Genre & Rhetorical Situation: Does Format Really Matter?

Genre is linked to rhetorical situation, and that the choice of genre is one a writer must carefully decide using a variety of factors. Key to making the appropriate choice is audience, purpose, topic, and context – all factors in the rhetorical situation.

A message is communicated successfully if it is received by its intended audience. The message conveyed in two different genres might involve the same content, but the conventions used to communicate this message may be drastically different depending on factors of the rhetorical situation. In this exercise we’ll analyze the ways conventions are used to communicate messages, the underlying assumptions associated with different genres, and the choices we must make when writing based on the audience for which we are writing. For all scenarios, stick to the details in the story provided but tailor your writing appropriately. Write each piece to the specific audience, analyzing before and as you write, how considering your audience and your genre varies.

Context of Scenario:

Earlier today you were in a car accident while driving your grandmother’s car on your way to take your Biology midterm. Luckily you were not hurt, nor were any others, but your vehicle and another have significant damage and are headed to the repair shop. Since you were texting your friend while driving instead of paying attention, you ran through a red light, so the accident was your fault. Police responded to the scene and your insurance company has been notified. Your grandmother’s car was towed away to get repaired.

Reflection on Rhetorical Situation and Genre:

Reflect on the experience of writing in different genres for each rhetorical situation. Craft responses for the following questions with your group:

- How did you know what was appropriate for each genre?
- For each scenario, how did your audience impact what and how you chose to say?
- Compare any two scenarios and discuss the significant differences in rhetorical situation (discuss purpose, audience, intended outcome, and appropriateness of writing style for each).
- How does your understanding of genre, audience, and rhetorical situation influence the choices you make in writing?
- What 5 elements from this exercise can you apply to a writing assignment you are currently working on in any other class? In other words, what did you learn by doing this that you can now transfer to another writing situation?