

ENG 303:

Historical Presentation Assignment

(KKV, FA14)

INSTRUCTIONS: In a 15-20-minute presentation, you will:

1. Communicate, thoroughly, the historical background of your topic. Some suggestions:
 - a. Come up with several research questions that you hope to answer via your presentation. (We'll discuss strategies for devising such questions in class next week.)
 - b. Go to McGill Library's website and explore the variety of sources available to you – specifically, scholarly books, journals, websites, reference texts, and media sources. Use these materials to find information about your topic's origins, key figures, main events, implications in English (and perhaps American?) culture, and lingering effects today.
2. Discuss how your historical topic relates to the author and/or text we are currently reading. Be specific – offer connections to several passages from the literature that support your ideas. Suggestions:
 - a. Consider the relationship among your text's content, form, and context: i.e., *what* is the text saying, and *how* is it saying it? How might the text's form (narration, characterization, language, style, tone, structure, etc.) magnify, minimize, or complicate its content (issues/topics/story)? And how does the text's content and/or form engage with its historical context?
 - b. Though this assignment doesn't require that you develop and support a formal thesis, your ideas should be presented clearly and should engage meaningfully with course readings.
3. Lead class discussion. Each student should come up with 2 or so thought-provoking questions related to the day's assigned text(s). Suggestions:
 - a. Aim to balance general questions with specific, pointed ones (i.e., direct the class to particular passages).
 - b. Connect the day's reading(s) to your historical presentation, when or if possible.
 - c. Adopt critical approaches learned in English 240 & 250.
 - d. Offer examples of scholarly readings (from presentation sources, article/book reviews, etc.) for debate.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Each presentation should be informed by **one primary (literary) source** and **five secondary sources** – one visual / audio source; three scholarly books or articles; and one reputable archival source from the Age ("archival" means that this source's publication date should fall within the years of 1832-1901). Aim to **synthesize** material from these different sources, presenting it in a clear, organized, and thoughtful fashion. Avoid direct regurgitation of historical and/or biographical timelines, as this will likely result in the immediate snoozing of your classmates and professor. Some tips re: locating scholarly sources:
 - Search MLA Bibliography, JSTOR, and Project Muse. Use interlibrary loan if needed – it's quick and easy.
 - Consult the Victorian Web and seek out other credible web-based sources.
 - Reread the introductions and/or appendices of course texts & your Norton Anthology.
2. Upload your presentation to the Coursework page at my.westminster on the day it is due.
 - Be aware of TIME. Most often, those who exceed the time limit didn't rehearse ahead of time.
 - IMPORTANT: The discussion-leading part of the presentation, which should happen last, does not count toward your total presentation time. I will also not factor in any time you might spend playing media clips.

PURPOSE:

This assignment will broaden and deepen your understanding of the key historical and cultural movements of the Victorian Age; generate fresh, insightful links between Victorian cultural context and assigned literary texts; provide practice on the kind of analytical thinking and communicating about literature that I ask of you in course essays and day-to-day discussions; and develop and sharpen your research skills.

DUE DATES:

See syllabus for due dates. Each presentation will take place at the beginning of class on the day it is scheduled.

GRADING:

This assignment is worth **15% of the course grade**. Below, you'll find the set of criteria I'll use to evaluate these presentations, followed by a self-evaluation form. **If you are presenting with a peer, please complete the evaluation and submit it to me on the day of your presentation.**

PLEASE NOTE: You will earn individual (not group) grades for this assignment.

If you can answer all of the questions below with a confident "yes," then you can expect an "A" range grade. If you can answer most of the questions with a confident "yes," then you can expect a "B" range grade. If you can answer only half or so of the questions with a confident "yes," then you can expect a "C" (and so on).

GRADING CRITERIA

CONTENT

1. Historical Coverage

Does the group thoughtfully and thoroughly discuss its historical topic, highlighting its origins, key figures, main events, implications &/or connections to contemporary culture?

2. Connection to Assigned Literature

Do students establish a clear, specific connection between their topic and the day's assigned literature, noting and analyzing several passages of text as evidence of that connection?

3. Source Use

Does the presentation synthesize material from five secondary sources, each of which is reputable, relevant, and properly cited (parenthetically and bibliographically)? Do students offer relevant, credible visual or media clip(s), which they carefully introduce, explain, and connect to the presentation's content?

4. Discussion Leader

Do students exhibit a command of the day's assigned literature, confidently posing thoughtful, specific, historically informed questions? Do questions avoid the obvious and instead focus on contradictions, tensions, and/or problems in the text?

DELIVERY

5. Preparation

Does your contribution suggest significant preparation, effort, thought, and interest? Do you dress professionally, speak loudly and clearly, and maintain good posture and eye contact?

6. Organization

Is the presentation well organized? i.e., does it avoid repetition of points? Does it transition smoothly from section to section, slide to slide? Does the presentation exhibit a clear sense of overall direction and purpose? Does the group use technology (Power Point, Prezi, etc.) effectively, balancing (limited) text with enticing visuals? Are media clips, images, etc. meaningfully connected to presentation content?