

Telling Stories with Video



The English language arts, often conceived of as reading, writing, speaking, listening, performing, and thinking, are shifting in response to emerging technologies and the new literacies they inspire. As everyday literacy practices outside the classroom change rapidly, students enter the English language arts classroom literate in multiple ways, yet the curricula they experience often remain focused on printed texts.

Students engage in 21st-century technologies without our guidance or instruction, and they are reading, writing, and producing dynamic multimodal and multimedia texts for a variety of defined audiences, purposes, and contexts that are authentic to them. They have access to a variety of tools that allow them to create tangible relevant outcomes.

Emerging technologies and the new literacies they enable provide new modes and media for communication and, likewise, create new opportunities and challenges for teaching the English language arts today. Digital video is one particularly dynamic technology with compelling implications for the English language arts classroom.

Although older forms of video have been used to varying degrees in education, digital video enters the English language arts classroom as a new media form and a new tool for multimodal composition. Research still is emerging when it comes to examining the role of digital video in the English language arts classroom, but we know that students learn best when they use

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multiliteracies to read and compose in new ways.

In addition, integrating visual images with written text, as done in most digital stories and multimodal compositions, enhances and accelerates comprehension. Meaning here is not necessarily additive but more layered, interactive, and complex. As such, text and pictures often convey more meaning when juxtaposed. This effect is further intensified with digital video, where motion, design, and interactivity are added to the mix.

Composing with digital video—creating digital stories, book trailers, music videos, screencasts, and more—requires us to examine how we produce, distribute, invent, explore, persuade, and create impact with texts written for specific audiences. Doing so alongside participatory media such as Web 2.0 tools allows us to leverage audience participation in ways that yield authentic collaboration and feedback. Examples might include the following:

- Students can watch the film version of Ambrose Bierce's short story, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," on YouTube and post reflections

there to engage in discussion with peers from across the state or around the world.

- Students can analyze peers' poetry performances from a distance using streaming digital video coupled with a blog or wiki for posting feedback, analysis, and evaluation.
- Students can create two- to three-minute video book trailers that persuade viewers to read a text. Students must read and reread a text, develop a storyboard of images depicting the content of the book, and write a script that advances the message within the trailer.

Students writing with multimodal tools, such as digital video editors, should use them selectively, intentionally, and in ways that leverage the unique capacities of the tools and media to accomplish a specific goal. As in print-centric writing tasks, the principles of choice and form matter, as does the larger context in which the writing is situated. To be fully literate, students must know how to use tools, but more important, they must also know which forms of literacy will best support their purpose for a given audience and a specific context.

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