Engaging the Community in Civil War Studies with Digital Video

ANDREW STOTZ, SAVILLA BANISTER AND JOHN FISCHER

6TH, 7TH, 8TH GRADES U.S. HISTORY, SOCIOLOGY

NCSS Thematic Strand
TIME, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Performance Expectations

c. Identify and describe selected historical periods and patterns of change within and across cultures.
d. Identify and use processes important to reconstructing and reinterpreting the past, such as using a variety of sources, providing, validating, and weighing evidence for claims, checking credibility of sources and searching for causality.

NETS-S National Educational Technology Standards for Students

3. Technology productivity tools
5. Technology communication tools

Performance Expectations

4. Use content-specific tools, software, and simulations (e.g., environmental probes, graphing calculators, exploratory environments, Web tools) to support learning and research.
6. Design, develop, publish, and present products (e.g., Web pages, videotapes) using technology resources that demonstrate and communicate curriculum concepts to audiences inside and outside the classroom.

Introduction

Students use text and web resources to research key elements of the Civil War with emphasis on original sources. From this evidence, students, working in groups, develop a storyboard to support their thesis on causes, battles, slavery, and other identified themes. The storyboard is used to identify media elements (text, audio, video, images) to be used in a digital video to present the information and arguments constructed. These digital videos are based in part on the work of Joe Lambert and the Digital Storytelling workshop.1 These movies are put on DVD to share with community and family members along with displays, reenactments and arts presentations.

Objectives

1. The student will be able to construct a digital video that illustrates significant elements and themes demonstrating key features of the Civil War.
2. The student will be able to locate reliable and appropriate information on his or her selected Civil War topic through the use of Internet search protocols, as well as other resources.
3. The student will be able to collect detailed analysis of sources and data related to key aspects of the civil war era.
4. The student will be able to construct, edit and present narratives that explain key elements of the civil war era.

Time
Approximately 4 or 5 one-hour sessions.

Instructional Steps

Students have previously been engaged in a unit on the study of the Civil War. During the unit they hear from speakers, read texts (fiction and non-fiction), collect notes, images and data about the Civil War and work to create a data-rich environment in the classroom.

As the end of the unit approaches students are informed that the cluster/team will be hosting a “Civil War Day” for their parents, friends and community members. The day occurs on a Saturday and lasts for approximately 3 hours.

As part of the day, student projects will be created, displayed and presented. Included in the projects will be student-made display boards on individual themes and aspects of the Civil War. Groups will be asked to perform music, stage reenactments, model costumes and engage community members in activities. As a major part of the day students and teachers will share digital videos created by students to share informa-
tion and images about the various themes studied as part of the Civil War.

Assigning Themes
After introducing the culminating project, brainstorm themes related to the stories, images, data and information students have been gathering and displaying on the walls of the classroom. These themes might reflect people they are studying (e.g. Harriet Tubman, Robert E. Lee). The themes might also reflect essential questions students have been trying to answer (e.g. What was life like for slaves?). After delineating various themes, form students into groups and have them choose themes they would like to work on.

Designing Storyboards
( http://www.storycenter.org/memvoice/pages/tutorial_3.html )
Place key steps in the development process on the time line: research and data, script development, recording of script, collection of images and graphics, merging of images and script, addition of musical soundtrack.

Research and data—students gather data, historical accounts and information about their theme.
Script development—students develop a storyboard with a script to be spoken as part of the soundtrack.
Recording of script—using digital video software, students record the script. Insert pauses of silence wherever music is expected to go.
Collection of images and graphics—students sort images and resize them to help illustrate script.
Addition of musical soundtrack—students load sound/music and adjust volume to allow spoken script to be heard.

Sharing Projects
Civil War Day provides one opportunity to gather an authentic audience for student projects. Various laptops might run next to student display boards in a museum type environment. Also, select projects might be projected on to large screens or walls and shared with larger groups at one time.

Assessment
Students are presented with a rubric at the beginning of the culminating project section of the Civil War Unit. The rubric scores them on key aspects of the project including: research
and data, quality of presentation constructed, actual presentation to parents and community members. ([http://www.ncrel.org/tech/nets/rubrics.htm](http://www.ncrel.org/tech/nets/rubrics.htm) and [http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php](http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php))

**Student Enrichment**
Working with digital video provides many opportunities for student enrichment. Students can be involved in multiple areas of the digital video creation process and can become room experts at various aspects including: sound, editing, graphics, script development.

Students might also work to enhance the community day by contacting historical organizations and inviting them to share in the events.

**Teaching Tips**
This lesson, and the digital projects that are created as a part of it, works best when various students are responsible for small pieces of the final products.

Each student must be required to:
- Conduct research
- Participate in the production of a product
- Have a role in the community day

**Technology Resources**

**Hardware**
Computers with Internet access for research
Macintosh computers (iMovie, iDVD) or Windows (Movie Maker)

**Software**
Internet browser (Internet Explorer, Safari, Mozilla FireFox, etc.)
iMovie, iPhoto, iDVD, all included in Macintosh operating system or MovieMaker for Windows operating system

**Resources**

**Internet**
http://americancivilwar.com/civil.html
http://www.civilwarhome.com/
http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war/warweb.html
http://www.cwclsu.edu/

**Notes**