Carnival: song and website

A Story Valley case study, presented as an example to support other settings to run the programme

Background information

This case study was submitted by Rim Bleeker, a teacher and mentor at Friesland College in the Netherlands.

Rim delivered Story Valley as an intensive project over two days, with a group of students who had come together from Scotland, Slovenia and the Netherlands.

Delivering Story Valley

This section will provide an example of how Story Valley can be delivered as a coherent project.

In particular, you may find this useful for the 'get creative' module – providing ideas of how to develop the stories shared in your initial sessions into a creative project.

How did you plan your first Story Valley session?
During the pitch of the international assignment students got some homework. This means they already jump in to the material (a story and a personal object they had to bring with them to the project). Students were in particular encouraged to bring stories from their childhood, and stories typical in their culture.   They had two weeks to think about the assignment and get ideas.   So when the students finally met, there had already been an important creative process personally for each student. So the few days that they were together they could immediately get to work.   They could brainstorm together about their own ideas and tell each other their stories. They connected by talking about the personal objects they brought with them to make the atmosphere more relaxed and fun.
How did you engage students with finding and telling stories?
We talked about stories they could remember from their childhood, and stories that are typical in their culture. We brainstormed together.
What surprised or interested you about the stories that emerged as part of Story Valley?

There are many similarities in the stories.
That the stories really made a connection between the students

Can you provide some examples of creative projects students completed as part of Story Valley?

Students made a website with the theme Carnaval (in each country people celebrate carnaval in a specific way).
And they composed and performed a song with this theme.

Can you provide an example of how creative thinking and creative practice were developed by your students throughout the project?

The students who made the website and performed the song.
In their group were different qualities each student had and they all went to different schools with different specialisms. They decided that they wanted to make something which related to all these differences. So they made a website (2 students were web developers), they made a song that they wanted to perform and film the performance to be put on this website (2 students were filmmakers/editors).
A lot of work to be done in a few days. But they succeeded. Especially when they performed the song live on stage; this really represented what the project is about; stories connect people and that is what they did.
One of the students overcame the fear of making a telephone call to someone she had never met before by performing a song live on a stage for a real audience; what a personal success is that!

What went well and what you would do differently in the future when running a Story Valley project?

Everything went well! It is all about preparation.
Give them homework so they already have to put effort in the project before they actually meet. This helps increasing the motivation of the students.
Also the setting is very important. In our case, the students could work together in the old prison; Blokhuispoort. Where all kinds of materials were available for them. So the setting has to be a creative one; it mustn't look like school.
The creative vibe is the most important one; so they get connected with each other and feel responsible.

What would I do differently; less teachers/professionals needed in guiding the students:
The students were really in control, took full responsibility so only 2 teacher would have been enough.

Can you summarise any formal or informal feedback you have received from students regarding their involvement in the project?
Students were enthusiastic about the project. We asked if it would have been better if they had more days to work on the project. But they said this limited time worked perfect for them. They could really stay focussed. And have fun together, no time to get irritated or any negative emotions. Some of them are now 'online' friends ;)

Sharing creative work

The section will provide an example how students' work was shared – which might provide ideas for sharing your own group's project(s).

On what scale was students' work disseminated?
☒ Internally ☐ In your local area ☐ Nationally ☒ Internationally ☐ Other (please describe)
Describe how students shared their work as part of your project
They presented their process and final product during a partner meeting where also other guests were invited with literacy backgrounds. They send their presentations to us; can be put on the Story Valley website The presentations were filmed; this film will be put on website
Can you share any examples with us? (e.g. links, images, videos)
You can find the website students made, which profiles the song they wrote about Carnaval, through this link.

Integrating Story Valley with your curriculum

In this section, the Story Valley deliverer reflects on how they used Story Valley to meet wider goals and outcomes, which might prove useful in setting up or pitching a project in your own setting.

The deliverer also describes their formal and informal evaluation practice; providing ideas on how to explore and communicate the programme's impact in your community.

What was your main objective when you began the Story Valley project?
☐ To build students' literacy skills

☒ To connect students to stories and storytelling
☒ To build students' creativity and/or creative skills
☐ To connect students from different backgrounds
☐ To engage students with their learning
☐ Other – please explain

How did you embed Story Valley into your curriculum?

☐ Story Valley was delivered as part of students' curriculum course
☒ Story Valley was delivered separately – as an extra-curricular activity

How did the Story Valley project link to the objectives of your curriculum?

They can put this experience in their portfolio and use it for English, Social Studies and their personal development as a Professional in the creative business.

Did you assess the impact of Story Valley on your students? If so, how did you approach assessment?

There was not a specific assessment; they had to give a presentation to the partners in which they also had to reflect on their experience.

How did Story Valley add value to your students' attainment and achievement?

It contributed in development of their literacy skills by telling stories and storytelling
It extended their creativity and/or creative skills
They connected with students from different backgrounds
It contributed to their social skills
Participating this project increased their self confidence