



Language Arts Challenge Digital Storytelling Unit

Literary Speed Dating

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

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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:

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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

The blind date is a situation that evokes a wide range of emotional, literary and linguistic possibilities: tragic, comic, awkward, passionate, tongue-tied or verbose.

The speed date smashes all of that into a condensed reality that lasts just three minutes. This Challenge asks you to take two famous literary characters, of your team's choice, and put them together in a speed dating scenario. Imagine Holden Caulfield (*Cather in the Rye*) and Elizabeth Bennett (*Pride and Prejudice*); Huck Finn and Hester Prynne (*The Scarlett Letter*); or Esperanza (*The House on Mango Street*) and Junior (*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*).

The characters must speak in their 'voice'; the time is current, but the characters are from their original time (they can 'time travel' to the present day, as necessary); and by the end of the scene, their romantic intentions toward each other (or not) should be clear. Also, the time limit for the 'speed date' is three minutes (the overall deliverable can be longer with the slates and credits, etc.).

A speed dating situation also begs for humor: the situation is artificial; the mix of characters is surreal; and the explicit desire for romantic attachment (otherwise, why would you be there?) is a tad awkward. Be sure to look for ways to create humor out of the dynamics that define the circumstances.

Deliverables include:

- Speed Dating Video
- Monologue (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:

- Choose your characters.
- Research your characters' speaking habits, focusing on word choices, cadences, often-used expressions, sentence structure (or lack thereof) and tone. This will help to develop an eye for your characters' voice.
- Choose some dialogue-rich scenes that feature your characters and, with your team, read those scenes out loud. This will help to develop an ear for your characters' voice.
 - Experiment with different members of your team reading this character. Who does each character the best, and why?
- As you are reading your character's words out loud, take notes and observe what you are hearing. As you listen, also ask yourselves: what does this character look like? Dress like? Walk like?
- We recommend that to conclude this phase, your team (or each member of your team) write a monologue for each character about a topic that is relevant to this Challenge. For example, you can write about what your character looks for in a romantic relationship. This will allow you to experiment with the character's voice and the content of the scene.
 - *Teacher's Option:* Monologues – Teachers may require that teams hand in their character monologues

During Phase II, student teams will:

- Brainstorm the scene: what is going to happen during this short encounter? Questions to consider include:
 - What decisions is each character going to make in order to move the scene forward to its conclusion?
 - Most short scenes contain a conflict that needs to be resolved. What is the conflict here?
 - How are you going to create humor out of this encounter?

- Role Play the scene. Working with your teammates and with those not on your team, role play the speed date and see what people do; what they say; how they react.
- Outline the scene.
- Draft the dialogue, reading each draft out loud before going back to write a second and third draft.
- As the words on the page evolve, consider what this scene looks like. Questions to consider include:
 - What are your characters wearing? Clothes from their time period or clothes from today?
 - What is the setting for this speed dating situation?
 - What role will the three-minute time limit play in your scenario and how will you communicate this?
- By the end of this phase, your team should have a final draft of the scene, as well as costuming, setting and casting close to completion.
 - **Teacher's Option:** Shooting Scripts – Teachers may require that teams hand in their Shooting Scripts.

During Phase III, student teams will:

- Memorize the script and rehearse the scene.
- Discuss how you will shoot the scene (watch other ‘two-people-across-from-each-other-at-a-table’ scenes on TV, to see how they shoot the scene.)
- Shoot the scene.
- Edit the scene, adding stills and graphics as desired.
- Add music and sound effects, as desired, to emphasize the different emotions and tones of the scene.

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 Scriptwriting and Comedy</i> – Kent Pierce <i>On Fiction Writing</i> – Lily King <i>On the Importance of Character in Storytelling</i> – Scott Nash <i>On Producing</i> – Tom Pierce	“Building Characters” “Conducting an Interview” “Video Editing Basics” “Producing: Tips for the Shoot”

Evaluation Rubric – *Literary Speed Dating*

CONTENT COMMAND			
Criteria	1 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10
Dialogue – Consistency with Original Character	The dialogue of the characters was not consistent with the original characters	The dialogue of the characters was consistent with the original characters	The dialogue of the characters was an authentic extension of the original characters
Decisions and Actions - Consistency with Original Character	The decisions and actions of the characters were not consistent with the original characters	The decisions and actions of the characters were consistent with the original characters	The decisions and actions of the characters added to our understanding of the original characters
STORYTELLING COMMAND			
Criteria	1 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10
Dialogue – Creativity	The dialogue does not propel the scene effectively	The dialogue propels the scene effectively	The dialogue propels the scene effectively thoughtfully
Humor	The presentation of the scene does not successfully evoke humor	The presentation of the scene successfully evokes humor	The presentation of the scene successfully evokes humor in myriad ways
MEDIA COMMAND			
Criteria	1 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10
Acting	The acting does not capture the essence of the original characters	The acting does capture the essence of the original characters	The acting excels at capturing the essence of the original characters

Visual Elements: Setting, Shot Selection and Wardrobe	The choice of visual elements did not effectively support the scene's intent	The visual elements were well chosen and supportive of the scene's intent	The visual elements were thoughtfully curated and perfectly suited to the scene
Editing and Music and Sound Effects	The editing does not positively impact our enjoyment and the overall use of music and sound effects detracts from the emotions of the scene	The editing is fluid and the use of music and sound effects supports the emotions of the scene	The editing is fluid and well-paced, and the selective use of music and sound effects enhances the emotional tones in 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
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. Characters are defined by the decisions that they make. What decisions have you had your characters make that adds further depth to our understanding of them?
2. In moving two iconic literary characters into wholly new contexts, how has your understanding of those characters changed?
3. How has writing a conversation in the style of existing characters affected your ability to craft authentic dialogue?
4. What are the myriad ways to evoke humor in a two-person scene?
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. The student will have a better understanding of the elements that go into communicating the essence of a character.
2. The students will have a deeper understanding of the internal and external dynamics of their select literary characters.
3. The student will have a more developed ability to write effective dialogue.
4. The student will have an understanding of comic elements – language choice, timing, body language – as well as the significant challenges inherent in creating comedy.
5. The student will utilize key 21st century skills, with a focus on creativity, critical thinking and digital literacy, in their process of translating literary content into a new narrative format.
6. The student will have an increased awareness of the challenges and rewards of team collaboration. Collaboration – the ability to work with others - is considered one of the most important 21st century skills to develop in students as they prepare for life after secondary school.

Curricular Correlations

The *Literary Speed Dating* Challenge addresses a range of curricular objectives that have been articulated by the **Common Core Curricular Standards – English Language Arts**. Below please find the standards that are addressed, either wholly or in part.

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Common Core Curricular Standards – English Language Arts Standards

<i>Standard</i>	<i>8th</i>	<i>9th / 10th</i>	<i>11th / 12th</i>
RL3 READING LITERATURE Key Ideas and Details	Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.	Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.	Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
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 Production and Distribution of 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.
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.
W6 WRITING	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual

<p>Production and Distribution of Writing</p>	<p>relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.</p>	<p>shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.</p>	<p>or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.</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>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>