Prologue

In Jerome Bruner’s seminal book, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Bruner, 1986), he suggests that there are two modes of cognitive functioning or modes of thinking, each providing distinctive ways to order experience. The paradigmatic or logico-scientific mode leads to a search for universal truth and the narrative mode seeks for connections between events. Both modes help us to understand, but to understand differently. The logico-scientific mode may help us to understand that the force of gravity pulls us down to earth but it does not help us understand what drives people to do what they do. It is this second narrative mode that helps us make sense of the world we live in. Literature, with its rich repository of narratives or stories, is one rich resource for students to begin to expand their ways of knowing about themselves and others in the world around them.

As such, we focus in this issue of *enl*ght on the kinds of stories that can be used in the classroom and the ways by which we can encourage storytelling in the classroom. We suggest that works used in the classroom should not be limited to either the canonical or the contemporary but should range from the local to the regional and international, from the classic to the contemporary. In order to teach students to read well, we need to teach them to read widely and learn to cross borders and cultures in their experiences of the world through their reading. Additionally, students need to be given spaces to tell their own stories and to learn to tell them well, whether it is through traditional prose writing or other multi-modal forms of communication such as digital storytelling. Stories should be a way for us to move beyond our pigeonhole experiences to see what we can learn about the world and what we can offer to the world.

May you discover many new stories for yourself and for the Literature classroom in this new year of 2013!

Assistant Professor, ELL Advisor, *enl*ght

References

Editor’s Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to another issue of enl*ght! Do you have a story to tell? Want to share them with everyone but you just don’t know how? In this issue, our team hopes to inspire the storyteller in each one of our readers so that storytelling and storywriting become a reality within and beyond the Singapore English classroom.

Our lives are made up of bits and pieces of histories, interwoven into webs which form the crux of our identities. With every added experience, our identities become richer, more fluid and even contradictory at best. How does one make sense of oneself? How do we negotiate our identities, if not through the stories that shape us? Storytelling and storywriting help us understand who we are, and what our place is in this cosmic fabric of life. And as Literature educators, should we not empower our students to find themselves through the art of storytelling and storywriting?

The aim of this issue of enl*ght then, is to break all preconceptions about storytelling and storywriting as elitist, only reserved for canonical or established writers, and for teachers to recognise that each student is their own authority, and that the stories they have to tell should be taken seriously. In promoting an open and non-threatening classroom environment for stories to be written and told, shared and debated, students in Singapore can contribute to the examination of the Singaporean experience and identity.

Hoping to instill an appreciation for storytelling and creative writing in Singapore, our first article features an interview with local writer, Dave Chua, who shares his writing journey with us. Teachers will be glad to know that this article comes with strategies on getting students engaged in writing through Chua’s award winning text, Gone Case.

Aside from using Singaporean texts as springboards for storytelling and storywriting, teachers should be afraid to expose students to the greater Classical Canon. Our second article explores how Shakespeare can be retold in Singlish, as seen from a group of NIE students who have injected local flavour into Shakespeare. Experimentation is a critical ingredient in the Literature classroom for students to view Literature as approachable, interactive and alive.

In a bid to make storytelling and storywriting aligned with the Desired Outcomes of Education in the 21st Century, the next article explores the concept of digital storytelling through storyboarding. The multimodality of this approach is another incentive for teachers to harness their students’ stories through mediums beyond pen and paper.

Short stories are excellent resources in the classroom, which is why the enl*ght team has put together a review of ten short stories from Singapore and Southeast Asia that may be used to trigger some exciting storytelling and storywriting opportunities amongst students. Finally, what’s a story if no one gets to read it? We recognise the importance of the individual voice, which is why the issue closes with a segment that informs readers where they can publish their stories. With this in mind, storytelling and storywriting become more relevant than ever as there are genuine avenues where one’s story can be seen and heard.

Punitha Ramanathan,

& Vincent Esther Xueming
As this issue is centered on the topic of storytelling and creative writing, the en*light team wanted to gain more insight into the creative writing process. We thought it would be best to hear from one of our very own local writers, Mr. Dave Chua, about the obstacles a writer faces and tips about creative writing and storytelling. The author of Gone Case, which has been adapted into a Graphic Novel, was honored with the Singapore Literature Prize commendation in 1996. He has also written several collections of poetry and short stories.

Without further ado, here are our ‘10 Questions with Dave Chua’

1) What does “being creative” mean to you?
To me, it’s tackling any challenge with a new approach. For storytelling, it is knowing that stories are disruptive. They shake up the characters within it, and how they react to this change.

2) What do you think is really important about creative writing?
I think it’s particularly important to learn not to use clichés and to know how to show, rather than just tell.

3) Can you describe the first time you realised that writing stories was something you absolutely had to do?
I’m not sure if it’s ever become something that I absolutely had to do, but I was encouraged after taking part in a short story writing contest and winning first prize. It was the first time I thought I might be good at it.

4) Could you share with us your writing process behind any one of your works? How do you start?
Do you free write?
I take some time every day to write about a thousand words. I do occasionally write down stuff that comes to my head.

5) How do you revise your writing?
I have to edit it a few times before I’m satisfied with it. I do a first edit and just let the story sit around for a few months before going back to it.

6) Share with us some of the challenges or writer’s anxieties that you have experienced. How do you overcome them?
I think every writer has moments where they feel like a fraud. They just have to push through it and continue to write. I work on several projects at the same time and flip between them.

7) How do you maintain your authorial voice regardless of the audience’s or your editor’s/publisher’s expectations?
I’m fortunate that the publisher doesn’t dictate how I should write. I’ve never had a particular audience in mind. I write mainly for myself.

8) Besides conventional fictional writing, you have also tried your hand at graphic novel writing as seen in the release of Gone Case’s (2010) as a graphic novel. What were some of the difficulties that you experienced whilst recapturing the story in the form of a graphic novel?
The graphic novel is more visual, and I wanted to make sure that Gone Case made that transition. I didn’t want a story where a lot of the text just made its way into the comic.

9) What’s the best advice you’ve ever had about how to be more creative?
I think you have to look at whatever comes your way with a new perspective and to turn a problem around.

10) What advice would you like to give to budding writers, teachers and students alike, who are afraid to put their creativity and imagination onto paper?
I would say just start writing and not let your inner editor kick in. Learn to write creatively, without clichés, and find ways of showing something rather than just telling.
In light of what Dr. Dave Chua has shared with us about writing, here are some suggestions on how to teach Creative Writing.

**Writing Circles/Cycles**

Students can be split up into groups of 5 or 6. They will then have to collectively come up with a story with the given writing prompts. For example, the teacher can give out writing prompts such as “It was a dark and stormy night”. Students would then have to progressively build a story around the given prompt.

A time limit can be set to challenge the students if they are of higher ability. The level of difficulty of this literary strategy can be heightened with added writing stimulus being provided to students throughout their writing process. This activity can be conducted in both a group setting and an individual capacity.

Students can then go through cycles or stages of writing as their stories can be rotated amongst the various groups for editing and revisions. Over time, the stories will begin to take a more refined form with multiple revisions. This activity can be turned into a holiday writing project, if the teacher is concerned that there is not enough time to conduct such an activity during curriculum time.

**‘Show Not Tell’ Boxes**

Students often resort to a narrative writing style which provides minute details to any story that tells events in the students explicitly rather than using allegory or metaphors to make the storyline more interesting. This strategy will effectively teach the students to use materials that represent the item and convey complex ideas and themes through symbolism rather than explicit prose.

Students will be required to choose boxes that best represent them. These can be in the form of shoe boxes, or cookie boxes amongst others. They will then have to decorate the boxes in items that best describes their personalities through the use of pictures and symbols. However, never once their names should be written in the box. They need not disclose anything that they are not comfortable with. During the first round of assessment, students can be asked to write a short character/personality description of the boxes that they like. They should try to piece together what kind of person the box represents. Teachers should then prepare name slips which will be given to students randomly. The classmates are supposed to match the given name slip to the box that best matches the name on the slip. If time permits, students can share with the class why did they decorate their respective boxes as such.

This exercise can be also used as an identity formation strategy as students will get more insight into who are they as individuals. This can double as a good ice-breaking exercise as well. The teacher would then have to highlight to students about the beauty of representation and symbolism that helps to heighten one’s understanding about their friend’s character and personality. Similarly, students can apply the same techniques when they attempt to build their story’s character profiles so as to give them depth whilst writing.

For this activity to work, students should be reminded that they should not try to guess whose box it might be from the start. Instead, they should rely on their deduction powers and trust their friends to best ‘show’ themselves through their boxes.

**Driving the Plot**

This activity would require students to tap on their imagination quite a bit. However, the students can be reassured that they will do this activity as a class. The teacher would have to ask students to close their eyes for this activity. One student can be appointed as a scribe to take note of the flow of the story and the contributions of the class. The scenario presented to them will be is that they are all on board a bus heading for a class excursion. They are to come up with a story on the way to entertain themselves. It is only when they finish the story that their journey will end. This story will be built together by sentences contributed by the students. For example, the teacher can provide a beginning statement to the story. It is up to the students to continue the story by adding sentences to the story. They would have to keep in mind the plot structure of the story and have appropriate climax points and rising/falling action to the story so that it becomes a more complete and structured version of storytelling.

This activity can be first conducted in smaller grouper settings. Once they have gotten a hang of it, they can proceed to tell stories as a class. With the help of a collective learning community, the students will feel more confident of sharing their stories. They also can learn from each other on how to best phrase and edit the stories whilst following a basic structure.
In this section, we review Singapore and Southeast Asian stories that capture the complexity of growing nations and changing individuals in a transnational world and are relevant to our adolescent readers who are negotiating their identities in an ever evolving world. “The Running Game” (Tan Mei Ching), “Corridor” (Alfian Sa’at) and “Reflections of Spring” (Duong Thu Huong) portray characters who are negotiating their identity in a developing and changing world. Characters in these stories look back into their past with a heavy sense of nostalgia and longing, and attempt to reconcile their past and present to reach a sense of understanding of who and what they are.

“Priscilla the Cambodian” (Rattawut Lapcharoensap), “A dream” (Phan Ngoc Tien) and “Thirteen Harbors” (Suong Nguyet Minh) relate the effects of war upon individuals and how these individuals attempt to overcome the adverse and painful effects of war upon them in a developing world. The stories highlight the plight and true consequences of the game of war upon innocent lives. Above all, these simple and yet compelling stories seek to evoke a sense of humanity and an appreciation for peace in our young readers.

“Development” (Wena Poon), “Bugis” as well as “Corridor” (Alfian Sa’at) present their take on city life. The stories move beyond the commonly adorned portrayals of city life and instead show the hidden discomforts and perhaps, realities of what city life might truly consist of. “Draft Day” (Rattawut Lapcharoensap) and “In the Quiet” (Tan Mei Ching), present the idea that injustice and tragedy do not discriminate. The stories explore how these youth are shaped by the injustice and tragedy they find themselves in.

The stories are taken from seven anthologies that seek to present realities in our world through different lenses.

**Sightseeing** by Rattawut Lapcharoensap presents alternative sights and insights into Thailand through intimate stories that explore the complexity of relationships in this vibrant nation.

**Draft Day** by Rattawut Lapcharoensap

“Draft Day” by Thai writer Rattawut Lapcharoensap is a short story about Thailand’s military conscription. The military conscription is unique in the sense that it is done in a lottery fashion. Where chance and luck should have been the determining factor in the lottery, corruption takes centre stage. “Draft Day” does not simply encourage students to empathise with the victims of corruption but forces students to reconsider assumption about individuals who are directly or indirectly involved with corruption. Written from the perspective of one who benefits from corruption, it encourages students to ‘see’ how it is like for an individual from the side that is involved in corruption. It encourages students to explore the complexity of humanity, to realise that things are not simply black and white.

**Priscilla the Cambodian** by Rattawut Lapcharoensap

“Priscilla the Cambodian” tells the story of an unlikely friendship between a Thai boy, the protagonist, and a Cambodian girl who is seeking refuge in Thailand with her family. The deep-seated animosity between the Thais and Cambodians is surfaced in the story through the vivid conversations between the adults. As such, the protagonist's friendship with Priscilla the Cambodian becomes a significant and rather inspiring one. Rattawut captures the possibility of acceptance and peace in the midst of hostility. Students can learn that perhaps the heart of acceptance lies in the simple gesture of taking the first step across the divide and offering one’s friendship.
Family of Fallen Leaves is a compilation of twelve short stories by Vietnamese writers that presents the agonizing impact of Agent Orange on Vietnam. The stories convey the true depth and impact of the Vietnam War upon generations of Vietnamese. These compelling stories not only reveal the destruction caused by war but also question the role of humanity in the face of war.

**A Dream**  
by Phan Ngoc Tien

The imperishable impact of the harmful chemical gas Agent Orange on the lives of the Vietnamese people is presented in “A Dream” by Phan Ngoc Tien. A couple is blessed with a baby but has to deal with her deformity due to the effects of Agent Orange. They manage to live happily until a turn of events that leaves the family in a state of devastation. The raw portrayal of the unfortunate events that strike the family shows the potent and inescapable impact of the Vietnam War upon generations of Vietnamese. Students can gain an insight into the true devastation of war through the unfulfilled humble dream of a Vietnamese family.

**Thirteen Harbors**  
by Suong Nguyet Minh

Set during the period of the Vietnam war, “Thirteen Harbors”, written by Vietnamese writer Suong Nguyet Minh tells the story of the effect of the Vietnam war and Agent Orange on the ordinary people in Vietnam. It gives students insights to the tragedy of war, and deepens their appreciation of peace. In addition, the infusion of Vietnamese folk lore in the telling of the tale gives students the opportunity to learn and respect cultures that are different from theirs.

The Proper Care of Foxes by Wena Poon carries eleven short stories that reflect our complex and pulsating cosmopolitan, globalized world. The stories in this anthology weave into unlikely terrains and present to us the elements of the unknown in our suspiciously familiar world.

**Development**  
by Wena Poon

Wena Poon's “Development” explores an understated issue in Singapore - the abuse of maids. The story reveals the regression of humanity in a city that prides itself on its first-class development and modern advancements. In developing his photographs of abused maids, the protagonist sees the “horror lurking” within such an organized and seemingly ordinary society. Students are offered an alternative perspective of Singapore as the story delves into a world in Singapore that is sometimes forgotten under the blinding lights of progress and development.

Reflections of Spring by Duong Thu Huong

The immensity of loss is portrayed in “Reflections of Spring” by Duong Thu Huong. The protagonist walks into a small town that suddenly reminds him of his distant past. Gestures, conversations and even the distinct air of the town bring him back to a past that he once neglected and left so as to fulfill a plan that promises success. Such a loss is sometimes overlooked in today's ambitious and ever-changing society. Duong Thu Huong highlights that loss and reminds us of the simplicity and purity of the dreams we once had.

Night compiles twelve short stories by contemporary Vietnamese writers. These stories present distinct views on post-war life in Vietnam where individuals struggle with postwar realities and the need to first remember and then reconstruct one's identity to belong.

Reflections of Spring by Duong Thu Huong

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Telltale: 11 Stories consists of eleven short contemporary stories set in Singapore. These stories take on a darker tone, highlighting the predicament and sudden tragedy that plague yet shape the characters.

**In The Quiet**
by Tan Mei Ching

Comfortably paced without being dull, “In The Quiet” by Tan Mei Ching is a short story told from the perspective of a teenage girl. It highlights how the daily lives and routine of a Secondary School student can be cut short by an unexpected event such as the death of a friend. The language is accessible, making it a good choice for Lower Secondary students especially. The tragedy in the story also allows students to see the human tragedy of death and develop empathy even for strangers.

Short stories in Corridor by Alfian Sa’at explore the notion of happiness in our very own city. Individuals try to find their sense of happiness in this fast-paced, ever progressing city we call home. Yet, they find hope and happiness not in the bright and sometimes blinding lights but in the smaller and simpler things that our city does offer.

**Corridor**
by Alfian Sa’at

Beginning with the discovery of a dead man’s body along the corridor, “Corridor”, written by Alfian Sa’at, goes on to paint a veracious picture of the lives of ordinary HDB-dwelling Singaporeans. The clarity with which Alfian Sa’at conveys his views about contemporary Singapore makes it all the more absorbing. “Corridor” allows the exploration and questioning of the presence of urban alienation that continues to persist in our fast-paced society.

**Bugis**
by Alfian Sa’at

Written by a local writer, “Bugis”, by Alfian Sa’at is set in contemporary Singapore and told from the viewpoint of a teenage girl. The story gives us a glimpse of what Bugis was like before it became a shopping district, an interesting part of Singapore history that many younger generations of Singaporeans are unaware of. “Bugis” is a culturally familiar story that would be accessible to students as well as help them realise that inspiration and ideas for creative writing can be found in their daily lives.

An Historical Anthology of Singapore Literature where Tan Mei Ching’s “The Running Game” can be found explores the realities of our growing nation. Tensions and concerns associated with the grappling of the Singapore identity is conveyed in the works found in this anthology which also pays tribute to the development of Singapore Literature.

**The Running Game**
by Tan Mei Ching

Tan Mei Ching’s “The Running Game” relates a young girl’s childhood memory of playing with her neighbors at her Grandmother’s block. Through the eyes of an innocent young child, a personal dimension is added to the inhabitants of the HDB flats. When playing with her neighbors, the child discovers the complexities and conflicts present in her neighbors’ relationships and she yearns to be free from the walls of the HDB flat. Through the clear and honest narrative, readers are able to sense the child’s sudden and desperate need for space and perhaps, freedom. A yearning for such freedom may not be unfamiliar to Singaporean readers.

Bibliography


Ask any storyteller, and she or he would probably name Shakespeare one of the greatest storytellers in the history of the English language. The problem with Shakespeare, though, is that his stories weren’t written in the most accessible language. Reading or watching an entire play in Shakespearean language is still a challenge for any of us, let alone secondary school students encountering the bard in their classrooms for the first time.

The solution? Perhaps a translation of Shakespeare’s works into Singlish, our quirky Singaporean vernacular, reviled by some but celebrated by others! Whichever side of the fence you are sitting on the Singlish debate, there is no denying that Singlish is infinitely more accessible to many Singaporean teenagers than Shakespearean English. Is this something that Literature teachers should cry foul over? To help me better understand the stakes of this issue, I decided to approach the masterminds behind the NIE-based “Shakespeare in Singlish” project...

Mention translating canonical Shakespeare plays into Singlish to Literature teachers and you would get a variety of responses. Some would see the merit in making the language more accessible to students, while others would find it almost sacrilegious. Either way, the project to translate the complete works of Shakespeare into Singlish was interesting and exciting enough to be undertaken by Assistant Professor Richard Angus Whitehead and Assistant Professor Warren Mark Liew from the NIE English Language and Literature Academic Group.

When asked what got him started on the project, Dr. Whitehead recalled his early encounter with a book by Rex Shelley called *Sounds and Sins of Singlish, and other Nonsense* (1995), which struck him as a mischievously wonderful celebration of Singlish in the face of authoritarian calls for nothing but proper English. Through the years, Dr. Whitehead was “always thrilled to hear older taxi uncles – whose English may not be ‘good’ in the Speak Good English sense fondly quoting [him] speeches from Julius Caesar or some other Shakespeare play!” Inspired by these educated taxi-drivers, Shelley’s work, and his own love for the rich and genuine Singlish he hears around him, Dr. Whitehead tentatively asked some fourth-year B.A. students at NIE to rewrite a scene from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in Singlish—with wonderful results. Encouraged, he invited both the fourth- and first-year undergraduates to translate the rest of Shakespeare’s plays and poems.

Later, seeing the delicious havoc that Dr. Whitehead and his students were wreaking on the English literary canon in the name of pedagogical progressiveness, Dr. Warren Liew decided that he, too, would get in on the fun – as well as the prospect of serious academic inquiry. Like Dr. Whitehead, Dr. Liew was convinced that Shakespeare was becoming increasingly unfamiliar to Singaporean students, the majority of whom are no longer opting to study Literature at O-level. What better way to counter this descent into literary and cultural amnesia, then, than to revive the Shakespearean through the familiar linguistic resources of Singaporean culture? The anticipated outcome: a collection of Shakespearean tales – 37 plays, 5 longer poems, and 154 sonnets – retold entirely in Singlish!

As Dr. Whitehead explained, “This Singlish Shakespeare project, writing and reading Shakespeare in Singlish, will hopefully provide for schoolchildren a fun, democratised way into Shakespeare.” He added, “Of course, as a book I hope it will have a wider appeal to the wider Singaporean public and visitors to Singapore – an accessible, fun take on all of Shakespeare’s Tales while simultaneously drawing attention to the joys of Singlish.”
Dr. Liew expressed similar hopes that this book project would somehow offer Singaporean teachers a model for culturally relevant pedagogy, making Shakespeare more culturally accessible and meaningful for students here. Especially noteworthy is the fact that these Singlish retellings of Shakespeare are written by NIE Literature undergraduates – that is, future Literature teachers – themselves “The students who’ve contributed to the collection should themselves be able to attest to the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach. In translating the plays, they were forced to draw creatively and critically on their own cultural-linguistic knowledge and skills - namely their proficiency in Singlish. In the process, I think they were also exploring how they as teachers might render otherwise ‘intimidating’ texts more approachable”.

When asked whether they expect to see the collection of “Shakespeare in Singlish” used in Literature classrooms in Singapore in future, Dr. Liew said that much will depend on how the book will be marketed to different audiences. He further adds that their challenge is to provide a persuasive academic justification for the project so that the Ministry of Education can appreciate its pedagogical value rather than write it off as some perverse attempt to challenge the Speak Good English Movement. Both Dr. Liew and Dr. Whitehead are optimistic about the potential of their book project, and are looking at ways to take it further.

If you are inspired by this project to perhaps use Singlish in your classroom as an interesting way to teach Shakespeare, here are some ideas of what you could perhaps get students to engage with Shakespeare in Singlish.

(1) As a summary or plot revision activity, get students to re-imagine the play in a local context. For example, what would Othello be like if he were a Singaporean? The spirit behind the “Shakespeare in Singlish” project is making traditional Literature more culturally relevant so that they would perhaps see more clearly that the themes behind each play are universal.

(2) Highlight key lines from the text you are teaching and get students to work together to come up with Singlish translations of those lines, explaining to the class the reasons behind their choice of words. For example, when doing *The Merchant of Venice*, students might come up with something like this:

(OVERVIEW)

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that.

(SINGLISH)

“I know I’m a Jew. But a Jew got no eyes meh? A Jew got no hands, got no organs, cannot see, cannot feel meh? Jews don’t eat the same food, get hurt by the same weapon, fall sick to the same illness the same way as a Christian meh? If you poke me, I don’t bleed meh? If you give me poison, I don’t die meh? And if you do me wrong, I cannot take revenge meh? If I am like you in all the other ways, I also will be like you in taking revenge.”

(Done by Siti Nurdiana Binte Johar, taken from the “NIE Shakespeare in Singlish Project – *The Merchant of Venice*”)

They might then explain how they have used the “meh” particle to replace the inverted subject-predicate cluster “do we not” with similar rhetorical effects (coupled with the right intonation and accent). In translating the quotes, they would also have to take into account the rest of the text to ensure that their quote still makes sense. After the exercise, you could ask higher ability classes to think about what they think is the difference between the original and their translated version, and why they think the original is studied despite the language barrier.

Good luck, and have fun using Singlish (with care and caution) in your Literature classrooms!
With modern technology, many fundamental aspects of people’s lives have been revolutionised. For example, the way we travel, the way we pass our time, and the way we communicate with people in modern times are vastly different from the way people did these same things centuries ago. Travelling has become easier and faster. Computers and television shows have become a big part of our pastime. Communication with others can now be done on a variety of platforms like through SMS, phone calls or over the internet. With technology changing so many fundamental elements of the way we live our lives, it is perhaps not surprising that it could also revamp the way we tell stories. We can now choose to tell stories digitally, by combining the ancient art of storytelling with modern technology.

What Exactly Are Digital Stories?

Digital stories bring together recorded audio narration, images, text, and music; and all these elements work together to tell a story that is multimodal in nature. To help you visualise what a basic digital story looks like, just imagine a slide show with images and text on it, with an audio recording playing in the background. They are usually less than eight minutes long.

Digital stories can be created for many purposes. People may of course create digital stories simply because they have a story they want to share. In the corporate world, digital stories may be used to promote an idea or to advertise a product. Digital stories are also increasingly being used as an educational tool, created either by the teacher to instruct students or, more often, by students as a way to reflect on and demonstrate what they have learnt.

People did not wait until there was writing before they told stories and sang songs.

—Albert Bates Lord

Basic Steps to Create a Digital Story

To help scaffold your students’ first attempt at creating their own digital story, you might find it useful to adopt the suggested steps as follows:

1. Write a script.

2. Create a storyboard. At this stage, the script is examined to decide what images can be used. Suitable images are then selected or created. The images are then fitted onto the storyboard to show which parts of the story it will illustrate. Storyboarding is important as it allows one to see at a glance if all the images appropriately illustrate the story at its various points.

3. Use computer software to stitch everything together. An audio recording is done of the storyteller reading the story out loud. Computer software is then used to stitch the audio recording, images, music and text together. Examples of user-friendly computer programmes to do the job include Windows Movie Maker, Photo Story, or iMovie.
Digital Storytelling Tasks for Your Literature Students

Digital storytelling can easily be brought into the Literature classroom. Below are a few suggestions of the types of digital storytelling tasks you can set for your students.

**Reflective Exercise**

The main purpose of this task would be to get students to reflect on a text they have studied, for example, the relevance of the text to their personal lives, or which parts of the text they most liked or disliked. As such, students have to write their own script, which will be their reflection based on the questions provided by the teacher.

**Creative Writing**

This is perhaps the task which allows most room for creativity. Students come up with their own poem or write their own story then create a digital story based on their written work.

**Reading a poem or narrating a significant part of a Literature text.**

For this task, students need not come up with their own script. Instead, they select a poem or a significant section of a prose. The final product should be a digital story which has an audio recording of the students reading the poem or narrating the story, accompanied by suitable images and music. A purpose of this task might be to direct students to focus on a close reading of the text or a portion of it, and to interpret the text by themselves. By being able to choose appropriate accompanying images and music and also to articulate their reasons for their selection, students can demonstrate their understanding of the text. For example, when studying the confrontation scene between Pip and the convict in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* a student can demonstrate his understanding of how the melancholic mood and atmosphere is conveyed through the text by choosing a picture of a dark sky or cemetery in his digital story, combined with foreboding music.

**Using Digital Storytelling**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Problems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourages independent learning and thinking</td>
<td>Requires students to know how to use computer software to create the final product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases student interest</td>
<td>Assumes students have access to computers and software</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fosters creativity</td>
<td>Potentially time-consuming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supports multiple literacies</td>
<td>Provides opportunity for oral skills</td>
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The long term benefits of using digital stories as a learning tool far outweigh any disadvantages it may have. The possible problems listed above also can easily be overcome. Firstly, many students these days are tech savvy so they might already know how to use computer software to stitch images and audio recording together. Even if they do not know how to use the software, it does not take more than an hour to go through online tutorials which are easy to find on the internet. Secondly, if there are insufficient computers in school, the project can be a group work instead of individual work. Thirdly, although the process of creating the digital story might be time consuming, it can be set as a take-home project with regular milestone checks to allow teachers to check on the students’ progress.

For those of you who are interested in exploring digital storytelling more, these are some useful websites:

- [http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/](http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/)

**Important Elements of a Digital Story**

Whichever task you decide to give your students, it is important to have a set of realistic and measurable criteria, which can also be included as part of your rubrics if the students’ digital stories are to be assessed.

- Clear goals which are met
- Coherence of image and music with the content of the story. This is essential to any digital story as this ensures that the images and music chosen are suitable and effective in illustrating the content of the story well.
- Clarity of the audio recording and images.
- Appropriate pace of reading.
- Interesting and logical storyline that can engage the audience’s attention.
- Appropriate length of digital story.
WHERE TO PUBLISH YOUR SHORT STORIES

BY BRIAN LIM

In this age of almost effortless global communication, publishing a piece of creative writing can still seem like a daunting task. In Singapore, however, there are a number of avenues that allow fledging writers to break into the literary scene, no matter how young or old the writer may be. Here is a short list of places where students can publish their work and, for some, even receive positive criticism and feedback to help them improve in their writing career.

Budding Writers League (Online Portal)
http://www.buddingwriters.org/

BWL is a non-profit organisation that provides youths a place to showcase their creative writing. It uses its Facebook page as a portal where contributors are able to post a link to their work (whether published on a blog, a FictionPress account, or any other online source) for the rest of the community to read and provide constructive criticism. The best contributions will be compiled into a monthly magazine.

Ceriph (Publication)
http://www.ceriph.net/home.htm

Ceriph is a relatively new, independently run print publication that produces a book every quarter. It seeks to fill a niche left by publications for local writing that “cater mainly to professional and full time writers”, and thus invites submissions from the general public. All submissions go through a selection process and, if published, the contributors receive a free copy of the issue.

Golden Point Award (Competition)
http://www.nac.gov.sg/events/competitions/golden-point-award

The Golden Point Award is a biennial creative writing competition for short stories and poetry. One of its distinctive features is the support of submissions in Singapore’s four major languages: English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil. The 2011 submissions were evaluated by a panel of professional judges, composed of notable names in the literary scene like Cyril Wong, Kirpal Singh and Simon Tay. The next competition will be held in 2013.

Quarterly Literary Review Singapore (Publication)
http://www.qlrs.com/about.asp

A non-profit Internet literary journal run by volunteers, QLRS accepts submissions for short stories, especially those with relevance to Singapore. The QLRS sets a high standard for its submissions, but does not have age restrictions. It also styles itself as a nonpartisan journal that uses the quality of writing as its sole benchmark.

Writing the City (Online Portal)
http://civiclife.sg/writingthecity/

An online community for people to contribute stories, poems, and scripts inspired by scenes in Singapore, Writing the City’s most distinctive feature is its focus on having a local flavour to all their submissions. Another unique trait is a Google Maps plug-in that pins stories to specific locations in Singapore. As a community, users are encouraged to read, contribute and comment on all the work published so that all may benefit from the feedback given.