**Computer-based digital storytelling**

This refers to what many would call conventional digital storytelling. Students use the computer as the main creation and performance engine. Typically this involves creating a **voice-over narration** and then adding images, music, titles etc. using a program like iMovie on the Mac, or MovieMaker on the PC. The final product is watched on the computer and is very reminiscent of a Ken Burns documentary in form. The process begins with mapping and the narration process (write, record, listen) described in the diagram below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Story Narrative Steps**- 1. **Choose and Map.**Students choose the story and the best format then create a story map (see above). Week 1
2. **Write.**Students write the narrative they will record. Week 1
3. **Story table (or storyboard?)** As discussed above, you will need to decide what kind of approach you want to use to organize your production. [I cover story tables in depth on another site of mine](https://sites.google.com/site/mediapsychologystory/story-table). Weeks 1-2
4. **Gather: Images and music following fair use laws** (get permission, give credit on any photo or illustration that is NOT yours. Use no more than 10% of music tracks and you can NEVER ever make a profit on this.)
5. **Record.**Students record themselves speaking their narrative. Week 2
6. **Listen.**Students listen to their narrative for purposes of revision. Week 2
7. **Organize and Order images and background music.**
8. **Done?** Students and/or teachers decide whether the narrative is finished. If not, is this because, a) it needs rewriting or b) it needs re-recording for technical or expression reasons? (optional office hours week 2-3)
9. **Next steps.** Students proceed with editing. (weeks 2-3)
10. **Showcase.**
 |  |

**Narrative is key**. Have your students spend as much time as possible developing and recording their narrative for the following important reasons:

1. **Practice "the narration process:"** Just like "good writing is re-writing," it is also true that "good narrating is re-narrating." So, narrate, narrate, narrate.
2. **Spend as much time as you can on narration:** The narration forms the foundation for everything else that follows. If the narrative is solid, then the story has a great chance of being successful.
3. **Tech tip:** To reduce technical issues, always perform a test recording: speak a few sentences, listen to it, and adjust your recording levels as needed.

**Many ways to record narrative**. You can use a headset, a stationary mike, the mike built into your computer or a wireless mike to record your narrative. There are pros and cons to each. [I provide information about audio and miking techniques at a companion storytelling page](http://www.jasonohler.com/storytelling/storytech.cfm#audio_techniques).

**Next steps: The Media Production Process**

Once the story map and narration are completed, students follow the steps in what is commonly referred to as the **media production process** to complete their projects. Each of the four phases of this process is described below.

**Phase I. Pre-production**. This involves creating, mapping and storyboarding the story, generating a media list, and gathering media. In short, pre-production involves the steps that students need to follow before they sit down at the computer and begin formal production. Each of these is addressed below:

1. **Create and map the story.** This was covered in some detail above. Don't forget to include peer pitching and other kinds of review.
2. **Write/script.**Students write out the script they are going to speak.
3. **Create a story table, story board or other kind of organizing instrument?**This was discussed in detail above. [I cover story tables in depth on another site of mine](https://sites.google.com/site/mediapsychologystory/story-table).
4. **Record/listen/redo.**Students record their script, listen to it, and redo either the script or the recording if necessary.
5. **Narrate**. Write, speak, listen and rewrite the narrative, as explained above.
6. **Develop a media list.** Students use their story map, narrative, or storyboard to create a list of the images, sounds and other media they will need.
7. **Go get the media!** Students gather all of the materials they need. This could mean searching on the Internet, scanning photos or objects, taking pictures, downloading music, etc. They want all the material with them as they sit down to assemble the story. If they don't have all the media, then they end up interrupting the creative flow every time they have to go get something. It is very frustrating.

**Phase II. Production**. Students sit at the computer with their completed story, narrative and media and assemble the story. Generally this involves:

1. **Use movie maker, storybird, screencast-o-matic + Powerpoint or prezi.** There are plenty of programs that can be used to create a digital story, but these are common, easy to use, and free. Come to office hours for more help
2. **Add the narrative to their story**. Students first add their recorded narrative to their stories. If they have used iMovie or MovieMaker to create the narrative - an approach that is quite commonly done - then they have already completed this step.
3. **Add visual media to the narrative.** Students add pictures, scanned images, etc. to support the narrative. They could also add animation and/or video, but doing so typically adds a level of cost and complexity that is hard to accommodate in an average K-12 classroom.
4. **Add music, sounds, other voices**. Audio information is added.
5. **Mix**. Once all the media elements have been added to the story, students now mix the audio. Above all, they need to make sure that nothing drowns out the narrative. Similarly, they need to make sure that visual information shows for just the length of time they want, in order to support rather than detract from the narrative.
6. **Peer/instructor review?**. Having students show their work in progress can be very helpful. How teachers approach that depends on a number of factors, including class size, structure and the purpose of the storytelling project.

**Phase III. Post-Production**. By this phase, the story is basically done but still in rough form. Typically at this point students do the following:

1. **Add titles.** Students add opening title information, and maybe other titles that appear during the story.
2. **Add background title music?** Up to you.
3. **Add transitions and effects.** iMovie and MovieMaker include many transitions and effects, from common transitions like fading in and out, to bold effects, like making words swirl on the screen. Caution your students to use the fancy stuff sparingly and with purpose and deliberation. The gratuitous use of transitions and effects just distracts story listeners.
4. **Add credits and citations.** Students add credits and citations at the end the story. I provide [fairly detailed information about copyright issues on a companion digital storytelling page](http://www.jasonohler.com/storytelling/storytech.cfm#copyright).

**Peer/instructor Showcase**

**BEFOREHAND: bring to office hours, or show to your peers since these are good ways ways. Use the progress check rubric (March 10-17)** to get input before the final mix.

1. **Final mix, polishing.** Students make any final modifications to their stories - the traditional "one last pass."
2. **Export the final file.** Students need to create a movie file that can be seen independently of the software they used to create it. This is generally referred to as "exporting the file." As of 2007, in iMovie the command is either Share or Export; in MovieMaker, select "Save Movie" from the File menu.

**Phase IV. Performance, distribution**. The story is done and is ready to be performed and/or distributed. Ways to do this include:

1. **UPLOAD or save in on-line outside of Blackboard**
2. **Showing in-class, in-school, in-community.** Have a showing for other teachers and students within your school or school district. Also consider a public showing at a school board meeting or other community event.