How does making movies empower boys in a Grade 8 Class?
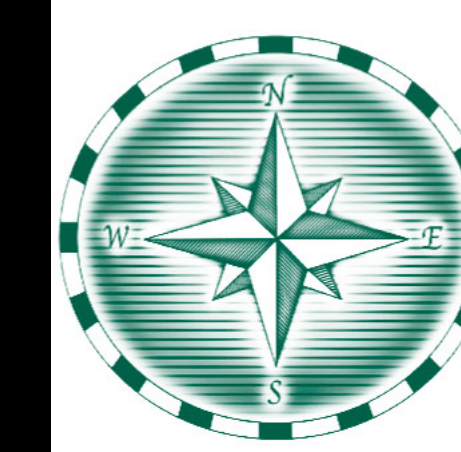
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Introduction

Today, many boys spend countless hours watching videos on websites such as YouTube and Vimeo. Some have even ventured into movie making themselves. In a culture of social media where videos are created and posted online daily, the movie making process could be a powerful tool for engaging students in many subjects. The tools to make movies have become affordable and easy to use. Before we devote time to making movies, we need to know how it will empower our students. What does movie making bring to a Grade 8 class?

Question

How does making movies in English Class empower Grade 8 boys?

School	Class	Boys
Selwyn House School: • Day school Grades K-11 • 550 boys • Westmount (Montreal), Quebec, Canada	Action research was conducted in a Grade 8 English class taught by my colleague, Bob Bouskill. Classes are 75 mins.	The class of 18 boys was excited to try something new and most had experience with iPads.

Action

Students were shown how to shoot movies with an iPad and how to edit clips into a movie using iMovie. Two movie projects were assigned: a book trailer for George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and an interview as the author discussing themes in Michael Morpurgo's *Private Peaceful.*

Screenplay:

Students work with the novels in order to prepare their script for the first production. The pre-production task of writing a script is one the boys are comfortable doing.
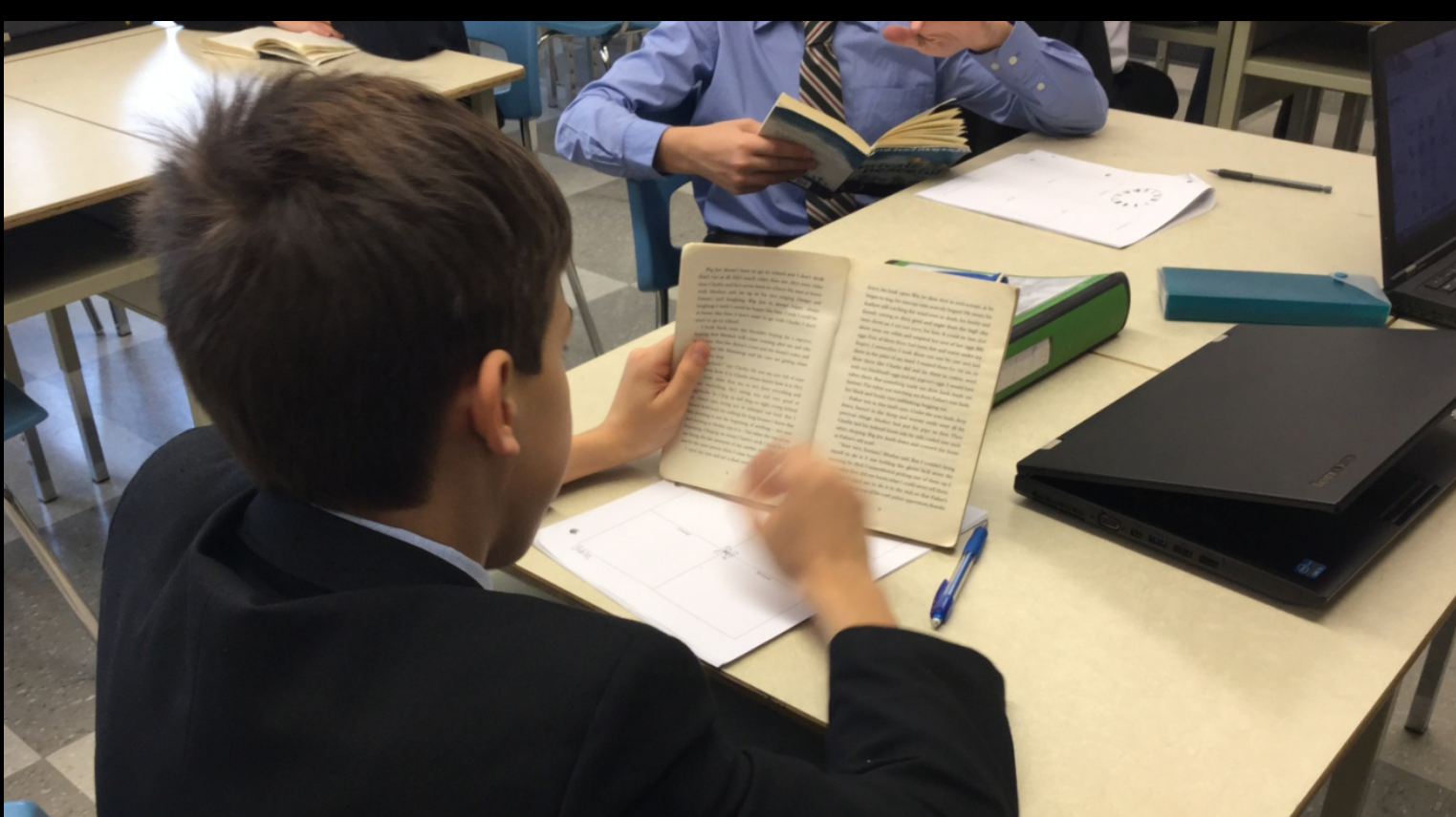
Studio Time:

Two students work in the studio on their second production. One student played the role of the author discussing the themes in Michael Murpurgo's *Private Peaceful*

Data Collection

• Pre-action survey to assess experience and self-confidence
• One 75 min class for discussion of the 3 stages of movie-making (pre-production, production and post-production)
• One class to teach students how to film with an iPad
• One class to demonstrate iMovie, including the trailers feature
• One class to write a screen play and begin shooting clips (students also used time outside of class to continue)
• One class to demonstrate the projects section of iMovie
• Two classes to present the finished movies
• Post-intervention survey to assess effects of making movies, determine changes to use of YouTube, and gather information to help improve the movie making unit.

All classes were filmed from three different camera angles to assess behaviour and attitude.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed several times looking for themes that arose from student responses and behaviour. A microanalysis, as suggested by Strauss (1998), including both open and axial coding techniques was done of the written samples from students.

The video data for each class were first edited to compile the three camera angles into a single movie. These movies were then reviewed, coded for student behaviour, engagement of the students, and attitudes displayed towards the subject matter.

Key Findings

• In the beginning, students were consumers of video content watching an average of 43 YouTube videos weekly.
• Students reported / demonstrated little confidence in ability to make a movie. Camera man & Editor were main concerns.
• Script writing was the task most easily accomplished by the boys.
• All students demonstrated anxiety during the class presentations of their movies.
• 16 of 18 enjoyed the challenge of the movie projects and found making movies more challenging than other work done in class.
• Asking students to take on the role of author Michael Morpurgo discussing themes in his novel *Private Peaceful* required them to think more deeply about the subject matter.
• YouTube videos became source for learning about movie making, camera work and editing.
• No increase in the number of YouTube videos watched per week.
• Students reported / demonstrated increased confidence in skills.

Conclusions

• Students found making movies more difficult than other projects and yet wanted to make movies anyway because they enjoyed the process. They took charge of their learning and changed their use of YouTube to learn more and better ways to make movies.

• The challenge of taking the author's point of view when discussing themes made them think more deeply about the subject matter. Getting into character requires a better understanding and students wanted to do their best.

• Making a movie made them appreciate what is involved. They wanted to learn more about the production and post-production side of movie making. They determined what they wanted to know and what they needed to know.

• Boys appreciated the physical effort involved in making a movie. Movement helps many to focus when it is time to sit still. The anticipation of production encourages many during the pre-production stage.

From the Students:

"I appreciate videos more as I now know how much work gets put into making one."

"Making movies is 10 times better than writing an essay."

"You have to be organized to film and can't wait until the last minute."

"You could make the movie making in class a better learning experience by doing it more often."

And my personal favourite:

"It was more of a team effort... for other projects, one person ends up doing most of the work. In movie making, everyone *NEEDED* to participate ."

Above: *Students engage in discussion about film.*

Below: *Students use iPads to film.*

Key Readings

Johnson, E. (n.d.). *Moviemaking in the classroom.* Retrieved August 6, 2014, from http://www.byebyeblackboard.com/moviemaking/?cat=14
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Pine, G. J. (2009). *Teacher action research building knowledge democracies.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Further Information

An online copy of this poster is available at http://www.theibsc.org/
Visit my project blog for more detail: https://makers.edublogs.org/
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