2 Digital story telling

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Introduction

Story telling is an important aspect of our lives, whether it is informal among family and friends, bringing a sense of coherence to our lives, fiction or non-fiction, or formal within our school curriculum and our working lives. Developing the creativity of children is an essential aspect of both formal and informal development. Barrett (2006) aligns digital story telling with student-centred learning strategies: student engagement, reflection for deep learning, project-based learning, and the effective integration of technology into learning, while Robin (2008) focuses on active learning.

With respect to terminology, Ohler (2007, viii) argues that story telling comes first, digital second and supports a change in terminology to 'story digitalising'; an argument many primary teachers would support. Sadik (2008: 480) describes digital story telling as 'a simple but powerful method to help students to make sense of the complex and unordered world of experience by crafting story lines', and Skinner and Hagood (2008: 12) as 'an opportunity for children and adolescents to design multimodal narratives that represent and reflect upon their lives and interests'. As a teacher it is therefore essential you plan for the development of story telling with your pupils and then consider which technologies might support your pupils. Try not to let the technology distract from the story.

This chapter focuses on digital story telling through the lens of the teacher facilitating their pupils to create digital stories. However, you may also want to consider creating your own digital stories to use in class to help to explain difficult concepts, facilitate discussion and engage pupils in the content. This chapter will start by examining how we can teach story telling in the primary classroom and then examines the range of technology that might be utilised to enhance the telling of the story. Case study examples of how teachers have incorporated digital story telling into their classrooms at two primary schools are shared. We will now look at the objectives for this chapter.

Objectives

At the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- state what digital story telling means in the primary classroom;
- plan for digital story telling in your classroom, drawing on appropriate pedagogy;
- explain a range of technologies associated with digital story telling;
- consider how you might assess digital story telling.

What does story mean in the primary classroom?

'A story has a beginning, a middle, and a cleanly wrapped-up ending' (Alexander and Levine, 2008: 20), but with new technologies stories may not follow this formula, indeed new technologies enable the primary classroom to facilitate digital story telling including hyperlinks, different media, different paths to follow in the story and may include the participation of others from across the globe in writing the story.

In creating a digital story pupils will develop a range of skills in researching, using technologies and developing storyboards to organise and construct their story or narrative (Banaszewski, 2005). You might also want to extend the activity to include self or peer assessment, thus providing opportunities for your pupils to critique their own work or the work of others.

Robin (2008) introduces three distinct types of stories: 'personal narratives', 'stories that inform or instruct' and 'stories that examine historical events', while Sadik (2008: 287) focuses on 'authentic learning tasks using digital storytelling'. Ohler (2008) talks of pupils being encouraged to engage emotionally and give their viewpoint, possibly through a news report of a day at school, or a field trip.

Digital story telling links to the school curriculum through 'speaking and listening'. Robin (2008: 220) describes digital story telling as 'a powerful teaching and learning tool that engages both teachers and their students'.

Task 2.1 Introducing digital story telling into your classroom

Having had an introduction to story telling, consider the key aspects of pedagogy you will need to consider when preparing to introduce digital story telling to your classroom. Write down the key aspects of pedagogy and then consider how these will need to be considered in relation to digital story telling. Think about the changes you may need to make to the arrangement of your classroom and what you will need to consider about the children in your class. Then think about the technology aspect of digital story telling. Consider what you have access to in terms of technology, what technologies your class know how to use, or could learn to use through their digital stories. Make a list of the technologies alongside your pedagogy. Keep these in front of you while you read the rest of this chapter and add your reflections to them as you develop your knowledge and understanding of digital story telling and how you could use it in your classroom.

Pedagogy

Story telling can engage reluctant learners and those who might find story telling using their own drawings or handwriting challenging. The BBC (www.bbc.co.uk) defines digital story telling as 250 words, a dozen or so pictures and two minutes in length. They align the need for definition to that of poetry, requiring constraints to define the form, for example a haiku is a poem written using 17 syllables, and the 14 lines of a sonnet are written in iambic pentameter. However, there are no specific rules for story

telling so you can create your own – you may want to create rules with your class through a 'brain storming' activity.

You will need to start by identifying the learning outcomes for the project. You should refer to Bloom *et al.*'s (1956) Taxonomy when writing learning outcomes. You will also want to consider the elements of literacy that you are going to develop and include a learning outcome relating to the development of the use of technology. An excellent example of integrating literacy can be seen in the Eureka School case study later in this chapter. You will need to set clear goals for your pupils to achieve. You might want to link the goals to timings to ensure the project completes on time, and you may want to link each goal to assessment criteria. Remember to build in formative assessment. If this is going to be a project over several lessons you may want to devise a checklist to help your pupils to see how they are moving forward and so that you can ensure deadlines are met. Remember to build in sufficient time for the end phase of the digital story; adding titles, music and transitions develops creativity in the classroom but needs careful time management. At this planning stage consider your pupils and how they learn. Digital story telling can be a good way to encompass learning styles. When you are planning your digital story telling project try to consider how you might incorporate Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (1999) such as kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, visual-spatial, naturalistic and rhythmic.

Digital stories can be made in groups or individually, therefore you will need to decide whether your class will work as a group or individually. When groups are working together to construct a story you are facilitating them in constructing knowledge in a social context, known as a constructivist approach to learning, as well as fostering active learning (Sadik, 2008). Working as a group can enhance pupils' experience of writing the story and can help to develop literacy skills to a higher level. Désilets and Paquet (2005) discuss a collaborative group story telling project using a wiki, setting out the experience in sessions in order that other teachers can follow the same process. Their findings indicate that allowing groups to self-organise can be more beneficial. Within groups the more computer literate are able to help those who are less literate.

The next stage will be how to introduce digital story telling into the classroom (Weis *et al.*, 2002). How you do this will depend on how much story telling your class has already completed and their ability to use associated hardware and software. You might want groups to brainstorm possible stories if they are going to be working in groups, you might want to invite in a professional story teller to share some stories to help individuals to explore their own creativity in story writing (an example can be seen in the Whitemoor Academy (Case study 2.2 below)), or you may have finished a curriculum topic and want the stories to reflect an element of the topic.

You will need to decide early on what type of 'digital' story you want your pupils to complete. This may be based on their age or knowledge of using technologies, for example you may want to start with an audio digital story using digital voice-recording hardware, or appropriate software such as audacity (www.audacity.com) pre-installed on class computers, or tablet recording Apps, before moving them to video cameras, etc. Whatever you decide to use, you will need to check that it is working and plan for charging time so that you don't run out of power at a crucial stage. You will find more information on hardware and software later in this chapter.

An example of how digital stories can be introduced into the classroom is given in Case study 2.1.

Case study 2.1 Digital story telling at Eureka Primary School with Years 4 and 5

This case study focuses on one of many stimulating ways digital story telling is utilised at Eureka Primary School, Midway, Derbyshire (see Figure 2.1). This is a smaller than average primary school with a larger then average number of children with special needs, disabilities and English as a second language. The school has been using digital story telling in various ways to develop literacy and phonics for a number of years. Various software is used to enhance digital stories such as Flip Flaps for creating storyboards, animation software, KerPoof, Scratch and the school's virtual learning platform. Teachers encourage the pupils to choose which technologies to use in their digital story telling and when needed the teachers show pupils how to use the different technologies, gradually building computing skills. In this case study the use of Myst, a graphic adventure video game, provides a focus for digital story telling. Myst puts the player in the role of a 'stranger' who uses a special book to travel to the island of Myst; as images unfold on the screen pupils are encouraged by their teacher to explore their imaginations and develop creativity while writing their stories. At the start of the project, which lasts several weeks, the pupils are encouraged to create on a character profile of their stranger, including aspects such as appearance, behaviour, thoughts, what others think of their character and their likes and dislikes.

At the start of the lesson the teacher displays Myst on a whiteboard with a mixed group of Years 4 and 5 and facilitates the class, who take it in turns to say which way the stranger should go. Next to the whiteboard is a flipchart with key literacy terms that are being developed through the project: nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, similes, metaphors, personification, alliterations and onomatopoeia. These are referred to throughout the activities. The teacher initially leads each session to review what has happened previously in the digital story, drawing out key literacy terms that the pupils have learnt and encouraging them to use in their digital stories. The teacher encourages the pupils to engage with the video game through using their senses to think how the stranger feels in different areas of the island and asking them to write their feelings in their books using specific aspects of literacy that are being learned. Each segment of film lasts only a couple of minutes and is then paused while the pupils use this stimuli to write more on their own digital story, applying different aspects of literacy. Pupils are then encouraged to share what they have written both in pairs and with the whole group, receiving praise and encouragement throughout by their teacher, thus receiving formative feedback to develop their sentences further.

Each lesson moves the pupils further forward in their development of key literacy terms and also moves them forward in discovering different aspects of Myst Island, through which they are developing their own digital stories. The engagement, enjoyment, development of literacy and development of creativity through stimulating imaginations makes it exciting for pupils and impacts on their developing stories and engagement in the lessons. Differentiation is observed through the development of their stories and ways in which pupils are able to share progress with each other, supporting peers through feedback and thus developing their self-esteem and confidence.

Generally storyboards are introduced early into the process, how much time is given to this process will depend on your class's previous experience. A storyboard can consist

Figure 2.1 Pupils from Eureka Primary School developing their digital story.

of a piece of paper split into boxes; pupils organise ideas into a coherent story then write into each box the order of the story. With digital story telling you would also ask pupils to include information on which technologies they will be using, etc. You may need to explain how to use different hardware or software, although most pupils will have developed knowledge of a range of these informally at home and more formally through school. You may want to brainstorm a range of appropriate technologies and software and identify 'champions' for each one that other pupils can go to for help during the project. An example of a storyboard from the Whitemoor Academy case study can be seen in Figure 2.2.

As your pupils develop their digital story they will need to solve many problems, including those experienced when using technologies. This will develop your pupils' computational thinking and digital wisdom skills.

Task 2.2 e-Safety

e-Safety is an aspect of every teacher's role that has to be learned and embedded into practice. Take some time now to familiarise yourself with your school's policy. Find out whether you will need to send letters home to parents, and if so how early you will need to do this in relation to the start of the digital story telling activity. Research any sites you will use from the Internet for digital story telling. Look at the CEOP site (see above) – what else can you learn from this site that will help you in preparing for the digital story telling activity?

Put this evidence in your PDP (Professional Development Portfolio) to show awareness of eSafety.

If you are going to use software that may expose your pupils to the Internet, or have plans to upload stories to YouTube or other social networks you will need to consider eSafety access and rules. In your planning ensure you are familiar with your school's eSafety policy; for further information, a good starting point is the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (www.ceop.police.net) and its ThinkUKnow (www.thinkuknow.co.uk) site, or the eSafety resources produced by the Association of Information Technology in Teacher Education (www.itte.org.uk). (See also Chapter 19.)

You will also need to consider health and safety. For example how will the class be working, in groups or individually; how will you organise the classroom? You will need to consider trailing wires and the space the pupils will be working in. If you're going to be on a field trip when the digital story telling is going to take place you will need to ensure you have met all health and safety requirements for the trip, and consider how you will charge equipment, how it will be used on the trip and how you will back up any copies.

At this point consider the whole process of the activity and what additional preparation you will need to do such as creating a folder for the work to be stored, searching for appropriate images and sounds for your pupils to access, and ensuring there are sufficient microphones. Decide on the range of technologies your pupils will have access to; will they need any helpsheets, or video clips on how to use some of the technologies (TeacherTube and YouTube have short video clips on many technologies that you might be able to utilise); remember to check access to video clips through your school's firewall.

Part of the preparation needs to focus on how you will assess. As with any task that is going to be assessed you need to have criteria that you must share with your pupils. You may want to award marks for different aspects such as the story elements of literacy, planning, artefacts created such as the storyboard, literacy skills, use of technology and overall presentation of content. Your consideration of literacy may include various literacies such as written, oral, cultural, information and visual. You will also want to make clear links to the curriculum the school follows and identify which aspects will be assessed. If the story has been developed by a group you may want to assess how each pupil worked within the team. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) discuss the importance of formative assessment and its impact on development, progression and motivation. You may want to build in some peer and self-assessment formative feedback to help individuals/groups to develop their digital story at planned times during the project, such as during the development of the storyboard.

Finally, consider how pupils will share their final digital stories and with whom. For example, in the Eureka case study the digital stories were shared within the class and at Whitemoor Academy they were shared with a wider community of parents and other schools. Sharing stories will provide a sense of achievement and celebration.

You may want your pupils to use a blog (see Chapter 3) so they can reflect regularly on the development of their digital story, such as problems solved and new skills and knowledge developed, thus developing skills in criticality. Their blog could include how they would improve their digital story and what they will do next time they have this opportunity. You can use this information to plan future lessons, ensuring opportunities for your pupils to develop any identified weaknesses. You may want to give parents access to the blogs so they can provide support at home and share the experience.

What technology can I use?

There is a whole range of technology available to support digital story telling, some of which has already been mentioned, such as digital voice recorders and video cameras. It is not the intention to provide a definitive list of technologies because what you use will depend on your pupils and availability, and new technologies have become available since the publication of this book. There are websites that will provide suggestions for technology such as www.whiteboardblog.co.uk/2011/06/10-tools-for-digital-storytelling-in-class/.

When considering your pupils think about what they would benefit from using or what they have used before that would enhance the story. Remember to encourage your pupils to incorporate the technology they plan to use into the storyboard.

Technologies you may want to consider are: computer or tablet; scanner, camera or mobile technology such as phone or tablet with camera facility for creating images; microphone (this doesn't need to be expensive and your computer/tablet may have one built in); speakers/sound (again most computers/ tablets have speakers built in); webcams; digital recorders; Flip cameras; Green Screen (these can be expensive, but you may well be able to borrow one locally); printer; tripods; range of software such as Audacity, video editing software, Adobe and PowerPoint. Remember to consider pupils' level of digital literacy, which will impact on this activity – for example, can they create folders, manipulate text and images, upload files from flip cameras, edit to add titles, voice and sounds? Build in time to let pupils experiment and learn new technologies from each other. You might want to ask pupils to create simple clips of how to use key equipment and upload to your school Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for others to follow, or reuse TeacherTube clips that explain the different technologies.

Web 2.0 technologies may also be used in digital story telling. For example, you may want to utilise a blog space as suggested above to tell a powerful story of their experience. If you have permissions, you may decide to upload the video stories your class have made to YouTube for wider sharing. Désilets and Paquet (2005: 1) found that being able to write and share stories with the general public can be a 'powerful incentive' to write; some primary schools use Twitter for pupils to tell a story with each pupil adding a 'tweet' and taking the story in different directions. You might also want to use an image-sharing website such as Flickr as a resource of images for your class to access, or to upload specific images that your class then uses as the basis for the story. Alternatively you may want to utilise a wiki, such as www.pbworks.co.uk or http://docs.google.com for groups to develop a story collaboratively (Désilets and Paquet, 2005), or KerPoof referred to earlier. You might also encourage your class to use Voicethread (www.voicethread.com) to create image slides then add audio to each slide; with this software others can add to the story so it has multiple voices.

If you feel overwhelmed with ideas of different technologies a useful place to start is with InAnimateAlice (www.inanimatealice.com).This site has an interactive story about Alice, that you can use as a starting point, and comes with a free-to-download education pack including links to the primary national curriculum, a starter activities booklet, resources and information for parents. Equally, you may want your class to create an audio story then upload this to your school VLE or other Internet site to share their story as a podcast.

Finally, you will want to think about how your pupils will present their digital stories. Is this going to be a presentation just to you and their class, or more widely such as in Case study 2.2?

Task 2.3 Digital story telling – considering technologies

Consider how you might approach the range of Web 2.0 technologies outlined above with your class in their next story telling project. In starting this task you might want to reflect back on a story telling project you have either taught yourself or observed being taught. Think about whether this activity could have been enhanced through the use of Web 2.0 technologies, such as prompts or a starting point using Flickr with all of the children starting at the same point, then developing their own middle and ending. You might want to consider making a story of the children writing their stories using a Flip camera, or your mobile phone, and upload it to the school's VLE, school website, or YouTube so the class can show their family and friends.

Put your reflections on how you would approach digital story telling in your PDP folder to evidence developing practice.

Case study 2.2 Whitemoor Academy's use of digital story telling in the classroom

This case study focuses on a project with Year 5 pupils. Whitemoor Academy is a larger-than-average sized primary school with above average numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language. Through a successful bid for external funding the school were able to buy in a project co-ordinator for their digital story project who had worked for the Broadway Cinema in Nottingham. The project, which was a week-long project on story telling, started with pupils watching a long sequence from the film 'War of the Worlds'. This was followed by various activities to stimulate creativity and story telling. For example, the pupils all thought about someone they might have lost during the 'war', either a fictional character or someone they knew, and were encouraged to bring in photos from home and create a 'missing person' poster. Each pupil wrote a diary event imagining they had lived through the first day of the war shown in the film sequence. In the next activity pupils were split into two groups – one group spent the day working on a short film with help from the co-ordinator with no talking and music chosen by the teacher. They then recorded their voices and were shown how to add this to the film they were making. In the film pupils were encouraged to use their imagination and act out what they thought might happen next in the 'War of the Worlds' film. The second group spent a day making a news story in groups of four: a reporter, an eyewitness to an event, an anchorman and a weather person. The group wrote the story, filmed it, then used green screen technology to film a weather forecast. The project co-ordinator again supported this activity, bringing in professional lighting and film cameras. The pupils then went through a similar project using the film 'I am Legend', which developed their creativity in describing landscapes, etc. Each pupil wrote a digital story using a storyboard (see Figure 2, for example) and incorporating specific aspects of literacy such as personification, first person and onomatopoeia. One pupil said it was their best literacy lesson ever and made learning literacy fun.

The films the pupils made were initially shown to the group, then the school. The films are also to be shown to parents at a special film event and the pupils have been

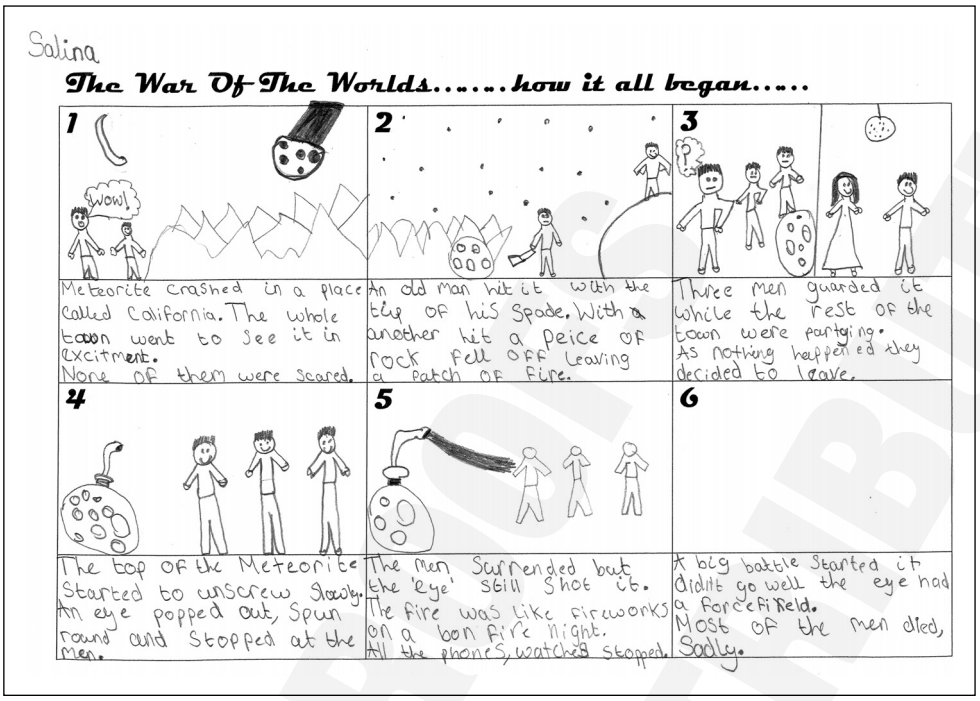

Figure 2.2 Storyboard developed by a pupil at Whitemoor Primary School.

invited to broadway cinema, along with pupils from other schools involved in similar projects, to see their films on the big screen.

Task 2.4 Using film to stimulate digital story telling

Reflect on a film you have seen that you could utilise in teaching your pupils digital story telling. Think about the section of the film you might show to pupils and where you might end it to encourage your pupils to think creatively about the next part of the film. Consider the planning stages you will need to work through to turn this into a live project; what are the challenges you face? What artefacts will you need to create for your project?: think about a storyboard, poster, mind map, list of key literacy words, film observation sheet. Next consider which technologies and software are available for you to use for this project. Now plan the project in more detail, including a session plan with aims, objectives, differentiation and assessment criteria.

Put this evidence in your PDP to show how you will use literacy to develop a digital story using a range of technologies. If you are a student teacher, talk to your mentor about putting this project into practice.

Summary and key points

In this chapter we have explored what digital story telling means in the primary classroom and how you might use this in your professional practice. The digital aspect of story telling will change as new technologies are introduced. You have learned that the story can be the main element through which you introduce your class to new technologies, creative writing and literacy elements of the National Curriculum.

However you decide to teach digital story telling, remember to plan it carefully, consider the pedagogy, development of knowledge and technology effectively and creatively, then consider which tools will be the most appropriate, thus developing pupils' digital wisdom (Prensky, 2010).

If you are a student teacher check which requirements for your course you have addressed through this chapter.

Further reading

Ohler, J. (2007) *Digital storytelling in the classroom: New media pathways to literacy, learning, and creativity*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.

Additional resources and websites

www.cyanworlds.com/products/index.php. Myst, referred to in the Eureka Primary School case study, can be downloaded at from this site.

www.dsaweb.org is the Center for Digital Storytelling and has further advice and support materials. Accessed on 8 April, 2013.

www.iste.org/learn/computational-thinking is a useful site for continuing research into computational thinking introduced in this chapter.

www.kerpoof.com is owned and operated by Walt Disney and provides a 'place' for children in primary education to create digital stories and explore creativity.

www.teachmeet.org.uk explains the concept of Teachmeets and helps you to find your local Teachmeet organiser.

www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Digital-Storytelling-tools-online-6176830/ includes a short video resource hosted by *Times Educational Supplement* showing a selection of great free resources that can be used in digital story telling – aimed at KS1 and 2. Includes information on sites that allow the creation of animation, comic strips or enhance story writing in some other way.

www.whiteboardblog.co.uk This site supports technology in the classroom. There is a section on technologies to support digital story telling that you may find of interest.

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