Digital Story Reflection

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As a teacher, it is important to push oneself, to grow in areas that present opportunities for student growth. Sometimes, growth is difficult and intimidating because it forces a teacher to confront his or her areas of weakness and inexperience. For me, creating a digital story pushed me into this kind of space. I do not have much experience with digital media, especially when it comes to creating a movie. Furthermore, I chose to craft a digital story about my own struggle with cancer and my volleyball team’s collective effort to move forward even when I was not able to be there with them. In this essay, I will reflect on that process, how it challenged me as a learner and how it will help me as a teacher.

For me, the process of creating a story map, script, and story table was fairly straightforward. My coursework in English has provided me with a solid grasp of story arcs, and all I had to do was recognize the big story that was unfolding in my personal and professional life and then describe it in story terms.

My main challenge in pre-production was coming up with raw footage of the volleyball season and my experience with treatment for and recovery from testicular cancer. This semester has been a non-stop, pedal-to-the-metal battle for survival, and all of my activities (travel, surgery, teaching classes, coaching practices) have required all of my focus and attention. It was extremely difficult for me to get the distance even for a few minutes to film or photograph any of these things. When other people (teachers, assistant coaches) helped me with practices, I did not want to put more things (especially meta-activities like filming) on their plates. So I filmed when I could and, when it came time to put the digital story together, made do with what I had.

The editing process was predictably grueling. This is the first iMovie project that I have ever done all on my own, and I found that the devil is truly in the details. Volume in particular was a real challenge; when I put together voiceover with music and footage volume, I found it difficult to control which sounds took center stage. Working with tiles was also a challenge, and I never did figure out how to remove preset verbage that I did not create and did not want. Nevertheless, I tried not to let the perfect get in the way of the good. What’s more, my final product is not really final. Even though the time has come to submit the project, I will continue to use this digital story as a forum to hone my editing and storytelling skills. The road goes ever on and on.

I will most certainly use digital stories in my classes. I think it is important to provide students with opportunities to build their technological acumen, and I envision them going on to college and jobs with better skills than I have, even now. I have been particularly inspired by my classmates’ digital stories; they have helped me recognize that digital stories can be useful tools in everything from literary analysis to the telling of personal narratives.

Challenge is a good thing. Confusion is an excellent starting place for learning. Moving forward, I am going to keep practicing and keep working until I can deftly deliver and teach digital storytelling to a new generation of digital citizens.