

Experiment Teaching Group  
Spring 2015  
Illinois State University  
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## **The Genre of Valentines**

### 6-8 Writing Research Lesson Plan Guide

#### **Day One<sup>1</sup>: The conventions of Valentines.**

In order for students to produce Valentines, or any other genre, they will first need to understand the concept of **conventions**. Conventions are like the “rules” of the genre, but they are really more than rules. Conventions are the expectations that people bring to a genre that help them recognize it. For example, abbreviations are a convention of texting, but this convention isn’t just expected. It has a history (remember when phones had three letter to a key?) that influences how it is used. And although genres and their conventions are stable, they can (and do) change.

#### **Objective:**

- Students will analyze the conventions of the genre of Valentines.
- Students will be able to define the term convention as it applies to genre analysis.

#### **Materials:**

- Enough paper valentines for each group of students to have 3 to 4 valentines to analyze.
- Google docs to share the conventions list as they are created together. (Not essential, but a good way to share documents composed with students.)
- Computer with internet access
- Projector

#### **Instruction:**

##### Introduction of Conventions:

- Introduce the term convention to students and provide the following definition:
  - “rules” of a genre. Students need to understand that these “rules” are flexible, they depend upon the writers using them, and they are historical (They change over time, and they can change in the future.)
- Ask students to provide the conventions of a sentence. (Students will likely provide conventions like capitalizing the first letter in the first word of a sentence, using punctuation.)
- Next, ask students which conventions of the sentence they use when they text.

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<sup>1</sup> Lessons based on 45 minute classes.

- Most students will say that they don't text in complete sentence, don't use punctuation, and use abbreviations.
- Some students might text in full sentence if they have an iPhone with voice commands.
- (You could point out that this is a historical change in texting due to the use of evolving tools.)

Once students have an understanding of conventions, they can begin investigating the conventions of a specific genre. (10 min.)

**Genre Analysis - Finding Conventions:**

- Provide samples of 3 to 4 valentines for each group of students to examine.
- Ask students to create a list of conventions for the genre. (15 min.)

**Compiling a Conventions List:**

- Once students have created their individual conventions lists, have students share the conventions to create a combined conventions list.
  - (These could also be collected and compiled, but it might be more helpful for students to be able to discuss why they chose the conventions they selected.) (20 min.)
- The conventions list that the class compiles can then be used by students to guide their writing in the genre of valentines.

**CCSS:**

**Reading Standards for Literature: 6.1** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

## Day Two: Research and Drafting

Students will consider the history of Valentines before they begin researching the kinds of writing that appear on Valentines. Students should have some time to begin drafting their Valentines.

### Objectives:

- Students will read literary genres of writing typically included in Valentines including poetry and jokes.
- Students will begin drafting their own individual valentine for an intended audience.

### Materials:

- Overhead projector
- Computer with Internet access
- Books featuring poetry
- Writer's notebook for drafting

### Instruction:

- Prepare students for the History of Valentine's Day Video from the History Channel.
- Provide the following prompt:
  - How has the genre of the valentine changed?
  - Compare the samples of the genre you analyzed in class yesterday with the historical examples of the genre from the video.
- Show the video clip <http://www.history.com/topics/valentines-day/history-of-valentines-day/videos/valentine-cards> (approx.. 4 min.)
- This video provides a history of valentines with examples of historic valentines. By watching this video, students will get a sense of the historical roots of this genre.
- Discuss how the genre of valentines has changed. (5 min.)

### Content Research:

The next step is for students to research the writing that people do when creating Valentines. This is content research, the type of research that is done to help the reader provide the information that is composed. While content and genre research are certainly related, this is the research that tells the writer **what** to write, instead of how to write (which is the focus of genre research). (Approx. 20 min.)

- Students could use books of poetry as examples of the types of poems that are included in this genre. Not all Valentines are poems, though.
- Teachers could provide copies of online examples of valentines or teachers could provide these websites for students to use.

- Teachers might want to restrict online genre research of valentines due to the adult language and images of some online resources. Some suggested sources include:

<http://www.minds-in-bloom.com/2012/02/20-great-valentines-day-writing-prompts.html>

Search Google Images: Valentine poems

**You might also consider using the following books with students:**

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Children's Poetry Treasure by Jack Prelutsky

Poems to Learn by Heart by Caroline Kennedy

The following site will provide some information about possible origins of the valentine note:

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/13/valentines-day-bloody-history\\_n\\_4768652.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/13/valentines-day-bloody-history_n_4768652.html)

**Audience:**

Students need to identify the audience for their valentine. Teachers might discuss how audience affects the language choices that students will make as they draft their valentines. (5 min.)

**Drafting:**

Once students have had some time to read through the types of writing that will fit the genre of Valentines, they should be ready to begin drafting the text for their Valentine.

- Teachers should remind students to consider their audience as they are drafting. (Approx. 10 min.)

**CCSS:**

**Writing Standards 6.3.d** Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

### **Day Three: Drafting and Conferencing**

Students should be provided class time to draft their Valentines. During this time the teacher can circulate around the room, conferencing with students as they write. Teachers might remind students that they can likely answer many questions about this genre by referring to their conventions list.

#### **Objectives:**

- Students will draft their valentines for an intended audience.
- In the genre of the bulleted list, students will identify the conventions they think they need help with from peers.
- Students will conference and provide peer feedback.

#### **Materials:**

- Writer's notebook for drafting

#### **Instruction:**

- Teachers should remind students to rely on their conventions list as they draft.
- Students should also consider their intended audience as they draft.

#### **Drafting:**

- Students should have the first half of class to work on drafting their Valentines.

#### **Peer Revision and Conferencing:**

- During the last 20 minutes of class, students should draft a list of the conventions they would like help with.
- Students would trade papers with a peer to read the valentine along with the list and provide written feedback for revision.
- Once students had time to read and respond, they should also have time to discuss their responses.
- The remaining class time should be used for students to return to their drafts to make revisions to their Valentines.

#### **CCSS:**

**Writing Standards 6.3.d** Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

### Day Four: Considering the Tools for Production

Valentines are typically colorful and will require tools that students don't necessarily equate with writing. Before students will be able to produce a Valentine for their intended audience, they will need to gather the tools necessary to produce this genre.

#### Objectives:

- Students will create a list of materials needed to produce their Valentine.
- Students will begin producing the final draft of their Valentine.

#### Materials:

- Tools to produce the genre:
  - Colored paper
  - Colored pencils
  - Markers
  - Scissors
  - Printers
  - Images
- Students might determine that they need additional tools to produce their Valentines.

#### Instructions:

- Ask students to list the tools that they will need to collect in order to create their valentines.
- Working individually or in pairs, students should create the list of tools.
- It might be helpful for students to return to their sample genres as they create these lists.
- Next, teachers could ask students to gather the tools need to create the valentines.
- While it might be easier for teachers to provide all of these materials for students, asking students to consider the material first will help them become more aware of the role that tools play in the production of genres.
- Considering the tools that are not available will also help students understand where their genres might fall short of the sample genres they analyzed.
- Once students have gathered their materials, they could begin producing their valentines.

#### CCSS:

**Writing Standards 6.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

### Day Five: Valentine Distribution Day

Students should have the opportunity to distribute their Valentine to the intended audience, if possible.

#### Objectives:

- Students will distribute their Valentines to the intended audience if possible.
- Students will be provided with another venue for sharing if the intended audience is not an option.

#### Materials:

- Completed Valentine
- Once copy of the completed Valentine
- Uptake genre questions listed below

#### Instruction:

Once students have completed their Valentines, they will evaluate their final product based on the conventions they investigated. Students will answer the following questions:

- Using your conventions list, identify at least 10 of the conventions of the genre that you used to write your Valentine.
- Provide examples from your genre. You can use the copy of your Valentine – (these can be labeled and numbered)?
- List all of the activities that you did to produce your Valentine.
- Compare your final production with the samples that you analyzed
  - How are they similar?
  - How are they different?
- How do you plan to get your valentine to its intended audience?
- How might your valentine be used if it didn't get to its intended audience?

#### CCSS:

**Writing Standard 6.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

**Writing Standard 6.10** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.