



# History Challenge Digital Storytelling Unit

## *Bill of Rights/Constitutional Amendments Movie Trailer*

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

The US Bill of Rights and ensuing Constitutional Amendments are explosive capsules of text, each of which is informed by hundreds of personalities and stories. This Challenge asks teams to create a movie trailer that tells a story behind the creation of a select Bill of Right, Constitutional Amendment, or a pivotal provision therein. For example, the movie *Lincoln* is all about the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery. But what is the story behind the passage of the Seventeenth Amendment whereby US Senators were allowed to be chosen by popular vote instead of by State Legislatures? Or when did the balance tip in favor of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women the legal right to vote?

Pick an amendment (or a part of one), research the tribulations that preceded its passage, and create a one-two minute movie trailer advertising a movie that is based on your select Amendment, focusing on the conflicting positions taken, the characters involved and the drama that ensued.

While there is no specific movie trailer formula that must be followed, there are a couple of considerations to help guide your story formatting.

1. If you have access to Apple's iMovie <sup>™</sup>, there is an iMovie trailer template. While a team cannot use this template, you can study it as a model for how to design your movie trailer.
2. Look at movie trailers from some of your favorite movies. Many are online at the movie's website. As a team, study them and take notes. How do the trailers set up the story? How much information do they give away and how much do they withhold? How do they end? Movie trailers are, among other things, exercises in pacing: what changes in pace do you notice from the trailer's start to finish?
3. Look at movie trailers from a selection of movies that you haven't seen. Which ones leave you *really wanting* to see the movie? How did they accomplish that? In the end, pick the ones that you like the best; identify what you liked best about them; and begin to create your own movie trailer template.
4. Listen to this 6 minute NPR story from January, 2012, "The Art of the Modern Movie Trailer"  
<http://www.npr.org/blogs/monkeysee/2012/01/15/145227280/the-art-of-the-modern-movie-trailer>

Keep this in mind: the single objective of a movie trailer is to convince the viewer to pay money for the movie ticket. That is your goal as well.

Deliverables include:

- The Movie Trailer
- Narrative Outline (at teacher's discretion)
- Shooting Script (at teacher's discretion)

## The Process

Below is a suggested breakdown for the students' work.

**During Phase I student teams will:**

- Select a Constitutional Amendment (or part of one). The teacher may place whatever restrictions he/she needs, in order to focus you on a certain kind of case or from a certain time period.
- Research the events that lead up to its passage...but this isn't just any research assignment. There are, to start, three levels of thinking on which your team needs to embark.

- Level 1: Research and clearly outline the basic facts of the Amendment, including the inciting incident; the process that the conflict or desired change went through to get to the US Congress (highlights only); the ramifications of the Amendment's passage or non-passage for the country; the Amendment itself; the passage of the Amendment; and the ramifications for and reactions by the country after the Amendment passed. This is your basic story outline.
  - The research for this level must include at least two secondary sources.
- Level 2: Pick two or three key characters and research their stories. These characters do not have to be the biggest historical players in the creation and passage of the Amendment, so poke around a little. Fundamentally, you need to identify the beliefs or principles that brought these characters to cause a nation to fundamentally change the way it functions. And, if possible, how, in their own personal histories, they came to align themselves with these beliefs or principles. At the end of this, you have the main characters for your storyline.
  - The research for this level must include at least one primary source.
- Level 3: Brainstorm how you might want to tell this story: from the point of view of one side or the other, one character or another, or, more or less objectively?
  - **Teacher's Option**: Narrative Outline – Teachers may require that teams hand in a paper or detailed flow chart that succinctly outlines the key story elements and characters from start to finish of the Amendment in question. All resources must be properly cited.

**During Phase II student teams will:**

- Conduct Creative Research - This assignment does not ask your team to create a movie trailer about a Constitutional Amendment. It asks you to create a movie trailer 'based on' a Constitutional Amendment. This gives you some creative license. This step asks your team to begin to imagine a few key scenes that you would need to include in your movie to tell your story. Identify those scenes and begin to brainstorm about what you think might have gone on in the room -- bedroom, living room, office, court room, kitchen, taxi cab, bus, diner, screened in porch -- of your main characters at key moments in your story.

- Decide on a movie trailer format, as based on the research process outlined above. Create a movie trailer rundown – or storyboard -- that outlines the action and time for each scene.
  - The final movie trailer must reveal a substantive understanding of the Amendment your team has chosen. (Please look at the Evaluation Rubric for content expectations.)
- Select your key scenes and write the script.
  - **Teacher’s Option:** Shooting Script – Teachers may require that teams hand in a Shooting Script.
- Finalize the entire movie trailer rundown.
- Pre-produce the trailer:
  - Scout locations for shooting (if this is being shot on location);
  - Create costumes, props and other set pieces, as needed;
  - Prepare the logistics for the actual shooting of the trailer; and
  - Rehearse the scenes.

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

- Shoot the video.
- Edit the video, adding stills and graphics as desired.
- Post-produce the video, adding music and sound effects as desired.

## Meridian Support Resources

<p><b>Meridian Stories</b> provides two forms of support for the student teams.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Media 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>Meridian Resources</u> – These are short documents that offer student teams a few key tips in the areas of creativity and production.</li> </ol> <p>Recommended review, as a team, for this Challenge include:</p>	
<b>Media Innovators and Artists</b>	<b>Meridian Resources</b>
<p><i>On Script Writing</i> – Kent Pierce</p> <p><i>On Non-Fiction</i> – Margaret Heffernan</p> <p><i>On the Importance of Character in Storytelling</i> – Scott Nash</p> <p><i>On Editing</i> – Tom Pierce</p>	<p>“Building Characters”</p> <p>“Creative Brainstorming Techniques”</p> <p>“Creating Storyboards, Framing a Shot”</p> <p>“Video Editing”</p>

# Evaluation Rubric – *Bill of Rights/* *Constitutional Amendments Movie Trailer*

<b>CONTENT COMMAND</b>			
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1 - 3</b>	<b>4 - 7</b>	<b>8 - 10</b>
<b>Clarity of Content</b>	The historical content is not presented clearly	The historical content is presented clearly	The historical content is presented clearly and compellingly
<b>Resonance of Content</b>	The historical context and ramifications of the scene are not clearly communicated	The historical context and ramifications of the scene are clearly communicated	The historical context and ramifications of the scene are communicated with insight
<b>Historical Figures</b>	The historical figures and their roles in this event are not presented clearly	The historical figures and their roles in this event are presented clearly	The historical figures and their roles in this event are presented clearly and compellingly
<b>STORYTELLING COMMAND</b>			
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1 - 3</b>	<b>4 - 7</b>	<b>8 - 10</b>
<b>Story</b>	The narrative is hard to follow and not enticing	The narrative is clear	The narrative is clear, engaging and enticing
<b>Character</b>	The characters are not easily distinguishable from each other	The characters service the trailer effectively	The characters are engaging, entertaining and thoughtfully executed
<b>MEDIA COMMAND</b>			
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1 - 3</b>	<b>4 - 7</b>	<b>8 - 10</b>
<b>Editing</b>	The trailer feels patched together and the overall editing detracts from the narrative	The trailer generally flows, servicing the narrative	The trailer is edited cleanly and effectively, propelling the narrative forward
<b>Acting and Cinematography</b>	The acting and story visualization don't fully engage the viewer	The acting and story visualization intermittently engage the viewer	The acting and story visualization fully engage and entertain the viewer
<b>Movie-Trailer Genre</b>	The marriage of pacing and graphics to key story	The marriage of pacing and graphics	The marriage of pacing and graphics to key story

	elements is ineffective	to key story elements is effective	elements is dynamic and effective
<b>Music and Sound Effects</b>	The selective use of music and sound effects detracts from the drama inherent in the trailer	The selective use of music and sound effects service the trailer	The selective use of music and sound effects enhance the drama inherent in the trailer

### HUMAN SKILLS COMMAND

Criteria	1-3	4-7	8-10
<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

## Essential Questions

1. What are some of the most important Constitutional Amendments and why are they so influential in the evolution of the US?
2. What are the specific human and societal dynamics at play in the evolution and passage of a single Constitutional Amendment?
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?

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. By converting an iconic historical event into a narrative that humanizes the event, how has your understanding changed or deepened?
  - a. How has immersion in the production of digital media deepened the overall educational experience? 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 be familiar with a range of Constitutional Amendments and understand why these Amendments can re-direct the destiny of the US.
2. The student will understand that significant historical events often occur as a result of the actions of a few individuals.
3. The student will understand how combining primary and secondary sources can help one to reach a more complex and nuanced understanding of history.
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 gain a new understanding of a key historical event by approaching it through the elements of narrative.
  - a. 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 *Bill of Rights/Constitutional Amendments Movie Trailer* 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 addressed, either in whole or in part.

## Common Core Curricular Standards – English Language Arts Standards

<i>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>
<b>RI1</b>  <b>READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT</b>  <b>Key Ideas and Details</b>	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.
<b>W3</b>  <b>WRITING</b>  <b>Text Types and Purposes</b>	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive 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.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
<b>W8</b>  <b>WRITING</b>  <b>Research to Build and Present Knowledge</b>	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	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	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

	plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.	selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.	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.
<b>SL1</b> <b>SPEAKING AND LISTENING</b> <b>Comprehension and Collaboration</b>	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.
<b>SL5</b> <b>SPEAKING AND LISTENING</b> <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> <b>LANGUAGE</b> <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> <b>HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES</b>	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships

<b>Key Ideas and Details</b>	prior knowledge or opinions.	develop over the course of the text.	among the key details and ideas.
<b>RH3</b> <b>HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES</b> <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> <b>HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES</b> <b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</b>	Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.	Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.	Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

## Goals – NCSS - The Themes of Social Studies

<b>Theme – Time, Continuity and Change</b>
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.
<b>Theme – Individuals, Groups and Institutions</b>
Institutions such as families and civic, educational, governmental, and religious organizations exert a major influence on people’s lives. This theme allows students to understand how institutions are formed, maintained, and changed, and to examine their influence. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, and history.
<b>Theme - Power, Authority, and Governance</b>
One essential component of education for citizenship is an understanding of the historical development and contemporary forms of power, authority, and governance. Through this theme, learners become familiar with the purposes and functions of government, the scope and limits of authority, and the differences between democratic and non-democratic political systems. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with government, history, civics,

law, politics, and other social sciences.

## **Theme – Civic Ideals and Practices**

An understanding of civic ideals and practices is critical to full participation in society and is an essential component of education for citizenship. This theme enables students to learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizens of a democracy, and to appreciate the importance of active citizenship. In schools, the theme typically appears in units or courses dealing with civics, history, political science, cultural anthropology, and fields such as global studies, law-related education, and the humanities.