Organizing Your Information: Performances

Writing a script is the essential first step in creating a performance. It will guide how you structure your acting, props, and costumes. Below are some tips for beginning to write your script.

Quick Tips for Writing Scripts:

- **Identify the key information first.** Find quotes, speeches, characters, etc. that you know you must include and work the performance around these.

- **Balance drama with historical evidence.** Using quotes, speeches, or excerpts from sources like newspapers can be an excellent way to incorporate evidence and detail that a great performance requires.

- **Prepare a performance.** Don't prepare an oral report that simply states facts. You need characters to come alive and interact with each other and the audience. Try to engage the audience by asking questions or creating dramatic scenes.

- **Choose the type of voice you want to use.** You can use 1st person and 3rd person perspectives to tell your story. In some cases you may want to use both to convey your points.

- **Choosing characters.** Select characters that can tell the most in your story. Do not overcomplicate the storyline with too many.

- **Block.** As you write your script, include the actions and placement of your characters.

- **Avoid clutter.** Too many props, costumes, or characters will overwhelm your performance.

- **Length.** Scripts are usually 4-5 pages.

- **Your research is still central.** You want each piece to tie back to your main argument and thesis.

- **Practice, practice, practice.** You will not use your scripts on stage, so make sure to practice your performance.

Building a Performance

Step 1: Create a list of ideas you need to express in order to best tell you story. Consider:
- Background
- Build-Up
- Heart of the Story
- Immediate Impact
- Long-Term Impact
- Theme
- Thesis

Step 2: Brainstorm a list of characters that would be able to express the ideas on your list. Be creative, characters can be historical or fictional, famous or unimportant, human or…not human!

Step 3: Design a setting in which the character(s) might openly share this information. Do you need multiple scenes? Will one actor need to take on more than one character?

Step 4: Draft a rough script.

Step 5: Review your original list of concepts and determine if all the pieces are there.

Step 6: Fine-tune the script as needed. Does the language you use fit your character(s)? Can you read through it in 10 minutes? Do you need to add or delete information?

Step 7: Think about your character(s) and setting and determine costumes, props, and stage pieces that make sense. (Note: props and sets are optional…less can be better!)

Step 8: Design blocking (movement) that adds action to your story.

Step 9: Put the character(s), setting, costumes, props, set, and blocking all together – do you have a unified story? Share it with your friends. Do they understand what you are trying to teach them about your topic?

Step 10: Practice, practice, practice!