

Oral Presentation: *Dragonwings*
Vr293SU20, Prof. Andrew Yang, May 17, 2020

Though all forms of art are arguably an expression of ethnicity, Chinese American literature, by its very title, is explicitly so. It argues for ancestral ties, for certain practices as part of its defining traditions, and for certain perspectives and experiences to serve as part of its core history. Ethnicity, however, is **not** a *universal* expression – it exists in reaction to the expressions and situations created by one’s environment, in particular an environment created by *another* ethnic group. The *importance* of particular expressions of identity can vary over one’s lifetime. Also, expressions of identity are *political* – they are made in relation to power and status in an environment of limited resources.

Laurence Yep’s *Dragonwings* is an expression of Chinese American identity. On the one hand, it creates a story describing the ethnic history of Chinese in San Francisco during the early 20th century, with representations of multiple groups of Chinese and their relations with whites under a national American setting.

On the other hand, *Dragonwings* is *also* a work of literature. It represents *one* group of Chinese in America above others. It emphasizes *some* forms of living and thinking amongst Chinese (and others) in America during that time. And it only portrays *some* of the relationships between Chinese and other ethnic groups. Finally, one must also remember *Dragonwings* is a historical novel – while the *story* is set in the beginning of the 20th century, the *text* itself was published in 1975. It is only *one* expression of Chinese American identity, during a particular place and time.

For your Oral Presentation, choose *one character, situation, or event*, and consider how that adds to ***the dialogue Laurence Yep creates about Chinese in America during 1975***. You may consider your work in three steps:

1. In what ways does your character, situation, or event resemble people, environments, events, etc. from 1903 San Francisco? Describe these similarities using carefully cited background research.
2. Consider the relationship of that character, event, etc. to the story or “world” of *Dragonwings* as a whole. Remember – *Dragonwings* is not a historical document. It is not a collection of facts. More than anything else, it is a work of literature that pushes readers to consider the *world, art, and people* in new ways. How is a character dramatized or made more active by his or her interactions with other characters? How is an event dramatized by the actions of characters during that time?
3. Now consider *Dragonwings* as a work of literature during the 1970s and 80s. Research some reviews and analyses of the text. How did the text satisfy the needs or desires of readers during those times? Was the text reacting to any representations of Chinese Americans earlier? Did any Chinese American groups see it as a proper “representation” of themselves – or not?

By considering these questions, you will begin to see a text beyond a simple story for education or entertainment, and more as a political *argument* within and between communities.

Do not forget – your Thesis must contain an Argument, meaning it must also contain a Counter-Argument that is sound and reasonable. The research you provide must be

properly introduced within the confines of an oral presentation. Your research must support your argument, not the other way around. Look in JSTOR or elsewhere in the SJTU library system for articles from credible publishers and institutions. Wikipedia, Baidu, and similarly “popular” websites are not acceptable sources for an academic presentation. Remember to state clearly for your audience your Thesis and Supporting Arguments, to enunciate clearly each section of your presentation, and to restate your thesis and supporting arguments for your conclusion. Unlike papers, repeating your phrases word-for-word actually helps your audience.

You will have *4-5 minutes* to present your analysis. Following each presentation will be a *1 minute* question-and-answer period led *only* by your peers. Do not go excessively over your allotted time. *Make sure you have all of your IT and other equipment properly set up before your presentation.* Any time you spend handling your technology, poor connections, etc. *will* be counted toward your allotted time. I will grade each presentation based on the rubric “Vy200 Presentation Assignment Scoring Rubric.” I will grade the quality and use of your research. Do *not* use slides or other visual aids. Your TA will distribute sign-up sheets to organize the order of presentation.

I will be watching your participation during the presentations and question-and-answer period. *Based on the questions you ask and your attentiveness, I may adjust your presentation grade by 1/3 of a letter grade (ie: B+ → B, etc.).* So please respect and consider your classmates in the middle of their efforts.

Finally, please hand in a “Works Cited” list of all your secondary sources in complete MLA format to receive your grade on Canvas; that Canvas Assignment will be available until **June 24, 23:59**.

This assignment will help you present your ideas clearly to a live online audience, and to become more familiar with online presentation tools. You will gain experience presenting a researched argument before a critical audience, and a chance to engage in a critical question-and-answer period.