

Challenging Genre Research Project: Science Fiction Vignette

Challenging Genre Reflection

I went into this project not knowing if I will be able to get out. Short stories are my forte, but putting them together to make one plot seemed impossible. To top it all off, I decided to make it science fiction which is my least favorite genre. I set out to give myself a challenge. I wanted to stretch my limits as a writer and step out of my box into a different genre. I think to become a good writer, it is important to experience all aspects of writing.

The research was kind of challenging for me. Vignettes are very hard to find, and I only found one. It was a good sample and I feel like I did get a lot out of that one vignette. To study the structure of each story, I researched micro fiction. I think that I really improved my short story writing with this research. I also researched science fiction. Even though this was a minor genre off of the vignette, I had only experienced a little science fiction in the past. Finding science fiction was not hard, and I even got lucky by finding a short story science fiction book. This allowed me to look at many different samples of science fiction and compare them.

When I first read the vignette, it surprised me that each story was so short. I didn't really understand how they were connected to each other until a few stories in. Each story left me wanting more, even though the next story would be just as captivating. When I was done with the book, I had to stop and think for a few minutes of what had just happened. The book was a quick read, but it took a while to process the technique the author had used to weave each story together.

The science fiction was a little harder for me to really grasp. I am not a science fiction fan, so of course reading it was very slow for me. After I got into it, I really learned that you have to have a big imagination to play around with science fiction. Even though the author had come up with the plot and story, a big part of making it good was understanding it yourself. I really had to be "in the zone" to understand what was going on. Once I did that though, I actually found a few stories to be good.

Writing in my genre was the most challenging for me in this project. When I started this project, I had that gut feeling that it was not going to go well. I somehow knew that this was probably going to be a lot more difficult for me than I said it was going to be.

It took me quite a while to actually come up with my first vignette. I did not know what the story was going to be about at all. Since I didn't read science fiction before this, I didn't really know how to base a story on it. So of course, along with researching and reading, I was able to get a mind set of what I was doing. As soon as I sat down to write, I realized that I had nothing. For some reason, it was just so hard for me to actually come up with something.

Later, I spent some time actually thinking and planning out what I wanted in my head. I realized that I wanted a specific pattern for my vignette to flow. Then I figured out that I wanted my character to change into some kind of creature. I didn't know exactly, but at least I had some kind of a start.

I started writing very late in the project and that is probably what I regret most about this project. It was just so hard for me to actually come up with something. Once I got my first vignette down, I had a pretty stable idea of what I wanted. From then on I just wrote each vignette, making sure that I was following the pattern that I wanted. This pattern was kind of an A, B, A, C, pattern. Each letter was a different person, except there would be one reoccurring person: the main character who was emotionally distraught.

I had gotten over the hill of coming up with a topic and pattern, but now there was one more obstacle that had me stuck for a while. My next job was to figure out what kind of power my character had. This was very challenging for me. It was so challenging for me that I found that I would avoid my project because I was frustrated. Then I had the idea of asking my dad for advice. After all he had once been a little boy with dreams of super heroes. Once I figured out the power, I realized that I would just have to work it in. The next step was just to write.

Thanks to my conferences, I was able to get some good ideas and figure out some of those knots in my plan. Overall this project was very

challenging for me, but I feel that I have learned a lot. I have learned to experiment more in different genres, but also how to deal with my writing frustrations and time management. But most importantly, I have created something that in the beginning, I thought was impossible.

An Experimental Emotion

By: Roxanne Kieme

The Beginning

I told you it wouldn't work. I told you that if I took that pill, my body would change and I would never be the same again. I told you this, but did you listen? No.

When you unwrapped the pill and told me that "it was for the better", I knew it's fluorescent green color was abnormal. And then when I swallowed and felt the slimy pill slither down my throat, I knew I was in to something bad. You told me it would give me powers, but right now all it has given me is pain. My head hurts and my body aches; it feels like my stomach is doing flips. I swear my vision is going, because every time I look down at my feet, they seem to be fading away.

I am changing. My hair is thinning, and my once soft skin is dry and gray. I am hungry, but when I eat, I feel that I can not indulge my needs. I feel tired, but when I lay to rest, my eyes won't close.

Is there need for this pain? I can barely look at myself in the mirror without cringing. I pass people in the street, and they stare in disbelief; they must think I'm some kind of monster. Maybe I am.

Desk Flower

From the day I started work, he was the first one to open the door for me. Pushing by with a pile of papers, I thought nothing of it, but when he looked back and smiled, I knew that maybe I would have one friend.

I started each day by trying to get enough courage to say hi; but each time turned into a glazed over stare and my clumsy feet led me scampering away. As the days went by, I would grow accustomed to just watching him, waiting for the day when maybe he would turn around and smile just as he did my first day.

I was always watching him, secretly waiting for the right moment. I actually started timing it; at 10:15am, he gets up to pour another cup of coffee. At twelve he has his lunch break. I also know that he sits alone during lunch until 12:20pm, when his friend from managing sits with him. By this time I realize that it is too late, so I fix my skirt and move the hair out of my eyes. I throw myself into my work, knowing deep down inside I really do want a chance.

A Regretful Mistake

The scientist walked into the room tripping and stumbling all over the place. Grabbing onto the table, a ghastly cry came from his old and grumbly throat. He tried to stand up, but this burden he was carrying on his shoulders was too much to bear. His fragility caused him to fall on his back; his distressed face cringing. Looking up at the ceiling while the fumes of acid filled his nostrils, he realized that the mistake he made was irreversible. He should have never talked that man into going along with his experiment. He knew of the strong and powerful side effects, but that wouldn't stop him from being the first and only scientist to pull this off. If it meant putting a innocent person in danger, than ^{soon} so be it. He took time and care in picking the right person. Only the one that seemed to be the most lonesome and the most foreboding would be selected. Only the one that had no one to love. Only the one he knew would not be missed.

Eyeing Change

He walked down the street; head down and shoulders slumped. His face was covered by his hair which at the moment, was black and stringy. The quiet confidence that he was so good at portraying had vanished, leaving a scared and distant disposition. People walked around him; seeing through his gray skin and black hair. Somehow they had a sense, but at the same time had no idea. He sauntered on, keeping his head lowered while making his way to an unknown destination.

No Milk

Mommy, mommy! We were going to the grocery store to buy food, and there he was! He was so scary! His skin was gray, and his eyes were purple! Mommy! I had never seen anyone like that! He had black hair like daddy, but it wasn't all nice looking. It was ratty, like when I first come out of the shower. Then he did something really weird to Daddy! But Daddy didn't get hurt. The man just stood there and stared at Daddy, and Daddy got really really pale. Then Daddy started falling over, but he walked over to me before he fell. I asked Daddy what was wrong, and he said that the scary man made him realize how sad he would be if he lost us. I told Daddy I would never get lost! He smiled, but then he said that he meant if I had been lost forever. After that Daddy needed to get home, so we forgot the milk.

A Simple Gesture

He came into the office late today. He seemed really sick and I decided that today I actually would have a valid excuse not to say “hi”. I did my usual daily observations of him, but he seemed really dysfunctional and distant. Instead of getting his morning coffee, he sat right down at his computer and stared at the screen. I did notice though that his eyes were a deep purple. I was surprised, because usually his blue eyes were shallow and glazed over with work, but today they were deep in concentration on something farther than the screen. I decided to take a great leap out of my boundaries and walk over to say hello. Maybe now would be a good time for him to gain a potential friend.

I stood up and fixed my skirt, making sure I was somewhat decent looking. I took one step by his desk, and his violet eyes locked with mine. A chill went up and down my spine as I realized that I was not in the office anymore.

Suddenly I was watching an old lady at a desk, typing on the computer. Her fingers arthritic, but she kept going. Then the background swirled around and I was at my house, but the old lady was sitting in my chair. There was a cat perched on her lap, and she was looking at a family album.

I was back again standing in front of him, except now his head was down on his desk, and his shoulders were slightly shaking. I felt myself gasp for air, realizing that I too was shaking very badly. For a second, my greatest fear of becoming lonely had become a reality. I walked back over to my desk and continued to type on the computer; never once looking back at him.

A New Light to Hold

The pain has gone farther than just physical. When I pass people in the street they stare; my dead skin and violet eyes seem to attract unwanted attention. I am reminded of the turmoil that I have been put through. Of course, I have found a way to keep myself occupied. I have found a way to see into people's minds and feed on their deepest fear. While still envisioning their fear, I almost feel like I am back to normal until the person gets too disturbed and plunges out. Then I feel dark, cold, and alone once more. The hope is given to me that maybe I have a chance to live a little more, taunting me with a shred of light in my dark world.

With each new person that crosses my path, I am able to gain the control of their fear, putting it in my mind bank for future reference. I find that by studying each personal horror, I could probably come up with one unified conclusion to everyone's fears. I am learning that the best way to deal with this change is to go back into the world with my head held high. Rejection and pain will continue to haunt me for the rest of my years, but secretly I am enjoying every minute of it.

List of Samples

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1989

Stern, Jerome ed. *Micro Fiction: An Anthology of Really Short Stories*, 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996.

Caravan, T.P. "Random Sample." *Fifty Short Science Fiction Tales*, 1st ed. Ed. Isaac Asimov and Groff Conklin. New York: Collier Books, 1963. 40-44.

Boucher, Anthony. "The Ambassadors." *Fifty Short Science Fiction Tales*, 1st ed. Ed. Isaac Asimov and Groff Conklin. New York: Collier Books, 1963. 31-35.

Brown, Fredric. "The Weapon." *Fifty Short Science Fiction Tales*, 1st ed. Ed. Isaac Asimov and Groff Conklin. New York: Collier Books, 1963. 36-39.

Hernhuter, Albert. "Texas Week." *Fifty Short Science Fiction Tales*, 1st ed. Ed. Isaac Asimov and Groff Conklin. New York: Collier Books, 1963. 113-117.

Knight, Damon. "Not With a Bang." *Fifty Short Science Fiction Tales*, 1st ed. Ed. Isaac Asimov and Groff Conklin. New York: Collier Books, 1963. 125-131.

Samples

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

The House on Mango Street was my only vignette that I could find to use for this project. I did get a really good idea of what a vignette was from this sample.

The first things I observed were traits that made up a vignette. Vignettes are composed of very short stories usually between 200 and 700 words. Although they have been known to be less and more. The stories individually are also completely different in plot, but are all related to each other to form one story. In The House on Mango Street, the author wrote short stories about the people and places in her neighborhood. When collected together, you could really get an idea of what her neighborhood was like.

I also observed in this book that some of her stories were very descriptive and had a much deeper meaning. Usually these stories could paint a picture in your mind of what her lifestyle was like. Others were actually stories of events that happened in her life. These were also short, but were to the point and more exact than the descriptive ones. Each story was very good at describing people and places. This really brought the story together as a whole and made it a vignette.

Micro Fiction : Anthology of Really Short Stories edited by Jerome Stern

There are not many vignettes out there, so I chose the next best thing to research. Micro fictions are very short stories, usually 200 to 500 words. I was actually able to relate quite a bit of my writing to micro fiction.

This collection of micro fiction had stories that were all very precise and descriptive in their own way. Some authors chose to write descriptive micro fictions that described a place or person. Others used micro fiction to tell a tale or scenario. There were many different styles in-between, with many different structures.

Some chose a structure that was basically a run-on sentences, but made

perfect sense. Others were written in first or third person which gave it a more personal feeling. It also seemed like the rules for quotations were a little more relaxed than with real stories.

I was able to pick up some good descriptive and short story writing skills that I needed to write my vignette. With the help from Micro Fiction, I was able to write short stories that made sense and went right to the point. It also showed me how to leave the reader wanting more.

“Random Sample” by T.P Caravan

“Random Sample” was one of the science fiction short stories I read to go along with the vignette. This story is about a little girl who is abducted by aliens and is giving her side of the story to some adults. The way this story was written intrigued me because it was written like the little girl was actually talking. This really gave you a good picture of the little girl, while leaving you with a sense that the whole scenario would be a bit eerie. I did actually form one of my vignettes in this structure.

“The Ambassadors” by Anthony Boucher

This short story was about a human observing martians on Mars. I relate to this story because it gave me a good idea of what science fiction is really like. This author wrote about aliens as a different species and separate from humans, while some authors write aliens as the main center point of the story.

“The Weapon” Fredric Brown

“The Weapon” touched a more sensitive side of science fiction. The story involved a scientist who had a mentally disabled son who was fifteen, but acted like five. When another man comes to the scientist and offers the him the chance to “end the human race’s chance for survival.” the scientist turned him down because he needed to take care of his son. This showed me

that you can still have the science fiction theme going on, but you don't have to mask every other emotion to pull it off. I can write science fiction and still make it artistic, without making it cheesy science fiction.

"Texas Week" by Albert Hernhuter

This short story was a very good example of another kind of science fiction that is set in the future. Here, a psychiatrist is called to a model home, with a model wife. Apparently, the husband had been acting "loco" and was talking about how there was a cliff to fall over. Later the psychiatrist goes to check it out, and falls over himself. This is the kind of science fiction that is more twisted and demented like "The Twilight Zone." This opened up another option for the topic of my vignette.

"Not With a Bang" by ^y Damon Knight

This story depicts of the end of the world. A man and woman are left, but the woman will not have children until she is married, and she will not get married until she has a minister to marry them. This type of science fiction is the type that is set in a different place than reality. It is like Armageddon and was probably written as a foreshadow of things to come. This gave me a great example of something that I could maybe form in my own piece.

Research Journal

Roxanne Kieme
Science Fiction Vignette

**composition
book**

Roxanne Kieme

~~Multi-Genre Journal~~ Challenging

2/16/05

This is the first day of actually ^{challenging} working and researching on our ~~Multi~~-Genre project. I have chosen Vignettes as my research project. I am good at writing short stories, but to make it harder, I am going to make it science fiction.

Last night when I had suggested this to my dad, he thought it was a great idea because he knows I hate science fiction. I also don't read any science fiction so I have to ~~be able to~~ research science fiction on top of vignettes.

I have already found some material to read and study. Ms. Andrew suggested "The House on Mango Street" for vignette. I have started reading the stories, and it seems like they are all completely different. They are all focused about a girl named Esperanza, (and her life) but they are all completely random. I think that each story is linked together, but I haven't figured it out yet. I also found a book on "Fifty Short Science Fiction Tales". I don't think I could find anything more

specific. I'm hoping it will give me some good examples. Just to research science fiction, I checked out Dandy Lion Wine by Ray Bradbury.

It has been really hard to find material on this subject. There are not a lot of vignettes, let alone science fiction vignettes. I am going to go to the ^{AA} library to research more options.

I also am going to research the structure of vignettes and the subject so that I can maybe learn how to write it better.

The Man is
a Harsh mistress

2/27/05

In the past week I have finished "The House on Mango Street", and started reading some of the short science fiction stories.

I noticed in the House on Mango Street, each "story" was at most three paragraphs long. At first I didn't really understand how you could write a whole story in 3 paragraphs, but it can be done. I noticed that they were very descriptive, and I was able to really picture the story in my head.

Also, each story had its own plot and characters, but all of the stories as a whole seem to be related to the same topic: the town. It seemed that the author uses this type of writing because it best showed off the traits of the town, but also gave you a sense of what kind of town it was.

The science fiction stories I have read usually revolve around aliens or another super natural being. The stories also may revolve around outer space or in the future.

3/4/05

I had a checkup with Mr. Blazell on Friday. I also took that time to think of some good topics. I was thinking maybe there could be a person, like

A - Main character morphs into something

B - Bystander character describes changes

A - MC

B - New character

I have a feeling this genre is going to be harder than most.

- I also finished microfiction in this week, and wrote back notes on it. I will have to keep better track of my research.

3/11/04 I attempted writing today,
but I really cannot get a good topic
sense. I'm a little bit confused of
what exactly my vignettes should be
like, but I guess that comes with
experimenting.

3/13/04 I am really stuck and I
really don't know what to do.

My meeting with Ms. Andrew is
tomorrow.

- I also started my second vignette,
the side of the scientist. I really
should figure out more of how it's
going.

I also feel like if I put some of
my own characteristics in the story,
and kind of relate it to my life, it
will be better. Just an observation.

3/18/05

I had my meeting with Ms. Andrew yesterday, and it went very well. The blurry lines are now a little bit clearer, so maybe I can start getting on the right track.

For starters, my vignettes can be longer! So that gives me a little more room.

The second vignette is also going to be moved and re-written, but my intentions were good.

I also got some great suggestions about powers: pain vs power basically.

So I have an outline of what I'm going to do, I just have to do it.

-I also started writing my second vignette: ... well re-writing.

-Now I have skeletons of what I want, now I just have to work with it.

3/16/05

I have officially finished my second vignette. My goal is to finish 3 + for Friday, and then finish writing over the weekend.

I am kind of stuck right now for my next vignette, but I will think of another one soon. (as in tomorrow)

Right now the pattern is

- Character - first person

- coworker - first person

(now I just have to come up with a third one)

3/16/05

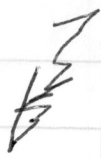
I have continued writing my vignette, finishing a third one and starting a fourth.

3/17/05

Today I finished writing my fourth vignette, and proofread the rest of them. So far I think my preplanned pattern is going well, my next obstacle will be to think of a new place for my main character. For example I

3/18/05

I feel like I can not write at all. It has been really hard for me to think of a topic, or just finish one vignette. I think this project is much more difficult than I thought it would be, so I'm having a hard time with it.




I find myself procrastinating when I'm on the computer, and it's really hard for me to focus. I think I am going to take a break today even though it is so near to the deadline.

3/19/05

Today on my projects not doing much better. I have written a bit more, but I am really dreading this project.


I have started the 5th vignette, and I think I have an idea of where I want it to go.

I have also realized that I am using some of the topics from my science fiction short story book like for



instance, one of the stories is of a little girl who talks in first person. So the story is written as if she is talking. I am modeling one of my vignettes after this.

3/30/05 Today was a much better day. I did not physically do a lot, but I have come up with a mind set of what I want to accomplish. I have ^{almost} finished the first vignette, and changed things around quite a bit.

 I also started some of my reflection for the end of the project.

3/31/05 Let me start with school. In school, I had my conference with Megan which gave me a lot of good ideas for my vignette. I took good notes (from good audience) so that I could make significant improvements on my project.

I had to leave early for a dentist appointment, so I didn't really get a lot of work time done at school, but I did get a couple of my sample reviews finished. More to come! →

I finished my vignette totally. All I have to do is proofread, and I have myself a finished copy. I also finished some samples and started my reviews.

The hard part is over, and now all I have to do is finish my reflections. I feel like with this project I was very prone to procrastinating. I think this was because I could not think of a paper, and that I have writing and reading science fiction.

3/22/05

I had one last conference with Ms. Anorey, and she helped a lot. She really liked it, and I think that I am feeling more confident with how this is going. I just have a few finishing touches, and I need to finish some reviews.

This project has really made me go beyond my abilities in different genres. I think that I have done well, and consider doing more.

I realized that I need to deal with time management a little better.

When I get writer's block, and get
frustrated, I tend to just not do it. I should
take more time to consider things and think
them through.