



History Challenge Digital Storytelling Unit

Intelligence Report

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.

Let's get started.

The Challenge

Everyone has seen the crime show genre on television, where viewers experience each step of the detailed investigation of the crime scene, from the probing questions and interrogation methods, to a complete final briefing of the crime itself. This Challenge asks you to be that Investigative Team and apply this process of research and discovery to a historical crime or critical event in history.

For example, why did conspirators feel the need to assassinate Gaius Julius Caesar? Who came up with the idea? And what consequences would come from this action? Or, you could investigate the Little Rock Nine and their story as they became the first black children in Arkansas to attend a newly integrated white school. How were they treated? What roles did Governor Orval Faubus and President Eisenhower play in the event? What were the motives behind the people and groups present? Ultimately,

although there is no official crime involved, who would you say behaved admirably or correctly and who was in the wrong? And why?

The challenge should be framed as an intelligence agency report, such as from the CIA or the FBI, that is investigating an impactful event. You are a team of investigators. Within this report you will include four main elements: 1. a brief introduction of the situation; 2. a suspect list or list of the main players in the event; 3. two scripted interviews/interrogations (one interview required for middle school) with one or two main suspects or characters; and 4. a final briefing or summary.

Ultimately, your Investigative Team is being asked to dramatize an understanding of the event itself, including the lead-up and historical consequences, as well as the key people that are at the center of this action that became History itself.

Deliverables include:

- Intelligence Report Digital Story
- Event Timeline and Character Profiles (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:

- Select your historical event. When choosing an event, students should look for options that:
 - Transpired quickly- you would not want to create a report about a war spanning multiple years, but a peace treaty concluding the war could be a viable option;
 - Include multiple important figures who are involved to create a complete ‘suspect’ list; and
 - Have a clear outcome: students should choose an event that has a result or impact that can be explained to their peers
- Develop a step-by-step analysis of the event, using both primary (at least two) and secondary sources, which should include:
 - A brief description of important preliminary events that set the stage for the chosen event

- Chronologically ordered series of actions that constitute the entire event (in other words, walk the audience through exactly what happened in the order it happened)
- The historical implications or results of the event (how did it affect people?)
- Using the analysis, identify two individual persons of interest (POI) (middle school – just one), parties, organizations, etc. who had a real impact on the historical event. Then, examine the motivations or goals behind their actions to create a complete character profile. Team members should think about:
 - Motivations and goals- why did the POIs act as they did, what ultimate goal were they trying to achieve?
 - Personality- how did the POIs go about his/her actions? Was he/she open or secretive about his/her intentions?
 - Success- did the POIs succeed in their intentions? Were the consequences what she/he hoped for?
 - Partners- Is the POI an individual or part of a larger organization? Do they have any clear allies or enemies?
 - ***Teacher's Option: Event Timeline and Character Profiles*** – Teachers may require that teams hand in a two page outline of key actions surrounding the event in question, as well as one page profiles of the characters/suspects upon which the team has chosen to focus. In both cases, primary and second sources are clearly cited.
- By the end of the first phase, student teams should have a clear outline of the facts surrounding the event, including the historical consequences, as well as complete character profiles for your one or two POIs or primary drivers of this event.

During Phase II, student teams will:

- Choose an investigative style or persona. Your group should brainstorm the different types of investigators or detectives you may have seen on TV. Is your approach inspired by Brooklyn Nine-Nine or Broadchurch? Sherlock Holmes or Fargo? Will your investigators be humorous and tricky in their interrogations or hard-nosed and tough? Do they employ a good cop-bad cop routine? Do they attack or sympathize with the suspects?

- Decide WHO they are working for.
 - For example, if Alexander Hamilton is one of your suspects and the crime is the ... Declaration of Independence, you might be investigating from the British side: has he (and his colleagues) indeed committed a crime or is the investigator prone to believe – given how you have articulated Alexander’s arguments – that this new view of humanity may be closer to the truth than ...the Divine Right of Kings.
 - Or, when questioning a citizen who participated in the Boston Tea Party, your group could determine if he acted rightly in his protest against an overwhelming tax, or if he was guilty of civil unrest.
 - If investigating Nelson Mandela and his time in prison, your group might determine whether he was justly or unjustly imprisoned, or if it was an effective method for him to protest ...or simply foolish?
- In all three examples above, WHO is investigating will make all the difference in the story being told.
- Script the interrogations/interviews.
- Script scenes to produce the video. The format for this Challenge is a) the set-up of the crime or historical moment: what happened; b) the interrogation of the one or two ‘suspects’ – your select historical figures; and c) the conclusion – the verdict, and historical ramifications of the incident.
 - Your group must act as if you are reporting the event to the public- either as a Press Conference or TV briefing- and give a central briefing, or summary, that makes the event completely clear and understandable. Present the information to your audience as if they have no prior knowledge of the event.
 - Photos, diagrams, and animations can prove useful in expressing what exactly happened, and may be used freely.
 - Remember, like the crime show genre on TV, this briefing should be a delicate balance between relaying only the vital, need-to-know information, while still giving a clear and logical breakdown of the event. What is the tone- somber, serious, or happy?
 - ***Teacher’s Option: Shooting Script*** – Teachers may require a scripted version of the character interviews and the central briefing.
- Pre-produce the video:
 - Scout locations for shooting;

- Research, as necessary, the still images that you will integrate into your video;
- Create costumes, props and other set pieces, as needed;
- Prepare the logistics for the actual shooting of the video; and
- Rehearse the scenes that will comprise the video.

During Phase III, student teams will:

- Shoot the video
- Record the voice-over or narration, as necessary.
- Edit the video, adding stills and graphics as desired.
- 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. Meridian 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. Media Resource Collection – These are short documents that offer student teams key tips in the areas of creativity, production, game design and digital citizenry.

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

Meridian Innovators and Artists	Media Resource Collection
<i>On Interviewing Techniques</i> – Tom Pierce	“Conducting an Interview”
<i>On Acting for Film and Stage</i> – Janet McTeer	“Sound Recording Basics”
<i>On the Importance of Character in Storytelling</i> – Scott Nash	“Creating Storyboards, Framing a Shot”
<i>On Editing</i> – Tom Pierce	“Video Editing Basics”

Evaluation Rubric

CONTENT COMMAND

Criteria	1-10
Historical Understanding of the Event	The digital story demonstrates a thorough understanding of the historical event, the figures involved, and the historical implications of the events
Character Accuracy	Students give realistic, historically accurate portrayals of the participants in the event
Analysis of Evidence	Students make inferences and display the ability to explain the underlying motives and contextual elements surrounding the historical event
STORYTELLING COMMAND	
Criteria	1-10
Presentation	The video style is easily recognizable as an intelligence or police report, and portrays the information clearly and accurately while doing so
Interviews	The interviews reveal the motives behind the suspects' actions and provide an entertaining and authentic questioning scene
Character Authenticity	In both the interviews and the briefing video, students assume the identity of intelligence officers and fully commit to their characters
MEDIA COMMAND	
Criteria	1-10
Visualization	The shooting of the briefings and the interviews reflect a thoughtful professionalism
Editing	The video is edited cleanly and effectively, resulting in an engaging digital storytelling experience
Sound and Music	The selective use of sound effects and music enhances the dramatic appeal of

	the Challenge and helps engage/entertain viewers
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. In your historical event, who are the important figures and what roles did they play?
2. By examining your chosen event through an investigative lens, how has your understanding of the historical event changed?
3. How has information gathered from primary sources enhanced your understanding of your select historical event? How is the information from these primary 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. The student will have a thorough understanding of their historical event as well as the ability to identify prominent figures and their specific roles and motives.

- a. The student will have a greater awareness about how specific individuals shape history with their decisions and choices.
2. The student, by applying an investigative approach, will open new pathways into understanding the historical event and the key people who are at its center.
3. The student will understand how combining primary and secondary sources can help one to reach a more complex and nuanced understanding of the topic at hand.
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

The *Intelligence Report* Challenge addresses a range of curricular objectives that have been articulated by two nationally recognized sources:

1. The **Common Core Curricular Standards – English Language Arts**; and
2. The **Themes of Social Studies**, as outlined by **National Council of Social Studies (NCSS)**.

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

Common Core Curricular Standards

English Language Arts Standards

English Language Arts Standards – History/Social

<i>The Standard</i>	<i>8th</i>	<i>9th / 10th</i>	<i>11th / 12th</i>
RI1 READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT	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

Key Ideas and Details			text leaves matters uncertain.
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 WRITING	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
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 Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas	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.

<p>SL6</p> <p>SPEAKING AND LISTENING</p> <p>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas</p>	<p>Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</p>	<p>Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</p>	<p>Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</p>
<p>L3</p> <p>LANGUAGE</p> <p>Knowledge of Language</p>	<p>Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</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>RH3</p> <p>HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES</p> <p>Key Ideas and Details</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.</p>	<p>Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.</p>
<p>RH9</p> <p>HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES</p> <p>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</p>	<p>Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.</p>	<p>Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.</p>	<p>Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.</p>

Goals – NCSS - The Themes of Social Studies

Theme – Time, Continuity and Change
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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
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