

Digital Storytelling - Tikal, the Ancient City of the Maya

Grade: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

This activity is designed for middle school students. However, it can be adapted to other age ranges depending on teacher needs.

Subject: Language Arts, Creative Writing, Social Studies, World History, Educational Technology, Maya Civilization

Duration: Four to seven 45 minute classroom sessions

Description:

Students will work in groups or individually to create a digital story about a historical site and the people who occupied the site and present it to the class. A digital story is short, multimedia piece that tells a story. In this project students will research and write a creative story about a fictional or real historical person and create a slideshow or movie project based on the narrative. This lesson plan uses Tikal as an example, but can also be adapted to any unit of study.

This lesson plan also features extensions for longer projects, gifted students and adaptation suggestions for classrooms with limited computer access.

California State Standards:

This activity is compliant with the California State Education Standards for Social Studies. This activity address Standard 7.7 which requires students to "compare and contrast the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the Meso-American and Andean civilizations."

This lesson plan address section 7.7.2, "Section 2. Study the roles of people in each society, including class structures, family life, war-fare, religious beliefs and practices, and slavery."

Materials:

Tikal Digital Story Student Sheets

Tikal Student Discussion Sheets

Digital Storyboard Duplication masters

Digital Story Grading Rubric

Paper

Pens, Pencils

Computer(s) with Internet connection

Computer(s) with software for photo editing, PowerPoint or iMovie

Digital microphone (optional)

Scanner (optional)

LCD Projector (optional)

Procedure:

Part 1 - Introduction to the site of Tikal

Time: Half of 1 classroom session

Introduce students to Tikal as an example of a Mayan site. Tikal is located in modern day Guatemala and is one of the largest Mayan sites, with six large step pyramids rising from the jungle. Media from the CyArk website (<http://archive.cyark.org/Tikal-media.php>) is available for free to educators and students and can be used to create a slideshow introduction to the site. The CyArk website has background on the city of Tikal and images, videos, and 3-D models of the city. Each media item also contains a detailed description and information relating to the media piece.

A Power Point introduction to the site of Tikal created by CyArk can be downloaded at SlideShare and is free to be used in classrooms.

<http://www.slideshare.net/namedina/tikalthe-ancient-city-of-the-maya>

Present students with a multimedia presentation about Tikal. Emphasize that the images in the slide show have been captured within the past few years. Ask students to imagine what the site looked like 2,000 years ago. How might it be different? How might it be the same?

Part 2 - Student Discussions

Time: Half of 1 classroom session

Distribute students copies of the Tikal Student Discussion sheets. Have students form small discussion groups of 4-6. Ask students to reflect on the media slide show they viewed. In groups, have students discuss the questions on the Student Discussion Sheets. These questions are intended to have students begin to think about how the existing remains of Tikal can help archaeologists learn about the Maya culture.

Part 3 - Project Assignment: The Digital Story

Time: Half of 1 classroom session

Digital storytelling combines traditional oral storytelling and technology together to create a powerful, interdisciplinary learning experience. Digital storytelling allows students to weave video, images, art, music, text and the human voice into a creative, visual expression of their ideas and classroom knowledge.

Ask students to think of examples of stories and how they are told and expressed. What makes a story a story? Begin a classroom discussion on how to define multimedia (using several different types of media) and how different types of media, such as books, videos, photography, comic books and advertisements tell stories.

Explain to students that a digital story is a personal narrative using multimedia to tell the story. Elements of most digital stories include:

7 Elements of Digital Story telling from Story Center

http://www.storycenter.org/memvoice/pages/tutorial_1.html

1. Point of View
2. A Dramatic Question
3. Emotional Content
4. The Gift of your Voice
5. The Power of the Soundtrack
6. Economy
7. Pacing

You may want to show students some examples of digital stories created by students. Some student examples of digital stories can be found online.

<http://www.storycenter.org/whatis.html>

http://www.digitales.us/gallery/gallery_living_memories.php

<http://www.streetside.org/stories/digital-stories.htm>

<http://voicethread.com/#q.b100357.i511685>

Explain to your students that they will be creating a digital story about the inhabitants of Tikal during the year 800 AD using images, movies, narration and music. The digital story will be a detailed account of the life of a single person from a particular class structure at Tikal. After students have created their digital stories, the stories of the whole class will be shared in a classroom presentation.

Distribute the Tikal Digital Story Student Sheets. This sheet provides students with details of the assignment and suggested steps for creating a digital story. Depending on the type of software available in your classroom, you may also want to create copies of the "Tutorial-Using Power Point in Digital Storytelling " sheets for students. Depending on classroom resources and time constraints, students will work on their digital stories in groups of 3-4.

To help students begin thinking about their digital story, have students complete the

brainstorming section of the Tikal Digital Story Student Sheets. This section asks students to create a character from Tikal and to develop their character's personality and life story. This process is intended to help students think about the digital story as a dramatic, personal narrative of a fictional character. The brainstorming process also helps student to begin to imagine Tikal as it was in the past and the role their character would play in the ancient Maya society.

Part 4: Research and Gathering Media

Time: 1 classroom session

Students will need time to do background research on the Maya and the site of Tikal. Students can either research information on the Internet or use this time to visit the library and check out any relevant books. The CyArk website contains detailed research on the site of Tikal.

<http://archive.cyark.org/Tikal-info.php>

Students should write down the URLs of any website they use or include books or magazine used in a bibliography. To make copying website URLs easier, students can copy and paste the URLs into a text document that can be turned in with the final project.

During this time students can also begin to gather online resources for their digital stories. This can include images, videos, sound and other forms of media. The CyArk media archive can be a valuable resource of images, videos, and 3-D laser scan models of Tikal. If a scanner is available students can scan images from books or draw and digitize their own art. Students should save these files on the computer in a folder with their name. Student should also cite the books or the URLs of any media they use. Inform students that they will need to turn in a bibliography and page with the Internet sources used in their project.

Part 5: Writing and Planning the Digital Story

Writing a Creative Story

Homework assignment

As a homework assignment, assign students to write a creative 1-2 page story about their character's daily life in Tikal. Explain to students that they can either write about one typical day for their character or one very unusual day for their character. These stories should be written in the form of a first person narrative from the perspective of the student's character. While students are encouraged to be creative in writing their story, the story should reflect student research on Tikal.

This creative story will serve as the foundation of the digital story. Before students proceed to the next part of the project, check to see if students have completed their creative story assignment.

Storyboarding

1 classroom session

Copy and distribute the Digital Storytelling Storyboard Handout to students. Explain to students that the storyboard is an organizational tool for planning the digital story. Students will use the storyboard to describe the scenes they plan to create. The digital story contains an area for students to sketch what types of images they would like to use in each scene and an area below the boxes where students can describe in words their scene, as well as write the voice-over portion of the scene.

Stress to students the importance of planning a digital story. Inform students that they will be required to show their storyboard to a teacher before beginning to use the computer to create the digital story.

Part 6 - Digital Story Creation

3-5 Classroom sessions

Working in groups or individually, students will spend 3-5 classroom periods producing their digital story on the computer.

There are many programs that can be used to create a digital story. Choose a medium that suits your classroom needs and materials.

Software

Microsoft PowerPoint

PowerPoint is a popular slide and presentation creation software. Available for both Mac and PC.

Microsoft Photostory 3

A free photo slide show creating software that includes special effects, soundtracks and personalize your stories with titles and captions. Available for PC computers.

Download Photostory for free:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/digitalphotography/photostory/default.msp>

Comic Life

Comic Life allows users to create comic strips using photos and allows users to add captions, voice bubbles and other comic effects. Comics can then be saved as images or as PDFs. Currently only available for Macs.

iMovie

Apple's movie editing software that comes installed on Macs with OSX. iMovie is easy for users with no movie editing experience. Available only on Mac.

Adobe

Adobe Premiere Elements- Adobe's basic video creating/editing software. Only available for PC.

MovieMaker

Windows Movie Maker is a video creating/editing software that is included in recent versions of Microsoft Window.

Online Resources

Voice Thread

<http://voicethread.com/>

Voice Thread is a web-based multimedia narrative service. The program allows users to record audio tracks and attach them to text and images.

YouTube Remixer

http://www.youtube.com/ytremixer_about

YouTube is an online video sharing site. The YouTube Remixer allows users to edit video using their online software.

Part 7 - Classroom Presentations

1-2 Classroom sessions

Once students have completed their digital story, have students burn their digital story project to a CD and turn it in. If students are using online software to create their project have them email the project URL.

Have a showing of entire class showing of everyone's digital stories. Many students enjoy sharing their stories with their peers and it is a great opportunity for students to see what their fellow classmates have created.

Sharing Projects

There are a variety of ways you can share your class's digital stories with the public. Uploading projects to the web can allow students to share their digital stories with their friends and families. Below are some websites you may want to consider using to share your students' work.

Slide Share

Voice Thread

Google Video

YouTube

TeacherTube

Our Media

Assessment:

Use the digital story telling rubric to grade the student digital stories.

Rubric for Final Digital Story				
CATEGORY	1	2	3	4
Content	The story is not complete	The digital story is missing significant elements	The digital story is completed, yet the content is not grade level appropriate.	The digital story is grade level appropriate and engaging for students.
Quality of Proposed projects	The digital story meets the minimum requirements.	The digital story needs more details added.	The digital story is engaging, visually attractive, yet it is not complete for classroom use.	The digital story is engaging, visually attractive and ready to be used in the classroom.
Format and Technology use	The project does not have a storyboard.	The project is emerging, but needs supporting details	Project is completed in the yet more editing is needed.	Project is nicely presented including sound and visual images