Multigenre writing: a ventana on the possibility of activating voice and increasing self-efficacy and motivation in a high school classroom

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Multigenre Writing: A Ventana on the Possibility of Activating Voice and Increasing Self-Efficacy and Motivation in a High School Classroom

by

Renee L. Mungons

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education

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May 2012
Multigenre writing is defined as a collection of pieces written in a variety of genres but centered on one topic. It is distinctively different from traditional research writing in that the writer has autonomy to select a topic of interest, determine which genres will best express the information and make decisions throughout the writing process. This study is a systematic investigation of what happens when students in a high school creative writing class engage in an eight week multigenre project. Through the window of a writing workshop classroom, the research constructs were viewed in relation to the following questions: In what ways does a multigenre project help students find and activate their voice? In what ways is self-efficacy and motivation evident throughout the multigenre project? How does multigenre writing support learning and understanding of genre? This study is qualitative, descriptive, practitioner research using a theoretical framework of social constructivism, and it is written from an emic perspective of teacher/researcher. The research setting was a naturally assembled, pre-existing high school class in a small, private, college preparatory school. All participants were 17 or 18 years old and came from moderate to middle income homes. A triangulation of data
was analyzed to describe this case of multigenre writing. Data collection included: students’ project folders, audio taping, video-taping, field notes, cataloging of tapes, pre- and post-writing surveys, progress questionnaires, students’ final multigenre papers, grading rubrics for each paper and students’ presentations of their topics. Multigenre writing made it possible to see the students as writers, their struggles and ability levels. Evidence will show how this unique style of writing facilitated activation of student voice through freedom of choice, mediated learning and interaction with others. Self-efficacy was apparent not only in the specific verbal responses that students gave but also in the ways they acted and reacted throughout the project. Multigenre writing also fostered a growth in motivation because it provided students with a sense of involvement and interest with real world relevancy. Finally, it involved the practical application of genres accompanied by daily decision-making while writing which contributed to students understanding and growth as writers.
This work is dedicated to my students, past and present, at Emmanuel Christian High School in Toledo, OH. It is my joy and privilege to be your teacher, and I am indebted to you for the love and inspiration you have given me and the purpose you have fulfilled in my life.
Acknowledgements

From one perspective, writing a dissertation is an isolating experience. It is a journey down a road one must travel alone; in my case spending countless hours in my home office during summer vacation. On the other hand, where it not for a small village of supportive people who kept me going, it would not have been possible to finish such an arduous task. I am thankful to my grandparents, Albert and Florence Wagner, who loved and supported me in life and beyond. Their financial legacy gave me the motivation and the means to return to college for graduate degrees. I am thankful for my parents, Ralph and Mary Mungons because they endowed me with a love for learning and taught me how to work hard and be persistent. I am thankful for Robert who supported and encouraged me as well as my dear friend, Pam whose gracious sacrifice in serving as my teacher’s aide lightened my workload so that I had more time to devote to my studies. I am thankful to my employers: Emmanuel Christian School and The Home Depot; they were understanding and supportive. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dr. Jenny Denyer, my longtime advisor and committee chairperson; her enthusiasm convinced me that my ideas were important. I am also thankful for my committee members: Dr. Eileen Carr, Dr. Suzanne Hapgood and Dr. Berhane Teclehaimanot. Finally, my journey would not have been successful without the students in my creative writing class in the spring of 2011. Their willingness to participate in this study made it possible for me to complete my degree and paved the way for countless others to benefit from the rich experience of multigenre writing.
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Chapter One

The Problem: An Investigation into the Dynamic of Multigenre Writing

Introduction to the Problem

“I used to enjoy writing.” My 13 year old, soon-to-be-a-freshman niece echoed the sentiment felt by many high school students and heard frequently by their English teachers. Chelsea was helping me put writing posters on the wall of my classroom the week before school started in the fall. She paused when she encountered a banner I had made: “We love writing!” My feeble attempt to motivate high school writers did not even convince my relative. Startled by her spontaneous response, I asked why she no longer enjoyed something that I knew she did well. “Even when we get to choose our own topics, we have a list of approved ones and only have a few minutes to decide,” she explained. After years of diligently following teacher-assigned procedures and faithfully modeling the 6 + 1 Writing Traits (Coman, 1995), she views writing as a restrictive chore. When I turned away, she went so far as to slip a handmade paper sign over the banner changing “love” to “hate”. It was a prank borne of genuine sentiment, but it does not have to be true of high school writing experiences.

Recently, I asked Chelsea to explain in more detail how she feels about high school writing tasks.

“As you get older you really don't have writing assignments that are considered ‘fun’ anymore. What I mean about that is we always have boring research papers or persuasive papers that require lots of work and time. I had a lot of late nights trying to organize my thoughts and research, and when I continually did this over the course of the year it just made me despise writing papers even more. I wish we had papers that required you to be more creative and express your imagination instead of the straight facts” (Email, June 18, 2011).

The three R’s of reading, writing and arithmetic have been the cornerstone of
education since the establishment of public education. Referring to the writing component, Donald Graves (1978) observed that it “is the basic stuff of education” (p. 27). Unfortunately, writing has been treated as the evil stepsister of the three fundamental subjects for decades, and as students’ progress through the grades, they can develop a negative attitude toward writing assignments. This is primarily due to the fact that policing grammar, spelling and punctuation along with structure and format, have made writing drudgery for both teachers and students. Teachers face labor intensive stacks of papers; students view revising work covered in red pen as punitive (Newkirk, 2009). Graves went on to note, “[Writing] has been sorely neglected in our schools. We have substituted passive reception of information for the active expression of facts, ideas, and feelings. We need the right balance. We need to let them write” (1978, p. 27).

The cognitive revolution which embraced social constructivism paved the way for a new relationship with writing. In the *Handbook of Writing Research*, Prior (2006) declares the dominant paradigm in writing research to be sociocultural theory which emerged from previous interacting traditions: Marxism, pragmatism, and phenomenology (Prior, 2006). Lev Vygotsky (1978), a major figure in the development of sociocultural theory, could be considered the father of constructivism; he reoriented learning theory from an individual to a social approach. Foundational to this new orientation is the concept of psychological tools – the artifacts that “when internalized help individuals master the psychological functions of perception, memory and attention” (Kozulin, 2003 p. 15-16). One of the most powerful psychological tools is literacy. From his studies on how children develop language by copying and modeling others and ultimately progressing to independent use of skills, Vygotsky crafted the Social
Development Theory which placed more emphasis on culture and social factors as contributing to cognitive development (Kozulin, 2003). Constructivism, then, is the theoretical framework that views culture and social interaction during the learning process to be of principle importance to learning.

Leading researchers from Murray (1980) and Graves (1983) to Romano (2000) and Newkirk (2009) have espoused more expressive, creative and interactive methods of writing instruction than traditional teacher-dictated assignments with strict parameters of structure and content. Recognizing Vygotsky’s (1978) theories as applicable to writing, they have developed classroom practices which foster engagement and interaction. Writing workshop and multigenre writing are two methodological approaches which have gained popularity in classroom instruction, yet the traditional research paper still reigns supreme in most high school English classrooms. The tyranny of the thesis statement continues to inhibit students’ self-expression and rob them of confidence in their writing abilities (Newkirk, 2009).

**Statement of the Problem**

The research problem addressed in this study can best be described as an investigation of what is going on in a writing classroom where a multigenre project is undertaken as an eight week unit of study. The multigenre paper can serve as an extended writing project that is an alternative to traditional research writing where students are often limited by a teacher-assigned topic and specific formatting requirements. Additionally, the traditional classroom atmosphere can restrict social interaction, stifle creativity and limit potential for using a variety of genres to make sense
of shared social experiences (Dean, 2004). This makes a second aspect of the problem the classroom context in which the writing task is done. Students need opportunities to interact with one another for the purpose of sharing ideas and gaining feedback for their work. Topics and genre selection can often seem contrived or disjointed when a natural context of social engagement for the purpose of sharing information and generating ideas during the writing process is lacking. Despite the toil and good intentions of every writing teacher, given a traditional writing assignment (with a teacher-assigned topic and requirements for specific structure), students tend to produce lackluster writing in which they hurriedly fill pages with words, hit the print button and hand in uninspiring work. Chelsea summed up the process this way: “Writing = stress. Research papers = more stress. Writing = boring” (Email, June 18, 2011). This is not engagement in the writing process. Contemplation of ideas and forms of expression, interaction with peers, editing and revising in order to find and express voice are also missing from this type of classroom writing experience.

As a veteran of teaching high school English and writing, I have observed firsthand how much of the restrictive, institutional writing assigned to students deters them from self-expression and demolishes the joy of writing that they surely felt in earlier years of their education. Before beginning the data collection process for this study, I decided to visit a first grade classroom in the same school in order to observe an early writing experience. On March 16, 2011, I walked to the other end of the building where education begins. Students in the first grade were listening to the teacher when I arrived. A veteran of teaching, Mrs. Fine was using her Smartboard to review the previous day’s work on a writing web. This was her preferred graphic organizer for teaching a new
writing concept, in this case the friendly letter. Students copied the web on the left side of a page in their writing journals; the right side of the page was reserved for creating their letter. At times the work seemed painstakingly simple to my high school teacher eyes. Every detail was discussed: where to place words on the paper and what punctuation to use. The class talked about various ideas for the first sentence of the letter, and then each student chose an idea and wrote a sentence. As they worked, I was invited to walk around and look at their journals. For the next ten minutes I enjoyed the rich enthusiasm that comes with students taking pride in their work and showing it off. It was hard to leave because everyone wanted me to read their journal. I learned two things from my visit to the cradle of writing instruction: the instruction was meticulously detailed, but the payoff was writers who were confident and proud of their work. It was possible to teach fundamentals of writing without squelching the joy of seeing one’s own thoughts and ideas on paper. The journals were a way for students to interact with others about their writing.

Slowly but surely, as students move through the grades, writing for the purpose of self-expression is replaced by writing that must be analytical and research-based. When students are in elementary school, they take pride in stories and reports they have written and proudly share them with others; however, by middle school writing has taken on a more formal tone and gets mired down by lists of requirements. Compliance with content area standards and the demands of high stakes testing can result in writing tasks that greatly restrict freedom of expression and erode students’ feelings of interest and motivation. Teachers understandably feel pressure to teach the research construct, but the sheer volume of work and the details of form overwhelm the most aspiring of writers.
Even journaling and story writing is sometimes dictated by assigned topics, length and format. This is where self-efficacy usually takes a nose dive, and this is why the multigenre project can be a defibrillator to breathe new life into classroom writing. Figure 1 illustrates the potential progression that should ideally accompany writing experiences from engagement to inspired, motivated writer.

Figure 1
*Potential Progression from Engagement to Inspired, Motivated Writer.*

While we want students’ writing to develop along a standards based continuum to show advancement in their ability to process and synthesize information, the pedagogy for achieving these goals often relies heavily on textbooks full of procedures and processes which can seem stilted and uninspiring. The potential for self-discovery and intrinsic motivation to learn is squashed in the daily doldrums of conformity to a set of writing criteria or rules. Why must the rigid step-by-step approach of note cards to outline to rough draft be the sole means for demonstrating an ability to research a topic of interest and write a paper about what one has learned? How can students help but feel somewhat negatively toward writing assignments that do not allow them to select the topic and methods of expression?

**Significance of the Problem**

One way to conceive of writing is as the process of making meaning by self-
selecting a topic of interest and engaging in interaction with others for the purpose of expanding knowledge and ideas beyond one’s own experience. Effective writing instruction facilitates both the learning of form and style and the expansion of one’s understanding of the world through interaction with others. The freedom of self-expression activates voice and plays a critical role in students’ self-efficacy beliefs and their motivation toward writing. In order to create a classroom atmosphere conducive to these writing goals, students must have the freedom to take risks and be creative in their use of topic, language and genre. Major theorists in writing instruction have pointed to the fact that the genres taught in school are often introduced with a rigid topical focus that undermines the potential for self-expression (Newkirk, 2009).

Bartholomae (1983) refers to this as the tyranny of the thesis. Adherence to the strict requirements of teacher-dictated research writing stifles the writer’s voice and often makes writing assignments the most feared aspect of the curriculum. The ultimate example of this is the annually assigned research paper with its list of requirements: thesis statement, outline, and a page quota that increases with each advancing grade. While well-meaning teachers may feel this is the highway to thorough writing instruction, for the students writing becomes characterized by apprehension and anxiety. Opening the road to freedom and risk-taking, however, does not mean that the academic content standards for writing must be abandoned. On the contrary, the multigenre project offers many opportunities for meeting these standards in a context which is far more suited to assimilation of the desired skills (see Appendix F). The difference lies in the fact that it can be accomplished in an atmosphere charged with enthusiasm and interest in writing.
Issues Embedded within the Problem

Not surprisingly, researchers and teachers are turning to alternative methods of writing as a means for achieving writing standards while restoring a passion for writing. Tom Romano (1995) introduced teachers to the potential of multigenre writing in his book, *Writing with Passion: Life Stories, Multiple Genres*. Multigenre writing is defined as a paper which “arises from research, experience, and imagination, composed of many genres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by a theme or topic. In addition to many genres, a multigenre paper also may contain many voices” (Romano, 2004, p. x-xi).

One distinctive feature of multigenre writing projects is that it allows students to make choices; they can self-select topics, style and genres of writing. Another distinctive feature is that it allows for the activation of student voice in writing. Voice has been defined, described, and dissected by major researchers in the field of writing instruction. Donald Graves (1983) identified voice as the dynamo in the writing process. He defined voice as “the imprint of ourselves on our writing” (Graves, 1983, p. 227). Romano (2004) describes voice as “the writer’s presence in a piece of writing” (p. 21). Writers who have successfully activated their voice deliver interesting information, employ techniques of narrative, exhibit perceptivity, incorporate surprising observations and demonstrate a sense of humor (Romano, 2004). It is the missing ingredient in classrooms where students have lost joy in writing and feel that they have no real freedom to express themselves.

This seems especially tragic since the current tech savvy generation of students
has elevated written communication to a position of primary importance in their social lives. When it comes to social networking sites and text messaging, students do not hesitate to share their opinions, experiences and innermost thoughts. Self-expression and voice do not have to be taught or coerced on Facebook. Unfortunately, this interactive, uninhibited exchange of ideas tends to dissipate at the door of the classroom leaving teachers with the challenge of crafting writing instruction that does not stifle enthusiasm, obliterate social interaction and net lackluster, cookie cutter assignments.
Chapter 2

Literature Review: A Pedagogical Examination of Writing Instruction

Writing as a Sociocultural Practice

Several key ideas in the field of writing research can be linked to multigenre writing. This chapter will examine the ways in which multigenre writing has the potential to address some of the challenges faced in the writing classroom and the conditions which the research literature identifies as central to students’ development as writers. The quintessential model of authorship is a lone, secluded individual in an uninspiring attic room hunched over a legal pad laboriously straining to create a flow of inspiring words. In the classroom, the traditional model consisted of rows of silent students with graphite pencils painstakingly forming letters into words, sentences, paragraphs and ultimately stories. In either case, isolation is assumed. Talking is perceived as a distraction and a sign of interrupted productivity. But this antiquated notion of how meaning is constructed began to vanish with the emergence of Vygotsky’s (1978) theoretical framework of social constructivism which laid the foundation for the idea that writing should be sociocultural experience.

In his seminal work, Mind in Society, Vygotsky (1978) observed that writing played a narrow role in school compared to the enormous role it plays in cultural development. He went on to point out that far more attention was paid to the mechanics of writing in school than to developing writing as a form of language and communication. Three practical implications emerged from his theories.

1. Writing should be meaningful.
2. Writing should be a task that is meaningful and relevant to life.
3. Writing should be taught naturally – “cultivated” not “imposed.” (Vygotsky, 1978).

These implications for learning resulted in educational researchers applying Vygotsky’s assumptions to an educational framework known as social constructivism. In order for multigenre writing to be viewed as an effective method for learning, one must at least to some degree espouse the sociocultural constructivist viewpoint as to how learning takes place. Constructivism is the educational learning paradigm that holds to the principle importance of culture and social interaction in the learning process. Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory differed from the earlier ideas of Piaget in a number of ways and influenced changes in educational psychology. Piaget did not place importance on interaction with others, and he believed that learning proceeds along with development; Vygotsky believed that development occurs before learning takes place, and learning requires social interaction.

Three of Vygotsky’s major ideas, all of which have their roots in cultural or social experiences, have influenced thinking about learning and by extension have affected methodology for teaching. The concept of mediated learning refers to the idea that a child’s development of higher order learning skills is dependent upon psychological tools (Kozulin, 2003). Psychological tools enable children to move from lower to higher mental functions. These tools include: systems for counting and math, mnemonic devices, art, diagrams, maps, and technical drawings and writing (Kozulin, 2003). When internalized, these psychological tools help children master other skills. Thus, one of the most powerful tools, literacy can serve as a mediating agent learning at an ever-increasing level. As students learn to express their knowledge and ideas in writing, it
adds to their growth in other areas of understanding. Writing is a tool of meaning-making; therefore writing that requires students to expand their knowledge base is a powerful mechanism for learning.

Secondly, is the concept of More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) which refers to adults or peers who have a higher ability level in a concept or task than oneself (Vygotsky, 1978). This suggests that students benefit from interaction with teachers and other students as a means to understand and assimilate new skills. The concept of scaffolding was borne of this principle; because More Knowledgeable Others can potentially create bridges between what they know and want students to learn and students’ pre-existing background knowledge. In a constructivist classroom, effective teachers of writing can serve as More Knowledgeable Others and act as mentors, coaches and facilitators for writing instruction. Initially, the teacher gives explicit instruction in the critical steps of the writing process, models the process through think-alouds, and leads the students in guided practice. Instruction in topics such as the mechanics of grammar, the structure of composition and even the features of particular genres can scaffold students to the point where they are ready to work collaboratively and independently (Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2006). Interaction with peers can also provide access to new ways of knowing and understanding information.

The third idea is the principle of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the heart of Vygotsky’s (1978) new development learning theory. The ZPD is defined as the point just beyond where a child can perform skills independently, and therefore it is the point where learning can most effectively take place as students are stretched to work toward new understanding but not defeated by tasks which are far above their abilities.
With appropriate assistance (scaffolding) from a More Knowledgeable Other, the student will have the boost necessary to succeed. Effective writing tasks should be designed to active the ZPD by stretching students to do work that is new and challenging and which builds upon previous experience. Vygotsky noted that writing often plays a narrow role in school practice compared to the enormous role it plays in cultural development. If that was true during his lifetime, it has multiplied a thousand fold for today’s technology-driven generation. As never before, students are using written communication for social purposes. They send hundreds of text messages, update their Facebook status, and Twitter more information than they communicate in person. The practical implications of this suggest that writing instruction should include meaningful tasks which are relevant and necessary for life. Writing tasks should take students to the edge of their learning comfort zone and present them with the challenge to move into new, unknown territory.

The Origins of Multigenre Writing

Multigenre writing, often within the context of a writing workshop, is a methodological alternative to more traditional writing approaches, and it reflects the Vygotskian (1978) model for creating a meaningful learning environment. The many facets of multigenre writing equip students with the tools and mentoring needed to adopt good writing practices while at the same time creating a meaningful learning experience which is just beyond their comfort zone. Students can select a topic of personal significance, thus making an immediate connection to real life relevance. Students can use their writing literacy tool to expand their knowledge and understanding of the world, but mystery surrounds the multigenre task because it is an unfamiliar format. Students cannot put the writing machine in gear and coast toward another completed paper. They
must learn a new way to express their ideas; they must rely on the teacher for information and peers for ideas. Throughout the project there is a sense of discomfort and uncertainty, but as they work through the steps to creating a multigenre paper, each completed genre gives them new confidence and a sense of direction. This writing on the edge of comfort is rarely experienced in traditional writing assignments because the repetition of an annual research paper is a well-worn path.

Although determining when a new concept or teaching technique first took root in the classrooms of America can be an elusive task, most researchers and teachers would agree that multigenre writing emerged on the scene as a result of the work and writings of Tom Romano (1987, 1995, 2000, 2004). Romano’s (2000) book, *Blending Genre, Altering Style*, was the first how-to manual for multigenre projects. He first began experimenting with multigenre writing while teaching creative writing to high school students in 1996 (Allen, 2001). A birth date in the late 1990’s makes multigenre writing an instructional method which is still in its infancy although the idea of writing in more than one genre is not a completely new concept. Many children and young adult authors have combined quotes, poetry and diary entries with prose to enhance their writing and its message (Avi, 1991; Draper, 2001). It is the deliberate crafting of a single text on a single topic using many different genres that has gained recent acclaim in classrooms.

Teachers who have ventured into the world of multigenre writing share a common desperate, passionate desire to free themselves and students from traditional research papers that spout facts and conform to a rigid format but lack any signs of real life. After years of dutifully assigning conventional research papers, they long to provide students with a writing experience that will truly inspire them and spark a genuine interest in
learning about a topic. It is this determination to produce real writers that has led instructors from upper elementary through college to multigenre projects.

The Definition of Multigenre Writing

Upon first hearing the word multigenre most students can make a rudimentary conjecture as to its meaning through basic word analysis. The prefix *multi* suggests many, and *genre* denotes a category or style. Teachers who use multigenre writing in their classrooms defer to Romano’s (2000) comprehensive definition of multigenre writing as the official description.

A multigenre paper arises from research, experience, and imagination. It is not an uninterrupted, expository monolog nor a seamless narrative nor a collection of poems. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images and content. In addition to many genres, a multigenre paper may also contain many voices, not just the author's. The trick is to make such a paper hang together (p. x-xi).

Peter Elbow (1998) refers to this methodology as a multi-genre style of writing that is a collage. (Note: His use of a hyphen in the word multigenre is used by some to emphasize the multiple genre nature of this form of writing.) He describes a collage as putting pieces of writing together that “go… but not too well” providing friction in writing that makes it interesting and pleasurable (Elbow, 1998, p. 1). Student writers would likely agree with Elbow’s (1998) observation that organizing and unifying one’s writing in the hardest task; therefore, writing a series of short pieces which have one or two strong ideas can shortcut this frustration. The collage writing technique provides a “quicker and easier way to a draft that is organized and usually a bit livelier, thus allowing even weak writers to complete strong work (Elbow, 1998, p.1).
Johnson and Moneysmith (2005) adapted the multigenre style to argumentative writing at the college level using a multi-voiced approach which they describe as “exploring alternative perspectives using multiple genres written from different points of view” (p. 2). Cheryl Johnson, a senior instructor in English at the University of Idaho, and Jayne Moneysmith, an associate professor of English at Kent State University Stark Campus, have dispelled the critics who view multigenre writing as lacking practice in argumentation and intellectual rigor. Their book, *Multiple Genres, Multiple Voices*, outlines a truly rigorous yet flexible writing discourse called multivoiced argument (MVA). They use the same concept of writing in many genres as the multigenre paper but for the express purpose of generating multiple perspectives on an argument. “When writing a multivoiced argument, students are much more likely to understand that argumentative writing is an often nuanced, complex, and most of all adventurous activity” (Ballenger in Johnson & Moneysmith, 2005). Using a multigenre approach allowed Johnson and Moneysmith to see a correlation between what was happening in their own lives and in their writing classroom. The multi-layered lives of their students, lived out in their writing, allowed them to deepen their critical thinking skills, shape their discourse together and form how they perceived an argument.

Another college English professor, Sirpa Grierson (1999) of Brigham Young University, uses the project as an alternative for college research writing. Seeking a rich yet meaningful writing project that would ignite a genuine interest in research for English education majors, Grierson asked students to craft a paper about an author or character associated with young adult fiction. Noting the multilayered, multidimensional nature of this style, Grierson (1999) aptly describes it as an “artifact bound by a common theme”
Grierson also served as a consultant for two sixth grade language arts’ teachers at a middle school in Utah. They taught the lower end of the age spectrum of multigenre students and wanted to incorporate a multigenre project into a literature unit. Anson and Baird (2002) found the multigenre project to be “multilayered and multidimensional yet bound by a common theme” (p. 52).

Camille Allen (2004) of Salve Regina University in Rhode Island and her pre-service teachers worked in a fifth grade classroom with teacher, Laurie Swistak, during a five year period. Allen (2004) emphasizes that “each genre reveals one facet of the topic and makes its own point” (p. 2). Using a multigenre project gave the pre-service teachers a vehicle for engaging in a long term writing assignment with their students. Both college students and fifth graders kept journals to provide feedback about their writing experiences. Students conducted research, but instead of writing a traditional paper, they were encouraged to use a variety of genres, each one portraying a different aspect of the topic. Writing was interspersed with art and graphics (Allen & Swistak, 2004). This natural union of writing and artwork led Allen and others to label multigenre as a collage of writing that showcases artistic expression (Elbow, 1998). Allen and Swistak learned that students needed support and step-by-step procedures to guide them in topic selection and to help them develop research skills. They created graphic organizers and a specific process that provided students with concrete steps that shaped a scaffolded approach to multigenre writing.

Knowing that middle and high school teachers more readily embrace new ideas when someone with prior experience supplies them with a step-by-side guide, Melinda
Putz (2006) paved the way for wider classroom usage of multigenre writing with *A Teacher’s Guide to the Multigenre Research Project*. She describes the multigenre project as a number of creative pieces in alternate styles of writing that is imaginative but based on fact as a result of the writer’s research on the subject. Armed with Romano’s *Writing with Passion* (1995), Melinda and a colleague began using multigenre writing with high school juniors in Ithaca, Michigan, in the mid-1990’s. From simple beginnings (three-genre papers), the unit of writing grew in proportion to her students’ enthusiasm and success. Eventually, the project included other language arts colleagues, and the school received recognition in 2002 from the Michigan Education Association which cited the project as an outstanding program.

As an infant in the world of writing pedagogy, multigenre writing requires more than a definition-driven introduction in the classroom. Romano (2000) and Putz (2006) warn that students will not have a clear understanding of multigenre writing until they have read an example, and to that end both authors provide examples in their books. This is especially helpful for teachers who are new to multigenre writing and do not yet have papers written by their own students or prior experience to serve as a guide. However, a better description of what multigenre can do in a writing classroom is achieved by identifying and examining the characteristics inherent to a multigenre project. Often these characteristics are enumerated in contrast with the experience of writing a traditional research paper; nevertheless, they are best described by the teachers and researchers who have firsthand experience with multigenre writing.

**The Process of Multigenre Writing**

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**Topic selection.** Step one in writing any paper is topic selection, and this is where the multigenre project immediately parts company with its better known counterpart, the traditional research paper. Instead of drafting a formal thesis statement, the multigenre paper is born of the writer’s interest in a subject and desire to explore it (Putz, 2006). A successful paper requires a strong connection to one’s topic. Topic selection is critical to “facilitating deeper thinking, richer writing and a more powerful experience” (Allen & Swistak, 2004, p. 226). Allen and Swistak observed that multigenre papers which made the most impact on peers were ones where the student wrote about a topic of personal significance. Knowing the students as well as their interests helps teachers recommend ideas especially to those who are struggling with the topic decision.

Allen (2004), with her pre-service college students, and Swistak (2004) with her fifth graders have developed a detailed approach to topic selection that assists students in finding a subject of interest. They begin by sharing a list of topics used by previous students. Next, they ask questions to help students identify what interests them; the answers are recorded in journals obtained for the project. Finally, they require both university and fifth grade students to defend their topic choice to their peers and teachers. This “accountable talk” allows them to redirect students who pick a topic they have little knowledge of or interest in (Allen & Swistak, 2004, p. 227). When a student has difficulty choosing from between two ideas, they have him/her complete a KWL graphic organizer listing five facts for each idea. This serves to illustrate which topic the student is better suited to pursue.

The approach used by Allen and Swistak (2004) is tidier than what teachers who
religiously follow Romano may undertake. “Find your passion” is the mantra of the purists (Romano, 2000, p. 164; Gillespie, 2005), but this is admittedly easier said than done and may be nearly impossible with students younger than high school. While it broadens the topic possibilities to ad infinitum, the open-ended approach of “the sky is the limit” can be overwhelming at first. Students unaccustomed to such freedom may benefit from a brainstorming session to help them identify their passions (Romano, 2000; Putz, 2006). A list of topics used by previous students can also serve to generate ideas since students often have interests in common.

Goldfinch (2003), a teacher at a college preparatory high school in Quebec, Canada, acted on a suggestion from an English colleague to collaborate in assigning twelfth grade sociology students to write a multigenre paper for a final project. Rightly viewing topic selection as one of the most difficult steps, she provided students with a list of potential ideas related to social problems and issues while at the same time encouraging them to select a topic which would be truly interesting and personal to them. Students readily recognized that research writing is a long term assignment; picking a topic “they can live with for a long time” increased their interest and involvement (Goldfinch, 2003, p. 27).

It should be noted that some teachers have reported being more comfortable providing students with specific lists of topic choices. Timothy Cate (2000) designed a multigenre assignment as a final project for his ninth grade global studies class in Oregon. He determined that his students needed the structure of specific topic examples. Within the general confines of Latin America, students could select a past or present event, person or element of culture. Cate supplied them with a substantial list of possible
topics, but in the end he actually concluded that this was not necessary. Half of the participants chose their own appropriate topics, and those who did seemed to be more significantly engaged in the project.

Teachers who are new to multigenre writing may hesitate to allow wide open topic selection to students. Sometimes after an initial experience with multigenre writing, teachers become more comfortable in putting topic choice in the hands of the students (Goldfinch, 2003). Topic selection may also need to be tailored to the type of class where the multigenre paper is being written. Content area teachers, seeking to meet state standards, may need to provide parameters for the topic that conform it to their curriculum. Nancy Mack (2002), a professor at Wayne State University, offered this explanation for why she uses multigenre writing projects. “After three decades of teaching, I have decided to only assign writing projects that I can’t wait to read” (Mack, 2002, p. 98). She asked her Integrated Language Arts majors who were attending a class about writing workshop pedagogy to write within the broad topic of folklore. They completed brainstorming sheets about family and community history. Once students were given an overview of the multigenre process, they conducted a preliminary interview with someone in order to find a story they could tell related to a relative, group or town. After this, students conducted research and chose five genres that combined historical information with real life issues to analyze and convey their topic. Mack found that less formulaic writing assignments produced more skillful and creative writing. Multigenre was more engaging, and students produced insightful, meaningful work.

When the multigenre project is assigned to specifically replace a traditional research paper, the emphasis is on research, and this is especially true at the college level.
“Our multigenre projects are based on extensive research” (Grierson, 1999, p. 52). The primary distinction lies in the fact that multigenre writing allows student authors to combine and express factual information while using their imagination to portray the message of their topic. Grierson observed that this allowed her students to discover meaning in the research process and be excited about pursuing a topic and reflecting on it in their writing.

**Researching.** In any research paper, topic selection is naturally followed by a time of researching to gather information; this is where many a teacher and student have become bogged down in the mire of plagiarism and poor writing. In fact, dissatisfaction with previously written research papers can be a motivating force for some teachers to try a multigenre project. In yet another college and high school collaboration, Randi Dickson (2002) of Queens College joined forces with a group of high school teachers in New York: two in language arts, two in cultural history and one media teacher all of whom were planning a research project about the Renaissance. Their mutual dissatisfaction with previous experiences where students failed to engage with their subject matter motivated them to try a multigenre writing project. One of their specific goals was to “make the research process of finding sources, reading, writing and thinking more recursive” (Dickson, DeGraff & Foard, 2002, p. 83).

Dickson’s (2002) previous use of multigenre writing as a requirement in a graduate course had taught him that creativity and imagination would drive the research in a multigenre project. In this case, ninth graders were encouraged to investigate a person from the Renaissance era to the point where they would no longer see their topic as a mere list of one-dimensional facts (Dickson, DeGraff & Foard, 2002). One
drawback cited as part of this experience was the limiting of topic choice to a particular time period. While their primary goal was to require student research about the Renaissance era, they acknowledged that this limit on topic selection also limited students’ freedom to investigate something that truly interested them.

Content area teachers who maintain a dual role as school librarians are often drawn to multigenre projects as a means of combining their areas of interest and expertise (Goldfinch, 2003; Allison, 2005). Leah Allison gravitated to multigenre writing in her role as a seventh grade research teacher and librarian at a college preparatory school for boys in Tennessee. She networked with her school’s computer teachers who helped the students learn to use software that would enable them to make charts, graphs, and presentations for their papers. Allison (2005) supervised the research process requiring the boys to read encyclopedia articles as well as view online books and videos about which they recorded notes in a source log.

Still other teachers have found the multigenre paper applicable to written analysis of literature (Grierson, 1999; Gillespie, 2005). Seventh grade teacher, Joanne Gillespie (2005) exercised her freedom to develop curriculum for students in an independent suburban Maryland school, and she developed a unit of study around the novel, *A Single Shard*. In these multigenre projects, research centered on the novel itself thus requiring the students to reread portions of it for deeper understanding. Gillespie observed a sense of empowerment among her students because they had the opportunity to respond to what they had read. Digging deeply enabled them to make connections between their own lives and the text which added meaning to the research process. Furthermore, students were able to present their work to their classmates which added yet more meaning to their
writing and increased their motivation.

Allen and Swistak (2004) developed a strategy for recording information and questioning it in order to make interpretations and generate ideas for genres. Their Facts, Questions, Interpretations (FQI) sheets are also being used by Putz (2006) who tried and discarded other methods before settling on this graphic organizer for use with upper elementary students. The FQI is a three column chart; its application could be modeled by a teacher or demonstrated with a previously written paper. Students list facts that are discovered during research and generate 1-2 questions which pertain to each fact. In the interpretation section, students write an idea for a genre which could creatively explore the fact and questions. Putz noted that more than one possible genre exists for almost every part of a multigenre paper; often the final decision may be dependent upon what has been written previously for the paper, the type of genre and its length.

The very nature of multigenre writing bends the pursuit of research in unusual angles. In order to ultimately write pieces in a variety of genres, students need to pursue multiple points of view on their topic; whereas, in a thesis driven paper, only the viewpoint which supports the researcher’s hypothesis is developed. New angles of research may include the use of unconventional sources such as media. Field research in the form of interviews or surveys may provide the writer with new points of view (Johnson & Moneysmith, 2005). Research for the purpose of multigenre writing also empowers the writer with the knowledge and creativity to blend fact with fiction in order to write in multiple voices and genres (Romano, 2000). Despite the freedom afforded by these angles, multigenre papers still require students to use a prescribed research style (such as APA or MLA) and include a list of references. Dependent upon the content and
academic level of the students, instructors may require the more rigorous annotated bibliography or the use of detailed footnotes or end notes which link genres to resources, distinguish fact from fiction and primary from secondary sources (Mack, 2002).

**Genre selection.** Having explored a topic through research, students are ready to make decisions about which genres to include in their paper. Genre selection is the heart and soul of the multigenre writing experience, because this is where students have more latitude than they have probably ever experienced in a writing assignment. Allowing students to make their own decisions about writing helps them to see themselves as writers not merely doers of homework (Atwell, 1983). A multigenre paper is flexible, but it is not random or arbitrary; students cannot amass a pile of different pieces and then expect them to spontaneously have cohesion when joined together (Larson 2008). In Minnesota, tenth grade English teacher, Sherri Larson (2008) used a multigenre project during the final month of the semester to meet several state writing standards which included planning and writing narrative, expository, descriptive, persuasive, critical and research. She recognized that “a teacher can mold the project to meet curricular needs,” and this may dictate some of the genre choices (Larson, 2008, p. 183). Teachers need to ask themselves questions about the skill level of their students, how much responsibility they can handle and what types of writing they need to master (Putz, 2006).

After topic selection, genre selection can be a difficult process for students. Although genre theory will be addressed later in this chapter, it should be noted that the more knowledge and experience students have with genres, the more effective they will be in choosing genres for their paper (Romano, 2000). As previously mentioned, one effective strategy is a whole class brainstorming session to develop a list of possible
genres. Teachers who have previously used multigenre writing may also have lists that can be distributed to the class. Examining a multigenre novel and conducting a speculative discussion about why the author used certain genres will help students develop the ability to analyze the purposes of different kinds of writing (Dean, 2008). This can also be accomplished by reading and analyzing multigenre papers written by students (Romano, 2000).

Ultimately, students need to generate a list of possible genres for inclusion in their paper (Romano, 2000; Cate, 2000; Goldfinch, 2003; Putz, 2006). The number of genres which compose the paper may vary from 4-12, again dependent upon the age of the students and the teacher’s experience with the process. For example, Mack (2004) began with a requirement of three but expanded to five genres when it became apparent that her students were motivated to invest significant effort in the project. In order to insure that students have a well thought out plan, both Romano and Putz recommend that students be assigned to write a rationale paper in which they list the genres they intend to use followed by a few sentences which explain how it will add information about the topic and how it will connect with other pieces. These detailed steps at the outset of a multigenre project set up a scaffolding process which takes students from what they know in general about writing tasks to how a multigenre paper is organized and written.

Drawing upon the experience of others, many teachers also assign specific required genres which are proven winners in developing students’ literary skills. Two of the most popular required elements are dialogue and poetry (Romano, 2000; Putz, 2006). Dialogue is a natural outlet of expression because it is a written form that mimics oral communication (Romano, 1995). Almost any multigenre topic can lend itself to a
dialogue piece. Poetry is a genre which combines words and images through the use of metaphor, figurative language and rhyme (Romano, 1995). Through poetry, students have the opportunity to link their personal experiences with expressive language in a powerful way that helps them feel like real writers. While all multigenre papers will require research, a formal research piece may also be mandatory, and research placed near the beginning of the paper will provide a foundation for the pieces to follow (Allen & Swistak, 2004). The final mix of genres, determined by the author’s vision, typically includes text and graphics, long and short pieces, humorous and serious writing. As students begin to craft their multigenre papers by writing individual pieces, it should be emphasized that nothing is set in stone. Genres on their list can be discarded, and different ones can be added; this is a natural part of the process. If there is an obvious class wide slump in motivation during the project, teachers may want to introduce new genre ideas such as the recipe, the labyrinthine sentence, the double-voice piece and the list (Putz, 2006). While not everyone may choose to deviate from their established plan, this may be just what some students need to reinvigorate themselves and their writing.

Each genre that is written should contribute one facet or big idea to the topic yet stand alone to make its own point (Allen & Swistak, 2004). As students write, an emergent theme should begin to weave the genres together into a cohesive unit. The existence of unity is paramount to a successful multigenre paper, and LeNoir (2002) warned that merely assembling all the genres into one document does not guarantee a unified message. LeNoir, a professor at Western Kentucky University, sounds an alarm to all potential multigenre teachers based on an experience coaching graduate students, some of whom chose to write multigenre papers. While his concern appears to be based
on a singular situation, his point is worth heeding. “A multigenre paper without unity is not a multigenre paper… it is an assortment of unrelated material precariously assembled” (LeNoir, 2002, p. 100). He goes on to observe that since multigenre papers step outside the box of traditional writing in so many ways, unity becomes paramount.

LeNoir (2002) sees a carefully crafted structural arrangement as the solution to a unified multigenre paper. Others emphasize the need for a unifying theme that is systematically developed one genre at a time (Romano, 2000; Allen & Swistak, 2004). In either case, a final step to ensuring that the multigenre paper flows together as one topic is to plan a genre that can serve as the glue holding all of the elements together. Romano (2000) provides the following rationale for this literary device.

“Multigenre papers require a great deal of readers. So much is implicit, so little explicit that multigenre papers can be quite a cognitive load. Because they can be so demanding to read and because they lack traditional transitions found in regular research papers, I nudge students to provide reoccurring images, echoes of language, and repletion of form that reverberate among genres” (p. 149).

Whether it is called a reoccurring element, repetend, or crot, this genre is typically brief. One method is to divide a story into several pieces and place the parts throughout the paper as a serial or to use journal entries that tell an on-going story. Another method is to use unexpected repetition of a word, sentence or phrase; this is known as the repetend (Romano, 2000). Goldfinch (2003) required her ninth graders to use repetends between each genre to re-emphasize the theme and provide more information for the reader. Elbow (1998) called the individual pieces of his collage writing “crots” due to the word’s connotation as bits or fragments. He described crots as “autonomous units devoid of any transitional devices and ranging in length from 1-30 sentences” (Elbow, 1998, p. 28).
Without giving this step a specific name, Cate (2000) encouraged his ninth grade students to make connections throughout the paper with transitional devices such as the use of chronological order, thematic quotes, timelines or the repetition of characters. A final option is to use a reoccurring genre such as business cards, bumper stickers, statistics or quotes. Writer-provided connections serve the reader in the same way that transitional sentences enhance the readability of a traditional essay (Putz, 2006). Requiring students to write introductory sentences for genres which are more artistic – posters, charts, lists – can also help readers follow the theme and make sense of what the writer is trying to say. This methodology for crafting this type of text offers the potential for students to develop as writers by deepening their skills. Students can learn that writing must be “reader-friendly”. Learning how to recognize and utilize the strategies that make text comprehensible to readers is an important aspect of writing instruction.

**Classroom instruction.** As with any writing assignment, some whole class lessons will be needed along the way to help students hone their grammar, punctuation and form as well as provide background information on various genres. Many teachers and researchers cite a desire to expand writing instruction and make it more relevant as reasons for attempting a multigenre project with their students. During the project, teaching sessions are often referred to as minilessons to denote a brief period of instruction that does not take away from writing time. Typical minilessons at the onset of the project would include defining a multigenre paper, genre brainstorming, topic selection, and conducting research. While research collection may be a well-practiced skill for high school and college students, elementary and middle school students will need specific direction. Using the library, conducting research, and writing in multiple
genres are potential lesson topics for younger students (Allen and Swistak, 2004). With older students, critical analysis, writing from multiple perspectives and effective use of genres may be covered in minilessons (Romano, 2000; Mack, 2002; Putz, 2006). Multigenre projects also create a natural setting for genre instruction: what are genres (for younger grades), what perspective various genres supply, how to choose genres for your topic, and how to correctly structure genres (Dean, 2008).

**The Benefits of Multigenre Writing**

While there is no shortage of critical acclaim from those who have used multigenre projects, it is not enough to tag the method as “creative,” “fun,” and “cool.” Mack (2002) stated that her most persuasive argument for multigenre writing was the fact that it requires more academic skills than the traditional research paper. The fundamental purpose of this research study is to describe what happens when multigenre writing is implemented as a project in a high school creative writing class. Facilitating student voice and increasing self-efficacy and motivation in writing are the benefits of primary focus, and these will be discussed in detail later. Additional benefits can be categorized as providing the following:

1. Freedom and flexibility in writing
2. A context for research writing
3. A natural context for learning about writing
4. A natural context for social interaction about writing
5. Skill building in writing
6. Engagement in writing
**Freedom and flexibility.** Freedom and flexibility are two hallmarks of the multigenre experience. Every step of the way students will be in the driver’s seat making decisions as to both form and substance. As students realize that they have the freedom to make decisions about their writing and even change direction along the way, they become motivated to write. Multigenre writing also capitalizes on the practice of today’s students who multi-task using multimedia. They have an active desire for variety and an interest in newer forms of literacy (Larson, 2008). Multigenre will allow them to think and write in ways that help them connect to their topic (Allen & Swistak, 2004). They will be free to present research creatively and determine the organizational structure of their information (Cate, 2000; Grierson, 2002). The freedom and flexibility of the multigenre format also make it possible for teachers to adapt it to many types of writing assignments with a confidence that the project will meet curricular requirements and educational standards for writing instruction (Grierson 2002; Larson, 2008).

The demand for students in high school and college to write research driven papers has gone well beyond the English classroom, and it can make students feel like every paper they write requires a trip to the library and extensive time on the internet. Often this is a major contributing factor to their loss of interest in writing by the time they reach the upper grades. Research becomes a necessary evil dreaded every time a writing assignment in announced. But what if students were so engrossed in the subject matter that research was self-motivated? According to Romano (2000), the multigenre paper requires that creativity and imagination be part of the research process. In part this is due to the opportunity to meld fact and fiction together, thus challenging students to use their intellect and emotions in their writing (Romano, 1995).
**Real world experience.** Research for a multigenre project is a lived experience. It parallels the way in which the real world constantly requires us to connect dissimilar things in innovative ways in order to construct meaning (Dickson, 2002). For example, a student may desire to write a story about a recent emotional experience such as the ending of a relationship. The many feelings associated with the situation could be expressed in diary entries, poetry, song lyrics or a short story. The multigenre writer must consider which genre best conveys the aspects of their experience. Romano (1995) observed that it teaches students to live with ambiguity and address issues in different ways. This may be uncomfortable for the student who relies on a specific formula or set of instructions to follow in order to successfully complete assignments. However, just as life is messy, so is the multigenre writing experience. Living with discomfort and struggling to make sense of things are necessary skills for survival in the real world.

Much of the research for a multigenre paper can be accomplished on the internet, and the current generation of technology natives is more comfortable finding information on the World Wide Web and in the library. The internet is a collage of information much like a multigenre paper (Elbow, 1998).

**Self and social interaction.** Another benefit of multigenre projects is the natural context it provides for learning about the writing process and self as a writer. The flexible structure of multigenre allows students to determine which genres are most suitable for representing the ideas they want to portray (Styslinger, 2006). Grierson (2002) described the multigenre process as “putting meat on ‘them bones’” (p. 56). Students gather facts as with any research paper but the facts come alive as they begin to write from various viewpoints and make decisions about the genres they will use. The
freedom of decision-making requires them to learn the particulars of specific genres and develop understanding of the purposes for which text can be used (Grierson, 2002). This in turn causes students to develop a rich understanding of what it means to be a writer (Allen & Swistak, 2004), and it provides teachers with a window into how their students think and make decisions as writers.

Social interaction is a natural part of the multigenre project, and the classroom often mimics a writing workshop atmosphere. As previously mentioned, this is an aspect of the project that connects firmly with Vygotsky’s sociocultural learning theory: students can take on tasks more complicated than they can master themselves when they are in an interactive situation (Kozulin, 2003). An interactive workshop atmosphere follows Rogoff’s (1995) steps of mediation – apprenticeship (teachers working with students), guided participation (students working alongside one another) and appropriation (students developing and applying writing skills (as cited in Kozulin, 2003). Atwell (1998) describes writing workshop as a student-centered atmosphere where individuals rigorously pursue their ideas. Perhaps more than any other generation, the current Millennials are relational. They rely on relationships for information and affirmation, so the workshop atmosphere during the multigenre project fulfills an inherent need for affirmation and advice. Students interact with teachers and peers to receive support for their ideas as well as glean new knowledge about writing.

Sherri Larson (2008) used a multigenre paper to stir up energy in her sophomores at the end of the year in Minnesota, and she shared her experiences by writing her own multigenre paper designed to answer questions other teachers might have about the process. She noted that multigenre writing creates a literate environment where people
can read and write as well as talk about their reading and writing much as Nancie Atwell (1998) promoted in her book, *In the Middle*. In a series of journal entries, Larson reflects on the cacophony of conversation her students generated while writing about everything from roller coasters to PopTarts. “Some days this project doesn’t even feel like work” was one observation after a particularly lively discussion about topics and genres (Larson, 2008, p. 187). From a theoretical standpoint, it can be assumed that motivation for writing increases when students are enjoying the task.

**Skill building.** If freedom, flexibility, and fascinating conversation about writing were the only benefits of multigenre projects, busy teachers could justifiably pass it up as being fun but not fundamental to writing instruction; however, skill building is also a well-documented outcome of this writing methodology. Allen (2001) compiled a thorough list of potential skill development: reading (research, example genres, and each other’s work), speaking in small and large groups, listening, self-evaluation, using technology, thinking and problem-solving, organization and collaboration. Unlike the traditional research paper where students frequently take information from sources and merely restate it in their own papers, multigenre writing requires them to synthesize information through the process of selecting a suitable genre and communicating it creatively (Romano, 2000). An additional advantage is the fact that this all but eliminates the possibility of plagiarism. These benefits vary depending upon the teacher’s goals and the content area where multigenre is being used. They are almost by-products of a methodology that has the potential to awaken classrooms to a renewed engagement and enthusiasm for the writing process.

**Cognitive engagement.** Apathy. It lurks in the corner of every classroom
waiting to begin its slow spread across the room like a cloud of doom when a research-based writing assignment is announced. Apathy can be the death knell of any possible benefits to a writing task if it gets a chokehold on student engagement. Cognitive engagement is more effectively observed than defined. It is a presence that manifests itself in sustained, thoughtful attention to a task. When students are engaged, they go beyond the requirements of the assignment, they pursue challenge and risk-taking, and they make mental and emotional investments in the mastery of knowledge and writing skills (Paris & Paris, 2001).

Guthrie (1999) observed that in today’s information age, higher order literacy strategies are needed in order for students to have a sustained, intrinsic motivation for a literacy task. He cited such strategies as problem finding, searching for information, applying prior knowledge, generating inferences and comprehending multiple genres as being pivotal to engaging students (Guthrie, 1999). Paris and Paris (2001) cited the classroom requirements for engagement as open-ended projects and problems based on driving questions, and they named engagement as a necessary component for self-regulated learning and motivation. Cognitive engagement is tied closely to motivation which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Multigenre writing has been proven to engage students to the extent that it wipes out apathy and replaces it with pure enthusiasm for writing (Paris & Paris, 2001). This is partly due to the creation of a novel learning environment that allows students to use multiple perspectives and connect their ideas to their own worldviews. This environment generates an intrinsic interest, fosters a sense of ownership, creates opportunities for collaboration and provides support in meeting expectations – all criteria which contribute
to engagement. Hawthorne (2008) describes engagement as three-dimensional: behavioral, emotional and cognitive. He conducted a study to explore students’ beliefs about barriers to engagement using 28 high school sophomores in Auckland, Australia. They were put into focus groups based on their levels of engagement with writing tasks. Having amassed and coded 591 comments from group discussions, Hawthorne (2008) established six themes that can affect engagement. These were interest/relevance, choice/control, environmental, knowledge/skill, self-beliefs and teacher. The most significant factor that contributed to students’ interest was topic selection and the perceived relevance of the writing task. This accounted for 36% of all comments.

Hawthorne (2008) found environmental factors to be the second leading influence on engagement; students showed a preference for writing on computers in class and being able to hold discussions about their ideas. Discussion promoted engagement because students felt more passionate about their writing when they received help and encouragement from others. However, there were exceptions to the perceived value of working with others. Disruptive or distracting students hindered engagement, and this was especially true for reluctant writers who tend to use any excuse to stop working. Some students are less social and just naturally prefer to work alone, so interaction was not valued by everyone.

Self-belief was another factor in student engagement in the Hawthorne (2008) study. Girls contributed 63% of the comments related to self-belief and were more aware of the affect that it could have on one’s engagement with writing. Reluctant writers also admitted that not knowing what to do or how to approach a writing task contributed to their self-efficacy about writing, and being required to write about an unfamiliar topic
had a negative impact on their motivation. Hawthorne (2008) encouraged teachers to allow students to write about a topic in which they had prior knowledge. He also pointed out that students need to be able to see the links between classroom work and the real world because relevance and interest play a strong role in engagement. All of these indicators mirror the authentic engagement that can be produced by a multigenre project.

Lipstein and Renninger (2007) studied 178 middle school students (grades 7-9) at a K-12 school which was academically-oriented and consisted of a more privileged demographic. They identified four stages in the development of engagement (which they termed “interest”) and strategies that teachers can employ to move students to a higher level. Questionnaires were initially used to classify students, and a subset of 72 students also participated in “in-depth, structured interviews” (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007). Not surprisingly, the first level was students who lacked almost all signs of engagement. They had no positive feelings about doing writing or about themselves as a writer. They rarely revised their work and disliked peer feedback because they felt inadequate to reciprocate. In the second level, students put more effort into their work and showed some signs of concern about doing work “right” to please the teacher; in fact, the perceived “rightness” of their work was their primary interest. Students began to exhibit actual traits of engagement if they were in the third level. This was identified by more willingness to revise in order to meet their own standards of “making it sound right.” They expressed personal enjoyment in writing, appreciated when their work was recognized by others, but disliked peer conferences due to skepticism about the feedback. Only four students were classified by the researchers in the top level of engagement, and they were all ninth graders, the oldest group in the study. When engagement was
maximized, students saw writing as a craft, gladly spent time on writing tasks, revised both content and mechanics and welcomed constructive feedback. They preferred feedback that offered help rather than just praise, and they appreciated peer conferencing but only if it felt constructive (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007).

When Lipstein and Renninger (2007) interpreted their data in terms that would inform classroom practice, they focused on teachers’ individualized feedback on papers, peer conferences and whole class instruction. Since students were at different levels, they need varying styles of grading feedback. In levels one and two, students were only able to handle concrete suggestions concerning grammar and sentence structure with the occasional observations that question their voice or style. In the third stage, students were more ready to heed feedback that would enhance their work from an audience’s standpoint, and at the highest level students were ready for input that helped them grow as a writer. The researchers dispelled teachers’ natural tendency to form peer groups composed of an amalgam of levels. They noted that grouping students who were in the same level would put them on equal footing and therefore make it more likely that they might address each other’s concerns (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007). Pertaining to whole class instruction, their best advice was to be mindful that all levels may exist in the classroom. Instruction should be scaffolded to begin with level one concerns and end by appealing to the more advanced students by offering ideas for new writing techniques. In the multigenre classroom, it is essential for teachers to recognize the presence of varying levels. Just because the multigenre project is new and unique does not mean that all students will respond to it with equal enthusiasm. The growth of the individual student as it relates to writing engagement should still be a primary focus. Not every student is
ready to take the literary world by storm, but handled correctly every student can grow
toward a higher level of interest and engagement in writing.

The Role of Voice in Multigenre Writing

Voice. It has been defined, described, and dissected by major researchers in the
field of writing instruction. It is often viewed as the missing ingredient which results in
piles of cookie cutter papers that represent a completed task but contain no flavor. They
are the equivalent of chocolate chips cookies baked without the benefit of chocolate.
Two basic concerns need to be addressed if voice is to be returned to its rightful place as
the primary ingredient in writing. What is voice and what does it look like? What type
of classroom pedagogy should be followed to insure that students have the freedom to
activate their voice in writing?

Timothy Lensmire (2000) summarized the two basic approaches which have emerged as solutions to fostering individual student voice in writing. Adherents of
critical pedagogy see voice as participation where teachers and students exchange critical
dialogue in an effort to create a classroom environment where writing ideas are socially
constructed thus igniting the spark of student voice. The other viewpoint sees voice as the
hallmark of individual expression. These writing workshop advocates, such as Murray
(1978) and Graves (1983) endeavor to cultivate freedom of expression by eliminating the
boundaries of assigned topics and strict formatting. Both sides have experienced some
measureable success primarily because discussion and deviation from traditional writing
assignments encourages more creativity, and while both conceptualizations no doubt
result in an increase of opportunities for students to experience the freedom of self-
expression, Lensmire (2000) aptly called for these groups to join forces and consider a revised concept for student voice. His view sees voice as a project which is in-process and embedded within the social experience of the classroom (Lensmire, 2000).

**Voice as project.** If voice is a project, then multigenre writing is the project for voice. Multi-genre writing is by its very nature a project. (Note: The most widely accepted spelling is *multigenre*. *Multi-genre* is used here to emphasize “many genres.”) Multigenre writing requires substantial writing over a period of weeks and careful consideration of what to include. It is dependent upon understanding of genre through experimentation with ways to express one’s ideas and experiences. It has the potential to meet all of Lensmire’s (2000) criteria for appropriation, social struggle and becoming. The first aspect that makes multigenre the project for writing is the need for voice to develop during a continuum of experiences. Once students select a multigenre topic, they generate a list of genres that best suit the way they want to express their ideas.

The second Lensmire (2000) marker for writing as a project is appropriation of individual experiences and the cultural tools one brings to a writing experience. Vygotsky (1978) first identified the engagement of individuals’ cultural tools in interacting with others; these tools extend the knowledge and experiences that can be used in interactions about genre choices. In the multigenre classroom, students can interact with each other to test ideas, articulate struggles and share suggestions. The voices of others can provide insight that induces the voice of the writer. Often these discussions center on genre choice. Students struggle to select and craft genres which express what they want to say. Examining how authors have used genre to convey the message can inform choices for students’ own multigenre projects.
Social struggle is Lensmire’s (2000) third requirement for voice as a project. One criterion for this is using something old for a new writing experience. Well known genres such as narrative, poetry and dialog can be used to creatively express the message of the writer. The freedom of choice releases the voice. It can also create a struggle, both personally and socially. Struggle is a well-documented aspect of a writing environment which stimulates student voice (Murray, 1978). Genre choice forces writers to consider the perspective that best portrays the essence of their intended message. Ultimately, we write for others, and the project of voice helps students find ways to appeal to their readers.

Finally, the project of voice is a process of becoming. Lensmire (2000) warns that there are no guarantees in the pursuit of creating a writing classroom that facilitates voice. Students may be given an assignment that exudes freedom of choice and still fail to exercise self-expression. “If becoming suggests an opening up of students’ voices, it also points to the possibility that they can be shut down (Lensmire, 2000, p. 285). Feelings of inadequacy, intimidation, confusion and even anger can stymie student voice. These are all emotions that students may experience when a multigenre project gets underway. Frequently, this is due to the struggle to select an engaging topic or the apprehension associated with an unfamiliar assignment. Making the transition to multigenre as the project for voice requires teachers to support students’ struggle to express themselves. Teacher modeling and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) is key to overcoming the barriers to becoming. Like crossing a bridge, once students recognize that the multigenre project throws off old ways of constructing meaning, they can enthusiastically embrace the opportunity for a deeper writing experience. Critical
pedagogy sees voice as a starting point for writing activities – a means for interaction that creates participatory classroom environment. Writing workshop proponents view voice as an ending point, something that is not evident until a piece of writing is completed. With multigenre writing, voice does not have a beginning or an end; it is apparent throughout the writing project.

**Qualities of voice.** Walking in the giant footprints of Donald Murray (1978) and Donald Graves (1983) who both espoused the presence of voice, Romano (2004) echoes the idea that voice is the “dynamo in the writing process” (p. 20). Peter Elbow (1998) refers to it as resonance and realness, “writing into which someone has breathed” (p. 299). He describes it as words that capture the sound of the writer on the page and writing without voice as “wooden and dead” (p. 299). Writing to deliberately include voice is a process that affects the subject matter and exhibits elements such as: fluency, rhythm, liveliness and empowerment (Elbow, 1998).

It is in developing and hearing their written voice that students become genuine writers. In the classroom atmosphere created by multigenre writing, voice can have its birthplace. As all writing teachers have surely experienced, voice is a presence more easily recognized and read than defined. Murray (1998) referred to voice as a magical quality wherein the writer is heard. Graves (1983) characterized it as an imprint of ourselves that is left on our writing. Romano (2004) defines voice as “the writer’s presence in a piece of writing” (p. 21). Voice requires energetic, exhilarating writing; it is not always writing that is neat and free from grammatical errors (Romano, 2004).

Interesting information, techniques of narrative, presence of perception and
surprising information or observations are the common qualities that signal the presence of a writer’s voice (Romano, 2004). Interesting information is not merely the existence of a myriad of facts regurgitated from research; it is evidence that the writer dug deeply into the subject matter and synthesized the found material in light of his/her own knowledge and experience. A story line that includes character and plot development as well as originality is another indicator of a writer’s voice. When information and narrative unfold with unique, honest and forthcoming perceptions, the writer’s presence will leap from the page. Finally, the use of surprise and humor allow writers to have fun and be themselves. Voice sets writers free to have fun, be creative and unleash their own individual styles of expression. Once writers realize the power of their voice, they will be motivated to engage in meaningful writing.

The Role of Motivation in Multigenre Writing

Teachers of writing are themselves motivated by many things – a need to cover curriculum, a requirement to conform lesson objectives to state standards, a desire to teach students the skills that will equip them for future success, and zeal for making learning meaningful, relevant and enjoyable within the classroom experience. For the language arts or English teacher, the end of the day often results in a stack of journal entries, paragraphs, essays and/or narratives to read and evaluate. With blurry eyes and brightly colored ink pens we wade through the work of fledgling writers in an attempt to both correct and inspire them to produce better work at a higher level. Occasionally, our autopilot of editing comes to a halt when something truly inspiring reaches the top of the stack. This oasis in a sea of dreary manuscripts prevents us from drowning in despair. While we revel in this sudden masterpiece, we also long for all of our students to exhibit
the same level of self-expression that provides a window into the soul of a writer.

Unfortunately, we teachers can be our own worst enemies. Determined that students must master the six sentence, five paragraph essay complete with thesis, topic sentences and transitional statements, we slam shut the door that leads writers to engagement and motivation. Motivated writers activate their voice and greet writing with enthusiasm as a pleasurable undertaking, but these signs of motivation are only in evidence when specific elements are present in the writing task. Multigenre writing is unique in that it has the potential to bring all of these aspects of motivation together in one writing experience.

**Aspects of writing tasks which influence motivation.** Turner and Paris (1995) observed 6-year-olds during literacy instruction in 12 classrooms over a period of five days in each room. They identified the results of closed and open tasks on student motivation. Closed tasks were those in which the product (answer) or process (task) were specified. Open tasks included those where students had the opportunity to make some decisions about the planning and execution of the assignment. “The major finding of the study was that the reliable indicator of motivation was not the type of program that districts follow, but the actual tasks that teachers provided students in their classrooms” (Turner & Paris, 1995, p. 664). Open-ended tasks had a profound influence on engagement and motivation; these tasks were categorized by six critical components: choice, challenge, control, collaboration, constructive comprehension, and consequences.

Choice is a powerful motivator that encourages personal ownership of the task and level of effort. As Vygotsky (1978) suggested with his Zone of Proximal
Development, tasks which are moderately difficult and just beyond the students’ level of comfortable achievement, actually serve to motivate them; thus, challenge is a valuable aspect of a lesson or assignment. Students also benefit from control over their learning. This includes opportunities to select, monitor and evaluate in order to accomplish their work (Turner & Paris, 1995). Collaboration, or social interaction, can be motivational in several ways. Other students can generate ideas and suggestions for a peer’s work; it can positively influence students to be productive when they see others working, and observing the success of others can increase confidence. Generally, when students see others engaged in a task, they expend more effort and persistence which generates the presence of intrinsic motivation. Choice, challenge, control and collaboration build to the point where students can and want to construct their own meaning from the task which gives it real world relevance. The consequences for open-ended tasks are also different from a returned paper covered in corrections. Rather than emphasis on success or failure, these assignments afford students the means to try a different approach when one does not work. Errors become part of the information-gathering process, and motivated students look for a new, better way to accomplish their goals.

As an indicator that principles of motivation are also important when working with older students, Frey and Fisher (2010) conducted a study of over 300 high school juniors and seniors. They observed that motivation can bottom out as students get older which may result in teachers assigning less rigorous work to appease disengaged students, but this can have the opposite desired effect on motivation. Mindless, rote work must be replaced by tasks which are “somewhat ill-defined” which ensure that students will be challenged to peak their interest and motivate them to seek interaction with others.
(Frey & Fisher, 2010, p. 31). The good news of their study was the observation that students experienced a stronger sense of accomplishment with meaningful, challenging work, and this served to motivate them.

Moulton (1999), a professor at an urban southwestern university, introduced multigenre writing to undergraduate secondary English education majors as a means for “increasing interest, motivation, and functionality in research” (p.528). When she introduced the project to her 14 students ranging in age from early 20’s to early 30’s, she had only Romano’s (1995) book, Writing with Passion, as a resource for the project. She required her students to write eight genres and keep a learning log. The fun and creativity the students experienced not only motivated their own writing but made them determined to use multigenre writing in their future classrooms. Moulton observed that her students’ papers exhibited a high level of effort and creativity, and her students gained motivation through taking ownership of their work. The euphoria that can result from such a writing experience, contributes to students’ self-efficacy beliefs about themselves as writers.

**The Role of Self-Efficacy in Multigenre Writing**

Self-efficacy is a gift; in fact it is a gift that endears that special teacher to a student’s heart years after graduation. In the midst of data analysis and the writing of this paper, I visited my high school chemistry teacher whom I had not seen in many years. Although his 76-year-old body is suffering from the effects of Parkinson’s disease, his deliberate and methodical mind is the same as what I remember from the 1970’s. I took chemistry at my parents’ insistence. Our student body had just moved into a new
building, and the state of the art home economics’ room lured all but one other girl to cooking and sewing in our junior year. Fortunately for my subpar math skills, our chemistry class was small (only five students), so individual attention was possible on a daily basis. Mr. Anderson’s dry sense of humor and limitless patience combined with an astute knowledge of science netted me a “B” average in class I could easily have failed.

My education and career choices have never required me to draw upon the information taught in chemistry, but Mr. Anderson’s gift to me goes far beyond the ability to balance chemical equations. He helped me believe in myself. He was the kind of teacher who instilled confidence in students that they could do anything with determination and hard work. Ironically, his memories of my class are more about worrying that we would set the storage cabinets afire which were above our Bunsen burners. However, I often share my chemistry story with my own students when encouraging them to reach just beyond their comfort level. Chemistry and the multigenre project do have something in common. The potential for improving even one student’s self-efficacy is a life-changing event with significance far beyond the completed assignment.

Anecdotal evidence abounds in almost every high school classroom where teachers encounter students who are self-defeated. Having experienced failure in a particular task or subject area, they are reticent to expend effort in that area again. They see it as a hole too deep to navigate; they perceive that they lack the skills and equipment that would even be motivational for trying. Today’s high school writing classrooms are full of this defeatism. It is especially tragic in light of the fact that most of these students were probably once confident in their ability to express themselves in writing, but at
some point a cave-in occurred. Restricted topic selection, rigid parameters, and a myriad of formatting requirements threw dirt on the joy of streaming one’s thoughts, ideas and experiences on paper. Students lack the belief they can exceed in writing let alone experience fulfillment through self-expression.

The ideas of Bandura (1986), psychologist and professor emeritus at Stanford University, awakened the academic community to the potential impact of self-efficacy on success and motivation in learning. His social cognitive theory of human functioning illuminated the fact that what students think about their abilities can significantly affect their academic work. Self-efficacy is defined as “students’ judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1987, p. 391). Bandura noted that self-efficacy can often better predict academic success in school than previous grades or accomplishments. It can also be an indicator of students’ willingness to pursue higher goals and difficult tasks. When given choices, students tend to gravitate toward assignments in which they feel competence and confidence.

Cognitively, students with strong self-efficacy are more likely to have ambition, exhibit a willingness to tackle challenges and pursue goals with determination (Bandura, 1986). Strong self-efficacy goes hand-in-hand with motivation. If students have a positive belief that they can succeed, they are more confident which translates into motivation for new and difficult tasks. Strong self-efficacy reduces stress and anxiety and increases coping ability, because prior success produces confidence that can be tapped into for new challenges. It also increases the energy students are willing to apply to tasks. Conversely, students often feel like there is no point to trying if past attempts
netted failure. They see only obstacles and the possibility of failure again with causes feelings of incapability. Thus, they lack enthusiasm, exhibit weak effort and give up quickly if difficulty is encountered. Overcoming students’ low self-efficacy toward writing is a significant problem that language arts’ teachers face on a regular basis. By the time they reach high school, students have become conditioned to negative responses when a writing task is announced, particularly if it involves research. An understanding of the sources of influence that feed into self-efficacy is necessary if teachers are going to halt this downward spiral (Grierson, 1999; LeNoir, 2002; Larson, 2008).

Bandura (1986) suggests three theoretical concepts that can increase self-efficacy. The first and best way to restore it in writing is to provide students with positive experiences. A multigenre project offers a new and interesting opportunity for self-expression. Even the biggest doubters cannot help but be intrigued by the possibility of a new form of writing that seems to signal a rebirth in freedom of choice. Positive social influence from others is a second plank to rebuilding feelings of self-efficacy. Observing the positive experiences of others can bolster self-confidence: enthusiasm is contagious. The classroom structure during a multigenre project allows students to interact with one another to exchange ideas and benefit from the knowledge and experiences of others. Additionally, observing others who model successful writing increases self-efficacy. Social interaction can also provide opportunities for social persuasion, the third plank for rebuilding self-efficacy. Positive encouragement, even positive peer pressure, can motivate students who lack self-confidence to work harder.

Bandura (1978) also points out that self-efficacy affects how people feel, think and motivate themselves. Students with a strong sense of self-efficacy approach a
difficult task as a challenge to be mastered, whereas those who have low self-efficacy may see difficulty as a threat to be avoided. Self-efficacy can be a more accurate predictor of student accomplishment than knowledge or skill level. Self-efficacy affects how students approach a task and the level to which they will be engaged and motivated. This has obvious implications for writing instruction, and this connection was made by Pajares and Valiante (2006) who synthesized the research on self-efficacy for their chapter in the Handbook of Writing Research. They outline four sources which influence the formation of a student’s self-efficacy toward writing.

1. The student’s interpretation of the result of previous writing performance
2. The student’s observations of others performing writing tasks
3. The student’s social interaction with others pertaining to the writing task
4. The student’s emotional response to a writing task

Self-efficacy toward writing can be measured by assessing students’ confidence in their writing skills, in their ability to complete the writing task, and in their judgment as to their confidence in receiving a particular letter grade for their work.

Self-efficacy toward writing has an obvious effect on motivation and also on the value that students ascribe to the pursuit of writing. Students who expect to succeed place value on the writing assignment. They confidently employ the use of self-regulated learning strategies such as planning, organizing, researching, editing and completing writing in timely fashion (Pajeres & Vilante, 2006). This suggests that teachers have a responsibility to scaffold the writing task by providing students with specific strategies for the process of writing as well as regular feedback regarding their work.

The role of self-efficacy in multigenre writing is most clearly seen in students’
reactions to their participation in the project. As previously stated, teachers of multigenre writing have attested to the power of positivity that is experienced by students (Grierson, 1999, Allen, 2004, Putz, 2006). Joanne Gillespie’s (2005) evaluation of her students’ experience mirrors the components that increase self-efficacy. She noted that her students were invested in their writing, felt empowered and motivated by having classmates as an audience and submitted “insightful pieces of writing” (p. 684).

An experience I had while teaching several years ago, brought this idea home to me and ultimately led to why I conducted this study on multigenre writing. I had two senior boys in creative writing who were examples of low motivation and self-efficacy. They were struggling students, and in the final semester of their high school career they saw no reason to exert any effort toward school work. As best friends, they sat together; however, since neither had any self-efficacy toward schoolwork, their interaction with one another was not usually beneficial. The chance to select their own topics for creative writing assignments provided a slight motivation to work harder especially when they could write about sports, but when I introduced the multigenre project, their initial reaction was the usual ho-hum. After much cajoling, Jay decided to write about trucks because he was working part time for a dealership, and Bill chose a famous basketball player.

The multigenre project was new and different; they became interested despite their normal attitudes. Slowly, a new eagerness for writing was born. Jay wrote an expressive one paragraph piece, and I was so excited that I praised his work loudly for the whole class to hear. Much to my surprise, that spark ignited a fire in the once dormant student. He came to class with a smile and began to raise his hand to seek
approval for his ideas. Ever the dramatic one, I began to call him “the example student”. My silliness inadvertently led to a firestorm of positive feelings. When you think you are the example student, you have a reputation to uphold. When your friend is being recognized for academic achievement, you want to be noticed also, so the motivation spread to Bill. Not only did Jay do his best work on the multigenre project, but he ended the year with a newfound confidence toward academics, and both young men enrolled in a community college the following semester. In stark contrast to the rigid, uninspiring experience of the five paragraph essay, multigenre writing has the potential to positively motivate students and increase their self-efficacy beliefs about themselves as writers.

The Role of Genre in Multigenre Writing

As the name suggests, multigenre writing is at its core a project designed to allow students to write using a variety of genres. This variety is not just for the sake of novelty; however, it is a project designed to stretch writers and widen their capabilities. Learning different genres and their meanings begins with early language acquisition in the home. Children are exposed to many forms of print: newspapers, magazines, bills, advertisements and other forms of paperwork that they may observe older individuals handling. Eventually, they become more oriented to print as they are exposed to the alphabet and children’s stories.

Duke and Purcell-Gates (2003) of Michigan State University, compared data using two research studies, involving young children and genre development. In the first study, children ages 4-6 in 20 different low-SES families were studied at home in order to observe all encounters they had with written language. In the other study, 10 classrooms in low-SES settings were observed for four days during a school year to record
information about students’ encounters with print. Researchers, in both situations, noted
the genres that children encountered and compared the lists of those used at home with
those incorporated in classroom instruction. When it was noticed that some frequently
used genres at home such pamphlets and brochures were never mentioned at school,
teachers were encouraged “to incorporate these texts in read aloud at school” (Duke &
Purcell-Gates, 2003, p. 35). Recipes and checkbooks were also examples of genres used
regularly at home, and projects were cited that included these in the curriculum. “Genre
proved to be one important means of bridging the known to the new” (Duke & Purcell-

Donovan and Smolkin (2006) compiled leading research on children and genre in
their chapter for the Handbook of Writing Research. They summarized the major
findings as it relates to elementary students and genre understanding.

1. Children have differentiated experience and exposure to a variety of genres.
2. Children’s genre knowledge is emergent.
3. Children demonstrate an ability to understand the linguistic features of a variety
   of written genres.
4. Children should be provided with the need to use a variety of genres.
5. Children can understand the structure and message of stories they have produced
   orally.

While the above observations relate to young elementary children using narrative forms
of text, children in the upper elementary grades should be able to understand and use
expository genres as well; this can be accomplished with scaffolding and exposure to an
increasing variety of print. These studies demonstrate that students come to school with
an understanding of a wide variety of genres and continue to grow in their knowledge and
usage.

In today’s world, the definition of genres has been expanded to include all forms
of interaction, and they are determined more by a social context than a classification system. As defined by Deborah Dean (2008) in *Genre Theory*, writing genres “include all interactions involving text” (p. 9). Genres are no longer defined by a specific form but rather by a specific purpose and situation in which they are used. Genres can reflect social interaction or help people make sense of a shared social experience. “Because genres are social, part of the meaning they carry resides in the social context that creates the genre” (Dean, 2008, p. 12). For this reason, genre instruction that attempts to expound on the characteristics of a specific form with the expectation that students will rote replicate it, is not meaningful or accurate. In reality, genres can be both messy and complex, and understanding genres requires a more natural context for instruction. Dean recommends keeping genre and context as closely connected as possible. What could be a closer context than a multigenre paper?

Not only does the multigenre paper create a means for using a variety of genres, it requires the writer to make decisions about genre choice. Often these choices are made in a social context; students consult teachers and peers for suggestions or affirmations. Discussions about genre choices require students to evaluate what they want to say and how best to say it. Genres may be considered and discarded if something different more accurately expresses the desired information. Johnson and Moneysmith (2005) also recommend that students bring completed genres to class occasionally to read aloud for peer feedback. Romano (2004) constantly emphasizes the connection between reading and writing. “The more experiential knowledge of genre that students have, the more depth and breadth they can achieve in their papers (Romano, 2000, p. 44).
While it may seem redundant to suggest that a learning outcome of teaching multigenre writing is creating a context for teaching genre, it is actually one of the value-added aspects because teaching genre does not come up often in most classrooms (Dean, 2008). Also, Newkirk (2009) noted that major theorists in writing instruction have studied the fact that genres taught in school tend to have a rigid focus that undermines the potential for self-expression. Furthermore, genre is often an aspect of reading and writing that is decontextualized in the classroom. Teachers may assume students have prior knowledge of the characteristics of particular genres simply because they have been exposed to them, but implicit learning should not be assumed. Discussion which activates prior knowledge lets the teacher know where students are in their genre knowledge in relation to where they need to be. Multigenre writing provides students with choice and experience in writing in a variety of genres; it creates an opportunity to learn and practice new genres that they may not have been exposed to previously. It provides challenge and a fresh way to look at one’s writing possibilities.

While the value of multigenre writing has been well-documented, information is lacking as it relates to the correlation between the theoretical ideas about writing espoused in the research literature the potential outcomes of the project in the classroom. This study will step into a high school classroom for the purpose of seeing the multigenre project up close. It will document the students’ experiences and the themes which emerge from the writing context. It will seek to make connections to the research as it relates to the sociocultural nature of effective writing instruction and the potential for activating voice and increasing self-efficacy and motivation toward writing when students craft a multigenre paper. The bell for class is about to ring, but it is not ringing
to signal another round of formulaic writing that leaves students unchallenged and uninspired. It beckons them to creativity and self-expression; it calls them to a renewed feeling of joy and success in writing.
Chapter Three

Project Design: A Qualitative Inquiry into the Use of Multigenre Writing

This study will investigate what happens when students in a high school creative writing class engage in an eight week multigenre project. Multigenre writing is defined in this study as a collection of pieces written in a variety of genres but centered on one topic. The goal of this research is not to advocate the disappearance of traditional research papers from high school writing classrooms; rather, it will be a systematic examination of the multigenre project in order to better understand what happens during this writing process in the hope that it may lead to its permanent inclusion in writing curriculum. The primary goal of this qualitative research is to add to the knowledge and understanding of multigenre as it relates to the research questions. Additionally, this study will contribute to the field of writing instruction by providing a better understanding of how to help students develop voice, motivation and self-efficacy as writers. In this chapter I will outline the research questions, context and participants, data collection methods, and strategies for data analysis. In order to provide a better view of what happens in a multigenre classroom, I will also systematically describe the process involved in executing the project from the teacher’s perspective.

Research Questions

This research will address the following question: What happens in a high school classroom when a multigenre project is undertaken? Additional secondary questions will include:

1. In what ways does a multigenre project help students find and activate their
voice?

2. In what ways is self-efficacy evident throughout the multigenre project?

3. In what ways is motivation evident throughout the multigenre paper?

4. How does multigenre writing support learning and understanding of genre?

Context and Participants

This study took place at a small, private, college preparatory high school in Toledo, Ohio, in which I currently teach. As the teacher/researcher, I have 24 years of teaching experience in both elementary and secondary classrooms at the school where the research took place. Due to my dual role as the teacher and researcher, the data collection and analysis will be reported in the first person. My current teaching assignment includes both Freshman English and an elective creative writing class for juniors and seniors. I have taught the creative writing course which will be used for this research project for the past nine years. As a result of completing my own multigenre paper in a graduate course, this will be the eighth year I have included a similar project in the content of the creative writing class. While the name “creative writing” assumes a curriculum which restores writing to its rightful venue of creativity and self-discovery, I am convinced that the multigenre project does not have to be limited in usage to elective writing courses. The broad spectrum of pedagogical components embedded within the project makes it a fitting choice for the writing curriculum in classes from upper elementary through college.

The research setting was a naturally assembled, pre-existing high school class.
All students came from moderate to middle income homes where parents were able to afford monthly tuition. Three juniors and 14 seniors were enrolled in the creative writing class. Another English teacher distributed their informed consent forms and supervised their completion. She collected and held the forms in a secure location until the course was completed and all final grades had been posted. As the teacher/researcher, I described the project to the students and their option to participate in the research study; however, since I would ultimately be grading their papers, it was important for the students to know that my evaluations would not be influenced by knowledge of whether or not they chose to participate in the study. Students who did participate were not asked to do any additional work for this research; they completed a regular course project.

Four seniors (all females) chose not to be participants in the study even though they did complete the multigenre project with the rest of the class. Of the 13 actual study participants, 7 were females and 6 were males. Eleven participants were Caucasian, 1 was African-American and 1 was Asian (an exchange student from Korea). All of the participants were either 17 or 18 years of age at the time of the study. The terms “participants” and “students” will be used interchangeably. They were given the option of selecting their own pseudonyms which are used throughout this paper. (With the exception of my niece mentioned in chapter one, no real names are used.) While the sample size appears to be relatively small, it actually represents at least 11% of the population since there were 110 students enrolled in the high school. The multigenre project took place over an eight week period in April-May, 2011; this is the normal unit of study as part of the course curriculum. However, it should be noted that this class was normally offered in the fall semester, and for the purpose of this study it was moved to
the spring to accommodate the researcher’s schedule. This change proved to be significant, as will be explained in the results, because the seniors were completing the multigenre paper one week before their graduation.

**Data Collection**

This study is qualitative, descriptive, practitioner research using a theoretical framework of social constructivism. A triangulation of data was analyzed to describe this case of multigenre writing. Data collection included students’ project folders, audio taping, video-taping, field notes, catalog of tapes, pre- and post-writing surveys, progress questionnaires, students’ final multigenre papers, grading rubrics for each paper and student presentations of their topics (see Table 1 for a complete list of the data sources).
Table 1
An Overview of the Data Collection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students’ project folders (notes, rough drafts, hand-outs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio tapes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal one-on-one conversations with the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group discussion (students’ choice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group discussion (teacher-assigned group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal conferences with the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal conferences with Dr. Denyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video tapes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal conference with the teacher (topic and genre choices)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini lessons taught by the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students working (writing on laptops during class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ final presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog of tapes (chunking transcription of audio and video tapes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre- and post-writing surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress update questionnaire (worksheet of responses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ final multigenre papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading rubric for each multigenre paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ presentations of their projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explanation of collection methods.** At the beginning of the project, each student was issued a pocket folder to use for retaining all their paperwork throughout the duration
of the multigenre unit. They were instructed to keep hand-outs, notes, lists of genres and ideas and rough drafts in the folder, throwing nothing away. These folders were collected on the final day of class and provided insight into how the students organized themselves as writers and how they made decisions about their writing. On two occasions during class I asked students to complete a questionnaire to monitor their progress, questions and feelings about the work they had completed thus far (see Appendix A).

I prepared a pre-and post-writing survey as a means of gauging the students’ level of motivation and self-efficacy toward writing. The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions with ordered choices – 11 used as indicators of self-efficacy and 11 used as indicators of motivation. A Likert frequency scale with five categories was incorporated for answer choices (see Appendix A). Survey questions were based on the benchmarks identified by Pajares and Valiante (2006) as indicators for self-efficacy and motivation as a result of successful experiences with writing. Students were instructed to base their pre-writing answers on all previous writing experiences which they could recall. For the post-writing survey, the same questions were used to evaluate the multigenre writing experience. It was anticipated that higher scores (agree or strongly agree) would indicate higher self-efficacy and motivation, and lower scores would indicate less change as compared to previous writing experiences. The survey also provided information as to the changes in feelings and attitudes from the pre- to the post-multigenre writing survey.

The survey was administered by another teacher in the school who was not involved in the study (the same individual who collected and retained IRB forms). Participants completed the surveys during a regular class period; they read the survey directions to themselves; no oral directions or interpretation of items on the survey were
given. Upon completion of the multigenre paper and presentation, the participants followed the same protocol for the post-writing survey. One male participant was absent when the post-writing survey was administered. All surveys were collected, sealed in an envelope and retained by the third party survey administrator until I (the teacher/researcher) had submitted final grades for the writing course. As previously stated, this was a safeguard against the possibility of the survey responses having an influence on the subsequent weeks of grading or data collection.

The intent of the survey was to provide descriptive information about the attitudes and opinions of students about the multigenre writing experience compared to their previous writing experiences. The unique nature of multigenre writing typically produces specific feelings and perceptions about writing and being a writer (Cate, 2000; Goldfinch, 2003). Anecdotal evidence suggests that students typically enjoy the multigenre experience, and most are willing to honestly share their opinions (Gillespie, 2005). Nevertheless, the possibility exists that some students may answer survey questions in accordance with what they think the teacher/researcher would like as a response. This should be minimal since the students know the surveys will not be viewed until the project is completed and graded. At that time, I will compile the results for both surveys and analyze both group and individual responses.

Field notes included direct observations about what I was seeing in my classroom, observations about the methods I used and summaries of conversations with students which took place when recording devices were not in use. As the teacher/researcher, I held individual conferences with the students on a formal and informal basis. During the first week, each student had a formal meeting to discuss his/her topic choice and list of
possible genres. Informal conferences occurred as I walked around the room while students worked and when students stayed after class to seek help or ask questions. Midway through the project, Dr. Jenny Denyer from the University of Toledo came to class on two consecutive days to meet with students. Students talked with her on a voluntary basis, and she met with a total of 7 participants. These conferences about the students’ writing progress served as formal interviews and were audio taped.

Two digital pocket cameras were used for video-taping on fourteen different days during the project. Taping included classroom instruction, minibllessons, students working independently on laptops and interaction between the teacher/researcher and students. Each student’s final presentation was also video-taped. Two digital voice recorders were used for audio taping on eleven days during the project. This proved to be less invasive and more user-friendly than video cameras. The voice recorders were operated by students when they met in small groups; this occurred twice – once in teacher-assigned groups and once in groups of the students’ choice. During these group sessions, students discussed progress, struggles, and genre choices. They gave each other advice and offered encouragement. Voice recording was also used when I talked informally with individuals and when Dr. Denyer met formally with them.

All of these video and audio recordings were stored on the teacher/researcher’s home computer in individual, dated folders. Two external hard drives, kept in two separate, secure locations, served as back up for all electronic files. On a daily basis, I listened to the recording for the purpose of transcription by “discourse chunking” (Denyer, Florio-Ruane, & Raphael, 2004) (see Appendix B). This allowed me to keep up with the time-consuming demands of transcription while also reviewing the events of the
day. This catalog of transcriptions and my field notes were recorded in a notebook kept in a secure location in my home.

Additionally, the multigenre experience will be analyzed in comparison to its counterpart, the traditional research paper. Melinda Putz (2006) highlights some of these differences in a chart similar to the one in Table 2, and this will serve as a basis for the comparisons.

Table 2


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Research Paper</th>
<th>Multigenre Research Paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• writer remains dispassionate about subject</td>
<td>• writer personally engaged; opinions encouraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• approaches topic from a single perspective</td>
<td>• takes many angles on a topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• follows conventions of formal prose</td>
<td>• broadens the range of acceptable writing styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• usually done as a solitary individual assignment</td>
<td>• involves much small-group work, peer response, and sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• handed in and performed for teacher</td>
<td>• handed in and performed in a class presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sometimes viewed as drudgery by students</td>
<td>• often becomes students’ favorite and proudest achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A final aspect of the data collection included the actual multigenre papers, final presentations and the grading rubric for each student. I retained the students’ original papers; this allowed me to go back through their finished writing while listening to the tapes. It also served as a visual record of their struggles and accomplishments. Each student was required to give an oral presentation about their topic and their writing; these presentations were held on the final four days of the school year and were video-taped.
Students were instructed to include the following elements in their presentations:

1. Tell why you chose your topic and why it is important to you
2. Talk about what you learned about your topic while writing your paper
3. Read aloud a favorite genre that you wrote
4. Tell what you learned about writing and yourself as a writer

The forthright attitude of the students during these presentations was a window into how they thought and what they felt about themselves as writers as a result of the project. A complete list of the daily lesson plans and the ways in which data was collected can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3

*Timeline of Lesson Plans and Data Collection.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lesson Plan</th>
<th>Type of Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, April 5, 2011</td>
<td>Distribute Assent and Consent form and explain introduce multigenre project</td>
<td>Audio taping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, April 6, 2011</td>
<td>Create interest for multigenre project by conducting a group brainstorming session to generate a list of writing genres</td>
<td>Pre-writing survey Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 7, 2011</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Defining multigenre Read aloud a sample multigenre paper from Tom Romano’s book Pass around sample papers from previous students</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, April 8, 2011</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Topic Selection Students individually generate lists of possible topics</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, April 11, 2011</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Rationale Paper Work in small groups to discuss topic ideas and possible genres for topics of choice</td>
<td>Video-taping Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, April 12, 2011</td>
<td>Work independently at laptops to write rationale paper</td>
<td>Audio taping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Wednesday, April 13, 2011 | **Mini Lesson: Dialogue**  
Work on laptops to write dialogue piece | Audio taping Rationale Paper       |
| Thursday, April 14, 2011 | (Dialogue due)  
Work on laptops to write a genre of choice | Video-taping                       |
| Friday, April 15, 2011  | (Genre of choice due)  
Work on laptops to write a genre of choice | Video-taping Field notes           |
| Monday, April 18, 2011  | Meet individually with 12 students in 5 minute writing conferences  
about topic and writing completed to date | Video-taping                       |
| Tuesday, April 19, 2011 | Mini Lesson: Prologue  
Work on laptops to write a prologue | Field notes                        |
| Wednesday, April 20, 2011 | (Prologue Due)  
Small group meetings to share writing and discuss ideas about future work | Audio taping                       |
| Thursday, April 21, 2011 | Mini Lesson: Research  
Work on laptops to locate research articles which relate to topics | Video-taping                       |
| Friday, April 22, 2011  | No School – Good Friday | N/A                                |
| Monday, April 25, 2011  | (One research article due)  
Work on laptops to write a second research article | N/A (Researcher absent; students wrote on their own) |
| Tuesday, April 26, 2011 | (Second research article due)  
Meet in groups to discuss writing progress and challenges | Video-taping (minilesson) Audio taping |
| Wednesday, April 27, 2011 | Mini Lesson: Poetry  
Meet in groups to discuss writing progress and challenges | Audio taping                       |
| Thursday, April 28, 2011 | Work in class to write poetry | Video-taping (no sound) Field notes |
| Friday, April 29, 2011  | Mini Lesson: How genre choice affects voice in a piece of writing  
Rewrite one previous genre using an alternate genre | Field notes                        |
| May, May 2, 2011        | (Collect alternative genre)  
Work on laptops to write a genre | Video-taping                       |
| Week 5 | Tuesday, May 3, 2011 | Mini Lesson: Interviewing and Note-taking  
Work independently to prepare a list of interview questions | Field notes |
|-------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------|
|       | Wednesday, May 4, 2011 | Work on laptops to write a genre of choice | Video-taping (no sound)  
Field notes |
|       | Thursday, May 5, 2011 | (Collect genre of choice)  
Work on laptops to write a genre of choice | N/A (Research absent; students wrote on their own) |
|       | Friday, May 6, 2011 | No Class – Early Dismissal | N/A |
| Week 6 | Monday, May 9, 2011 | (Collect genre of choice)  
Individual writing conferences with Drs. Denyer, Carr and Hapgood | Audio taping |
|       | Tuesday, May 10, 2011 | (Genre using interview due)  
Mini Lesson: Use of Endnotes | Audio taping |
|       | Wednesday, May 11, 2011 | Individual writing conferences with Drs. Denyer, Carr and Hapgood | Video-taping |
|       | Thursday, May 12, 2011 | Work on laptops to write genre of choice | Video-taping |
|       | Friday, May 13, 2011 | No class due to school wide activity | N/A |
| Week 7 | Monday, May 16, 2011 | (Collect final genre of choice)  
Mini Lesson: Reoccurring Genre  
Work on laptops to write reoccurring pieces | Audio taping  
Student notebooks and notes used to organize genres |
|       | Tuesday, May 17, 2011 | Mini Lesson: Epilogue  
Work on laptops to write epilogue | Audio taping |
|       | Wednesday, May 18, 2011 | Mini Lesson: Assembling Multigenre Paper  
Work on laptops to assemble multigenre papers | Video-taping |
|       | Thursday, May 19, 2011 | Mini Lesson: Preparing a Multigenre Presentation | Audio taping |
|       | Friday, May 20, 2011 | Collect multigenre papers (originally due on May 19 but extended one day)  
Begin work on presentations | Multigenre papers |
| Week 8 | Monday, May 23, 2011 | Post-writing survey  
Work on laptops to create a Power Point presentation | Post-writing survey |
|       | Tuesday, May 24, 2011 | Multigenre Presentations | Video-taping |
Note: Transcripts were made of all audio and video tapes using the chunking method.

**Researcher bias.** As the teacher/researcher, my role in the research was emic. I collected and recorded data as an insider – one who was involved in the process. Recognizing the possibility of researcher bias, I was cautious every day about saying anything or describing any aspect of the project with terminology that could bias the student participants recognizing that it is natural for teachers to be enthusiastic especially when asking students to undertake a big project. I refrained from comments which specifically showed bias toward the project itself because I wanted students to come to their own conclusions. I was careful to engage in regular critical analysis of my observations and the classroom activities and keep my insider’s voice from being present in my findings. Multiple sources such as video and audio tapes, field notes and students’ papers will contribute to the analysis thus allowing the triangulation of data to serve as another safeguard against bias. Additionally, I relied on the objective input of my dissertation committee when establishing themes and coding for data analysis and interpretation.

Researchers such as Ball (2000) and Lampert (2001) have worked successfully while maintaining the dual role of teacher as well. Ball developed the Mathematics Teaching and Learning to Teach Project at the University of Michigan. Her studies, which involved a triangulation of data similar to this study, followed third grade teachers in order to develop practice-based knowledge standards for teaching mathematics.
Lampert (2001) studied her own teaching in a fifth grade classroom for the purpose of analyzing the problems she encountered and the potential strategies for effectiveness subsequently authoring the book, *Teaching Problems and the Problems of Teaching*. These two accomplished teacher/researchers have demonstrated the fact that experienced classroom teachers can also be effective researchers.

**Data Analysis Strategy**

In preparation for data analysis, I initially created a chart to correlate the research questions with appropriate strands of data collection that could potentially yield information. This chart was created prior to the start of the project and helped me determine what types of data to collect each day (see Table 4).

**Table 4**

*An Overview of the Correlation Among the Research Questions, Data and Analysis.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data: Where will I look?</th>
<th>Collection/Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| In what ways does a multigenre writing project help students find and activate their voice? | •Final drafts of multigenre papers  
•Classroom observations | •Triangulation of data collection from a grading rubric, the multigenre papers and group interaction (class conversations between peers and teacher/student writing conferences) |
| In what ways is self-efficacy evident throughout the multigenre project?         | •Pre- and post-writing surveys  
•Progress questionnaire  
•Student presentations | •Survey with 20 close-ended questions to be evaluated using a Likert frequency scale  
•Descriptive evidence on the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of the writing group will be coded and charted on a table of specifications (listing talk and behaviors that reflect self-efficacy) |
In what ways is motivation evident throughout the multigenre project?

- Pre- and post-writing informal interviews
- Classroom observations
- Student presentations
- Informal conferences will generate themes/topics to be correlated with classroom observations and written work
- Descriptive evidence on the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of the writing group will be coded and charted on a table of specifications (listing talk and behaviors that reflect motivation)

How does multigenre writing support learning and understanding of genre?

- Classroom lesson plans for mini lessons
- Classroom observations and field notes
- Students’ project folders
- Selective video-taping of group meetings
- Objectives from mini lessons on genres will be compared with coded observations from classroom writing sessions which will establish identifiers of social interaction about genre use

The process of data collection and analysis was intertwined and simultaneous so that the data could continually inform the themes and coding of the analysis (Creswell, 2009). A spiral image best illustrates the interrelatedness of this continuum of data collection (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

*Data Collection Spiral.*
The strategy for analysis of the data involved beginning with a broad overview of all pieces of information and gradually narrowed to a more focused examination of the evidence related to the emergent themes (see Appendix D). Initially, I considered each participant one at a time by listening to audio and video tapes of him/her while looking through the artifacts – questionnaire, survey responses, class folder and multigenre paper. This created an overview of each individual’s experience. Considerable time was spent with the video tape of each presentation because this was where the students articulated their feelings about writing and their multigenre project. While looking at all data for a student, I formulated a chart divided into sections: item/issue, data source, what I notice, evaluation/interpretation and patterns in data/inferences. I paid particular attention to what I knew to be the basic aspects of the writing task – topic selection, genre selection/work, poetry writing, reoccurring element, self-efficacy and motivation. After having done initial data analysis for several students, I began to formulate a list of preliminary codes which I continued to use, adding as needed, for each subsequent student. This list was my first sense of the emerging themes.

1. Topic based on passion
2. Final paper tells a story
3. Initial worry about doing a quantity of writing
4. Writing skills/ What one knows about self as writer
5. Struggle (motivation, ideas, etc.)
6. Response to suggestions (teacher, peers)
7. Engaged in genre talk
8. Has genre ideas that do not get used or were replaced by another genre
9. Evidence of motivation (extrinsic or intrinsic)
10. How students organized self as writer
11. Power of poetry to engage writer and activate voice

These themes were color-coded in each paper, and once I had examined each student participant, I reread their chart and added applicable codes that had become a part
of the list as I worked. I began to get an overall picture of each participant’s experience and how it related to other students and the research constructs. Using these ideas, I started a second round of analysis which took a closer look by aspects of the project – topic selection, genre selection, and poetry writing. I re-examined each participant’s data in light of each aspect by listening to any audio and video tapes in which they talked about these areas. During this time, I made a new round of notes in paragraph form and developed some coding for each aspect. For example, I assessed the types of topics and how many students wrote each: 2 wrote nonfiction stories, 5 wrote nonfiction topical papers, 1 wrote a nonfiction satire, 2 wrote fiction, and 2 wrote fiction based on literature or a movie.

Two students, Tad and Erin, changed topics during the first week of writing. Tad switched from the Vietnam War to the life of a traveling musician. While he was interested in the 1960’s and its major events, he realized that he did not have enough background knowledge. “You can’t force a knowledge trip; I was having a tough time figuring out where I wanted to go” (Interview, April 12, 2011). Erin first chose Phantom of the Opera due to her love of music, but she also asked to change during her formal interview with me. Her concern was a deficit of original ideas for writing genres about The Phantom. At my prompting, she switched to softball and her experience will be discussed in the next chapter.

Additional observations about topic selection included how long it took each student to decide and the basis for their selection. Four topics were chosen based on career aspirations, 3 were due to interests in social issues, 3 were related to writing the student had done earlier in the semester and 3 were current interests or activities. The
timeliness of topic selection, basis for topic selection and type of writing are factors that indicated the presence of the writer’s voice in writing because the level of passion is determined by the writer’s immersion in the topic through a genuine desire to know about it in a deeper way (Romano, 2000).

The same method of analysis was used to consider genre selection. In this case, I listed all the genres each student used, whether or not they added or subtracted genres from their original list, the amount of artwork (color, font, pictures) incorporated in the final paper, and which genres they identified as their best writing. This information was primarily gathered by looking through their papers and re-listening to their presentations. At the end of this section, I again compiled some general observations. Three students included a previously written paper in their project, 3 students included one more genre than required, and six students had new themes emerge as they wrote their papers (see Table 5).

Table 5

Emerging Themes Developed from Original Topic Choices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Initial Topic</th>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Com</td>
<td>Sam Cooke</td>
<td>Death of Sam Cooke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt</td>
<td>Harley Davidson Motorcycles</td>
<td>Dispelling stereotypes about Harley owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>Life of a Writer</td>
<td>Handling rejection of one’s writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Video Game Addiction</td>
<td>Need for legislation recognizing it as real addiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Visit to New York City</td>
<td>Diverse languages spoken in NYC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piper</td>
<td>Satirical look at college recruitment</td>
<td>Serious look at college student leaving home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I also formulated a list of the types of genres participants chose to read in class during their presentations as this typically represented the writing that they liked best. Five
students read their poems, 3 read stories, 2 read dialogues, and one each read a labyrinthine sentence, an internal monologue and a journal entry. The reasons they stated for choosing these pieces as favorites shed light on their decision-making, their insights into writing and how they personalized their work.

Next, I considered the poetry writing experience; it was a required element in the project and the subject of much conversation among the students. I chose to pay particular attention to the students’ experiences with poetry writing because their comments about it were so explicit. Knowing that they had talked among themselves about writing poetry, I re-listened to all audio tapes at the points where my transcript indicated poetry talk. Five students identified poetry as their favorite genre, and many others talked in whole class or small group interaction about poetry writing. I wrote a paragraph summarizing each student’s experience with poetry and coded five themes.

1. Articulated struggle in writing poetry – 5 participants
2. Wrote independent of help or interaction – 4 participants
3. Did not choose to take the teacher’s advice about changing revision – 2 participants
4. Placement of poem in final paper (beginning, middle, end) – all participants
5. Referred to poem as their favorite genre – 5 participants

Of additional interest was the fact that 10 out of 13 participants used a pattern of rhyming couplets and three used repetition at the beginning of lines. This was noteworthy to me because in previous years many students did not go to the effort of developing rhyming schemes. Seven students wrote in first person and five used third person. Poems ranged from an elegy for Sam Cooke to a two-voiced poem about pain. The most amusing
aspect of the students’ poetry writing was their perception that this work might best be accomplished late at night. Erin gave this advice to others on at least two occasions. “Write your poem at 12:45 a.m.” (Transcript, May 9, 2011).

A list of how students organized themselves and a summary of ways in which talk played a role in the writing process completed the second round of analysis. I identified seven types of talk: informal classroom interaction during writing, classroom questions, teacher interaction while circulating in the room, peer group interaction, teacher-student informal conversation, teacher-student formal interviews and formal interviews with a professor. Talk was defined by some overarching questions. With whom did students interact during writing? In what interesting ways did they interact? How did they respond as writers to interaction?

Since the students’ presentations served as the best first person account of each participant’s experience with multigenre writing, the third round involved re-listening to each presentation in full. I was specifically looking for comments related to their feelings about the project which would indicate their level of motivation and self-efficacy as well as their understanding of effective use of genre. I transcribed their responses verbatim. What emerged was surprising and significant. It was surprising because the patterns were obvious, but I had not noticed them previously. It was significant because the comments related to the aspects of fun, creativity and choice. Six students called the project “fun,” 6 referred to it as being creative, 2 mentioned a new love and insight for writing and 2 mentioned having the opportunity for self-expression. Three students contrasted the experience with negative ones in other English courses. For example, Piper, a senior, said, “AP English kind of ruined me because I hate being crammed in a box. I don’t like
to follow form, so this was kind of fun” (Transcript, May 24, 2011). While this was a relatively brief analysis, it led me to consider additional literature related to role of fun in writing, and it gave me new insight into the participants’ experiences as it related to engagement.

Round four of analysis consisted of a focus on the aspect of struggle which is a well-documented part of the writing process. Evidence of struggle had first appeared when I analyzed types of talking. During two class periods two weeks apart, students were asked to form groups of 3-5 people to discuss their writing. For the first group meetings, they were allowed to choose the members. The classroom configuration consists of 2 rows of tables with two students at each table. Most students turned to peers beside and behind them without getting up to move around the room. Their conversations followed my suggestion to specifically talk about what if anything was a struggle in their current work. The topics of these conversations included: concern about flow, determining a reoccurring element and how to use it, ideas for the next genre they intended to write and suggestions to each other for additional genres to consider for their papers.

The second time that peer group meetings occurred; I assigned students to a group. I had a two-fold purpose for making the assignments: to force students to talk to different people and to cluster them according to ability. In each group, I placed an expert writer, 1 or 2 learning writers (those midway between expert and struggling) and at least one struggling writer. These determinations were based on classroom observations and work already submitted. The expert writer was assigned to lead the group session, asking each person to talk about their paper in terms of what was written,
what needed to be done and any struggles or concerns they were having. Again, the topics of having cohesion (flow) and having enough genres were prevalent. With only three weeks remaining in the project (and the school year), motivation to get work done was also discussed in two groups of the six groups. Another new concern was whether or not a particular genre was working in the paper. For example, Nicole had designed a T-shirt for her project on New York City, but she was worried because it listed negative aspects of the city – “terrible traffic, dark alleys and people who want my money” (Multigenre paper). When she asked her group if it was okay to have one negative genre, another member questioned what her intention was for the overall theme of the paper and then assured her that it was a good idea to present both sides.

For the fifth and final round of analysis, I felt it was important to revisit the central question of this research – what happens in the multigenre classroom? This led to further examination of struggle, what it looked like and sounded like, as well as how it was significant to individual experiences with multigenre. I also took a deeper look at what a teacher learns about her/his students as a result of doing a multigenre project. Not all students have a positive experience with multigenre writing. For some, the open-ended nature of the task can be uncomfortable and confusing (Romano, 2009). It may be possible that some students do not enjoy a project that requires a heavy dose of creativity. It may be that some are unsure about a writing project that is vastly different from previous experiences, and they have trouble dealing with the unfamiliar.

In the next chapter, a window will open into the writing classroom and lens of research analysis will focus on what takes place when a multigenre project is the sole focus of instruction for an eight week unit of study. First, I will detail the step-by-step
process involved in multigenre writing. This will be followed by three case studies.
Finally, the power of vision, variety, verse, voice, verge of engagement, and victory will
be evidenced by the experiences of 13 high school writers who undertook a multigenre
writing project for the first time. The second bell is ringing; the students have taken their
seats at two rows of long tables. They settle in with the uneasy expectation that
something new and very different will be required of them.

The Power of a Ventana

In this section, we will see how the participants engaged in the process of writing
a multigenre paper. The project, a brand new experience for everyone, will open a
window on how students think of themselves as writers, how they interact during a
writing project, how they make decisions, how they progress through the daily task of

The word, ventana, is Spanish for “window” and is used here for the purpose of
alliteration and illustration as to the windows which are opened on the world of writing
during a multigenre project.
writing, and finally how they emerge at the completion of their papers. If writing is a
journey, then multigenre writing can be the trip of a lifetime for fledgling student writers.
An initial discomfort is not unusual because the destination can seem as confusing as
reading a road map upside down. While you can still see the signposts and roadways, the
usual order of things has been disrupted. Romano (2009) noted that “although many of
my students find multigenre papers fun to write, many of them, also, at least initially, are
scared to death of them” (p. 35) The nature of this unique, unfamiliar territory is
foundational to what happens when students engage in a multigenre project. While they
are familiar with academic forms of writing such as the essay or research paper, the
multigenre paper is a new way of looking at a writing project. In essence, it turns upside
down their previous knowledge of how to express information as a writer; therefore, unlike traditional research writing, the multigenre paper can serve as a ventana through which powerful pictures emerge for the researcher that have the potential to influence the field and classroom practice. These pictures reveal how students see themselves as writers, the level to which they have confidence and motivation for writing tasks and much more.

The multigenre classroom. During an eight week period, the 13 participants and 4 non-participants engaged in a multigenre project. Due to the variety of qualitative data gathered during this study, all class periods involved at least one form of data collection. Digital voice recordings were made on 11 days. The digital voice recorders were especially handy during peer conferences because the students could operate them. Video-taping was used on 14 days, 4 of the days were taped student presentations. If audio or video-taping was not done on a particular day, field notes were written immediately following the end of the class period with the exception of two days when I was absent and six days when I talked most of the period (sometimes on issues unrelated to multigenre) or students wrote during the entire class period. This, combined with the paper forms of data (drafts of writing, multigenre papers, questionnaires, etc.), provided a wide open view of what takes place in a multigenre classroom.

In the previous seven years that I taught the multigenre project, we started in mid-November, the papers were due just before Christmas vacation and the presentations were prepared and presented in January leading up to the semester break. This timetable enabled me to use the project as an exam grade. For this study, however, the class traded semesters with the speech course in order to accommodate my research schedule. Speech
and creative writing are elective courses at the school; most students choose to take both although this year we lost four students at the semester break who dropped out after speech. Whether the multigenre project precedes the semester break or the end of the school year, it is well-placed to engage students at times when academic enthusiasm can be at its lowest.

Prior to the start of this project, the course curriculum for creative writing involved students completing one paper each week in various styles of writing: comparison, business letter, product review, etc. Therefore, our classroom procedures were firmly established before the multigenre project began. Typically, at the beginning of the week a writing task would be introduced, topics were discussed and selected, and students spent 1-2 days writing a 1-3 page paper. Writing was always started in the classroom and finished at home; all students were expected to have a flash drive in order to save their work from place to place. The school has a 2:1 ratio of students to computers, so a cart of laptops was always available for our use. Since these were older high school students well acclimated to the school’s technology, they could get set up with a laptop quickly and get work done even on days when they were only given 20 minutes to write. (Class periods were 42 minutes long.) Another advantage of doing the multigenre project at the end of the semester or year was the fact that these classroom routines were firmly established.

**Introduction to multigenre writing.** The students knew what was coming (they had a well-used road map for how to complete a writing assignment), but they didn’t know (the multigenre project was a new undertaking). Since the beginning of the semester, I had been referring to the final project – a multigenre paper, but they did not
have any prior knowledge concerning this type of writing. At this time, there are no other teachers in our school using multigenre writing with the exception of the eighth grade English teacher who requires a short research paper that includes writing in several different genres. Intentional mystery surrounds the launch of the multigenre project; this is one of the reasons that it generates struggle and creates a context for conversations about writing. The value of mystery was a concept I did not understand prior to attending graduate school. I had always been the type of teacher who tried to tell the students everything about a project on the day it was introduced. I have learned the significance of withholding information so that students have a more open-ended experience and are more likely to enter the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). Understanding of multigenre writing evolves over time during the process of writing; this requires the students to evaluate their work every day, creating and recreating personal goals for the next step in their project.

The project was launched on April 6, 2011. I generated interest (and perhaps some nervousness) leading a brainstorming session using the Smartboard to list all the possible genres of writing. Com gave the first response. He immediately shouted, “Dialogue,” which was an interesting place to begin since unbeknownst to him it would be a required element of their papers. Anything a student said, I wrote on the board, so after a few minutes they began to realize they could “think outside the box” and offered unusual ideas like “library card” and “license plate.” Piper suggested that the definition of genre needed to be clarified to distinguish between actual genres of writing and things that just contain writing, but I was more interested in students seeing how many things in their world are communicated through writing (Field notes, April 6, 2011).
I like to foster organizational skills in students, so I gave them an assignment calendar for April on the first day even though they would not understand the contents at that point thus keeping the mystery intact (see Appendix F). The calendar was merely a guide (an upside down road map). In a school setting flexibility is a daily requirement because unforeseen events can occasionally eliminate or shorten a class period although we actually experienced fewer interrupted class periods by having creative writing in the spring. (When it is held in the fall semester, pep rallies interrupt last hour classes.) The calendar set a fairly aggressive pace, and eventually we would need to slow down and use some days for catching up on completion of genres.

**Topic decision-making.** The next day a copy of the genre list (see Appendix H) was distributed to every student along with another list from a previous year that contained even more possibilities. I distributed a sample multigenre paper photocopied from Romano’s (2000) book; I like to use the one entitled “Cosmetic Clips” which he published in Chapter 2 (p. 7-14) because it has interesting elements and makes a subtle but significant point. I called on to take turns reading a genre from the paper, and at the conclusion I pointed out how a reoccurring element “Nymens Training Tips” was used by the writer to tie the paper together. Reading an example paper provides an introduction to the technique of telling a story from multiple perspectives with a variety of genres. For homework, students were asked to label each piece on the sample paper as to the genre they thought it was. This enables them to see how narrative essay is combined with dialogue and poetry, and it requires them to consider how genre choice affects writing.
The following day I was curious about what they were initially thinking concerning the project, so I began class by asking everyone to write down any questions they already had about multigenre writing. These papers were filed in their folders to serve as data but not discussed because that could have potentially dented the impact of the unknown. I gave a brief presentation on what a rationale paper is, and we went over their labeling on the sample paper read the previous day. I pointed out the author’s possible rationale for each genre used in order to demonstrate how rationale is necessary to make the pieces fit together. Next, I produced a stack of multigenre papers from previous years and pointed out the merits of some – great writing, artwork, etc. With a few minutes remaining in the class period, I was ready to initiate topic selection. I explained that their topic could be anything that was interesting or important to them. I exhorted that they would need to be thinking about their subject “all the time” throughout the project. In order to help them focus on their interests, I handed out questionnaires to complete (see Appendix H). Students had the weekend to think about a topic, and this was not an uncommon occurrence because I frequently assigned topic decision-making as homework. On the following Monday, class began with a look at a few more of the papers I had from previous students in order to allow them to see the wide variety of topics that had been explored. Next, I asked them to take out their completed list of interests and circle the one that was most appealing to them at the moment. This step-by-step procedure allowed students to be autonomous in their topic selection without making the task so unstructured that they had no idea what to do.

**Minilessons.** The first minilesson then served to formally introduce the project and topic selection process. Atwell (1998) explains that one function of minilessons can
be the teacher’s sharing of authority; in this case it was what I know about multigenre writing that students do not. While minilessons can be interactive, at the beginning students need to listen, learn, and ask questions for clarification. I used minilessons to give the requirements of particular aspects of the paper and offer suggestions for writing genres that I hoped students would consider. A minilesson was typically accompanied by a Power Point presentation; it usually lasted 15-20 minutes and contained information pertaining to the next step in the process. The lessons were called “mini” because the focus of the project was not intended to be teacher-generated knowledge; once they received brief instructions students could return to working and talking since the structure of the project parallels that of a writing workshop.

During the eight week unit, minilessons were taught on topic selection, writing a rationale paper, dialogue, the prologue, research, poetry, how genre choice affects voice, creating a reoccurring element, the epilogue, assembling the final paper and preparing a presentation. While these minilessons were readymade from previous years of doing the project, a new minilesson could be launched anytime it became apparent that students were struggling with ideas or the fundamentals of grammar. For example, during this project I added a lesson I called, “Breathing new life and inspiration into your multigenre paper,” when I thought many students were losing momentum with their writing. I used the lesson to offer some encouragement and present new genre ideas. In the past, I have also compiled a list of common mistakes I find while grading papers and then given a minilesson on how to correct and avoid them. Even a multigenre project requires the occasional review of the fundamentals of grammar and writing.
**Rationale paper.** The following day’s minilesson contained information on how to write a rationale paper. (At this point, students had not yet been officially asked to name a topic.) The rationale paper is a list of genres of the student’s choice that they want to use in their paper along with 2-3 sentences explaining how each will fit the topic and be used to convey information. I require six genres of choice in addition to several other genres which are required elements. At the conclusion of the lesson, students were asked to write their topic idea on notebook paper and brainstorm a list of possible genres; they were encouraged to refer to the genre handouts for ideas. This procedure links the topic idea to the requirement for multiple genres, and it can solidify whether or not the students have workable ideas. Next, the class was instructed to form small groups and share their topic and genre ideas. Students began sharing immediately because we had used peer groups for generating ideas on writing assignments previous to the multigenre paper.

At this point, Erin underwent intense questioning by Brooke and a non-participant who doubted that music could be legitimately used as a genre. Students used laptops for the remainder of the period in order to begin the formal copy of their rationale paper which was collected the following day. I did not choose to give a homework grade on this assignment because I wanted students to feel like it was a fluid document, and they could make changes to their genre choices right up to the end of the project. During the remainder of the week I regularly reminded students that they could change their topic for any reason if they felt that their first idea was not moving forward. The freedom to change topics often eliminates the possibility that someone will be stuck in a dead end situation and forced to produce work about something that is not really igniting their
passion. Ultimately, Erin and Tad both switched to something completely different from their original idea.

**Required genres.** The first year that I incorporated a multigenre project into the creative writing class, my only resources were a paper I had just written and Romano’s (2004) book, *Blending Genre, Altering Style*. Having no experience, I did whatever was recommended in the book. Romano (2004) stresses the importance of the first genre because it serves to initiate the students into the world of multigenre writing. “Ask students to create an opening piece that is engaging, informative, and reader-friendly,” he recommends (Romano, 2004, p. 40). To this end, Romano (2004) supplies a list of ideas that revolve around writing a character sketch. In my experience, not every topic lends itself to a character sketch, so in more recent years I have directed students to begin with one of our own required genres – dialogue.

A minilesson on dialogue primarily served to remind students of the punctuation procedures one must follow in writing conversation. I also suggested that the script or interview format is easier to manage because it eliminates the need for quotation marks, and most students ended up following this suggestion. Dialogue gets things rolling. It’s easy for teenagers to imagine and write a conversation. During this time, students who do want to have a main character in their paper usually settle on a name for the person. Others just made up two fictitious characters for a conversation about something related to their topic. Dialogue is easy to write and usually brief, so it was collected the following day for a homework grade. However, just because the dialogue was written first does not mean that it must be the first genre in the final paper. In fact, it is usually
after the dialogue is finished that students begin to really understand the enormity of writing many separate pieces that must ultimately be tied together.

Two other genres were required and written in the third and fourth weeks of the project: poetry and research. The poetry experience will be explained in greater detail later in this chapter; it too was launched with a minilesson on possible styles (see Appendix I). I prefer an informal partnership with research during the multigenre project. Unlike traditional research papers and even some multigenre teachers, I do not expect students to spend the first two weeks locating and reading resources. In my opinion, this would not set a positive tone for the project, and it would not distinguish it from previous research-writing experiences. Instead, we relied mostly on the internet for information; students used search engines almost every day to help them with the genre they were currently writing. This was a more subtle approach to research; since it was driven by the topic and project underway, it did not seem laborious or meaningless to the students.

I did want every paper, no matter what the topic, to contain some expository writing, so I assigned two research summaries during the fourth week of the project (see Appendix J). Even students who were writing a fictional story were asked to find two sources related to their topic and summarize the information. For example, one year a student wrote about his lawn care business, and he did a research piece on John Deere lawn tractors. In the end, I made an exception this time and did not require Kira to do research genres. We discussed it several times throughout the project, and neither of us came up with a way to do it without interrupting his storyline. Research summaries were a struggle for some students. They seemed to have a difficult time understanding the
purpose for switching to expository writing after having written several genres of choice by this point. I think many of them missed the important link between using what you know and combining it with what you do not know: a hallmark of multigenre writing is the possibility of combining fiction with nonfiction.

**Prologue and epilogue.** A prologue and epilogue were the required bookends for each paper (see Appendix K). These were important pieces because they served several purposes. The prologue set the stage: it introduced the topic, explained why it was important to the writer and why it was relevant to the readers. Not only did the epilogue draw the paper to a close, it answered several questions for me as the teacher and researcher. What did you learn about your topic? What did you learn about yourself as a writer? What did you learn about multigenre writing? These are questions I ask every year, not just when collecting data. The prologue and epilogue were pieces supplied that a great deal of information about what was in the writer’s head; they were often the most personal parts of the paper offering a view of what the students thought of themselves as writers.

**Genres of choice.** Class settled into a familiar routine. Students arrived, took a laptop to their table, listened to my opening remarks or a minilesson, and then they wrote. What they worked on each day was determined by the calendar. I encouraged students to arrive with a completed genre to hand in for a homework grade, but that did not always happen. Sometimes work was finished during class on the due date. This mode of procrastination eventually caught up to a few students who fell behind and were given zeroes on our web-based grade book until work was turned in. While it is ideal to allow students to write at their own pace, left alone some will not be producing work at a steady
pace. A genre was submitted for a homework grade approximately every other day. Again, the open-endedness of the project had to be tailored to the school’s demand for the regular collection of grades. This appeased the administration’s desire for grades, helped the students use mini deadlines to disperse their workload, and gave me opportunities to edit their work. Once a corrected genre was returned to them, they were instructed to make changes and retain a revised version on their flash drive for when they would put everything together into one paper. Feedback was an important dimension of the project, and students’ reactions to suggestions from me will be examined later.

While conversation about writing is a key component of the project, the casual, chatty nature of the classroom atmosphere was not ideal for all writers. Students like Danielle, Olivia and Laura kept to themselves and worked on a piece every day, others such as Com, Kurt and Stewie (who were good friends) digressed into unrelated conversations and laughter. Juliet and Kira were two writers who preferred to use class time to ask questions of others and puzzle over their next piece. They did the bulk of their actual writing away from school. Naturally, I circulated around the room during these writing sessions to monitor conversation and progress as well as answer questions. Occasionally, most of a class period would be consumed by instruction or writing conferences.

**Writing conferences.** One of the premiere features of the multigenre project is interaction. Not only did student talk among themselves while writing in class, but informal and formal conferences were held. Students met in peer groups three different times, with me formally once and informally several times, and with Dr. Denyer once. On two occasions peer conferences involved students grouping together with others of
their choice, usually those sitting nearby. The first time they discussed their topic and genre ideas; the second time they discussed their progress – what they had written and planned to write next. The final peer conferences involved groups I assigned by putting an engaged writer with someone who was reluctant and one or two who fell in the middle of the performance continuum. These discussions revolved around questions I had given each group because I wanted them to talk about any struggles they were having (see Appendix L).

I met with each student formally during the second week to discuss their topic and go over their rationale paper. Informally, I walked around the room while they wrote and made various types of comments – reading over a shoulder and commenting on content or grammar, addressing those who were missing work and answering questions. If someone asked a question that might benefit others, I answered in the form of a louder, whole class comment. If someone wrote something that was especially compelling, I often picked it up and handed it to another student to read too. This enabled students to get some immediate recognition for their work and involved others in a writing response.

On the Monday and Tuesday of the week the paper was due, Dr. Denyer joined us (as she had the past three years) to be available for formal writing conferences. This had the added benefit of providing students with an opportunity to speak one-on-one with a college professor. Prior to her visit, I explained how important it is to be willing to talk to professors in college for guidance and help with assignments. Despite my efforts to keep things moving, Dr. Denyer only ended up having time to talk with 7 of the 13 participants – some meetings were longer than others. I allowed the students to speak with her on a voluntary basis; they had to practice good etiquette by introducing
themselves and getting a conversation going about their project. Dr. Denyer tended to ask questions that I had not asked which helped students gain new insights about writing. These meetings served as another means for the students to see themselves as writers. In most cases, students read a favorite genre aloud, talked about the purpose for their topic selection, and discussed what they needed to do in order to finish their paper.

**Challenges.** Working on the multigenre paper in the weeks leading up to the end of the school year created the added challenge of keeping seniors engaged in school work with a month remaining until graduation. At times, even Tad, one of two valedictorians in the class, struggled to be motivated. They were easily distracted some days. This seemed to plague the seniors most often, but even the juniors had times of being off task. When Erin discovered that you could get an electrical poke from the outlet behind the laptop cart, other students got up to rub their shoes across the same rug and shock themselves. Several students had fallen behind in their writing and were turning in short, poorly written genres in an effort to look like they were working. In an attempt to combat this slump, I presented the new mini lesson entitled, “Breathing new life and inspiration into your multigenre paper.”

I gave my best persuasive speech replete with statements of dire warning such as, “You either fizzle and die on the vine, or you recognize and resist the tendency to putter out” (Transcript, May 3, 2011). Using Putz’s (2006) book as a reference, I presented four new genre ideas: a double-voiced piece, a descriptive list, a labyrinthine sentence and a crot. Handouts of examples were made available, and while several students picked one up, only Olivia used one to create a new, previously unplanned genre for her paper – the labyrinthine sentence. I also reminded students about some unused genres such as the
recipe, memo, press release and manifesto and encouraged them that deviating from their original list was not only allowed but also welcomed.

Stewie was especially prone to turning in weak work due to writing at the last minute to meet a grading deadline. This was partly due to pressure at home from his mother who knew that he was missing work. His prologue did not follow the directions given, and an instruction guide for Nike ID (a web page for custom designing your own shoes) was disorganized and poorly written. I corrected his work but did not grade it, choosing instead to return the papers with a typed note from me urging him to produce work more reflective of his capabilities. In the end, he rewrote the prologue and abandoned the other piece in favor of something he spent more time writing.

While I tended to attribute a lull in motivation to the end of the academic year, it is only natural for a long term project to have spurts of productivity and letups. Sometimes students were just running short on inspiration and ideas. A few days later, Stewie admitted this to his peer group.

Stewie: I’m struggling with new ideas, what to do. I have descriptions of different shoes; I don’t know how to tie it all together.”

Brooke: Have you done a business meeting? You could do a commercial script.

Kira: Yeah, or you could try billboards or something.

(Transcript, May 9, 2011)

The significance of this conversation was Stewie’s willingness to articulate to others that he was struggling for ideas as a writer, because Lensmire (1998) identified struggle as a component of activating voice. Conversations of this nature did not always translate into
advice that the recipient used. Stewie ended up writing another poem after this talk, but
the value of the group was in the recognition of struggle.

Reoccurring element. During the sixth week, I formally introduced the idea of
having a reoccurring element (genre) to provide cohesiveness and bind the multiple
genres together. Some students had already planned a shorter genre for this purpose such
as quotes, tips, journal entries, or Tweets. These smaller pieces were not required
between every single genre, but I suggested writing 4-6 of them with an eye for where
they would best fit the overall paper. The most effective reoccurring elements are usually
ones specifically written to fit the genre that is before and/or after. Olivia and Tad wrote
methodically with a constant mindset for how their pieces would fit together. Olivia’s
aspirations to produce movies as a future career gave her the ability to envision the entire
project and craft each piece to fit in a sequential order.

When I heard *The Hunger Games*, one of my most recent paperback obsessions,
was being transformed into a film, I couldn’t help but search the internet for any
details, good or bad, about pre-production. Realizing my reaction was similar not
only to internet users around the world, but to most movie production experiences, I found a formula that laid the groundwork for my multigenre paper [emphasis added] (Multigenre paper).

She began by visualizing a poem set in a movie theater; it centered on two girls eagerly
awaiting the premiere. Since she had an idea of how she wanted the paper to evolve,
many genres were actually written to link to a previous one. Olivia wrote most of her
paper in a chronological order carefully ending one piece and beginning the next like
parts of a story. Others puzzled over how to create a reoccurring element that fit their
genres together, and they sought understanding by again referring to multigenre papers
written by previous classes. In the final week before the paper was due, many students
worried about how it would all come together as one cohesive unit. “Cohesion” became a buzz word in conversations.

**Completing the multigenre project.** Much to the relief of everyone, I gave a one day extension, moving the final project due date from Thursday to Friday, May 20, 2011. A final minilesson encouraged the use of color, interesting fonts and artwork. This lesson included design tips such as using a dark color on light background. “No yellow ink on white paper, please.” I also emphasized that large amounts of text such as an essay or story must be in a Sans Serif font for readability; quotes or poetry could be featured in a decorative font. Brooke designed each page along the way with artwork that fit the genre, but most students added these final touches at the end when they merged their paper together into one document. Everyone had at least one artistic genre by the end – a poster, brochure, newspaper article, etc. Some students took the time to vary the font on every genre and add elements of color; others were content to use 1-2 fonts and make an attractive title page with a picture or clip art. I collected all of the multigenre papers on time, and over the weekend I graded them using a rubric I designed (see Appendix M). It was used as a test grade for the seniors and a semester exam grade for the juniors. Due to the small size of the class, I was able to return the grading rubrics to the students the following Monday as they prepared for their presentations. I retained the papers as a data source.

**Publishing the multigenre paper.** If students had merely handed in their project and headed out the door for summer vacation, the multigenre paper might have almost been like every other writing assignment – for an audience of one: the teacher. However, the remaining days of class were spent preparing and delivering a presentation
of their topic to the class. This is another way the multigenre project incorporates characteristics of a writing workshop. Requirements of the presentation included a minimum of 6 Power Point slides, reading aloud at least one genre, talking about their individual multigenre experience and their feelings about writing (see Appendix N). The presentations were a test grade for everyone, and I used another rubric for the evaluation process (see Appendix O). These presentations took four class periods – three days of senior presentations and one of juniors. Students genuinely enjoyed the opportunity to talk about their topic, share their favorite genre and relate their personal experience with multigenre writing. Their topics were important to them, so the presentation provided an opportunity to showcase their ideas. The presentations and the epilogues in the papers were the places where many students revealed their inner thoughts and feelings about their subject matter and their writing experience. As a teacher, I had the opportunity to see my students as writers and what they thought about themselves as writers.
Chapter Four
Data Analysis I: A Ventana on Three Case Studies

In this chapter, we will open the window on the multigenre classroom a little wider to take a closer look at what happens during a multigenre project. This analysis will begin with three cases studies which represent three levels of writers: Kurt, a senior and a reluctant writer, Erin, a junior and learning writer, and Kira, a senior and an expert writer. They are representative of the participants because they vary in age and gender and would be considered academically average. Erin and Kira are students who represent positive experiences while Kurt described his experience by saying, “For me the multigenre project was kind of difficult” (Audio tape, May 25, 2011). Their stories offer a window into the multigenre journey. Their experiences highlight the themes which emerged and the correlation to the research questions.

Kurt: “I found it [multigenre] a bit more challenging.”

Kurt could be considered a reluctant writer. As will be described later, he was hesitant to act on his ideas and had a tendency to procrastinate on the individual writing assignments. A single experience in Kurt’s life shaped a dream he has for the future and a topic for his multigenre paper. Kurt’s mother has a friend who owns a Harley Davidson motorcycle; he brought it to their house and allowed Kurt to take a ride on his own around the neighborhood. So profound was this single event that Kurt became an instant fan of all things Harley. He told the story in the prologue of his paper (see Figure 3).
I chose to do my multigenre paper around the topic of Harley Davidson motorcycles. I remember the first encounter I ever had riding one of those bikes. My mom’s friend brought his Harley Davidson Fat Boy Lo over to our house and let me take a few spins on it around the neighborhood. This was one of the few memories in my short life so far that I know I will never forget. The minute I turned the handle grip, the half-ton beast tore forward. The dual exhaust pipes in the back sounded like an automatic rifle shooting right behind me. The wind seemed to fly through my hair instantly turning me into a bike junkie. I have taken other bikes on rides, everything from dainty little Japanese Suzukis that go faster than any legal road permits, to the attempted copy Harleys that call themselves Honda, but none of them have done justice to the Fat Boy I tried. It’s truly an abstract concept to anybody who hasn’t had the feeling I got while riding that beauty of a bike.

Ironically, a severe burn to the inside of his right leg also sealed this memory in his mind. He failed to wear long pants on his test drive but did not even realize the extent of his injury until the ride ended because the burn had severely damaged his nerve endings. Kurt was a senior boy who had attended the school since his early elementary years, and at first his primary desire was to promote Harley as the superior brand of motorcycles. He did not struggle with his topic selection as Erin did in the next case study, but his passion and interest in his subject matter was just as strong. Although he would later make some negative comments about his multigenre experience, his voice was in evidence in all his writing especially the prologue where he shared his personal encounter with riding a Harley. When he describes the start of his Harley ride by saying, “The half ton beast tore-forward,” his vocabulary mirrors his strong feelings about the experience. The evidence of narrative (Romano, 2000) emanates from sentences such as: “The dual exhaust pipes in the back sounded like an automatic rifle shooting right behind
Kurt chose to write his required dialogue as a conversation between two bikers because he wanted to emphasize his opinion that Harleys are superior to Hondas. He had a topic and tone in mind but was a bit confused due to the newness of multigenre writing. When he asked me, “Does this have to be real dialogue or can it be fictional,” I assured him it could be either or both (Audio tape, April 14, 2011). His question led to my suggestion that he use realistic biker lingo, and he responded to the idea with enthusiasm. A short time later during the same class session, he recognized the need for assistance so he got up and went to where a girl (non-participant) was sitting who had lived in the South for a number of years. Later, he told classmates that he liked his dialogue because it was “edgy” and that he had sought help to add authenticity to his writing (Video tape, May 25, 2011). Phrases such as “whydya say” and “it’s a ‘ight” came about as a result of talking to another student. This example of gaining new knowledge from a More Knowledge Other (Vygotsky, 1978), shows how the multigenre project creates an opportunity for collaboration. Students are free to get up and talk to someone else about their work. This may take the form of asking for help as Kurt did or discussing a struggle as will be considered later when Kira talks to Tad about vocabulary.

The next genre Kurt completed was a poster advertising an event at a Harley dealership (see Figure 4).
The ad touts a concert “coupled with all you can eat hot dogs and beer,” and it included color, pictures and logos. Since the school where this research took place was socially conservative and religious, I was interested the Kurt’s classmates’ opinions of his poster especially the inclusion of beer-drinking in an anti-drinking institution. A lively dialogue ensued with many students offering opinions but everyone supportive of Kurt’s realistic work.

Miss M: What about Kurt’s use of beer?

Stewie: Well, there’s beer at all sporting events, even the MudHens.

Miss M: Does anyone think that this is inappropriate in a paper submitted for a grade at our high school? (Everyone shakes their heads “no.”)

Kurt: That’s how Harley people really are. They don’t care what anyone thinks.
In this case, a paper in progress became a tool for classroom conversation about a social issue. This is another aspect of how a multigenre project benefitted engagement in writing through talk about writing and provided real world experience. This is an example of the kind of analysis you should write about what to see in the data.

Near the end of his paper, Kurt wrote a short story based on his real life experience of attending a concert at a Harley dealership. The multigenre paper allowed him to explore his topic using many angles (Putz, 2006), and the detail and emotion of his narrative are indicative of his voice as a writer.

…After about an hour of waiting for the main band to take the stage, the time had finally come. The bartender called for last drinks while everybody squeezed toward the stage in hopes of securing their spot at front stage. I had luckily been fortunate to keep my spot in the front row smashed between a drunk person and a man with a tattooed face…Around 11:30 p.m., the first song started to play; it was so loud I could barely distinguish it. All I remember was that my heels had gone numb after the first song from the ground shaking so much…(Multigenre paper, May 20, 2011)

Phrases such as “Everybody squeezed toward the stage,” and “All I remember was that my heels had gone numb,” are descriptive word pictures that indicate to readers the strong emotion he felt about the experience. This is another indicator of activation of voice (Romano, 2000).

Although Kurt’s paper was one of the shorter ones in the class at 11 pages, he included some creative genres not used by others – a biopoem describing the Harley Fat Boy and a recipe for customizing a bike. He also wrote a 26-line poem with rhyming couplets about a father who wanted to buy his daughter a gift and chose to give her a Harley. The poem ended with what was clearly Kurt’s own desire: “This bike would be the perfect gift for any grad. What do you say, mom and dad?” (Multigenre paper, May
20, 2011). Kurt wrote both of his poems without saying much to anyone, but later he admitted that poetry writing was difficult because, “It’s hard to find a place to start” (Video tape, May 25, 2011). This seemed to echo Erin’s sentiment that poetry needed to be written under special circumstances.

An interesting change in focus occurred while Kurt worked on the various genres for his paper. His stated theme at the onset was promotion of Harley bikes and owners, but it evolved into addressing a social issue as well, the stereotyping of Harley owners. His thinking and focus appeared to change due to two influences – a group conversation with peers and a formal interview with Dr. Denyer. Three weeks into the project, while talking in the small group I had assigned, a non-participant in the research asked if his main goal was to break stereotypes when he wrote his dialogue. He replied, “No, I was just being funny” (Video tape, April 27, 2011). However, during the follow day’s class discussion about his poster and beer advertisement, he began to exhibit interest in dispelling stereotypical ideas about Harley owners. “That’s how Harley people really are. They don’t care what anyone thinks,” he told the class (Video tape, April 28, 2011). Then, as his project neared completion, he met with Dr. Denyer for a formal conference. This was part of their conversation:

Kurt: My main idea was to take a whole bunch of topics and write it from the point of view of a Harley owner. Some of them use poor grammar, but I want it so you can hear the voice, the roughness and grittiness of the person to capture some of the personality that goes along with the bike…

Dr. Denyer: So, I’m really taken by this notion that you wanted to capture the roughness and grittiness and personality of the bike…So there is a group, not that particular one, who ride Harleys that are doctors and presidents of companies. So if someone asks you about that how will you explain it?
Kurt: Well, I tried also in my paper to kind of get rid of the stereotype that all Harley owners are big, beer-drinking types.

Dr. Denyer: Good. That makes me really interested to read this. I think any time we can use our writing to breakdown a stereotype like that, that’s part of what makes our writing powerful…You’ve got an opportunity here.

(Audio tape, May 18, 2011)

As evidence of his change in focus, Kurt made the following comment during his presentation to the class.

They [Harley owners] don’t look like us. They don’t talk like us. They may not even drink the same things we drink, but if you knew some Harley owners even the big, scary guys are just teddy bears in disguise. They don’t really judge you which I find interesting. The people you would be most likely to judge are probably the exact people which would be the least likely to judge you which I found pretty cool (Video tape, May 25, 2011).

Kurt profited from interaction with others in ways he may not have been able to recognize or acknowledge. He received basic suggestions to enhance his writing, and he changed the focus of his paper due to the need he saw emerging from talk with others.

When another student asked him early in the project if his focus was to break stereotypes, he responded, “No, I was just trying to be funny” (Video tape, April 27, 2011). In his conversation with Dr. Denyer and the comments during his final presentation, he evidences his struggle to understand and articulate the social issue that has immerged during his writing. He contradicts Dr. Denyer’s comments because he states that Harley owners don’t look and talk like other people, even professionals. He gives evidence of the hard conceptual work he was doing – trying to work out what the stereotype actually is. At this point, he merely sees it as a need to dispel anyone’s negative ideas about Harley owners. He is on the real verge of using his writing to convey a significant message, but he lacks the ability to completely merge his topic with
the wider social issue.

In his presentation, Kurt described his difficulty with the multigenre format and his frustration that his paper did not tell one story as compared to those of some classmates. He also summed up his feelings about the project when he wrote his epilogue.

I feel that the multigenre paper has been a lot more difficult to form rather than the British literature research paper that we had to type. It has been quite the challenge trying to organize completely different types of papers and put them together in order to form a cohesive unit. I disliked the fact that we had to write so many different types of papers on the same subject whereas with a research paper it was the same genre; it felt like I was saying the same things over and over. I feel that the multigenre paper showed me how typing serious, straightforward papers is actually more beneficial to my learning experience rather than multigenre papers, although I did enjoy the experience (Multigenre paper, May 20, 2011).

Kurt’s experience and his honesty shed light on why the multigenre project is not an equally positive writing task for all students. Grierson (2002) noted from her own class’ experience, “Not all projects were commendable, nor were all student reactions positive” (p. 58). She treated these situations as challenges to find ways to better engage reluctant writers, and she also pointed out that many times growth occurred even in a negative experience. In Kurt’s case, his authentic genre choices, dedication to depicting the topic accurately and newfound concern for dispelling a possible stereotype are evidence of his growth as a writer even though he may have failed to see his own progress. A lack of self-efficacy (a belief in one’s ability to successfully complete a writing task), positive peer influence and motivation at the end of the academic year could all have played a role in Kurt’s assessment. Kurt’s friends in the class were Com and Stewie; all three of them seemed to have similar, somewhat mediocre experiences
with the multigenre project. At one point, Kurt, Com and Stewie all fell behind in completing the genre assignments for homework. There were class periods when the three of them produced no writing and spent the time talking and laughing together. If they had been younger, I might have felt punitive measures were needed to get them back on task, but since they were seniors, I felt they needed to be allowed to make their own choices as to when and how much to work. I did urge them on as much as possible, but the fact that I had to do so may be an indication of a lack of intrinsic motivation. Fortunately, all three guys turned their final papers in on time.

**Erin: “It definitely is fun.”**

In her presentation, Erin said, “If I was asked, essay or multigenre, I’d go with multigenre. It taught me how to be creative. It’s also encouraging. I struggle with writing, and when I do something like this I get good grades which are encouraging” (Video tape, May 27, 2011). These comments serve as evidence that Erin’s motivation and self-efficacy toward writing increased during the project. She indicates a preference for multigenre writing over traditional essays because it allowed her to be creative and it was encouraging. She points out that getting good grades was encouraging since she usually struggles with writing. Erin was an example of a learning and growing writer. She illustrated her preference for multigenre writing over the five paragraph essay by creating an anti-essay graphic for her final presentation (see Figure 5), and these feelings might have never surfaced were it not for the opportunity to present her work in class, which is another hallmark of the multigenre experience (Putz, 2006).
Erin’s multigenre project got off to a slow start; she described it by saying, “Getting started was the only thing that I disliked” (Video tape, May 27, 2011). This was her first year in our school. During parent-teacher conferences in the fall, her mother shared with me that she had been a victim of fetal alcohol syndrome and sometimes this caused her to struggle academically. Erin was out-going, had a positive attitude, and got along well with other students. She was outspoken which meant that she never hesitated to speak her mind or ask questions when she needed help. Initially, she chose Phantom of the Opera as her topic because music is a major interest in her life. She played the trumpet in the school band and sang in the school choir.

“I am frustrated with my topic.” Topic selection can be pivotal to engagement during the multigenre project. If a student comes to the project with a lower level of engagement but chooses a topic that sets afire their interest in writing, their level of engagement has the potential to increase, and once it increases, that growth can be carried into subsequent writing experiences. Erin was an example of growth in engagement and a resultant improvement in self-efficacy and motivation. Her case has already been chronicled at the beginning of the chapter, but it is revisited here to examine the link
between topic selection and engagement. Erin’s class folder was missing the interest questionnaire used in class to help students begin to determine a topic of interest; therefore, it is not known if her first topic, *Phantom of the Opera*, and/or her second topic, softball, were on her original list. Her love of music and *The Phantom* motivated her original choice, but she gave engagement a fighting chance when she wisely recognized a few days into the project that it would be complicated to write original work about a well-known and much performed musical. This decision was a process scaffolded by conversation with others.

Erin’s doubts about *Phantom* as a topic began when I asked students to form quick peer groups with those sitting nearby to discuss their topic ideas. She was questioned intensely by two other girls who were skeptical that music could be a genre of writing. She told her group that she wanted to use a music score from *Phantom* as a genre, and this was met with intense questioning by the two other girls who did not feel that a well-known musical could be rewritten as her original work. They ask questions such as, “How are you going to do that?” They made statements such as, “I don’t see how that is going to work.” Although she held her own while the two suggested that her idea was not legitimate, it planted a seed of doubt in her mind. She may have staunchly defended her ideas out of loyalty to *The Phantom* or because she saw herself as a writer who had a right to choose her own topic.

The following day I walked systematically from person-to-person holding a digital voice recorder and asking about topic ideas. Erin was still planning as if *Phantom* would be her topic, but her uncertainty as to a specific plan was evident.
Erin: I wanted to do just one page with the words and the music so the readers would know; they could read and be familiar and then be engrossed with my paper.

Miss M: Now, this tune, this music that you want to put in your paper…Is this something that you were going to write, or this is from a Broadway play?

Erin: It’d be from a Broadway play. Or…I can’t do that? Could I do lyrics?

Miss M: Well now, what would you add to that genre, before, after, a paragraph, by way of writing that might make it legitimate for your paper since of the people in your group felt pretty strongly that it wasn’t really a genre of writing?

Erin: Okay, so I could do that [include music]? And, you want me to do a paragraph of introduction about why.

(Audio tape, April 12, 2011)

At this point in the conversation, Erin begins to explain to me the history of *Phantom of the Opera*, and I take note that she has suddenly begun referring to a specific production.

Me: That brings me to my next concern for you that the topic of Broadway…is very big.

Erin: It might be too broad. (laughter)

(Audio tape, April 12, 2011)

We talked for another few seconds about choosing one aspect of Broadway, and at that point I moved on to the next student leaving Erin to continue puzzling over how to narrow her topic and write using music. Five more class periods transpired. Erin settled on *The Phantom* and put together a rationale paper to meet the assigned deadline.

Nevertheless, three days later in a formal interview with me, she announced, “I’m kinda frustrated with my topic. I kinda want to switch…everything’s already been done [on *Phantom]*” (Video tape, April 20, 2011). I asked her if there was anything else on her list of interests that she might want to use. In her usual forthright approach, she said, “No!”

This was a moment where knowing your students paid off for me as the teacher. Erin talked frequently about softball. She was playing on the team; it was a first time
experience for her and despite spending a significant amount of time on the bench, she loved the sport. When I suggested softball as an alternative topic, she was hesitant. “I don’t think Coach D. would like it” (Video tape, April 20, 2011). I assured her that this would not be the case and suggested that we brainstorm together a list of possible genres. She had no trouble coming up immediately with ideas: game schedule, position chart, short story, poem, interview with coach, checklist of equipment, status updates. Ultimately, she completed the list when I sent her to get ideas from another student in class who was also on the team. Following her topic change, Erin’s paper took off immediately; it made all the difference to her experience. She was writing about something she loved, and she thrived on the freedom to come up with her own ideas. One evidence of this was the amount of time she began putting into her work outside of class; another evidence was the creativity that characterized each genre she created.

Erin’s own words during her final presentation best illustrate the power of engagement that resulted from a change in topic.

So why did I choose this topic [softball]? So we did this assignment [the rationale paper], and I really wasn’t sure what topic to do. Then I decided on Phantom of the Opera because I’m a big, big fan. I know almost everything about it. I tried doing a couple of the genres, and that wasn’t working out. So then I talked to Miss Mungons and bada bing bada boom – inspiration! (Video tape, May 27, 2011)

Erin’s dramatic pronouncement accurately depicted her strong, positive feelings about the project and her newly developed confidence as a writer, and her experience hinged on a topic that represented her real life interest.

With softball as a topic, Erin’s next task was to write the required dialogue piece, and in doing so she exhibited the creativity that characterized her entire paper. Erin’s
voice as a writer was evidenced by the descriptiveness and humor in her writing – two recognized qualities of voice (Romano, 2000). First of all, she referred to her teammate as a “bench warming buddy.” She also used her dialogue to poke fun at the coach’s requirement to do pushups. Finally, she used satire to describe her prediction of the game’s outcome. “Mercy comin’ up.” At the end of the project, her dialogue piece (see Figure 6) and a poem would be the favorite genres she read aloud to the class. Another evidence of Erin’s growing self-efficacy during the project was her eventual willingness to read the dialogue to her coach who told her it was hilarious – a great compliment and confidence-booster since Erin had initially worried that the coach might not approve of her topic.
Erin’s voice comes alive as she describes the cold, the possibility of snacks to keep them warm, and her hopeless outlook on the game itself. It also points out how Erin felt intimidated by the coach who was taking the game more seriously. She responds with, “Oh, sorry,” and “I’ll try harder,” when the coach rebukes her dire prediction of a “Mercy”. Interestingly, once the coach knew that Erin was writing her paper on softball,
she made positive comments to her about her effort and attitude as a team member. Erin may never have known that the coach appreciated her if she had not had the multigenre paper as an avenue for opening up dialogue between herself and someone she considered to be stern and somewhat unapproachable.

When it came time to write poetry, Erin was also quite vocal about her experience much to the amusement of us all. She felt that the timing of her poetry writing was significant to the outcome. “I wrote my poem at 12:30 in the night [meaning 12:30 a.m.]” (Transcript, May 17, 2011). She had decided right after settling on her topic that she wanted to write a “pain poem” which would reflect a close encounter with the softball which she had experienced during a recent practice. This experience ultimately led to her writing a two-voiced poem that alternated stanzas between her voice and the voice of pain. “I like the poem. I was sitting by my bookshelves, so I was thinking about Shakespeare and how he always used dialogue” (Audio tape, May 17, 2011). The quality of her work reflected prior knowledge and experience with reading and writing poetry in English class, and this connection will be addressed later in the next chapter of research analysis. The creative aspect of the multigenre paper not only allowed Erin to flourish as a writer by encouraging her creativity and freedom of expression, but it also gave her an opportunity to learn new computer skills. On her own at home, she spent hours designing a colorful rendition of the softball field using a paint software program, adding text boxes to make it a positions’ chart that looked just like the one her coach used (see Figure 7).
This was an example of how multigenre writing can broaden the range of acceptable writing styles (Putz, 2006). When it came to describing her own multigenre experience during her presentation to the class, Erin was one of the most detailed and articulate students. Her project folder contained a sheet of notebook paper covered front and back with detailed notes about the comments she planned to make. This was not part of the assignment but rather something she created to help her sort out her feelings about the experience (see Figure 8).
The numerous scribbles (and two ink colors) on the paper suggests that she struggled and played with words, revising her thoughts more than once before sharing them with the class. Ultimately, this lead to the themes she presented on her Power Point slides. After talking about her topic and reading her two genres, she discussed her answers to three questions. Why did I choose this topic? What did I learn about softball? What did I learn about writing? These comments were an unsolicited part of her final presentation.
She, more than any other participant, articulated without prompting, what her feelings were about the multigenre project. In response to her third question, she told the class:

“Fun, fun, fun, fun. Oh yes, it definitely is fun. I never really enjoyed writing [before], but with this I got to be creative. My writing developed over time, and I actually became a more settled writer.” In self-evaluation, Erin also declared, “I really developed a lot as a writer” (Video tape, May 27, 2011).

These feelings were supported by specific statements she made elsewhere in her presentation concerning her writing experiences. She referred to what she learned about being a writer while doing the multigenre project, and she compared it with past writing experiences.

“When you’re stuck on things, ask questions. I was actually stuck on a couple things including my reoccurring element – what to do and how to do it. I asked questions, and bada bing, bada boom, I got it.”

“I struggle with writing, and when I do something like this, I’m actually getting good grades on my writing. That’s very encouraging.”

“My paper became a big success. I could take what I learned about softball and just put it on my paper. I interpreted softball with my own ideas.” (Video tape, May 27, 2011)

It is also significant to note that she qualified her paper as “a big success” and explained that the success was the result of taking something she had prior knowledge of (softball) and interpreting the information using her own ideas.

Obviously, Erin’s observations and advice warmed the heart of her teacher/researcher, but it also supplied evidence of her increased self-efficacy and motivation as a result of multigenre writing. She referred to her paper as a success, and her confidence motivated her to take the initiative to create a presentation slide with the topic: “Advice for future multigenre writers.” This was not a requirement of the
presentation, and Erin was the only person who included this type of information. Her recommendations were:

1. Pick a topic that interests you.
2. Enjoy writing about it.
3. Think about your topic daily.
4. Go all out.
5. Ask questions.

(Video tape, May 27, 2011)

This list supplies evidence that Erin’s self-efficacy and motivation toward writing increased. She makes the connection between writing and enjoyment (#2), feels confident enough to recommend “going all out” with writing, and she has come to recognize that “being yourself” is important to writing. This list suggests the possibility of self-efficacy toward future writing assignments because she developed a series of processes that she could apply to assure success. The multigenre project gave Erin these tools for future use.

**Kira: “I gained a lot of personal insight as to my own ability.”**

Kira, also a senior, was a highly motivated expert writer, but he lacked personal self-confidence. On the third day of class, he lingered after the bell to dismiss class, and he was a combination of obvious excitement and apprehension. At this point in the project sequence most class time had been devoted to laying a foundation for multigenre writing; no one had been prompted to name a topic. Although I am used to Kira’s somewhat nervous demeanor, a result of his Asperger’s Syndrome, he was especially anxious as he eagerly informed me that he had an idea for a topic. He asked if he could write his multigenre paper as a story similar in style to the work of H.P. Lovecraft. I was aware that a few months earlier he and another boy in the tenth grade had taken an
interest in Lovecraft, downloading his short stories from the internet, reading and talking about them. I was aware of their interest, but horror is not even on my radar screen when it comes to genres of choice for reading.

In a moment of actual wisdom and self-control, I resisted the urge to make an immediate negative response. Instead I asked how he could make such a story into a multigenre paper. (Secretly, I was sure this will be the death of his idea because he knew so little about multigenre writing at this point.) Kira suggested a couple ideas for genres, a dialogue and a prelude to be used as a flashback, and this demonstrated he had put much thought into the possibility. I could not help but give him my approval at that point, and as he left the room he literally pumped his fist in the air as a sign of victory. Seeing his unbridled enthusiasm immediately killed any doubts I had as to the validity of his topic (Field notes, April 8, 2011). It also taught me a lesson in self-restraint. If I had jumped into the conversation and expressed my immediate doubts about the potential of his topic, the entire outcome of Kira’s paper and multigenre experience might have been different. Later he would described his topic selection in his formal conference with Dr. Denyer.

I happened to come across a video game that was inspired by him [Lovecraft]. I thought it was one of the most horrifying things in my life. It was very atmospheric. I thought, ‘This is really cool.’ When we were coming up with topics, I thought, ‘I am so doing this right now. I am so doing this because I am crazy about his stuff.’ I have this character, Irvine Wilson, set in the early 1900’s. Irvine is a surveyor. He’s called out to Finland on an assignment, and while he’s out there he gets caught in an ice storm. He comes across a dilapidated castle…

(Audio tape, May 26, 2011)

Kira, at age 18, was a gentle giant; he towered above his peers and teachers, but he had a kind heart and positive outlook on life. He was diagnosed with ADHD as a
kindergarten student and immediately put on Ritalin; eventually this assessment was changed to Asperger’s Syndrome. (His father put this on his medical form each year, but the school had no information in his records as to this diagnosis.) In middle school, he struggled socially and rarely looked adults in the eye when speaking to them. But Kira developed a circle of loyal friends in high school, and as his self-confidence grew so did his social skills. Teachers still had to extend an extra measure of patience; he carried a huge notebook stuffed with papers, was disorganized, frequently misplaced work and was often late with assignments. (Note: These observations are based on the fact that I have known him as a student since middle school.) By the time he reached his senior year, the frequency of these negative tendencies had diminished significantly; however, Kira was still his own worst enemy. Once he got behind on an assignment, it tended to signal a downward spiral thus necessitating frequent prompting from the teacher for his work.

The multigenre paper may very well have been one of his single, most noteworthy successes in high school. About one week into our project, I offered this teasing observation to Kira: “You might as well skip the multigenre paper and just start writing your book” (Audio tape, April 12, 2011). His writing had a depth that I never see in high school work. From the beginning he envisioned a complete plot and story sequence. His writing was rich in description to the point that it gripped the reader’s attention. He appeared to be functioning mentally as a writer in a manner superior to most of his classmates. It seemed like a waste to limit his knack for writing in the unique style of classic horror to a mere paper. For Kira, the multigenre paper was not just one more assignment to churn out in order to get a diploma. He exhibited an unusual tenacity to master the art of writing in a specific style. He carried around computer print outs of
Lovecraft stories, circled vocabulary words and looked up the definitions. He analyzed the style and structure of Lovecraft’s work, and in doing so, he exhibited the ideal sequence of events for a writing experience even though he was not always working in the same order as others.

While the rest of the class sat at laptops typing a rationale paper, Kira was planning his first genre. “I want to introduce the character of my story through a psychological analysis,” he informed me (Audio tape, April, 12, 2011). Later during the same class period, he asked, “So, you talked about a reoccurring element. What exactly can this element be?” I explained the reoccurring element as short pieces which keep the flow of the paper going. Ultimately, Kira did not use it in the classic sense; instead, he did incorporate three journal entries between other elements in the first half of his paper/story. In a way his multigenre paper ultimately became several narrative genres within the overarching genre of horror.

One day I was circling the room during a work session and engaged him in conversation about plans for his dialogue. Typical to the way he organized himself as a writer, he had a well thought out plan. “I have names, personalities and the basic idea of what they are going to say. I was just looking up some authentic 19th century vocabulary” (Audio tape, April 14, 2011). At times Kira was constrained by the genres I was requiring of all students because he was writing in a story format. Occasionally, I compromised when it seemed like it would be too much of a stretch for the story he was telling. This became obvious to me after reading a few of his first pieces. Although we discussed the inclusion of a research piece on the biography of Lovecraft, in the end I excused him from the requirement to write research summaries. It would have
interrupted his story line, and it seemed like a moot point since he did more actual research than any other student. This was another way that Kira taught me as a teacher. His immensely evident commitment to the work of writing and his success as a writer were accomplishing my goals for the project; he did not need to be bound by every requirement I had originally set forth.

Another aspect of Kira’s writing experience was his habit of frequently asking questions at each juncture of his work. Often these questions were a reflection of his forward thinking. While others were starting a genre of choice, he was thinking about another required element – poetry. “Would it be acceptable for me to incorporate a quote [from Lovecraft] in my poem?” he asked (Video tape, April 18, 2011). Not everyone felt a need to get confirmation from me before pursuing their next piece, but questioning provided opportunities to discuss the writing process and exchange ideas – a characteristic of writing workshop pedagogy (Atwell, 1998). This was actually a way that Kira developed self-efficacy without even knowing it – by benefitting from the social persuasions of others (Pajares & Valiante, 2006).

Without prompting, Kira also sought affirmation from his friend Tad. He went to Tad’s table and tossed down a stack of Lovecraft’s stories. “I’m really trying to absorb the writing style at this point. He’s [Lovecraft] got a complex mastery of the English language” (Video tape, April 18, 2011). It appeared that Kira was applying his knowledge of how to analyze literature from his AP English class. He had circled vocabulary words, both those used repetitively and those that were higher order words, and he underlined the reoccurring themes. He determined that he needed to study the vocabulary of H.P. Lovecraft in order to replicate both the time period and style of the
author. He systematically gleaned a list of words from Lovecraft’s work and looked each one up using an online dictionary. After grading his dialogue, I admitted to not knowing the meaning of one word he used, and when I mentioned it, he immediately recited the definition much to the amazement of another student standing nearby.

With his typical intensity, Kira admitted in a small group discussion that he was worried about the meter of his poem. Meter was not a requirement but something that he had taken on voluntarily. Most of the students were content to just write poetry that had a rhyme scheme. As the meeting began, he blurted out this statement.

Kira: On the subject of poetry, I hate meter a lot. It’s stupid.

Piper: That shows you are thinking about it too much. I think if you just feel it out and write it without thinking about how you’re metering it, it works better.

Kira: Ummm.

(Audio tape, April 27, 2011)
His conversation demonstrated that he was not deterred in his struggle even when others suggested he was worrying over the minute details too much. He claimed to “hate meter,” yet he labored over his poetry to use it correctly. His work ultimately reflected voice and an advanced level of writing.

Swan Song
By Kira

The sweet, solemn, and comforting noose
Appears now at last to set me loose
From dark and deepest hell-born fears
Who now lay waste to all held dear

Thwarting my quest of comprehension
Come twisted fiends of foul conception
That haunt my every waking sight
And be not still in darkest night
"Ignorant was I for but a short time
My hardship ends at the bell’s final chime"

(Multigenre paper submitted May 20, 2011)

On the surveys, Kira’s response to “I am motivated to write when others around me are working,” changed from disagree to agree. He seemed to thrive on the interaction with others about his writing even when they did not always offer significant feedback as was the case when he talked with Tad about vocabulary. In a small group discussion, he explained his most significant struggle during the project was the result of his desire to include an admission’s form for an asylum.

Kira: I’m doing a story inspired by Lovecraft’s works.

Stewie: What are you trying to prove with this?

Kira: The big thing that I’m worried about… I wanted to do an admission’s form for an asylum, but I’m having a hard time coming up with how to make it.

Stewie: Make it look as handwritten as possible.

(Video tape, May 10, 2011)

This had been one of his first ideas for a unique genre that would shed light on his character’s past. After many days of finding no helpful information on the internet, he remembered that his mother worked in the medical field and asked for her input. (Kira has lived with his father most of his life and has limited contact with this mother.) She was able to supply him with terminology and an appropriate sequence of questions which resulted in an authentic-looking application. In this situation, multigenre writing created an authentic opportunity for Kira to seek help from a More Knowledgeable Other (Vygotsky, 1978) to obtain information that he needed to complete his writing.

When he had a formal writing conference with Dr. Denyer, Kira defended his
topic to the extent that he read aloud a quote from Stephen King praising Lovecraft’s work in order to help her understand his passion. When his paper was finished, Kira had written an amazing story with sentence structure and vocabulary that outshined the majority of his peers in its depth, and he educated us all on the genre of horror as written by H.P. Lovecraft. He wrote his story as a series of recollections told in the first person by his protagonist, Irvine. The following piece entitled, “Recollection: Prelude,” is the genre he used to create interest and a sense of mystery at the beginning of his paper.

…Taking much heed to conserve my meager supplies, I carefully removed a match from my satchel and lit it, the moist air necessitating several repeated attempts before the flame was struck. As the scant traces of light emanating from the match illuminated the inky darkness that enveloped the castle’s interior, I beheld a sight unlike any that I had ever seen before. From every imaginable orifice it oozed, slithering and sliding and dripping along the walls and ceiling; Slime of a most sickly, putrid green assaulted my every sense with its abominable presence…

(Multigenre paper, May 20, 2011)

Kira chose to read this piece in its entirety when he presented his paper to the class, and it was followed by a spontaneous round of applause after which he sheepishly acknowledged that he “went crazy with the vocabulary” (Video tape, May 26, 2011). Is there a writing teacher anywhere who would not get chills if a student announced such a thing? Hopefully, his admission will result in “the social persuasion of others” in their future writing (Pajares & Valiante, 2006, p. 160) by planting the idea that realistic vocabulary enhances one’s writing. At the conclusion of his presentation, he confirmed his own increase in motivation and especially self-efficacy toward writing.

I gained a huge amount of self-confidence… Some of you know I’m really an unconfident person. I gained a lot of knowledge and experience on the process of writing a story, connecting the bits together and completing it. I gained a lot of personal insight as to my own ability to write and my personal love of writing (Video tape, May 27, 2011).
“It was personally fulfilling to make my own story.” Were it not for the power of choice, Kira would have graduated from high school never having had the opportunity to write his amazing story. For the high school basketball coach, a player good enough to advance to a college team or even the pros may come along once, if at all, in a career. For the writing teacher, a student like Kira may only come along once in a career. On several occasions I told him that his paper could be a book. I could never really gauge if he just didn’t believe me or was embarrassed by the level of my flattery. Kira had a gift. It was the gift of an incredible story, and choice is what made it fun for him. Choice was the key to unlocking the door of a story waiting to be told. According to Kira, “It was refreshing to be able to branch out and do whatever I wanted. It was personally fulfilling for me to make my own story and develop it. It was great for me. It was tons of fun” (Video tape, May 26, 2011).

The experiences of Kurt, Erin and Kira produce evidence as to the individual impact that a multigenre project can make on a student’s writing experience. They experienced challenge, deep fun and growth as writers. They opened a window into the levels of writers within a classroom and how each responded to a new, non-traditional form of writing. In the next chapter we will see how these characteristics, combined with additional data from other students’ projects, will further substantiate the power of multigenre writing to activate voice and increase self-efficacy and motivation.
Chapter Six

Data Analysis II: A Ventana into the Power of Multigenre Writing

Having highlighted the experiences of three participants in the preceding pages, this chapter will identify some of the big themes which emerged from the data. We will look through the same window but with an eye for the themes of vision, variety, verse, voice, verge and victory. Vision refers to how I saw my students as writers. Variety denotes the freedom of choice inherent to a multigenre project. Poetry, or verse, proved to be a defining genre for many writers. Activation of voice will be analyzed in light of Romano’s (2000) and Lensmire’s (1998) work. The possibility of reaching the verge of engagement will be evidenced by the struggles of four writers. Finally, motivation and self-efficacy will be the signposts of victory (success). The three case studies in the previous chapter will be revisited as they apply to these themes, and each of the other students’ experiences in the class will offer data to support various aspects.

The Power of Vision: Seeing Your Students as Writers

In a bustling writing classroom full of students with laptops, it is easy to lose track of the productivity and progress of individuals. Time and attention is often gobbled up by the rowdiest students and those who ask frequent questions for guidance and reassurance. Unfortunately, those who are the least engaged, least motivated and least proficient in writing can go unnoticed. They reluctantly turn in lackluster and sometimes late work with a sigh of relief that the project is over. In order to understand the value of the multigenre project as it relates to seeing your students as writers, researchers and teachers must understand how different it is from the traditional research paper.
Seeing your students at work – struggling, making decisions, interacting with others and writing – is a significant feature of the writing workshop atmosphere of a multigenre paper. I have taught Freshman English for the past 7 years which involves guiding students through the writing of a traditional research paper for the science fair. In contrast to the multigenre project, the traditional research paper is a solo event. Even when students work on laptops in the classroom, they work independent from the ideas and input of others, and they are bound by the rigid content and style for the paper. Once the traditional research paper is completed, it is read by two teachers and placed on exhibit at the science fair, but classmates are never privy to each other’s writing. As their teacher, I spend most of my time keeping the students on schedule completing notecards, bibliographies, and an assigned number of pages. I watch over them as they mechanically move information from a source to a note card to a typed page. The only thing I really learn about them as writers is their ability to type, stay on task and meet deadlines.

Recognizing levels of writers. In contrast, during the multigenre project I really saw my students as writers – writers who struggled with ideas, writers who talked about their ideas to seek knowledge and approval from others and writers who shared successful strategies. These writers used resources (people and text) to improve accuracy and authenticity. They had an audience with which to share their final work and receive feedback. I did not have to wonder what they were struggling with or even what they thought about the assignment, because there were numerous opportunities for even the quietest personality to engage in talk about the project. I saw firsthand how or even if they used organizational skills to approach an unfamiliar writing assignment. For
example, Brooke had two well-worn sheets of notebook paper in her folder in which she reordered and refined her list of genres six times. The lists were check-marked, circled, and numbered to show her thinking and planning process. In a group conversation, she asked, “Are we allowed to change genres?” (Transcript, April 27, 2011) Her own struggle with genre selection caused her to be empathetic and helpful to others, and her voice could be heard making suggestions when someone was struggling to choose a genre. “You could use a journal entry or status updates” (Audio tape, April 27, 2011).

Pajares and Valiante (2006) suggest that “students can create and develop self-efficacy beliefs as a result of the social persuasions of others” (p. 160).

In an upper level high school elective writing class, it is easy to assume that all of the students are highly motivated writers. Enrolling in an elective course does signify some motivation to improve writing skills. At the beginning of the course, most students reported that wanting to be prepared for college and wanting to be a better writer were their reasons for signing up. However, turning on video cameras and digital voice recorders and then reviewing the tapes nightly, was literally a revelation as to what was actually occurring in my room. As the teacher/researcher this was the way I could step outside of myself and analyze what was going on in the classroom. One day I was teaching and helping students with such zeal that I didn’t notice or correct a boy who failed to complete the previous two writing tasks but had his head on the table nap-like for the duration of class. Often I found myself addressing an issue the following day because it had come to my attention on the tape. This included noting who I had neglected to help or have a conversation with but should not be slighting. If my thermometer for engagement in writing is based on the “amen corner” of front row
students who ask meaningful questions and produce writing replete with self-expression, then the class could be ill without my knowledge.

Not only did I see the struggles of my writers, but I also saw evidence of their ability levels in order to better understand their needs. The terms “engaged” and “reluctant” are often used to describe writers, but I also saw a third, middle category in my group of participants. A closer look and listen at each young writer is needed in order to strengthen and support their writing endeavors. One way this can be accomplished is by evaluating how the students interact with and help one another. Their real selves and attitudes are revealed in group writing conferences. In this particular class, the group appeared to be divided as follows:

Expert writers: Ask specific questions about the content of their writing, struggle with vocabulary choices, spend time accurately formatting particular genres, seek to be original by drawing upon previous literacy experiences (Olivia, Juliet, Piper, Tad, Kira).

Learning writers: Talk about what they are doing and what they plan to do next, have a tendency to default to over-used ideas such as journaling (Brooke, Nicole, Laura).

Reluctant writers: Struggle to make decisions and get started, are hesitant to act on their own ideas without confirmation from someone else, have a tendency to procrastinate and talk with others about matters unrelated to writing, may be known to be weaker students academically (Com, Kurt, Stewie, Erin, Danielle).

An interesting dynamic of the classroom that I noticed was that like writers
sought out each other. The students did not have assigned seats in the room, but they had to pick a spot during the first week of class and stay there so a seating chart could be made. More tables and chairs existed in the room than what the group size required, so there ended up being little divisions of students separated by empty seats. Generally, the expert writers arranged themselves together directly in front of the teacher’s desk. The learning writers were in both rows on the opposite end of the room, and the reluctant writers made themselves less visible in the middle of the room like an overlooked middle child.

It was interesting to note that given the opportunity to choose, students sought out friends, but they also unconsciously sought out those whose writing level was similar to their own. This realization led to my assigning of groups (as previously mentioned) for the second set of peer conferences. This required the students to move about in the room, and I specifically encouraged the groups to discuss any struggles they were having and what they perceived to be the theme of their paper. Here is an example of an expert writer questioning a reluctant one within the group and coaxing him to organize his paper and identify a theme.

Juliet: I don’t need anything. I have everything.
Com: I’m looking for a way to put it all together…I didn’t know what the point was…like what she [the teacher] was saying today. I was just going to slap everything together and say, ‘Hey, multigenre paper.’
Juliet: Do you know what your reoccurring element is?
Com: Yeah. I figured that out a long time ago.
Juliet: If you have those, just put them in order and the following genres.
Com: I just didn’t know what the point was.
Juliet: Do you now know your point?
Com: Yeah. It was gonna be more of a story…it is an informative thing on Sam Cooke – who he is, what he did and why he is one of the greatest musicians of all time.

(Audio tape, May 9, 2011)

In this conversation, Juliet, an expert writer, helped Com, a struggler, by asking questions which guided him toward articulating what the point of his paper was. “It is an informative thing,” he decides.

On the survey, Com’s response to the question, “I discuss the content of my writing with others,” changed from strongly disagree to agree which might suggest that as a result of the multigenre project, he saw the value of talking to others about his writing. When a classroom of students undertakes a multigenre project, the teacher can see, hear and learn firsthand where the students are as writers. When this information is exposed, the teacher can effectively address the needs of the individual and the group in order to increase self-efficacy and motivation toward writing.

**Recognizing levels of talk.** Talk is another way that teachers can see their students as writers. Conversation is an important part of a writing workshop classroom not only to generate ideas and foster encouragement, but also to facilitate understanding of your students’ abilities and needs. Atwell (1998) has aptly stated, “Writers are vulnerable” (p. 217). When you write, especially something of significant length or importance, you are “laying yourself bare for the world to see” (Atwell, 1998, p. 217). While I totally agree with these statements as it relates to multigenre writing, I do not feel, based on anecdotal evidence, that students tend to “lay themselves bare” while writing a traditional research-based paper. Typically, a traditional research paper means looking up facts and merely rewriting them in one’s paper. In grappling with a new,
more personal medium like multigenre writing, students wanted to be affirmed and helped along the way. This was most certainly true for teenagers who struggle already with issues related to self-worth and self-identity. The writing-in-process nature of a multigenre project enabled me to see three levels of communication among my students, and these levels revealed how they made decisions as writers.

Basing my levels of communication on some stages in Bloom’s Taxonomy (Forehand, 2005), I am calling the first one observational. In this level, students were mainly talking to discern what others were doing. They were curious about each other’s topics and the genre choices being used to present that topic. Sometimes this interest was due to a lack of motivation to work on their own writing as was explained concerning the relationship among Kurt, Com and Stewie, who often chatted randomly during writing workshop sessions instead of producing their own work. At other times, this talk was initiated in order to better understand the assignment at hand. For example, someone who still did not have an idea for a dialogue might lean over and looked at their neighbor’s monitor while asking what he/she was doing. This observational talk to gather information could also be directed toward me as the teacher. Shortly after Erin changed her topic to softball, we talked about it.

Erin: I want to do an interview because you suggested it, and I take your suggestions wholeheartedly.

Miss M: Who are you going to interview?

Erin: I need to interview coach.

Miss M: Okay, you want to interview your coach, and for what purpose?

Erin: So I can pass this paper (chuckles). I need your help with making up questions ‘cause I have no clue what to ask.
Miss M: This is going to be an easy problem to solve because the theme of your paper is first year softball player. So we don’t necessarily need to brainstorm a list of questions today. You said you were going to write your prologue today. You can start thinking about what you want the questions to be…advice from Miss D. for first year players…advice for you…maybe even something about when she first played softball…It’s going to be easy. Just think of the theme of your paper.

(Audio tape, April 26, 2011)

In this situation, I saw Erin’s lack of self-efficacy; she did not see herself as capable of preparing for an interview, and she was worried about how the coach might react to finding out that she was writing about softball. Eventually, however, through her interview with the coach, Erin not only discovered that Coach D. was delighted that softball was the topic of a paper, but she also found out that the coach admired her hard-working, positive attitude during practices. What began as a low level of observational talk ended in contributing to self-efficacy which contributed to motivation for writing.

The second level of talk was analytical. Students engaged in conversations to trouble-shoot their writing, make comparisons with the successes of others and consider adjustments in their focus or direction. The very next day in class, Erin asked a question while writing her dialogue entitled, “Riding the Pine,” which was a conversation between herself and her beloved bench in the dugout. She was stuck on how to portray a word with a sound. She wanted to elongated the sound of the word “but”. Again, instead of feeding her the answer, I questioned what she thought she should do. When she hesitated, I asked Brooke, who was sitting beside her, to get involved.

Miss M: What would you do?
Brooke: I’d do “but” dot, dot, dot.
Miss M: That’s one idea I thought of. I also thought about “b” with a bunch of u’s in the middle.
Erin: I think I’ll do the dot, dot so people don’t read “booot.” (laughter)

(Audio tape, April 27, 2011)

This talk was a guided conversation intended to help Erin solve a problem in her writing. It was significant because it involved two types of mediated learning – from a teacher and a peer. Other analytical talk concerned both the content and the craft of writing (Atwell, 1998).

The third, and seemingly highest, level of talk was judgmental – not in the negative sense of the word but with the idea of evaluating one’s work and the work of others. This allowed me to see how students viewed themselves and others as writers. It was talk designed to improve work and move forward. When students engaged at this level, they critiqued, explained and defended writing. Danielle always appeared to have confidence in the direction of her paper, so she was not afraid to question others. “What are you doing for a reoccurring element?” (Audio tape, April 27, 2011). When she asked this in a peer group, it caused Tad, Piper and Kira to reflect on the direction and flow of their work.

Danielle: I already have the storyline in my head.

Piper: I don’t. I’ve got my list of genres…

Tad (discussing flow): I’m trying to draw back from the example [Cosmetic Clips] she gave us. It has a flow.

Piper: That will help a lot. I would like it [his paper] to be reasonably flowy.

Danielle: It’s kinda like a chain. The reoccurring element ties it.

(Audio tape, April 27, 2011)

Although Piper and Tad were more accomplished writers than Danielle, she demonstrated self-efficacy by being bold enough to question their work.
Talk also served to indicate students’ varying levels of decision-making. It would be too simplistic to deduce that students who were autonomous in decision-making had a higher level of self-confidence than those who consulted with Dr. Denyer, me or their peers. At one point or another in the process, everyone had times of independent work and times when they talked to others. Olivia, Laura and Nicole were the more quiet participants. Were it not for peer conferencing and my occasional questioning, they may have completed the entire paper without the input of others. By creating a writing workshop atmosphere, these girls gradually learned the value of talk, not just any chat, but sharing struggles with the possibility that talk could make their writing better. Here is one example from Olivia:

Olivia: I’m stuck on how to do a movie review. I don’t know how to do it because the movie has not yet been developed.

Brooke: Just go off the book [The Hunger Games].

Olivia: Okay…okay.

(Audio tape, April 27, 2011)

Not every conversation resulted in changes made to a paper. Sometimes even my suggestions were not heeded. I never assumed that a student just didn’t want to do the work of following up on my advice and revising, because they did make my grammatical corrections. These students were old enough to know what they were doing and what they wanted to say. If I suggested that some wording was vague and could be clearer if changed, they usually left it as written. This will be examined more closely in the section about poetry writing because students tended to equate ambiguity in poetry with successful writing. One day Brooke suggested that Erin write a letter as a genre to which she replied, “That’s totally not me.” This remark was both true and telling. Writing in
multiple genres gave students an opportunity to choose ones that were most comfortable to them as a person. This also suggests that they were not always willing to move out of their comfort zones, but the genres I required were in place to stretch them as writers when they did not take the initiative. The friendly atmosphere in the school and classroom gave students the autonomy to heed or discard advice and to be able to say either way. This was another example of a way in which they responded as real authors do. Atwell (1998) explains why talk is an important characteristic of the writing classroom. “Student writers need response while the words are churning out, in the midst of the messy, tentative act of drafting meaning” (p. 218).

The Power of Variety: Choice in Writing

“Don’t smile until Thanksgiving” is a popular mantra of advice for new teachers, and I heard it often when I first began my career. Designed to emphasize the need for establishing classroom control early in the school year, it unfortunately permeated classroom pedagogy as well. Teachers tell students that learning is fun, but it comes across like a cheerleader in an empty gymnasium – meaningless. In this era of education with its high stakes testing and subsequent expectation for high results, form and formulas have drained the joy from many classroom writing experiences. Writing, with its demand for higher order words and carefully crafted paragraphs, has fallen prey to the no smiling rule. Students see the mundane repetitive nature of formulaic writing as uninspiring and perhaps downright boring. Traditional research papers, assigned as early as upper elementary, have contributed to the view that writing is not fun. This perception, left to grow and overtake students, leads to a lack of motivation and belief in oneself as a writer.
Choice is foundational to American culture. In our abundant democratic society, we enjoy the freedom to choose in big and small ways every day – everything from picking up a box of cereal in an aisle resplendent with breakfast foods to choosing a college major and career. The ability to choose is a powerful tool that personifies freedom. In a writing classroom void of choice, creativity is stifled; rote and repetition are flourishing. Not only does a multigenre paper allow the teacher to see students as writers, it also allows students to have an amazing level of choices. Students were make the decisions using their own knowledge and the advice of others. The multigenre project still had requirements, a schedule and grades much as any classroom project would. The reality of school life demands these elements, and the choices within the multigenre project were confined by these expected academic procedures as well.

Nonetheless, the multigenre paper is an open-ended task in which personal choice is a primary element. Students make choices beginning with topic selection, and everything they write is a result of personal choice. Turner and Paris (1995) found that students who were allowed to choose showed more personal responsibility for their writing because being the decision-maker demanded that behavior from them. The participants in this study equated choice with freedom from traditional essays and the opportunity to be creative. During the video-taped presentations of their papers, the most noticeable pattern that emerged when participants described the multigenre project was the freedom and creativity that came from an opportunity for self-expression and this was often perceived by the participants as “fun”. Ten students made at least one comment related to the choice involved in writing a multigenre paper, and these described the experience as fun, creative, and/or an opportunity to write without the rules of a formal
essay. As you will see in the next section, five participants literally referred to the multigenre project as “fun.” They identified fun as a writing experience which gave them freedom of choice, an opportunity to be creative, and a break from the traditional research format.

Laura: “It was fun. No more boring paper.” Laura was a senior and a Korean exchange student; she attended the school for all of high school. Unlike exchange students who only spend a year in America, Laura had become adept at communicating in English. This was also due to an American boyfriend which forced her to use English regularly in her social life. Laura was quiet and diligent, working independently in the back row without much conversation with me or other students. Later, she would admit that she began the multigenre paper with her usual trepidation over having to write abundantly in formal English. As the weeks unfolded, she began to relax and revel in the project as she realized that she was actually expected to be creative. This will be seen later in an interaction with me about a creative genre that she came up with late in project. Laura chose the topic of video game addiction because it was personal to her. She lived with a host family who had five children; the youngest boy played video games all day. When he began to exhibit some violent behavior and use inappropriate language, his parents greatly restricted his gaming. This withdrawal also resulted in some overt behavior. Laura loved this boy like a brother; she thought he was cute, funny and entertaining. She was deeply disturbed by what she witnessed at home, and this caused her to develop an interest in video game addiction.

Earlier in the semester, she wrote a short essay on the topic, and this became the inspiration for her multigenre project. In the third week, she began to occasionally stay
after class (which was the end of the school day) to seek help. The first time it was about the essay she had previously written.

Laura: You told me I could use the paper I wrote earlier, but I don’t know what to call it.

Miss M: I had a question for you too. Are you writing a paper based solely on the characters you used in your dialogue?

Laura: No. I thought it would be about violent video games in general, people of all ages.

Miss M: Good. Then your previous piece about the young boy you live with will work. For the purpose of your rationale paper, just call it an essay.

(Field notes, April 18, 2011)

Laura shared her ideas and concerns in peer groups but usually reserved her questions for me until after school. Near the end of the project, she began staying after school for more lengthy periods of time, continuing to sit and work at her laptop long after the last bell. Eventually, I learned that her home computer was not working, so she was taking advantage of the school’s equipment before leaving for the day.

One day I sent her to the next classroom to work because I had a meeting after school. An hour later when my meeting concluded she returned to show me a genre she had just finished. On the paper were what looked to me like business cards; she called them bookmarks because she had punched holes in the ends and attached fringes of colored paper. The work was artistic and original, and I exclaimed over it enthusiastically.

Laura: I figured you would either love them or hate them.

Miss M: Well, I love them.

Laura: I thought they might be too artistic.
Miss M: No. It’s perfect for the multigenre paper.

Laura: I made them to look like ads for a counselor with a phone number at the bottom. It’s my number, so you can call me if you need to talk. (We chuckle together.)

(Field notes, May 17, 2011)

This experience was a breakthrough for Laura. I was dazzled by her work, and she could tell that my enthusiasm was genuine. From that point on, she felt free to worry less about her grammar and concentrate on having fun with her project. She produced a wanted poster, a newspaper article, an email and a list of the top ten most violent video games. Each genre was done with artwork that increased the authenticity. She did include some longer pieces of writing and told us later that Kurt had graciously assisted her with proofreading.

The deep fun of the multigenre project freed Laura to worry less about the rudimentary elements of writing in English and find her flow, but she still attended to them. According to Romano (2009), “Flow is deep fun…fun from the fulfillment of engaging in meaningful academic work” (p. 31). He reminds teachers that fun in the classroom should not be defined by viewing videos and eating candy. Meaningful work is the key to deep fun, and deep fun helps students see value in the work they are doing. This value produces motivation that becomes intrinsic (Romano, 2009). In Laura’s own words:

No more boring paper. If I was to write a ten page essay of this, I would get really bored. I always have a bad feeling about essays. Everyone else is doing fine, but I always have to be concerned about my grammar. It is a challenge for me. But this one, I really didn’t have to worry about grammar…The whole time I kept feeling like this was an art class, especially my bookmarks that I made…My topic was negative, but I didn’t have to be negative because I was able to write in so many different ways…It was fun.
Laura, an ESL student, gained confidence in herself as a writer. This self-efficacy came at a time when she was about to enter college here in America and face many more writing assignments. Laura also gained a platform for her interest in video game addiction. She staunchly defended her position despite opposition from some gamers in the class. Along the way, she learned that video game addiction is not a recognized addiction by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* like alcohol and gambling are, but it is going to be reviewed in 2012. In her presentation, she told the class, “Hopefully this will change, so they will provide help and counseling for those with video game addiction” (Video tape, May 26, 2011). By the conclusion of her project, Laura’s motivation for writing included motivation for social change.

Laura was one of five students who referred to the multigenre project as fun when describing the experience during their presentations. Others said:

Piper: I don’t like to follow form, so this was fun.
Com: It was relaxed and fun.
Kira: I got to go crazy with the vocabulary. It was fun.
Erin: Oh yes, it definitely is fun.
Juliet: The fun part of writing.

Five participants referred to the multigenre project as an opportunity to be creative, and five described the multigenre project as freedom from the constraints of formal writing. Some specifically contrasted the multigenre project to writing assignments in other English classes.
Piper: It [multigenre] restored my faith in writing. AP English kind of ruined me because I have being crammed into a box. I don’t like to follow form, so this was kind of fun.

Kira: Liberating, especially after AP English where you are churning out the same format over and over. This was refreshing.

Juliet: I enjoyed getting away from [English teacher’s] higher order words, six sentences in each paragraph. I could express myself in the paper.

Nicole: Writing doesn’t have to be just a piece of paper with sentences that form paragraphs. It can be really creative.

Stewie: It is a lot easier to write if it doesn’t seem like you are just doing a ginormous book of paragraphs.

(Video tapes, May 25-28, 2011)

Positive emotions about a writing task can also serve to increase students’ self-efficacy. Pajares and Valiante (2006) observed that strong emotional reactions are a precursor to success or failure on academic tasks. As students contemplate beginning a task, their degree of confidence can be gauged by their emotional state (Pajares & Valiante, 2006). This confidence level is also based on previous experiences with a similar task. Given the opportunity to actually talk about these feelings during their multigenre presentations, students made the following self-assessments.

Kira: It was personally fulfilling to make my own story and develop it.

Nicole: I like to be creative and use my imagination, so it [multigenre] gave me a new insight into writing.

Brooke: I kind of dreaded doing this, but as I went along, I found a new love for writing.

Erin: If I was asked essay or multigenre, I’d go with multigenre. It taught me how to be creative. It’s also encouraging.

(Video tapes, May 25-28, 2011)

Danielle: “It has a flow.” Danielle was an enthusiastic writer from the beginning of the class. Her motivation was so firmly intact that she announced on more
than one occasion, “Writing is my minor in college.” Danielle had been motivated by her interest in writing to take the elective creative writing class as a junior. When the multigenre project was announced, she knew immediately that she wanted to write a story to parallel her own. It would be about a high school girl who wants to be a writer, and along the way, she experiences a painful break-up with her boyfriend which increases her determination to turn life events into stories. During her formal interview with me about her rationale paper, she explained her ideas this way: “Her [the main character’s] writing is about the things happening in her life, and my dialogue is her friend meeting up with her and telling her that her boyfriend is going to dump her. So now her writing for the contest is going to be affected by it” (Audio tape, April 14, 2011).

Due to the fact that Danielle had an instantaneous, clear picture of where her paper was going, she had a good grasp on the concept of flow. This was evidenced by her comment in a peer group: “I already have the story line in my head,” and it enabled her to offer advice to others on more than one occasion (Audio tape, April 27, 2011). When Kira admitted to not understanding the concept of a reoccurring element, Danielle said, “It’s kinda like a chain. The reoccurring element ties it together.” In another group, she explained the multigenre writing process by saying, “It has to have flow” (Audio tape, May 9, 2011). She offered the best commentary on flow during her final presentation:

I feel that I accomplished the most by seeing how so many tiny, seemingly insignificant pieces can all come together to produce a rather lengthy piece of writing that still had merit. Choosing the genres for the paper was the easiest and the hardest thing to do. I really wanted to find ones that would fit together well but also wouldn’t be very generic. It was neat to be able to pick many of the genres that I wanted to use, which in turn made the whole paper more personal than the traditional paper.
Danielle’s self-efficacy and motivation stemmed from her strong desire to be a writer and from her firm grasp on the concept of flow. Romano (2009) calls this “bulldog learning; latching onto a bone of knowledge and gnawing away to learn all you can” (p. 31). This is flow that is driven by passion, and passion abounds when writing has voice and detail (Romano, 2009). Danielle struggled with poetry writing, and was the weakest student in the class when it came to grammar, punctuation and sentence structure, but her self-efficacy did not waver. In fact, her high aspirations, willingness to commit to a difficult challenge and belief in her personal capabilities were indicators that her self-efficacy was firmly established (Bandura, 1993). Her strong personality may have also played a role in a strong confidence in her writing abilities. Despite my numerous requests to edit and revise her work, she gave no indication of anxiety or discouragement, both of which can be indicators of low self-efficacy and motivation (Pajares & Valiante, 2006). This was also confirmed by her survey answer to “My motivation toward writing is affected by the attitudes of my classmates” to which she responded that she strongly disagreed. Danielle’s personal determination to be a writer was not swayed by anyone or anything.

Olivia: “You can be really creative.” Olivia was the quietest worker in the classroom. She chose to sit in the same front corner chair for both classes she took with me – yearbook and creative writing. As every teacher knows, the quiet, diligent student can easily be ignored, and this may have happened were it not for Nicole’s topic selection which was The Hunger Games.
When Miss Mungons first announced the multigenre paper, I immediately pictured a poem set in a movie theater as the movie is about to begin, and it just like got stuck in my head, and I really wanted to go that way. So I decided to go with the topic movies, but then I realized that I needed to narrow it down. And, Miss Mungons made a comment that we should be thinking about our multigenre paper like every spare moment that we have. I was already doing that with \textit{The Hunger Games}, so I figured I should just put them together and have that be my main focus (Videotape, May 25, 2011).

She followed an ideal path in developing her topic. First, she immediately formulated an idea when the paper was announced, and it stemmed from her main interest in life – becoming a movie producer. Then, she recognized a need to narrow her idea to a workable size. Finally, she put together her idea with classroom instruction, and a specific topic emerged. As her teacher, it helped that I had read the book and shared her enthusiasm; it enabled me to offer appropriate suggestions when she needed help, and it was fun to discuss the plot together. Olivia knew that \textit{The Hunger Games} was slated to become a movie the following year; she could combine her knowledge of the book and movie production and portray in her paper how it might take place.

As Olivia’s paper progressed, it focused on production of the movie from the audience’s perspective. She observed, “The production studios want a buzz surrounding their movie, so they pour out a plethora of media in the months before a movie premieres in the hope of generating interest” (Multigenre paper). Her paper included an article announcing the lead actors and comments about the choices, a labyrinthine sentence, a movie poster, an interview with the lead actress, a movie review, dialogue between movie goers, a poem about sitting in the theater and Twitter updates. She immersed herself in the opportunity to be creative and took advantage of all the information she could find about the actual movie on the internet. She also utilized her technology skills by creating a realistic movie poster using PhotoShop.
Although she primarily worked in isolation, Olivia took advantage of the peer group discussions to get ideas from others. During one meeting she admitted to being stuck on how to do a movie review, “Because the movie has not been developed yet” (Audio tape, April 27, 2011). Brooke spoke up and suggested that she base it on the book. This seems like an obvious answer, but Olivia clearly benefitted from the reassurance. Pajares and Valiante (2006) noted that, “Students develop self-efficacy beliefs as a result of the social persuasions they receive from others” (p. 160). Brooke's simple suggestion enabled Olivia to move forward more confidently.

A suggestion from a group member was not always taken literally but may have helped the writer develop an idea. When Olivia needed a reoccurring element, one student suggested a fan page and another mentioned blogging. Ultimately, Olivia chose another technology-based genre and developed several Twitter updates; this was a suggestion that had been given to another student within the same group. Frey and Fisher (2010) stated that a primary purpose for collaborative learning is to give students the opportunity to consolidate their understanding of a task; therefore, group suggestions do not always have to be taken literally in order to be influential. Olivia’s reoccurring genre was primarily the fulfillment of an assignment not borne out of necessity. She saw her paper as one continuous story and planned the genres together; this mental picture enabled her to end one genre where the next one would pick up. She never had an issue with lack of cohesion.

Olivia's paper illustrated a complex understanding of the movie industry. The multigenre paper provided an outlet for her to pursue her interests and abilities. The multigenre paper enabled her to be creative, but the opportunity for creativity also
stretched her as a writer. In her presentation, Olivia summarized her feelings about the experience.

When I first envisioned writing this paper, I thought it would be essay after essay of really boring stuff, and I did not look forward to it because I like to be creative and it just didn’t sound fun. But, it ended up being the most creative paper I’ve written for a class, and I really enjoyed it. It was really neat to just sit down and write about stuff I actually liked, something fun, rather than something someone else was forcing me to do (Video tape, May 25, 2011).

Kira also benefitted from the power of choice. As was seen in his case study, the freedom to write an original story using the overall genre of horror, motivated him and gave him a sense that writing could be both fun and fulfilling.

“When students learn that they have control over their choices, thoughts, and actions, it means that their teachers have created motivating learning environments” (Daniels, 2010, p. 25). Daniels identified three factors that contribute to student motivation: autonomy, relatedness and competence. Autonomy refers to choice, receiving clear instructions and then being able to make decisions and have control over completion of the task. Students also need a connection to the teacher and their classmates (relatedness) and a feeling that they possess the necessary skills (competence). When a teacher raises the level of challenging work, facilitates choice and provides support, students will be motivated through increased expectations (Frey & Fisher, 2010).

Choice can be intimidating especially to teachers who graduated from college at a time when pedagogy often espoused teacher control. A quiet classroom, where attentive students listened to a lecture, was an effective classroom. Not only has pedagogical thinking evolved but so has the current generation of students sitting in the classroom. They are comfortable with problem-solving, autonomous decision-making and utilizing
technology to gather information almost instantaneously. By the time the average student reaches high school, they have completed many traditional writing assignments: compositions, essays, reports and research papers. Most likely the majority of these writing experiences involved teacher-assigned topics and formats. When confronted with a multigenre writing assignment, it’s a whole new world, and it moves students from the known to the unknown. They cannot rely upon on a teacher-dictated topic or a rigid set of writing rules. As a teacher of multigenre, I am always secretly amused by the confusion and concern that students express when first given the assignment; it is a blend of interest and uncertainty. Having written two multigenre research papers myself I can relate to what they are feeling: ‘This is so random; how can it work to write a paper this way?’ The multigenre project moves them just beyond their ability to complete a task independently, thus it enables students and teachers to work together in the students’ Zone of Proximal Development and open the door to the power of choice (Vygotsky, 1978).

The Power of Verse: Writing Poetry Required Emotion

Poetry is a staple of multigenre writing primarily because it is recommended in Romano’s (2000) book, and it is recognized as a higher order writing skill. In this research study as in all the years I have done multigenre projects with students, poetry was a required element. When students bemoaned the expectation that they write a poem, I used a minilesson to remind them of some of the simpler, more formulaic types of poetry such as Haiku, cinquain and the biopoem. In previous years, some students chose the formulaic route, wrote a Haiku and gave no more thought to poetry writing. Some students crafted lengthy prose on a topic of personal importance. One standout
poem in a former class was a three page sonnet which saluted every player on the Detroit Tigers’ roster.

Several years ago I learned an important lesson about critiquing poetry: it is a genre about which students feel very personal. A senior girl wrote a long, lyrical poem about graduating from high school. Her classmates related to the heavy sentiment of saying good-bye and praised her writing. I, on the other hand, deemed it repetitive and sentimental. When I diplomatically suggested this to the writer, she was quite offended and insisted her work needed no revision. She owned those words and was shocked that the poem did not affect me as it did her friends who defended the lyrics with fervor. As the senior class advisor, I had to mend some wounded spirits over the course of the next several months. Ultimately, the poem was put to music by another member of the class and performed by student musicians at graduation. “Poetry goes in our daily lives. Everywhere we go, then, poetry goes with us” (Romano, 2000, p. 91). Perhaps no other genre holds the potential to universally tap into the writer’s emotion. Poetry requires writers to think and speak metaphorically, to draw from experience and feeling, to focus and make associations (Romano, 2000). Students who are experts in polishing off writing assignments that conform to requirements but are devoid of heart, are forced to become real writers when it is time to craft a poem. They must mull over ideas and vocabulary; they must be emotional in spite of themselves, and what emerges may surprise and delight them. Poetry is writing with passion and voice.

Nevertheless, this was still high school. Not everyone was prepared to go deeply, but this group of participants came closer to the edge of an insightful experience than past classes with whom I have undertaken the multigenre project. Perhaps this was due to
their willingness to engage in the necessary struggle to produce rhyming verse. As previously mentioned in chapter three, 10 out of 13 participants chose the more difficult road of crafting a poem using a rhyming pattern. Classroom observations and other data indicate that this led to a deeper, more meaningful experience with poetry writing.

**Stewie: “It was a chance to relate to the poet’s side for a change.”** Stewie has been identified as a reluctant writer. Factors which appeared to contribute to this included his disinterest in doing work at the end of the year (late assignments) and his frequent engagement in off task behavior with his friends in the class (talking and laughing on audio and video tapes). He chose Nike as his topic, and when I insisted that he narrow the subject, he declared it to be Nike shoes. As his teacher, I did not view this as a very original idea primarily because he had used Nike as a topic for speeches in the first semester class and other writing assignments in creative writing. Nevertheless, Nike was genuinely his main interest at the time, and he frequently talked about his aspirations to be CEO of the company someday. Stewie was one of 3 students, all boys, who chose to write two poems for his paper.

The point of poetry is open to the reader’s interpretation. In a writing workshop classroom, this may lead to questioning the author directly as to his/her purpose in the writing. Stewie wrote two poems that had an element of vagueness (which is a hallmark of poetry and is why multiple interpretations can exist side-by-side). In the first poem, written as descriptive free verse, he speaks of an unnamed “drug”.

*There is a Drug*

*by Stewie*

*There is a Drug that is known by many,*
But feared by more.
This Drug cannot be traced and is not punishable,
yet is addictive as they come and is a punishment.
There is nothing compared to the rush you feel when you achieve it,
And there is no easy way to produce it.
This drug is born through pain, sweat and sometimes tears;
However, it keeps you crawling back for more.
It is made possible by your legs;
craved by your body;
pursued by your mind,
And fueled by Nike.

(Multigenre paper, May 25, 2011)

After reading the poem, I asked Stewie to define the “drug” because I wanted to understand his thinking behind the writing. Impersonating an English teacher, he responded by first asking what I thought it was. I answered, “Running,” to which he replied that it was, “Adrenaline.” Stewie had been a cross country runner, and his descriptive language seemed to draw from his deep understanding of running. He chose to read the poem as his favorite genre when presenting his topic, and he offered an explanation in his folder. “I thought it was APish [referring to AP English]” (Questionnaire, May 9, 2011). I asked him to further explain his rationale during the data analysis process. “I guess I related to AP poems because personally I am almost always uncertain about their true meaning when I first read the poem, and when I read my poem to others they were confused themselves. So it gave me a chance to relate to the poets side of the matter for a change” (Email, July 8, 2011).

Stewie’s perception of poetry was that power existed in ambiguity. (This represents a deep understanding of poetry and the power of ambiguity.) Parr and Campbell (2006) enumerate one benefit of poetry as “encouraging language and word play” (p. 38). High school students understand the value of alliteration and metaphor in
poetry having (as Stewie described) analyzed poems on numerous occasions in English and literature classes. What may have been misunderstood and meaningless when someone else wrote it becomes a pattern for writing one’s own poetry given the right opportunity. According to Parr and Campbell (2006), students need the chance to write poetry otherwise it becomes a case of storing away forms and structures analyzed in class but not implemented. It is in implementation that students actually learn and appreciate poetry. Authoring your own poetry provides a real life connection to other authors of poetry.

Piper: “I blew my chance at a poem.” Poetry writing was the subject of much conversation during the project. Students expressed the feeling that poetry had to be written at a specific time when you were “feeling like poetry.” Four students (3 participants and 1 non-participant) were in an assigned discussion group, and the conversation moved from general comments about struggles to the topic of poetry. Students' interest and excitement over this topic was illustrated by their often overlapping talk when expressing their opinions about poetry. This was Piper’s thread of the conversation:

Poems are something you kind of definitely have to have. If you aren’t in a poem mood, it’s not going to work, but if you are in a poem mood, you can write…I’m kinda nervous…I’m afraid I blew my chance at a poem. There was a couple days ago when I thought, ‘I could write a poem right now,’ and it was like, [sound] I’ll do something else. And now, I’m just like…[drops off]
(Audio tape, May 9, 2011)

Teachers often accuse high school students of procrastination on any given day, but this was more than a case of putting off work. Erin retold the story of her poetry writing experience late at night to contribute to the group’s sentiment that poetry had to be written when the time was right. Interestingly, when everyone began sharing on a deeper
level about poetry writing, by discussing the need for motivation and the timing of when
one can write effectively, Piper, who was the group’s leader, suggested turning off the
digital voice recorder. Then he said, “No, this is a good conversation.” This is evidence
of the fact that the students were aware that they were engaged in meaningful talk about the
process and complexity of writing.

Poetry writing is a true literacy experience. It gives students a reason to express themselves on a deeper level and explore their own understanding of the world. It
demands tapping into deep emotion. Jocson (2006) observed, “Poetry offers a place
where youth can be themselves and embrace their own experiences” (p. 700). A
postgraduate fellow at Stanford University, Korina Jocsun studied the power of poetry
through the use of a program known as Poetry of the People (P4P). She observed the
ways in which poetry can have relevance in the lives of young people and be an outlet for
achieving social justice. While Jocsun’s (2006) study was primarily focused on at risk
teenagers, the same advantages to poetry were seen in the multigenre classroom. It can
serve as a vehicle for expressing one’s views, gaining better writing strategies and
constructing ideas about self (Jocsun, 2006).

Tad: “I actually used some higher order words.” Although not a part of the
formal study, it bears noting that students maintained a journal during the entire semester
of creative writing. While it was not officially utilized during the multigenre project, one
section that students had developed was a list of interesting words. They were
encouraged to notice words used by others and read in books and add them to the list. If
a word was especially unique or unusual, they sometimes shared it with the class, and
everyone added it to their lists. Describing words in terms of “higher order” was a phrase
Tad picked up in AP English. When he made the comment, Danielle and Nicole murmured agreement as if to suggest that they too were looking for ways to include robust vocabulary (Audio tape, April 27, 2011).

Tad used poetry as his reoccurring element, so he produced 3 cinquains and a sonnet. This may have been an obvious choice for him because of the close link between poetry and music. Tad was an accomplished bass guitarist whose plans included becoming part of a successful band someday. His paper mimicked this real life goal; it was a fictitious story about Ted Waters, a musician in a newly formed travelling band. He picked up on the idea of using cinquains during the minilesson on poetry; they are simple and easy to write, the perfect bridge between other pieces. His paper opened with this one.

Life as a Touring Musician
by Tad

Music
Emotional
Perfect inspiration,
Beautiful communication.
The Sound

(Multigenre paper, May 20, 2011)

His paper ended with a sonnet written carefully using the difficult form of iambic pentameter. Like Stewie’s poem, it had an element of ambiguity as seen in the final line of the last stanza.

In searching for lasting pleasure,
Look no more for secret treasure.
The answer lies within
These texts of aged spin
Bound’ry lines of sacred measure.

(Multigenre paper, May 20, 2011)
Tad suggests that the answer to lasting pleasure “lies within,” but he does not specify what it is. The element of vagueness in one’s writing suggests that everything is not always simple and this correlates with real life (Elbow, 1998). The purpose of most academic writing is to say everything possible on a topic, leaving nothing implicit. Elbow (1998) addresses this “cover everything” tendency as it relates to his ideas about writing as a collage. “I make no argument against it [traditional writing], only against the notion that it’s better, more advanced, and that it is the only goal in teaching writing” (p. 33). Sometimes there is more energy, drama and even meaning in writing where the reader is expected to make the connections. I suggested that Tad consider changing the last line of his poem in case some readers did not understand his use of the phrase “sacred measure,” but he chose to keep it in its original form in his final paper. One aspect of self-efficacy exhibited here and in a few other situations reveals that when students feel confident in themselves and their work they feel comfortable ignoring my critique. A real writer can believe so strongly in his/her work to the point of not being willing to change it for anyone.

Vocabulary was an aspect of multigenre writing that affected many genres, not just poetry. This conversation is an indicator that it was on the minds of the student writers.

Miss M: Hey Kira, I read your dialogue earlier today, and you used words I didn’t know. That’s not good.

Laura: (who happened to be standing nearby) Did you know those words or look them up somewhere?

Miss M: I don’t know what ‘palaver’ means.
Kira: It’s useless talk. I’m going through Lovecraft’s writing and circling words he used so I can mimic his dialogue.

(Field notes, April 19, 2011)

Again, the freedom to choose one’s own topic meant they had a built-in knowledge of and interest in their subject matter. This had the potential to motivate them intrinsically to the point that they were willing to seek the knowledge discourse they needed to be able to write their paper. Here was an instance where the students taught the teacher. Kira was so motivated to attend to the authenticity of the writing style that he stretched his knowledge of language and mine.

Erin: “I was thinking about Shakespeare.” In group conversations and final presentations, many students were quick to compare the multigenre paper to the more traditional writing they did on a regular basis in English classes. The point of this research project was not to gather a fan base in support of abandoning the five paragraph essay. Obviously, many valuable skills are learned within the context of academic writing, and as often as the students disregarded those experiences, they also drew from them. Erin’s comment about Shakespeare is the type that could put a spring in the step of any English teacher. As previous stated in her case profile, Erin had pain on her mind when she finally settled on softball as her topic. As a new player, she had much to learn, and that included keeping your eye on the ball at all times. On the day I interviewed her about topic selection, she had just been hit in the face by a ball she was supposed to be catching during practice. The team had been in the gym doing a drill that involved the coach hitting the ball to a player to practice catching. Erin explained that she was concerned about standing so close to the wall of the gym, and her mental distraction resulted in a slow reaction. She was hit on the cheek by a fly ball. Fortunately, she
sustained only a minor injury, but it was truly painful. The coach immediately told her to “take a lap,” the standard penalty for failing to catch the ball. According to Erin, she ran 50 laps that day because she never managed to catch a ball. Erin’s positive outlook enabled her to view the experience as a painful but important lesson in learning to play the game.

When she got ready to write her poem, the pain was gone but the memory of it was still fresh. Erin, like most students, chose to write her poem at home. The chatty atmosphere of the classroom was great for generating ideas and encouraging one another, but some levels of writing call for solitude. According to Erin, she was sitting at home at her desk at 12:30 a.m. ready to write. While reflecting on how to express her experience, she glanced down at her nearby bookshelves and saw a work by Shakespeare. “His writing was like poetry, and he used a lot of dialogue.” This was the thought process she explained to us later (Audio tape, May 17, 2011). Her completed poem drew from her experience and her knowledge of Shakespeare’s style. Her classmates thought it was funny, but they also connected with her sentiment.

Pain Poem:
by Erin
To Pain, who without you presence, everything would be the same.

Me:
Pain, my nerves tell me about you.
Pain, we’re stuck together like glue.
Pain, you caused me to cry.
Pain, you hurt me, why?

Pain:
Erin, you’re an honest lass.
Erin, I’m having a blast.
Erin, catch the ball.
Erin, then my reign will fall.
Me:
I’ll try harder to be relieved of your terror.
I’ll do it sublimely in the upcoming hour.
I’ll do anything to catch the ball.
I’ll then make you fall.

Pain:
Never again will I see the sun.
Never again will I be the reason.
Never again will a ball be missed.
Never again will I be expressed.
(Multigenre paper, May 20, 2011)

The Power of Voice: Activating Its Presence

Lensmire (2000) and Romano (2004) have informed my understanding of voice and how it relates to the multigenre project. Having summarized their writings in chapter two, it is now significant to note how their ideas link to the data found in this research project. Romano (2004) identified the components that indicate the presence of voice as information, narrative, perception, surprise and humor. Lensmire (2000) examined the pedagogical criteria for voice as a project.

Romano (2004): “Put down words fearlessly on paper” (p. 23). The first indicator of voice requires information gathering. Today’s tech-savvy students love to roam the internet, and that was part of the multigenre writing process. Every student had access to a laptop every day. The school subscribed to an internet filtering system, so there was no danger of students’ wandering onto dangerous or inappropriate websites. Once they had secured a topic, they began information gathering. Some students went directly to a website linked to their topic such as Nike or Harley Davidson. Others used topical searches to “see what’s out there.” While some teachers of multigenre require visits to the library and the traditional use of card catalog and encyclopedia searches, I felt that my students did not need to use that type of research for three reasons. First,
they were old enough to have had plenty of experience in using the library. Secondly, they were more comfortable (and happy) to use high speed search engines. Thirdly, I assumed that much of their future college research would be done via the computer.

Proof of information gathering was obtained in two ways. Students were required to include two research summaries (paragraphs of at least 150 words) in their papers. This forced everyone to locate and synthesize expository information that was related to their topic, but it did not stifle creativity. For example, Stewie wrote a paragraph for his Nike paper on the history of the Swoosh, and Erin summarized an interesting website about maintaining turf on a ball field. The second way that students were accountable for information was the requirement of a bibliography. This proved to be a weak spot in the project mainly due to teacher neglect. I should have presented the bibliography requirement nearer to the beginning of the project; because I waited until the final two weeks, some students did not have a record of all the sources they had used. Regretfully, about half of the students forgot to even include a bibliography in their final papers. I did not count it against them having felt the error was due to receiving the requirement so late.

Romano’s (2004) second quality of voice is narrative or story-telling. This is almost an assumed element in multigenre writing. Although not required, 8 out of 13 participants wrote a short story for their paper. Romano (2004) has suggested, “Readers love stories. They perk up when they see characters in action” (p. 22). I observed that writers also perked up when given the opportunity to craft a story. Participants had a strong English background, so they understood the elements of story: setting, characters, plot, theme and point of view. They analyzed the presence of the elements far more often
than they applied the elements to their own stories; therefore, this project was a chance to spread their story-telling wings. In one situation, I encouraged Juliet that a short story would be a stronger genre choice to make her point than a journal entry she had submitted.

    Juliet wrote a journal entry to illustrate the point that “love is patient;” she wrote a piece about a day when everything went wrong, and at the end of the day, the character realized she should have started her day with prayer for patience. The litany of events gone wrong listed in the journal entry reminded me of a favorite children’s story, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. I suggested that Juliet could rewrite her journal entry with a parody of the story thinking that it would be fun and drive home her point more effectively. Juliet was not familiar with the story, so I promised to get the book from the school’s elementary library.

    A few days transpired before I obtained the book, and many more went by without Juliet showing any interest in the re-write. However, “Nicole’s Awful, Dreadful, Unfortunate, Intolerable, Rotten Day” was written near the end of Juliet’s project. She asked me about her choice of adjectives to parallel Judith Voirst’s (1972) book. I was delighted that Juliet had gone to the extra effort of rewriting a genre and had gone the extra mile to closely parody the original story. In her paper, the story was over three pages long, portrayed in a fancy font and several colors. If time had permitted, it would have been a great learning experience to require all students to take a finished genre and rewrite it as a different one. Originally, this had been my plan, but students needed all of their time to meet the deadlines for the other requirements, so the genre rewrite was a challenge that I only passed on to Juliet. She was a more advanced writer and could
handle extra work.

Perception and surprise are more refined writing skills that signal the presence of voice. Perception suggests the presence of insight, the ability to look closely and see what others might not (Romano, 2004). Insight can be acquired through experience or gaining knowledge. Since multigenre papers are typically based on a student’s interest, experience can be utilized by the writer to give insight into the topic. For example, at first Brooke was hesitant to write about cheerleading feeling like it was not very original, but her five years of experience provided her with an insider’s perspective. In fact, once she determined to use cheerleading, it became her mission to dispel stereotyping:

Many people stereotype cheerleaders as ditzy and slutty blondes who wear lots of make-up and are always chipper. However, I am here to prove you wrong. Though I cannot vouch for every cheerleader out there, most are far from this stereotype. From making posters to performing cheers, this paper will give you the inside scoop on what really happens as an [school’s name omitted] cheerleader (Multigenre paper, May 20, 2011).

An especially telling genre that offered insight into the behind the scenes drama of high school girl cheerleaders was a diary entry written by the cheerleading captain. Since she used her chosen pseudonym in the diary, I assume she was speaking from firsthand experience. It is a mixture of frustration, because squad mates were dumping their every last complaint on her and the coach was expecting her to do all the work. Not only does the diary entry provide insight into the unseen responsibilities of a cheerleader, but it is also a window on Brooke’s own feelings normally hidden by her perpetually positive demeanor.

Coach Kay doesn’t care. She just assumes I’ll do all the work, just because I’m Brooke, and because I am always doing something for cheerleading. I know it really shouldn’t get to me and I should be willing to serve and contribute to our squad, but it really does (Multigenre paper, May 25, 2011).
Brooke’s paper also gives insight into the cost of cheerleading, the long hours and the school’s policies and requirements for cheerleaders. A reader need not be even interested in cheerleading in order to gain an appreciation for what they do by reading Brooke’s paper. This is what happens when writers activate their voice to tell a story.

Surprise is a more difficult commodity to identify as an element of voice in this research partly because surprise varies with the reader, and the primary reader (me) has looked at the papers so many times, there was not much surprise left! For me, the biggest surprises were found in genres near the end of the papers where the overall plot took an unexpected turn. Interestingly, this occurred in all four of the papers that were written as one narrative story. Danielle added the surprise of a former boyfriend turned stalker. Piper went from sarcastic about college recruitment to sentimental about leaving home. Tad’s band member quit the group and broke up the band, and Kira’s tortured character admits to lying in order to be free of the asylum. Surprise endings indicated that students were free to be creative and use their own voice in unique ways.

In naming humor as the final quality of voice, Romano (2004) acknowledges that it is not appropriate for every genre and not a comfortable fit for every writer. Piper’s paper used sarcasm as a form of humor. His fake college application included lines for “hair color” and “real hair color” as well as goofy things like “favorite high school faculty member” and “least favorite.” These elements were probably the most humorous to Piper himself because he had a chance to vent his frustrations about the constant prodding for information that accompanies the college search. Com was a student whose most important goal on any given day seemed to reigning supreme as class clown. His
coverage of Sam Cooke’s death did not lend itself to humor, but true to form he found a way to slip some into his paper.

Com’s dialogue was a fictitious conversation between two high school students planning to attend a Sam Cooke concert (see Figure 9). He combined his African American ethnicity with some evidence of what the setting would have been in the 1950’s or early 1960’s.

Figure 9

*Com’s Dialogue (Multigenre paper, May 25, 2011).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In their high school geometry class, two students, Michael and Herbert, speak about their plans for the weekend. As it turns out they will both be attending a concert of one of their favorite artists, Sam Cooke. Let’s listen in...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chauncy: Dude! Did you hear Sam Cooke is performing downtown this weekend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob: YES! OH MY DARWIN, I ALREADY HAVE TICKETS!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauncy: WOW! That’s awesome; I bought my tickets two weeks in advance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob: That’s a gas my brother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauncy: I can’t wait to hear Cry! That song is way far out on the radio, but it must be totally gone!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob: That is a pretty groovy jam, but Good Times steals the bacon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauncy: Sam is so far from a drag and his rags are righteous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob: Totally, I’m thinking about going out and getting a pair of Ivy Leaguers just like him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauncy: That’s a shaggin’ idea! Sam is really hipping up what it means to be a musician, Soul usually isn’t my thing but Sam really has an amazing voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob: Couldn’t have said it better myself my brother from another mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauncy: Where are your seats?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob: I’m in section C row 4 seat 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauncy: FAR OUT BRO! I’m in section C Row 4 seat 11!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bell Rings signaling end of period</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob: See you at the concert!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauncy: Bye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phrases such as “Oh my Darwin” and “That’s a gas my brother” reveal Com’s unique sense of humor. The dialogue continues with the humorous use of slang such as “groovy jam,” “shagging,”,” and “far out bro.” Naturally, this was the genre he liked best and
chose to read during his presentation (as opposed to his emotional poem on Sam Cooke’s death). Com wanted his voice to be known as a humorous one. The presence of information, narrative, perception, surprise and humor were collectively found during this multigenre project, and in most cases individual writers’ voices could be heard through the use of more than one of these attributes. The context of the project itself also ensured that voice would be activated, and this was seen through the lens of Lensmire’s (2000) research.

**Lensmire (2000): “Project has something of the smell and feel of school in it”** (p. 279). If, as Lensmire proposes, voice is a project, then multigenre is the project for voice. This point was made in chapter two by comparing the multigenre project with Lensmire’s (2000) criteria for voice: appropriation, social struggle and becoming. Lensmire uses the term appropriation to convey how voice should represent a processing of cultural resources that turn them into an individual response. This could be as simple as taking someone else’s idea and making it your own as Juliet did with her story that mimicked Viorst’s or as Kira did in borrowing from Lovecraft’s vocabulary.

Appropriation is the reusing of knowledge and resources that students have already acquired. This can be a fun experience in multigenre writing where freedom abounds from use of the silly and the sublime to the careful approximation of a writing style by careful choice of language. It stands in contrast to the traditional paper that forces students to report facts directly from expository resources with little personal input.

Social struggle is the second tenant of voice as project. Lensmire (2000) names three sources of struggle and suggests that one or more may be present where voice is activated. “First is the struggle to use something old to do something new” (Lensmire,
2000, p. 282). To this end, I like to quote to students a phrase from Ecclesiastes, “There is nothing new under the sun” (The Bible). High school students naturally want to be unique, their own person. No two classes would ever dream of using the same homecoming theme. This is probably why Brooke was uncertain about cheerleading as her topic. Lenomire’s (2000) social struggle is not the social justice type, it is the inner struggle of a writer who may vacillate between originality and repetition, convention and the unconventional. Tad wanted to write about a touring musician because he hopes to be one; his paper is a combination of realism as it relates to bands and his own musings of what might be. “I wished to somehow experience what it would be like for those people, as that could potentially be me in the future in any of the bands which I have participated” (Multigenre paper, May 20, 2011).

The second aspect of social struggle is the desire to please one’s audience. The fact that most multigenre teachers include some type of presentation as part of the project guarantees that the audience will be wider than a teacher with a red pen. In this project, audience approval was seen as audience reaction during presentations. Spontaneous laughter erupted when Com read his dialogue; students chuckled when Erin read her pain poem; the applause was genuine and deep when Kira read his short story (Video tapes, May 26-27, 2011). Small audience approval was sought and obtained when students, during the course of the project, read a genre to a peer, me or Dr. Denyer, and these instances have already been noted.

The struggle to choose is the third spoke under the umbrella of social struggle. Given the myriad of genres which offer multiple voices and perspectives, the writer must choose how to portray information and be prepared to rework something when the voice
does not speak as they wished. Laura replaced a plan to include a cartoon with her thought-provoking bookmarks. This was partly due to a struggle to come up with a cartoon that fit her topic. Juliet dismissed an idea to use a song, and replaced it with a school detention hall slip stamped “Forgiven,” because it was more relevant to her everyday life. Nicole realized that a brochure was far more fitting for a paper about touring New York City than the book cover she put on her first list of genres. Not only do these changes represent the struggle to choose, they also serve as evidence that understanding of genre deepened during the multigenre process because students identified more meaningful ways to get their message across.

Lensmire’s (2000) third and final requirement of voice as project is becoming, a concept which suggests a continuum of growth. On the one end, there are no guarantees that every student will activate voice merely because they are assigned to write a multigenre paper. If the project is too challenging, and they become frustrated or overwhelmed, as Kurt did, voice will be somewhat silenced. If the audience is hostile or even uninterested, voice can be silenced. Fortunately, the school where this study took place is a close knit community where that would be unlikely to happen, and it did not. Becoming also requires students to rise above mediocrity and well-worn writing routines and aspire to new ways of self-expression. As their responses in the epilogues signified, this was the case for many.

Brooke: I never thought that one could communicate a certain topic in so many different and unique ways. Yet, I have begun to love being creative with my writing and adding uniqueness to my papers, and I hope this continues on to my required college writing.

Stewie: I thoroughly enjoyed having to come up with something different than an essay.

(Multigenre papers, May 20, 2011)
They were more than happy to give the five paragraph essay a vacation. Becoming is a wonderful opportunity, but it mandates learning new ways and moving beyond the comfortable. This is yet another reason why the teacher’s ability to scaffold the project for students is so important. Having already written two multigenre papers myself in graduate school was very helpful. Not only does this say, “If I can do it, you can do it,” it also says, “Do as I do.” Romano (2004) espouses the power of the teacher as a role model of writing. Students gleaned ideas and inspiration from my own papers as well as those of former students.

**The Power of the Verge of Engagement**

Not only is voice a desired element of student writing, we also want students to be deeply engaged in their writing because it maximizes the learning opportunity and increases the likelihood of increased self-efficacy and motivation. Interest in writing and engagement in writing are somewhat synonymous in that they share the same features. For the purpose of this research, engagement is the term used to characterize this element of the writing process. When students are engaged, they are invested in their writing; they care about vocabulary and sentence structure; they are conscious of the structure of their points and paper (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007). Verge is used here to represent the edge on which student writing often stands. Not every student or every day of writing will be engaged work. As illustrated by the case studies, some students thrived with the task (Erin and Kira) while others had occasional periods of engagement (Kurt).

It would be easy to pass off engagement as an immutable trait as if only a few students in any given class are innately endowed with a love for writing, but this is not
supported by research on engagement (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007). In reality, the classroom context has much to do with students’ engagement and their motivation toward a writing task. The multigenre project has the power to open a window on the varying levels of engagement within the classroom. This serves to deepen the teacher’s understanding of students’ needs and deepen the students’ level of engagement with writing. As Erin’s case study previously showed, the opportunity to interact with others and the freedom to change to a topic of personal interest paved the way for a deep level of engagement.

**Juliet: “I started with my reoccurring element.”** Organization was a second aspect of the multigenre project that contributed to engagement. Students who were already engaged writers did not all approach organization in the same way. For some, such as Tad, struggle was experienced when trying to get a clear mental picture of where his paper was going. He relied on this strong work ethic and tried to meet deadlines despite a lack of comfort about the overall development of the paper. “I was just writing stuff to write stuff” (Audio tape, May 9, 2011). He, too, changed his topic during the first two weeks. Eventually, he started to see that his topic was “coming along as I write the whole thing” (Video tape, April 27, 2011). His changing attitude was later reflected in his post-survey responses.

I am usually satisfied with my writing. (Pre-survey = disagree, post-survey = agree)

I generally feel free to express myself on a writing assignment. (Pre-survey = disagree, post-survey = agree)

Piper had a similar struggle, and during the third week he decided to rewrite his rationale paper as a detailed outline so that he could visualize how pieces would fit
together in a chronological order. When I noticed that many students were struggling
with this same issue, I required everyone to type a list of their genres in a planned order
and supply evidence of how they would fit together. This forced organization was
exactly what Piper had already done on his own.

Juliet demonstrated a high level of engagement due to several possible factors. She was a straight “A” student; she was methodical in her approach to schoolwork, and she really liked the creative writing class. Several days after the multigenre project was introduced, she stayed after class to talk. “I really love this class; I look forward to it all day” (Field notes, April 11, 2011). Not only did she indicate in that moment a high level of motivation, but she elevated my level of motivation as a teacher. (At the high school level that type of compliment is a rarity.) Although the school was a religious institution, Juliet was the only student who chose a topic with a Biblical basis. (While the Bible is always a welcomed theme for assignments, I do not force it upon students because that could produce negative feelings.) Juliet chose to write her paper on the Biblical view of love as expounded upon in I Corinthians 13. “Our school is lacking love. We do not know what real love is” (Video tape, April 12, 2011). She frequently expressed this sentiment while working on her paper. Juliet determined that the list of love’s attributes in I Corinthians 13:4-8 would be the basis for her topic (The Bible). This list served as her reoccurring element and her outline.

At no time in my past experience or Dr. Denyer’s, as teachers of multigenre, had we encountered a student who started with the reoccurring element. Usually that was a genre developed at the end to bring the other pieces together. Juliet demonstrated an inverted approach to organization that served her well and could be used as a future
example for classes. She tenaciously clung to a 3x5 card with her list of love’s characteristics (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

*Juliet’s Planning Card for Her Paper about Love.*

Some days she just sat with her head on the table holding her card and thinking about the direction of her paper. Hers was a quiet but profound struggle. As she began to write genres, the plan on her card underwent changes. The list remained the same, but the genres changed.

On both the pre- and post-writing survey, Juliet indicated that she is not usually satisfied with her writing. She had a tendency to struggle over every detail in an effort to get it just right. One day Juliet became very moody about her topic, and her ideas started to wander into broader territory. She told me that she was thinking about expanding to everything in the Bible about love. As I look back on it now, it appears that she was becoming discouraged due to a desire to be extremely comprehensive. At the time, I snapped a quick, “No, it’s too broad,” in reaction to her comment (Field notes, May 2, 2011). We engaged in a few minutes of awkward conversation.
Miss M: Okay, so what have you considered using for your second research piece?

Juliet: I am waiting on ideas from Pastor Andrew.

Miss M: Okay, but with all due respect to Pastor Andrew, I don’t think you are getting help from him at the rate of speed that you need… Have you considered looking on the internet to see if someone has written a sermon or outline about love?

Juliet: I’ve looked, but I can’t find anything… I don’t want to make it so close to what some else had done.

Miss M: How do you know it’s going to be before you even see it? Sometimes you talk yourself out of something that may not even exist.

(Video tape, May 2, 2011)

Juliet continued to respond negatively to suggestions, so eventually I said, “I think you need to move on,” and at the dismissal bell she left the room. I was extremely frustrated, and I assumed she was too. I thought, “That’s it; she’s mad, and nothing is resolved” (Field notes, May 2, 2011). But much to my surprise, she returned to the room several minutes later determined to work out the direction of her paper. She was carrying the 3x5 card. We talked for about fifteen minutes about her reoccurring genre and using the subject of arrogance (an opposite of love) for her second research piece. I printed out a copy of I Corinthians 13 from The Message, a modern language paraphrase of the Bible. Ultimately she used the wording from that for her reoccurring phrases which she placed in her paper in a large, purple script font. She also printed the entire chapter of I Corinthians 13 from the New International Version and included it just after the prologue. She made a Wordle (word picture) of all the phrases to conclude her paper before the epilogue. For Juliet, the multigenre experience included learning more deeply about love and learning a new way of writing.
Writing a multigenre paper has been an exciting, interesting, helpful, learning experience. I never actually thought about how many genres there are, and this paper opened my eyes. I learned that writing is not always huge endless paragraphs, but it can be little things that mean a whole lot more because of the creativity put into it. My favorite part was the learning experience; I desired to learn more about what true love is, and without writing a multigenre paper, I never would have done that. (Multigenre paper submitted May 27, 2011)

Juliet illustrated a strong self-efficacy toward writing and a high level of engagement. She was confident to the point of self-regulating her own writing; she benefitted from interaction with others but then made her own decisions. Her deep critical attention to content and her standard of excellence were signs of the highest level of engagement. For the teacher/researcher and future multigenre teachers, Juliet taught us about the possibility of pre-determining a reoccurring element and using it as a form of outlining to plan and organize the paper. While this may not work for everyone, it is certainly a possibility for the student who is confused about what to do or needs a different approach to understanding the structure of multigenre writing.

**Stewie: “I am struggling with new ideas, what to do.”** By the time students near the end of high school they should understand that writing is a process. Completing a writing assignment is not like polishing off two dozen math problems for the next day. The process requires one to chart a course of action, pursue needed information and evaluate along the way with a readiness to make changes when obstacles are encountered. Scardamalia and Bereiter (1994) observed that the writing process encourages evaluation, response and revision similar to a scientific discipline. Furthermore, if writing is to be a knowledge building experience, as it should be in school, it should incorporate multiple points of view, access to the expertise of others and an audience beyond the classroom (Scaramalia & Bereiter, 1994). All of these concepts can be found within the multigenre
experience. It is a project that requires work over a period of time, and that leads to information gathering and perpetual evaluation in order to make changes as one progresses. It facilitates multiple points of view because the writer can use many voices reflected through many genres. The unfamiliar nature of the multigenre project forces students to stretch beyond their prior knowledge to new ways of understanding writing, and this requires them to turn to others, teachers and peers for help.

Therefore, the dynamic of multigenre writing produced frequent comments in the classroom similar to Stewie’s expression of struggle. Unlike a traditional research paper where students pick a topic and plod through information in order to support a thesis statement, multigenre writing requires them to make little decisions every day. What genre should I write next? What big idea will this piece contribute to my paper? Where will it fit in my paper? Is this planned genre going to work, or should I choose a different way to express the idea? Is my paper going to have cohesion? Does my paper have a message? The fluidity of the multigenre process allowed students to change topics, genres, even the central message of their paper as they worked, and this freedom to change encouraged daily evaluation of one’s work.

The students were not always comfortable with these realities. They were used to being given an assignment and knowing exactly what to do. For some, like Kurt, the discomfort of unchartered territory was not pleasant. Other students, like Tad and Juliet, were used to academic success based on their ability to follow known rules: This is the assignment, and I will complete it by doing what I have done successfully in the past. Ultimately, they were able to adjust to the uncertainty that comes with a first time multigenre experience because they learned to accept the struggle as part of the process.
On the fourth day of class, Juliet lamented, “What is a rationale paper? What are we doing? I mean I don’t know what to do” (Audio tape, April 12, 2011).

Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev and Miller (2003) point out that “Vygotsky never assumed that learning related to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) would be easy” (p. 43). In identifying the ZDP, he wanted to draw attention to the fact that it provides indicators as to the presence of certain maturing functions that can then be targeted for meaningful intervention and interaction (Kozulin et al., 2003). Vygotsky’s ZPD (1978) can be used for two different purposes in analyzing student development. First, it serves to help identify the types of psychological functions needed to move from one age period to the next. Secondly, it can be used to identify the current state of development in relation to what is needed to transition to the next level (Kozulin et al., 2003). It is this second purpose that can be applied in the multigenre classroom.

As has already been discussed, the multigenre paper enables teachers to see where their students are as writers. Seeing this enables teachers to mediate a learning situation that takes students to the next level. The teacher serves as the More Knowledgeable Other who can scaffold the necessary information and assistance that will facilitate growth because the students are in a situation where they are not ready to perform the task independently (Vygotsky, 1978). This was especially true when 11th and 12th graders were involved in a multigenre project. By this point in their education, they had much practice in traditional research writing, and it required little guidance beyond the occasional review of procedures. A multigenre project, however, required them to operate on the verge of the known (past writing experience) and the unknown (writing in multiple genres). Comments like Juliet’s statement of uncertainty clarified this and
provided me with an occasion to take her learning to the next level.

Scaffolding during the multigenre project was not limited to the teacher-student relationship. Students turned to each other for help with vocabulary, suggestions for genres to fit subject matter and critique of finished pieces. At least one student also solicited help from a parent as was evidenced earlier in Kira’s case study when he sought the help of his mother. Kira had decided early in the project that he wanted to include a completed application form for an asylum to indicate that his story’s character, Irvine Wilson, had spent time institutionalized. He put the idea on a back burner because he knew it would require help. Eventually, he came to me about it, but our conversation did not generate much help since my medical knowledge is limited. The internet had not proven helpful since asylums no longer exist. One evening it suddenly occurred to him that his mother might be able to offer suggestions. Since Kira does not live with her, I do not know if the conversation was in person or conducted on the phone; nevertheless, the next day he arrived with a page full of notes. She had provided him with the terminology and format that could make his genre realistic. He facilitated his own learning by persevering and finding the right source of information. It was an added bonus that he made a connection with his mother in the process.

Nicole: “Mine [dialogue] is really short, but it makes its point.” The manipulation of a variety of genres shed light on the characteristics of genres that were in evidence during a multigenre project. Genres were ways of seeing things, flexible devices for rhetoric and venues for ideology. Nicole’s first genre, the required dialogue, was written creatively as an internal monologue. She based it on her first taxi ride in New York City and how the crazy driving made her feel. I looked over her shoulder
while she was typing it in class, and that was when she defended its length. It was one of many conversations that took place about genre choice. Dean (2008) makes several points related to the pedagogical challenges of genre instruction that can be connected to multigenre writing. First, students need to be able to see the ways that genres are alike and how they can differ (Dean, 2008). Perhaps the most significant of all genre talk revolved around concern about choosing what would best portray what the writer wanted to say in a particular situation. For example, having planned to write an obituary about Sam Cooke’s death, Com realized that it was not going to be an avenue for reporting the circumstances of his death.

Com: Question. The obituary never reveals like details…of, like, murder…
Miss M: You could write a news article to cover the murder.

(Audio tape, April 12, 2011)

Com’s paper was in the process of evolving from his initial interest in Cooke’s music to a focus on his death that was an unsolved murder. He correctly analyzed that an obituary is intended to serve as a death notice but does not supply readers with details as to how a death occurred. Thus, the idea of a news article was born. He gleaned the facts from internet sources and designed a page that looked exactly like the top sheet of a newspaper to fulfill his desire to cover Sam Cooke’s death from all aspects. This process required Com to consider different genres, their purposes, structure and content.

Genres do offer writers some flexibility not only in that it is possible to choose from a seemingly endless array of genres but also because writers can make rhetorical choices within a genre to fit different situations. Dialogue and poetry are two genres that offer great flexibility; this freedom becomes part of the decision-making experience in
multigenre writing. Olivia’s dialogue involved two friends in a theater waiting to see a movie; Kurt’s was two bikers discussing Harley vs. Honda; Piper’s was a phone conversation between a college recruiter and a high school student (Multigenre papers). Students sat side-by-side crafting the same genre for a myriad of contexts. Sometimes students were uncomfortable with the open-ended nature of working with multiple genres, and they would ask me questions to receive affirmation for an idea. Examples included:

Piper: I’m nervous that it [college pen slogans] will be artsy and not enough writing (Audio tape, April 12, 2011).

Com: Could I write about a single [of Sam Cooke’s music] that’s coming out like a newspaper feature (Audio tape, April 12, 2011)?

Brooke: This is a poster; I didn’t know if it was okay that I did it by hand (Audio tape, April 26, 2011).

Some conversations involved a student’s rationale and defense of a genre choice or its content. Examples included:

Olivia: I thought [referring to her dialogue]…two people in a theater waiting to see a movie (Audio tape, April 14, 2011).

Kurt: My next goal is to write a short story and make a poster (Audio tape, April 27, 2011).

Some questions were merely due to a need for clarification of requirements or the need for advice related to technical computer work. Examples included:

Kira: So, you talked about a reoccurring element. What exactly can this be (Audio tape, April 12, 2011)?

Laura: How did you make an email (Audio tape, April 27, 2011)?

Genres are also dynamic; they are adaptable to shape a context, respond to or affect a situation. Since genres can represent the way a writer thinks about the world,
they are also ideological. Laura and Juliet were two students whose papers reflected their social ideology. Laura wanted people to see the dangers of video game addiction – loss of friends, increased aggressive behavior, obsession with gaming, growing immune to horror – these concerns were the focus of several genres including a short story, a dialogue, an essay, and a poem. One of her most poignant genres was an email to a therapist.

Dear Dr. Suzie Jones,

Hi, I am a 34 year old female, and I am divorcing. I know it may sound weird that I am looking for help on such a place, but I really don’t know what to do. The reason for my divorce is very specific. My husband is addicted to computer games, and he may spend the whole day in front of a monitor. We don’t even talk normally because of his occupation with these games… (Multigenre paper, May 28, 2011)

She went on to cite credit card debt and neglected home repairs – realistic potential outcomes in an extreme case of addiction.

Juliet was genuinely concerned about how students at her school sometimes treated one another. She wrote a journal entry that enumerated unkind words and behaviors that she had witnessed among the student body. The third journal entry in the series made her point; it reviewed a chapel message in which a pastor had talked about God’s love and kindness. Both of these girls met with opposition to their viewpoints from among their peers in the class. Two boys attempted to staunchly defend video games; one was Kira whose horror story multigenre paper was partially inspired by a video game. While not as vocal, some students did not share Juliet’s view that the school was lacking in love although they politely listened to her observations.
With the exception of required elements – prologue, dialogue, poetry, research summaries and epilogue – which were entities proven to enhance the writing experience, all other genres choices were made by the individual students. This element of choice facilitated analysis and synthesis of information and provided a variety of lenses for seeing information related to the topic. At the beginning, students were befuddled about multigenre writing and simply prepared a required list of genres based on what seemed familiar, fun or interesting to them. Some thought was put into how genres might be appropriate for the topic but only in a cursory way. This is evidenced by the fact that 10 out of 13 students switched to a different genre or added a genre during the project, although 2 students (Com and Stewie) made changes because their original rationale paper did not include enough genres.

Danielle added an extra short story at the end of her paper, and her decision to do so represented growth as a writer. She wrote a gripping story about her main character being stalked by her former boyfriend. It was a great addition to her paper because it added an unexpected twist. Also, she showed real improvement in her sentence structure, grammar and use of dialogue as compared to the first few pieces that she submitted for a grade. It was at this point that Danielle really began to analyze her work in light of how to make it all fit together. The fact that she added a dramatic story to an otherwise informative paper showed great creativity. Two other students inserted a surprising piece near the end of their papers. These changes were also analyzed previously as evidence of surprise – a component of voice. Tad’s musician wrote a letter resigning from his traveling band. It was unexpected but served as a thoughtful conclusion to his paper. He later explained that he wanted to demonstrate his understanding of the difficult
relationships which can exist among band members.

Piper surprised himself with a short story about his character leaving for college and saying good-bye to his family. His three pages with a small font and single-spacing actually made it one of the longest genres anyone wrote. The story brought tears to my eyes as I read it and recalled my own emotional departure for college. During his presentation, Piper admitted that his satirical look at college recruitment took a turn that even surprised him at the end. “It started off really funny, and it kind of took this weird emotional turn. And it wound up being kind of somber at the end. That’s kind of like the big turning point of the thing…” (Video tape, May 24, 2011). During the course of writing his paper, Piper, a soon-to-graduate senior, moved from a jaded attitude toward college recruitment to the sober realization he was about to step into the world on his own. Murray (in Newkirk, 2009) understood this phenomenon because he said, “I hear voices from my students that they have never heard from themselves” (p. 153). Piper heard a voice he had never heard before. This evolving experience also illustrates how genres can provide a variety of lenses for seeing the world and a variety of voices for expressing oneself. Piper saw college recruitment through a cynical lens but leaving home through an emotional, even painful one. His voice included stress, humor, frustration, and nostalgia, all the things we would expect a senior to feel.

Genre understanding can grow during a multigenre project as students see the way genres differ, the flexibility of rhetoric with genres and the potential for the presence of ideology. Students can come to understand the value of analyzing how to best portray their written message through genre choice and how using a variety of genres allows them to see the world with different lenses and voices. In future writing assignments,
students should have the ability to see ways of communicating beyond the formal five
paragraph essay. I would argue that once you have written a multigenre paper the
awareness of genre potential will always be with you. Hopefully, the students will find
ways to slip creativity and even humor into their future writing (as I have in this paper)
even if it is of a more traditional variety. The use of dialogue, poetry, perhaps even
artwork can engage their future readers and brighten the day of a proofreading-weary
teacher.

The Power of Victory

I hear voices from my students they have never heard from themselves. I find
they are authorities on subjects they think ordinary…They follow language to see
where it will lead them, and I follow them following language. It is a matter of
faith, faith that my students have something to say and a language in which to say

I could never hope to summarize the multigenre experience better than Donald
Murray’s (1979) description in his article, The Listening Eye: Reflections on the Writing
Conference. Given the wide open latitude to self-select a topic of personal interest, my
students did prove to be experts on the ordinary from touring New York City to Harley
motorcycles. Through the use of multiple genres, they used language in a new way and
saw where it led them, sometimes in unexpected directions. And, undertaking a
multigenre project required faith, the faith that an unconventional writing task can
produce conventional results sometimes beyond what traditional writing offers. Success
may be the most powerful motivator of all, but it cannot be fully realized until one tackles
an unfamiliar, difficult task and accomplishes something they never realized they were
capable of doing. It is the euphoria one feels when crossing the finish line of a first 5K
race. Adrenaline is pumping, and you are so proud of your accomplishment that your
place among 600 runners is not remotely important. Some students will never exhibit outward enthusiasm after completing a challenging writing assignment; they may not view any academic pursuit with positive emotion. However, in this project, Kira’s fist pumping euphoria more than makes up for the more reserved students. A tour through students’ comments in their epilogues confirms that he was not alone.

Com: I enjoyed writing about him [Sam Cooke] as well as the multigenre paper experience all together. It was relatively more interesting and creative than your typical five-page essay.

Brooke: Writing this paper has grown my interest in writing. I never thought that one could communicate a certain topic in so many different and unique ways…I have begun to love being creative…I hope this continues in to my required college writing.

Olivia: Now, because this experience was so fulfilling and rewarding, I can see myself writing multigenre papers in my spare time.

(Multigenre papers, May 20, 2011)

The first way that success can be measured is in these finish line statements which indicate that the multigenre experience was interesting, enjoyable and an opportunity to be creative. These statements also show that students are anticipating the next “race” – future writing tasks and multigenre papers. Personally, I can contrast these responses with the ones typically seen when my Freshman English students complete their science fair research papers. I congratulate them, and like a cheerleader, I try to whip up a celebratory atmosphere. Unfortunately, many students can only muster up a sigh of relief. They plop the paper down next to their exhibit as if they have just rid themselves of the most miserable task of the year. With rare exception there is no pride in their writing or sense of accomplishment. They groaned when the project was announced, and they groaned when it was finished.
**Success as seen in voice and motivation.** Success can also be measured by the signs of activation of voice and increased self-efficacy and motivation. The purpose of this research was to gather and analyze data as evidence of these desired writing outcomes with the multigenre paper, and that has clearly been the case. Voice was activated, perhaps not in every genre written by every student, but certainly at some point in every paper. The provisos for motivation – choice, challenge, control, collaboration, constructing meaning, and consequences – were woven into the open-ended project and seen in individual outcomes. In a sense motivation is not proven until tested, and this testing must come as a response to the next writing assignment that these students are given. Completing the multigenre paper at the end of the year is both a curse and a blessing. Without a doubt everyone struggled at times to stay on task with summer vacation drawing near, but the momentum that many experienced after completion of the project should serve the 10 seniors, now graduates, well as they enter college. In her presentation, Nicole showed anticipatory signs of success in college.

I learned that I a lot of time jump ahead of the game more than I need to which I’m probably going to be thankful for in college. I actually was ahead through most of this project and it surprised me that I was so much farther ahead than some other people were…I was getting work done faster than I was expected to…so that really gave me confidence in myself and confidence for the future.

(Transcript, May 24, 2011)

Nicole measured success in terms of acquiring confidence in her ability to plan and execute a long term assignment in timely fashion. As a long time teacher in a small school, I look forward to these students returning for visits during holiday breaks, and I will be certain to ask about their future writing experiences.
Success and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be elusive during the teenage years in any given situation. When I was in high school, self-efficacy never made an appearance in gym or sports. Fortunately, athletics was not foundational to my future success as an adult. Writing is a skill that no one can do without. Email, business letters, thank you notes, resumes, applications, announcements, presentations…the list of genres used in every day adult life would probably astound us were we to keep track of them. This is what motivates English teachers to drill grammar, spelling and mechanics; they know that successful people have mastered the fundamentals of written communication. But mastery of grammar and self-confidence in one’s writing ability are two different things. It is possible to know the parts of speech and still not believe you are a good writer. Worse yet, it is possible to face future academic life dreading every writing assignment that comes your way.

I wanted to insure that my students were on the path to future success, and the best means was imbuing them with self-belief in themselves as writers. They will need self-efficacy to the point that it gives them a strong sense of personal competence which enables them to apply effort and persistence to the next writing task (Pajares & Valiante, 2006). A sense of self-efficacy can serve students well in future assignments not only because they will have more confidence, but they will also know how to keep their confidence high. The multigenre project taught students the valuable roles of self, others and emotions in maintaining a high level of self-efficacy. When students believe that they are capable of producing the outcomes that they desire, they have an incentive to work hard (Pajares & Valiante, 2006). When they understand the value of involving the knowledge and opinions of others in their work, they will be more likely to interact
socially about academics in the future. When they have experienced a high level of success with a particular task, like the multigenre project, they will feel less stress and more confidence when the next big writing assignment is given. Self-efficacy and motivation can become habits of thinking that will serve them throughout their lives (Pajares & Valiante, 2006).

Success and the multigenre paper. In this project, success in terms of activation of voice and increased self-efficacy and motivation was both self-reported by the students and evident in their work. Several factors seem to have contributed to success. First, some students determined to do well as their usual approach to school work. It is not insignificant that several top academic students (Tad, Piper and Kara) were in the class. Their desire to maintain a high GPA and be class leaders academically motivated them to work hard on every assignment. Secondly, some students drew deeply from a well of personal experience. Brooke had been a cheerleader for five years. Kurt had a memorable experience riding a Harley. Nicole loved New York City because she had spent a weekend there with her father. These students had deep emotional ties to their topics that contributed to their willingness to expend effort. Thirdly, some students dug deeply into a topic of personal interest. Olivia loved *The Hunger Games* series and Danielle dreamed of becoming a writer someday. All of these are legitimate reasons for writing a successful paper, and were it not for the freedom of topic selection, these situations may not have existed. The final reason for success is the most inspiring of all. Some students dazzled themselves and all of us by embracing the multigenre project with the complete abandon that resulted in an amazing experience. At the time of this writing, Kira has already carried his new self-efficacy into a college writing course, and hopefully
he will publish a book someday. Erin is continuing on with her senior year and seems to exude more self-confidence in all her schoolwork. Success here is defined as an increased self-efficacy and motivation toward writing; several reasons may have contributed to it, but almost every student indicated some measure of success.

For those who were less successful, both academically in their grades and in their level of self-efficacy and motivation, it is important to examine and acknowledge the possible contributing factors. Some students generally lacked motivation toward schoolwork, and this was compounded at the end of the year. At least one, Kurt, failed to be inspired by the multigenre format. Danielle had a positive attitude and positive feeling about the project, but she still has much to learn about grammar, sentence structure and writing. Despite these negative issues, the multigenre project gave students an opportunity to write in a way they had never before experienced. I can fully relate to Donald Murray when he said:

Now that I’ve been a teacher this long I’m beginning to learn how to be a student. My students are teaching me their subjects. Sometimes I feel as if they are paying for an education, and I’m the one getting the education. I learn so many things…The content is theirs, but so is the experience of writing – the process through which they discover their meaning. My students are writers (Murray in Newkirk, 2009, p. 155).
Chapter Six

A Consideration of the Ramifications for Current Teaching and Future Research

Lessons Learned from this Study

Although as the teacher/researcher I was present in the classroom and involved in everything that took place, the process of data analysis was still eye-opening. When you put your own teaching and your own students under the microscope of research, it is amazing what you notice. Some days as a teacher you are deep in the zone, with your game face on, blazing through material you want to cover, and you fail to fully notice the disengaged students. Later, watching the video tapes recorded for data collection, I found myself wondering how I could have failed to notice a girl sitting in the front row daydreaming while repetitively twisting her hair around her finger and two boys exchanging looks and whispers that were clearly not about writing ideas. Listening to video and audio tapes also forced me to confront my teaching style. Since I taught speech to this same group during the first semester, I found myself analyzing my own style and habits as a speaker. Why did I repeat the same sentence of instructions three times? Why did I verbally hound a student I perceived to be lazy when others were not much better? Why did I neglect to have significant conversations with the students who were habitually on task? These were moments of analysis which will no doubt affect my future teaching of this project even though it is not being officially considered in this research.

Beyond my foibles of style, an intense look at the multigenre project forced me to see what procedures had been ineffective in accomplishing my goals, common struggles that I had failed to treat as significant and spontaneous instructions that really hit home
with the students. These observations will also impact my future teaching strategies. For example, next year I will be guiding students through the topic selection process with a different approach borne of these discoveries. My interest questionnaire which required students to list 12 categories of personal interest was not fully completed by anyone (see Appendix H). I wrote it from the viewpoint of an adult not a teenager, and some questions which no one answered will be eliminated. What did prove to be helpful for many students was an inadvertent comment I made designed to emphasize the nature of the writing process. “You have to think about your multigenre paper all the time, every day, whenever you are not mentally focused on something else” (Transcript, April 15, 2011). Hearing myself, I realized that I expected my high school juniors and seniors to treat their paper like a mini dissertation. Fortunately, what they actually heard was, “If I am supposed to think about my topic all the time, I will write about something I already think about all the time.” For Stewie, that was Harley motorcycles and his dream of ownership. For Olivia, it was *The Hunger Games*, a contemporary three book series she had just finished reading. For Brooke, it was cheerleading and the fact that something which had defined much of her life for five years was coming to an end with graduation. Those who identified a passion and made it their topic tended to feel positively about the multigenre experience. Olivia put it this way: “I was able to write about ideas that I enjoyed. I love books and movies, but I never get the chance to express that in my schoolwork. If I could, I would connect *The Hunger Games* or any one of my other entertainment obsessions, to every class” (Transcript, May 25, 2011).

What happens in a high school classroom when students engage in a multigenre writing project? This qualitative descriptive practitioner research study used an inverted
pyramid approach to examine the data through a series of analysis beginning with an in
depth look at multiple sources for each person, moving toward the establishment of
themes and finally eventually re-examining each person in light of the themes which
emerged. The lens of constructivism was used to analyze and interpret the data – what
was seen, heard, and written in the classroom. Long before I nurtured the idea of
officially gathering and analyzing data during a multigenre project, I was one of
thousands of English teachers in the U.S. with a passion for equipping students with the
tools they need to be writers. The multigenre paper found me when I was a graduate
student. I know firsthand that it can be confusing, frustrating, and a bit scary. “What am
I supposed to be doing?”

In my first multigenre experience, my classmates and I brainstormed genres; we
read a sample paper (the one I had my students read); we discussed topic possibilities; we
researched. I still remember how unsure I felt about the paper I was supposed to be
writing in multiple genres. And then I found myself in a peer group with Sarah and Will.
Sarah taught kindergarten; Will taught middle school language arts, and I taught high
school. We quickly discovered that not only were we representative of the different age
divisions in school, we had different ways of synthesizing information and writing.
Every day in class we discussed our individual topics, issues in the field of literacy that
were significant to us. As we listened to each other and became more comfortable
sharing, we began to offer suggestions. These small group conferences often yielded
better genre ideas, and we were permitted to make changes as our creativity picked up
speed.

Sarah and Will each brought an added dimension to my paper. Sarah often
questioned my motives and direction which forced me to evaluate how I could better explain my topic and express myself. “Hey, you could show that in a chart.” Will was a master at visualization; he could produce a chart to illustrate anything, and his input went straight into our papers. Sarah and Will fed me ideas that I never would have thought of on my own. We would return the next day with something written that we could read aloud in our group. I had not even completed my own first multigenre paper before I knew I wanted to do a multigenre project with my class. Having experience now on both sides of the multigenre process – as a writer and a teacher, I consider myself to be one of its greatest fans. While I would never suggest total elimination of the traditional research paper from high school curriculum, our multimedia generation can creatively and effectively express itself in multigenre writing. Now, I have taken my zeal for multigenre writing to the next level by exposing it to the rigors of data analysis. Let’s reconsider the research questions in light of this data.

**In what ways does a multigenre project help students find and activate their voice?** The short answer is through freedom of choice, mediated learning, and interaction with others. As we have seen, the multigenre project puts a huge amount of choice into the hands of the writer. First, they can choose their own topic – something that is interesting to them personally, something they may already know about, something that has real world significance to them. Then, they can choose their own genres in which to write a single cohesive paper. As they work, they are also free to make changes. The topic can be changed; the intended genres can change; the theme and focus of the paper can change. In fact, change is encouraged because it signifies that the students are assimilating new information, thinking about it, listening to the ideas of others and then
growing in their own understanding of writing. Freedom is so fundamental to the multigenre project that some of the ways students could be autonomous were barely even noted. For example, they decided when and where they could do their best writing. Some students used the classroom to work, others used it to think and plan. They made decisions about the order in which to write genres, how to use them to disseminate information, and where to place them within the paper. At the end, they decided how to enhance their paper with color and graphics followed by how to present the information to their class.

With the exception of a few required pieces of writing, the students were completely independent to make their own choices about genres. This freedom allowed them to be who they really are. One person was interested in Harleys while another worried about video game addiction. This freedom allowed them to write in many voices— all their own. In one piece, Piper was more than a little frustrated with college recruiters. In another, he was deeply sentimental about leaving his younger brother to go to college. There is a cathartic element to writing a multigenre paper because it often takes you to places that you did not know existed deep inside yourself. These are the voices that needed to be heard, and they were.

The writer’s voice was also activated through mediated learning. Students were taken from what they knew to what they needed to learn through the unique scaffolding process that is characteristic of a multigenre writing workshop. As Lensmire (1998) said, voice is a project. It is awakened in the classroom through both a pedagogical approach and a writing workshop atmosphere. Multigenre writing is the project for voice. First, students had to struggle. This was something new. The waters were murky at times.
What is a rationale paper? How is this reoccurring element supposed to work? They were swimming in the deep end with no life preserver, and they had to look to More Knowledgeable Others, such as Dr. Denyer and me as their teachers, to help them to the safety of new understanding, new ways of looking at themselves, their writing and even their world. This required them to analyze and improve their work. Even parents were involved in offering information from their areas of expertise. Minilessons also taught them new skills and new genres.

Finally, voice was activated through interaction with others. Students shared what worked for them in an effort to motivate their peers. “I wrote my poem in the middle of the night.” “Yeah, you have to be in just the right mood for poetry.” Students also helped others with writing suggestions. “You should write a poem about pain. It sounds like an emotional experience.” Genres were added, discarded, and rewritten as a result of the advice of peers and the teacher. Ultimately, themes grew and changed due to talk within the classroom. “Are you trying to dispel stereotypes about bikers?” What started out as a fun exploration of a personal interest became a podium for teaching others about acceptance.

To anyone who has never spent a long evening clutching a red pen and wading through a stack of dreary, lifeless essays, it may not seem all that significant or complicated to foster an environment where voices are engaging, humorous, and even surprising. After all, no one has trouble expressing themselves to the driver who didn’t notice the light turned green or the server who cannot seem to get the food order right. But those wonderfully youthful voices that scream at the pep rally and laugh in the hallway can be silenced with a writing assignment. “Here we go again.” “I hate note
cards!” Multigenre writing is not easy or simple, but it is creative, interesting and even fun because when we are finished we see ourselves and others do too.

**In what ways is self-efficacy evident throughout the multigenre project?**

Self-efficacy is an internal aspect of writing that manifests itself in many external ways. It is a student’s “self-perceptions of their own writing confidence” (Pajares & Valiante, 2006, p. 158). As we have seen, self-efficacy is formed through the ways in which students interpret information within the domain of writing. The most influential source is a student’s previous experiences with writing. If the experience is perceived as successful, then self-efficacy increases, if it is perceived as unsuccessful, then self-efficacy declines, and this is carried into the next writing task. Of the 13 participants in this study, only one expressed somewhat negative feelings about multigenre writing. On the contrary, 10 students specifically described the experience with positive expressions such as “fun,” “creative,” “fulfilling,” and “new love for writing”. Additionally, several students described having new feelings of confidence about their writing and writing ability.

Self-efficacy was apparent not only in the specific verbal responses that students gave but also in the ways they acted and reacted throughout the project. Social interaction with the teacher and peers served to encourage and empower. The goal of all interaction was to make one another better writers. Students were sincere in their praise and their advice. They helped one another with vocabulary, genre choices, proofreading and putting the final papers together. Sometimes a student felt a high level of self-efficacy toward a particular piece of work to the point of not heeding advice for change.
Nevertheless, the multigenre project itself generated an atmosphere in which it was understood that help was always available, and it would be given respectfully. Never in the eight weeks of the project did I hear someone mock another’s work, belittle another’s opinion or degrade another’s writing. A positive atmosphere in the classroom reduced stress and generated the unspoken message that everyone was a successful writer no matter what their ability level, topic or writing style.

The real point of self-efficacy is that students develop a self-confidence which can be carried into the next writing task. Dewey (1938) challenged educators that growth in a particular direction (such as self-efficacy) has an impact on attitudes and habits which opens up opportunities for further development in other areas. “Every experience affects for better or worse the attitudes which help decide the quality of further experiences” (Dewey, 1938, p. 37). This is what makes a growth in self-efficacy toward writing so significant. The presence of self-efficacy means that students will value the task, apply successful strategies to complete it, and take pride in their work. It is highly unlikely that the next major paper these students write will be one that is open to the use of multiple genres, but that is not necessary in order for their newly revived self-efficacy to motivate them. It is more likely a feeling of, “If I could write a multigenre paper successfully, I can do this.” No matter what the parameters of their next assignment, they will be equipped to organize, make decisions, synthesize information, evaluate their work and even seek the help of More Knowledgeable Others.

In what ways is motivation evident throughout the multigenre project?

Motivation and lengthy writing assignments seem like an oxymoron to the average student. With the exception of a few who are academically-driven, the trained
response is one of negativity and dread. Danielle arrived for class every day with a deep sense of motivation. She wanted to be a writer, and this was the place to do it. She loved the image of herself as a writer and did not let discouragement get in the way. Her motivation allowed her to benefit from the power of the intervention of the teacher and others who could help make her work better. Juliet stayed after class on the fourth day of the project to say, “This is my favorite class; I look forward to it all day.” While these two exhibited motivation from the beginning, it was a growing process for the rest of the students. Multigenre writing fostered growth because it provided them with a sense of involvement, curiosity and social exchange (Guthrie, 2003). Students were motivated to come to class because they knew they could interact with one another, have a good time, be creative with their writing (through genre choice, use of vocabulary and the freedom of expression) and write something that was interesting and meaningful to them.

The multigenre project created contexts every day in which motivation could be ignited, and over time it grew into a fire that burned brightly as choice, challenge, control, collaboration, construction of meaning, and consequences were added (Turner & Paris, 2005). Choice was provided in topic and genre selection. Challenge was present because students were doing something new. Control was shifted to the students who made daily decisions about the direction of their writing. Collaboration was made possible with daily talk designed to generate ideas and promote confidence. Meaning was constructed due to the open-ended nature of the task. Consequences were the evaluative moments designed to make better writers not cause feeling of failure.

Some of the specific work within the multigenre project also contributed to increased self-efficacy and motivation. Several students had positive experiences with
poetry writing that made them feel like successful writers. They were motivated by the outcome of their work. Brooke said, “I didn’t realize how much I like writing poems until I read it.” Nicole smiled shyly when I returned her poem to her and told her how much I liked it. Stewie admitted to feeling like one of the great poets he studied in AP English when not everyone immediately understood the meaning of his poem. Writing dialogue also proved to be motivating because students could incorporate their own personalities and sense of humor. Com made us laugh with his use of dialect, and Kurt entertained with biker lingo. When students received a positive response from their audience it was motivating. Students saw through the multigenre project that writing could be a creative form of self-expression, and it restored their sense of its value and meaning.

How does multigenre writing support learning and understanding of genre?

We must navigate a barrage of written communication every day in order to be successful. For this reason, teachers recognize the need to provide genre instruction that includes what the genre is and appropriate uses for it. Teaching genre in a regular classroom context can be difficult because it does not often come up normally (Dean, 2008). Traditional teaching within the context of language arts’ classes typically offers analysis for fostering the ability to recognize particular genres but falls short on practice in writing them which would bridge the instruction to real world experience. This involves facilitating opportunities for students to make decisions about genres which is a unique aspect of the multigenre project.

Genre is embedded within the name multigenre, but this alone does not guarantee that students will have an experience that constitutes learning and understanding of
genres. It is the practical application of genres accompanied by the daily decision-making while writing one’s paper that fosters real learning and understanding of genres. When Nicole (whose paper was about a trip to New York City) abandoned her plans to create a book cover and designed a brochure for tourists instead, she demonstrating understanding of genre. Multigenre writing is not just about the quality of genres but also students’ appropriate and effective use of them (Romano, 2000; Putz, 2006). When Erin creatively wrote a list of qualities for softball players and added it to the end of her prologue, we discussed how it could be more effectively made into the reoccurring elements between her other genres. She learned the value of manipulating genres in order to produce a more effective message. The same was true when Juliet rewrote a journal entry into a much more powerful and engaging short story.

Multigenre writing is “flexible but not arbitrary” (Larson, 2008, p. 188). It stresses critical analysis as the result of researching and determining how to present information from multiple perspectives. Laura’s paper on video game addiction included the voices of gamers as well as those who were witnesses to the negative impact on friends and family. Multigenre writing also addresses creativity (through freedom of choice and expression). Genres offer options, and creativity is encouraged when students consider the purposes behind their genre options. Tad discarded plans for a classified ad and a concert ticket, preferring to write a reflective narrative and an additional poem to express his ideas. Keeping genres and context as closely tied as possible provides for the acquisition of literacy learning (Dean, 2008). This means that as student understanding of genre grew, they developed the ability to match particular genres to what they wanted to say. Transfer also occurred with the conscious deliberate application of previous
knowledge related to genres such as the short story and poetry both of which are
emphasized in English classes.

Finally, the struggle related to making decisions about genre allowed me as the
teacher to see where my students were as writers. In order for this to occur, the teacher
must have the courage to face “blank students worried by their blankness” (Murray in
Newkirk & Miller, 2009, p. 18). Teachers must allow students to find their own subjects,
forms and language. As a multigenre teacher, I saw their strategies for making decisions
and organizing themselves. I saw the ways in which they sought help from others in
order to make their work better. I saw their engagement with text as they considered
what they had written and what they should do next. I saw their emerging sense of self-
efficacy and motivation toward writing as they saw their papers come together and
presented their topics to the class. Multigenre writing is more than a cute idea cut from a
teachers’ magazine to use on a rainy day. Multigenre writing will transform a classroom
where the cloud of too much research writing is threatening to choke the life out of young
writers who should be discovering the joy of finding their voice and setting it free on
paper.

Contributions to the Field of Writing

As was seen in the literature review, much has already been written on the subject
of multigenre writing – how to guide students through the process and what outcomes can
be expected. This research study has endeavored to make direct connections between the
research on writing instruction and the multigenre experience. Multigenre writing is not
merely another gimmicky method designed to perk up students who view writing as
drudgery. It is a systematic approach to writing instruction that has its roots in social constructivism and has the potential to activate voice and increase self-efficacy and motivation in student writers. Given the impact of this open-ended writing task on both classroom instruction and student experience, it is an important pedagogy in the field of writing instruction.

This research illustrates the significance of a teacher being able to see firsthand, on a daily basis, who the students are as writers – what their skills levels are, what their struggles are and even what they are thinking and feeling. Seeing your students as writers enables the teacher to better scaffold classroom instruction. For the students’ part, evidence has been presented to show that multigenre writing does have the potential to activate student voice, increase self-efficacy and motivation and aid in the understanding and use of various genres. Multigenre writing projects can create a positive feeling of enjoyment, creativity and accomplishment. Students may be reawakened to the freedom of self-expression and the sense of personal fulfillment that is a result. Hopefully, this research will inspire more teachers to incorporate multigenre writing projects in their classrooms, not as a replacement for the traditional research paper but as an avenue of expanding the students’ writing experiences and opening the window on a new perspective toward student writing.

**Recommendations for Future Multigenre Projects**

In the multigenre classroom, I, as the teacher/researcher will make some changes in subsequent multigenre undertakings as a result of holding my own teaching under the microscope of research. Lipstein and Renninger (2007) have taught me that it might be
more effective to form teacher-assigned peer conferencing groups with students of the same level of writing engagement in the same group. In this study, I did what most teachers do and put higher students with lower ones. By grouping students together who have similar needs, I may increase the likelihood that peers will share more with one another because they have the same needs and concerns. Struggling writers will not feel intimidated to offer suggestions because a more accomplished writer is in their midst. This is a lesson that can benefit all writing teachers.

Initially, I wanted to add some new elements to my project as a result of having read much literature during the past year; however, time did not permit the realization of this goal. The extra burden of setting up recording devices and transcribing eliminated the possibility of new pursuits. In the future, I would like to require end notes. This is a genre that students in my classes probably have never used, yet it is espoused by other teachers of multigenre. Larson (2008) wrote a multigenre paper to answer questions about using multigenre projects, and she used end notes to give the references that would normally have been part of the text. Some teachers require end notes as a means for students to track the nonfictional sources which contributed to their fictional writing.

To come full circle with the experience of writing in multiple genres, I had planned to require that students choose a completed piece and rewrite it in another genre. While these rewritten pieces may or may not have been included in the final papers, it would have been a good challenge that illustrated how genre choice affects the voice and effectiveness of writing. For example, a short story transformed into a poem says something completely different. Students would also have had the experience of comparing two genres to determine similarities and differences. Perhaps they would
even have discovered that a genre written another way was more interesting and powerful than what they wrote originally. It is always challenging to get students to understand the value of revision. In the future, this may prove to be a fun way to see how rewriting improves one’s message.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The nature of a multigenre project makes it an ideal fit for qualitative research. Many sources of data such as field notes, audio and video tapes, questionnaires, surveys and student writing, provided a significant variety of information for triangulation. Ideally, however, this study could have also included an element of quantitative data analysis from the results produced by the pre- and post-writing surveys. A number of factors may have contributed to why the survey results did not lend themselves to quantitative analysis at this time. The researcher was inexperienced in this type of data collection; therefore, the structure of the survey may have affected the lack of evidence. The students may not have understood the need to refer to past, traditional writing experiences when answering pre-survey questions as opposed to responding to the post-survey based on their immediate experience having completed a multigenre paper. Additionally, the post-survey was administered on the last day of school for the students who were seniors. It can be assumed that they may not have been fully focused on answering the questions with thoughtful consideration. It is also possible that teenagers may not be likely to change their responses right after a project has concluded. Rather than attempt to make much out of little real and meaningful data, the survey results were only considered as an element of the qualitative data in this study.
The features and benefits of a multigenre projects cannot be easily paired with test results as is the case in other studies, but, in the future, researchers may develop a more effective survey with better questions and different phases of implementation. Pajares and Valiante (2006) have suggested that instruments could be developed to measure self-efficacy asking students to respond to questions which would judge their confidence level to get a particular letter grade. Also, a longitudinal study which encompasses multiple years, classes, or even schools could broaden the validity of multigenre data analysis and perhaps provide quantitative results as well. This might also enable future researchers to investigate whether participation in a multigenre writing experience improves the writing score on high stakes testing such as the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT), SAT or ACT.

Although not a dimension of this study, the multigenre project definitely has a connection to the use of educational technology. Students used Word daily, and along the way there were opportunities to teach new techniques or usage of lesser known items on the tool bar. Due to the freedom for creativity, computer-generated and enhanced genres were in evidence in all projects. From the simple use of color, fonts, borders, and clip art to more complex designs such as newspapers and diagrams, students relied on computer technology throughout the project. A desire to add creative elements enabled some students to draw upon prior knowledge of design programs such as PhotoShop while requiring others to learn how to scan and edit images or electronically create something from scratch. Future studies could examine how technology adds breadth to the variety of genres which can be used to communicate information in a multigenre paper. Other teachers have developed multimedia multigenre projects, and little to no research has been done to investigate the educative value of incorporating multimedia.
Possible Future Research Questions

Since multigenre writing only emerged on the classroom scene a little over a decade ago, many educators are still unaware of this writing pedagogy. I hope that this paper and future research will serve to spread the word about its value and motive more teachers to institute it as part of their curriculum. Very little research has been conducted to connect multigenre writing to what we know about writing instruction. A wide open field of opportunity exists for future researchers. Here are a few possibilities which could be explored.

1. Is there a measurable difference in self-efficacy and motivation on pre- and post-writing surveys as a result of engaging in a multigenre project?

2. Do students report a tendency to incorporate more than one genre into research papers written for college after having completed a multigenre project in high school?

Conclusion

Much has been said, much has been proven about the benefits of multigenre writing projects. In the end, “seeing is really believing” when it comes to multigenre writing. You must try it as a teacher before it is possible to fully understand how it can transform a classroom, and you must write a multigenre paper yourself before you can truly realize its transforming power. The following excerpt concludes this paper exactly as it concluded a multigenre paper written by one of the participants. There is power through vision, variety, verse, voice, verge of engagement and victory awaiting both teacher and student, writer and audience when the window is thrown open to multigenre writing.

202
Using multigenre writing was the most enjoyable writing experience I have ever had. It allowed me to show my creative nature and express my personality much better than in a traditional research paper. It reminded me that writing is not a chore or something you do for an assignment; it is an art (Nicole, Multigenre paper, May 20, 2011).


Mungons, C. (2011, June 18). Interview by Renee L. Mungons [Email].


Appendix A

Pre- and Post-Writing Survey

Name ______________________

Writing Survey

*Please indicate the extent to which each statement is true of you as it relates to your previous writing experiences.*

| |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| I enjoy doing a writing assignment. | | | | |
| I discuss the content of my writing with classmates. | | | | |
| I am motivated to write when others around me are working. | | | | |
| I am usually satisfied with my writing. | | | | |
| I generally feel the freedom to express myself on writing assignments. | | | | |
| I find class discussion helpful for generating ideas about my writing. | | | | |
| I gain new ideas and ways of thinking about my writing by interacting with others. | | | | |
| I usually give my best effort toward writing tasks. | | | | |
| I feel restricted when my teacher assigns the topic. | | | | |
| I feel free to express myself even when the writing assignment must conform to specific requirements. | | | | |
| I enjoy the opportunity to express myself in writing. | | | | |
**Please indicate the extent to which each statement is true of you.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I generally feel optimistic about starting a new writing assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My attitude toward writing assignments has not changed over time.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tend to view research writing as drudgery.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see the value in doing writing assignments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually begin writing assignments as soon as they are given.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it easy to break a big writing task into daily pieces of work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I procrastinate on writing assignments and end up doing most of the work at the last minute.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed writing more when I was younger than I do now.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I look forward to classes that I know will involve writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My attitude toward writing is affected by how others in the class react.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My motivation toward writing is influenced by the attitudes of my classmates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Only the directions changed when this survey was reissued post-writing so that students would relate their answers to the multigenre project.
Appendix B

Sample of Discourse Chunking from Transcription Notebook

Wednesday, April 27, 2011
Group Meetings ~ Audio 6:48 minutes
2:01
Piper: My prologue really picked up speed toward the end.
Tad: I found myself using a lot of higher order words for a change. (Danielle and Nicole agree.)
2:37
Piper: I’m running into a wall where I don’t see how I am going to make it flow, but that will come.
Tad: My biggest concern about the MG paper: I’m the kind of person who likes to get everything done at once... I don’t have a coherent story line...
2:59
Danielle: I already have like the story line in my head.
Piper: I don’t. I’ve got my list of genres.
Tad discusses flow.
3:17
Danielle: What are you doing for a reoccurring element?
Piper answers. That will help a lot. I would like it to be reasonably flowy without them.
## Table D1: Process of Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1: Person by Person</th>
<th>Coding and synthesis of data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps of analysis undertaken</strong></td>
<td>Made notes for each student using initial themes which were elements of the task:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Watched all video tapes and listen to all audio tapes</td>
<td>✓ Topic selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Read contents of student’s folder</td>
<td>✓ Genre selection and work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Review student’s multigenre paper and grading rubric</td>
<td>✓ Poetry writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Read answers to progress questionnaire</td>
<td>✓ Reoccurring element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Read and compare pre- and post-writing survey responses</td>
<td>✓ Self-efficacy and motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 2: By Themes</th>
<th>Coding and synthesis of data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps of analysis taken</strong></td>
<td>✓ Topic selection:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Reviewed data by themes gleaned from Round 1 of analysis</td>
<td>✓ Created codes for types of papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonfiction: topical, story, satire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiction: story, based on literature or movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Noted process and speed with which topic was selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Who changed topics and why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Genre selection:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Developed codes for aspects of genre selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Poetry:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Developed codes for aspects of writing and feelings about poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Coded new aspects:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ How students organized themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Genre read for presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ How talk about writing evolved and changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Developed new categories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Fun, creativity and choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Put together beginnings of an outline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### ROUND 3: By Presentations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps of analysis taken</th>
<th>Coding and synthesis of data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢Reviewed each participant’s presentation</td>
<td>◗Noted comments made about the multigenre writing experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>video tape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ROUND 4: By Specific Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps of analysis taken</th>
<th>Coding and synthesis of data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢Reviewed audio tapes from April 27 and</td>
<td>◗Added pertinent details to transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 9 to take a deeper look at struggle and</td>
<td>◗Developed a preliminary outline to reflect major constructs and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flow</td>
<td>primary themes from data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢Reviewed literature related to struggle,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-efficacy, motivation and genre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢Added pertinent details to transcripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢Developed a preliminary outline to reflect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>major constructs and primary themes from data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ROUND 5: By Specific, Determined Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps of analysis taken</th>
<th>Coding and synthesis of data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢Reviewed “big idea” – What happens in the</td>
<td>◗Detailed aspects of struggle – what it looked and sounded like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multigenre classroom – with committee chairperson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢Discussed struggle and significant</td>
<td>◗Considered why poetry writing had a profound effect on many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences of individual participants with</td>
<td>participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>committee chairperson</td>
<td>◗Discussed format for reporting data in paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢Discussed format for reporting data in paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix D

### Example of Data Analysis Chart: First Page for Kira

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item/Issue</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>What I Notice</th>
<th>Evaluation, Interpretation, Questions</th>
<th>Patterns in Data/Inferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic selection</td>
<td>4/7 Field notes</td>
<td>Kira stays after class; he is obviously excited about a topic idea and wants to get my approval Credits AP English with exposing him to alternative genres such as horror Determines to emulate Lovecraft’s writing style and themes Questions how to introduce Lovecraft since I have suggested that he do a piece on the author “Due to the nature of my paper, I was able to give it an actual name.” States that he has a basic plan in mind for his dialogue and he is looking up authentic 19th century vocabulary to use</td>
<td>Makes a quick, definite decision about a topic based on only two days of class discussion about MG This will require an in-depth analysis of Lovecraft’s writing while crafting his own paper This suggestion never materializes. Kira has such a definite story line in mind that genres such as an author bio. would detract from it Does deeper research in preparation for writing than any other student in class</td>
<td>Topic based on passion Final paper tells a story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre selection/work</td>
<td>MG paper (Prologue)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/12 Audio of discussion with me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation comment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/14 Audio of discussion with me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/18 Video of class session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Voluntarily gets up and consults Tad about his work – specifically the fact that he wants to emulate Lovecraft’s writing style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Process Standard</th>
<th>Writing Applications Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Formulate writing ideas, and identify a topic appropriate to the purpose and audience.</td>
<td>A. Compose reflective writings that balance reflections by using specific personal experiences to draw conclusions about life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Select and use an appropriate organizational structure to refine and develop ideas for writing.</td>
<td>B. N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Use a variety of strategies to revise content, organization and style, and to improve word choice, sentence variety, clarity and consistency of writing.</td>
<td>C. Produce functional documents that report, organize and convey information and ideas accurately, foresee readers’ problems or misunderstandings and that include formatting techniques that are user friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Apply editing strategies to eliminate slang and improve conventions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Apply tools to judge the quality of writing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Prepare writing for publication that follows an appropriate format and uses a variety of techniques to enhance the final product.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix E

Ohio Department of Education Academic Content Standards

for Grades 11-12 which Align with a Multigenre Project (p. 41-51)
D. Produce informational essays or reports that establish a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject, include relevant perspectives, take into account the validity and reliability of sources and provide a clear sense of closure.
E. Use a range of strategies to elaborate and persuade when appropriate, including appeal to logic, use of personal anecdotes, examples, beliefs, expert opinions or cause-effect reasoning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Conventions Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Use correct spelling conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Use correct punctuation and capitalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Demonstrate understanding of the grammatical conventions of the English language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Identify a topic of study, construct questions and determine appropriate sources for gathering information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Select and summarize important information and sort key findings into categories about a topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Create a list of sources used for…written reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Communicate findings orally, visually and in writing or through multimedia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix F
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Creative Writing: Multigenre Project Calendar**

**Students’ Multigenre Project Calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>Explain Research Consent Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 4</td>
<td>Take Pre-Writing Survey and Brainstorm Writing Genres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Topic Selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>Examine example multigenre papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>Work in class on a genre of choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>Genre of Choice Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 9</td>
<td>Work in class on a genre of choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Rationale Paper Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>Rationale Paper Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>Dialogue Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Work in class on a genre of choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 14</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Prologue Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Prologue Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 16</td>
<td>Work in class on a genre of choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 17</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Dialogue Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>Dialogue Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>Work in class on a genre of choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Rationale Paper Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 21</td>
<td>Rationale Paper Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>Dialogue Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23</td>
<td>Work in class on a genre of choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 24</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Prologue Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25</td>
<td>Prologue Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 26</td>
<td>Work in class on a genre of choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 27</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Dialogue Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 28</td>
<td>Dialogue Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 29</td>
<td>Work in class on a genre of choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 30</td>
<td>Mini Lesson: Rationale Paper Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>Rationale Paper Due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This calendar is subject to change whenever the teacher feels that it is warranted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>AP Exam Week</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Poem Due</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Mini Lesson: How Genre Affects Voice</strong></td>
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<td>4 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Alternate Genre Due</strong></td>
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<td>5 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Work in class on alternate genre</strong></td>
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<td>6 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>FOURTH Genre of Choice Due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Writing Conference with a professor</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>FIFTH Genre of Choice Due</strong></td>
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<td>9 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Epilogue Due</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Mini Lesson: Reoccurring Genre</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Work in class to assemble paper</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Work in class on Power Point for presentation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Mini Lesson: Epilogue</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Genre Reoccurring Choice Due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>15 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Writing Conference with a professor</strong></td>
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<td>16 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Fifth Genre of Choice Due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>17 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Epilogue Due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>18 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Mini Lesson: Reoccurring Genre</strong></td>
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<td>19 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Work in class on Power Point for presentation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>24 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Epilogue Due</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Mini Lesson: Reoccurring Genre</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Work in class on Power Point for presentation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Mini Lesson: Epilogue</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Genre Reoccurring Choice Due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>29 May 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 May 2011</td>
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<td>31 May 2011</td>
<td><strong>Epilogue Due</strong></td>
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Appendix G

Abridged List of Genres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Scripts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Songs</td>
<td>Short story</td>
<td>Applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bible verse</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Resumes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Restaurant menu</td>
<td>Invitations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Text message</td>
<td>Worksheets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magazine article/ad</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Tests</td>
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<td>Web page</td>
<td>Flyers</td>
<td>Placards</td>
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<td>Phone book</td>
<td>Greeting cards</td>
<td>Poster</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brochure</td>
<td>Memos</td>
<td>Name tags</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plays</td>
<td>Biographies</td>
<td>Clothing labels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedules/Costs</td>
<td>Autobiographies</td>
<td>Quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tracts</td>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>Novels</td>
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<td>Editorials</td>
<td>Recipes</td>
<td>Jewelry</td>
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<td>Credits</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>Obituaries</td>
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<td>Maps</td>
<td>Report cards</td>
<td>Business cards</td>
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<td>Calendars</td>
<td>Gift cards</td>
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<td>Message boards</td>
<td>Diplomas</td>
<td>Time cards</td>
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<td>Fortune cookies</td>
<td>Directions</td>
<td>Homework</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billboards</td>
<td>Handbook</td>
<td>Posters</td>
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<td>Blogs</td>
<td>Manuals</td>
<td>Product labels</td>
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<td>Myspace</td>
<td>D-halls</td>
<td>Classified ads</td>
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<td>Ads</td>
<td>Forms</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>T-shirts</td>
<td>Instruction manual</td>
<td>Announcements</td>
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<td>Bumper sticker</td>
<td>Scrolls</td>
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<td>Captions</td>
<td>Choruses</td>
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<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>Birth certificate</td>
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<td>Yearbook</td>
<td>Driver's license</td>
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<td>Citations</td>
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<td>Licenses</td>
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<td>Letters</td>
<td>Haiku</td>
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<td>Tickets</td>
<td>Welcome mats</td>
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<td>Closed captions</td>
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<td>Food wrappers</td>
<td>Transcripts</td>
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<td>Table of contents</td>
<td>Seating charts</td>
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Appendix H

Questionnaire used to Guide Students in Topic Selection

WHAT INTERESTS YOU?

1. A historical person of interest (dead): C.S. Lewis
2. A Bible character of interest: Exodus Abraham
3. A contemporary person of interest (living): Paul Gigot
4. A politician of interest (dead or alive): Reagan
5. A decade of interest: 1950’s
6. A historical event of interest: Woodstock
7. A career of interest: Touring Musician
8. A place of interest (building, city, country, etc.): Chicago
9. A sport or sport’s team of interest: Pittsburgh Steelers
10. A book of interest (that you have read): "Anders or PhD"
11. A life experience you would like to explore: "Music"
12. Something else that is important to you:
Appendix J

Poetry Mini Lesson Handout

Poetry Ideas for the Multigenre Paper

Free Form
The poet makes up his/her own design, but it should look and sound like poetry.

Couplets
Pairs of lines that rhyme together

Haiku
A short Japanese form that has three lines with 5-7-5 syllables

Cinquain
Five lines that follow a specific pattern
   Title – 2 syllables
   Description of title – 4 syllables
   Some action about the title – 6 syllables
   Feeling about the title – 8 syllables
   Synonym for the title – 2 syllables

Biopoem
A biographical poem with specific line structure:

   First name
   Describe yourself with three words
   List three
   Things you like
   for each
   category
   What do you fear?
   What have you always wanted to do?
   Where do you live?
   Last name (or nickname)

Sonnet
Written in the tradition of Shakespeare
Follows the rhyme pattern ababccddefgg
Usually uses iambic pentameter (Each line has 10 syllables and the stress is on every other syllable)

Song
One year a student wrote a song that was put to music and performed at graduation!

*There are many more types of poetry which can be researched on the internet.
Appendix K

Instructions for Writing Research Summaries

Research Pieces for Multigenre Paper

- You are required to find two research articles that relate to your topic.
- Select articles from professional or educational websites.
- Print the article and read it.
- Write a 150 word, single-spaced paragraph that summarizes the article.
- Put the title of the article at the top followed by the bibliography information in MLA style. The bibliographic information may be in size 10 font.

Example of Format:

Author last name, author first name. "Title of article." Title of publication. Date of download (day month year) URL (web address).

Example of Entire Research Genre:

Does Independent Reading Make Better Readers?


In 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP) report, which influenced the federal legislation for "No Child Left Behind" and "Reading First", made recommendations for the implementation of reading practices in the classroom. The panel called into question the widespread use of independent, silent reading as a tool for improving reading achievement. Correlative studies have suggested that the more children read, the better their fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The panel, however, pointed out that this does not necessarily prove that independent reading is the cause. "It is also possible that better readers simply choose to read more." They found no scientific evidence that independent, unguided reading of library books was a valuable use of classroom time. While the NRP recognized that it is appealing to encourage students to read more, they suggested that studies determining the influence of independent, silent reading are needed to validate it as a cause of improved skill.
Appendix K

Instructions for Writing the Prologue and Epilogue

**Prologue:**
A prologue will serve as the introduction to your paper. It should greet readers and give a bit of background information about your project. You will need to introduce the subject and anything you think the reader should know about you and your project before they read it. It will help orient your readers quickly and supply information that will help build meaning.

Some information you might include:
- How you came up with your idea
- Why your topic is important
- A key part of the story
- An introduction to a main character
- A description of a crucial setting or central activity
- A theme that will be carried through your genres
- An overview of the information to follow

**Epilogue:**
An epilogue is similar to a conclusion. In your epilogue you should reflect on your topic and your multigenre writing experience. This is a chance to share your thoughts, feelings, and concluding information with your audience.

Some aspects you might include:
- How writing about this topic has changed your perspective
- How you felt about using the multigenre approach to writing
- What you hope your audience has learned
- What you feel you accomplished from this project
- What you learned overall
Appendix L

Directions for Peer Group Meetings

**Multigenre Peer Review Session**

Tape folder number: 

Names of people in group: 

*You will need to limit yourselves to a six minute discussion which should give each person two minutes to talk. This is a problem-solving session which should involve helping one another make progress on your papers.

Idea for discussion:

What are you struggling with?

What do you need help with (or ideas for)?

How can your group help you move forward with your project?
Appendix M

Rubric for Grading Multigenre Paper

![Rubric Image]

**Rubric for Evaluation of Multigenre Paper**

**Student:** ______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Critique</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction/Prologue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explanations of topic of paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explanations of rationale for topic choice</td>
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<td>Required Genres</td>
<td>20 (5 pts. each)</td>
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<td>Dialogue</td>
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<td>Poetry</td>
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<td>Research Summaries (2)</td>
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<td>Genres of Choice (5 minimum)</td>
<td>48 (8 pts. each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reoccurring Element</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conclusion/Epilogue</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draws paper to a close</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Explains what writer learned from experience</td>
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<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>Mechanics, usage, punctuation, spelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Appearance</td>
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<td>Cover sheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flow of theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of fonts, color, artwork</td>
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<td>Wow Factor (Something extra or unusual)</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FINAL GRADE</strong></td>
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Appendix N

Instructions for Preparing Multigenre Presentation

Multigenre Presentation

Upon completion of the multigenre research paper, students are required to prepare a presentation of their project for the class. They are required to use Power Point (another genre) and bring in objects which relate to their topic. In my class, the multigenre project is the final assignment for a semester of creative writing. In the second semester, students take speech from me. This presentation is an effective bridge between the two classes.

Time: 5-7 minutes

Content: Must include...
Reason you chose your topic
Read aloud from at least one genre
Explanation about what you learned from the writing process

Power Point: Must include...
Minimum of six slides
Effective use of color and content
Good visual layout
Easy to read
Use of color contrast
Limited use of text (Do not copy and past an entire genre!

Final advice:
The purpose of the Power Point is to ENHANCE your presentation. Do not read it. Print out a copy for yourself in order to maintain eye contact with your audience.

Date assigned: __________________________
# Rubric for Evaluation of Multigenre Presentation

**Student:** __________________________

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<tr>
<th>Areas of Critique</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gave reason for topic choice (5 pts.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read aloud from at least one genre (5 pts.)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Explained what you learned (5 pts.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Power Point</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Presented material in an organized manner (5 pts.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spoke loudly and clearly (5 pts.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Made eye contact with audience (5 pts.)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintained interest of audience (5 pts.)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time (5-7 minutes)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Final Points (60 possible)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Final Grade</strong></td>
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</table>
Appendix P

Questionnaire used to Guide Students in Topic Selection

Name

PONDERING YOUR PROGRESS...

What is your favorite piece that you have written so far? Why?
Dialogue, I think it’s fun to communicate in writing & planning, a pep rally would go by the3 chimes 6 it.

What is your biggest challenge/question as this point?
How is my paper going to flow smoothly?

In what ways have your classmates helped you with your writing?
They have given me ideas on different genres & how to include the genres I already have.

In what way have I helped you with your writing?
Making sure I was keeping with the theme for each genre & helping it flow

The thing I have enjoyed most so far is ...
being creative & having the freedom to do basically anything with my topic

The thing I have liked least so far is...
nothing really, besides having one more subject requiring a lot of writing.