

Writing Spaces

Assignments & Activities Archive

Who Tells My Writing Story Better? Exploring Genre, Voice, and AI “Silences”

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Overview

This activity invites students in a ‘Writing for University and Beyond’ undergraduate-level writing course to critically analyze and reflect on generative AI use while fostering rhetorical awareness. Students revisit their already written “My Writing Story” essay through the lens of rhetorical moves and compare their writing to an AI-generated literacy narrative. Students use the Jacobson, Pawlowski, and Tardy’s rhetorical moves framework to annotate both texts to identify the differences in how rhetorical moves are realized, focusing especially on embodied memory where writing is connected to lived experience and emotional response. Students identify what AI keeps, alters, or silences, in relation to voice, identity, emotional nuance, and rhetorical moves and strategies. As a personal narrative genre, the Writing Story essay provides an ideal site for questioning AI’s rhetorical capacity, for current research (e.g., Al-Hosni; Robbins and Blundell) shows that generative AI models often homogenize writing by flattening identity, standardizing stylistic variation, and erasing culturally specific expression. When students critically analyze how their own voice differs from AI’s patterned output, they develop rhetorical agency, deepen their awareness of genre conventions, and critically analyze how rhetorical choices shape meaning.

Time Commitment

2 class sessions.

Materials

Students need access to a previously written literacy narrative, the "[Make Your Move: Writing in Genres](#)" article by Brad Jacobson, Madelyn Pawlowski, and Christine M. Tardy, Kerry Dirk's "Navigating Genres", for additional genre framing, a generative AI tool such as ChatGPT, board space or collaborative annotation software, e.g., Google Docs, for collaborative move mapping, printed worksheets, LMS discussion.

Activity Process

- Prior to the class session, students read Jacobson, Pawlowski, and Tardy's article and define 'genre', 'genre conventions', and 'rhetorical moves' in their own words. Then, students should try to identify one possible rhetorical move in their literacy narrative. In my class, students are asked to use their "My Writing Story" essay, which is a reflective literacy narrative designed to help students examine their personal histories, attitudes, and development as writers.
- First, students individually identify one paragraph in their literacy narrative, where they made a deliberate rhetorical choice such as dialogue vs. summary, moments of reflection, and moments where emotion and embodied memory were strategically constructed. In pairs, students compare their definitions of genre and rhetorical moves and share the moves they identified in their own narratives to reinforce shared vocabulary before deeper analysis.
- Next, in small groups, students identify and analyze several rhetorical moves present in three writing stories: student A's, student B's and a sample provided by the instructor.

Students will have to identify 4-6 recurring moves, debate which are obligatory vs. optional, and justify the classification with textual evidence.

- During the same class session, each group presents their analysis using a move table modeled on Jacobson, Pawlowski, and Tardy's framework. Here, instructors can use guided questions to elicit the main takeaways, focusing on how specific rhetorical moves are impacted by writer's purpose, audience, structure, voice, identity, and genre conventions.
- During the second class session, students receive the AI-generated version of a literacy narrative text created by prompting ChatGPT or any other OpenAI tool with the neutral prompt: "Write a typical undergraduate student's literacy narrative about challenges and successes in writing". In pairs or small groups, students annotate the AI-generated writing story and apply the same rhetorical move framework to identify moves and classify them using textual evidence.
- Next, in pairs or small groups, students compare annotations to identify one move AI performs effectively and one it struggles to realize and describe how the AI language choices (verb tense, pronouns, specificity, abstraction) shape the realization of moves.
- To shift from description to critique, in the same group, students are prompted to discuss how the rhetorical choices shape meaning, paying attention to moments of AI "silences" or gaps, whether these are linguistic, contextual, or experiential. Possible guiding questions include: a. Which rhetorical moves appear and how are they realized?, b. Where does the AI generalize or simplify experience?, and c. How does the realization of moves affect voice and reader perception?
- Finally, to develop students' metacognition, students write a short paragraph (200-300 words) in response to the

following prompt: Which version tells the writing story better; the student version or the AI version? Students have to defend their answer using rhetorical concepts such as: genre conventions, rhetorical moves, audience, voice, and purpose. Students should reference specific examples from their comparison table to reflect on how embodied memory, lived experience, and rhetorical intent differ from AI's data-driven language production. Students share their reflections using the course LMS discussion board or collaborative platform to foster critical discussion and engagement.

Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity will:

- Develop rhetorical awareness by identifying and naming rhetorical moves in literacy narrative writing
- Analyze how rhetorical moves contribute to achieving the social action of the genre
- Articulate how embodied memory and rhetorical decision-making shape voice and identity in writing
- Analyze differences between human-authored and AI-generated texts across voice, genre, and structure

Learning Accommodations

- The activity can be completed individually, in pairs, or in small groups to support different participation preferences.
- Materials and prompts should be provided in accessible digital formats and modeled verbally and in writing.
- Students may complete the reflective component in written,

audio, or multimodal form depending on course context.

Works Cited

Al-Hosni, Jokha. "Preserving Authorial Voice in Academic Texts in the Age of Generative AI: A Thematic Literature Review." *Arab World English Journal*, vol. 16, no. 3, Sept. 2025, pp. 244–258, <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol16no3.14>.

Jacobson, Brad, Madelyn Pawlowski, and Christine M. Tardy. "Make Your 'Move': Writing in Genres." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, vol. 4, edited by Dana Driscoll et al., Parlor Press and the WAC Clearinghouse, 2021, writingspaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/jacobson.pdf.

Robbins, Scott, and Inga Blundell. "Losing Our Voice? Generative AI and the Degradation of Human Expression." *Minds and Machines*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-025-09757-6>.

Further Reading

Dirk, Kerry. "Navigating Genres." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, vol. 1, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, Parlor Press and the WAC Clearinghouse, 2010, pp. 249–262, wacclearinghouse.org/books/writingspaces1/dirk--navigating-genres.pdf

Wardle, Elizabeth, and Doug Downs. *Writing about Writing: A College Reader*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.