



Language Arts Challenge Digital Storytelling Unit

Comic Poetry Skit

Designed for Middle and High School Students

Table of Contents	Range of Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction• The Challenge• Process• Meridian Support Resources• Evaluation Rubric• Essential Questions• Student Proficiencies• Common Core Curricular Correlations (W3, W4, W5, SL1, SL5, L3, L5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poetry Genre Analysis• Comedy Genre Creation• Character and Scene Creation• Scriptwriting• Digital Literacy Skills - Video - Pre-production, Production and Post-production• 21st Century Skills: Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Presentational Skills

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.

Let's get started.

The Challenge

Create a comic skit that successfully communicates the basic rules that govern three different kinds of poetry.

- The three different kinds of poetry are up to the team (or teacher, if desired).
- The skit must communicate three defining characteristics of each poetic form.
- The skit can be about any topic of your choosing.

Comic skits are generally characterized by the following:

- Small Number of Characters: Since skits are generally very short, they don't have too much time to develop character. Therefore, they usually feature only two or three characters.

- Exaggerated Features: For the same reason as above – very little time to develop and communicate character – the characters are often slightly exaggerated, which, in a comedy, can also service the humor.
- Plot Structure: Skits, like any story or scene, need to have a beginning, middle and end. If we look at this like a scene, then the following definition may help you structure your narrative. Citing the work of Jack Bickham in the Wikipedia entry on ‘scenes’, the characteristics are:
 - Statement of a *goal*
 - Introduction and development of *conflict*
 - Failure of the character to reach his goal, a tactical *disaster*.
 While not all scenes or skits follow this pattern, this can serve as a helpful starting point on which your team can layer the elements of a comic scene.
- Setting: Most skits take place in a single setting or location. The team may choose any setting or location that they want with one exception: the classroom. The sketch cannot be ‘a class’ or set in any kind of formal educational setting.
- Format: A skit can take any form. It can be a newscast, a documentary, a sitcom, a game show, a mystery...there are numerous video formats that your skit can parody or embrace.

Deliverables include:

- The Comic Poetry Skit
- Poetic Format Choices (at teacher’s discretion)
- Draft Script (at teacher’s discretion)

The Process

During Phase I, student teams will:

- Identify the three forms of poetry that will form the basis of the content in the skit. Additionally, identify which three defining characteristics for each of three poetic forms that you will communicate in your skit. Be sure to clearly and succinctly organize this content because this is the material around which you will brainstorm your comic skit.
 - ***Teacher’s Option – Poetic Format Choices*** - Teachers may require that teams hand in their three poetic format choices, as well as their defining characteristics, for review and feedback.

- Study media-based comedy. We recommend that your team look to current media sources – from Nick or Disney sitcoms to appropriate sketch comedy shows – to get a deeper understanding of how this medium communicates comedy. When watching these videos or TV shows, what makes you laugh? Why does it make you laugh? Take notes and this may help to inform some ideas for your own skit.
 - Comedy is often related to humor that is sexually, culturally or ethnically based. This Challenge will not accept any material that:
 - Is sexual in any way;
 - Denigrates or demeans any part of the population; or
 - Is generally offensive or uses inappropriate language.
- Brainstorm your skit. While there are numerous brainstorming approaches (see Meridian Support Resources below), the questions below direct your team to begin with the content itself. It essentially asks you to consider this: what, in the content itself, is funny?
 - What are the unique characteristics of your poetic choices that might lend themselves to comic situations?
 - Pick several examples of each genre of poetry and start reciting those examples to each other. Recite them quickly and slowly, dramatically and without emotion. Does anything comical emerge from this exercise?
 - Consider how the three different forms of poetry might match up to three different character types.
- By the end of Phase I, you should have a creative approach in place for your skit.

During Phase II, student teams will:

- Write and draft the script. This will take several drafts and discussions amongst the team. With each draft and discussion, be sure to read aloud your work. This will help your team to consider new ways to make it livelier and funnier.
 - ***Teacher's Option – Draft Script*** – Teachers may require that teams hand in a draft of their script for review and feedback.
- Finalize the script.
- Pre-produce the shoot. This involves securing the location; dressing the location with set pieces and props as necessary; agreeing on the costumes and setting up the remaining logistics of the shoot.
- Rehearse the piece. Comic skits are a very challenging genre. Comic skits... about poetry are even more challenging! Rehearse. Play around

with different readings and approaches. Pay close to attention to timing – a lot of comedy is intricately tied to timing (as you will have discovered when you were researching comedy skits on TV and the Internet).

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><i>Meridian Stories</i> provides two forms of support for the student teams.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 2. <u>Meridian Resources</u> – These are short documents that offer student teams a few key tips in the areas of creativity, production, game design and digital citizenry. 	
<p>Recommended review, as a team, for this Challenge include:</p>	
Media Innovators and Artists	Meridian Resources
<p><i>On Directing Comedy</i> – Davis Robinson</p> <p><i>On Scriptwriting and Comedy</i> – Kent Pierce</p> <p><i>On Acting</i> – Janet McTeer</p> <p><i>On Film Producing</i> – Tom Pierce</p>	<p>“Creative Brainstorming Techniques”</p> <p>“Video Editing Basics”</p> <p>“Sound Recording Basics”</p> <p>“Producing: Time Management”</p>

Evaluation Rubric – *Comic Poetry Skit*

CONTENT COMMAND			
Criteria	1 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10
Three Poetic Forms	The three poetic forms are not presented clearly	The three poetic forms are evident and integral to the scene	The three poetic forms are presented clearly and used creatively to propel the scene forward
Poetic Forms: Defining Characteristics	The defining characteristics of the three different poetic forms are not presented clearly or fully	The defining characteristics of the three different poetic forms are covered	The defining characteristics of the three different poetic forms are presented clearly and fully
Comedy	The scene is not funny	The scene has several funny moments, revealing some understanding of the comic genre	The scene is premised on a humorous conceit, executed well and reveals a solid understanding of the comic genre
STORYTELLING COMMAND			
Criteria	1 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10
Character Creation/ Dialogue	The characters – and the words they speak - do not contribute to the appeal or enjoyment of the skit	The characters – and the words they speak - are interesting and appropriate for the skit	The characters – and the words they speak - are compelling and perfectly suited to the skit
Visual Elements: Setting, Wardrobe and Props	The choice of visual elements do not effectively support the skit’s intent	The visual elements are well chosen and supportive of the skit’s intent	The visual elements are thoughtfully curated and perfectly suited to the skit
Creative Premise	The creative premise does not successfully integrate the poetic content in a humorous and engaging way	The creative premise successfully integrates the poetic content	The creative premise successfully integrates the poetic content in a humorous and compelling way

MEDIA COMMAND			
Criteria	1 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10
Sound Design	The mix of music and sound did not enhance most elements of the video	The mix of music and sound serviced the goals of the video	The mix of music and sound greatly enhanced the goals of the video
Editing	The video feels patched together and the overall editing distracts from the narrative	The video flows, but there are occasional editing distractions	The video is edited cleanly and effectively, resulting in an engaging video experience
HUMAN SKILLS COMMAND			
Criteria	1-3	4-7	8-10
Collaborative Thinking	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
Creativity and Innovation	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
Initiative and Self-Direction	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 three different forms of poetry and their defining characteristics?

2. What is comedy, on the page and in production?
3. What is involved in writing an original scene with your own characters, plot and dialogue?
4. 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?
5. How has working on a team – practicing one’s collaborative skills - changed the learning experience?

Student Proficiencies

1. The student will have a clear understanding of three different poetic forms and their defining characteristics.
2. The student will have a visceral understanding of the key elements involved in creating comedy.
3. The student will have a clear understanding of the key elements that go into making a short narrative through their work in the area of character development, plot development and script writing.
4. The student will utilize key 21st century skills, with a focus on creativity, critical thinking and digital literacy, in their process of translating poetic content into a comic narrative.
5. 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 *Comic Poetry Skit Challenge* addresses a range of curricular objectives that have been articulated by the **Core Curricular Standards – English Language Arts**. Below please find the standards that are addressed, either wholly or in part.

Core Curricular Standards – English Language Arts Standards

<i>Standard</i>	<i>8th</i>	<i>9th / 10th</i>	<i>11th / 12th</i>
W3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences

For more information, please write to info@meridianstories.com or go to the website: www.meridianstories.com. © Meridian Stories. All Rights Reserved.

<p>WRITING</p> <p>Text Types and Purposes</p>	<p>using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.</p>	<p>using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</p>	<p>or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</p>
<p>W4</p> <p>WRITING</p> <p>Production and Distribution of Writing</p>	<p>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience</p>	<p>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p>	<p>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p>
<p>W5</p> <p>WRITING</p> <p>Production and Distribution of Writing</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>SL1</p> <p>SPEAKING AND LISTENING</p> <p>Comprehension and Collaboration</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 expressing their own clearly.</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, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</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' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p>
<p>SL5</p> <p>SPEAKING AND LISTENING</p>	<p>Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas			and evidence and to add interest.
L3 LANGUAGE Knowledge of Language	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 LANGUAGE Vocabulary Acquisition and Use	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.