

**Engaging Hearts and Minds:
Using Digital Storytelling in High School ELA Classes to
Prepare Students for the 21st Century**

by

Ana Galac

Bachelor of Arts, University of Victoria, 2009

Post-Degree Professional Program, University of Victoria, 2011

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In the Area of 21st Century Literacies (Language and Literacy)
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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Abstract

This project examines the application of digital storytelling in high school English Language Arts (ELA) classes as a means to engage students in their learning. A particular focus is placed on culturally and linguistically diverse learners to see how digital storytelling can help a wide range of students find their voice through the exploration of personally meaningful topics, including identity and community. Chapter 1 begins with an introduction, which examines the changing landscape of communication practices in the 21st century, and the need to embrace multicultural and multiliteracy practices. Curricular connections and underlining questions are outlined. The second chapter reviews current literature regarding digital storytelling practices through the theoretical lens of Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the New London Group's pedagogy of multiliteracies, and Geneva Gay's concepts regarding culturally responsive teaching. Literature pertaining to adolescent and English Language Learners, as well as multiliteracies and multimodalities is explored. Chapter 3 connects the literature to the included resources that are located in the Appendix, suggests possible classroom considerations as well as research implications, and concludes with a personal reflection. Within the Appendix teachers will find a guide to pre-teaching visual literacy in ELA classes, followed by a digital storytelling guide, a 9-lesson unit plan, and all related activities, instructions, handouts, and assessment tools. The project is created in the hopes that teachers, especially those of high school students, will see the value in incorporating digital storytelling practices in their own classrooms.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to the love of my life, my partner and best friend, Andrew Law. His unyielding love and encouragement throughout my years of study, classwork and the writing of this project are the reason I was able to achieve this educational goal. He listened when I ranted, hugged when I cried, and helped me through the minutiae of daily life routines with patience and understanding, giving me all the time, space, and support I could ask for.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I piece together my family history through a series of photographs found in an old shoebox under my Nona's bed. Stained sepia images slip through my fingers as I try imagining what it was like back when they were taken. I pause to look at a weathered photograph depicting a group of old woman, frozen in time –handkerchiefs tied tightly over their hair, seemingly pulling up the wrinkled corners of their eyes. Staunch expressions of pride are found in the slightest upturn of lips. The dusty dirt road and a stone building backdrop seem all too familiar. Have I seen this place before? How am I connected to these people? Gathering the images, I take them to my mother, who is shucking corn in the old kitchen with my Nona. I sit with them and listen, enthralled as they recount stories of times long before I was a thought in anyone's mind. A visual narrative of my family unfolds across the table as they lay out each photograph gently beside the next, weaving together a tapestry of history and identity through words and images.

Experiences such as this one invade every aspect of my life, with visual texts impacting my identity, way of communication, and my professional practice as a teacher. As an immigrant to Canada, my study of the English language came from an initial place of necessity. I remember the feeling of isolation in not being able to express myself, chasing kids around the playground and shouting, "I love you!" because I lacked the ability to ask them to play. I felt displaced and unsure of my new home, community, and place in the world. At home, my primary spoken discourse was entwined with a passion for art, and the hours spent painting and drawing played an integral role in my ability to express myself.

I was fortunate that throughout my childhood my parents supported the arts and literacy by modeling this passion themselves, and by creating an environment that held creative opportunities. Books, music, paints, and clay filled my formative years, along with enough support and free time to be creative, explore, fail, and succeed. Ever since I can remember, I have had my nose in a book or my hands on art supplies, creating paint-splattered messes and living in imagined worlds. Whether I was writing, drawing, or taking photographs, the final product was an expression of personal identity. In the art of creative expression, I found my voice. Playing with written words –pairing and mingling sounds between varying pauses, all cooperating to express a deep desire or whimsy –always enticed my imagination; however, I have always maintained the need to represent myself visually and still find that when words fail, images are my true form of expression. I find moments of eloquence through the visual narratives I create, each mark expressing emotion, layering intent, inventing possibilities, and asking the viewer to interpret and discuss. I read images the way I read books, looking for meaning behind shapes, colours, and composition. Why did the artist choose to create the image in this way, and what were they trying to say? Each image tells a story of an event, a moment in time, or about the artist and their identity at the precise moment of creation. I am enamored by the possibilities of symbolic communication, and the ability we have to tell stories with images fascinates me.

Communication in the 21st Century

While standardized English and formal academic language are important aspects of in-school learning, and the ability to read and write traditional print-texts remains an essential skill, it is also clear that what it means to be literate in the 21st century has evolved alongside technological advances and modern communication needs. To be literate today requires a certain

level of digital competency so as to be able to navigate the online world of information, and further skills are required to understand the evolving way in which information is expressed. Vacca, Vacca, & Mraz (2014) maintain that, “A literate person needs to be able to ‘read’ and ‘write’ and learn with texts that have multimodal elements such as print, graphic design, audio, video, gesture, and nonstop interaction” (p. 33). While my own students may groan when I ask them to read or write, they share their tech-prowess with me regularly and are proud of the videos, art, and games that pique their interest. They are constantly turning to these expressive outlets when working on projects. These students are bursting with digital wisdom and ideas that go far beyond the traditional literacies I grew up with, and daily they challenge what ‘text’ means in the 21st century. If these are the literacy tools and practices my students are accessing at home and finding the most relevant for their daily lives, then these are the tools that I want to use to engage, inspire, and motivate them in their learning.

Digital storytelling: Blending the old with the new.

Digital storytelling allows students to engage with modern and relevant literacy practices, while allowing for an inclusive classroom that honours multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) and ability levels, providing equal opportunities for students to express themselves through the act of storytelling (Benmayor, 2008; Wessels & Herrera, 2014). Students are able to find their voice, tell their stories, and succeed in English Language Arts (ELA) classes, which may otherwise be too challenging (Sylvester & Greenridge, 2009). As my classroom becomes more diverse each year –containing students with varying levels of ability, engagement with school, and expanding cultural and language backgrounds –I aim to reach as many of my students as possible and provide them with chances to find success. Allowing students to feel successful in their learning abilities will improve their self-efficacy, and in turn, they are more likely to find

future success and motivation to continue in their education (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Smagorinsky, 2013).

Digital storytelling blends traditional literacy practices with new ones. It embraces the notion that, “all the lessons of life can be found in story and taught through storytelling” (Rule, 2010, p. 56), while honouring the idea that our way of navigating the world is becoming increasingly digitized. The “use of digital modalities open[s] up possibilities for stories that could not be told through print alone” (Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman, 2010, p. 456), because technology allows the weaving of multiple modes: images, music, narratives, and voice in a way that printed texts alone cannot. Moreover, the digital narrative process engages students in expressing ideas through first person perspectives, requiring them to delve into reflexive practices, using various digital modalities to represent themselves (Sukovic, 2014). Students are able to tell about experiences that are personal, interesting, and unique to them, which is important in high school as students are beginning to piece together who they are, question their identities and place in the world, and look toward the future to whom they want to become. During this time of self-discovery is when I, as a teacher, come into my students’ lives and hope to impact their learning by motivating them to engage in rich, life-long literacy practices.

Embracing multicultural practices.

With an ever-growing multicultural society that embraces learners from all over the world, it becomes increasingly important for me to find ways to encourage and support the culturally and linguistically diverse students who enter my classroom. For low proficiency English Language Learners (ELLs), comprehending traditional forms of text can be extremely challenging (Ajayi, 2009; Green, 2013). Along with the need to speak and understand a new language through listening, reading, and writing, these students also need to understand the

difference between academic language and the altogether different sociocultural language of their peers (Early & Marshall, 2008). Using digital storytelling as a teaching tool can allow these students a variety of ways to explore language, identity, and their place in Canadian schools, all the while acquiring communication skills that are transferable to 21st century educational and career opportunities (Gay, 2010). Digital storytelling allows students to find confidence in their literacy abilities, and to find a voice to share their own stories (Kajder, 2004; Sukovic, 2014).

Curricular Connections

Digital storytelling is supported in British Columbia's prescribed learning outcomes (PLOs) (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007). The current English Language Arts (ELA) Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) group the terms "writing" and "representing" in one curricular organizer, allowing for a multitude of ways for students to demonstrate their understanding and ideas. Furthermore, the new draft curriculum for ELA 9 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013) uses the phrase, "a variety of texts" (p. 5) in regards to creating, viewing, or making connections with information. These broad outcomes recognize that the term "text" is evolving and allow for teacher autonomy in deciding how to bring new literacies into the classroom. With a multimodal understanding of literacy, text can be recognized as moving "away from the static, printed text to dynamic texts supported by sounds and pictures" (Sewell & Denton, 2011, p. 61) and "ranging from print texts to digital texts and from visual media texts to embodied texts, [all] deeply encoded with meaning" (Lenters & Winters, 2013, p. 228). Moreover, British Columbia's curricular documents clearly outline the importance of story and building identity at the high school level as the new draft curriculum asks students to, "Appreciate the universal importance of story..." and "Demonstrate an understanding of how

story supports the well-being of the self, the family, and the community in Aboriginal and other cultures” (BC Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 5).

Purpose and Underlying Questions

From my personal background and interests, the desire to improve my teaching practice for the betterment of my students, and my awareness of the changing landscape of literacy practices and classroom composition, came my interest in multimodal –specifically visual-teaching pedagogy. I set out to answer the following questions through a review of current literature and a subsequent project designed to help teachers:

1. How can multimodal pedagogy, implemented through digital storytelling in a high school ELA curriculum, impact students’ learning, comprehension, and engagement, to better prepare them for the 21st Century?
2. How can digital storytelling help students –including culturally and linguistically diverse learners –find their voice and explore their social, familial, and/or personal identities?
3. What tools do students require to navigate our increasingly visual culture and find confidence in their digital competencies?

Overview

In chapter 2, after a brief introduction, I begin by exploring the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that support digital storytelling practices, including sociocultural, multimodal, and culturally responsive frameworks. Next, I review current literature regarding the use of digital storytelling in high school ELA classes, focusing on adolescent and English language learners, multiliteracies and multimodalities, and concluding with the importance of storytelling and the shift towards digital storytelling. The subsequent project, found in chapter 3, is created as a

guide for teachers who are hoping to incorporate digital storytelling in their own lessons, and who may be working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. I provide a short digital storytelling unit for any Grade 9-10 ELA class, focusing on students' personal, social, and cultural identities, explored through stories about their communities and their sense of belonging.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The traditional teaching model has been considered and reworked numerous times with new theories arising out of changes in global and social needs and priorities. The traditional model situated the teacher as the lecturer and knowledge keeper, while students were meant to sit and listen, learn individually, and memorize content. The drive for students to succeed came from an extrinsic grade-based reward system, with learning measured primarily through summative assessment. In sharp contrast, modern constructivist and sociocultural models of curriculum focus on the social aspect of learning with students as the center, or driving force, of their education (Drake, Reid, & Kolohon, 2014, pp. 3-9).

While traditional teaching methods were meant to mold students into efficient learners, grouping all students under the same umbrella with the same teaching methodology, today we acknowledge that students learn in a variety of ways. Modern teaching practices recognize that students have individual learning needs which require varied lessons that honour multiple intelligences, learning abilities, and cultural and language practices (Friesen & Jardine, 2009). Students understand their world based on prior experiences and knowledge, cultural backgrounds, and through a unique skill set that may be different for all other learners. For example, I learn through visual and kinesthetic means, and am also most apt at representing my understanding through visual expression. My cultural background affects how I view and understand the world, society, my peers, and myself as a learner. Similarly, students in the classroom will learn through a slightly different lens than those around them (Vygotsky, 1978). Digital storytelling is a modern pedagogical practice that supports and validates cultural practices, beliefs, and multiple ways of knowing through the use of multimodal representation.

Each textual source in multimodal storytelling plays an integral role in the creation and dynamics of personal and uniquely created student stories.

In the following sections of chapter 2, three theoretical frameworks are outlined, including Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the New London Group's pedagogy of multiliteracies, and Gay's culturally responsive pedagogy. This is followed by a review of current literature exploring the use of digital storytelling through these three theoretical lenses. First, digital storytelling is explored as a means for engaging adolescents and culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Next, multimodality and multiliteracies are defined before linking these modern pedagogical ideas with current literature regarding digital storytelling and how, when applied in high school ELA classes, they can engage and enhance learning. The final section covers the importance of storytelling and how digital storytelling allows students to find confidence in their voice, place, and identity, all while embracing culturally responsive practices.

Theoretical Frameworks

There are strong theoretical and conceptual underpinnings that support the use of digital storytelling in high school ELA classes. Before delving into current research and a review of the literature, it is important that I consider three theoretical frameworks: Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978), which acknowledges social, cultural, and historic perspectives as central to students' development and learning; emphasizing the use of collaborative learning processes, engaging activities paired with semiotic tools, and inclusive learning experiences. Next, I define multiliteracies and multimodality through the theoretical lens of the New London Group's "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" (1996). Finally, I examine Geneva Gay's model of Culturally Responsive Teaching (2002) as it pertains to digital storytelling as an inclusive teaching practice.

Lev Vygotsky: Sociocultural theory.

Sociocultural approaches to the phenomenon of learning and human development were first explored and applied in theory in the nineteen-twenties and thirties by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. He began his career as a teacher, but turned his efforts to research after publishing his doctoral thesis. While Vygotsky lived a mere thirty-seven years and suffered much of his adult life from tuberculosis, he managed to write hundreds of foundational articles and publications (Smagorinsky, 2009). This period of great productivity arose out of a time of significant upheaval and turmoil as Russia went through a Civil War that culminated with the creation of the Soviet Union (Smagorinsky, 2009). During a time when studies of human development were suppressed in Russia, Vygotsky wrote his revolutionary ideas; however, after his death in 1934, Vygotsky's work was banned. It was not until the 1970's that the pioneering and innovative thinker's theories became popular, influencing and informing educational practice and research worldwide (Cross, 2010; Smagorinsky, 2007; Tappan, 2010). The numerous translations of Vygotsky's condensed ideas have led to diverse expansions and interpretations of sociocultural theory, including central concepts that define his work.

Vygotsky grounded his theories around three important concepts, and this framework has become the foundation for sociocultural psychology and theory, which recognizes societal and cultural beliefs and attitudes as central to human learning (Cross, 2010; Mahn, 1999). Firstly, he suggested that higher order mental functions are tied to both genetics and development, meaning that the ability to think and reason cannot simply be relegated to genetics, or how one is raised or taught. Rather, both are inextricably linked. Vygotsky also believed that humans use physical and psychological tools to navigate mental functions, and "he considered language the most important" (Tappan, 2010, p. 24) tool or sign system that shapes learning. He believed language

was “an instrument of thought” that would help a child plan and solve problems (Tappan, 2010, p. 24). Finally, his main premise stated that the development of higher-order cognitive functions –and therefore the origins of learning –is social in nature (Smagorinsky, 2009; Swain, 2013; Tappan, 2010). Through this rich, multifaceted theoretical framework, Vygotsky examined a range of interwoven concepts, including the role of culture and language in education, learning potential, thinking and emotion, and differentiated instruction.

Vygotsky believed language to be the primary tool used to represent the world, explain ideas, and make meaning. He proposed that language is central to the appropriation of knowledge and that as a semiotic tool it is used to mediate between social and individual thinking. Through communication with others, people co-construct knowledge with language, and by internalizing external dialogue, individual thought is also shaped (Smagorinsky, 2007, 2013). He suggested that the way to discover new thoughts is to discuss problems until ideas arise and new meanings are formed. This verbal brainstorming can then be used to produce text to which others can add or base new ideas from, making the original thought one shared and expanded upon within society (Smagorinsky, 2007). Vygotsky also realized that speech varies amongst different social groups, and that to communicate effectively one must understand the speech conventions of that group. While he recognized that formal speech is often preferred in schools (Smagorinsky, 2013), he advocated for the use of informal “exploratory talk” which allows students to develop their ideas with no fear of failure. Collaborative projects, small and whole group informal discussions, and the freedom for exploration with language to produce draft ideas in response to problems have all become common educational practices, partly in response to Vygotsky’s theories regarding speech (Smagorinsky, 2007).

Vygotsky also understood that culture and historical perspectives work to shape the collective thinking of societal groups. If “all higher mental functions are internalized social relationships” (Cross, 2010, p. 438), then the way in which a student understands a topic will be mediated through prior knowledge and their cultural background. Vygotsky worried that if students come into the dominant school culture with cultural and linguistic differences, they might struggle to find success. He championed inclusive practices that validate an individual’s culture, language, past experiences, and level of ability (Smagorinsky, 2007, 2013). He further believed that “making sense of one’s environment is a fundamental task of human development” (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 202), and that students need to feel a sense of belonging to become successful in their learning, with inclusion and validation of differences the way to build students’ self-esteem. Vygotsky argued that learners should not be limited by their supposed ability levels; rather, they should be challenged to reach their greatest potential. He believed that this development could occur through collaboration with adults or more capable peers so as to facilitate the development of higher mental functioning, and by using engaging artifacts and activities (Mills, 2010; Tappan, 2010).

What teachers assess as a student’s level of ability is where learners are at that particular point in their development; however, Vygotsky believed educators must look towards the higher order thinking functions that are still forming as a student is beginning to learn a concept. This developmental potential, or zone, between what a student can do on their own presently and how much a student can do with the guidance of an adult or more knowledgeable peer, Vygotsky (1978) termed the “zone of proximal development” (p. 68). In this zone, students are able to collaboratively accomplish complex tasks that in the future they will be capable of doing independently. Through the repetition of varied challenging experiences, students can become

skilled in specific cognitive activities of their communities. The more experienced adult or peer can help shape and scaffold learning opportunities so as to support the student's evolving understanding of complex skills.

Another tenet of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory proposes that emotion is inseparable from thought (Smagorinsky, 2013). He believed that emotion and imagination work together, and that having an emotional reaction to art yields deeper understanding and helps in cognitive development. Furthermore, personalities develop and are shaped from emotional responses to personal and social drama, which also aid in the development of cognitive functions.

While Vygotsky's (1978) ideas remain influential to this day for both teachers and researchers, they must be considered in the context of the modern changes in technology, which effect both how classrooms and lessons are shaped, and how students learn. The means for collaboration, social learning, and student engagement, have significantly transformed as technology has evolved. In 1996, in response to the ever-changing field of communication, the New London Group redefined literacy and text, adding modern and relevant theoretical ideas to education and literacy pedagogy.

New London Group (NLG): A pedagogy of multiliteracies.

In 1994 a group of respected scholars came together in New London, New Hampshire, to discuss the changing landscape of communication through technology, and the implications for literacy pedagogy in educational and workplace contexts. From this open discussion forum came a theoretical overview regarding what they termed "multiliteracies", published in their seminal work, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" (NLG, 1996). They realized that, "what students needed to learn was changing", and that "[c]ultural differences and rapidly shifting communications media meant that the very nature of... literacy pedagogy –was changing radically" (p. 63).

The NLG posed two main arguments relevant to changes in modern communication practices. First, they suggested that “new communications media are reshaping the way we use language”, and that information was being transmitted through increasingly multimodal means so that text “also relate[s] to the visual, the audio, the spatial, [and] the behavioral” (p. 64). Secondly, standard English and traditional print text no longer prepared students for the growing cultural and linguistic diversity that was resulting from the global connections modern technology affords. They maintained that, “literacy educators and students must see themselves as active participants in social change” (NLG, 1996, p. 64), embracing the changes occurring in human experiences, which included working lives, public lives, and private lives.

With the dramatic shifts in communication and social experiences, the NLG understood that literacy pedagogy must change so as to provide “students the opportunity to develop skills...through learning the new language of work” (p. 67). It was through education in school settings that the NLG believed change could be affected and that adaptations to the curriculum and pedagogical practices needed to occur. Moreover, they realized that with cultural and linguistic diversity “central and critical issues... the meaning of literacy pedagogy ha[d] changed” (pp. 68-69). It became important for students to understand global and culturally diverse discourses, and have the skills to be able to code switch between varying text styles, including visual, audio, gestural and spatial, to succeed in all aspects of their lives.

The NLG also proposed a framework of “design”, maintaining that, “learning and productivity are results of the designs (the structures) of complex systems of people, environments, technology, beliefs, and texts” (p. 73). The “available designs” (p. 74) are the resources for designing and making meaning. These resources are used to shape meaning through the act of “designing”, with the available designs being re-worked and transformed into

new knowledge. From designing, new meaning and knowledge is created in the form of “the redesigned”, which is never a reproduction or restatement of ideas, rather an original concept with personal voice that includes cultural and historic beliefs. The redesigned can then become an available design. Through this process of design, the “meaning-makers remake themselves... reconstruct[ing] and renegotiat[ing] their identities” (p. 74). The NLG suggested that by implementing multiliteracy pedagogy, students will engage in designing their social futures and find personal success while discovering their individual identities.

As new technology and communication trends redefine texts and literacy pedagogy, they also shape social practices and identities. Teachers must not only work to bring relevant practices into their classrooms, but also acknowledge the diverse range of students and the out-of-school knowledge they bring into the schools. An important part of creating relevant pedagogical experiences is being aware of the cultural identities of each student. New literacy tools provide opportunities to bridge culture, language, and learning abilities through multimodal means of expression, valuing not only what students have to say, but also how they choose to say it. Gay (2002) suggests developing the potential of diverse students by creating a culturally responsive pedagogy, which ensures students are engaged by subject matter in meaningful ways that connect to their lives.

Geneva Gay: Culturally responsive teaching.

Geneva Gay (2002) advocates for Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices as our schools become increasingly multicultural, asserting that, “the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students will improve when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters” (p. 106). CRT sifts both curriculum and teaching strategies through a cultural sieve so that learning is meaningful for each individual student and, therefore, is easier

to master. Gay (2010) sees culturally responsive pedagogy as a means of empowerment, not merely for individual students, but for the collective school community. She stresses that the incorporation of culture in lessons should be seen as a means of learning, rather than an addition, or a token insertion into pre-designed lessons. CRT requires teachers to know their students as individuals through open dialogue, and with culturally sensitive understandings about where students come from and what is valued within their culture.

Pedagogy that is culturally responsive validates home cultures and languages, or primary Discourses, with capital “D” Discourse encompassing the way words are used in terms of the user’s beliefs, actions, attitudes, social identities, and “ways of being in the world” (Gee, 1989, p. 7). CRT works to bridge the gap that exists when a student’s primary Discourse varies significantly from the secondary Discourse of school. CRT suggests that teachers need to act to validate students and the prior experiences they bring with them, by acknowledging the legitimacy of all culture through culturally relevant resources, discussions, instructional strategies, and relationships with family members and the community (Edwards & Edick, 2012; Gay, 2010; Gee, 1989; Griner & Stewart, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Meidl & Meidl, 2012; Milner, 2011).

There is a large disproportionality between the ever-growing number of cultural, racial, ethnic and linguistic minority students in our schools, compared to the increasingly White, female teaching population (Griner & Stewart, 2012). CRT aims to lessen the cultural divide and take the relationships of power and dominance out of the classroom. By openly discussing cultural differences and inequities, and by empowering students to further question where they fit within society, students gain a voice not only to enact change for the betterment of their community, but also come to find pride in their culture and identity. This transformative and

emancipatory (Freire, 1970; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Meidl & Meidl, 2012) process of education teaches students to become vehicles of change within their society, giving their voice a place of authority within the dominant culture.

CRT requires differentiation and awareness of the unique identity each student brings into the classroom. Edwards and Edick (2012) maintain that a scaffolded process of interaction, accommodation, and ownership, will ultimately bring about opportunities for students that may have not otherwise existed (p. 3). The first step in creating culturally responsive learning experiences is to build significant relationships through meaningful interaction with students (Edwards & Edick, 2012; Milner, 2011). By getting to know students, the teacher not only learns what is important to each individual, but makes connections between their home, community and school lives. Through this relationship building process, a teacher is able to form bonds with students and their families, discovering what “funds of knowledge” –or the collective and accumulated experiences, information, and social practices of a community – families can offer to all students in the classroom (Moll, 2000 as cited in Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 197). Allowing for this involved and collaborative learning environment increases the likelihood of student achievement as they see relevant learning opportunities that mirror their own values (Edwards & Edick, 2012).

CRT does not suggest the act of teaching static information about other cultures, which tokenizes the content and devaluates personal identities, but promotes, rather, the sharing of collective knowledge that a family or community possesses needs within the classroom setting. Gay suggests a simple step teachers can take in creating a culturally relevant learning environment is to ensure there are resources and materials that reflect students’ cultures and experiences. Welcoming family and community members into the classroom and including their

knowledge alongside the curriculum (Gay, 2010) shifts the concept that the teacher is the purveyor of knowledge, and allows students, family, and community to play an active role in the education process and curriculum decision making.

When cultural knowledge is seen as valuable, and students are able to identify with the lessons taught in school, they are more likely to take an active role in their education (Ladson-Billings, 1995). If teachers step back from the role of knowledge keeper and instead allow students and their immediate support community to play a role in their education, students are given the opportunity to take ownership of their learning. Teachers need to demand success from *all* students, and hold high expectations. When students know that teachers expect their best, they understand that the teacher believes in their abilities (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Beyond cultural awareness, teachers need to allow for, and celebrate, home languages within the classroom, acknowledging that other languages or dialects are valid forms of expression that are valuable within the dominant culture, within the home, and as means of learning (Gay, 2010; Smagorinsky, 2013). While the language of school, primarily academic English, plays an important role in mainstream societal success and is a key learning that needs to occur, the primary language of home is equally important for students as it recognizes their cultural identity and validates the “funds of knowledge” that exist within the family and community. When students’ languages, or ways of learning, are distinctly different from mainstream educational practice, it is imperative that teachers do not consistently correct and point out flaws in their vocabulary or fluency. If this happens, students are bound to feel ‘dysphoria’ (Smagorinsky, 2013) due to perceived inferiority, a key reason many minority students withdraw or drop out of school. Moreover, building students’ confidence in their

abilities will make them “much more motivated than their peers in terms of their effort, persistence, and behavior” (Curwood, Magnifico & Lammers, 2013, p. 677).

The three aforementioned theoretical and conceptual frameworks focus on the social nature of learning through the socially mediated and changing landscape of communication, with consideration of culturally and linguistically diverse learners and the validation of their prior knowledge and experiences. Technological affordances allow for multimodal means of expression and an ever-reaching scope for worldwide communication, bringing a greater diversity of people together and expanding the types of literacy practices that can occur at home and within the classroom. The common elements found in these theories, when combined, create an educational model that places the teacher as a facilitator and students as active and collaborative learners, brings relevant and engaging tools into the classroom that embrace multiliteracy practices, and values the unique identities of each student.

In the following sections digital storytelling is explored through the lens of these frameworks, focusing on topics that include adolescent and English language learners, the importance of storytelling and a modern shift to digital storytelling, and finally multimodalities and multiliteracies with a focus on visual literacy.

Adolescent and English Language Learners

Adolescence, or the time between childhood and adulthood, is a developmental period of significant physical, emotional, intellectual, and often social change. Once students reach their teenage years and develop both physically and mentally in their readiness for learning, they are often referred to as adolescent learners. Adolescence is a continuum, and it is “not clear when the brain has finished developing” (Checkley, 2004, p. 1), meaning that the specific age could range anywhere between 10 years old, and young adulthood at 25 (Checkley, 2004). In high

school, as students get closer to adulthood, they begin to develop adolescent learner characteristics “that shape the way individuals make meaning of their world” (Davis, 2012, p. 134). The ability to both hypothetically and deductively reason strengthens at this age, as do metacognitive skills (Davis, 2012). Motivation and the ability to master goals often increases by the adolescent years, though these traits will differ amongst individuals considering that “[a]ll of these attributes are shaped in important ways by the social environment in which the learning experience occurs” (Davis, 2012, p. 134). Adolescents often both strive for independence while simultaneously seeking to belong as they are searching to find themselves. For students to be prepared for twenty-first century higher education and employment opportunities, literacy skills need to be explicitly taught throughout the adolescent years with adolescent literacy “understood as the ability to read, write, understand and interpret, and discuss multiple texts across multiple contexts” (International Reading Association, 2012, p. 2); however, for adolescents, literacy must go beyond reading and writing to involve “purposeful social and cognitive processes” that allow learners to discover ideas, make new meanings, and invoke higher order thinking skills (NCTE, 2006, p. 5).

For those adolescents who also happen to be English Language Learners (ELLs), this time of personal growth and development can also be full of daunting challenges. These students must develop a skillful command of English as they navigate the complexities of secondary schools, learn grade-level subject matter, and compete with their native-speaking peers (Green, 2013). ELLs are students whose first language is not English, though they may speak more than one other language fluently. They are those students who are in the process of acquiring proficiency in English but not yet considered fully fluent (NCTE, 2008). Their English proficiency may range from having little to no English language competency, to having a fairly

proficient grasp of the English language with adequate fluency, possibly still lacking in vocabulary or syntactical knowledge (August, McCardle, & Shanahan, 2014; de Schonewise & Klingner, 2012). Since academic achievement requires having the language tools to fully participate in aspects of classroom life, such as listening with comprehension, speaking about ideas and concepts, reading for varied purposes, and capably writing across a wide range of genres, finding academic success can be exceedingly difficult for adolescent ELLs (de Schonewise & Klingner, 2012).

The fastest growing segment of the school population are ELLs from a diverse range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (August et al., 2014; Brooks & Thurston, 2010; Green, 2013). Culture “encompasses beliefs, norms and acceptable behaviors that form a group identity... [and] [i]t is not possible to discuss second language learning without pedagogical understanding of culture” (Green, 2013, p. 26), because “[l]anguage is a manifestation of culture” (de Schonewise & Klingner, 2012, p. 56). ELLs’ identities are intertwined with big “D” Discourses as they try to navigate the way words are used in terms of the users’ beliefs, actions, attitudes, and social identities. Gee (1989), like Vygotsky (1978), contended that in order to learn the Discourse of an academic discipline, a person must have extensive guidance and mentoring through social interaction with people who are proficient in the academic Discourse of that community. When ELL students are able to, “decipher these sociocultural rules, maximum language learning and academic success can be achieved” (Green, 2013, p. 26). Since the Discourse gap can be large for racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students, the teacher plays an important role in finding culturally responsive ways to bridge the gap between home culture and language, and school culture and language.

In a 2010 study, Theodore and Afoláyan aimed to see how digital storytelling could help

teachers learn to be more culturally sensitive with diverse students in urban classroom settings. The two-semester study was conducted in a course about multicultural education with 77 participants, all undergraduate pre-service teachers, predominantly Caucasian and middle class from small towns in the United States (US). Although this study focused on students in undergraduate teaching courses, the ideas encompassed in the study are applicable to Grade 9-10 English Language Arts education because researchers not only looked at the use of digital storytelling as a cultural mediator, but also at how teachers could use this pedagogical practice in their classrooms for such purposes. Most of the students “were not aware that they had a ‘culture’...coming from a monocultural upbringing” (p. 99). The researchers set out to see what students could learn about culture through creating digital stories, what they could learn about culture by watching and discussing the digital stories created by others, and how this practice could transfer to their classroom teaching model.

After viewing digital story examples, which were understood to be “a 2-to-4 minute digital video clip, most often told in first person narrative, recorded with your own voice, illustrated mostly with still images, and with an optional music track to add emotional tone” (Barrett, 2005 as cited in Theodore & Afoláyan, 2010, p. 95), students had the opportunity to discuss digital storytelling concepts, as well as textbook theory regarding multicultural education. The assignment guideline outlined the steps for the process of creating the story, including brainstorming, gathering images, organizing images, writing and then recording a script, and finally arranging images and effects to match recorded scripts. While students were encouraged to work in collaborative groups, each student was responsible for creating their own digital story about their own culture. In the end, students were required to share their projects with their class, and submit written work describing their learning process at the end of the

semester.

The digital storytelling projects and written work were subject to qualitative analysis, including the independent coding of themes by the two researchers before jointly analyzing the portions that were first coded similarly. Further data was collected from transcripts from a digital bulletin board, which students were required to use for discussion.

Theodore and Afoláyan (2010) found three dominant themes from their data collection. Importantly, these students were able to use digital storytelling effectively to both realize they had a culture and learn how each was distinctly unique. Moreover, by viewing the stories of others, students became aware of the cultural differences that existed in a community they thought was monocultural, many learning “to recognize cultural difference [and] to become aware that others' perspectives may differ from one's own” (p. 101). Finally, students were able to see “the commonalities that connect us as human-beings” (p. 102). The findings led the researchers to conclude that digital storytelling was an effective tool in teaching cultural awareness.

Theodore and Afoláyan's study is based on Gay's theory of culturally responsive teaching as their study explores how both teachers and students can bring their home cultures into an educational setting, validating identities of self and others. The study also is supported by Vygotsky's ideas of social constructivism as collaboration was encouraged as a way to explore new ideas and meanings. Finally, the NLG's pedagogy of multiliteracies is honoured as student-teachers explore concepts of identity and culture through multimodal digital texts.

Other research, conducted by Yang and Wu (2012), explored ELLs' experiences with digital storytelling through a year-long quasi-experimental study. The researchers maintained that most teachers still struggle with incorporating technology in the classroom (p. 342), and

therefore wanted to compare teaching methods. They aimed to discover the differences in achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation between pedagogical approaches –a lecture based approach to teaching with technology, and the more “learning by doing” (p. 340) approach of digital storytelling.

The study included over one hundred participants, double the ratio of boys to girls, from two Grade 10 English classes in Taiwan whose average test scores prior to the study were considered low. One class of students was taught using lecture style methods, while the experimental group was taught using digital storytelling methods, with instructional goals the same for both classes: to improve “vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading, and writing skills” and to become familiar with two Chinese festivals (p. 345). Researchers met with teachers prior to the study and designed a 10-week unit. Data was collected from students participating in the study prior to and after the digital storytelling project, along with interviews that were conducted in groups.

The students learning to create digital stories had their technology knowledge scaffolded between lessons. The teacher first introduced the vocabulary of digital storytelling, demonstrated examples, and outlined the tasks and roles that needed to be assigned within each group. The teacher posed guided questions to prompt discussions, and then took on the role of facilitator, monitoring the progress of each group. Groups had a chance to present their preliminary work to the class and receive feedback so as to be able to revise and edit their work, before presenting a final product to the class at the end of the study.

After analyzing test scores, Yang and Wu concluded that digital storytelling had a significant effect on academic achievement in improving English proficiency. Students’ listening, reading, and writing were markedly better than the control group, which Yang and Wu

believed resulted from students listening to other group's projects, discussing their ideas, and editing their work collaboratively. Students not only had to understand their peer's ideas, but also had to provide constructive and critical perspectives. Both classes scored equally in terms of vocabulary and grammar, suggesting that digital storytelling enabled students' understanding of these concepts with equal effectiveness. Critical thinking scores were much higher in the digital storytelling group, likely due to the fact that students needed to make interpretations, as well as judge and evaluate information provided by their peers. Finally, learning motivation was much higher in the digital storytelling group as students felt challenged in a meaningful, social, and creative way. Interviews showed that students were proud of their digital stories and that their level of self-efficacy in regards to their technological and language abilities had improved. Yang and Wu see "the potential of DST as an approach for fostering collaborative second language learning in an environment that fosters higher order thinking and learning motivation" (p. 350).

Yang and Wu's study is supported by the theoretical frameworks of Vygotsky, Gay, and the NLG. As Vygotsky suggests, students worked together to discuss and edit ideas collaboratively, learning from each other and co-constructing knowledge. Gay's concept of culturally responsive pedagogy embraces the teacher as facilitator who encourages students to use their primary language to mediate the acquisition of their second language. In this study, students were able to use their native language to discuss problems and ideas before working together to find the answers in English, as the teacher stepped back and acted as a guide rather than lecturer. Finally, the use of digital storytelling as a medium for learning embraces the ideas of multiliteracies outlined by the NLG, as students were required to use multimodal digital texts and skills to improve their 21st century communication competencies.

With technology and the digitization of information, new genres as well as new contexts for communication are emerging through varying combinations of multimodal formats. The following section defines and explores multiliteracies and multimodalities before delving into research regarding digital storytelling and visual literacy practices.

Multiliteracies and Multimodalities

The concepts of multiliteracies and multimodalities have both emerged in response to the changing social and semiotic landscape, arising out of shifts in modern communication due to the affordances of digital communications technology. The term “multiliteracies” was first introduced by the New London Group (1996) to encompass “the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity” (p. 63), and has become a pedagogical theory used to rethink and redesign the landscape of education (Jewitt, 2008). Multiliteracies stretch the traditional ideas of literacy beyond written and spoken language, to “connect with the culturally and linguistically diverse landscapes and the multimodal texts” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 245). The term “multimodality” means that meaning is constructed through multiple representational and communicational resources, including visuals, written and spoken linguistic codes, sound, gesture, and so on (Kress, 2010; Jewitt, 2008). Kress (2010) maintains that meaning is made using a variety of modes, with the term “mode” referring to a “socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning” (Bezemer & Kress, 2008, p. 171), which can include image, writing, speech, and other communicative sources. Multimodality suggests that modes do not occur independently (Kress, 2010) indicating the complexity and intertwined relationships that exist between modes in texts. Multimodal approaches to teaching acknowledge that meaning-making involves many modes beyond language, even if only one mode is used to represent understanding.

There is a deeper level of critical analysis that must happen when a student can competently represent and manipulate ideas over a variety of literary modes. Multimodal texts allow students to access information in a variety of ways to possibly gain a deeper layer of understanding before creating meaning and making connections with written text. Integrating and layering other textual modes into storytelling practices requires students to use higher order thinking skills as they must *transmediate* information –translating concepts from one medium or mode to another medium or mode –demonstrating comprehension and fluency using multiple literacies. Moreover, using multimodal textual practices in the classroom helps to differentiate instruction, allowing for diverse students with multiple intelligences to create personal stories with a wider range of tools. There is a “fundamental importance of providing students with multiple ways to represent and express their learning” (Pantaleo, 2013, p. 371).

We live in “an age of multimedia authoring where competency with written words is still vital, but is no longer all that is needed to participate meaningfully in the many spheres of life” (Mills, 2010, p. 36). However, while many students come to school with some technological competency, students from varying backgrounds –cultural, socioeconomic, and so on –have different experiences with technology and multimodal textual practices, as well as varying degrees of access to these technological tools. Layering and scaffolding multimodal texts in the classroom is an important practice needed to prepare all learners for 21st century communication (Mills, 2010). Digital storytelling allows for the scaffolded integration of digital practices while also teaching students about visual literacy, audio and oracy practices, and how to pair these texts with traditional print-text to yield a more dynamic and engaging story.

Storytelling is most commonly associated with oral language traditions or textual literary practices; however, before the advent of written language, stories were often shared through

multimodal means. From ancient cave drawings, intricate frescos on ceilings, and dramas enacted on stages, to modern applications like Snap Chat™ and the use of emoticons, in one form or another, images have always been used as a means of communication and a way to share narratives. Hubbard (1989) maintained that, “images at any age are part of the serious business of making meaning –partners with words for communicating our inner designs” (p. 157). Visual symbols “combine with written language [and sound] to make new meanings, not necessarily linked to the concrete world, but possibly to social, imagined, and critical worlds” (Christianakis, 2011, p. 48). Using activities, such as digital storytelling, that involve visual art “has been shown to further students’ comprehension of print [text] and learning in general” (Vacca, Vacca, & Mraz, 2014, p. 35). Ohler (2009) reminds us that:

Being literate in a real-world sense means being able to read and write using the media forms of the day, whatever they may be. For centuries, consuming and producing words through reading and writing and, to a lesser extent, listening and speaking were sufficient. But because of inexpensive, easy-to- use, and widely available new tools, literacy now requires being conversant with new forms of media as well as text, including sound, graphics, and moving images. In addition, it demands the ability to integrate these new media forms into a single narrative, or “media collage,” such as a Web page, blog, or digital story. (p. 30)

In a 2013 US study, Chisholm and Trent designed a Grade 10 composition course around the idea of place to examine the potentials of allowing students to have choice in their learning and express their identity reflexively, while meeting curricular demands. Through a multimodal lens, they explored how “digital storytelling provides students with multiple tools that they can use to mediate their thinking about concepts that are central to and extend beyond the

curriculum” (p. 308).

The case study was conducted in a high school where students were predominantly Caucasian, where school-wide test marks were consistently low, and where a majority of students qualified for special education support. In total, fourteen students participated in the 12-week composition course, which began with reading of a variety of texts written by established authors, with texts all relating to identity and place. Students then had the chance to practice writing in the style of these authors. Finally, the culminating project asked students to create a digital story about place.

Chisholm and Trent analyzed the digital story of one student, looking at how she combined “linguistic and visual signs to construct meaning” (p. 313). They inspected her digital story, examining how language was used to create meaning, and how visual elements combined with story elements to create new meanings. They also triangulated with data from written reflections collected throughout the course, and with data from a final interview.

The researchers found that the student was able to transmediate meaning across sign systems “to develop a compelling narrative about place, which explores such robust concepts as identity, home, and symbolism” (p. 313). They also determined that the multimodal affordances of digital storytelling, with the use of both linguistic and visual semiotic systems, allowed the enhancement of “narrative composition in ways that couldn’t be accomplished unimodally” (p. 313), arguing that the student’s composition showcased added layers of meaning.

Chisholm and Trent found that using digital storytelling allowed students to “learn more deeply about narrative composition” (p. 315), find a unique voice while authoring their personal stories, and effectively experiment with ideas of “identity, home, stability, change, and memory” (p. 315) while connecting to the concept of place. The process helped students be self-reflexive

and work on metacognitive skills. Students incorporated traditional story elements found in the curriculum while layering in vocal narration alongside visual and linguistic elements, enabling them to think about rhythm, intonation, and pace. Furthermore, through visual texts, students were able to develop metaphors effectively, use colour as a tool to layer meaning, and add a layer of space that linguistic composition would not have captured. Digital storytelling enabled students to engage in “21st-century literacy practices that demand their fluency beyond reading and writing print texts so that they can consider ... how multiple layers of meaning are conveyed and recast across linguistic, visual, and aural semiotic modes” (p. 316).

Finally, multimodal teaching practices, such as digital storytelling, extend the traditionally available meaning-making modes and provide students with “robust opportunities for personal expression and rigorous learning” (Chisholm & Trent, 2013, p. 307). For students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, the multi-modal approach to digital storytelling allows them the ability to access and express information in a variety of ways, enabling the scaffolding of language acquisition, and the incorporation of cultural identities.

Chisholm and Trent’s (2013) study is in line with Gay’s ideas regarding culturally responsive pedagogy as well as the NLG’s theory of multiliteracies. The study promoted the use of multiple and diverse textual modes to enhance meaning, to engage and promote relevant literacy practices, and to provide students with opportunities to explore and design their personal and cultural identities.

While multimodal texts can include a variety of interlinking media forms, visual components are a key mode found in most multimodal texts. To both create visuals and ‘read’ visuals requires the understanding of how visual elements and principles of design fit together to create meaning. Visual literacy is therefore an important part of being literate in the 21st century

and requires explicit instruction at every grade level to ensure students are prepared for modern means of communication in their personal, school, and working lives.

Visual literacy.

John Deves first coined the term ‘visual literacy’ in 1968, with many varying definitions since. Ausburn & Ausburn (1978) state that visual literacy is a “set of skills” that help us “understand and use visuals for intentionally communicating with others” (as cited in Bamford, 2003, p. 1). These skills enable us to interpret and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image, and question that image in terms of social impact. As technology brings visual images to the forefront of modern communication, it becomes increasingly important that students have the ability to hone their visual literacy skills. Spalter and van Dam (2008) maintain that, “this substantial and relatively recent shift in methods of communication and ways of understanding the world is directly due to the rise of computer graphics—the ability to represent computer data visually and interact with that representation” (p. 94). This rapidly changing way of delivering and interacting with information, using images and symbols, shows a shift in the type of education students will need to navigate in the modern world. Bleed (2005) suggests that, “it is now difficult to find any industry in which knowledge workers do not need significant visual literacy skills. The 21st century workforce must every day create and critically interpret visual content” (p. 3).

While we are immersed in visual culture and are “[l]iving in an image-rich world ... [this] does not mean students (or faculty and administrators) naturally possess sophisticated visual literacy skills” (Felten, 2008, p. 60). Teachers may not teach visual literacy strategies because it is easy to assume that students already have the ability to make sense of the images they see. Many presume that “[u]nlike learning to read and write, learning to see and work with many

types of visual information seems to come effortlessly” (Spalter & van Dam, 2008, p. 96); yet, the task of making meaning from visual representations is a complicated one, considering that “[v]isual language is not – despite assumptions to the contrary – transparent and universally understood” (Kress, 2003, p. 4). Moreover, if teachers lack confidence with visual literacy practices, they may not know how to assess the learning that students exemplify through visual modes.

Holdren (2012) investigated whether visual arts projects can be used effectively to assess reading comprehension skills, and if this assessment style can be an alternative to traditional assessment. Specifically, Holdren wanted to see if students could synthesize and manipulate detail in their reading, solve interpretive problems, use metaphor and symbol to represent their interpretation, and make personal connections with text. Three classes of Grade 11 English students, from a rural school that was focused on standardized test preparation in the US, were invited to participate in an action research case study. All students read one of four novels for a 22-day literature circle unit, full of group work and question-building discussions. Students who participated in the study were able to create an arts-based assessment project, in a medium of their choice, as a way to showcase their learning. From these three classes, 21 students with varying artistic and reading abilities elected to participate in the research project.

Data came from the teacher-researcher’s anecdotal field notes, collected as she circulated around the room, along with video of the class, video of follow-up interviews, and some photographs of the projects created. Students referred to a teacher-created rubric to guide their projects, and their grade was a way to explore the effectiveness of the rubric. Students’ presented their art assessments to the class, verbally or in writing, explaining the decisions and process they used in creating their art pieces. The researcher asked 12 students whose projects

represented a range of media choices, learning styles, and abilities, to conclude with follow-up interviews, discussing their experiences with visual arts assessment for reading comprehension. Data was later coded, analyzed, and categorized into three themes: barriers to success, benefits of art assessment, and examples of higher-level thinking.

Through observation and data analysis, Holdren found that students, regardless of ability, demonstrated use of a variety of thinking skills relating their reading to art. Out of 21 students, 14 created pieces that showed connections that moved beyond literal illustration, and 10 successfully created metaphorical connections or synthesized details showing an understanding of the text's themes. A rubric was created so that those who showed metaphorical and personal connections, careful selection and manipulation of details, and proficiency of basic art skills and design concepts, would achieve a higher score. Ultimately, Holdren concluded that visual arts projects can be used effectively to assess higher-level reading comprehension skills, specifically when a rubric considers process as well as product. Furthermore, this type of assessment can be used as an alternative model of assessment to accommodate different learning styles while engaging critical thinking skills. Holdren's study is based on the NLG's ideas regarding multiliteracies as students were able to explore their understanding of print text through the exploration and creation of visual texts.

The Importance of Storytelling

In this highly multimodal and technology rich world, storytelling continues to engage people and has the power to cross the boundaries of countries and cultures. It is shared daily through social media, YouTube™ videos, and endless other applications that incorporate written, visual and audio texts. While these new literacy practices may be changing the landscape of

storytelling, our modern culture has simply developed new forms of sharing narratives, building connections, and finding personal and collective identities.

Storytelling occurs in every culture around the world and is the primary way humans share information, make connections, and find their identities. Story is “central to human understanding—it makes life livable, because without a story, there is no identity, no self, no other” (Lewis, 2011, p. 505). The act of telling a story requires a person to make connections with the world, use linguistic features that help to draw in an audience, and make meaning from events that have already transpired or put words to imaginative worlds. Moreover, storytelling is a means of imparting generational knowledge. It allows us to connect with both our personal history and that of our community, enabling reflection on our present and future paths.

Unfortunately, while the practice of storytelling occurs regularly in elementary and middle grades, it is often overlooked in high school classrooms, even though “students engaged in storytelling show improvements in their cognitive abilities” (Speaker, 2000, as cited in Lockett & Jones, 2009, p. 3). Not only does the process of storytelling engage students’ prior schema—the existing patterns and organization of knowledge (Piaget, 1952)—regarding story structures, it allows students to make new connections with current topics of study. The ability to connect with stories helps students feel successful in their ability to comprehend new topics, and in creating stories, students are able to find their own voice, seeing that there is value in their ideas.

The National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Storytelling (1992, last edited in 2008) encourages the use of storytelling as a tool for learning about us, about the ever-increasing information available to us, and about the thoughts and feelings of others (pp. 1-3). Story allows for students to find a voice and identity because the act of recollecting experiences

and sharing them through stories requires the teller to make meaning of those experiences and their own place in the world (McCabe, 1997; Lewis, 2011). When students make sense of their world through narration, they are able to find their identity through “the roles they select to portray themselves, their family, and their friends as having played in those experiences” (McCabe, 1997, p. 454). As students’ “experiences with stories increase, they learn to understand the intertwining of stories and their lives” (Ollerenshaw, 2006, p. 34).

Furthermore, storytelling embraces an inclusive pedagogy that celebrates culture. Stories are significantly able to, “shap[e] social realities . . . [and are used for] crafting one’s cultural identity” (Vasudevan et al., p. 446). Every culture carries with it a different story structure, and “the way people tell stories affects their comprehension of stories from traditions other than their own” (McCabe, 1997, p. 462). People remember narratives that are similar to those they have learned in the home and their own cultural background; however, “[t]alking about different forms of stories to all students will provide them with the rich metalinguistic vocabulary they need to work with their own stories” (McCabe, 1997, p. 464). By learning about other people’s cultural narratives, students are able to explore their own identities.

Digital storytelling.

One of the key benefits of using digital storytelling as a pedagogical practice is that it provides all students a chance to access, develop, and represent their knowledge through a variety of modes. While traditional print text might act as a barrier for English Language Learners (ELLs), digital storytelling allows these students to demonstrate their learning with equal emphasis on visuals and audio texts, providing them multiple access points to the same textual information (Green, 2013). Moreover, culturally diverse students are able explore ideas through a cultural lens by adding visual and auditory cues of cultural significance to traditional

print text. ELLs and culturally diverse students are able to become active and valued contributors when using digital storytelling. While they may have previously struggled as learners in the school culture, with digital storytelling they are able to become “historical and cultural informants” (Green, 2013, p. 27).

Additionally, the use of artistic representations of ideas in digital storytelling requires the creator and the reader to have emotional responses to the text, and Vygotsky would argue that having any personal reaction necessitates higher-order cognitive functions. The creative use of artistic representation in digital storytelling asks students to transmediate their understanding of an idea across multiple textual modes. As students author their multimodal texts, their intention or purpose for creating that text in a particular way should become an important consideration since, “[t]he act of telling a story means building a relationship between the author and the reader, or listener” (Peralta, 2010, p. 28). The way individual readers respond or understand a text can vary from the author’s initial intent if the work is not carefully planned. With teacher support and guided practice, students must learn to reflect and ask themselves what sounds, images, and writing work together to best capture the concept so that an audience will understand it the way they do (textually and emotionally).

With the help of digital communication technologies, collaboration in social networks is an everyday occurrence. All ages of society are “increasingly using online [and digital] spaces to collaborate and communicate” (Curwood, Magnifico, & Summers, 2013, p. 678). Learning in the digital age is no longer dependent on individual knowledge acquisition. Rather, it relies on the connected learning that occurs through interaction with various sources, participation in networks, and group tasks (Siemens, 2005). Students use “digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning

and contribute to the learning of others” (International Society for Technology in Education, 2007, p. 2). Through students’ brainstorming, experimenting, creating, and sharing with an audience, the planning, development, and process of digital storytelling becomes a collaborative and social venture. Moreover, digital storytelling encourages learners to expand their zone of proximal development as they learn from technology savvy peers and the guidance of their teacher, which “moves them beyond the known to the new” (Mills, 2010, p. 44). This interaction lends itself to the perfect opportunity for students with strong digital skills to act as experts and guide the learning of their peers. Through scaffolded opportunities to explore digital texts, all students are able to develop their skills in the zone of proximal development and acquire new skills necessary to independently problem solve in the future. Digital storytelling allows even the most shy or nervous students a chance to socialize, contribute, find their voice, and even become the expert (Cicconi, 2013).

In a 2014 case study, Australian researchers Smeda, Dakich, and Sharda explored the use of digital storytelling and found that “digital storytelling can help students to improve their confidence, and can contribute to better social and psychological skills” (p. 19). The study involved five teachers and their classes in one Kindergarten to Grade 12 school, during the final semester. Both primary and secondary classrooms were involved in the study, which investigated the potential of digital storytelling as a teaching and learning approach, and to see how digital storytelling impacts student learning and engagement.

The five teachers attended two workshops prior to the implementation of digital storytelling in their classes to gain confidence in their abilities and concepts of digital storytelling. Each teacher followed a set of lessons, which, depending on grade level, took varying times to complete. The process for students included collaboration through

brainstorming, creating storyboards, searching for appropriate materials, creating the digital story, editing and giving/getting feedback, and finally presenting their stories to the class and their parents (pp. 10-11).

Smeda et al. (2014) used observation field notes, an evaluation rubric, and interviews to determine their findings. They concluded that “students were always engaged in the classroom” (p. 12), because they had the opportunity to work with peers and use the latest technologies. The process of creating a digital story allowed for diverse learning opportunities while using communication practices that were similar to those students would use outside of school (Smeda et al., 2014). The researchers also found that digital storytelling fostered a collaborative learning experience especially as students helped each other use new technologies, solve problems, and share resources. Those who felt confident with the technologies were able to take on mentoring roles while teachers acted as facilitators of student learning. Through collaboration, students further worked on their communication and social skills to help express problems and share solutions. The digital storytelling process allowed for a collaborative and flexible learning environment where students were able to use “their own individual approach based on their interactions and experiences and generate novel outputs by using different sources in their creation of the digital story” (Smeda et al., 2014, p. 14).

Teachers that partook in the study found that their students’ tech-skills and research abilities improved through digital storytelling. Moreover, students had to work on their “organizational skills, and [gained] confidence in terms of asking questions and expressing opinions” (Smeda et al., 2014, p. 13). Students needed to focus on their writing skills as the short written sections were important in their stories. Additionally, during interviews, the teachers who worked with diverse students in the five classes expressed how digital storytelling

“help[ed] learners to transfer their knowledge, skills and culture, thereby evolving their thinking process and helping them gain confidence” (Smeda et al., p. 15).

Smeda, Dakich, and Sharda’s study embraces ideas found in the NLG’s pedagogy of multiliteracies, because, as previously outlined, the use of digital storytelling in the classroom helps prepare students for multimodal communication of the 21st century. Furthermore, the study is based on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory that learners should be provided with socially rich environments in which to explore complex ideas with their peers, teachers, and outside experts. Digital storytelling can be used to support these types of learning environments by acting as a tool for discussion, collaborative writing, and problem-solving, while scaffolding relative, engaging, and evolving digital practices (Benmayor, 2008; Bou-Franch, 2012).

Vygotsky emphasized the importance of meaningful academic experiences and activities, narrowing the gap between students’ personal interests and knowledge with formal academic concepts, thereby lessening feelings of dysphoria (Smagorinsky, 2007). Digital storytelling is an “innovative way for students to use multimodal texts to study and document aspects of their lives and social worlds” (Nixon, 2009, p. 63), and the melding of multimodal texts with technology enables students to “build from the social and textual resources of their life experiences” (Mills, 2010, p. 38).

Conclusion

The many reasons to bring digital storytelling into the secondary English classroom are evident in the reviewed research. Digital storytelling enables collaborative learning opportunities where students are able to explore concepts through relevant and engaging means. The practice bridges cultural and linguistic gaps for multicultural and diverse learners by validating prior knowledge and experiences while enabling students to become both cultural and

technological ‘experts’ in the classroom. ELLs can use this pedagogical practice to increase their English proficiency, while all students can practice higher-order thinking skills as they transmediate information across multiple modes and work on reflexive metacognitive skills. As a modern form of storytelling, digital storytelling prepares students for a visual and multimodal world of 21st century communication.

CHAPTER 3

CONNECTIONS TO DIGITAL STORYTELLING

We live in “an age of multimedia authoring where competency with written words is still vital, but is no longer all that is needed to participate meaningfully in the many spheres of life.” (Mills, 2010, p. 36) While many students come to school with some technological competency, students from varying backgrounds –cultural, socioeconomic –have different experiences with technology and multimodal textual practices, as well as varying degrees of access to these technological tools. Layering and scaffolding multimodal texts in the classroom is an important practice needed to prepare all learners for 21st century communication (Mills, 2010). Digital storytelling allows for the scaffolded integration of digital practices while also teaching students about visual literacy, audio and oracy practices, and how to pair these texts with traditional print-text to yield a more dynamic and engaging story. Moreover, the use of personal narratives when creating digital stories allows for culture to play a significant role in the creation of these multimodal artifacts, valuing the voice and identity of every student that enters the classroom.

Digital storytelling most often consists of a series of still images in combination with embedded narration and audio. It emphasizes the use of semiotic mechanisms as a means for expressing ideas. While video clips can be incorporated within digital stories, they are not a required aspect of this storytelling method (Bull & Kajder, 2004). Digital storytelling often draws from personal narratives for content (Emert, 2014, p. 404), while simultaneously building students fundamental language competencies. Digital storytelling, as commonly practiced today, is modeled upon the work of Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley at the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkley, founded in 1994. They based their research and practice on the belief that everyone has a story to tell and that digital technology provides a unique and powerful way to express and

share these stories. Students are able to explore their authorial identities as the “mesh[ing] [of] oral storytelling with images, music and audio, enhance[es] the storyteller’s personal voice” (Green, 2013, p. 27).

When students create a digital story, “their roles change from passive information receivers to active knowledge developers” (Hur & Suh, 2012, p. 324). Digital storytelling celebrates language and multi-textual representations of thought, while as a medium for expression it begs to be shared with a larger audience. The practice of digitizing stories enables students to share their ideas with a wider community beyond the school setting so that a larger societal group can view and think about their message (Nixon, 2009). When stories are shared, “others listen raptly, finding connections between the storyteller's tale and their own perspectives and co-constructing meanings about people” (Peralta, 2010, p. 30). Multimodal storytelling, within a sociocultural context, provides “new opportunities for the students to redefine their social roles within the larger community. Students are able to . . . reflect on their own lives and worlds in ways that challenge hegemonic discourses that devalue their capabilities” (Nixon, 2009, p. 63). The multimodal practices of digital storytelling help “promote agency, social awareness, literacy and identity development in youth from historically marginalized backgrounds, bringing their life stories and views on their social worlds to the forefront” (Nixon, 2009, p. 63).

Digital storytelling is also a pedagogical practice that supports and validates cultural practices, beliefs, and multiple ways of knowing through the use of multimodal representation. Each textual source in multimodal storytelling plays an integral role in the creation and dynamics of that story. Digital storytelling melds academic knowledge and skills with lived experiences, allowing students to create personally meaningful representations of their learning. Digital

storytelling can be used as a way to bring students' home culture and language, or their primary Discourse (Gee, 1989), into the classroom. Students are able to express their personal narratives through a cultural lens with the incorporation of multimodal artifacts. The use of personal narratives allows for culture and identity exploration to play a significant role in the creation of these multimodal artifacts, valuing the voice and identity of every student that enters the classroom. By encouraging students to bring their unique identities into their stories, and validating their ideas and cultural differences, teachers can build relationships and find out what is important to each student, thereby embracing culturally responsive teaching practices. Gay (2002) maintains that when students are able to bring their personal experiences into the classroom and pair these with high interest activities, they will learn "more easily and thoroughly" (p. 106).

Culturally diverse students, and "ELLs, in general, are at risk of being perceived as disadvantaged, a label accompanied by low expectations for achievement" (Emert, 2014, p. 402). Digital storytelling helps diverse students feel positive about their abilities and contributions and it provides ELL students with "an invitation to demonstrate academic strengths: the ability to sequence narrative events, manage an intricate multi-step process, and improvise with the aid of technology tools" (Emert, 2014, p. 402). These diverse learners are engaged and motivated by the process of digital storytelling, and by allowing them to explore their personal and cultural experiences, they are more likely to have "strong feelings of success at accomplishment" (Green, 2013, p. 26). While students may feel shy about their language abilities or cultural beliefs, digital storytelling acts as an engaging, motivating, and safe forum where students can "put aside the fear of making mistakes and seeming foolish" (Green, 2013, p. 26). Emert (2014) found that when ELL students were asked to create digital stories, and were paired with and given support

from mentors and peers, they “produced sophisticated multimedia projects. They demonstrated a desire to succeed academically, and they also demonstrated their capacity to excel when offered an assignment that both draws on skills they already possess and challenges them to develop new language competencies” (p. 411) resulting in an authentic representation of the student’s knowledge that validates their strengths.

Based upon the sound theoretical framework of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, the New London Group’s pedagogy of multiliteracies, and Gay’s ideas regarding culturally responsive teaching, along with a review of current literature, it is evident that bringing digital storytelling into high school ELA classrooms can positively impact students’ learning and engagement to better prepare them for the 21st century. It is a pedagogical practice that allows for all students, including culturally and linguistically diverse learners, to find their voice while exploring personal and meaningful concepts.

Designing the Teacher’s Guide and Unit Plan

With my desire to engage students in modern literacy practices, and after my research on digital storytelling, I aimed to create a digital storytelling unit plan that high school teachers could utilize in ELA lessons. I soon came to realize that designing a digital storytelling unit hinged upon the assumption that students already possess prior knowledge and skills regarding storytelling, figurative language, visual literacy, and computer technical skills. Considering that not all students will come into a classroom with such knowledge, it became apparent that a fair amount of pre-teaching must occur for students to gain visual literacy skills and digital storytelling competency while still feeling engaged and motivated by the process. For every step of the digital storytelling process I saw another layer of knowledge that needed to be scaffolded

into the lessons with sufficient resources and guidelines for teachers to effectively teach the art of digital storytelling.

The final guide (see Appendix) was created to help any English Language Arts (ELA) teacher who wishes to incorporate a digital storytelling unit in their curriculum, regardless of their experience with this pedagogical practice. The guide begins with an overview for teachers so as to easily locate lessons, resources and handouts when implementing the unit. Further, it consists of pre-teaching materials in the form of a visual literacy toolbox, a step-by-step guide to creating and developing a digital story, a series of lessons to use in a digital storytelling unit for Grade 9/10 ELA students (though the lessons could be adapted for Grades 9 to 12), as well as the handouts and resources needed to teach the unit.

While the provided unit consists of 9 lessons, these lessons will span over a 3-week period and occur after much of the pre-teaching. I recommend the incorporation of visual literacy lessons and practices throughout the semester so that students feel confident with visual communication when they come to create their digital story. Also, learning about figurative language –perhaps through poetry –would provide students the vocabulary and background knowledge needed to incorporate these techniques within their own digital stories. Finally, the digital storytelling unit would be best suited after a short story unit that not only teaches students about the parts and vocabulary of a short story, but also incorporates stories pertaining to the theme of identity, home, and community. With the need to narrow down my project, I decided to focus on the pre-teaching lessons that many English teachers may lack confidence in –visual literacy.

Pre-teaching visual literacy.

As I learned through my literature review, “being able to read and write alone no longer makes one literate” (Mostafa, 2010, p. 4). The need for visual literacy education is becoming increasingly vital as the changing landscape of digital communication requires students to be savvy decoders of a daily stream of pictures, signs and symbols. We must “expand our concept of literacy to match the reality of today” (Bleed, 2005, p. 3). However, many English teachers may lack confidence in pre-teaching the grammar, or elements and principles of visual texts, therefore the guide begins with a substantial section on visual literacy and how to bring visual practices into the ELA classroom.

While it may seem simple to add visuals to presentations and handouts, or ask students to create a poster of project with images, the basic skills needed to be visually literate are rarely taught explicitly. Pantaleo (2013) maintains that pre-teaching students visual literacy strategies is important so that they can then apply this acquired knowledge when creating their own visual texts, and that the final “multimodal text can be viewed as a representation of [student] learning” (Pantaleo, 2013, p. 373), therein making the time spent teaching visual literacy strategies valuable. Furthermore, before technology is paired with visual literacy practice, students should be equipped with a toolbox of decoding strategies. Once students are able to ‘read’ and ‘write’ with images, they will have the tools needed to better comprehend lessons that involve visual stimuli. The pre-teaching of visual language should occur throughout the year and therefore I provide numerous suggestions as to how this could occur in the ELA classroom.

By helping students “understand the relationship among visual, verbal, and alphabetic language ... students [are able] to comprehend and express ideas more fully and ... [are] more comfortable moving from one form of communication to the other” (Mostafa, 2010, p. 2). The

language of images and the process of decoding their meaning are no different than learning to read. While elementary classrooms are full of art projects that celebrate the imagination, by the time students reach high school, visual literacy education often ceases. It is expected that the information students received in earlier grades is sufficient to carry them through the visual world, “because the act of seeing is an early-developed and natural means of understanding the world, people frequently do not look beyond the surface to understand visual images” (Mostafa, 2010, p. 2). As students become older and better able to communicate ideas and make connections, the instruction around visual communication only becomes more important. However, for the ELA teacher, materials and equipment, time, and training in visual literacy instruction are often major concerns.

With traditional literacy, there are many layers of learning that need to occur before a student can competently read or write. The first step in learning to read is learning the letters of the alphabet and their accompanying sounds before decoding words within sentences. Reading comprehension eventually becomes the goal in the reading process. We teach students to not only decode words, but also to make sense of what they read in context to the text, themselves, and the world around them. Reading comprehension requires vocabulary, prior knowledge, and the ability to make connections using critical thought, and teachers have various approaches and strategies to help students build contextual understanding of what they read. Visual literacy is no different. The first level of visual literacy is the basic identification of the subject and the elements in an image. The skills necessary to identify details of images are included in many disciplines; for example, careful observation is essential to scientific inquiry. Yet, while accurate observation is important, understanding what we see and comprehending visual relationships is

equally valued. These higher-level visual literacy skills require critical thinking and are essential to students' success in any content area in which information is conveyed through visual formats.

The visual literacy toolbox.

Using both my English and visual arts background, I created a basic visual literacy toolbox. Many ELA teachers leave visual literacy lessons to the art teacher, but with declining numbers of arts programs and not all students taking even those art classes which are offered, the visual literacy toolbox is intended to ease English teachers into the practice of incorporating explicit visual literacy instruction in the ELA classroom.

The visual literacy toolbox begins with the elements and principles of art and design. The elements are the parts that make up an image. The building blocks of an image, if you will, are made from the elements of line, shape, colour, tone, texture etc., and the way we discuss the connections that exist between the elements is by looking at the principles of design, like movement, balance, contrast, harmony, unity, emphasis, pattern and rhythm, proportion, perspective, and variety. By providing students with the language to understand the grammar of images we increase the level of observation and insight that can be made when decoding visual messages.

Once students are comfortable with the grammar of images, teachers need to demonstrate strategies regarding how to use these elements and principles to closely look and question what they see, which is when critical thinking occurs. Using a series of questions, the process can be modeled for students and students can explore looking deeper for meaning. The toolbox provides questions that can lead to in depth discussions regarding the meaning and connections made when viewing an image.

The final elements of the toolbox's use is giving students plenty of time and practice communicating with visuals along with traditional literacies, for which I provide an example activity and a list of other ways that visuals can find their way into the English classroom.

While many lessons exist which incorporate visual literacy in ELA classes, it is the pre-teaching component that is missing from most. Once these concepts are taught, weaving visual literacy practice amongst traditional literacy can create enriched and engaging lessons. Moreover, when students interact with technology, much of their time is spent viewing visual prompts; therefore, blending new technologies with curriculum across any of the disciplines ensures students will be interacting with visuals throughout their education, and beyond. One way to bring both visual language and technology meaningfully into ELA lessons is through digital storytelling.

Introducing digital storytelling.

In examining best practices for digital storytelling I turned to Lambert (2002) at the Center for Digital Storytelling who outlined seven key elements of digital storytelling. I decided to create a chart that incorporated these seven elements while melding them with the ideas of Bull and Kajder (2004), as well as concepts found in my literature review (Chisholm & Trent, 2013; Smeda, Dakich, & Sharda, 2014; Theodore & Afoláyan, 2010; Yang & Wu, 2012). I paired the seven elements with a brief description and some questions and considerations for discussing the digital storytelling process with students. This chart can be used by teachers as a guide, or can be shared with students to help them in discussing the effectiveness of digital stories that they view. Next, I created an 8-step guide for the digital storytelling process, adapted from Angay-Crowder, Choi, and Yi's (2013) research, Morra's (2013) article, and Sadik's (2008) research. The process looks beyond the elements and closer at the steps required to create

a digital story, from brainstorming to presenting and reflecting, with a description of the process paired with each step. Finally, I combined the seven elements found in effective digital stories with the 8-steps of digital storytelling to create a 9-lesson unit plan. I aimed to apply much of what I had learned through my literature review to this unit.

The unit encourages collaborative and social experiences where students are asked to brainstorm, question, and problem solve in whole group, small group, and partner opportunities. Students who may lack experience with technology, or who have language barriers, are paired with students who are confident in these areas. Students are able to learn from each other –while one may share their experience with technology, the other may share cultural stories, artistic abilities, or other talents as inspiration. Students learn from the paired “more knowledgeable other” and are able to co-construct knowledge within the “zone of proximal development” as they collaboratively learn a task or skill that they will one day know how to do on their own (Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, in creating the final product for this unit, students develop a personal, first person story centered on the concepts of community, home, and identity. This open-ended and personal approach allows for all students to feel validated in their identities and invested and engaged in their work, while being encouraged to explore concepts that include culture, language, and family (Gay, 2002). Students are further encouraged to speak with their family or community members when gathering background information and artifacts, thereby bringing their primary Discourses (Gee, 1989) into the classroom and capitalizing on their community’s “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 2000 as cited in Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 197). Of course, the entire project hinges on the use of multiple modes of expression, focusing less on the traditional print text and more on visual and auditory modes. As students explore digital storytelling designs as forms of expression, they eventually reshape and redesign ideas into their

own original concepts (New London Group, 1996). Students are able to find an authorial identity in the creation of these stories, and hopefully will carry with them a sense of accomplishment and success.

Resources.

The final piece of the teacher guide and digital storytelling unit is a series of handouts and resources that can be photocopied and distributed to students or used by the teacher in conjunction with the digital storytelling unit plan. In creating these resources I learned just how many pieces go into teaching digital storytelling.

I created a sheet with links to examples that can be shown within the class. This task alone can be daunting as there are countless examples of varying effectiveness. This said, even if a teacher were to show an example that was not of the highest caliber, the door is opened for further discussion regarding not only what worked, but what didn't work, and how to constructively hold a discussion around these ideas.

Also included is a description, guide, and template for storyboarding, as well as a link to a website that shows planned storyboards alongside their final digital story productions. I added lessons and links regarding copyright images and audio, how to narrate and use your voice to express emotion and set the tone of a story, a step-by-step guide for using Windows Movie Maker™, and finally a digital storytelling rubric. While I encourage the collaborative whole-class creation of a rubric after discussing what is needed in a digital story, the pre-prepared rubric can alternately be used. It focuses on the elements and steps of digital storytelling.

Implications and Considerations

While there is clear evidence that incorporating digital storytelling in high school ELA curriculum can be beneficial for student learning and engagement, often the practice does not

occur. The lack of digital storytelling practice may be a result of a number of concerns and barriers, such as lack of teacher knowledge regarding new technologies and literacies, lack of technology in the classroom, or insufficient time to incorporate the practice into an already filled semester.

Living in a computer-mediated world makes it easy to forget that not all teachers, nor students for that matter, possess the same digital competencies. As students' digital literacies often surpass that of the teacher, teachers may feel unable to thoroughly teach a unit that incorporates technological tools. Moreover, with an endless source of digital media and constantly changing tools and applications, teachers must be careful to use appropriate technology that enhances learning, and not simply technology for the sake of using technology; yet, the constantly adapting technology is often a deterrent for teachers who may generally lack experience with newer literacy practices. However, this lack of confidence with technology should not stop teachers from exploring such pedagogical practices as digital storytelling. The onus lies with the teacher to continue to find professional development opportunities that can translate into the classroom and will help them find ways to engage 21st century students. Teachers need to embrace the fact that they too are life-long learners. It is also important that teachers allow themselves to be facilitators who, perhaps, do not have all the answers, and rather problem solve and work with their students to find collaborative solutions. In the act of discovering new practices together, many learning opportunities can exist for both students and teacher.

One of the greatest obstacles in validating students' "out of school literacies practices" (Bruce, 2009, p. 147) is the lack of access to technology within schools. The disparity between what exists in one school compared to another can be large, and while some schools or

classrooms may have endless resources, for many schools this affordance does not exist. I have had the fortune of working within schools that provide students access to a well equipped computer lab, however finding the time to get students into the lab on a regular basis when that lab is shared with the entire school population can in itself be difficult. In my school district Wi-Fi access is often non-existent, and with endless budgetary cuts some classrooms are still without projectors to be able to share technologies, pre-teach concepts, or demonstrate examples –like digital stories. Furthermore, in schools with low socioeconomic backgrounds, students may not have access to cell phones with cameras –as we have begun to take for granted –and schools often do not have digital cameras readily available for students to work with. Additional stumbling blocks may exist, like school computers not having access to editing software that helps in the creation of digital stories. These hurdles can seem large and daunting, and for some teachers are enough to avoid the incorporation of technologies in their lessons, especially with units as involved as digital storytelling. For the unit that I have created it is a necessity that students have access to computers, on and off over a period of three weeks. It is also required that the classroom is equipped with a teacher computer and projector so that examples and final projects can be shared. It would be a further advantage if the school can share the projects through televisions in the common areas or on the school website.

Another possible concern in teaching the digital storytelling unit may exist for educators who feel pressured for time to cover all required curriculum in a short semester. Traditional ELA classrooms most often focus on traditional literacies, and I foresee opposition from parents, teachers and students alike as they may question the role of visual literacy or digital storytelling in an English course. ELA teachers may find it difficult to justify the time needed to properly teach students the building blocks of visual literacy, model strategies, teach the elements and

steps of digital literacy, and still provide time for collaboration and exploration, editing, sharing and reflection. While the unit could be rushed, and older students may be able to finish it in a shorter period of time, to ensure each student has the time to develop their ideas requires time many teachers may not feel they have. However, I would argue that the layered learning that can occur throughout the digital storytelling unit is immense and that established curricular concepts could be explored through this new literacy practice with equaled or increased learning opportunities. The time spent initially on pre-teaching techniques can be transferred throughout all subsequent lessons so that the time spent should be seen as an investment.

Ultimately, there will always exist reasons why incorporating new practices into traditional teaching models may not work. The unit I have created makes the assumptions that teachers will be willing to try new literacy practices to engage their students and empower themselves as life-long learners to take on new challenges; that technology will be available to create personally meaningful multimodal stories; and that the time needed to thoroughly teach this unit will be seen as beneficial in scaffolding 21st century literacies that prepare students for life beyond high school. I hope that there is enough value in this guide and unit that it is utilized in part or in its entirety to guide teachers towards exploring new literacy practices in their classrooms.

Research Implications

My review of current literature leads me to the conclusion that digital storytelling can be used in ELA classes to teach students about narrative composition through the authoring of their own stories (Chisholm & Trent, 2013). It allows for exploration of personally engaging ideas, enabling students to explore and celebrate their culture in a school setting. Through the incorporation of multimodal and social mediating tools, learning can be scaffolded, creating a

practice that empowers all students to feel intellectually and linguistically able. Moreover, research showed that ELL students gained the same, or greater, language competencies through digital storytelling projects (Yang & Wu, 2012) than students who were taught English through traditional teaching practices. It is an engaging and motivating practice that prepares learners for multimodal and digital practices after their education, including becoming visually literate. While most current research points to the value of this pedagogical practice, future research in digital storytelling is still required.

Further research should explore the influence of digital storytelling in promoting 21st century skills, such as creative thinking, problem solving, and global literacy. While these skills seem to be inherently used in the process of planning and developing a digital story, researchers have not directly explored how these skills are utilized, nor if they are indeed strengthened through the process. Moreover, to what extent does digital storytelling prepare students for the multimodal, socially mediated and interconnected world?

Additionally, research regarding the effectiveness of instructional strategies in the implementation of digital storytelling in the ELA classroom would help instructors understand best practices and how to modify instructional activities to accommodate individual students' needs. For example, research could focus on the learning process during collaborative efforts versus individual work, or the amount and type of pre-teaching that is required.

While my inquiry is geared towards digital storytelling in ELA classes, I see how digital storytelling could be utilized in other subject areas. I recommend further research focus on how digital storytelling can be used to explore multidisciplinary concepts. While current Western teaching models divide the disciplines into teaching subjects, in reality, learning is an interconnected process where one skill or piece of knowledge translates across multiple

disciplines.

Digital storytelling is a powerful way to share ideas and deepen learning experiences. Regardless of the body of research that already exists around digital storytelling, there are many other questions that exist pertaining to this pedagogical practice. I hope that my inquiry adds another layer to the digital storytelling conversation and that it acts as an encouragement for teachers and researchers to explore this rich pedagogical practice within schools, especially high school settings.

Personal Reflection

I look around my classroom, registering the aged posters full of positive encouragement, highlighted by the rays of sunlight and dust in the air. I see as well the desks with names of students' past loves etched in the sides like a history book of young romance. My eyes begin to focus on the photographs, a quilt of overlapping memories pieced together with tape and magnets displayed across the wall above my desk. Faces of my students from years past and present smile back at me, their endless possibility radiates in the sparkle of their eyes, proud that they have made graduation and are themselves becoming adults. The bell rings suddenly, jolting me from my daydreams as files of adolescents surge towards the empty seats. They bring with them ideas I could not have dreamt of when I was their age. Generations of culture and hope are carried to school each day, and they leave every afternoon with the ideas I share with them. I am immediately accosted by my name, said over and over with questions of due dates, imploring for extensions, asking for clarification. "I don't understand this, Ms. Galac", says a voice tinged with accent and uncertainty. I smile at her with patience and understanding; I remember what that felt like, I remember being this student.

Now I am a teacher with ELL learners of my own and I search for ways to engage and motivate them in their learning. My classes are full of diversity and a wealth of collective knowledge. Some of my students are new to this country, while others have arrived from distant places for short periods of time, feeling alone and isolated in their language, which differs so greatly from what they hear in school. They feel displaced and unsure of their new home and community and question their identity in this foreign world. They look to me for guidance and the key to unlocking the mysteries hidden in our English words. Laughter fills my classroom as I find joy in their progress, particularly when a student practices saying “eh” at the end of a sentence in the hopes this makes them sound more “Canadian”.

I am equipped with the knowledge gleaned from years of study and personal experiences. My Master of Education program prepared me for the students that are struggling, for the ones that are excelling, for the countless ones in between with individual learning needs. I no longer cringe at a loud classroom, rather marvel at the learning that is happening, remembering that “learning is social in nature” (Vygotsky, 1978). I know now when I hear them exploring and discussing their ideas in small groups that they are collectively creating new knowledge.

We discuss ideas together, learn from each other, and value the differences we all bring to the class. I want them to know that they are successful in their learning, no matter at which point on the continuum they find themselves. I want them to know they belong, that each of their unique identities adds richness to my class and my life, and that both they and their ideas are valued. I have learned new strategies to make sure these bright young minds are challenged by relevant new literacy practices that will impact, engage, motivate, and inspire them. I am eager to bring more multimodal projects to my classroom and to see them develop the skills they need to find future learning and career successes.

Daily I see the power of visual literacy practices, in my own life and in that of my students. As I scribble words and phrases across the whiteboard and see fear in some of their faces, I doodle a drawing and accompany this with a continuous game of charades as I enact, emphasize, demonstrate, and express the concepts that suddenly seem to register in their smiles. Through imagination and self-expression, the grammar of images bridges the gaps of language.

This year I will head the International Program at my high school, working exclusively with ELL's. I am excitedly planning their year, bursting with new ideas. I look forward to the visual and digital storytelling that I intend to incorporate in my lessons. I know how important it is that students are able to explore personally meaningful ideas while honouring their individual cultures and identity. Even more, I now realize how valuable it will be for them to learn from and about each other to find both the commonalities that connect us and differences that make us unique. I know that digital storytelling will not only engage them, but also will challenge them in their language acquisition and provide them with new literacy skills. Digital storytelling has the promise to enable all students to realize their potential for academic success. I feel lucky to be given this teaching assignment now as I complete this final Master's project, having worked through the steps and process of creating this teacher's guide and unit plan. I am prepared to bring 21st century literacy practices into my classroom and to engage my students' hearts and minds.

APPENDIX

To the Teacher

The following guide and unit have been created as a resource to use and share in the hopes that more teachers will bring digital storytelling practices into ELA classes. It was designed for Grade 9 and 10 students, but can be adapted and applied across multiple grade levels. The resource begins with a guide to visual literacy in the form of a visual literacy toolbox of strategies, questions, and activities that can be used throughout the school year and prior to teaching the included digital storytelling unit. Next, through graphic organizers, digital storytelling is concisely broken down into essential elements and steps for the process of creating an effective digital narrative. These are paired with descriptions and guiding questions. The elements and steps are then combined and incorporated in a 9-lesson, multi-week unit plan for digital storytelling, focusing on the creation of a personally meaningful story regarding the concepts of home, identity, and community. Finally, the necessary handouts, resources, directions, and an assessment rubric are included to assist teachers in implementing the digital storytelling unit.

Guide Overview for the Teacher

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The Visual Literacy Toolbox

The following charts of the elements and principles of design are shared with permission from creator, Patrick Butler (2002). They can be used as a guide for teachers or as handouts for students. It is important for students to learn the vocabulary and use of these semiotic building blocks.










How to use these resources:

1. Discuss the elements and principles first to strengthen vocabulary
2. Find an engaging piece of art, or an advertisement, and discuss as a class how the elements and principles are used in the artwork. Do they help express an idea, feeling, story, or message? If so, what is the story and how do they help to accomplish this?
3. Students can then work in groups to repeat this activity with images from magazines or other artworks and then share their findings with the class.
4. Further extensions could include removing the images used in these resources and having students find their own examples of each element and principle of design.

The building blocks of an image are made from an arrangement of the following elements.

| <h1>The Elements of Design</h1> <p>(the tools to make art)</p> | | |
|--|---|---|
| Line |  | Horizontal, vertical, diagonal, straight, curved, dotted, broken thick, thin. |
| Shape |  | 2D (two dimensional)/ flat Geometric (square, circle, oval, triangle) Organic (all other shapes) |
| Form |  | 3D (three dimensional), Geometric (cube, sphere, cone), Organic (all other forms such as: people, animals, tables, chairs, etc). |
| Colour |  | Refers to the wavelengths of light. Refers to hue (name), value (lightness/darkness), intensity (saturation, or amount of pigment), and temperature (warm and cool). Relates to tint, tone and shade. |
| Value |  | The lightness or darkness of an image (or part of an image). |
| Texture |  | The feel, appearance, thickness, or stickiness of a surface (for example: smooth, rough, silky, furry). |
| Space |  | The area around, within, or between images or parts of an image (relates to perspective). Positive and negative space. |

The way we discuss the connections and relationships that exist between the elements (building blocks of images) is by looking at the principles of design.

| <h1 style="text-align: center;">The Principles of Design</h1> <p style="text-align: center;">(how to use the tools to make art)</p> | | |
|---|---|---|
| Pattern |  | A regular arrangement of alternated or repeated elements (shapes, lines, colours) or motifs. |
| Contrast |  | The juxtaposition of different elements of design (for example: rough and smooth textures, dark and light values) in order to highlight their differences and/or create visual interest, or a focal point. |
| Emphasis |  | Special attention/importance given to one part of a work of art (for example, a dark shape in a light composition). Emphasis can be achieved through placement, contrast, colour, size, repetition... Relates to focal point. |
| Balance |  | A feeling of balance results when the elements of design are arranged symmetrically or asymmetrically to create the impression of equality in weight or importance. |
| Scale |  | The relationship between objects with respect to size, number, and so on, including the relation between parts of a whole. |
| Harmony |  | The arrangement of elements to give the viewer the feeling that all the parts of the piece form a coherent whole. |
| Rhythm/ Movement |  | The use of recurring elements to direct the eye through the image; the way the elements are organized to lead the eye to the focal area. The eye can be directed, for example, along edges and by means of shape and colour. |
| Unity |  | All parts of an image work together to be seen as a whole. |
| Variety |  | Using different elements in an image to create visual interest. |

Reading Images

When students read traditional print text stories, teachers ask them to think about the components of what they are reading to help strengthen their reading comprehension. After they have learned vocabulary, we teach them to identify the:

- Main Idea - What idea seems most important in the story?
- Mood - What is the mood and what language depicts the mood?
- Author's Voice - What kinds of literary devices and phrasing does the author use to make the story come to life or make imagery?
- Transitions - How does the author connect events?
- Personal connections –How does student's life connect with the story?

Similarly, it is important that we guide students to ask deeper questions when looking at images. After students learn the vocabulary of images –the elements and principles of design – they need to walk through the strategies and thinking process that should occur when viewing visual stimuli. By modeling the questions that students should ask, they will learn to ask these questions of all images they see.

1. What do you see in the picture? (Students can simply describe what they see)
2. What stands out most when you first look at the picture? Explain why it stands out.
3. Look again, what else seems important?
4. What leads your eye from place to place?
5. What feelings and mood does this picture have and how does the artist show it?
6. What is the main idea of this picture and what details give you a clue to the main idea?
7. What title would you give this picture and why?
8. Which art elements do you notice the most in this picture?
9. What do you already know about the objects, people, animals, shapes in this picture that helped you to understand the picture?
10. What is the style of this picture? (realistic/photographic, abstract, expressive, etc.)
11. What memories and new thoughts do you have that connect to your own life when you look at this image?

An Example Activity

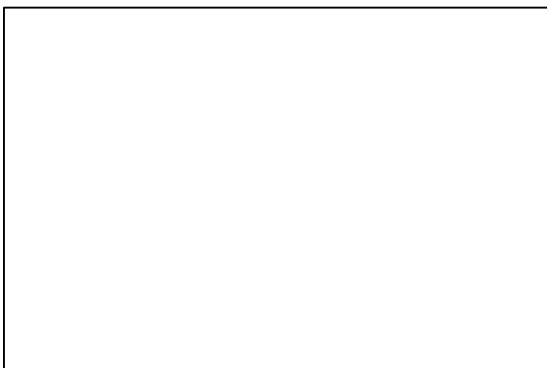
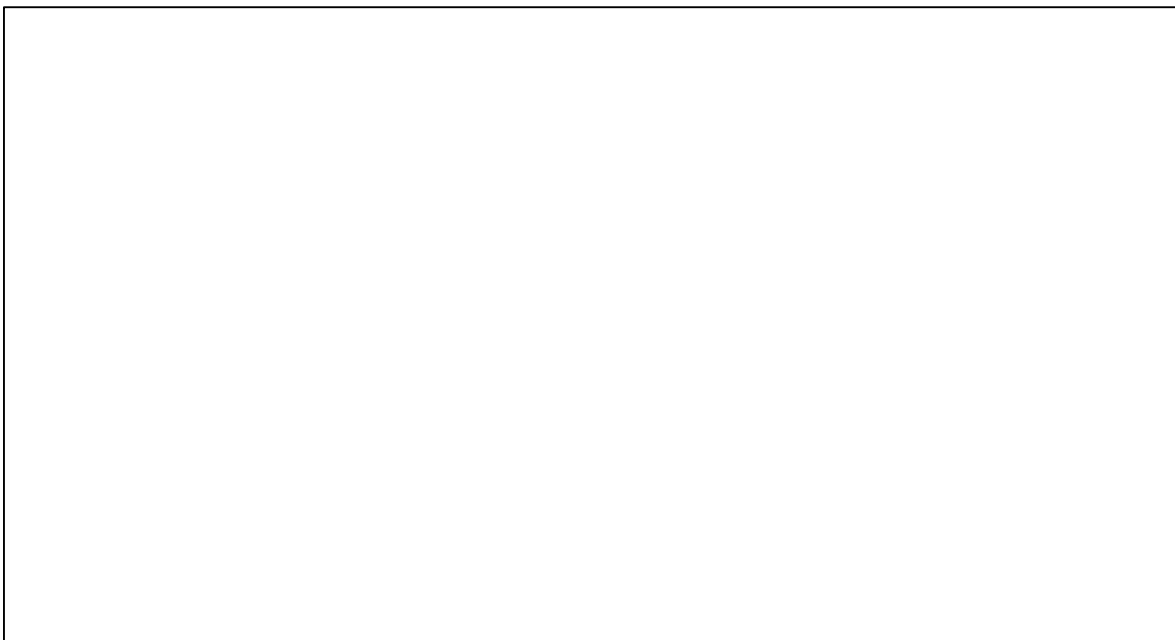
After students have learned about figurative language, have them apply their understanding through the following exercise that incorporates visual literacy practice.

Drawing the Figurative Language

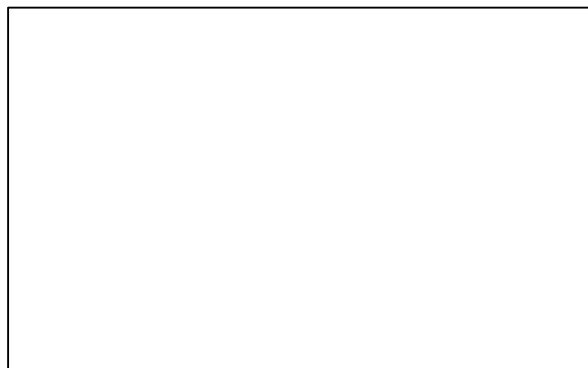
Name: _____

Block: _____

In detail, draw the literal meaning of the excerpt you chose from the story or novel you are reading. Make sure you include story details in your drawing. Use colour to enhance your artwork. The content of your artwork will show your understanding of the Figurative Language both literally and in reference to the story.



Figurative language



Story excerpt and page number

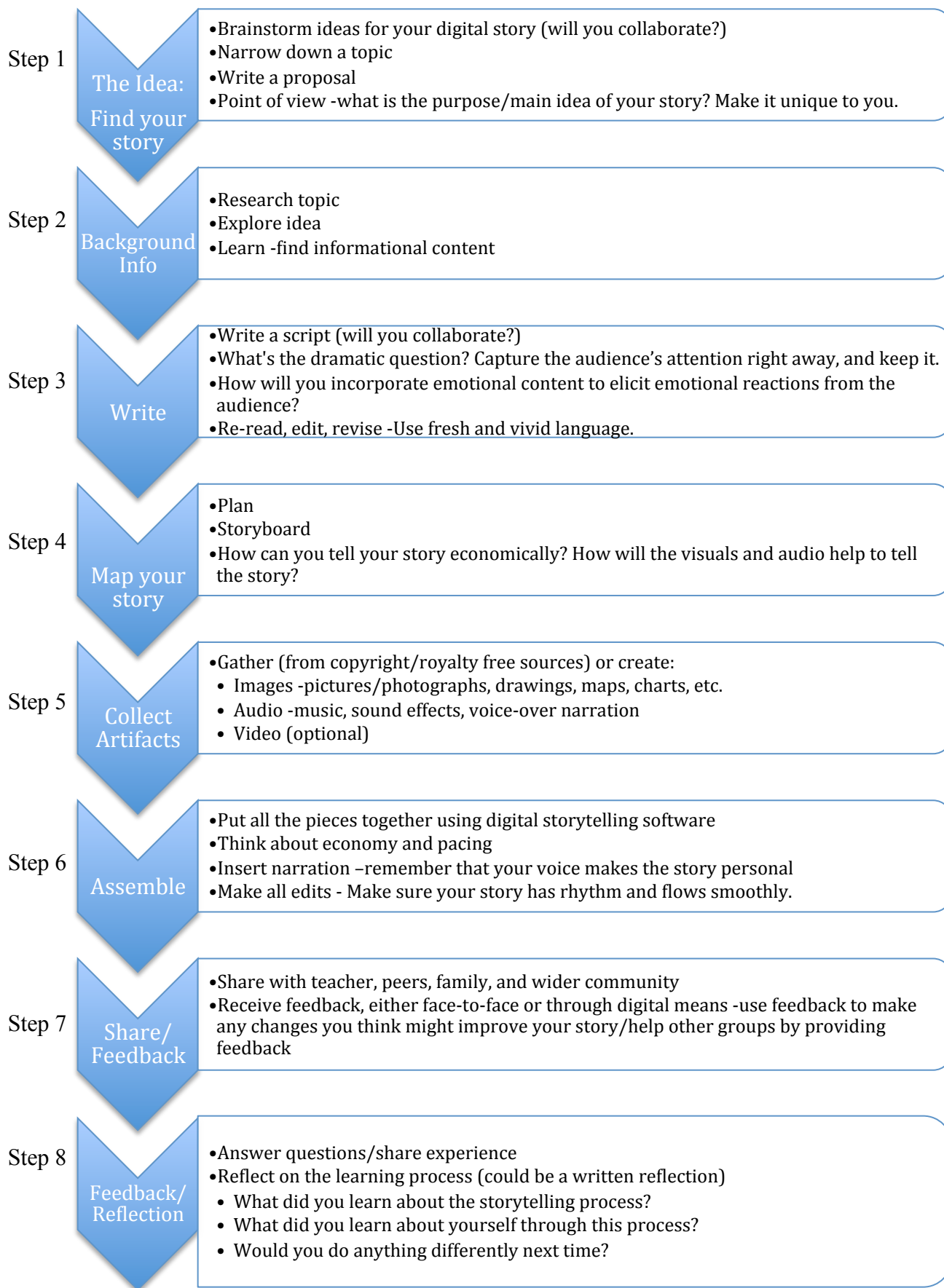
Other Ideas for Incorporating Visuals in the ELA classroom

1. Visualizing exercises - Have students close their eyes and visualize what is going on in a scene from a novel, play, short story or poem. Ask students to use visual language to describe what they see and explain the connections they are making with the text.
2. Reading and creating comics, cartoons, graphic novels, and/or picture books -The use of visual storytelling can spark interest and imagination in students of all ages. Not only does the ubiquitous nature of visual texts bridge learning gaps for students who struggle with reading, writing, or language acquisition, it allows students to create their own deeper understanding by making meaning from the images they view. Discussions can easily occur around plot, setting, perspective, juxtaposition, colour, shape, line, placement, etc. Students are encouraged to make meaning and connections without being given the literal translations, which asks for students to use deeper level thinking.
3. Gaming - Students are spending much of their own time playing and engaging with online gaming, which is almost completely visual content. There are many games that promote discussion, that use historical references, or help tell stories. Allow students to bring in their interests into lessons by incorporate the high interest activity of gaming with learning. Having a toolbox of visual literacy discussion strategies can help enhance these learning opportunities.
4. Media/Social media - Discussing the authenticity of images, or their purpose, message, intended audience, and the visual tools used to express meaning.
5. Infographics - Looking at how information, statistics and data are represented visually.
6. Drawing, doodling, and brainstorming - Students can draw or doodle ideas when taking notes, brainstorm ideas with sketches or mind maps, or can be asked to represent vocabulary words with images. Students can respond to reading passages with drawings, or use images to spark a piece of writing.
7. Video and Animation - Explore different mediums of visual expression and communication. Students may want to try creating a video or animation in response to something they read.
8. Digital storytelling - Every picture has a story. Allow students to tell their multimodal stories, using images, music, voice narration, and animation. The following section looks at digital storytelling more closely and provides resources, strategies and lesson ideas.

Digital Storytelling in the ELA Classroom: The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling

| | Elements of Digital Storytelling | Definitions and Descriptions | Questions and Considerations |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Phases of Writing | 1. Point of View | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the main point of the story, and what is the author’s purpose? • Should be personal and use the pronoun “I” • Should reveal something about the author | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific realization are you trying to communicate with your story? • Why is it important for you to tell your story? • What do you hope your audience will understand about what you have to share? |
| | 2. Dramatic question | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key question that keeps the viewer’s attention and is answered by the end of the story in some way. • A compelling question invoking interest and viewer commitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What crisis of conflict do you, or will your audience, realize in the story? • Where did you, or where will your audience, have an “Ah ha!” moment leading from some tension? |
| | 3. Emotional content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious issues that come alive in a personal and powerful way and connect the audience to the story. • Should discover and communicate new understandings about humanity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often comes from what was desired in contrast to the opposite happening. What were you expecting to happen, and what really happened? • Why are you invested in this topic, and how will the audience also be invested? |
| | 4. Economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using just enough content to tell the story without overloading the viewer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose images in your story that can help to eliminate words in your script. • Use sound effects and music to help add ambiance and help tell your story. |
| Phases of Construction | 5. Pacing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rhythm of the story and how slowly or quickly it progresses. • Varying the speed images are displayed, with varied inflections and speed of narration for dramatic purposes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the pace in your story by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Using starts, stops, pauses, and quick phrases. ○ Change the music tempo to build a sense of action or release. ○ Use panning effect on still images to slow down the pacing. ○ Use bursts of images to speed up the pacing. |
| | 6. Gift of voice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A way to personalize the story to help the audience understand the context. • Pitch, inflection, timbre of your personal voice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice, and then tell your story without reading straight from the script. • Speak slowly, as if you are having a conversation with a friend. • Vary your voice and allow for emotion to be heard. |
| | 7. Accompanying soundtrack | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music or other sounds that support and embellish the story. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use instrumental music. Lyrics can distract from your story. • Use sound effects to enhance your story. |

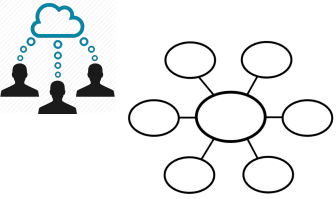
The Digital Storytelling Process



Digital Storytelling Unit

Lesson Plan 1

Lesson Focus: Introduction to Digital Storytelling
Grade 9/10 ELA

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To define digital storytelling To explore what makes an effective digital story | <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to computer, projector, and pre-loaded digital stories Digital storytelling examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A list of resources is included in this guide. The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling: Double-sided handout -with all the info on one side, and a blank note-taking section on the other side. |
| <p>Time Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 class period | |
| <p>Before:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review: what makes a good story? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think/pair/share -brainstorm on board with whole class Show examples of digital storytelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does a digital story consist of? Discuss How might you define digital storytelling? Discuss | |
|  | |
| <p>During:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Handout</u>: The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling and review as class Watch another digital storytelling example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in groups to identify each of the seven elements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are to take notes in groups and be prepared to share out | |
| <p>After:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share with class –discuss what made the story effective, or not effective based on the seven elements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What comments would you provide or questions would you ask the author if you could? Would you change anything to make the story more effective? Explain. | |
| <p>Reflection/Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exit slip –Answer the following question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What background do you have with storytelling or digital media tools that prepares you for digital storytelling? If none, that’s ok –explain what you would like to learn in order to be able to produce a digital story. | |
| <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELL students may need extra time to review the vocabulary found within the handout. They may not feel comfortable sharing their ideas with the class. While others are working, provide extra teacher time to their groups to go over ideas and review their brainstorming. | |

Lesson Plan 2

Lesson Focus: The Idea / Point of View
Grade 9/10 ELA

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|--|--|
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn about copyright infringements • To explore the digital storytelling process • To brainstorming ideas for digital story | <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to computer, projector, and pre-loaded digital story example • Digital storytelling example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of resources is included in this guide. • Digital storytelling process –Handout |
| <p>Time Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 class period (80 mins) | |
| <p>Anticipatory Set:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch another example of digital storytelling –what did you like/dislike? • Go over any concerns from the previous exit slip responses: how can we work together and learn from each other? Each of you have different strengths and experiences, how can you use the experience in the class to help you? | |
| <p>Lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion on theft <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever had anything stolen? What did it feel like? • Can ideas be stolen? • Is downloading music, videos, or images without permission theft? Discuss. • Discuss plagiarism, copyrights, and why these ideas are important. Explain that there are many websites that provide free images and music for free: copyright free/royalty free –creative commons/public domain. • Why is this important when thinking about digital storytelling? • <u>Handout:</u> The Digital Storytelling Process –go over as a class • <u>Introducing the topic for the digital storytelling project:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Explore what community, home, and/or identity means to you</i> • Define each of the three words as a class. How many ideas can you come up with for each word? How do they differ amongst you? Why would definitions be different from each other? • How does culture and language play a role in this topic? Does it to you? • What images or sounds come to mind when you think of these words? • Is there a story or memory that defines those words for you, personally? • As a class, discuss what should be included in the marking rubric, based on all the introductory materials. If time, create rubric together (a prepared rubric is included with this resource). If no time, go over the prepared rubric to ensure students are aware of expectations. | |
| <p>On your own/Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a brainstorm web (or any form of brainstorming –doodle, make a T-chart, write, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do those words mean to you, personally? Do these ideas connect for you? Will you focus on all three, or on only one or two? • How can you tell a story about your topic? • What specific realization are you trying to communicate with your story? • Why is it important for you to tell your story? • What do you hope your audience will understand about what you have to share? | |

Lesson Plan 3

Lesson Focus: Background Information / Dramatic Question
Grade 9/10 ELA

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share ideas with peers • To research topic and find informational content • To write a proposal for approval by the teacher | <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Lab • Paper and writing utensils |
| <p>Time Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 class periods (80 minutes) | |
| <p>Before:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the brainstorming activity from last class • Put students in small groups and have them share ideas • Can you help add to, provide suggestions, or give encouragement for each of the group members? | |
| <p>During:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer Lab <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will have the majority of the block to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research topic, explore ideas, and learn -find informational content • You may want to start a file on the computer where you add images or sounds you find along the way that inspire you –remember to only use images that are free of copyrights, and write down the source information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * NOTE: at this stage the focus should not be on collection, rather gather ideas for the writing process. • <u>Encourage students to consult with their parents and other adults in their local community about the accuracy of information in their digital stories, especially when the narratives relate to their heritage, country, or culture.</u> • Start to explore your dramatic question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What crisis of conflict do you, or will your audience, realize in the story? • Where did you, or where will your audience, have an “Ah ha!” moment leading from some tension? | |
| <p>After:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a one-page proposal regarding your digital story. It may be in paragraph or point form. Provide as much detail as you can at this stage in planning. Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your topic/purpose –why is this important to you? • How will your story start, what is the dramatic question, on what note will you end the story? • What message do you want to convey to your audience? • What emotions you are hoping to elicit from the audience and how you will achieve this. • Who would be the potential audience for your story? | |
| <p>Reflection/Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your proposal with the teacher –receive feedback | |

Lesson Plan 4

Lesson Focus: Writing / Emotional content
Grade 9/10 ELA

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To write a script | <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figurative Language Literal Drawing -Handout |
| <p>Time Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 class periods (80 minutes) | |
| <p>Before:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review story elements with the class (should know from previous class work) • Discuss how a digital story could incorporate these elements and how they may differ • What figurative tools can we use in stories? –metaphors, similes, alliteration, personification, onomatopoeia, symbolism, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you use these in your stories to make meaning? Remember the written content is very limited, so would you use these in that limited writing, in the narration, or can you use images? | |
| <p>During:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on a story we have recently read, the novel you are reading now, or our class novel, complete the Figurative Language Literal Drawing worksheet. (Review with class). • Provide class time for students to write their story scripts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will happen in the story? • How does it start, progress, and end, and what are you trying to say? • How does it incorporate the theme of community, home, and/or identity? • Remember that you are narrating these stories in first person –what do you have to say about your topic so that it is personal, with emotion and impact? | |
| <p>After:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get together with a partner of your choice and share your scripts/writing conference • Receive and provide feedback from your partner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What emotional response were they trying to elicit? Did it work? • Was there a dramatic question? Did it hook you? • Was it brief (economical) but still containing a strong point of view and sense of purpose? • Teacher will circulate during conferences to provide feedback as well • Make edits and changes based on conferencing ideas | |

Lesson Plan 5

Lesson Focus: Storyboard / Economy
Grade 9/10 ELA

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn about storyboards • To create a storyboard | <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storyboard examples Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling Website: http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/page.cfm?id=23&cid=23&sublinkid=37 • In the <i>Create Storyboards</i> section, find links for how to create storyboards, templates, and examples • Scroll to the bottom of the page to find six examples of digital stories, paired with the storyboard that was used as to plan. |
| <p>Time Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 class periods (80 min) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storyboard template - Handout |
| <p>Before:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at storyboard examples as a class • Try and tell the story based on the images present in the storyboard examples –as a class • Look over the storyboard template - <u>Handout</u> | |
| <p>During:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with time to sketch and plan their storyboards • Allow students to work collaboratively in small groups | |
| <p>After:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask if any students will share their storyboards with the class | |
| <p>Reflection/Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind students to hold onto each piece of the digital storytelling process. All the pieces will be put together as a final portfolio submission. | |

Lesson Plan 6

Lesson Focus: Collecting Artifacts
Grade 9/10 ELA

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To select appropriate images and sounds | <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computers Projector Websites to collect artifacts/resources Flash drives for students (optional) –they can alternatively save content to their home directory, into Google Docs™, or email content to themselves. Cameras (optional) /can use cellphones if they have them available Students may want ear buds so that their music search is personal and not intrusive for other students. |
| <p>Time Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-2 class periods (80 min) | |
| <p>Before:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Storyboard template and remind students that their goal is to collect all the pieces they will need to assemble their digital stories. Remind students that the stories will be shared beyond the classroom, so to create content that they are proud to show off. Review ideas of copyright infringement. Share with students some websites that provide free images and sounds and demonstrate on the projector how to search, save, and organize content. | |
| <p>During:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide computer lab time for students to gather audio and visual components Allow students some freedom to take photographs around the school if they desire (send out in small groups for timed intervals) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind rules of not disturbing other classes/students/teachers They must show the photos they took upon return to the teacher –be appropriate, safe, and respectful. Stay on school grounds. | |
| <p>After:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a file for your digital story. Organize all the content in the order you will be uploading it into the digital storytelling software. | |
| <p>Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For some students the collection process may be more challenging, especially those less confident with technology. Ask students who feel strongly in their abilities, and/or who finish early, to help those students who need assistance. | |

Lesson Plan 7

Lesson Focus: Gift of Voice
Grade 9/10 ELA

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To record narratives | <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers • Projector • Access to Windows Movie Maker™ (or other voice recording software like Audacity™) • Guide to using Windows Movie Maker™ -Handout • Students' pre-written scripts and storyboards • Ear buds with microphones, and/or headsets with microphones • Gift or your Voice -Handout |
| <p>Time Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 class periods (80 mins) | |
| <p>Before:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give students the Windows Movie Maker™ Directions <u>Handout</u> • Review how to record voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show students how they can also record their voice on Audacity™ and then upload it as a music file. • Record your voice for the students –show them what it is like if they are noisy, if you speak too slowly, too quickly, in monotone. • Go over concepts of pacing, tone, inflection, etc. –<u>Handout</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read each section of the handout by providing examples with your voice. Let students try. • Place students into groups of 3 • Remind the class that recording audio requires a quite space, so to be mindful of their classmates. | |
| <p>During:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students read their scripts for their group. Have group members provide feedback on their reading. If the script sounds too choppy, suggest students identify key talking points and then avoid using the script. • After practicing, go to the computer lab. • Groups should have space between them in the computer lab. • One student will read their script, one student will act as the controller for the audio equipment, the third student will help where they can and provide feedback and support. Students may need to read through their scripts numerous times before coming up with a final version they are pleased with. • Rotate through the group so each student has a turn in each role. | |
| <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELL students may feel self conscious about their speaking. Encourage them to practice with each other, at home with their family or homestay, and with you. Pair them with supportive and capable peers who will help them with pronunciation. Remind them that they can re-record as many times as needed until they are happy with the outcome. This is a chance for them to hear themselves and make adjustments as needed. It should be personally meaningful to them, and therefore engaging. | |

Lesson Plan 8

Lesson Focus: Assembly / Pacing
Grade 9/10 ELA

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn about digital storytelling software • To assemble the pieces of the multimodal digital story • To be aware of pacing and the effect it has on the story | <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers • Projector • Extra copies of Windows Movie Maker™ – Handout • Ear buds and/or headsets for students when editing their audio |
| <p>Time Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 class periods (80 mins) | |
| <p>Before:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time must be spent in the computer lab showing students how to navigate the digital storytelling software, in this case, Windows Movie Maker™. Teacher should be sure to know how to use this software and can demonstrate via projector. Go through the steps slowly and answer questions. Allow students time to play with the software before beginning to assemble their story pieces. May take full block. • Go over concept of pacing with students as a reminder before they begin assembling their stories. | |
| <p>During:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide time in the computer lab for students to assemble their story pieces and play with the animations, time, audio, narration, etc. This process may take multiple class periods, after students have learned to use the software. • Teacher should circulate through class and ask questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are you using this particular image and tone of voice here? • What effect does this image or sound have on your overall meaning? | |
| <p>After:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a student feels they are finished: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students take turns sharing their digital stories with a partner (one different than they've worked with previously) • They provide feedback • Allow time for students to make any final changes or edits based on this feedback | |

Lesson Plan 9

Lesson Focus: Share, Feedback, Reflect
Grade 9/10 ELA

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share the digital stories with peers, family, and community • To receive feedback and make final edits • To reflect on the learning process | <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers • Projector • Speakers • Rubric –Handout |
| <p>Time Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 class periods (80 mins) | |
| <p>Before:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the digital storytelling rubric (<u>Handout</u>) with the class as a reminder of what is being looked at, and also as a guide for appropriate comments. Model what those comments might sound like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You used pacing very well when you... • Your story made me feel... because... • The message I took from your story is... | |
| <p>During:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin the presentation process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student should introduce themselves and their story • Peers will watch with a rubric in front of them • After each presentation, the class will discuss the elements of the digital story in supportive and constructive responses • The teacher will mark the student based on the rubric • Repeat until all have had a chance to share | |
| <p>Reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once presentations have ended, students will discuss the following with the class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn about digital storytelling through this process? • What did you learn about yourself through this process? • What do you think you did particularly well in your digital story (consider the elements of an effective digital story)? • What do you think you could improve upon for your next venture in digital storytelling? • What were you hoping your audience took from your story (message, emotion), and do you think you accomplished this? How so? • Students will self assess their digital stories on their blank rubric, and will submit their assessment, reflection, and all sections of the planning process. | |
| <p>Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will receive feedback from their peers and teacher • Using a rubric, students will be marked on pre-determined outcomes and expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should self assess using the same rubric (conference with the teacher if time permits) • Students will submit all their planning stages with their self-assessment, teacher will mark for completion –are all the sections included? Are all the questions answered? | |
| <p>Sharing with a Wider Audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite families/other teachers/classes/community into the classroom and encourage students to post their stories online for others to see -post to the school website, to class website, to social media sites if appropriate. • IF TIME –teach students to upload their stories to YouTube™ to reach a wider audience • Possible share some of the stories during parents night | |

Examples of Digital Storytelling

- **Center for Digital Storytelling:** <http://storycenter.org/stories/>
 - The definitive resource for digital storytelling
 - In the *stories* section you can find 34 examples of digital stories. Scroll through to choose one you want to share with the class by clicking on *Playlist* in the upper left corner of the video screen and using the scroll bar to move up or down.
 - “7th Word” by Tate Blackbear is a nice example of a student’s digital story where he talks about who he is, his community, his family, and his culture.

- **Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling:**
<http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/page.cfm?id=23&cid=23&sublinkid=37>
 - In the *Create Storyboards* section, find links for how to create storyboards, templates, and examples
 - Scroll to the bottom of the page to find six examples of digital stories, paired with the storyboard that was used as the plan.

- **BBC Wales Digital Storytelling Shoebox Stories:**
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/audiovideo/sites/galleries/pages/digitalstorytelling.shtml>
 - A collection of digital stories. Many useful examples.

- **UMBC –The University of Maryland:** <http://stories.umbc.edu/projects.php>
 - Under *Selected Stories* find some good examples of digital stories.

- **Digital Storytelling Examples:**
http://captura.llanogrande.org/DOCS/PDF/2_NOW_SHOWING.pdf
 - Click on the PDF to find digital stories that link you to YouTube™. Most are beginner made stories.
 - The resource includes a section on oral histories, advocacy, and personal stories (p. 6)

**The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling
Blank Worksheet (Side B)**

| | Elements of Digital Storytelling | Definitions and Descriptions | How were these elements used in the example digital story? |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Phases of Writing | 1. Point of View | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the main point of the story, and what is the author's purpose? • Should be personal and use the pronoun "I" • Should reveal something about the author | |
| | 2. Dramatic question | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key question that keeps the viewer's attention and is answered by the end of the story in some way. • A compelling question invoking interest and viewer commitment | |
| | 3. Emotional content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious issues that come alive in a personal and powerful way and connect the audience to the story. • Should discover and communicate new understandings about humanity | |
| | 4. Economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using just enough content to tell the story without overloading the viewer. | |
| Phases of Construction | 5. Pacing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rhythm of the story and how slowly or quickly it progresses. • Varying the speed images are displayed, with varied inflections and speed of narration for dramatic purposes | |
| | 6. Gift of voice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A way to personalize the story to help the audience understand the context. • Pitch, inflection, timbre of your personal voice | |
| | 7. Accompanying soundtrack | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music or other sounds that support and embellish the story. | |

How to use Storyboards

Storyboards are visual representations that help in the planning and creation process of digital storytelling. Storyboarding allows you to lay out images in sequential order to create the flow of the story. They can also include information regarding time, audio, animation, and narration. The following flowchart demonstrates how the basic scenes from a digital story might be organized.

Storyboard Directions

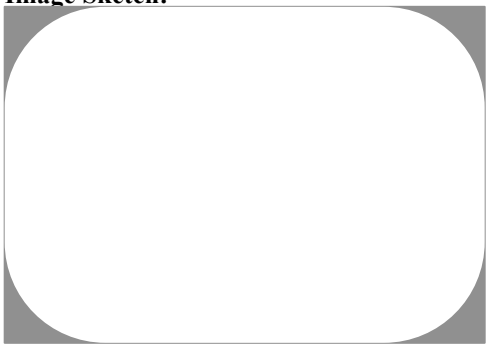
Author: Write your name (or all names of a group working together)

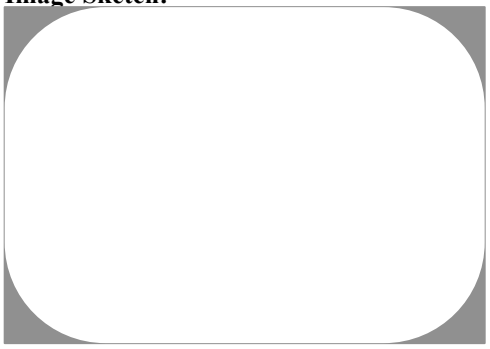
Project Name: Name your project something interesting, catchy, and related to your story

| Page/sequence order: | Time for frame: | Frame Description: | Media List and Description: |
|---|---|---|--|
| Number your boards so you remember the order. | How long do you expect this section to play on screen? You can always adjust this in the assembly stage | Here you describe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what will appear on the screen (picture, clip, graphic or other kind of visual) • what listeners will hear (music, narrative, sounds) • your director's comments about what you're trying to achieve and communicate | Here you list the specifics of every piece of media you will need; this will help you gather materials before beginning the story assembly. It can also be a "works cited list" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music, songs, voice recordings • Pictures, graphics, diagrams • Video clips • Text, title, transition |
| Image Sketch: <div style="border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 50%; padding: 20px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%; background-color: #f0f0f0;"> Here you do a quick sketch of what will appear at this point in your digital story. You can also paste a graphic or photo if you don't want to sketch. Remember it's just a small reminder so you can plan this part of your story. </div> | | | |
| Narration: Here you write out, or describe the narrative occurring at this point in your digital story. | | | |

Author: _____

Project Name: _____

| Page/sequence order: | Time for frame: | Frame Description: | Media List and Description: |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Image Sketch:  | | | |
| <u>Narration:</u> | | | |

| Page/sequence order: | Time for frame: | Frame Description: | Media List and Description: |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Image Sketch:  | | | |
| <u>Narration:</u> | | | |

Finding Images and Audio

Why copyright is important

Copyright is important to creators like writers and artists as well as those such as publishers that own rights, as it provides them with a legal right of ownership of the work that they produce. This means that creators of an original piece of work can have some control over how it is used, which is not only fair but necessary for them to make a living from their talent and efforts.

What can you do?

You can make your own images and audio by painting/drawing, taking digital photographs, making movies, and recording your own sound effects/narration/music. If you are using images, audio, or video that someone else made, you need to give it a proper citation. However, there are many websites that offer royalty free (no cost to you), and copyright free resources. These resources are created for the purpose of sharing. Below are a few websites, though many others exist.

Visuals

- Creative Commons: <https://search.creativecommons.org/>
 - Allows you to search within a wide range of sites for royalty-free and copyright free images.
- Freeimagebay: <http://freeimagebay.com/>
 - Copyright-free images for personal and commercial use at no cost.
- Pixabay: <https://pixabay.com/en/>
 - Royalty free stock photos and copyright free vector graphics.
- Stockvault: <http://www.stockvault.net/>
 - Over 13,000 free and copyright free photos for personal or non-commercial use.
- Freeimages: <http://www.freeimages.com/>
 - Over 400,000 free photos to choose from, but you must abide by its image license agreement.
- Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/>
 - Millions of images under a [Creative Commons \(CC\) License](#).
- UPICM: <http://www.upicm.com/>
 - Free photos for personal and commercial use.

Audio

- Creative Commons: <http://creativecommons.org/legalmusicforvideos>
 - Connects you to websites that offer free, creative commons audio.
- Incompetech: <http://incompetech.com/music/royalty-free/>
 - Royalty-free music you can download by both genre and feel. Instrumental/good for digital storytelling.
- Freesound: <https://www.freesound.org/>
 - Database of Creative Commons Licensed sounds.



The Gift of your Voice

It is not only important *what* you say, but also *how* you say it. Practice varying your voice speed, adding emotion by speaking louder, softer, or by expressing anger / frustration / sadness / joy with the tone of your voice. Your voice is a gift, and is one of the most important parts of the digital storytelling process. Here are some things to consider as you practice your script.

Volume

Think about how loudly or softly you will say certain words or phrases. Usually when you get excited about something, your voice gets louder. If you are angry, you may sound louder than if you are sad. You might whisper a secret, or an aside.

Pace

The speed at which you narrate your story makes a big difference. You never want to read your narration too fast so that it is hard to follow, or too slow so that it drags on. However, there might be a section where you want to emphasize a point and so you might slow down and enunciate each word clearly. If you get excited or worked up about a topic, you might speed up the pace.

Tone

The tone of the story tells you what mood is being set. Is the tone dark and melancholy, or light and dreamy? You can achieve this mood-setting trick with your voice. When you are reading a section that conveys emotion, allow for that emotion to register in your voice. Don't just read the script, feel it!

Pitch

The pitch refers to how high or low your voice goes. You may not realize that you do it, but most people change the pitch of their voice depending on their emotions. When you are frightened your voice might go up, even squeak a little.

Inflection

When you say a phrase, or a word and your voice goes up or down at the end, this is you changing the inflection. For example, when you ask a question, your voice pitch usually goes up at the end, signaling that you are asking and not telling. Similarly, you use different inflections in your voice when you are being sarcastic (try it, you'll know it when you hear that sneer in your voice), or shocked by something.

Pause

While your voice is extremely important, taking a pause for emphasis in just the right moment can be equally impactful. As you think about the speed, or pace, of your voice, also think where would pausing make its own statement. Don't start your script too soon, and leave a pause near the end.

Stress

There are certain words you want to stand out because you are *making a point*. You can do this by adding a stress on those words, saying them louder or softer, and allowing for a brief pause in between.

Windows Movie Maker™ Directions

How to Create a Folder

1. Right click with the mouse on the desktop
2. Choose *New* and *Folder*
3. Type both partners name and press enter. Please instruct them not to name their folders anything else, but their names

How to Search for and Save Pictures

1. Click on the icon *Internet Explorer™*
2. Type in google.com in the address bar
3. Click *images* in the top left corner to change to an image search
4. Type in a description of the picture you are looking for.
5. Remember to look for images that are not copyright.
6. Browse page to find images. Instruct the students to look at the number under the picture that is followed by the letter k. This number needs to be larger than 30k. If it is not, the pictures will appear blurry in the movie. The larger the number, the better.
7. Click on a desired picture
8. Click on *See full-size image*
9. Right click in the center of the picture
10. Click *save picture as*
11. Click *Desktop*
12. Click on *students folder*
13. Click on *File name* and rename picture with a descriptive title
14. Click *save*
15. Use the back arrow button to return image

Opening Movie Maker and Saving Project

1. Click on the *Start* tab on the desktop
2. Click on *Windows Movie Maker™* to open program
3. Click *File*
4. Click *Save Project As*
5. Click *desktop*
6. Click on *(students name)* folder
7. Click on *File name* and type in name (if partners, type both names)
8. Click *Save*

Importing Images and Inserting Images

1. On the left side under *Capture Video* click *Import Pictures*
2. Click *desktop*
3. Click *(students names)* folder
4. Highlight all the pictures by putting the cursor to the right and below all the pictures, click, drag to the left and up to highlight all, let go and click *Import*
5. Make sure the screen is in Storyboard view. If it is not, click on *show storyboard* in the middle of the screen. In storyboard view you should see a series of boxes towards the bottom of the screen.
6. Click and drag pictures into the large boxes in the desired order. If you decide you don't want a picture right click and delete it.

Adding Effects

1. Under *Edit Movie* click *View Video Effects*
2. Browse through video effects clip; double click to view the effect
3. Choose an effect, click and drag the effect into the little box with the star in it. The star will turn blue when the effect has been successfully added. Add an effect to pictures as desired.

Adding Transitions

1. Under *Edit Movie* click *View Video Transitions*
2. Browse through video transitions; double click to view
3. Choose a transition and click and drag into the smaller boxes between the pictures. Choose a transition to insert between each picture, even if it is a quick fade from black.

Adding Titles

1. Under *Edit Movie* click *Make Titles or Credits*
2. Choose *Add title at the beginning of the movie*
3. Type desired title. To change font and background color click *change text font and color*. Click the arrow under font and choose a font. To change color, click on the box under color and choose a color, click *ok*.
4. Click *Done*, add title to movie.
5. Click *Make Titles and Credits* to add more titles. Read from the title choices and add titles where desired throughout the movie. Remind the students that they will need titles throughout their movie not just at the beginning and the end, though they need to limit their writing and rely on the images, sounds and narration more than the written text.

Importing Audio

1. On the left side under *Capture Video* click *Import Audio or Music*
2. Select where you want to import the music file from i.e. my music
3. Select a song and click *import*
4. Click and drag the music track into the audio/music row
5. If the song is too long drag your cursor to the end until you see a double red arrow and click and drag longer or shorter
6. If your song is too short for your movie you can drag the music clip in again

Recording Narrative

1. Plug microphone into microphone jack
2. Check to make sure volume is turned up
3. Click on microphone icon on the tool bar and tap mic to test it
4. To record click *Start Narration* and start speaking
5. Click *stop narration* when you are finished
6. The *Save As* box will automatically pop up when you stop, save audio in your folder
7. Import audio clip into your project and drag into audio row
8. To trim, click on the audio clip in the timeline, move cursor to either end until you see a double-sided red arrow and drag in or out.

Saving Projects as a Movie File

1. Once the movie is done select *file, save movie file*
2. Select *my computer*
3. Enter a file name
4. Browse to select a location to save your file, select *ok, next*
5. Make sure *best quality for playback on my computer* is selected, *next*
6. Once the project has been converted, close out.
7. Open the file or folder where you saved your movie and copy and paste it to a flash drive or a server.

Digital Storytelling Rubric

Name:

| CATEGORY | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Point of View - Awareness of Audience | Strong awareness of audience in the design. Students can clearly explain why they felt the vocabulary, audio and graphics chosen fit the target audience. Establishes a purpose early on and maintains a clear focus throughout. | Some awareness of audience in the design. Students can partially explain why they felt the vocabulary, audio and graphics chosen fit the target audience. Establishes a purpose early on and maintains focus for most of the presentation. | Some awareness of audience in the design. Students find it difficult to explain how the vocabulary, audio and graphics chosen fit the target audience. There are a few lapses in focus, but the purpose is fairly clear. | Limited awareness of the needs and interests of the target audience. It is difficult to figure out the purpose of the presentation. |
| Dramatic Question | A compelling question invoked interest and viewer commitment. Tension was created. Realization is dramatically different from expectation. | An interesting question is presented and viewers stay hooked. Some tension was created. Realization differs noticeably from expectation. | A question was posed that was not thought provoking or original. Little tension was created. Realization barely differs from the expectation. | There was no dramatic part to the story. No tension was created. Realization and expectation do not differ. |
| Emotional Content | Author uses vivid details and figurative language to reveal feelings and information. Strong emotional content. Music stirs a rich emotional response that matches the story line well. | Author uses adequate details and some figurative language to reveal feelings and information. Emotions come through in the story. Music stirs a rich emotional response that somewhat matches the story line. | Author uses minimal details and little to no figurative language to reveal feelings and information. Some emotional content. Music is ok, and not distracting, but it does not add much to the story. | Author uses little to no details and no figurative language. No emotional content. Music is distracting, inappropriate, OR was not used. |
| Economy | The story is told with exactly the right amount of detail throughout. It does not seem too short nor does it seem too long. | The story composition is typically good, though it seems to drag somewhat OR need slightly more detail in one or two sections. | The story seems to need more editing. It is noticeably too long or too short in more than one section. | The story needs extensive editing. It is too long or too short to be interesting. |
| Images | Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story. The images may communicate symbolism and/or metaphors. | Images create an atmosphere or tone that matches some parts of the story. The images may communicate symbolism and/or metaphors. | An attempt was made to use images to create an atmosphere/ tone but it needed more work. Image choice is logical. | Little or no attempt to use images to create an appropriate atmosphere/ tone. |
| Gift of Voice | The pace (rhythm and voice punctuation) fits the story line and helps the audience really "get into" the story. | Occasionally speaks too fast or too slowly for the story line. The pacing (rhythm and voice punctuation) is relatively engaging for the audience. | Tries to use pacing (rhythm and voice punctuation), but it is often noticeable that the pacing does not fit the story line. Audience is not consistently engaged. | No attempt to match the pace of the storytelling to the story line or the audience. |

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