

English 498: Adapting Texts

Context Presentation Assignment

Assignment

You will research a key context for *Hamlet*, *Frankenstein*, or *Star Wars* and share your findings with the class in a five- to ten- minute presentation. In your presentation, you should describe the context and explain how it helps us to understand the primary text. You should also provide a handout that lists key details about the context you discuss and cites sources consulted for the presentation. The technology available in our classrooms allows for use of PowerPoint; however, you are not required to use the program.

On the attached sheet, I've listed specific presentation topics. Generally, context presentations fall into four categories:

- ❖ **Biographical:** Offers details from the artist's life that inform the composition of the text.
- ❖ **Literary History:** Provides information on literary or cinematic movements influencing the text's style and narrative.
- ❖ **Socio-political History:** Gives an overview of contemporary events the text reflects and responds to.
- ❖ **Industrial History:** Describes how industrial factors shape the text's production and distribution.

Whatever type of presentation you undertake, you must meet with me to discuss ideas and to develop a research plan.

Guidelines

- ❖ **Evaluate the information you gather from research and focus your presentation.** Your research will uncover far more material than you can discuss in a five- to ten-minute presentation. Consider how the data you find will advance your classmates' understanding of the text. Focus your presentation on information that students could refer to in class discussion or incorporate into their papers.
- ❖ **Remember your audience.** What information is likely to interest them? Which points might they understand immediately? Which might require more explanation?
- ❖ **Make the presentation easy to follow.** Use an organizational format suited for oral presentations: chronological ordering, cause/effect, compare/contrast, or "three points." Use transition phrases to signal the shift from one point to the next.
- ❖ **Speak from notes.** Although you may worry that nervousness will erase your memory, do not write out your entire presentation on paper or PowerPoint slides. Speakers who do so tend to look only at their papers instead of their audience.
- ❖ **Avoid lacing your speech with "um," "uh," "like," and "you know."** Do not perform the shifty-footed, hand-wringing dance of the terrified orator.
- ❖ **Conclude effectively.** End with a statement that leaves that audience with a significant detail or a statement about why the information you've presented is important to understanding the film. Do not say "that's all" or "I'm done." These statements diminish the impact of your presentation.

Grading

Presentations will be graded on the following criteria:

- ❖ **Focus:** The presentation addresses the assigned topic; each detail presented has a clear relationship to the topic.
- ❖ **Organization:** The presentation has a logical structure; the progression of points is easy to follow.
- ❖ **Evidence:** The speaker elucidates major points with sufficient details. If the speaker refers to specific sources, he or she cites those sources clearly.
- ❖ **Depth:** Although brief, the presentation is obviously well-researched. The speaker provides significant information about the context rather than listing points that provide little insight into the context or its relationship to the primary text.
- ❖ **Delivery:** The speaker conveys points smoothly and adheres to the time limit. If the speaker provides uses visual aids, they are legible and play an essential role in the presentation.

Speakers will receive 0-4 points for each criterion, with 0 representing a missing component and 4 representing exceptional execution of the criterion. The presentation grade constitutes the sum of the points in each category.