- Her project included multiple **FORMS**:
  - a recipe for the rave
  - a phone call between concerned parents
  - an audiotape with representative music and a liner describing it
  - a diary
  - a scrapbook with pictures and written descriptions of rave personalities and activities
  - a reading log–type response to an article on raves
  - a double-voice piece between an experienced rave attendee and a newcomer
…and this alternate-style piece describing the potentially dangerous effects of Ecstasy…

One more pill *his eyes say*
one more pill
just one more
what can it hurt? *his eyes ask*

**ECSTASY**

A hasty swallow and *the eyes brighten to an unnatural glassy stare*

**dancing**

Faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster and faster

the eyes grow frantic as the effects take hold and the final dose the body can’t handle, the 6000th mg of MDMA, is the overload.

happy floating,
urges to touch
increased awareness,
heightened sensations,
talking, talking, talking,
spiritual well-being
happy giddiness
sounded great

Until...

the final overdose
convulsions
the eyes now fill with fear, no control

grasping, nothing to hold onto
gasping, nothing to breathe
people screaming, running frantically

911

Student Sample #2—Ryan

Multigenre Topic: The Hummer

- The Hummer is Ryan’s dream vehicle!
- His project, enclosed in a packet of official documents, included many FORMS:
  - Job Openings
  - Announcement to work in Hummer’s engineering department;
  - A lengthy dialogue between President Clinton and a designer of the Hummer stretch limo;
  - A radio advertisement;
  - A newspaper New Arrivals column announcing new purchases;
  - A political cartoon pointing out the gas-guzzling nature of Hummers;
  - An advertisement for Hummer Tours of Denver; a couple of alternate style poems;
  - A letter to Santa
1992 Jeep Wrangler 4x4

A green Jeep Wrangler, 7 years of running, of West Virginia, died Thursday, October 28, 1999, at the base of the Appalachian Mountains in Charleston, West Virginia.

The Jeep was manufactured in Detroit, Michigan, at the Jeep and Eagle Assembly plant. In late 1992 it was bought by Fred Davis of Pontiac, who later moved down South in 1997 where 4x4s are needed dearly in the rough winter months.

The Jeep Wrangler couldn’t handle the rough terrain of the Appalachian Mountains. In 1998, the Jeep completely rusted out due to the major salt in West Virginia for the treacherously icy conditions.

The 4.0 liter engine was also wearing down.

“I should have known better,” Davis said after his Jeep’s last ride. “I should have bought a Hummer instead. It would have cost me a little more, but it would have been worth the $90,000 to purchase a vehicle that has a minimum life of twelve years. Hummers can also go through any type of terrain, whereas my Jeep got stuck a number of times.”

The Jeep was preceded in death by his sister, a red Jeep Wrangler.

Funeral services will be on Friday, November 5 at the Jeep Cemetery in Charleston, West Virginia. Burial will follow the Services.
Student Sample #3—Katie
Multigenre Topic: *Barbie*

- For years, Katie had collected everything to do with the fashion model doll Barbie, and she wanted to learn more about her long-time hobby.
- I won’t bother to list every genre Katie included—there were so many—but I will say that they were all cleverly packaged in the pink Barbie case, little ones hanging on the tiny plastic hangers, others slipped neatly behind.
Student Sample #4—Jacob

Multigenre Topic: *The Manhattan Project*

- Contained in a brown file marked “Top Secret,” all of the “documents” look and sound official.
- Jacob includes several FORMS:
  - a telegram;
  - four slips with definitions we might need to understand such a technical topic;
  - an interview with Oppenheimer;
  - an official letter to Oppenheimer from Brigadier General Leslie R. Groves;
  - a memo about laboratory policies;
  - a journal
  - entry reflecting on the events at Los Alamos;
  - an extensive timeline of the final year;
  - and the following phone call transcript concerning the purchase of the land for the Los Alamos site...
Phone call between Brigadier General Leslie Groves and Colonel James Marshall.

Marshall’s secretary: Hello.
Groves: Colonel Marshall, please.
Marshall’s secretary: May I ask who is speaking?
Groves: Brigadier General Groves.
Marshall’s secretary: Just a moment.
Marshall: Groves, good work on buying the land in Tennessee. Any idea when it will be operational?
Groves: Well, we don’t know yet, but it should be the perfect site to have our uranium enrichment facilities. We will be calling it Oak Ridge.
Marshall: Have you found a site for the Project Y laboratory?
Groves: That’s what this call is about. I think we have found a site in central New Mexico.
Marshall: Good. Where exactly in New Mexico?

Student Sample #5—Emily

Multigenre Topic: *Ellis Island*

- Emily packed this poignant, free-flowing piece about Ellis Island into a cardboard box suitcase along with some of the following FORMS:
  - journals,
  - documents,
  - menus,
  - essays,
  - and other poetry reflecting an immigrant’s experience upon entering America.

[Emily’s source was the book Redman, Renee C. *Life on Ellis Island. San Diego: Lucent Books.* 2000. She wrote in her endnotes that: “The book really provided the ‘meat and potatoes’ for the information in my project. After reading it, I tried to imagine the building and how I would feel if I experienced it firsthand in my poem about the building.”]
Your multi-genre project must include:

- **A Letter to the reader** (in your voice, explaining what the reader is about to see in your project)
- **A Table of Contents**
- **A Rhetorical Précis**
- **A Repetend**
- **Traditional Research Exposition** (2-3 pages)
- **5 Multigenre Research Artifacts** (explanation to follow)
- **Works Cited Page** (Minimum of 6 sources—2 not from the Internet)
The Rhetorical Précis Format

- In a single coherent sentence give the following:
  - name of the author, title of the work, date in parenthesis;
  - a rhetorically accurate verb (such as "assert," "argue," "deny," "refute," "prove," "disprove," "explain," etc.);
  - a that clause containing the major claim (thesis statement) of the work.

- In a single coherent sentence give an explanation of how the author develops and supports the major claim (thesis statement).

- In a single coherent sentence give a statement of the author's purpose, followed by an "in order" phrase.

- In a single coherent sentence give a description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.
Charles S. Peirce's article, "The Fixation of Belief (1877), asserts that humans have psychological and social mechanisms designed to protect and cement (or "fix") our beliefs. Peirce backs this claim up with descriptions of four methods of fixing belief, pointing out the effectiveness and potential weaknesses of each method. Peirce's purpose is to point out the ways that people commonly establish their belief systems in order to jolt the awareness of the reader into considering how their own belief system may be the product of such methods and to consider what Peirce calls "the method of science" as a progressive alternative to the other three. Given the technical language used in the article, Peirce is writing to an well-educated audience with some knowledge of philosophy and history and a willingness to other ways of thinking.
The Repetend

The purpose of a repetend is to create unity and coherence in a multigenre piece. It also allows the reader to hear the writer’s voice and have a string that carries through the entire piece. Using a repetend is like using a thesis to tie a traditional research paper together.

Ideas for creating a repetend (you may think of something different) include:

- the same phrase, sentence, or passage in each genre page as a heading or somewhere else in the text
- include a description or design in each piece (written or graphic), placed strategically for easy recognition
- include a running commentary from you, the writer, following or preceding each genre piece
- address a particular narrative perspective or series of perspectives that are related.
- have a reoccurring idea or image in each piece.
- have a particular argument, point of view, or thesis that is throughout the whole project.
Traditional Research Exposition

- An analytical, expository, or argumentative essay or a research paper. This should follow a traditional structure and articulate your thesis or main idea. This will use parenthetical documentation (MLA) with the Works Cited Page at the back of the project.

- The purpose of the research component is not to cover the whole topic, just a piece that might be best presented in a more traditional way.

- Required: 2-3 MLA formatted pages
Multigenre Research Artifacts:

5 different genre forms from at least 3 categories:

- The project must also include 5 elements from at least three of the following multi-genre categories. Within each category there will be many options of expression, and they are not limited to what I have listed below. If you think of an additional genre that you believe would fit the category, please see me before your proceed. If you would like, you may include more than three categories.

1st Category: Creative Writing - Poem, Scene, Short Story, Vignette, Menu, Letter, Memoir, Song, Obituary, Eulogy, Business Letter etc.

2nd Category: Visual Component - Photographs, Art, Collages, Map w/legend, Wanted Poster, Cartoon, Chart/Graph, etc.

3rd Category: Non-Fiction – Primary Source, Newspaper article, Editorial, Biography, Essay, Movie Review, etc.

4th Category: Web 2.0 Genre - Blog, Twitter, Facebook Profile, PowerPoint, etc., Voicethread, Website - screen-shots to be included *No more than 2 of your 5 genres can come from this category!
Due Dates: Every Friday!

- Brainstorming/Proposal: Due: 3/22/13
- Works Cited 1st 3 Sources: Due: 3/29/13
- First 2 Genre Artifacts AND Traditional Research Exposition (Draft): Due: 4/12/13
- Works Cited 2nd 3 Sources: Due: 4/19/13
- Second 3 Genre Artifacts (Draft): Due: 4/26/13
- Dear Reader/Table of Contents/Rhetorical Précis/Repetend: Due: 5/3/13
- Full Multi Genre Research Project—FINAL DRAFT DUE: May 17th, 2013

***NOTE: We will be in the MAC Lab every Thursday for the next 7 weeks for collaboration and research