



The Decade Group Project

Focus: Literature in its Time

Overview

In this group project, students will read a novel from a particular decade of the modern era, relate it to American and world events of the time, and present their findings using technology.

Standards

- **9-10.SL.2.** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.
- **9-10.SL.4.** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
- **9-10.SL.5.** Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- **9-10.SL.6.** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Objectives

- To demonstrate knowledge of research methods
- To demonstrate knowledge of appropriate presentation methods
- To demonstrate knowledge of literature's tie to and representation of the era in which it was written
- To demonstrate an ability to collaborate with colleagues
- To show an ability to work effectively and efficiently with technology.

Materials

- Computer and internet connection or computer lab
- Elmo
- Projection system
- List of novels and authors arranged by decade and country
- Slips of decades - 1860s - 1960s
- Video recorders - [perhaps the Flip](#) - and upload capabilities

- Software for editing movies - [Final Cut Pro](#) is the industry standard
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Activity 1

Lecture

Introduce the first part of the project. In essence, students will be using electronic and print resources to create a group presentation focusing on the interrelationship between a work of literature and the specific decade in which that literature emerged. The overview of the project follows below, so teachers may wish to copy and reproduce this information for student perusal.

Author / Decade Group Project

Purpose: The purpose of the author/decade group project is to get you to ask (and answer) the following key questions, then work with a group to present your findings using technology.

Key Questions for Literature

- How does a work of literature reflect the era in which it was written?
- How does a work of literature help to shape and create the era in which it was written?
- In what way did this work of literature shape the culture beyond its own era?
- Why has it remained part of the literary canon of outstanding texts?
- What influence did your work of literature have on our conception of us as Americans?
- In what way did your work of literature shape the moral or ethical values of its time and beyond?

Key Questions for History

- Your work of literature was written in a particular decade, but what was that decade really like?
- What was going on during that time in the following arenas:
 - Politics – domestic politics and foreign politics
 - Economics
 - Significant events in technology
 - World events
 - Famous people of that era



Requirements

Each individual will do the following:

1. Choose and read a different novel from the decade.
2. Become an “expert” on your chosen novel by answering the **key questions for history** and the **key questions for literature** in the box above.
3. Research your decade, focusing specifically on the key questions for history.

Each group will do the following:

4. Create a 25-35-minute presentation covering their decade
5. Have every member present his or her novel’s connection to the decade
6. Use at least two of the following forms of technology in your presentation:
 - PowerPoint
 - Embedded movie or film clips
 - Podcast
 - Graphs, photographs
 - Music

Example: A presentation focusing on the 1920s and *The Great Gatsby* could include Jazz Age music, a clip from the several film versions made of this novel, graphs demonstrating the wildly changing economy during this time, photographs of people doing the Charleston (a popular dance), or of Charles Lindbergh successfully completing the first solo transatlantic plane flight.

7. Please remember the important rule: The technology is there only to *enhance* your presentation, not to *be* your presentation.

The primary focus of your time should be spent on expanding your own knowledge of the literary work and how it fits into the decade, not on less relevant tasks such as adjusting animation on a PowerPoint.

Getting the Project Started

Divide students into groups of three to four. Have students draw for a decade. In a group, students jot down as much prior knowledge as they have on their decade, including authors, artists, and world events.

Also, have students list what they should know about their decade – that is, what information they specifically need to research in order to answer the **Key Questions for History** element of the project.

Finally, distribute the project paper and read it aloud, reviewing the specific elements of the project, answering student questions, discussing possible technological difficulties, and brainstorming ways in which collaboration and cooperation can run smoothly.

Activity 2

Resource Building

The goal of this in-class activity is to divide the decade among the three or four students and then create a workable database for that decade. Each decade's resources will be given to each student; so in essence, students are creating a personal database.

Recommended division

This is one recommended division, but obviously, teachers can split up work as desired.

- Student 1: Authors and works to use
- Student 2: Primary historical source documents
- Student 3: World events
- Student 4: Domestic events

Collaboration

Students should be encouraged to use [Dropbox](#) or [Google Docs](#) to share information and make that information readily accessible from any computer. Dropbox and Google Docs allow students to share a common folder in which information such as documents, pictures, film clips, YouTube videos, and other forms of media can be stored and shared. Documents can be edited in Google Docs and the results merged to create a collaborative effort.

Note: Teachers not familiar with Google Docs or Dropbox should familiarize themselves with either or both before the project begins, but both are very easy to use.

Using the Library

If resources permit, the librarian can present information available through the school library or shared databases. Some librarians will assemble reliable resources or resource sources for students depending on workload and time commitments. Either way, this would be an opportune moment to collaborate with the school's resources.

Activity 3

Planning the Project

Students should work together in groups to outline the project. Each group member can outline his or her specific area of expertise, making sure s/he has answered each of the Key Questions for Literature and Key Questions for History below:



Key Questions for Literature

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Key Questions for History

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Students should decide how to incorporate the media resources into their presentation, ideally developing a “game plan” specifying what pictures, graphs, film clips, or other information will be presented first. **Remember, each student will be speaking!**

Students will prepare a “rough draft” or “dress rehearsal” of their presentation for initial review and critique. Students should also prepare a basic outline for their classmates to follow during the presentation.

Remember, **the outline should answer the Key Questions for Literature and the Key Questions for History!** (This will help keep students focused on the main point of this project – not a bad idea!)

Activity 4

Sharing the Project

Groups can share the projects by decade. With luck, teachers should be able to fit in at least two projects per class period (more if schools are on a block schedule). Students who are not presenting should be encouraged to take notes, ask questions to the presenters, and focus specifically on how the other students' projects reflect on their own decades.

Closing

In notes or in journal format, students can be asked to reflect on the following questions:

- What was the most compelling or interesting piece of information you learned about the novel from this decade?
- What sense of the era did the presentation give you?
- What do you now understand about "the way things were" during that particular time?
- What similarities do you see between that era and our own?
- What differences do you see?

General for ELA:

- [BBC](#)
- [History Channel](#)
- [Library of Congress](#)
- [Non-Profit Downloadable](#)
- [Film Archives](#)

For Outlines:

- [Microsoft at Work](#)
- [Power Points](#)
- [Free Templates](#)

On Presentations:

- [Free Templates](#)
- [Tips](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Personal Branding](#)

