



**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.

Brett Pierce - brett@meridianstories.org



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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

MS²TC — Butcher Educational Center

Permission Granted



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PART 1

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

Brett Pierce - brett@meridianstories.org



The Liability - Brief Process/Learning Analysis

Opening Shot – We don't know what we are seeing

Character - The boss – we only see her hair. And her hands. And then there's the reveal in the medium shot. **The body language of the guard:** straight as an arrow and fearful, subservient. In a uniform.

The Setting – sterile, corporate, with an echo

Sound and Image - The pulse – first rule of the dystopia, the truth is revealed through pulsing sensors. Visual and sound.

The Montage – A monologue that explains the history of the world, written as a build up to imminent disaster – 'And then they gave us strength, so that we could protect them.' We know where this is going. The dystopian world, communicated through words and images.

Visual Movement - We move from words and technology to physical touch.

Language Choices - Her cadence and vocabulary: formal, clear, direct. The title: *The Liability* – a gorgeous, evocative word. **Unit 3010** – 'Where is it right now?' Not her, or him: 'it'.

Storytelling: The ending: the reverse! The boss is human!



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

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



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 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.



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PART 2

What is Literacy Today?

Brett Pierce - brett@meridianstories.org



NCTE - “Definition of Literacy in the Digital Age”

“Literacy has always been a collection of communicative and sociocultural practices shared among communities. 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. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with histories, narratives, life possibilities, and social trajectories of all individuals and groups” (NCTE 2019).



The Participatory Culture

“...the new media literacies should be seen as social skills, as ways of interacting within a larger community, and not simply an individualized skill to be used for personal expression” (Henry Jenkins 2006).



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 (?), ...



Digital Storytelling

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



Digital Storytelling - Select ...Literacy Distinctions

TEXT

- Organized, linear, analytical thinking
- One on one communication (emails)
- Academic, scientific communication
- Language Mastery dependent

DIGITAL LITERACY

- Structured and Unstructured
- One to many - social in nature
- With text, imagery, sound and music - emotional and personal communication
- Universal language of ...imagery and sound and music



Digital Storytelling - Select Process/Creation Distinctions

1. Not Driven by Language Proficiency
2. Ownership - The Meaning resides with the author/creator, not the reader/viewer
3. Organically shaped by participation in a public, social realm - Amplifying Student Voice
4. Invites a Wide Range of Expertise



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



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

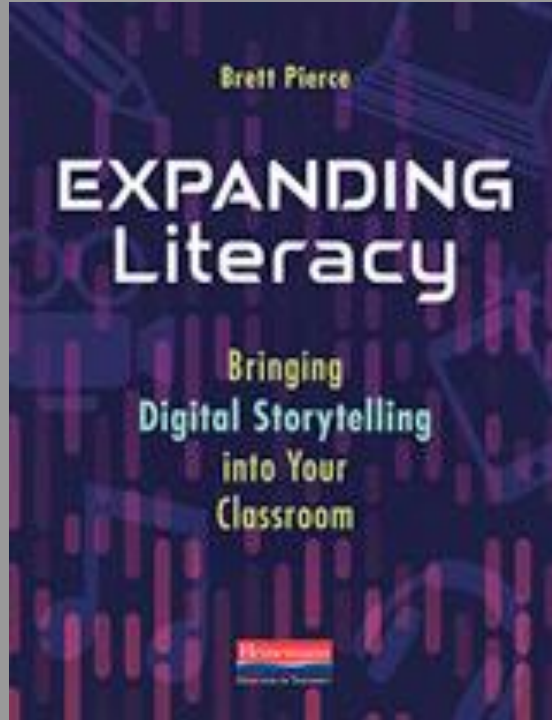
The stories we choose to tell and to read are full of twists, turns, ups, downs, and ultimately, endings that leave us thinking. This challenge asks you to place yourself directly into the final moments of the world of a book you are reading, and then leap into the future. Imagine you are on a news show 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?"



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

What's the First Word the Pop into your Mind when I say, Meridian Stories?

laughter inspiring computer
weird confusing better challenging hilarious
wacky script thinking bizarre acting laborious rewarding
else wonderful communication editing grueling fun yippee reading
omg talk imaginative writing yes
anything stressful silly hard best deadline goofy
work chaos rushed
hooray creative nerd sigma
skibidi crazy exciting
glorious time teamwork difficult winning yay
planning on-task magnificent woohoo



Questions for Consideration

1. **(Value)** Take a look at these two literacies - text-based and digital literacy (text, sound, music and imagery (still and moving)), and consider the educational value of mastering each for your students. They each point to different ways of thinking and communicating.
2. **(Problem)** What do you fear most about this integrating this process - fully acknowledging this literacy - into your classroom, your school? Are there external obstacles at your school? How might you overcome them?
3. **(Solution)** If the idea is to make digital storytelling normative in the classroom - to have every classroom integrate one or two digital storytelling projects into their curriculum, replacing a paper, say - what would it take at your school to make that happen?

Opportunities to Expand Literacy



brett@meridianstories.org - Contact Me

www.meridianstories.org

