

Examining & Practicing Genre & Rhetoric: Problem Two--National Citizens Forum: Problem Handouts



This work by Rita Kumar, Claudia Skutar, and Brenda Refaei is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

As an open educational resource, feel free to modify and distribute this work under the conditions stated by the Creative Commons license. Originally developed as a part of the [PBL Clearinghouse](https://pblclearinghouse.org/) at the University of Delaware.



Examining & Practicing Genre & Rhetoric: Problem Two--National Citizens Forum

Problem Statement

You have just received a letter from the local Citizens for Change Forum, inviting you to a meeting to address the growing concerns of citizens in your city on the following Saturday at 9am. The letter states the subject as Threat to Freedoms, which gets you thinking about the current state of affairs. You think about how your country has evolved into a progressive nation since it was founded and became part of the Global Union. However, the country is presently facing civil unrest. The citizens are dissatisfied with the way the government is executing its responsibilities. It seems the neighboring country that your country borders is inciting antidemocratic propaganda in your country. There is a general concern among the citizenry that the current administration has lost sight of the will of the people that had been the foundation on which the founding fathers had built the country. Certain freedoms are facing threats as the current administration is reflecting the influence of the undemocratic viewpoints of the neighboring country. Concerned citizens are gathering in different parts of the country to organize themselves into forums to voice their discontent. They are committed to keeping true to the founding fathers' belief in the value of a democratic society.

You and your fellow citizens are part of such a citizen forum and represent different walks of life. As a group you are exploring the best way to make the general populace understand why it is imperative to preserve rights of individuals and the importance of their contribution to this effort. The meeting has been called to initiate discussion and an action plan to diminish the influence of the anti-democratic propaganda.

The day of the meeting you walk in only to find yourself in the midst of an informal discussion. One of the members suggests, "The best way to have our voices heard is to organize a demonstration.

Another member yells, "Let us liaison with unions to organize a strike."

A calm voice from the back suggests, "Have you thought about the power of the pen to change ideas?"

The group is intrigued by the suggestion and suddenly there is a flurry of questions.

"What do you mean by the power of the pen?"

A skeptic sardonically questions, "Are you suggesting we write as our country falls apart? What a way to solve a problem!"

Another member, while asking for silence, requests the member who provided the suggestion to clarify.

The member, Marc, a man in his forties, walks up from the back to the podium and suggests that each member should make a strong argument in the form of a letter to the editor of national



newspapers as to why a particular freedom needs to be preserved if we want to continue to be identified as a democracy.

A woman in the front states, "Oh! You mean maybe I could make a strong case for the freedom of privacy and he could make a case for freedom of speech, both of which we seem to be losing."

Another raises the question, "Okay I get that but do you think we could argue from the perspective of what specific role we play in our society? I am an educator and would be able to better defend a freedom from that perspective."

"Sure you could do that but I think it is even more important that we make arguments that are grounded in sound logic and support," responds Marc

He continues, "How about everyone writes at least a four page letter by [date] and then we can put our letters together and develop a six to eight page White Paper, which we can present as a strong argument justifying the protection of our most important freedoms at [your country's name] National Citizens Forum on [date]."

A young man seated beside the woman enthusiastically gets up and unfolds a fresh sheet on the poster board set up on the podium. He turns around and asks the forum participants, "What are the freedoms that we think are the most vital for a democracy and the possible roles we may take into consideration to develop a perspective on the freedoms we choose to defend?"

Marc continues, "Let us get organized by first listing the freedoms and roles before we set up some time lines. We must have a plan on what we want to state in our arguments and how we are going to support them with reliable sources as we write these letters in defense of different freedoms to the editor."

Questions to consider

- Who is our audience?
- Since we are writing a letter, what are important aspects to take into consideration?
- Since we are writing a letter in an argument form, what factors should we take into consideration?

What guidelines do we want to adopt to organize our individual drafts so the final synthesis for the White Paper can be facilitated? Should we develop common criteria for all to follow?

Contract Sheet

Group name:

The following ground rules have been discussed and agreed upon by all group members:

Signatures of Group Members:

Date:



Personal Reflection Log

Your name:

Group name:

Date:

Write your version of the problem statement (what you are being asked to think about and do in this problem):

What Do I Know?

Note below facts from the problem statement that you might need to solve the problem. Also identify information you have learned in the past, to be shared with group members, that might help your group solve the problem.

Facts from the problem:

Information I know:



Steps We Might Take to Solve the Problem:	





Possible Student Roles

Evaluator: elicits critique from group members and notes level of participation from individuals

Facilitator: leads discussions; focuses discussion on the purpose of the meeting

Note Taker: records and summarizes progress

Planner: outlines where and how the group is proceeding through the problem

Scheduler: responsible for scheduling group meetings/chats outside of regular class time

Timekeeper: keeps track of time during group meetings and due dates for problem logs



Self and Peer Assessment

Your Name _____ Group's
Name _____ Date _____

Please write below the names of all your group members INCLUDING YOURSELF. Reflect carefully on your experience in our class and select one of the ratings which best describes your work and that of your peers as you work collaboratively at this point in the quarter. (The numbers after the ratings represent point totals. To obtain final ratings, the points will be totaled and averaged.)

Excellent (20) Consistently went above and beyond-tutored other members; carried more than his /her share of the load; clear understanding of his/her role. Very active in Blackboard Groups Area. Demonstrated respect for self and others by always reading assigned materials before class, always completing assigned tasks, always coming to class, always arriving on time. Always took responsibility to inform group if had to miss class/group meeting.

Very good (18) Consistently did what he/she was supposed to do; very well prepared and cooperative; play his/her group role appropriately. Active in Blackboard Groups Area. Consistently read materials before coming to class, came to class regularly and on time. Usually completed assigned tasks on time. Took responsibility to inform group member if missed a class or group meeting.

Satisfactory (15) Usually did what he/she was supposed to do; acceptably prepared and cooperative. Sometimes completed readings ahead of class. Usually came to class and arrived on time. Usually took responsibility to inform group members if missed a class or group meeting. Fairly active in Groups Area of Blackboard.

Ordinary (12) Often did what he/she was supposed to do, but minimally prepared; usually cooperative. Basic contribution to Groups Area of Blackboard. Sometimes contacted group members if needed to miss class or group meeting.

Marginal (10) Sometimes failed to show up or complete assignments; rarely prepared. Limited contributions in Blackboard.

Deficient (6) Often failed to show up for class/group meetings or complete assignments; rarely prepared. Little to no contribution in Blackboard.

Superficial (2) Practically no participation. No contribution to Blackboard.



No show (0)

No participation at all.



Group Ground Roles

Complete the attached document with members of your group. You may include any rule you agree upon, however; you must include specific strategies for addressing the following issues:

- Identify consequences for, and how you will address, problems with students who do not contribute to the completion of a problem because they do not attend class.
- Identify consequences for students who arrive late to class on a regular basis or is absent from class without prior notification to the group.
- Identify expectations for communicating through e-mail and using the group pages on the course site in Blackboard.
- Identify consequences for students who contribute only minimally to the completion of the problem.
- Identify what happens when a student has your group worksheet/notes/etc. and doesn't come to class.

Your group will use this document during the quarter to assure that you have the most worthwhile learning experience possible.

This document will be submitted by the end of the week, and the Ground Rules will be posted on the group pages on Blackboard at the same time

