Cross-cultural story book

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 Richard Evans, a web development lecturer at Edinburgh College, Scotland.

He 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.
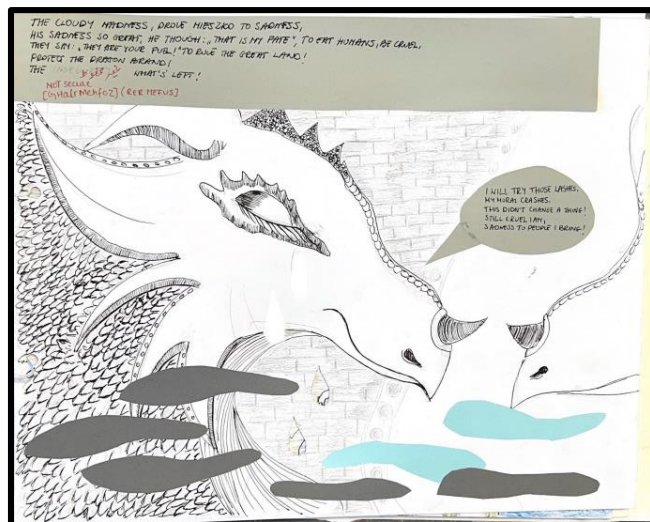
How did you plan your first Story Valley session?
I did brief the Edinburgh college students that they had to prepare an object or photograph of an object that had some meaning to them. They were also advised to think of a story that had some resonance with their cultural background. This helped prepare the students and speed things along when the SV project started.
How did you engage students with finding and telling stories?
I gave the students an example of a story from my own cultural background. This was to be a reference point for them to help them think about a story from their own cultural background. Giving them an example really helped them focus. I also facilitated in one-to-one conversations with the students just to help them along as some of the student were not sure about the stories they were willing to share and needed a little encouragement, but without directing or influencing them.
What surprised or interested you about the stories that emerged as part of Story Valley?
The common theme in many of the students' stories related around dragons, which was interesting as the students came from different cultural backgrounds and geographical locations.

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

The main creative output that was completed was a hand drawn, interactive children storybook based upon an original story created by the students.
This was a creative project that started with a really useful ice breaker task based on pidgin English where students had to recognise some commonality in their different languages.
This was really useful for the students to kick start the project before they started thinking of concepts of what they were going to work on as part of the creative project.

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

Creative thinking and creative practice were embedded in every aspect of the SV creative project.
The students started with a **brainstorming** session to consider possible themes and what they were going to achieve, the creative output. The brainstorming session really had the students communicating and coming up with innovative and creative ideas. Of which, they settled on creation of a unique story based on their shared stories in children's storybook format.
Students then did some **research**. The analysed different children's storybooks. This helped then utilise their creative practice by recognising the typeface, colour scheme and content that would resonate with the target audience. From there research they also realised that many children's books have an interactive element, this helped them arrive at the idea of adding interactivity to their children's book.
Students then started a **design** phase of the project. It was inspiring to see students undertake research and design when there was not requirement in the project to do so. They just realised, this is the correct way of working.
During the design phase, they worked together on creating an original story, utilising creative writing skills, and then designed the story using **storyboards**. They also created some concept art, **prototype** sketches of the main characters in the story and decided as a group which one they felt worked best. Great collaboration where they all had a voice. The design phase helped them visualise the story before committing to development of the book.
The entire book was entirely hand drawn using pencil and paper which called on the groups drawing skills and they were able to put together an interesting original story, based on stories from their collective backgrounds, in a fun, interactive and engaging format.
This called on their current creative skills (drawing, creative writing, designing) and helped them develop new creative skills (storyboarding, prototyping)

Describe one student or group whose work stood out to you during the project

All students brought different attributes to the project and came together to create a highly effective team. One student was clearly gifted illustrator and was a paid graphic designer and artist, she worked intensely on the illustrations in the book. Another student was clearly an ideas person, who exercised creative thinking but also helped bring the group together with her personality and sense of fun. Another student, was very pragmatic and

hardworking. Together all students in the group contributed greatly to a well formed and dynamic team.

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

The pidgin English activity worked really well as an ice breaker task that was connected to the project, so it didn't feel like it was just a random activity that brought no value.
The ability to allow students free reign to express their creativity worked really well too as did the amount of different skills and knowledge that they utilised during the project.
Perhaps, I wouldn't ask the students to bring an object with them the next time as it wasn't really necessary, the students thinking about a story prior to starting on the project was enough.

Can you summarise any formal or informal feedback you have received from students regarding their involvement in the project?

All students in the group informally verbally feedback to me that they loved working on every aspect of the project. They really enjoyed being given a creative project to work on and free reign to create what they wanted. They enjoyed not having a rigid set of tasks that were required to be completed.
The group enjoyed working on the project so much that they wanted to continue even after the premises we were working in was due to close! They borrowed equipment, pencils and paper, and continued work in their own time and space but still as part of a team.
Even post project, students sent informal messages stating how much they had enjoyed the project and meeting other students from different colleges, I think that they all missed each other😊

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

The work was presented to partners in a formal presentation format. This was really useful as it allowed the students to show off the fruits of their labour and feel pride in what they had achieved.

Going forward, it is planned to digitalise their storybook and share it via digital media too.

Can you share any examples with us? (e.g. links, images, videos)

The students' story book is available to see on the Story Valley website.

Did students benefit from the process of sharing their work? If so, how?

Yes, as explained above, sharing their work helped students realise that the project was completed and that they had achieved something great.

It also gave them a sense of pride that they had successfully completed the project and get feedback from people who were not involved in the project, the people that they presented it too.

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.

Are the students in your Story Valley project studying on a course or for a formal qualification?

☒ Yes – please specify which course and/or qualification
HND User Experience and other media courses from Friesland and Ljubljana Colleges
_____
☐ No – please describe the nature of your Story Valley group

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?

Although it was conducted as an extra curricular project, it did have many benefits regarding, teamworking, design skills, researching, creative thinking that link closely to the students college courses.

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

The Story Valley was not formally assessed – we conducted discussions with students during and after the project, encouraging them to reflect on how the project would contribute to their learning as part of their overall course.

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

It did add value to the student experience by getting them out of the classroom and working in a different setting with students from different cultural backgrounds.