



for students to choose from or have your class brainstorm a list. You could focus on presidents, famous people from your state, inventors, or authors.

Have students select a figure and complete research on this person and the time period in which he or she lived. When their research is complete, have students write a biography for their figure. Depending on student writing ability, you may want to give them an outline for what information should be included in each paragraph of the biography. Have them partner with another student to edit and revise their rough draft before publishing the final version.

Step 3: Team Planning

Form teams of 3–5 students who have studied the same person or are interested in making a video of a particular person. After reading each team member’s biography, the team should use the parts that they like the most to write a compelling screenplay for their video. Next, have the teams translate their screenplay into a visual map or storyboard.

Step 4: Create the Biography

Student teams should locate media that supports the various scenes in their biography. They can search for copyright-friendly images on Pics4Learning to show locations or objects important to the story, or search the Library of Congress web site for music from that time period. They could also create original costumes and take photos of themselves with a digital camera.

Teams should then use Frames to create a biography that includes information that explains the impact of their character on history.

Step 5: Present the Biographies

Have the teams share the movies with the rest of the class, at a school assembly, or even on local access television station.

Identifiers

Grade Level

4–12

Subject

Language Arts and Social Studies

Duration

2 weeks

Objective

Students complete research on a historical figure. Students write a biography of a famous person.

Description

Students study a historical figure such as a scientist, politician, inventor, or explorer, and use Frames to create a video biography of that person.

Application

Frames™, Pics4Learning

Process

Introduction

Many students are familiar with Ken Burns’ groundbreaking documentaries. While many students dread writing biographies, asking them to transform their writing into a compelling digital documentary about a person’s life helps motivate them to write.

Procedure

Step 1: Read and Discuss Biographies

Introduce your students to biographies by reading a few of them first. Jerry Spinelli’s *Knots in My Yo-Yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid* or Daniel Dyer’s *Jack London: A Biography* provide insight into an author’s background and help students learn how personal experiences affect a writer’s voice.

Discuss the factors that make a good biography. A great biography is also a great story, and while a biography needs to include facts, a simple listing of them may not be compelling. Have students brainstorm questions they can ask to make a biography more interesting. You might prompt their thinking with questions like:

- Did the person’s background influence what he or she believed in or how the person acted?
- What personal qualities helped or hindered this person?
- Was this person admirable or simply famous?

Step 2: Select a Historical Figure and Research Their Life

Introduce the project to your students by sharing the biography examples and giving each student a copy of the project rubric. Provide a list of historical figures

Steps for Students

Creating a Video in Frames™

Once you have all of your images collected, use Frames to combine them into a video biography.

1. Launch Frames.
2. Click the New blank frame button on the toolbar to add more frames.
3. Click the Library button to add clip art, photos, or images you have collected.
4. Click the Tools button to use drawing tools to create your own illustrations.
5. Click the Clone button on the toolbar to duplicate frames. Make changes to the objects on the frames to create animation.
6. Click the Text tool on the Tools panel to add text. Use the handles and Format options to change how the text looks.
7. Click the Record tool on the Tools panel to add narration.
8. Select a frame or group of frames and adjust the Duration slider on the Tools panel to change the timing.
9. Click the Save button on the toolbar to save the file.
10. Click the Project button and choose *Export* to create an animated movie to share.



Assessment

Make sure to evaluate the rough draft of the biography and the productivity of the team discussions before you assess the final biography. You will also want to evaluate the process the team uses to identify topics and well-written sections of the initial biographies as they write their screenplay. The screenplay serves as another tangible example of understanding and skill, as does the storyboard of the screenplay.

The video biography will serve as the culminating project and summative assessment. You may also want to assess team work, responsibility, organization, and problem solving.

Resources

Jerry Spinelli, **Knots in My Yo-Yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid.**
ISBN: 0679887911

Daniel Dyer, **Jack London: A Biography.**
ISBN: 0590222171

Denis Ledoux, **The Photo Scribe—A Writing Guide: How to Write the Stories Behind Your Photographs.**
ISBN: 0961937343

The Biography Maker
www.bham.wednet.edu/bio/biomaker.htm

Writer's Workshop: Biography
teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/biograph/

Standards

NCSS—Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

Individual Development and Identity—Personal identity is shaped by one's culture, by groups, and by institutional influences. ...Examination of various forms of human behavior enhances understanding of the relationships among social norms and emerging

personal identities, the social processes that influence identity formation, and the ethical principles underlying individual action.

IRA/NCTE – Standards for the English Language Arts

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to relate and communicate knowledge.

NETS for Students—2007

2. Communication and Collaboration
Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others.
Students:

- a. interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts or others employing a variety of digital environments and media.
- b. communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats.



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