Storytelling

OBJECTIVE

Project 1: Cause and Effect
Create a short movie about a cause and effect event.

Project 2: The Hidden Life of Things
Create a video project with characters and a narrative out of inanimate objects instead of people.

MATERIALS

- Tablet
- Paper & Pencil
- Costumes (Project 2)

SCHEDULE

Duration: 12 hrs

Introduction: Background and Set the Stage activity (10 mins)

Project 1: Cause and Effect (2 hrs)

Project 2: The Hidden Life of Things (2 hrs)

Challenge 1: Chain of Events (2 hrs)

Challenge 2: Don’t Judge a Movie by its Title (2 hrs)

Personal Project: Be the Narrator (2 hrs 50 mins)
SET THE STAGE ACTIVITY
This collaborative exercise encourages students to be creative by having them imagine a story based solely on its title.

1. Write the title of an actual movie on the board.
2. Write a description of what the movie is about on a piece of paper, but don’t show it to the class.
3. Students write three sentences describing what they think the movie is about based on the title.
4. Collect the descriptions (including yours) and read them aloud to the class.
5. Take a vote to see who can identify which one is the real movie description.
6. Discuss the importance of the titles, and as a class, list other movies with titles that don’t describe what the movie is really about.

ACTION ON THE SET!
Use these ideas to connect each project to core subjects.

PROJECT 1
Cause and Effect

**English:** Create a short film about something from a recent book you’ve been reading where something that seemed insignificant at first caused important events later on.

**Math:** Create a short mathematical film showing how something affects things around it, such as weight above a certain amount will cause something to break.

**Science:** Create a short film demonstrating a non-human cause and effect that occurs in nature (floods, tornados, etc.).

**History:** Create a short film about how certain events in history caused other historical events to take place at a later time.

PROJECT 2
The Hidden Life of Things

**English:** Create a short film about books coming to life in the library.

**Math:** Create a short film about digits with decimal points arguing about who is the larger number.

**Science:** Create a short film about a conversation between a bird and a worm.

**History:** Create a short film about a famous historical object discussing its most important day, such as King Tut's sarcophagus, Ben Franklin's kite or The Great Wall of China.

PREP
Project 1: Gather sample items showing cause and effect.
Project 2: Become familiar with the tablet settings so you are comfortable with recording, playing back and editing.
UNIT 4: STORYTELLING

Background

The Art of Storytelling

As film technology and editing techniques progressed throughout the years, the stories movies told became more elaborate.

Plays could be recorded with this new film technology and re-watched, which had never happened before. Actors and actresses could see themselves on a screen for the first time!

As movies became more complex, the need for written layouts to keep the production in order rose. The format for movie scripts borrows heavily from American theater, using setting locations to note where the scene takes place, stage directions and formatting techniques.

Scripts are used to tell actors and crew what to do in every scene, where to stand, what their dialogue is, how to say it and what needs to be going on around them.

Scripts also document which actors are playing which roles. Depending on what kind of control the writer or director wants over the movie, scripts can range from very vague to exact and specific. Scripts for movies are also called screenplays.

A good movie has good storytelling. Popular books and comics are often adapted into movies. Acting is another important element in storytelling and filmmaking. Many actors work in the theater as well as in film. The words actors say is called dialogue. A director is the lead artistic force in telling the story on film. They work with the actors, set designers, videographers and writers to create a movie. Movie making is a team effort!

Additional Information

First Oscar for Best Original Screenplay was awarded in 1927 to Benjamin Glazer - 7th Heaven.

Additional Resources:
Film History
www.filmsite.org
Screen Writing
www.screenwriting.org
Academy Awards
www.oscars.org
Encyclopedia of Film
www.filmreference.com
KEY TERMS

Actor – A person who plays the role of a character.

Director – The principal creative artist on a movie set. They tell the actors the way that they would like a particular scene played.

Genre – The style of a story such as thriller, comedy or action.

Inanimate – Anything that is not alive such as rocks and books.

Rehearse – Practice for a later public performance.

Script – The written story a film uses as a guide.

Storyboarding – A sequence of drawings created to show the basic setting and action of scenes in a movie.

Voice Over – The voice of a narrator reading off-screen or edited over the original audio.
Create a short film that tells a story of “cause and effect.”

1. Brainstorm several cause and effect situations that you would enjoy making into a short movie. The idea of brainstorming is to imagine as many ideas as possible. Spend about fifteen minutes thinking of any events that come to mind and be sure that everyone contributes at least three ideas. There are no wrong ideas. Some examples would be a baseball hitting a window causing the window to shatter, bending a stick too far causing it to snap or startling a cat causing it to run. Be creative!

When brainstorming, use the checklist below:

☐ Gather as a group
☐ Generate as many story ideas as possible (Remember, no criticism of ideas)
☐ Everyone participates (Be sure all group members contribute at least three story ideas)
☐ Record ideas

2. Review your list of ideas. Write the cause and the effect for each idea.

3. As a group, choose which idea you like most, and would enjoy making into a short movie. Which idea did you choose? Write it below.

Cause:______________________________________________________________

Effect:______________________________________________________________
4. What event (or effect) would not happen if the cause did not happen? Write down three to five sentences about the possible outcomes.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. Think of a way to visually show your event in a movie. Give your movie a beginning, a middle and an end. For example:

   **Beginning**
   A cat is peacefully lying next to the window, sleeping.

   **Middle**
   A young boy jumps out from behind the curtains, shouting and throwing his hands in the air.

   **End**
   The cat becomes frightened, hisses and runs away.

6. Sketch a drawing of the beginning, middle and end of your movie. This process is called **storyboarding**.

7. Assign everyone in your group a role for your movie. Some need to be **actors** to play the characters in the movie. You also need a videographer to operate the tablet and to tell the **actors** what they need to do. This person is both the videographer and the **director**.

8. **Rehearse** your movie before you begin recording. Act out your entire story several times until you feel you have it memorized.

9. Begin recording! Reenact your process from beginning to end.

10. Review the footage. Decide if you like it or want to film it again to make it even better.

11. Play your movie for your class.
The Hidden Life of Things

MATERIALS
- Tablet
- Paper & Pencil
- Costumes

RECOMMENDED LENGTH
0:30–1:00 Minutes

Make a short film where objects are the characters, not people.

1. As a group, brainstorm a list of objects that if they could talk, you would like to hear what they have to say! Here are some ideas to get you started! An ice cube melting, a remote control car crashing or a pencil being sharpened.

2. Review the list of objects and discuss why each one would be easy or difficult to turn into a short movie.

3. Agree as a group which object to choose for your movie. Write a brief description of what the object might do and say in the movie.

4. Decide on a beginning, middle and an end for your movie. Keep the following in mind while writing your story.

   **Beginning:** This is where the main problem of the story arises.
   **Middle:** This is where the characters make a plan on how to overcome the problem.
   **End:** This is the part where the characters put their plan into action and overcome the problem they are facing.
5. Storyboard the beginning, middle and end of your movie using the Storyboarding Worksheet.

6. Assign everyone in your group a role for your movie. One person operates the camera and is also the director.

7. Build costumes for the actors in your film. They can be simple, but this helps your audience understand what object each person is playing. You can also use the objects as puppets.

8. Rehearse your movie before you begin recording. Act out your entire story several times until it is memorized.

9. Record from beginning to end.

10. Review the footage. Decide if you like it or want to reshoot.

11. Play your movie for your class.
CHALLENGE 1 | Chain of Events

Think of a chain of events that is started by one event happening. For example, a rock falling into a lake causes ripples to splash out. The ripples then push a stick floating in the water up onto the shore. A little boy sees the stick and grabs it while walking along the road. As he is picking up the stick, he sees a butterfly and follows it into the bushes. Record your chain of events into a short movie. Film the scenes individually and combine them into a short video. Add a title.

CHALLENGE 2 | Don’t Judge a Movie By Its Title

Create a movie with the title “The Adventures of Tom (or Tina) and the Sidekick Stapler.” Your instructor assigns the group a genre to film in, such as comedy, action or western.

HINTS...

Try different title styles to fit your genre. If it’s a comedy, make the title flashy and fun! If it’s a horror, make it scary.

PERSONAL PROJECT | Be the Narrator

Another way to tell a story is with a narrator speaking over the video, also known as voice over. Create a short film about your favorite activity as well as narrate an original script about the activity. Write a short script about something you enjoy or that interests you. Have a friend film you doing your favorite activity. If you can’t film yourself doing the activity, draw a series of pictures about the activity. Record a voice over reading your story. See the Software User Guide to access that feature on the tablet. Import the video into the video editing software you have access to. Create a title slide to your movie, save and show it to your class.

1. Discuss the activity and explain why it is important.
2. Explain the creative process you went through to write the voice over.
3. Explain what reaction people might have after viewing the short film.
PROJECT 1 | Cause and Effect

1. How was story telling different from the other types of movies you’ve made? Which type did you enjoy most?

2. How might you continue the story with a new cause and effect?

3. How closely did the final movie match the storyboard you drafted?

PROJECT 2 | The Hidden Life of Things

1. Switch around the actors and their roles and try filming the scene again. How was this different from your original video?

2. Draw your favorite scene from the movie.

3. Is it difficult to play an object? Describe the experience.

CHALLENGE 1 | Chain of Events

1. What was the most challenging part of filming this movie and why?

CHALLENGE 2 | Don’t Judge a Movie By Its Title

1. Write a script based on the title and the genre assigned to your group and then film it as a short movie.

2. Add a title screen to your movie using video editing software.

3. What is your favorite genre of movie and why?

PERSONAL PROJECT | Be the Narrator

What activity would you like to participate in next and why?
Review units 1-4 with this class-wide challenge.

THE NEWS ROOM

Produce an imaginative and bizarre news broadcast. Each group produces their own video which becomes part of a larger broadcast. Assign a reporter and videographer to each story, plus a crew to recreate either the news story or people’s reactions to it. Imagine a fake news event that could happen in your neighborhood or school. Choose from the list or make up your own!

- A UFO has landed in Central Park and is giving space ship rides for free.
- A kitten pulled its owner from a burning building.
- A student found dinosaur fossils underneath the playground.
- The National Guard has been called in because there really IS a troll living under the bridge.
- A student from your class has been selected to ride in the next NASA space shuttle into space.
- Jack’s giant beanstalk has been found and does lead to a castle in the sky.
- A new vitamin has been found that gives young children the ability to fly, but doesn’t work on adults.
- Summer break is going to be twice as long this year.
- The food in the school cafeteria has come alive and has been plotting an attack on unsuspecting students.
- It has been discovered that the principal of the school is an alien.

Once all the videos are finished, select a class anchor to present them. Have the anchor sit in a chair with a TV next to him or her. Play the news videos on the TV while the anchor presents them. Make a recording of the anchor explaining the news for the finished class project!

NEWS TEAM MEMBER NAMES:

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

1. Before filming, gather all the teams for a news meeting and discuss the stories each team is going to report on. Be sure there are no duplicate ideas.

2. Record your news team’s story idea.

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
3. Conduct research on your proposed story ideas. List three sources of information you utilized.
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

4. Identify three specific details about your story.
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

5. Sketch a scene from your story.

JOURNAL ENTRY:
Describe your experience. Was this a fun project? What was the most challenging thing to do?