

HANDOUT: ORGANIZING YOUR INFORMATION: PERFORMANCES

Writing a script is the essential first step in creating a performance. It will guide how you structure your acting, props, and costumes. Below are some tips for beginning to write your script.

Quick Tips for Writing Scripts:

- **Identify the key information first.** Find the quotes, speeches, characters etc. that you know you must include and work the performance around these.
- **Balance drama with historical evidence.** Using quotes, speeches, or excerpts from sources like newspapers can be an excellent way to incorporate evidence and detail that a great performance requires.
- **Prepare a performance.** Don't prepare an oral report that simply states facts. You need characters to come alive and interact with each other and the audience. Try to engage the audience by asking questions or creating dramatic scenes.
- **Choose the type of voice you want to use.** You can use first person and third person perspectives to tell your story. In some cases you may want to use both to convey your points.
- **Choosing characters.** Select characters that can tell the most in your story. Don't overcomplicate the storyline with too many.
- **Block.** As you write your script, include the actions and placement of your characters.
- **Avoid clutter.** Too many props, costumes, or characters will overwhelm your performance.
- **Length.** Scripts are usually 4-5 pages.
- **Your research is still central.** You want each piece to tie back to your main argument and thesis.
- **Practice, practice, practice.** You won't use your scripts on stage, so make sure to practice your performance.

WORKSHEET: PLANNING YOUR PERFORMANCE

By their very nature, performances are the most creative History Day category. It's impossible to give you a formula for a successful performance. They can take many different formats and will vary based on the number of people, characters, scenarios, and topic. Below are two tools to help you begin brainstorming your performance. Keep in mind that these are not the only successful approaches to the performance category – just a place to get started. Be creative!

DRAFTING YOUR SCRIPT	
What	Key Questions and Elements
Intro (1 minute)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the scene. • Who are you? When is this taking place? Where are you? • Introduce your thesis.
Historical Context/ Background (2 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened before your topic to influence it? • Were there other movements, people, or ideas that influenced it? • What events led up to the topic?
Heart of Story (3 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key events and issues related to your topic.
Short and Long-term Impacts (3 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the immediate outcomes of your topic? • What has been the long-term significance of your topic in history?
Conclusion/ Wrap-up (1 minute)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce your thesis. • Conclude your characters actions.

SCENARIO BRAINSTORM
Brainstorm at least two different scenarios using different characters in each. Which one is the best approach for presenting your ideas?
Scenario 1
Character(s) (historical figures, composite characters, narrators): _____
Setting: _____
Timeframe: _____
Describe Scenario: _____ _____ _____ _____
Scenario 2
Character(s) (historical figures, composite characters, narrators): _____
Setting: _____
Timeframe: _____
Describe Scenario: _____ _____ _____ _____

What Would Your Character Know?

When selecting characters for your performance, think about what they would or wouldn't know. If your character is Abraham Lincoln, it's impossible for him to know what happened in 1870 because he was assassinated in 1865. Sometimes selecting a different character – maybe someone who wasn't a major player – gives you the chance to take a step back and discuss your topic's significance in history in a different way. Instead of Abraham Lincoln, one of his advisors or aides who lived after his death would give you a more long-term perspective on Lincoln's presidency.

