



Historical Paintings and the Stories They Tell – A Dramatic Re-Imagining for Radio

History Challenge

Submission Due Date: April 7, 2023

Designed for Middle and High School Students

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Skills: Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Presentational Skills
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The Challenge

One critical source of historical knowledge comes from the period illustrations. Each illustration – from portraits to battle scenes; family gatherings to famous moments in history - when analyzed, reveals telling details about attitudes, status, traditions, emotional states, fashion trends, and, above all, in the pre-photographic age, what people really looked like, famous and otherwise.

In this Challenge, you will select a picture from a time or moment in history that you are studying and bring to life one, two or three characters from that illustration. As they figuratively step out of the frame, they will tell us the story of the picture. That’s Part I. This Challenge then asks your team to imagine these characters at dinner – audio only - that evening discussing one critical historical event of the time period. In short, you will create a radio drama that features your characters from the painting engaging with a seminal historical event of the time period. Are they politely discussing the event and how it affects their lives? Or, are they plotting to undo the events that have occurred? That’s your call. The best place to start this Challenge may be with a visit to ...your nearby art museum.

Deliverables include:

- The Dramatic Re-Imagining (this is the only Meridian Stories deliverable)
- Two Stories Summary (at teacher’s discretion)
- Historical Event Overview (at teacher’s discretion)
- Narrative Outline (at teacher’s discretion)

Assumptions and Logistics

Time Frame - We recommend that this digital storytelling project takes place inside of a three to four-week time frame.

Length - All Meridian Stories submissions should be under 4 minutes in length, unless otherwise specified.

Slate - **All digital storytelling projects must begin with a slate that provides:**

- a) the title of the piece;
- b) the name of the school submitting;
- c) the wording 'Permission Granted' which gives Meridian Stories the right to a) publicly display the submission in question on, as linked from, related to or in support of Meridian Stories digital media; and b) use or reference it for educational purposes only, in any and all media; and
- d) We strongly recommend that students do **not** put their last names on the piece either at the start or finish, during the credits.

Submissions - Keep in mind that each school can only submit three submissions per Competition (so while the entire class can participate in any given Challenge, only three can be submitted to Meridian Stories for Mentor review and scoring).

Teacher Reviews - All reviews by the teacher are at the discretion of the teacher and all suggested paper deliverables are due only to the teacher. The only deliverable to Meridian Stories is the digital storytelling project.

Teacher's Role and Technology Integrator - While it is helpful to have a Technology Integrator involved, they are not usually necessary: the students already know how to produce the digital storytelling project. And if they don't, part of their challenge is to figure it out. They will! ***The teacher's primary function in these Challenges is to guide the students as they engage with the content.*** You don't need to know editing, sound design, shooting or storyboarding: you just need to know your content area, while assisting them with time management issues. See the [Teachers Role](#) section of the site for further ideas about classroom guidance.

Digital Rules/Literacy - We strongly recommend that all students follow the rules of Digital Citizenry in their proper usage and/or citation of images, music and text taken from other sources. This recommendation includes producing a citations page at the end of your entry, if applicable. See the [Digital Rules](#) area in the [Meridian Stories Digital Resource Center](#) section of the site for guidance.

Location – Try not to shoot in a classroom at your school. The classroom, no matter how you dress it up, looks like a classroom and can negatively impact the digital story you are trying to tell.

Collaboration - We strongly recommend that students work in teams of 3-4: part of the educational value is around building collaborative skill sets. But students may work individually.

Process

Below is a suggested breakdown for the students' work.

During Phase I, student teams will:

- Working in collaboration with your teacher, select a painting. Take note of the date of the painting, the artist, and the title. The only requirement: there must be people in the painting. They will be the characters in your story.
- The first step is to answer this question: what story is your painting telling you? There is no right or wrong answer to this question, but there is historical research that your team can do to inform your story. Where is the action of this painting taking place; when; and, in general, what is going on during this time period? Use your knowledge of the historical context of this painting to inform your story creation. We recommend that each team member write what story the painting is telling them privately, before sharing it with the team. And keep in mind how the painting's title may impact your ideas.
 - If you want to take that question a step further, do a little research about the artist and then re-phrase the question this way: what story do you think the artist is trying to tell? Which may lead to the question: who, if anyone, is paying the artist to paint this painting? Probing those questions may shift your perspective a little.
- This is a Challenge that demands very active observation skills. The next step is to take note of the details of your select painting that will reveal important details about the action or the people, and their time period. Think of this as sleuthing. You are looking for clues and evidence in the painting that points to ideas about that historical moment that you never knew before. Write down what you notice, again, individually at first, and then share the results with your team. We recommend writing one or two sentences about what strikes you about each element that you observe. Things to which to pay attention include:
 - Facial expressions.
 - The posture and pose – the body language – of the people.
 - Their eyes – what are they looking at?

- The humanity – do they come across as distant figures on a canvas or do they seem like real people? How is the artist conveying this?
- Point of view.
- Repetition: are there recurring images/objects?
- Any symbols?
- Clothing and accessories.
- Architectural details and room furnishings.
- Other background paintings that might be on a wall.
- Darkness and light – what is revealed, highlighted and what is obscured?
- Color palette – The choice of color palette is deliberate. What is the artist saying in those choices, ...if anything?
- Mix and match your two sets of documents: the stories from the first part of this Phase, with the observed details from the second. Do the details observed bring out certain ideas or themes from your stories? Do your proposed stories shift in direction – become more concrete or focused - based on some of the details your team has highlighted and brought to the fore? This is a brainstorm where your team is working through all your ideas to come up with two draft stories of your picture, as informed by your analysis of the painting’s details. Write up those two stories.
 - **Teachers Option: Two Stories Summary** - Teachers may require that teams hand in a summary that outlines two narratives that have emerged from their analysis of the painting, as informed by their detailed observations and knowledge of the time period.

During Phase II, student teams will:

- Research a significant historical event that took place loosely within a five-year period before the painting was published. In other words, find an event that the people in your painting might be talking about at dinner that night. It may be useful to think in terms of politics, culture, and/or science. The event could be a battle or change in regime; it could be the publishing of a novel or play that has the world abuzz; or the discovery of a new medical solution or physics principle. Think broadly as you research your significant historical event.
- Using primary and secondary sources, write up a one-page summary of this historical moment. As you are doing this, try to unearth the small details that make this historical moment interesting.
 - **Teachers Option: Historical Event Overview** - Teachers may require that teams hand in a summary of the historical event that helped shape the time period in which the figures in the painting exist.
- Now, create an audio drama that brings to life the characters in the painting and then extends that to a conversation that evening where the characters are

discussing – debating, arguing over, dramatically conspiring with and against each other – as related to the historical event that you have researched. Here are some ideas to help guide this creative development and first draft script.

- Your digital story will begin with a shot of your select painting. Using voice over, either with a narrator or the character voices themselves, tell us the story that you have landed on about the painting itself. While telling that story, be sure to point out a few specific details from the canvas that are informing your story; that are supporting your interpretation. This may take up to one minute of your final deliverable.
- Then, the story moves ahead in time to that evening. Having introduced your characters and the general sense of who they are and what they are doing in that painting, your digital story now moves into a wholly audio mode: a radio play. Visually, you can fade to black or choose to highlight different parts of the canvas or settle on a picture of the artist as you continue your story in voice and sound. In all, your team can play with the visuals for the remainder of the story or do nothing at all: this is now an audio story.
- Draft a script. The challenge here is to take your characters and the backgrounds/story that you have created for the painting and bring them to life in a small drama that helps us all to understand the historical event that you have selected to focus upon. Questions to consider include:
 - Were your characters connected to the event in question in any way?
 - Are your characters on opposing sides of this event – some feel pained by it and others, celebratory?
 - Is one of your characters planning something sinister for that evening, as shaped by this historical event?
 - Are your characters not at all interested in this historical event until X arrives for dinner and changes everything?
 - Is there a symbol or object in the painting itself that can be used as a significant prop in your story that evening? That symbol/prop could be a murder weapon or a long-lost family heirloom. We strongly recommend integrating an item from the painting into the story you are telling about that evening.
- Your job is to create a radio drama - an imaginary story - that is shaped by the history of your painting. You'll need conflict. Have fun. Keep looking at the painting for story inspiration. And be sure to effectively and accurately communicate the information you have researched about the historical event that is at the center of your story. This is a radio drama as informed by

historical events and the painting. This gives you some creative license. Your radio drama is made up to entertain. But it needs to be historically aligned with the event and the time period.

- **Teacher’s Option: Narrative Outline** – Teachers may require that teams hand in a first draft script for review and feedback.
- Finalize your script, cast your characters, and rehearse the voices through multiple read-throughs of your script.

During Phase III, student teams will:

- Develop and implement a sound design. Your options include artificial sound effects (i.e., the cymbal crash!), natural sound effects (i.e., the creaking door, sounds of glasses clinking, or wind and rain), and music. Ask yourself how and when sound can help enhance dramatic moments of your story. This is critical. Your story is essentially aural, so go crazy on brainstorming a sound design strategy to heighten the tension and impact of your story.
- Record your Radio Drama, as well as the opening minute of the digital story that showcases the painting.
- Post-produce the Radio Drama, adding sound effects and music as desired.
- Edit together the opening minute which features the painting with the purely audio portion of the story.

Meridian Support Resources

Meridian Stories provides two forms of support for the student teams:

1. Meridian Innovators and Artists – This is a series of three to four minute-videos featuring artists and innovative professionals who offer important advice, specifically for Meridian Stories, in the areas of creativity and production.
2. Media Resource Collection – These are short documents that offer student teams key tips in the areas of creativity, production, game design and digital citizenry.

Recommended review, as a team, for this Competition include:

Meridian Innovators and Artists	Media Resource Collection
<i>Sound Design</i> – Chris Watkinson	Sound Editing Basics
<i>Radio Plays</i> – Margaret Heffernan	Sound Recording Basics
<i>Acting</i> – Abbie Killeen	Digital Rules – The Starting Line

Presentation of Learning

Meridian Stories is a proud partner of the non-profit *Share Your Learning*, which is spearheading the movement of over **five million** students to publicly share their work as a meaningful part of their educational experience.

The workforce considers Presentational Skills to be a key asset and we encourage you to allow students to practice this skill set as often as possible. These digital storytelling projects provide a great opportunity for kids to practice their public presentational skills. *This can be achieved in a remote learning environment by inviting parents to a Zoom/Google/Skype screening of the student's digital stories.*

According to *Share Your Learning*, Presentations of Learning (POL) promote...

- **Student Ownership, Responsibility & Engagement.** POLs can serve as a powerful *rite of passage* at the end of [a project]. By reflecting on their growth over time in relation to academic and character goals, grounded in evidence from their work, students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning. Just as an artist wants their portfolio to represent their best work, POLs encourage students to care deeply about the work they will share.
- **Community Pride & Involvement.** When peers, teachers and community members come together to engage with student work and provide authentic feedback, they become invested in students' growth and serve as active contributors to the school community.
- **Equity.** POLs ensure that all students are seen and provide insight into what learning experiences students find most meaningful and relevant to their lives.

Meridian Stories' own research indicates this to be a really useful exercise for one additional reason: Students actually learn from their peers' presentations – it is useful to hear a perspective that is not just the teacher's.

It is with this in mind that we encourage you to plan an event – it could be just an end-of-the-week class or an event where parents, teachers and student peers are invited – to allow the students to showcase their Meridian Stories' digital storytelling projects. For more free resources that will support this planning, visit [Share Your Learning](#).

Evaluation Rubric – *Historical Paintings and the Stories They Tell – A Dramatic Re-Imagining for Radio*

CONTENT COMMAND	
Criteria	1-10
The Story of the Painting	Your analysis and consequent narrative explanation of your historical painting is thoughtful, grounded in visual and historical details, and expansive
The Historical Event	The historical event is presented fully and artfully, yielding information and perspectives that enlighten the listening audience
The Extension of the Painting	Your narrative extending the painting into a simulated historical scene reflects substantive research about the time period and the people
STORYTELLING COMMAND	
Criteria	1-10
The Telling of the Story of the Painting	Your story of the painting is told in an engaging style that invites the viewer into a deeper relationship with the painting
The Drama Around the Historical Event	Your ability to create a dramatic and thought-provoking scene around an important historical event from the time is exemplary
Characters	The characters created, as experienced through voice, carry the story forward in a way that is historically aligned with the time period and creatively executed
MEDIA COMMAND	
Criteria	1-10
Visual Presentation of the Picture	The opening minute presents the historical painting in ways that invite inspection and analysis from the viewer

Sound Design	Voice, sound effects, and music are used to great effect, heightening the drama and storytelling, while illuminating the newly imagined historical tale
Editing	The digital story is edited with just the right pacing to result in an engaging listening experience
HUMAN SKILLS COMMAND (teachers only)	
Criteria	1-10
Collaborative Thinking	The group demonstrated flexibility in making compromises and valued the contributions of each group member.
Creativity and Innovation	The group brainstormed many inventive ideas and was able to evaluate, refine and implement them effectively
Initiative and Self-Direction	The group set attainable goals, worked independently, and managed their time effectively, demonstrating a disciplined commitment to the project

Essential Questions

1. How do you view and analyze a historical painting that can lead you to an expansive understanding of that time in history?
2. What is a significant event in the time period of your painting - be it political, cultural, or scientific - and what are the ramifications of that event on society?
3. How can storytelling and dialogue, as informed by research in primary and secondary sources, be used to understand complex historical ideas more deeply?
4. What are the unique qualities of the medium of audio that allow for effective and engaging communication?
5. How has immersion in the creation of original content and the production of digital media – exercising one’s creativity, critical thinking, and digital literacy skills - deepened the overall educational experience?
6. How has working on a team – practicing one’s collaborative skills - changed the learning experience?

Student Proficiencies

1. The student will experience the many surprising levels of information and deduction that can be excavated from a single painting through active viewing.
2. The student will come away with a deep understanding about how one significant event in either politics, culture or science can affect societal perspectives.
3. The student will understand how combining primary and secondary sources can help one to communicate complex historical ideas in an engaging and immersive way.
4. The student will understand how words, sounds and music can be mixed to create an impactful and entertaining narrative.
5. The student will utilize key Human Skills, with a focus on creativity, critical thinking, and digital literacy, in their process of translating literary content into a new narrative format.
6. The student will have an increased awareness of the challenges and rewards of team collaboration. Collaboration – the ability to work with others - is considered one of the most important 21st century skills to develop in students as they prepare for life after secondary school.

Curricular Correlations

The *Historical Paintings and the Stories They Tell* Challenge addresses a range of curricular objectives that have been articulated by two nationally recognized sources:

1. The **Common Core Curricular Standards – English Language Arts & History/Social Studies**; and
2. **The C3 Framework for Social Studies**, as outlined by **National Council of Social Studies (NCSS)**.

Below please find the standards that are being addressed, either wholly or in part.

Common Core Curricular Standards English Language Arts Standards – History/Social Studies

	5 th Grade	8 th Grade	9 th - 10 th Grade	11 th - 12 th Grade
W2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective

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		analysis of relevant content.	selection, organization, and analysis of content.	selection, organization, and analysis of content.
W3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
W4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
W5	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
W7	Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.	Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
SL1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 5 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL5	Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.	Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.	Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.	Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
SL6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, using formal English when appropriate to task and situation.	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
RH 2	N/A	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

C3 Framework for Social Studies

D2.His.1.6-8. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.	D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.	D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.
D2.His.14.6-8. Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.	D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.
D2.His.16.6-8. Organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument about the past.	D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.