

## **Ten Practical Digital Movie Making Projects**

Why do we remember stories?

What makes a movie worth watching?

What tools do movie makers use to tell their stories?

What is digital media and where can students access it?

Practical Project #1: One Image Story

Practical Project #2: Seeing Words: Read and see poems, letters, and great documents

Practical Project #3: Interview

Practical Project #4: Product Commercial

Practical Project #5: Public Service Announcement

Practical Project #6: Political Advertisement

Practical Project #7: A Life Connected to Mine (Biography)

Practical Project #8: Turning Points: "What if?"

Practical Project #9: How to Movie

Practical Project #10: News Report

## Why do we remember stories?



Close your eyes and think of a story that you remember very well.

Now open your eyes and consider, "Why do you remember this story?"

Smith, J. W. (n.d.). ["He looked up at the broad yellow moon and thought that she looked at him."](#) Library of Congress: Exhibitions, The Water-Babies: Illustrations by Jessie Willcox Smith

Add your ideas to the list below of reasons why we remember stories.

- ☐ Told many times
- ☐ Could relate to the characters
- ☐ Emotional – scary, funny
- ☐ Important person told the story
- ☐ Short – easy to remember
- ☐ Words had rhythm or rhyme
- ☐ Good pictures – illustrations
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

Identify the three most important elements to a story told through a movie.

## What makes a movie worth watching?

Consider the question, “What makes a movie worth watching?”

Add to the list of possible elements listed below.

- Topic or theme
- Storyline or plot
- Characters
- Setting – place
- Genre or type of story, mystery, comedy, horror
- 
- 
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Circle the elements that are most important when choosing to view a movie.

List possible people, places, events, and time periods that you might like to make a movie about. Why might these topics make movies that are worth watching?

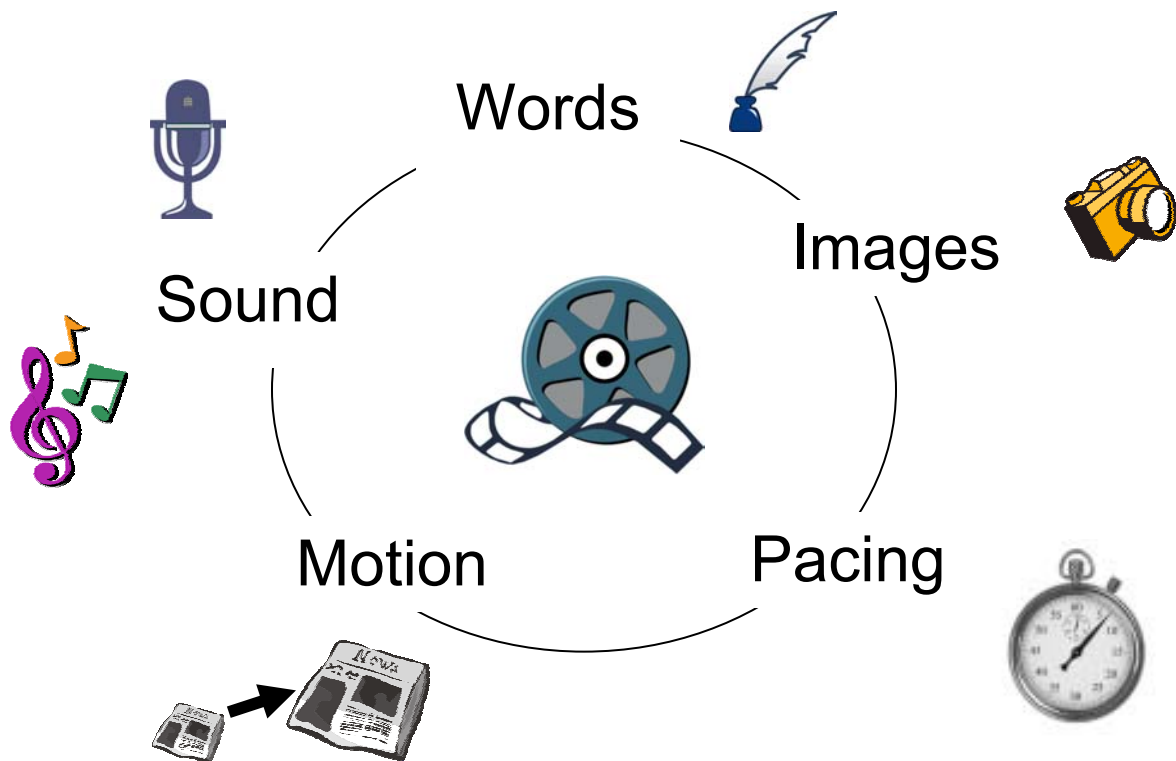
| Possible Topics | Why it would make a movie worth watching? |
|-----------------|---|
|                 |   |
|                 |   |
|                 |   |
|                 |   |

## What tools do MovieMakers use to tell their stories?



Bain News Service. [Herbert Brenon & Alla Nazimova examining a movie camera. Aug. 9, 1916 - half-length, standing, right profile.](#) Library of Congress: Prints & Photographs, RR-George Grantham Bain Collection

## MovieMaker Tools



These tools help Moviemakers communicate a story to an audience.  
The audience will see, hear, feel, and remember the story.



# Words

Choose words for the script that will help the audience see and listen to the message.

## **1. Words add meaning**

The words in a movie script have to do more than just describe the images. The words add details and feeling to the images the audience sees.

## **2. Words are heard**

The words in a script have to sound right when you say them out loud. The audience hears the words from the script that are recorded as a narration.

## **3. A few words are seen**

Words can be displayed on the screen as titles over a black screen or over images.

### **Here are some ways that words can be used:**

- Give information – facts found during research
- Create curiosity – pose questions, make the audience wonder
- Show feelings – that people experienced
- Encourage feelings – help the audience feel the story's emotion
- Identify conflicts or obstacles
- Make connections – show a cause and effect, relationships
- Add to the action through rhythm and emphasis

The words that tell the story confirm for the audience the purpose of the movie. Words are chosen for a specific audience. Movies that are meant for young children may use different words than movies that are made for college students.

# Images



Images must do more for a movie than simply illustrating the script. Images can:

- give information,
- help the audience understand an idea,
- add feeling or emotion to the script, and/or
- provide beauty to help the audience experience the big ideas of the story.

The images express parts of the story that are best told by looking at the image or a part of an image instead of listening to this part of the message in words. Often one image can communicate a message much faster and more accurately than using many words.

## Tips for choosing Images

### 1. Historic relevance of the image to the script.

Make sure to know information about each image such as the:

- creator
- date
- subject
- place
- purpose for creating the source

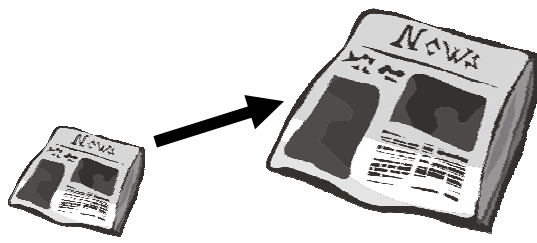
### 2. Potential to communicate the story

- Place images carefully to further the message in the script

### 3. Visual appeal

Think about the quality and elements of the image that add to the story. Think about how one image flows into the next image on the screen. Tools to help choose visually pleasing pictures include:

- Elements of Art
  - color
  - line
  - shape
- Principles of Art
  - harmony
  - rhythm
  - unity



## Motion

Motion focuses the audience's attention.

Motion can be added to each image.

Motion provides information and adds emphasis and feeling to the script.

Motion begins by cropping the image to a specific portion of the image.

## Cropping

Create different types of shots.

Wide shots establish the location.



Medium shots show both the main subject and the surroundings.



Close-up shots focus on the subject.



Extreme close-up shots isolate an object.



# Zoom-Out

**Zoom-Out** gives the audience information.



Start small, focused on a part of the image



Expand the image to give more information. You might surprise the audience.

## Example: Digital Documentary Storyboard

Image



Effect

Image shows: Idea, Feeling, Information  
Motion: Zoom-Out

Script

Are there times when doing the right thing leads to trouble?

R

require



Rosa Parks was arrested on December 1, 1955 because she refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger.



# Zoom-In

**Zoom-In** draws attention to a detail.



Start with a wide shot



End with a small part of the image that you want the audience to pay special attention to.

## Example: Digital Documentary Storyboard

Image



Effect

Image shows: Idea, Feeling, Information  
Motion: Zoom-In

Script

John Trunbull's painting shows the committee presenting a draft of the Declaration of Independence to Congress.



How did the committee members, John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert R. Livingston, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin, contribute to the final document?

# Pan

Pan shows distance.



Start with a medium shot.



Do not change the size of the crop box as you move.

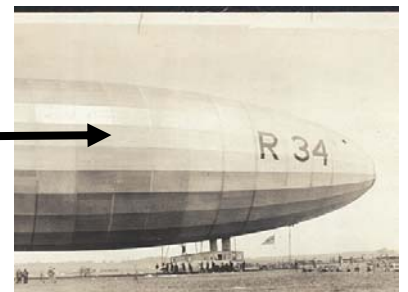
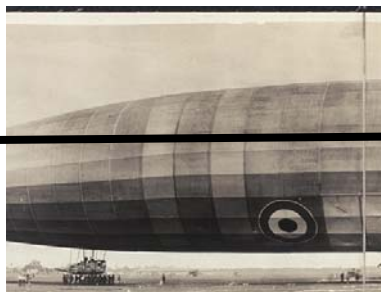


End at a different place in the image.

This will help the audience feel the height of this tall tree.

## Example: Digital Documentary Storyboard

Image



Effect

Image shows: Idea, Feeling, Information  
Motion: Pan

Script

This British air ship, R34, was the first air craft to cross the Atlantic from Europe.

The R34 was 643 feet long.

# Stillness

Stillness gives the audience time to comprehend the image.



**Still shots** freeze the action.

Start and end with the exact same shot.

This will create stillness or no motion.

Crop out parts of an image that are not relevant to the script.  
Emphasize what is important.

# Sound

The audience hears the story told in the movie.



Narration is the recorded script that the audience hears. Different voices may be used to help the audience recognize characters.

Music connects the images and sentences of the script into a whole story.



Sound in a movie connects the ideas of the story, adds feelings, and encourages the audience to pay attention to the movie.

## Tips for recording narration

1. Use voices that make sense with the story and help the audience get to know the characters in the movie. The narrator may have one voice and the characters in the movie may use different voices. MovieMakers may ask other people to narrate some parts of the movie or vary their own speech to create different voices.
2. Inflection and emphasis help the audience know what words are most important in the story. Underline important words in the script so that when recording, the narrator knows what words to emphasize.
3. Speed of the narration is very important. If the narration is too fast the audience misses information. If the narration is too slow the audience may become bored. Varying the speed of the narration can create excitement or anticipation.

## Tips for choosing music

1. Music connects the images and the narration in the movie.
2. Music can be used to set the mood of the people, place, time period, and/or actions in the story.
3. Music can provide information to help tell the story



# Pacing

Pacing is the speed that the audience experiences the story in the movie. Good movies keep the story going forward. MovieMakers pay attention to how much is said about each part of the story and how long each image is on the screen

## Tips for adjusting the pacing

1. When the images are shown on the screen for a short time the pacing is faster. Leaving an image on the screen for a longer time slows down the pace of the story.
2. Consider eliminating information that distracts from the main message of the story. Make sure that every image and part of the script is needed to tell the story.
3. Shorter is almost always better. Keep your movie under **two minutes** in length. Better to make three short movies to tell a long story than one long movie that audience won't have time to watch.

# Practical Project #1: The One Image Story

Purpose: Tell a story with an engaging beginning, high point middle, and memorable ending. Use details in an image to tell specific parts of the story and to add meaning to the image by writing a script.

Create a collection of digital media:

Offer students a selection of images to choose from. The images should be related to topics that student have or are currently studying.

## Crop It

Directions:

1. Choose an image that connects to you, maybe it:
  - links to an experience that you have had,
  - relates something that you know a lot about and/or
  - leaves you with questions.
2. Explore the image through Crop It.
  - Crop the image to the part that first caught your eye. *Think: Why did you notice this part?*
  - Crop to a part of the image that tells who this image is about. *Think: Why is this person important?*
  - Crop to a part of the image that tells where this image takes place. *Think: What has happened at this place?*
  - Crop to a part of the image that tells the time period this image reflects. *Think: What helps us recognize specific times?*
  - Crop to a part of the image that shows tension or conflict. *Think: Do you see other problems?*
  - Crop the most important part of this image. *Think: Why is this important?*

# See the Story

## **Beginning:**

3 - Think: What makes an engaging beginning to a story?

2 - Crop or circle a part of the image that would make an engaging beginning of the story.

1 – Confirm: Why would this part make an engaging beginning of the story?

## **Middle:**

3 - Think: What makes a high point in the middle to a story?

2 - Crop or circle a part of the image that would make a high point in the middle of the story.

1 – Confirm: Why would this part make a high point in the middle of the story?

## **End:**

3 - Think: What makes a memorable end to a story?

2 - Crop or circle a part of the image that would make a memorable end to the story.

1 – Confirm: Why would this part make a memorable end to the story?

# Practical Project #2: Interview

Purpose: Create a conversation between two people on a topic where they might disagree or debate an issue if they had a chance to talk with each other. In an interview, a moderator introduces the participants and poses a question. Then each person presents their answer to the interview question using at least two specific examples as support. Finally, the moderator assesses the responses and concludes the interview identifying which participant made the better case.

Example projects:

Alice Paul and Woodrow Wilson

Should women have the right to vote?

Frederick Douglass and Robert E. Lee

Should the slaves be freed?

William Penn and John Locke

How should colonists act toward England?

Samuel Adams and Benedict Arnold

How should colonists act toward England?

Massasoit and Powhatan

How should native tribes best respond to English colonists?

Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton

What should the government look like?

Daniel Shay and George Washington

What is the most important problem facing the New Republic?

David Walker and Henry Thoreau

What's the best method for creating social change?

Harriet Tubman (or Frederick Douglass) and Robert E. Lee

Whither slavery?

Andrew Carnegie and William Jennings Bryan

What's the nation's best economic policy?

Woodrow Wilson and Alice Paul

Should the United States enter World War I?

Cesar Chavez and Richard Nixon

Affirmative action?

Jackie Robinson and Rachel Carson

What is the most important problem facing America?



# **Practical Project #3: Product Commercial**

Purpose: Employ persuasive writing techniques to sell a product that was needed during a time period in history.

## Persuasion Techniques

Bandwagon

Everybody's Doing This

No one's Doing This – Elite

Celebrity Endorsement

Sex Appeal

#### Practical Project #4: Public Service Announcement

Purpose: Employ persuasive writing techniques to sell a behavior or persuade community members to take a particular action that was needed during a time period in history.

## Practical Project #5: Political Advertisement

Purpose: Employ persuasive writing techniques to sell a person running for an office or piece of legislation during a time period in history.

## Practical Project #6: A Life Connected to Mine (Biography)

Purpose: To explain why we should remember a person today.

## Practical Project #7: Turning Points

Purpose: Retell a moment in history with the story that we think may have happened. Then change a key person, event, or place and tell the story that could have happened.

Practical Project #8: How to \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose: Describe how to do something in a step by step manner so that someone else might be able to follow the directions to complete the task.

How to revise a poem – using Langston Hughes' 5 versions of Ballad of Booker T

How to test a telephone – using Graham's notebook

How to change the world – protesting – getting laws signed? Child labor?  
Schools?

How to build a bridge? – Brooklyn bridge

How to build a sod house?

How to have tea?

Practical Project #9: Seeing Words: Read and see poems, letters, and great documents

Purpose: To add meaning to the words in a written document by reading the words out loud and illustrating the ideas conveyed in the text.



### Practical Project #10:

Purpose: To report on an event that happened in history using facts and many different perspectives of the time period.

## Works Cited



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