

**RESOURCE LIBRARY**  
ACTIVITY : 3 HRS

## The Role of Images in Storytelling

Students discuss the importance of images in storytelling. They build a digital story around photographs they take to tell a story they want to share with others; they also evaluate their peers' digital stories.

### GRADES

9 - 12+

### SUBJECTS

*Arts and Music, Earth Science, Oceanography, English Language Arts, Geography, Human Geography, Photography*

### CONTENTS

5 Links, 1 Video, 4 PDFs

## OVERVIEW

Students discuss the importance of images in storytelling. They build a digital story around photographs they take to tell a story they want to share with others; they also evaluate their peers' digital stories.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/role-images-storytelling/>

## Program



## DIRECTIONS

**1. Engage students in the topic of the activity by having them read and discuss James Cameron's account of going to the bottom of the ocean.**

Direct students to read the National Geographic article "Pressure Dive" and view the accompanying *DEEPSEA CHALLENGE* photo gallery. Ask students to summarize the article. Ask: *What did Cameron experience? What was unique about his experience? Can you imagine yourself in Cameron's position?* Discuss the photo gallery images and how they complement the story. Ask: *How did the images affect your understanding of the story Cameron told? Did the images make the story better? How? What would the story have been like without the images?*

**2. Have students compare images to determine which are more effective.**

Ask students to think about the photos in the story they just read. Ask: *Which of these images do you like the most? Why? Which image do you think best represented the story? Is it the same as your favorite image? Why or why not?* Display one of the images that students seem to like best. Prompt students to think about specific elements within the photograph. Ask: *What does the term "composition" mean related to photographs? What are the main figures or objects, and where are they located? In the foreground? The background? Are they centered in the photograph? What kind of emotional impact does the photograph have? How does it make you feel? Is there humor in the photograph? Is there movement in the photograph? What is moving? How does your eye move through the photograph? What story is the photograph telling? Is that story interesting to you?* Have students work with their group to identify specific examples of elements that were effective in the image and elements that were not. Have groups share and discuss their ideas with the class. Give students the list of best practices for photographs from the provided National Geographic Photo Tips website.

**3. View the "Telling the Story" video clip of James Cameron discussing the role of images and film in exploration.**

Introduce the video by explaining that James Cameron, with whom they may be familiar as the director of films such as *Titanic*, *Avatar*, *The Terminator*, and *Aliens*, is also a National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence. Tell students that they are going to watch a video in which James Cameron discusses the role of images and film in exploration. Give students the following focus questions prior to watching the video: *How does James Cameron feel about images in exploration?* (He thinks they are important.) *Why?* (They help to engage people in the stories of exploration.) View the video and then discuss the focus questions. Ask: *Why does James Cameron think images are so important in exploration?* (Images help to tell the explorer's story and trigger other people's imaginations.) *Who does he think benefits from*

*these images?* (People who aren't able to be there themselves benefit from the images.) *Do you think Cameron is right about how images help to engage people in important issues and explorations?* Discuss how Cameron's roles as both an ocean explorer and film director make his perspective unique and how this perspective could have informed the photographs used in the National Geographic article the students read in step 1.

#### **4. Introduce the digital story presentation project.**

Divide students into groups of three or four. Explain that the members of each group will work together to produce a ten-minute digital story about a topic of interest to them and that they will present their completed story to the class. Explain that students' presentations should use images in an effective way to illustrate the story they are telling. Ask students to share what they know about digital stories. Show examples of digital stories from the provided websites. Have each group select and revisit one of the digital stories you viewed and discuss the main idea or theme of the story. Ask them to talk about whether the images used in the digital story are effective in expressing that main idea or theme and what makes the images effective or ineffective. Ask them to describe how the images work to enhance the digital story.

#### **5. Introduce the basic guidelines for selecting a topic for the digital story.**

Distribute the How to Choose a Topic handout and review it with students. Point out that the topic they select must be something they can photograph at least in part in or around the classroom, their home, or their school. Have students work in their small groups to identify an issue or topic they would like to bring to the attention of others through a digital story.

#### **6. Introduce the project guidelines and storyboarding.**

Distribute the Digital Story Rubric handout and Storyboard worksheet to students. Go through the rubric with students and make sure they understand what is expected of them. Read the storyboard worksheet with students. Explain that the storyboard will help students plan their digital stories for their presentations. Tell students that as they develop their digital stories they will sketch the outlines of their proposed stories in the storyboard, including one scene in each of the boxes. Under each box they will write a brief description of the scene text and/or narration to accompany the image they want to use. As students identify image files, they can include the name or location of the files under the sketches as well. Point out that it may be easier for students to type the script separately and include anchors that they can refer to on the storyboard. Allow time to answer any questions students might have about the rubric or the storyboarding process.

### **7. Have students create their digital stories.**

Have students begin by taking some photographs, writing drafts of their scripts, and storyboarding their digital stories. Students will likely go back and forth between their scripts and photographs. Once students have completed the core of their stories, they can search for any additional images, audio files, and maps that they would like to use to supplement their own photographs.

### **8. Have students present their digital stories and peer review other groups' presentations.**

Distribute and introduce the Presentation Checklist to students. Explain that after each presentation, students will work in their groups to fill out a Presentation Checklist to provide feedback to the group that just presented. Emphasize that each group is to give constructive feedback, which means they should give specific examples and suggestions that could be used to improve the presentations. Have each group present their digital story to the class. Instruct the groups that are not presenting to pay close attention. After each group is finished presenting, allow time for students to ask questions and a few minutes for the other groups to thoughtfully review the digital story using the Presentation Checklist. Once the groups have finished their reviews, collect the checklists.

### **9. Have students review and discuss the feedback from their peers.**

Distribute the Presentation Checklist handout to the appropriate groups. Have students review the feedback in their groups and discuss what they did well and how they could improve. Bring students together for a whole-class discussion on the peer review process. Ask: *What was it like being a peer reviewer? What did you learn from being peer reviewed?*

### **10. Have students reflect on the role of images in their digital stories.**

Ask: *How important were images in your story? What did the images in your story do that words could not? How did you choose which images to include? How did these images help tell your story? Which digital story that your classmates presented did you feel was most effective? Why?* Ask students to reflect on the similarities between the use of images in their digital stories and the use of images to promote exploration. Ask: *Why is collecting imagery important for exploration?*

## Modification

If desired, have students use the available technology and tools to record any narration and piece together their stories. Students can then “play” their stories rather than presenting them to the class. A number of tools for recording audio, editing photographs, and creating digital stories are listed in the Other Notes area of the Preparation section.

## Modification

If digital cameras are not available for all students, consider allowing students who have camera phones to use them. If a limited number of cameras are available, modify the activity to stagger photo-taking times for the groups and/or have students download images instead. If there is limited availability of technology, students can gather physical artifacts instead and present their stories live, using the visual artifacts they have gathered.

## Tip

In step 3, choose several brief digital stories so you can show students a variety of examples.

## Tip

Step 7 can provide an excellent opportunity to discuss appropriate use of copyrighted materials and alternatives to using copyrighted materials. See the For Further Exploration section for resources relating to copyright in student-produced work.

## Tip

The tips for choosing a topic in step 5 are based on the three understandings of geo-literacy. For more information on geo-literacy, see the For Further Exploration section.

## Alternative Assessment

Use the provided Digital Story Rubric to assess students’ digital stories.

## OBJECTIVES

## Subjects & Disciplines

- Arts and Music

## Earth Science

- Oceanography
- English Language Arts

## Geography

- Human Geography

## Storytelling

- Photography

# Learning Objectives

Students will:

- discuss the role of images in storytelling
- analyze images to determine what makes an effective image
- analyze digital stories to determine what makes an effective digital story
- plan and create a digital story on a topic of their choice

# Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

# Teaching Methods

- Cooperative learning
- Discussions
- Experiential learning
- Reflection

# Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
  - Information, Media, and Technology Skills
    - Information, Communications, and Technology Literacy

- Media Literacy
- Learning and Innovation Skills
  - Communication and Collaboration
- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Applying
  - Creating
  - Evaluating
- Geographic Skills
  - Organizing Geographic Information

# National Standards, Principles, and Practices

## IRA/NCTE STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- Standard 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 nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

## NATIONAL SCIENCE EDUCATION STANDARDS

- (9-12) Standard G-1:

Science as a human endeavor

## NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR ARTS EDUCATION

- Dance (9-12) Standard 6:

Making connections between dance and healthful living

## OCEAN LITERACY ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES AND FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

- Principle 7a:

The ocean is the last and largest unexplored place on Earth—less than 5% of it has been explored. This is the great frontier for the next generation’s explorers and researchers, where they will find great opportunities for inquiry and investigation.

# ISTE STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS (ISTE STANDARDS\*S)

- **Standard 1:**

Creativity and Innovation

- **Standard 2:**

Communication and Collaboration

- **Standard 6:**

Technology Operations and Concepts

## **Preparation**

## **What You'll Need**

### **MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE**

- Paper
- Pencils

### **REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY**

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per learner, Projector, Speakers
- Plug-Ins: Flash

### **PHYSICAL SPACE**

- Classroom
- Computer lab

### **GROUPING**

- Large-group instruction

### **OTHER NOTES**

The following is a sampling of tools that could be useful for digital storytelling:

- Pinterest: [Web 2.0 Tools for Educators](#)
- Edudemic: [Best Web 2.0 Classroom Technology Tools](#)

- Edtech Teacher: [Best Technology Tools for iPads](#)
- [Windows Movie Maker](#) (for video recording and editing)
- [Audacity](#) (for sound recording and editing)
- [Gimp](#) (for image editing)

Consider copyright concerns when deciding whether or not to publish students' digital stories online. Some points to consider include the use of copyrighted audio and/or imagery downloaded from the Internet and permissions requirements for images and audio of students or community members. See the For Further Exploration section for resources relating to copyright in student-produced work.

## BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

### Background Information

In March 2012, National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence James Cameron made the first solo dive to the bottom of the Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench, nearly 11 kilometers (7 miles) beneath the surface. Cameron's deep-sea exploration vehicle, *DEEPSEA CHALLENGER*, was the second manned vehicle to make it to the Challenger Deep. The first was the *Trieste* in 1960. One of the many differences between the two expeditions was the emphasis on bringing back images. The *Trieste* was unable to take video or even still photographs at the bottom of the ocean. The *DEEPSEA CHALLENGER*, however, was equipped with lights and video cameras, enabling it to capture images of the remote deep-ocean world and bring them back for all to see.

### Prior Knowledge

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### Recommended Prior Activities

- None

### Vocabulary

<b>Term</b>	<b>Part of Speech</b>	<b>Definition</b>
composition	<i>noun</i>	arrangement of the parts of a work or structure in relation to each other and to the whole.

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## For Further Exploration

### Reference

- [ReadWriteThink: Students as Creators—Exploring Copyright](#)
- [National Geographic: Photo Tips](#)

### Video

- [National Geographic Education: Experiencing Film—An Active Approach](#)

## FUNDER

