

What Do Rhetorical Situations Have to Do with Genres?

Now that you have an understanding of what constitutes a rhetorical situation and a beginning concept of genres, it's time to examine how they work together. When composing, a writer is always working within a rhetorical situation. That means the writer considers the purpose of her piece, whom she wants to reach, how best to appeal to her reader, and what sources and evidence to use, along with other considerations mentioned in [Chapter 1](#). The next step for the writer is to choose how to best respond to her rhetorical situation. Which genre or genres are the best social response to her situation?

Genres Respond to Rhetorical Situations

If we examine a particular event, we can see that there are numerous ways someone might choose to respond. After the Orlando shooting in the Pulse nightclub on June 12, 2016, people chose to respond in a variety of ways. Former President Barack Obama responded by releasing a press statement that included, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones of the victims." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted, "We grieve with our friends in the US & stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ2 community after today's terror attack." Samantha Bee, a comedic television talk show host, used her show *Full Frontal* to issue her response:

After a massacre, the standard operating procedure is you stand on stage and deliver some well-meaning words about how we will get through this together, how love wins, how love conquers hate. That is great, that is beautiful, but you know what? F--- it.

Many people changed their profile pictures on Facebook to show solidarity. Perhaps you read or posted a blog about it. At the Tony Awards, which took place the evening after the shootings, *Hamilton* playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda chose to respond in a line in his acceptance speech: "And love is love cannot be killed or swept aside."

Consider different ways people might protest against something. They might make signs and march, give a speech, create a public service announcement, circulate a petition, or write a letter to the editor. The genre is chosen based on the rhetorical situation.

There are times, however, when genre is stipulated for you. In academic settings, you are often given an assignment and told to compose a research essay, write a poem, or create a lab report based on an experiment. In business settings, you might need to create a proposal, write a recommendation report, or prepare a presentation. We will discuss academic genres in more detail in [Chapter 7](#).

A Meme Responds to a Rhetorical Situation

An Internet meme is a concept that spreads quickly from person to person via the Internet through blogging, e-mail, or social media. Memes are easily replicated and altered; for example, when Elizabeth sees that a blogger has posted a photo of his ferret wearing a party hat and looking irritated, she can take that concept and post on her Instagram account a photo of her dog wearing a cowboy hat and looking irritated. Amy might then see Elizabeth's meme and post to her Facebook status a photo of her cat wearing a baseball cap and looking irritated.

The rhetorical situation that the original blogger and Elizabeth and Amy are all responding to is simple: They all have pets that they think are just adorable and find their pets' reactions to being anthropomorphized hilarious. They are participating in a long tradition of pet owners sharing the silliness of their own pets (purpose) with other pet owners (audience).