

Sample Essay #1

Essay Prompt: Describe how George Gershwin's Porgy and Bess became entangled in politics. Use your knowledge of the USAD Music Resource Guide to support your essay.

George Gershwin's musical Porgy and Bess, which tells the story of an African American community, was a hit from the beginning, but it became entangled in lots of political issues regarding racism and segregation. After dealing with blackface problems, boycotting theatres, how it portrayed African Americans, and how the African American community responded to it, Porgy and Bess became one of the most important musicals of the Cold War.

One of the first problems that George Gershwin had when producing Porgy and Bess was the fact that it was cast with African American actors instead of white people in black face, which was very unusual for the time. Instead of appealing to the segregation and racist environment of the time, Gershwin cast black actors in the musical.

Porgy and Bess also became political in terms of where it was performed. At the National Theatre, the cast refused to give perform while the theatre remained segregated between the African American and White audiences. The theatre eventually relented and allowed, for the first time in history, for the National Theatre to be desegregated for one of the shows. Porgy and Bess therefore became political in the sense of advancing a good civil rights agenda in the United States.

Along those lines, the Soviet Union ridiculed the U.S. for promising a better life for all the United States, yet having its African American population be treated so wrongly. It was hard for a person of color to get cast on a show, let alone remain a big Hollywood star. The United States knew this image was not a good one to present to the new independent African nations that the it was trying to bring under its sphere of influence. The United States looked at Porgy and Bess to broadcast that even African Americans could make it to the level of being able to tour and perform internationally. This proved the U.S.S.R wrong.

However, African Americans did not agree 100% on what the U.S. was portraying the African American opportunities to be. Many African Americans wondered why those touring and performing for the U.S. were allowing themselves to be used in such a way, knowing what life was actually like for an African American. Even stars from Porgy and Bess were criticized because of their involvement in a play that was being used as propaganda. The stars of Porgy and Bess also expressed that they could further civil rights by being part of this popular musical. This became political in the sense that the very same people the United States had sent out to show just how well the U.S. was in handling civil rights affairs, were the same people who were looked down on in the US.

Porgy and Bess was one of the most successful productions during the Cold War. Of course, this success came with problems and issues, related to justice and human right. After dealing with the black face problems, the boycotting, and the overseas problems, and the criticism from African Americans, George Gershwin's Porgy and Bess proved to be resilient and powerful, making it a huge success.

Sample Essay #2

Essay Prompt: Discuss how the mentality during the Cold War affected spending and nuclear weapons production during the Soviet-American arms race. Use your knowledge from the USAD Economics Resource Guide to support your essay.

The mentality during the Cold War was very paranoid which led both sides during the Cold War to focus spending on nuclear weapons during the Soviet-American arms race. When the Cold War occurred there was a great concern to the idea of the enemy having devastating power, so to assure safety and intimidation both sides of the Cold War spent massive amounts of money for nuclear weapons.

After the devastating events of World War Two it is seen that the same type of dilemma for competition between the American and Soviets had occurred. At the end of World War Two, America was already beginning to fear the growing Soviets and had to prevent the possible nuclear tragedy. America was practically forced to spend a massive amount of money because the fear that communism might spread needed to be stopped by something and like almost everything it was definitely not going to be free. The race to power from the beginning and end of the Cold War was provided by money, and that need for quick power was fueled by fear from both sides as seen in the Marshall Plan.

A lingering mentality that ultimately affected the decisions of the Cold War was the fear of the other side. In the situation of the Soviet-American arms race there was a fear and need of nuclear weapons, both sides needed to spend massive amounts of money for the nuclear weapons and assure safety and domination but even in the early Cold War there were events such as the massive amounts of spending for the American Marshall Plan to assure safety and domination from communism because of the fear from Soviet growth. Throughout all of the Cold War fear played a major point in the need to spend money.