

digital storytelling course

**Common Good First
A Digital Storytelling Training Module (for Academics)**

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Rhodes University Community Engagement

In 2016, a project led by Glasgow Caledonian University in Scotland, was given a considerable grant from the European Union to create a network of people and groups trying to make a difference to their communities. These social innovators would be identified, initially, in South Africa and then across the world in order to be connected by a website which would showcase their projects to each other and to universities and potential sponsors and funders.

The initiative is called Common Good First and it has partners from twelve higher education institutions from Europe and South Africa. This group has, over the three years of the project, delivered a website - **commongoodfirst.com** - which will host a growing network of social impact projects, using easy-to-complete profiles in the style of Facebook or LinkedIn sites. These will be uploaded by the social innovators themselves, following a range of digital literacy classes, and feature text and images about their projects.

In some instances, Universities will work with community partners to create digital stories, using this specially-developed module to help groups take part in digital story circles.

Our goal is that this project - and the digital storytelling tools we will launch across South Africa during the course of 2019 - will create an equal voice for all storytellers so that engaging with each other's narratives and initiatives will help us work together to create a more just and prosperous community.

INTRODUCTION

Using digital storytelling as an academic tool can facilitate communication between academics and the broader public, further contributing to building a common human story that encompasses varied perspectives and unique lived experiences. This focus on human interconnectedness is vital in creating a society that celebrates diversity and overcomes struggles through communication, compassion and creativity. Furthermore, as a category of e-learning, digital storytelling can potentially improve digital literacy amongst learners and improve critical thinking and problem-solving.

The storytelling process is simple - everybody has life experiences that have moulded them into who they are, taught them valuable lessons and helped them connect with other people (or hindered their ability to connect with other people). Storytelling is simply exploring these experiences and retelling them in a creative and technological-driven way.

Sharing stories helps people learn from others' experiences, forms bonds between people who have experienced similar situations or feelings and builds social cohesion between community partners who have gone through the emotional process of finding, constructing and sharing their stories. Moreover, simply listening to someone's story is a constructive part of the process as this elicits empathy and confidence to create our own stories. Adapting the storytelling process to academic spaces involves integrating disciplinary knowledge with personal reflection.

WHAT IS DIGITAL STORYTELLING?

THE WORLD OF STORYTELLING

Storytelling simply refers to the act of relaying details of events and experiences to others. Storytellers can process and make sense of their environments or situations by creating fictional stories and characters or simply by relaying real-life events. Storytelling has an endless list of possible functions – it can be therapeutic for the storyteller and a means of processing experiences; it can provide useful information to a wider community and it can simply form part of social cohesion and sharing of experiences.

Storytelling has developed as mankind has progressed through the ages. Africa has a strong oral tradition – relaying stories verbally and passing these stories down through generations. These stories were then able to be written down as mankind developed writing, first etched in stone then recorded on papyrus. When the printing press developed, these stories could be mass produced and disseminated far and wide. Soon, radio developed, and the human voice could be broadcast to remote areas across the world. Then film developed, and later television. Now, over the past few decades, digital technologies have joined their analogue counterparts and the internet can be used to share stories.

Thus, the 'digital' in 'digital storytelling' refers to the medium that stories are created in – photographs, videos and audio. Digital storytelling is then simply using these nifty new gadgets and tools that have become readily available to us as we delve deeper into the digital information age and as more and more people join social networks.

Characterising Digital Stories

Digital stories are typically easy to digest pieces that can be shared online. The way people communicate is changing. Many internet users value short snippets of information and appreciate visually stimulating content. We like short videos that don't require too much data to load, that we can send to our friends and families and that we can watch while standing in line at the bank. When sharing content online, a single media artefact can be shared thousands of times and can reach millions of people.

For social innovators, digital stories are a useful way of showing the community, potential volunteers, everybody involved and donors, the progressive work that is being done. Because of these useful and innovative aspects of digital storytelling, it has become an increasingly popular genre used by a range of industries. Digital storytelling sets itself apart from digital journalism and marketing in that it is a personal and reflexive process. The focus and intention are not to be viewed by millions of people and obtain thousands of likes, nor is it about producing a high-quality product – it is simply about using the resources you have access to and expressing your voice while adding to a network of voices that together can sing harmoniously and loud enough to demand attention and social change.

To help solidify your understanding of what digital stories are, watch a few examples (shown during the workshop) and take note of the following characteristics and distinguishing features:

- Short length (typically 2-5 minutes)
- Combination of multimedia sources
- Use of text
- Still images mixed with video
- Added music, narration and sound effects
- Theme and structure of stories

Who Can Make Digital Stories?

For community project leaders and non-government organisations, digital storytelling can be a means of exploring and processing traumatic experiences. It can also be an effective way of showcasing work to donors and sponsors. For the community, digital stories can be a means of self-expression and a way of voicing concerns and struggles. Digital storytelling also has an educational role and is often used as a methodology in academia and education encouraging students to reflect upon their academic journeys.

Why Make Digital Stories?

- To connect people
- To make sense of complex ideas and concepts (such as slave history in South Africa or violence against homosexuals)
- As an emotional release
- To express issues and feelings weighing on one's shoulders
- To re-frame suffering and empower survivors
- To make sense of the environment

The digital divide and literacy in South Africa

If you have grown up using technologies and have consistently been exposed to the developments in the technological world, learning to create digital stories may come to you intuitively. South Africa has an alarming digital divide, that is, the gap between those who have access to digital technology and those who do not is quite significant. Digital storytelling can be an effective way of upskilling communities that have a limited familiarity with digital technology with sought-after digital competencies. This is particularly useful for school learners and university students. Amongst young school learners, digital storytelling may be a first step in levelling the digital playing field, preparing learners for encounters with technology in their careers or higher education. As such, digital storytelling is becoming a valuable and increasingly used medium for academic assessment.



DIGITAL STORYTELLING AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

An increasing trend towards the implementation of digital storytelling as an educational tool emerged from United States' universities around the late 1990s, establishing digital storytelling as an academic method with a unique capacity to improve learner's critical capacity, creativity and engagement with learning material (Robin 2019). Beyond encouraging students to focus on the meaningful aspects of lessons rather than on the examinable details (Beck & Wyzard 2019), digital storytelling encourages learners to apply what they learn in academic settings to their real-life experiences. By adopting a personal reflexive approach to the course material, the scope of the material that the learners engage with increases (Beck & Wyzard 2019).

Although self-reflection by students may not provide hard evidence of an ability to comprehend and process learning materials in the way that traditional assessments may, digital storytelling and other reflective projects improves conventional methods of writing by showing students the transferable skills of structuring and composing a body of writing through the intricate storytelling process (Oppermann 2007). Thus, in the academic arena, digital storytelling marks a space where personal experience and expert or disciplinary knowledge intersect in a meaningful way. Creating a digital story is not only a descriptive process but involves analysis and interpretation (Oppermann 2007). The stories created not only speak to individual experience but also to the broader cultural, political and economic landscape that give rise to social circumstances. Moreover, storytelling involves contributing prior knowledge or knowledge gleaned through the academic process to the personal reflection process, thereby stimulating cognitive resources (McDrury & Alterio 2003).

Digital storytelling as a learning tool helps improve students' ability to problem solve and to think critically while using technology in a creative way (Yamaç & Ulusoy 2017). Therefore, digital storytelling is effective in basic education (primary and secondary) as well as in higher education. Using non-traditional educational strategies improves learners' eagerness and interest in the course. In turn, it helps develop emotional intelligence and communication skills (Aktas & Yurt 2017). Rather than being passive recipients of knowledge, learners are required to contemplate and interpret throughout the digital storytelling process (Chowdhury 2016).

**“Digital storytelling develops not only the traditional literacy skills such as reading, writing, speaking and communication but also new literacy skills that are highly required in multimedia environments”
(Yamaç & Ulusoy 2017).**

Although it has been posited that digital storytelling focusses too strongly on the learner's personal experience and not sufficiently on academic content, the relatively new medium can be used in a way that allows personal experience to solidify understanding of academic content, making digital storytelling as an e-learning tool applicable to higher education settings as well. For example, setting assessments that require the student to position themselves at the centre of academic content can encourage the learner to adopt a personal interest in the learning material as well as to understand how academic content feeds into the broader community, for example, a history curriculum centred on slavery in South Africa can not only produce interesting personal narratives but can also help students understand a society that has been affected by historical ills and is still recovering. By investigating the phenomena from a personal perspective, students can see how their studies and education can contribute to restructuring an aspect of society. Digital storytelling is thus valuable to service learning projects.

REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

Reflective journals encourage learners to be contemplative rather than passive recipients (Chowdhury 2016). Digital storytelling can be an interesting and stimulating take on academic reflective journals. Rather than producing a written report based on an ongoing reflective journal throughout a period of engagement with a community group (such as working in a community clinic for psychology students or teaching youth for education students), students can alternatively produce a digital story.

Why students should keep reflective journals (Bobo 2019):

- Personal record of learning experiences
- To record and reflect on observations in the field
- To contextualise experiences
- To challenge preconceived assumptions

Steps for reflection (Bobo 2019):

Students should consider their environment, the people in the space and the intended outcome of their project when recording observations. Reflection is a layered process and has "three aspects: returning to experience, attending to feelings and evaluating experience" (Boase 2013).

Observations: What did you notice about the space you were engaging with? Observations often omit a much deeper analysis of the situation and simply speak to the first encounter with a space. For example, a student may record that they saw a young child crying in the street. At this stage, the student will most likely not know who the child is, why they are upset and whether seeing crying children is a regular occurrence.

Questions: Students should then ask questions to further probe their observations. For example, why was the child crying? Who upset it, why was the action upsetting and what does this say about children in the space.

Speculations: After considering what the student saw and questioning what they were seeing, students can further speculate about the situation. For example, the student saw a group of older learners playing nearby the crying child and perhaps the child was upset that it could not join in the older kids. Perhaps your assumptions about the child were wrong or you had preconceived ideas about the child's situation and completely misunderstood its concerns.

Self-awareness: Now that you have considered the situation from an outside perspective, place yourself in the middle of it. What upset me when I was younger? As an adult, how can I help the child? What could solve the problem in the future?

Integration of theory and ideas: Having observed and analysed the situation, the student can now integrate their academic content into their real-life experience. What has the student learnt about group dynamics amongst children, for example? Perhaps this could speak to the student's observation of the crying child.

Critique: Now, the student can form an opinion or report on the situation, possibly in the form of a digital story. The digital story or reflective journal will not only provide personal insight into an individual's observations but will also provide expert (academic) insight into the scenario.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN ACTION

Developing a digital story can be an individual or a group exercise. Doing it alone defeats the object of sharing the process so that the stories and the production of the stories benefit all. To accomplish the training objectives of this module, we will start with inviting a group of participants to become a 'story circle'. Since the earliest times, people have gathered in a circle around a fire to share stories. It is an activity that generates a sense of community, providing a space where people can share their stories and experiences. In the conversations that take place, it is possible, to draw out the similarities that connect us, and the differences that can be better understood and overcome. Your facilitator will help you to do this. Your story circle will become a private group, ideally consisting of about 6-10 people – and you should feel comfortable that you are in a 'circle of friends' – like-minded people who will share your journey to finding and producing your digital story. Some people may feel vulnerable and intimidated sharing their stories, and so it is always useful to do some 'icebreaker' or 'warming up' activities that will get people to know each other in a relaxed and non-threatening way.

In your story circle, you will come up with an idea for your digital story. You will then follow a process where you research your idea and come up with ideas to tell your story. You will then learn how to make a storyboard and write a basic script for your story. You will then need to gather your images and audio for before you can begin to produce your digital story. Your facilitator will assist you to put it all together to produce your digital story and then you can share the story with your story circle, and others if you wish to.

The next stage of the process will be to get feedback from your storycircle members on your story. The process of giving and receiving feedback is covered in this module. Remember to be kind to others about their stories - they have 'bared their souls' to you with their stories, and they may be feeling vulnerable and emotional about sharing with you. Feedback on your story will help you to reflect on how you have told your story. You may wish to make some changes, or you may be happy with the result.

So - the process you are about to embark on looks something like this :

Form your story circle

Come up with an idea for your story

Research and explore your story idea

Make a storyboard and write a script for your story

Gather/create your images, footage and audio for your story

Put it all together using available technology

Share your story

Get feedback on your story and reflect - make changes if necessary

Help other members of your story circle with feedback and reflection

REPEAT THE PROCESS AND MAKE ANOTHER STORY!

Invite the participants of the story circle to share the following exercises so that you can 'warm up' – the aim is to build connections and understanding, and start to develop a bond with each other.

'Break the ice' or 'warm up'?

Short group exercises to help participants in a workshop or training exercise to get to know each other are traditionally called 'icebreakers'. But this suggests that there is an 'icy' relationship between the participants to start with! Let's call our exercise, a 'warming up' exercise – one that brings a warmth of sharing and bonding to the story circle!



UBUNTU

“Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, ‘Yu, u nobunto’; ‘Hey so-and-so has ubuntu.’ Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, ‘My humanity is inextricably bound up in yours.’ We belong in a bundle of life.”

No Future Without Forgiveness
by Desmond Tutu Doubleday 1999



1. FACE PICTURES

Using Ubuntu as a point of reflection, discuss the idea

“I am because we are”

1. Ask members of the story circle to reflect on what this means to them and what it means for the work they do.
2. As part of this reflection, ask participants to share stories and examples from their own life experience in which Ubuntu manifested itself.
3. Examine the picture of Nelson Mandela in which some of his facial features are represented by words that are relevant to his life.

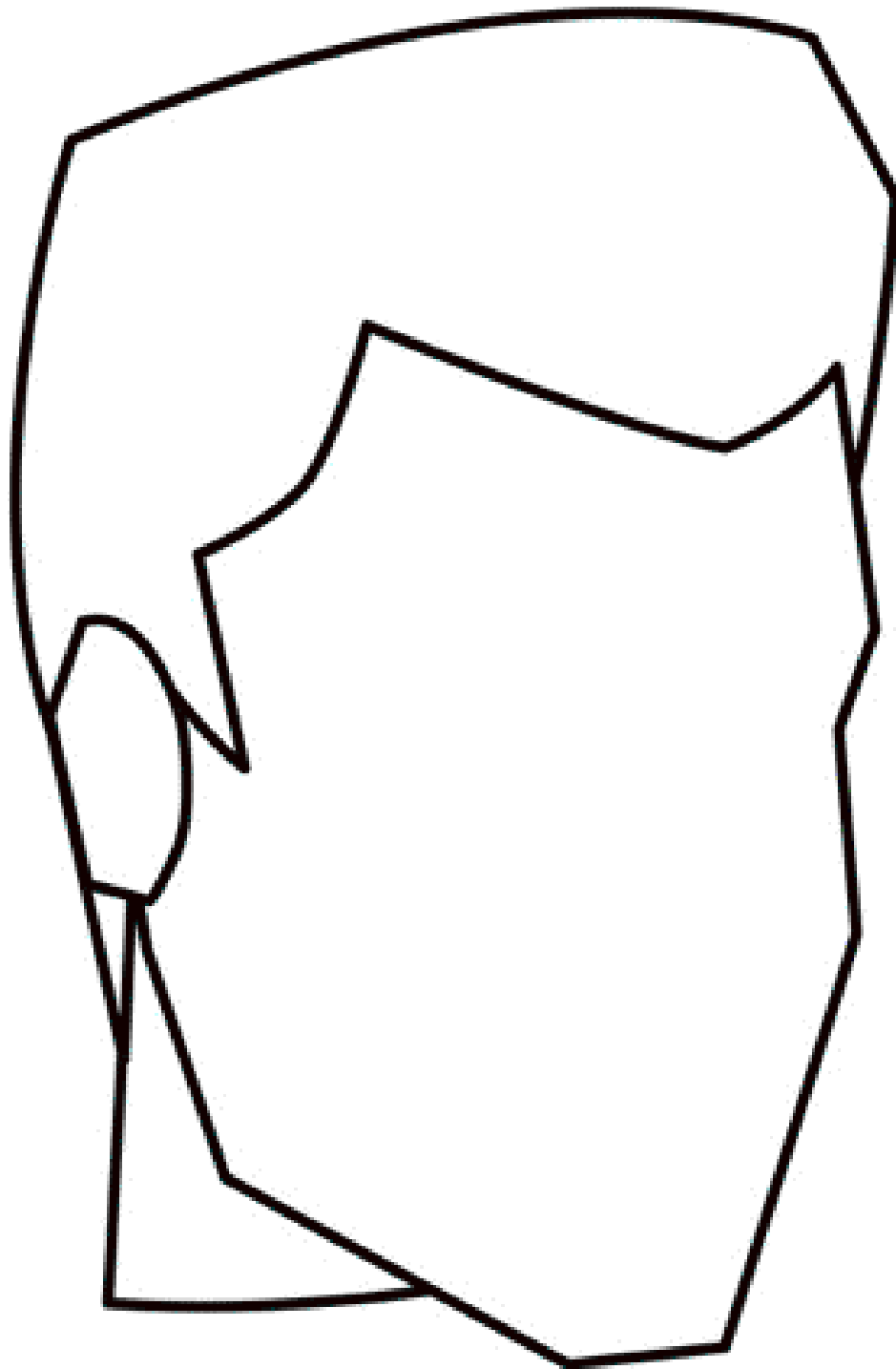


Now, take some quiet time now to fill in 'your' face using the face shapes below, with words to represent some of the life events that shaped your life. What does your face look like? What are the events, emotions, challenges, experiences that form your face picture?

Share your face picture with your story circle. Remember – a story circle is like a circle of friends, and so all should agree to be respectful of each other's stories, and to keep confidentiality. That's what friends do for each other!

Draw your own face shape if these two are not anything like you!





GETTING-TO-KNOW-YOU BINGO

Here is another exercise that you can use to get to know the members of your story circle.

It is based on the game Bingo. You will move around your story circle and find out from participants if any of the blocks on the Bingo card are true about their lives. Tick off the blocks as you find someone who answers “yes” to the statement. The first participants to get a full line across the page (i.e. one complete straight line) can shout ‘BINGO’. By the time that this happens, you are likely to learn a lot about your fellow story circle members!

B	I	N	G	O
I come from a single parent family	I have been overseas	I have my driver's license	I can speak 4 or more languages	I love animals
I speak three languages	I was brought up by a grandparent	I have bank account	I am a vegetarian	I have experienced discrimination because of my race
I own a car	I love chocolate	FREE SPACE	I have had a cellphone stolen from me	I enjoy reading
I have never been in love	I can ride a bicycle	I own a camera	My parents are divorced	I can play a musical instrument
I have experienced discrimination because of my religion	I do not drink alcohol	I have personally met a celebrity	I have children of my own	I use Facebook
I have been in a car accident	I love hamburgers	I enjoy dancing	I would be lost without my cellphone	I have a younger brother/sister

BEST PRACTICE TO DIGITAL STORYTELLING

“Guidelines for an ethical practice of digital storytelling for teaching and learning, research and community engagement in higher education” has recently been written. This document is available on request, if you would like to thoroughly engage with this topic.

Once you have completed the exercises that will help you to get to know your fellow story circle members, you will hopefully feel that you have made new friends. It is important that all the members of the story circle understand the journey that you will take together – one where you will share stories that involve your thoughts, feelings, experiences, successes, disappointments, hopes, dreams, resentments, pleasures, pain, victories and defeats. You will expect your story circle members to listen to your feedback with respect – just as you will show respect for their stories.

It is important that you all AGREE to respect each other's feedback, and to treat each other with dignity and an attitude of support. Some story circle members may experience a significant degree of emotional pain and turmoil when they share their stories. If they feel that the story circle is a 'safe space' for them to express experiences that may be painful, they will be honest and open. They will need understanding and support. All the story circle members may be emotionally affected by the stories they hear. Your facilitator may even choose to assist them with additional therapy and counselling, depending on the seriousness of the emotional upset. However, in the first instance, the story circle should feel safe, non-judgmental and supportive.

Equally, in a diverse group of participants, there may be cultural differences which could become contentious and emotional. Your facilitator will attempt to mediate any differences to arrive at respectful and sensitive understandings. However, it is up to each story circle member to be sensitive to and tolerant of cultural diversity. The old biblical adage: “Do unto others as you would have done unto you” applies strongly. You will expect sensitivity and tolerance from your story circle, and equally, it will be expected of you to show such an approach.

Making a digital story means that you will be recording your story for others to see. If your story shares a painful experience which may implicate others in wrongdoing, or document evidence of such wrongdoing – participants need to remember the initial objective of this project – for common good. Digital stories produced as result of this module are aimed at social innovation and upliftment. Sharing painful experiences may be a part of arriving at such objectives – however, the motives for sharing such pain with others should not be as incitement to violence or antisocial behaviour, nor should it be to shame individuals or communities.

Sharing pain may have unintended consequences, but your facilitator will guide all participants towards the intentions of the project, and will ask you to be honest but responsible, authentic but dignified.

So you will need to ask these two questions of the story that you want to make:

- Will my story be for the “common good”?
(i.e. will it be beneficial and positive for those who see it?)
- Will my story cause no harm?
(i.e. will it cause no hurt to others or damage to communities?)

GUIDE TO ETHICS FOR DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Digital storytelling is a powerful tool for social innovation, e-learning and personal expression. Because of the personal nature of such stories, there are ethical concerns to bear in mind when creating and assessing digital stories. This booklet discusses some of these issues and how to ethically and legally gather footage of subjects in digital stories. It further addresses some ethical issues that facilitators of digital storytelling workshops may need to consider for the wellbeing of participants. Finally, it addresses some of the concerns relating to digital storytelling as a method of assessment in academic spaces.

When producing media content (digital stories, images, video or podcasts) about community engagement with vulnerable groups or children, the subjects discussed and portrayed in your project should be represented in a way that is empowering and fair. Being sensitive to your surroundings, the feelings, safety and comfort of those who are participating in your project is essential.

ETHICS FOR DIGITAL STORYTELLING WORKSHOPS

During the storytelling process, if you feel overwhelmed (as many people do) feel free to express your feelings to the group or to the facilitators. Conversely, if another member of the group is grappling with sensitive issues, allow them sufficient space to explore their feelings. Note that this is not a counselling session and qualified counsellors may not be present. It may be a beneficial idea to have a qualified counsellor present or co-facilitating the story circle process. For your interest, find an interesting article at the back of this guide, Resistance as method: unhappiness, group feeling, and the limits of participation in a digital storytelling workshop

Who are 'vulnerable' groups?

When we talk about vulnerable groups, we are typically talking about adults who are at risk or lacks basic life skills or needs often due to individual health issues or systemic social and institutional oppression. Generally, vulnerable groups include:

- Women and girls
- Refugees/immigrants
- Migrant workers
- HIV positive people/ people with AIDS
- Survivors of sexual violence
- Survivors of traumatic experiences
- The LGBTQI community

Children in the media

Representation of children has previously tended to subordinate children. Keep this in mind when creating stories about or involving children. Try and bring out their voices and perspectives rather than positioning them as dependant and helpless.

It is illegal to record footage of children without consent from the parents or guardians. There are ways to include portrayals of children without exposing their identities (discussed later).

Consent and masking identity

It is important to always get consent from subjects featured in your work. This is particularly true for portrayals of vulnerable groups, people who may find themselves in legal trouble from being recorded or people who could be threatened or put at risk for divulging information.

There are ways to include portrayals of children and people who do not wish to be seen on film without exposing their identities (this can also work if you are shy of being on camera).

- Enshroud the subject in shadows
- Take a photo from obscure angles
- Blur or censure faces
- Use stock images or a dramatization in addition to the original voice.

Privacy Laws

In South Africa, it is legal to take a photograph of a person in a public space without needing consent. Public spaces include parks, streets, concerts. Additionally, you can take a photograph of private spaces as seen from a public domain. In other words, you can take a photo of a person's flat if you are standing from the street. Note that not all spaces where people gather public are really public – shopping malls, bars, offices of non-government organisations and educational institutions may be privately owned (malls often have explicit no photography signs). Also keep in mind that members of the public do have rights in public areas where privacy is assumed or to be expected, such as changing rooms, public restrooms or medical institutions.

'Fair Use'

Contrary to privacy laws, it is generally acceptable to use footage of people for news, art, satire and educational purposes. In many cases, politicians are exempt from rights to privacy as they are public figures.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Digital storytelling does not easily allow for anonymity due its reflective nature (affects anonymity of the creator) and its focus on content (affects anonymity of data). The creators of stories can omit or conceal their identity, but this creates the potential of exploitation, particularly where skewed power dynamics exist, for example between researcher and the research subject.

Even though participants can opt not to share their stories beyond the workshop group, it should be noted that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. This should be upfront and clear to participants before they decide on what story they would like to share. The identities of parties (present or spoken about) implicated in illegal or otherwise sensitive situations cannot be guaranteed protection.

It is also necessary to inform students of the legal ramifications of naming people in their stories without consent.

COPYRIGHT LAWS

When sourcing footage for your story, ensure that you don't break copyright laws. Most of the time, your story won't be used to make money, so you are less likely to find yourself in legal trouble. However, to be on the safe side and to create a more complete project, you can use copyright free music and images which can be found from a number of online sources. Any images that are found on public social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are free to use (if the user has made the image public in their settings, including profile photos).

US organisation, Creative Commons is a platform to share and develop a collection of media available to use under Creative Commons licenses.

ETHICS FOR ACADEMIA

Digital storytelling participants must be willing to engage with the process. This makes using the method in educational spaces difficult as students often can't negotiate the form of their assessments. There is also a distinct power dynamic between students and educators which must be considered, particularly if the digital storytelling process is facilitated by the educator themselves. Furthermore, it is recommended that story circles do not exceed ten participants as this allows for direct interaction and eases time limitations, yet university (particularly undergraduate) and school classes are typically much larger groups.

The digital storytelling process may be counterproductive to people with post-traumatic stress disorders. Because of the size of the groups and the dynamic of educator-student (particularly on a tertiary level) and the sensitivity of the issue, it may not be possible to note all students' wellbeing and position. In many cases, expressing unwillingness to participate may be a source of anxiety in itself. A means of addressing this may be setting a topic or limiting the scope of what should be discussed in the story. The downside to this is that it places limitations on free expression.

Academics using digital storytelling for educational purposes must then ask the following questions:

- Will a digital story be the only form of assessment or will there be a second option available for unwilling students, such as a reflective essay?
- Will the educator facilitate the workshops and story circle process or will a outside party or co-facilitator be brought in?
- What support is provided to students who have an emotional response to the process? It may be helpful to have a counsellor co-facilitate. It is also valuable to note the wellbeing and willingness of the facilitator - are they comfortable listening to stories without feeling triggered?
- Are educators or facilitators sufficiently skilled to guide students through the process?
- Can students withdraw consent at any time during the process without fear of compromising academic performance?
- What are the boundaries of acceptable discussion?
- Will the process or the final story or both be assessed?
- What are the resource constraints and literacy levels of students? Is this equal amongst students and will access to equipment such as smart phones and laptops need to be provided?

CONSENT

It is important for you to understand that your story belongs to you – and that you can decide who sees it and what happens to it. While the objective of this project, “for common good” may broadly be to produce stories that will influence social innovation and upliftment, your personal story may be YOUR way of dealing with your own journey, and you may not want to share your story widely. It is your decision to make, and you should be aware of the extent to which you are willing to let your story be viewed. It is advisable to come to an agreement with your facilitators about this. The best way is for you both to sign a consent form which can look something like this:

Common Good First Digital Story Consent Form

My name is: _____

and the name of my digital story is: _____

Tick boxes

- I agree that my story can be used online in appropriate forums, such as The Common Good Social Innovation Platform
- I would like my story to remain confidential
- I agree that my story be shared with my story circle members
- I agree that my story can be shared in projects and communities where it may contribute to social innovation and upliftment.
- I am happy for my story to be used in future digital storytelling workshops to help others discover their stories.
- I agree that my story can be used only under the following conditions:

- The content of this consent form has been explained to me by the project facilitators and I understand the implications of signing below.
- I can withdraw or change my conditions of consent at any time by signing a new consent agreement with the project.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Contact details: _____

Remember – your story belongs to YOU!

Other important ethical considerations :

- If you use pictures of other people in your story, whether they be friends or family, it is a good idea to ask for their consent first before they appear publicly. This is especially true of children, especially at a time of concern about potential harm from exposure on social media platforms.
- If you plan to reveal information (through either visuals or narration) about someone that could be construed as private, speak to them about it first or ask them to read the parts of your narration which refer to them to make sure you have your facts straight, and they are not being caused emotional harm. While family members are unlikely to sue you should they feel a bit aggrieved by your representation, other members of society could see fit to take legal action if they feel harmed.
- And also, any information you include and publish about yourself or anyone else should not be incriminating! If you want to show a picture of how taking drugs was a bad part of your past, don't be tempted to show yourself or someone else taking drugs for your story, as this could have many harmful and legal consequences.



1. Scope, nature and history of digital storytelling

DEFINING DIGITAL STORYTELLING

What is digital storytelling?

We all know that 'digital' refers to the electronic and computerized technology that is all around us in the modern world, and 'storytelling' is the act of relating events or incidents, whether fictional or real, to hold the attention of others. So what exactly is 'digital storytelling'? And what about 'digital storytelling' makes it worth knowing about?

Digital storytelling is essentially a way of combining 'storytelling' as we know it, with the kinds of media that are available to us, with a view to sharing short, personal aspects of your life story online. A digital story is a story told by combining still photos, video footage, text, audio narration, music and sound effects into a short 'movie' that can be shared using the internet. Digital stories are often personal accounts of significant happenings in someone's life, or about some interesting point of learning or discovery.

But why? Why would you want to tell people stories about your life?

The saying goes, 'everyone has a story to tell'. The truth is that:

- we seldom tell our stories in such a way that we can share them with people beyond our immediate friends and family,
- we seldom have the opportunity to tell our stories in such a way that people can learn from our experiences,
- we seldom tell our stories in such a way that they can be stored for the future.

Digital storytelling is a way in which we can share personal stories that may have significance for others. The format of digital stories – short visual 'snacks' that can be viewed on phones or computers, make it an ideal medium to share stories that can inform and instruct. The fact that digital stories can be produced without sophisticated equipment, lengthy training and long experience on the part of the storyteller – makes it accessible to many people who have precious stories that can be captured for the benefit of others.

Digital storytelling is not a new communication format. It's been around for about 20 years, but with the advent of the smartphone and tablets, and the rising use of social media, the audiences for digital stories has grown. A story that catches the attention of viewers can be shared thousands of times in the matter of minutes, and therefore the impact of a digital story can be extensive. It can spark dialogue, build understanding, change mindsets.

**The saying goes,
"Everyone has a story to tell".**

And so, what may have started as short, low-tech efforts by amateur filmmakers to share their stories, has now become a 'genre' – a form of communication that is being harnessed by educators, trainers, healthcare workers, politicians and communicators. But, digital stories remain a very personal affair. A digital story is not meant to be a training video, or a 'how-to' guide. Its intention is more reflective, more contemplative, more personal. The production of a digital story doesn't have to be a lonely journey where you fiddle with your cell phone and hope that your effort is vaguely viewable! The production of a digital story in a group where you are encouraged and assisted to find your story, and then supported to bring that story to life using the resources that are available to you is in itself a personal journey of discovery and transformation.

The nature of digital storytelling is very personal to the maker of each story. The final product is as important as the process by which the digital story is made - the journey that we take to find the story we want to tell, and then how we give it form. The process can affect us as much as our story might affect those that we share it with.

The best way to understand what digital storytelling is all about, is to watch some examples. It is important to note the following characteristics and features of the stories :

- The length
- The combination of multimedia sources for the images and the soundtrack
- The use of text
- The use of still images mixed with video images
- The use of music, narration and sound effects
- The theme or topic of the stories
- How the story starts, develops and ends
- Who are the people making these digital stories

Watch the following examples of digital stories :

<https://tinyurl.com/yyw4bgpw>

<https://tinyurl.com/y5evwrpj>

<https://tinyurl.com/yxgj7baq>

<https://tinyurl.com/y58tnwh7>

<https://tinyurl.com/y2ecxwfe>

<https://tinyurl.com/yxcua7hd>

<https://tinyurl.com/y5c8xvp8>

<https://tinyurl.com/y2dvwjwo>



ASSESSING DIGITAL STORIES

Because digital storytelling is a relatively new academic discipline, there is still a lot of room for creativity in terms of finding a means of assessment and examination that assesses the niche requirements of a digital storytelling project. Two strands of assessment should be considered, that is, assessing the final creative product and secondly, evaluating the digital storytelling and reflexive process.

• ASSESSING THE FINAL PRODUCT

Some educators may opt to assess the end-product rather than the process. For this approach, evidence of the storytelling process can be assessed through the final story. A combination of Moon's (1999) and McDrury & Alterio's (2002) evaluation criteria can provide a framework for assessing final digital stories. In this approach, digital stories have value as a final product because a well-produced story will contribute to the overall source of academic knowledge and encourage further participation in alternative assessment. It can, however, affect the integrity of the story making process if students are more concerned with producing a quality end-product in lieu of engaging with the deep and authentic storytelling process. If using this approach, educators would need to take digital literacy and access into consideration. Some lecturers suggest that benchmarks for quality should be implemented to ensure production value (Boase 2013).

**“I suppose you could equate this to writing a book – doing the research, thinking about the content, working out your approach and so on. The last thing you would want to do is to publish it badly, with spelling mistakes, poor description, etc.”
(Simon Turner in Boase 2013)**

To assess the final product, it may be useful to have familiarity with media grammar, that is, the aspects of a media product that is well-constructed and complies with general media production values. For many academics interested in using digital storytelling as an assessment tool, this digital competency may be a challenge. Nevertheless, a simple rubric can act as a means of assessing stories (Ohler 2019). You can find an example at the end of this guide Appendix (pp.65)

Images

- Is the image clear and focused?
- Is the image well-lit?
- Is it appropriately composed and framed?
- Appropriate use of images?
- Supportive and logical image changes?
- Appropriate shooting angle?

Audio

- Is the audio clear?
- Is it well-mixed and varied where appropriate?
- Is the voice/narration well-paced and use and inflection?
- Appropriate (legal) music choices
- Editing, Transitions, and Titling
- Seamless transitions and appropriate effects
- Clear titles/text/subtitles
- Clear citations/credits

• ASSESSING THE STORYTELLING PROCESS

Alternatively, educators can opt to assess students' progression through the storytelling process instead of focusing on a final product. Educators can assess how students worked in groups (perhaps even through peer assessment), research skills, planning and structuring of a narrative, language, clarity and technical proficiency (Boase 2013). The assessment framework developed by Jason Ohler (2019) assesses almost every aspect of the complex storytelling process. The development process involved in digital storytelling is similar to that of other assessments (Boase 2013).

Possible Evaluation Criteria (Ohler 2019)

This comprehensive list can easily be adapted to suit the requirements of the assessment:

Story: Assess the strength of the written story similarly to how one would assess any narrative assignment.

Project planning: Did the student plan the project using storyboards, a script etc.?

Media development process: Did the student follow or apply the production process?

Research: Is the story well-researched?

Content understanding: Does the student display comprehension of the academic learning material?

Assignment criteria: Is the story under five minutes long, show evidence of personal reflection and does it combine multimedia elements as per assignment instructions?

Writing: Does the student's written script and planning show evidence of quality writing?

Originality, voice, creativity: Assess how strongly the student's voice comes across and the originality of the story.

Economy: Was the story told using a condensed format effectively? Could narration be reduced to images or text overlay in some instances? Could the video have been shorter? Flow, organization and pacing: Was the story well-organised and coherent? Was the climax too soon or omitted? Was the story easy to follow?

Presentation and performance: How did the student share or distribute the story? If shared on social media was there an appropriate social lead or blurb? Did the description speak to the target audience? Was there an attempt to engage with a broader community?

Sense of audience: Did the story appeal to a targeted audience? Was the storyteller sensitive to the audience?

Media application: Was appropriate images or audio used well?

Media grammar: Does the story work as a media product? Does it comply to the generally accepted traits of a media product, that is, steady video, clear sound, clear images etc. Citations, permission: Does the student have permission to use all footage included, has the student represented children ethically or obtained consent? Has copyright-free footage been used?

Problem solving and innovation: Did the student use critical thinking to solve problems that arose, such as, creative sourcing of footage, overcoming limited digital skills, using equipment available, for example, a cell phone instead of a computer/camera.

The history of storytelling and the rise of digital storytelling

STORIES, STORIES, STORIES!

Think about your first experience of storytelling. Was it your mother or father telling you a children's story, at bedtime? Was it a movie that you watched on television? Was it a story told to you by a friend? Or a story being told in the classroom at school?

Let's look at the evolution of storytelling and how it has been a constant preoccupation of humans since the earliest times. Where did storytelling begin?

Stories have been used to preserve and pass down knowledge for generations. The earliest stories can be found in cave paintings, from a time before humans could write. Ancient cave paintings predominantly portray animals, probably because hunting animals was a preoccupation of prehistoric hunter-gatherer communities. It is not clear whether cave paintings were used for decoration, or to pass on information, but they have certainly provided modern historians with many clues about the existence of ancient peoples - they tell the stories of ancient existence.

Before the development of writing, stories were passed on verbally. One can imagine the tales of good hunting and heroic exploits that were shared around fires and at mealtimes. These stories were essentially memorized by children and adults alike, and passed on to each generation. Sometimes, stories changed over the years as people added their own interpretations. Many stories were based on actual happenings, but as the years went by, they became folk tales that were adapted as the storytellers changed. But stories were an important way of remembering the happenings of communities - the journeys, the good times and the bad, the personalities, the losses and the gains. Stories became the memorial of the times.

Oral traditions - the telling of stories through word of mouth, sometimes using songs, chants, poetry, music and acting, to groups of people - is present in cultures all across the world.

Oral African storytelling has even attracted its own descriptor, "orature" - a combination of 'oral' and 'literature'. While 'literature' is most often associated with the written word, there can be little doubt that oral stories, passed on through the spoken word, are equally important in terms of their content - epics tales, folklore, proverbs and songs. However, they need communities to survive. If communities no longer value the oral tradition - the stories can be lost.



With the development of writing, humans were able to record their stories, first on stone tablets and later on papyrus scrolls. Once pen and paper became common, everyone was able to write and record their own stories. Typewriters made writing even easier, and faster. Of course, the invention of the printing press in the early 1500s profoundly changed storytelling, as books became easy to reproduce and so stories could be shared with large numbers of people.

Stories have been used to preserve and pass down knowledge for generations.

Newspapers and magazines gave easy access to all the stories of the day. Early word processors, and then computers meant that writing could be edited easily, and everyone was able to write their stories.

The advent of radio meant that people could listen to stories, even if they were not able to read. And movies and eventually television meant that stories became visual - people could see and hear the stories. Television meant that people could enjoy stories in the comfort of their homes. But, up until recently, the stories that we have enjoyed in the form of novels, movies, television plays, at the theatre, art, and many other mediums, have been "made for us" - produced by writers, movie directors, artists.

With the introduction of the Internet - EVERYTHING changed! From this point on, everyone is able to tell their own stories and share them widely - using blogs, YouTube, websites and social media. Creating digital stories and posting them on the Internet is an effective way of sharing them with people all over the world. Anyone with a smart phone, tablet or computer, linked to the Internet is able to view digital stories. With technology that has become accessible and easy to use, it is possible for anyone to produce and share their stories.

The age of digital storytelling is here!

WHO MAKES DIGITAL STORIES AND WHY?

Digital stories are used extensively in education and training environments, where students are able to record their journeys through their own learning. They can make up fictitious stories, or the story can be an authentic reflection of their experiences. Either way, both the student and the teacher can come to a deeper understanding of the learning process. This can only benefit teaching and learning.

Digital storytelling is also used extensively on social media - short personal stories that can be shared over and over again, featuring ordinary people making sense of the world in their own ways. It can be a form of social advocacy for causes that are close to their hearts.

Digital storytelling to teach history from the personal perspective of historical characters is another use of the genre, especially in museum settings. It is a way of recording social history. It follows that digital storytelling can be used in any developmental setting where individuals or communities are seeking change or processing past happenings. While each story may be intensely personal, the sharing of the story in a community or group impacts the whole, and quite possibly changes the individual's understanding of themselves and the group's understanding of the individual.

Digital stories are increasingly being used by NGOs to showcase their work to donors. The personal stories of recipients of development projects make for powerful reporting, while at the same time giving participants the opportunity to evaluate and contribute to the fundraising and reporting processes.

In short – anyone can make a digital story. However, it is most likely that your first guided digital story will be made within an educational or community setting, where the purpose will be to introduce you to the processes needed to shape your story and produce the story. The associated reflective and contemplative reactions may well be secondary to start with, but will be used by facilitators to encourage further story development, and to inspire deeper personal introspection and sharing. Ultimately, the purpose of telling personal stories is to take someone on a journey that will inspire them to reflect on their own situations, and hopefully to change, and act for the “common good”.

APPROACHES TO STORYTELLING

It is clear that the process of developing a digital story can have multiple aims, both deliberate and unintentional for the storyteller, the viewer and the facilitator/teacher involved in the development of the stories. It is unlikely that inexperienced storytellers have clear ideas of the stories they will eventually tell, once guided through a process – and equally, they will not be able to predict the effect of their stories on viewers. They may well intend to spark certain responses, or trigger particular emotions – but whether their stories succeed in doing so is not guaranteed.

In the event of digital stories used in advertising and branding, the narratives will be carefully crafted by the producers to promote their products. However, in the context of community organisations and NGOs that strive for social innovation, the approach to digital storytelling projects will be to share stories for the ‘public good’ – stories from which others can learn, be empowered, lives can be transformed, behaviours adapted, changes encouraged, understanding advanced. In the context of South African society, which is so fractured from past injustices and present misapprehensions, giving people the opportunity to share their stories with a view to understanding the humanity that binds us can play a critical role in advancing compassion and empathy.

THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Digital stories help to bring people together to share in personal experiences. Listening to, or watching stories is usually a shared experience, and the enjoyment, assessment and analysis of stories gives people the opportunity to interact on a personal level.

Stories help people to understand complex concepts and ideas. We can use stories in a modern day context to tackle hard issues like inequality, gender bias, racism, homophobia, abuse. Stories establish trust between people. Someone who is listening to a story is usually receptive and open to the other person. They will engage their emotions and participate in the narrative if this is required. What better way to get someone's attention?

Digital stories can teach values and re-frame suffering. Stories have been used all over the world for healing and reconciliation. When people are able to share their stories of their hurt and pain, they are often able to start healing. We've seen this with stories of the violence in Northern Ireland, stories of reconciliation from the Rwandan genocide, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

Stories can be a release for people who have been keeping their suffering a secret. How often do we read in magazines of victims of abuse who come forward and say, “I need to tell my story”. Sharing their stories helps them to change their lives, and often their stories



resonate with other abuse victims, giving them courage and strength, and raising awareness and understanding of sensitive issues.

Stories help us to make sense of the world. We've established that stories and storytelling exist across all cultures, and the attraction of humans to stories is universal. It is as if our brains are wired to see stories as patterns in which we find meaning.

Exercise

Choose one of the digital stories offered as examples in this chapter, or find another example if you prefer. Watch the story, and analyse it by focusing on these four questions:

1. Why did this story interest you?
2. Could you identify the beginning, middle and end of the story?
3. Can you describe a dramatic moment and the emotion you felt when you viewed it?
4. In what way has the story moved or changed you?

**The power of storytelling is exactly this:
to bridge the gaps where everything else has crumbled.**

Paolo Coelho

2. Finding your personal story

DIFFERENT KINDS OF STORIES

Some people are bursting with stories while others may feel quite blank about what to tell stories about! In choosing a story, one needs to remember that it doesn't have to be a lengthy exposition - it is a personal expression of something that is important to the storyteller. It could be something that makes the storyteller happy, or sad. It could be something that they have previously found difficult to express, but now they feel empowered to share the story. It could be an accomplishment that they would like to share as an inspiration to others, or a conquering of a skill, or fear, or challenge.

Here are some ideas for stories:

People stories

- a story about someone that is important to you
- a story remembering someone you have lost in your life
- a story of someone who you have loved
- a story about someone who has wronged you
- a story of a relationship
- a story about people that you took action with in your community

Experience stories

- a story to share an experience that has taught you something
- a story told to explain some sad or happy event in your life
- a story about an achievement
- a story about an adventure
- a story about your job and what it means to you
- a story about overcoming a challenge/crisis in your life
- a story about a moment when you understood your own power to make a change
- a story about the place where you live
- a story about a place that you have visited
- a story about your community and its characteristics, features, needs

Time stories

- a story about a particular time in history
- a story about another time in your life
- a story about a future that you would like to have
- a story about what could happen if.....
- a story about what should have happened if only...

STORY STARTERS

When faced with a blank canvas, and a dearth of ideas for the focus of your story, there are a number of easy ways that you can use to help you find a story. These include :

- **making a poster of your life** - a sort of 'road map' from birth to now, showing the big moments, the highs and lows. The poster can be a colourful expression of the happenings in your life, or it can follow a more linear 'timeline' format
- **talk about personal things that are important to you.** These can be pieces of clothing or jewelry, books, memorabilia, ornaments, childhood toys, special foodstuffs - anything that is meaningful and that can form a story that you'd like to share.
- **talk about old photographs.** There is nothing like old photos to stir up ones memories and recollections of past stories. If you do not have any photographs of your past, you can

draw pictures to represent memories from your past, or find pictures in magazines or newspapers that represent memories from your past.

- **make a love/hate list.** By naming the ten things that you love most and the ten things that you hate most, you may find the essence of a story that you'd like to tell.

There are many other ways to source story ideas. However, they all require sharing your thoughts, feelings, memories and discussions with a partner or a group. Take your time - and if necessary, discuss your ideas with your story circle members. You may even want to do some Internet research to establish facts that are relevant to your story.

The creative process does not follow a formula - so take the time and space to think about your story until you come up with an idea that feels exciting and comfortable for you.

Once you have an idea of the story that you would like to tell, it is important to take your idea and refine it by asking yourself some key questions :

1. What is the main topic of my story?
2. What is the main purpose of my story? (i.e. what do I want to achieve with my story?)
3. Who is the intended audience of my story?
4. Is my story interesting and engaging?
5. Do I have all the information I need to tell my story?
6. Is my story logical and coherent? Does it have a storyline – a beginning, a middle and an end?

THE STAR OF THE SHOW - YOU!

You will be telling your story, and even if it is about someone else – this is your personal story about someone else. It will give your point of view, and show your emotions. It will use your voice to narrate the story, and it will feature your visuals and your ideas for a sound track. A personal story does not necessarily have to be about something deep and emotional, or a dark secret about your life. It does however help if your story is heartfelt and genuine. The more believable the story – the more it will attract the attention of viewers, and engage their thoughts, emotions and even actions as a result. It is important therefore to be clear about the message that you want to come through your story.

WRITING A SCRIPT FOR YOUR STORY

Once you've decided on the story that you would like to tell in your digital story, the next step is to write a script for your story. While the visuals for your story are important – if you do not have a coherent script – your story will not succeed in capturing the attention of your viewers. Your story should succeed as a script before it is produced – in other words, your story should sound good before you start to make it look good! You may be tempted to think about the fancy visuals that you plan for your story before getting your script completed, but this will be a mistake. Time taken on drafting, writing, sharing and perfecting your script will vastly improve the quality of your story. Do not expect to get your script done after your first attempt! The secret to a good script is to test it out by reading it to members of your story circle, and then to rewrite it several times until it 'works'. Take the feedback of your story circle members on board, and ask for their suggestions to make your script meaningful.

Remember, your script needs to:

- Be short and simple – aim for about 250- 300 words (time yourself reading your script – is it the right length?)
- Contain the emotion that your story is about
- Have a connection with the visuals that you are planning for your story

- Make sense

Writing the script for your story is possibly the most important planning step in the whole process of making a digital story. There are techniques and tips that can make your script work really well.

The unfolding storytelling process is often said to move through seven stages, which were developed by the Center for Digital Storytelling as a starting point for your digital story journey:

The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling (as developed by the Center for Digital Storytelling)

1. Point of view

Remember that a movie script gives the words to be spoken by the different characters in a story. In your digital story, the main character is likely to be you – talking from your point of view. You will be the narrator, and you will need to take your audience into your confidence. How can you do this?

2. Pose a dramatic question

Pose a dramatic question at the start of your script. A dramatic question is the opening sentence of the story which is used to create tension and an inquiring approach in the minds of your viewers. It is used to draw the viewer into the story – and so it needs to be bold, intriguing, a bit dramatic! Ideally, your story will answer the question, or elaborate on the statement during the course of the story. While the opening sentence can be a question, it can also be a bold statement, like :

“I was seven years old when I first saw a man hit a woman”
 “The day I learnt to read, my life changed completely”
 “I knew from the first moment that it was wrong to be his friend”

Or questions like :

“What would you do if you hadn't eaten in four days?”
 “Why do women always have to carry water in the rural areas?” “Where do you go to escape the one you love?”

3. Establish the Emotional Content that you will associate with your story.

Decide on the serious emotional issues that will come alive in your story and how you will connect your audience with these emotions. You will need to be courageous and honest with your audience to make your story authentic and believable.

4. The gift of your voice – your narration

Your voice and words telling the story, making it personal and intimate . Make each word count. Even make the silence count!

5. The power of sound

The music and sound effects that set the mood for your story.

6. Economy – keep it short and succinct (KISS).

Keeping your story short and simple – with just enough detail to keep the viewer engaged. Use your visuals to say things that words can't say.

7. Pacing – the rhythm of your story

How slowly or quickly you want your story to progress.



MAKING A STORYBOARD – ‘SEE’ AND ‘HEAR’ YOUR STORY!

Once you have decided on the story that you would like to tell in your digital story, it is time to start planning how you will tell your story. For this purpose, we recommend that you make a ‘storyboard’ – a representation on paper of each step of your story. A storyboard will help you to arrange your story into a logical and coherent progression. You can make sure that your story has a clear beginning, middle and conclusion. It will help you to visualize and plan for the resources that you will need to record your visuals.

It is a good idea to take your script, and underline the KEYWORDS and PHRASES that you would like use for visuals. This will give you an idea of the kind of visuals you will need to source – photographs, video clips (which you might need to film some), graphics, interviews, props for photographs – and so on.

A storyboard will help you to plan each scene in your story from a visual perspective, as well as the sound track for your story. It should consists of two columns – one that will show the visuals of your story, and the other that will show the sound aspect. At its most basic, a story board is a table which shows the pictures on the left and your notes on the pictures, sound, music, text and visual effects on the right. Here is a basic example for you to follow. You will have as many rows as there are visual changes in your story. Try to put an approximate time that you envisage the visuals being played so that you can get an idea of the length of your story. Remember, the ideal digital story is between 2 and 3 minutes long. You need to make sure that every second of your story does the job you intend it to!

It’s time to start planning!
Visualize your story.
Hear the soundtrack.

My Storyboard

[On this side, you can roughly draw or stick a photo of what the visuals will be in your story at this point]

Image Description:

Describe the visuals here – is a photo, a video clip, a drawing, text

Sound:

What is the narration / music / sound effect for this visual?

Effects:

Is there text required?

Transition:

How will this visual change to the next one?

Time:

Comments:

Anything else that is relevant for this part of your story

Image Description:

Sound:

Effects:

Transition:

Time:

Comments:

Image Description:

Sound:

Effects:

Transition:

Time:

Comments:

Image Description:

Sound:

Effects:

Transition:

Time:

Comments:

**Total time:
between 2-3 minutes**

EXERCISES TO HELP YOU FIND YOUR STORY

Exercise 1: Story, story, where are you?

Briefly write down 3 THINGS you LOVE about yourself or your skills that you use in community engagement or in your social innovation work.

Briefly write down 3 THINGS you FEAR OR INTENSELY DISLIKE about yourself or your skills that you could use in community engagement or in your social innovation work.

Read them out loud – members of the story circle will choose the most interesting of both lists.

Exercise 2: What's your name?

Use three minutes to think about YOUR story.

Create a short and descriptive title – two sentences max.

Exercise 3: The star exercise

List 5 story topics in three minutes and choose the most likely one.

Write one answer in each point of the star, starting at the top:

- Who are the main characters of the story? Include yourself.
- Where is the story set? It could be in more than one place.
- Think of your story as a mini-movie running in your head. How do you feel at the beginning of the story?
- What happens during the most important moment of the story?
- How does this event (or realization) change your life, or the way you feel about the world?
- In the centre of the star, write the answer to: Why do you want to tell this particular story?

Underneath the star: Write the first paragraph of the story!

The first paragraph of the story:

Who are the main characters of the story?

Where is the story set? Where does the action take place?

How do you feel at the beginning of your story?

What happens during the most important moment of the story?

How does this event (or realization) change your life, or the way you feel about the world?

Why do you want to tell this particular story?

Exercise 4: Free flow writing towards a script.

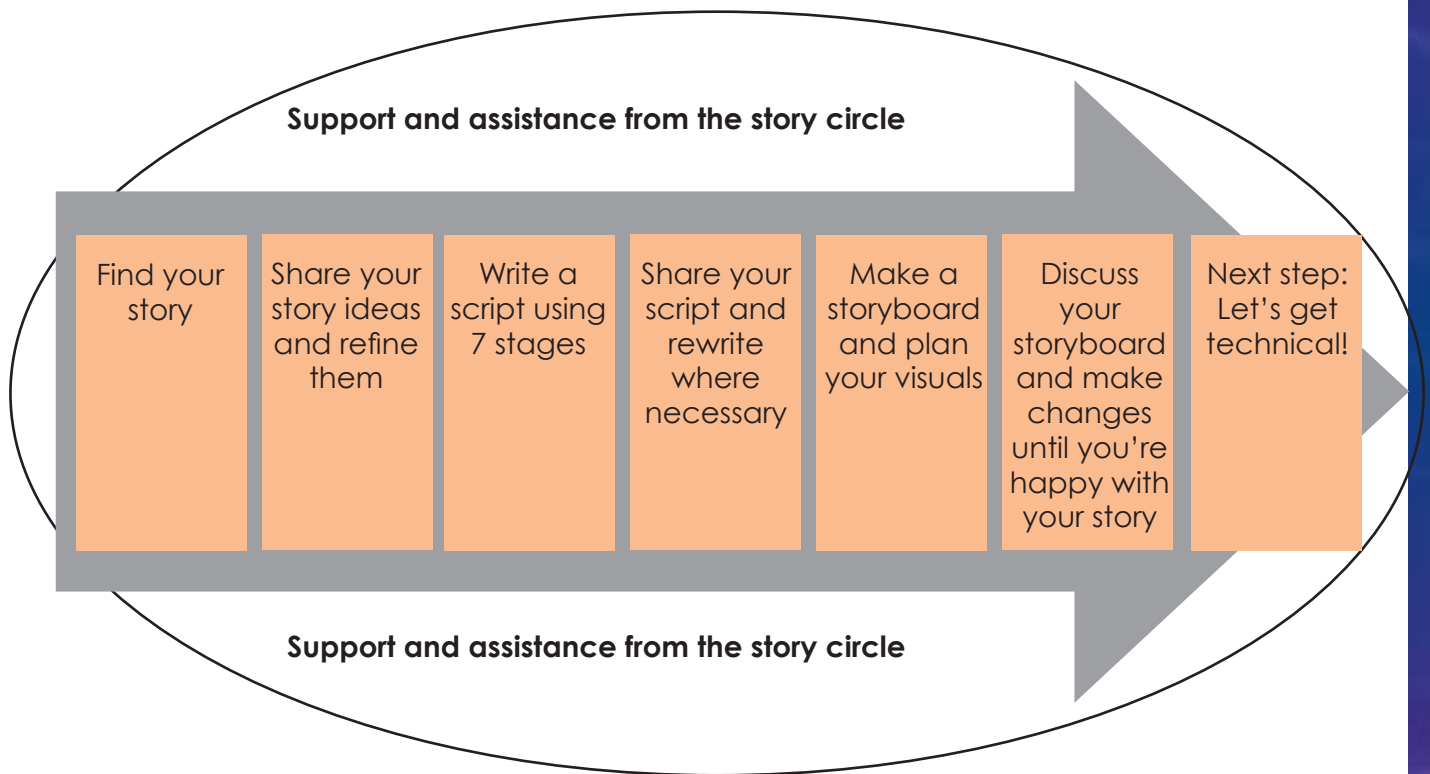
The goal of this exercise is to write as much as you can, without considering style, corrections or limitations. Use a large sheet of paper and in 15 minutes, write as much as you can, using mind- maps, drawing a plan of your script which you will share in your story circle.

Rules:

- Do not edit, erase or dismiss
- All thoughts are to be included (feelings, moods, colours, images, sounds). No boundaries!
- Keep your pen running. Write continuously!
- Note all impressions and ideas you get in the process.

Where are you now?

The above exercises have all been aimed at getting you into the process of producing your own digital story. You should be able to follow this process, assisted and supported by the members of your story circle:



STORY CIRCLE IN MOTION

Your story may burst into life, and be exactly what you want it to be!

But, you might also struggle to find the right balance between the story you want to tell, the length of time you have to tell it, and the resources you have to use to make your digital story.

This is where the members of your story circle can help you. They can tell you if your story 'works'. It will need to 'work' as a short piece of writing that tells your story, with authentic emotions and a piece of truth that you would like to pass on to your viewers.

Sit with your story circle, read your story aloud, and then ask them to assess it against the seven story steps to see where you can rework your story.

Point of view	Is this your story, told from your perspective, with your voice and insight shining through?	<input type="text"/>
Dramatic question	What is your opening dramatic question or statement?	<input type="text"/>
Emotional content	What emotions do you want to stir in your viewers with your story?	<input type="text"/>
Your voice	What is your narration for your story?	<input type="text"/>
The soundtrack	What music or sound effects will you use to set the mood for your story?	<input type="text"/>
Economy	Is your story 'short and sweet'? Where can you simplify and shorten it?	<input type="text"/>
Pace	What is the rhythm of your story - is it vibey and fast, or slower and contemplative?	<input type="text"/>

RECEIVING FEEDBACK ON YOUR STORY

Your story circle is a place where you can share your story with 'friends' before it is viewed by 'strangers' – people who have not been on the journey with you as you developed your story. Listening to the feedback from your story circle is a way of finding out how people will respond to your story – it is a way of 'practicing' your story before you go 'live'!

You will get feedback about how you tell your story – your use of emotion, your narration, the pace – and you will also get feedback on how you've arranged your story. You may get suggestions to cut certain things, or to rearrange your information.

Feedback will help you to organise your story, and improve it. In some cases, you may need to explain why you want to say certain things. Make the feedback session interactive:

– you don't have to take every suggestion on board, but learn to listen with an open and understanding mind.

When it is your turn to give feedback on the stories of members of your story circle, remember how it felt to receive feedback, and try to be the person who gives the useful, constructive and supportive feedback. You need to trust your story circle members and they need to trust you:

– to be kind, respectful, compassionate and yet honest, constructive and helpful.

Here is a useful way of **giving feedback**:

Start by saying what you liked about a story.



Tell the storyteller if the story made any personal connection with your life experiences.



Explain areas that you found difficult to understand.



Make suggestions for rearrangements, changes, additions.



Offer to answer any questions that the storyteller might have about your feedback.



And here is a suitable way for **receiving feedback**:

Show your appreciation for the feedback you've received.



Tell them what you found useful about the feedback



Explain any areas where you feel your intention was misunderstood, and how the feedback will help you to improve those areas to make your intentions clearer



Ask for any further advice or feedback



Remember that your digital story is still just a script and a storyboard! You will have to move onto the next steps where you:

1. Film and record your digital story
2. Share it for feedback from your story circle
3. Finalize and finish your story
4. Upload it and share it
5. Review your experience as a digital storyteller

3. Producing Your Story

MAKING YOUR STORY LOOK GOOD AND SOUND GOOD

This section of the module will take you through the process of producing your digital story from the storyboard that you have developed.

You will be introduced to the technological steps that you must follow to make your digital story. There are many resources available to help you to make a digital story using images, sound and video clips. Your story does not need to be sophisticated. It can be a set of pictures with some narration from you and some well-chosen music. It can also be a little fancier – with more complicated audio and visual effects, but, the point of this exercise is to make your story to share with others, not to show off your 'movie-making' skills!

However, it does help to know a little about how to make your story look good and sound good! We will learn how to record your images, record sound, and then how to use the software to edit your material into your first digital story. You may have access to equipment and software from the project you are working with, but it is also possible to make your own story using your mobile phone, a computer and some free programmes designed to edit material for digital stories. We will go through the basics so that you can use the resources that are at your disposal.

There are essentially three main steps that you need to follow:

1. **Visuals:** Collect your images, by finding photographs or taking new photographs, taking video clips, and any other visuals that you want to use.
2. **Audio:** Decide on your audio for your story – the soundtrack that will accompany your visuals. It could include music, a voiceover of you narrating your story, or other sound effects that you want to use.
3. **Edit:** Using appropriate software, mix your visual and audio so that they run together to make your digital story. You will need to use a software programme to do this.

So, visual, audio, edit! Ready, steady go!

We will start with how to capture your visuals, and we will assume that you will be using your mobile phone and a camera if you have access to one :

There are two kinds of visuals that you can use.

1. **Still images** are pictures that stay 'still', like photographs. You can collect personal photographs or pictures from magazines and newspapers. Your images can be of anything – people, text, landscapes – anything that illustrates your story.
2. **Video footage** is different from 'stills' in the sense that it 'moves' – like a movie. You can record video footage on your phone, and use it together with still images.

How to capture your visuals

Using cameras and phones for recording and capturing still and moving images can be a simple exercise. If you are familiar with taking pictures or selfies and recording video on your phone, you are ready to start shooting your story. All you need are a few guidelines to keep in mind that will help you create the best possible version of your work.

These are the important things to remember when recording video footage :

- Shoot with the sun behind you so that your subjects are in full colour and detail, and not silhouetted.
- When using your phone, hold it sideways (landscape mode) so that you don't have vertical black stripes surrounding your footage when editing.
- If you don't have a tripod, place your phone on a stable surface to shoot what is called a wide shot, such as a grouping of people, trees, houses in a street, etc.
- You are not making a professional movie, so a bit of camera shake is acceptable and adds to the feeling of the narrator being immersed in the story, but bouncing shots will make your viewers dizzy! This means that you should hold the camera or phone as steady as possible.
- If you want to pan (the shot that begins at one point, moves horizontally and ends on another point), hold your shot still for about three seconds at the start and end of the camera movement so that when you edit your clip, you won't have chopped off a nice moving visual.

How to frame your video or stills shots

- Pause before pressing buttons and look at what is in your camera frame.
- Have you chopped someone's head or feet off?
- Have you given them enough space to move in your frame without losing sight of them?

Here are some descriptions of different shot frames that you can use when filming your story:

- A wide shot: an establishing visual that gives context and location to what you are filming.
- A medium shot: of a person, this means filming from the waist up.
- A close-up shot: of a person, focussing on their face, or hand for instance.
- A two-shot: usually shot in wide or medium frame where you can fit both people in.
- Low angle shot: filmed with the lens pointed up at the person, giving the impression they are authoritative and looking down on the viewer.
- High angle shot: the opposite where you shoot from above the person's eyeline, creating the impression they are smaller. This framing is also useful to shoot very wide shots in order to get the whole picture of something.

Words that filmmakers use

- Edit:** The joining of one image or piece of video with another, and putting down a soundtrack with the visuals.
- Footage:** a video that you have recorded
- Shoot:** to photograph or film something
- Tripod:** a three legged stand on which you can attach a camera so that you can keep it still while you film
- Shot:** a photograph or piece of video footage
- Pan:** to move your phone or camera horizontally to record/ film moving object of person in view, or to capture a wide area of landscape.
- Clip:** another word for a piece of footage
- Angle:** this is the specific position of the camera or phone when you take your shot
- Close-up:** a shot where the picture is up close to the person or object being photographed, without any background, e.g. just the eyes and mouth of a person, or just a face.
- Zoom:** this refers to the technique when you change the focal length of your shot from far to near (zoom in) or from near to far (zoom out).

How to make your soundtrack

Once you have got your visuals recorded, you can decide on the soundtrack that you want with your story. Will you use music, narration, sound effects, other people's voices? You will need to record your sound. There are some limitations to the technology used in digital story telling for sound.

Have you ever been disappointed in the sound quality of audio captured by your mobile phone? That is an example of where using 'low tech' can let you down. If you are going into a very noisy environment and want to record an interview, you might lose that voice in the background noise. If you don't have access to a microphone that clips onto your subject's collar, rather wait to record that audio when it is quieter. Audio is a vital part of a digital story and it should be carefully controlled. If you need the visuals as well in the background, shoot your subject in that environment doing something and replace the interview you wanted with some narration instead. There are always solutions to be found in the creative process of storytelling!

If you are looking for a quiet spot to record your sound, a good idea is to climb into a quiet car with windows closed and record your voice. You can also wrap yourself in a heavy curtain or sit in a shut wardrobe full of clothes to record your voiceover – all recommended for trying at home.

In some of the editing phone apps, you can only record your voice, or import a voice clip per one video clip at a time. This is actually a good thing as it encourages you to really try to match the duration of your narration to each storyboarded visual block. When you record your voiceover, it will be the right fit for your visuals.

Digital Storytelling Editing Software Guidelines

It is important to remember that your story is more important than the technology you choose to produce it with!

Digital storytelling is exciting because there are different software programmes that help you put your story together. You will need to download a free programme and try it out. New programmes are being developed all the time, and so you can try out different programmes until you find the one that suits you best. The only way to familiarise yourself with them is to PLAY around, practise – find out what works for you.

If you're working in small groups and spending a lot of time with one another in your story circles, it makes sense to choose one particular programme to edit with. If there's a big group, such as a class of students, with less time to spend with facilitators and story circles, there is leeway for individual choices.

Here are some video editing programme and app suggestions.

For Smart Devices: Android and iPhone

1. **FilmoraGo:** FilmoraGo is suitable for Android and IOS mobile phones and easily downloaded. It allows for both video and audio editing. Recording of voice-over is a simple match to a video clip to match storyboard guides. This is a popular app as it allows for more non-linear editing. This means there are more features and you can use editing tools such as Picture-in-Picture (PiP) to cover one clip with still images. This app takes some exploring but it is fun to use, with the timeline displayed horizontally. The prompts are very clear and it is also intuitive.

See the step-by-step breakdown in picture form below for FilmoraGo.
 (Sourced from: youtube.com/watch?v=KKiUewLBbxE / Published by Filmora MVP)

Go select clips and trim:

1. Open app
2. Create New Video
3. Select your video and/or stills from your phone
4. Add them to your project and use the 'trim clip' button to select your video and discard what you do not want to include.



Arrange order of clips



Check your storyboard: swipe the clip icons around to create a sequence that matches your storyboard.
 You should also check your clip durations as they need to be long enough to hold your narrated script.

Your project is now on a timeline and ready for an audio track.

(Storyboard source: tinyurl.com/y2l8tw4p)

Record voice-over video clips and adjust levels

On your project page scroll down to the Edit Tools button on the right hand side and press the voice-over icon.

You have two options:

- record your voice over individual clips (it must be the same length as the clip)
- OR save your project to the Camera Roll function of your phone and import it as one clip if you want to read your whole script without breaking between clips.



Adding text at the press of a button

In your edit tools menu, choose Subtitle. Manually adjust the height and width of the text bar space for your subtitles and type in your text.



Music selection and trimming

Use the Music icon on the right hand menu bar to open up a library of royalty free options. Royalty free means that it is music that you can use without asking for permission or paying to use the music.

Remember music is a storytelling aid and should be used to give your story atmosphere and meaning. Choose the music you use carefully and ask yourself how the music relates to your story and if it is the most appropriate sound effect for your story. Make sure that the music is not too loud if there is narration at the same time.



Adjust the music and voice-over levels using your Adjust tool in the edit tool menu.

Other apps that you can try for your mobile devices are:

1. **WeVideo:** Download the app from the iStore and Playstore. Great for simple, linear timeline editing by adding images from your phone's library, recording voiceover and adding text and music. The timeline scrolls vertically, with each clip clearly segmented.

A note on voiceover: lay clips down first and record your voice to the clips. A very simple, intuitive and straight forward app.

2. **KineMaster:** This app can be downloaded from the Google Store. It is a subscription service, but you can use it for free as a trial version for personal, non-commercial purposes. You can view the app tutorial here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-NxiXqIF7Uk>

Laptops and PCs

If you are going to edit your story on a computer, you can try the following free programmes:

1. **Wondershare Filmora:** free download and another intuitive programme, the PC version of FilmoraGo.
2. **WeVideo:** this is editing on the cloud, so it requires you to register your email address and provide a password. You get one publishable project per month in the free version, which contains a watermark. You can laydown a multitude of video and audio tracks, and the timeline displays horizontally. Again, the prompts are fairly intuitive with trimming function and the ability to manipulate audio levels.
3. **Shotcut:** free download and very intuitive programme.

Exercise

Getting busy producing your digital story. The story should not exceed 2 minutes.

Write your script on a computer or tablet. Max 200 words. This is the basis for the recording of the story. Use the words – and dialect – you normally use. Printing the script, preferably in a large font, makes it easier to use when recording.

Select images you want to use, 8 -15 images will normally be enough. Possible sources: your own digital images, open sources on the internet, scanned or photographed drawings, texts, newspaper or magazine cuttings.

Select suitable sound effects and music to go with your story. We recommend using instrumental music rather than singing, as this may compete with your voice recording in the story.

4. Assessing and finalising your story

Nearly there!

Now that you have recorded your digital story, it is time to finalize it and eventually distribute it. Once again, we will turn to the trusty story circle for feedback and an honest assessment of your digital story. Whereas before, they were hearing your story idea from your script – now, they will see the result of your filmmaking.

A constructive feedback session

The first time viewing the digital stories of your group is not a competition! The objective is not to find the best or worst story. A feedback session is a two way process – an opportunity for each storyteller to ask for help in areas where they have doubts about their stories, and for the story circle to respectfully give honest and constructive feedback.

REMEMBER : Each storyteller has dug deep into their emotions to tell the story that you will be viewing. It will be natural that there will be emotional responses. Sometimes, silence is also an appropriate response. The important thing is to be supportive if you're giving feedback and open if you are receiving feedback.

We will need to look at how successful the story is, as well as the production of the story. For this, we will return to the Seven Steps/ Ten Point Quality Checklist to assess the technical production of the story. Here are the questions that we must ask about the story:



Does the film 'work'?

Seven Steps/ Ten Point Quality Checklist

Ask these questions about the story:

What can you do to improve the story?

1. Purpose of Story	Is the purpose of your story clear from early on, and does it have a clear focus all the way to the end?
2. Point of View	Is your point of view clear and does it connect with the overall story?
3. Dramatic Question	Is the dramatic question/statement made at the start, and does the story address the question/statement clearly?
4. Choice of Content	Does the visual content of the story create the tone and connect well with the meaning of the story? Does the use of images communicate meaning clearly?
5. Clarity of Voice	Is the voice narration is clear and audible throughout the story?
6. Pacing of Narrative	Is the pace of the voice narration suitable for the story, and does it help the audience to engage with the story?
7. Meaningful Soundtrack	Are music and sound effects suitable for the story and do they match the visuals well? Does the soundtrack add to the emotional content of the story?
8. Quality of Images	Are the images well-chosen and do they represent the story meaningfully, adding to the atmosphere and tone of the story? Is there good use of symbolism and metaphors?
9. Economy of Story Detail	Is the story not too short and not too long? Is it told with the right amount of detail?
10. Grammar and Language Usage	Is the grammar and language usage appropriate and correct as far as possible, and in keeping with the character of the language usage of the narrator?

You can assess your own story in terms of the questions above. It is said that you can be your own harshest critic! Be constructive with your assessment and all the way – think of how you can improve your story. Do not think that you have failed if one of the aspects on the checklists is problematic. That is the beauty of making a digital story – everything can be edited to make improvements!

Feedback Session

So, here is the process to follow for the feedback session :

1. Before the story circle views the story - give the storyteller the opportunity to speak about their experience of making the story. They can explain challenges they faced, and ask for help in areas that they feel need improvement.
2. View the digital story with the checklist and make notes
3. Each member of the story circle can give feedback using the checklist as a guide.
4. The story teller can have the opportunity to clarify feedback and ask for suggestions.
5. Make sure that the story teller feels positive and certain of the changes that need to be made to the story before moving on to the next digital story.

Finalising your story

Don't be upset if you have A LOT of work to do after your feedback session. The creative process is a brutal one, and your objective is to make your digital story as good as it can be. By "good" - we mean that it must succeed at communicating your story, and hopefully be able to inspire others to change or act in the "common good" as a result of what you have shared with them.

If you need to change some of your visuals – do this. If you need to rerecord footage – just get on with doing it. You may need to record your soundtrack again. Just do it in a spirit of making your story the best it can be. Never be afraid to redo something so that it is better. Giving up is not an option! Your story could be really important to someone.

Resolving technical issues

Viewing your digital story with members of your story circle can be a daunting task! Suddenly you will see and hear mistakes or flaws that you can fix. You may want to change the sequence of your visuals, or add some or remove some. You may want to remove unwanted sounds, or rerecord your narration, change your music.

DO NOT FEEL DEFEATED OR DEMORALIZED!

This is all part of the process of reviewing and resolving technical issues so that your digital story will be better. Take the time to resolve the technical issues that emerge with the first version of your story

NOTES

Ideas

Things to do

Things to say

Other stories

What I've learned

5. Distributing your story and final reflections

Distributions platforms

Engaging in the process of making a digital story presupposes that you are going to share it with other people. Once you've finished your digital story, it will be time to 'make it public' – sharing it on platforms where it can be viewed by people other than your story circle. We call this 'distributing' or 'publishing' your story.

But remember : you do not have to distribute your story if you would like to keep it private. You can save it on a CD or flash drive and keep it for yourself or to be viewed with people of your choosing. If this is the case, hopefully the process of and participation in the development of your digital story will have been an empowering and reflective experience for you. Perhaps you will gain the confidence to share your own story now that you have a heightened awareness of the role of digital stories, and the impact they can have.

If, however, you feel comfortable sharing your story on a wider platform, there are a number of options. Depending on who you intended as the audience of your story, you can decide how and where to share it.

Video files are usually large digital files – too large to share via email, and so you will need to 'park' your story somewhere on the internet, and email the link to your contacts so that they can access it. Here are your options :

Common Good First Social Innovation Platform

Available here: commongoodfirst.com

The platform developed by the Erasmus + CGF Project is a hub on which social innovation stories generated through participation in the module can be shared in order for new partnerships to emerge between diverse groups, since social innovation projects and ideas often overlap across sectors but do not find common ground in everyday practice. Importantly, the Erasmus + CGF platform will allow for the stories from diverse stakeholder groups to be shared in a democratic way such that an equality of voice can be given to all storytellers. Engaging with each other's narratives and initiatives promotes the philosophy that all stakeholders are participating in the development process, working together to shape a more just and prosperous community.

YouTube

The easiest and most common video sharing platform is YouTube. You can upload your story to YouTube as an unlisted video, and then share the link on email with the people that you would like to invite to view it. They can pass on the link to others, so this is not a completely private way to share the video – but it means that you can control the first group of viewers, and possibly invite their feedback on the story.

Social media

Social media is a great way of sharing your digital story. You can use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or all of these platforms. Videos on social media receive a lot of attention with likes, comments and shares meaning that your story will spread to a wide audience. You can mark your stories with hashtags # to mark keywords and topics that can be searched and linked by people who are interested in the content of your story.

On Facebook, you can load your story on your own Facebook page and set the privacy settings to limit the group of users that can view your story. You can also tag facebook friends in your story so that they can be notified that you've posted your story.

Other potential ideas for distribution can include some of the following platforms:

Your own website

You can start your own website on Wordpress and feature your digital story on the site along with other personal ideas and information.

Partner websites

The organisation you work for may have a website that will be willing to feature your story, or there may be websites connected to your area of work that will be willing to post your story if they feel it will contribute to their mission.

Events

There may be community events where you can arrange for your story and those of others in your story circle to be viewed.

Hard copies

Saving your story on a CD, DVD or flash drive and making it available to libraries, community organisations, family members and friends is a great way of distributing the story. Obviously this will involve the cost of the hard copies, but this investment may be well worth getting your story 'out there'.

Attracting and building your audience

Your story is unlikely to be seen unless you work at building the audience. Getting your digital story distributed on a wide variety of online platforms is one way of getting an audience, but it is your response to any comments, likes or responses to your story that is likely to build your audience. Being a storyteller means that you enter into an interactive process with your viewers. Make sure that you check your social media platforms, and respond and reply to people who have viewed your story.

Your target audience: You are likely to have a good idea of who will be interested in your story. Ask yourself : Who will benefit from seeing my story? Who will enjoy my story? These people will be your 'target audience' and you should take the necessary steps to get your story to them. These people are likely to know others who will benefit from, and enjoy your story, and so you can find new viewers to engage with. If you are available to engage with your target audience, you will build a following. You may engage on line, or in person.

Reflecting on the storytelling process

Can you believe that you have made your first digital story? You have been through a process which has resulted in a 'product' which can now be used to benefit others.

How do you feel? Are you ready to make another story? Did you enjoy the experience? What impact has your story had on you, and on others?

Spend some time with your story circle looking back on the process you have been through. Ask yourself these questions :

- What were your original goals for the project?
- What did you hope to achieve?
- How many people have seen your story?
- Is the response what you hoped for?
- Did the audience "get" the message you intended?
- What will you do differently if you were to do it again?

REMEMBER: Reviewing your work doesn't mean comparing your digital story to the stories of others in your story circle. You are all in this project to learn!

Keeping the story circle alive into the future to support each other for new stories

You are likely to have made powerful connections with the members of your story circle! You have probably shared some secrets and life experiences which have become part of your digital story. Make sure that you can keep in contact with your story circle members, perhaps with a view to making further stories, or just to follow the progress of each person. Here are some ways to make this happen:

- Exchange phone numbers and other contact details.
- Start a WhatsApp group where you can talk to each other
- Plan a reunion in the future.
- Plan to make more stories.
- Share ideas to build your target audience.

Exercise 1:

Describe the purpose of distribution for your story

List your intended audience

Select the most suitable platform(s)

Draft extra information needed for chosen platforms

List extra activities required by chosen platform(s) for attracting and building an audience.

Exercise 2:

After playing and discussing the stories, use the story circle space to reflect on:

- What you learned from making a digital story
- How this process influenced you
- How digital stories can be used by you, as a tool in your professional work, and in your daily life.

Your own website

You can start your own website on Wordpress and feature your digital story on the site along with other personal ideas and information.

Partner websites

The organisation you work for may have a website that will be willing to feature your story, or there may be websites connected to your area of work that will be willing to post your story if they feel it will contribute to their mission.

Events

There may be community events where you can arrange for your story and those of others in your story circle to be viewed.

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Appendix



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Resistance as method: unhappiness, group feeling, and the limits of participation in a digital storytelling workshop

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Resistance as method: unhappiness, group feeling, and the limits of participation in a digital storytelling workshop

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a narrative case study of Mirabel, one participant in a digital storytelling workshop for women who were newcomers to Canada, whose experience compelled me to rethink conceptualizations of participation in social justice-oriented, community-based participatory media projects. Drawing on the work of Sara Ahmed, I consider how Mirabel's resistance to the 'promise of happiness' offered by the group was interpreted by others as a failure to participate. Conversely, I suggest that Mirabel's experience and her digital story are generative for thinking about resistance as a method of participation and a political resource for the group. I argue that conceptualizations of participation should be complicated to include the kinds of agency demonstrated by participants like Mirabel who resist the norms of the digital storytelling workshop and group culture.

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resistance; happiness;
participation

In every digital storytelling workshop, as in every research project, there are outliers: those participants who do not seem to fit so easily into the culture of the project and the group, who struggle with and resist the methods and frameworks offered, who make 'trouble' for the facilitator and the researcher. In the workshop setting, facilitators tend to work very hard to make sure these participants complete the digital storytelling process as planned and produce a finished work. In research, these are often the participants that do not get mentioned in the final analysis – they are the exceptions that the norm of active participation in the group tends to obscure. In this paper, I turn to the case of Mirabel, a woman who occupied the role of the outlier, both in the digital storytelling workshop I observed and in my own research study of that workshop, whose experience compelled me to question my own assumptions about what counts as participation in digital storytelling and other participatory media projects. In exploring what might be learned from expressions and experiences of resistance within community-based participatory research contexts, this work is in dialogue with others who have written about the significance of 'non-participation' (Milne, 2012; Switzer, 2018) and 'refusal' (Tuck & Yang, 2014a, 2014b) in research.

Mirabel¹, a woman in her late 30s who came to Canada from Angola via Portugal, was a participant in a leadership program for women who are newcomers to Canada, in which they used digital storytelling to produce multimedia first-person narratives about the complexities of migration, loss, and survival. Many community-based organizations use digital storytelling as a strategy for community development, aiming to cultivate increased social agency, empowerment and

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community leadership in participants through practices of storytelling and media production (Dunford & Jenkins, 2017; Hartley & McWilliam, 2009; Lambert, 2013; Low, Brushwood Rose, Salvio, & Palacios, 2012). This paper offers a close reading of the group response to Mirabel's story, as well as the final digital story she produced. Through a narrative analysis of the reception of Mirabel's story in the storytelling circle as well as its final outcome, I aim to explore the nature of participation as an experience that is foregrounded in community-based media projects, rather than Mirabel's experience as an individual (Riessman, 2008). Specifically, I explore how Mirabel's story illuminates the limits and possibilities of digital storytelling as a participatory method and the concept of participation in research, more broadly.

What counts as participation in these projects? What kinds of experience do our conceptualizations of participation marginalize or obscure? First, drawing on Sara Ahmed's (2010) writing on 'the promise of happiness,' I suggest that Mirabel's story and self-expression in the workshop story circle positioned her as an 'affect alien' who, in 'facing the wrong way,' was easily interpreted by those around her as not fully participating. Second, rather than dismiss Mirabel's contributions as counter-productive, contrary, or anti-participatory, I suggest that her story and the nature of its reception are generative for thinking about how unhappiness, ambivalence, and resistance might in fact be methods for participation. I argue that our conceptualizations of participation in research might be complicated to include the kinds of agency demonstrated by participants who resist the 'norms' of the digital storytelling workshop and group culture. Indeed, Mirabel's story revealed not only the limits of the group feeling developed in the workshop and the collaborative promise of participatory media, but also the limits of my own research agenda.

As such, in some ways this paper also reflects on my own story as the researcher, and my own experiments with greater reflexivity, which Wanda Pillow (2003) describes, 'not as clarity, honesty, or humility, but as practices of confounding disruptions – at times even a failure of our language and practices' (p. 192). As I began my data analysis, I had excluded Mirabel from any close attention, positioning her as 'the one that got away' both from my attempts at interpretation but also from the possibilities offered by the project. Over time, I began to see that her story did not suggest a mere methodological improvement, but instead challenged the foundational ideas undergirding the digital storytelling workshop and my research. Pillow argues that reflexivity acts 'not as a tool of methodological power but a methodological tool interruptive of practices of gathering data as "truths" into existing "folds of the known"' (p. 192). In this way, the failures, disruptions and interruptions posed by the difficulties of doing research are potentially generative, not of 'better methods', but of a complex rethinking of our methodological foundations. Through my exploration here, I have come to see Mirabel as a reminder of how my own research narrative is bound up in the foundational discourses of participatory media that I also critique: that participation in such projects makes life better for participants.

Tuck and Yang (2014a) describe how resistance or refusal in research 'is not just a "no," but a starting place' (p. 812) that signals 'a deliberate shift in the unit of analysis, away from people, and toward relationships between people and institutions of power' (p. 815). Understanding resistance as a mode for participation and relation, rather than an unwillingness to engage, is to recognize, as Alice Pitt (2003, 1998) suggests, that complex experiences of negotiating social contexts often reveal themselves in moments of resistance. 'From this perspective,' Pitt (2003) writes, 'resistance is a method' (p. 48). As a relation, resistance is not something that belongs to the individual (as a deficit), but is a method for negotiating the ambivalent experience of coming to know the self and the world, and of representing that experience with and for others. Reframing Mirabel's resistance as a method of participation allowed me to recognize her unhappiness as a form of knowledge and a political resource that has its source in the persistence of shared histories.

The digital storytelling project

The digital storytelling project I describe here was undertaken as one part of a yearlong curriculum in community leadership for newcomer women. Run by a downtown social service organization, which supported several other programs in literacy and training, this yearlong leadership program accepted approximately ten female participants a year, all of whom were newcomers to Canada (most within five years). The participants in this program were ethnically and racially diverse, most were English language learners, and all experienced racialization within the Canadian context. The leadership program aimed to cultivate community-development and leadership skills in participants, many of whom used the program as a springboard to acquire social service work, as settlement workers, community program staff and managers, and so on. It is important to note that many participants were over qualified for such positions, having received advanced education and training in various fields, such as law and communications, in their countries of origin. In this way, the leadership program both provided a welcome employment opportunity and implicitly participated in the ghettoization of immigrant women into service- and support-oriented professions.

Digital stories themselves are 3–4 minute digital videos comprised of image (photographs, video clips, illustrations) and sound (voiceover, music, sound effects) that tell a short personal narrative of life experience. The goal of the digital storytelling method, first developed by the founders of the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in California (Lambert, 2013), is ‘the production of elegant, high-impact stories by people with little or no experience, with minimal direct intervention by the workshop facilitator’ (Burgess, 2006, p. 207). The key features of the digital storytelling method as outlined by its founders include the following, often overlapping, experiences: (1) storytelling circle, where participants sit together and share stories orally; (2) script writing; (3) voiceover recording; (4) image collection and development of a visual narrative; and, (5) video editing.

While the workshops I studied here were derivative of the method originally developed by the CDS in the mid-1990s, the nature of the digital storytelling process and the workshops offered by the facilitators of this particular project had their own unique character, in part due to technological advances in both software and hardware, but also due to the emphases of the local program. Drawing on several years of experience, the facilitators of this project had modified their approach to the digital storytelling process to incorporate a stronger emphasis on place-based storytelling and multi-modal storytelling. Participants were initially asked to tell stories that connected them to a place in their community; they collected images and sounds on neighborhood walks, and produced digital stories that were later located on a digital map using Google Maps. The facilitators augmented the digital storytelling process by adding workshop experiences for participants that included drawing maps as a way to represent one’s perceptions of and relations to community, a silent neighborhood walk, and discussion of and experimentation with photographic techniques.

Digital storytelling is a process that cultivates a sense of community among the participants. It is a fundamentally collaborative process, in which participants and facilitators share their stories with one another, give each other creative feedback, assist each other with technical matters, and accompany each other in the gathering of media. In this particular project, a collaborative approach was made explicit: the facilitators actively cultivated a sense within the group that ‘no one is finished until everyone is finished.’ This collaborative or group experience was heightened by the extended nature of the digital storytelling workshop in this particular leadership program, where the traditional 3-day digital storytelling workshop evolved into a series of experiences that spanned the yearlong leadership program, and a year’s worth of leadership and community development in the lives of participants.

This sense of connection and collaboration is also implicated in my work as a researcher who attended all of the digital storytelling workshop sessions, listened to, read, and watched the

participants' stories evolve, and at times offered support or feedback with technical and creative issues or gave encouragement. My presence in the space of the workshop as a witness to their stories, my familiarity with the facilitators, and my informal interactions with participants during the more social features of the program (including potlucks and screenings), all contributed to a sense that I was a member of the workshop community as well as an outsider. Despite my rapport with participants, my social difference within the group was evident in a number of ways: I was a witness and researcher rather than participating storyteller; I am a white, middle-class, and Canadian-born; and, I had prior experience with the workshop practices and technologies being introduced.

I had a pre-existing relationship, as a collaborator and researcher, with the two community-based facilitators who ran the workshops, and had myself co-facilitated digital storytelling workshops with them in the past. Participants occasionally approached me for assistance or feedback, partly, I think, because the facilitators had identified me as someone familiar with the digital storytelling method but also because I had identified myself as a researcher and university professor, inevitably positioning myself in general terms as a kind of expert. However, in this context, I participated in the workshops as an observer and witness, and occasionally as an extra pair of hands, and occupied the role of researcher during the fieldwork and interviews. The data collected during this project included fieldnotes on each workshop session, documentation of workshop and program curricula, participants' story scripts and final digital stories, as well as transcripts of individual interviews with both participants and facilitators.

In this paper, I draw on data generated through my own fieldnotes as a participant-observer as well as the visual and textual data of Mirabel's final digital story. My analysis of this data utilizes a narrative inquiry approach (Brushwood Rose & Granger, 2013; Riessman, 2008), which considers not only *what* is communicated but also *how*. What is the structure of the narrative and what might this tell us about its meaning, beyond the self-evident content? What might the silences and repetitions we observe communicate about the narrator's experience? How might the structure of the narrative, on its' own and in relation to the content, depict a process or experience that the narrator is undergoing? This attention to form or structure in addition to content is imperative when working with multimedia and/or visual data, which not only serves as a source of empirical data, but reflects 'processes of creation and self-representation through which complex and contradictory meanings and experiences are revealed' (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014, p. 30).

Unhappiness, storytelling, and the limits of participation

Multiple affects circulate in the digital storytelling workshop, and unhappiness or distress are among them. However, the group feeling at the end of a digital storytelling workshop, and in key moments of sharing and collaboration throughout, such as the story circle, is often characterized by a 'goodness' or 'happiness' that accompanies shared participation in a project structured around the ideal of empowerment. So while unhappiness and emotional difficulty emerge in the workshop, and even become the grounds for social critique, for example, of domestic violence or socio-economic marginalization, participation in the workshop is largely cast as an experience that leads to greater happiness. In practice, there are emotional and social difficulties that emerge in the digital storytelling workshop which are not so easily ameliorated by the storytelling forms offered there.

The quality of Mirabel's participation in the digital storytelling workshop was notable from the beginning, when she took her turn in the story circle and began by speaking about her teen-aged daughter. Mirabel described how she had spent a great deal of time worrying about her daughter's achievement in school because English is not her daughter's first language. She told the group that she was surprised to discover that her daughter had received an A+ on her

report card for English. Still surprised and unbelieving, she attended a parent-teacher conference at her daughter's school where the English teacher confirmed that her daughter was doing exceptionally well. Mirabel went on to say that her daughter had made many friends in Canada, who often invited her for sleepovers, and that she was well liked by her friends' parents. In short, Mirabel said, 'she has a life here.' While to an outsider this may sound like a 'happy' story, Mirabel began to weep as she shared it with the group. She admitted that her daughter's success at making a life for herself in Canada had thrown into relief her own failures to do so. Mirabel told the group that she was in Canada only because her husband insisted she stay and her daughter was doing so well – in contrast, Mirabel expressed that she 'hates it here' and 'has no friends.'

As Mirabel was telling her story, several group members interjected with advice for her about how she should follow her daughter's example, about adapting to life in Canada and making new friends. Others suggested that she should focus on being strong for her daughter, setting a good example. This turn toward advice-giving was unusual in the story circle where the 'rules' governing the process, laid out by the facilitators, encouraged participants to ask each storyteller questions and to offer constructive criticism, and strongly discouraged the tendency to tell others what they 'should' say or do. In general, the participants were good at following these rules and found them helpful. The chorus of advice-giving that greeted Mirabel's story was exceptional. In response, Mirabel remained insistent about her experience, at one point forcefully responding to the advice of others by declaring 'I'm not happy here!' Following her declaration that she 'has no friends,' the other participants interrupted Mirabel in a scattered chorus insisting that they were her friends. While on one level a caring gesture, their correction, like their advice, served to undermine or refuse Mirabel's story of experience. Again, Mirabel continued with her story as if the others had not chimed in, steadfastly refused to be swayed by their influence, and asserted that she was 'afraid to try and make friends.'

In telling her story, Mirabel both described and embodied a deep unhappiness. With encouragement from the facilitators to tell a story that feels authentic and to avoid a happy ending that is insincere, many participants like Mirabel are able to tell stories that avoid or resist the 'victory narrative' (Lather, 2001) of overcoming hardship that is expected of newcomers. However, in the story circle, in which participants first try to articulate a story and must do so facing each other, the absence of a happy ending is unusual. Given the nature of group experience, in which one is keenly aware of their own vulnerability and the effect of their story on others, the happy ending may be offered as a way to ameliorate any bad feelings generated for the group. In Mirabel's case, no such relief was available, and the group's turn to advice giving offer evidence of the group's attempts to generate some relief for themselves. The group response, as well as Mirabel's refusal of the group 'norm' which demands that participants be 'ok' in the end, reveals both the persistence of the 'happy ending,' despite an environment that usually welcomes a range of affective expression, and the difficulty that unhappiness poses for participation.

The persistence of the happy ending might be understood in a couple of different ways. First, our ideas about what counts as a story are tied both to ideas about transformation – the story arc a protagonist undergoes – and, thus, to notions of a happy ending in which most transformations leave the protagonist better off than she started. This is similarly true in the narration of research: despite my own misgivings about the emphasis on 'transformation' in participatory media projects, it is hard to imagine narrating a story in which no such transformation occurs. Mirabel's experience in the workshop and the responses she elicited from her peers suggests that the happy ending offers a kind of resolution that in its absence is felt to be missing. Indeed, the response of the group might be partly symptomatic of the difficulty of working with a story that one facilitator described as 'unresolved.'

Throughout the telling of Mirabel's story and the group's response to her, the facilitators looked visibly uncomfortable, and seemed to be waiting for an opportunity to interrupt and

re-direct the group's attention. They reminded the group twice that they should be offering Mirabel feedback on her story rather than giving her advice. Before moving on to the next storyteller, one facilitator said, 'Mirabel is living in the middle of this story right now, and that is fine,' suggesting that the group should 'honor where you are in your life right now' and not expect Mirabel's story to be 'good.' Implicit in these remarks is the sense that a 'good' story (marked by a happy ending) signals a finished story – this is how you know you've arrived. The group reaction to Mirabel's story reveals both a general discomfort with the 'bad' or 'unhappy' story, and a discomfort with the ways in which her unhappiness reveals the difficulty of 'arrival.'

In her discussion of the figure of the 'melancholic migrant,' Ahmed (2010) suggests how the achievement of happiness becomes indicative of the migrant's successful arrival and integration into Western society, where such integration becomes the basis of one's freedom to claim happiness. 'The freedom to be happy is premised on not only the freedom *from* family or tradition but also the freedom *to* identify with the nation as the bearer of the promise of happiness' (p. 137). Happiness for the migrant is thus premised on her capacity to let go of the 'old' and embrace the 'new,' and thus to get over the conflicts that a melancholic attachment to what has been lost would pose. Like Mirabel, whose refuses the closure of the happy ending, the 'melancholic migrant' is seen to be 'stuck in a bad feeling' because she is unable to do the 'moral and emotional labor of becoming unstuck' (p. 138). Bad feelings become indicative of the migrant subject's inability to leave their culture behind, to let go of or 'get over' their suffering, and to arrive in the new nation.

Connected to Ahmed's analysis is a second observation about the imperative of the happy ending: we offer and need the happy ending as a sort of container for the difficult emotions in a story. The happy ending both makes the difficulty more bearable for the storyteller and the listener, but also, I would argue, assuages or obscures their obligation to attend to the difficulty. The happy ending can be offered as a gift to the listener(s) with whom we have shared and to whom we have transmitted our unhappiness and bad feelings. In the story circle, the happy ending is an offering given to others, to allow the group to move on, to provide respite between one story and the next. It is also a gift given to the storyteller by herself – a way of closing up the wounds that she's opened in telling her difficult story, perhaps for the first time, a reassurance to herself and the group that 'I'm okay now. We can move on.' In these ways, the offering of the happy ending, rather than simply automatic or insincere, can be a resource that preserves the integrity of the storyteller and the group, that enables moments of breakdown and difficult feeling, precisely by promising an outcome in which things get put back together again. I've explored this elsewhere in terms of the holding environment offered by the story circle (Brushwood Rose, 2016), and the happy ending might be understood as one of the aesthetic or narrative forms that enables such containment.

At the same time, while the happy ending functions as a protective measure for the psyche, it does so precisely by operating as a form of disavowal, which neutralizes the unresolved difficulty and the political implications of the difficulty that unhappiness may reveal. In Mirabel's case, she rejected the happy ending sought by the group through their gestures of friendship and advice about how to make things better. In doing so, Mirabel refused to ameliorate her own bad feelings and their effects for the group. In her refusal to be happy, and her direct expression of unhappiness, which interrupted the affective traditions established in the group and through notions of participation more broadly, Mirabel reminds us of both the social and political significance of emotional life.

Ahmed (2010) describes how affect serves particular social functions and how community is made through certain shared affective orientations. Refusing participation in these shared orientations – for example, the happiness associated with integration – the melancholic migrant becomes alienated from and is seen as alien by the group. If an affective community is produced by sharing 'happy objects' as well as objects of loss, 'then the melancholics would be affect aliens in how they love: their love becomes a failure to get over loss, which keeps them

facing the wrong way' (p. 141). Migrant subjects are judged to be melancholic 'because they have failed to give up on objects that we have declared dead *on their behalf*' (emphasis in original, p. 141). Suffering or unhappiness is thus a failure to give up the lost object and a failure to identify with 'the nation as the bearer of happiness.' Mirabel's unhappiness provides a 'sore point' for the group; her unhappiness reminds the group of what is sore and keeps 'what is sore at that point' (p. 141). In this way, Mirabel's story introduces a wound and an experience of alienation that affects the group. The melancholic migrant's suffering implicates the present and future social group, even the nation, and so the group must respond.

Even when it was expressed early on in the story circle, Mirabel's unhappiness, and her willingness to speak of 'what is not good', was a palpable reminder of what happiness works to cover over: the trauma of migration, and the persistence of histories of colonialism and racism in such trauma. In this way, racism is located in the figure of the melancholic migrant, who is held responsible for 'not letting it go' and whose unhappiness is used by the group to disavow the presence of racism in contemporary life: national happiness is maintained by locating racism in an unhappy past which is only preserved the migrant's attachment to history. As Ahmed suggests, 'the happiness duty for migrants... is a positive duty to speak of what is good but can also be thought of as a negative duty not to speak of what is not good, not to speak from or out of unhappiness. It is as if you should let go of the pain of racism by *letting go of racism as a way of understanding that pain*' (emphasis in original, p. 158).

By understanding unhappiness as a failure of the individual's capacity to participate in the group or the nation, its function as a necessary response to and reminder of collective traumatic histories is disavowed. Alternately, to reject the happiness duty and to recognize unhappiness is to 'recognize the impossibility of putting certain histories behind us; these histories persist, and we must persist in declaring our unhappiness with their persistence' (p. 159).

Indeed, by refusing the happiness duty, Mirabel is able to recognize, attend to, and represent a range of personal, social and political events and to forge links between them. She does not let listeners to her story turn away from or disavow its difficulty by offering us the assurance that everything is better now. Instead, Mirabel's final digital story, which I discuss next, stands as a powerful testimony to the difficult work of naming unhappiness and, in doing so, of identifying what it is the promise of happiness, and its demand to participate in particular ways, works to cover over. In this way, Mirabel's unhappiness becomes the grounds of her participation in social life, even though the discourses of participation that structure that social life (and the storytelling group) suggest otherwise. While Mirabel might be understood as resisting participation in the group by refusing to adopt the right affect, I want to suggest that by insisting on her unhappiness Mirabel calls attention to that nature of participation as something much more complex than the version offered to us via the 'happiness duty.' Mirabel's unhappiness reveals her unflinching participation in the group project, and also points to the group's participation in the larger socio-political field.

'Suffering of my silence': unhappiness as a shared problem

Unhappiness, depression and 'bad feelings' should be understood as significant public and political experiences (Ahmed, 2010; Cvetkovich, 2012). That is, our bad feelings have a great deal to teach us about the collective histories of trauma we inherit and the ways in which individual experiences of suffering are connected to and symptomatic of such collective histories. Unhappiness is a political resource that can reveal a great deal about the persistence of oppression, and about the persistence of histories of oppression in contemporary life. Mirabel's digital story offers this kind of resource both because it speaks of suffering despite prescriptions for silence, and because it makes connections between personal feelings and public events, between her own experience of unhappiness and the socio-political dynamics of racism and

sexism that pervade public life. Mirabel's digital story does not explicitly name these connections, yet conveys them through the juxtaposition of a series of experiences, which move from personal to public and back again. In this way, her digital story offers us an account of her own unhappiness that invites us to recognize its source in the persistence of shared histories.

In her digital story, 'Suffering of my silence,' Mirabel tells a series of inter-connected stories – about coming to Canada, about confronting racism in her work at Amnesty International in Portugal, about her thwarted desire to go home to work in Angola, about her relationship with her daughter, and about the struggle to live her daily life. As I watched, listened to, and transcribed it, I came to understand Mirabel's digital story as comprised of a series of episodes, which move somewhat abruptly in space and time. In making this interpretation, I draw on insights from structural approaches to narrative analysis, which are concerned with content, but in giving attention to narrative form add 'insights beyond what can be learned from referential meanings alone' (Riessman, 2008, p. 77). Structural analysis urges us to pay attention to how narratives are organized and to develop the capacity to hear different narrative styles, particularly those that might seem less familiar or less easily recognizable as stories. This may be particularly important in relation to multimedia narratives, in which form, esthetics and technique offer further evidence of experience (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014). In Mirabel's case, her rejection of the 'happy ending' seemed to make space for her to tell a less closed or linear narrative, to which there is often some resolution, and instead to make connections between moments in her life in an episodic fashion and to leave her story open-ended. Mirabel does not tell us a neat story with a definitive ending, but rather invites the viewer into an affective space in which the struggles she depicts are present and past, but not over. In shifting my attention to include not only what is 'told' in the story but also the 'telling' of the story, I want to pay attention not only to the experiences Mirabel relates, but also to the experience of hearing/encountering her story and to the meanings made through the story's juxtapositions and associations.

In the first episode, Mirabel tells us about the recent past and her arrival in Canada: 'I came to Canada to learn English for six months. But during that time my husband applied for refugee status. I did not want to stay. I had already bought my ticket to go back to my country [Angola].' Mirabel had already made plans to leave Canada and return to Angola, a place she had been 'dreaming' of returning to since she had left for Portugal some years before. Mirabel tells us very simply that her husband made a choice to apply for refugee status. The subtext here is palpable: Mirabel had a plan to undertake a 'professional career' in her 'home country' and, as the already purchased but unused plane ticket attests, this plan was undermined when her husband made another choice without her.

In the next episode, Mirabel moves away from this personal conflict to consider a political one and moves the story back in time to Portugal, where she was working at Amnesty International. She says:

I was working on human rights. At that time, racism was a big issue in Portugal. On the weekends, there was lots of trouble on the beach – vandalism, assaults, theft – and the media blamed the Black people. My organization investigated and found it was not them, but because the media had reported it like that, they did not apologize and say they were wrong. We were working hard to try and change public opinions about the racism (Figures 1 and 2).

Her move between the first episode and the second signals the multifaceted quality of Mirabel's suffering, which resides not only in the conflicts that attend her role as a wife and mother, but also derive from her experiences of racism as a Black woman living in Western nations. While the details of these two episodes seem somewhat unrelated, the affect conveyed in both accounts is similar and their juxtaposition reveals an association between these two events: both stories depict the struggle for something better, the unjust conditions tied to histories of sexism and racism which thwart such struggles, and the sense of helplessness that attends the everydayness of such trauma.

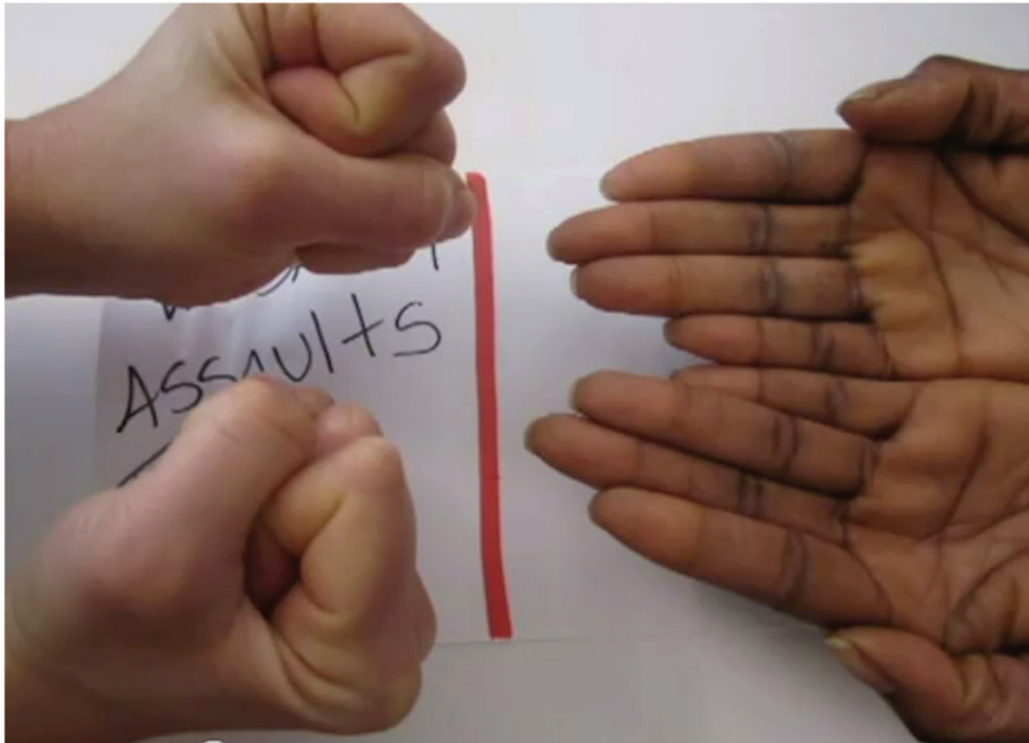


Figure 1. 'My organization investigated and found it was not them ...'.



Figure 2. 'We were working hard to try and change public opinions about the racism ...'.

In the next part of her digital story, Mirabel recounts that it was her work on human rights issues in Portugal that garnered her an invitation to return to Angola to take a position at the United Nations office there. 'I had lived in Portugal for years,' she says. 'I had lots of friends from my country and we all dreamed to go back when we got invited' (Figure 3). In the next sentence, Mirabel moves from Portugal to Canada, and from past to recent past, as she returns to the conflict with her husband: 'When my husband said to me, "You have to think about your



Figure 3. 'We all dreamed to go back when we got invited.'



Figure 4. 'We are like a mirror ...'.

daughter. It is best for her to be here in Canada," I thought, "But we are like a mirror. I can see myself back in her. If I am not happy, she will not be happy" (Figure 4).

In this episode, there are resonances with the story Mirabel told in the story circle and with the conflicts that emerged with the group as they responded to her. During the story circle, Mirabel related her experience of having 'no friends' and of being 'afraid to try and make friends,' but in her digital story she offers a different narrative of friendship and connection. First, Mirabel's story invokes a 'we' several times: 'we were working hard,' 'we all dreamed to go back,' 'we are like a mirror.' This collective, made up of friends, family and colleagues, is largely set in the past and describes a community of shared struggle – to fight racism, to return home. The other 'we' at stake here is the one formed in the relation between Mirabel and her daughter, which is not the collective of peers described in the previous iterations, but instead invokes an

inter-generational collective, reaching both back and forward in time. The phrase 'we are like a mirror' is striking because it suggests this bi-temporal movement: Mirabel 'can see myself back in her' and her daughter can do the same. The double mirror shows both of them past and future, *ad infinitum*.

While the initial episodes of Mirabel's story suggest important political connections between personal suffering and collective trauma, this third episode gestures toward the socio-political significance of shared affect or, more precisely, of the experience that one's affect is seen as a shared problem. In the story circle, the group was unable to hold Mirabel's unhappiness as signaling a set of problems or histories shared by the collective. Instead, like her husband, the group admonished her to think of her daughter's happiness and forget her own bad feelings. In her digital story, Mirabel responds to this demand by conveying the significance of the collective, not as an antidote to unhappiness but as a community that can claim one's unhappiness as part of a larger story about community life. As Ahmed (2010) observes, collective consciousness raising or understanding does not necessarily produce happiness; this is a defining paradox of liberation movements. However, the collective's ability to recognize such losses also allows one to mourn them, and 'in mourning open up other possibilities for living' (Ahmed, 2010, p. 79). So while the sharing of unhappiness does not necessarily produce happiness, the experience that one's unhappiness is a shared problem, one with inter-generational and socio-political roots, can allow one to live and to hope in spite of one's suffering. Mirabel's digital story suggests the possibilities for thinking about community as made in the *recognition* of what is shared (your unhappiness belongs to all of us), rather than in what is shared (we all feel unhappy).

And yet, in the final episode of Mirabel's digital story, the collective and the sense of participation in a collective are absent:

I am trying, but I never thought, when I finish my degree, that someday I would have to work as a cashier. I get home late. I do not have more than six hours to sleep. I feel sick inside. I do not have energy to do things better. I do not care about my English. I know I will improve. I can understand people but for me it is not enough. I need more. I know I can do better. That is why I attended the [community leadership] course, just for find myself.

This episode, which concludes Mirabel's digital story, is particularly striking in its unflinching account of difficulty and bad feelings. For the first time in her digital story, Mirabel speaks to the viewer in the present tense: she has told us something of the recent and more distant past, and in this final account places us squarely in the difficulties of the present. The repetition of short sentences and 'I' statements is a stark contrast to the more narrative quality of the earlier episodes. The tone of this final section of her story is insistent and unrelenting – 'I feel sick ...', 'I do not care ...', 'I need more ...' – and in this way resonates with her earlier responses in the storytelling circle. As in that encounter, here Mirabel depicts her unhappiness with stark clarity, and yet the tone of insistence and her unwillingness to relent in order to make us feel better conveys a profound sense of agency and inner strength. There is also an unrelenting sense of hope that seems to emerge in relation to her recognition and admission of what feels bad: 'I do not have energy to do things better ... I know I will improve,' 'for me it is not enough ... I know I can do better.'

As her repetition of the pronoun 'I' suggests, the end of her digital story depicts Mirabel as alone in her struggle and unhappiness. I wonder about the way in which Mirabel's digital story is a response not only to the conditions of her life but also to the group dynamics that greeted her story in the story circle. While Mirabel's digital story tells us about times and places in which she has felt a sense of belonging, the final episode seems to reaffirm that right now and right here in Canada, she is without a collective in which her unhappiness is recognizable. For me, Mirabel's story is an evocative object for thinking about the ways in which unhappiness may preclude one from claiming belonging or participation in a social life governed by the promise of happiness. It also suggests the ways in which discussions of unhappiness may allow us to

rethink what counts as participation, as something other than participating in the happy story of group life. Indeed, the last line of Mirabel's digital story offers a counter-narrative about the significance of participatory projects like the digital storytelling workshop, and the broader community leadership development project it is a part of. She attended the community project, Mirabel tells us, just to 'find herself.' There is ambivalence in this statement in how it conveys both the loss of some other possibility, of finding a community or sense of belonging, for example, and a resistance toward fitting into group life as the best possible outcome of such a participatory project.

Mixed feelings: resistance as a method

Mirabel's ambivalence, or 'mixed feelings,' and their significance for thinking about participation, emerge in the tension between 'we' and 'I.' There are two ambivalent stories here: the first is about the ambivalence Mirabel had to negotiate in the digital storytelling workshop between her desire to be heard by the group and the loss she experienced through the group's inability to hear her; the second is one that she shares in her digital story, which offers an account of simultaneously feeling that one's unhappiness is shared by others and that one is profoundly alone in that unhappiness. These two stories of ambivalence reveal something about the complexities of participation in the kinds of workshop groups that form through participatory media projects and in social life more generally. Both of these contexts confront us with the possibilities and difficulties of belonging, with what it means to represent the self to another other, and with the dilemma of what that knowledge of the self might have to do with the others among whom one lives one's life.

In considering Mirabel's ambivalent stories of social life, I have come to see her experiences in the workshop not as a refusal of participation, but as a productive resistance that was generative of and perhaps even the necessary condition for her participation there. Mirabel's refusal of the norms of participation in the story circle, and elsewhere, was a response to the unjust quality of those conditions, which demanded a particular kind of affect as evidence of participation. Her resistance was a method for negotiating the ambivalence that attended her experience of participation in the workshop group and in social life, more generally. Mirabel's resistances tell us something about the difficulties and ambivalences which emerge through the demand to represent the self – 'I' – for others – 'we'. While resistance can appear as a refusal to participate, or as 'a resounding "no"' directed at our 'good' intentions and plans (Pitt, 2003), it may be that resistance functions as a method of participation in the difficult work of composing a story of the self that does not require a happy ending. Likewise, when taken up by the researcher, refusal can offer 'a starting place for other qualitative analyses and interpretations of data' (Tuck & Yang, 2014a, p. 812).

Mirabel's digital story reveals the rewards of such a method when it is given the space to work for the storyteller. Many of her choices about self-representation in her final story, like many of her choices during the production process, stood out as resisting the traditions and forms of the medium. For example, Mirabel chose not to include any portraits of her face in her digital story. While this choice is already unusual, her repetitive use of images of hands (see Figures 1–4 above) rather than faces draws even greater attention to this absence. The only image she includes of herself is taken from behind and at a distance. Where is she/the narrator, one wonders. What does she look like? Mirabel's visual narrative provokes these kinds of questions and curiosities, and in doing so depicts an ambivalent position in which she is both absent and powerfully present. In another example of this, Mirabel was the only participant in the workshop who chose not to identify herself as the creator of her digital story in its final credits. She chose to remain anonymous, not by excluding her name, but by using a pseudonym – another absent-presence. Like Mirabel's willingness to narrate ambivalence in the story circle

and, in doing so, offer insight into the 'happiness duty' evident there, the ambivalent self-representation offered in her digital story reveals the kinds of psychological, social, and aesthetic complexities that may be obscured by the duty to participate enthusiastically in the traditional forms and processes of the digital storytelling workshop. Indeed, Mirabel's creative and resistant use of the workshop reminds us of its true promise.

While the notion of participation at stake in digital storytelling workshops, and other participatory media projects, may be marked by the promise of happiness, it may also be that the actual impulse toward the 'public cultures of memory' that animate such projects, and especially their deployment in systemically marginalized communities, 'stems from the need to connect with histories of trauma that have not yet been overcome' (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 7). 'One value of memoir,' Cvetkovich reminds us, 'is to track the life of the sensate being in the world ... to see how diaspora feels without screening out nostalgia or sentiment or melancholy' (emphasis in original, p. 81). Memoir 'depicts transformation as a slow and painstaking process, open-ended and marked by struggle ... the revolution and utopia are made there, not in giant transformations and rescues' (p. 80). Digital storytelling practitioners know the value of telling a story about a moment, a turning point or feeling, for the political struggle to build community and fight the 'culture of silence.'

The frequent use of participatory media by and with socio-politically marginalized communities reflects the turn to public cultures of memory that Cvetkovich describes, precisely because methods like digital storytelling implicitly prioritize the autobiographical story as politically valuable and culturally significant. In these contexts, bad feelings are 'not simply reactive; they are creative responses to histories that are unfinished' (Ahmed, 2010, p. 217). This is not to suggest that unhappiness or 'depression is thereby converted into a positive experience' but rather that such bad feelings might actually be seen as a resource for political critique, action, and community formation (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 2). As Tuck and Yang (2014b) suggest, 'refusal turns the gaze back upon power' (p. 241) and 'generates, expands, champions representational territories that colonial knowledge endeavors to settle, enclose, domesticate' (p. 242). Rather than a refusal to participate, Mirabel's refusal of the happy ending and her challenge to the transformative promise of digital storytelling might be understood as a vital form of participation in the process of self-representation and community development – in a kind of on-going political transformation that does not have happiness as its end point, but a world in which understanding unhappiness as shared allows us to mourn and to open up to new possibilities for living.

When used as tools of qualitative research, participatory media practices like digital storytelling are often positioned as processes of representation that are fairly uncomplicated: we understand participatory media as offering a process to the participant through which they can depict and communicate their experiences (Braden, 1999; Buckingham, 2009). However, Mirabel's experience suggests that the process of participatory media making is far from straightforward – for participants, facilitators, or researchers – and that the experience itself can reveal a great deal about the limits of self-representation and understanding. As this study indicates, engendering participation in such processes is not as simple as giving someone access to media and encouraging them to create. Wheeler (2009) argues that participatory media 'cannot be understood simply as a means of communicating visually about research ... [but] involves a whole series of processes that are linked to power, exclusion, fear, mistrust and voice' (p.16). Researchers must be willing to engage with these complexities as a way of understanding, through reflexivity (Pillow, 2003), the promise and limitations of their own research methods and understandings. At the same time, the complexities of the process can become a critical source of data: 'as participants grapple with the possibilities, challenges and pleasures of such things as symbolic expression, beauty, composition, narrative function and purpose, representing ambivalence and unrepresentability ... attempts to interpret them need to be sensitive to the signs of this grappling' (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014, p. 39). Observing the ways in which Mirabel mobilized resistance as a method challenges us to trouble the

seeming straightforwardness of participatory media methods and encourages us to enrich our research understanding by considering what sources of meaning our assumptions about participation might obscure.

Note

1. Pseudonym chosen by the participant.

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Notes on contributor

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Digital Story Evaluation Rubric

Author's Name: _____

The following rubric will be used to evaluate your Digital Story. This rubric is based on the guidelines discussed in class for creating a digital story.

Categories	Excellent to Supreme 7-10	Good to Very Good 5-6	Satisfactory 4-4.5	Unacceptable 0-3	Score
Content (Critical Incident)					
Rationale for choice of critical incident and context	Clear rationale for choice of particular critical incident, identifies what initial beliefs were about incident, interprets significance of incident in context of school and wider society.	Rationale for choice of particular critical incident apparent, identifies what initial beliefs were about incident, interprets possible significance of incident in context of school and wider society.	Rationale for choice of particular critical incident somewhat apparent, attempts to identify what initial beliefs were about incident and significance of incident in context of school and wider society.	No rationale evident for choice of particular critical incident, does not identify what initial beliefs were about incident nor possible significance of incident in context of school and wider society.	
Outline of incident	Clearly describes key features of incident, chronology of events in the incident are clearly understandable.	Describes key features of incident, chronology of events in the incident are stated.	Somewhat describes key features of incident, chronology of events in the incident are unclear.	Does not describe key features of incident, chronology of events in the incident are not explained.	
Demonstrates learning that involves the whole person	Critically reflects and shows evidence of learning that involves the whole person; clearly shows how the incident impacted on their emotions, thoughts, beliefs and actions.	Evidence of reflection and learning that shows how the incident impacted on their emotions, thoughts, beliefs and actions.	Little evidence of reflection that shows how the incident impacted on their emotions, thoughts, beliefs and actions.	No evidence of reflection, does not show how the incident impacted on their emotions, thoughts, beliefs and actions.	
Draws on other perspectives and time frames	Critically reflects and draws on other perspectives about incident, including literature & colleagues. Considers incident in different ways and within different time frames.	Reflects and draws on other perspectives about incident. Considers incident in different ways and within different time frames.	Little evidence of reflection on other perspectives about incident, or consideration of incident in different ways or within different time frames.	No evidence of reflection on other perspectives about incident, or consideration of incident in different ways or within different time frames.	
Demonstrates change in thoughts or actions	Clearly conveys how critical incident has changed their thoughts and/or actions.	Conveys how critical incident has changed their thoughts and/or actions.	Somewhat conveys how critical incident has changed their thoughts and/or actions.	Does not convey how critical incident has changed their thoughts and/or actions.	
Evidence of integration of theory and practice	Incorporates at least three quotations from academic literature about teaching and learning that hold significant meaning for them in relation	Incorporates two quotations from academic literature about teaching and learning that hold significant meaning for	Incorporates one quotation from academic literature about teaching and learning that holds significant meaning for	Does not incorporate quotations from academic literature about teaching and learning in relation to critical incident.	

Rubric based on School of Ed. critical incident criteria and assessment rubric provided by the Center for Digital Storytelling, www.storycenter.org, used with permission. Adheres to NUI grade bands. 1

Digital Story Evaluation Rubric

Categories	to critical incident.	them in relation to critical incident.	them in relation to critical incident.	Score
	Excellent to Supreme 5	Good to Very Good 3	Satisfactory 1	Unacceptable 0
Planning				
Working Portfolio	Working Portfolio includes complete and detailed planning materials: € Brainstorming sheet € Story drafts € Story map € Storyboard, € Final script € Resources page € Reflective write-up	Working Portfolio includes most required planning materials.	Working Portfolio includes some required planning materials.	Working Portfolio does not include any of the required planning materials.
Storyboard	Complete and detailed evidence of planning throughout entire storyboard, including sketches, sequencing, pacing, script, images, music and sound. Reflective write-up is within the 800-1000 word count.	Evidence of planning through most of the storyboard, including sketches, sequencing, pacing, script, images, music and sound.	Evidence of planning through some of the storyboard, including sketches, sequencing, pacing, script, images, music and sound.	Little to no evidence of planning, including minimally completed sketches, sequencing, pacing, script, images, music and sound.
Reflective write-up	Write-up clearly conveys the author's feelings on the making of the digital story, explaining both the <i>process</i> of making the film and how they feel about the <i>product</i> .	Reflective write-up is 5% above or below the expected word count. Write-up conveys the author's feelings on the making of the digital story.	Reflective write-up is 10% above or below the expected word count. Write-up somewhat conveys the author's feelings on the making of the digital story.	Reflective write-up is not included in the working portfolio.
Mechanics				
Citation of Sources	All sources (including images, sounds/music and quotes) are cited completely and accurately in the Resources page. (Google images is NOT cited as a source.)	Most sources are cited completely and accurately in the Resources page.	Some sources are cited completely and/or accurately in the Resources page.	No sources are cited in the Resources page.
Length	Length of digital story is between the required 3-5 minutes.	Length of digital story is 30 seconds shorter or longer than the required 3-5	Length of digital story is one minute shorter or longer than the required 3-	Length of digital story is more than one minute shorter or longer than the

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Digital Story Evaluation Rubric

Categories	Excellent to Supreme 5	Good to Very Good 3	Satisfactory 1	Unacceptable 0	Score
Grammar and spelling	Grammar and spelling are correct (for the dialect chosen) and contribute greatly to clarity, style and story development.	Grammar and spelling are mostly correct (for the dialect chosen) and contribute to clarity, style and story development.	Grammar and spelling are somewhat correct, but errors detract from the story.	Repeated errors in grammar and spelling detract greatly from the story.	
Story Structure					
Dramatic Statement	Use of strong dramatic statement; opening statements demonstrate thoughtfulness and creativity and engage audience in an interesting and subtle fashion.	Use of dramatic statement; opening statements demonstrate thoughtfulness and creativity and engage audience.	Use of dramatic statement; opening statement somewhat engages audience.	No dramatic statement apparent; opening statement does not engage the audience or has no relationship to the rest of the story.	
Personal narrative	Story is clearly told in the first person, conveys why events are important and how they affected the author, expresses the author's thoughts and feelings throughout, and includes many relevant sensory details.	Story is told in the first person, conveys why some events are important and how they affected the author, expresses the author's thoughts and feelings, and includes some relevant sensory details.	Story is mostly told in the first person, reason behind importance of events and how they affected the author is lacking, author's thoughts and feelings are not well expressed, includes few relevant sensory details.	Story is not told in the first person, importance of events and how they affected the author is missing, author's thoughts, feelings and/or relevant sensory details are not included.	
Economy of story	The story is told with exactly the right amount of detail throughout. It does not seem too short nor does it seem too long. Only language necessary to further plot and complete story arc is used.	The story is mostly told with the right amount of detail throughout. However, it does need slightly more detail in some sections, or seems to drag somewhat in others. Very little unnecessary language is used.	The story seems to need more editing. It is noticeably too long or too short in more than one section. Some unnecessary language is used.	The story needs extensive editing. It is too long or too short in many sections. A great deal of unnecessary language is used.	
Resolution of dramatic question	Dramatic question is clearly resolved. Story is concluded through the use of details that allow the audience to interpret the message of the story. The audience feels satisfied and is given the opportunity to think about the content.	The story concludes with enough information to provide a response to the dramatic question. The audience feels satisfied and the conclusion does not sound preachy.	The story concludes with the resolution to the dramatic question. The audience feels satisfied, although the conclusion may be moralizing or preachy.	The conclusion does not address the dramatic question, is not a logical conclusion given the content of the story, or the story trails off without a response to the dramatic question.	

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Digital Story Evaluation Rubric

Categories	Excellent to Supreme 5	Good to Very Good 3 Use of Technology	Satisfactory 1	Unacceptable 0	Score
Images complement and help convey the ideas in the script	Implicit imagery used to convey information that is not contained in the script but that adds to storyline and sense of satisfaction with the story. Tone of the visuals is aligned with tone of the story or is juxtaposed to the story with specific intent.	Some use of implicit imagery to convey information not contained in the script. Images enhance the audience's experience of the story. Tone of most visuals is aligned with the tone of the story.	Limited use of implicit imagery to convey information not contained in the script. Most images reflect the voiceover exactly and do not provide additional information. Tone of some visuals is aligned with the tone of the story.	Many images undermine intent of story. Almost all images reflect the voiceover exactly and do not add any new information to the script. Tone of visuals is not aligned with the tone of the story.	
Soundtrack (optional) contributes to the message of the story	Soundtrack choice enhances sense of satisfaction with the story and makes it more interesting. Soundtrack does not interfere with ability to hear voiceover and adds greatly to the emotional tone of the story.	Soundtrack enhances sense of satisfaction with story. Soundtrack does not interfere with ability to hear voiceover and adds to emotional tone of story.	Soundtrack somewhat enhances story. Level of soundtrack interferes with ability to hear voiceover.	Soundtrack interferes with ability to hear voiceover and/or undermines purpose of story or makes it impossible to understand story.	
Voiceover supports purpose and tone of story	Voiceover is clearly audible, voice inflections and pacing draws audience in and creates intimacy with authentic emotion.	Voiceover is clearly audible. Voice inflections and pacing in most of the script makes it easy to listen to and engage with the story.	Voiceover is mostly audible. Some interest created with inflection and pacing.	Voiceover is difficult or impossible to hear or is missing. Interest is lost due to lack of inflection and pacing.	
Student utilizes video editing software effectively	Exceptional use of movie editing software. Titles, transitions and effects used effectively and greatly enhance the experience of watching the digital story.	Effective use of movie editing software. Titles, transitions and effects used effectively and enhance the experience of watching the digital story.	Titles, transitions and effects under or over used, and can distract from story.	Titles, transitions and effects under or over used, or not used at all. No evidence of knowing how to apply movie editing effects.	
Possible points: With Soundtrack: 130 Without Soundtrack: 125		130	125	Final %:	
				Points out of 40:	

