

Methods of Discovery: A Guide to Research W

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Chapter 12: Mixing Genres and Voices in Multigenre Writing

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Chapter 9

Mixing Genres and Voices: Multigenre Research Writing

<A> Definition of Multigenre Writing

This chapter is dedicated to multigenre writing. Multigenre pieces combine different genres, or kinds of writing. According to writing teachers Cheryl Johnson and Jayne Moneysmith (2001), "The term genre refers to types of writing that adhere to definite conventions of style, form, and structure." (178). Therefore, multigenre works combine different styles, forms, and structures, thus creating multi-faceted and multi-dimensional representations of their topics. They can contain prose, poetry, newspaper reports, diary entries, images, and even multimedia elements. As a result, the finished multigenre paper does not look like many of the traditional forms of writing to which many of us are used. By using different genres in one piece of writing, authors can impact readers in ways that are radically different from what can be achieved with single-genre writing.

If you have never written or read a multigenre piece, you may be surprised by the structure and appearance of multigenre writing. You may also be surprised by the strategies and skills required for successful reading of multigenre works. As a student writer, you may even be questioning the need to learn multigenre writing since not many college professors outside of writing or English classes ask for it. Most students are used to and trained in writing mainly in one genre—the essay. Moving into multigenre writing can be an unsettling experience to some writers because producing a multigenre pieces asks them to change their writing strategies and habits. At the same time, multigenre writing can provide for an incredibly rich and satisfying experience, allowing you to present your thoughts, ideas, and creativity in a new way. This chapter attempts to answer these and other questions and provide you will practical strategies for understanding and writing multigenre works.

<A> Why Write in Many Genres?

I am going to devote a fairly large portion of this chapter to explaining why I believe it is a good idea for all writers to understand multigenre writing and try his or her hand at it at least once in a while. As I have stated throughout this book, I believe that in order to research and write well, it is important to know and understand the reasons for this work. Also, when assigned multigenre and other experimental pieces students sometimes question the validity of these assignments because they do not see much use for them beyond their writing class. After all, in spite of the fact that multigenre writing is fairly popular with writing teachers, very few professors in other disciplines would either assign or accept it. So, the following are my reasons for doing multigenre research and writing and inviting students to do it.

We are surrounded by a multi-genre reality. Think of all the texts you read, people you speak to, and voices you hear during a day of your life. Think also of all the words and images that you need to read and understand as you go about your day. At the end of the day, it is certainly possible to summarize or explain your experiences in a brief statement or a traditional paper. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to show the mosaic of life in a linear account, such as a thesis driven essay or even a unified narrative which retells the events of

the day sequentially.

Multigenre writing attempts to capture the multi-dimensionality and multi-vocality of life by allowing writers to design a collage of voices, styles, and genres in order to capture and express his or her ideas. Through multigenre writing, authors do not just tell readers about their subjects. Instead, they show. The stories, experiences, and events relayed in multigenre pieces become more palpable.

One of the defining purposes of multigenre writing is to allow its authors to be “present” in the piece with their own voices, styles, and personalities. Multigenre writing does not allow for a boring and detached author, found so often in traditional school papers. According to Johnson and Moneysmith:

“Multigenre writing breaks some tried-and-true rules, but it does so for good reasons.... Writers of [multigenre papers] do not lose themselves in their research. The secondary sources don’t control the writing. Rather, writers draw on their own creative juices to discover the different perspectives represented in the topic choice; what you don’t hear in the [multigenre paper] is a flat, monotone, distanced research voice.” (2001, 180).

Multigenre pieces use different kinds of writing. Thus, they have to use different voices and approaches to talking about reality. The author him or herself chooses what genres (prose, poetry, images, or anything else) will suit the topic under investigation and the writers purpose.

Traditional essays, such as most college students are used to writing, usually require the writer to speak from one perspective and with one voice. Most traditional academic writing is judged on how well the writer establishes and maintains a unified position or point of view throughout the paper, and how well he or she establishes and maintains a unified voice and style to suit the topic of the argument and the audience reading it.

Multigenre writing does things differently. The goal of a good multigenre piece is to show multiple perspectives of a topic or issue, and to do it in a variety of voices and styles. Writers of multigenre works are encouraged to experiment with seemingly incompatible texts, tones, and ideas. The end goal of this experimentation is to create a multi-dimensional and multi-vocal, but very purposefully organized piece.

Most school writing is analytical, or expository, in nature. What this means is that you, the student, are required to select a topic, conduct some research and about it, and consider all of its aspects in a systematic and orderly manner. Authors of expository pieces typically write in one voice and one tone, building orderly arguments by constructing clear thesis statements and supporting those theses with appropriate research and detail. Expository, or analytical writing is, of course, important and necessary because it allows us to make sense of the world we live in and to effect changes to this world.

Multigenre writing wants you to go a step further. In his 2000 book *Blending Genre, Altering Style*, teacher of multigenre papers Tom Romano states that the essence of multigenre writing is in combining the analytical way of thinking about one’s subject with the narrative way. According to Romano, analytical thinking and writing reflect and dissect experiences and events while narrative writing allows a writer to bring their readers into those experiences, to make them “live the page” (24). Narrative thinking and writing takes the reader “inside a present moment, present because narrative thinking lets us experience the writing, a little like watching a compelling movie...” (Romano 24, emphasis in the original). Romano gives an example of an encyclopedia entry devoted to the jazz musician Count Basie. According to Romano, it is a typical piece of encyclopedia writing that retells the basic facts of Basie’s life and his career as a musician (19). Romano then asks his students to summarize, in writing, what they had learned from reading the entry. The students successfully gleaned the important information from the original and produced their own “mini-entries” which summarized the original but did little more.

Then Romano offered his students a poem about Basie, “Basic Basie”, by Kamau Brathwaite (Romano 20). In the poem, Brathwaite, more or less, creates a scene of Basie playing his

music. The poem approaches subject emotionally rather than analytically, with imagination rather than attention to factual detail. As one of Romano's students said after reading the poem, "You could hear the 'jumping' beat" in it, something that was missing in the encyclopedia entry the class had read earlier (20-21).

What working with two radically different texts on the same topic allowed these writers to do, then, is to acquire two different perspectives, to hear two different voices speaking about the same thing. Examining these two radically different texts that spoke of the same subject in two radically different ways allowed the students to approach that subject differently, not only from the analytical, factual point of view, but also from an emotional one. While the encyclopedia entry about Count Basie gave them the chance to see their subject "from afar," the poem placed them "inside" that subject and, in a way, allowed them to participate in the events depicted in it.

 For Exploration—Re-presenting Traditional Works in Multigenre.

This activity will enable you to begin to see the differences between single and multigenre writing and the different opportunities that they afford their readers. You can work on it individually or with a partner. After finishing, share your results with your classmates and your instructor. In this activity, you are not yet required to write your own multigenre piece—this will come later in the chapter. For now, try to construct a multigenre pre-presentation of an existing single-genre text using available texts in different genres composed by others.

Take a "traditional" piece of writing. It can be paper you wrote for a class, a novel, or a poem you like. It can be a newspaper or magazine article. It can be a poster or even a musical piece.

Try to re-present this piece in multigenre. Given the work's topic, purpose, intended audience and style, how can it be recast in multigenre? If it is a prose piece, written in a unified voice, could it include some poetry, images, or dialog? Is it a poem or a play, could some of its parts be recast as fiction, creative non-fiction or as a newspaper report?

Do a quick search in the library or on the Internet for texts, images, and voices that would be useful in recasting the original text in multigenre. Also, don't forget to think of suitable and appropriate family photos, your own diary entries, and so on. Then try to assemble a multigenre version of the original piece. Experiment with the placement of different parts, contract and expand them where you see fit. Add your own commentary and links between the various sections. In other words, try to create a new re-presentation of the original text and see what that new re-presentation will allow you, the writer, and your readers, to do. Next, consider the following questions:

- How many different genres does your new piece contain?
- What new treatment of the subject does each new genre introduce to the work? Relate this back to the explanation of the analytical vs. narrative thinking and writing explained above.
- How many different perspectives or points of view on the topic of the writing and voices does it represent?
- How does your experience reading this piece differ from the experience reading the original? What new information, emotions, points of view can a reader of the multigenre text get out of it?

<A> Key Principles of Multigenre Research and Writing

Multigenre papers look very different from traditional ones, yet in writing them, you should employ the same basic strategies and techniques as you would writing any other research-based work. These strategies include finding an interesting and appropriate topic, developing concrete and relevant research questions, locating and studying relevant and credible primary and secondary sources, and writing the paper in a voice, style, and tone appropriate to your purpose, audience, and context.

At the same time, some aspects of multigenre writing are different from those of traditional writing. The principles and features of multigenre texts come from the fact that, unlike traditional writing, multigenre pieces do not attempt to create linear, thesis-driven arguments. Instead, writers of multigenre papers create multi-dimensional, multi-perspective pieces, “mini-worlds” that represent their subjects and the writers’ thinking about them. Here are some of these distinctive principles and features:

- Multigenre pieces speak in different voices, styles, tones, and genres.
- Multigenre pieces show different perspectives, angles, and points of view of the same topic or of related topics.
- Multigenre pieces do not always have a succinct thesis statement although, like all other writing, they are argumentative in nature and purpose.
- Multigenre pieces may contain both “analytical” and “personal” writing, including the author’s commentary on the contents of the piece.
- Multigenre pieces often contain images, even video and other multimedia elements which do not only illustrate the verbal elements but are integral parts of the argument presented in the piece.

<A> Invention for Multigenre Writing

So, where and how do you begin working on a multigenre research writing project? Of course, first, you need to find a topic for it. The invention stage of a multigenre project is no different from the invention stage of any other research project you undertake. As always, your topic must interest you, the writer, and your readers. Mark Shadle and Rob Davis, the authors of the 2004 article “A Piñata of Theory and Autobiography: Research Writing Breaks Open Academe” say this about multigenre writing: “The first step for students is to choose a topic that matters to them for their multiwriting project. These may turn out to be...people and places, [or] events. (84). Shadle and Davis recommend that all writers of multigenre works begin with autobiographical notes and diary entry-style pieces because, according to these two authors, autobiographical writing can yield excellent topics for research and the subsequent multigenre works (Shadle and Davis 84-85). Shadle and Davis call writers to “discover connections between personal and academic passions” and to “mix emotions and intellect in detail” (2004, 82).

What Shadle and Davis suggest is that autobiographical writing and the memories of events, people, and ideas brought to your mind with it, can trigger some subject or question in your memory that would be suitable for a more systematic investigation and treatment through writing. The idea that remembering or reflecting upon some event, person, or even item which is important to you as a human being can be a powerful invention technique capable of moving writers to do excellent work is not new, but it is remarkably underused. In the following invention activity, I invite you to use such a “triggering” strategy as you prepare to write your own multigenre work.

 Invention Activity 1—Topics Triggered by Memories and Observations

Your multigenre paper topic must also be relevant to the time and the context of your writing. In other words, the topic of a multigenre piece must meet all the criteria that we have discussed throughout this book, in particular in Chapter 1 dedicated to rhetoric.

Multigenre writing is so interesting and rich because it allows the writer to explore and show an issue or a subject from multiple perspectives in the same piece. It allows you to present different voices and points of view, use different genres and media in order in developing and making your argument.

Therefore, when selecting topics for multigenre writing, look for something that can be best argued, read, or discussed from multiple points of view, from multiple positions. Look for topics with many voices, opinions, and ways of expression. Look for topics that can or have been covered in various genres: poetry, plays, fiction, not-fiction, images, letters and e-mails, and

so on.

Try one or several of the following multigenre invention steps:

- Do a 5 or 10-minute freewrite about an important memory, person in your life, or a subject or question that interests you.
- Draw, make a chart, or another graphical representation of your intended topic or topics.
- If possible talk to friends and relatives about your intended topics and keep notes of what they tell you. Share your ideas and plans with them and listen for suggestions.

 Invention Activity: Coming up with the Topic Through Informal Research

Conducting some preliminary informal research can be a powerful invention tool. Take the preceding activity a little bit further and look at some external sources dedicated to it. Later on, after you have finalized your topic, you will need to conduct more in-depth research.

- Study images and other non-verbal representations of your topic (music, buildings, sculptures, etc.) and ask the kinds of questions of them which are described in the section about reading photographs in Chapter 4 of this book.
- Consider various verbal and non-verbal representations of your potential topic over time. For example, study various personal and analytical account of your topic by fiction writers, newspaper reporters, witnesses and participants of the events you are interested in, and so on.
- As you proceed through the above steps, remember not to limit yourself to the studying and producing prose only. Since you will be writing in many genres, it is useful to begin thinking “in multigenre” from the beginning of the project.

Because at this point in the project, you have probably not yet formed any definite research questions, your main goal should be to learn as much as possible about your topic from your sources, to get a general feel of the kinds of problems, concerns, events and incidents that surround it and the kinds of language, style, genres, and tone that others have spoken about your intended topic before you.

 Invention Continued: Defining an Issue

The invention activities above should have helped you select suitable and interesting multigenre research and writing topics. However, before you begin your research and writing, you need to complete a couple more steps. The first one is finding a suitable issue for your research. An issue is different from a writing topic because it allows the writer to see what aspects of his or her topics need and deserve to be covered either because they contain some unresolved and productive tensions or because there is significant public interest in them. Cheryl Johnson and Jayne Moneysmith whose 2001 article “Multigenre Research: Inquiring Voices” I have cited earlier write:

“You can tell the difference between an issue and a topic when you ask yourself this question: Would others disagree on how to see, define, or come to terms with it? Usually, a topic is broad; a paper on a topic might be informational, finding out a lot about something....An issue...is not only narrower, but reflects several different voices with varying opinions” (181). In other words, like with every research project, it is not enough to find a writing topic. It is necessary to find some part or aspect of that topic which would interest your readers either because it is controversial or because it can be seen and understood from multiple perspectives. Once you have selected such part or aspect (issue), it will be up to you, the writer, to highlight all those perspectives and to construct an argument around one or several of them.

I’d like to extend Johnson’s and Moneysmith’s definition. Like all writing, multigenre writing can be used not only as a tool of public argument, but also a tool of personal learning and growth. Therefore, when trying to define a “researchable” issue, do not limit yourself to public

arguments and controversies. Look also into the tensions and unresolved questions in your own life, your own intellectual history, and the lives of histories of the people and places around you. In other words, look not only for a subject or an issue about which you can passionately argue with others, but also for something personally important which you could learn more about and understand better through multigenre research and writing.

<C> Invention Activity: Defining an Issue.

The following is an activity designed to help you to make the transition from choosing a topic for research and writing into defining a suitable and interesting issue for your project.

Suppose, for example, that as a result of the first invention activity earlier on in this chapter, you have decided to create a multigenre project about the history of your hometown. How do you go from simply knowing what your topic is to defining an interesting and informative issue at whose heart there is some kind of an unresolved tension or problem that you can resolve or illuminate in the process of your research?

Ask yourself the following questions about your topic. These questions can be asked and answered in any order. As you work through them, don't forget to jot down the answers.

- What is one most interesting, important, unusual, or controversial people, places, or events related to my hometown's past and present?
- Are there any unresolved conflicts between individuals or groups or people in my hometown, both past and present?
- Are there any unresolved conflicts or questions between you and your hometown?
- What are the attitudes of outsiders about your hometown? Are they positive or negative? How much do people outside of your community know about it and what, in your opinion, should they know?

• Since any multigenre project aims to create a multi-dimensional representation of a topic, begin thinking about the various genres (prose, poetry, dialog, images, comics, music, diary entries, and so on) in which you can represent the controversies and interesting aspects of the life in your hometown.

These kinds of questions can be asked about any topic for multigenre research and writing, regardless of whether it is a topic for a "public" argument on a controversial issue or a private passion that you would like to learn more about and share with the world. As with all writing, you need to keep asking yourself the same question when developing your topic and defining the issue at the heart of your project. This question is "so what?" Ask yourself what it is about your topic that can interest and engage the reader. What questions, tensions, conflicts, or other interesting aspects of your topic may help you truly learn about it yourself and educate your readers about it.

<A> Forming Research Questions

Once you have found your topic and defined an issue, it is time to form research questions. As you know from reading other chapters of this book, forming solid research questions is an important part of success for any research project. The process of forming research questions for your multigenre project is really no different from forming research questions for any other kind of writing project. Follow the practices that you have learned about in Chapters 1 and 6 of this book. However, in multigenre writing, your goal is to present your topic and your argument in multiple genres and media. It helps to begin thinking early on in the project about how your questions can be answered using different genres, voices, and media. Follow the following steps to design research questions:

- Examine your current knowledge of your topic and issue.
- Examine the reasons why you are interested in the topic and issue
- Examine the reasons why other people might be interested in it
- List or learn more about the different opinions that might exist on your topic among different people.

- Consider whether there exists a difference of opinion or multiple perspectives or ways to look at your subject. This strategy is especially important because, when writing your multigenre paper, you will need to represent these perspectives.

As you design your research question or questions, remember that you may work not only with contentious and controversial public issues about which people disagree, but with topics and subjects closer to your own life. In the latter case, your purpose for writing the paper might be to learn and to show rather than to prove something to someone.

Now, try to complete the following sentences:

In my multigenre piece, I want to learn _____

Or,

In my multigenre piece, I want to show that _____

Next, rephrase these statements as questions. These research questions would become the anchors for your research and writing. As you look for sources and construct your multigenre piece, look back at your research question often.

<A> Research for Multigenre Projects

As with all research projects, after determining what your research questions are, you need to conduct some preliminary research. As you know from studying other chapters of this book, the purpose of this “first round” of searches is to get a better idea about your subject, to “update” your understanding of it, and to plan for the rough draft of your paper. Research techniques you should use when working on a multigenre project are, essentially, the same as with any other projects. What matters is reliability and timeliness of sources and their appropriateness for your project. The latter means the ability of these sources to help you answer your research questions and to help you create an informative and convincing piece for your readers.

As you conduct your searches, try to collect, study, and use sources that are written in different genres. Because later on, you will be required to use different genres in your own piece, it will help you to see and understand how other authors use different kinds of writing, voices, and media to create stories and arguments. In other words, when doing research for your multigenre project, treat what you find not only as sources of information, but also as possible models for your own writing.

As with other research projects, don’t forget to conduct some field research. Interviews, observations, surveys are likely to yield some interesting and even unexpected perspectives on your topic which secondary sources alone could not. Also remember to go beyond the traditional sources, such as book, academic journals, websites, and so on. According to Johnson and Moneysmith (2001), radio and TV programs, electronic newsgroup postings, fiction, poetry, and other non-traditional and “non-academic” sources can prove very useful for a multigenre project (183).

 Activity: Using Research Sources as Models for Multigenre Writing

The following activity invites you to conduct several searches online for possible sources for a future multigenre project. In addition, I invite you not only to apply the usual source credibility and suitability assessment techniques to your search, but also to consider ways in which different genres and media can represent the same topic differently and how they can appeal differently to readers’ intellect and emotions. Before we get started, here is a sample search that I conducted online.

I went to the popular search engine Google (www.google.com) and searched for the phrase “The cost of war in Iraq.” One the search results that caught my attention was an article “Local Costs of War in Iraq,” published by The National Priorities Project (www.nationalpriorities.org) which broke down the monetary cost of war by state, indicating how much money the citizens of each state in the country have had to pay for the war by late 2004. The article can be found at

<http://www.nationalpriorities.org/Issues/Military/Iraq/CostOfWar.html>.

I then switched to the “Images” tab on my Google search to see what kinds of visual representations of the cost of Iraqi war might be available to me. The first photo that caught my attention was one of a US soldier, in a desert, standing next to some military trucks, with his M16 rifle ready to fire at any second. The photo can be found at [The soldier is very tense, he looks like he is ready to fight at any second](#). The effect of the photograph is enhanced by the fact that it was taken through what looks like a windshield of a military vehicle with a bullet hole in the middle of it and a spider web of broken glass emanating from that hole. Clearly, the photo speaks more about the human costs of war than of monetary ones. It expresses the notion of those human costs in ways and through a medium that are different from the way in which it would be expressed in a scholarly article or another “verbal” text. If I were to write a multigenre project on the topic “The Cost of War in Iraq,” I’d probably have to consider various representations of my topic and then create such various representations myself in my paper. A quick search of the Internet also reveals that texts of other genres also address the broad subject of the cost of war in Iraq. For example, I came across weblogs with entries discussing both the monetary and the human costs of the war, some poems, some song lyrics, and so on. Now, I’d like you to try a similar search of your own. Follow these steps:

- Do a search, whether in the library or online, for your subject.
- Try to find texts in at least 4 or 5 different genres. These could be newspaper and other articles, short stories or novels, images, poems, diary or weblog entries, anything you want. The goal is to gather a range of genres and voices representing the same subject.
- Now that you have found some sources, study them carefully and pay attention to the following:
 1. Pay attention not only to the information contained in your sources, but also in ways in which this information is presented.
 2. Notice how different genres appeal to intellect and emotions. If they use both appeals, through what means do they do it?
 3. Do any of the genres bring up new or unusual elements of the topics or angles of looking at it which other genres did not cover?
 4. Summarize what you learned about your topic after studying your sources. Include not only the factual information or opinions contained in them, but also the different ways of representation of your topic used by texts of different genres.

After finishing the activity, share your results with your classmates and instructor.

<A> Drafting and Revising your Multigenre Project

As with the research stage of the project, drafting and revising multigenre writing are governed by the same principles as the corresponding stages of all other writing endeavors. You have probably already read about the general principles of the process model of composing which cover these topics in Chapter 2 of this book. However, multigenre projects have several important peculiarities that you normally would not encounter when writing in single genre. They are as follows:

Remember that when creating multigenre texts, you will need to create all of their elements yourself. It is very tempting to use excerpts from or even whole texts that you found during your research and construct your project out of them. But if you use other writers’ texts, you will, essentially, be creating a collage. That would not be your own work. Even if you use other writers; work respectfully, even if you carefully cite and document your sources, this approach would not allow you to realize your whole potential as a writer. Remember that you have selected the topic for your multigenre project because you yourself were interested in it. Therefore, allowing someone else to speak for you would undermine a large part of the reason why you have decided to write your multigenre work in the first place.

At this point, you might say that you are used to writing only in academic, expository prose

and that never in your life have you written a poem or drawn a cartoon. If this is the case, now is the time to try other kinds of writing. A key feature of multigenre writing is experimentation, and as a writer, you should not be afraid to experiment with different genres, voices, and media. Teachers who assign multigenre projects will typically reward such experimentation. They understand that it is not easy for any writer, especially for a beginning one, to write about the same topic in many genres, voices, and from many different perspectives. When it comes to writing in multigenre, the possibilities are endless. Here are but a few options.

- Write a research-based short story. This is one of my and my students' favorites. After conducting your research and, perhaps, writing a short analytical piece similar to a traditional research paper, try to recast your subject as a short story. Create characters, scenes, and events. Create a plot and a setting. The challenge is to be creative while organizing your story around the research data you uncovered. Feel free to add details and to use your creativity and imagination in any way you see fit. Keep in mind that the overall goal of your multigenre project is to present your research in multiple ways highlighting multiple voices and perspectives.
- Write a research-based poem. All writers, including poets, often use research as the basis for their work. After gathering facts, theories, and opinions about your topic through research, try to express and explain them in a poem. Create a fictional narrator for the poem or be the narrator yourself. And remember that your goal is to present another aspect of your topic, to speak of it in a voice and genre different from the other ones included in your multigenre piece.
- Write a series of diary entries or letters. Suppose you have decided to research eating disorders. After collecting and studying your sources and, perhaps, trying to write about your topic in several other genres, you may want to create a series of diary entries written either by a person suffering from a disorder or by a doctor trying to treat him or her. Alternatively, you may try to create a series of letters or e-mails between the patient and his or her doctor or his or her family and friends. The research you conducted will help you create the content of these documents.
- Create a graphic representation of your topic. You can draw, or, if you are technically inclined and have access to graphic design software, create a digital image or series of images showing some aspect of your research subject. Alternatively, consider making a comic strip that can be either serious or humorous.
- Write an introductory letter to your readers explaining to them how to read your multigenre piece. In this letter, you could briefly summarize the contents of your project, explain your choice of genres and voices, and generally help your readers get oriented in the piece.
- Write an analytical piece, similar to a traditional academic research essay. Having such a piece a part of your project may help readers not accustomed to multigenre writing understand your work better.
- Create a dialog between experts. If, during your research, you have come across two or more sources whose authors disagree on some aspect of your topic, have them debate that subject in a public setting. For instance, you can write a round-table scene. Or you could create a series of letters to an editor of an academic journal or a popular magazine whose authors would defend their positions.
- Create an annotated bibliography of sources that you have used in the project. Include both sources that you used in your project and other relevant sources on the topic. Having such a bibliography on hand will help interested readers learn more about your topic. Think about other genres, too. As you create these texts and assemble them into one multigenre project, remember that each of them can help you shed a different light on your subject and to help your readers see it from a new and unexpected perspective. Therefore, your goal for the multigenre project is to highlight as many aspects, voices, and ways of

talking and thinking about your topic as possible.

<A> Arranging and Unifying the Genres

Arranging the parts of a multigenre project in a way which both helps you make your point and guides the readers through the piece can be tricky. How, for example, you should begin your project? You have several options here. You could, for example, open your piece with an introduction in which you explain the contents of your project to readers, telling them how to read its parts and how the different genres work together. Alternatively, you could intrigue the readers by opening with an image, a poem, or a short fiction piece and leaving the explanations until later. In either case, your goal is to create an interesting and engaging introduction that would accomplish two goals: introduce the topic to your readers and intrigue and interest them enough to keep reading on.

After you have introduced your readers to the project, the arrangement of the other pieces is up to you. Remember, though, that, like all writing, multigenre writing is a rhetorical endeavor. Therefore, how you arrange the parts of your project matters. Your task as a writer remains to “make a point” through multiple genres. Therefore, as you work on arranging the parts, always remember that you are constructing an argument that should say something to the readers. This means that your multigenre text should be unified around a central concept or idea. In traditional texts, such unification is often achieved through a thesis statement. In multigenre writing you have other options.

In *Blending Genre, Altering Style*, Tom Tomano (2000) offers several ways of unifying multigenre projects.

- Repeating imagery and language. Just like in analytical researched pieces where, in order to emphasize a point, you show and explain typical examples and details, in multigenre writing you can repeat the same words, phrases, and even whole paragraphs to show their importance of ideas, people, and events they represent (Romano 151).
- Extending the story. This technique calls you to combine internal and external perspectives on your topic. Romano (2000) gives an example of a multigenre paper on eating disorders whose author combined stream of consciousness-like writing with descriptive passages, poems, images, and so on. By doing that, the author shows together the more objective or external ways of looking at the topic and the more subjective or internal ways of not only studying it, but also of feeling it (Romano 151).
- Pacing Repetition. Do not give away all the important parts at once. Give important information to your readers in small doses throughout the piece. You want to create a steady progression, going through which the reader will know that more important and interesting writing is coming, but not all at once. Romano (2000) calls this “revealing the story’s transformation” (154). He suggests interspersing elements worth repeating with other fragments and other genres (Romano 154).

Cheryl Johnson and Jayne Moneysmith (2001) offer additional advice on unifying your multigenre piece.

- Design the project around one central voice. For example, a project that argues for the preservation of Native American traditions can be written as “a memoir of an elder writing for his grandchildren.”
- Begin each section with a short explanatory note.
- Present opposing view points alternatively and in different genres
- Create a website, “including one central essay with links that connect to explanatory and other views” (Johnson and Moneysmith, 2001, 189).

<A> Evaluation of Multigenre Writing

Writing in multiple genres required new ways of reading the finished projects. This, in turn, usually means that the evaluation system that your teacher will use for multigenre pieces will be different from the one you are accustomed to when writing traditional work. Many teachers

who assign multigenre writing assignments follow the following sets of criteria in evaluating them:

1. They want to see not only the final draft of the paper, but also evidence of work in progress, such as preliminary drafts, journal entries, research notes, and so on.
2. They want to see five or more genres used in the paper, with all the components written the author of the paper him or herself.
3. They want to see evidence of the understanding on the part of the writer how the genres interact and work together. Such evidence can come from process memos and other explanatory texts to the teacher or to the readers produced by the paper's author.
4. They want to see unity in the multigenre piece. This means that every multigenre work must express and develop a concept or an idea, and not only be a collage or unrelated or loosely related materials.
5. They sometimes want to see self-evaluation pieces written by the student and submitted together with the paper.

Of course, as with every writing project, it is best to consult your teacher about the evaluation criteria he or she will be using when reading your multigenre paper. Study those criteria carefully and ask your teacher questions if something is not clear.

<A> Example of a Multi Genre Paper

 Channel 19, Impact News, by Amber Love

<C> Contents

1. You Are Watching Channel 19—Impact News that Matter
2. Florida Hurricanes of 2004
3. We'll Be Back After These Messages
4. Welcome Back to Impact News
5. We'll Be Back After These Messages
6. More Impact News
7. Hurricane (Not News) Update

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
 I shall not live in vain;
 If I can ease one life the aching,
 Or cool one pain,
 Or help one lonely person
 Into happiness again
 I shall not live in vain.
 Emily Dickinson

And when there's disaster
 You can bet the BBC is there
 And the people and their grief
 Are very soon - On Air

Albert Gazeley

<C> You Are Watching Channel 19—News that Matter

Loud Music! Three, two, one, action! The lights flare on, and a young news reporter bounces

to life. Hands carefully folded in her lap; she is ready for her piece. Images of rain, winds and flooding appear.

"I'm Windy Storms, hosting the special report for Channel 19 impact News." She smiles steadily into the camera as the operators roll them around to capture the best shot. "As many of you Floridians have noticed, our state has been in complete upheaval from the start of this hurricane season. On the coasts our oceanside beaches are unrecognizable, and towards the middle of the state, the citrus trees are doing headstands. It's been years since we've seen something like this. The combined death toll is at 108 people (Dahlburg). Let's take a closer look." Live clips play and rainy sounds are projected for the Television viewers. Windy continues in a narration.

<C> Florida Hurricanes of 2004

"It all started on Friday, August 13th. That should have been omen enough. Charley was the first of 2004's unforgettable storms to hit Florida (Gongloff). This maniac booked a weekend vacation to the center of the state. Before residents could catch their breath, in whirled Frances, right on Charley's heels. It was only September 5th, still early in hurricane season. Even though Frances was less intense, its enormous size covered Florida for two straight days (Langtimm). It passed over on the same path as Charley. Little did we know we were in for even more. Winds from Frances raged at 145 miles per hour.

Thursday, September 16th 2004, in came Hurricane Ivan. This time landfall was near mobile Alabama, but still the raging wind and rain torrents collected their dues. The Florida panhandle was devastated. As Florida slowly came out of hiding and prepared to clean up the disaster, Jeanne made her debut. More powerful and on the same run as Frances, she arrived as a Category 3 with wind speeds of 120 miles per hour (Langtimm). This particular storm caused immense damage along the east coast, not only because she was enormous, but because many coastal structures had experienced erosion from her big sister, Frances (Langtimm)." The cameras were now turned towards Windy, and she smiled in excitement and continued with the story. Her short blonde hair glistened in the studio lights. "Our other reporters have been kept busy capturing these intense moments." Devastation clips appeared carefully edited together. Rivers of water, rushing down roads, crumbling docks along the bay front, boats bobbing, and palm trees bending were part of the visual aid. The mini presentation ended and Windy appeared again. "As you can see, this is what it's all about. There is so much more to discuss, and when we come back, our very own dollars and cents expert, Penny Nichols will bring you information from a financial perspective."

<C> We'll be Back After These Messages

"I'm Cole Lector, and I am proud to be part of the Central Florida Lawyers Association. If you are tired of insurance companies holding back your well deserved money, give me a call. I will represent your case and get you the money you deserve. I have been in business for the past 9 years, and have a very creditable reputation. My number is 1800-Get-Rich." The greasy man gave the viewers a cheesy smile before going off air.

An intense sales woman makes her point clear. She walks down the isles piled high with wood. "It's a sale of a lifetime! Right now when you spend 100 dollars, Home Fixit will extend your purchase of lumber. The more you buy, the more your dollars will stretch. Right now pressed wood, framing pieces, and plywood sheets are in stock. Hurry in before the wood is gone. Remember, your family's comfort is important to us too so get your house repaired with quality materials from your friendly Home Depot." A monotone voice quickly states the fine print.

"Remember, all purchases are final, no refunds provided on products over \$100."

<C> Welcome Back to Impact News

The news program continues. Walking along a business district in Orlando with damaged

offices in the background, a slender lady with black framed glasses confidently grips the microphone. As she walks towards the camera, she begins talking. "Penny Nichols here for Channel 19 Consumer Cents." The camera pans out to revile the damage. "Tourists? Do they really make a difference? They do when you are in a hurry behind a family of site seers driving way below the speed limit, or when they clog up all your favorite shopping areas. But when it comes down to it, they are what keep the economy going.

Florida was on the track to accumulate at least 48 billion dollars in tourist revenue this year (Drew). That is, before the storms blew their dollars away. Our state's hopes of profits were smashed along with everything else in the area. Here with me is Margo, an out-of-towner from Great Britain."

The screen widens to view a pale chubby blond lady that is taking advantage of her three-minute claim to fame.

"So Margo, what brings you to Orlando?" Penny questions with authority.

"Well, for me I like taking the opportunity of the insanely reduced hotel prices. After all, ye chaps have to do something so we travelers want to come for ah stay. Aye, all my other friends thought I was loopy, but, I'm the one saving all the expense. Things are a bit less crowded around here." Her time was up and Penny thanked her pleasantly. "Cheerio!" Margo's reply comes quickly in her thick Queen's English. The camera moves back to Penny as she continues with the statistics.

"Yes, 20% of tourists say they are less likely to visit Florida this year ("Bush hears"). Although many of us don't like to put up with pesky tourists, the total loss in tourism is over a billion dollars (Dahlburg.) Our state obviously can't afford to loose that amount of money, so the Tourism Bureau is seeking thirty million dollars in positive advertising campaigns to get people to come for a visit (Mackie)." Penny continues walking and a lumber yard is featured in the background shot. "If you think tourism is the only thing putting holes in Florida's pockets, think again. Prices have sky-rocketed on maintenance material. Framing lumber, for example is 15% higher than what it was just last year ("Entire Nation"). Companies have caught on fast and have jacked up prices on wood, lumber and mettle (Dahlburg). This price scalping has had a huge effect on the locals. According to statistics one in five homes have been damaged (Dahlburg), so just imagine how many people will be in line to get building materials.

Insurance companies are at their wits ends. Claims have accumulated at \$14 billion dollars in property damage. Uninsured totals are at \$20 billion dollars (Gongloff).

Mega Moneys also took a hit. Big names like, Disney and Wal-Mart are picking up the pieces along with everyone else. Restaurant chains, auto retailers, newspaper publishers and hospital workers were all doing overtime thanks to the storms" ("Gongloff"). Penny stopped along side a black Jetta and rested her hand on the hood of the car. "Already high gas prices have climbed due to slow production in the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricane Ivan shut down 39 production platforms and two drilling rigs in the Gulf. The economic strain is truly exponential. That's the latest information on this subject ("Entire Nation"). Windy is back at the studio with more information. Back to you, Windy." Again Windy was seated in front of the desk. She didn't hesitate.

"So, the land, the economy and our agriculture too, has taken a hard hit. We have a clip from Mr. Green who is the owner of several groves." Windy's face fades out and the next clip is set in a mangled orange grove. A tan grower wearing a trucker hat and suspenders surveys the scene.

"I'm devastated, just devastated." The older man's voice was deep. He shakes his head.

"These have been my groves for 47 years and we endured even through last year's low juice prices. I kept them up. The only thing I can do is start over and plant some news ones. The

state is going to see the smallest crop in over a decade (Dahlburg).” He eyes the camera. “Y’all will have to get used to drinking Brazilian orange juice, I reckon” (“Dahlburg”). He stooped to pick up a fallen half rotten orange. “My grapefruit trees don’t look any better.” The shot cut back to Windy and she intently looked back into the face of the camera.

“Time for another break. Stay tuned though, we’ll be right back.”

<C> We’ll Be Back After These Messages

A clip of workers fixing a restaurant along the water comes up. A lady’s voice is heard and pictures of seafood are show. “Dockside Bar and Grill is re-opening November 1st and is having some great deals to celebrate. We’ve been working hard to get everything back to normal. Our Shrimp Dinner and Fish Fry Basket are two grate items to satisfy your craving. We will be ready, will you? Stop in and help us celebrate. Remember to come November 1st!”

“Sod, grass pallets, shrubs and palms!” A man with a straw hat and glasses gets very close to the camera. “If your yard is suffering from the wrath of the storm, a face lift would be the perfect thing. Come to Tropical Nursery off of High Way 27 and pick up some plants. They are the perfect thing to get you into a better mood, and you owe it to your self to have a beautiful yard again.”

“Right now hotel packages are starting at \$120 a night. Book your stay at one of Florida’s leading vacation resorts. Our operators are ready to answer any questions you might have about our incredible offers. Give us a call at 1800-Deal-Now!” Images of poolside views and tropical vegetation look serene and tempting. The commercials cut off.

<C> Welcome Back to Impact News

Windy looks up. “Even the 2004 elections were affected by the storms. Over 90 previously scheduled voting stations were damaged, causing relocation to dry facilities. Water played a big part in damaging electronic touch screen machines. A clip plays. A curly headed old lady smirks and bats her eyes.

“Well last time it was Chad. This time it’s Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne. Florida always has to blame something for our problems.” Her head tilted to the side. “We should just keep telling everyone it’s El Niño.” The clip cut back to Windy. “Governor Jeb Bush has allowed the U.S. Postal Service to forward absentee ballots to make sure they get to residents whose homes were damaged or destroyed. This practice is normally prohibited but this was definitely a special case scenario (Associated Press). I wonder what Governor Jeb is going to have to say when it comes to education.”

The camera cuts to a title. “Just Read, Florida!” Windy continues. “The North gets snow days where the kids can go out and play, but here, over 14 million public school students ran for cover. The storms caused dismissal in 23 county school districts. We have an interview with a Teacher from a Middle school classroom.” A teacher with a denim vest, big tacky buttons is seated in front of a green chalkboard. Two pencils are projected from her hair tightly twisted in a bun.

“Hey, I’m Mrs. Smith, a six grade English teacher. Yes, the storms have had a huge impact on the schools. First kids were worried and had trouble concentrating as the storms approached. Many missed classes a few days in advance to help their parents get ready for the weather. Um, now we are talking about cutting out most of Christmas break, and extending the school year into the summer to make up for lost time” (Norvell). She fidgets on her seat and goes on. “FCAT now has to be crammed. That is the most important test, and it is coming up soon. I don’t know how we are going to fit it all in. (“Schools Making”). There is so much to do, but we are all united because at least for me, teaching is my number one concern. We are so lucky here because this school wasn’t damaged too badly and we can still have classes in this

facility. It has been crowded lately though, because the middle school in the next city over won't reopen until after Christmas. They have had to bus kids over here and that gets pretty tricky. " The teacher ends her interview and Windy comes back on the screen. "For high schools, homecoming dances and festivities have been canceled or rescheduled. Football games have been postponed and Graduation might be delayed. If you want to think of this in terms of numbers, remember how 40% of Florida lotto goes to education. This money has gone down by \$13 million dollars due to these storms (Norvell). A question for is: how is that going to be budgeted in? In a few moments we'll be back to focus on some positive effects of the storms."

<C> We'll Be Back After These Messages

Trucks, cups, and first aid kits bearing the familiar Red Cross symbol scroll across the screen.

"We are here to serve you." A friendly man shows a warm face.

"We are ready to meet your needs!" A woman holds a child. "You are our number one concern." An older couple reaches out lovingly. A voice begins to narrate.

"In the mist of Crisis Red Cross is ready to respond. Shelters are stationed all over Florida and there is sure to be one near you. Come let us reach out to you; that is what we are here for."

A man's voice is heard.

"This commercial paid for by the Red Cross, and other helpful sponsors."

"Are you paying too much for car insurance? A fifteen minuet call could save you fifteen percent or more. Call Geico Direct!"

"We are the experts." Three construction men are posed in front of a dilapidated house. "Let us handle the repairs. You will be on your feet again, and there will be a dry roof over your heads. We have been in the area for years, providing quality repairs to our local customers."

<C> More Impact News

The red light above the camera blinks on. Windy continues her news report. "In the mist of turmoil, good sometimes arises. Many new jobs are available. Construction workers, electricians and roofers are in high demand. In government jobs alone, over 5,000 emergency responders were activated to Florida. They joined other government agents there to pick up the pieces (Bush Hears). This means overtime paychecks and new employment opportunities. The housing market is doing surprisingly well. Many houses have been purchased by construction workers who plan on staying around for a few years to patch up the damage (Benedick). Just like 9-11, tragedies bring people closer together. This disaster has caused other states to reach out and help us back on our feet. We are grateful for the help, and for what we did salvage. Hurricanes in Florida are common, and we all need to be prepared. Until the next strike, I'm Windy Storms reporting for Channel 19, Impact News. Have a good day!"

<C> Hurricane (Not News) Update

Just over a year after the original version of this piece was written, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the Gulf of Mexico Coast. New Orleans was flooded, and entire towns in Louisiana and Mississippi were obliterated. The death toll in New Orleans alone is in the hundreds and dead bodies are still being recovered.

Federal Government's response to Katrina was slow in coming which led to intense criticism of Washington officials and the resignation of the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In a radio interview, the angry New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin told the federal government to "get off their asses" and come help his flooded city.

Gas prices across the nation shot up to around three dollars a gallon but various pundits were predicting that in order for Americans to change their driving habits and lifestyles drastically, gas has to cost four dollars a gallon or more.

The 2005 hurricane season has sixty days left in it. It has been one of the most intense hurricane seasons on record. According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's

professor Kerry Emanuel whose article appeared in the prestigious scientific journal *Nature*, "Hurricanes have grown significantly more powerful and destructive over the last three decades due in part to global warming..." (qtd. in Thompson). If Emanuel and many others who agree with him are right, it is not just the changing of our driving habits we should be thinking about.

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<A> Conclusions

I'd like to close the chapter with another passage from Tom Romano which, I think, captures well the feeling one gets when reading we-crafted multigenre work. Romano writes, "Reading [the multigenre paper] is like listening to jazz; the reader feels something satisfying and meaningful, but may not be able to articulate what it is right away. The multiple genres, the non-chronological order, the language rhythms, the condensed images—all these the reader adjusts to and begins to work with. Intellectual and emotional understanding mounts." (qtd. in Johnson and MoneySmith 2001, 191).

As a writer of multigenre papers, your task is to create such an active and deeply satisfying reading experience for your audience.

