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High school English language arts

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High School English Language Arts

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Interactive Activity

Before you begin the case study, please participate in the following interactive activity. This short learning experience will help you think about tone in poetry, the primary content focus of this case.

Watch and listen to the Lost Generation video at http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA_Video1. As you read the poem, listen carefully to the accompanying music. Does it capture the tone of the poem? If so, in what way? At what point does the music change?

http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA_Video1

Now watch a second video at http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA/Video2. Pay attention to the voice of the narrator reading the poem, (which will scroll down the page). Does she capture the tone of the poem? At what point does her spoken tone change?

http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA_Video2

Did you notice the second half of the poem is the same as the first, only read in reverse? Take another look at the text. How might an English language arts (ELA) teacher use this poem to get students to think about tone in literature?

· · · · · · · ·Scenario· ·

Interactions between and among human beings are complex and multidimensional. When one person engages in a conversation with another, each must read visual and verbal cues to make sense of what is being said. Understanding the tone of a speaker is crucial to understanding the speaker's meaning. Likewise, when reading literature, particularly poetry, understanding the tone of a text is critical to making meaning of it.

Because it is a somewhat abstract concept, tone, defined in literary study as the writer's or narrator's attitude toward the material and reader, is generally a difficult literary element to teach. While students are introduced to tone in elementary school, many middle and high school students still have difficulty identifying tone in a work of literature. Likewise, adolescents in English language arts classrooms sometimes struggle with making meaning from works of poetry.

The following activity presents a Digital Poetry Project from Dana Riddle's 10th-grade English language arts classrooms. With the use of web-based image libraries, Microsoft Movie Maker, a class wiki, and collaborative partnerships, students in the class explored tone in poetry while making connections between visual images and accompanying audio texts, thus enhancing their media and digital literacy.

Image via Flickr user thesaltr

Dana's activity is clearly aligned with standards, including those of the Common Core State Standards, the National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association standards, and the International Society for Technology in Education National Educational Technology Standards for Students.

Common Core State Standards

Following are examples of Common Core State Standards in English language arts grades 7-12 that are aligned with the activity that is presented in the video case. All standards related to Reading Literature include the study of poetry, among other genres.

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively.
- Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

National Council for Teachers of English/International Reading Association

- Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
- Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

International Society for Technology in Education NETS-S

- Locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media.
- Students demonstrate a sound understanding of technology concepts, systems, and operations.

· · · · · · Meet the Teacher ·

- Dana Riddle
- English Teacher
- Albemarle High School

I am a certified teacher of English language arts in grades 6-12 and am beginning my third year of teaching. I have been at this school for all three years of my short career, and have taught grades 10 and 12 each year. I teach honors classes and academic advanced classes.

Despite my relatively short time in the classroom, I have been asked by the school's administration to lead professional development workshops for colleagues, mostly in the area of technology integration. I had good training in my teacher preparation program, and I see
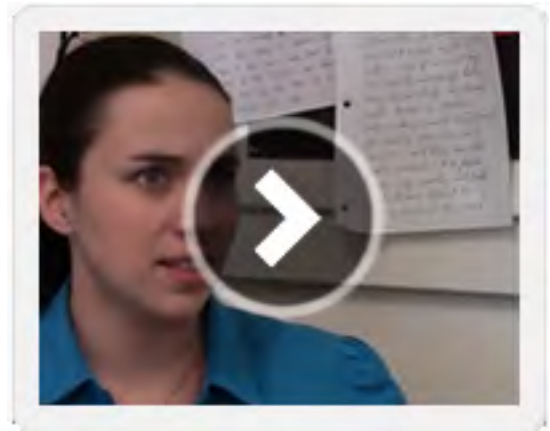
http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA_Video3

digital and media literacy as an integral part of the English

language arts curriculum.

http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA_Video4

As a teacher, I see myself as more of a mentor than an expert. I guess I am really a constructivist when it comes to teaching. My role is to come up with the best learning activities to help my students meet the objectives of the lesson or unit of study. Students learn best when they have ownership of what they are reading, writing, or creating, making personal connections to whatever we are doing in class.
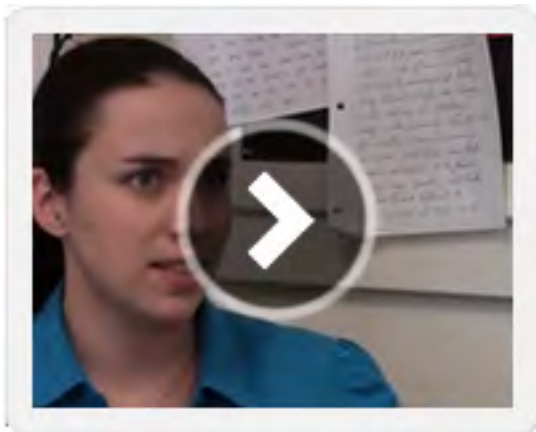
Albemarle High School, where I teach, has been identified as rural and suburban. It is a high performing school with 96% of our students having proficiency in reading and 93% in math. Of our 1,750 students, about a third come from minority groups (17% Black; 6% Asian; 4% other groups). Close to 20% of our students come from economically

disadvantaged homes. Despite the high level of achievement of the students in the class shown in the video case, I believe the activity is appropriate for students in other settings and contexts. I could see doing this lesson with students in grades 8-12.

.The Activity

Toward the end of an instructional unit focusing on poetry Dana realized that some students were struggling to identify and articulate the tone of some of the more abstract poems they were reading. In an effort to help students better understand tone, she began a three-day lesson. Students spent most of each class period working on the assigned project in collaborative pairs. On the last day of the project, students turned from their role as producers to that of consumers. They watched the digital video projects created by their classmates and provided feedback and evaluation of their work.

Day 1

In the first part of the lesson sequence, Dana gave a mini-lesson reviewing the concept of tone in poetry. She and her students defined tone, created a list of terms that might be used to describe the tone of poems, and then read one poem together as a class and discussed the tone of the poem. Dana then instructed her students to revisit poems they had read during the poetry unit and identified the tones that could be found in the poems.

After having students watch and discuss the two "Lost Generation" videos you viewed at the beginning of this case, Dana explained the project that the students would be working on. In teams of two, students would select a poem that they liked and create a digital poetry project, in which they would combine visual images and digital recordings of them reading the poem to capture the tone and theme of the poem. They would have two class periods (in a block schedule) to create their projects and post them on their class wiki. On the third day, students would view projects of selected classmates and provide evaluative comments about their effectiveness.

TPACK Commentary: Students need opportunities to apply their understanding of abstract concepts such as tone. "I know it when I hear it," is a first step, but teaching for transfer requires that students engage in multiple interactions with the concept. Dana chose to use a mini-lesson to help students recall a prior discussion of tone. Then she had them apply the definition to familiar material, poems they have already read. Dana next showed two videos of a provocative poem. The multimodal presentation allowed students to experience the poem visually and aurally, further interacting with the concept, scaffolding their learning for the technology based digital poetry project.

Day 2

On Day 2, after a brief mini-lesson on oral interpretation of literature (how to use vocal features to represent tone and meaning when reading a work of literature) and a demonstration of Microsoft Movie Maker, students used the software to record two oral interpretive readings of their poems—one in a voice that expressed no tone and another that attempted to capture the tone of the poem. After the second recording, students listened to the audio recording, evaluated its effectiveness, and in most cases, re-recorded to better capture the tone of the poem. Most students made at least three recordings before being satisfied.

Once the digital audio recordings were complete, students paired them with the digital images to create a final product—a digital visual/oral poetry reading in Movie Maker. Dana felt that pairing visual images with the audio recordings would scaffold their understanding of tone, build their digital literacies (pairing video and audio files for effect), and motivate them to put greater effort into the project. Once they were satisfied with their work, they uploaded the projects to YouTube and then embedded the video project next to the text of their poem on the class wiki (which they had used throughout the year in their class).

Day 3

In the final stage of the lesson sequence, after a mini-lesson reviewing how to provide meaningful comments and critiques and reviewing the purpose of the digital video projects, student teams viewed classmates' digital poetry readings and responded to the presentations, using the wiki's comment feature to provide feedback. They were instructed to focus their evaluative comments on the poem's tone as captured in the digital images and oral interpretive reading. In the final part of the class period, student pairs were able to review their own digital poetry project a final time, read the comments and feedback of their classmates, discuss with their partners, and write a final reflection about what they had learned over the past three days—about tone, about media literacy, and about collaboration.

Dana assessed the students' project using a rubric that had elements related to content (understanding of theme and tone in poetry), use of images to capture theme and tone in a poem, use of oral interpretation and audio recording to do the same, and effectiveness in crafting a digital document that blended visual and audio files.

TPACK Commentary: An essential part of learning for transfer is knowing the extent and quality of what one learned. In this assignment, Dana asked students to compose for a public audience and then provide feedback on the presentations of classmates. Dana knew that using digital recordings of their oral interpretations of the poems provided a much better way for her students to demonstrate their understanding of tone than, say, a traditional formal literary analysis essay. The digital recordings could capture tone (which is really an oral tradition) more precisely than a written essay. Dana also realized that audio alone might not capture the tone and that, as they say, "a picture is worth a thousand words." Therefore, using Movie Maker to provide the added visual dimension both supported content and was more motivating for her students. Also, using videos and a wiki gave Dana's students a platform to take their work and their feedback public, which is both engaging and motivating. The written reflection offered a final way for individuals to articulate their learning, making it more likely that they will not only remember what tone is but also be able to comprehend and compose it in future texts.

? What are the benefits of having students work in pairs on this project rather than individually or in small groups?

· · · · · · · · The Technology ·

In this lesson Dana used several technologies, some of which her students were accustomed to using, others that were new to them. Students pasted the text of self-selected poems into the class wiki. They used Internet search engines to locate images that would convey their understanding of the tone and main ideas of their selected poems.

They used Windows Live Movie Maker, which was new to most of the students. Dana selected this program for three reasons: (a) it was already installed on the school-owned laptops that she uses with her students on a regular basis; (b) Movie Maker is fairly simple to use and interfaces smoothly with the laptops' built-in web camera and microphone; and (c) it is a relatively simple program that allows for all of the technical features this project required—audio and video clip joining and trimming, pairing of audio and visual, and easy uploading to YouTube. While some of Dana's

students had previously uploaded to YouTube, many had not, so she had to support this portion of the process somewhat. Dana first did a quick demonstration for the entire class and then circulated to provide coaching as needed.

Dana and her class had utilized a wiki all year long in various ways. She posted assignments throughout the year, maintained a class assignment calendar, used a Twitter widget, and posted supplemental materials on the wiki.

http://bit.ly/ELAwiki

Likewise, the students used the wiki throughout the year to post response papers, journal entries, and book reviews. The students were comfortable with uploading their completed projects to the wiki and viewing each other's work. The comment feature in the wiki was essential to the feedback/response portion of the activity.

?

What technology support might students need to complete this activity?

How would you structure the activity so that you are available to support the technological questions and challenges your students might have with this activity?

What classroom management issues do you anticipate in your own classroom if you had your students engage in this activity?

What alternative technologies might you use if any of the ones that Dana used were not available to you and your students?

TPACK Commentary: Although much of the technology used in the digital poetry project was familiar to the students in Dana's class (with the exception of Movie Maker), she had never used them together in this way. She had several classroom management problems to solve due to the collaborative nature of the assignment (students working in pairs). She needed additional space for students to work, especially during the audio recording, so she had students use space in an empty adjacent classroom and had a colleague oversee them. She circulated constantly through her own classroom, as well as the one her students had annexed. As she moved about, she conferenced with students about their content understandings as well as their use of the technologies. Dana also identified technology "experts" in the class who could provide support to classmates while she was working with other students.

Classroom in Action

Students worked in pairs for two days to create this digital poetry project (the third day was for viewing and responding to each other's videos). Dana supported her students' learning of both the content and the technology. The collaborative project helped students better understand the concept of tone while simultaneously developing their digital and media literacies.

Vignette1

As Dana introduces this activity, watch for the strategies she uses to prepare students to use the technology as a tool for achieving her learning objective.
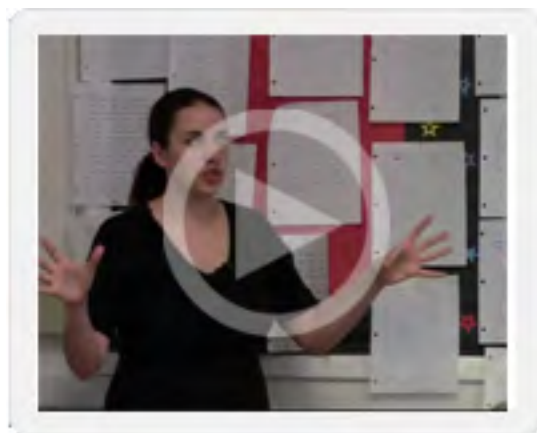
http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA_Video5

? Providing directions simultaneously on how to do the learning activity and how to operate a technology tool takes some forethought and pedagogical skill.

What did Dana do well in this introduction?

What could she have done more effectively to keep students engaged?

TPACK Commentary: Notice that Dana did not walk students through the Movie Maker software step by step. Rather, she focused on the particular features of the tools that they would be using to help demonstrate their understanding of tone in their work. She was very specific in what she wanted the students to do and how to integrate the use of the two different software applications, and she addressed this all in the context of the specific requirements and expectations of the project. In addition to these big-picture ideas, she also helped students avoid common challenges by having the students record their narration in the more quiet hallway and by providing tips on where to save and access the files. In short, the way Dana introduced the technology tools went beyond a techno-centric focus on the tools themselves to a more pedagogically focused introduction of the tools.

Vignette 2

In this portion of the lesson, one pair of students is working to create a digital audio recording of the text of the poem that captures the tones found in "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost. Dana monitored their progress with this part of the activity, providing feedback and support as needed. Note how she encourages the students to listen to their recordings critically to determine if they had adequately captured the tone in the poem.

http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA_Video6

? In what ways might requiring students to create digital audio recordings allow them to demonstrate their understanding of tone?

How might this be motivating for students who find the study of poetry to be challenging and uninteresting?

Vignette 3

After the projects were completed and uploaded to the class wiki, students spent time viewing the videos of their classmates. They were asked to discuss and evaluate the appropriateness of the tone portrayed in the oral interpretative recording. This part of the project is important, as there was a real audience for the project and the creators were able to get feedback and suggestions from that audience.
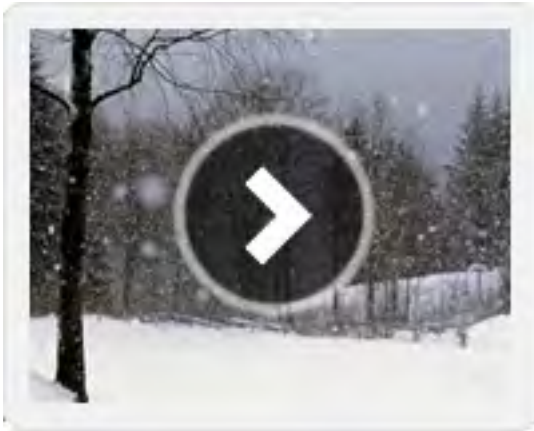

http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA_Video7

TPACK Commentary: Dana understood that basic technologies like a laptop with a microphone would afford the students the opportunity to explore oral interpretation and tone in a meaningful way. She provided technological support to the students by suggesting that they rename the file to a more easily memorable name and that they minimize the document as they review and reflect on their work. Clearly, Dana was familiar with the challenges students face when they need to curate multiple files and multiple drafts of digital files.

In the third vignette, Dana guided students to articulate their readers' response to oral poetry readings to provide feedback and reader response, using the comment feature on the wiki to which the recorded poetry readings had been recorded. Some of her comments focused on the content. For example, one student referred to the reader's tone as being lonely, and the other suggested that the selected image is dark. Dana pointed out that the creators of the project probably used the audio and visual effects to demonstrate a particular phrase in the text, "miles to go before I sleep." In that same interaction, she provided them with a suggestion for making the most of their collaborative time, having one person enter the comments on the wiki while the other call out the text.

Students' projects represented a range of poetry types, including lyrical, narrative, humorous, and whimsical. The two projects below focused on classic texts that high school students often read. Look at the two sample projects and think about what literacies the students who created them demonstrated in their work. Do they seem to understand tone? Her 10th graders' oral interpretation skills were rudimentary when they started the project, so Dana had to keep that in mind as she assessed their work.

http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA_Video8
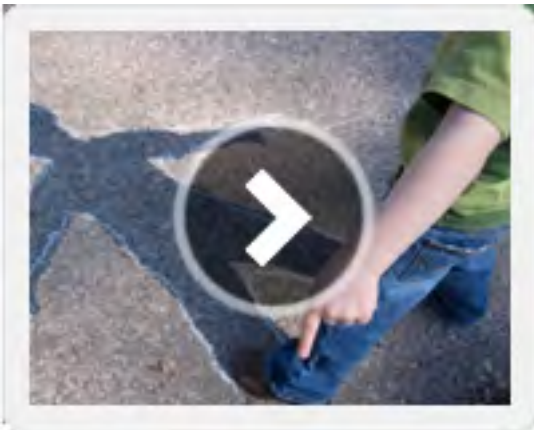
http://editlib.org/go/Sec_ELA_Video9

Student comments on the wiki (which is private and cannot be shared here) focused on various aspects of the project. For example, one student posted, "The rise and fall of your voice as you read the second stanza made me feel like I was on the ship." Another student focused her comment on the pairing of digital images and the audio recording, saying, "Before you started reading, and I just saw the horse in the field [in the image], I wasn't sure what the tone was supposed to be, but when you started reading it I immediately knew that the tone was somber and contemplative." A review of the student comments showed that they focused almost equally on tone, visual imagery, oral interpretation in the audio recordings, and technological savvy.

Poetry is scary and confusing for a lot of kids, so I feel like this project, at this particular point in the poetry unit, was a really good idea. Some of my kids had been struggling with identifying tone. Some even struggled with it in this activity. I think that the process of having them complete this project coupled with the process of reviewing and critiquing the projects of their classmates helped the proverbial light bulb to go off for some of my kids. They really got a deeper understanding of the particular texts they were working with and felt some sort of ownership of the poems through the process of pairing the text of the poems with visual images and their audio recordings.

I feel like the use of technology in this lesson really led to students' better understanding tone. When they talk to one other in everyday conversation, they hear each other's tone but they don't have an awareness of their own tone of voice. This was true when they did their oral reading of the poems. When they had the opportunity to go back and listen to their recordings, they were able to self-assess the effectiveness of their attempt to capture the tone of the poem they were reading. If they were not satisfied with the tone they conveyed in the reading, they could go back and do another recording very quickly and easily. Some did it numerous times until they got the effect they wanted. We have talked a great deal in class about the writing process, and they are used to writing multiple drafts. I think the students realized (as did I) that creating audio recordings also requires revision and editing. This was an eye-opening experience for us all.

One of the logistical lessons I learned during this initial go round with this activity had to do with the process of saving a file in Movie Maker. Numerous students lost their work from day 2 of the activity, because they saved the movie as a project rather than as a movie (it seems logical that the unfinished piece would be a project, not a movie). Since the computers rebooted at the end of the day, those students who saved as projects lost their day's work. I learned my lesson about this. As this was my first time using Movie Maker in the classroom, I had no idea that I needed to provide this particular instruction to the students. Now I know. That is one of the challenges of working with new technology, but the students and I learned it rather quickly.

Another lesson learned had to do with the setup for recording the audio files. Because our classroom is relatively small, there was no quiet area for students to make their recording. I sent them into the hallway and an adjacent classroom to do it. For the most part this worked well, but for some students it was a struggle to stay focused outside my classroom. By identifying "recording specialists" who knew the ins and outs of audio recording, I was able to have help with trying to support each of the pairs of student in the class.

This was the first time I tried this project with my students. I definitely feel that it was worth the three days of instruction. Not only did my students come away with a better understanding of tone, they had a greater appreciation for the poetry that we had studied in class. They had made a personal connection to at least one of the poems. They also got to stretch their digital and media literacies by creating the digital poetry project. I like to experiment each year with something new. This one is a keeper.

? What other possibilities exist for a digital project like the one Dana and her students completed?

Could it be used for other literary genres?

TPACK Commentary: A close reading of Dana's comments show that she simultaneously thought about content, pedagogy, and technology as she reflected on the lesson plan, the pedagogical choices she made while facilitating the lesson, and the projects created by the students. When thinking about the technologies used in the project she linked them to the content objectives, the learning process, and the learning outcomes. She did not separate her discussions of the various aspects of the lesson; rather, she thought of them in a recursive, connected, and symbiotic way. She considered issues of classroom management related to the technologies being used and, quite adroitly, named "specialists" in audio recording, Movie Maker, and wiki management.

· · · · · · · Resources ·

Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2014). *English language arts standards*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/

National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association. (2012). *NCTE/IRA Standards for the English language arts*. Retrieved from http://www.ncte.org/standards/ncte-ira