

## The Fastest Connection

I am the first to say that I'm not a huge proponent of technology. I love every chance that I get to escape from cell phone service, and leave the world of gleaming screens behind. However, as a language arts teacher, I always love a good story. A good story is something that can span generations, cross technological boundaries, and leave a lasting impact in people's lives. Whether you're sitting around a campfire or in a movie theater, people flock to a good story. So when I had the assignment in my Educational Technology class to combine storytelling and technology, I was intrigued.

A topic that I have often written about but never created digital media about is my summer occupation of commercial fishing. The first step in our assignment was to create a story map for our media piece. I appreciated the physical aspect of drawing out my map: detailing the trials and growth involved through my years of commercial fishing. The map was a helpful frame of reference as I continued on to the next step of creating a script for my story.

The script was the easiest portion of the assignment for me, as I usually enjoy putting moments into words. I had to focus on cutting details out in order to fit reasonable time limit. Editing, whether it's video or in writing is always a challenging aspect of production, but an incredibly valuable skill for anyone. The process of sifting between crucial and superfluous details is tedious, but necessary for a concise, polished final product.

I began identifying photos that would accompany my narrative, and matching them up in a story table. The story table chunked out similar ideas and helped provide me with a frame of reference when I began moving the piece into iMovie. Only having produced one other video using iMovie, I was a little hesitant, but the layout is incredibly intuitive, and I found the process

of layering audio over my photos come together seamlessly. There were some moments of my narrative that I didn't have any photos for. For these, I recorded myself drawing on a piece of paper in permanent marker: in order to make this fit into the final product, in iMovie I had to speed up each individual drawing. I was so excited to discover that the sound recorder on my Mac picked up the sound of the sharpie on the paper - I love the dimension that sound adds to the media piece: a little bit of nostalgia on screen.

Within the language arts classroom, I can see this being an interesting option, or project for students to work on within the context of establishing personal narratives, or within the general study of story arcs. A story is something that we intuitively tell on a daily basis, but in order for one to be compelling in a context outside of friends and family, students must be made aware of the elements involved, which is where the story map comes in.

The story map is an excellent way to visualize the path of a story, and can be utilized as a reflection/study tool for novels previously read, or to chart the path of a novel in progress. In a time when the majority of students have cell phones glued to their hands, they create stories (and half-stories) on a daily basis, through the pictures they take, the texts they send, and the videos they record. I struggle to contain the use of cell phones in the classroom, but try to allow and plan for moments in the classroom where students can use their devices for educational purposes, to show them that they can use their phones for so much more than SnapChat.

As a teacher, I feel like I'm constantly competing with these screens for my student's attention, but I view the assignment to create a digital story as a way for students to draw on the personal experience of their lives (or a fictional life); there are undoubtedly hundreds of mini

stories held prisoner under their glass screens, and this is the perfect opportunity to let these stories out.

Even for someone like myself, who's not instantly attracted to techy projects, I acknowledge that technology will always be intricately connected to my students lives, and I consider it part of my job to figure out how to navigate this relationship between people and their devices. While I may spend the rest of my life trying to figure that out, I do know that no matter where we go, stories will always be a part of our lives, and in a world with the internet at our fingertips, there is still nothing that connects people faster than a story.