

English Literature & Composition

A Legacy Project: Students Bring Arthurian Legend into the 21st Century via WebPage Development and Podcasting

Submitted by Kathleen Malone Clesson, NBCT



Overview of the Unit

This is the second year that English literature and composition has been situated in a laptop classroom with full access to copyright free literature and the enrichment resources available on the Internet. It is the goal of this first semester medieval literature unit to tap into Web 2.0 technologies, moving students from consumers of knowledge to creators of knowledge, sharable in multi-media format.

The primary content is Arthurian legend. Specifically, students access and read from the twenty-one book collection of tales compiled by Sir Thomas Mallory in *Morte d'Arthur*. Each student selects a book and two chapters to read, comprehend, interpret, and bring to life via audio performance. For the first selected chapter, each student prepares a written summary of the content in contemporary language. For the second chapter, students write an old time radio-style script to be performed and recorded using *Audacity*, a free/open source audio editor and recorder program. All three pieces (a summary, a transcript of the podcast, and the rendered mp3 file of the podcast) are then uploaded to a class website designed using *FrontPage* for this purpose.



Special contributions: The intro and outro music for the podcasts are original compositions by Class of 2007 alumni Justin Tanaka and Alex Rodriguez. Claire Smid, also Class of 2007, created the graphic above and to the right, an image used as a design element on all handouts for the unit.

NETS Standards

- ✓ Students use a variety of media and formats to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences.
- ✓ Students use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhanced models, prepare publications, and produce other creative works.
- ✓ Students develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.
- ✓ Students demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature and operation of technology systems.
- ✓ Students are proficient in the use of technology.

IL Learning Standards and Goals

STATE GOAL 1: Read with understanding and fluency.

- ✓ **1.A.5b** Analyze the meaning of abstract concepts and the effects of particular word and phrase choices.
- ✓ **1.B.5a** Relate reading to prior knowledge and experience and make connections to related information.
- ✓ **1.B.5d** Read age-appropriate material with fluency and accuracy.
- ✓ **1.C.5b** Analyze and defend an interpretation of text.

- ✓ **1.C.5d** Summarize and make generalizations from content and relate them to the purpose of the material.

STATE GOAL 2: Read and understand literature representative of various societies, eras and ideas.

- ✓ **2.A.5a** Compare and evaluate oral, written or viewed works from various eras and traditions and analyze complex literary devices (e.g., structures, images, forms, foreshadowing, flashbacks, stream of consciousness).
- ✓ **2.B.5a** Analyze and express an interpretation of a literary work.

STATE GOAL 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

- ✓ **3.A.5** Produce grammatically correct documents using standard manuscript specifications for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- ✓ **3.B.5** Using contemporary technology, produce documents of publication quality for specific purposes and audiences; exhibit clarity of focus, logic of organization, appropriate elaboration and support and overall coherence.
- ✓ **3.C.5b** Write for real or potentially real situations in academic, professional and civic contexts

STATE GOAL 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

- ✓ **4.B.5a** Deliver planned and impromptu oral presentations, as individuals and members of a group, conveying results of research, projects or literature studies to a variety of audiences

STATE GOAL 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess and communicate information.

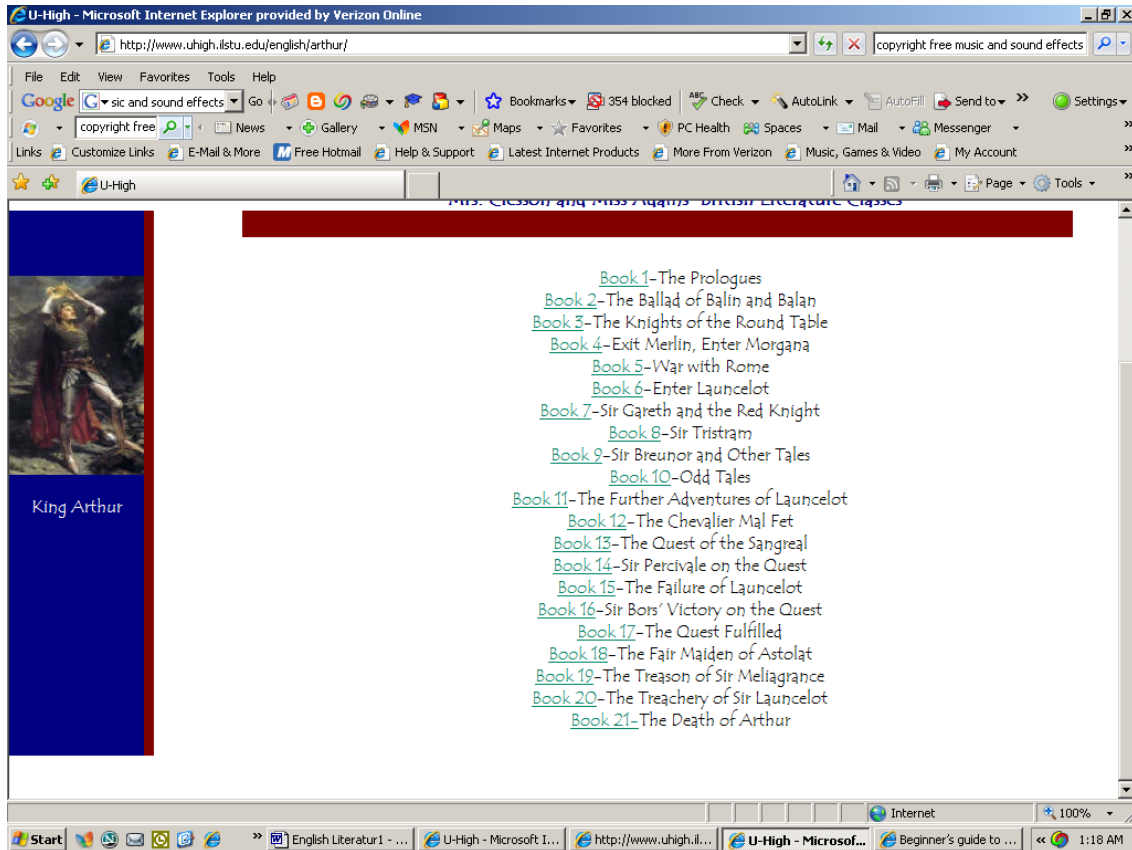
- ✓ **5.B.5a** Evaluate the usefulness of information, synthesize information to support a thesis, and present information in a logical manner in oral and written forms.

Learning Activities

1. Teacher introduces Arthurian legend via Blackboard links, lecture, and clips from John Boorman's Excalibur.
2. Whole class close reading and analysis of common selected texts (sample chapter).
3. Introduction of LEGACY project and concomitant exploration of existing webpage in progress. <http://www.uhigh.ilstu.edu/english/arthur/>; model product analysis.
4. Sign up for chapters and workshop for writing/editing/rewriting of modern language summaries.
5. Preliminary technology mastery: mapping drives; searching, saving, and crediting images; project electronic folder system creation and maintenance; downloading Audacity and lame encoder; hot-linking unfamiliar vocabulary and Round Table characters, etc., in web environment.
6. Project progress checkpoints monitored.
7. Introduction to FrontPage, workshop for uploading summaries to templates, image insertion and citation, formatting to standard specs, and proofreading.
8. Radio Theater introduction with episodes from THE SHADOW playing in the background during Phase I of the legacy project (summary writing and posting).
9. Podcast how-to: quality sample review; handouts, links to how-to resources http://forevergeek.com/geek_resources/beginners_guide_to_podcasts_and_podcasting_plus_how_to_create_a_basic_podcast_of_your_own.php (how to article) <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/> (Grammar Girl podcasts as samples) <http://www.uhigh.ilstu.edu/english/arthur/book1/Chapter%205/chapter5.htm> (class model) <http://freeplaymusic.com/> (audio production resources)
10. Writer's workshop/editing transcript production
11. *Audacity* demo and experimentation (create, save, edit, and render a one-minute piece)
12. Collaboration with table groups for sound production of polished transcripts.
13. Workshops for editing, finalizing, and uploading mp3 versions of podcasts.
14. Showcase for final products: three reviewed and debriefed collectively by class; each student listens to and responds to three others posted in the webpage.

Le Morte d'Arthur

Extended Summaries and Podcasts



Laptop Implications: This unit clearly harnesses technology in the service of teaching and learning. It could not be done without a ubiquitous computing environment. Many of the students had never worked so intently with archaic literature. Neither had they written script adaptations of literature, collaborated in developing a webpage, created a podcast, or completed a complex multimedia assessment that was destined to become part of an ongoing legacy for English literature students to come, and for an online audience at large. Engagement was high, our study of Morte d'Arthur was deeper than it has been in the past, and students succeeded in bringing Arthurian Legend into the 21st Century.

Role of Teacher: In a constructivist environment, the role of teacher is guide on the side rather than sage on the stage. Project management is important – knowing who has signed up for what, making sure production checkpoints are met, monitoring technological problem solving (sharing successes and solutions) and, of course, ensuring that directions are clear is critical. It is also useful to host after school work time in the laptop lab as deadlines approach. Conferencing with students as they read and assimilate, then write and revise and carefully proofread is also key.

Role of Teacher Educator: Both years that this Legacy project has been done, there has been a student intern teaming with the teacher. Meghan Adams helped conceive of the unit, and Patrick Skuba worked this year to refine and monitor it. The teaming with an intern is a win-win-win scenario. Students have access to two instructors on a daily basis; we are able to make use of and monitor multiple settings

on recording days; and it serves as a model for pre-service observers who often team teach in the English language arts for their culminating clinical experience.

The unit also demonstrates Standards VII – XIII from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in adolescent and young adult English Language Arts under the heading of **Advancing**

Student Learning in the Classroom:

- Integrated Instruction
- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking and Listening
- Viewing and Producing Media Texts
- Language Study
- Assessment

Student Response: The Legacy project is not easy. The literature is challenging, the applications of technology are new, and posting work in a public online forum does not suffer less than best efforts. The overwhelming response to the unit, however, was positive. There is a degree of exhilaration in solving problems, in envisioning a product and seeing it through to final production, and in making a contribution to a body of knowledge you know will be revisited by students in the Class or 2009. Students felt the pride of accomplishment and the satisfaction of demystifying complex literature and technology.