

Digital Storytelling in the Classroom

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Digital technology has brought a resurgence of interest in the ancient tradition of storytelling to the classroom. Today, more and more teachers and students are using digital tools to tell and share interesting and personal stories over the Internet. All you need to participate in this exciting new art form with your students is a digital video or still camera; a scanner; a networked, multi-media computer; video-editing software; and, of course, a good story to tell.

What Are Digital Stories?

Simply put, digital stories are short movies (typically 2–3 minutes in length) that combine multimedia elements such as photographs, video, animation, sound, music, text, and voice with a narrative of some kind. As an expressive medium in the classroom, digital stories can be used to integrate subject matter knowledge and skills from many areas of the curriculum. Students can work individually or collaboratively to produce their

own digital stories. Once completed, these stories can easily be uploaded to the Web and viewed by a worldwide audience.

While doing digital storytelling in the classroom and publishing your students' work online is ambitious, the results make it well worth the effort. Knowing that people everywhere will see their work online inspires students to work hard at creating polished presentations. For ideas and technical advice on planning and implementing digital storytelling projects with students, visit the Web sites listed below.

Getting Started


One of the best places to begin your search for information and guidance is the Center for Digital Storytelling (www.storycenter.org), the definitive online resource for digital storytelling. Their site includes case studies, articles, and the Digital Storytelling Cookbook, a comprehensive guide to using digital video as a storytelling medium.

Another excellent online resource is Digital Tales (www.digitales.us), which provides project ideas, technical advice, a gallery of examples, scoring rubrics, lists of recommended tools and software for both Macintosh and Windows users, and links to related resources.

Other informative sites include KQED's Digital Storytelling Initiative (dsi.kqed.org) in San Francisco, University of Houston's Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling (www.coe.uh.edu/digital-storytelling), and David Jakes' Digital Storytelling Collection (www.jakesonline.org/storytelling.htm). Each of these sites offers tips on story writing, scripting, technical advice, examples, links, and more.

Learning by Example

The best way to learn about digital storytelling is to see some examples. In addition to the sites already mentioned, Scott County Schools in Georgetown, Kentucky presents an assortment of digital stories produced by teachers and students on their Web site (www.scott.k12.ky.us/technology/digitalstorytelling/ds.html). There is also a nice collection of digital stories created by eighth-grade students on the Banting Middle School Web site from British Columbia, Canada (www2.sd43.bc.ca/banting/Web%20Pages/dstories.html).

The growing number of sites devoted exclusively to showing digital stories on the Web offers a rich array of examples to critique and inspire your students. Creative Narrations, a Boston-based, nonprofit organization, features a large and diverse selection of digital stories focusing on the theme of "community" on their Web site (www.creativenarrations.net/site/storybook). Likewise, the BBC's Digital Storytelling Web site (www.bbc.co.uk/wales/digitalstorytelling) presents digital stories told by people of all walks of life from around Wales. Lastly, you can view award-winning videos on burning topics of today by independent and youth producers from around the country and around the world on MediaRights' Fifth Annual Media That Matters Film Festival Web site (www.mediathat-mattersfest.org/mtm05). 

Note

Viewing the digital stories presented on the above sites may require you to first download and install a recent version of QuickTime, Media Player, or RealPlayer on your computer.

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