

Appendix IV.1.9

Historical Drama Project Sheet **VIETNAM PROJECT**

The Goal: Over the course of the next several weeks you will individually research a topic from the Vietnam War (or Vietnam era United States). This topic will then be transformed into a dramatic script complete with characters, setting and dialogue. These scripts will be critiqued, revised and for the best of both classes, actually performed with authentic settings and props.

The Basics: This Project will be composed of four main parts which are outlined below.

The Question/The Research: Because the drama that you are making must be historically accurate, you will need to find a story based on an aspect of the Vietnam War/Era. Then, through research and use of primary documents, you will create a play.

Make sure that whatever story you pick is neither too general nor too specific, examples follow:

1. Too broad: *A soldier's experience during war.*
2. Too narrow: *A two minute fire fight in the late afternoon of 3 January 1968.*

1. *The French Outline/ Character Profiles:* After finding and reading a compelling story (perhaps involving a young man's experience with being drafted and how that makes him feel as an American), you will then transform that story (and the myriad ideas it inspires) into a dramatic medium. This means that you will create a plot, complete with believable characters. Keep in mind that good authors do not just tell the audience what they want them to get out of their performance; they instead tell a story in which the audience learns of the intended message through the dialogue and interactions. For this part you will need to create an outline of the plot you envision with individual profiles explaining the motivations and personality of the characters that act out the plot. This will also illustrate how your plot answers the question you intended to answer.
2. *First Draft:* After being approved by your peers for completion of your French outline with character descriptions, you will then begin the creation of your script. This script will contain not only all dialogue between characters, it will also include all stage directions and all setting details that you envision.
3. *Final Draft:* After undergoing another session of peer and teacher critique your script will endure many revisions in order to come to the state of a final draft. The final draft will include all dialogue and instructions in a polished form.

The Specifics:

Part One: Story/Research

1. The **story** must be of sufficient substance to base a play around. This does not mean that your drama must be serious and boring, but it does mean that your play will have to have a point. Again, make sure that it is neither too specific nor too narrow.
2. The **research** must be done as a history board. What this means is that you will need to find primary documents that support your setting and story. You will then add your own commentary and analysis alongside these artifacts that show what the purpose of the document is and why you will use it in your play. There should be a minimum of 4 sources from which you draw your material. These could include (literature [O'Brian, Caputo, Rabe], diaries, lists, historical commentary from the time [Cronkite], philosophical thought from the time

Part Two: French Outline/Character Bios

1. The **character profiles** are basically a fictional biography of the characters that are in your play. While there is no minimum length requirement to this aspect, most descriptions should be around one double spaced page in length. Obviously, a character that has a very minor role in your play will not need quite so detailed of a description. These biographies should tell what these people like, what motivations make them stir? How are their emotions? What do they feel towards other characters? How do they fit into the society at the time? What is their favorite food...? Or whatever it takes to make them a believable character. Write these biographies as if these people really did exist. Make them exist. Give them life through your profiles.
2. The **French outline** is a description of how your story unfolds, told through the actions.

Part Three: The First Draft

1. This **first draft** is a “draft” in name only. The draft that you turn in must include all dialogue, setting and stage directions of your play. It will probably take you a number of scribbled out pages and revisions to even get to this “first draft.” It should be **typed**, flow smoothly, and be believable both to the era and the dialogues characters have. Because you are aiming for a fifteen-minute play, the draft should be no fewer than about 12-15 single spaced pages. This amount may vary greatly depending on the number of stage directions and descriptions of setting etc., but spoken aloud the entirety of the play should be as close as possible to fifteen minutes. This does not mean I want you to include filler to get there. Rather, for example, if your play lasts seven minutes, you will not pass. On the other hand, please do not make a full length play that lasts an hour and a half. If you have too much, cut. If you have too little, add. Please include a title page, a list of characters and a bibliography (Chicago style).

Part Four: The Final Draft

1. The **Final Draft** is exactly what its name entails. It is a polished piece of drama that is free from errors, including both dramatic and grammatical mistakes. The final version is the compilation of peer and teacher recommendations put through your team’s own cuts and additions. The final play should be visually sound and well composed.

All Said...

Find a story that you can have fun with and be creative. Just because the title says that this is a *historical* drama, does not mean you cannot make your play a comedy, a tragedy or even a mocumentary. The simple goal you must accomplish is that your play should be accurate historically and should teach the audience something through the performance of the play. The dialogue and characters should fit with the development of the plot.

Above all, find something that interests you, and make it come alive through your play.

Young scholars take pen in hand and write! Prove to us that your abilities are worthy of our acting.