

Student Work: Historical Fiction

Amira, a 9th-grade student wrote this piece after “meeting” Tony Hopson in the Legends Tea Party and looking up Tony Hopson in the Year Book Dive. To further prepare for writing, she interviewed Mr. Hopson on the phone. To further prepare for writing historical fiction, students read and analyzed Demo Legend, Renee Watson’s historical fiction piece This Side of Home, as well as other student models.

It’s a Friday night, it’s cold and dark outside. Thousands of people are packed into the gym, some standing, some sitting. Around me, I could feel the excitement radiating off of people in crashing waves. Today is the biggest day of my life. Well, that might be a little bit of an exaggeration but it is still a very very big day. Today is our big championship game against Grant High School. But before I tell you how the game went, let me tell you how we got here. And let me tell you, our journey was not easy.

My name is Tony Hopson, I’m a senior here at Jefferson High School. I’m one of the members of the varsity basketball team. Around school, they call me “Ice Tea” because I’m probably the calmest and collected person around. Everyone is cool with each other and it is a pretty good atmosphere. And on my team, I was the leader and the one who helped balance the team. I would not exactly say I am the best player on our team, but I am up there. I even set a state record of 13 shots in a row.

Anyways back to what I was saying; our journey to the top was pretty rough. Being a mainly African American team, we were not treated with respect most of the time this basketball season. There were one too many moments where I felt like we were being cheated by referees. They were mainly white and back then (1972), they still didn’t accept us. We would score a lot of points but the final result would be way lower than what we had actually gotten. Even though that bothered me, I didn’t give it much thought because we won every game, except for one game against Washington High School. We lost 72-82. The refs probably cheated but it’s whatever.

Our first game this season was against Benson High school. We did pretty well and won the game that day. But towards the end of the game, a riot broke out and almost got us kicked out of the game. Only us. Not Benson. Just us. Only Jeff got the punishment and Benson got off easy even though they were also part of the problem. A few weeks later, we had a game in Astoria. We were excited as we pulled into Astoria, but that excitement quickly vanished. When I looked out of the window of the bus, there was a dummy, painted black, hung from a noose as a welcome to Astoria. Even after all that, we still won the game.

As a team, we faced many hardships. We had to overcome the ignorance of others and step up to be a bigger and better team. Most of the time we were successful, but sometimes we were not. My teammates and I got along well most of the time. I was especially tight with Ray Leary. He was like my best friend. Our team mainly consisted of seniors but there was one junior starter with us, Ronnie Cole, and he was a beast. Unsung hero if you will. And we had one of the best coaches around, Coach Jack Bertell. He even won a “coach of the year” award. But other than that, we

pushed each other to be great and had a healthy level of competition amongst ourselves.

Overall, we were one of the best teams around, if I do say so myself. We had an average of 105 per game. And this one time, we had the highest number of attendance during the regular season. Over 6000 people came to watch one of our games and it was so packed that a lot of people had to stand. Even though it felt amazing, there were quite a few people that were making negative comments.

On the night of our championship game, our whole team was pumped and full of adrenaline. We were ready to put in our all and leave with the title. Before our game began, Coach pulled us aside and gave us a pep talk.

"I want you all to remember tonight that you earned your way here. No matter what happens tonight, win or lose, I'm proud of each and every one of you for having an outstanding season. Always remember that you can achieve whatever you set your mind to. Don't let these hecklers get to your head tonight because we can do it. Now on three go demos. 1... 2... 3..."

"GO DEMOS!"

Throughout the game, we held a pretty steady lead. Grant had nothing on us. Tonight we were unstoppable. Everyone on my team was focused and determined to win that playing basketball became as easy as breathing. Passing the ball, shooting it through the hoop, dribbling it down the court felt like my mind was taking control of my body and I could sit back and relax. It was the last quarter and a few seconds left in the game, Ronnie passes the ball to me. I catch it and immediately start making my way down the court. When I reached the 3-point line, I stopped and looked up into the crowd, which was a big mistake. A group of white boys sitting toward the top were yelling and laughing hysterically. One of them stood up.

"Bunch of talentless niggers" tumbled out of his mouth.

I froze and everything around me was going in slow motion. Then I remembered what Coach had said. "Don't let these hecklers get to your head." When I realized the shot clock was winding down, I looked at the basket, aimed, and let the ball fly out of my hands. Swoosh. It went in right as the buzzer sounded. Everyone around me was roaring and jumping up and down. I turned around and walked up to Ray.

"We did it," he said.

"We sure did," I said while dapping him up.

Legends Historical Fiction Criteria

Task: Using *historically accurate* information from your interviews with Jefferson legends, write a fictional story that demonstrates a critical moment in their lives. Using Renée Watson's *This Side of Home*, as a model, create scenes where the story takes place. Through the scene(s) unveil the history of one of these eras.

___ 1. Dialogue

- What are the characters saying?
- Do they each have a "voice print?"

___ 2. Blocking

- What are the characters doing while they are talking? Leaning against a wall? Tossing a ball in the air?
- Where are they located?

___ 3. Character Description

- Physical Description
- Attitude Description – walk, talk, act

___ 4. Setting Description

- Where does the story take place?
- What does it look like?
- Smell like?
- What's on the walls?

___ 5. Sentence Variety

- Parallel Sentence
- Coordinating conjunction

___ 6. Interior Monologue

- What is going on inside the character's head?
- What is the character thinking while the action is happening?

Add a cumulative sentence to your paper –

Mrs. Bohanan was an unkind woman, *singling* out her favorites for rewards, *picking* on students who didn't speak Standard English, *humiliating* lower class students. Forty years later, I still don't forgive her.

Mrs. Johansen pushed me to take risks, *demanding* that I debate Daniel Chin on the national service policy, *thrusting* me into the world of speech teams, *insisting* that I move out of my comfort zone and into an intellectual frenzy. I loved her.

NOTE: Some of you are still working on the correct punctuation of dialogue. PLEASE USE DEVEN'S AS A MODEL:

After dinner I asked my mom, "Mama, can I have some chocolate cake and ice cream now?" I'd smelled that cake for too long and now I just had to have some of my mama's chocolate cake.

"Did you finish with your history homework? I don't want Mrs. Parrish sending me no more letters about missing work." Mama didn't play when it came to school work. She wanted me to become a lawyer like Mr. B.C. Franklin or a doctor like Dr. Jackson, who lived next door.

"I finished my homework, Mama. Can I have some of that delicious cake?"

"Just hold on, now, quit asking me," she replied. "And ask right or people are going to think I didn't teach you any manners: May I have some cake please."

Writing Historical Fiction

[illegible]

Student Samples of Historical Fiction

Basement Stories

by Channelle Crittenden

"Make sure there are a variety of signs or Miss Warren will have a field day," Latrice called out to Yolanda from behind an old bookshelf. She shuddered as she stepped over an old mousetrap in the dusty basement while searching for paint. Miss Warren would be coming down to check on her and Yolanda in a couple of minutes, and they hadn't even started writing on the signs that about 50 of the neighbors had made the night before. Nearing the paint shelf, Latrice chose a can of black paint to bring to Yolanda, along with two wide paintbrushes for each of them. Her hands were shaking with excitement; she'd never participated in anything that was so important in her life.

"Don't worry," Yolanda called back. "I've got it all under control. I won't have her yelling at me tonight!" She focused on the blank picket sign in front of her, racking her brain to figure out what to write. "I just wish I knew what to write on here," she said more quietly to herself. Tufts of coarse, curly black hair began to sprout from Yolanda's tight ponytail in the dim, dank room. They were preparing for a big strike—one that could change everything about the way Blacks lived in Portland, Oregon.

Miss Warren began to quietly walk down the stairs of the basement from the kitchen. She was covered in flour and smelled strongly of fish grease and corn meal. "Why don't you have it say 'Equal Opportunity in Housing,' and in really big letters, 'FREEDOM NOW!'" She wiped her hands on her yellow and blue star-covered apron and tucked a few gray strands back under her headscarf. Caught off guard by her sudden appearance, Latrice and Yolanda nodded their heads in submission and immediately set to work. Knowing that she had startled them, Miss Warren chuckled to herself as she started back up the stairs.

"Miss Warren? Do you think that you could help us with the signs? We're really not very good at these types of things."

Hearing the sincerity in Latrice's voice, she turned around, to respond. "Latrice, honey, I'm real busy right now. I'm cooking for the board meeting that's in about two and a half hours. Everyone's going to be over here, and by then, all of the signs need to be ready. I can send a couple of my grandchildren down here to help y'all, but that's about it." She turned around in the direction of the door leading upstairs and yelled upstairs. "Cathy! Dylan! Maya! Come on down here to help Latrice and Yolanda with these here signs!"

The three siblings flew down the stairs as soon as they heard their grandmother's stern voice. "Now y'all help these two outline these signs and paint them all. I want all of them to be different, but to still make sense, you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am," Maya answered. She was the oldest child and was always the first person to respond to things. "How many do you want us to make?"

"There's going to be close to 70 people here tonight, and they're all going to be looking for a sign to carry. I want you to make about 100 signs, you hear me? Make them neat and mean."

"You want us to say mean things on them, Miss Warren? I thought this was a peaceful strike," Latrice asked with a confused look on her face, which mirrored everyone else's expressions.

"Honey, do you know why we are going on strike? Why I am slaving away shaking up five pounds of catfish in cornmeal and cracking my back, bent over, cutting up every vegetable in this house for our neighbors?"

All of the children had heard this speech from Miss Warren plenty of times, but they wouldn't dare interrupt her. They understood that her passion was the edification of Blacks in Portland and listened quietly.

"The white folks in the government have run us down. They started with outlining a map of Portland saying where Blacks and whites could live. And they penned us to this small Albina area, forbidding us to ever adventure outside of the line. That's what redlining is. But confining us to this packed place wasn't enough for them, so they killed hundreds of trees just to send all of us Blacks living in this area a letter saying that we have 90 days to get the hell out of our houses. And the worst part of it is that we are all only given \$15,000 to purchase a new home. \$15,000?! Honestly! How cruel could one be? \$15,000 couldn't buy a nice house!"

Tears streamed down Miss Warren's face, seeping into her burning chest where they dissolved. Cathy, Dylan, and Maya looked at each other, surprised to see their grandmother cry; her hard exterior had never been broken as long as they had known her. Latrice and Yolanda bowed their heads, feeling the pressure of the strike on their backs.

Realizing that she was crying in front of some of the youngest people she knew, Miss Warren immediately wiped her face and cleared her throat.

"So, that's what I mean when I say make it mean. Feel the pain of every Black person forced to move out of their home, leaving their memories and watching them get torn down. We're striking for the government to give us more money to survive, but our homes will be torn down regardless. Get angry, children. Get angry and understand why we're going on strike. Get angry because you're tired of being put on the back burner. Get angry and make these signs."

She turned around and started up the stairs. When she was at the top, she turned around and saw all of the children getting to work. "I hope they never forget this for as long as they live." Entering the kitchen, she closed the basement door and saw her catfish floating in the pot of grease. Grabbing a set of tongs, she picked up the plate meant to hold the fried fish and plucked them out of the pot.

Albina Gets Torn Down

by Xavier Niece

Johnny and his son Sam walked to Citizen's Café for some breakfast. Citizen's was the place for good food and better gossip. Johnny was in need of both. They opened the creaky door on North Williams that announced their arrival. Heads swiveled as they walked in.

"Hey, Johnny and Sam," Leroy said as he brought the stained coffee pot and a couple of white mugs to their table. "You want stacks of pancakes today?"

"Yeah, just don't burn 'em like you usually do. Should I send my wife in to teach you how to cook?" Leroy and Johnny had a running joke about Leroy's bad cooking. But, like many folks in the Albina community, they came to Citizen's Café as much for the gossip as for the coffee and food.

"As many mornings as you come to breakfast, I'm thinkin' Sherri's not that great of a cook," Leroy laughed.

Leroy brought Johnny and Sam their food. As he set the food down Johnny pulled out a pink note and read it to him. "Do you see this note from the city? It says I have to move out in 90 days. Do I really have to move out in 90 days?" said Johnny.

"Yeah, I did get that note yesterday. It said my house was blighted. They were going to give me \$15,000 to buy a new one and give me 90 days to move out," said Leroy with a confused face.

"Hey, I got that same note this morning also. It says that my home was blighted and I need to pay a loan to keep it or it will be destroyed," said Billy as he took a sip of his coffee.

"But I don't understand when they said our homes are run down, and he can't get money to pay loans to fix them," Leroy said as he ran a damp towel across the counter.

"Well, Mrs. Warren was in yesterday afternoon. She told me that the city wants to tear down our houses to build an ER room on the hospital and to add on to the freeway. She was pretty upset. Said the prices they are offering are too low, and where are we going to move to with all of the redlining going on?"

Sam looked up from his pancake, "What's redlining, Dad?"

The people of Albina were all in shock and were confused about what they were going to do to keep their town on its feet. They couldn't even get loans at the time because they were African American.

One year later, Johnny goes back Citizen Café to get the status of the people who have been all moved out of the town. Surprisingly, Leroy is still working there and Johnny walks up to him and asks him about how he is doing.

"Hey, long time no see, how have you been?" asks Johnny.

"It could be better, I had to move out to the north when I got moved out, and it's a bother to get to work and back every day now," replies Leroy.

"I was also moved out to the north area also, it was the only area I could afford a house in. I and Sam have been having problems adapting to our new neighborhood since he still goes to Jefferson school," says Johnny.

They hear a loud noise outside of the cafe and go outside to check it out. They walk outside and to see a bulldozer knocking Johnny's roof in where he used to live in.

Student Work: Poetry

Future Demo Legend, Rosa, wrote this poem about Demo Legend Lavert Robertson after becoming familiar with him during the Legend Tea Party, meeting him on Legends' Day, and studying the models for persona poems.

For Them

When you share my story
Tell them I did it for them
I did it so they wouldn't have to bear
What I bore

Say I was once one of them
I listened to all the rumors
To all the trash talk
And expected the worst
I was the sheep who followed the shepard

Say that all of it was a lie
That all the presumed fights
And shootings
Were deceiving

Tell them how
I walked in
And felt the closeness
The unity
The love

How I fell in love
With my High School sweetheart
How I skipped my classes
How I truly only
Attended choir and jazz

Share my problems
How I had to push
And give it all
To graduate my senior year
That I got pregnant
That my counselor
Infuriated me

Explain to them

How his only expectation of me
Was to graduate
Without getting pregnant

Tell the world
How attendance
Grades
My happiness
Wasn't expected of me

The only expectation
Was to not get pregnant
How the support
And encouragement
I needed
Was never given to me

Share to the world
That I became a teacher
And a Vice principal
To uplift every single one of them
Their children
Their grandchildren
To support them
Instead of leaving them behind

Tell them one last thing
That I left my mark
On a brick
At Jeff

Persona Poem

According to poet Patricia Smith, when you write a persona poem, “there’s got to be some wrinkle in the life of the person you’re writing about. Something they’re angry about. There’s a texture to it. What’s sparking you to write the persona and what’s sparking the persona to talk to you? It’s something that’s happened in their life that’s making them talk, that has them angered or sad or about to jump off of a building.”

Make a list of people from the stations who you find interesting, who have a “wrinkle” in their life. What have they endured? Resisted? Created? Tap into your own emotions as you write. **Write as if you are the person.** Make up details, but keep to the “heart” of the truth from this moment in history.

Hiroshima

"Sister, where are you?"
I see the shadow where you were,
but only surrounded by ashes.
Your beautiful smile,
your enchanting face
are the ashes at my feed.
The quiet of death surrounds me,
and I hope for a noise,
something to break the silence.
Your voice would prove
the shadow wrong,
but only cries of children
whose sisters disappeared
as quickly as you did.
I know you're not just ashes.
"Sister, where are you?"

Kamaria Kyle, Jefferson High School

(This was written in the "persona" of a young girl whose sister was killed during the bombing of Hiroshima.)

Language Lost and Regained

by Lisa Lammert

Say that I am the stories
of the ancestors
the dogwood in spring
signaling the children
that it is okay to swim

When you write my story
tell the white men
that theirs is not the only way.
We've survived here
for thousands of years
and understand the land
and the animals
and the people.

Tell them about
Coastal Athabaskan, Tewa, Cree
And the richness
of my cultural legacy
I do not belong
in only a dictionary
spoken by few

There is no shame
in my tongue
Or the ways
of my people

Flames From the Past

The flames consume the paper. The flames consume my life, everything I am, everything I loved. My first love is consumed by flames, consumed in the basket of flames, burning hotter than the sun, melting away my life. The vultures came to buy the piano where mother played me sweet melodies. He offered five dollars. I wish he was dead. I'll burn it, too. I'll burn the whole house. I would rather burn it than let one of those vultures have it. They have no hearts. In the place that should hold their hearts, is hate, greed, and selfishness. I'll burn it first. I'll burn it with the past I love.

Sam Doersh, Jefferson High School

(This was written as an interior monologue from a Japanese American perspective. This scene takes place after the family was told they had six days to pack up their belongings before being "interned" during World War II.)

Write that I Persona Poem

The "Write that I" poem allows you to more deeply understand events and characters, to develop empathy, to step outside of your own lives. This poem provides a few more hooks to get into the writing, especially at the beginning of the year. The structure of the "Write that I" poem provides that poetic footstool.

1. Begin by reading the poem "Molly Craig" out loud. Highlight the poem with two colors of highlighters. Highlight the repeating lines in one color. For example, 'Write that I' is a repeating line. What other lines repeat and carry the poem forward? Highlight the details about Molly's life in the other color.

Write that I;
tell them that I;
when you write my story,
say that I.

2. Think about the details from Molly's life, where she grew up, that she was a tracker,

and so on. Work to categorize these details, the specific information included in the model: Names of people and places, dialogue from the movie, characters' actions. Notice the use of negatives and questions as a pushback to the white's assessment of Molly's conditions:

No there weren't walls,
And no there weren't beds,
And yes, we were poor,
But when did love come in units
Counted up in dollar bills?

Notice the tools in process—repetition, negation, questions, lists.

3. Add phrases that will hook your poem forward. "What other phrases could you use to anchor your stanza?" List their alternatives on the board. "Your poems will all sound the same unless you find your own verbs here."

5. List details from the event or person's life that will make them come alive.

6. Write the poem. Use the lines as hooks to move the poem forward. When you run out of details, begin a new stanza. Write a new linking line and add new details.

Sample Write that I Poems

Molly Craig

by Linda Christensen

Write that I grew up in Jigalong
With my mother and grandmother.
Say that it was my home,
No there weren't walls,
And no there weren't beds,
And yes, we were poor,
But when did love come in units
Counted up in dollar bills?
When did family become something you could count
Instead of something you could count on?

Tell them that I learned to read animal tracks,
Filter water from roots in a desert, cook over an open fire,
And find my spirit bird
Before most kids learn to read words.
And yet, Mr. Devil calls me uneducated.

He wants to teach me to sweep, empty buckets,
Wring water from white people's sheets.

Tell them instead of beating me and shaming me
For my color, my dirty hair, my language,
My mother taught me through praise,
Good tracker, she said,
"You brought us a fat one."

When you write my story, tell Mr. Devil that my mother's grief
Could not be counted, not tallied up in his books,
My mother's grief strummed along 1,200 miles of rabbit-proof fence
And hummed me home.

Say that I wasn't half anything,
Not half caste, not half black, not half white,
Yes, when you tell my story,
Say that when I'm home,
I'm whole.

Thousand Pieces of Gold

by Kyle Christy

When you tell my story. . .
Tell it all
Tell the truth

Tell the world how I was so stubborn
Stood up for what I wanted
Did what I felt was right
Despite what society asked

I broke the stereotype
Of a normal Chinese women
Led my own life. . .
Lived it how I wanted

No more bound feet to hold me back
No slavery
No husband
No falling into stereotypes
But also. . .
No disrespect

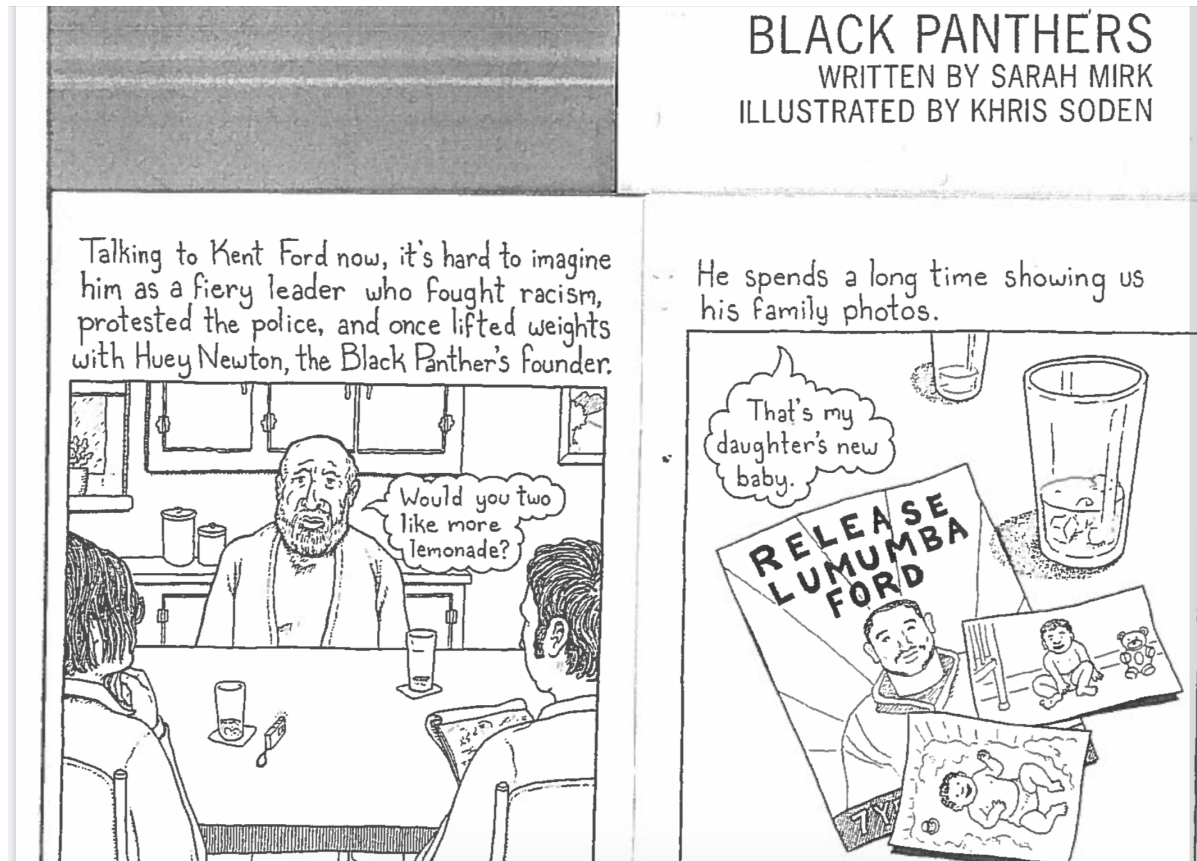
But that's how I like it. . .
Free

Even when things were the worst
Tell the world how I still fought
I always fought
Never gave up
No matter how bad it got
I stayed strong

When you tell my story. . .
Tell about. . .
Me

Student Work: Comic Books

Some students created comic books of their legend in action. We looked at a model from a local artist and discussed how some panels included dialogue (speak bubble), interior monologue (thinking bubble). We also discussed how details for characters, setting, and action were included. Some of the model panels had summaries or narrations.



Students that chose to do comics did very well as they were already into the genre. We are not able to currently access our student samples of these due to the pandemic.

Student Work: Posters

Some students made posters that included artistic representation of their legend, quotes, background information, characteristics, interview answers, etc.

We are not able to currently access our student samples of these due to the pandemic.

Share Out of Student Work: Book

Students were to select pieces from their creative works to form the Demo Legends, Vol. 1 book.

