

## **Multimedia Group Project #1 Documentation**

### **Purpose:**

Poetry can be a difficult subject for learners, as many are uncomfortable with the form. Allowing students to engage with the text in as many modalities as possible, including through visualizations, is beneficial to help some learners understand the themes, tone and mood of a poem. That is why we decided to create a "Pirdle" (i.e. Picture + Wordle) which provides a pictorial mind-map of the poem based on the frequency that certain words appear in the text. The poem that we chose to use as our example is Samuel Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," a poem often studied in senior level English classes, and all images were either taken by us or found on Creative Commons. This activity could be used both as an introduction or hook to a poem (i.e. asking students to consider overarching themes and ideas before delving into the specifics of the text), as an post-reading strategy to help students visualize and synthesize the ideas of the poem.

### **1) What process did you use to develop your idea?**

Overall, the development of this project involved a lot of trial-and-error. We actually began with the idea of creating a photo essay for a poem, having previously discussed how we had each used visualization activities during our practicums to help our students understand and analyze poetry. As we developed the project, trying to decide what pictures to take to visualize "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," we decided to use Wordle to help pick out the key images and words in the poem. We would then overlay images corresponding to each word in the Wordle, thereby creating a sort of pictorial mind-map of the poem. Once we had created our Wordle, we played around with colour, font, and orientation in order to reflect the mood and themes of the poem. We also experimented with ship-silhouettes in Tagxedo to represent the poem, but found that visual to be too literal. We also considered superimposing our Wordle onto an image, but we once again returned to our original idea of overlaying multiple images onto the text. This, we compiled on Photoshop, superimposing images onto each word in the Wordle and finally rendering all the layers into one master image. Initially, we had wanted to create a visualization that would toggle back and forth between the picture and the word underneath when the user scrolled over the image with their mouse. However, this proved more complicated than we had anticipated. Realizing that we would need to post our project on some sort of social media platform in order to enable users to interact with the image/test, we considered using Adobe Dreamweaver and Wordpress to create a website / blog. Ultimately, in the interest of time, we settled for an already-existing social media site that would allow us to tag our photo with each word so that users could still scroll over each picture and find out what word it represented. At first, we used Facebook, but after discovering that there was a 50-tag limit per photo (and we had about twice that number to tag!) we turned to Vuvox, an interactive collage-making tool, and finally found success there.

## **2) What other pre-production strategies did you employ?**

We approached the project by discussing what our ultimate goal for the project would be (i.e. what aspect of multiliteracies did we want to focus on and what would be helpful for our future teaching practices?). Deciding that we wanted to help visual learners (who often comprise a large chunk of learners in classrooms) engage with text in a meaningful, we decided on working with visualizations in our project. We also decided to use a poem as our text, not only because it would be more manageable given time constraints, but also because readers often struggle more with poetry than prose due to poetry's more ambiguous, less structured, less obvious representations of meaning. Creating the Wordle was the easiest part of the assignment, and we did not have much difficulty gathering the images either, though the more abstract terms sometimes required a bit more creativity and imagination. Combining both text and image into the final product that we had envisioned, however, was the more the more difficult part that entailed a lot of trial and error.

## **3) How did you assign tasks or roles within your group? How did you manage time?**

We divided the roles by separating the Wordle into four separate quadrants, each choosing one of the quadrants to be responsible for and either photographing or finding images associated with the words found there. We later gathered as a group to determine how we would arrange the images and decided to use class time to Photoshop the images together. We also made use of Google Docs to complete the written portion of the assignment, assigning parts to each person and editing online as needed. Thus, we were able to save a considerable amount of time as we all had different schedules and meeting outside of class proved to be difficult.

## **4) What approaches would you use to assess this activity that take into account the following: a) the multimedia nature of the assignment; b) the collaborative nature of the assignment**

- a) We chose to focus on evaluating how the images reflect student understanding of the poem as well as enhance the meaning of key ideas. Assessment of this project involves looking at both the individual images, as well as how everything fits into a larger vision. The creative nature of this project can make this assignment difficult to evaluate. For example, what the students may be intending with their images may not be immediately clear to the evaluator, but this can be partially rectified with a written or oral rationale.
- b) This project easily allows for collaboration. When we developed our collage, we took the Wordle and divided it into four quadrants, with each person in the group responsible for finding images that represent each word. The teacher could choose to focus on how students worked both individually as well as collaboratively through peer evaluation as a complement to a written reflection.

\*\*Below is a sample rubric that might be used to assess this assignment, as well as a rubric for assessing students' participation and collaboration in the project:

	Needs Improvement (2 points)	Satisfactory (3 points)	Good (4 points)	Excellent (5 points)
Images	Image selection is not consistent with the theme/imagery of the poem	Image selection demonstrates some understanding of the theme/imagery of the poem	Image selection is used thoughtfully to reflect the theme/imagery of the poem	Image selection is used thoughtfully to reflect the theme/imagery of the poem  Image selection is used to enhance meaning of the poem
Understanding of Key Themes	Artistic representation does not display an understanding of key themes of the poem	Artistic representation demonstrates some understanding of key themes of the poem	Artistic representation demonstrates understanding of key themes of the poem	Artistic representation demonstrates a thorough and in-depth understanding of key themes of the poem
Interpretation	Artistic representation is literal and adds no value to the meaning of the poem	Artistic representation demonstrates some understanding of the theme/imagery of the poem	Artistic representation is used thoughtfully to reflect the theme/imagery of the poem	Artistic representation is used thoughtfully to reflect the theme/imagery of the poem  Artistic representation is used to enhance the meaning of the poem
Unity/Focus	Artistic representation is a series of disjointed images that are largely unrelated to the poem. Overall, the image lacks focus.	Artistic representation highlights too many ideas in the poem and lacks focus.	Artistic representation highlights one idea in the poem but does not add value to the meaning of the poem.	Artistic representation is unified under one main idea and lends insight into the meaning of the poem

	Attitude Towards Learning	Personal Productivity Responsibilities	Teamwork
Exceeds Expectations	This student displayed an eagerness to contribute to the group and he/she encouraged	This student accepted his or her responsibilities for the project with professionalism. This student was on-task and	This student contributed to the project by staying on task and ensuring group members stayed on task.

	others to follow suit. This student is cooperative and a leader.	productive.	
<b>Fully Meets Expectations</b>	This student displayed a willingness to contribute to the group. The student was cooperative, but could have also taken on more of a leadership role.	This student overall took his or her responsibility seriously, with some digressions.	This student made clear efforts to contribute to the project by staying on task. The student is listening and contributing.
<b>Meets Expectations</b>	This student contributed but could he/she needed some pushing and occasionally complained.	The student showed ambivalent concern for his or her responsibilities.	This student showed concern for contributing to the group, but either did not contribute enough or tried to contribute in a way that was domineering and left little room for peers to contribute.
<b>Not Yet Within Expectations</b>	This student either refused to participate in the activities or only participated after a lot of pushing.	The student showed a complete disregard for his or her personal responsibilities.	This student showed a lack of concern for contributing to the group, and/or the student used a cellular phone during work time.

**5) What are the greatest challenges in using this approach in a classroom and can they be ameliorated through careful instructional design? What learning opportunities did this activity afford?**

The biggest challenge in doing this group project was its obvious reliance on technology. If the students were to do this in class then there would need to be sufficient computers for each of the students. The students would also need to possess the knowledge and skills of how to use these programs and even though they are not necessarily difficult, teaching students with limited to no exposure towards these programs still require time and dedication. Another challenge that arose was the inherent difficulty in finding an appropriate image for several key words/ideas that were not nouns, demonstrating the level of thought needed to conceptualize and form images out of certain text.

One additional limitation we found is that because we were compiling all the images on Photoshop, it made sense for only one person to be using the program at a time. We avoided having only one person do all the compilation work (because it was quite a laborious task) by taking turns using the program and working on other parts of the project (such as the write-up or finding an appropriate platform to display our project) in the meantime. One potential adaptation for the classroom is to have students physically create the Pirdle by printing out an enlarged version of their Wordle onto poster paper and then gluing / taping images onto the individual words in such a way that allows each image to be flipped up and the word to be revealed underneath.



