

Worksheet 2 Academic Writing and Culture

Letters About Literature –Is this a typically American genre?

There are differences between the writing styles of American teenagers and German teenagers. When you go the USA, for example for a high-school year or to study there, you might have to adapt your writing style to fulfill the task requirements.

Have a look at the following (incomplete) list of differences between the writing styles often used by American and German students.

Analyze to what extent *Letters About Literature* is a typically American genre.

You may also refer to the evaluation criteria of *Letters About Literature* which you applied when writing and giving feedback.

Category	American students...	German students....
pronouns	...tend to use 'I' and 'we' more often, tend to write from the author's personal point of view	...tend to use 'man' more often, use fewer personal statements, more impersonal constructions
structure	...tend to structure their texts in a way so that the most important argument is mentioned rather early/at the outset of the argument (point-early structure)	...tend to structure their texts in a way so that the most important argument is mentioned rather late/at the end of the text (point-late structure)
reader/writer responsibility	... tend to always have their readers in mind; readers need to be told why the text is worth reading. They need to be told what is important and they need to be led through the text by signposting so that they have an easy, enjoyable read. (writer responsibility)	...tend to think less about their readers; understanding the text is viewed as mostly the readers' responsibility. (reader responsibility)
hedging	...tend to use cautious, polite expressions such as <i>may</i> , <i>seem to</i> , <i>appear to</i> to build a good writer-reader relationship, to appear humble rather than arrogant, to reduce the risk of opposition.	...tend to distinguish less between facts and claims, tend not to use downtoners but assertive language (more direct, self-assured)