

## SAMPLE SCRIPT OUTLINE

Here is a basic outline of the different aspects of your topic you should think about while writing your script.

### 1. Statement of topic/thesis statement

- a. Introduce the person/place/event you will be portraying and the main point your presentation will make.

### 2. Historical context

- a. Talk about the era of history in which your topic takes place—the economic, social, cultural, and political climate.

### 3. Historical conflict

- a. Introduce the specific tension, disagreement, or controversy that makes your topic powerful, interesting, and dynamic.
- b. This is the bulk of your script and is a great place to use different characters' voices or change settings.

### 4. Relation to theme

- a. Be sure to make very clear how your topic fits the year's NHD theme. Repeat key words or phrases in the theme itself, such as triumph, tragedy, rights, responsibilities, etc.

### 5. Historical relevance

- a. History continually shapes and reshapes our current world. Analyze how your topic is significant in history. How would we be different if this event had not occurred or if a single person had made a different decision? Why should we remember it?

## WRITING YOUR SCRIPT

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At last it is time to write! Sometimes the hardest part of writing a script is getting started, so just jump right in. Look at your thesis and write something! Once you get going, it will begin to take shape. Even if your initial effort is less than spectacular, it will give you something to work with, so do not be discouraged.

- Brainstorm general ideas and how they may be presented.
- As your script begins to take shape, think about your setting and how you will convey a sense of place in your performance.
- Look for ways to incorporate the words of people from your primary sources.
- Try to use language appropriate to your time period as well as to your character's geographic location and social station.
- Remember, it is just a draft. Once you have your ideas on paper, you can edit and rewrite as needed.
- If you are working as a group, decide how the writing will be done. You might want to write "committee style," where someone is designated scribe and you all sit down and talk through the script, writing as you go. Depending on the type of presentation, it might work to assign different sections to each group member.
- Try to say as much as you can in as few words as possible.
- Review your draft. Come together as a group to review and edit. Remember, in a group project you will need to compromise, as it is unlikely that everyone will agree on every detail.

Refer to your Character Score(s), thesis, and your outline as you write so you do not stray from your focus. The Character Score will keep you aware of whom you are portraying and will help you develop a consistent voice for your character. Your thesis will make sure you stay on track. If portions of your script do not support your thesis, eliminate them. The outline will remind you of the important points you want to make. Remember, you simply cannot include everything you have learned about your topic. Your outline will help you be selective. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does each section of my script lead to my final conclusion?
- Does my script convey the story that I want to tell?
- Does my script match the character I want to portray?

- Does my script stir emotion?
- Does my script tell a story?
- Does my script convey the meaning and the importance of the event, theory, or individual I want to describe?

It is not enough to state that an event is significant; you must tell the audience **why it is significant and what it meant to your character**. Put yourself in your character's shoes and imagine how you would feel in those circumstances. Strive to express those feelings in your writing. Consider the following when making choices for your characters:

- Although they live in another time period and place and probably have a worldview quite different from your own, they are human.
- Being human means they are vulnerable to the same physical limitations and illnesses as you are, the same moments of self-doubt, and the same feelings of joy.
- Give your characters a wide range of emotions. Imagine for them a full life beneath the immediate words and actions of your script.
- Make your characters real in your mind as you write and you will be a step closer to making them real for your audience.

A successful script stirs emotion for both the characters and the audience. Channel the characters' emotion to convey the story as a dramatic event unfolding before the audience's eyes. Use primary sources such as letters and diary entries to find out what emotions influenced your character. Include a range of emotions in your script to keep the audience interested in your story. Brainstorm ways you can convey the following emotions:



ANGER



SADNESS



DESPAIR



SORROW



HOPE



RELIEF



HOPELESSNESS



JOY



ANXIETY

Remember that drama must revolve around conflict. Whether it is human versus human, human versus the environment, or human versus self, all good stories are based on the journey towards resolution of a conflict. Conflict does not have to be as dire as war, revolutions, famines, or hurricanes. Something as simple as keeping up with the weeds in the garden can be a conflict in some people's lives.

- Identify your conflict early on, and use your character's struggle to propel your story toward its climax.
- Does your script outline the development of your conflict?
- Finish strong, and leave no doubt that your thesis was sound, well supported, and the makings of a great story.

Every good performance contains some degree of conflict, where characters disagree or do not know how to resolve an issue. Do not assume that you do not need a point of conflict just because you are doing a monologue. Conflict is what creates interest, so find a conflict within the character if there is no external conflict to which he or she must react.

