



TikTok Democracy – Celebrating a Historic Moment in Democracy History Challenge

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

[This Meridian Stories Challenge was developed by Ben Clifford, a student at Colby College.]

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<p>Common Core (SL1, SL2, SL5, W3, W8, L5, RH2, RH8, RH9)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Digital Literacy Skills - Video - Pre-production, Production and Post-production ● Human Skills: Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking,
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The Challenge

Global democracy is a hot topic. In the US, the turmoil that continues to unfold around the 2020 elections has created a lively debate around the essence and preservation of democracy in the US and elsewhere. The Pew Research Center summarized that overall state of affairs in an introduction to their research paper about democracy entitled, “Global Public Opinion in an Era of Democratic Anxiety.”

As democratic nations have wrestled with economic, social, and geopolitical upheaval in recent years, the future of liberal democracy has come into question. In countries across the globe, democratic norms and civil liberties have deteriorated, while populists have enjoyed surprising success at the ballot box. Newly democratic nations have struggled, while more-established, once self-assured democracies have stumbled, exposing long-simmering weaknesses in their social fabrics and institutional designs.¹

You can help. Pick a moment in history where a country’s democratic institutions were upheld, strengthened, and fortified. It may help to think in terms of voting rights; free speech; representative government; rule of law; checks and balances; an independent judiciary; and the right to protest. There are many pathways into our understanding of ‘democracy.’

Find your way to a historical moment – from a moment yesterday or back to the country’s founding - when that country’s ever evolving grip on democracy was put on a firmer ground. And create a celebratory TikTok about that moment. One last

¹ December 7, 2021 – Pew Research Center – Global Public Opinion in an Era of Democratic Anxiety by Richard Wike and Janell Fetterolf - <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/12/07/global-public-opinion-in-an-era-of-democratic-anxiety/>

requirement: at some point in your story, the visual action will stop, and the following three to five seconds will be filled with wordless sound or music only. Then carry on.

This Challenge is written with the United States and its relationship with democracy as the central idea, but your TikTok story can be about any democratic nation in the world.

Deliverables include:

- TikTok Democracy Digital Story (this is the only Meridian Stories deliverable)
- Democratic Statement of Purpose (at teacher's discretion)
- Story Outline (at teacher's discretion)
- Final Script and Storyboard (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:

- This Challenge begins by interrogating what is meant by the word 'democracy.' It's a very broadly understood word and one that is currently under intense scrutiny worldwide. Begin by creating a list of five key elements that you and your team deem are necessary for a truly functioning democracy. With each element, support that choice with two sentences explaining your rationale. We'll call this your Democratic Statement of Purpose.
 - **Teacher's Option: Democratic Statement of Purpose** – Teachers may require that teams hand in their Democratic Statement of Purpose that outlines their definition of the ideas and values that are necessary to a functioning democracy, for review and feedback.
- This Statement of Purpose now becomes the basis for your search back into history to locate a moment when democracy was forming or being attacked or shifting into a new iteration because of changing times brought about by the

rise of industry or transportation or technology, as examples. Find that historical or current events moment, using both primary and secondary sources.

- Keep in mind that this isn't limited to American democracy. Hong Kong, Taiwan, Sudan, Ethiopia, Chile, and India are just a few examples of countries where authoritarian rule is currently combatting traditional democratic values or vice versa; where our understanding of 'democracy' is in flux.
- For this Challenge, it's important to focus in on a specific moment in history. This isn't a story about, say, the American Revolution or China's general crackdown on Hong Kong. It's about a specific decision a leader has made, or a political event that went awry, or a protest, to give a few examples. Your team is looking for a moment – which can be defined as an hour, a day or a week - that suddenly changed the rules about how people are governed.
- Once you have located the moment - the historical event that will become the focus of your story - dissect that moment into its component parts, purposefully mixing primary and secondary sources. Creating a timeline of the event may be the most useful way to understand the dynamics of the moment. Profiling the one or two key figures that create this moment may be useful as well.
- Cross reference your timeline with your Democratic Statement of Purpose. How do the democratic elements in your Statement fare in your select historical moment? How do they grow stronger or change for the better? Reminder: this is a celebratory TikTok. This is not a story about democracy weakening – and there are many stories to tell about that – but about democracy triumphing – winning the day, if even only temporarily.
- Create a one-page outline of a story you want to tell.
 - ***Teacher's Option: Story Outline*** – Teachers may require that teams hand in their one page outline of the story that they are about to produce.

During Phase II, student teams will:

- Become familiar with the TikTok format and learn how to shoot videos using the TikTok studio. This is a strange digital storytelling challenge. In Phase I, your team is asked to seriously explore a very complex and perplexing issue and locate a historical story to understand the issue more deeply. In Phase II, you are working inside a format that is most universally known to be silly, fun, comic, and irreverent. So how do you take this serious topic – this

consequential story that you have located – and make it silly, fun, comic, irreverent and ...shareable? *That* is the fun challenge ahead of you now.

- Begin with an immersion into the TikTok media production and storytelling universe. While you are not required to utilize these assets, we recommend doing so as the platform is rich with tools in the digital storytelling realm.

Within the TikTok studio, you will be allowed to choose from both effects and templates. Experiment with these creativity tools using ideas from your Story Outline.

- In TikTok's Effect House you can use multiple filters in categories such as Funny, World, New, Holiday. Within Effects, there is also the ability to apply the green screen feature which you can potentially use to create different historical settings within your TikTok.
- The different Templates within the TikTok Effect House allow you to alter the lens of your camera to make images and videos appear completely altered. For example, templates can make your video appear in a kaleidoscope form. One of the most impressive features of TikTok is the audio library which contains an almost unlimited supply of sounds that can be overlaid on your TikTok. Part of this assignment is to become well-versed with these features and include them in your TikTok. Dive in and have fun. And keep this in mind: the mission of TikTok is "to inspire creativity and bring joy."
- Those are the tools. Now how do they come together? Become familiar with the TikTok style of storytelling. One way to do this is research popular creators on the app by following hashtags based on the TikToks you are interested in. In your case, you may want to look for creators focused on American or global history. Also, be sure to explore the Creator Portal for overall guidance on how to succeed in the TikTok world.
- At this point, you will have a) familiarized yourself with the TikTok media creation universe; b) explored the various narrative options that succeed on TikTok; and c) experimented with ways that portions of your story can successfully be produced as a TikTok story. With all this in mind, draft a script, based on your story outline, and create a storyboard to accompany the draft script. The point of the storyboard is to see if the overall story you are trying to tell will make sense. To keep it simple, try summarizing your story into 4 main scenes and create an illustration for each.
 - And don't forget this one important point: your three to five second moment of sound. It needs to serve a purpose. Be sure to spend some time brainstorming this question: what can just sound or music, without words, effectively communicate and when should that go into the story?

- Once you are happy with your storyboard, finalize the script.
 - Keep in mind that TikTok stories are designed to be shared and watched repeatedly. Not all digital stories have that as their objective, but TikToks do. Imagine the educational power of creating a meaningful story about an important topic – democracy - that your peers will want to watch over and over again? It’s immense. All to say, as you finalize your script and storyboard, ask yourself: does this have the qualities needed to be popular and shared repeatedly on this vastly popular platform?
 - **Teacher’s Option: Final Script and Storyboard** – Teachers may require that teams hand in their final draft script and four frame storyboard for review and feedback.
- Pre-produce the scene:
 - Prepare your locations for shooting - pay specific attention to lighting
 - Revisit the Effect House and the TikTok Creator Portal where you can find “creation essentials” that will help you effectively frame and shoot your TikTok;
 - Plan the logistics of the shoot; and
 - Rehearse the scene

During Phase III, student teams will:

- Finalize the Script (just one more time).
- Finalize the visual support.
- Shoot the visual items.
- Record the finalized script
- Edit together the visuals in TikTok, adding music and sound effects as desired.

Meridian Support – The Digital Storytelling Resource Center

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 key tips in the areas of creativity and production.

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

Media Innovators and Artists	Meridian Tips
<i>Non Fiction</i> – Margaret Heffernan <i>Memoir and Non-Fiction Writing</i> – Liza Bakewell <i>Directing Comedy</i> – Davis Robinson <i>Editing</i> – Tom Pierce	“Producing: Time Management “Creating Storyboard, Framing the Shot” “Digital Rules – The Starting Line” “Sound Recording Basics”

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 – *TikTok Democracy – Celebrating a Historic Moment in Democracy*

CONTENT COMMAND	
Criteria	1-10
Understanding of Democracy	The digital story effectively communicates a nuanced and thoughtful understanding of the complex governing concept that is democracy
Historical Presentation	The digital story demonstrates a thorough understanding of the moment in history in its accurate presentation of facts that comprise the select moment
Historical Resonance	The digital story demonstrates a thorough understanding of the historical resonance of the moment in our ever-evolving grasp of what democracy was, is and will be
STORYTELLING COMMAND	
Criteria	1-10
Narrative of Historical Moment	The narrative – the script and dialogue, the characters, the order of events - of the historical moment is cohesive and compelling
TikTok storytelling	The digital story successfully marries challenging and serious content into a celebratory narrative that meets the standards of the TikTok genre
Use of Sound	The integration of three to five seconds of sound/music to effectively communicate meaningful content is powerful and illustrative of your understanding of sound/music as a vital storytelling element
MEDIA COMMAND	
Criteria	1-10
Visual Shot Selection	The visual shots effectively and creatively communicate the content
Editing	The digital story is edited cleanly, effectively, and with pace, resulting in an engaging and sharable video experience
Use of TikTok Media Creation Features	The selective use of TikTok sound effects and music enhances the dramatic appeal of the story and helps engage/entertain viewers. Use of filters and other TikTok features is effective.

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 is democracy and its vital components?
2. Can a specific historical moment in time alter historical trajectories of American and/or global democracy?
3. Can TikTok be used to spread substantive information about complex historical concepts such as the governing ideology that is democracy?
4. How is information gathered from primary sources different from information gathered from secondary sources?
5. How has immersion in the creation of original content and the production of a digital story – 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 research, excavate, and articulate the fundamental components that are needed for a functional democracy.
2. The student will gain an increased awareness that a specific historical moment can shape history, in this case, the evolution or sustenance of democratic principles.
3. The student will understand how TikTok can be used as a tool for meaningful and thought-provoking storytelling.
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 (Democracy).
5. The student will utilize key Human Skills, with a focus on creativity, critical thinking, and digital literacy, in their process of translating a challenging societal issue into a spirited and creative TikTok designed to engage and be shared.

- 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 TikTok* Challenge addresses a range of curricular objectives that have been articulated by two nationally recognized sources:

- The **Common Core Curricular Standards – English Language Arts & History/Social Studies**; and
- 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	8 th	9 th /10 th	11 th /12 th
RI1	Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
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	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and

	details, and clear event sequences.	descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.	details, and well-structured event sequences.	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, 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.	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
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 command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
RH2	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.
RH9	N/A	Analyze the relationship between a primary and	Compare and contrast treatments of the same	Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and

		secondary source on the same topic.	topic in several primary and secondary sources.	secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.
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C3 Framework for Social Studies

6 th – 8 th Grade	9 th – 12 th Grade
D1.5.6-8. Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of views represented in the sources.	D1.5.9-12. Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.
D2.Civ.5.K-2. Explain what governments are and some of their functions	D2.Civ.5.6-8. Explain the origins, functions, and structure of government with reference to the U.S. Constitution, state constitutions, and selected other systems of government.
D2.Civ.6.6-8. Describe the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people’s lives.	D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens’ and institutions’ effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.
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.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.
D3.1.6-8. Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.	D3.1.9-12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.
D3.2.6-8. Evaluate the credibility of a source by determining its relevance and intended use.	D3.2.9-12. Evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the source.