

Implementing Digital Storytelling in the Classroom

Timelines, Tips and Techniques



Introduce the Project To Your Class *(Approximately one-half of one class period)*

1. Introduce the Project and the Process of Digital Storytelling
 - a. Introduce the Essential Question and explain that each group of students will conduct research and answer the essential question through the production of a movie or “digital story”.
 - b. Consider showing your finished sample movie to illustrate.
 - c. Cover the phases of creating a digital story, emphasizing the need for a script and storyboard BEFORE proceeding to images and movie creation. (Consider creating the “filmstrip” wall hanging with the phases written out.)
 - i. Preproduction –
 1. Scriptwriting
 2. Storyboarding
 3. Organizing folders
 - ii. Production (this phase is completely driven by the storyboard!!)
 1. Recording voiceovers
 2. Gathering images
 3. Beginning movie creation
 - iii. Post Production
 1. Adding effects, title screens, and background music to your movie
 - iv. Distribution
 1. Sharing finished products!

Make some notes of your own here. Perhaps things you learned while creating your story or an explanation of what will be done with the student’s finished product. (For example, in the Zoo project the student videos will be on display at the zoo. For other projects, videos may be shared on a web site or in other ways.)

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Introduce the Six Elements of a Good Digital Story *(Approximately one class period)*

2. Examine the Six Elements
 - a. Divide your students into 6 groups and assign each an element. They should read and discuss the element they will be critiquing. The elements are explained in the notebook used in the workshop or you can download them from Blackboard.
 - b. Show one of the sample movies (available on Blackboard)
 - c. Each group will discuss their element and report out their thoughts.
 - d. Shift the elements assigned to the groups (the group with element one now gets element two, etc.)
 - e. Show another sample movie.
 - f. Continue as time allows. You should show at least three sample movies.
 - g. Return to examining your Essential Question and how the six elements might be applied. For some projects (especially the Zoo project) a balance between “living in your story” and the information has to be kept. Merely covering information is boring, is usually plagiarized and sounds like a video encyclopedia. Extreme creativity, on the other hand, can move a story away from what the zoo needs.

Make some notes of your own here. Consider generating a list of “do’s” and “don’ts” of implementing the six elements within your specific project.

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Assign projects to Students *(Approximately one-half of one class period)*

3. Assign topics to student groups.
 - a. Students should be in groups of 3 if possible or 4 as a maximum.
 - b. For some projects, it is appropriate that each group works on the same topic and for some projects it is appropriate that each group gets a unique subtopic.
 - c. You may have already decided the subtopics the various projects will cover and decide to assign them to groups
 - d. Or you may want students to brainstorm subtopics and select one that interests them
 - e. Make sure there is enough information *from your curriculum* for the students to research, synthesize and evaluate.
 - f. Keep your subtopics narrow enough that they can be covered in a 2-3 minute video.

Make some notes of your own here about how you plan to assign projects to your students.

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Gathering Research

*(The length of time depends upon the amount of research needed
and if some of the research will be assigned for homework.)*

4. Students gather research needed for scripts
 - a. Some information will be gathered whole class through lecture, lab activities and class discussion that would normally occur.
 - b. Some information may be gathered through interactions with a community partner or expert (in person or online)
 - c. Some information may be gathered through Internet research
 - d. Some information should be gathered outside of class hours as homework

Make some notes of your own here. Consider listing possible research resources, such as books, Internet sites, United Streaming videos, and community partner contact information. If you would like an electronic discussion board to allow your students to ask questions of your community partner, contact one of the project leaders.

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Script Writing

(Writing a script for a 2-3 minute video should take the students approximately 5 hours of writing time, including opportunities to conference with you to ensure they are working in the right direction.)

5. Students write scripts (*Some class time and some time spent outside of class*)
 - a. Some scriptwriting may be done outside of class, but some should be done during class when the group can work together, combining their research.
 - b. Remember that **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE WHOLE PROCESS**. This is when your students are *learning*.
 - c. Remember that they need to be “in” the story to avoid sounding like a video encyclopedia – and to avoid plagiarism! Force them to work at the higher order thinking levels!
 - d. Don’t forget to conduct Script Peer Reviews (Forms are available on Blackboard)
 - e. Review student scripts often watching for the six elements and also making sure that they are on target for the learning you want them to achieve.
 - f. Coach students to stay tightly on the main idea of their topic. Steer them away from going off on tangents or covering information not important to their main concept.

*Make some notes of your own here. How are you going to manage conferencing with your students? How are you going to structure peer reviews? Make sure you complete your first conference with students **VERY EARLY** in the script writing process.*

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Storyboard

(One class period or done/finished for homework)

6. Students storyboard script
 - a. Students need to chunk their script into voice-over sections. **ONE VOICE OVER PER IMAGE IF YOU ARE USING ADOBE PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS SLIDESHOW TO CREATE YOUR MOVIE.**
 - b. Students should number their narration chunks and put several line spaces between each chunk.
 - c. Have students shrink the right margin of their script and print their script.
 - d. Students should hand-write a description of the image they need next to the chunk of narration it matches.
 - e. **DO NOT let students:**
 - i. Type the descriptions (it is too tempting for them to begin surfing for images before the storyboard is finished)
 - ii. Look for images to “see what is available” before mapping out what they want/need (they will waste time)
 - iii. Insert images into the storyboard (this takes up too much time and means they were surfing for images before the storyboard was completed.)

Make some notes of your own here. How are you going to check the storyboards to ensure they are the correct structure and will guide the student work from this point forward? Remember how important the storyboard is to the rest of the project and make this clear to your students.

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Recording Narrations and Gathering Images

(One to three class periods, depending on access to recording areas and experience of students at searching for images)

7. Students Record Narrations and Gather Images
 - a. Students should NOT begin this phase without a storyboard approved by the teacher.
 - b. You will have to locate some quiet areas for students to record narrations.
 - c. Once one student knows how to record, normalize and export narrations, let that student teach others.
 - d. Students should divide and conquer this work. As one is recording narrations, others should divide up the needed images from the storyboard and begin collecting what is needed.
 - e. Remember that choral reading and multiple narrators is often confusing in a short video. Encourage students to select ONE narrator.
 - f. Remember to use a spitguard and normalize the audio!
 - g. Number the narrations so that they are easy to identify when building the movie.
 - h. Remind students to PERFORM when recording their voice!!
 - i. When capturing images from the Internet, do not use copyrighted images and be sure to use images that are at least 800x600 pixels.
 - j. Some image capturing can be done outside of class for homework.
 - k. If students number their images to match their narrations, the building of the movie will go easier. (Number numerically – 1pic.jpg; 2pic.jpg – not with text – one.jpg; two.jpg. The movie software will sort the list numerically and alphabetically during the import process. Numbering your images will allow the images to import in order.)
 - l. Remind students to keep all their images and narrations organized in folders!!

Make some notes of your own here. Where will your recording areas be? You can put more than one student in an area if they are far apart and very careful not to interfere with each other. What can you provide to help your students with images - web sites with images that will be especially helpful? Ideas for photos they can take with their cameras? Sets of photos on CD? Remember also that video looks great but requires an extra step in order to trim the video and add narration to it (using Adobe Premiere).

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Altering Images in Photoshop *(Zero class periods!)*

8. Altering Images in Photoshop
 - a. The best approach would be to NOT TEACH this to students. If a need arises to crop or alter an image, teach it at that moment. Invite ONE student from any other group that would like to know how to do it to come and watch.
 - b. Title screens can be created within your movie software using a blank screen and text or a photo slide and text. If some students wish to figure out how to do it in Photoshop, fine. But it is probably best not to encourage it!
 - c. Definitely let any student “experts” teach others how to do things as the need arises.
 - d. Remember that when you save images in Photoshop you will have to change the image type to .jpg. Photoshop likes to save everything in its native format (.psd for PhotoShop Document).

Make some notes of your own here. What effects in Photoshop do you feel comfortable showing students? Crop, Clone, Filters (artistic effects) and adding Text are the features we taught during the workshop and are covered in your notebook. You can make these directions available to your students if you wish.

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Putting It Together

(One to two class periods IF the storyboard was well constructed and all of the images and narrations are organized and named correctly.)

9. Students create their digital story by putting their images in the timeline and attaching their narrations.
 - a. Coach students to stick to the original storyboard and to not make significant changes at this point.
 - b. If a narration needs to be split, this can be done in Audacity.
 - c. Now is not the time to add pan and zoom.
 - d. Coach students to avoid adding the graphics provided in the movie software to their pictures – remind them that this is decorating, not illuminating!
 - e. Remember to develop student experts that can help to answer questions.
 - f. While the software will automatically adjust the time of the photo to match the narration, sometimes you will have to shorten or lengthen it to get the effect you need. Don't go too quickly from narration to narration.
 - g. Think about just teaching them to bring in ONE photo and add its narration, then add the NEXT photo etc. While you CAN add all the photos at once, this is sometimes a source of confusion for people. Adding one at a time can be a more organized approach. If you decide to go with the "one at a time" approach, **do not** point out to students that there is another option!
 - h. Make very clear that the audio track at the bottom is for music, NOT narrations – and then immediately check each student project to be sure the narrations are going on the image and not in the audio track.

Make some notes of your own here. As you teach the students to use the software, remember "I do, We do, You do". Have them WATCH YOU add a photo and add the narration to it. Then do it together – as you add another photo, they follow and add one of their own and put narration to it. Then they can add the rest of their photos.

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Special Effects

(One to Two class periods)

10. Students enhance their story with pan and zoom and background music.
 - i. Students should divide and conquer within their group. As one sets pan and zoom, others should be previewing and selecting music.
 - j. Music needs to be copied or “ripped” in Windows Media Player in order to be set in the background.
 - k. Remember that Pan and Zoom can be used to “crop” a picture that wasn’t altered in Photoshop.

Make some notes of your own here. Again, remember the “I do, We do, You do” method. Directions for copying music in Windows Movie Maker are in your workshop notebook.

Finishing Touches

(One class period)

11. Students apply finishing touches and save their work (“output” in Adobe Photoshop Slideshow). Save movies as DVD quality AND Web quality.

Make some notes of your own here.