

Students Write With  
Passion

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MULTIGENRE  
WRITING  
PROJECTS

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## **Introduction - What is a Multigenre Writing Project?**

“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.”

Tom Romano *Blending Genre, Altering Style*

When I was first introduced to Tom Romano’s work I was excited about the idea of multiple text writing tasks. I wanted to encourage my students to ‘write with passion’ and believed that this was a way to do it. I decided that my students would produce a writing project/folio on a topic or issue of their choice that was both interesting and important to them (a topic that they felt passionate about). I called this the ‘Multigenre Writing Project’.

I knew my students could do it, but I also knew that they would need solid structure, direction, support and encouragement in order to do it really well. I came up with a fairly thorough plan and the project was overwhelmingly successful.

The folio included 6 pieces of writing, each in a different genre. Together these pieces constructed a thorough picture of the topic/issue of the student’s choice. The students chose to work on one piece at a time or to move between several pieces. This flexibility enabled the students to write in the style that appealed to them most on any given day. If they experienced ‘writer’s block’ on a particular piece they moved to another piece for the session, therefore maximizing productive writing time.

Each student submitted a project proposal in which they detailed their focus and listed the genre they intended to cover. This proposal was to be used as a project planner and was not set in concrete. Students negotiated changes to their proposals as their ideas and projects evolved.

I used the information on the proposals for planning guided reading and writing sessions. For example, if 5 students planned to write a report then I grouped them for a guided reading session where we read 1 or 2 examples of reports and discussed the features of each. A guided writing session followed where perhaps the students would write a short report together then begin writing their own, coming together regularly as a group to provide feedback and support.

Students thought carefully about the presentation of their final product. They were encouraged to be creative in presenting their project. The final package included a contents page and the original project proposal sheet.

Their writing was powerful, passionate, challenging and just wonderful! Feedback from the students, parents and other teachers was extremely positive. On our celebration day (completion) there was such excitement in the air. We all knew that we had achieved something very special.

## Multigenre Writing Projects

- connect reading and writing in meaningful ways
- provide rich learning experiences for all
- are truly 'open ended', catering beautifully to a range of abilities and talents
- promote high level discussion and higher order thinking
- promote creativity and embrace the use of various art forms in presentation of the work
- enable children to follow their true interests and passions, therefore engaging them fully in the process
- allow children to explore their own experiences, thoughts, feelings and ideas, therefore developing deeper understandings of themselves and others

## 8 Steps for Multigenre Writing Project Success

- 1) Planning and introducing the project
- 2) Choosing topics
- 3) Researching and gathering information
- 4) Critical reading and sorting
- 5) Project proposals
- 6) Working on the project
- 7) Assessment
- 8) Celebration

## 1) Planning and Introducing the Multigenre Writing Project

- Ideally, plan to run the Multigenre Writing Project in terms 2 or 3 to give yourself time to prepare your students by:
  - ✓ initiating critical literacy questions and discussions when reading
  - ✓ establishing good reading and writing conditions in your classroom
  - ✓ reading and writing in a range of genre and paying attention to the features of different text types
  - ✓ creating regular routines eg. demonstration and share times during writing sessions, student self and peer assessments, silent writing
- Thoroughly explain and introduce the ideas and aims of the Multigenre Writing Project.
- Discuss and extend understandings of 'genre'.
- List genres that may be used in the project, beginning with the genres covered together so far.
- If you really want your students to write about what they are passionate about, you need to have a discussion about the word 'passion':
  - what does it mean?
  - allow your students to develop their own understanding of the meaning of the word and to relate this to their own lives
- Set whole group teaching and learning directions for 'revisiting' the features of familiar genre and introducing less familiar genre where appropriate.

## 2) Choosing Topics

*\*Choice- This project is so effective because it allows students to express their ideas, concerns and hopes on issues and topics that are important to them. It empowers and engages students because it gives them a voice. Please value their choices.*

*\*Topic Title- The process of refining big ideas down to a manageable working title is challenging for some students, they will need help with this. Students must be given enough time to really discuss and think about their topic.*

- Each student writes down 2-3 topics they are passionate about.
- For each topic on the list, the students write reasons for choosing that topic.
- The students are randomly paired and must read their topics and reasons to their partner. Partners provide feedback and advice.
- Each student then decides on their project topic.
- The students fill in the first part of their project proposal and share with the class (topic title and reason only - see proposal at end of handouts). List and display topics against students' names so that everyone is aware of topics being researched. Acknowledge each student's choice and reasons.

## 3) Researching and Gathering Information

- Students begin gathering information on their chosen topics. They are encouraged to share information relevant to another student's topic if they come across it in their own research.
- Provide students with school library and computer lab sessions for research purposes.
- Encourage students to continue their research at home, calling relevant organisations, finding relevant articles in newspapers/magazines etc.

*\*Most parents are enthusiastic and supportive. Some students are not supported at home to the extent that others are, so I gave extra support to those students at school.*

## 4) Critical Reading, Sorting

- Whole group discussion about how best to use the information gathered. Discuss the need for thorough reading of the materials. Look at the range of genre used in presenting the information.
- Shared reading (one enlarged text read together) – demonstrate reading for information, including dot point note taking (modelled writing).

- Provide time for discussion, quiet reading and writing related to sorting information.
- In guided reading groups, read and discuss selected texts from those gathered. Engage in critical analysis of the information by asking:
  - ✓ Who wrote this and why?
  - ✓ How was the information presented?
  - ✓ What was the writer's position on this topic/issue?
  - ✓ What information do they include and what is left out?
  - ✓ In what ways do the writers try to convince us with words, pictures, diagrams and numbers?

**REF: Article by Barbara Comber 'Critical Literacy: What's It All About?'**

*\*Engaging in Critical Literacy practices when reading really develops students' writing skills. Through critical reading and discussion, students learn to identify a range of strategies that writers use to present their information. Students are then more able to make decisions about how to use the information gathered in their own writing.*

- Having done all this research, reading, analysis, discussion and thinking, students are now ready to complete their project proposals and get started on their writing.

## 5) Project Proposal

- Students refer again to genre list written together earlier and select 6 different genre for their project, drawing on the ideas and understandings they developed during their research.
- Students are to plan how each piece of writing will fit together to construct a thorough picture of the topic/issue of their choice. They also need to consider how each piece will reflect their position on the topic.
- Students complete the project proposal sheet. Model and explain how to fill in the sheet with a focus on writing statements of purpose for each piece.
- Students share their proposal with a randomly selected partner. Partners are to provide feedback.
- Students to make changes to their proposals if necessary.
- Collect and make copies of proposals for planning purposes.

## 6) Working on the Multigenre Writing Project

- Students begin working on the written pieces for their projects.
- Each student meets individually with the teacher to discuss the project proposal whilst the others get started.

*\*This initial meeting is a great opportunity to write assessment notes on each student. Further notes can be kept during guided reading and writing sessions, roving conferences and share times.*

- Ongoing support is provided to the students by:
  - displaying charts listing features of various genre around the classroom for easy reference
  - regularly working with small groups on specific skills and genre styles as planned (and as the need arises)
  - regularly modelling editing skills and providing time and support to students in editing and improving their writing
  - meeting regularly with individual students to monitor progress and provide appropriate support and guidance
  - setting share times where students regularly share their completed pieces with the class
  - making time to discuss and investigate different presentation options
  - supporting students to produce their best writing and celebrating their successes
  - encouraging creativity in presentation of their work by allowing students time to explore and develop their presentations *\*For example, a student in my class wrote a 'rap' and wanted to go to the music room with some friends to collect instruments and to work on the presentation of this piece of writing in its musical form. The performance was entertaining and proved to be a powerful way to get a message across.*

## 7) Assessment

- 3 levels of assessment –
  - 1) Teacher Assessment
  - 2) Self Assessment
  - 3) Peer Assessment
- Ongoing Teacher Assessment during:
  - guided reading/writing sessions
  - individual student progress meetings
  - roving conferences
  - share times
  - observation times

- Self Assessment through:
  - teacher designed self assessment sheet
  - discussion with teacher
  - individual progress log
- Peer Assessment through:
  - formal peer assessment sheet (students need guidance in giving **positive** and **helpful** feedback here – crucial to success of peer assessment)
  - informal oral feedback during share time

## 8) Celebration

- Invite parents, friends, other classes, teachers, principal etc to celebrate the students' completed projects. Give students an opportunity to read each piece of writing in their project with others and to discuss their topic choice. Address the parents yourself to explain the ideas and outcomes of the project then let them look closely at the students' work. Plan for performance of written pieces in a range of genre:
  - poetry recitals
  - plays
  - advertisements
  - songs/raps
  - news reports etc

## Multigenre Writing Project Proposal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Working Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons for choosing this topic: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Write down your planned written pieces below.

Genre

Purpose

1) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_