

Biographical Stories and Poems

Students can use technology to enhance their poetry by illustrating it with images, movies, music, photos, and narration. iWork and iLife enrich the experience by enabling students to create professional-looking digital media collections to publish their work, allowing them to go beyond the textual aspects of writing as they incorporate their own digital media elements.

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Curriculum area: Language Arts

Grade level: Middle School

Project Overview

In this project, students gather biographical stories from family members, practice oral storytelling skills, and tell their stories to an audience of peers. They then condense the themes of their stories into ten-line poems, which they showcase in a digital class portfolio using Keynote.

Project Steps

- 1 Have the class study the elements of storytelling and oral presentations. Model storytelling techniques for the class.
- 2 Have each student collect a biographical story from a family member about events from that person's life. The stories can be humorous or serious.
- 3 Students should prepare to tell their stories orally, without a script and without memorizing them. Student partners can rehearse and practice the techniques of eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, voice, and so on.
- 4 Have students tell their stories in front of the class. They should use rubrics to evaluate each other's stories.
- 5 Have students condense their stories into poems of ten lines that capture the stories' themes. Since each poem is limited in length, students must choose the most important elements for their poetry.
- 6 Ask a team of students to create a class "poem template" master slide in Keynote so that all the students' poetry pages have the same design. The template should be made available to all students. The template should have a poem border, text box for a poem, place for title, student name and grade, and placeholders for graphics and digital photos students add.

- 7 Have each student type his or her poem into the text box in the template. They should add images such as digital photos, scanned photos, or images located on the Internet. The photos might be of family vacation locations, famous places, or well-known landmarks students' families have visited. Students can also add to their slides movies, narration, and sound bites or quotes from family members and friends.

Students can use iMovie HD to create movies of themselves telling their stories or reading their poetry and then add those movies to their slides. Students should use digital cameras to take photos of themselves for the introductory "cover" slide and their individual slides. Students can create audio files in GarageBand or iMovie HD as they read poems aloud or describe photos or movies they import. They can also import sounds or background music from iTunes or GarageBand that can be played automatically on each slide.

- 8 Students should combine their individual Keynote slides into a class collection of poetry.
- 9 Share the poetry collection presentation with the whole class and copy it to CDs to share with students' families.

Extension: Students can use Pages to create a class publication of their poetry, which can be in the form of a brochure, newsletter, class booklet, digital portfolio, or advertisement. Students should choose a template for the type of document they are creating.

Outcomes

After completing this project, students will be able to:

- Create biographical stories from true events in a family member's life
- Learn and use oral presentation and storytelling techniques
- Condense stories to ten-line poems, summarizing their themes
- Work as part of a group to complete a group digital media project

Technology Skills

After completing this project, students will be able to:

- Work collaboratively to create a class collection of poetry using digital media
- Use Keynote to create slides with text, images, movies, and other elements
- Use applications such as iMovie HD, iTunes, iPhoto, GarageBand, and Keynote to create a digital media poetry collection
- Use technology to design, develop, and publish their work

Preparation and Duration

Days 1-3: You model storytelling techniques, teach terms, do practice exercises with students; students harvest stories from family members and begin to prepare outline (homework).

Days 4-7: Students practice oral presentation techniques with a partner; practice stories at home; tell stories in front of class; class audience grades with rubrics.

Days 8-11: Students compress theme of stories into 10-line poems; type poems in the Keynote template on computers for class collections.

Days 12-14: Students work in groups; locate Internet resources; create multimedia collections of poetry in Keynote, and combine individual slides into one class poetry collection presentation.

Assessment Suggestions

- Student audience members can use teacher-created rubrics as each student tells his or her biographical story. The rubrics can contain categories such as eye contact, voice, gestures, preparation, interpretation, audience response, and organization.
- For group work, checklists can be used to assign individual tasks and monitor progress.
- Final class projects can be assessed by you, the teacher, noting both individual and group contributions.
- Students can use rubrics to do self assessment and peer evaluation.

Tools and Resources

Internet

- <http://images.google.com>
- http://yahooligans.com/Around_the_World
Photos of nature scenes
- http://yahooligans.com/Sports_and_Recreation
- http://yahooligans.com/Arts_and_Entertainment/Music
Pictures of sports, hobbies, music, books, clubs, and so on
- <http://digital.nypl.org/mmpco/browse.cfm?trg=folder>
Images from the large collection found in the New York City Library
- <http://www.50states.com/>
- <http://images.google.com/images?q=states&ie=ISO-8859-I&hl=en>
Images of the fifty states
- <http://www.apple.com/education/iwork>
iWork in the Classroom
- <http://www.apple.com/support/keynote>
Keynote Support and Resources
- <http://www.apple.com/education/ilife>
iLife in the Classroom
- <http://www.apple.com/education/ichat>
iChat AV and iSight in the Classroom

Tools

Macintosh computers, digital video cameras (optional), digital cameras, scanner (optional), Keynote, iMovie HD, iPhoto, iTunes, GarageBand (optional)

Prerequisite Skills

Before beginning this project, students should have the following skills:

- Basic computer skills, such as accessing files, saving, and copying and pasting
- A beginning knowledge of Keynote
- Using any of the iLife applications each student will use
- Using peripherals—digital cameras, scanners, and so on
- Using the Internet to do searches

Technology Tips

- More proficient students can create the class templates, assist other students with peripherals and software, and help assemble the final collection.
- The master slide template that students create can be made available to the rest of the class on a classroom webpage or via a .Mac account.