

► BLOG

Christine Goforth, *The Dragonfly Woman*. In her post titled “Well-Nigh Wordless Wednesday: Itty Bitty Wasp,” the blogger writes: “I was walking past my back door about a month ago and caught sight of something out of the corner of my eye. I went to inspect and discovered this: [see image] A very tiny wasp! I’m betting it’s one of the parasitic wasps, based on the diminutive size and enormous hind legs. I grabbed my iPhone and my “macro” lens and snapped a few photos because it was simply too adorable to pass up. Apparently my glass could do with a bit of cleaning, though.” See thedragonflywoman.com.

In other situations, you choose the genre to compose in, depending on what you want to say, who you want to say it to, and how you want to say it. Your choice of genre also depends on your own skills and interests, as well as the materials available to you. For example, your band is playing next week and you need to advertise the event. Your purpose is to persuade your potential audience to come to your show. You might choose to present your ad as a poster. Depending on your supplies and desired effect, you could create a handmade poster to tape up at school or design one to post on Facebook. Alternatively, you might choose to advertise by creating and posting a short music video.

WRITE

What kinds of composing have you done so far as a student? What are some of the features that define the works you’ve composed? Write a paragraph that conveys this to your reader. If you were to revise that paragraph for an audience beyond the classroom, maybe to a high school student about to enter college, what genre would you choose to present your ideas?

The Memoir as a Social Response

One of the best ways to become a better writer or composer is to read like one — to pay attention to what other writers and composers do, how and why they work in a particular genre, and how they make that genre work for them. Let’s look at an example from history. Annie L. Burton (ca. 1858–unknown) was born a slave and as an adult decided to write about her experiences; her 1909 memoir is titled *Memories of Childhood’s Slavery Days*. She writes:

Our clothes were little homespun cotton slips, with short sleeves. I never knew what shoes were until I got big enough to earn them myself. If a slave man and woman wished to marry, a party would be arranged some Saturday night among the slaves. The marriage ceremony consisted of the pair jumping over a stick. If no children were born within a year or so, the wife was sold. At New Year’s, if there was any debt or mortgage on the plantation, the extra slaves were taken to Clayton and sold at the court house. In this way families were separated.

While we can’t fully know Burton’s purpose in writing her memoir, we can assume she wrote to help her readers understand how a formerly enslaved African American woman experienced and resisted expected social and economic roles. What we do know, however, is that she was motivated by her faith. In her memoir, she states: