

## HUMANITIES REPORT SAMPLE

This past summer, I devoted myself to the development of my honors playwriting thesis – a script currently entitled, *A Little Prayer*. The incredible financial freedom afforded to me by the Kaori Kitao fellowship allowed me to focus my time and my energies on fleshing out the plot of this rather substantial work. The premise of the piece is this: a group of survivors in a post-apocalyptic world rally around a Christian preacher who has no faith of his own but feels mounting pressure to keep up his charade so as to not let down his community.

Because I have no experience of my own as a Christian minister, I conducted research on sermons by going through archives of old sermons – particularly sermons given in times of crisis. Too many of these, however, seemed excessively harsh, with fulminations against human sinfulness, and promises of greater ordeals should humanity fail to repent, ie. “If you sinners don’t recognize your fallenness and make amends to the Lord, 9/11 will only be the tip of the iceberg!” etc. None of this seemed to align with the style of the preacher character that I had in mind, and so instead I reached out to the pastor of a church that I once attended in my hometown. I knew him to be kind and just, in addition to being deeply religious, and so I hoped that he might offer a different perspective. He had a gentler approach to making sense of catastrophe, which focuses more on tenderness and looking after one another; God reveals himself through the glimmerings of altruism when humanity comes together in the face of disaster.

I revisited biblical scripture as well, in order to find appropriate stories for my pastor character to cite during his own sermons, as well as verses that other characters might quote at one another. I felt that my fictitious preacher would primarily discuss the teachings of Christ in the new testament (such as the Beatitudes) during the first act of the play, and then the less flattering parts of the bible from the old testament (Leviticus, etc.) in the second act.

I unfortunately was not able to complete the script over the summer as I had intended; writer’s block continuously frustrated my efforts, and on numerous occasions, I scrapped entire scenes from the play. However, I did develop a cast of strong characters, and through repeated storyboarding, a richer plot than my original conception. I will continue to work on this text this fall, under the guidance of Professor James Magruder, and will have a completed work by the end of the semester. It is my hope to have the play produced in the spring here at Swarthmore College, with the support of our theatre department.