In Their Own Words: Oral Presentation #2A, B, and C

The class will divide into three groups:

Group 2A will present excerpts from historic speeches, letters, articles written by women primarily during the 18th and 19th C. about the abolitionist, suffrage, and early civil rights movements. You will choose from materials already selected and decide on your own excerpts. Group 2A’s presentation session is on Feb. 13th.

Group 2B will present excerpts from women’s westward expansion letters, journals, and diaries. (These are often called frontier and pioneer materials, but since Native Americans already lived on these lands, these terms feel somewhat inaccurate.) You will select your own sources from suggested texts and collections and decide on your own excerpts. Group 2B’s presentation session is on Feb. 27th.

Group 2C will choose from poems in Mitsuye Yamada’s Camp Notes and poems by Latina poets—these poems are already collected in your course packet. Group 2C’s presentation session is on March 6th.

Assignment Goals:

- to give voice to and bear witness to women’s experiences, ideas, and contributions from specific moments and perspectives in U.S. history
- to work closely with primary sources and/or with poetry as a literary form—as presenter and as listener
- to practice bringing your own interpretation and emphases to your oral presentation of these texts
- to continue to develop your own ease and style as a presenter
- to develop research skills in order to introduce your text to your audience and to place the text in a helpful context

Selecting an excerpt: Your actual excerpt should probably be no longer than two minutes. (You will have four minutes maximum for your entire presentation.) Lots of criteria might apply to your choice of an excerpt:

- It captures the voice of the writer.
- It’s full of vivid details that illuminate an experience.
- It sounds good when you read it aloud.
- It communicates distinct emotions or conveys a powerful thought.
- It employs particularly effective rhetorical devices like repetition, direct address, rhetorical questions, etc.
- It emphasizes and makes specific something you learned in your research.
- Others?

If it speaks to you, then it should speak to us through your delivery. Your excerpt also needs to hold together and make sense to your listeners.
**Researching for the context of your presentation:** With the Native American stories project, I provided introductory material that gave some context either to the story itself, to the traditions of storytelling, to the challenges of translation, to the style of the original storyteller, etc.

This time, you will do your own research and decide on the context you want to create for your reading of speech, letter/diary, or poem. This might involve researching relevant timelines and events; writer’s biographies; issues and topics such as attitudes towards bilingualism or trends in migration, another culture’s religion, traditional tales, customs, etc.

Learn lots, even if you can’t possibly include it all in your brief introduction. Everything you learn will help you appreciate and interpret the poem, speech, or letter/journal. It will help you give voice to this one woman’s experiences and ideas.

**NOTE:** a mandatory part of this research is to read the entire text from which you’ve chosen your excerpt. You will need this to give us a set-up for your excerpt. Read the whole speech, the entire set of journal entries by that one woman, the entire pamphlet, not just the excerpt. This is your first step in helping to put your presentation into context. Read the relevant introductory material, too.

**Introduction and conclusion:** Use your research and perhaps your own reasons for selecting your poem or excerpt to create the introduction and conclusion for your presentation. Also, remember the shared course investigation we are all invested in as you create a context. Talk to us during both introduction and conclusion; use note cards or outlines that allow you to make lots of eye contact. Remember to signal closure with a “thank you,” with a clear slow down in tempo, or with transitional phrases: “I’d like to end by.....”.

**Noting your sources as you go:** As you present, identify the sources from which you quote. If you find a strong sentence or phrase in a secondary source that you want to include in your introduction, great!—just name the author and the text you got it from.

Be sure you announce your shift to the primary source, too. This can be done in various tones: “Now I’d like to share Ms. Anthony’s own words on the subject”—formal and respectful. “Here’s what Susan B. Anthony herself has to say about it”—less formal, still respectful. Probably not “And now let’s hear from Miss Susie B”—a bit too informal?

**Interpreting the text for presentation:**
- It’s crucial you understand all the words and sentence constructions, images and allusions in your excerpt. Ask instructors and fellow students, even Loft tutors, if you feel stuck.
• Look closely at the text for all it gives you to work with: descriptive details, imagery, questions, repetition, short sentences, long sentences, transitions, tone/attitude, humor, emotional appeal, evidence, sound effects like alliteration and rhyme and more. How do you want to use these to their best effect in your presentation?

• Decide what you most want your listeners to get from this text. Experiment with pauses, shifts in volume and pace, inflection and pitch, to find the best ways to emphasize these things vocally.

• Play with the idea of purpose; an actor would call it choosing an action or tactic. Think in terms of verbs: Are you preaching, pleading, informing, guilt-tripping, inspiring, clarifying, selling, illuminating, confessing etc.? Maybe more than one...

• And think about how you want to use your body and the performance space, as well. What spatial relationship do you want to create with your audience?

**Time limits:** Each presenter has up to four minutes, but no more, to introduce and present the text and to conclude the presentation. Be specific and judicious when you choose what to include in the introduction and conclusion. Practice all your materials out loud. Time yourself!

**Coaching teams:** you will form small supportive groups of three or four with folks working in the same session (A, B, or C). You will get some class time to practice your presentation in these small groups. Be sure you let your team know how they can best help you in their feedback. We encourage you to meet outside of class, as well. You can reserve a study room in the library for a safe space to practice.

**Feedback:** The class will spend four or five minutes giving oral feedback to each presenter. The coaching team will begin since they know best what the presenter has been working on. All audience members should be prepared to offer responses both about the content of the presentation and its delivery.

**Written requirements:**
- one well thought-out and well written paragraph about what you most hope your audience to get from your presentation
- one well thought-out and well written paragraph about the goals and challenges you set yourself as presenter this time
- a bibliography of the secondary sources you used in your preparation in basic MLA format
Grading Criteria:

- Clear and engaging introduction and conclusion
- Insight and relevance of research shared in setting up context
- Committed performance/presentation of the chosen text—observable effort to bring the author’s words, circumstances, concerns, ideas and voice alive
- Control of volume, pacing, and enunciation throughout the presentation so all can follow you
- Effective use of body, blocking, and space
- Observable effort to connect to your audience through eye contact, attention to the whole room etc.
- Written work that is on task (see above), is double spaced, and keyboarded.