History Challenge
Digital Storytelling Unit
(Optional - STEAM – 3D Modeling/Printing)

Historical Escape Room

Designed for Middle and High School Students

Table of Contents	Range of Activities
	• Primary and Secondary Source Research into Assigned (or Chosen) Historical Person, Time Period or Event • Creation of Immersive Historical Environment • Puzzle Making and Problem Solving • 2D/3D Design and/or Printing (optional) • 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

Escape rooms are physical problem-solving spaces. In this Challenge, you and your team are going to design an Escape Room that has a historical theme to it. OK, here's a little more detail. There's a museum in town – say it's a museum about Prohibition, the Underground Railroad, the Battle of Fort Sumter or even ceramics from the Middle Ages. The proprietors want to build an Escape Room full of puzzles that engage the players' minds around that historical theme. And you have been commissioned to design it. Go!

Well, not so fast. An entire Escape Room, you say? Well no: just the first phase of development. That includes a) the story that is driving the player's escape from the room; b) a design of the space with key props and secret passageways (or other secretive places) that is reflective of the historical time period; and c)

two puzzles that need to be solved related to your historical topic, that will begin to lead the players out of the room.

The video that you will create is your presentation to the Museum Board of your First Phase Development work. In other words, they are not going to pay you the full amount…unless they like what they see. Yup: this is one of those contracts that read: "One third payment upon completion *and acceptance* of Phase I, and the rest upon delivery of all plans, puzzles and schematics." So, you have to do your work and present a scenario, a setting and some puzzles to convince the Museum Board that you are on your way to an amazing, history-laden, Escape Room Experience.

<u>Deliverables</u> include:
- Video
- Historical Outline and Inciting Story (at teacher's discretion)
- Sample Script (at teacher's discretion)

The Process

Below is a suggested breakdown for the students' work.

During <u>Phase I</u>, student teams will:
- Begin by exploring the gaming structure of an Escape Room. In other words, what makes a good Escape Room? Escape Room puzzles generally involve:
    - An Inciting Story that determines why you are there and why you have to escape inside of an hour;
    - De-coding and unlocking things that hide further clues;
    - Linking things that we see around the room with clues that we've unlocked;
    - Utilizing random, familiar objects in the room that are arranged in an unusual pattern; and
    - Asking you to look at familiar things from a new perspective.

> Inciting Story Example: Take Prohibition. You are a dry crusader (supportive of the new laws that prohibit alcohol). You have heard tale of a speakeasy (a secret, illegal bar) behind a small deli. You have given the police an anonymous tip. They are coming in an hour to

> bust the place. You will meet them there. But guess who else knows about your plans? The Speakeasy proprietors! You arrive before it opens and go in, and the door locks behind you. It's a set-up! The only way out is to solve a variety of puzzles left by the proprietors...who are betting you won't get out before the police arrive...and catch you red-handed with the booze!

- Research, using primary and second sources, your chosen (or assigned) historical topic. This isn't your everyday history class research. There are two main areas of research on which your team will want to embark. The first has to do with the story and the clues, and the second has to do with the set. Let's start with the story and the clues
- The challenge here is to research details about your chosen historical person and event or time period. Yes, you will need to know the basic narrative of, say, the Pony Express or the final years of Mary, Queen of Scots. That is important and perhaps some members of the team can research that. But to create your own story and to create puzzles, you need details – look for and catalogue the details of your historical topic: that will be the substance of your puzzles.
    - In the end, you want to have a firm enough grasp on the topic to be able to create an original, historically viable story about that topic.
    - Be sure to keep track of your sources so that you can cite them at the end of the final video.
- Once you have an understanding of the larger narrative of your topic and a grasp on some relevant details, create your Inciting Story. It can be simple: it *should* be simple. But remember that it should be driven by a sense of urgency: your players must get out in an hour!
    - *Teacher's Option*: **Historical Outline and Inciting Story** – Teachers may require that student teams hand in an organized summary of the research that they have conducted, with a focus on the ideas that will be used in their Escape Room, along with a draft outline of their Inciting Story.
- The second part of your job is to create a room – a set – that reflects this time period. So you need to have a sense of what that time period looks and sounds like; what objects would be in that room; what are the likely dimensions of the room and how is it lit? Often the best places to find these kinds of details are in primary sources. Different topics to research include:

- Daily Life – You are going to concoct a story of those times, so knowing how people spent their daily lives will be important. For example, how they got water; did the washing; cooked and ate; shopped; got around town and entertained themselves.
- Books – In many Escape Rooms, clues are found in books in clever ways. If you are basing your story around a historical figure, what books do you think he or she might have in their library? Or, what books would *anybody* during that time have in their library?
- Art – What art might adorn the walls…in which you can hide a clue?
- Sound and Music – Think about what one might hear if you opened a window in this room or if you were to play a record player or Victrola? Might there be an instrument in the room? If so, what kind?
- ***The one historical exception we can allow you are…locks. Any kind of locks you want to use, you can, regardless of historical accuracy.***
- By the end of Phase I, teams should have completed their primary and secondary source research to understand a) the important general aspects of your historical topic; b) the details that inform your historical topic; and c) the basic structure of your Inciting Story.

During Phase II, student teams will:
- Before you begin Phase II, have an initial brainstorm about what you want your final video to look like. This is mentioned here in case you want to video any of the team's next activities.
- Design the puzzles. Your team has to come up with at least two puzzles. And per the norms of the Escape Room game structure, each puzzle usually has multiple parts; requires multiple actions. Sometimes, for example, you have to do four different actions to acquire four different numbers that will unlock a single lock.
  - Keep in mind that it is important that your puzzles be directly related to your historical topic.
- Test your puzzles out on your friends. Are they too hard? Too easy? Do you have to know information about the topic before you enter the room? Or are there items in the room that will give you that information (you want to aim for the latter if possible)?
- Finalize your two puzzles and the props that you need to carry out your puzzles.

> **If desired, this is a great opportunity for collaborating with teachers in the STEAM area to design and 3D model/print one historically accurate props that can be used as a vital clue in your Escape Room. The inclusion of this prop is not a requirement. However, there is a line in the rubric that will allow Mentors to evaluate it, should it be included. The engineering objective of the creation of such a prop would be to design a historically accurate replica of something that would be an integral part of the problem solving in the Escape Room.**

- Design your room. This can be done in Minecraft, or any number of 2D/3D Modeling applications. This can be done physically, using cardboard and tape. Or this can be done mathematically, creating a scaled blueprint of your room, along with some color sketches of what the room looks like. Or, just those color sketches. It's up to you. There is no 'best' way to approach this.
- Strategize about your video. It's time to pull it all together. You have your story, your puzzles and your room design. Now it's time to tell your story about these elements. This isn't exactly a pitch video: you don't need to sell your audience aggressively. But you do need to convince them that this experience will be historically substantive and memorable.
- Draft a script
    - *Teacher's Option*: **Draft Script** – Teacher may require that student teams hand in a draft script for feedback.
- Finalize the script

During Phase III, student teams will:
- Pre-produce the video:
    - Scout locations for shooting (as necessary);
    - Research, as necessary, the still images that you will integrate into your video; and
    - Prepare the logistics for the actual shooting of the video.
- Complete the video shooting, scripting, and recording.
- Post-produce the video, adding music and sound effects as desired.

Meridian Support Resources

Meridian Stories provides two forms of support for the student teams.

1. Media Innovators and Artists – This is a series of three to four-minute videos featuring artists and innovative professionals who offer important advice, specifically for Meridian Stories, in the areas of creativity and production.
2. Meridian Resources – These are short documents that offer student teams a few key tips in the areas of creativity, production, game design and digital citizenry.

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

Media Innovators and Artists	Meridian Resources
On Photography – Michael Kolster *On Making Documentaries* – Margaret Heffernan *On Non-fiction* – Margaret Heffernan *On Editing* – Tom Pierce	"Creative Brainstorming Techniques" "Rendering and Animation Programs" "Minecraft in the Classroom: Getting Started Guide" "Introduction to 3D Modeling"

Evaluation Rubric – *Historical Escape Room*

CONTENT COMMAND	
Criteria	**1 - 10**
Historical Research	Historical research is substantive and evident throughout the experience
Escape Room Design	The Escape Room design significantly adds to our understanding of your selected historical topic
The Puzzles	The puzzles provide insight and knowledge about your historical topic
STORYTELLING COMMAND	
Criteria	**1 - 10**
Inciting Story	The Inciting Story is an engaging and imaginative pathway into the Escape Room experience

The Escape Room Game	The component parts – the story, the setting and the puzzles –form a cohesive and dynamic historical experience
The Video Narrative	The video narrative is persuasive and engaging, organized and poignant

MEDIA COMMAND	
Criteria	**1 - 10**
Mixed Visual Media	The use of video, stills, screenshots, graphics and/or text was engaging, visually interesting and well matched to the goals of the video
Editing	The video is edited cleanly and effectively, resulting in an engaging video experience

HUMAN SKILLS COMMAND	
Criteria	**1 - 10**
Collaborative Thinking	The group demonstrated flexibility in making compromises and valued the contributions of each group member
Creativity and Innovation	The group brainstormed many inventive ideas and was able to evaluate, refine and implement them effectively
Initiative and Self-Direction	The group set attainable goals, worked independently and managed their time effectively, demonstrating a disciplined commitment to the project

Essential Questions

1. What are the fundamental ideas that need to be understood about a select historical topic in order to tell an original story about that topic?
2. How are the defining characteristics of a historical topic reflected in the physical design and interior decor of a room in that time?
3. How is information gathered from primary sources different from information gathered from secondary sources?
4. What is game design and how does one combine that skill set with historical content?

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. Students will increase their understanding of how to research a topic in order to obtain the relevant information for a thorough understanding.
2. The students will increase their understanding of the selected historical topic by analyzing that society through the lens of daily living conditions and architecture.
3. The student will understand how combining primary and secondary sources can help one to reach a more complex and nuanced understanding of a historical culture.
4. The student will understand the fundamental challenges, constraints and rewards of developing curriculum-driven game design.
5. The student will utilize key 21st century skills, with a focus on creativity, critical thinking and digital literacy, in their process of translating historic content into a narrative game.
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 21st century skills to develop in students as they prepare for life after secondary school.

Curricular Correlations
The *Historical Escape Room* Challenge addresses a range of curricular objectives that have been articulated by three 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)**.
3. **Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)**

Below please find the standards that are being addressed, either wholly or in part.

Common Core Curricular Standards
English Language Arts Standards – History/Social Studies

The Standard	*8th*	*9th/10th*	*11th/12th*
RI1 **READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT** **Key Ideas and Details**	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.
RI7 **READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT** **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**	Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.	Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
W2 **WRITING** **Text Types and Purposes**	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
W3 **WRITING** **Text Types and Purposes**	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.
W4	Produce clear and coherent writing in	Produce clear and coherent writing in	Produce clear and coherent writing in

WRITING **Production and Distribution of Writing**	which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
W5 **WRITING** **Production and Distribution of Writing**	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.	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.	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.
W7 **WRITING** **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**	Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
SL1 **SPEAKING AND LISTENING** **Comprehension and Collaboration**	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher- led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one- on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
SL5 **SPEAKING AND LISTENING**	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	Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas		enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.	enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
SL6 **SPEAKING AND LISTENING** **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
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.
RH2 **HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES** **Key Ideas and Details**	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
RH9 **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.
Theme – Time, Continuity and Change
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
Theme - People, Places, And Environments
This theme helps learners to develop their spatial views and perspectives of the world, to understand where people, places, and resources are located and why they are there, and to explore the relationship between human beings and the environment. In schools, this theme typically appears in courses dealing with geography and area studies, but it is also important for the study of the geographical dimension of other social studies subjects.
Theme - Individual Development and Identity
Personal identity is shaped by family, peers, culture, and institutional influences. Through this theme, students examine the factors that influence an individual's personal identity, development, and actions. This theme typically appears in courses and units dealing with psychology, anthropology, and sociology.

Next Generation Science Standards

Middle School

MS-ETS1-2. Evaluate competing design solutions using a systematic process to determine how well they meet the criteria and constraints of the problem.

MS-ETS1-3. Analyze data from tests to determine similarities and differences among several design solutions to identify the best characteristics of each that can be combined into a new solution to better meet the criteria for success.

MS-ETS1-4. Develop a model to generate data for iterative testing and modification of a proposed object, tool, or process such that an optimal design can be achieved.

High School

HS-ETS1-2. Design a solution to a complex real-world problem by breaking it down into smaller, more manageable problems that can be solved through

engineering. *(Meridian Note: OK, so it's not 'real world' but the engineering challenge remains the same!)*