Task 10.1: Genre Analysis

Rian ENGL 101 FA25 210 | Brian Stever 24042080

First, follow the directions on the Task 10.1 page in D2L to find at least two more samples of texts in the same genre as the text you chose to analyze for Project #2. If the text you chose is fairly short, feel free to find more than two samples. List your main text, its genre, and the two sample texts below:

Main text for Project #2:

Machine healing
Alvin Powell

The genre of your text:

Online science/technology feature article (from a university news publication)

Sample text #1 in this genre (title, author, link if available):

What will AI mean for humanity?
Clea Simon | Harvard Correspondent

Sample text #2 in this genre (title, author, link if available):

How AI could radically change schools by 2050
Sy Boles | Harvard Staff Writer

Next, read the sample texts carefully and take notes based on the genre conventions for the structure, design, and language - use the questions in the Genre Analysis Toolkit and the ideas on language in Chapter 9 ("Selection, Slanting, and Charged Language") to help you. Compare your genre samples: do they all have similar organization or structure? Do they all look similar in terms of design? Do they use similar vocabulary, register, and grammatical

conventions? If you are not sure about any of these conventions because not all texts follow them the same way, you can either add it to your notes that the convention is not followed consistently, or you can find more samples to form a better opinion.

Then, fill out the table below with what you notice about these conventions with some examples from your texts (you can quote from your sample texts or describe what you notice if quoting is not possible). In the last column, consider what these conventions mean for the genre: why do they exist? What do they do? What would happen if a text breaks them?

What Do You Notice About...	Common Choices (conventions) in the Collected Samples: what do you notice? Give examples from your sample texts	What do these conventions do? Why are they common? What would happen if a text doesn't follow or break them?
Structure	**1. Headline & Subheadline:** All three have a main headline and a smaller one under it that explains the topic more before getting into the main content or intro sentence. * **Ex:** My article's headline is "Machine healing," and the subhead question underneath is "Artificial intelligence is up to the challenge of reducing human suffering, experts say. Are we?" **2. A "Hook":** They all start with a story or by describing an event to pull you in. My article starts with a story about a med student, Adam Rodman. The other two start by describing the panel event they're reporting on. **3. Bold Subheadings:** They all break up the text with bold subheadings (like "Shoring up the 'tottering edifice'" or "The bias threat"). This makes the long article easier to read. **4. Expert Quotes:** The whole article is built on quotes from experts (Harvard professors, researchers). The author's job seems to be connecting these quotes together smoothly.	**Why?** This structure makes the articles feel credible and easy to read at the same time. The goal is to make complex ideas from smart people (the experts) understandable to a general audience. **Subheadings:** These are super important because nobody wants to read a huge wall of text online. It lets you skim. **Expert Quotes:** This is the main point. It shows the article is based on research and authority, not just the author's opinion. If an article didn't have these quotes, it would just be an opinion blog, not a university news story. **What if broken?** Without these, the article would fail. If it was just one big block of text, no one would read it. If it didn't quote experts, it wouldn't have any authority.
Design	**1. Professional Photos:** All three use really high-quality photos of the people they are quoting. They're not stock photos;	**Why?** The design choices are all about building trust and credibility.

	they look like they were taken by a professional photographer for the university.

2. Embedded Media: My main article ("Machine healing") has little "Play" buttons with audio clips of the experts. This is pretty cool.

3. Author & Date: The author's name (and that they're a "Harvard Staff Writer") is right at the top, along with the exact date and the "read time" (e.g., "6 min read").

4. Clean Layout: The design is very clean, with lots of white space. It looks serious and academic, not like a flashy news site. | **Professional Photos:** Shows these are real, important people. It puts a face to the name and makes the university look professional.

Author/Date/Read Time: This shows transparency. It tells you who wrote it, when (so you know it's new), and how long it'll take you. It's respectful of the reader's time.

Clean Layout: The simple layout makes it feel more serious and academic. It's designed for reading and learning, not for clicking on ads. If it were flashy and messy, it would feel less trustworthy. |
| **Language: level of formality, mechanics & grammar** | **1. Formal but Accessible:** The language is very formal. The grammar is perfect, and it uses complex sentences.

2. Jargon is Explained: It uses high-level vocabulary (like "biomedical informatics," "cognitive offload," "poesis") but it often explains what these things mean by using the expert quotes.

3. Objective Tone: The author's voice is very neutral and objective. It reports on what the experts are saying; it doesn't add its own opinion. | **Why?** This is key for the genre. It has to sound smart enough to be from Harvard (formal, correct grammar) but simple enough for a non-expert to understand (accessible).

Objective Tone: This is crucial for credibility. The author acts as a neutral guide, just presenting the experts' views. This makes the article feel more like "truth" and less like one person's opinion.

What if broken? If the language was too casual (using slang, bad grammar), it would completely damage Harvard's brand. If it was too academic (just jargon), it would fail at its goal of educating the public. |
| **Language: reader/writer interactions** | **1. Author is Invisible:** The author never uses "I" or "you."

2. Reader is Assumed: The articles assume the reader is intelligent, curious about the world, and trusts experts. It treats the reader like an educated person who wants to learn.

3. Event Reporting: In two articles, the author "sets the scene" for the reader ("speaking during a forum Wednesday..."). This is the only real interaction, where the author acts like a reporter telling you what happened. | **Why?** The author stays invisible to keep the focus 100% on the experts and the topic. The author is just a window, not the main event.

This one-way communication (author presents, reader receives) is standard for journalism. It establishes the author as an authority (or at least, a messenger for authorities) and the reader as a learner.

What if broken? If the author started saying "I think..." or "You should...", it would turn into an op-ed or a blog post, breaking the genre's rule of objectivity. |

Language: slanting, charged words, etc.	**1. Very Little Charged Language:** The articles avoid obviously "charged" or emotional words. They sound very balanced. **2. Selection & Slanting:** This is a perfect example of 'slanting by selection'. The 'slant' comes from selecting only facts from Harvard experts to achieve the 'intention of the communicator' (which is to promote the university). **3. Positive Framing:** The tone is generally positive or "cautiously optimistic" about the future, technology, and Harvard's role in it. It frames the experts as solving big problems. * **Ex:** My article talks about "reducing human suffering" and "shaping the human soul." These are big, important ideas, and the articles suggest Harvard is at the center of figuring them out.	**Why?** The genre's purpose is not just to inform, but also to promote the university. **The slant is subtle.** By selecting only its own experts, the Gazette slants the story to imply that Harvard is the most important center of knowledge on this topic. It's a form of institutional promotion. **Positive Tone:** This supports the university's brand. It's not investigative journalism looking for scandals; it's a feature article showcasing the university's best and brightest. **What if broken?** If it used angry, charged language, it would sound unprofessional. If it was too critical of Harvard, it probably wouldn't get published in the official university news.
Context: medium	**1. Online Publication:** It's published on the Harvard Gazette website. **2. Multimedia:** Because it's online, it can include things print can't: hyperlinks, audio clips (in my article), and high-res color photos. **3. Searchable & Shareable:** It's designed to be found on Google and shared on social media.	**Why?** The medium is the message. Being online makes it instantly accessible to a global audience for free, which is the whole point. It's meant to spread Harvard's ideas far and wide. The multimedia elements (audio, links) make the article "richer" and more engaging than a simple text-only page. It takes advantage of the web.
Context: material conditions & surroundings	**1. How You Read It:** You need a computer or smartphone and an internet connection to access it. **2. When You Read It:** The date is very prominent, so you know how recent the information is. This is important for a fast-moving topic like AI. **3. Author's Job:** The author is a "Harvard Staff Writer" or "Harvard Correspondent." This means their job is literally to write these articles for the university. They are part of the institution.	**Why?Entry This matters.** The author being a paid staff writer (not a random blogger or a New York Times reporter) tells you about their relationship to the topic. They are writing for the university. This isn't just a random person's thoughts; it's an official publication from a major institution. The entire context is designed to feel official, credible, and authoritative.

Context: author	1. **Staff Writers:** As mentioned, the authors (Alvin Powell, Clea Simon, Sy Boles) are listed as staff writers or correspondents. 2. **The "Real" Authors:** In a way, the *experts* are the real authors. The staff writer's job is to be a good interviewer and editor, organizing the experts' ideas into a readable story. 3. **Authority by Association:** The author's authority doesn't come from their own name, but from *who* they work for (Harvard) and *who* they are quoting (Harvard experts).	**Why?** This setup is a key convention. The author is a professional communicator, not a subject-matter expert. Their skill is translation. This makes the genre work. You don't need the *writer* to have a Ph.D. in AI; you just need them to be able to talk to the people who do and write it down clearly. It separates the role of "expert" from the role of "writer."

Finally, reflect on the conventions above and the typical rhetorical situation of this genre (its audience, purpose, and context) and answer the following questions as fully as possible:

1. *What conventions do you think are consistent among this genre? What similarities do you notice among the samples? Do you notice any inconsistencies or deviations from these conventions in the samples you found?*
2. *How do the conventions of this genre work to help connect to or influence the audience? And the other way around: how do the needs and expectations of the audience influence the genre conventions?*
3. *How does your text of choice for Project #2 follow or not follow the genre conventions you've identified in the chart above, and why?*
4. *Who is the typical audience for this genre? What is the relationship between the audience and the author(s)? Does your main text (the one you chose for Project #2) show the same kind of relationship between the author and the audience?*
5. *Why does the genre exist? What practice does it carry out or what is its primary function? What does it help people do? Look at your main text: is it trying to achieve the same purpose? How successful is it?*

Your response:

After looking at all three articles, the conventions are unsurprisingly consistent. I chose these three articles because the topics interest me and I love reading The Harvard Gazette/HBR's pieces on AI and technology - so being familiar with these articles prior to this assignment, I intuitively felt like there was something formulaic about them. And that became quite obvious when I started to pay conscious attention to the genre, especially after this week's readings. The most important similarities are the structure (hook, subheadings, and building the entire article from expert quotes) and the

language (formal but easy to read, with an objective author). The design is also consistently clean and professional, which makes the articles feel serious and credible.

The only real inconsistency I saw was that my main text, "Machine healing," had embedded audio clips of the experts, while the other two didn't. This just seems like a cool extra feature that was used for this particular feature, not a deviation from the genre. My text follows all the main conventions perfectly.

All these conventions are there to build trust with the audience. The audience for this genre (an educated, curious person who trusts experts) expects a serious, credible, and polished article from a place like Harvard. The clean design and formal tone show them "this is high-quality information." In turn, the audience's expectations mean the genre can't be flashy or use slang, or it would lose that trust. However, I will add that the artistic design of the header (hero section) of my main article is beautiful (I love designs like this and it's part of what drew me in initially to read the piece).

The relationship between the author and audience isn't a conversation... It's more like a lecture or a report. The author is an invisible guide, and the audience is the learner or student. The author (like Alvin Powell in my main text) never says "I" or "you." They just present the experts' ideas, and the audience is there to absorb them.

I think ultimately, this genre exists to do two things at once… educate the public by translating complex ideas, and promote the university by showing off its experts and their important work. My main text, "Machine healing," is a perfect example and is very successful at this. It takes a huge topic (AI in medicine), makes it understandable using Harvard's own experts, and leaves the reader feeling informed and impressed by the university's role in this field.