

## **Group Presentations: Your Assignment**

English 2025-2 • Fall 2007 • Prof. Jennifer West

### **Your Task**

In order to help us establish the context for the novels we read, each of you will be responsible for helping to supply the class with external information. In groups of 2, 3, or 4, you will make a presentation of no more than 20 minutes (depending on the number in your group - plan on about 5 minutes per person) on one aspect of the novel's context: biographical information about the author, historical information important to the setting of the novel, critical reception of the novel, or other issue-related information particular to each text.

### **Some Guidelines for Each Group**

- Have a visual aid of some sort: a handout or Power Point presentation will suffice, or if you have something more creative you'd like to show us, that's fine too. You only need one visual aid per group.
- Make it interesting: don't just stand up and read from your Power Point slides or from notecards. Think about what would be interesting to you if you were in the audience (which, of course, you will be except the day that you present).
- Turn in: a copy of the visual aid and a bibliography of sources you used, as well as your notes for the presentation (nothing formal - just evidence of your work).
- Choose the information you think is most interesting and most important to our understanding of the novel -- you won't have time to tell us everything, so hit the highlights.
- Speak audibly and clearly.
- Be professional - the class is yours to lead for 15 minutes, so act like you're in charge.
- Be creative! Find an interview online with the author? Feel free to have us listen to a few minutes of it. Is there a pop culture reference that fits in with your topic? (song, TV clip, etc.) Share it with us. Images that will help us understand? Include those too.

### **Content**

So what are you supposed to talk about?

- If your subject is the author's life, choose what you think will help us understand that writer's perspective. Where did s/he grow up? What was/is his/her family life like? What influenced him/her? Education? Interests? Other writings? What does the author say about the novel in interviews?
- Critical reception: Read some reviews of the novel—Lexis-Nexis and Academic Search Complete are good places to find these—and decide what the general consensus about the novel was when it was first published. What did critics particularly like about the novel? What did they criticize? Has the novel won or been nominated for any awards? For what (are there any explanations of why that particular novel was chosen?)
- Historical and literary context, and issues: Each novel deals with history or issues that have their roots in the real world: do some research and tell us what you think we need to know to better understand the themes the novel is grappling with (depending on what your topic is). Each of these novels also follows a particular literary tradition; tell us about that tradition and how this novel fits in if that's the topic you signed up for.

