



Justice Triumphs – A (musical) *Courtroom Drama* History Challenge

Submission Due Date: April 7, 2023
Designed for Middle and High School Students

Table of Contents	Range of Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Challenge• Assumptions and Logistics• Process• Meridian Support Resources• Presentation of Learning• Evaluation Rubric• Essential Questions• Student Proficiencies• Curricular Correlations: C3 Framework and Common Core (W1, W2, W3, W5, W7, W9, L3, L5, L6, SL4, SL5, SL6, RH2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploration of Justice• Exploration of Seminal Court Cases• Primary and Secondary Source Research• Organizing, Script Writing and Dramatizations• Song Writing• Digital Literacy Skills - Video Pre-production, Production and Post-Production• Human Skills - Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Presentational Skills

The Challenge

The classic court room drama is a story that is told about a good guy, who is often a little powerless, going up against a bad guy, who holds the power. In this Challenge, you are going to discover a moment in history where justice prevailed (against all odds) - in court - and re-tell that story. There will be three main characters: the two opposing lawyers and the judge. The team can add witnesses and other sundry characters, but essentially this asks you to present the arguments that each side put forward and then summarize the judge's final judgment. Oh, and one more thing. The final verdict must be ...sung.

What kind of stories can be told here? Here are a few examples:

- Courtroom dramas around corporations dumping illegal chemicals into the water supply;
- False accusations based on the color of one's skin;
- Sexual predation in the church or the workplace; or
- Disinformation spread through social media.

Another source for stories could come from tapping into seminal Supreme Court decisions where, in your view, justice triumphed over evil. The final deliverable is a dramatic re-telling of the case, with a focus on the decisive arguments that won the case, and the rollicking verdict that sealed the triumph.

Deliverables include:

- Justice Triumphs Digital Story (this is the only Meridian Stories deliverable)
- Outline of Key Arguments (at teacher's discretion)
- First Draft Script (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:

- The opening moment of your digital story must begin with your own definition of 'justice.' With your team, brainstorm what 'justice' means to you. Write a draft statement and let that guide you through Phase I.
- This Challenge continues with research. Your team needs to find what story it is you want to tell. Here are a few lead questions that may help guide your search.
 - Your search for a compelling story could be motivated by an issue: in what domain do you want to explore your notions of justice? A few examples to get you going might include the environment, civil rights, free speech, corporate overreach, or surveillance capitalism.
 - You are allowed to adapt existing filmed versions of court room dramas based on real events such as *Philadelphia*, *Erin Brockovich* or *Dark Waters*. Looking for your story by cataloguing filmed courtroom dramas may lead you to the narrative you want to re-imagine in your own words.
 - The Supreme Court and the UN's International Court of Justice are highly interesting sources for exploration and discovery.
 - The last five years have seen an explosion of cases that challenge our sense of what justice is, from election fraud to disinformation to what is and is not "self-defense"? Find a way to survey news reports of the last five years to find your case.
- Once you have selected your story, we recommend dividing up the work so that part of the team researches the prosecution and part of the team researches the defense. The use of both primary and secondary sources will be essential to your command of this content.
 - It's important to consider that even though we all know where your story will end, it's paramount to develop the opposing perspective as fully as possible. A riveting story hinges on conflict. Your team needs to

create this conflict, this suspense. To do that, the opposing side needs to be as convincing (at least for a while) as the winning side.

- Keep in mind that if your story is taking place more than a decade ago, some information about the historical context in which this trial is happening will need to be communicated. Integrating those societal dynamics shaping the magnitude of the trial into your arguments will be essential. The same goes for stories that are taking place in this decade: some context will be needed to make your story both salient and powerful.
- Based on your research, edit your work down to three primary arguments for each side that are designed to be in dialogue with each other in a point-counter point style.
 - ***Teacher's Option: Outline of Key Arguments*** – Teachers may require that teams hand in an outline that charts their primary and secondary source research, as organized around their select arguments, for review and feedback.
- By the end of Phase I, student teams should have a very clear sense of the select arguments that they are going to put forth to effectively tell their story of justice.

During Phase II, student teams will:

- Shift gears to the media production side of this digital story. First step: who are the characters playing your three primary players? In other words, how are you going to shape the voices of the opposing sides and the judge? Write up character descriptions for your lead actors. And finally, ...can anybody sing? Feel free to bring in an outside person for the singing. In short: a ringer!
- Before you begin to draft your script, brainstorm about the staging and blocking of your court room drama. The default approach would be simply to cut from talking head to talking head, interspersed with a wide shot or two of the lawyer characters pacing and delivering their arguments. Can you be more visually creative in bringing your court room drama to life? How can you make this story visually interesting, surprising, and engaging, all the while building suspense and drama? That's not an easy task, but ...go for it.
- With the arguments and counter arguments researched, the story cast and the overall visual direction mapped out, write your first draft script.
 - This is a good time to revisit, and to the degree desired, re-edit your statement about justice that will begin your story.
- Simultaneous to writing your first draft script, your team should begin writing the Judge's Song. Lyrically, consider finding ways to integrate your statement of

justice into the song. That’s not a requirement, just a suggestion to consider. Musically, the song can be original, royalty free, or adapted from the public domain. You may not legally take a current song and replace the lyrics without the permission of the copyright holder.

- ***Teacher’s Option: First Draft Script*** – Teachers may require that teams hand in their first draft script, including song lyrics, for review and feedback.
- Finalize the script and begin rehearsing. Dramas, in particular, require time and rehearsal for a) the characters to find their voice and establish their interpersonal dynamics, and b) the director to find the blocking and timing to maximize the dramatic impact of your story. Please make the time to rehearse thoroughly.
- Simultaneous to the rehearsal period, complete the pre-production process which includes securing locations; identifying and securing your props; creating your costumes; and discussing your lighting options.

During Phase III, student teams will:

- Shoot the video, including the song.
 - The expectation is that the song will be recorded live on the set. You can do that (or lip sync to a pre-recorded version) *and* also plan to cut away to other images during the judge’s song. Other voices – including those of the lawyers or outside choristers (a singing jury made up of your school choir?)– can join in. The tone of the song can be earnest or silly, indie, or pop or musical theatre or ...there are no rules about the song, except to have fun with it. The song is there to help your team fully own this story; make it original; make it ...memorable. Shoot for the moon.
- Research, as necessary, the still images that you will integrate into your video.
- Edit the video, adding stills and graphics as desired.
- Post-produce the video, adding music and sound effects as desired. And consider adding more tracks to your recorded song.

Meridian Support Resources

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

1. [Media 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. Meridian Resources – These are short documents that offer student teams a few key tips in the areas of creativity, production, game design and digital citizenry.

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

Media Innovators and Artists	Meridian Resources
<i>The Importance of Characters in Storytelling</i> – Scott Nash	Creating Storyboards, Framing the Shot
<i>Nonfiction</i> – Margaret Heffernan	Building Characters
<i>Acting for Film and Stage</i> – Janet McTeer	Guide to Royalty Free Music and Sound Effects
<i>Editing</i> – Tom Pierce	Guide to Working in the Public Domain

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 you 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 – *Justice Triumphs – A (musical) Courtroom Drama*

CONTENT COMMAND	
Criteria	1-10
Winning Arguments	The winning arguments are written and presented thoughtfully, convincingly and in a sequence that capitalizes on the drama
Opposing Arguments	The opposing arguments are written and presented thoughtfully, convincingly and in a sequence that capitalizes on the drama
Justice and the Judges’ Verdict	The final verdict clearly communicates that justice has rightfully prevailed and is aligned with your team’s articulated understanding of the term, which opens your story
Historical Context	The important societal dynamics of the time period that are shaping the significance of your trial are clearly communicated

STORYTELLING COMMAND	
Criteria	1 - 10
Characters	Your three primary characters are creatively conceived and well - fitted to their roles in your story
Dramatic Tension	Your understanding of how to carefully craft a court room drama to maximize drama and engagement is commanding

The Judge's Song	The Judge's Song, a story unto itself in a whole new genre, is executed creatively, cleverly, and engages the audiences wholly
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MEDIA COMMAND	
Criteria	1 - 10
Videography	The choice of images, shots, and camera angles dramatically enhances the impact of the story
Sound Design	The mix of music and sound add value to the narrative experience. In particular, the production of the song is exemplary
Editing	The video is edited cleanly and effectively, resulting in an engaging digital storytelling 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. What does the idea of “justice” mean to you and your team?
2. What are some seminal court room cases that have shaped our ever evolving legal and values-based understanding of human justice?
3. How does one craft an argument that succeeds in persuading a general audience of the merits of your story? What are the component parts and how are they sequenced to succeed?
4. How has information gathered from primary sources enhanced your understanding of your historical court room case? How is the information from these primary sources different from the information gathered from secondary sources?
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 have explored and thoughtfully articulated their understanding of what is meant by the word ‘justice,’ as supported by their re-creation of a seminal historical story that puts that understanding into practice.
2. The student will have researched a range of court room cases that have contributed to our national/global understanding of the many facets of justice and how it currently shapes human interaction.
3. The student will have practiced how to select and position arguments and counter arguments in order to convincingly persuade.
4. The student will understand how combining primary and secondary sources can help one to reach a more complex and nuanced understanding of the topic at hand (human justice).
5. The student will utilize key Human Skills, with a focus on creativity, critical thinking, and digital literacy, in their process of translating their research into compelling story that is punctuated by lyrics and music.
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 Human skills to develop in students as they prepare for life after secondary school.

Curricular Correlations

The *Justice Triumphs* 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
W1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts,	Write arguments to support claims with	Write arguments to support claims in an	Write arguments to support claims in an

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	supporting a point of view with reasons and information.	clear reasons and relevant evidence	analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.	analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
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 analysis of relevant content.	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective 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.
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	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.	understanding of the subject under investigation.
W9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
L3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
L5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
L6	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.	Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.	Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
SL4	Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant,	Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid	Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow	Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can

	descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.	reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.	the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.	follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.
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

6th – 8th Grade	9th – 12th Grade
D2.Civ.2.6-8. Explain specific roles played by citizens (such as voters, jurors,	D2.Civ.2.9-12. Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to

taxpayers, members of the armed forces, petitioners, protesters, and office-holders).	various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.
D2.Civ.3.6-8. Examine the origins, purposes, and impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements.	D2.Civ.3.9-12. Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.
D2.Civ.8.6-8. Analyze ideas and principles contained in the founding documents of the United States, and explain how they influence the social and political system.	D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.
D2.Civ.10.6-8. Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.	D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.
D2.Civ.12.6-8. Assess specific rules and laws (both actual and proposed) as means of addressing public problems.	D2.Civ.12.9-12. Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.
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.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.