
Writer's Statement for "The Extent of Influence that Genre Conventions Have on TED Talks"

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When I first learned about the final assignment in ENC 1102, I was immediately worried. A research paper was definitely a step-up from the final paper in ENC 1101. The biggest, most alien factor was the format that the paper had to be written in. The combination of rules and the formality of the research questions and the proper way to answer them were very intimidating. In Professor Lambert's class, we were assured that the paper was not going to be as scary as it looked because it was composed of many small parts that would add up to be the final paper. That idea helped get some of the stress out from writing such an extensive and detailed research paper.

The first step in the process was choosing a topic that would fit into one of the three different concepts that we had read about in class. This was especially hard for me, since I had written about something that I was really passionate about in my last writing class, and I doubted that I would find something as good as that with relation to writing. I was scrambling to find something that was good enough to write a 15-page paper on and not run out of things to say. The most obvious topic to write about was engineering, since it's my major, and there are a lot of misconceptions about the ability that engineers have to write complex works with ease. I knew I would definitely not run out of things to say; however, I had very limited access to actual engineers in the field, which would have limited the legitimacy of my research. Nevertheless, it was my only spark of inspiration and the deadline was fast-approaching, so I decided to start doing some research to see if I could find any engineers talking about their writing. With my Google search came some articles talking about writing in engineering, some ads, and a couple of videos, one of which was a TED Talk. I knew TED Talks were interesting sources of information from previous experience watching them, and since I was familiar with them, I clicked on the video. I immediately fell down the internet hole of binge-watching videos. That's when I realized that TED Talks are kinds of speeches, and speeches have to be written. I then decided that I would make the suggestion of TED Talks as my research topic.

After finally choosing something to write about, I had to decide how I would approach it to turn it to a research paper. I then thought that I would make the paper about how TED Talks qualify as a genre. All was well until, some weeks later, I had found so much information that I was completely overwhelmed. I had found different TED Talks that were completely different. They were addressing topics of all sorts, and they all had different tones, aid tools, and appeals. I also had found the preparation process for the TED Talks, some interviews about what is allowed and what is not allowed on them, and even the history about how TED Talks emerged. Some of my information did not really apply to the question, "How are TED Talks a genre?" After reviewing my information and concluding that I had no idea what I was even doing anymore, I decided to go talk to Professor Lambert at her office. She helped me sort out my information, and we discussed TED Talks as a whole new "thing" that evolved to the genre that it is now. I then was able to separate my information into

four categories: how TED Talks emerged as a genre, how they evolved to what they are now, what characteristics they have that make them a genre, and how TED Talks that seem to be completely different in what seems like everything still fit into one big genre, or a genre system. Writing the essay was not easy, but I made it so it was enjoyable. I decided to pick out different TED Talks that I had enjoyed watching for analysis and do a case study about them. This made the paper a lot easier to write, since I had organized everything into very specific categories and subcategories, and I found the talks really interesting and informative.

I finished this paper having a totally new understanding of what a genre is and what is included in it. I developed a love and respect for TED Talks and the people that deliver them, and I learned about what goes into making such a legendary speech. Most important of all, I succeeded in writing a full research paper, something I had originally thought was near impossible for me.