

Group Assessments for American Drama Unit

1. **Audience Group:** Your focus is that of the critic and theatrical historian – the provider of critical context and history and watcher, listener and reader looking for entertainment and enlightenment. Your task is to write a brief production history and review of the script/performance at hand.
 - The production history must include research of the original production of the play as well as a complete Broadway production history. Production histories in general include background on the playwright (including brief bio, influences and where the play falls in the playwright’s career), a contextual history (how the play made sense for the time it was written), a highlighting of original reviews, a listing of original director, producer, performers and designers, and in this case a list of when the play was produced on Broadway with any noteworthy productions particularly highlighted. At least four sources – properly cited in MLA style – must be used.
 - Your review must contain a JUDGMENT of the play – is it good? Poor? Enjoyable? Boring? Complex? Facile? Obvious? Penetrating? Etc., etc. PARTICULARS and SPECIFICS of that judgment are also required; what makes the play good or bad? Enjoyable or not? Etc. A brief SYNOPSIS is necessary, as well as a discussion of the THEME of the work. What’s the main idea of the play, and does it successfully come across to you, the audience? QUOTES from the text are of course required as part of your supporting evidence for whatever claims you make. Some COMPARISON should be made concerning your expectations from the script and how those were or were not met by the film performance. (Paper should be 4-6 pages double spaced typed)

2. **Actors Group:** Your focus is that of the performer – the actor getting inside of the character and his/her motivations, physical and vocal quirks, and relationships with other characters. Your task is to write a character analysis of ONE MAJOR CHARACTER from the text.
 - This analysis shall include a study of the character’s MOTIVATIONS behind his/her actions and decisions.
 - A BACK STORY, a semi-fictional creation, **informed by the text**, of who the character was before we meet him/her on the stage is required, as well as a short explanation of what is likely to happen to the character after the events of the play have played out.
 - How you would intend to “PLAY THE CHARACTER” is also required – this is where you can talk about physical and vocal quirks as well as RELATIONSHIPS with other characters.

- This paper can be written in first person or third person, and can be subdivided under headings such as Motivations, Back Story, Relationships, etc. QUOTES from the text should be included to support any major decisions you make. (Paper should be 3-6 pages double spaced typed.)

3. Directors Group: Your focus is on envisioning the whole. Like a director, you need to fully imagine how the play would be presented on the stage; focus (theme), casting, lighting, sound, stage design, blocking, and direction of actors must all be considered. Your task is multi-faceted.

- You need to draw a **STAGE DESIGN**, locating the set on the stage. This is a top down drawing (artistic skill is not required)
- You need to **CAST** the show, choosing any stage or screen actors you know to fit the roles (do not do “reprises”), with brief explanations of why these choices are good ones.
- You need to choose a **PIVOTAL SCENE TO DIRECT**. (Scene can be anywhere from 3-6 pages in length) Explain why the scene is pivotal, particularly in relation to what you believe the theme of the play is, and then on photo-copied pages of the text, **MAKE THE NOTATIONS FOR DIRECTION, INCLUDING LIGHTING, SOUND, BLOCKING, AND CHARACTER DIRECTION OF ACTORS**. If you need more space than the pages themselves will allow, make numbers referring to notes on notepaper. Length of this assessment will vary; it is not a formal paper, but a creative “workbook.”

[The technical aspects of direction may be considered generally, but need to be thorough. Lighting: terminology need not be known, but decisions about where the light will be, how focused, color, patterned or not, changes in light and cues, are expected.

Sound: sound effects and music are your general concerns here. What does the script call for? What else might work to enhance the scene, without being a distraction?

Blocking: the movement of actors on stage. The basic blocking directions are: to move towards the audience is to move downstage (DS), to move away from the audience is to move upstage (US), movement right to left is done from the perspective of the actor facing the audience, and thus stage right (SR) is to the audience’s left, and stage left (SL) is to the audience’s right. Whether an actor sits, stands, slouches etc. are all also in the domain of blocking.

Character Direction: we’re really talking about explanations to the actors of why their character is doing what we (the directors) are telling them to do. Emotions displayed, timing, physical posture and such should be considered, as well as particular motivations for the scene you have chosen. This will require the most writing from you.]