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Teagan R. Knoblich
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Running Head: TEACHING WRITING: GENRE LESSONS

Teaching Writing: Genre Lessons for Teaching Writing in the Homeschool High School
Classroom and Beyond

Teagan Knoblich

A Creative Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Teaching

In

Education Studies: K-12 and Secondary Programs

Minnesota State University, Mankato

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This paper is submitted as part of the required work in the Department of Educational Studies, K-12 and Secondary Programs, KSP 610, Scholarly Writing, at Minnesota State University, Mankato, and has been supervised, examined, and accepted by the professor.

Under the Creative Project option for the Masters of Arts in Teaching, this paper is offered in lieu of a thesis.

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Abstract

Most high schoolers in America operate with basic writing skills at best (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Students who are educated at home, or homeschoolers, may be only marginally better in their writing skills, if at all. A review of materials available to home educators for the instruction of their homeschool students revealed that available writing curricula does not do a good job covering more than a few basic writing forms, such as research and narrative. This creative project aimed to create writing instruction materials that could be used by home educators to teach their high school students how to write well. In order to create versatile materials that educators can personalize and individualize for their students; genre pedagogy approaches were used. Genre pedagogy considers all texts based on the situation in which they were written, including the purpose of the piece, the audience it was written for, and the context it was written in. Teaching students to be mindful of a text's genre and situation prepares them to analyze and write in any genre form. As such, the materials created for this creative project informs educators on the basic principles of genre pedagogy, provides a step-by-step process for creating a writing unit based on genre pedagogies, and offers three writing units that familiarize students with the writing situation as well as the process of analyzing a text's genre. The resulting materials are flexible and will aid home educators in their instruction of writing. Finally, conclusions were drawn about the need for more robust writing curricula, particularly for home educators and recommendations were made for further research where the literature review showed a distinct lack of materials.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Writing is a weak skill for high schoolers across the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Education's *The Nation's Report Card: Writing* (2012), when high schoolers completed an online written assessment that asked them to consider the writing situation for different purposes and audiences, less than one third of the nation's 8th and 12th graders scored at or above proficient. That means that somewhere between 70%-80% of high-school students only have a partial mastery of writing and writing concepts, or "basic" skills as they were categorized in the report. Writing is clearly a communication skill with which many high schoolers struggle.

This is not entirely surprising as writing is a multi-faceted skill that takes time and practice to master. This may largely be because writing is a social activity with a purpose, context, and audience (Hyland, 2007). There are many elements that factor into effective writing, and thus it should be no surprise that there are a variety of methods and approaches to teach writing. One of the current dominant methods of instruction is through process pedagogy (Hyland, 2003) or teaching the students writing as a form of critical thinking where they learn to express themselves clearly and accurately via the writing process. Another, arguably strong, approach for teaching writing is through genre pedagogies, where students consider how texts fit together in genres according to contexts (Hyland, 2007). Currently, however, much writing instruction in American schools is not taught based on such pedagogies but are taught based on the educational standards for writing (Gilliland, 2015). There are more writing pedagogies than simply

these, and with so many different approaches to teaching writing, it is to be expected that high school students complete grade school with varying degrees of mastery.

What might be more revealing of why our secondary students have such a weak grasp of writing is the lack of strong writing classes and materials in our classrooms. A preliminary inquiry into school districts surrounding the researcher of this project revealed that many of the schools in South Central Minnesota did not offer explicit writing classes. Writing instruction was incorporated into the English Language Arts curriculum, along with literature and grammar instruction. If classes focused on only writing were offered, they were usually at the remedial level, or for college credit, but not throughout the high-school experience, with a few exceptions. This means that not much time is spent on writing instruction specifically, which could explain why so many students are only operating at basic skill levels (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Students quite simply have little focused instruction on writing allowing for anything more than rudimentary skills.

When considering these “catch-all” English classes, many teachers also may not have much of an option when it comes to material for their writing curriculum (Thomas, 2016). Often textbooks and curriculum purchased by the schools, specifically public-school classrooms, are written and created to teach the national standards of writing, meaning they focus largely on surface-level “testable” content such as grammar and punctuation (Gilliland, 2015, p. 273). Also, if the schools operate like the one studied in California in Gilliland’s study (2015), the curriculums that *do* offer writing instruction are often lacking the personal connection that allows students to better understand and apply the concepts of writing. In this case, the common core standards for writing are

only really learned when the teacher is able to adapt the standards to individually reach their students. The teacher can clearly make the difference in whether students master writing, but it is apparent that neither the classes nor the curriculums currently offered in most schools support effective writing instruction.

Fully adapted and personalized instruction is one of the benefits of being a homeschooler in the United States. Homeschoolers are any school-aged children who are educated primarily at home. Their parents or guardians, the home educators, select the curriculum and routine for instructing the child (Thomas, 2016). The exact details of instruction and curriculum required of home educators will vary from state to state, as each state has control over their own home education policies (Ray, 2010; Thomas, 2016). What we do know is that elementary homeschool students, who learn in a structured environment, actively perform better than their public-schooled peers as demonstrated through compared standardized testing (Martin-Chang, Gould, & Meuse, 2011). As a matter of fact, all homeschooled children, regardless of how long they had been homeschooled, easily out-perform their public-educated counterparts in standardized testing (Ray, 2010). Despite this achievement, in a study by Duggan of students enrolled in a community college, fewer homeschoolers than public-schoolers who made it to this level of education perceived themselves as above-average writers (Duggan, 2010). This means that despite the ability to fully personalize the education of homeschooled students, home educators must also be struggling with supporting their students in the pursuit of proficient writing.

Considering the lack of dedicated writing instruction in schools and the less-than-ideal levels of writing skill among high schoolers and homeschoolers, this Creative

Project aims to create teaching materials mainly for home educators, to aid in the implementation and instruction of writing through genre pedagogies.

Statement of Problem

Writing instruction is not strong in our high schools. This can be seen in our relatively basic testing scores (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). However, there is no doubt that writing is an important skill for every high schooler. According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010), students, by the time they complete high school, are expected to be able to write in various genres as well as argue, analyze, convey ideas clearly, and write correctly. Aside from educational standards, writing is a skill needed beyond the classroom. Strong writing skills are needed for post-secondary work. In a study of first-generation minority college students, Reid and Moore III (2008) found that any student who took Advanced Placement (AP) English classes felt more prepared for college than their counterparts. They felt that English teachers overall were “providing them with writing skills that are helping them as college students” (Reid & Moore III, 2008, p. 247). Writing skills are also an important ability in the work force. Scholars agree that students being taught dominant literacies, that is the textual rules and genres used in most public discourses, will prepare them, “giving [them] access to higher studies, working life and democratic life as adults” (Hultin & Westman, 2013, p. 298). Considering what we want our students to achieve and how we want them to succeed, educating our students to have strong communication and writing skills in various forms and mediums is necessary.

Home educators are in a unique position to help their students succeed in all possible fields. This is because home educators are able to completely personalize their

student's education. Partly, this could be in the form of a personalized routine. In a large survey of homeschooling educators, or "home educators" as they will be referred to in this creative project, Thomas (2016) determined that selection of educational routine was based on the homeschooled student's unique learning style, followed closely by the educator's personal preference. Personalization of education for homeschoolers could also come in the form of materials carefully selected. For instance, many homeschoolers work with some combination of published curricula, online resources, community resources, and parental involvement/knowledge (Hanna, 2012; Martin-Chang et al., 2011). Home educators draw much of their curricula materials from other sources, often combining different resources in an attempt to find the best possible material for their students. Although home educators' choices for curriculum and approach may be largely dictated by the regulations of their states (Thomas, 2016), the diversity of materials and curricula used by home educators may be on the rise (Hanna, 2012; Martin-Chang et al., 2011; Thomas, 2016). Although many home educators tend to measure their methods as more controlling or structured, the homeschool setting allows for an environment that is very supportive of student autonomy, due to the small ratio of students to teachers, the flexibility in curriculum, the amount of time available for each student, and the focus on the student's needs (Cai, Reeve, & Robinson, 2002). What is more, home educators are able to use a vast array of teaching materials to the advantage of themselves and their students. If students were to master writing and communication skills, the homeschooled environment would be an ideal setting to accomplish this given the home educator's ability to fully personalize education.

When it comes to writing materials, however, resources for home educators are lacking. In many states, homeschoolers can use local district curriculum, but it has already been established that texts used by the public schools often do not have separate or robust writing curriculum (Gilliland, 2015). Given the weak curricula available at public schools, it is unsurprising that home educators rarely use public school resources and *if* they do, it is often for equipment or involvement in teams (Hanna, 2012). As for specific curricula created for homeschoolers, many publishers have created homeschool-specific curriculums (Pearson, 2018) and some publishers have arisen specifically for the publication of homeschooling supplies (Sonlight, 2018). These publishers include such names as Sonlight, Pearson, Bridgeway Academy, Christianbook.com, and more. However, once the researcher of this project previewed the materials offered by such publishers, it became clear that much of the high school curricula offered from these publishers for Language Arts are either literature or syntax/grammar based. Publishers may offer handbooks with information on various writing genres, but there are few writing-specific curriculums offered. Full writing curricula are often limited to creative writing, or essay and research writing, which in turn limits the skills and experiences of students. More robust ones may also include literary devices and arguments, like the *Writing Strands* series from Master Books (www.masterbooks.com), or cover other genres of writing. There are a few publishers that do seem to carry a more complete writing curriculum. These curricula may even include instructional guides for teachers; one such example coming from the Institute for Excellence in Writing (www.iew.com) and Write Shop (www.writeshop.com), but, quite simply, these materials are not enough. Some curricula look as if they have not been updated since the early 1990's, which calls

into concern how current their concepts and examples are given the quickly-changing platforms of online writing and mixed media. Some curricula only cover a few basic writing genres or typical academic essays (“Writing Curriculum,” 2019), which might limit our students’ skills and experiences by forcing repetition of a few dominant academic genres. Finally, some curricula do not seem to put writing into meaningful contexts, meaning that the writing itself is assigned for the sake of writing and may not be given to students with specific purposes or audiences in mind, which greatly limits the actual process of writing. In short, there is a shortage of solid, useful writing curriculum in the market, particularly for anything beyond basic school genres, for high schoolers and particularly homeschoolers. If home educators are seeking the best materials for their students, they could use lessons and units that make writing purposeful. They need curriculum they can apply.

Homeschooled students are still students, and educators we owe them access to the best education they can get, including when it comes to writing instruction. Considering how home educators often find and use teaching materials, and considering how many home educators are educated, but are not licensed or trained in writing (Martin-Chang et al., 2011; Ray 2010), it is reasonable to believe that we as educators should provide materials to support the homeschooling community in their efforts to educate their students in writing. Such materials would not only aid the home educators in their process of personalized instruction for students, but such materials could also be used as supplements for public educators as they seek material for their own curriculum.

The purpose of this creative project then, is to generate and provide high school home educators with materials that will guide and support their attempts to teach writing

in authentic and meaningful ways. By using genre pedagogies to do this, both the instructors as well as the students will be able to learn about writing through comparing genre examples, considering the writing situation of a piece, and following conventions of the genre as established by the repeated context. The following questions will guide the creation of these materials as well as their implementation:

1. What are the shortcomings in offered homeschool, high school writing curricula?
2. How can genre pedagogies be used to create instructional writing materials to teach homeschoolers and high schoolers to write well?
3. How can genre-based writing curriculum for homeschoolers be successfully integrated in the homeschool environment to create authentic writing situations?

Importance of Study

There are a large number of homeschoolers in the United States. More than that, the number of homeschoolers is on the rise (Redford, Battle, Bielick, & Grady, 2017). By the year 2012, there were over a million estimated homeschooled students in the U.S. Homeschooling is a choice made by families for multiple reasons, but usually the motivations for home education can be categorized as either pedagogically or ideologically related (Hanna, 2012). These categories, created by Van Galen and further discussed by Hanna, mean that these families choose to educate at home because they do not agree with what they perceived as poor teaching (pedagogues) or they are choosing homeschooling as an objection to school teachings and/or to strengthen parent-child bond (ideologues) (as cited in Hanna, 2012). Regardless of motivations, the intent of home

educators remains clear: They intend to instruct their students as best they can with personalized instruction that fits their child (Thomas, 2016). It is little wonder then that many parents and guardians are making the shift to homeschooling, as it allows for a highly personalized and a highly supportive educational environment.

This personalized support and learning benefits homeschooled students greatly. Homeschoolers in structured environments do seem to out-perform their public-schooled peers (Martin-Chang et al., 2011; Ray, 2010). However, when asked which skills they were most confident in when they reached college, homeschoolers at the community college level were not as confident as other students in their ability to write (Duggan, 2010). This is not uncommon, as most high schoolers in the U.S. are operating with writing abilities that qualify as “basic” and show only partial mastery (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Such weak skills may be from a lack of learned writing pedagogies on the part of the instructors, but it also may be due to lack of good writing curriculum.

A home educator’s choice of curriculum is very intentional. An ethnographic research study by Thomas (2016) explored over 1200 home-educators in the United States via survey and expounded upon his findings with nine follow-up interviews. His qualitative descriptive study mainly looked at why and how home educators chose to structure their routine and curriculum. Some of the home educators’ motivations are based on faith, family matters, or finances, and despite the presence of state regulations, no parent in his survey attributed their choices in educational routine to state regulations. This means that home educators are flexible and will often tailor their materials and routine to fit the educational rhythms of their individual child. However, of the over 1,000 home educators surveyed by Thomas, only 1% of them chose their curriculum

based on recommendations from a curriculum package. Home educators have a variety of choices when it comes to their curriculum and routine and design, and possible influencing factors for building curricula and routine include the use of community resources, faith, student goals, and special needs. This demonstrates that home educators are using whatever materials they have available to craft the best personalized instruction for their student that they possibly can.

This search by home educators for the best curriculum for their students is evolving with the times. A longitudinal descriptive research study performed by Hanna (2012) reported on the motivations and materials used in over 200 homeschooling families in Pennsylvania. The researcher contacted the families with surveys and interviews and re-questioned the families on the same topics after a 10-year period. Hanna found a large rise in computer usage among home educators, and an increasingly “eclectic” selection of curriculum (Hanna, 2012, p. 620). Over the decade, there was a substantial increase in the use of prepared curricula among the use of other resources, which included networking and online resources. Hanna does note that these results may not be applicable to all homeschoolers, as home-schooling policies differ by state and Pennsylvania is one of the stricter states regarding homeschooling policies; but an earlier survey of over 11,000 homeschoolers corroborated the high computer usage (Ray, 2010). The use of these resources is encouraging. Home educators are eagerly looking to find materials to best educate their students, including utilizing current technology and curricula, and they are happy to mix materials, schedules, and curricula for best results.

The personalized instruction home educators are able to give is having positive results. A comparative exploratory analysis by Martin-Chang et al. (2011) compared the

standardized testing scores of homeschoolers and public schoolers in Canada under controlled conditions. Although the students were young (ranging from five to ten years old), the study was able to recognize an important distinction. The researchers recognized that there were two sub-groups of homeschoolers; the structured and un-structured. The structured homeschoolers were students whose home educators used premade curricula, structured lessons, and combined materials to create curricula. These students scored above their unstructured peers and their public schooled counterparts across the board. This would make sense seeing as they were presumably receiving personalized instruction from an adult who knew them personally.

The achievement of homeschoolers does not stop there. Duggan (2010) compared over 100 freshmen homeschooled students to both public and private schooled students enrolled in their first year at a community college. She surveyed the population electronically to find that homeschoolers had the largest percentage of A averages and spent a large amount of time on their homework during the week, showing dedication to their education. Homeschoolers were the most likely to rate themselves above average for many academic abilities, however, they *did not* rate themselves as above average when it came to writing. So, despite the fact that homeschoolers are benefiting from direct personalized education as seen through their comparatively higher educational achievement, it seems that writing is possibly one of their weaker skills, or at least is perceived as one of their weaker skills.

If the homeschooled students are feeling a lack of preparation in their writing skills, it is possible that home educators do not have access to the materials they need in order to effectively train their students in writing proficiently. In order to collect and

synthesize materials to create and teach a well-rounded writing curriculum, home educators need good materials to draw from, but there is a stark lack of robust writing curricula as discussed above.

Due to the lack of materials available, the influx of homeschooled students to the students population, and low levels of perceived writing proficiency, it is clear that home educators need more materials to teach writing. Considering how home educators amalgamate materials in order to synthesize the best materials for their student's instruction (Hanna, 2012; Thomas, 2016), ideal teaching materials would be flexible lesson plans or curricula that home educators could easily access and choose from to best serve their students. These materials would best equip home educators to continue their work of personalized education for their students.

It is the aim of this creative project to generate materials to fulfill that need. These materials will aim to support students as they work towards proficient writing skills based on genre pedagogies and provide materials for instructors to utilize in order to enhance their own writing instruction.

Methods

For this creative project, the author generated teaching units and materials centered on genre pedagogies for use mainly in the homeschooled high school classroom. In order to create these materials, the researcher reviewed studies, surveys, and theory from well-known genre pedagogues, including articles from nationally recognized and peer-reviewed journals. The materials were accessed through Minnesota State University's Memorial Library, either online or through Interlibrary Loan. Search terms included: genre studies, genre pedagogy, writing, writing curriculum, homeschool, and

home school, and the research found included theoretical discussions as well as empirical research since the year 2000. The researcher accumulated materials until content regarding teaching genre pedagogy and information regarding homeschoolers and writing seemed saturated. The researcher of this project also reviewed writing materials for the homeschooled classroom along with other homeschool writing curricula, mainly through publisher websites, online reviews and previews of curricula, and through samples of the curricula procured from publishers or online. From these analyses, the researcher synthesized the best possible approaches of genre pedagogy for home educators, while considering authentic writing topics and assignments in order to create flexible genre-based units that could be used in the high school classroom in conjunction with other lessons and materials.

The researcher chose to utilize a genre approach to writing for four (4) reasons. First (1), genre studies have proven an authentic method of learning how to write as it places a text within a situational context and meaningful environment (Hyland, 2003; Hyland, 2007). Secondly (2), focusing on written texts as genres prepares students for real-world writing by familiarizing them with the idea that repeated situations result in repeated responses, which sets a flexible framework for a text that is not static or prescriptive (Hyland, 2003; Hyland, 2007). Third (3), genre pedagogies layer writing instruction so students can learn about language as well as considering context, purpose, structure, and audience, expand vocabulary, and genre pedagogies also teach writing as a series of choices and as responses to situations (Hyland, 2007; Lirola, 2015). Lastly (4), teaching writing from the standpoint of genre pedagogies involves the instructor as they also must categorize and analyze texts (Hyland, 2007; Lirola, 2015). In short, genre

studies focus on how texts can be categorized based on their situations and purposes (i.e., written reviews analyze a topic and could be casual or formal depending on the context and audience). Such an approach to writing allows students to create and analyze texts that have a place and a purpose, as opposed to writing a piece because it is assigned, like many academic genres. Writing a piece because it is assigned has been shown to be ineffective because of its inauthentic nature. Writing through genre studies, however, allows the students to make real and meaningful texts based off other model texts in the same genre; this allows students to learn how to write in real ways for real-life contexts (Hultin & Westman, 2013). This approach is also manageable for educators who may not be trained in other writing pedagogies, as they can participate in the construction of genre expectations with the student, making this approach very versatile and easily applicable. Genre pedagogies then offers an authentic framework to learn about writing.

Aside from these reasons why genre pedagogy is a strong approach to writing, it is also worth mentioning how well the genre approach works in congruence with other subjects and materials. Because genre studies focus on the natural situations where writing occurs, writing assignments can be created based on content and situation as opposed to simply standards/needs. This could range from writing lab reports to literature reviews, from argumentative editorials to how-to process manuals. The diversity of genres used as communication in society opens the door for a range of genres and assignments and focusing on a genre in context allows us to attach the assignment to meaningful content. This could (a) more completely integrate writing with literature in an ELA curriculum, and (b) allow for writing to be integrated into *any* subject matter. Because of this, the genre lesson materials created for this creative project will not only

be able to be used in homeschooling contexts. The versatility and applicability of genre pedagogies allows the materials to be useful for any and all high-school teaching environments.

Limitations

The researcher's preview of already published homeschool writing curriculum was not exhaustive. The researcher was limited by time and money and was not able to analyze nor access all available curriculum. A more in-depth analysis of available curricula, both for public school students and homeschooled students would better reveal strengths and shortcomings of the writing curricula currently on the market.

The researcher chose to consider genre pedagogies over other pedagogies due largely to their ease of integration. This is a high priority given home educators' preference for personalization as discussed above. Also, instructors do not have to be versed in genre pedagogies or any writing pedagogies in order to use genre approaches effectively, which makes genre pedagogies particularly useful for the intended audience of home educators.

The researcher does not claim that the genre approach and lessons created will be the ultimate solution for incorporating writing instruction. Moreover, the materials generated are not a completed curriculum, but instead working units and lessons from which to build and continue to more fully integrate a writing curriculum. Also, these lessons were created with the intention of attaching to other meaningful curriculum content, which will be dependent upon the class and teacher. The lessons provide

examples for how to integrate the writing units, but ultimate integration will be the responsibility of the instructor.

These methods and lessons may not be ideal for certain situations and students, and their usefulness and implementation will be up to the teacher's discretion, based on their knowledge of the students.

Definition of Terms

Genre Pedagogies: Referring to a method of writing instruction focusing on the text as an answer to a situation. Genres are groupings of similar texts responding to certain social contexts with similar purposes, and genre theory study the texts within this socially constructed context. Genre pedagogies then seek to educate students on the idea of genre and how to approach writing from the mindset of being aware of a piece's genre and situation (Hyland, 2003).

Homeschool/ed/ing: Referring to the act of being schooled at home and spending less than 25 hours a week in a public-school classroom (Redford et al., 2017). Also referred to as "home educated."

Homeschoolers: Children ages 5-17 (grades K-12) schooled at home, who are classified as "Homeschooled" by parents.

Home Educators: In this creative project, the home educators will refer to the parents and/or guardians that are administering instruction or overseeing homeschooled students. Also referred to as "homeschool instructors" or "homeschool educators."

Overview

In conclusion, writing is a weak subject area for many high schoolers, and homeschoolers are no exception. Even though home educators are in a unique position to

provide a fully individualized learning environment, these educators still need strong materials with which to teach their high school students. This is particularly important due to weak writing materials on the market, and because of the rise of the homeschooled population in the United States.

In Chapter Two, literature on genre pedagogies will be closely examined. This will include a review of both theoretical articles as well as application articles to answer how and why genre pedagogy might be an ideal curricula approach for home educators. More literature on homeschoolers will be reviewed as well, including empirical studies, surveys, and other curricula offered on the market in order to more clearly determine what kinds of curricula will be most helpful to home educators in what forms, and through what medium.

Chapter Three will describe the completed creative project in detail, including the completed materials and how they are expected to be incorporated into the homeschool curriculum. The materials include genre exercises, genre instructions for educators, and a writing unit where the genre approach is fully integrated. These materials will be placed on a website created for ease-of-access for home educators.

Lastly, Chapter Four will summarize the creative project in relation to the reviewed literature and consider more possible limitations and suggestions for content creation and application.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The number of students being educated at home is increasing in the United States. In 2012, Redford et al. (2017) used a mailed survey to estimate the size of the homeschool population in the United States. They successfully surveyed over 17,000 students, 397 of which were homeschooled. The findings were weighted to estimate that over 1,000,000 students are homeschooled in the United States. Considering errors and statistical adjustments for surveys that may not have been clearly used or understood, Redford estimates that the numbers of homeschooled students in the United States had increased from 2.91% in 2007 to 3.4% of students in 2012 (Redford et al., 2017). This increasing population of homeschoolers was corroborated by Hanna (2012), who performed a nonexperimental descriptive research study with 250 families in Pennsylvania over a period of 10 years. She also observed an increasing number of families homeschooling in each of the districts she surveyed by 2008 (p. 623). Homeschooling has become a nation-wide educational option that more and more families are utilizing.

What is more, home educated students have been found to be largely high achievers when it comes to scholastics. A literature review of homeschooling data in 2010 by Taylor-Hough sampled studies prior to 2000 that demonstrated the higher-than-average academic achievement of homeschoolers. More recently, in a nation-wide cross-sectional descriptive study that was correlational, Ray (2010) used an online questionnaire to survey 11,000 homeschoolers across the United States in 2008. His

findings showed that home schoolers tested particularly high on standardized tests compared to their public-school counterparts (p. 43). Ray also warned that this was not an experimental study demonstrating causality, so being homeschooled did not necessarily *cause* the high achievement. Regardless of the cause of such high-achievement, the numbers showed that homeschoolers clearly outperformed their peers. The rising number of homeschoolers in the United States and their high academic achievement are worthy of note.

There are, however, exceptions to these high numbers. Ray's study (2010), despite his attempts at being more representative of the home-schooling community by contacting more standardized testing companies to garner a larger variety in the survey responses, had response rates that were difficult to calculate. Overall, the research found that the sampling was not completely representational of all families in the United States (Ray, 2010, p.44). Also, as there was no way to verify if this sampling was representational, we do not know if *all* homeschooled students perform at such high achievement scores, and whether such high achievement is an accurate representation of the rest of homeschoolers in the United States. A study that better represents the achievement among home-schooled students might be the study by Martin-Chang et al. (2011). In an exploratory comparative descriptive study, standardized tests were compared between 37 elementary-aged homeschooled children and 37 elementary-aged public-schooled children. In this study, Martin-Chang et al. (2011) differentiated between "structured" homeschoolers and "unstructured" homeschoolers. "Structured" homeschoolers had a structured educational environment with specific lessons and curricula. These students scored significantly higher than their public-schooled peers,

which is the kind of high achievement we have seen from homeschoolers in other previous studies (Ray, 2010). “Unstructured” homeschoolers, on the other hand, were largely taught through natural experiences without assessments and rarely used any form of structured lessons or curricula (Martin-Chang et al., 2011, p. 197). This group was a distinct minority when it came to educational methods of the sampled home schoolers. As such, the group of unstructured homeschoolers could not be fairly compared to the other groups; however, Martin-Chang’s analysis suggested that the unstructured homeschoolers had the lowest scores of all students, including the public schooled students. So, despite some impressive test scores and robust populaces of student that are being homeschooled, it is apparent that outstanding academic achievement may not be the case for all home-schooled students.

This is of a concern particularly in the field of writing. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education preformed assessments on 8th and 12th graders across the United States. This writing assessment was computer-based and required the students to complete writing tasks of both popular and academic varieties, including to different audiences and purposes (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 1). From this nationwide assessment of over 50,000 students, only 27% of students preformed with writing skills that were considered at or above “proficient,” which meant “solid academic performance” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 1). This means 73% of both 8th and 10th graders wrote only with “basic” skill, or “partial” mastery (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 2). Writing can be clearly seen as a weakness for most students. However, this study did not explain the population it tested in detail, and it is unclear if

homeschoolers were a part of this population; all we can definitively say is that assessed high schoolers in the United States are not exceptional writers.

Other assessments are also not wholly clear when it comes to homeschoolers and their assessment data either. The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), a popular college-entrance exam, does not currently differentiate its testing populations to clearly tell what test-takers come from a homeschooled environment (College Bound, 2018). SAT reports earlier than 2016 offered Total Group Profile reports, with a more specific breakdown of the demographics of students, including differentiating types of schools (College Bound, 2016). Here, the scores are broken down by “Public” schools, “Religiously Affiliated,” “Independent,” and “Other or Unknown” (College Bound, 2016, p. 6). Presumably, homeschooled children would classify in the “others” category, but the report does not specify, and, as the given scores are actually composite scores between the written essay and other multiple choice portions of the exam (“SAT scoring,” n.d.), such reports do not provide clear data about homeschoolers and their writing skills. The data specifically regarding homeschooled students is poor at best, and more data needs to be gathered to accurately report the achievement of homeschooled students.

Given the lacking data regarding homeschooled students’ writing abilities, what may perhaps be more revealing of the writing achievement of homeschoolers would be certain recent studies. Duggan in 2010 performed a descriptive cross-sectional pilot study where he sent out a survey to 121 public, private, and homeschooled students enrolled in their first semester at a community college. The survey was sent out electronically and the population sampled via a “snowball” technique. His findings corroborated the high-achievement seen previously in homeschoolers, as almost 64% of homeschoolers

reported having an A average, compared to the 33% of private-schooled students, and 19% of public-schooled students (Duggan, 2010, p. 30). Duggan took his survey further though, and asked students to rate their perceptions of their skills and academic abilities. More homeschoolers tended to rate themselves above average in certain categories, but more public-schooled students ended up rating themselves as higher specifically in the writing ability (Duggan, 2010, p. 32-33). Although these statistics are self-perceptions and not necessarily proven data reflecting home-schooled students' writing ability, the lack of confidence homeschoolers have in their writing skills certainly does call into question their previous education in writing. In the same study by Duggan, homeschoolers were also the *most* likely of all the students sampled to credit their skills to previous education and knowledge (p. 31-32). If these students believe their previous experiences and what must obviously include their home education influences their current skills and knowledge, and if they do not perceive themselves as very strong writers, then logically these homeschooled students did not get enough writing instruction in order to feel confident in their writing skills. So, despite the fact that home-schooled students are known as high-achievers, it is possible that their writing skills are perhaps just as weak or only marginally better than the skills of nationally assessed high-school writers.

Despite the large size of the homeschooling population in the United States and the lacking representational data of homeschoolers' writing achievement, the national sub-par performance in writing by our high schoolers and the lack of confidence homeschoolers have in their own writing skill is enough to infer that home educators likely need more support in teaching writing so homeschooled children can continue to

succeed. This Creative Project then aims to create effective writing curricula materials for the home educator. To guide in the creation of the most effective materials possible, the researcher focused on the following research questions:

1. What are the shortcomings in offered homeschool, high school writing curricula?
2. How can genre pedagogies be used to create instructional writing materials to teach homeschoolers and high schoolers to write well?
3. How can genre-based writing curriculum for homeschoolers be successfully integrated in the homeschool environment to create authentic writing situations?

The following literature review considers writing materials available to home educators along with their strengths and deficiencies, how home educators choose and select curricula for their students, how genre pedagogies are used in the classroom, and how genre pedagogies might be an excellent approach for home educators to teach writing to high-school-aged students.

Current Homeschool Writing Curricula

Home educators often completely personalize their curricula to suit the needs of their students. Researcher Thomas (2016) performed a qualitative ethnographic descriptive research survey where he demographically surveyed 1,282 home educators across the United States and followed up with nine interviews. His study aimed to better understand home educators' motivations when it came to choosing curricula for their students. His survey results found that most home educators (45%) chose curricula materials based on their student's "unique learning style" or based on their interests

(Thomas, 2016, p. 2079). Only 1% of those surveyed said they selected materials based on recommendations from a curriculum package (Thomas, 2016, p. 2079). Other influencers for home educators to choose curricula included personal preferences of the home educator (Thomas, 2016, p. 2079). This means that home educators are on the hunt for the best possible materials in order to fully personalize instruction for their students.

This personalization of curricula is achieved through many different avenues. Redford et al. (2017) in their 2012 survey not only estimated the number of homeschooled students in the United States, but they also managed to survey the home educators' use of curricula in the homeschool environment. According to their survey results, home educators used a variety of materials in order to create curricula. Such materials included: the public library, websites, bookstores, public school curricula, private schools, church or religious organizations, homeschooling organizations, and homeschooling catalogs/publishers (Redford et al., 2017, p. 13). Homeschooling catalogs/publishers and websites were the most popularly used sources for curricula, and curricula from private or public schools were the least used (Redford et al., 2017, p.13). What is more, the nonexperimental descriptive research study by Hanna (2012), where she interviewed 250 homeschooled families in Pennsylvania over the course of 10 years, determined that this 'eclectic approach' increased over the years (p. 620). This means that home educators used a variety of materials and approaches over the years while trying to educate their students. Over this 10-year span, Hanna (2012) also noted an increase in the amount of prepared curricula used by home educators, a greater use of technology, and more networking with other homeschooled families (p. 626-627). The heightened use of technology is unsurprising, as this longitudinal study spanned a rise in internet and

technology use from 1998 to 2008. The increased amount of networking among home educators is also predictable, given the networking possibilities that came with the widespread use of technology and the internet. It seems that home educators are using any and all resources they can find, particularly taking advantage of technology, in order to collect the best possible teaching materials for their students.

One of the most popular resources used by home educators are websites. Online websites that were non-retail in nature were used by 77% of home educators in Redford's survey (Redford et al., 2012). Regarding writing curriculum, such websites could include any of the thousands of sites that appear when googling words like "writing," "high school," and "lessons." Websites like *Read, Write, Think* (www.readwritethink.org) offer lessons, professional development, activities, and printouts. *Teach Writing* (www.teachwriting.org) has games as well as articles, and lesson ideas. The only noticeable problem here is that searching for possible curricula websites through Google produces usable materials, yes, but also a plethora of tangential ones, like teaching articles, news articles about teaching, and blogs. Not all of the materials in the search results are usable directly in the home educators' classroom, and many of the usable materials may only focus on small lessons or segments, like teaching theme and commas, as opposed to teaching approaches and units, like how to write a proposal. Specific search terms, such as "resume lessons," will result in more specific applicable materials, assuming the home educator has the patience and research techniques to wade through the mass of material and find the specific curricula pieces they need. Regardless, online websites offer endless materials and resources for building curricula that home educators seem to be taking advantage of.

Options for prepared printed curricula for home educators are perhaps a bit more limited. Printed curricula are one of the other major curriculum sources for home educators and include curricula materials purchased through homeschooling catalogs and publishers, bookstores, or other educational publishers by home educator (Redford et al., 2017, p. 13). These prepared curricula, or “textbooks,” as they will be referred to in this project, offer comprehensive prepared lessons, units, assignments, and information. However, the options for textbooks on the market made explicitly for writing instruction are noticeably limited. Many textbooks are not solely writing curricula, but often English curricula that *include* writing, often alongside elements like grammar and language. These textbooks may only offer partial information for writing and writing instruction. For example, Christian Liberty, a Christian homeschool publishing organization, offers a variety of curricula, but their English materials for high schoolers only include instruction in grammar, speech, literature, and creative writing (www.shopchristianliberty.com). WriteShop, another homeschool curricula publisher, offers more high-school level writing materials, but again it focuses mainly on creative writing, with titles like *Terrific Tales*, or grammar (“Jr. High & High School,” n.d.). More mainstream publishers, like Pearson’s homeschool curriculum, offer large varieties of curricula for the younger student, including phonics, handwriting and more, but only two major texts for teaching writing; *My Perspectives* which does not seem to address language or writing based on the description online, and *Prentice Hall* which focusses on grammar and research as well as writing (“Homeschool Curriculum,” n.d.). W. W. Norton, a major publisher of textbooks and anthologies, also offers three high school textbooks on their website (“Composition,” n.d.). These consist of the handbook teaching writing as argument (*They*

Say I Say), a book exploring popular writing modes (*Back to the Lake*), and a handbook with citation styles, grammar, punctuation, and short overviews on writing forms and the writing process (*The Little Seagull*) (“Composition,” n.d.). These texts are merely a sampling, but the pattern is clear: very few texts available are devoted explicitly to mastery of writing for high schoolers, particularly beyond the two or three repeated genres of essays, research, and creative writing.

The problem with the available high school writing curricula for home educators is two-fold. Firstly, money may be a concern. As earlier discussed, online websites seem to show more singular lessons and activities for use, and less complete writing materials for home educators to use. Which means that to get a more complete writing curriculum, many home educators may purchase supplements or textbooks like those discussed above. Ray’s online questionnaire (2010) also managed to compile data regarding the amount of money home educators spent on their students per year. The questionnaire revealed that the median amount spent on a single students’ education in one year in total, including on textbooks, materials, tutoring, and testing, fell at between \$400-\$599 (Ray, 2010, p. 19-20). Over 65% of parents spent under \$600 per student per year, but the range of money spent on material went up to costs of \$2000 or more (Ray, 2010, p. 19-20). What Ray found when comparing the amount of spending on instructional materials to student achievement was a statistically significant difference in the achievement between students whose families spent more than \$600 on their student (Ray, 2010, p. 25). Students who had more than \$600 spent on their educational materials outperformed their lower-funded peers at nearly every grade level (Ray, 2010, p. 25). Ray notes that the amount spent relates to a very small effect size, explaining only .05% of variance with

student scores, but the effect is there. This means that lower socio-economic status and lower income home-educators may not be able to purchase curricula and materials as effective at supporting high achievement as their more affluent counterparts. Not having money should not be a deciding factor in the quality of education that can be given to any student.

Secondly, the other feature that makes even some of the most promising curricula options questionable is the likelihood that these curricula, when teaching writing, are often pushing only a select few genres. In this case, the term “genres” is used to describe different forms or formats of writing, also called “modes.” Genres arise out of social situations, and often respond to a specific context, purpose, and audience. These forms and formats may vary in purpose, like an analytical essay compared to an argumentative essay, or in shape and format, like an application letter compared to a resume. Hultin and Westman (2013) did a qualitative grounded-theory sub study of 12 first-grade students with representational writing skills in Sweden. The study consisted of analyzing 417 textual samples and being involved in the children’s classrooms over a two-week period. The study, using genre theory approaches for classifying the text, found five major genres taught in school, with the two most popular being the informative report and the narrative, which involves events with a plot, conflict, and resolution (Hultin & Westman, 2013, p. 286). These two genres are considered the “dominant” genres, meaning they are the most frequently assigned and prescribed by teachers (Hultin & Westman, 2013, p. 296). The genres chosen by teachers may also be influenced by what texts are prescribed by national curriculums, but the point of having these dominant texts is to help students “gain access to a more public literacy” (Hultin & Westman, 2013, p. 296). Students are

exposed to these genres in school so they can better utilize these forms of writing outside of the classroom. Teachers are trying to prepare their students to participate in popular genres, which students might not otherwise be trained in, in order to give students more socio-political mobility later (Hultin & Westman, 2013, p. 296). The problem with teachers instructing mostly about dominant literary forms is that such dominant genres are then perpetuated as dominant. Forms, like the report and narrative, are made to seem more important than other genres that students might already know or have better access to, effectively marginalizing other genres and making them seem less important (Hultin & Westman, 2013, p. 297). This “perpetuation of inequality” through the teaching of only dominant genres is a concern that was also corroborated by Hyland in his literary review of genre theory (2003). The other problem noted by Hultin and Westman (2013) is that even if these highly popular “dominant” genres are taught, it may not be enough to fully prepare students for “participating in working life and civic, democratic life” (p. 297). In his theoretical discussion of genre theory, Clark (2005) also discusses how high schoolers who are too familiar with genres of personal narratives and reports may not be able to discern the true purpose and expectations of college writing assignments. These multiple sources seem to agree that being too rigid with instruction of dominant genres does not allow for the flexibility and autonomy that students will need to write effectively in *all* situations.

Some may take concerns with the sampling of Hultin and Westman’s (2013) study as it is a small population of elementary-aged students in Sweden. Even though this group of students was very similar ethnically (Hultin & Westman, 2013, p. 282), their experience is likely universal. Although the study itself agrees that the Swedish children

may have *slightly* different experiences than children in the United States, say for instance with which dominant textual forms are taught (Hultin & Westman, 2013, p. 296), the literacy education and shortcomings in the sampled classroom are similar to other students learning to write. Gilliland (2015), in an analytical ethnographic study, observed a ninth grade English class in California for three days to determine how a teacher implemented reading and writing instruction in the classroom. Although this study focuses specifically on multilingual learners and how instruction worked for them in the classroom, Gilliland's (2015) review of the literature found that most writing taught in America is dictated by the "survival" genres (p. 274). That is, much like the Swedish classroom, instruction was shaped by the most popular or dominant genres based on what is deemed most crucial for the students to learn. Curricula and teachers that focus too narrowly on a few specific genres do students a disservice, as they do not equip students to flexibly react and respond to all writing situations with a variety of genres.

This embodies the second problem with some homeschool curricula. Many of the more complete writing curricula on the market also teach limited genres, with a narrowed focus on a few particular writing forms. The more robust writing curricula available to homeschoolers do offer instruction for more than one or two genres when it comes to major writing projects, but it is easy to see the prevalence of dominant genres. The *Writing Strands* series through Master Books publishers, aside from typical English literary devices, teaches creative (narrative) genres, informative reports, and persuasive writing, which includes the art of argument ("Writing Strands Scope," n.d.). The *Essentials in Writing* collection samples perhaps even more genres, with research,

informative writing, response pieces, persuasive, and narratives (“Level 10,” n.d.). The variety in writing purposes offered through these curricula is indeed encouraging, but the variety is not as broad as is needed. The Essentials in Writing collection refers to their various writing projects as “essays,” which likely refers to the dominant academic genre of the structured academic report. In only one curriculum previewed did the researcher of this study see deviation from the typical academic genres into other options, when the Institute for Excellence in Writing offered a course that included instruction on the college application/personal essay (“High School Essay,” n.d.) but even then, this was only a partial course with a focus on essays that cost \$79 USD. Good writing curricula makes the attempt to help students learn to write in genres and forms that might be useful to them in the future, but the selection is slim at best. It is possible there is a more robust writing curricula on the market that homeschoolers could use, but the researcher only found these select few curricula options that showed promise. That means that even if a more robust and complete curricula was out there, it was not easy to find for the researcher, and likely would not be readily found by a home educator either. So, not only can lack of funding for curricula hurt home educators in their mission to help their students master writing, the curricula itself offered to home educators seems too narrow in scope or difficult to find to promote mastery of writing.

Home educators are trying to find the best possible materials to educate their students, and they are willing to use a variety of resources to do so. There are a plethora of support and teaching materials through online platforms, as well as more traditional “textbook” materials, but the options are perhaps overwhelmingly vague and incomplete or language and grammar heavy. At best, it seems that only a few complete curricula

options are available for home educators to instruct their high-school level students, and these may be either narrow in scope or limited by the amount of money home educators have to spend. This limits home educators. Strong, versatile writing curricula is needed, easily accessible curricula which will help high school students learn more about writing than just grammar or the dominant genres.

Genre Pedagogies

It is imperative that home educators have access to usable curriculum that will help their high schoolers learn how to write well in any context, as current instructional options seem to be lacking. One possible approach to support home educators in their instruction of writing is to use genre pedagogies, which directly consider texts as the result of their context.

Genre pedagogies are a set of teaching approaches that allow for students to understand written texts and writing tasks by considering their collective groupings into genres. Hyland, in the previously discussed 2003 literature review, compared genre pedagogies to other forms of writing instruction. He determined that process pedagogies seemed to be the most typical method for teaching students how to write (Hyland, 2003, p. 20). Process pedagogies focus on the *process* of writing, that is writing multiple drafts, revising work, and the personal exploration of ideas, however considering written work in this way limits considerations of the piece to the individual. A more broad perspective of writing comes through genre pedagogies. Genre pedagogies make writing move beyond the realm of writing as a personal action and decision. According to Hyland (2003), genre pedagogies seek to teach writing by interpreting written texts as *responses* to certain situations and audiences (Hyland, 2003, p. 17). This is supported by Devitt

(2000) when he wrote a theoretical article working towards a synthesized definition of genre. Devitt (2000) explained that genres are sets of written texts that follow a pattern. These patterns result in “conventions” or expectations for a piece, and the patterns and conventions of a genre arise from a repeated situation (p. 702). Because writing is done as a *response* to a specific audience or situation, it means that writing can be understood as a social action or social response. This is the current perspective of new rhetorical genre theorists; genre is understood as a typified social action, a response by writers to a repeated situation until a body of work developed that shares similarities in form and function. If the texts work similarly for similar texts and purposes, then they are said to be of the same genre.

One possible downfall of the genre approach is for the definition of genre to stop at this point. If teachers and writers think of genres as only categories of texts that share similarities, this does both writing and the texts themselves a great disservice. For, if genres are merely categories of texts classified by similar techniques and forms, then the genre itself becomes a formulaic checklist for writers to accomplish (Devitt, 2000, p. 697). Devitt (2000) in her theoretical article moves the understood definition of genres away from this sort of formal categories to one that understands written texts as the results of their situations; genres are defined by their context and their function (p. 698). Instead of being a simple formula then, genres exist as a pattern to model other texts off of. Also, as a social action or a response to certain situations, genres work dynamically, constantly changing to accommodate new situations, audiences, and purposes. Genres need variation to adapt to all writing situations, allowing for an ever-evolving understanding of texts. Hyland (2003) recognized that texts operated on a continuum,

meaning that genres do not follow specific rules, but rather adapt their form in order to more completely fit the situation they are written in. This more holistic view of genre is more dynamic and adaptable, and better represents texts as action.

If teachers are able to use this flexible perspective of genre to teach our students how to write, students will be adaptable and dynamic writers. Williams (2014) performed a quasi-experimental qualitative study where he compared two classes of college writers working with mixed genres. In one section of an upper-level writing class, Williams (2014) assigned students a multi-modal project and accompanying paper. In a different section of the same class, which was given a semester later, Williams (2014) gave students the same multimodal unit and paper, but this time with explicit instruction regarding genres and students' experiences with them. He then compared the completed projects for quality and interviewed students in the second semester for results. Despite William's small sampling of students and lack of robust methodology to categorize and code the differences in student samples, the difference in the quality of writing between the two classes was undeniable. Students who discussed and considered genres, genre conventions, and genre purposes were able to mix and bend genres and genre conventions as intentional choices in order to achieve their purpose (Williams, 2014). Devitt's (2000) theoretical article supports this idea, as through his analysis of genre pedagogies he determined that having this perspective of genres will help students "read and write flexibly, with an eye to the rhetorical function of discourse but without becoming fixed in a single genre or single set of formal conventions" (p. 714). Lirola's (2015) qualitative review of college students in a Spanish university corroborates these benefits as well. In Lirola's (2015) upper-level English course, Lirola observed for one semester how much

difficulties students had with the different text genres and language. The next semester, Lirola (2015) applied genre pedagogies to teach writing, mainly through observations and analysis of textual genres, and scaffolded modeling and feedback on their writing samples. Students at the end of the study used a model text to then write an explanatory piece (Lirola, 2015, p. 194). Comparing the work of these students who received instruction based in genre pedagogy to those students who didn't receive this instruction found that explicit instruction regarding genres helped students with textual awareness, particularly structural awareness and the effectiveness of texts given their culture and conventions (p. 193). Genre pedagogies clearly offer a way to teach student writers to be perceptive of writing situations, flexible with their writing choices, and receptive to patterns and conventions.

Benefits of Genre Pedagogies in the Classroom

The genre approach to teaching writing has many benefits in the classroom. Firstly, genre approaches are easily applied in the classroom. In Hyland's (2003) literature review of genre pedagogies and approaches, he discusses how easily genre studies fit into the popular teaching method of scaffolding (p. 26). Based in Vygotsky's theory requiring collaboration between teacher and student, genres can be first introduced and modeled by the instructor as the instructor analyzes a given genre for conventions and features (Hyland, 2003, p. 26). The students then work with the teacher to discuss and navigate the textual samples before moving into independent work of creating and analyzing in the genre on their own (Hyland, 2003, p. 26). Discussion with peers and instructors is key in this navigation of genres, as the students and instructor can work together to better understand not only the genre, but the writing situation of the piece, and

the social action it takes (see “Genre Pedagogies” discussion above). In this way, not only is the discovery and writing of genres in the classroom easy to implement, it also promotes class interaction and understanding, which supports participation as well as learning.

Using the genre approach to teach writing is also a great pedagogical approach thanks to its versatility. Partially, this is because genre pedagogies consider writing texts within the realm of their social contexts, which means that students and instructors using the genre approach can work to understand and write a *wide* variety of texts. Badger and White (2000), in a theoretical article that aimed to synthesize the best features of genre pedagogies along with other prominent pedagogies, discussed how genre pedagogies examined a large “range” of texts. This range virtually includes every written text, from letters to articles to reports (p. 155). This kind of wide catch-all for written texts could help prevent the perpetuation of dominant pedagogies only (see “Current Homeschool Writing Curricula” discussion above), as true genre pedagogies work to understand all written texts within their social context, opening the possibility of study to all texts.

Also, the broad focus on social actions and genres as a result means that the approach of analyzing and examining a group of texts in a genre for patterns and conventions can be applied to *any* written text in the classroom. Because all written texts can be perceived as genres, that means all written texts have the ability to be studied and learned in the classroom. Teachers could take the scaffolded approach to analyze and write a text in a given genre and apply it to lab reports as well as movie reviews, recipes as well as travel essays. The genre approach could be applied to any text and in any class where a specific writing form needs to be learned. This kind of versatility in writing

instruction means that *any* written genre could be closely examined, analyzed, and mimicked for the sake of writing mastery.

These strengths of using the genre writing approach can be particularly useful for home educators. If home educators were given curricula or lessons that helped them use genre pedagogies and equipped them to apply genre pedagogies on their own, they would have the possibility to teach any textual genre to their students. They could work with their students to examine genre samples and the situations surrounding the genres, and help their students achieve the autonomy to navigate and write in new genre independently.

Summary

Despite the widespread confirmation that homeschooled students are high achievers, homeschooled students are not explicitly studied for their writing achievement, although at least one study of homeschooled students shows a lack of confidence in their writing skills. The number of homeschoolers is on the rise and their achievement in writing could be influenced by curricula available to them, as well as the amount of money home educators have to spend on their curricula. Unfortunately, even though home educators do the best they can to find strong materials for their students, writing curricula for homeschoolers is often found piece-meal on the internet, lacking for high-school aged children, or largely focused only on a few dominant writing genres. The genre approach to teaching writing offers a versatile and effective approach for teaching homeschoolers how to write. Not only are genre pedagogies easy to integrate with any writing text and for any situation, they can easily be applied across any curriculum and course. As such, online lessons and curricula that use genre pedagogies to teach writing

are a viable option for equipping home educators to teach writing to their high-school aged students.

Chapter Three presents the instructional materials created and compiled to help home educators implement genre pedagogies in their curriculum. These materials, housed on a website created by the researcher, will include a writing situation unit, an argumentative research proposal, a multi-modal informative project unit, instructional support materials for the home educator, a brief overview of genre pedagogies, and a document on how to create genre based units.

Chapter Three

Creative Project

This creative project aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the shortcomings in offered homeschool, high school writing curricula?
2. How can genre pedagogies be used to create instructional writing materials to teach homeschoolers and high schoolers to write well?
3. How can genre-based writing curriculum for homeschoolers be successfully integrated in the homeschool environment to create authentic writing situations?

Chapter Two discussed the population of homeschoolers and home educators in the United States, along with the shortcomings in the variety and depth of curricula available to homeschoolers. Chapter Two also considered how genre pedagogies can be integrated into an educational setting. Genre pedagogy is a versatile and authentic approach for teaching writing and can be easily integrated with other texts and curricula. This, coupled with the information that home educators are branching out and using a variety of resources for curricula (Hanna, 2012), with 98% of surveyed homeschoolers having and using computers (Ray, 2010), means that genre-based writing curricula available online would be ideal material for home educators to use in their curricula.

This creative project uses the knowledge of implementing genre pedagogies in order to produce three usable instructional writing units including supporting materials and resources for home educators to instruct their high schoolers in writing. Access to

these units and their supporting materials will be housed on an online website for easy access for most home educators. This curriculum has the potential to influence hundreds of home educators and their students given its easy access. Chapter Three will look at the created writing curricula materials in detail, along with their housing, connections, and uses.

The Website

The website used to house this creative project can be found at:

<https://sites.google.com/view/teach-write-now/>

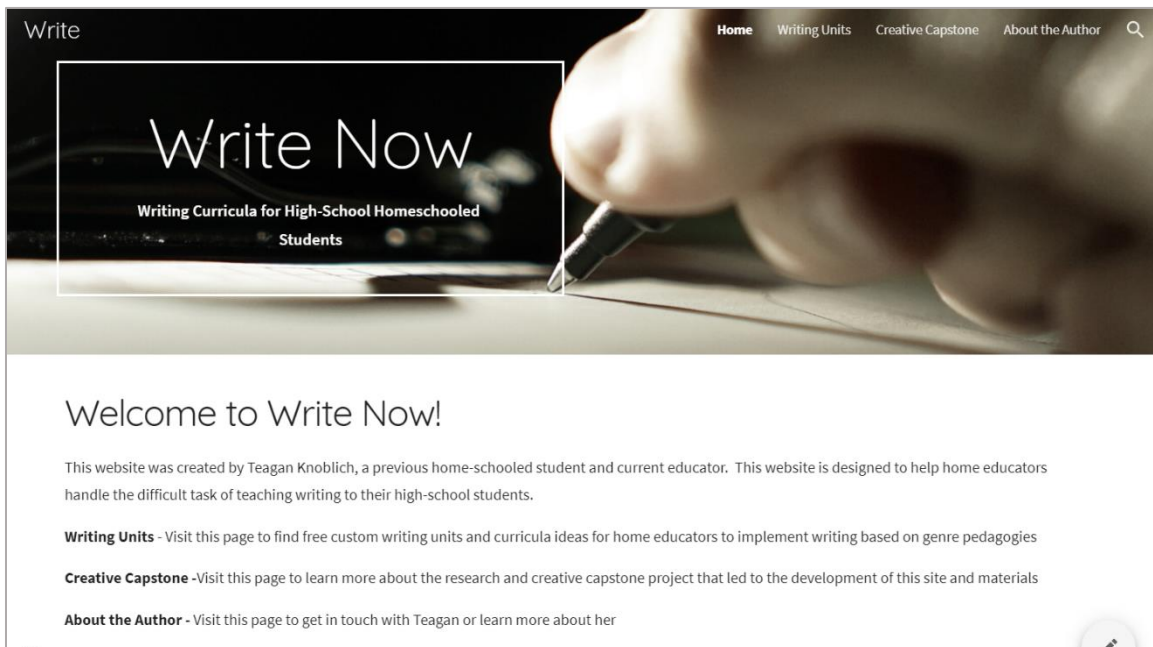


Figure 1: Write Now website

The choice of using an online website as a platform for sharing materials and curricula with home educators was obvious. Home educators have been shown to be hunters of curriculum, with many of them turning to online websites for at least some of their curricular materials (Hanna, 2012; Redford et al., 2017). A website also has the benefit of being free to users, which means it can benefit homeschoolers of all

socioeconomic levels and not just the homeschooled students who benefit from parents that can afford expensive curricula and support materials (Ray, 2010). A website for materials is widely accessible for the homeschooling community and perhaps one of the best ways to provide materials to home educators.

The website created for this creative project in order to house the writing curricula materials, titled *Write Now* (see Figure 1), was created through the Google Sites application. This was partially because of Google Site's easy-to-use interface, but also because of the availability to publish a Google Site without advertisements or fees. Publishing a Google Site also allows for complete access to public users as well as a simple interface for easy maintenance and upkeep.

The website itself is written in such a way as to be accessible to any home educator that finds the site, with easy-to-comprehend language and syntax, and an open and available tone. The hope is that home educators feel that the site is easy to access and use, and because of this they would feel welcome to use the materials or seek assistance if needed.

The website itself is divided into subpages including the following:

- *Homepage*: Includes a welcome to the website, along with navigational information about the content on each of the site's pages and links to major pages (see Figure 1)
- *Writing Units*: Houses links to the three writing units compiled, along with other instructional support documents, such as an "Overview to Genre Pedagogy" and a navigational "How to Use this Guide" document (see Figure 2).

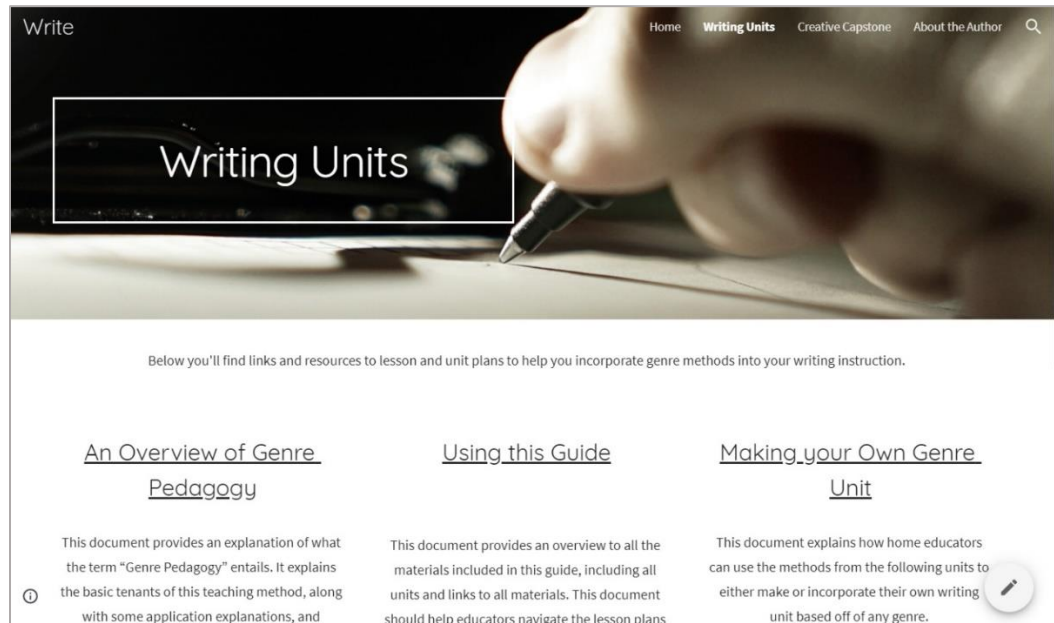


Figure 1: Writing Units page

- **Creative Capstone:** This page offers explanations to possible visitors for the reason behind the compilation of these materials and some of the related research that resulted in the development of the materials (see Figure 3).

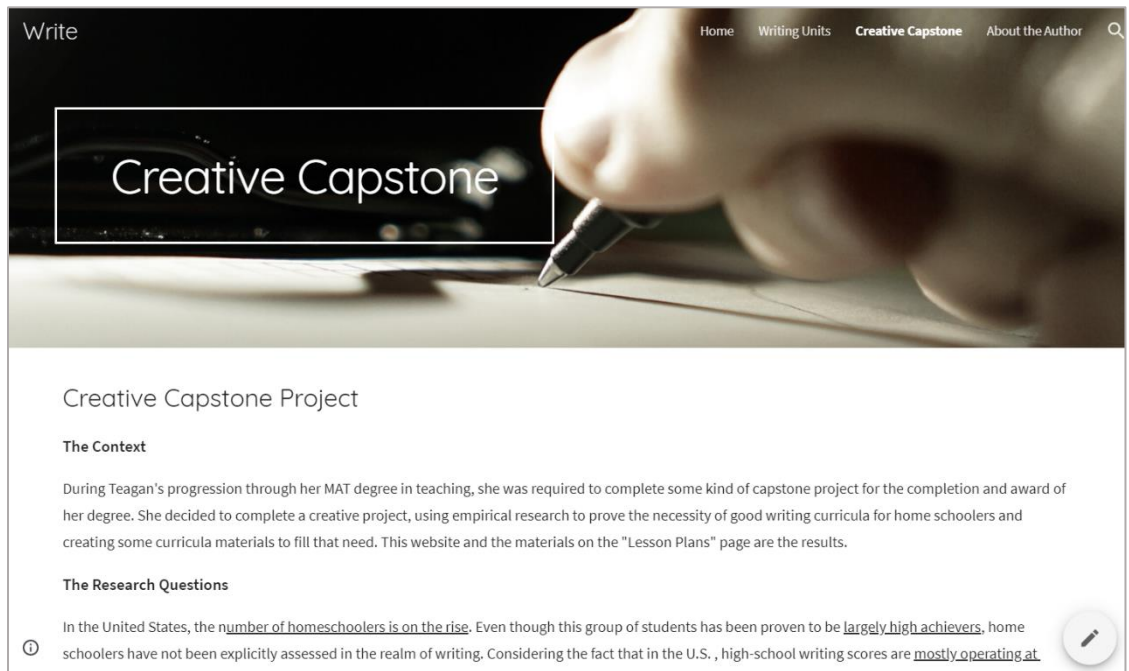


Figure 2: Creative Capstone page

- *About the Author:* This page offers biographical information about the researcher, along with contact information and a Google form for educators to provide feedback or request changes to materials (see Figure 4).

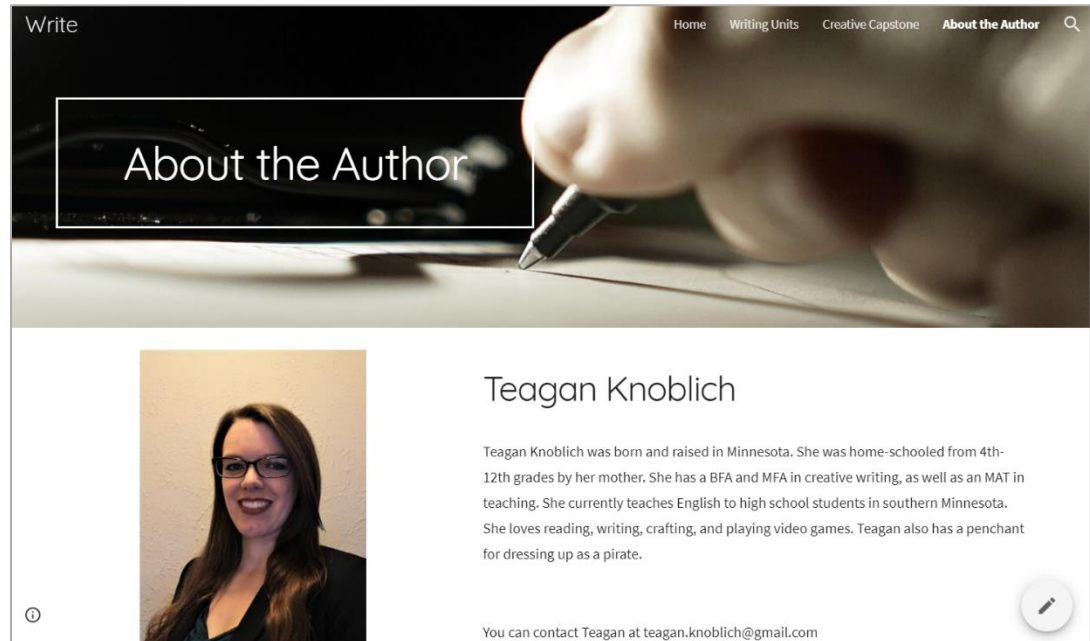


Figure 3: About the Author page

The Writing Units

This creative project consists of three supplementary support documents, along with the compilation of three different writing units and their materials to be used by home educators. All units and support materials can be found in a public Google Drive labeled “Homeschool Writing Curricula” located here (see Figure 5):

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tcVPcXH1s6mxHCpXpqu8MYjIIXIpxvsy?usp=sharing>

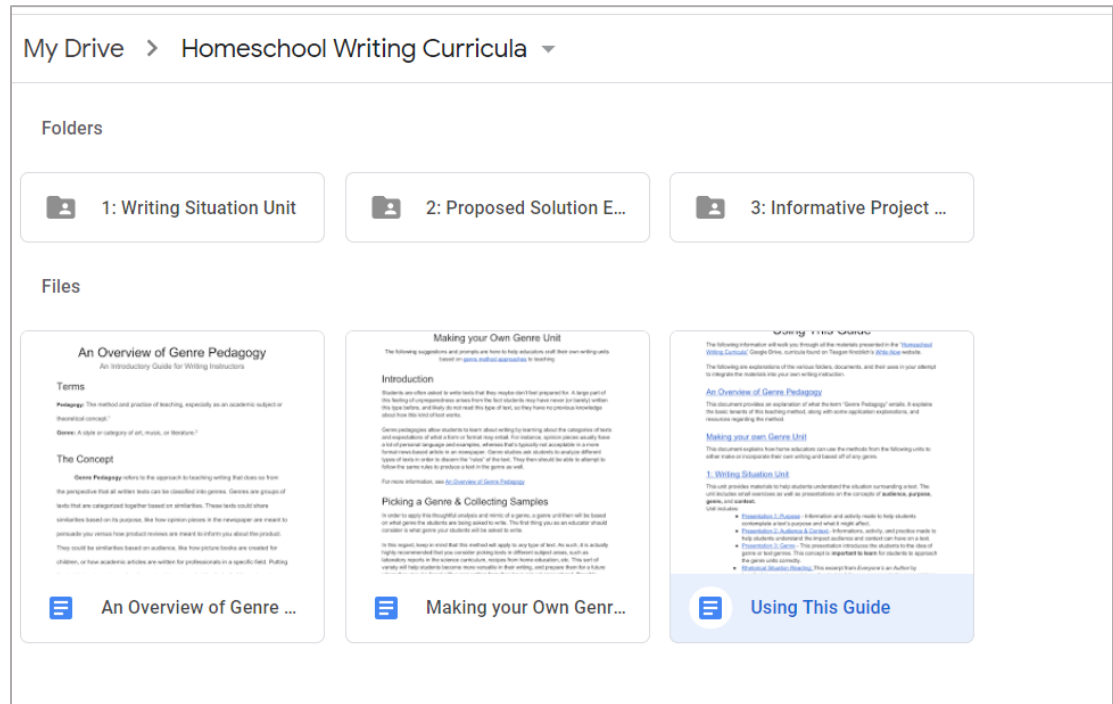


Figure 4: Homeschool Writing Curricula Google Drive

The units and supplementary materials were then linked to the *Write Now* website on the Writing Units page for ease of access (see Figure 2), but also through the textual references to them on the “Home” page and the “Creative Capstone” page. The multiple links provided, and because the materials are housed in a public Google Drive with link sharing available, means that these materials should be easy to access for educators. This shareability is an important part of the accessibility of this project, as researchers have shown that home educators share and pool resources (Hanna, 2012). Using digital documents made public and shareable means there is no limit to who can find and use these materials.

Supplementary Support Documents

In order to help home educators better understand the methodology and application of the writing units, a few supplementary documents were created.

Firstly, the document labeled “An Overview to Genre Pedagogy” explains in detail what the term “Genre Pedagogy” entails (see Figure 6). The document explains the basic tenants of the genre pedagogy approach for teaching writing, along with some application explanations, and resources supporting the pedagogy. Since most home educators do not have any formal training in education (Ray, 2010), this support document was made to inform educators on the basics of genre pedagogies and how they work in the classroom. The pedagogical concepts were put simply with many examples and resources so as to make the genre method approachable to home educators. The information included is largely drawn from the sources from the Literature Review in Chapter Two and includes some more direct application information from an extra text (Tate, Taggart, Schieck, & Hessler, 2014). This document is linked directly from the “Writing Units” page of the *Write Now* website.

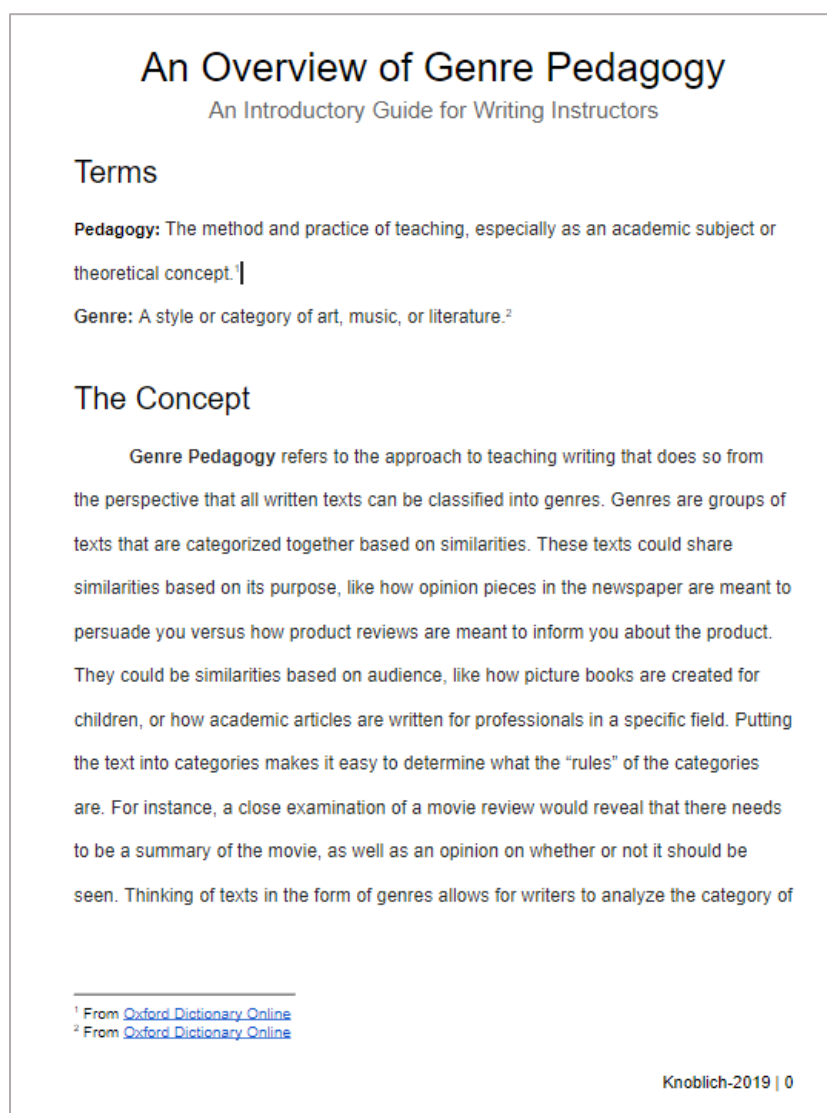


Figure 5: An Overview of Genre Pedagogy document

The second supplementary document created to support home educators is the “Using this Guide” document (see Figure 7). This document explains all of the material in the “Homeschool Writing Curricula” Google Drive, including both the supplementary support materials for home educators and the writing units. The documents also provides links to all of the units and support materials, operating as a sort of table-of-contents for the compiled materials. This document was made to organize and explain the materials to

a new instructor, as well as to provide yet another means of accessing all the documents. A link to the “Using this Guide” document can be found directly on the “Writing Units” page of the *Write Now* website.

Using This Guide

The following information will walk you through all the materials presented in the [“Homeschool Writing Curricula”](#) Google Drive, curricula found on Teagan Knoblich’s [Write Now](#) website.

The following are explanations of the various folders, documents, and their uses in your attempt to integrate the materials into your own writing instruction.

[An Overview of Genre Pedagogy](#)

This document provides an explanation of what the term “Genre Pedagogy” entails. It explains the basic tenants of this teaching method, along with some application explanations, and resources regarding the method.

[Making your own Genre Unit](#)

This document explains how home educators can use the methods from the following units to either make or incorporate their own writing unit based off of any genre.

[1: Writing Situation Unit](#)

This unit provides materials to help students understand the situation surrounding a text. The unit includes small exercises as well as presentations on the concepts of **audience, purpose, genre, and context**.

Unit includes:

- [Presentation 1: Purpose](#) - Information and activity made to help students contemplate a text’s purpose and what it might affect.
- [Presentation 2: Audience & Context](#) - Informations, activity, and practice made to help students understand the impact audience and context can have on a text.
- [Presentation 3: Genre](#) - This presentation introduces the students to the idea of genre or text genres. This concept is **important to learn** for students to approach the genre units correctly.
- [Rhetorical Situation Reading](#): This excerpt from *Everyone’s an Author* by Lunsford is a supplemental reading text to follow-up or precede the presentations to help your students better understand these concepts. Please understand that in this case “Rhetorical Situation” is synonymous to “Writing Situation.”
- [Writing Situation Practice](#): A worksheet for your student to practice answering

Figure 6: Using this Guide document

The third supplementary support document for home educators is entitled “Making Your Own Genre Unit” (see Figure 8). Home educators have been shown in recent years to be avid hunters of material, often mixing various resources in order to compile the best possible curricula for their children (Hanna, 2012). To aid home

educators in their creation and adaption of media, this document was created to walk home educators through the process of creating their own writing unit based on genre pedagogy. The document provides a recommended structure, some recommended assignments (many from the Writing Units), along with a “Notes” section providing options for variation and application. This document was created to help home educators see how they could apply genre pedagogies in their homeschooling curricula. This option is important for home educators as it has been shown that homeschooling curricula is usually highly customized by the home educator (Hanna, 2012). This document then allows for even further personalization of writing curricula, as it equips home educators to create their own materials based on their preferences and the needs of their students (Thomas, 2016). The “Notes” section in particular brings into account some alternative formats or situations homeschoolers might want to utilize (e.g. working various subject areas together), effectively allowing for even more personalization. This document gives a flexible model for applying and adjusting genre pedagogy approaches, which will readily suit the need of many home educators. This document can be found on the “Writing Units” page of the *Write Now* website, as well as on the “Using this Guide” document.

Making your Own Genre Unit

The following suggestions and prompts are here to help educators craft their own writing units based on [genre method approaches](#) to teaching

Introduction

Students are often asked to write texts that they maybe don't feel prepared for. A large part of this feeling of unpreparedness arises from the fact students may have never (or barely) written this type before, and likely do not read this type of text, so they have no previous knowledge about how this kind of text works.

Genre pedagogies allow students to learn about writing by learning about the categories of texts and expectations of what a form or format may entail. For instance, opinion pieces usually have a lot of personal language and examples, whereas that's typically not acceptable in a more formal news-based article in [an newspaper](#). Genre studies ask students to analyze different types of texts in order to discern the "rules" of the text. They then should be able to attempt to follow the same rules to produce a text in the genre as well.

For more information, see [An Overview of Genre Pedagogy](#)

Picking a Genre & Collecting Samples

In order to apply this thoughtful analysis and mimic of a genre, a genre unit then will be based on what genre the students are being asked to write. The first thing you as an educator should consider is what genre your students will be asked to write.

In this regard, keep in mind that this method will apply to *any* type of text. As such, it is actually highly recommended that you consider picking texts in different subject areas, such as laboratory reports in the science curriculum, recipes from home education, etc. This sort of variety will help students become more versatile in their writing, and prepare them for a future where they may be faced with a new writing form they have not yet encountered. Possible genres for study include:

- The opinion piece
- Different forms of newspaper articles (formal, like Wallstreet Journal vs. BuzzFeed)
- Book/movie/music reviews
- Political campaign ads
- Commercial advertisements
- Instruction manuals (board games, assembly, etc)
- Formal letters/application letters

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Figure 7: Making your Own Genre Unit document

Unit 1: Writing Situation Unit

The first unit compiled for this creative project consists of familiarizing the students with concepts of the writing situation, which in this unit includes purpose, audience, context, and genre. Being aware of the writing situation, namely the context and audience of a text, are tenants of genre pedagogies (Hyland, 2007) and for students to

really approach writing with genre methods they will need to understand these concepts.

The goal of the unit is then to familiarize students with these ideas. This unit was developed because it provides foundational writing concepts, upon which other units, curriculum, and materials can easily be built or connected. This unit is perhaps not as hearty as the other units in this creative project, but most students by the high school age should be at least partially aware of the concepts of audience, purpose, genre, and context. This unit then serves to clarify these concepts and prepare students to identify these elements in a piece of writing. These identification skills are necessary for any further genre studies. The goals, overview of materials, recommended organization for instruction, and modification suggestions for administering this unit are all listed in the “Writing Situation Unit Overview” document (see Image 9).

Writing Situation Practice Overview

Prerequisite:

Students must complete the [Writing Situation presentations and activities](#) before continuing with the [Writing Situation Practice assignment](#).

Objective:

Students should be able to take any form of text, here interpreted as communication involving words (i.e. videos, commercials, articles, reports, podcasts, etc), and analyze the text in order to discern the text's writing situation, including its **purpose, audience, genre, and context**.

Goals:

After reviewing the Writing Situation material, students should:

- Know a working definition of purpose, audience, genre, and context
- Be able to identify a text's purpose, audience, genre, and context
- Be able to provide specific examples supporting their analysis of a text's purpose, audience, genre, and context

Content:

This unit includes:

- [Presentation 1: Purpose](#) - Information and activity made to help students contemplate a text's purpose and what it might affect.
- [Presentation 2: Audience & Context](#) - Informations, activity, and practice made to help students understand the impact audience and context can have on a text.
- [Presentation 3: Genre](#) - This presentation introduces the students to the idea of genre or text genres. This concept is important to learn for students to approach the genre units correctly.
- [Rhetorical Situation Reading](#): This excerpt from *Everyone's an Author* by Lunsford is a supplemental reading text to follow-up or precede the presentations to help your students better understand these concepts. Please understand that in this case "Rhetorical Situation" is synonymous to "Writing Situation."
- [Writing Situation Practice](#): A worksheet for your student to practice answering questions and analyzing a piece's writing situation. *Students will need to have these skills to apply genre work in later units*

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Figure 8: Writing Situation Practice Overview document

The unit provides multiple presentations to help instruct students on the concepts of purpose, audience, context and genre. Other materials include supporting materials for activities in the presentations, supplementary texts, and an exercise for analyzing a text's writing situation. Full contents include:

- *Presentation 1: Purpose* - Presentation and activity to help students contemplate a text's purpose and what it might affect

- *Presentation 2: Audience & Context* – Presentation and activity made to help students understand the impact audience and context can have on a text
- *Presentation 3: Genre* - Presentation and activities introducing students to the idea of genre or text genres
- *Rhetorical Situation Reading*: A supplemental reading excerpt
- *Writing Situation Practice*: A worksheet where students practice answering questions and analyzing a piece’s writing situation

The Writing Situation Unit is linked on the “Writing Units” page of the *Write Now* website; and a full listing of unit materials and links to the separate materials are included in the “Using this Guide” supplemental support document.

Unit 2: Proposed Solution Essay Unit

The second unit compiled for this creative project requires that students write an argumentative essay based on research that proposes a solution to a problem. This unit was created with more conventional writing content in mind, namely the teaching of incorporating sources and using research along with the art of arguing. Instructing students in more popular academic genres such as research and argumentation better prepares students for popular academic discourses (Hultin & Westman, 2013). This unit begins to apply more genre pedagogy, however, by actively asking students to analyze models for textual features and apply them in their own work. Although more conventional in both the genre form (research essay) and content (argument), this unit does push to move beyond the dominant genre forms, looking for students to argue in the specific genre format of a solution/proposal. Moving students into writing more non-standardized academic forms helps to cease the perpetuation of dominant genres as well

as give our students more varied experiences when it comes to writing and reading (Hultin & Westman, 2013; Hyland, 2003). The goals of the unit, a list of materials, the recommended organization of lessons, and some modifications are found in the “Proposed Solution Essay Overview” document (see Figure 10).

Proposed Solution Essay Overview

Prerequisite:

Students should already be familiar with the [writing situation](#), including the importance of **genre, audience, purpose, and context**.

Students will also hopefully have some practice researching prior to this unit. If not, consider giving students more time and instruction in order to learn good researching habits and techniques (see “Resources” below for more research instruction help).

Objective:

Students will complete a professional essay detailing a problem and a possible solution using evidence from outside sources.

Goals:

Students will:

- Thoroughly research a problem and solution of their choice
- Integrate this research and evidence into their essay correctly using proper citations
- Propose a clear stance and argue effectively for their stance (i.e. solution)
- Analyze the Proposal/Solution genre for patterns or conventions, completing the “[Genre Patterns & Rules](#)” handout to demonstrate their analysis.
- Evaluate their own project for fulfillment of assessment criteria using the [Self Evaluation Form](#)

Content:

- [Proposed Solution Essay Prompt](#): This document gives the goals, objectives, and requirements for the essay.
- [Proposed Solution Essay Rubric](#): To assist in the assessment of student’s essay, this rubric breaks down the different features of their essays, along with detailing different performance levels.
- [On Proposals](#): This supplemental text from *Joining the Conversation: A guide and Handbook for Writers* by Palmquist and Wallraff, will help students better understand the genre of proposal/solution pieces.
- [Reading Academic Articles Presentation](#): This presentation discusses why reading academic articles is so difficult and equips students with some methods for reading | them.

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Figure 9: Proposed Solution Essay Overview document

This unit provides multiple proposal/solution textual examples for students to review, along with presentations on arguments, evaluation forms, and a rubric to help grade the essay. The entire contents of the unit include:

- *Proposed Solution Essay Prompt*: This document meant as an introduction to the essay for students, gives the goals, objectives, and requirements for the essay
- *Proposed Solution Essay Rubric*: A suggested rubric that breaks down the different features of the essays, along with detailing different performance levels
- *On Proposals*: This is a supplemental reading excerpt
- *Reading Academic Articles Presentation*: This presentation discusses why reading academic articles is so difficult and equips students with some methods for reading them
- *Narrowing your Topic Worksheet*: This worksheet helps students focus their researching efforts to consider subtopics of the main topic
- *Argument Presentation*: This presentation focuses on discussing how argumentative genres work, what an argument is, and what that looks like for this essay
- *Sources and Plagiarism Presentation*: This presentation covers the PANDAS technique for considering source credibility, along with how to paraphrase, quote, and summarize effectively

- *Proposed Solution Evaluation:* This worksheet provides guided questioning for someone to review a Proposed Solution essay, whether for peer-review or conferencing.

A link to this unit can be found on the “Writing Units” page of the *Write Now* website, but all of these materials, their descriptions, and their links can also be found on the “Using this Guide” supplemental support document.

Unit 3: Informative Project Unit

The last unit, the Informative Project unit, asks students to apply yet more genre pedagogy methods. Students take previously found research (like that from Unit 2) and determine what audience needs to receive that information. From that decision, students are required to pick and research a genre they think will best reach their audience. This unit perhaps applies the most in terms of genre pedagogies, as students must not only identify genre features, but select and compose their own genre in what will likely be a mixed-medium. This unit moves students into a more independent analysis of genre, as they are required to find samples in their genre and create a working list of “rules” for their genre. Such an experience can easily be repeated, and this approach to new texts will serve students well as they learn a method for approaching any new writing situations they might encounter (Lirola, 2015). An overview of the unit, goals, a list of materials, unit structure, and optional modifications can be found in the “Informative Project Overview” document (see Figure 11).

Informative Project Overview

Prerequisite:

Students should already be familiar with the [writing situation](#), including the importance of genre, audience, purpose, and context.

This writing unit should follow a **research assignment**. For this unit to work, students should already have a body of research that they are familiar with. Consider doing this writing project after a research paper, a proposal, a cause and effect paper, the [Proposed Solution Essay](#), or an argument paper.

Objective:

Students will complete a multimedia informative project that extends their experience with different genres while utilizing research materials they have already found.

This project uses more of a "[Genre Awareness](#)" approach to teaching. As such, students will not only be expected to **write** but to analyze other writing forms. This particular unit also calls into account the use of visuals and design as well as textual format and content.

Goals:

Students will

- Choose an informative genre, finding at least 3 samples of their given genre
- Analyze the genre for patterns or conventions, completing the "[Genre Patterns & Rules](#)" handout to demonstrate their analysis.
- Create a text in the genre of their choosing (see the **Resources** section below for extra software and sites to help your student build their materials)
- Evaluate their own project for fulfillment of assessment criteria using the [Self Evaluation Form](#)
- Reflect on their writing process and choices as a writer by completing a reflection at the end of the unit.

Content:

- [Informative Project Prompt](#): This handout for students explains the project in detail, along with grading expectations and suggestions for some possible genres
- [Informative Project Rubric](#): To assist in the assessment of student's Informative Project, this rubric breaks down the different features of their projects, along with detailing different performance levels. The categories are weighted at 25 points apiece, to make

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Figure 10: Informative Project Overview document

This unit calls for more awareness of genre and the writing situation, and it is imperative that students have covered and understand the concepts from Unit 1 above prior to taking on this unit. Full compiled materials for this unit include:

- *Informative Project Prompt*: A handout for students explaining the project in detail, along with grading expectations and suggestions for some possible genres
- *Informative Project Rubric*: A suggested rubric for this unit, which breaks down the different features of their projects, along with detailing different performance levels
- *Genre Pattern & Rules*: A graphic organizer used to analyze genre samples once a student has found samples they want to mimic their own project from
- *Designing Text & Using Visuals, Incorporating Sound*: Supplemental reading excerpts
- *Self-Evaluation Form*: A checklist for students to evaluate their own work and focus on specific areas that might be areas of concern

A link to this unit can be found on the “Writing Units” page of the *Write Now* website. A full list of materials and links to the materials can also be found on the “Using this Guide” supplemental support document.

A Note on Material Creation

It is worth noting that not all materials on the website or in these units were created solely for use in this project. Many of the supplemental readings or examples, often in the form of PDFs, are included for the students to have authentic texts to consider and secondary resources to help them better understand concepts. Citation information is either on the document or provided through the “Unit Overview” documents for home educators who wish to consider more of the text. These small

samplings were used under the understanding of Fair Use copyright law, as these small samplings are being used for educational purposes and not for personal profit.

Some of the other materials, such as the presentations, prompts, and rubrics, were repurposed materials. The original materials were shared as educational tools with the researchers many years prior. The materials have since undergone major modifications including extra prompts, more complete details, new examples, or different activities developed by the researcher. All materials were then also modified for this project with the audience of home educators and homeschoolers in mind. For example, the “Informative Project Prompt” lists many example genres. It was determined that home educators may not be as familiar with various media genres and might be in need of more ideas to draw from. The “Informative Project” unit was originally developed by the researcher for an earlier class once the researcher was introduced to genre method and pedagogy. The unit was then adapted for the home educator and homeschooler. Some materials bear little similarity to their original resource.

Other materials, such as the unit “Overview” documents and especially the supplementary support documents (e.g. “Overview of Genre Pedagogy” and “Make your Own Genre Unit”) were generated entirely for this project with the audience of home educators in mind. These documents were to communicate to home educators the reasoning behind the various materials and genre methods, along with providing recommended organization for application, explanation of materials, and even “Notes” sections with suggestions for how to best modify and incorporate the lessons into the homeschool environment.

Regardless of where these materials came from, the specific collection, organization, and modification of these materials is completely new and unique, and meant specifically for the home educator working to educate high school students in writing.

Summary

Chapter Three reviewed all of the materials assembled for this creative project, including the Google website *Write Now*, various supplemental support documents for home educators, and the three writing units meant to support students in their writing through genre approach methods. These materials were all created with the home educator in mind, and extra resources, modifications, and information about structuring the units were shared to help home educators in the implementation of these materials.

Chapter Four will evaluate the materials assembled for this creative project, including shortcomings, successes, and possible areas for improvement, as well as recommend future research in this area.

Chapter Four

Summary and Conclusions

Genre pedagogy has great potential for the instruction of writing. Not only does it allow all students access to texts that might otherwise seem exclusive, it allows writers to analyze, interpret and eventually write in the myriad of social situations which require texts to communicate (Hyland, 2003). The purpose of this creative project was to discover how to best use genre pedagogies to help home educators instruct their high school students in writing. Home educators are adaptable and versatile when it comes to their curricula (Redford et al., 2017) and this creative project aimed to assemble and create writing instruction materials for home educators to use in a manner that would be particularly accessible and usable to these unique educators.

Summary of Literature Review

The number of families in the United States that have decided to homeschool is on the rise (Hanna, 2012; Redford et al., 2017). These home educators often have very individualized approaches for instructing their student (Thomas, 2016). Such approaches could include a formalized “structured” approach to instruction or a more laissez-faire “unstructured” approach (Martin-Chang et al., 2011). Whereas most research supports the finding that homeschooled students are usually very high academic achievers, scoring well above their public-schooled peers (Duggan, 2010; Ray, 2010), this may not be the case for all home schoolers, particularly their writing scores. Martin-Chang et al. (2011) projected that homeschooled students in “unstructured” environments may be scoring lower than both other homeschoolers as well as public schoolers. Also, homeschooled

students entering the college environment, although the most likely to give credit of their knowledge to their previous homeschooling experiences, were *not* the most confident in their writing capabilities (Duggan, 2010). A lack of research on homeschoolers, particularly regarding their achievement in writing makes it difficult to determine how well-instructed homeschoolers are in the art of writing, but national writing assessments show high schoolers performing mostly at “basic” writing skills or below (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). All of this information implies that high school homeschoolers are likely having difficulty mastering writing as well.

One possible reason for this lack of confidence and possible lack of performance in the realm of writing is due to the curricula home educators use. Home education can be achieved in a variety of ways, including through various online classes and curricula, shared resources, libraries, catalogs, or local school curricula, with websites being one of the most popular (Redford et al., 2017). However, when it comes to writing curricula, options seem weak or a bit narrow for home educators. Much curricula is not meant for high school students, and what is meant for the high schooler is often limited to grammar and syntax, or writing what Hyland (2003) and Hultin and Westman (2013) call “dominant genres.” The curricula show little variety in what they are teaching, often sticking to research, narratives, and arguments. Only some curricula focus on writing instruction, and fewer still go beyond the few major academic genres. This greatly limits what home educators have to offer their students in the form of writing instruction.

When considering approaches to teaching writing, genre pedagogies offer a versatile and authentic way of approaching texts. Genre pedagogies consider texts as direct responses to social situations, which by proxy makes writing a social action

(Hyland, 2003). Considering writing from this standpoint, writing becomes a complex set of choices made by the author specifically for the audience and context of a piece. This perspective provides a focused opportunity on how to analyze texts and categorize them into “genres” based on similar circumstances and characteristics. From these genres, flexible rules or conventions can be determined, common features which have become expected in certain genres (Devitt, 2000). Making a student aware of genres and training them how to analyze genres allows that student access to write in any genre form, effectively preparing them for any future writing situation they may encounter (Lirola, 2015).

Genre pedagogies are easily incorporated into the classroom. They align well with Vygotsky’s theory of scaffolding, as the process of analyzing and writing in a genre naturally takes the form of supported modeling with an instructor before independent work (Hanna, 2012). Because genre pedagogies offer a method of analyzing texts in context, this means that genre pedagogy approaches can be applied to *any* type of text, making it a very versatile approach for teaching writing (Badger & White, 2000). Because these methods can be applied to any text, this means genre-based writing instruction could easily be offered in any subject area and highly individualized. This makes genre pedagogy an ideal approach for the very personalized instruction methods of home educators.

Summary of the Creative Project

In order to support home educators in their instruction of high school students in writing, three instructional units were created using genre pedagogy approaches as genre pedagogy was shown to be very versatile and a strong option for students to learn the

patterns and expectations of text. Because nearly all home educators surveyed had access to computers (Ray, 2010) and because most home educators affirmed that online website resources were a large part of their choice in curriculum (Hanna, 2012; Redford et al., 2017), all of these materials were made available online, both through the *Write Now* website (see Figure 1), a website created explicitly to house these materials, and through an online public GoogleDrive (see Figure 5). This way the materials created can be shared as a resource among home educators and easily accessible.

The three units created were the Writing Situations unit, the Proposed Solution Essay unit, and the Informative Project unit. The units created all included an “Overview” document, which explained the goals, content created, and organization of the unit, along with some possible modifications that home educators might want to take advantage of. These documents and the other materials created were by no means exhaustive. Materials provided in the units included all major instructional pieces needed for both the home educator and the homeschooler, such as the assignment prompt, supplemental support readings, and a rubric to grade the assignment. Other materials could easily be added to the units, and assignments could be easily modified, which was a consideration when creating the materials, as home educators are known to personalize their materials for their students. As such, the units are not fully scripted with every single lesson planned, but rather materials are provided to teach the key concepts and the implementation and support will be up to the home educator. The units work as a flexible framework that home educators can further modify or use.

Three supplemental support documents were also created for home educators, including an “Overview of Genre Pedagogy,” “How to use this Guide” document, and a

“Make your Own Genre Unit” document. These documents provide explanations and resources to the home educators so they can better understand the concepts of genre pedagogies that are being applied. The “Make your Own Genre Unit” document in particular was made with the knowledge that home educators individualize their curricula, and the document walks them through how they can create a writing unit based in genre pedagogies for their student based on any type of text. This allows for complete personalization, and some of the other unit materials are recommended to help support them in their instruction. Again, these materials are not exhaustive, but rather foundational, providing home educators with all the basic resources they need to understand the concepts of genre pedagogies and get started implementing them. Further research and implementation will be up to their discretion.

More support materials and lessons could easily be added to these units. Because the materials are offered digitally, it will be easy for the researcher to update, modify, and add to materials on the website and GoogleDrive based on feedback and recommendations from home educators. To this end, a feedback form is provided on the “About the Author” page of the *Write Now* website for further feedback, requests, and recommendations.

Conclusion

Home educators have a unique opportunity. Given their very small instructional environments of only a few students per instructor, home educators are able to give their students completely personalized curricula and instruction. However, these home educators are not always trained in education, and they are often limited by what materials they can find and afford. Writing is one such subject where home educators

need extra support. The curricula available to teach high school level writing, both public curricula and those made specifically for homeschoolers, is lackluster at best, with most materials focusing only on language and punctuation, with maybe a few textbooks offering instruction into writing specific types of texts. If educators are to be able to teach students strong writing skills, then there needs to be strong writing curricula available to support them in the teaching of writing.

In order to support home educators in their attempts at solid writing instruction, this creative project successfully produced a website that houses three writing units which were created and assembled with home educators in mind. These units and the supporting instructional materials are based on the tenants of genre pedagogy, which shows students how to analyze texts for\ audience and context, effectively preparing students to analyze and write in any genre. The materials assembled in this creative project are extensive, but not exhaustive, and even though these materials were collected and modified for home educators, these materials are available online and could easily be used by any writing instructor.

Writing is something many high school students struggle with. This could be from a lack of direct instruction, a lack of experience, or a lack of training on the part of educators, but it is likely that students are not receiving instruction that prepares them for taking on the wide variety of writing situations they will encounter throughout their lives. Genre pedagogies offers one approach that better equips students to write, and this creative project makes use of the genre pedagogy approach. However, the materials created in this creative project are not enough. If high school students, including those being homeschooled, are really struggling this much with writing, then writing curricula

and instruction needs to be revisited. Stronger more versatile materials need to be made, and educators, including those making the choice to educate at home, need access to these materials as well as resources to support them if we want students to succeed in writing.

Limitations and Recommendations

A few features limited the scope of this research and the resulting creative project. First, as mentioned in the literature review section and by at least one of the articles previewed (Thomas, 2016), there is a lack of research on homeschoolers. Samples and resulting studies may not be accurately representative of the actual population of homeschooled students and educators in the United States, nor is the research specific when it comes to their writing achievement. Much of the research focuses on reasonings behind why home educators turned to homeschooling, but little more seems to be studied. This made it difficult to not only answer the research questions posed in this creative project, but also to truly target areas of weakness where home educators need support. The researcher, having personal ties to the homeschooling community and having interacted with home educators on variety of occasions, heard about their desire for good writing curricula for high schoolers, but this also was only from a select few home educators in central Minnesota and was not covered in any research. Therefore, the conclusions reached in this project about the need for writing curricula and the usefulness of genre pedagogy approaches were deduced based on what research *is* available. To better identify the needs of home educators and achievements of homeschooled students, clear assessment data that separates homeschoolers as a separate population, say in

college entrance exams and other assessments, would be ideal. Quite simply, more research on homeschoolers, their experiences and achievements, is needed.

A second limitation of this study concerns the breadth of homeschool curricula reviewed. The internet offers a wide array of materials to educators of all kinds, and the researcher was not able to review more than a small sampling of curricula and lessons offered online. This means that the curricula and websites sampled in the literature review of this creative project may not be fully representational of materials available to home educators. A more qualitative review of available curricula would result in a more accurate evaluation of the current homeschool curricula on the market. Case studies and surveys that more specifically review writing curricula and materials used by home educators to teach writing would be optimal.

Finally, this creative project did not directly inquire what home educators want from a high school writing curriculum directly. The basic concepts of genre pedagogy were familiar to the researcher, and upon close consideration during this creative project, genre pedagogy provided a flexible entry into teaching writing which aligned with what is known about how home educators teach. However, this might not be the kind of materials home educators are after. Further interviews, case studies, and inquiries of the home educator population might provide more clarity on the types of materials they desire to help instruct their students.

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