

Teacher Resources

Setting up Your Computer/Classroom

Technology

Preparing your classroom for the digital storytelling process is not difficult, because the technology and software that is required is easily available, accessible, and — for the most part — free. These lessons are PC/Windows-based, but Mac users can use *iMovie* instead of *Movie Maker 2*. The lessons, guidelines, and handouts can be easily adapted for Mac users.

The following checklist describes the suggested programs for creating a digital story. These programs should be installed on each student computer, with shortcuts created on the desktop for easy access.

Word — for writing the story/script

Adobe Photoshop (or other graphics program) — for editing images

Goldwave 4.26 (or other music-editing program) — for extracting music from CDs and editing the clips to fit your movie

Movie Maker 2 (or **iMovie** for Mac users) — to build your movie

Windows Media Player — (or **QuickTime** for Mac users) — to play back your music and movies

Computers should have a **CD burner**, and students should have access to a printer to copy their stories. A **scanner** is necessary if they need to scan photos, unless you are working with digital images only.

A **microphone** and **speaker** are required when students record their voices or to hear their music files. A headset that includes both is good for individual use. External speakers will be needed when students work in teams, so all of them can hear the audio.

Classroom Management

The digital storytelling unit has been tested for 5th through 12th-grade students. Nevertheless, the lessons can easily be adapted for younger students once you become familiar with the process.

The most challenging part of teaching a class in digital storytelling is managing all of the different tasks — writing, gathering images, editing images and music, etc. — in a large classroom. Most teachers do not have a lot of time to devote to an in-depth activity like this, so we suggest dividing the class into teams of two to four students per movie. This makes the class more manageable.

When teams are working on one personal story, the first thing inevitably to come up is: whose story should be told? This decision is a great exercise in the democratic process, and many lessons can be learned, as they must work together to tell someone else's story. For another solution, see the movie sample provided, *What Lies Within*, which successfully compiles three short stories into one movie. Once the teams begin working on their projects, it is often necessary to oversee and make sure one person is not dominating the others. All team members must participate in the different phases of production. Make sure they all have a hands-on experience.

Teacher Resources

Previewing Movies with the Class

The best way to view movies as a class, is to connect your computer to a projector and project the movie onto a screen or wall. Connecting external speakers to the computer is also better than relying on the built-in speakers. If this is not possible, you will have to play the movie on one computer and allow space for everyone to stand around and watch it. To be prepared for movie viewing, it is best to create shortcuts on your computer to your sample movies. This way you can quickly access the movies for viewing.

Movies to Share with Class

The Target website includes three digital stories: *Sittin' There: What Is Digital Storytelling?* provides an overview on the medium and the process, with clips from movies. The other two are movies that were created in workshops by individuals with no prior experience. In our Digital Storytelling Overview (Activity 2), we provide links to many sites that have sample movies that you can either view or download. We also encourage the students to go online and find stories that they like to share with the class. This develops their online researching skills and will inspire them as they see the hundreds of stories made by everyday people.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long will it take to create a digital story?

The digital storytelling lessons can be implemented in different ways and in diverse classroom environments. For this reason, it is difficult to give exact time frames. For example, if you are working with four students versus 20 students, it will shorten the time it takes to complete the stories. Also, it depends on whether you are going to devote full-day blocks of time, or daily hour sessions over a longer time period. We suggest that you create your own digital story before teaching it to your class. This will help you to determine how you would like to integrate it into your classroom.

Can I use these lessons with a large classroom of over 20 students?

We suggest breaking the class up into teams of two to four students. The collaboration and sharing that takes place is invaluable, and it makes project management of this activity more accessible.

What if I need help?

The web is full of resources. The ones listed above are just a few. We have found that young kids often know more than we do about technology. If you ask them, they will probably know the answer — or figure it out on their own!

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Leading a Story Circle

The story circle is the creative space that provides a place to throw around ideas, refine them, and develop the story — all with feedback from teachers and peers. This collaborative environment is crucial to the development of the story, as well as to the relationships within each team and among all students. It is a place to learn more about each other by hearing each others' story. It is also usually the first time the story gets told and the storyteller finds his/her voice.

The Story Circle

The story circle is a designated place in the classroom where participants sit in a circle to discuss ideas and story outlines.



The teacher/leader begins the dialogue by asking participants to share ideas for stories, responding openly to create a nurturing and non-judgmental environment for creative thinking.

The teacher/leader reviews “Story Development Guidelines” (Activity 2) with the class so that everyone has an understanding of the fundamental principles of digital storytelling.

Participants then work in teams to write a draft of their story concept and, when ready, return to the story circle to receive feedback from the teacher/leader as well as from other participants.

Teams return to the story circle as often as necessary to develop their story.

Story Circle Guidelines:

1. Create a safe and nurturing environment for all participants.
2. Demonstrate how to offer critique and suggestions with sensitivity and without judgment.
3. Develop respect and tolerance for diverse viewpoints and subject matter.
4. Encourage creative thinking and individual expression.
5. Teach successful writing techniques through positive and interactive discussion around story concepts.



