

FRENCH DEPARTMENT A GUIDE TO COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

Your **20-minute presentation** should include the following elements:

- Information about the author, a brief overview of the text, and the presentation of relevant context
 - **Introduction to the author.** Date of birth and death; active period of writing; any significant literary movements or circles in which the author participated; any significant biographical details, if any, that influenced the text you are analyzing, ...
 - **Historical Context.** Any social, political, cultural, scientific, ... events that are significant to your argument.
- An argument or a question that your presentation will address
- A clear trajectory through which you will develop your analysis of the text
 - A list of 2-3 sub-arguments or topics according to which you have organized your analysis
- A selection of passages from the text that you will read and analyze in support of your observations
 - You may flag these passages with sticky-notes in your copy of the book.
- A conclusion

No more than 5 minutes of your presentation should be dedicated to information about the author, the summary of the text, and the context.

- **Tip:** Limit the biographical and contextual information to those elements that are **essential** to the development of your argument and analysis.

The overview or summary of the text that you provide should be limited to the introduction of your presentation and should not exceed 2-3 sentences. Your objective in this exercise is to propose **an analysis** of the work, **not** a description or summary. You are seeking to **demonstrate** something about the text or bring our attention to some aspect of the text that is not self-evident (i.e. that goes beyond “what happens in the text” or “what the text is about”).

In your conclusion, you may consider explaining **why** you chose this text for comps and how it relates to other francophone works you have encountered (at Amherst, during study abroad, ...)

- If it is a text you have read for a class, you may wish to explain the context in which you studied it, and how your presentation has examined this text from a different perspective or further developed the threads you had already explored in class.
- If the text you have selected is new to you (i.e. you had not encountered it in a class), you may wish to explain what drew you to it.

Sample outline:

- Introduction [5 minutes]
 - Presentation of author, text, context [4 minutes]
 - Presentation of question or argument + path [1 minute]
- Analysis [12-13 minutes]
 - Topic 1 (4:00-4:30 mins for 3 topics; 6:00 minutes for 2 topics)
 - explanation of this topic/ its connection to your main questions or argument
 - 1-2 passages from the text (reading + analysis)
 - Topic 2
 - Topic 3
- Conclusion [2-3 minutes]
 - Reflections on connection between this text and courses you have taken in the French Department (or other areas of study)