ANALYZING GENRES

When working with genres, it is important to understand what the conventions of that genre are—how is that genre different from other genres? What are the defining characteristics of this type of text?

Here are some steps to follow that may help you discover a genre's conventions:

COLLECT SAMPLES OF THE GENRE

STUDY THE SITUATION OF THE GENRE:
Where does this genre appear?
Who uses this genre?
Who writes/creates this genre?
When is this genre used?
What is the purpose of this genre? Why is it created and used?

IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE PATTERNS IN THE GENRE'S FEATURES
What content is typically included in this genre?
What content is excluded?
How are the texts in this genre structured? What parts? How organized?
In what format are the texts of this genre presented? Layout?
What kind of language is most commonly used in this genre?

ANALYZE WHAT THESE PATTERNS REVEAL ABOUT THE SITUATION
What do participants have to know or believe to appreciate this genre?
Who is invited into the genre, and who is excluded?
What values, beliefs, goals, and assumptions are revealed through the genre's patterns?
How is the subject of the genre treated?
What content is considered most important?
What content is ignored?
What actions does the genre help make possible?
What attitude toward people and the world are implied in this genre?
What does this kind of text/genre tell us about our culture?

Source: Bawarshi, Anis. *Genre and the Invention of the Writer*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2003.