

American Story: Historical Backdrop

As a filmmaker, your ultimate goal is to make a film that leaves your audience walking thinking and reflecting on what they just watched. They can best do this if the story they see is believable and authentic. There are subtle ways to create this authenticity through simple research of the time period. Using correct scenery and natural setting in your film adds richness and value to your story. Forrest Gump uses history brilliantly to establish this authenticity through his dialogue, his clothing, his mannerisms, and the cultural icons included in the film. It is essential that your movie demonstrates the history authentically and with authority. A couple of tasks I would like you to do:

1. Identify the historical period. Identify and **define 8 scholarly and 8 slang** vocabulary terms from this period. Scholarly terms are historical vocabulary terms used in professional publications or websites that are used to describe events or people of the period. Slang vocabulary terms are acronyms, nicknames, or abbreviated words used in everyday language.

Historical Period:	
Scholarly	Slang

2. Identify the **3 cultural attitudes** dominant during the decade of your film in US history. Summarize each cultural attitude with a statement that summarizes a stereotypical viewpoint about society at the time. Pick one cultural trait and write a short 10-line dialogue that could be used in your script where you illustrate dominant cultural attitudes of the period. For example if I was doing a film during the 1960's, I might write a dialogue between a soldier in Vietnam and his parents at the airport saying goodbye before the soldier goes to Vietnam. My dialogue would show the soldiers ignorance of Vietnam while my parents were happy I was serving my country.

Cultural Attitude #1:

Cultural Attitude #2:
Cultural Attitude #3:
Dialogue

3. **Costuming** is important in a film like this because it can give clues to the time period in history without taking up valuable dialogue. Identify at least 5 specific costume items you might use in your film. What was the name of the item, what did it look like, why was it common in those days, etc. An example would be if I was doing a film on the Vietnam War, I would write about the M-16 semi-automatic rifle.

4. **Setting Description** is important in a film like this to take note of modern objects that **would not be in your historic era** and others that would be present. E.G. would there be cars — if so what would they look like? Would there be cell phones, computers, typewriters etc. Consider what items that you could use that would show the viewer that they are in the era you wish to convey and where you might get these items for your film.

Key Items	Where we could obtain it