

# Zines AS Composition

Read on to discover why **incorporating zines** (pronounced ZEENS) **into your writing pedagogy** can make it more authentic and engaging for both you *and* students!

## WHAT ARE ZINES?

The word “zine” (short for *fanzine*) were first made and distributed by members of science fiction “fan clubs” in the 1930s.

Although the first zines mostly made use of **written text**, they evolved to become a form of composition that not only incorporates written text, but **visual** and **spatial text** as well!

Most zines are made through a **hands-on process** (see next page) that includes foraging for ephemera (from old newspapers, magazines, flyers, etc.), writing, drawing, and cutting and pasting. However, zines can also be created and assembled using **digital tools** like Canva, Google Draw, or Flipsnack.



## THROUGHOUT THE LAST 50 YEARS,

The ubiquity of zines has ebbed and flowed. However, they have most often been used for three distinct purposes: 1) to **build community**, 2) to **circumvent** the limitations of traditional publishing, and 3) to **create counter-narratives**.

These counter-narratives **push back on dominant ideas**, stories, and assumptions, particularly those that involve or affect members of **traditionally marginalized communities**.



Zines as a compositional form “exploded” in the 1970s as part of the **punk music scene** and again in the 1980s & 1990s in many **feminist** and **queer communities**.



Rather than being distributed using “traditional” means, zines are often **photocopied** and **traded** between and among other zine-makers or are **made freely available** in a variety of locations open to the public, including libraries and coffeeshops.



Fig. 1: Examples of zines created by me and/or my students.

As a multimodal form of composition, students can use zines to **argue** or **advocate** for a particular position, **share research** around a topic, **demonstrate their understanding** of a concept taught in class, or simply **play with creating a text** using a variety of materials. **See the following page for some how-to's!**



# SOME ZINE BASICS:

## COMPOSING A ZINE

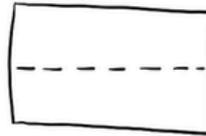
There's no one "right way" to make a zine, but the most common form is the **eight-page zine**,\* which can easily be made using paper that measures 11-in. x 17-in. Other paper sizes work, too (I've even seen people make a zine out of a single **playing card**!)-just know that the larger the paper used, the more surface area students will have to compose and/or arrange their text.

\*Or a six-page zine that includes a front and back cover.

I CAN'T WAIT TO  
TRADE ZINES WITH  
MY FRIENDS LATER  
TODAY!

## ZINE ASSEMBLY

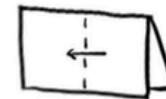
1) Fold your paper in half lengthwise.



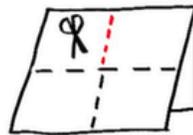
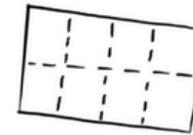
2) Now fold it in half again (crosswise).



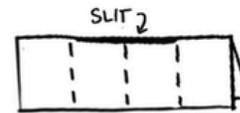
3) Fold in half again.



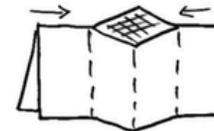
4) UNFOLD! It should look like this:



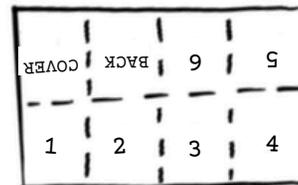
5) Use scissors to cut the center, where the red dotted line is.



6) Unfold ONCE, then fold again lengthwise.



7) Push ends toward each other and fold once more to make a booklet.



This is how your pages will be formatted.



Zines are **low-risk, hands-on**, and necessitate using **as many or as few materials** as you have on hand. In addition, they offer an opportunity for students to **build community** with one another through the creation and distribution of their unique compositions!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Shawna Coppola has spent over twenty-five years in schools working as a classroom teacher as well as a literacy specialist/coach. She has consulted with educators across the country and has written three books for teachers about enacting equitable and engaging literacy pedagogies. Currently, she teaches first-year composition at a local community college while pursuing her doctorate in critical pedagogy. Learn more about her work by visiting [shawnacoppola.com](http://shawnacoppola.com).