**StoryJumper – a Valuable Tool for Students**

* **Grade level (or age of students) and subject**: 6th grade (12-year-olds) / English as a second language
* **Overview of the activity**:

6th graders studied a unit in their ESL book called *Once upon a time…* As you might expect, the unit dealt with fairy tales, their features (characters, challenges, motivation, setting, obstacles, climax, closing), and after reading and analyzing seven classical fairy tales I asked my students to create their own story. To do this, I created a free account on <http://www.storyjumper.com/main/help>, I picked a password and I created a Classroom Edition where the students were supposed to post and share their stories between the classroom and home.

* **Student learning outcomes**:

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

* 1. develop more positive attitudes towards writing;
  2. acquire computer writing skills by building an illustrated book on the storyjumper.com website;
  3. evaluate critically the quality of their peers’ stories by using evaluation criteria.
* **Reason for creating:**

Creating a personal free on-line story is a product all students can be proud of, and this could contribute to raising their self-confidence.

**Why Story Jumper?**

I chose Story Jumper Classroom Edition because this technology is designed to give the teacher an interface to manage and review students’ work and, on the other hand, it maintains strict privacy controls over student information. Moreover, this tool is easy to use and step-to-step directions of how to create digital story books are clearly provided by its authors; for instance, the Story Creator shows students how to use props (characters and artwork), scenes (backgrounds), photos and text. Finally, it’s inspiring and motivating for teenagers by challenging them to be creative, make decisions and work independently.

* **How will the technology enable students to accomplish the stated learning outcomes?**

StoryJumper is a website that allows kids to build their own books. They can easily create cover pages, add text, upload drawings or photos to illustrate their story, and they can use the StoryJumper clipart gallery, too. When they’re done, they can order their own professionally published hardback book!

To make things clearer, here are some directions taken from the site: “The next section will show you how to build a new story online and the share and publish your creation. We’ll also give you some tips for editing your story and making it better. To get started, first visit the StoryJumper site (www.storyjumper.com). If it’s your first time, click the sign-up in the upper right to create an account. It’s fast, safe and free to get started. Important: If you’re under 13, please use your parent’s or guardian’s email address so they can let us know that it’s ok for you to use the site. Also, please do not use your real name. StoryJumper has a bunch of fun art (props) that you can use to illustrate your story. First we’ll show you how to find props, then how to use them. StoryJumper also has backgrounds or scenes that you can use to illustrate your story. You’ll find the scenes tab just under the props tab. Just like props, you can search for scenes by clicking the more scenes button and searching for the background you need. However, unlike props, scenes cannot be re- sized, rotated or moved around. You can upload from your computer, and soon you’ll also be able to import from sites such as Flickr, MySpace, FaceBook, and others. In the creator, you have the freedom to move and format text however you like”.

* **What challenges do I foresee in employing the technology?**

I promote greater improvement of writing by giving students an instructional tool they could use easily and passionately.

* **Assessment of students' work**

Students are given some peer evaluation worksheets with very specific criteria on them. These are meant to evaluate their peers’ writing, taking into account the ***content***(ideas, message and illustrations), ***layout and organization*** (the arrangement of ideas), ***editing*** (grammar, spelling, punctuation), ***task achievement,***and***classroom behaviour***.

**Rubric for the Story Book – Peer Evaluation**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Score** | **4p** | **6p** | **8p** | **10p** |
| **Layout/ Organization** | The story is unattractive or inappropriate. Text is difficult to read. It does not have proper organization or linking words. | The story appears busy or boring. Text may be difficult to read. May have some organization, but no linking words. | The story is eye-catching and attractive. Text is easy to read. It has good organization, good topic sentences and some linking words. | The story is creatively designed with easily read text. It has excellent organization, creative topic sentences and many linking words. |
| **Content** | Information is poorly written, inexact, or incomplete. No suggestive pictures. | Some information is provided, but is limited or inexact. May have words or pictures that indicate it is an illustrated story. | Information is well written and interesting to read. Grammar, vocabulary, style and pictures are indicative of an illustrated story. | Information is exact and complete, is creatively written, and is cleverly presented. Grammar, vocabulary, style and pictures are all excellent for an illustrated story. |
| **Task Achievement** | The information requested in the rubric is largely absent. | Several aspects of the information requested in the rubric are absent. | The rubric is fully understood. Most of the information requested in the rubric is included. | All information requested in the rubric is included (style, purpose, information, advice, number of words) and is supported with well-chosen details. |
| **Editing** | Little or no editing – consistent problems with grammar, punctuation, spelling and choice of words. | Weak editing – several errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling and choice of words. | Good editing – few errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling and choice of words. | Excellent editing – limited errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling and choice of words. |
| **Following Classroom Behaviour Code and Teacher’s Directions**  **(optional)** | Students are often out of their area without permission and are disruptive to the class. | Students occasionally leave area without permission. | Students stay in their area and talk quietly to their own partner only. | Students are always on task, stay in their own area, and work quietly. Students followed teacher’s directions. |

Grade 10 if scored **46p –** **50p**

Grade 9 if scored **40p – 44p**

Grade 8 if scored **34p – 38p**

Grade 7 if scored **28p – 32p**

Grade 6 if scored **20p – 26p**

If you want to see some stories my 6th graders created in 2011-2012, please take a look at:

<http://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/4861202/It-will-rain->

<https://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/5383442/Frankenstein-against-Dracula>

<http://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/5470192/In-search-of-an-opponent->

<https://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/5579762/The-support-from-the-other-side>

<https://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/6624232/A-nightmare-weekend>

<https://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/8736142/Abe-s-Opportunity#description>

<https://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/4931272/A-ghosty-night>

**Tips to those teachers who would like to give it a try!**

First, in a 50-minute class, I took my students to the IT lab and visited together the StoryJumper site (www.storyjumper.com) and we read several stories that were already published there (see the EXPLORE button). They loved the stories and their excitement was visible. Then, right in the following class, I showed them how to create cover pages, add text, upload drawings or photos to illustrate their story, and use the StoryJumper clipart gallery (press the CREATE button and see the quick tutorial). I let students to practice on the books that were started there: choosing characters and backgrounds, re-sizing and rotating the props, etc. Meanwhile, I created a free account on <http://www.storyjumper.com/main/help>, my students and I picked a password and a username, and so, it was generated a Classroom Edition where the students were supposed to post and share their stories between the classroom and home. In the third English class, students, individually or in pairs, were already working on their book in the school lab. I handed them the evaluation rubrics I posted above, and everyone knew what to do. While they were working, I kept moving around and gave them partial feedback and more directions. After these three English classes, students were able to finish their projects at home (all students in our school have personal computers at home and an excellent Internet connection). To assess projects, we went to the computer lab again for three more English classes. Now, my students are 11th graders and they still remember this exciting project. And I, as a teacher, use their digital books in classes with other students from school, which is even more appealing, as students know each other (the students that are about to work on this project get more motivated, and the older students - the writers - get new peer feedback).