

## Using Technology in the Elementary Classroom

By Marilyn Western

### Once Upon a Time...

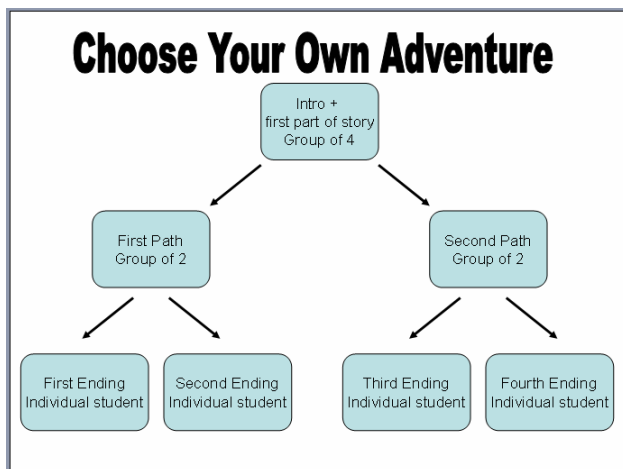
... there was a teacher who wanted to add some oomph to her students' stories. Thinking that technology would be a great motivator, she introduced the concept of a digital story - a story with a combination of digital images, text, narration, video, and music. Her students amazed her with their ingenuity as they created stories 'written' as photo albums, slideshows, and movies.

But, alas and alack, the teacher found that students were often much more interested in the technology than the story itself so she quickly learned to require that the final draft be finished before they could get to the 'oolala'. She also found that digital stories could be time consuming – there were small groups of students working on 'the story that never ends' for weeks. She became skilled at setting deadlines for various steps and left herself sticky notes on her coffee mug to check story progress on a daily basis.

Students became remarkably organized when they learned to create digital folders to collect all their materials in one place. They storyboarded ideas, and then searched for, saved, & cited images, audio (music, sound effects, speeches, etc.) and informational content. Then the real work began! They learned to carefully sort through their collections for what they actually wanted to use which meant they had to revisit their storyboard to edit and revise. Then, zippidy-doo-dah – they imported images and content into the storytelling software, added background music, sound effects, etc. and as icing on the cake, recorded their own narration.

By the end of the year their skills in research, writing, organizing, using appropriate technology and presenting material grew remarkably, and so, they all lived happily ever after.

Most teachers use one of the Big Four programs for digital stories: MS PowerPoint, PhotoStory3, MovieMaker, or iMovie. Depending on availability (and your own comfort level) any of these will help you produce a nice product, but it's the actual story that will make or break the final presentation. Here are a few ideas for supporting your curriculum.



#### Choose your own adventure

A graphic organizer is an essential part of this project as it's easy to get lost in this project without some sort of guide. If you divide your students up into groups of four, each group can work together to present the setting, characters, and narrative hook. This section should end with two paths. The group of four splits into two groups of two to continue – each pair writes the next module with another conflict ending in two more paths. At this point, individuals write the final modules (for a total of four possible endings). When the story is complete, transfer the story modules to a **PowerPoint slideshow**. Following your graphic organizer will make this process fairly easy. On slides that give options to choose,

create **action buttons** (under AutoShapes on the Drawing toolbar) with **hyperlinks** to the module slides that continue each choice. Remember to add a Home hyperlink on each slide

#### Sing it loud!

Start with a song, compose your own lyrics to the melody, and then draw, scan, or locate images to illustrate your new words. Did you know you can make your PowerPoint slides into .jpg images? Create your PowerPoint slideshow with images, lyrics, and a nice background (sorry, transitions and animations won't work on this!). When your slideshow is finished, **File** and **Save As**. Under **Save as Type**: select **JPEG File**. Then select either

**Every Slide or Current Slide Only.** You can now use these images just as you would any jpg picture. If you import the whole slideshow into **MovieMaker** or **PhotoStory**, you can add your own narration and background music for a sing-a-long.





### My Hero

**Voicethread** <http://voicethread.com> is an online media album that allows you to make comments, either audio or text, and share them with anyone you wish. This site is classroom friendly and way cool! Assign students to collect a series of images of someone who is a hero to them (drawings and scanned images are acceptable in this project). Create a story about this person and why s/he is a hero to them and then narrate the story over the images.

### Riddle me this

Instead of an actual story, students can choose a noun (whatever happens to be a part of your current unit – dinosaurs, solar system, state, etc.) and make a riddle out of it. Create a storyboard for individuals or partners to plan their riddle. Students will need just one image of their noun – for the first clue, they can crop and enlarge the image for a very close up image, the second clue should be cropped less and enlarged less so there is more of the noun to be viewed, and the third clue should be cropped even less. The next slide should contain the final answer with the original image of the noun.

**MovieMaker** or **iMovie** would be a great way to present the slides with a student’s voice reading the clues. And if you have a subscription to **United Streaming**, adding a short movie clip at the end would be a nice way to round out this research project.

Slide One: Draw or insert your picture here 	Invertebrate Riddle By Jason
Can you guess this <b>invertebrate</b> ?	
1 <sup>st</sup> clue:  They are in every ocean of the world and can be in a cup, bowl, or parachute shape.	
2 <sup>nd</sup> clue:  They have two layers – an outer layer for protection and an inner layer which is the lining of its stomach.	
3 <sup>rd</sup> clue:  They have stinging cells in their tentacles which they use for defense and to capture prey.	
What is this invertebrate? Can you guess?	
This invertebrate is a <b>jellyfish!</b>	

### Additional links:

Looking for something different? Introduce one of the following programs to your students and step out of the way – let their imaginations soar!

Use **Picasa** <http://picasa.google.com> to add text titles to your photos, and then upload your album with a click of Picasa’s “Web Album” button. You can make your album ‘private’ and invite individuals (e.g. parents) to view the album. Each account gets 1GB of free storage - that’s enough to post and share around 4,000 standard resolution photos. No narration available at this time and text is limited to short labels, but a good possibility for collecting images that illustrate a student-written poem or vocabulary words.

If student voices are important to the project, explore **Bubbleshare** <http://www.bubbleshare.com> for more pizzazz. No registration required. Upload photos, remix, add comments or your own voice to them and set up private links for families to view. For an interesting creative ‘writing’ project, collect a variety of 10-12 images for students to use. Their assignment – choose any 5 and create and narrate a story linking those 5 pictures.

Create 2, 3, or 4 panel cartoons at **Make Beliefs Comix** <http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/comix.php>. This site allows students to quickly put together a short story – How I Spent My Spring Break or How to Build a Snowman. Choose two characters and their moods. Add word or thought balloons with your original words. Print. This is an easy and fun way to learn how to write dialogue. No narration.



**Qlipboard** <http://www.qclipmedia.com> is free software for your PC that helps you combine

pictures with drawing, highlighting, and your voice. The home page has a variety of sample narrated videos to spark your imagination. What makes this program different is that you can draw on the pictures to highlight

what you are talking about. Once you have your finished video, you can save to your computer, email or post to the web. This software is great for instructional stories. The ability to draw on the slides as you talk gives how-to directions an extra Wow!

Can you tell a picture story without words? Students will love this MTV-type online software called **Animoto** <http://animoto.com>. Upload images, choose music and you have a music video. Register your class to use (free). This would be a clever twist on the All About Me story, or a most unusual way to document a field trip, or collect a series of images of the American Revolution and let them rock to a modern sound!

*Marilyn Western is a former member of the MACUL Board of Directors, a Discovery Educator Network (DEN) scholar, an MTIP Scholar, TAPS winner, and a Mt. Pleasant Public Schools 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade computer lab teacher. Outside of the classroom, she has worked as the 1998-99 MDE Technology Using Educator on Loan, an ATA course designer and instructor, a technology trainer for Gratiot Isabella RESD, a national presenter for the Bureau of Education & Research, and a district Tech Guru.*