



Digital Photography Project: My Special Place

This project gives girls an opportunity to jump into technology and work on a lesson that is relatively easy and that produces quick results. The lesson appeals to girls' interest in digital photography and offers an outlet for self-expression. With a few images of themselves and their favorite place, girls use PowerPoint or a design program like PageMaker to produce a digital story. This lesson makes a good introduction to our digital storytelling curriculum.

This project was inspired by a lesson developed by Anthony Cody, a teacher in the Techbridge program.

Icebreaker

My Name

Hand out the My Name article from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. Read the article aloud in the group and invite girls to write a story about their name. It's best to give this as a take-home assignment to give girls a chance to talk with their family to find out the history of their name. You can encourage the girls to write a story based upon the Cisneros story. Or, you can give students the following questions from *Tribes* as prompts: Why did your parents choose your name? If you were named after someone, who was it? What nickname do you have, and how did you get it? Do you like your name? Why or why not? If you could choose another name, would you? What would it be?

This activity is a great way for students to get to know one another at the start of the program. It can also be introduced later on since it often reveals new insights into students.

Supplies

1. Computers with PowerPoint or PageMaker
2. This is My Special Place handout
3. Digital or disposable cameras (enough for each girl to take at least 6 pictures)
4. PowerPoint in the Classroom Tutorial available from <http://www.actden.com/pp/>
5. Presentation Guidelines handout
6. My Name article from *The House on Mango Street*

Directions

1. Pass out the Photography Project: This is My Special Place handout. Read aloud the article by Janine James, which was a letter to the editor in the San Francisco Chronicle.



2. Give girls the option of adapting the lesson if they do not wish to write about a room inside their home. Ask students to take six photographs of a room/place that reflects their lives and inner selves. They should appear in at least two of the photographs. They will choose three photos for their presentation.
3. Review the tips for taking digital photographs before passing out cameras.
4. If your girls are not already familiar with PowerPoint, you will need to go through the PowerPoint in the Classroom tutorial so they can learn how to use this software program.
5. Once everyone has her photographs, ask your students to create a 3-4 slide story with PowerPoint. Encourage girls to take time to think about how the place makes them feel and to write more than a physical description of the place.
6. Once they are finished, ask the girls to show their project to a partner. In this exercise, encourage students to check one another's stories for grammar and spelling and for clarity of expression.
7. Once students have made the suggested changes, review each student's work.
8. When their stories have gone through a final edit and review, ask students to gather in teams of four and to present to each other. Review the guidelines for making successful presentations.
9. Now the group is ready to showcase their Photography Projects for an audience.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did you choose the place you did for this assignment?
2. Which presentations told the most expressive stories? What elements made them successful?
3. What did you learn from your partner when you presented your project for a first review?
4. Did you learn anything about someone in the group that surprised you?

Time Required

Allow a week for girls to take photographs for the project. Putting the photographs and stories together and going through edits for a final presentation can be completed in two two-hour sessions.

Lessons Learned

It is important to know your group. Not every girl in Techbridge was fortunate enough to have the kind of bedroom described by Janine in the news article; some slept on a couch in the living room, some share a bedroom with several siblings, and some live in shelters. In respect of the lifestyles of girls in our group, we called this project "My Special Place." The place could be a bedroom but could also be a place where the girls like to visit. For Techbridge girls, these places included a front porch where they talk with friends, a private spot in a neighborhood park where they can reflect without interruptions, a church where they sing in the choir, or a make-believe place in their imagination.



In our afterschool programs, some girls were loaned digital cameras from Techbridge. In some instances, these arrangements worked well and the girls had the opportunity to take digital pictures of the places in their neighborhoods that made for interesting and meaningful projects. However, we also had a few incidents that proved unfortunate: a digital camera fell into a lake, another was stolen. In order to avoid costly lessons like these, some programs purchased disposable cameras for the girls. These were shared between 3-4 girls; however, sometimes their timely return was problematic. We advise setting a schedule and sending home a letter to families to let them know about the project and the arrangements for borrowing equipment.

Lesson Extensions

1. **Getting to Know You.** At the start of one of our Techbridge programs we invited girls to pair up and take a digital photograph of one another. Once the photos were completed, we asked the girls to download the photographs and create a slide or two with PowerPoint to serve as an introduction of each student to the group.
2. **Grrlstories** is a national online community for girls sponsored by Blue Earth Alliance. This online community for girls, ages 9-15, offers photography and narrative to tell compelling stories that are important to adolescent girls. With its discussions and activity guides, this website provides ready-to-use activities. <http://www.grrlstories.org>
3. **My Room Goes International.** As part of the Global Village Classroom competition, students from Arizona, Canada, and Uzbekistan worked together to create a website that showed the rooms of teens from their part of the world. While the project didn't win an award, it taught the students important lessons about technology and teamwork. For more information about this project, which is sponsored by Give Something Back International visit www.gsbi.org/gvc (click on **Secondary School Team Links**)

Resources

1. A Beginner's Guide to Digital Photography offers lessons and projects for the novice photographer. With these step-by-step lessons, you can teach your students the basics so that their images are well composed. You'll also find ideas for projects and handouts for lessons. This site was developed by Anthony Cody, a Techbridge teacher from Bret Harte Middle School in Oakland, CA. <http://tlc.ousd.k12.ca.us/~acody/digi1.html>
2. Teaching Digital Photography includes lessons on the basics like how to handle the camera to more advanced lessons in image editing and multimedia presentations. This site is supported by the YouthLearn Initiative at the Education Development Center.



<http://www.youthlearn.org/learning/activities/multimedia/photo1.asp>

3. Adobe Digital Kids Club offers free online lessons to help you get started editing and manipulating images. Also includes tips for making calendars, stickers, and other fun projects.

<http://www.adobe.com/education/digkids/main.html>



National Standards

Digital Photography Project: My Special Place addresses the following Technology Foundations Standards for All Students:

1. Basic operation and concepts
 - Students are proficient in the use of technology.
2. Social, ethical, and human issues
 - Students develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.
3. Technology productivity tools
 - Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity.
 - Students use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhance models, preparing publications, and producing other creative works



Presentation Guidelines

1. Introduce yourself. Provide your name and additional information (school, grade, and relevant information appropriate for your audience).
2. Remember to speak loudly and clearly.
3. Make eye contact with your audience and be sure to look across the entire room.
4. Be calm, remember your posture, and try not to fidget.
5. Don't rush. Take a breath and pause between your important ideas.
6. Be natural and try to use gestures.
7. Add some creativity to your presentation. Make a poster or bring props to add a visual element to help explain your topic.
8. If needed, make note cards to help you remember your key points, but do not read from your notes.
9. Know your time limit and stick to it.
10. At the end of your presentation try to summarize the main point in one sentence.
11. Invite questions from your audience.
12. Most importantly, enjoy yourself! The audience will be on your side and want to hear what you have to say.
13. Thank the audience when you're finished.
14. Practice, practice, practice. The more practice you have giving a presentation, the better it will be.

Photography Project: This is My Room



Photos by JERRY TELFER / The Chronicle

HER SPACE: Janine Jones of Oakland has decorated her room in blue and arranged displays of her various collections. Beanie Babies and My Little Pony figures are arranged on a ladder to the attic, below.



Janine shows her room

Editor – My name is Janine James, I am 14 years old. One of my favorite places in the world is my room. From the colorful door to the casual lounge, my room has it all. It's modern and hip to match my personality.

In the front part of my room I have my desk and bed. Above my desk is a blue bulletin board with boa lining, but you can't buy it in stores, I made it myself! My bed has cloud sheets and a cool moon throw. Around my bed I have

Christmas lights, over 30 posters and a gallery of movie ticket stubs.

The lounge part of my room is really neat, too. There's a breakable collection, a futon, a beaded curtain and a ladder full of Beanie Babies and My Little Ponies.

That's only a taste of my room – there's so much more! A parasol from Thailand, an antique desk, a one-of-a-kind My Little Pony, collector Barbies, dried roses – you have to see it to believe it!

JANINE JAMES, Oakland

We all live in rooms that reflect our lives. Some of us share rooms, and some live in a living room. For this project you will take three photographs of your room, and write a description of how your room is special. You should appear in one of the three photographs. When you have the three photographs, put them into your computer, and paste them into a Pagemaker page, so you can write on the page next to the photos.



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