



**WSRA - The Unfolding Story of Literacy -  
February, 2025**

**NARRATIVE UNLIMITED –  
DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND  
YOUR CURRICULUM**

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# WSRA - The Unfolding Story of Literacy - February, 2025

## Preface

Digital Storytelling is the capacity to communicate using text, sound, music and imagery – still and moving.

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A **dystopia** is a community or society, usually fictional, that is in some important way undesirable or frightening. It is the opposite of a utopia. Dystopias are often characterized by dehumanization, totalitarian governments, environmental disaster or other characteristics associated with a cataclysmic decline in society.

In this Challenge, your team is asked to create the basic parameters of a dystopian society, and then write and shoot a scene that takes place in this dystopian society. The catch here is this: the ‘undesirable or frightening’ society should be connected to technology – a word that is as broad and infinite as you want to make it.

# The Liability

**MS<sup>2</sup>TC — Butcher Educational Center**

**Permission Granted**



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PART 1

*Flux and Confusion: Our Moment in the History of  
Media and Technology*

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## The Communication/ Historical Context

“The use of any kind of medium or extension of man alters the patterns of interdependence among people, as it alters the ratios of the senses.” McLuhan



# The Communication/Historical Context

## ORAL CULTURES

“In an oral culture, knowledge, once acquired, had to be constantly repeated or it would be lost: fixed formulaic thought patterns were essential for wisdom and effective administration. ... Without writing, words...have no visual presence. ...They have no focus, no trace, not even a trajectory. They are occurrences, events” (Ong, 1982).



# The Communication/Historical Context

## WRITING ENTERS THE SCENE

“Writing separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for objectivity in the sense of personal disengagement and distancing. ... To live and understand fully, we need not only proximity but also distance. This writing provides for consciousness as nothing else does” (Ong 1982).





# The Communication/Historical Context

## ENTER TELEVISION - 1939

- Reshapes how we spend time.
- Expands our understanding of what the world looks and sounds like.
- Introduces the idea of culturally shared experience.
  - *Friends, Mad Men, The Wire, Bewitched, Dawson's Creek, West Wing, 24, ....*
- Storytelling, Comedy and Drama are re-invented.
  - Sitcoms, Police Procedurals, The Western, Game Shows, ....



# The Communication/Historical Context

## A Sampling: YouTube

- In 2022, on average, 500 hours of content ...uploaded every minute” (Statistica, April 2022).
- Influencers: “Arguably, for many people, asymmetrical relationships with YouTubers can be a huge saving grace, therapeutic, and potentially an emotionally and physically safer alternative than actual human beings.” (Dr. Grant Brenner, Psychology Today)
- LEGO 2019 Study (3000 kids, 8 - 12): “today's children are three times more likely to aspire to be a YouTuber (29%) than an Astronaut (11%).”



## The Communication/Historical Context

“For the message of any medium or technology is the change of scale or patterns that it introduced into human affairs” (McLuhan 1964).



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PART 2

*What is Literacy Today?*

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## NCTE - “Definition of Literacy in the Digital Age”

“As society and technology change, so does literacy. The world demands that a literate person possess and intentionally apply a wide range of skills, competencies, and dispositions. These literacies are interconnected, dynamic, and malleable.” (NCTE 2019)



# A Sampling of Literacies in Play

- Traditional text-based literacy.
  - Brick/Digital Libraries, the Academy, Newspapers, Literature
- Audio Only - Oral Storytelling
  - Podcasts, Spotify, Pandora, Community Radio
- Texting and Emojis - Oral Communication as Writing
  - Texts, Whats App, Viber, Dating Apps
- Short Videos - Stories to Entertain and Educate
  - YouTube, Vimeo, TikTok (?)
- Call and Response Literacies - Communications that insist on a response
  - X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok (?), ...



# The Digital Universe

- The digital realm is their **library**.
- It's their **communication platform**.
- It's their **social life**.
- It's their source of **knowledge**.
- It's their **language**.

*It's a full-blown communication spectrum the breadth and depth of which is unprecedented in history.*



# Digital Storytelling

Digital Storytelling is the capacity to communicate using text, sound, music and imagery – still and moving.





## *Extending Literature: A News Report about The Next Chapter - The Challenge*

The stories we choose to tell and to read are full of twists, turns, ups, downs, and ultimately, endings that leave us thinking. This challenge asks you to place yourself directly into the final moments of the world of a book you are reading, and then leap into the future. Imagine you are on a news show reporting on the events of your book immediately *after* the final chapter. Including an interview with one or more characters in this story, film a newscast detailing what has just occurred at the end of the story - be sure to include select details about the story itself and the character's journey - and then answer the question, "What's next?"





# Digital Storytelling - The Process

- **Digital Stories** are team-based efforts. Therefore, they are **Collaborative** ... Which Includes skills such as **People Management, Delegation, Leadership and Coordinating with Others**.
- **Digital Stories** are scripted and often character driven. Therefore, they require **Creativity and Imagination**.
- **Digital Stories** are comprised of many small decisions about research, narrative structure, look and sound. Therefore, they invite **Problem Solving, Decision Making and Critical Thinking**.
- **Digital Stories** require students to research content and tell their own story about that content. Therefore, they require **Evidence-Based Reasoning and are Empowering**.
- **Digital Stories** are designed to be shared with an audience of more than just one (you, the teacher). Therefore, they invite **Presentational Skills**.





# Student Roles

**Producer** - The Leader and super organizer, Alpha student.

**Actor** - In front of the camera, bringing the story to life

**Writer** - The shaper of the story, crafting voice

**Researcher** - The Internet image finder and fact finder

**Sound Designer** - The kid who loves dark rooms, buttons, and sound, but gets the emotional significance of sound to storytelling.

**Editor** - A different kid who loves dark rooms and buttons, but loves to play with dissolves and flying letters, and colors...and understands the importance of pacing in good storytelling.

**Lighting, ...Costuming, ...Props Management, ...Location Scouting and Set Building, ...Composer and Musician, ...**

# Narrative Formats

**DRAMA:** MYSTERY - POLICE/ CRIME DRAMA - LEGAL COURTROOM  
DRAMA - SUPERHERO ADVENTURE - HORROR - YOUNG ADULT  
FICTION - SCI-FI - RADIO DRAMA - MOVIE TRAILER - SHOW OPEN -  
SOAP OPERA - FAN FICTION - **NON-FICTION:** DOCUMENTARY -  
NIGHTLY NEWS - TED TALK - TALK SHOW (“THE VIEW”) - PODCAST  
INVESTIGATION - BIOGRAPHY - **COMEDY:** SKETCH COMEDY - LATE  
NIGHT TALK SHOW - STAND UP - SITCOM - **OTHER:** GAME SHOW -  
MUSIC VIDEO - INSTAGRAM STORY - COMMERCIAL/PSA -  
SPORTSCASTING - ANIMATION - PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY -  
MINECRAFT - WEATHER REPORT - PITCH/PERSUASIVE VIDEO



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# Select Narrative Formats: A Rapid Dive

*The PSA*



# The PSA - Singular Objectives

**PSAs** are designed to accomplish two things:

1. Communicate knowledge about an attitude or a behavior; and
2. Persuade or induce the viewer to like, want, need, or support that attitude or behavior.

Excellent examples: [adcouncil.org](http://adcouncil.org).





## The PSA: Select Narrative Tools

Humor

Beauty

Celebrities

Music

Forcefulness

Mystery

Aspiration

Fear and guilt

Surprise

Honesty/ Authenticity



# Select Narrative Formats: The PSA

## ACTIVITY

- Identify the attitude or behavior change they are seeking;
- Identify at least three important facts about their subject for inclusion in their thirty to sixty second script;
- Develop a tagline;
- Develop a creative approach - represented in four visuals and key words, designed to target their peers inside of which the facts will be embedded; and
- Write the script and finalize the storyboard.



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# Select Narrative Formats: A Surface Dive

*The Vlog*



# The Vlog - Leading with ...Character


## CHARACTER

- Leads with Personality
- Emotional Identification
- Self - Exploration
- Behind-the-Scenes of the Familiar
- Unscripted - Extemporaneous



# The Vlog - Following with Story

## STORY

1. Theme  Journey
2. Beginning, Middle and End
3. Obstacles and Climaxes - Some Personal Level of Enlightenment
4. Micro-Storytelling ...with Macro meaning
5. Target Audience - Their Peers



# Select Narrative Formats: The Vlog

## ACTIVITY

- Pick a literary object or idea in their home or backyard; an object that reeks of ...story.
  - Think a childhood book (Oz), a ripped stuffed animal, a family figure that used to read to you, a poem you wrote in 3rd grade....
- Create a 90 second vlog ...that must:
  - Be structured, literally or metaphorically as a journey;
  - Contain an obstacle or conflict;
  - Be delivered extemporaneously; and
  - Conclude in an unexpected way.



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# Select Narrative Formats: An Expeditious Dive

*Podcasts and Radio Dramas*



# Select Narrative Formats - The Radio Drama

## Story and Audio Tools

Creating *Character* Through Voice

Creating *Place* Through Ambient and Natural Sounds

Creating *Place* and *Character* Through Writing

Creating *Action* and *Movement* Through Sound Effects

Creating *Emotional Connection* Through Music





# Select Narrative Formats - The Podcast

## Story and Audio Tools

Creating *Trust* Through Voice

Voice as intimate and personal

Voice as authoritative and informed

With Trust established, storytelling - in this audio vacuum without any visual cues - can take place.



# Select Narrative Formats: The Radio Drama

## ACTIVITY

- Pick a topic you are studying - say, “The Lottery”
- Identify three important elements of that topic - elements the students have to discover on their own - 1) tradition for the sake of tradition; 2) how to create horror (happy festival ...of unexpected death; 3) conformity.
- Create two new characters that are in town that day and witness this. One is amazed and one is appalled. Create the scene between the two. Do they change the outcome of the story?



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Select Narrative Formats: A  
Brisk Dive  
*Game Shows*



# Select Narrative Formats - The Game Show

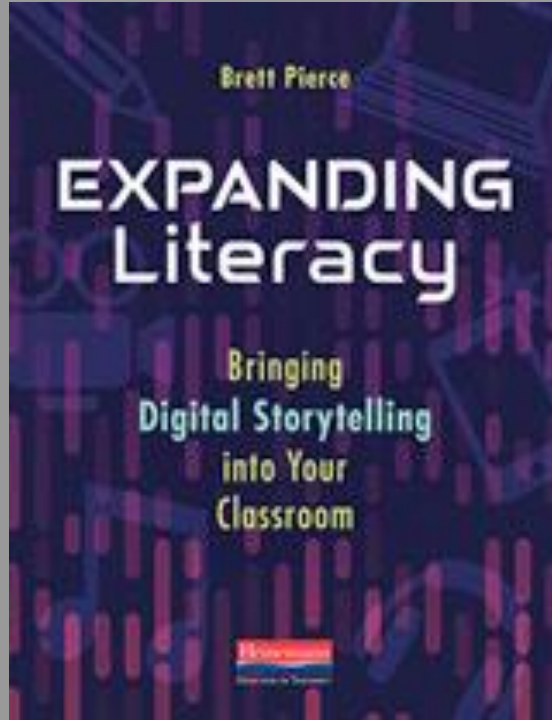
In Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, is the Stage Manager meant to be:

1. More like a God, omniscient, caring and existing to bring about a greater awareness of the beauty that is humanity and life;
2. More like a Devil, overseeing the tragic death of Emily Gibbs and revealing the afterlife to be drab, lifeless and unempathetic; or
3. More like a mature tree in Grover's Corner: ever present, through life and death, an objective observer, providing comfort.

# In the Classroom - How to do This?

1. Research, Create, Develop, and Produce
2. Three to four week projects, on average
3. Teacher as Mentor and Guide - There is a loss of control
4. Digital Literacy Skills - Let the students teach you
5. Assessment: Content Command, Storytelling Command, Media Literacy Command, Human Skills Command
6. Student Engagement and Accountability will increase

# Digital Storytelling Support



# MERIDIAN STORIES

## THE MISSION

To prepare students for the current and future workplace by providing opportunities to collaborate, create, problem solve, and lead in the development and production of meaningful digital narratives that address curricular goals.

# The 2024 - 2025 Competitions

## Language Arts

Extending Literature: A News Report about The Next Chapter

Modern Poetry Visualized - Interpretive Video

And...Action! - Let the Camera Bring Lit to Life!

Lit Obits - Podcast

## History/Current Events & Issues

Sportscasting History

Flag Designing: Telling a Visual Story of Place

The Meaning of AI: A Graphic Novel Strip

Both Sides Now – An Historical Podcast



# The 2024 - 2025 Competitions

## Maker Space and Games

Rube Goldberg: Defying Gravity - A Documentary

Designing Community Public Art - A Video Pitch

Game of Teens - A Video Pitch

What If? ...A Climate Change Radio Game Show

## Personal and Communal Voice

New Tech Perspectives: A Vlog

I Am Who I Am Because... A Digital Self-Portrait

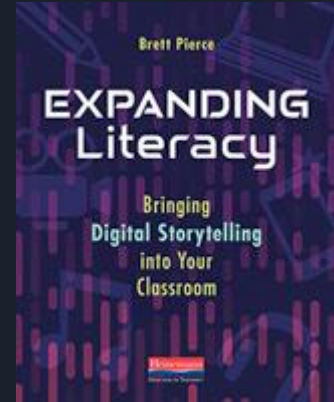
Social Media and Your Mental Health: A Dramatic Monologue

Team Moth - A Podcast

# Opportunities to Expand Literacy



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[www.educatorslink.com](http://www.educatorslink.com)