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Professor

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Слава Україні! (*Translation: Glory to Ukraine!*): A Genre Remix

*“Our weapons are our truth, and our truth lies in the fact that this is our land, this is our country, our children, and we are going to defend all of this... Glory to Ukraine!”*

- Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine

When drafting for the rhetorical situation analysis, I frustratedly flipped back and forth between topics. The news about Ukraine and Russia coming to the forefront of conversation compelled me to analyze a powerful [speech](#) from the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Using his address to the European Union and background research on the illustrious history of tension between Ukraine and Russia, I gained insight into not only the situation, but to the needs of the Ukrainian people. The urgency I saw swayed me into the genre remixing this piece over my previous narrative; I needed to do *something*. Zelenskyy described the effect war had on the population, detailing the death and destruction encountered daily. In a figure from the OHCHR, as of April 20th, 2022, 2,224 civilian deaths and 2,897 civilian injuries have been confirmed with the toll only expected to grow; these numbers do not even reflect the effects felt by the Ukrainian armed forces (“Ukraine”). In response to this situation and the immense need for aid to Ukraine, I constructed a [website](#) of information and resources benefitting Ukraine. The strongest motivator for me to use this genre was ‘money-centric’ ideals of society. People tend to

brush off relief efforts if they do not have funds to give because aid is often solely equated with donating money. The artifact I created does include financial aid, but it is only just one piece. It also involves information in the form of videos and news stories, social media straight from the Ukrainian government, and petitions for a multitude of efforts surrounding the situation. A direct line to Ukrinform, a Ukrainian multimedia broadcasting site with minute-by-minute updates, is on every page. Essentially, I built a multi-faceted help center for those looking to lend a hand.

### **Why a Website: How Conventions of the Genre Help Accomplish Goals**

Zelenskyy's speech was excellent in appealing to the audience he presented to— members of the European Parliament. I operate on a much lower level. I needed to change genres because he gave an address targeting high-up parliamentarians; I am trying to reach the general public. A website is the most efficient and enticing segue for information, petitions, and campaigns on a large-scale.

As we have read with Bitzer, the audience is only made up of those who can change the situation at hand (7). The inclusion of multiple forms of aid broadens the scope of those reached— everyone has the ability to make change. Take, for example, a fundraising campaign. Practically every college student would not be considered part of the audience because they are unable to donate and therefore not considered “mediators of change” (7).

I shifted away from the genre of an address or speech, because it excludes a large portion of the potential audience. A major constraint of a speech is that often unless you specifically go looking for it, you most likely will not hear it. My thought process was that a website would be the most efficient way to compile sources that would otherwise go unnoticed in a form accessible through a single link.

### **The Situation: Explained**

Decades of tension built upon the Soviet Union collapse exploded into all-out war in eastern Europe on the 24th of February 2022. For the entirety of Ukraine's history, animosity with Russia has existed. Shortly after the fall of the USSR in 1991, Ukraine voted to become a sovereign state (Fitzgerald). For the next three decades, Russia interfered with Ukrainian politics. From veiled diplomatic attacks such as the Budapest Memorandum that allowed Russia to take possession of all nuclear weapons held by Ukraine to meddling in presidential elections and keeping Russian-backed politicians in Ukrainian leadership positions, Russia has constantly tried to chip away any power, assets, and influence that Ukraine has held (Fitzgerald). In my previous work, I extensively addressed the notable history between Russia and Ukraine to explain the exigence, however in this project and article, I shifted the focus to be about current tensions, aid, and relief efforts that the audience can use to affect the situation.

I kept portions of the information included in my original rhetorical analysis on the site. In addition to background historical information, first-hand accounts directly from Ukrainians, live updates, and footage of the battle in southern Ukraine were included. It was important to me to give people access to information not only to help the situation, but about the situation; knowledge is power. It reaffirms why the Resource Center is needed. Supplementing the background provided ('News' page), there are three other divisions: fundraising efforts, media, and petitions. As mentioned previously, by creating a platform displaying a multitude of resources it allows the audience to have more opportunities to influence the situation.

### **The New Rhetorical Situation & How It Changed: Exigence, Audience, & Constraints**

I wanted to continue what Zelenskyy aimed to accomplish in his speech: get aid for the people of Ukraine. Bitzer's definition of an exigence is "an imperfection marked by urgency" (6). Zelenskyy's speech was created because of the need to gain membership to the European

Union. He rounded out his address with a very powerful sentiment speaking to this exigence:

*“We are fighting for our rights. For our freedoms. For life. For our life. And now, we’re fighting for survival. And this is the highest of our motivation. But we are fighting also to be equal members of Europe. I believe that today we are showing everybody that’s exactly what we are. The European Union is going to be stronger with us. That’s for sure. Without you, Ukraine is going to be lonely, lonesome. We have proven our strength. We have proven that at a minimum, we are exactly the same as you are. So do prove that you are with us. Do prove that you will not let us go. Do prove that you indeed are Europeans”* (Zelenskyy qtd. in Carrick). In the genre remix, the exigence changes slightly. At its core it is still about getting help for Ukrainians. More specifically, it is about educating the audience about the Russo-Ukrainian war and directing their attention to relief efforts. Both President Zelenskyy and I are acting on behalf of the citizens in Ukraine; he acts directly, I act indirectly.

Bitzer’s explanation of an audience is “those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change” (7). In this genre remix, I attempted to reach the entire population of CofC students and staff. The crux of this artifact is to direct people to help Ukraine, so to amplify the effects by including the largest audience possible I showcased multiple forms of aid. As mentioned previously, I built this website knowing much of my does not have the means to donate and by Bitzer’s standards, are not part of the audience. The website genre allowed for the inclusion of forms of aid everyone can take part in.

I used a few methods to expand my audience. Under the ‘News’ page, I included stories and videos from ten different sources. Knowing a number of potential readers have preferences when it comes to where they consume information influenced this decision to provide a wide range of media outlets. I included sources across the ‘bias-spectrum’ (both left and right leaning

as well as independent) to provide something everyone can read. I wasn't originally planning to have a 'media' section but given the majority of my audience is younger people, it was fitting to include. The Ukrainian Twitter account discusses serious topics but also uses comedy to make light of the situation— a big part of Gen-Z coping mechanisms. The content is 'relatable' and allows for the audience to connect to the situation.

As for constraints, there is one major limitation that could undermine the entire artifact. Those without internet access are unable to visit the site. Luckily, this is not necessarily a constraint I need to worry about because College of Charleston (where most of the audience will be) requires students to have laptops and has Wi-Fi access on campus. The bulk of negative constraints in this project arise from accessibility. Looking at the 'Media' portion, apart from the news story, all the content comes from Twitter. Typically, when looking at Twitter, there is a limit before users are prompted to sign in to view more tweets. I combated this constraint by including screenshots from the Ukrainian Twitter account preventing my audience from encountering this issue. The bias constraint was mitigated by including a multitude of sources so the audience could pick what aligned with their interests, ideals, and views. A constraint of having a college-aged audience is that many may not be able to donate to fundraisers, as I have addressed. I ended up deciding to add fundraising because if anything, they can boost the campaigns that I curated; they are not fully excluded from using fundraising to modify the situation. A constraint of the petition section is that some may fall into the traps of false petitions or scams and not produce the desired effect they envisioned. To avoid this, I screened all the petitions and efforts and added examples and explanation section to show what to look for on petitions to verify their legitimacy.

### **Writerly Choices**

A photo of protesters rallying against the war is displayed immediately when the site is opened to set the tone for my artifact. Below this is a quote from Zelenskyy that was in the original speech I analyzed. It reads “Support us in any way you can. Any -- but not silence. And then peace will come” (Zelenskyy qtd. in Carrick). I chose to include this because it not only connects back to the inspiration for this project, but with words like “support” and the sentiment “in any way you can” reaffirms what I am creating– a site with aid everyone can take part in. Adding to this point, at the bottom of the home page there is a disclaimer titled ‘We Understand,’ which addresses that not every member of the audience will be able to contribute in the same way, and states “Whatever you *can do* benefits those fighting to keep their beloved country alive.” There is also a disclaimer on the ‘News’ page– a content warning. This decision stemmed from wanting the audience to have some insight on the content of the stories and to help them potentially avoid triggers. I would argue the most important writerly choice is present throughout the website: using first- and second-person pronouns. It speaks to the reader directly and provides a more personal experience that reaffirms the sentiment found on the home page: “You are instrumental in this movement.”

## **In Conclusion**

Zelenskyy’s appeal to the members of European parliament was effective in conveying his message but did not offer the public a chance to be able to influence the situation. The genre needed to be changed to one that provided mass appeal and directed attention to modes of relief; a website connects readers to a myriad of efforts related to Ukraine within one single link. This genre effectively makes them, by Bitzer’s standard, audience members and enables them to be the mediators of change that Ukraine needs. I hope my efforts have enabled readers to benefit

those fighting to keep their beloved country alive. Слава Україні! (Translation: glory to Ukraine!)

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