Example Performance Assessment and Rubric

For a Civil War Unit

Assignment 4

Brittany Peters

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Abstract:

There is a need for teachers to continually assess students in order to monitor their progress and growth. This can be done in a variety of ways to evaluate if students are meeting objectives. One way that teachers can achieve this assessment is through the use of performance assessments. Performance assessments allow teachers to assess higher cognitive levels. There are significant benefits of performance bases assessments. The following paper maps a performance based assessment in the form of a play for a fifth grade Civil War unit including the rubrics necessary for grading and assessment.
Literature Review:

Performance assessments differ from traditional assessments; they require teachers to observe and evaluate student demonstration of a particular skill or ability in creating a product or presentation. Performance assessments are more consistent with reconceptualization of teaching and learning that goes on in a classroom when compared with traditional assessments such as multiple choice exams (Miller & Linn, 2000, p. 367). They supply a richer and more context-bound application of the material than the rote memory skills associated with paper and pencils tests. In fact, an advantage of a performance assessment “is that it is done with methods that more accurately reflect the teaching and learning process, rather than with a summative measure of the effects of schooling” (Miller & Linn, 2000, p. 367). The emphasis is placed on the student’s ability to perform tasks by producing their own work with their own knowledge and skills (McMillan, 2011, p. 220). Performance assessments provide a more meaningful experience for students because the products are a result of their own work. Teachers are able to interact with students as they complete the task, provide immediate feedback, and prompt students to help them learn during the task. A key advantage of performance assessments is that they are linked to real world challenges and situations, and therefore, students are better prepared for thinking and working outside of school. Additionally, a performance assessment is a strong way in which teachers can evaluate the higher order thinking skills in Bloom’s Taxonomy such as creating and evaluating. Performance assessments are beneficial for teachers, students, and parents in evaluating the abilities of students.

Teachers should identify specific criteria for judging performance assessments and this can often be done through the use of a rubric. A rubric can be defined as “a type of matrix that provides scaled levels of achievement or understanding for a set of criteria or dimensions of
quality for a given type of performance” (Allen & Tanner, 2006, p. 197). A strong rubric is aligned with the content standards for the class. It describes the level of quality typically though a point scale. It is important to note that “the descriptions of the possible levels for attainment for each of the criteria or dimensions of performance are described fully enough to make them useful for judgment of, or reflection on, progress towards valued objectives (Allen & Tanner, 2006, p. 197). Defining the quality of the teacher and the student is a primary goal of using a rubric for assessment (Shepherd & Mullane, 2008, p. 29). An authentic assessment scale should be consistent, fair, and organized. It should help avoid misunderstanding between parents, teachers, and students about what is expected from the project. A rubric should also be valid. Teachers should ask themselves what they want the students to know and be able to do and how they will know when students know the material and do it well when constructing the rubric (Allen & Turner, 2006). Teachers should also list criteria the student should demonstrate as a starting point when completing a rubric and include clear wording to assist student comprehension. If the wording is unclear or not on par with the reading level of all students they will struggle.

Rubrics can vary in their construction. A holistic rubric incorporates very general criteria; it provides fewer criterions and requires the evaluator to make an overall evaluation of student work. An analytic rubric, however, is more specific. There is a level of quality assigned to each academic ability that is being judged. An analytic rubric is beneficial because “overall performance of the class could be analyzed for each of the criteria competencies” (Allan & Tanner, 2006, p. 202).

Rubrics have numerous advantages for both teachers and students. It is beneficial for teachers to have a rubric so that they are not intimidated by assessing and assigning student work
that is not done in a non-traditional non-written format. Rubrics make instructors standards and the resulting grading explicit; they also give students a clear sense of what expectations exist for a high level of performance and how this level can be met (Allen & Tanner, 2006, p. 203). Although rubrics may be time consuming for the teacher to construct, once they are in place the grading process becomes easier. Teachers know exactly what they are looking for from students and how these expectations align with the standards. Most importantly, rubrics support reflective practice by students and the teachers. Developing a rubric “instigates a powerful consideration of one’s values and expectations for student learning, and the extent to which these expectations are reflected in an actual classroom practices” (Allen & Turner, 2006, p. 203).

**Blueprint Points/Objectives Covered**

In Appendix A I have included my Civil War blueprint, this performance assessment will specifically cover the following standards:

**Content Area: Underground Railroad/Slavery**

*Evaluate:* Evaluate the historically appropriate social status and treatment of various groups.

*Create:* Create an overview of historical figures given their background and contributions

**Content Area: Causes/Effects**

*Apply:* Ability to understand to explain the effect of significant historical events on the United States

*Evaluate:* Demonstrate knowledge of and recognize opposing opinions in the Civil War

**Content Area: Battles/Historical Figures**

*Remember:* Identify significant battles/dates and historical figures from the Civil war

*Analyze:* Demonstrate the ability to recognize the significance of key historical figures
The assessment will also cover specific standards from the New York State Standards including:

**Standard 1 - History of the United States and New York**

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

Key Idea:

Study about the major social, political, economic, cultural, and religious developments in New York State and United States history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups.

**Standard 5 - Civics, Citizenship, and Government**

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the U.S. and other nations; the United States Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

Key Idea:

The study of civics and citizenship requires the ability to probe ideas and assumptions, ask and answer analytical questions, take a skeptical attitude toward questionable arguments, evaluate evidence, formulate rational conclusions, and develop and refine participatory skills.

Performance Indicator: suggest alternative solutions or courses of action to hypothetical or historic problems.
Common Core Standards Addressed:

Reading Standards for Informational Text: Grade 5

Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent

Overview of Performance Assessment:

Students will be working in small groups of four or five students. These students will be placed in heterogeneous groups varying in ability level. As mentioned in assignment one, the students come from varying backgrounds and ability levels. By placing them in mixed ability groups they will be able to assist one another. High level learners will be able to assist classified students; each student will bring unique talent and contributions to the assignment. The assignment requires a variety of thinking and learning styles. As mentioned previously, four of the fifth grade students are English Language Learners. Working in mixed groups will provide these students with assistance in comprehension from other students. There are also students with reading and writing learning disabilities who will benefit from working with other students on the writing elements of this project.

The performance assessment task will involve an accumulation of the knowledge the students have learned about the Civil War throughout the unit. The performance assessment requires higher order thinking including creation and evaluation and will demonstrate their deeper understanding of the significance and importance of the Civil War. The resulting work from the performance assessment will complete a small portfolio of work. In small groups, the students will receive a task card. This task card describes the assignment which entails students composing a short play about the Civil War. Each group will be assigned a different portion of
the Civil War so that a variety of perspectives and events are displayed. These task cards will be drawn at random so that all students have an equal chance of covering a particular event. The events will include significant battles, the Underground Railroad, the Compromise of 1850, and the Emancipation Proclamation. Each task card will provide a list of roles that must be represented in the play. For example, those assigned the Underground Railroad must have one person play an escaped slave, a slave owner, a conductor, a homeowner that hides the slaves, and a bounty hunter looking for slaves. The students are encouraged to use and take on the persona of specific historical figures whenever possible. For example a conductor of the Underground Railroad should be represented by a major historical figure such as Harriet Tubman. Students are encouraged to choose who will play each role amongst themselves. The variety of roles represented in the play will allow multiple cultures to be represented which will aide in the multicultural perspective of the classroom. The performance assessment includes multiple aspects to complete the assignment and it should be expected that the performance assessment and its details will take several days. The performance assessment can be broken down into several tasks.

**Task one:**

The students are placed into heterogeneous groups by the teacher. The teacher then assigns each group a specific Civil War event to represent during their short plays. The students also receive a list of roles that must be represented during this play. The students are encouraged to include as many significant historical figures as possible. In the groups, students must divide the work equally as each student must play a role in the play and have roughly the same amount of lines. The students must check one another and their script for historical accuracy and content. The students may refer to any of their own notes but may not refer to texts to ensure their
understanding of the content. The students will write the play out in full and must turn in the script to the teacher. The teacher will walk around and assist with any revisions necessary and the students will practice performing their play. This portion of the performance assessment will appeal to those who enjoy verbal and linguistic tasks. Additionally, it requires students to remember significant historical figures, analyze the significance of key historic figures, and create an overview of historical figures. Students are continually evaluating the treatment of various social groups and opinion as they imagine what each person would have said.

Task two:

The students in each group must create a visual to represent the time period and setting of their particular event. The visual is open ended and students may choose to represent their particular event in any way that they see is a best fit. The teacher will encourage students by providing materials such as large paper for a backdrop along with paint and markers as well as a variety of materials to serve as costumes and props. This portion of the performance assessment will appeal to a variety of learning styles, particularly visual learners and those who enjoy tactile/kinesthetic experiences. Photos of visual representations may be taken to include in student portfolios along with captions to identify what is being represented. The photos require students to evaluate what is an essential aspect of the time period that can be represented and must create an overview of what the historical characters setting and belongings would look like.

Task three:

Students will perform their skits for the other groups in front of their class. Students must adhere to their scripts and are encouraged to act dramatically and with the enthusiasm/emotions indicative of the historical characters represented. While each group is performing, those
students in the audience will be responsible for completing a task as well. The students will have to record their observations of the other plays. The students never state in their play which characters they are representing, however, they must provide concrete clues and evidence as to who they are. Those students in the audience must evaluate and decide which historical event is represented by the play and which historical figure or type of historical person each student in the play represents. The students in the audience must record what event and historical figures they think are represented in each play and what their concrete evidence for this is. The students will also provide advice/constructive criticism to their classmates on ways to improve the plays for historical accuracy and performance. The recorded evidence for all separate plays will be collected to add to the portfolio.

**Rubric Use and Description:**

Each of the performance assessment tasks will be evaluated on a teacher constructed rubric. As mentioned previously, a strong rubric is in alignment with the content standards for the class, the level of quality is described, a point scale is provided, and it is consistent, fair, and organized. The first rubric covers the requirements for tasks one and two. Prior to beginning the assignment, the teacher will pass out the rubric and explain what is expected of students. The rubric is based on a nominal scale with 4 representing the highest quality work and 1 representing the lowest quality work. Do to the sensitive nature of 5th graders, I used a nominal scale to avoid the frustration and competition many students feel from the connotation of words such as excellent and poor. The rubric clearly maps out what constitutes high quality work to receive a score of 4 and the level of work that will receive each subsequent score. This information will be provided with the students so that they understand how to achieve the maximum score. The rubric is consistent with what is required on each level, it is fair as it
requests obtainable goals, and is organized in a clear manner. Students will be evaluated for tasks one and two in the categories of historical accuracy, composition and organization, visual representation, and performance. I chose these four categories because I believe they are in alignment with the learning objectives and state standards.

The second rubric assesses student evaluations of other performances. Again, this rubric will be reviewed with students and the expectations are reviewed with students. The rubric was created with the content standards in mind and all requirements are clear and organized. This rubric is also based on a nominal scale from 4 to 1 with 4 representing the best quality work and 1 representing poor work.

**Conclusion:**

Overall, I feel that these students involve the students in learning about the Civil War in a new way. They are learning from the perspective of those historical figures involved which helps them apply their understanding to a real world setting. The students are using higher level cognition and it will also teach them to work in teams and to think critically about the historical presentations of others.
## Appendix A
### Civil War Blueprint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major content areas</th>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Create</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Battles/Historic al Figures</strong></td>
<td>Identify significant battles/dates and historical figures from the Civil war 10 (11%)</td>
<td>Infer information from a historical document 5 (6 %)</td>
<td>Be able to locate significant places and events on a map 3 (3 %)</td>
<td>Demonstrate the ability to recognize the significance of key historical figures 3 (3 %)</td>
<td>Describe the alternative outcome of an event given a hypothetica l situation 0</td>
<td>Be able to plan, create, and design models of significant battles based on given historical battles 2 (2 %)</td>
<td>23/25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Underground Railroad/Slavery</strong></td>
<td>Pinpoint the learning strategy in remembering historical facts 0</td>
<td>Demonstrate understanding of differing opinions during a historical era 5 (6 %)</td>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge and use of historical information and research 5 (6%)</td>
<td>Deconstruct thinking when comparing and contrasting key historical events and figures 0</td>
<td>Evaluate the historically appropriate social status and treatment of various groups. 10 (11%)</td>
<td>Create an overview of historical figures given their background and contribution 7 (8 %)</td>
<td>27/31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Causes and Effects</strong></td>
<td>Exemplify understanding of key information by summarizing key sections into own wording 10/(11%)</td>
<td>Summarize the key causes of the civil war 10 (11%)</td>
<td>Ability to understand to explain the effect of significant historical events on the United States 6 (7%)</td>
<td>Draw conclusions based on comparison of Northerner and Southerner opinion during the war 8 (9 %)</td>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge of and recognize opposing opinions in the Civil War 3/(3%)</td>
<td>Ability to create a summary of a cause effect relationship in the war 3/ (3%)</td>
<td>40/44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>20 (22%)</td>
<td>20 (23%)</td>
<td>14 (16%)</td>
<td>11 (12%)</td>
<td>13 (14%)</td>
<td>12 (11%)</td>
<td>90 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Task Card Example and Rubrics

**Play:**

**Directions:** You and your teammates have been assigned the Underground Railroad. You must compose a short play that embodies the emotions and actions of individuals involved. Your play should be approximately 5-10 minutes in length. Be sure to include historically accurate information and that all members of your group participate equally in the production and presentation of the play.

For your group the roles will include:

- runaway slave
- slave owner
- conductor of the Underground Railroad
- bounty hunter
- Underground Railroad homeowner

* Remember one person must play each role. Whenever possible include a real historical figure that we have studied to fill each role. Think about how your character would feel in each situation. What would they do, say, and think? Be creative and evaluate the perspective of each character.

**Visual Aspect:** For the play, each team must add a visual aspect. This visual aspect may be of your choosing and can include items such as a large backdrop or props. The visual aspect must enhance the performance of your play and the historical accuracy.

**Peer Review:** For the other groups’ plays, pay close attention. Decide which Civil War event they are representing and what historical figures are being represented. Describe in detail what evidence you used to reach these conclusions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Historical Accuracy</th>
<th>Composition and Organization</th>
<th>Visual Representation</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Accuracy</td>
<td>Overall, the quality of the historical information in the play is excellent. All events and historical figures are represented in a way indicative of actual events.</td>
<td>The composition/organization of the play is excellent. The flow of the play is in alignment with the order of actual historical events. All statements from historical characters are creative and are clearly developed from evaluating evidence of history.</td>
<td>The quality of the visual representation is excellent. It reflects the time period and dramatically enhances the performance of the play. It enhances the value of the performance rather than taking away from it.</td>
<td>The quality of the performance is excellent. All students engage with one another in an appropriate manner. The students display enthusiasm for the material and perform dramatically in a way that represents the emotions/sentiments of historical figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Category</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Accuracy</td>
<td>Overall, the quality of this historical information is excellent. Events and historical figures are represented in an accurate way. The performance could be enhanced slightly with historical information.</td>
<td>The composition/organization of the play is good. The flow of the play in an order that is historically accurate and historical character statements are evaluated through evidence of history. The composition of the play could be enhanced with more details or a slightly different flow.</td>
<td>The visual representation is incomplete or lacking meaning. It reflects the time period and enhances the performance of the play. It enhances the value of the performance. A few more details could be added to enhance the value.</td>
<td>The quality of the performance is lacking one or more elements. Students should engage with one another more frequently. The students sometimes display enthusiasm but it should be enhanced more accurately. Emotions and sentiments should be represented more accurately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Category</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Accuracy</td>
<td>The quality of this historical information is incomplete. The events and historical figures are sometimes represented accurately. The performance could be enhanced with more or correct historical information.</td>
<td>The composition/organization of the play is incomplete. The flow of the play does not always represent historically accurate information and is not evaluated through evidence of history. The composition of the play should be enhanced with details and a better flow.</td>
<td>The visual representation is incomplete or lacking meaning. It reflects the time period and enhances the performance of the play. More details and historically accurate information should be added to enhance the value.</td>
<td>The quality of the performance is poor with little to no participation. Students do not engage with one another or do not talk at all. Students display no enthusiasm or emotions to portray their characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Category</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Accuracy</td>
<td>The quality of the historical information is poor. The events and historical figures are either lacking or not accurate. The historical accuracy should be revised.</td>
<td>The composition/organization of the play is poor. There is no clear flow or it lacks flow entirely. There is no evidence of history present. The composition and organization should be entirely revised.</td>
<td>The visual representation is poor. It does not reflect the time period or offers no details. It does not add to the performance of the play, it distracts the audience. It is not historically accurate and should be redone.</td>
<td>The quality of the performance is poor with little to no participation. Students do not engage with one another or do not talk at all. Students display no enthusiasm or emotions to portray their characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Category</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>The student accurately identifies all historical figures and events represented in the plays presented by their classmates</td>
<td>The student accurately identifies most historical figures and events represented in the plays presented by their classmates with one or two errors</td>
<td>The student sometimes identifies historical figures and events represented in the plays presented by their classmates with several errors</td>
<td>The student rarely or never identifies historical figures and events represented in the plays presented by their classmates with many errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation/reasoning</td>
<td>The student provides excellent, concrete evaluation and reasoning for how they identified historical figures and events in each play. Strong historical knowledge is always present.</td>
<td>The student provides good evaluation and reasoning for how they identified historical figures and events in each play. There are one or two errors present in reasoning. Historical knowledge is present.</td>
<td>The student provides inconsistent evaluation and reasoning for how they identified historical figures and events in each play. There are three or more errors present in reasoning. Historical knowledge is sometimes present.</td>
<td>The student provides poor evaluation and reasoning for how they identified historical figures and events. There are significant errors. Historical knowledge is not present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback to classmates</td>
<td>The student provides excellent advice to classmates that would enhance the historical accuracy and performance of the plays.</td>
<td>The student provides good advice to classmates that would enhance the historical accuracy and performance of the plays.</td>
<td>The student provides inconsistent advice to classmates about their plays. Some elements would enhance historical performance while other information is not useful.</td>
<td>The student provides poor advice to classmates. Advice is either missing or is not carefully thought out. It would offer little help to classmates in improving historical accuracy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources:


