

Integrated Media Literacy Project

Researching an Era: Multi-Media Presentations (Secondary Grades)

Project Description

Using slideshow creation software ([e.g. Keynote, PowerPoint, or Impress from Open Office (<http://www.openoffice.org/download/>)] and Voicethread (www.voicethread.com) students can compile research about the lives of everyday people in other eras, gaining historical context for the novels they are reading (in our example, research about the lives of 1960s teenagers supported a novel study for *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton). After conducting their research, students can build multi-media projects using Voicethread, including slides, images, and voice recordings that present their research with accompanying narration.

Before the Project

- Research and Learning: Classes should review the project outline before starting the project, deciding their research focus and criteria (e.g. social issues, current events, family life) and begin their research as time permits. In our project, because all students were exploring the same era, each student group explored a different aspect that appeared in characters' lives in *The Outsiders* (eg. clothing, colloquialisms, contemporary social events, etc).
- Technical and Media Setup:
 - Teachers can either pay to create a master class account and invite students to join Voicethread, or invite individual or partnered students to create their own accounts for free and "share" their presentations with their teacher. For manageability, we recommend that students work in pairs or small groups while creating their projects.
 - Teachers should review Voicethread in advance to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the tool. For example, students can upload images, videos, documents and PowerPoint presentations, then can record narration to accompany each slide. However, the length of the narration becomes the length of time each slide appears in the presentation. Students can also leave comments on each others' presentations, but these comments (in text, video or voice recording) play/appear upon each slide, and lengthen the amount of time each slide remains on the screen. We recommend that teachers watch Voicethread's video tutorials to gather ideas for how best to use Voicethread for this and other projects.
 - Students and teachers should ensure that there are voice recording capabilities (sound cards and microphones) on their computers, or (if this is not available) should instead test and use the phone recording application within Voicethread.

First Online Session

- Teachers can start their session by reviewing the project outline, research criteria, and rubric. Students should also review proper methods of referencing their online and traditional

Integrated Media Literacy Project

information sources, as well as techniques for confirming that information is both true and complete.

- Students can start their projects by organizing their project slides in their slideshow software based on their research criteria. As part of their planning, students should leave room for video clips and images. While researching their chosen era and topics, students should enter information into their slideshow and including references at the bottom of each slide. They should also be sure that the slides contain only small amounts of text; more detailed or explanatory information can and should be provided in the Voicethread narration.

Second Session

- Teachers can start this session with an introduction to Voicethread, explaining the program's parameters and allowing students the opportunity to view a number of sample presentations to gather ideas for their own projects.
- Once students have explored the Voicethread website, and after they have completed their slideshows, they can create Voicethread accounts and upload their slideshow files.
- While working to add videos, images and web-links to their presentations, students can plan their narration in detail, ensuring that it is informative and coherent, yet also concise, so as to avoid an overly long amount of time spent on each slide.
- Students should be encouraged to work on their projects independently and at home, recording narration in a quiet space.

Third Session

- Students should log into their Voicethread account and undertake the last tasks to complete their project. Partners/groups should also be sure to play their projects in their entirety, and make any last revisions before playing their work in front of the class.
- In situations where the teacher has created a master account, students should share their project to their teachers account; in the case of students having independent accounts, they should share their presentations with their teacher by email or to the teacher's independent account.
- If and when time permits, student presentations can be shared for online viewing, or using a projector and speakers, can be played for the whole class. It should be noted that to export a project for offline viewing there is a small cost (approximately \$2-3 per project). During the screening, students can take notes for possible test questions and can ask clarifying or probing questions about the topic.
- To engage students in reflecting about their online learning, ask students:
 - What research strategies did you use to complete your project? How did you organize yourself and your project team?
 - How did you verify the information you were gathering? How were you able to confirm its truthfulness and completeness?

Integrated Media Literacy Project

- Did using Voicethread as a tool for your project assist you in learning the era you were studying? Why or why not?
- What other ways could you use Voicethread for your class projects? How could you make use of the interactive comments feature for other topics of study?

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