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Media Project One: Visual Media Literacy

1. The process of developing our idea was born, frankly, out of a sense of expediency with regard to the technical challenges of creating the project. We wanted something “easy” and we wanted to exploits the talents of one of our group members who is quite adept with digital technologies. However, once the process of determining the project began, many different sorts of ideas were offered. These were received with enthusiasm and then modified and refined by other group members in a fairly organic—almost dialectical—process. After having had spirited contributions and argument from all quarters, we settled on the form of our project: a slide show/film of images, selected by each group member, in response to each line from a reasonably short poem with accompanying audio of said poem being read aloud.

2. The pre-production strategies we employed included selecting a poem for the project (W.B. Yeats “The Second Coming”), recording each group member speaking the poem aloud using the Garage Band application for Mac, individually selecting images in response to each line of the poem, and emailing folders containing these images to the technical director of the project.

3. Since Justin provided so much work in terms of technical arrangement, it was decided that he did not need to select images for the project nor record himself reading the poem. The idea for the form of the project was, as is described above, arrived at organically and cannot be easily attributed to any group member, but Justin was able to be a sounding board for our ideas in terms of feasibility and efficiency. Interestingly, the rest of the group took on identical tasks in the collection of images, the lending of our voice for the recording, and advising each other on how the final product might be best displayed. The planning for the project and the audio recording were completed during the lab time appointed by Dr. Dobson, while the collection of the images and the editing of the slide show/film happened on group members’ own time.

4. One approach to address assessing the multimedia nature of the project would be a simple appraisal of which media were incorporated into the project and whether those media contributed usefully to the effectiveness of the project and were not employed in a perfunctory or haphazard manner.

It can be difficult to determine the degree of collaboration with finished projects—especially if they integrate different media seamlessly—so it is necessary to have group members describe their contributions and the process of working together.

Ideally, the finished project will have an aesthetic unity to it, so an articulation of the process would be a requirement.

Following those holistic appraisals of relevant media integration and collaboration, the evaluator(s) would use the rubric below:

Criteria	Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary
The project makes evident a substantial degree of collaboration.				
The project incorporates a number of media, including images				
The project makes relevant connections to the discipline of English/Language Arts.				
The project displays a high degree of creativity.				

This rubric is intended to provide an instructor/evaluator the opportunity to type/write specific and germane comments in the cells that they think represent the group’s achievements vis-à-vis an individual criterion.

5. Our goal in creating this assignment was to showcase the possibilities that inhere in the process of juxtaposing and combining individual responses to a single text. In this sense the collaboration was a freeform one: each group member selected an image that resonated or represented an idiosyncratic response to each line of W.B. Yeat’s iconic “The Second Coming”. This process of selecting an image that was evoked by (or evoked) each line was done individually and without the consultation of other group members. The plan was to combine images in a particular pattern to produce a heady, even psychedelic, procession of images as an audio version of the poem played. The planned pattern had the images appearing in the same order for each line, i.e. group member number one’s image would precede member number two’s for each line—the poem being read aloud and recorded by all members. The final product did produce the psychedelic procession of images that was hoped for, but the ordering of the images became more arbitrary, which had interesting results.

One of the challenges that came from using this approach was the somewhat discordant aesthetic that was produced. Because each group member signed off on the choices of each other, there was some clashing of images that may have lessened the impact of the project. This challenge could have been ameliorated by the building-in of more time for the group to edit and collaborate once the collection of images had been completed. There was an “enabling constraint” quality to the way we designed the project, but a high school group may require even more explicit instructions (or not, perhaps.)

The most salient learning opportunity that was afforded by this activity was a profound realization of how images can supplement or even supplant verbal or textual responses to poetry. Each group member commented on how pleasurable and curious the process of finding images became. The lines were considered from a diversity of perspectives, and the images we settled on were often a surprise even to ourselves.

Note: all images were sourced using a Google “labeled for non-commercial reuse” search.