Unit 46: Digital Storytelling

Unit code: J/502/5260

QCF Level 3: BTEC National

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 60

Aim and purpose

Through this unit, learners will explore the importance of storytelling using digital technology. Learners will consider the mechanics of storytelling and will construct, plan, capture and manipulate visual and audio material to realise a digital story.

Unit introduction

Storytelling be it factual or fictional, is an essential part of life, culture and society. Some of the most important messages in society are delivered and passed on in the form of stories. Over the centuries it has been an important aspect to human development. Stories have been used to entertain, inspire belief, mobilise peoples, document life, communicate doctrines, cross cultural boundaries, challenge accepted ideals, and to ask fundamental questions about the notion of existence itself. It remains one of the most enthralling, vital and engaging activities in human culture today.

This unit enables learners to identify storytelling mechanisms and use them to develop stories of their own, using digital technology. More accessible, less expensive digital technology has made it cheaper and easier to produce stories. Digital storytelling also crosses into contemporary art and design practice. Digital technology made storytellers' work more accessible to a wider audience and potentially more interactive, in various forms, through the internet.

In this unit learners will be taught how to construct a story, plan its production and capture visual and sound material. They will consider storytelling conventions such as narration and make decisions on how they are going to tell their story. They will learn about different digital technologies, processes and equipment such as cameras, equipment and software. Learners will be encouraged to produce a dynamic and exciting story using digital technology, and to explore the possibilities in this medium.

Learners will be taught how to manipulate the sound and visual material they have captured in the post-production stage. They will manage their projects by organising project layouts, controlling settings, naming files appropriately and using timelines. They will also explore aspects of image and sound manipulation techniques by using different aspects of the editing or post-production software. As they work through the process of constructing their story, they will be able to refer back to their original intentions, and gain valuable insights into their working practice.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

1 Be able to plan a digital story

2 Be able to generate audio and visual material

3 Be able to manipulate and develop audio and visual material

4 Be able to produce a finished digital story.

Unit content

1 Be able to plan a digital story

Mechanisms: forms, eg narrative, non-narrative, linear, non-linear, juxtaposition, first person, third person; development, eg story arcs, character, subject, situation; representation; context

Story ideas: eg themes, subjects, characters, plots, ideas, adaptations, narration, structure

Planning: eg writing, self-generated brief, analysis, project management, tasks, schedule, roles, group-based work, scripting, storyboarding

Research from primary sources: eg natural world, environments, human figure, machinery, architecture, interiors, theatre performances

Research from secondary sources: eg books, films, moving images, still images, animations, museums, collections, internet, postcards, magazines, poetry, music, popular culture

2 Be able to generate audio and visual material

Audio and visual material: eg drawing-based, lens-based media, equipment, still images, moving images, collaged material, found material, commissioned soundtrack, narration, readings, musique concrete, sound effects, sampled sound

Capture material: eg scanning, digital filming, stop motion, in-camera edit, still lens-based imagery, audio recording equipment, digital audio recorder, built-in microphone, CCTV, imported imagery, screen grabs, internet movies, copyright free material, web camera, mobile phone images

3 Be able to manipulate and develop audio and visual material

Use equipment: importing, eg audio, video; organising, eg labelling clips, project folders, naming conventions, project settings; using peripherals; external storage devices

Manipulate and develop audio and visual material: editing, eg video, audio, timing, pace, image manipulation, background effects, motion effects, filters, transitions, titles; arrange; synchronise, eg, scripted narration, action, visuals; develop, eg review, test screen, feedback refine ideas, adapt ideas; software, eg Photoshop, PhotoImpact, Lightroom, Aperture, Premiere Pro, Final Cut Pro, iMovie, Cool Edit Pro, Pro-Tools, After Effects, Apple Motion, Pinnacle Liquid, Adobe Flash

Formats: eg file compression, QuickTime, AVI, DV Stream, AVCHD, TIFF, JPEG, WAV, AIFF, MPEG2, MPEG4, H.264, PAL, NTSC, web streaming, podcasting, iPhone, PDA, BlackBerry, hand-held device

4 Be able to produce a finished digital story

Produce a digital story: eg choose format (on screen, projection, print), burn DVDs, upload, prepare files for viewing on different devices, suitability, specific purpose, audience, control of lighting, visual impact; formal elements (line, colour, contrast, pattern, shape), sound qualities, audience reaction

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	**To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:**	**To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:**
P1 plan a digital story [IE; CT; EP]	**M1** plan and develop a coherent digital story	**D1** plan and develop a complex and original digital story
P2 generate audio and visual material [SM]	**M2** generate audio and visual material effectively and consistently	**D2** independently generate diverse audio and visual material
P3 manipulate and develop audio and visual material [CT; SM]	**M3** manipulate and develop audio and visual material with purpose and effect	**D3** innovatively manipulate and develop audio and visual material
P4 manipulate and develop audio and visual material. [CT; SM]	**M4** skilfully produce an effective finished digital story.	**D4** independently produce an original and involving digital story.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

For this unit learners need access to appropriate digital equipment. Depending on the projects set for the learners, equipment should include a selection of the following in order to capture images and audio: digital stills cameras, DSLRs, DV, HDV or AVCHD cameras, a scanner, digital audio recording equipment, access to the internet, web cameras and mobile phones.

To manipulate and develop the audio and visual material, learners need access to digital stills/moving image manipulation packages and digital audio manipulation packages. Learners need the opportunity to export their project in an appropriate digital format.

This unit gives learners the opportunity to explore storytelling in a digital format. The unit focuses on both the construction of and conventions used in storytelling, and the application of digital technology and equipment to bring this to life. Tutors may decide to deliver this unit through individual projects or group-based work. Where group work is carried out, learners need to have appropriate individual work for assessment that demonstrates their contribution to the project. Learners could develop finished stories using any aspect or combinations of still imagery, moving imagery, animation, narration, soundtrack and music. There is a series of conventions that could be used, for instance voiceovers and inter-titles (used to provide dialogue or narration in silent films).

For learning outcome 1, learners should be taught how to plan a story. Learners will benefit from exposure to examples of storytelling that use a variety of mechanisms eg linear or narrative. To help learners understand the mechanics of storytelling, analysis of examples in class or in peers groups may be beneficial. Examples of storytelling, for learners to interact with, in order to develop their understanding of storytelling, may come from a variety of sources.

Learners must also plan and research stories, for learning outcome 1. Assignments for this could be developed around learners interpreting existing narration, stories or ideas, and being asked to re-record the narration and develop visuals based on their responses or feelings about the story. Alternatively, learners could explore themes, provided by the tutor or themselves. Whichever route is taken, learners should provide evidence of their planning process. This should record information about subjects, themes, responses and ideas. It should also show consideration and identification of roles, tasks and schedules. As learners develop their work they should record their ideas and observations in their work journals or sketchbooks. Learners are required to research their stories through primary and secondary sources.

For learning outcome 2, learners should develop their plan from learning outcome 1 into the production stage, which involves using a range of equipment to record both audio and visual material. Tutors may need to demonstrate the basic functions of digital cameras and sound recording equipment, depending on learners' prior knowledge and ability. Learners need support tutors to choose processes, techniques and equipment that are best suited to their story. Learners' plans may need to be adapted and refined as they begin to use digital processes to capture their source material. They should be encouraged to explore and exploit the potential of visual elements to make their visual footage as potent and engaging as possible. Tutors need to work with learners to resolve any safety issues during on or off site project work. Learners may need to involve actors and other participants to be able to realise their story. They may also need to access specialist resources such as chromakey equipment, green/blue screen facilities or sound recording booths. At the end of this process learners should have gathered/created and captured their source materials.

For learning outcome 3 learners need to bring their source material into the post-production stage. They will need access to edit suites or computers to download and import their captured materials into a digital package to manipulate and develop their audio and visual materials. Tutors need to explain appropriate platforms and file formats for importing and exporting. Tutors may need to demonstrate basic procedures for downloading or importing digital material, and the correct conventions for naming files and organising projects in editing software. In this learning outcome learners should have the opportunity to manipulate their visual and audio material as they compile their story. The extent of manipulation will depend on the nature of the story. Learners should be encouraged to review their work against their original plan, and judge its effectiveness accordingly. Opportunities may exist for screenings of rough edits to peers for feedback. Learners may need to re-record some of their visual or audio material if it does not fit its intended purpose.

For learning outcome 4 learners should complete their work and produce a finished story. The story should be exported in the appropriate format, depending on the intended purpose for the finished story. This should be screened to an audience of peers and feedback should be received and recorded appropriately. Learners may find it beneficial to record their own feelings about the work they have produced, in relation to meeting their original intentions, any adaptations they made and why, its particular successes and development areas. They should also evaluate their use of formal elements such as composition and contrast.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to the unit and its structure – whole class.
Delivery of assignment brief – whole class.
Introduction to storytelling and its mechanisms – whole class.
Analysis of examples of storytelling mechanisms.
Assignment 1: Analysing Digital Storytelling Learners work towards analysing the mechanics of storytelling. • View examples. • Analyse examples. • Differences between digital and traditional forms. • Draw conclusions referring to examples. • Document evidence of analysis.
Assignment 2: Planning a Digital Story • Consider ideas. • Research from ideas primary and secondary sources. • Develop final idea. • Create plans for final idea. • Share ideas with peers.
Learner initiated study.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Assignment 3: Capture Audio and Visual Material • Demonstration to learners: how to capture material in correct file compressions. • Learners capture audio and visual materials. • Learners ensure all captured material is in the correct format for selected application.
Learner initiated study.
Assignment 4: Generating Audio and Visual Material Learners use a selected editing package to manipulate and develop, audio and visual material. • Demonstrate software to learners. • Use equipment. • Arrange and manipulate imported audio and visual material to meet original intentions.
Learner initiated study.
Assignment 5: Present Finished Story Learners finalise finished digital stories. • Finalise the combination of the audio and visual material. • Export the project in the desired/appropriate format/compression. • Whole class view each others work. • Peer and tutor feedback. • Evaluate finished product.

Assessment

Work at pass level will show an appropriate response. Learners should able to explain their intentions clearly. Their choice of techniques should demonstrate understanding of potential as applied to the brief. The control and application of digital techniques will be suitable to their intentions. Equipment must be used safely and appropriately.

For P1, learners must use appropriate techniques to plan a digital story. They must demonstrate understanding of the mechanics of storytelling, develop ideas for a digital story, plan the different stages in their story, research their story ideas and plan suitable responses to source the material they need.

For P2, learners must generate audio and visual material using equipment and processes safely and showing appropriate skills and control of the production stage. They should express their ideas clearly, and demonstrate understanding of the characteristics of audio and visual material.

For P3, learners must manipulate and develop audio and visual material communicating their intentions clearly, and demonstrating suitable skills in working thorough the importing and editing stages. They must work safely when using specialist equipment and resources.

For P4, learners must be able to produce a finished digital story that communicates their intentions and ideas clearly using a range of skills and processes that are appropriate to their intentions. They must work safely and explain the different stages of their work, with reference to feedback and the final product.

Work at merit level should show an effective approach. The stages in the planning of the story should be more considered than in pass level work. The use of techniques and digital processes will be more skilful. Work in the subsequent production stages should be more considered and purposeful.

For M1, learners should use techniques to plan a coherent digital story. They should effectively demonstrate understanding of the mechanics of storytelling and develop ideas for a coherent digital story. They should effectively identify audio and visual materials required, and purposefully plan the different stages in production. They should produce relevant supporting research.

For M2, learners must generate audio and visual material effectively and consistently, showing skill in using a range of equipment and processes and effective control of the production process.

For M3, learners must effectively manipulate and develop sound and visual material using digital techniques and software proficiently to develop the story. They should show a sense of purpose in identifying the required treatment of their captured material.

For M4, learners must skilfully produce an effective finished digital story, showing understanding and skill in controlling the use of digital technology to achieve the intention of the story. They must work safely and discuss the different stages of their work, feedback and the finished product.

Work at distinction level should show a greater sense of innovation and originality. Learners should perform all the tasks within the assignment(s) with fluency. The use of digital technology and equipment should be sophisticated and informed.

For D1, learners must use techniques to plan and develop a complex and original digital story, showing original thinking in their planning with exciting combinations of audio and visual material. They should demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the mechanics of storytelling and develop ideas for an original digital story. Planning should be informed and comprehensively meet the needs of the story idea. They must produce independently detailed and relevant supporting research.

For D2, learners must generate diverse audio and visual material comprehensively and independently, showing sophisticated approach to using digital technology, processes and equipment to comprehensively meet the needs of the story idea. They should be responsive to the potential offered by the events, scenarios and subjects that they record.

For D3, learners must innovatively manipulate and develop audio and visual material. Their use of digital techniques and software should show flair and innovative ideas about how visual and sound material can be combined or exploited to produce dramatic effect.

For D4, learners must independently produce an original and involving digital story that shows a sophisticated understanding of the potential in digital techniques and processes and an awareness of potential audience. The original story idea must be comprehensively developed. Learners should work safely and be able to independently discuss in detail the different stages of their work, product feedback and how the final product meets their original intentions.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	**Assignment 1:** Analysing Digital Storytelling	Designer considering the work of others.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: • notes • analysis or viva voce • reference of material studied.
P1, M1, D1	**Assignment 2:** Planning a Digital Story	Designer creating ideas for new work.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: • set brief • identification of tasks involved • schedules • identification of roles • scripting • storyboards • synopsis • character profiles • ideas • structure.
P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3	**Assignment 3:** Capture Audio and Visual Material	Artist building up a bank of resources.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: • a catalogued portfolio of research, highlighted and annotated • summaries of research • a research log • an information trail, eg a bibliography.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P3, M3, D3	**Assignment 4:** Generating Audio and Visual Material	Artist developing materials for project.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: • scanned, recorded material and audio files captured in their correct format • screen dumps of correct file management of the project • learner log discussing methods of generating audio and visual materials • tutor observation records.
P4, M4, D4	**Assignment 5:** Present Finished Story	Artist or designer presenting work to audience/client.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: • editor's notes of process, changes made throughout and techniques, visual and audio filters effects and transitions used • tutor observation records • final digital story, exported in the correct file format • collation of feedback on final story • written evaluation or viva voce.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Art and Design sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Art and Design suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Introduction to Graphic Visual Language	2D Visual communication	Video Production for Interactive Media
Introduction to Creative Use of Computers	Video Production	Computers in Art and Design
Working to Graphics Brief	Working with Graphic Design Briefs	Pre-Production Techniques for the Media Industries
Introduction to Animation	Working with Digital Art and Design Briefs	Image Manipulation Computer Applications

Essential resources

For this unit learners should have access to library and internet resources. They should also have access to appropriate digital production equipment, to the requirements of the project. This may include: digital stills cameras, DV HDV or HD cameras, a scanner, digital audio recording equipment, access to the internet, web cameras, iPods/iPhones and mobile phones, digital stills/moving image manipulation packages and digital audio manipulation packages. Learners need the opportunity to export their project in an appropriate digital format and they may therefore require digital storage devices.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres should try to make links with local media production companies, art galleries, film festivals, community TV channels and internet TV channels. It is also possible that an output for this unit could be through the college website, YouTube or MySpace. Local media practitioners and artists are usually willing to come in and talk about their work and how learners should develop their projects.

Centres should develop links with media practitioners and artists to deliver assignments to learners or to provide work experience.

Links with employers are essential to the delivery of the programme for work experience and future employment.

Vocational learning support resources:

- Learning and Skills Network – www.vocationallearning.org.uk

Business and finance advice:

- local and regional Business Link – www.businesslink.gov.uk

Assignments should be vocationally relevant; centres should consider the delivery of 'live projects' for example to support the vocational content of the unit and programme.

Creative and Cultural Skills (www.ccskills.org.uk), the Sector Skills Council for Arts, Crafts and Design have launched the web portal Creative Choices (www.creative-choices.co.uk). This portal has a range of information about careers in the arts, crafts and design sector, including job descriptions.

Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for Creative Media (www.skillset.org), provides details (www.skillset.org/careers) on careers and the industry and has plus a regularly updated news and events page.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Baines P and Haslam A – *Type and Typography (Portfolio Series)* (Laurence King, 2005) ISBN 978-1856694377

Braverman B – *Video Shooter Storytelling with DV, HD and HDV, Camera* (CMP Books, 2006) ISBN 978-1578202898

Hampe B – *Making Documentary Films and Videos: A Practical Guide to Planning, Filming, and Editing Documentaries* (Holt, 2007) ISBN 978-0805081817

Handler Miller C – *World Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment* (Focal Press, 2008) ISBN 978-0240809595

Rose J – *Producing Great Sound for Digital Video – DV Expert Series* (CMP, 2008) ISBN 978-0240809700

Rabiger M – *Developing Story Ideas: Find the ideas you haven't yet had* (Focal Press, 2006) ISBN 978-0240807362

The Adobe Bible (Hungry Mind, US – various years of publication) series of books would also be useful – tutors need to match the edition to that of the available software in the centre

Journals

A/V

Broadcast

Creative Review

Creative Technology

Emigre

Post Update

Screen International

Television

Websites

www.adobe.com	Adobe Magazine
www.atom.com	Atom Films
www.avid.com	Avid
www.bbc.co.uk	BBC
www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales	BBC Shorts Wales
www.bfi.org.uk	British Film Institute
www.channel4.com/film/shortsandclips/shorts.html	Channel 4
www.pixar.com	Pixar
www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/shortfilms	UK Film Council

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	researching and planning their digital stories
Creative thinkers	developing story ideas manipulating and producing their finished digital stories
Reflective learners	evaluating their work and reflecting on the feedback obtained and their own thoughts
Self-managers	throughout the production process.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	analysing examples of story mechanics in class discussions
Creative thinkers	adapting ideas based on research and feedback
Team workers	producing their digital stories if working in small teams
Self-managers	responding positively to change, seeking advice and support where needed
Effective participators	engaging with feedback on online stories.

Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	editing the digital stories
Use ICT to effectively plan work and evaluate the effectiveness of the ICT system they have used	evaluating the overall production process and the final product
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	storing the generated footage for use on the project
Follow and understand the need for safety and security practices	using stills/moving image devices to gather images
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching the production
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	creating the final evaluation of their product
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: • text and tables • images • numbers • records	capturing and collating materials for their final project
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	planning and developing a story
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	finalising their product and gaining feedback from an audience
Evaluate the selection and use of ICT tools and facilities used to present information	evaluating the use of ICT in their final evaluations
Select and use ICT to communicate and exchange information safely, responsibly and effectively including storage of messages and contact lists	planning a story with others

Skill	When learners are ...
Mathematics	
Understand routine and non-routine problems in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations	calculating frame rates and frame sizes for the project
Identify the situation or problem and the mathematical methods needed to tackle it	calculating frame rates and frame sizes for the project
Select and apply a range of skills to find solutions	manipulating the images in order to create the desired effects
Use appropriate checking procedures and evaluate their effectiveness at each stage	duplicating required effects during production and post-production
Interpret and communicate solutions to practical problems in familiar and unfamiliar routine contexts and situations	manipulating the images in order to create the desired effects duplicating required effects during production and post-production
Draw conclusions and provide mathematical justifications	working in the post-production and evaluation phase
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	producing development work, researching and presenting final products
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	working during the research and development phase
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	working in the evaluation phase.