Beyond Engagement: Using Storyboards as a Digital Storytelling Tool for Teaching Libyan EFL University Students Literary Fiction During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

In the current situation of COVID-19 pandemic, and in response to an appeal from the Libyan Ministry of Education to all universities and colleges to improve the quality of education as the country is in lockdown, there are new ongoing discussions on how best to integrate technology for online-learning and teaching. How best to address the academic rigor of the new situation in Libyan EFL university classrooms during this period of unexpected and unprecedented educational disruption, and to engage students in meaningful use of technology for learning is a topic of great interest to practitioners and researchers alike. By encouraging online or blended learning, language institutions are making great efforts to further promote the foreign language learning process. Integrating technology into the EFL curriculum is not a single concept which is generated from a single theory, and its implementation calls for a range of perspectives and theoretical views. This paper discusses the issue of technology's contribution in EFL classroom, more specifically it investigates the teaching of literary fiction and how best to support its reading and understanding through technology. The question raised in this paper is how technology facilitates the attainment of course goals. So, it tries to propose answers to the questions: How can we best make use of technology for planning literary lessons? What instructional strategies can teachers use to promote reading development? How do teachers help their students acquire the necessary skills for literary analysis and understanding in an online environment? The aim of this research paper is therefore to provide suggestions which Libyan EFL classrooms could make use of in the current situation, to promote technology use and online learning when teaching literature, and also make use of this technology to promote understanding, and analysis of literary texts (fiction) in order to develop creativity, collaboration, and eventually language skills. It, therefore, proposes the utilization of digital storytelling tools like 'StoryboardThat' as an instructional approach to facilitate art-based language standards.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling Tool- Storyboards - Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Introduction

More than 1.5 billion students across the world are affected by school and university closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak (UNESCO, 2020), and Libya is no exception. In response to this, the Libyan Ministry of higher Education and Scientific Research seeks to facilitate inclusive learning opportunities for its students across universities during this period of unexpected and unprecedented educational disruption by encouraging online or blended learning.

Yet, this transition may not come easy for Libyan educators, coming from a purely traditional instructional background which does not value learner interaction and learner independence. Meaning that teachers need to, not only think about the digital tool to be used, but also the pedagogy they would want to leverage for that purpose. Being open to the current crisis-driven educational opportunity is a call to action-based practices and, therefore important for teachers not to confuse technology with teaching.

This means that the goal ought to be to ‘use’ technology to facilitate an engaging and effective online learning experience for the students. Virtual classrooms, especially in the current context, bring about new experiences and new challenges for first-time students and teachers alike. For this reason, investment in remote learning is needed urgently. Such investment should not only mitigate this disruption caused by COVID-19, but also determine approaches to develop different modes of learning to establish a more flexible educational system for the future.

Teaching remotely may be new to faculties, but then again there are numerous resources to help instructors determine a suitable pedagogical approach

that best suits the institutional goal and the learners' needs. To demonstrate how this mode of learning could improve access to quality education for students as the pace of digitization is accelerating these days, an essential and reliable digital strategy is the use of digital storytelling for understanding short stories. A digital story is a short, narrative that is told through multimedia, such as images, audio, and sound effects. (Miller & Kim, 2015). A digital storytelling tool that can be utilized to promote active learning, interaction, collaboration, and creativity, is *StoryboradThat*. Digital stories bring together graphics, sounds or recorded audio narration, music, and video to demonstrate information on a topic. These kinds of multimedia presentation tools can be invaluable constructive means for transforming learners' learning processes, which focus mostly on memorization, the extraction of knowledge and at times application, to more learner-centred approaches.

For students who are now considered to be "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001), the idea of creating digital products which integrate voice narrations, image and text seems like something that most of them would find intriguing. An emerging body of literature supports students' use of digital storytelling to strengthen understanding of content and encourage reflection (Jenkins & Lonsdale, 2007; Genereux & Thompson, 2008; Ohler, 2008; Sandars & Murray, 2009).

Despite the fact that many Libyan educators and investigators in the EFL arena consider explicit instruction of reading strategies, a significant feature of effective foreign language reading, strategy instruction in EFL as a vehicle to attain reading comprehension has not been widely accepted as an official instructional model. Students need to be able to not only read and understand literary texts, but also analyse and evaluate them by comparing views with others and sharing their

personal responses to create better opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and creative meaning making.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to provide an overview of an instructional tool for developing the necessary reading skills and strategies to help Libyan students raise their understanding of literary texts by drawing on a host of reading strategies. It will introduce storyboard as a teaching technique to create a more hybrid learning situation online for Libyan students, one which values the role of the learner in the learning process. For this purpose, the paper will first start by reviewing literature on the reading process, and aspects related to the development of second language (L2) reading. Then, technology as an educational tool is introduced, making reference to the current situation. Finally, the concept of digital storytelling is introduced to explain how it can be used to facilitate instruction and development of reading comprehension. Additionally, it provides sample activities and shows how well to use them for planning EFL instruction.

Research on L1 Reading: General Overview

Research on the process of reading has had significant evolvement over the past half century. Studies conducted in the 1960's have suggested that reading was a bottom-up process of word perception (Spache, 1964) which merely involves the extraction of linguistic information from the written print (Widdowson, 1975). According to this view the most important aspect of the reading process is the written word. This makes the reader's role exploratory in nature where he/she decodes the sentences moving from the smallest unites of the text, putting together graphemes, words, and sentences to make sense of it (Gough, 1972). This modality of reading unfortunately gave little significance to what the reader could bring to the text (background knowledge and experiences).

During the 1970s and early 1980s reading took a new meaning, with the rise of cognitive views based on work done by Goodman (1967, 1970) and Smith (1971, 1982). Reading was viewed as a top-down process that was not merely about extracting meaning from print, rather a process which involves one's knowledge in the construction of meaning. This meant that readers make sense of a text when their identification of the written text is in correlation with their cognitive exploration (Smith, 2004). This psycholinguistic view of reading gave importance to schema theory which suggests that "when individuals obtain knowledge, they attempt to fit that knowledge into some structure in memory that helps them make sense of that knowledge" (Ajideh, 2006, p. 4). What have then come to be called schemata, these representations make it possible for the reader to make connections with the text by relating new knowledge to prior knowledge, eventually leading to comprehension.

Towards the late 1980s and early 1990s a new approach which blended the two views was introduced. According to this view reading was an 'interactive' process which involved both the reader and the text, thus giving importance to the decoding of information and the reader's interpretations of that information (Rumelhart, 1977, 1980; Stanovich, 1980). What came to be called the 'interactive model' conceives reading as a mutual interaction between the reader and the text. So, it can be said that top-down and bottom-up models are, in this sense, complementary to each other, though one model may dominate over the other in the reading process (Nuttall, 2005).

The 1990s introduced new ideas based on the interactive model of reading. Rumelhart and Stanovich's interactive models gave importance to different sources of knowledge possessed by the reader, including the strategies they have mastered or acquired along the way. The different reading strategies which

different readers fulfil had become an important dimension of reading research, thus giving a more individualized vision of reading in general, and more precisely, second language reading.

During the last decades, such views of the reading process have led to increased interest from researchers and educators as a sociocultural discipline, making the focus of reading an important aspect of success in other forms of life, including economic prosperity. As a result, both first language (L1) and second language (L2) reading research have made advances in providing scholarly interpretations of ways in which strategies could be developed to help L2 readers master the reading process, including Libya (for example Jounto & Mustapha, 2016; Abubaker, 2017). These advances, however, have not been easy to reach as the relationship between L1 and L2 reading processes and reading development have not always been accepted as being equivalent.

Reading Theory and Its Contribution to L2 Reading Research and Pedagogy

Research in L2 reading has developed remarkably in the past few decades, making use of L1 research to gain insight on both theory and practice in L2 (Grabe, 1991). In spite of the considerable number of studies attempting to highlight the commonalities between L1 and L2 acquisition, perspectives on L1 and L2 reading development had been a matter of discussion for some time. Cummins' (1981) Linguistic Interdependence Theory (LIT) was one of the most influential theories explaining the role of L1 in L2 reading development. This hypothesis states that "[r]eading performance in a second language is largely shared with reading ability in a first language" (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995:17).

What this theory suggests, is that reading ability in the L2 is suggestive of L2, meaning that reading skills in L1 are automatically transferred to the L2, which then implies no direct influence from language proficiency. Now this may be true

if we assume that readers who are good readers at one language, are definitely going to be good readers at another, however, this may well be argued against, as language barriers do actually have a significant role in L2 readers' reading ability. Clarke's (1980) arguments against this view seems to justify exactly this point.

Arguing for what he called the 'short circuit theory' or 'the linguistic threshold theory' (LTT), Clarke (1980) argued that a certain level of proficiency in the second language has to be achieved first, for readers to be able to transfer their reading abilities from L1 to L2. So, for instance, an Arabic student with good reading skills in Arabic (L1) should be able to "cross" the threshold of sufficient linguistic knowledge in English (L2) first, in order to be able to become a good reader of English (L2). This, however, can go both ways, and therefore, language alone may not be a guarantee to either good or bad reading skills in L2.

This is evident in Clarke's experimental study on several proficient adult Spanish speakers in both L1 and L2 reading comprehension. Findings from this experiment indicated that, though good readers had the right abilities, they can short circuit and become vulnerable "when confronted with a difficult or confusing task in the second language" (Clarke, 1980, p. 206). This seems to suggest that both views from Cummins' LIT and Clarke's LTT are valuable when we talk about L2 development (Bernhardt and Kamil, 1995). Bernhardt and Kamil suggested that both linguistic knowledge and reading ability are important for reading comprehension, indicating that they are complementary to each other. However, they emphasise that other factors also contribute to this activity including, the reader's interest in the topic, and his/her background knowledge.

This is arguable why ESL/EFL teachers have to make use of reading strategies (both top-down and bottom-up) (Nuttall, 2005) to help students apply behaviours (which are only evident in fluent readers) effectively, thus

concentrating on macro-level semantic cues, the formulation of hypotheses (predictions) about the text prior to reading, re-reading to confirm or reject these hypotheses, and making use of different levels of information both textual and visual. This point needs to be highlighted for the purpose of this research paper, as the idea behind this paper is mainly to provide Libyan students with an array of skills and knowledge in multimodal representations to reach comprehension when reading literary fiction. This makes it important to make L2 reading the focus of this paper, in order to pinpoint what exactly is it that students need to be acquiring and provide ideas on how best to support that.

Current L2 Reading Research and Instruction: Focus on the Learner

Although researchers have come to realise the potential of L1 research in L2 reading research and development, there have been some misconceptions on how well these two processes are linked, as there have been suggestive arguments on the significance of other factors such as age, socio-economic background, and schooling which make the whole idea of existing similarities between L1 and L2 reading abilities rather superficial (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006). As been asserted earlier, a reader's reading skills in the first language provide a vital indication, but not necessity, of the level of his/her skills in L2 reading because readers may have more to contribute with to comprehend a text. So, to best put it:

> *In the process of reading the successful reader brings to the task a formidable amount of information and ideas, attitudes and beliefs. This knowledge, coupled with the ability to make linguistic predictions, determines the expectations the reader will develop as he reads. Skill in reading depends on the efficient interaction between linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world (Ajideh, 2003,p2).*

Clarke & Silberstein (1997) better explain this process indicating that:

> *More information is contributed by the reader than by the print on the page. That is, readers understand what they read because they are able to take the stimulus beyond its graphic representation and assign it membership to an appropriate group of concepts already stored in their memories (pp136-137).*

Meaning that reading comprehension relies heavily on what readers brings to the text (i.e., their background knowledge and experience) (Carrell, 1991; Clarke & Silberstein, 1997). As second language learners interact with the text their previous knowledge stimulates their comprehension, allowing them to break down data from the text easily and more effectively. Such data could be either textual, or even visual, as reading can be the reading of both linguistic and non-linguistics presentations (such as signs and images). More on this will be explored further on in this paper.

Let's not forget the point that had been made earlier about the significance of readers cultural and social backgrounds, an aspect which can best be described in light of Vygotsky's socio- cultural theory of learning (1979), a theory which values the role of a learners past knowledge and experience along with the social affiliation being imposed through the surrounding environment. What has resulted from this theory in terms of reading makes researchers aim at making reading an interactive activity which makes use of students' interaction with the text and with others. This interaction takes place between different readers when they share and exchange ideas, suggestions, and interpretations of the text, an aspect when adopted to the teaching of literature, can be valuable for triggering imaginative response and creativity, giving students an opportunity to raise their 'horizon of possibilities' (Abubaker, 2017).

This point argues for the relevance of, not only the acquisition of certain strategies to tackle a reading text, but also the need for practice for developing reading fluency (i.e., automaticity in decoding, and using different reading strategies appropriately and effectively). Strategies are defined as conscious actions or behaviours used by readers as they interact with a text (Pritchard, 1990). Reading strategies help readers approach a reading task and solve potential problems that may arise during the processing of a text. This means that readers use strategies to tackle potential difficulties encountered while reading and searching for meaning. Readers are therefore able to plan ahead their reading activity and monitor their comprehension of the text accordingly. So, interaction is enhanced, and meaning is constructed using reading strategies (Anderson, 1991), meaning that readers become efficient at reading by drawing on a set of reading strategies which facilitate the use of different sources of knowledge: semantic, linguistic, or structural. Reading strategies, in addition to other variables, are key to the development of reading, and an L2 reader's ability to use them efficiently and appropriately will make understanding possible.

According to Wallace (1988, 1992), good L2 learners make use of the same reading strategies as good, experienced L1 readers. So, all good, fluent readers use predicting, skimming, scanning, guessing meanings from the context, inferencing, and self-monitoring as they interact with a text and construct meaning. However, less proficient (poor) readers tend to use fewer strategies, or they use them inappropriately and therefore less effectively when reading a text (Garner, 1987).

Although it had been mentioned earlier that foreign language (FL) reading comprehension is influenced by both the reader's L1 reading abilities and L2 language proficiency, Bernhardt (1991) also indicates, in her interactive model of FL reading, that when readers have good L1 skills along with the motivation,

interest in reading, in addition to the content knowledge, then acquiring the FL reading strategies is just a matter of practice. That way readers benefit from all sources of knowledge as they compensate for any deficiency in any sources of knowledge. Reading strategies will most likely give them what they need to understand by drawing on all these knowledge sources, both bottom-up and top-down in the interactive process of reading. Unfortunately, as Libyan EFL classrooms are still teacher-centred and text-based, rather than activity-based, a lot of the necessary strategies for comprehension are neglected in the instruction process. However, this only makes the potential importance of this paper indicative of the need to move away from traditional views of reading and its pedagogy to more interactive, reader-centred views which value the active role of the reader in the construction of meaning.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) provide suggestions for how reading instruction should look like. They believe that the aim of a reading lesson should be to create a balance between background knowledge, which is presupposed by the text (writer), and the readers' background knowledge (schemata), which readers are expected to possess, i.e., what Iser (1978) has come to call the "implied reader" in the process of literary reading. Now what this suggests, is that background information and previewing text content for readers is vital for understanding. This can be done by teaching key concepts, presenting specialized vocabulary and structures, and providing visual prompts to activate schemata of topic content, all of which are important strategies an EFL teacher can use, especially with poor readers (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983).

This is mainly why high priority ought to be given to modelling, scaffolding, and constant practice of reading strategies inside the FL reading classroom (Grabe, 2009). Teachers can make sure that readers use reading strategies by judging the

necessary time and procedure needed to provide technical support to the students (Wallace, 1992). Wallace explains that shared reading in this situation can be a helpful technique, in which the teacher and students explore, discuss, and analyse the language and content of a text. So, students are encouraged to create what can be called a 'reading community' (Abubaker, 2017) inside the classroom in order to explore the text through shared meaning making, which is an important aspect of learner-centred teaching.

Accordingly, an EFL learner-centred reading lesson is best structured into three stages: pre- reading, while-reading, and post-reading (Wallace, 1992). The reason behind using this framework is to help students build background knowledge, practise the appropriate reading skills, and engage in comprehension (Grabe, 1991). Additionally, readers require scaffolding as they engage with a text before, while, and after reading it (Gibbons, 2002). As part of this scaffolding process, readers need to be able to make use of the appropriate strategies. Each part should give the students a chance to, think, explore, and use knowledge and skills, and build on that knowledge to construct new meanings. So, students are encouraged to draw on their prior knowledge, and activate their schemas of text content, structure, and language in the pre- reading stage while interacting with it to make use of reading strategies in the while-reading stage. Finally, students will check their comprehension, identify with, and reflect on, the text to make sense of it after reading.

Gibbons (2002) also suggests, for the pre-reading stage, predicting, storytelling, and sequencing illustrations. Whereas, in the post-reading stage, she suggests using activities which encourage students to give alternative possibilities and ideas for the text by, for example, creating cartoon strips (or as this paper suggest storyboards), participating in readers' theatre, and producing story

innovations. So, to make use of non-linguistic representations can be seen as a creative and effective solution to compensate for any language barriers that EFL readers may face when constructing meaning from a text, especially when interpreting to literary texts (Zuñiga-Dunlap & Marino-Weisman, 2006). Short (as cited in Hill & Flynn, 2006) recommends using realia, technology, and hands-on activities like drawing pictures and sequencing stories to provide EFL learners with effective comprehension instruction. As this paper focuses on the reading of literature, especially fiction in Libya, and due to the current situation of Covid-19 and the face-to-face restrictions for classroom instruction, it has become important that teachers in Libya, like any other country, make use of online learning and teaching, and therefore integrate technology into the planning and delivery of their programmes.

Now this may sound rather complex due to the teacher-centred nature of the Libyan educational system in general, but it may come to light that as a way to move towards current learning/teaching perspectives, and let's not forget the status of digital technology in the past few years, in which students have become ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2005), this may be the right time to make that move, and therefore facilitate better transition to learner-centredness. But, one thing which needs to be emphasised when we use the term technology integration, is that the main focus ought to be pedagogy and not technology per se. Meaning that technology is only a tool for effective delivery (teaching), which makes it important for teachers not to confuse technology with teaching.

Technology Integration: The Case of Libya

Past attempts at educational reform have normally tried to find new solutions to old problems, therefore equating "change" with "newness," using words like "ineffective" as reference to "old" (Earle, 1992). As Earle explains, it seems that

people just like the idea of newness, because usually that's what grabs their attention, new for old, rather than effective for ineffective, or efficient for inefficient. This may be of concern when we are talking of instruction and education in general, as learning and teaching are very interrelated, and therefore what is new, at times may be ineffective or inefficient with certain groups of learners or teachers alike. Let's take for example using computer-based technologies, whether inside or outside the classroom.

Focusing solely on the idea of newness of computer technology alone, independent of teaching and learning processes, may cause insufficient gaps in the learning/teaching cycle. So, when considering online or berended learning, whatever the technology being used (computers, mobiles, etc), the focus of integration ought to be on pedagogy, meaning on effective practices for teaching and learning. Libyan teachers therefore need to be able to make judgments about the sort of technology to use without becoming technocentric by placing more emphasis on technology for its own sake without connections to learning and the curriculum. (Earle, 2002). For the purpose of this paper, we are going to address technology as the source of delivery, so as to provide some background for the use of storyboards for teaching English literature in Libyan higher education. This then makes the issue of technology use more individualized to suite the Libyan context.

Instructional technology does, indeed, give great potential for changing the quality of teaching and learning in our university classrooms in general, and since English is the medium for most technological resources, it can be the catalyst for transformation in EFL pedagogy. The application of computer-based technologies for instruction provide ample opportunity for learner-centredness. Technology use, therefore, reduces teacher-centeredness. Using technologies provides teachers and

course administrators ways to provide learners with motivational lessons, catering for different learning and teaching styles, both inside and outside the classrooms, thus promoting more interaction with the language. It can reduce student's language learning anxiety by giving them a chance to actually use the language in meaningful situations, without having them fixate on their mistakes (Al-Mahrooqi & Troudi, 2014), which can, in turn, reduce their "affective filter" (Krashen, 1981). This means that students become more interactive learners who have better chances for language development in general. This is especially true with technologies that make use of multimedia tools (in this case the use of storyboards). As Yaverbaum, Kulkarni and Wood (1997) argue, integrating multimedia into the traditional learning environment not only enriches the styles of presentation, but also has the advantage of increasing language retention.

According to Earle (2002) in order to best integrate technology into any educational setting or system it needs to include the potential of new developments, rapid availability, creativity, Internet access, ease of communication, or the promise of impact on learning, which is a very important aim. Barriers and constraints to such integration might include for example, not having the necessary technical support, insufficient teacher expertise and training, time for planning, or lack pedagogical applications.

As mentioned earlier, Libyan education is still teacher-centred and for that reason its incorporation of technology in teaching and learning was somewhat slow. In 2005, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Vocational Training proposed to manage a national policy for information communication technology ICT in education (Hamdy, 2007; Chen, 2008; Rhema & Miliszewska, 2010). Its main aim was to provide the tools to help develop Libyan students' ICT skills in order to implement e-learning and improve the quality of learning (Rhema &

Miliszewska, 2010, p.427). The main aim was to select suitable technological techniques and develop methods for face-to-face and distance learning (Hamdy, 2007; Rhema & Miliszewska, 2010). Unfortunately, even with such proposals, the programme was not successful as it ended before completion. One of the reasons behind this was the use of traditional approaches, which can be ineffective, and that was partly because of the lack of teacher training. Nevertheless, this does not mean that technology cannot be applied to teaching in Libya at all without a large- scale plan from different stakeholders.

Mohamed (2017) investigated the interaction of ten Libyan university participants for reading short fiction collaboratively by online learning. Findings indicated that students had positive attitudes towards the interaction between teachers and students, and that the students' understanding of texts was enhance. So, what does this say about this current situation? It may be suggested that, maybe teachers can plan their own lessons online, as long that they make learning their focus and not technology.

It goes without saying that it is understandable if teachers lack the necessary technological skills, then they will opt not to use the technology, even if it is available to them. In addition, teachers' attitudes towards the use of technology in the FL classroom can have negative outcomes in terms of its adaptation and effectiveness (Albirini, 2006; Al-Senaidi, Lin, & Poirot, 2009). Similarly, learners need to have the right disposition and attitudes towards the use of e- learning or any online sources, even though research has shown the appeal of technology use in language instruction for students as they are digital natives.

As technology use has become the norm in any educational setting, gauging students to appreciate its usefulness in online reading in the blended learning environment becomes of importance. In a study conducted by Peel (2014) on EAU

students attitudes towards both traditional textbooks and online reading (via the Internet and through programmes such as BlackBoard Vista [BBV]), and in an attempt to determine possible reasons behind their evaluations, results revealed that students acknowledged the usefulness of online reading courses, but they felt that textbooks remained an important reading resource. As EUA is similar to Libya in terms of its educational and cultural background, it can be concluded that for the purpose of this study one must take into consideration the need for a balanced method of teaching which values the learner and the text to facilitate interaction and response in the best possible way.

This might infer the need for a teaching strategy that makes use of all the relevant points being made earlier on the need for interaction, collaboration, visual and textual representation in meaning construction. Additionally, as indicated earlier by Narr (2013), the use of digital storytelling as an instructional strategy for making that balance between promoting reading development, literary response, and technology integration becomes of relevance here. Digital storytelling can draw on a range of metacognitive and cognitive thinking skills, reading, and technological skills, for online reading. Research from Junto & Mustapha (2016) on Libyan student's use of metacognitive reading strategies in online reading showed that students found it rather problematic to apply and use these strategies. The researchers advised instructors to teach these reading strategies for better reading comprehension and help students benefits more from online sources in less time and with less effort, which will eventually reflect positively on their English language performance. It is quite clear that all this discussion above needs to be considered for more effective planning and teaching in online instruction in Libya, but its noteworthy to point out in more detail what this entails with the integration of technological tools like digital storytelling.

Instructional Planning for Technology Integration: Technology as Process

Successful adaptation of educational technology requires the focus on the mission of improving the quality of education (Earle, 2002). It must be viewed as an ongoing process involving the need to meet instructional objectives and learning needs (Robey, 1992). Effective planning for reading therefore includes identifying art-based standards and learning outcomes. This is captured in Bernauer's (1995) statement on the significance of technology for learning. According to him, "it is not technology per se that has resulted in improved student outcomes, but rather how the technology was used and integrated into instructional processes" (p. 1). Bernauer attributed students' achievements in language learning to the teacher's planning and expertise, thus emphasising on the nature of this success as relating to teaching and learning perspectives.

Having clear learning targets increase the likelihood that technology becomes the digital tool to support the acquisition of knowledge, and in the case of reading and meaning making (Young & Bush, 2004). Similarly, it is of importance for students to know what is intended of them and see the learning objects to best manage their learning process. Additionally, Wallace (2004) found that the "pre-active phase of teaching," in which instructors find and select useful material from which students carry out intended tasks required greater amounts of effort and time to plan when delivering online instruction more than traditional materials, such as textbooks. This shows the amount of thought that needs to be put in planning.

For example, in digital storytelling, Ohler (2008) advises teachers to design instruction so that to allow focus on the elements of the story first, then on the technology. Pitler et al. (2007, pp. 30-33) recommends making use of criterion-referenced rubrics to clearly set out the learning aims and show students what is

expected of them to be able to sequence and to maintain focus on key content throughout the lesson. To best provide suggestions on how best to plan digital storytelling lessons, it ought to be made clear what digital storytelling is, then how the use of storyboards could best facilitate literary understanding in EFL.

Digital Storytelling

Robin (2011) defined digital storytelling as the "practice of using computer-based tools to tell stories." A digital story is a short, narrative that is told through multimedia, such as images, audio, and sound effects. (Miller & Kim, 2015). Digital storytelling can be used as an alternative method to demonstrate students' learning. (Miller & Kim, 2015). In fact, Storytelling and learning are intertwined because the process of creating a story is also a process of meaning making. For this reason, integrating opportunities for "storytelling" into academic content knowledge can strengthen learning (Matthews DeNatale, 2008). (cited in Miller & Kim, 2015).

Only recently have digital stories made their way into instructional settings. Digital storytelling is a useful tool for supporting English language development. Digital storytelling can be an effective educational tool which engages students in the creative process of integrating technology to construct meaning. It is particularly beneficial to language learners, as it is a task-based project using multimodal and multiliteracy skills. (Miller & Kim, 2015). Producing digital stories engages students in cooperative and collaborative learning, drawing on all four skills. As a learner-centred activity which combines traditional literacies (writing, narrating) with new literacies (online search, video editing) (Hafner & Miller, 2011), EFL learners build on an array of knowledge resources: linguistic, cultural and personal (lived experiences) as content for text. Additionally, they take

an active/critical (problem solving) role in reading and evaluating text to create meaningful situations/contexts.

This tool may then be a useful apparatus for developing students' understanding of literary fiction. By providing students with relevant experiences, they make literary stories more meaningful and develop creativity as they reflect on different aspects of the texts. Digital storytelling using digital storyboards can be an effective educational tool to teach literary fiction. It engages the learners by visualizing their reading and thinking processes. Storyboarding has been found to facilitate effective instruction by facilitating peer interaction and collaboration (Hoffart et.al, 2016). Using online collaborative classrooms such as BlackBoard Collaborate can facilitate the exchange of resources and material between the teacher and the students, thus promoting student-teacher interaction, and student collaboration, making it an effective online instructional tool to teach literature and share digital storyboards.

Storyboarding is certainly not something new, as it was said to have originated with Leonardo da Vinci (Lottier, 1986) and was then adapted and revised by Walt Disney as a graphic paper- based organizer before film making (Barnes, 1996). Apart from developing language skills, storyboards can be used for several classroom application, especially for developing reading comprehension and the reading of literature. A study conducted by Narr (2013) revealed that storyboards can have a positive impact on English language learners with limited language proficiency. His research also indicated positive effect on students' ability to read and understand literary texts.

As a storytelling tool, storyboards allow students to "make use of different reading strategies such as previewing, visualizing, using background knowledge, illustrating, summarizing, sequence understanding, identifying main idea and

details, identifying important information, and many more. Storyboarding promotes the integration of reading and writing during class instruction since students are expected to describe their illustrations in detail". (Narr, 2013). Creating storyboards encourages students to respond to, or in Rosenblatt's (1987) term "transact*"* with the text. In the process of creating storyboards, students are engaged in a continuous process of thinking and meaning making, what reader-response theorists like Langer (1990) call "envisionment building", thus reaching new meanings as they make use of the visuals they create.

Storyboards can also be used for drama activities. Storyboards can be used as a scaffold for drama projects where students could use it as a brainstorming activity to help them organize their thoughts about how they want to frame their scenes. Of course, students will have to consider things like, the character's actions, scenery, all of which are available with storyboarding tools like *StoryboardTha*t. Students can select from a variety of possible scenes, clothing, facial expression, hair, and accessories. Characteristic of tools like StoryboardThat (a digital storyboarding tool), can help interpret the students' ideas in the form of images, where they can add other characteristics like soundtracks, narration, and music. It can be used as a pre-writing activity where students engage in deep thinking about the story. Additionally, it can be used at the end of a lesson as a way of reflection, where students provide their personal responses and relate what they have understood to aspects of the text by, for example using symbols and forms of imagery to represent their feeling and attitudes using symbolic colours and symbolic references and words.

Storyboards can also be used as a technique for assessing reading. It is sometimes difficult for teachers to diagnose where exactly students are in terms of comprehension and whether they were able to progress in terms of acquiring the

necessary skills to analyse and make meaning from any text. As Bruce (2011) explains, from his own experience of using storyboards with secondary students, when students create storyboards to reflect their reading, the visuals become artefacts which reflect their understanding (or misunderstanding) of the details of the text being interpreted. So, this way teachers have records of their students' visual reading, what Jeffrey D. Wilhelm calls "seeing the visual possibility" (1997: 117), i.e., the students' ability to "see the visual possibility" of the text.

Instructional Strategies for Digital Storytelling (Storyboarding)

At EFL university level students are expected to be able to write about what they read—for example, by analysing how the setting shapes the development of characters or plot in a story. Adapting the work of Lambert on digital storytelling, Robin and Pierson (2005) identified ten elements of a digital story which can be used as an initial indication of literary aims or objectives:

1. The Overall Purpose of the Story
2. The Narrator's Point of View
3. A Dramatic Question or Questions
4. The Choice of Content
5. Clarity of Voice
6. Pacing of the Narrative
7. Use of a Meaningful Audio Soundtrack
8. Quality of the Images
9. Economy of the Story Detail
10. Good Grammar and Language Usage

Of course, as you are required to make some adjustments to the requirements, these ten elements could be exploited to suite the general learning aim, and the aim of the activities too. By attending to the ten elements of the digital story, students

communicate a concise and meaningful message through the integration of text, voice narration, and images.

According to Robin (2008) if students are able to create their own digital stories, they gain valuable skills and literacies which cater for the 12st Century Skills (2004). These can be used as learning targets to make the ten previous elements more digitized. They are summarized by Robin (2016: 21) as follows:

1. Digital literacy: the ability to communicate with an ever-expanding community to discuss issues, gather information, and seek help.
2. Global literacy: the capacity to read, interpret, respond, and contextualize messages from a global perspective.
3. Technology literacy: the ability to use computers and other technology to improve learning, productivity, and performance.
4. Visual literacy: the ability to understand, produce, and communicate through visual images.
5. Information literacy: the ability to find, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Garcia and Rossiter (2010) as cited in Robin (2016:22) add to this list three more learning outcomes that result when students share their digital stories. These include:

1. Empathy and perspective-taking: as digital stories allow viewers to share the experiences of the storyteller and enlarge their own perspectives.
2. Self-understanding: for digital storytelling allows self-reflection and seeing one's self in new ways.
3. Community-building: by facilitating connections with others and through shared experiences.
4. However, as we have mentioned earlier, students are not only required to tell stories or create summaries for stories they have read, for teachers have a host of activities to make use of to promote thinking and meaning making. Before addressing some of these activities, it may be significant to provide teachers and students with useful criteria to self-evaluate the designed storyboards. Teachers can use these criteria to shape students'

understanding of storyboarding and what to expect, as well as make judgments about their effectiveness.

Self-evaluation criteria for storyboard design

Teachers can help students create effective storyboards by helping them understand what is expected of them. A good and effective storyboard is judged by the following:

1. how well it communicates the logic of the intended idea/plan.
2. The plan/ideas are easy for follow. For example, the point of view or focalisation, the organization, pacing, selected images, combination of multi-model elements, etc.

It is important that teachers and students consider, in their planning and evaluation of a storyboard the following questions to help them take the two aspects above into account:

1. Who the intended audience are? What purpose does the storyboard serve?
2. What is the general message or argument behind the storyboard? Are readers able to interpret the message being conveyed? How does the storyboard communicate the most important ideas or concepts, for example main events in the plot structure, or main ideas of chapters from a novel?
3. Whether the order of takes or scenes in the storyboard contributes to the intended message? How are ideas linked? Are some ideas more important than others? How can their reordering affect the overall message and what is its effect on the viewers? How does the opening and concluding take/scene inform the rest of the scenes in terms of what viewers can expect and what they can come out with at the end?
4. What is the relationship between the text, the image, and the audio? How do they contribute to the viewers overall experience (e.g., tone and mood, theme, and subject matter)? Whether the audience can understand how, for example, the theme is handled in prose and picture? Do the text, image and audio complement each other?

Storyboarding works of fiction

When using storyboards with works of fiction several activities could be used, including identifying story elements, providing summaries, comparing

different versions of the story, or creating new versions of the same stories. For example when working on a novel students could provide summaries for the chapters of the book where different students are assigned a chapter.

Learning objectives in creating a digital storyboard for literary fiction:

- Determine main ideas and themes and analyse their development and summarise supporting details to determine story elements.
- Integrate and evaluate content using multimedia tools and formats.

Activity 1: Providing Plot Structure

In the following exercise, figure.1, using storyboards for Kate Chopins' "The Story of an Hour" (see appendix 4), students are required to visually re-create key events in the story. Not only is this a great way to teach the parts of the plot, but it reinforces major events and helps students develop greater understanding of story structures. Students read the print text for important details and then translate them into a visual statement. In addition to the pictures, students are required to extract quotes and document the page numbers. The captions are as important as the visuals, this helps students make necessary citations from the text. Students select from the toolbar different scenes and tools to create visual events, making use of voice narrations, music for dramatic even and different sound to reflect the surroundings (such as bird singing, etc.). Students will draw on a host of strategies to determine how the events unfold, they will need to make predictions and hypotheses about some details of the story, draw conclusion, use contextual clues and monitor their comprehension of such details. Students will need to rely heavily on their understanding of how a story is structured to designate main ideas and make use of key events and words to make inferences. It is worth noting that in this story, textual analysis is important as it reveals different aspects about the

events and the characters' reactions to these events (for example the reaction of Mrs. Mallard to her husband's return).

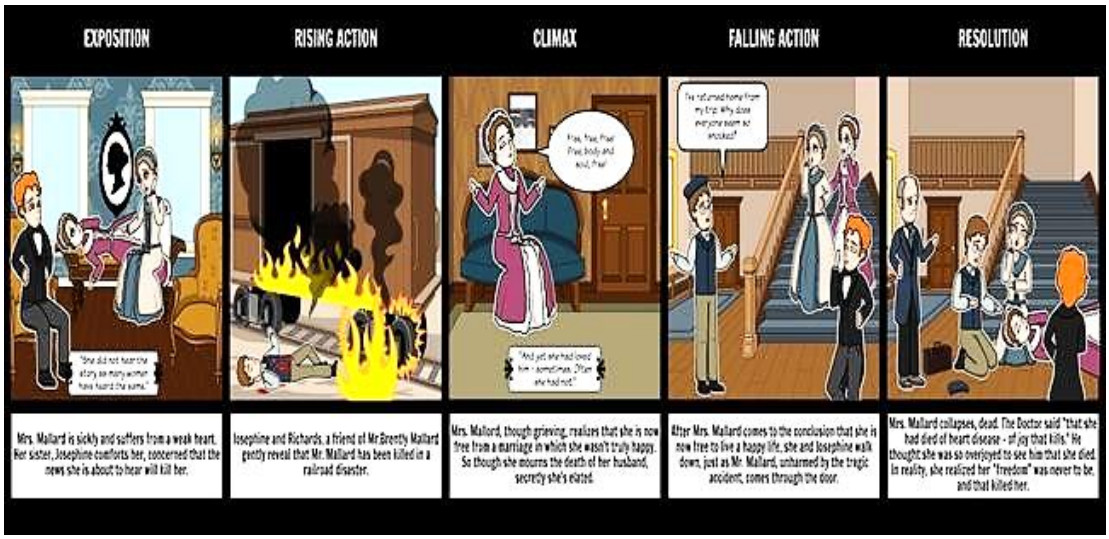


Figure.1. Plot Structure

After students have completed their storyboards, they are encouraged to share their ideas with their classmates. *StoryboardThat* has a feature in which the users can share their work with others. It can also be helpful to share their creations with other tools like Microsoft *Teams*. Students often storyboard similar events in Novel chapters. The discussion that they engage in is often a rich interchange of how they visualized the events, focusing on commonalities and variations of individual interpretations. Students should be encouraged to provide justifications behind their choices and assign textual clues/cues. Students can post their plot summaries on a shared webpage, a bulletin board, or any course related page for everyone to see as a graphic book to be stored for future readings. This is especially important when reading longer texts, since the visuals provide a graphic summary of the events for students to remember, making them into graphic novels. See appendix 1 for more details.

Activity 2: Identifying Elements of a Story

Another way of using storyboards with works of fiction is by making storyboard templates to interpret and explain story elements like character, characterization, theme(s), irony(s), etc. (see appendix 2 and 3) . This activity works especially well with short stories. Students are asked to read the text, then create a visual, using quotes from the text detailing their understanding of the story elements. For example, in the activity below (figure.2) the students are asked to describe characters, and their relationships with each other. This activity puts the responsibility for making textual choices on the students as they search the text for details which are clues about the characters' personalities and actions. By doing this student will make use of facial expressions to demonstrate how different characters feel about each other, making use of symbolic meanings and though bubbles (to show verbal ironies).

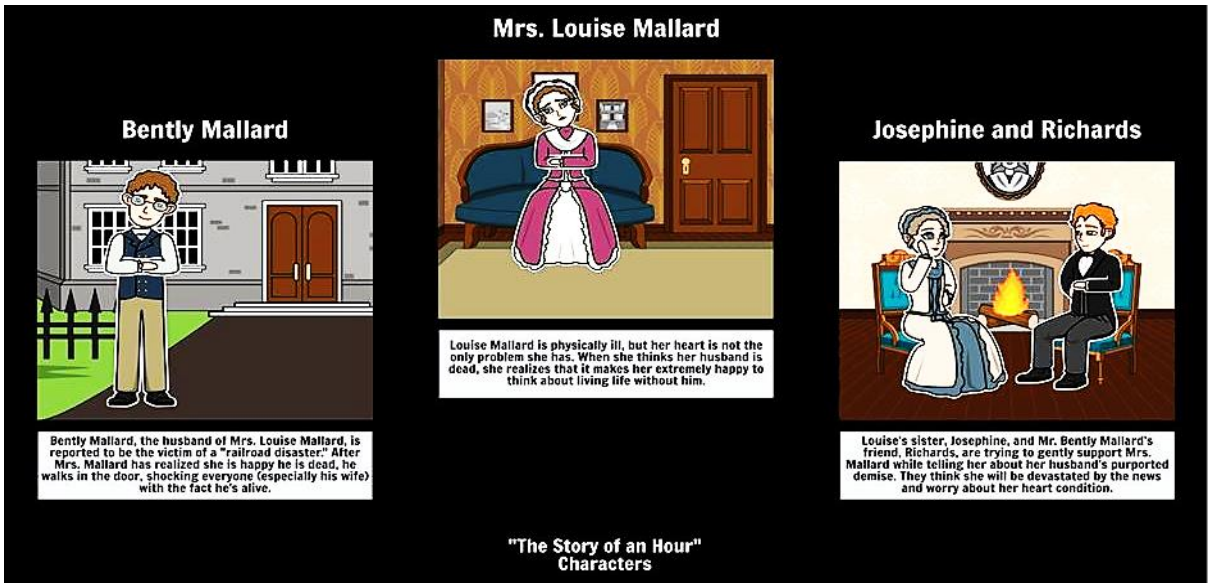


Figure.2. Characters

Students need to draw on their background knowledge of the world and make links to other texts (intertextuality). They will ought to pay attention to textual clues to use as evidence of characterization, by using characters' actions and words, and the author's narrative style. Inferencing is a useful and highly recommended strategy to draw on for different aspects of the story. Students choose the characters' outfits, facial expressions, and clothes. They can make use of other features like voice to give more details for their visualizations. Students can work together as a group by selecting one character each and assigning missions to each one. Again, the storyboards become the prompt for class and group discussion, particularly the students' understanding of each story element (or in this case character) and how it relates to the others. Using storyboards in this fashion also becomes an easy way for assessing students' ability to identify various story elements and determine links.

Encouraging Multiple Interpretations

We have offered here some suggestions on how to capture students' visualization of a text and how to interact with a passage using non-linguistic representations. The three activities (see appendix 1,2, and 3), invite for different ways to engage students with visuals. There is no limit to the different ways a teacher could use to generate interaction, discussion, and response. An important aspect of using storyboards, especially digital ones, is that students can make use of many online resources to search for ideas. Providing interpretation of a scene is part of its appeal. Storyboarding could be used as pre, while, or post-reading activity, to brainstorm, organize thoughts, sequence, and for deep reflection and thinking.

Using storyboards, allows for close reading of a text. The activity provides learner, especially those who are visual, to make use of their skills in addition to textual reading. Students can also learn the meta language to describe their visuals. Most importantly, allowing students to share their ideas, visions, and interpretations can help them learn that interpretations are not fixed, and that reading is a transactional process which is constantly changing with time and exposure to the world, and that created meanings are subjective and mutable, meaning that readers can interact with texts in many ways.

Final Reflections

Any innovation is fraught with promises as well as challenges. The involvement of key stakeholders is often the best way to achieve any potential promises while addressing and overcoming the many challenges we face (Waddoups et al., 2001). When thinking about Libya's current situation and the challenges in moving towards blended and online learning, both teachers as well as learners (in addition to institutional partners) are key. The way to move from teacher-centredness to learner centredness is another issue of concern, but may best be achieved via technology integration, and now is probably the best way to take this seriously. Hence, the need to focus on the teacher and the learner and not the technology is vital. Through the curricula and practices which bring teachers and learners together in order to create a more balanced atmosphere which gives priority to student collaboration, interaction, individuality, higher-order thinking skills, and independence is of great importance. Storyboard, as a digital storytelling tool, can help make this achievable through deep planning that emphasises the need to make learning and teaching the focus of instruction, not the technology. So, as teachers of English literature, we have come to see a balance that spurs the status que to make a shift and maintain a balance between students,

teachers, and technology, thus giving relevance to teaching and ways of making learning more effective. As, this paper has come to suggest, storyboarding and digital storytelling are only means to an end, an end that values student' personal responses and shared meaning making. This only makes our proposal for digitization, a call for reflection and admiration to what learners can achieve with the help of technology.

Although this paper has made some suggestions about how to make use of digital storyboarding as an online technique for developing the Libyan students' understanding of literary fiction, there are yet other aspects which need to be addressed for the application of this technological tool. It is worth researching these aspects by exploring students' and teacher's perceptions of what technology is and what it brings to the EFL literary class and establishing the relationship between technology integration and achievement. What's more, it would be of great benefit to see the effectiveness of digital storytelling tools, including storyboards, on the students reading and strategy use.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Activity 1_ Plot structure

- **Storyboard:** ***Story of an Hour by Kate Chopin***

Story summary: In Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour", the main character, Mrs. Mallard, is a married woman with a heart condition. Her husband is away and news comes that he has perished in a horrific train accident. Her sister gently breaks the news to her, and silently, Mrs. Mallard rejoices. It turns out that she is not happily married and the thought of freedom from her bonds of marriage gives her joy. She assumes that she will be playing the mournful widow, but is she? This is a great story for your middle school students to read!

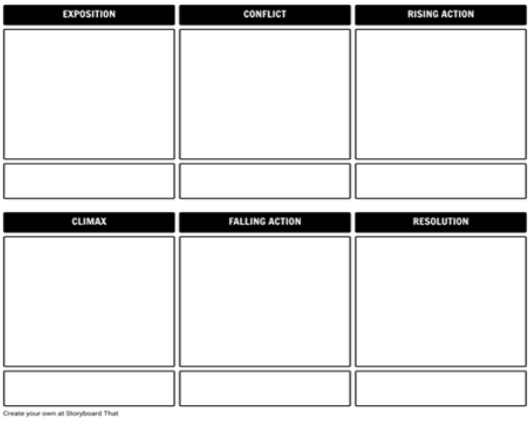
STUDENT ACTIVITIES FOR THE STORY OF AN HOUR INCLUDE:

1) Plot Diagram 2) Characters 3) Ironic Twist

- **Activity1: plot structure**

Type of Assignment: Individual, Partner, or Group

Type of Activity: Plot Diagrams and Narrative Arcs



General aim:

- Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

Learning outcome: Students will be able to explain the parts of a story using details from the text.

Activity Overview:

Have your students create a plot diagram of the events from a story on Storyboard That. Not only is this a great way to teach the parts of the plot, but it reinforces major events and help students develop greater understanding of literary structures.

In a five-cell storyboard, have students represent the major plot points of this story in sequence

using **exposition, rising action, climax, falling action,** and **resolution**. They should use the description boxes to explain what is happening during each part. Facial expressions and different coloring can really bring out the drama of these moments!

Adopted from: https://www.storyboardthat.com/storyboards/beckyharvey/story-of-an-hour-plot-diagram

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Appendix 2: Activity 2_ Characters

Activity 2: Characters

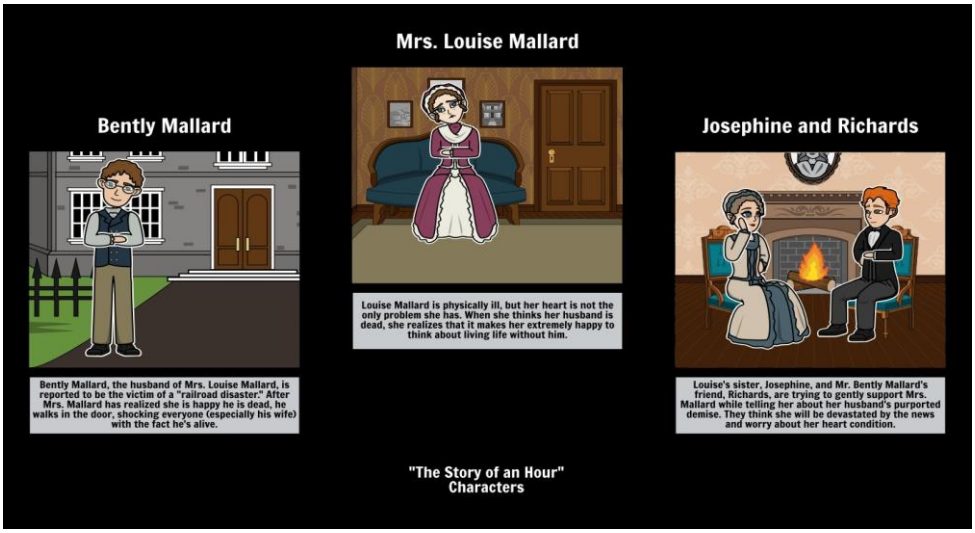
Type of Assignment: Individual or Partner

Type of Activity: Character Map

General aim:

- Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot)
- Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision

Specific aim: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).



Activity Overview:

Characters drive the action in any story.

Have students identify the characters of "The Story of an Hour" and use the description box to explain the character's role in a spider map. Have students choose an appropriate scene and any props that are important to that character. Students create a short bio for characters in the story, paying close attention to the feelings and actions of the characters. Students can also provide detailed information regarding the characters' actions, how they influence other characters, and how the main character changed over time.

Adopted from: https://www.storyboardthat.com/storyboards/beckyharvey/story-of-an-hour-plot-diagram

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Appendix 3: Activity 3_ Literary elements (Ironic twist)

Activity 3: Ironic Twist

- **Type of assignment:** individual, partner, or group work.
- **General Aim:** demonstrate an understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings
- **Specific aim:** demonstrate understanding of types of irony; situational and dramatic.

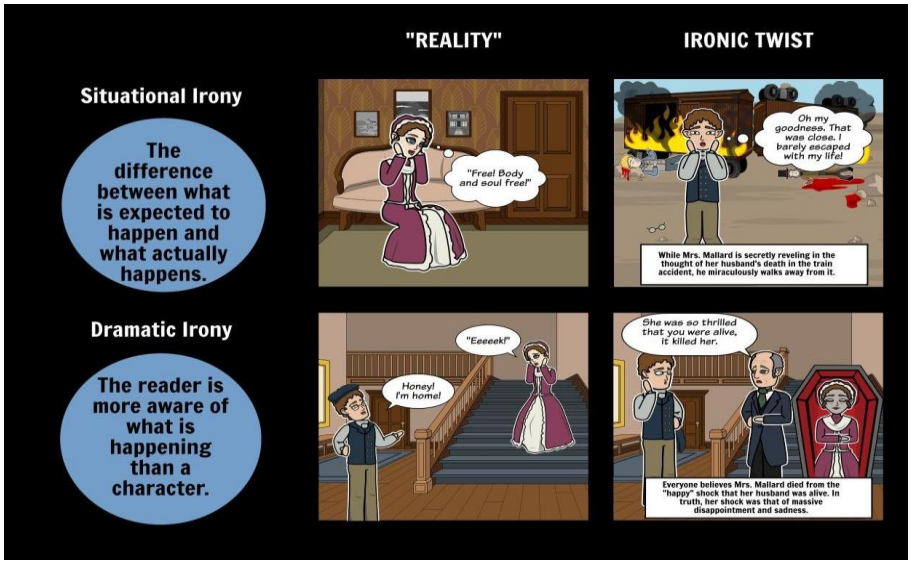
Activity Overview:

One of the most-taught literary terms is irony. In fiction, and in life, irony is all around. Common types of irony are: verbal, situational, and dramatic. It is critical that students distinguish between the types of irony. Asking students to create storyboards that depict each type of irony makes teaching these elements a breeze.

The entire short story is one long set up for an ironic twist. Have students create a storyboard using descriptive labels to show what the dramatic and situational irony brought about by the unexpected end.

Irony Template:

	TEXT	TEXT
TEXT		
TEXT		



Adopted from: https://www.storyboardthat.com/storyboards/beckyharvey/story-of-an-hour-plot-diagram.

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Appendix 4: "The Story of An Hour" by Kate Chopin (1894)

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will--as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under hte breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a

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right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him--sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhold, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door--you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease--of the joy that kills.