

2: PERSONAL NARRATIVE AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Hanging on the door of room 173 is a black-and-white photograph of the door to my grandmother's house. Students regularly question its placement and content, as most of the doors down the hall are either covered with construction paper (so others cannot see in) or covered with flyers announcing school events. I reply simply, "It's an invitation."

Sometimes I am prompted to share a story about that door, about why the photo shows it half-open and how that makes me feel secure and welcome. Sometimes I ask students what they see in the door, asking them to consider how it might be a part of what they know. No matter what story I share, it is paired with an opening (much like that door), invoking and evoking students' stories and welcoming them into our shared learning space.

Stories abound in this classroom, allowing students to see themselves in our work, to participate within our literacy community and, often, to take huge strides in defining themselves as readers and writers. In a culturally diverse, socioeconomically challenged suburban school ten minutes from Washington, D.C., the mix of students is rich and staggering. The thirty-seven students in period two, English 11, were the first to tell me that they were not readers or writers—and their test scores and student files reflected several years of that thinking. I countered that they were. Each time they picked up a manual, jumped online to instant message (IM) a friend, or got on the Metro and headed into town, they were readers. Culturally, there is an argument that holds that the competition for reading as a source of stories has become more intense. It proposes that students are captivated by the Internet, television, film, and video games *instead* of reading. I believe that these media support and *promote* reading. These students are intensely literate but not in the ways that might allow them to score well on tests.

Early into our first semester, I “reinvented” a unit on personal narrative, working to evoke students’ stories, extend their literacy skills, and provide a multimedia environment that allowed them to work not only as readers and writers but also as directors, artists, programmers, screenwriters, and designers. As a culminating activity, students created a digital story that conveyed a 3–5 minute personal narrative in response to a significant question and experience of each student’s choosing. The project took two weeks of instructional time and required the development of a sustained community.

It was not an easy sell. Students lacked trust, rarely having space within a classroom that was their own. They all read below level and were accustomed to worksheets as opposed to invitations to be heard and seen. We started with the reality Adrienne Rich describes, “When someone with the authority of a teacher describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing” (1979, p. 36). Each student had to look into the mirror and see through different eyes.

Rochelle’s story spoke to and about her mother. Their relationship was strained and had led to Rochelle’s rebellion in the form of many piercings and detentions. Rochelle was a student with tremendous capacity who just did not see where to start. We began this project in late September, and it was the first piece of writing that Rochelle submitted. Expecting our routine struggle when it came time to collect her work, I was stunned when Rochelle entered class, submitted a rather tattered first draft of her script, and smiled.

In what grew into a three-and-a-half-minute digital story, Rochelle’s voice told the story of her mother riding a streamer-laden pink bike down the dirt paths that were the initial construction sites for I-270. The images rotated from black-and-white shots of her mother at age fifteen to those of a grinning, six-year-old Rochelle in brilliant color, riding her own bike with her mother trailing close behind. Taking full advantage of images that spoke, she balanced the use of her voice with moments where silence allowed the image to communicate. She closed with the words, “I would have liked to have known the girl with the wind in her hair.”

This was Rochelle’s entrance into our interpretive community. Not every day was a great day, but several marked triumphs in her work as a reader and a writer. She explained in a journal entry late in the year, “We started class with where I was instead of starting with everything I didn’t know and because of that, I’m starting to know where to begin.” That same day, Rochelle placed a sign underneath the image of my grandmother’s door. It read, “Enter Here.”

WHAT IS DIGITAL STORYTELLING?

In an early class discussion exploring the compelling qualities and nature of storytelling, Rochelle shared that “stories capture our voices telling our own stories.” This is just what a digital story is—the melding of human voice and personal narrative, using technologies only as tools that bring these elements together into one text. Digital storytelling grew out of the work of Dana Atchley, Joe Lambert, and the Center for Digital Storytelling at University of California at Berkeley in 1993. Joe often explains in the workshops held at the center that “the digital story is more like film for the rest of us.” Good stories require honesty and simplicity, not the skills of a great auteur or a techie. My students saw our work as the work of the storyteller, with the computer working only as a tool for eventual publication and sharing. Or, as Elliot explained in his journal, “we aren’t learning a technology; we’re using a technology to learn.”

Lambert identifies seven elements of effective digital stories, which helped to fuel much of our work: Point of View, Dramatic Question, Emotional Content, Voice, Soundtrack, Pacing and Economy (Lambert 2002). I like to group these elements, focusing on their use and importance “during writing” and “during construction” elements (see Table 2.1).

Point (of View)

Students’ digital stories need to be built from their own experience and understanding, using “I” as opposed to a more distant third person point of view. However, I place “of view” in parentheses in an attempt to signal the importance of the “point” of the story. Good stories take us somewhere. Every part of the story works toward a “point” which evokes some response from the audience. This focus is useful for student writers, especially those in my classroom who often wrote for pages without knowing where they were going.

TABLE 2.1: ELEMENTS OF A DIGITAL STORY

| DURING WRITING | DURING CONSTRUCTION |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Point (of view) Dramatic Question Emotional Content Voice | Soundtrack Pacing Economy |

Dramatic Question and Emotional Content

Effective stories do more than work toward a point. Narratives that lead the reader to become invested typically pursue a compelling question that evokes interest and commitment, and sets the reader up for the eventual “payoff” at

the close of the story. This was extremely challenging for my student writers who would either bury the question too deeply in the story or whose story structure fished around for a question. Only through revision and story circle activities (discussed later in this chapter) did students begin to shape their stories into a text that rewarded and surprised their readers and viewers.

Voice

This class of thirty-seven had several “unheard” and “unseen” students. They might enter the classroom, submit work, and leave at the sound of the bell without participating in discussion, group assignments, or any task that asked for their voices. The process of digital storytelling required that students exercise their voices as writers and as readers, sharing their drafts in a story circle that aimed at eliciting helpful, reflective peer responses to the text when read aloud. Further, students must absolutely record themselves narrating their scripts—a process that paralyzed even my most vocal students. They are the storytellers, reading (not reciting) their own words, their own ideas, and their own stories. Although it’s the largest obstacle at the start of the process, it’s often the most empowering element of the experience. As Ron explained in a reflective exit ticket after we viewed his class’s stories, “Reading stories made me hear things in my voice. Seeing stories let me hear people in this class in a whole other way.”

Soundtrack

We address soundtrack late in the construction process, emphasizing to students that there is a power to placing instrumental music under their voices and images as the story unfolds. I’m continually surprised by students’ skills when it comes to selecting and cuing music that allows them to take their intended meaning to a different, more powerful level. Where a colleague of mine argues that this makes the story a music video, students find that sound adds complexity and depth to the narrative. This also provides students with a lesson in music copyright that in an era of file sharing and Kazaa.com seems more and more pressing.

Pacing

I remember many childhood hours sitting up with my father, whose stories would unfold with a rhythm and energy that led me to cling to each word he

spoke. That's the art of the storyteller, made even more essential as students work within a digital space to compile and communicate their stories. In my notes from a digital storytelling workshop led by the team at the Center for Digital Storytelling, I have written in all caps and underlined the phrase "GOOD STORIES BREATHE." Pacing is all about letting that happen. For student writers, this means pulling back or racing forward when the story calls for it, as opposed to when the time limit approaches.

Economy

I think that this is one of the most essential elements when students are working with digital multimedia. Too often, we're led to add effects and bells and whistles because the tool is capable of it or because it helps us to replicate the visual onslaught that we see on MTV or even CNN. I argue to students that the effective digital story uses only a few images, a few words, and even fewer special effects to clearly and powerfully communicate intended meaning. Here, students need to work to include only what's necessary as opposed to what's possible.

INTO THE CLASSROOM

Getting Started: Prewriting, Reading and Thinking Tasks

In designing the unit, I quickly realized that there were several significant ideas that I needed to introduce and discuss with students if I were to build on their skills and capacities as readers and writers. First, we needed to define what it meant to be literate. To Joscisa and Sahar, it meant "the ability to read and to write what you're thinking." Niko countered that literacy was "all the stuff that we don't learn in school that allows us to be who we are." Tamyra offered that "literacy is about knowing what tool I need to use to share my thoughts." Together, we agreed that literacy requires knowing how and when to use "the most powerful cultural tools for making, communicating and conveying meaning" (Wilhelm, Baker, and Dube 2001, p. 12). Today, that includes online technologies, communication technologies and tools (like email or IM), and software tools that allow us to visualize thinking and represent it in multiple ways.

Our second big idea targeted story. Students shared and discussed family stories, books from their childhood (though only three of thirty-seven students

had actual “artifacts” to share), and stories about their experiences in school. As I crafted the lessons and activities, I was driven by Langer’s idea that “all literature—the stories we read and those we tell—provides us with a way to imagine human potential” (Langer 1995, p. 5). Students were sounding their stories and balancing them against the authors we read (Frank McCourt, Anne Lamott, Alice Walker, Maxine Hong Kingston, Lucy Grealy, Gary Soto, and others) in an attempt to validate, understand, and problematize their experiences. Bruner writes that “language is a way of sorting out one’s thoughts about things” (1986, p. 74), and story provided an entrance into writing for those students who wrestled with putting the right words together to communicate exactly what they wanted to express.

As writers, students were actively working as readers of their written text and the writing of their peers, and exercising new muscles as they took on the published texts in our curriculum. We know that students are more motivated when they are given the choice and the latitude to include texts that interest them (Ivey 2000). In working with story and personal narrative, these formerly unmotivated readers dove into the bookcases and read actively in the library after school.

Equipped with strategies we had modeled and explored in class, students struggled to find entrances but did not quit. As Lashawna put it, “writing that’s real and that matters” challenged student comprehension in the sense that Harvey means when she writes that “comprehension means that readers think not only about what they are reading but what they are learning” (2000, p. 9). Students read not to glean what the color green meant in a text but what significance that story had to their own understanding and experience. Reading, both in and outside of the classroom, is about much more than simply absorbing words on a page. As Gallas writes, “to read a text with understanding and insight, we must move inside a text, pulling our life along with us and incorporating the text and our lives into a new understanding of the world” (2003, p. 20). The combination of story and student interest allowed me to challenge students to demonstrate that they knew what to do with texts beyond just saying the words.

I felt the need to consider our district’s idea of “rigor,” knowing that the task would be challenged by some in the building who argued that student choice was a curricular luxury when working with lower-level students or that technology integration was about play as opposed to learning. Rigor is about challenging students to learn in new, evocative, and meaningful ways. Myers

writes that “learning is not about transmitting or acquiring knowledge . . . it’s about transformation” (1996, p. 27). Students were not reading for information. They were reading to relate, to connect, and to understand. Further, this was a task steeped in connections, a requirement for learning, as Dyson explains:

Children must link new material to old material, with its familiar frames of relationships and purposes; without such linkages they cannot approach the new with any sense of agency, with any sense at all. Old information must be recontextualized within and transferred to new systems of relationships and uses . . . as new material enters into and transforms old relational rhythms, and old material reverberates in the new. (1999, p. 162)

New understanding shaped and drove a revision of former ideas and practices. Content and writing drove this assignment. The technology was simply a delivery tool that ultimately provided a hook to tap into students’ existing visual and technological literacies.

THE TASK AT HAND: CRAFTING THE STORY

Nuts and Bolts

In a district curriculum packed with required tasks designed to address local and state standards, we had two weeks (five instructional ninety-minute blocks) to work with personal narrative, excite student reading, incite student writing, and lead them through the process of creating a finished digital story. We didn’t know whether or not we could realistically bring it all together and filled each class, lunch, and after-school period to the brim. As long as students were willing to work, I was willing to make the tools available. This was not a school or a classroom with abundant technological tools. We worked with five outdated iMac computers (two in our classroom and three housed next door), running an early version of iMovie. (Newer operating systems come with digital video editors bundled in—iMovie in OSX for Mac and Windows MovieMaker in Windows XP.) We learned iMovie together as I raided the shelves of the local bookstore for manuals and guidebooks and as students navigated their way through the somewhat intuitive interface. Further, this was an experience that required me to work as a coach, recognizing that the development of the

MANAGING THE TECHNOLOGY

Many of the teachers that I work with are blocked by their lack of technology skills. In working with this unit, I, too, was essentially learning alongside my students. We used digital video editing tools because we could—but PowerPoint has similar capacity to fuse images alongside sound.

What's essential here isn't that you are the master of the technology tools. Yes, this should not be the very first time that you open the software. You need at least some familiarity with the basic functions of the tool (opening documents, saving materials, working with a timeline) in order to help students troubleshoot and structure the time spent in the classroom. And yes, you might need to provide students with some reference materials. However, there is an advantage in that the software is extremely intuitive and students bring a visual acuity that will surprise you.

students' work would be a dynamic, non-prescribed process. Our two weeks played out as follows:

Step One: Prewriting (What do I have to say?)

Students worked through several stages of construction after a reading scramble and full-class discussion on the differences between personal narrative and memoir. First, they needed to identify specific stories “worth telling.” This was initially problematic, as students struggled against the voice of an internal editor who argued that their stories were not worth sharing. Several exercises helped:

1. Students drew a detailed map of the neighborhood in which they grew up. This included the layout of the streets, homes of friends and strange neighbors, location of school, location of local hangouts, and so forth (Roorbach 1998, pp. 21–34).
2. In a journal exercise, students were asked to respond to the following: “Think of your favorite childhood coat. What is in your pockets?”
3. In another journal exercise, students were asked to respond to the following: “Write about a decisive moment (one where you ended up heading in an unanticipated direction) in your life.”

The results were surprising. Students understood that the personal narrative needed to be a window

into a moment, a self-contained story set in one particular place and time. They chose to tell rich stories that were about discovery and understanding. Dahabo, an immigrant from Somalia, wrote the story of the first day she wore pants, explaining what freedom and America meant to her. Niko wrote about seeking his first job, wanting security and possibility, or, to use his words, “the ceiling of America and the floor of Greece, my family's home.” Though they were all locked in on the logistics of writing, each student submitted a draft of between one and one-and-a-half pages, double-spaced. The length was short

but required packed, precise language and provided an entrance for struggling writers who were intimidated by the blank page. The trick was to develop voice while exercising economy.

Step Two: Artifact Search

Students' digital stories were built from an assortment of still images. I had assumed that this would be the simplest part of the process, but it was actually the most difficult. Students simply did not have photos to use. We used a Parent-Teacher-Student Association mini-grant to purchase disposable cameras that students could take home to photograph the places and objects that would help to tell their stories. The media center specialist also allowed students to check out the school digital camera (a three-year-old Sony Mavica acquired with "Apples for Students" money). Students also worked with print images, scanning or creating a "copy" by photographing each with the digital camera. This was a quick process, as most student movies used less than fifteen images.

Step Three: Storyboarding

Students were required to map on paper each image, technique, and element of their story by constructing a storyboard. This visual story had two dimensions: chronology—what happens and when—and interaction—how audio information interacts with the images (Lambert 2002, p. 61). Using a template supplied by the Center for Digital Storytelling, students arranged and rearranged images that were listed on sticky notes. The storyboard also required the writer to consider how effects, transitions, and sound would be sequenced. I conferenced with students, reviewing the finished storyboard and using it as an "entrance ticket" to use a classroom computer. Students worked at different paces and the instructional time was scaffolded and individualized, allowing some students to work with the assigned reading while others worked to construct their stories.

Step Four: The Story Circle

Students needed a place in which they could discuss what they were getting right in their work and those areas that needed additional development. They needed a place in which they could practice the pacing and sound of reading aloud. They also needed a place to take some risks, hear their own stories, and work as a community to develop ideas further. To that end, we introduced the

QUESTIONS TO SPUR THE CONVERSATION

As skilled as we are at leading discussions, leading student writers to develop their digital stories can be a challenge. What follows are questions that have proven to be effective in helping student writers to consider and develop their scripts:

- *Why tell this story now?*
- *Consider the images that you're going to use within the story. Are there places where they can do the heavier narrative work, and you can pull back on your words?*
- *Who is your intended audience?*
- *What do you see happening on the screen at this point in the story? How do the images and the words work together?*
- *What's the most important moment (or even sentence) in the script? What happens if we just start there?*

“story circle” as a time for sharing drafts, developing ideas, and supporting one another through the work of expressing a compelling story.

Because of the size of the class, we broke into three circles, each of which was facilitated by an English teacher from the school who was on a planning period. I circulated between circles in order to support, add comments, and get a sense of the evolving conversations and energy. Initially, we worked with volunteers, asking them to read the script aloud and then respond to comments which were all framed with the prompt “If this were my story, I . . .” Students, at first, needed to be drawn into the community, through their eyes and their voices. However, once the second or third script was read, a momentum began to unfold and the room filled with comments and ideas. Teacher-facilitators reached a point where we needed to monitor feedback only to ensure we didn’t overwhelm student readers with the volume of responses. Readers took notes on their drafts and worked to implement suggestions in later revisions.

Step Five: Revising a Script

Storyboarding required students to examine their scripts closely. All needed some degree of rewriting and “reseeing.” I set up revision stations around the classroom to provide prompts and writing exercises

designed to assist in revision. As Heard explains, revision “involves changing the meaning, content, structure or style of a piece of writing rather than the more surface changes that editing demands” (2003, p. 1). To that end, students’ work centered on bringing voice to their pieces or on helping the events come alive for the viewer-reader. Each student completed at least two revision exercises, providing different entrances into their writing and more fuel for our daily conferences.

Option 1: Highlighting

Students marked up their scripts, highlighting all of the action in

green and all of the reflection in pink. Too much pink indicated too much preaching. Too much green indicated that the writer was telling an anecdote with no implications.

Option 2: Timeline

Students rearranged the order of events, making them either more or less chronological (Heard 2003, p. 99).

Option 3: Exploding Sentences

There are two possible plans of attack here. First, writers could work to explode the sentence into a slow-motion retelling (helpful to the text that will be read aloud). Or, writers could think of the explosion as more of a magnifying glass, focusing in on pin-pointed, targeted specifics (Heard 2003, pp. 32–38).

The last stage is for students to transfer their script to a readable form as most of these strategies lead drafts to be written on, crossed out, and packed with marginal notes. Students are shocked when I hand out 4×6 cards and insist that the script be no longer than the front of the card. Again, we're aiming for precision within an end product that should not screen for any longer than two to three minutes. The 4×6 card helps students to focus, to weed out phrases that don't take the reader anywhere, and to home in on the question and eventual payoff.

INTO THE COMPUTER LAB

The Tools

In order to build their digital stories, students needed to import or digitize their photos, add transitions and special effects to how they played, record narration, add a soundtrack, and burn their finished work to a CD. Students had limited time using the classroom computers but were able to come in after or before school, use computers in the media center, or work from home or the community library. Because several students had better tools at home, they built from home, bringing in work to meet my “checkpoints” on their progress.

Again, we worked with iMovie and Windows MovieMaker as our primary tools. Some students elected to work with Adobe Premiere, much higher-end software with both a high threshold and a high ceiling. All of those students had

prior exposure to working with Premiere in a digital art course offered during the same semester. This project could, again, be completed using multimedia software such as PowerPoint, but the filmic nature of the final products generated using the digital video editing software provided both a hook and a polished end-product. It led students to voice their confidence in working as both writers and readers in developing compelling visual, textual stories.

Central to the construction was a rule that emphasized content over presentation, setting the balance at 80 percent content and 20 percent effect. Without the rule, students were caught up in zooms, pans, and special effects that showed knowledge of the tool but little control of the story. By putting the story first, students were selective about effects, choosing those that drove the story farther as opposed to those that mimicked what might be seen in films or television. I continually found myself reminding students that one of the essential elements of digital storytelling is economy.

When the Technology Fails and Other Lessons Learned . . .

The downside of working with technology in classroom instruction is its lack of dependability. Digital video tools such as iMovie and Windows MovieMaker are new and still a bit “glitchy.” As we worked through the last two days of the project, we were plagued with crashing machines and temperamental equipment. (Students insisted the problems must have been the result of the hamsters inside of our CPU’s taking a break instead of running on their wheels to provide power.) The good news is that even in the short amount of time since we completed this project, each of the software programs has developed substantial free updates, and our school server got a little more robust. Some hints and tips to help you along the way:

1. Save early. Save often.

Construction of the story when working with digital video tools like iMovie or MovieMaker can move rapidly. Given that, students (and teachers) need to be reminded to continually save their work, especially as earlier versions of the software (which are most prevalent in our schools) tend to be less stable. All it takes is a locked computer at the close of the class period for a student to fall significantly behind. Students were often amused by my calls to save their work. I quite literally kept an egg timer ticking throughout the period, in an attempt to remind students to save every four minutes.

This isn't a golden rule in terms of the time allocated, but it is essential that students save each time they make some significant changes to their work. Then, in the event of a crash, they have something to return to.

2. Follow the specific order of the steps—write, plan, discuss, sequence images, add narration, adjust timing, add effects/transitions, and add soundtrack.

If students are instructed to follow the specific sequence of steps, there are two central advantages. One, teachers can easily track individual progress using a chart placed on a blackboard or classroom whiteboard. Second, students will maximize instructional and lab time when the tasks are well-framed and specific. The order is designed to tap into the organic process of storytelling as well as to work with some of the “quirks” that exist in different digital video tools.

3. Require “entrance tickets” before entering the computer lab.

Those classrooms where students complete script drafts and storyboards apart from computers have been more efficient and have yielded more powerful, more focused student stories. The script and storyboard provide students with a space in which to pre-plan how images will appear on the screen, and encourage precision, allowing images to speak and ultimately do heavier narrative work. Students who haven't had these steps completed before sitting down at a computer regularly lose significant amounts of lab time as they lack a focused plan or even materials to reference.

4. Maintain backup copies of student work.

This is another “best practice” when working with any technology. Never save in one place when you can save in two. File sizes of digital videos, even those that are close to two minutes in length, can get large. I asked students to save their files to CD's as well as their school network folders. That way, each could work from any machine and there was a backup copy in case a file did not want to open or be read.

5. Narrate in small “chunks.”

Recording narration sentence by sentence allows students maximum control over the pacing of their work. Files are simpler to manage.

Inevitably, students who choose to record the script as one large file end up regularly re-recording as it only takes one mispronounced or even deleted word to require beginning again.

6. Focus on the writing/reading elements of the project.

This project is full with the practice of what good readers and writers do in working with and crafting print text. To that end, when glitches occur, instead of seeing them as time lost, focus on the time gained as an opportunity to further refine and develop the script and/or storyboard. Don't let the technology get in the way of the story.

7. Copyright matters.

Students regularly want to use images gathered from online sources or music downloaded from online repositories. Where this immediately puts materials into students' hands, teachers absolutely must emphasize the need to work within copyright law. I require that students and teachers use their own original images and royalty-free soundtracks. Raising the subject requires that you spend time teaching about what is and is not legal to use.

SCREENING, VIEWING AND DISCUSSING . . .

At the close of our work, we screened the finished products, complete with popcorn and student-written feedback. Shared responses celebrated students' attempts to reflectively add meaning to past events and often requested more detail. Others explored technical suggestions for both the presentation and the content, using cinematic terms or referring to texts that we had read. These early conversations marked the start of a collaborative interpretive community that was a safe, supportive structure for their talk and interaction as readers and as writers.

ENDING POINTS

Kylene Beers writes in *When Kids Can't Read* that she "wants to teach kids how to struggle successfully with a text" (2002, p. 16). I firmly believe that

engaging readers is my critical teaching responsibility. While I was working here to lead students to really struggle with published personal narratives, my goals were much bigger. As students were not satisfied with only reading someone else's words or experiences, I wanted students to struggle with their words and experiences, to work as writers and readers, and to reinvent their understanding of how they functioned within that role. I wanted them to tap into robust communication tools to tell their story verbally, visually, and powerfully. By allowing each student to see that "all ways of seeing have their silences and their exuberances" (Myers 1996, p. 134), I hoped to create a starting point from which they would see value in their work as scholars.

As with all terms and instructional strategies, there has been "term drift" when it comes to what digital storytelling entails. To some, it's using PowerPoint to create a multimedia, five-paragraph essay. To others, it's using iMovie to capture class events like a Mock Trial or a symposium of student presentations. In my classroom, I've "reinvented" the model to include "digital memory boxes" (collections of readers' artifacts gathered while reading a class novel) or visual literacy narratives (see Chapter 3). Whatever reinvention we use, there are some essential elements that my students argue must be in place: **images**, **narration/voice**, and **motion**. Some tools allow the product to be filmic, and others, like PowerPoint, lead to a slide show product. Again, we aren't concerned about the tools used but the process and understanding gained. Elliot wrote in his journal that "what makes this different is that it's somewhere between a movie and a slideshow but that it allows my thoughts and voice to be on the screen with the images that I see in my head."

At the end of our first "go" at using digital storytelling in the classroom, more students had completed the project than any other assignment we'd undertaken thus far. More important (and more important than the data that the school system hungered for), students were listening, reading, writing, and seeing the class in a different way. I won't say that they were all engaged and raring to go, but Rochelle, who previously did little more than inhabit her seat in class, was writing more regularly and eager to jump into class discussion of the texts that we read. Sahar and Joscisa came into class talking about English class. And the annotated list of "read books" that Elliott kept in the front of his class journal began to grow. For us, this project was a very real starting point.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Center for Digital Storytelling

www.storycenter.org

BBC Digital Storytelling Project

www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales/

PBS—Telling a Story

www.pbs.org/civilwar/cwimages/tellingStory/flash.html