



ONCE, SOCIAL-STUDIES

lessons meant those rickety filmstrips, textbooks, and using sometimes outdated encyclopedias for research. That's, well, history. Today, digital media has energized the teaching of history and fired up students' enthusiasm and interest. Gone are poster boards; student projects now pop with PowerPoint presentations filled with streaming video and audio voice-overs, or take the form of newscasts of historical events.

With so much technology at your disposal, the only limit is your creativity and those of your students. Three teachers show you how to stretch the bounds. They'll tell you all about those newscasts, how to stage productions depicting how history might have been, and other innovative approaches to traditional history lessons that employ digital media and Discovery Education *unitedstreaming*.

HISTORY WITH A TWIST

ILLUSTRATION BY BRYAN LEISTER

LIGHTS, CAMERA, LEARNING!

BY ERIC LANGHORST • SOUTH VALLEY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL • LIBERTY, MO

Turn on the TV, surf the Web, and in minutes you've got news. The immediate coverage of worldwide events impacts the way we view them and how we formulate our opinions. Imagine how current news coverage would have impacted historical events. This is what we do in my eighth-grade American history class at South Valley Junior High, in Liberty, MO, as we study the American Revolutionary War.

In one particular lesson about the Boston Massacre, we go beyond what happened on March 5, 1770. In our textbooks, we learn that Boston residents were outraged that British soldiers would shoot and kill innocent citizens. In an effort to unite the colonists against the British crown, the Sons of Liberty, a secret organization of anti-British revolutionaries, distributed drawings of the shootings and called them a "massacre."

In my lesson, I encourage students to dig deeper. Using our textbook and *unitedstreaming*, we learn how citizens of Boston gathered as an unruly mob that night, threw snowballs at the British soldiers, yelled insults, and threatened to beat them with clubs. We discover that the British soldiers were eventually acquitted in a murder trial. So how did this incident become a major propaganda tool for the revolutionaries? To answer that question, we look for connections to how it was reported. I challenge the students to imagine the Boston Massacre being reported as a live news broadcast using today's technology. Then, I tell them to create it.

Making the Past Newsy

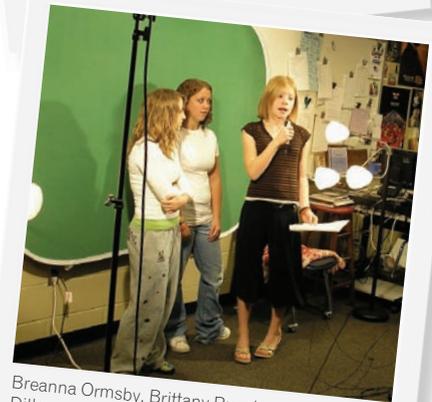
I enjoy doing this project with my students early in the school year, because it sets a tone for the remainder of the year. Students learn to examine history from different viewpoints and to dig below the surface for information. They transition from the role of passive observers to active participants in their own learning.

unitedstreaming gives us the in-depth information needed to make an accurate news program on this event. The website's extensive video library contains dozens of video segments on the Boston Massacre—some several minutes long and others over a half an hour. After previewing the videos, I found a 35-minute segment entitled "The Story Behind the Boston Massacre." This clip includes modern reenactments of the Boston Massacre, diagrams of the scene, acoustical simulations of the shots fired, and information on the incorrect engraving produced by Paul Revere and distributed throughout the colonies. While students watch the video clip, they create a graphic organizer to collect facts and ideas for the news broadcast.

I give guidelines for producing the news broadcasts from the scene of the Boston Massacre using modern technology. Students must report the event as a live, five-minute TV broadcast. They are divided into teams of two to five people and are each assigned specific roles on the news production teams: anchors in the studio, eyewitnesses, reporters, soldiers, the wounded, etc. Students must write the scripts and choose costumes and background images. Each segment is filmed in my classroom using



Glen Hoenninger and Sean Mears review their mock newscast.



Breanna Ormsby, Brittany Rueckert, and Rebecca Dillon run through an interview for their project.

a digital video camera. Students use digital video-editing software to create their broadcasts, which they share with my other history classes.

Yesterday's History, Today

Watching the *unitedstreaming* video clip gives students a combination of critical facts and a realistic visual from which they can build their own video. Students also contribute their own ideas when editing the video. For example, one student suggested that the members of the Sons of Liberty hide their identity on camera since they belonged to a secret organization.

We use a "green-screen effect" on the videos to make it appear as if students are in a news studio or on location at the scene of the Boston Massacre. The green-screen

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effect allows you to place images or video behind the students who are on camera. You also can download segments from *unitedstreaming*, edit them, and then place them behind your students. We used Visual Communicator software to create this effect. You also can use Adobe's Premiere Elements 2.0 software. If you don't want the green-screen effect, you can edit your digital video with free editing software, such as Windows Movie Maker 2 for PCs and iMovie for Macs.

After all production and editing is complete, we have a "premiere day" to view the final work. Then, as a class, we discuss how much differently the Boston Massacre would have impacted the Revolutionary War if it had been reported using modern technology instead of the media available in 1770. Many students had never previously thought about a world in which only one news source was available. Plus, students become much more aware of how today's media play a role in the way we view events around us.

In the end, having my students create and own the content they use to learn about historical events is an extremely powerful tool.

TIPS FOR INCORPORATING DIGITAL-VIDEO PROJECTS INTO YOUR SOCIAL-STUDIES LESSONS

1. MAP OUT YOUR STORY.

Before you start filming, have your students create a storyboard of the video they want to create along with a script. Create a simple six-panel page in which the students can write down the dialogue and any media they want to add to tell their story—pictures, music, video.

2. KEEP THE VIDEO SHORT.

A five-minute video may not sound like a long time, but it can be quite an undertaking if students are using multiple clips, music, transitions, etc., and then trying to piece it all together in a coherent and engaging story.

3. KEEP THE CONTENT TOGETHER.

Create a folder on the computer with all the content you would like your students to use in the project: video clips, music, images, etc. Give your students enough material so they can create a unique and interesting video. Providing material in one place will allow your students to get to the essence of creating their project without spending an entire class searching for the perfect image or music.

4. TRY NEW IDEAS.

Download clips and images of Abraham Lincoln and have your students create a television campaign commercial for Lincoln to learn more about his election in 1860. Or, use clips from a video on the Civil War to have students create a report from "the front lines" with the Confederate army at the Battle of Gettysburg.

CREATING DIGITAL WAR STORIES

BY JENNIFER DORMAN • HOLICONG MIDDLE SCHOOL, DOYLESTOWN, PA

It is six o'clock in the evening, yet my classroom is still bustling. Students are clustered around computers poring over scripts, photographs, video clips, and audio files. Others are rehearsing narration and voiceovers for the twentieth time. They approach my desk with a rush of urgency: "Mrs. Dorman, is it okay if our movie is a couple of minutes longer than the rubric asks for?" and "Mrs. Dorman, did you know that our soldiers missed their landing drops on D-Day?"

I could be sitting down to a relaxing dinner, but I cannot pull myself away. I am experiencing the "teacher's high," the exhilaration when students are engaged, excited, and motivated to learn. Students rarely want to spend



The author, Jennifer Dorman, reviews student Jude Habib's digital documentary project.

more time than absolutely necessary on schoolwork or go beyond the minimum requirements of their research. But

mine do. I struck a balance between their obsession with tech gadgets and giving them valuable learning experiences. Instead of making my classes simply about history, I now challenge students to chronicle it through original digital documentaries.

Digital Stories

I have been teaching ninth-grade American history for nine years and infusing my teaching with digital media for the past seven. World War II is a favorite unit for my students and me because at the end of the lesson, students present their documentaries—digital movies they research, plan, and produce—demonstrating their learning.

Digital documentaries are one form

of the broader digital-storytelling genre. I have been using digital storytelling in my classroom for the past five years, even though I have only one computer with a digital video-editing program in my classroom. Since much of the editing software can be downloaded for free, students can work on most of the project outside of class. But my students are learning far more than how technology works in this lesson. I have found that when students have to recount history in story form—or especially using technology—it forces them to dig deeper for information, to think of personal connections to the historical event, and to articulate it in interesting ways. For example, some students will find personal accounts in their research, or they will interview their grandparents if it the subject is about something relatively current, such as World War II. They also retain the information better and have a deeper understanding of the consequences and ramifications of events in the war.

The War in Pictures

At the beginning of the World War II lesson, I show two Discovery Education *unitedstreaming* photographs on my SmartBoard (“The Dropping of the Atomic Bomb on Nagasaki” and “Concentration Camp Inmates 2”) and ask students to analyze what they see as the enduring aftermath of the war. As we investigate the causes and events of the war, I show various *unitedstreaming* photographs and videos. I make sure that the video segments I show in class are editable, so students can use those clips in their digital documentaries. I also build the skills students will need to create their own digital stories during the course of the year. This process, which uses several *unitedstreaming* resources, includes developing stories from one image (“The Arizona Burning After Being



Students Isaac Wood and Kristin Bonacum take a break from digitizing and importing their captured *unitedstreaming* video. They then edited the video for their project.

Attacked at Pearl Harbor”), creating stories from a sequence of images (“Hitler with His Troops,” “France Surrenders to Germany,” “Concentration Camp Inmates 1,” “Roosevelt Asking Congress to Declare War on Japan,” “The Ruins in Stalingrad,” “American Troops Coming Ashore at Normandy,” “Germany Surrenders”), and producing original narrative with a free audio-editing software called Audacity for a video clip with the audio stripped. For this, we used segments from the “Witness: Voices from the Holocaust.”

After students have a fairly comprehensive understanding of the war, they select a topic to research. I keep a website of online references for students to access during their research: (www.cbsd.org/holicong/jendorman/curriculum_internet_links.htm). With their stories in mind, students search for images and editable *unitedstream-*

ing video segments from among the many I download. My students have used segments from two dozen videos as well as hundreds of images from *unitedstreaming*'s Image Library to craft their digital documentaries.

Citing Your Resources

As students research, I constantly reinforce that they must record source information and copyright licenses on their annotated bibliography. This is a very important part of the project.

While the students understand what plagiarism is, they find crediting information from the Internet and other digital media murky. They can forget that a downloaded picture or audio file must be cited. I have them create an annotated bibliography, a two-column table that includes a thumbnail image of all visual media in one column and the accompanying citation and copyright information in the other. This process reinforces that all forms of media are intellectual property and forces students to consider copyright and fair use as they are researching.

Students end their World War II digital-documentary experience with an enduring understanding of the political, economic, scientific, and social forces that have shaped our world. The combination of using technology and digital media to create documentaries has motivated my students in ways that other learning experiences cannot begin to match and that I could scarcely have predicted.

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Working with Editable Clips

To find editable clips on the *unitedstreaming* website, click on Advanced Search and then check the Editable Titles box when searching for your specific topic. Once you download the clip, you can edit it to fit your curricular needs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Dorman is a ninth-grade American History teacher at Holicong Middle School (Central Bucks School District) in Doylestown, PA. She has led the way in her district with the implementation of interactive whiteboards, digital storytelling, podcasting, and blogging.



GIVING THE PAST A NEW PERSPECTIVE

BY JENNIFER BRINSON AND RJ STANGHERLIN • SALISBURY HIGH SCHOOL, • ALLENTOWN, PA

What if you could change history? We ask our students this question each year in our Advance Placement U.S. history and honors English 11 team-taught class. In our integrated project called “What If...?” we have students think of a pivotal historical moment and then reconsider the outcome. What if Abraham Lincoln had not been assassinated? What if the stock market had not crashed in 1929? How might daily life have been different socially, politically, economically, religiously, and militarily?



Students perform their counterfactual history project on life in the United States if Abraham Lincoln were not assassinated.

To answer such questions, students research factual events, but they also get to imagine and create their own counterfactual history, opening their minds to the importance and complexity of our nation's history.

We started this project in 1998, because it immersed students in history with a hands-on approach to learning. Over the years, the final presentation has evolved into a 45-minute, full-stage play.

Students first form small teams and choose their jobs. Then, they research primary sources, create annotated bibliographies, make slides with Discovery Education *unitedstreaming* resources,

conduct voice-overs, write scripts, design and build sets, and make props and costumes for the play.

Creating “What Could Have Been”

Technology integration drives this project and *unitedstreaming* makes it come to life. *unitedstreaming* is invaluable as students research primary-source material and use the website's audio and video collection to represent factual history and to create their own counterfactual history.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of developing a counterfactual history for students was making a transition from a factual to a counterfactual segment of the presentation. One team started its presentation by fading a series of phrases in and out to emphasize the importance of Abraham Lincoln. They ended with their title, “What if Abraham Lincoln had not been assassinated?” Then, they faded the screen to black and showed an edited *unitedstreaming* video to rewind through time and begin their counterfactual story.

A Yearlong Historical Adventure

Since this is a yearlong project, there is time for both teachers and students to build on the lesson and for students to conduct comprehensive research on their topic. Here's how we organize the project during the school year:

September: We introduce the project and review the objectives and technology expectations. Students select their “What If...” question, and we present *unitedstreaming* resources they can use as they begin their research.

October: Students continue their research, creating organizational charts to summarize their information. Then, they view *unitedstreaming* tutorials on embedding and hyperlinking videos.

November/December: Students begin producing their slide watermarks, backgrounds, and collages. They rely heavily on *unitedstreaming*'s Image Library to help embed photos. They also start editing audio and video streams and embed them into slides. In late December, peers edit one another's slide to see if it answers the “What If...?” question.

January: Teams create and arrange the final slides for their presentations, including their bibliography information.

February: Each team's technologist makes final edits to the audio/video segments and voice-overs and embeds them into the slides.

March: Team scriptwriters coordinate the presentation with each slide's information. After final script editing, students collect artifacts, props, and costumes, and design their sets.

April: Students begin practicing their presentations and can no longer make changes to their slides.

May: Presentations begin mid-month before parents, fellow students, and the community.

Exploring counterfactual history in high school is an emerging and worthwhile concept. Students often question the relevance of history. What if we empower students to question the past, rethink it, and discover the future? The “What If...?” project not only challenges students to change history—if only on a stage—but it also makes them realize that they may be able to change history in the future. Our students are, after all, living history. 🌐

To view the syllabus and rubrics for the integrated project, go to www.stsd.org/shs/staff/rj/Student%20Resources.html.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jennifer Brinson teaches eleventh- and twelfth-grade social studies and RJ Stangherlin is a tenth- and eleventh-grade English teacher at Salisbury High School, in Allentown, PA. They have collaborated on interdisciplinary, technology-infused high school projects for the past 10 years and constantly seek new ways to integrate *unitedstreaming* project-based learning in their classrooms.