

# CATEGORY: PERFORMANCE



The performance category allows you to create a historical argument using acting. It will be a dramatic portrayal of your topic's significance in history. Entries in this category must have dramatic appeal, but not at the expense of historical information.

## Basic Rules

- No longer than 10 minutes
- Must be an original production
- You must set up the props before your performance by yourself

## Research Comes First

Don't jump right in and start writing a script. Do good research first. This is the foundation for your entire project!

## Develop a Thesis

Even in the performance category, it's important that you are discussing the significance of your topic in history. After you've done your research, develop your thesis before you start planning your performance.

## Brainstorm Scenarios

Once you have a thesis, it's your chance to figure out which characters and scenarios will best help you to discuss this for your viewers. Be creative! Consider not just the major players in your topic. What people were connected to this topic that might provide an interesting point of view on the issue? **Remember:** You want to avoid presenting an oral report on a character that begins with when they were born and ends with when they died. Become the historical figure and write your script around an important time or place that will explain your ideas.

## Write the Script

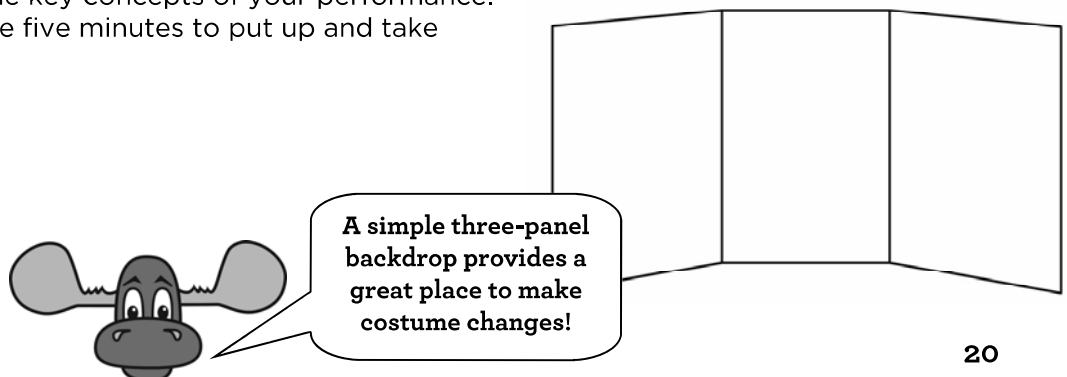
The average script for a ten-minute performance is four to five double-spaces pages. Make sure your thesis is clear in your performance, ideally incorporated into the beginning and ending of your performance. Make sure your script contains references to the historical evidence, particularly the primary source material you found in your research. Using actual dialogue, quotations, or taking excerpts from speeches are good ways to put historical detail into your performance.

## Practice!

Once you have a solid script you can begin practicing. This will include blocking, memorizing, costumes and set design. Often times the more simple props and costumes are the better. Good costumes help make you convincing, but be sure they are appropriate to your topic. Consult photographs or costume guides if you are unsure about appropriate dress. See examples of historical plays to get ideas about stage movements, use of props, etc.

## Remember What's Important

Don't get carried away with props! Content is the most important factor in your performance and any props you use should be directly related to your theme. Props should help you to emphasize the key concepts of your performance. Remember, you only have five minutes to put up and take down your props.



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

### 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 Characters Know?

When selecting characters for your performance, it's important to 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.