

# Living History

## Judging Guidelines

Familiarization with the score sheet will make it much easier on you as a judge during the presentation. Therefore, we ask that you read this document carefully and feel free to ask for clarification if necessary.

## What Living history is and what is it trying to accomplish

An RGA Living History performance is a first person portrayal of an actual or composite character from the time-period of 1800 to 1900. The presentation may be done by a single person or may involve two or more people. The purpose of Living History is to educate through entertainment. Accuracy is paramount, whether the script is of comedic or dramatic nature.

## How the competition is set up

Three judges will score the Living History performances. A fourth person, the judge's moderator, will coordinate forms and monitor the performance length and the overall Living History schedule.

Each Living History performance is to be a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 15 minutes, followed by a brief question and answer period. The total time allotted to a performance, (performance plus Q/A), must be no more than 30 minutes in order to stay on schedule. At the scheduled time, the presenter will introduce him/herself or will request the MC to do so. The presenter will call "time" at the beginning and end of the presentation, signaling the moderator to start/stop the clock. When the presentation is over, the moderator will instruct presenter to approach the judging table for the Question/Answer (Q/A) time and will announce the length of presentation time for judges to enter onto their score sheets. Judges will be given a minute or two to finish notations on their judging sheets and to inspect the performer's clothing and accessories. (This additional time for clothing inspection after the performance will allow judges to concentrate more attention to other aspects of the performance during the presentation without having to worry about costuming during the performance). The moderator will then instruct the judges, one at a time, to ask questions of the presenter to clarify points if necessary. Each judge will have a maximum of 3 minutes for his or her questions. It is not mandatory for a judge to use their time allotment, so if you have no questions, simply indicate that and the Moderator will move on.

[\\* Please note the additional comments regarding Question/Answer at the end of this page.](#)

At the end of Q/A, the Moderator will collect each judge's form and will double check for:

- \*comments relating to each deduction; there must be a comment for each deduction,
- \*correct entry of length of performance time,
- \* correct calculations of deductions and
- \* check for completion of form. The form will be returned at that time to the judge for completion)

### Understanding the score sheet

Each judge will work independently from the other two judges using a score sheet with four sections. Each section is broken down into four specific sub-sections. (See Below) Each presenter starts with the full 80 points at the beginning of the presentation.

Five deductions are possible in each sub-section. Please note that a deduction is NOT to be given more than once in any sub-section, UNLESS the infraction continues to the extent of being extreme. For example, if a presenter used the word "groovy," obviously this would be a one-point deduction in the section 3B (Appropriate language for time period); if he/she says it a time or two more, it still counts as only one deduction, UNLESS they say it so many times that it becomes completely distracting; in this case, a second point could be taken. Using the same example, if the presenter also said "My bad," another point could be taken. It would be considered a separate infraction.

To clarify some of the sub-sections better, please note the following:

Section 1) Clothing :(clothing must reflect both the time-period and activity which the character is playing at the moment)

Sub-section A) Appropriate for character...as being portrayed at that moment in the character's life (beware of common stereotypes...while we usually think of Davy Crocket in buckskins; as a senator he wore formal clothing)

Sub-section B) Accurate for time period...be aware of presenter's actual time frame (ie, if Sarah Bernhardt is "reminiscing" about her life 20 years earlier on the stage, she wouldn't be dressed as if it were 20 years ago)

Sub-section C) Accessories and jewelry...should be appropriate to character, time period and social class being portrayed (for example, wrist watches and other modern items should be deducted for)

Sub-section D) Hair, makeup, hat and footwear...same as above: also look for condition of items being worn (clean and shiny would be a deduction for a working individual like a blacksmith or a cowboy on the trail...unless the individual makes mention of having just bought new clothes or some acceptable justification)

Section 2) Historical Knowledge:(should be evident to the audience and judges DURING presentation...not only during question and answer time)

Sub-section A) General knowledge of time period...this should be obvious

Sub-section B) Character representation...this sub-section is one which shows whether the presenter has done their research or not...is the portrayal true to who the character really was? Did the presenter develop a characterization through his research or is he/she just mimicking a Hollywood stereotype of the individual? At the same time judges should be open-minded and not be prejudiced by their own stereotypical image of the character being portrayed. Keep in mind that the more research a presenter has done on a character is possibly a side we generally overlook.

Sub-section C) Knowledge of character events...meaning events in the character's life during the period of time being presented.

Sub-section D) Presentation of related events or persons...is the character's acquaintances and happenings being described accurately and truthfully?

*Regarding section 2, please remember that the presentation is to include education for the audience, so listen for facts specific to the individual's history, time-period, occupation, etc. When the presentation has finished, the audience should have had the opportunity to have learned something about the character.*

Section 3) Presentation (of character):

Sub-section A) Clear and understandable...could the presenter be heard and was his enunciation and pace easy to comprehend?

Sub-section B) Appropriate language for the time period...bear in mind the character's dialect, station in life, etc....also, watch for contemporary slings or terms that wouldn't have been used.

Sub-section C) Body language/movement/blocking...do the motions appear natural or do they come off as distracting, melodramatic and/or inappropriate?

Sub-section D) Realistic and believable...did he/she convince you they were the person they were portraying?

#### Section 4) Overall Presentation (from a theatrical perspective):

Sub-section A) Audience appeal/interaction...was the characterization engaging and interesting? Did they play to the audience as a whole or just the judges? (Please note that these presentations are for the entire audience and presenters are to be held to that goal.)

Sub-section B) Appearance...was the demeanor inconsistent for the emotion and events the character was portraying? If used, did accessories or props detract from the point the presenter was trying to make? Props may or may not be used to set the stage and mood. It is not necessary for the judges to become too critical of the props being used unless they become totally distracting from the presentation. Some improvising is sometimes necessary depending on the stage available. A modern folding chair or table may have to be used and the presenter might decide to throw a blanket over it to somewhat cover it. It would be better for the judges to put more weight on how the stage, space and props were used to help the audience connect to the characters' moment in time than the fact the tea cup had "made in China" stamped on the bottom.

Sub-section C) Presence...did the presenter pull the audience into the historic moment and keep them there?

Sub-section D) Story line/script content...did the script ramble rather than having a beginning, middle and end? Was the script well written and did it include education as well as entertainment?

#### Completing the score sheet

As you observe the presentation, you will deduct one point for each infraction within a given sub-section...if there is one infraction, circle the "1", if two infractions circle another "1", and so on. It is imperative for each deduction you take, a brief comment stating the reason is to be entered in the space to the right of the item. Therefore, if two deductions occur in a sub-section, for example, there should be two brief but specific comments alongside the line. If a brief explanation is not made for each deduction

or if the explanation is not clear/legible/understandable, the deduction will be removed when the final tally is made at the end of the event. When your judging sheet has been completed, tally the total circled numbers in each sub-section and enter on the line at the bottom of the section; add the four sums from each section and enter the total in the "Minus Total Deductions" space; fill in any time penalty and safety infractions in the appropriate space (the Moderator will inform you if this is the case), then deduct all deductions from the 80 possible points; finally, enter the result at the bottom of the form and sign your name where designated.

## IMPORTANT

### Comments Regarding Question/Answer Time

- \* Please ask questions loud enough for the audience behind you to hear...this is a learning experience for them as well.
  
- \* The questions should be pertinent to the performance given. If the character's presentation goes only to the year 1869, don't ask questions about the character's life in 1890; i.e. don't ask, "what year did you, Doc Holiday, die?"...unless, of course, the performer is presenting their script as the character's ghost!
  
- \* Q/A time is NOT intended to be a forum for trick questions to stump the presenter, nor a forum for a judge to show his/her knowledge of a given "side" topic. For example, while the judge may happen to know Doc Holiday's brother's aunt's pig's name was Olivia, it would not be appropriate to ask the performer UNLESS the script actually had reference to that pig!
  
- \* Q/A time is intended to be a positive experience for all involved; keep in mind that while authenticity and seriousness to the education are paramount, this is still a hobby for most RGA members and demeaning and over critical comments are not conducive to the event. Constructive criticism is welcomed...critical "ripping" is not! The purpose of Q/A time is to clarify any confusion or questions which the script brought up and to ensure that the presenter has researched the character/event at length and on their own, as opposed to simply learning a script that someone else prepared for them.
  
- \* Any demerits marked on the Clothing and Historic Knowledge sections of the scoring sheet shall be noted at this time and the presenter made aware of them; judges are not walking encyclopedias and are not expected to have ALL the answers. If a judge feels something is incorrect in the clothing and/or comments, they are to question the presenter about those and the presenter given opportunity to explain. If a satisfactory explanation or documented proof is provided at the time, the demerit shall be removed. The demerit stays, however, if the presenter has been in error or

simply fails to present a good explanation. A judge should only question clothing that is visible; there is no need to ask the presenter to disrobe to inspect something that was never exposed during the performance, where would you stop?

\* The Presentation and Overall Presentation sections are based more on a judge's opinion and therefore will rarely be something that the presenter can "explain". For example, if the script appeared boring to a judge, that is a demerit that stands without questioning.

\* Again, other than time deductions and safety violations pointed out by the official moderator, which must be deducted by all judges, each judge is acting independently and should score independently from the other judges. Judges conferring to reach a consensus during performance scoring defeats the purpose of having more than one judge. Any questions about scoring should be directed to the moderator.

\* Exception to this comes only at the end of a competition and a tie must be broken. Judges will meet under the guidance of the moderator to review their notes and score sheets. There will be no ties. Judges will decide the tiebreaker in order for position. The judges may discuss at that time only the scoring criteria on the score sheet pertaining to the performances given. They should avoid any discussion of personal bias of individual performers. The moderator has no voice or vote in this matter, only to direct, see to it that the rules are followed then collect tally when the task is completed.

\* All awards are final. Personal score sheets may and should be given to the presenters after the competition. Judges scores should be accepted as critique and used by the presenters to make changes and prepare for future performances. Judges are human and a presenter may not always agree with the score they have received but judges make rulings upon their knowledge and opinions. Judging is not easy and it is not always a desirable thing to be doing. Judges and their judgments should be respected. If an obvious mistake is found, the State Director over the event should be made aware of it. In some cases points maybe adjusted to go toward National totals but awards and positions already awarded in past competitions will stand.

### Message to the Judges

Please keep in mind that RGA presenters are educators; their goal should be to create a believable, yet interesting and entertaining first person situation. They should be able to hold the audience's attention in order to share some historic facts and information about an actual or composite character's experiences, life, environment or craft. Try to envision their presentation as if it were being given to a history class in a local school.

The presentation time allotted is not enough to truly give a complete and in-depth accounting of every facet of the person or subject matter they are presenting. Remember that a successful presentation should stand alone, having a beginning, middle and end. It should also hopefully renew and spark the audience's interest enough that they might want to research more about the person or subject being portrayed. It should at least be as informative as a good book report would be on the subject.

Try to be positive and encouraging to the presenters with your critiques and during Q/A time. The presenters want to grow and improve, not be discouraged from ever doing it again.