

# DIGLIT GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



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# WELCOME!

## Welcome to the DigLit Guide!

The Erasmus+ project [DigLit: Lit Up. Your Phones](http://www.digit.eu) (www.digit.eu) developed teaching methodologies for the English classroom that combines contemporary Young Adult Literature with Digital Storytelling to foster intercultural competences and extensive reading. It is the aim of this guide to provide information on how to carry out this DigLit methodology which combines reading Young Adult Literature and Digital Storytelling. This guide is designed to be printed and ready to use!

The guide has **three sections**. The first section will discuss the **importance of using stories** in the language classroom. The second section will outline a **Step-to-Step description** on how to create and carry out a **Digital Social Reading Project** and a **regular reading project** with contemporary Young Adult Literature. The final section will explain how **Digital Storytelling** can be implemented as a post-reading activity within a reading project.

### Suggested Citation:

Bergner, Victoria, Da Lio, Elisa, Drago, Silvia, Fazzi, Fabiana, Fina, Maria Elisa, Fodor, Mónika, Guzzon, Sofia, Lugossy, Réka, Haring, Nicole, Maierhofer, Roberta, Menegale, Marcella, Schuch, Andreas, Szeverics, Laci, and Zordan, Mara (2023). *DigLit Guide*. <https://digit.eu>



# IMPORTANCE OF STORIES

For most of us, stories have been sources of memorable content and language throughout our lives. And yet, according to classroom-based research, in many English classrooms stories tend to appear on the “educational margin or frills” (Egan 1989, 29), only dealt with when we have finished with the “more serious” things.

**How do students benefit from the regular use of narratives in the English class?**

## Cognitive Development

The idea that humans organize, process, and store new information in **narrative patterns** is not new. Studies in anthropology suggest that the story form is a **cultural universal**, and it is one of the earliest and most basic and powerful forms in which we organize knowledge and make sense of the world.

An influential psychological theory which supports the idea that stories help us **organize new perceptions** and thus **create knowledge** is Schema Theory. Cognitive psychologists Schank and Abelson (1995) claim that stories function as **mental frameworks**, so-called schemas based on which we organize and remember experience. They say that “all human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences” and that “new experiences are interpreted in terms of old stories” (1).

This idea is a powerful underlying reason for using stories in our classrooms. Regular engagement with narrative patterns enables us to gradually **develop abstract thinking**. It appears that the more stories we hear, read, and make up, the smarter we become. Therefore, when it comes to the role of stories in cognitive development, we must remember that experiences with stories will not only increase learners’ knowledge in different areas, but they will also **stimulate their imagination** and **cognitive development**.

## Engaging Contexts for Language Learning

Research as well as our experiences as teachers and learners tell us that we **learn best through engaging and imaginative contexts**, through **tasks where we can involve our cognition, emotions, and creativity**. Good stories will meet these requirements:

- they engage learners' minds and emotions through relatable situations and characters, and
- they challenge learners to think about what they read.

Beside boosting learners' motivation, stories also **support language development**. New words and language structures are more easily understood, remembered when they are embedded in a narrative context. Regular exposure to stories and extensive reading in and outside the classroom can be significant sources of **incidental vocabulary learning**, while they also promote the **acquisition of language structures**, and the **language style** used in stories (Krashen, 1993). Research also highlights that the acquisition of new words is most successful when students find the readings culturally relevant. In Elley's study (1989) word recall was more significant when the students found the **story emotionally engaging**.

## Opportunities for Interaction

If stories deal with themes and topics that students find relatable, they can become **good starting points for a discussion**. Classroom-based studies reveal that in literature-based foreign language classes teachers ask significantly more genuine questions, and student output is more extensive and includes more negotiation than in classes where discussions revolve around coursebook texts (Ghosn, 2013; Lugossy, 2012). This is the reason why, when using Young Adult Fiction in the foreign language class, the story-based discussion and follow-up tasks can be just as important in terms of language benefits as the reading itself. Using stories creates room for a dialogue in which learners construct their knowledge of language, literacy and other subjects in interaction with one another and with the teacher.



# MAIN IDEAS

## WHY STORIES ARE IMPORTANT

Stories organize and transmit human knowledge

Stories are crucial in developing personal and social identities and in building communities

Stories boost motivation in the classroom

Stories provide the basis for social interaction and language learning in the language class

Stories form the basis for speaking, reading, listening and writing tasks



## Section II:

# PART I: DIGITAL SOCIAL READING (DSR)

**Digital Social Reading (DSR)** is a relatively new concept that refers to “a wide variety of practices related to the activity of reading and using digital technologies and platforms (websites, social media, mobile apps) to share with other people thoughts and impressions about texts” (Pianzola 2021, 4). In education, DSR has been used to engage students in online literature discussions that extend the classroom space and support both teenagers’ extensive reading in a foreign language and digital literacy development. Indeed, when reinforcing in class book discussions with online conversations, teachers can transform reading in a mediated social activity that “creates a foundation for reading communities and enthusiasm” (Barrett 2014, 143).



# TIPS FOR DESIGNING A DSR PROJECT

## Tip 1: Choosing of Platform

There are several platforms that can be used for digital social reading. Here are a few: Glose for Education, SocialBook, Edji, Hypothes.is, ActivelyLearn.

### Important question to ask:

- Which platform works for my group?
- Where can the platform be used? (e.g. computer, smartphone)
- Does it allow the kind of interaction I anticipate for this project?
- Does it allow students to interact, annotate and comment?

## Tip 2: Small Groups

Students should be divided into **small groups (4-5 per group)**. This allows for more interaction between them and better discussions. Set the groups right at the beginning of your Digital Social REading project.

## Tip 3: Pre-and Post-Reading Activities

Design **pre-reading discussion activities** with the aim to get students interested in the book/topic(s) and activate their prior knowledge. Design **post-reading discussion activities** to help students critically and creatively respond to the text in line with the new mediation scales of the CEFR (2018; "expressing a personal response to creative texts; analysis and criticism of creative texts) and in preparation to the digital storytelling process at the end of the project.



## Tip 4: Prompts

Facilitate during-reading discussion by using **both general** (i.e. Share a moment in the chapter that stood out to you) and **specific prompts** (i.e. why is character X doing this at this moment?)

These prompts should promote students' text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world connections, and should be "open-ended, spark interest, and often begin with why, tell me about, or explain" (Larson 2009, 640). Also, prompts should promote students' "understandings of, and connections to, themes/"big ideas" and personal interpretations of the text" through exploiting the affordances of multimodality (Elliot-Johns 2011, 170).

For example, students could be asked to choose a music that captures the mood of the chapter/text, or an image to represent the setting, or record their voice while commenting on a picture of an annotated quote. This would help students in critically exploring the characteristics of literary devices, such as theme and mood, while also building the multimodal competence necessary for curating a digital story. You could also ask students to examine plot, perspective, and voice through comparing the same story across different formats and media (Thompson & McInay, 2019, 71). Pose follow-up questions only if the discussion stalls (Collwell et al. 2018). That is, be present but not too much!





## Tip 5: Scaffolded Discussions

If it is the first time your students participate in a digital book club, you could give them sentence starters to **scaffold their asynchronous discussion** about books (i.e. I wonder...; I want to piggyback on...; Can you explain...; I agree with...because...; Based on the text, I think..., etc.) as well as support them in using textual evidence to construct arguments and track changing perceptions (see Jocius & Shealy 2017).

## Tip 6: Face-to-Face-Discussions

What is very important in this project is to have to **regular face-to-face** discussions. Organise them to build on the results of the online discussions and develop a stronger sense of community.



# Section 1: Step-by-Step DSR Guide

## STEP 1:

### Introduction of the Project

Raise your students' awareness of the goals and benefits of extensive reading through digital technologies. First, tell them they are going to be involved in an extensive online reading project and provide them with clear expectations regarding their participation in the project. Second, have a discussion with them (Task 1) about their reading experiences. Third, browse through our DigLit Young Adult Literature collection (Task 2).

#### Task 1: Discussion

Have a discussion with them about:

- their **reading habits** (what they like to read and why, when/how/where they read, etc.)
- how people read in their **first, second** and **third language**, and the differences and similarities that exist
- their **expectations** and **fears** about reading authentic texts in English as a foreign language

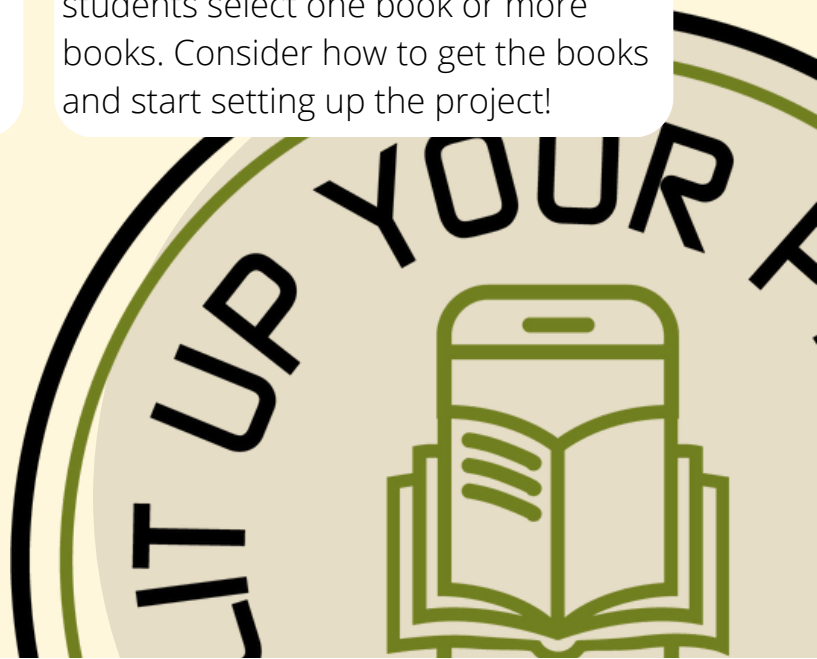
#### Task 2: YAL Collection

After the discussion, review with your students the **DigLit Young Adult Literature Collection**.

Ask students:

- Which books are appealing? Why?
- Which aren't? Why?

Together with your students, decide which **topic(s) and/or genre(s)** you'd like to work on. Have your students select one book or more books. Consider how to get the books and start setting up the project!



## STEP 2:

### Choosing a Book

Encourage your students to choose the **most appropriate book(s) to read**. Supporting students' selection by arousing their curiosity and building their motivation could be done in several ways depending on the time at your disposal, the age and language level of your students, and the goals of the project. Below you will find two examples of activities that you could implement.

#### Activity 1

Divide students in **small groups** (3-4 people) and ask them to navigate the Diglit YAL Collection to find **three texts** they would like to read. Ask them to explain their decision. Each group could share the results of their discussion a chosen platform. We suggest padlet (padlet.com) but any other you feel comfortable with would do just as well. In plenary, ask students to look at the padlet and make a list of ten.

#### Activity 2

Select **six books** from the Diglit YAL Collection that you think respond to your students' interests and needs.

Prepare a **HyperDoc** with titles, cover pictures, and links to Google Books or Goodreads.

Divide students in **pairs** and ask them to read the first three pages of each book and fill out:

- Title of Book:
- Setting (where & when):
- Main Character:
- Problem:
- Possible Issue:

## STEP 3:

# Obtaining the Books

To obtain the texts to read with your students, here are some options:

Public Domain Books:  
e.g. Project Gutenberg, Planet Publish, Open Library

Rent or Buy E-Books

Glose for Education

## STEP 4:

# Strategies to Keep Students Engaged

Develop strategies to prepare for reading and to sustain reading. Depending on the digital platform, these will look different. Here is an example from the Digital Social Reading Application Glose for Education:

- ✓ think about what you already know about the story/topic
- ✓ re-read what you just read
- ✓ read out loud or use the text-to-speech feature on your smartphone
- ✓ make inferences (What does this word probably mean? What clues can you use?)
- ✓ visualise what you're reading
- ✓ look up a word you don't know by using Glose for Education
- ✓ ask for clarification by posting a question on Glose for Education

Avoid distraction and reduce engaging in multitasking. Immerse yourself in what you're reading!

Once finished the chapter, ask yourself these questions: Did I understand the chapter? What was the main point? How do I feel about the story so far?

### READING STRATEGIES

Organise your reading

Support comprehension

Check in with yourself

Concentrate

Relax

Assess your reading

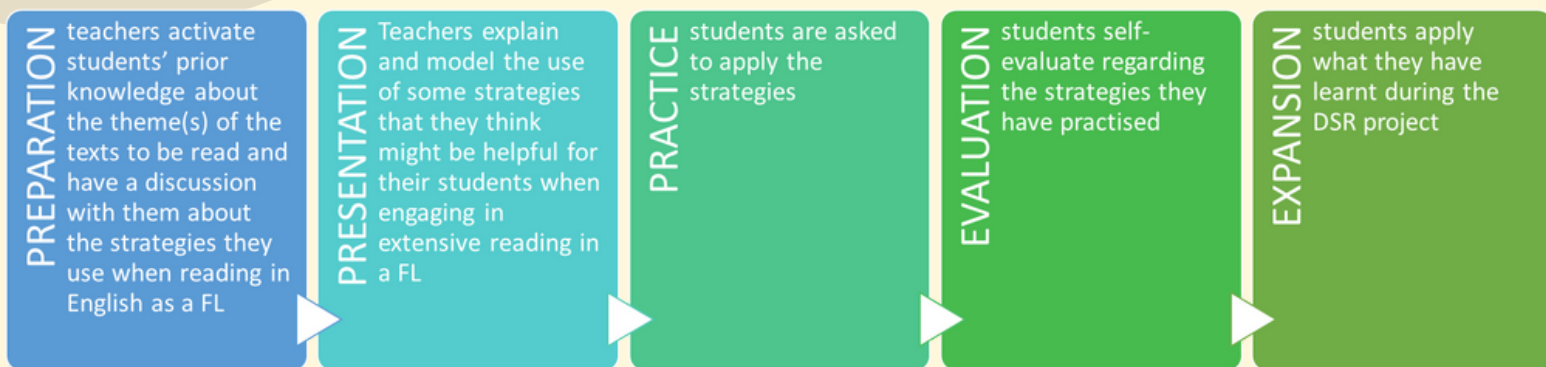
Go over the chapter. How many pages do you need to read to finish it by the deadline? Set your daily goal

Ask yourself if you're understanding what you're reading, if it makes sense or if you need to make changes

- ✓ Find a quiet space/moment
- ✓ Find a comfortable position
- ✓ Listen to music
- ✓ Take breaks when reading on your smartphone and/or tablet

In reviewing the strategies with students before they start reading autonomously, you could follow the steps presented below:

Figure 2: CALLA Model of Strategies Learning adapted from Chamot et al. (1999, 45)



To sustain students' engagement with reading during the project you could also ask students to **keep a reading chart** with the following information:

- Week
- Reading goal
- Pages read

Think of prizes (i.e. points, badges, etc.) to reward students who hit important milestones.

If you decide to use Glose for Education, some of these features are already available through the application.

Finally, check on students' satisfaction and enjoyment of the project regularly.



## DSR activities based on *We Were Liars* (2014) by Emily Lockart

The activity we report here is based on ***We Were Liars* (2014)**, a psychological horror young-adult novel written by Emily Lockart. The book is composed of eighty-one short chapters and is perfect for students that have a B1-B2 level in English. The book focuses on different themes, such as family conflicts, mental health, and growing up. It is centred on the Sinclar family, a wealthy and apparently perfect family that spends every summer on their private island, until during one vacation something terrible happens that changes their life forever. It is a book that has all the ingredients teenagers love – mystery, first love, friendship, conflict – but it is also an invaluable tool for language teachers who want to discuss issues related to mental well-being and health.

### Pre-Reading Activity (online on Moodle)

To activate students' schemata and introduce them to the issues related to mental health and well-being, students are engaged in a **pre-reading discussion on Moodle**. Specifically, they are asked to complete a Google Quiz on mental challenges and then answer the following questions in a post:

- How did you find the test? Was it interesting, boring, difficult, etc.? Why?
- Did you find anything that surprised you or that you didn't know?
- How important do you think it is to know and talk about mental health and well-being? Why?

To reply to these questions, students could help themselves by reading the sections "What is mental health", "Mental Health Challenges", and "Myths vs Facts" on the [Walk in our shoes](#) website



## During-Reading Activity (online- Glose for Education App)

After the initial discussion, students are divided into smaller groups and start reading on Glose for Education. This phase can last up to **four weeks** and each week we assigned students a few chapters (around 30 pages) to read, depending on the time available. To scaffold students' reading and promote their interaction with each other, both general and specific prompts are created. The general prompts are shared on the classroom homepage of Glose for Education, while the specific prompts are created on the text margins.

Below find an example of a **general prompt** (Figure 3) and of a **specific prompt** (Figure 4):

Figure 3: General prompt on Glose for Education

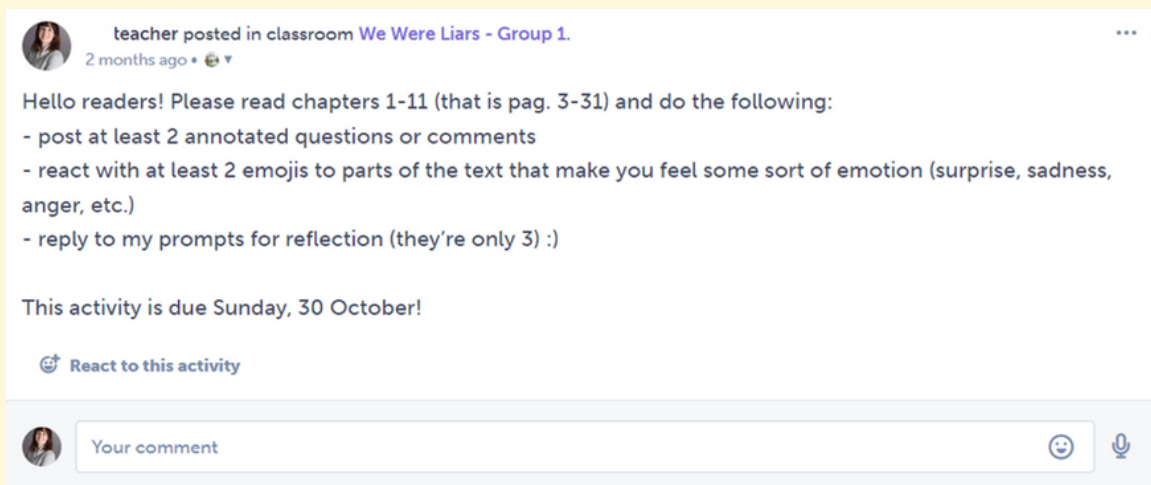
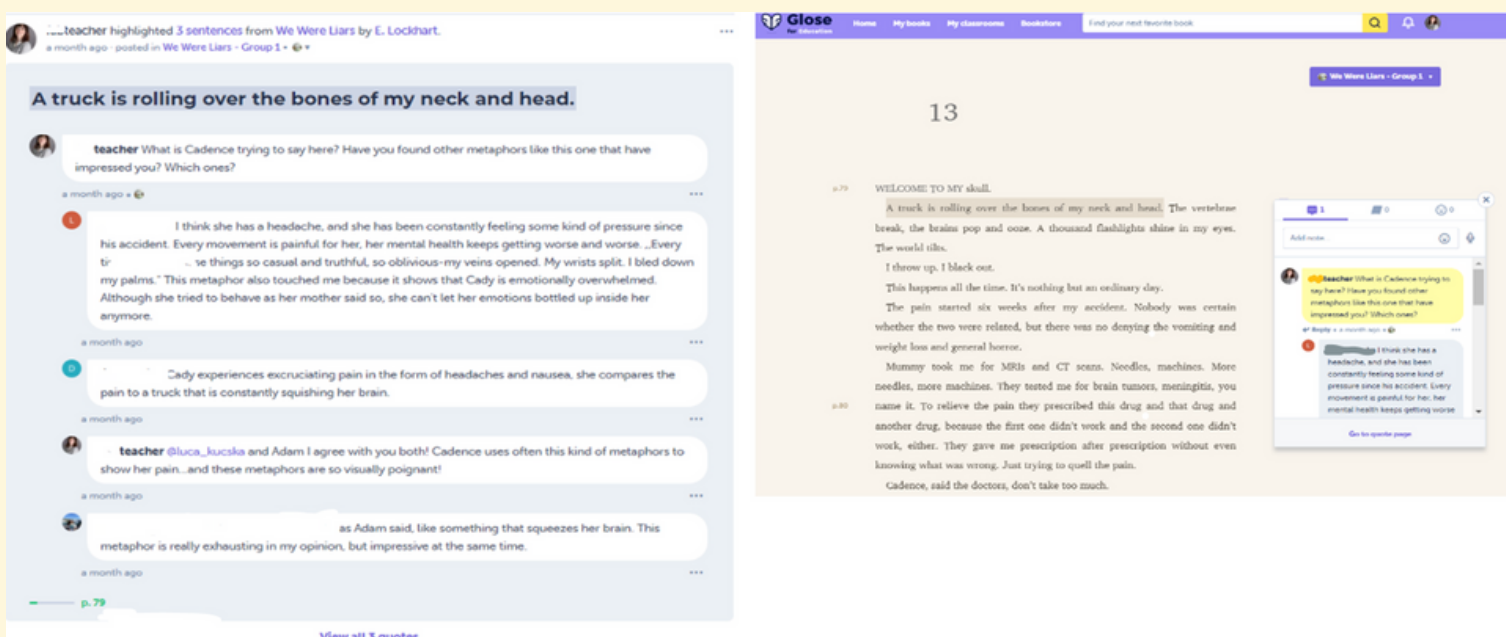


Figure 4: Specific prompt on Glose for Education



## Post-Reading Activity (online- Moodle)

After having finished the book, students are encouraged to share their reactions and interpretations of the text on Moodle. Specifically, students have to reply to **two different discussion prompts**, one more general and one more specific. See the examples below:

### General Prompt

Dear readers,

After reading the book on Glose Education, now it's time to have a little discussion.

In this forum, answer the following questions:

- What is your immediate reaction to the book? Why?
- Which passages or aspects of the book particularly interested you? Why?
- Which characters and/or events did you relate to in particular and why?
- What is the most important message of the book for you?

The deadline for this activity is: ...

I can't wait to read you!

Best,

Your teacher

### Specific Prompt

Dear readers,

In reading *We were liars* by Emily Lockart we also explored issues related to Mental health and well-being.

So, the questions I want to ask you at this point are:

- In the book, Cadence suffers from PTSD. What could you do to support someone who suffered from mental challenge? Check out the suggestions you find at this link.
- What other aspects related to mental health and well-being do you find interesting and would like to explore in the future?

The deadline for this activity is: ...

In responding to these questions, you write a post or upload a voice message or video!

Best,

Your teacher



# PART II: READING PROJECT

Instead of using a digital reading platform, the DigLit methodology is also applicable to use **printed books**. Similar steps as for the DSR project are recommended for the reading project:



Step 1: Introduction of the Project

Step 2: Book-Choosing Activities

Step 3: Obtaining the Books

Step 4: Strategies to Keep Students Engaged



## Section III:

# Digital Storytelling as Post-Reading Production

Within this project, Digital Storytelling is implemented after the reading of the novel as a post-reading activity. The digital stories are created by using popular smart phones.

Digital Storytelling is a method where 2-5 minutes long short clips are created that consist of photographs and voiceovers. The method was developed by the StoryCenter Berkley (USA) and is a popular life-narrative technique that combines the ancient art of storytelling with digital media.

The following will outline the steps for the creation of a Digital Story.

## Step 1: Brainstorming

Students are encouraged to collect ideas for the Digital Story they will create. The Young Adult Novel functions here as a trigger to come up with an idea for the Digital Story. Here are some questions :

- What topic or theme from the book sparked your interest?
- What character was particular interesting for to?
- What are your ideas for a sequel to the book?
- How can you now turn these ideas into a digital story?
- What will you story be about?
- How are you going to present it?
- Which App will you use?



## Step 2: Storyboard

It is very important to plan the Digital Story carefully in order to have a smooth recording. Students are encouraged to write out their script and to edit it before recording. The storyboard below will be useful for the process.

Storyboard				
	Time	Text	Visuals	Audio
Beginning				
Main				
Ending				

**IMPORTANT SIDE NOTE:** The students **MUST** record their own voice and cannot use any pre-recorded voiceovers.

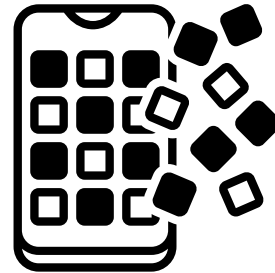
A printable version of the storyboard is in the appendix of this guide



### Step 3: Recording and Editing

The recording of the story can be done on any smartphone App the students like to use. Examples:

- Flip (log in with Microsoft 365)
- Capcut
- ShadowPuppet ( Apple Devices/ just still images)
- Com-phone (Android Devices/just still images)
- Splice
- Filmora
- Clipchamp
- Canva
- Google Photos
- just your camera
- any other App on your phone



### Step 4: Sharing

The digital stories should be shared with the teacher and peers. Uploading them to a platform, such as Moodle, is an ideal way to do this. Other options are:

- Upload your video to a cloud service and share access via a link
- File sharing websites such as [WeTransfer](#) can also help you share larger video files
- Upload your digital narrative to YouTube and share the YouTube link

### Step 5: Reflecting

After the digital storytelling process, it is very important to reflect with the students. This can be done in small groups, pairs, or individually in written or oral form. The following questions can be used:

- What inspired you to create your digital narrative?
- What did you enjoy the most?
- What did you find difficult or challenging about the project?
- What advice would you give other students working on digital narratives?
- Other things you'd like to say?

# APPENDIX

Storyboard				
	Time	Text	Visuals	Audio
Beginning				
Main				
Ending				

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