

Serif MoviePlus Project 4



Telling Tales

Project brief

Every picture and every object has a tale to tell. Choose a painted or photographic portrait of a famous person you have studied and an object that could be associated with him/her as the starting point for an oral history account, narrated by the subject, of the memories triggered by that item or artefact. Use a mix of still images and video footage of the narrator speaking to camera to create the movie, which should not be longer than two minutes in its final cut.

Curriculum focus

KS3NS English Framework – Year 7: *Speaking 2 - recount a story, anecdote or experience, and consider how this differs from written narrative; Year 8: Speaking 2 - tell a story, recount an experience or develop an idea, choosing and changing the mood, tone and pace of delivery for particular effect; Speaking 4 - provide an explanation or commentary which links words with actions or images, e.g. a sports commentary or talking to a sequence of images*

History – Unit 22: *The role of the individual for good or ill? Extension: pupils could carry out structured research into a local individual of historical importance; Unit 7: Images of an age - what can we learn from portraits 1500-1750?*

Movie genre

Video diary, reality TV show, biopic, video blog, digital storytelling, or POV (point of view) format.

Learning objectives

- To conceptualise an idea
- To develop a story and script based on oral history and digital storytelling models
- To record a mix of still images and to camera video footage, voice narration and other expressive audio to convey narrative, characterisation and mood.
- To use MoviePlus to create pace, interest and variety when editing the video
- To construct a soundtrack for the movie using voiceover commentary with other appropriate audio
- To export the movie in a suitable format for viewing

What you need

- DV camera and tapes
- Tripod (optional for still shots, not needed for to camera footage)
- Suitable props, including the selected object and picture
- External microphone (optional, but recommended when recording source narration)
- Serif MoviePlus

Project outline

Pre-production

- Show students a variety of clips that use video diary, POV or digital storytelling formats and ask them to identify the key elements that distinguish these genres, such as camerawork (is it amateurish or smoothly professional?); dialogue (is it rehearsed and carefully scripted?); viewpoint (is it personal, passionate or neutral?); lighting (is it studio-based or natural?); storyline (is it anecdotal or fully developed?).
 - Suitable resources for this activity can be found on the following sites:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/videonation>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales>
<http://www.kingscrossvoices.org.uk/>
<http://www.storycenter.org/>
 - In groups agree on an individual for your video diary and a significant possession, then brainstorm to suggest an anecdote about the object.
 - Allocate roles to the group, including the main actor, director, cameraperson, editor.
 - Write a proposal and treatment for your video diary.
 - Plan and storyboard the movie, but script only a story outline, as the main actor should try to recount the incident naturally in her/his own words using improvisation techniques practised in drama lessons.
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- Prepare the set and any props.

Production

- Film the diary narrative from a fixed viewpoint as if the main character is alone and has propped the camera against an available support. Get the actor to turn the camera on and off her/himself and include this footage in the final cut.
- Try to minimise unwanted background noise (ambience) and use an external microphone if possible to record the narration (source) more clearly: this is known as maximising the source/ambience ratio.
- Record any sound effects or original music separately.
- Take still shots with a digital camera or using the stills feature on your digital video camcorder, or scan/download existing pictures. Try the “Ken Burns” rostrum effect using a tripod to pan and zoom into a still image.

Post-production

- Make a project folder for each group with another folder inside it called *project_assets*. Save still images and audio to this folder.
 - Connect your camera to a suitable PC, making sure it's set to Playback mode. Open MoviePlus, select Start from scratch on the *Startup* menu and choose a suitable project setting – either DV PAL or DV PAL Widescreen are standard UK formats. Choose as high a resolution and quality as possible at this stage: the movie can be resized and compressed later.
 - To transfer your video footage from your camera to your PC, choose *Capture* from the Tools menu or click the *Capture* button, then use the controls under the preview window to play and pause the tape in your camera to find the footage you want to use. Choose whether to save all your scenes as separate files (recommended) by clicking in the *Split files by scene* check box. MoviePlus will automatically name and number your files.
 - Start to play your video source a couple of seconds before the point at which you want it to start, then click Record. Click Pause if you want to fast forward to another part of the tape, then Pause again to resume recording. Click Stop when you have all the scenes you need.
 - Name your project and save it.
 - Use the Explorer pane to navigate to the assets you have saved. Drag these and the clips you have captured to the Timeline to create a rough cut. Use the skills learned in the introductory lesson to sequence and edit the movie:
 - i. drag and drop video clips onto Video Track 1, still images to Video Track 2, and sound effects or mood audio files to Audio Track 2 on the Timeline, keeping Audio Track 1 for the narrative [**Lab 2: Video sources**];
 - ii. play back, rewind and pause a sequence [**Lab 3: Previewing your project**];
 - iii. zoom in on the Timeline to view it in greater detail [**Lab 2: Video sources**];
 - iv. trim a clip by adjusting its start and end points. [**Lab 4: Trimming your video**].
 - The narrative should be in sync' with the video footage and continue as voiceover during cutaways to still images, creating a continuous commentary or narrative. Note that the default time for stills is 5 seconds, which is rather too long, so adjust and vary the timings.
 - Make the majority of transitions between shots unobtrusive cuts, using other transition effects sparingly to create mood.
 - Adjust volume on audio tracks.
 - Make titles and end credits.
 - When you are happy with your movie select the Export button on the Standard toolbar and choose MPEG Video (*.mpg) as the file type, VCD PAL from the template list and set the export Quality to High, then click the Export button. When MoviePlus finishes composing your movie you will be able to view it in your computer's default media player.
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Extension/differentiation

Find a written account of an incident from your character's life, from her/his autobiography for example, and compile a checklist of the main differences between oral and written narrative accounts e.g. for Black History Month: "*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African*". (1789) – the video diary could have Equiano recounting memories of his treatment as a slave as he looks at an illustration of the type of shackles used to chain slaves together at sea.

Criteria for success

- The storyline and characterisation draw the viewer in and give a vivid and believable account based on oral history and digital storytelling models.
 - Camera work and lighting was authentic for the genre.
 - The editing had good pace and supported the narrative.
 - The mix of still images and to camera video footage, voice narration and other audio communicated narrative, characterisation and mood well.
 - The quality of voiceover was clear.
 - The final cut was within the two-minute time limit.
 - The group collaborated well as a team.
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