



# History Challenge Digital Storytelling Unit

## *Battle Boarding*

Designed for Middle and High School Students

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# Introduction

This Digital Story Telling Challenge will take two to four weeks to complete. This Challenge targets key Human Life Skills – creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, digital literacy and presentational skills – in equal measure with the curricular content. Delivering on all those learning goals requires student immersion and time. The results, as based on our research, are a high level of student engagement, deep learning, and 100% teacher endorsement.

The following Challenge:

- Should be completed by collaborative teams of two to four students but can be completed independently, if desired.
- Is aligned to nationally recognized Curricular Standards.
- Contains an Evaluation Rubric that allows the teacher to clearly score and appraise the students' work.
- Is designed to be integrated into the classroom in alignment with existing curricula.
- Can be assigned as an extra credit project to teams of students that you think would benefit from this kind of immersive, deep learning experience. Additionally, will work well in informal educational settings.
- Should follow the rules of Digital Citizenry in their proper usage and/or citation of images, music and text taken from other sources. See the Digital Rules area in the free Media Resources section of the Meridian Stories site for guidance.

The [Media Resources](#) section also contains many other **free support materials** from short videos featuring professionals in the field – Artists and Innovators– to short written documents that cover everything from storyboarding to creative brainstorming, interviewing techniques to game design.

While it is helpful to have a Technology Integrator involved, they are not usually necessary: the students already know how to produce the media. ***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.***

At the end of the Challenge, it is often fun and useful to have a screening of all

the media productions – they are all designed to run under 4 minutes each. Students can vote for their favorite videos that can then be screened in a larger assembly-like setting for the whole grade to see. Or this work can be presented as part of a student showcase for parents and friends. Presentational Skills is another Human Life Skill that this project enables.

Our research indicates this to be a really useful exercise for two additional reasons:

1. Students actually learn from their peers' presentations – it is useful to hear a perspective that is not just the teacher's; and
2. The public setting – painful as it is for some students – provides them with an opportunity to 'own' their work and to be more accountable.

Finally, if you are interested to learn more about the community of schools who annually participate in the [Meridian Stories Competitions](#) – a community that is characterized by a friendly competitive spirit; feedback from Mentors on each submission; and the rewarding of digital badges in content, storytelling and digital literacy – please return to the Competitions section of the website or inquire at [info@meridianstories.com](mailto:info@meridianstories.com).

**Let's get started.**

## The Challenge

History has many decisive markers that shape the destinies of communities, nations and cultures. These markers come in many predictable forms such as coup d'états, elections, tyrannical leaders, revolutionary uprisings, plagues, ...and BATTLES.

Throughout history, there have been numerous decisive battles that have fundamentally changed the course of history. From Antietam to Waterloo, Cajamarca (Peru) to Agincourt, Gallipoli (Turkey) to Changpin (China), these events are brutal and fascinating stories whose ramifications we feel today.

In this Meridian Stories Challenge, your job is to tell the story of one battle of your choice. Your primary visual vehicle for telling the tale of your battle is a flat board, on which is mapped the landscape in which your battle takes place, and markers indicating the two sides of the battle. In other words, you want to provide the viewer with a bird's eye view of how each side was originally positioned, and then the strategy that followed, allowing one side to conquer

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the other. The techniques that you use to move the story forward visually - cross-fades, time-lapse animation, or the manual movement of your battle markers - are up to you. The challenge here is to:

1. Set up the battle and what is at stake. You may want to use talking heads and illustrations from the time period to introduce the key players and geography of the battle
2. Show the simplified, strategic movement of battle, using this flat board-style approach (this cannot be done wholly digitally, as in with Minecraft).
3. Conclude with the larger historical consequences of this battle.

**Deliverables include:**

- Battle Board Video
- Outline (at teacher's discretion)
- Draft Map (at teacher's discretion)

## Process

Below is a suggested breakdown for the students' work.

**During Phase I, student teams will:**

- Select a battle – one that has clear historical resonance - for teacher's approval.
- Read at least one primary source document about that battle.
- If available, research primary source visual illustrations that relate to your battle, to get a visual sense of the landscape, place and moment.
- Read at least one contemporary synopsis/analysis of the same battle (secondary source).
- Break the battle down into three parts:
  - The key factors that led the opposing forces into battle at that moment, in that place.
  - The key strategies employed by both sides to win the battle, and the outcome of those strategies. Keep in mind the role of serendipity – such as weather – in these outcomes.
  - The ramifications – short-term and long-term - of the results of this battle for that culture, nation or civilization.

- **Teacher's Option: Outline** – Teachers may require that their teams hand in a detailed outline of the two to four key elements that shape each of these three parts.
- Focus on the visualization of the battle itself. Ask yourself:
  - Do you have enough information to accurately re-tell the action of this battle, in the format outlined in this Challenge?
  - If not, do you feel comfortable making conjectures, to fill in the missing historical information? And if they are conjectures – informed and educated analyses - be sure to reference them as such.
  - How many parts or movements are there to your battle story? In other words, what are the key decisions that moved the battle forward toward its conclusion? If there are many decisions, can you simplify in order to tell a compelling, yet historically accurate story, in a short video?
- By the end of Phase I, the team should have mastery over the historical content and, in particular, the strategic details of the battle itself.

**During Phase II, student teams will:**

- Begin to assess the whole narrative. This Challenge asks you to consider your chosen battle in three parts: 1) the reasons leading up to the battle and what is at stake; 2) the battle itself; and 3) the ramifications of the battle's outcome. While this Challenge clearly indicates how to portray the battle itself, it does not provide guidelines for the beginning and end of the video. The first step in this phase is crafting your approach. Will you want to present this information from the point of view of characters involved in the battle ('historically recreated' planning scenarios before the battle and victory/defeat scenarios after)? Will you choose to create a 'historian' character to present the story of this battle? Or is it best to just be yourselves and tell us what you know – what thrilled you in your research – as you take us through the story of this battle? These are just some options. Decide on a creative approach for telling this story, from beginning to end.
- If there is character-creation involved in the telling of this battle, we recommend that you write up short descriptions of those characters.
- Once your team has decided on the creative approach, take the historical content that you want to relate in all three parts, and begin to script it.
- Draft the map that you will use to tell the story of this battle. It needs to be on a physical flat board – examples include plywood, poster board, or astro turf on a table. On top of this board, are there two-dimensional

drawings (photos?) with three-dimensional markers signaling the two sides? Or is the mapping of the battle area three-dimensional with hills, woods, and buildings in place?

- ***Teacher's Option: Draft Map*** – Teachers may require that their teams hand in a sketched-out draft of the map for their battle.
- The final creative decision that needs to be made is how you will visually move the battle scene forward. Will you manually move the markers around or use some of your editing tools to tell your story? Play around with different approaches and make a decision.

**During Phase III, student teams will:**

- Complete the creation of the map.
- Finalize the script.
- Pre-produce the scene:
  - Scout locations for shooting (if this is being shot on location);
  - Create costumes, props and other set pieces, as needed;
  - Rehearse and time out the whole process. Is the video coming in under four minutes? Cut and revise the script as necessary.
  - Prepare the logistics for the actual shooting of the scene;
- Shoot the video.
- Edit the video, adding stills and graphics as desired.
- Post-produce the video, adding music and sound effects as desired.

# Evaluation Rubric - *Battle Boarding*

| <b>CONTENT COMMAND</b>               |   |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| <b>Criteria</b>                      | <b>1 - 3</b>  | <b>4 - 7</b>   | <b>8 - 10</b>  |
| <b>Historical Stakes</b>             | The historical stakes of the battle are not clearly communicated                                    | The historical stakes of the battle are clearly communicated                                     | The historical stakes of the battle are communicated with insight  |
| <b>Key Strategic Detail</b>          | The key strategic decisions that inform the battle's narrative are not presented clearly            | The key strategic decisions that inform the battle's narrative are presented clearly             | The key strategic decisions that inform the battle's narrative are presented clearly and compellingly          |
| <b>Historical Consequences</b>       | The historical consequences of the battle are not clearly communicated                              | The historical consequences of the battle are clearly communicated                               | The historical consequences of the battle are communicated with insight  |
| <b>STORYTELLING COMMAND</b>          |   |  |  |
| <b>Criteria</b>                      | <b>1 - 3</b>  | <b>4 - 7</b>   | <b>8 - 10</b>  |
| <b>The Beginning and End</b>         | The beginning (the set-up) and the end (the consequences) are not presented clearly or compellingly | The beginning (the set-up) and the end (the consequences) are presented clearly and compellingly | The beginning (the set-up) and the end (the consequences) are presented clearly, compellingly and thoughtfully |
| <b>The Battle Story (the Middle)</b> | The story of the battle is not communicated clearly or in an engaging way                           | The story of the battle is communicated clearly and in an engaging way                           | The story of the battle is communicated in a way that is clear, engaging and riveting                          |
| <b>Characters and Voices</b>         | The decisions made to narrate and voice the video do not enhance engagement                         | The decisions made to narrate and voice the video enhance engagement                             | The decisions made to narrate and voice the video are thoughtfully crafted and entertaining                    |

| <b>MEDIA COMMAND</b>                 |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Criteria</b>                      | <b>1 - 3</b>   | <b>4 - 7</b>   | <b>8 - 10</b>  |
| <b>Formatting</b>                    | The creative format for presenting this battle story is not effective                              | The creative format for presenting this battle story is effective  | The creative format for presenting this battle story is effective, creative and well produced  |
| <b>Visualization</b>                 | The flat-board visualization of the battle is not effective or clear                               | The flat board visualization of the battle is clear  | The flat board visualization of the battle is clear and compelling   |
| <b>Sound and Music</b>               | The selective use of sound effects and music detracts from the drama inherent in the narrative     | The selective use of sound effects and music supports the drama inherent in the narrative  | The selective use of sound effects and music enhances the drama inherent in the narrative  |
| <b>HUMAN SKILLS COMMAND</b>          |  |  |  |
| <b>Criteria</b>                      | <b>1-3</b>   | <b>4-7</b>   | <b>8-10</b>  |
| <b>Collaborative Thinking</b>        | The group did not work together effectively and/or did not share the work equally                  | The group worked together effectively and had no major issues  | The group demonstrated flexibility in making compromises and valued the contributions of each group member                                     |
| <b>Creativity and Innovation</b>     | The group did not make a solid effort to create anything new or innovative                         | The group was able to brainstorm new and inventive ideas, but was inconsistent in their evaluation and implementation of those ideas | The group brainstormed many inventive ideas and was able to evaluate, refine and implement them effectively                                    |
| <b>Initiative and Self-Direction</b> | The group was unable to set attainable goals, work independently and manage their time effectively | The group required some additional help, but was able to complete the project on time with few problems                              | The group set attainable goals, worked independently and managed their time effectively, demonstrating a disciplined commitment to the project |



# Meridian Support Resources

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| <p><i>Meridian Stories</i> provides two forms of support for the student teams:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Meridian Innovators and Artists</u> – 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.</li> <li>2. <u>Media Resource Collection</u> – These are short documents that offer student teams key tips in the areas of creativity and production.</li> </ol> <p>Recommended review, as a team, for this Challenge include:</p> |  |
| <p><b>Meridian Innovators and Artists</b></p>  | <p><b>Media Resource Collection</b></p>  |
| <p><i>On Nonfiction</i> – Margaret Heffernan<br/> <i>On Photography</i> – Mike Kolster<br/> <i>On Memoir and Non-fiction Writing</i> – Eliza Bakewell<br/> <i>On Producing</i> – Tom Pierce</p>  | <p>“Guide to Working in the Public Domain”<br/> “Sound Recording Basics”<br/> “Creating Storyboards, Framing a Shot”<br/> “Video Editing Basics”</p> |

## Essential Questions

1. What is the role that conflict plays in shaping history?
2. What are the specific human, strategic and environmental dynamics at play that help to shape the outcome of these significant historical events?
  - a. Specifically, what is the role of will, strength, intelligence, foresight and luck in shaping the outcomes of battles, as understood through a deep analysis of a select battle.
3. How has information gathered from primary sources enhanced your understanding of the topic? How is the information from these sources different from the information gathered from secondary sources?
  - a. How does one properly cite source material?
4. How does one research, select and organize content from a variety of sources in order to present a compelling, cohesive and historically accurate narrative.
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 understand that some conflicts drive such a profound societal change, that the history of select cultures is changed forever.
2. The student will have a substantive understanding of the critical elements that comprise a battle, resulting in irreversible, historical change.
3. The student will understand how combining primary and secondary sources can help one to reach a more complex and nuanced understanding of history.
  - a. The student will practice proper citation of source material.
4. The student will understand the processes involved in researching content from a variety of sources; selecting relevant information from those sources; and organizing this information in a way that yields narrative cohesion and historical accuracy.
5. The student will utilize key 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, with a focus on creativity, critical thinking and digital literacy, in their process of translating historical 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 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to develop in students as they prepare for life after secondary school.

# Curricular Correlations

The *Battle Boarding* 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;** and
2. The **Themes of 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**  
**English Language Arts Standards – History/Social**

| <i>The Standard</i> | <i>8<sup>th</sup></i> | <i>9<sup>th</sup> / 10<sup>th</sup></i> | <i>11<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup></i> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---|--|
|---------------------|-----------------------|---|--|

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| <p><b>RI1</b></p> <p><b>READING<br/>INFORMATIONAL<br/>TEXT</b></p> <p><b>Key Ideas and<br/>Details</b></p>   | <p>Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</p>   | <p>Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</p>   | <p>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.</p>   |
| <p><b>W3</b></p> <p><b>WRITING</b></p> <p><b>Text Types and<br/>Purposes</b></p>                             | <p>Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.</p>  | <p>Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</p>   | <p>Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</p>  |
| <p><b>W8</b></p> <p><b>WRITING</b></p> <p><b>Research to Build<br/>and Present<br/>Knowledge</b></p>         | <p>Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.</p> | <p>Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.</p> | <p>Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.</p> |
| <p><b>SL1</b></p> <p><b>SPEAKING AND<br/>LISTENING</b></p> <p><b>Comprehension and<br/>Collaboration</b></p> | <p>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</p>   | <p>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,</p>   | <p>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'</p>   |

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|   | expressing their own clearly.   | building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.  | ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.  |
| <b>SL5</b><br><b>SPEAKING AND LISTENING</b><br><br><b>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas</b> | 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. |
| <b>L3</b><br><b>LANGUAGE</b><br><br><b>Knowledge of Language</b>                              | 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.             |
| <b>RH2</b><br><b>HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES</b><br><br><b>Key Ideas and Details</b>               | 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.                                |
| <b>RH3</b><br><b>HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES</b><br><br><b>Key Ideas and Details</b>               | NA  | Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.   | Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.                              |
| <b>RH9</b>  | Analyze the relationship between  | Compare and contrast treatments   | Integrate information from diverse sources,   |

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES</b></p> <p><b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</b></p> | <p>a primary and secondary source on the same topic.</p> | <p>of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.</p> | <p>both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.</p> |
|---|--|--|---|

## Goals – NCSS - The Themes of Social Studies

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|---|
| <p><b>Theme – Time, Continuity and Change</b></p>   |
| <p>Through the study of the past and its legacy, learners examine the institutions, values, and beliefs of people in the past, acquire skills in historical inquiry and interpretation, and gain an understanding of how important historical events and developments have shaped the modern world. This theme appears in courses in history, as well as in other social studies courses for which knowledge of the past is important</p> |