

Cicero, Indiana: Ryan White's Advocacy for Acceptance and Truth

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Senior Division

Individual Performance

Process Paper:

493 Words

Process Paper

Since I was little, I've loved the Indianapolis Children's Museum. My favorite exhibit has always been the Ryan White, Anne Frank, and Ruby Bridges exhibit, titled "The Power of Children." Ryan White's story always struck me hardest, with him being from Indiana, and I could immediately align his story with this year's theme. Ryan came from a community of people that refused to listen to him when he shared the facts about AIDS. He stayed determined, taking the opportunity to share his story with America, opening up a conversation about the reality of an AIDS diagnosis.

I started my research at the Children's Museum exhibit, reading their articles and excerpts from people he knew. From there, I gathered the key points about his life and the AIDS crisis that I wanted to expand on in my project. I decided to do my piece as a performance per my teacher's suggestion and my love for theater arts. One of the hardest parts of my project was developing the protestor character, because it required me to step outside of my own mindset and think about the perspective of those in Kokomo. Using real interviews from the 80's and letters from his life, I was able to set up the points I wanted to make and the information I wanted to present.

My historical argument is that Ryan White, by sharing his story, started a conversation to communicate with the American public in order to accurately present the reality of AIDS. When AIDS was on the rise in the 1980's, it was blamed on homosexual men and drug addicts. Ryan, however, developed AIDS through a blood transfusion, and actually spoke about the slurs that people called him after he was diagnosed. Because of this, he fought to prove that AIDS wasn't to blame on any particular group that society deemed "disgraceful". Ryan was able to speak to the entire nation, sharing how AIDS actually worked, and dispelling some previous stereotypes,

and, because Ryan developed AIDS from a blood transfusion, scientists and the CDC were able to understand more about how AIDS worked and who could contract it, helping blood screenings become enforced to help check for bad blood donations.

Ryan White's biggest contribution politically was his advocacy for the Ryan White CARE Act, named after him when he died. Under this act, people with HIV and AIDS are able to receive affordable treatment thanks to funding from the government. Ryan influenced health programs in school to provide more education on AIDS and HIV, practices that had previously not been in place. He reached the President's Commission on AIDS and gave a speech at the White House that influenced the CARE Act to be set into motion. He played a major role in the United States's history, touching the hearts of civilians with his courage and kindness, opening the eyes of those previously caught up in stereotypes, and using the power of words to educate a nation.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Herzfeld, John, director. *The Ryan White Story*. Landsburg Company Saban International, 1989.

The *Ryan White Story* is a dramatized documentary that covered the time from Ryan's diagnosis to his move to Cicero, Indiana. It gave a detailed insight into the lives of Ryan and his family as they were harassed during their time in Kokomo, and it also explained the growth in Ryan's fame as his case became national news and he was painted as the face of the AIDS epidemic. I used this source specifically to know more about the specifics of Ryan's diagnosis and his history with Kokomo, as well as his relationship with his mother and how things changed for him when he moved.

History.com Editors. "History Uncut: Ryan White 1986." History.com, A&E Television Networks, 30 May 2012, www.history.com/topics/1980s/history-uncut-ryan-white-1986-video.

In 1986 Ryan White gave this interview on his return to school after winning the court battle that allowed him to attend school on the account that AIDS was considered a handicap. This interview helped me understand how Ryan was feeling during a surely terrifying time, moving back into an area from which he had been shunned, and how both he was dealing with it as well as the students and parents who were afraid of him. I used it to expand more on how big

Ryan was becoming, to the point where he was being interviewed by many news outlets at such a young age to tell his story.

King, Caroline. "Interview with Doctor Woody Myers." 20 Jan. 2020, Accessed 20 Jan. 2020.

This interview with Doctor Myers - Indiana's senior doctor in 1988 and on the defendant team for Ryan when he went to federal court - really helped me understand Ryan's story and the epidemic from a different point of view. I used to further my understanding of the medical history of the AIDS crisis, as well as get a closer look as to who Ryan was to someone who worked with him and knew him personally as a patient and as a person.

"Ryan White Letters." *Indiana Memory Hosted Digital Collections.*"

<https://indianamemory.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/RyanWhite/search>

This online database provided me with many letters written to the White family during the years 1989 and 1990. I used these letters to be able to explain Ryan's impact on other people around the country, and how he was viewed by others who looked up to him. These letters helped me understand more about Ryan's personal life and the effect that his story was having on the people around him, allowing me to paint a more accurate picture of him and his story in my performance.

"Ryan White's Mother Remembers Jackson." CBS News, CBS Interactive, 8 July 2009,

www.cbsnews.com/news/ryan-whites-mother-remembers-jackson/

In this interview with Ryan White's mother, Jeanne White-Ginder, recalls the relationship between Ryan and celebrity Michael Jackson. This interview showed me just how widespread Ryan's story had become, as he is even referred to as the face of the epidemic, as well as how

celebrities went out of their way to connect with him to show others that there was no need to fear Ryan, and that he was a normal person that they wanted to be around. I used this interview to know more about Ryan as a public figure as well as how he was perceived by the people who knew him and heard about his story.

White, Ryan. *AIDS Boy Banned From Attending School - 1st August 1985*. YouTube, uploaded by CampaignTB, 2 Nov. 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCMr9jbq3Tk>

A news report on the case between the White family and Ryan's middle school in 1985 interviews Ryan on his being banned from attending school in person. From this I gained a better understanding of the discrimination Ryan faced and the lengths that people went to in order to defend their idea of what AIDS is and how it should be dealt with. I used this interview to be better able to explain the specifics of Ryan's case and his life before he moved to Cicero, Indiana.

White, Ryan. *1988 Ryan White Interview on Being Bullied*. YouTube, uploaded by JPMcFly1985 Retro Videos, 24 Mar. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXnnbXwHkwE>

In this 1988 interview Ryan describes his time at his old school and how he was treated by his fellow students and their parents. I used this interview to get a better grasp on the growth of Ryan's situation as he moved from hatred in Kokomo to a welcoming community in Cicero. It gave me an insight on the horrible treatment Ryan and his family received after his diagnosis from people that they used to call friends, as well as painting a picture of how fear overtook his community and turned them against him.

Secondary Sources

“History of HIV and AIDS Overview.” *Avert*, Avert, 10 Oct. 2019,

www.avert.org/professionals/history-hiv-aids/overview.

This source outlined the history of HIV and AIDS in the USA and those affected, as well as how the CDC, health officials, government officials, and the general public responded to the epidemic. I used this source for more scientific and historical knowledge on AIDS as a disease and how it affected the country. It helped me understand how the stigmas surrounding AIDS grew, as well as the progression of the understanding and the medical care/treatment of AIDS and HIV.

“Homophobia and HIV.” *Avert*, 10 Oct. 2019,

www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-social-issues/homophobia.

This article helped me with the information I needed regarding Ryan White’s influence in equality when it came to the AIDS epidemic. I now understand more about the stereotypes of AIDS and how they were largely based in homophobia, generating blame for the disease targeted towards members of the LGBTQ+ community. Using this article, I was able to delve more into the de-stigmatization that Ryan White worked for, as he was called slurs and was threatened with homophobia as well because of the stereotypes tying homosexuality and AIDS together.

Rawl, Paige, and Alison Benjamin. *Positive: Surviving My Bullies, Finding Hope, and Living to Change the World*: Harper, an Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2014.

The book *Positive: Surviving My Bullies, Finding Hope, and Living to Change the World* by Paige Rawl and Alison Benjamin strengthened my understanding of the biology behind AIDS

and HIV, as well as what life is like for a teenager who has been diagnosed with either of the diseases. From pages 172-174, Ms. Rawl explains the history of HIV and AIDS during the 1980's epidemic in America, as well as the stigmas placed on those who contracted the diseases, from the perspective of someone looking back currently dealing with said diseases. I consider this memoir a secondary source because Ms. Rawl was born after the epidemic and did not personally witness it or know Ryan White.

The Children's Museum of Indianapolis. "Ryan White: Fighting Discrimination, Finding Determination." 2007. PDF File.

This PDF file contains extensive lessons and descriptions of the in-person Ryan White exhibit at The Children's Museum. It described Ryan's life, his accomplishments, and what can be learned from his struggles and triumphs, and it helped me understand more about Ryan's time at school and the background of some of the interviews he did with major news outlets to spread awareness to his cause. I used the source to understand more about Ryan's life in Cicero, Indiana, and his new life there.

NHD PERFORMANCE COMPANION WORKSHEET

Purpose: Submitted with your process paper and annotated bibliography, this worksheet will help judges understand your performance’s background, costumes, and props.

Instructions: Please complete this worksheet with information relevant to your project.

- There is an 11 page limit: 2 pages for performance information, overall scenario, and characters and 3 pages per section for background, costumes, props.
- The overall word count for this worksheet should not exceed 1,270 words.
- All student text in this worksheet must be in a 12 point font.
- Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri fonts accepted.
- Remove sections if they are not applicable to your performance.
- Photos should be taken by the students and reflect the actual elements of your performance. Students can appear in the photos in this worksheet. No photo citations are necessary on this worksheet.
- Paperwork order: Title Page, Process Paper, Companion Worksheet, Annotated Bibliography
- A script is not required for your submission.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION	
Project Title	<i>Cicero, Indiana: Ryan White’s Advocacy for Acceptance and Truth.</i>
Student Name(s)	Rebecca Piñero
Division/Category	Senior Individual Performance
Performance Runtime	9:56
Performance Companion Worksheet Word Count (starting with the performance overall scenario box; should not exceed 1,270 words)	232 words
Thesis	When Ryan stepped up and shared his story, he started a conversation. He gave America the opportunity to communicate with someone who was discriminated against because of his diagnosis, and begin to see where they went wrong. He showed us how to snap stigmas by giving us the facts about AIDS and how it’s actually spread, giving us a chance to educate ourselves and realize where the stigmas are based. Through the power of his words and peace, Ryan White has been leading us as the face of the AIDS epidemic, touching our hearts and opening our eyes, and that’s why he’s our feature.

**Performance Recording
Link**

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AJ7Hc3BCr_-3Hw6sUgdorvIrfVIn3JA/view?usp=sharing

PERFORMANCE OVERALL SCENARIO

Story Setting(s)- 60 Word Limit

Where does the performance take place?

Hamilton Heights Yearbook Meeting (Cicero, Indiana). Hamilton Heights Student Assembly. Kokomo, Indiana.

Timeframe- 60 Word Limit

When does the performance take place?

After Ryan's diagnosis while he still lives in Kokomo - 1985; before Ryan comes to Hamilton Heights - 1987; before Ryan dies during his senior year of highschool - 1990

Story Synopsis - 100 Word Limit

A student is the head of the yearbook club at Hamilton Heights, and wants to do a story on the life of Ryan White, a famous senior attending there who has been diagnosed with AIDS. Some flashbacks of important times in Ryan's life after his diagnosis occur as she recounts major things she wants to describe in the pages dedicated to him. The yearbook has never done something like this before, and she wants it to be special.

CHARACTERS

Remove rows as needed.

Character Name	Actor	Description/background for the character <i>10 Word Limit per Character</i>
Yearbook Committee Director	Rebecca Piñero	Head of the Yearbook Committee; student at Hamilton Heights.
Dr. Myers	Rebecca Piñero	Medical official who works with Ryan and advocates for him.
Protester	Rebecca Piñero	Parent at Ryan's school who is against Ryan returning there.

PERFORMANCE BACKGROUND

Over the next 3 pages, provide photos and descriptions of your performance background. Please remove any scenes that don't apply to your performance.

BACKGROUND BY SCENE

Scene # 1

Photo

Photo Size should be 3x3 maximum



Description

What is the purpose of the background in this scene?

50 Word Limit

The background of the scene is open, allowing it to represent multiple settings. There is a stand in the background to hold the stethoscope, and the only other prop is off to the side.

PERFORMANCE COSTUMES

Over the next 3 pages, provide photos and descriptions of your performance costumes.
Please remove any scenes that don't apply to your performance.

COSTUME(S) BY SCENE

Scene # 1

Photo

Photo Size should be 3x3 maximum



Description

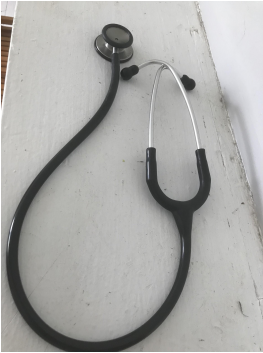
What is the purpose of the costume in this scene?

50 Word Limit

The costume is simple black and white so that it can be worn by any of the characters.

PERFORMANCE PROPS

Over the next 3 pages, provide photos and descriptions of your key performance props.
Please remove any scenes that don't apply to your performance.

KEY PROP(S) BY SCENE	
Scene #1	
Photo <i>Photo Size should be 3x3 maximum</i>	Description <i>What is the purpose of the props? 50 Word Limit</i>
	The purpose of this prop is to distinguish Dr. Myers from the yearbook director. Dr. Myers was one of the driving forces in communicating the facts about AIDS to the public during Ryan's career.