

Eyewitness to History Mini-Dramas

This will be the culminating activity in our four week unit on Pre-Revolutionary America, which was to be a review of grade 5 early U.S. history. The main topics of the unit were Native Culture, Conquest & Colonial Life, and Slavery.

In this activity, student groups will use primary source texts from the website *Eyewitness To History* (Links are below) as a basis for writing a script which they will bring to life in an acted out dramatization.

Directions:

1) The main character or characters from the chosen Primary Source should be portrayed in the skit, and they should use actual direct quotes from the text. You will bring the quotes to life in the script, and the rest of the script you will compose to help fill in the gaps so the audience understands what happened. All of the source options are interesting voices from exciting places in history. While you are making up lines for the characters in addition to using direct quotes, and you want to make your script entertaining for your audience, you are not re-writing history. In other words, you should avoid making major changes to actual events from the historical record. Let the script you create be true to the nature of the text you chose. This will require you to read and discuss the text extensively BEFORE you begin your composition.

2) A narrator should provide ample background and context for the audience so it is very clear why the characters are doing and saying what they are saying. Students should draw from the introductions at the beginning of each source on the *Eyewitness* site and should also do some additional research. At a bare minimum the time, place, other details of the specific setting, and historical context should be set. For example, if you are doing *The Price of Adultery in Puritan Massachusetts*, you should explain (through the narrator) what Puritans were and some of their basic distinctive beliefs.

3) Each skit should include some simple props that can be made from things we have around or that you have at home. These should be useful and intentional.

4) Practice and polish your performance, and get ready to do it in front of your classmates. Get into character and make this a rewarding experience for yourself and your classmates.

Please note that a few of the skits have reference to mature themes (e.g. *The Price of Adultery in Puritan Mass.* and *Daily Life on a Colonial Plantation*). While they are all appropriate for middle school, students should be careful to be appropriate in how they choose to portray certain actions mentioned in the texts. If you have to ask if something is inappropriate, you probably know the answer already.

Link to the 17th Cen. Topics. Exclude the 3 non-U.S. : Charles I, Louis XIV, London Fire. 7 Viable Topics remain

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/17frm.htm>

Link to the 18th Century Topics. Exclude all after Daniel Boone opens up the west, and exclude *A London Hanging*. 6 viable topics remain

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/18frm.htm>

descriptor	marks possible	marks earned
narrator provides appropriate context, see above #2	1/2	
script brings alive the character(s), incorporates the primary source, and is of substantial depth, see above #1	2	
performance is in character, seems polished, see above #4	1	
appropriate and functional props, see above # 3	1/2	
total	4	