



History Challenge

Digital Storytelling Unit – Podcast

First Encounters – Unknown Voices in History

Designed for Middle and High School Students

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 21st Century Skills: Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Presentational Skills
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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.

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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

In the Age of Exploration and Discovery, European explorers probed beyond the outermost reaches of their known world. Kings didn't finance these expeditions to learn about their worldly neighbors. They were seeking vast troves of natural resources in North America, Asia, and Africa. The fact that they encountered people there with their own flourishing civilizations was almost a side effect of their global conquest for wealth and power.

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Historic records of European first encounters with newly discovered civilizations were naturally written from the perspective of their authors' own cultural context. In this challenge, we put the shoe on the other foot. Write the story of first encounter from the perspective of the "discovered," seeing Europeans for the first time. Choose your native culture, from any continent. How do these newcomers appear? What do they look like in their dress, armory? How do they comport themselves? Do they seem cultured, or backward? What are your impressions, fears, and hopes? Are the native people happy to be "discovered" by the newcomers? Are they a threat, or do they see a way that they can help each other, perhaps has trading partners?

The format is that of a podcast. There is a (pretend) podcast called 'Unknown Voices in History'. You are producing this piece for this show. The team will write two or three monologues that offer to our audience two or three persons from the native culture telling us what they saw or felt or witnessed. It's as if your team is creating a primary resource of people from that time being interviewed. This podcast are those interviews of them telling their stories. In two - three minutes, tell this story of two cultures colliding on the native people's home soil, from the perspective of the native people.

Deliverables include:

- First Encounters podcast
- Summary of Key Perspective Points (at teacher's discretion)
- Shooting Script (at teacher's discretion)

Process

Below is a suggested breakdown for the students' work.

During Phase I, student teams will:

- Research the cultural juxtaposition upon which you will base your narratives. It will help to read European (or other) accounts of first encounters – primary sources - and think about how your account may differ knowing that it is written from the perspective of the indigenous population being "discovered".
- Here are some larger, contextual questions to consider as you start to piece together your story:

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- What part of the world forms the backdrop for your story?
- Who are your indigenous population and what shapes their worldview?
- Is their civilization flourishing at the time of discovery? (In answering that, you must understand how they define wealth.)
- Is it a time of peace and tranquility between their people and neighboring people when the Europeans (or others) arrive on the scene?
- Begin to shape your perception of the Europeans who have appeared at their doorstep. In seeking to explore the questions below, be sure to research a mix of primary and secondary sources.
 - Perhaps Europeans view the native people as backward “savages” or “heathens”. How do the natives view them?
 - What do the native population make of their appearance, dress, armor, livestock, and the way they comport themselves?
 - What is the European mode of transportation?
 - What are the Europeans promising and is that something the native population needs?
- At the point in time that you are relaying your characters’ perspectives, have the outsiders made clear their intentions of (for example) conquest for wealth and/or conversion to Christianity? If so, what are your population’s options? Do the Europeans (or others) pose a real threat, either in numbers or in weapons? Will your population enter into an alliance, either a) with the Europeans against rival tribes with whom you vie for power; or b) with other indigenous tribes, to fend off the European invasion?
 - ***Teacher’s Option: Summary of Key Perspective Points***– Teachers may require that their teams hand in a summary of the key perspective points that will be articulated in their podcast.

During Phase II, student teams will:

- At this point you will have sufficient information about the two cultures to be able to develop the stories you want to tell and the characters who will tell them. Begin with character descriptions. Who are your First Encounter storytellers? Are they a tribesman, or a king/queen, chief, or priest/priestess? A farmer, beggar or warrior?
 - Keep in mind that this podcast, *Unknown Voices in History*, is an exercise in speculation. We can’t really know what the native populations saw or

felt. But we can make some very educated guesses and that is your job: to make some highly informed guesses as based on thorough research.

- Formulate two or three stories that you are going to tell. Outline your script.
 - Remember, you need two or three characters. Do these characters agree with each other, or do they have differing perspectives? While we say that this podcast is a series of short monologues, you can have your characters interact with each other at the end.
 - What is the context for your storytelling? Is this a young woman washing clothes in the river who was surprised by the appearance of boats and she is reporting back to her family? Is this a messenger who has spied the encampment of the Europeans and is reporting back to the king? Or is this a princess who has just encountered the Captain of this new people, and she is trying to understand what just happened.
- The overall podcast – which is designed for today’s audience and might be broadcast on NPR - needs a structure. Is there a neutral voice that introduce the characters that we are about to hear? How is this all being set-up? This is up to the team, but we recommend making it simple. The focus should be on the stories and the voices that tell them.
- Finalize your show format and your script.
 - ***Teacher’s Option: Shooting Script*** – Teachers may require that their teams hand in their final recording script.
- Brainstorm about sound design. This isn’t just about writing and recording voices. What is the sound design that surrounds these voices? Is it natural sounds from their environment? Or will you produce this under more modern circumstances, adding underscore and punctuating their narratives with sound effects. This is not meant to be ‘of the time’. Or it doesn’t have to be. The important thing is to:
 - research the perspective;
 - create a narrative around that perspective;
 - put a character and voice to the narrative; and
 - deliver it to the audience inside of your podcast format with maximum impact.

During Phase III, student teams will:

- Cast the voices and rehearse.

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- Record the voices.
- Edit the monologues together into your podcast format.
- Post-produce the podcast, adding music, ambient sound and sound effects as desired.

Meridian Support Resources

<p><i>Meridian Stories</i> provides two forms of support for the student teams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <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. ▪ <u>Media Resource Collection</u> – These are short documents that offer student teams key tips in the areas of creativity and production. <p>Recommended for review, as a team, for this Challenge include:</p>	
Meridian Innovators and Artists	Media Resource Collection
<p><i>On Sound Design</i> – Chris Watkinson <i>On Editing</i> – Tom Pierce <i>On the Importance of Character in Storytelling</i> – Scott Nash</p>	<p>“Building Characters” “Creating a Short Documentary” “Producing: Time Management”</p>

Evaluation Rubric – *First Encounters*

CONTENT COMMAND			
Criteria	1-3	4-7	8-10
Portrayal of the Indigenous Perspectives	The podcast’s portrayal of the perspectives of the indigenous people is not well developed or realistic	The podcast’s portrayal of the perspectives of the indigenous people seems plausible	The podcast’s portrayal of the perspectives of the indigenous people is well developed and realistic

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Juxtaposition of Indigenous and European Contexts	The podcast lacks adequate historical context of a first encounter	The historical context of a first encounter is incorporated	The historical context of a first encounter is clearly incorporated and portrayed
STORYTELLING COMMAND			
Criteria	1-3	4-7	8-10
Script	The script is hard to follow and not informative	The script presents acceptable storylines	The script is clear, concise, and creatively presented
Characters	The characters are not convincing or interesting	The characters are realistic and believable	The characters are well developed and entertaining
MEDIA COMMAND			
Criteria	1-3	4-7	8-10
Voice Recording	The recorded voices are not well mixed, balanced or engaging and the transitions are disjointed.	The recorded voices can be clearly heard and the transitions are evident	The recorded voices are well mixed, balanced and engaging and the transitions are effective
Sound and Music	The sound effects and music detract from the audience's engagement with the scene	Sound effects and music adequately support the scene	Sound effects and music enhance the audience's engagement with the scene
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

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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
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Essential Questions

1. How does your research of first encounters broaden your understanding of regional, national, or global processes of the period?
2. How is information gathered from historical resources different when viewed from a contrasting cultural perspective?
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 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. Research into the historical circumstances of first encounters deepens students’ ability to contextualize a specific event within broader regional, national, or global processes.
2. Students constructing interpretations through the lens of contrasting cultural perspectives, broadens their understanding of historical events and historical records.
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 utilize key 21st century skills, with a focus on creativity, critical thinking and digital literacy, in their process of translating historical content into a new narrative format.
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

This *First Encounters Podcast* addresses a range of curricular objectives that have been articulated by two nationally recognized sources:

1. **The Common Core Curricular Standards** – English Language Arts & History/Social Studies; **and**
2. **The 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 for English Language Arts Standards and Literacy in History/Social Studies

The Standard	8th	9th/10th	11th/12th
RI3 READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT Key Ideas and Details	Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).	Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.	Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

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<p>W3</p> <p>WRITING</p> <p>Text Types and Purposes</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>W8</p> <p>WRITING</p> <p>Research to Build and Present Knowledge</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>RH2</p> <p>HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES</p> <p>Key Ideas and Details</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>RH6</p>	<p>Identify aspects of a text that reveal an</p>	<p>Compare the point of view of two or more</p>	<p>Evaluate authors' differing points of</p>

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HISTORY/ SOCIAL STUDIES Craft and Structure	author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).	authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.	view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.
RH8 HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.	Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in text support the author's claims.	Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
RH9 HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	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

Theme – CULTURE

Through the study of culture and cultural diversity, learners understand how human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture, and appreciate the role of culture in shaping their lives and society, as well the lives and societies of others. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with geography, history, sociology, and anthropology, as well as multicultural topics across the curriculum.

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Theme – POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE

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.