Language Arts Challenge
Digital Storytelling Unit

Mythological Photographic Storyboard

Designed for Middle and High School Students

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	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

A myth is a traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people. The purpose of myths is to account for the origins of something, explain aspects of the natural world, or delineate the psychology, customs, or ideals of society. (americanfolklore.net)

This Challenge asks you to explore the myths of cultures other than Greece and Rome – Egypt, Ireland, Scandinavia, Babylon, and China for example. You may also choose to research a Native American myth. Then, re-tell this myth in a fully–produced, ten to twelve-panel, photographic storyboard. By 'fully produced' we mean that the storyboard presentation needs to be shot and

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edited together to music and/or sound effects. The teams can choose whether or not it is effective to also narrate the storyboard, or leave it up to the viewer to read it.

There are two conditions that apply to creating this photographic storyboard:
- o All photos must be original – you may not use existing photos or illustrations that might be taken from mythology books, for example.
- o All photos must be three-dimensional. In other words, you cannot take a picture of a two–dimensional drawing that your team has created. But you could, for example, take a picture of a three-dimensional diorama that your team created. Otherwise the expectation is that your team will photograph pre-planned photos on location.

Two more conditions to keep in mind:
- The teams must open their storyboard presentation with a slate that clearly states the English title of the myth; the country from where it hails; the general time in which the myth was created or takes place; and a web URL (or book and chapter, if there is no relevant URL) where a write up of the original myth can be located.
  - o If the team then chooses to give their storyboard a different title, they can do so after this initial slate.
- The teams can interpret the myth in almost any way that they want – see notes below – but they need to keep the myth's original character names the same.
- Finally – and this is not a condition – after the Storyboard, your team is welcome to comment on the choice of myth and your rendering to camera to provide more context for the viewer. But this is not a requirement.

Deliverables include:
- Photographic Storyboard
- Written Storyboard (at teacher's discretion)
- Draft Storyboard (at teacher's discretion)

Process

Below is a suggested breakdown for the students' work.

During <u>Phase I,</u> student teams will:
- Choose one region of the world that has been known for its rich myth-creation history (not Greek or Roman) and begin to research the myths of that culture.
- Narrow down your selections to two or three myths. Discuss with your team the strengths and weaknesses of each of the final myth selections. Be sure that the myth selections aren't too complicated as the 12 frame storyboard format is only capable of effectively communicating a relatively uncomplicated story.
  - In particular, explore the meaning of the myth as it relates to your lives.
- Choose your myth.
- Break down your myth into ten or twelve key scenes or frames – the essential moments in the myth that are needed to convey the story and its meaning. For each frame, break down the story into its component parts, including action, characters and setting.
  - *Teacher's Option*: <u>Written Storyboard</u> – Teachers may require that teams hand in a written storyboard draft - just the written summary for each frame - to your teacher for direction and comments.
- Outline the ideas that will inform the conclusion about the teams' relationship to the myth.

During <u>Phase II</u>, student teams will:
- Brainstorm about how you will represent these scenes photographically. Student teams have a huge range of flexibility in terms of their visual approach to communicating their chosen myth. Here are a few (but not the only) starter ideas to launch your brainstorming:
  - Your team can attempt to represent the myth literally, by looking to use period costumes and looking for settings/locations that approximate the setting of the myth.
  - Your team can re-locate the myth to the present day and re-tell the story using contemporary clothing, props and references. However, keep in mind that you must use the original names of the characters.

- o Your team can approach the myth abstractly, creating photos that communicate meaning through symbolism.
  - o To see one winning submission to a version of this Challenge from year's past, see "How the Moon and Stars Came to Be" on the homepage
- Once you have decided on your general creative approach, work out the design for each frame, as based on your written storyboard draft. Here are some questions to consider as you look explore your photographic design work.
  - o What is the location for each frame? Your team may need to go on location scouts – trips to relevant interior and exterior places – in order to figure this piece out.
  - o How are you depicting the characters in this myth and where are they going to be located in each photograph?
  - o What props do you need for each frame? How are you going to find those props?
  - o What is the general mood of each frame? How will you use lighting and color to help create that mood?
    - ▪ In this same vein, each storyboard will be accompanied by music of your choice. Music is an important mood setting element as well. Explore the role and choice of music as your team discusses mood and tone.
  - o What is the point of view of each frame? Where will you place the camera in order to communicate that point of view?
- By the end of this phase, student teams should have their design for each frame clearly sketched out.
  - o *Teacher's Option*: **Rough Storyboard** – Teachers may require that teams hand in a rough storyboard draft – matching writing to picture, including basic creative approach - to your teacher for direction and comments.
- Create your storyboard script. What is the text that accompanies each frame? Sometimes it is better to finalize this after you have completed your photographic shooting. However, at this point, it is good to have a rough draft in place of the storyboard text.
  - o The text can be created solely out of existing language in your myth source text. This is not about re-writing the myth; it is about creating a visual interpretation of the myth; a visual re-telling. If all

of the text is taken from an existing source, the source, of course, must be properly cited.
- Write your concluding script – the piece that connects your team to the myth -- and discuss how you will shoot and present this segment.

During Phase III, student teams will:
- Pre-produce the shoot – making sure that all costumes, props, people, locations and other variables are in place for the actual photography shoot.
- Production – Shoot the storyboard and shoot the conclusion whereby your team reflects on the experience (if desired).
- Post-produce the video.
   - In addition to the visual editing together of the storyboard and conclusion – which involves turning the storyboard into a video element that can be uploaded onto YouTube -- each team needs to incorporate a sound design. What kind of music will support the mood and tone of your myth? Is there a place for sound effects? Should this be narrated or simply read by the viewer?

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 Collection – These are short documents that offer student teams a few key tips in the areas of creativity and production.

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

Media Innovators and Artists	Meridian Resources
On Photography – Michael Kolster *On Character Design* – Scott Nash *On Music in Film* – Mary Hunter *On Multi-Media in Theatre* – Roger Bechtel	"Creative Brainstorming Techniques" "Royalty Free Music" "Sound Recording Basics" "Creating Storyboards, Framing a Shot"

Evaluation Rubric – *The Mythological Photographic Storyboard*

CONTENT COMMAND			
Criteria	**1 - 3**	**4 - 7**	**8 - 10**
Clear re-telling of the myth	The photographic storyboard does not clearly retell the myth	The photographic storyboard covers the basic events that comprise the myth	The photographic storyboard clearly and succinctly retells the myth
Substantive and meaningful re-telling of the myth	The choice of scenes, and use of language and imagery, do not reveal meaning and depth in the myth	The choice of scenes, and use of language and imagery, intermittently reveal meaning and substance in the myth	The choice of scenes, and use of language and imagery, reveal meaning and depth in the myth.

STORYTELLING COMMAND			
Criteria	**1 - 3**	**4 - 7**	**8 - 10**
Creative Approach	The creative approach (visual interpretation) to the myth is generally lacking cohesion and imagination	The creative approach (visual interpretation) to the myth is interesting and generally engaging	The creative approach (visual interpretation) to the myth is imaginative, cohesive and engaging
The Frames (scenes)	Only a few of the individual frames were effective	Many of the individual frames were effective and poignant	Most or all of the individual frames were effective and poignant
Narrative Elements	The choices made in terms of character, setting, point of view, language and tone do not successfully communicate the narrative.	The choices made in terms of character, setting, point of view, language and tone are generally interesting and thoughtful	The choices made in terms of character, setting, point of view, language and tone are coherent, compelling and effective in

			communicating the narrative

MEDIA COMMAND			
Criteria	**1 - 3**	**4 - 7**	**8 - 10**
The Photography	The artistic choices are not well presented and detract from your overall re-telling of the myth	The artistic choices are solid and service the myth	The artistic choices are visually arresting and bring new meaning to the myth
The Audio Choices (including music, sound and/or voice)	The selective use of music, sound, and/or voice detracts from the overall presentation of the myth	The selective use of music, sound, and/or voice supports the presentation of the myth	The selective use of music, sound, and/or voice creates an atmosphere that enhances and enriches the overall myth

HUMAN SKILLS COMMAND			
Criteria	**1-3**	**4-7**	**8-10**
Collaborative Thinking	The group did not work together effectively and/or did not share the work equally	The group worked together effectively and had no major issues	The group demonstrated flexibility in making compromises and valued the contributions of each group member
Creativity and Innovation	The group did not make a solid effort to create anything new or innovative	The group was able to brainstorm new and inventive ideas, but was inconsistent in their evaluation and implementation of those ideas.	The group brainstormed many inventive ideas and was able to evaluate, refine and implement them effectively
Initiative and Self-Direction	The group was unable to set attainable goals, work independently and manage their time effectively.	The group required some additional help, but was able to complete the project on time with few problems	The group set attainable goals, worked independently and managed their time effectively, demonstrating a disciplined commitment to the project

Essential Questions

1. What is the role of myth in a culture, both historically and now? How do certain myths embody meaning for you?
2. What are some important myths from a culture that is neither Roman nor Greek?
3. In re-imagining your select myth, how have your choices regarding setting, character, tone and aesthetic design impacted the viewer's experience with the story?
4. In moving from the base of a written text to a photographic storyboard, what elements of the story have you been able to communicate more effectively? Which elements less effectively?
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 an increased awareness of the role of myths as shapers of past and current cultures.
2. The student will have a deeper understanding of the mythological canon in a select culture.
3. The student will understand how to create their own narrative impact by making strategic choices in the areas of setting, character, tone and aesthetic design.
4. The student will understand the differences in communicative power between text and photography; between story and storyboarding.
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 *Mythological Photographic Storyboard* addresses a range of curricular objectives that have been articulated by the **Core Curricular Standards – English Language Arts.** Below please find the standards that are addressed, either in whole or in part.

Core Curricular Standards – English Language Arts Standards

Standards	8th	9th/10th	11th/12th
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).
RL4 **READING: LITERATURE** **Craft and Structure**	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.
RL6 **READING: LITERATURE** **Craft and Structure**	NA	Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.	NA
RL7	NA	Analyze the representation of a	Analyze multiple interpretations of a

READING: LITERATURE **Integration of Knowledge**		subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment	story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text.
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.
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.
L1 **LANGUAGE** **Conventions of Standard English**	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
L5 **LANGUAGE**	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language,	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language,

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use	word relationships, and nuances in word meanings	relationships, and nuances in word meanings	word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.