

VIDEO CAMERA AS SCANNER

Teachers and students will learn to use the video camera as a scanner, digitizing family photographs to use in a narrated slideshow.

Invitation for learning

Our best learning often occurs when we explore and examine the commonplace in our environment. We may touch and consume Calrose Rice or StarKist Tuna nearly every day, but have we read or tried to understand the labels? Artists in our communities produce beautiful posters, calendars, and postcards, but do we know how to bring this visual information into our classrooms to engage children in critical thinking? Our students love to draw and paint, but do we integrate their art into literacy activities? When is the last time we really looked at a dollar bill or a postage stamp with our students? These materials offer a world of information.

The video camera is in fact a scanner. So long as the lighting is right, we can take pictures of nearly anything, including the postage stamp on a postcard or the 10-cent coin in a child's pocket.

Directions

Working in teams of three, learners will use the video camera as a scanner. Teams will scan photographs to create a narrated family slideshow of about 8 to 10 minutes in duration. They will:

1. Identify 20 to 25 photographs that can be used to illustrate a family story. If the photographs are in family albums, remove only one photograph at a time for scanning and replace it in the album before removing the next.
2. Create a well-lit work surface. This can be the hood of a car, a dry sidewalk on a sunny day, or a table next to a window to maximize the available natural light. It may help to use a table lamp, but this is not usually necessary.
3. One at a time, place each photograph on the work surface. Holding the camera, use the side viewfinder and the wide-angle lens (do not zoom). Frame the photograph in the viewfinder and record for 8 to 10 seconds. If you can maintain the focus, move the camera closer to the photograph to record individual people or details. If there is glare from a glossy photo, tilt the photo slightly as you record. You can record the photographs in any order, as they can be re-sequenced later.
4. Attach the video camera to the DV iMac, open the *iMovie* software, create a new project, and import the video onto the shelf. Using the "create still clip" menu command, create a series of 25 still clips along the movie line, each 20 seconds in duration.
5. Re-sequence the photographs, if desired, by clicking and dragging them along the movie line.

6. Use “save frame as” to create a folder of still photographs from each of the 25 still clips, print a contact sheet of the 25 photographs (in *iView Media Pro*), and prepare a written or oral narrative (script) to go with each photo. Do not start your script with, “This is a picture of...” Instead, say something descriptive and informational such as, “My father was born in 1917 in this small house in the village of Nuuuuli.”
7. Add two title cards to your *iMovie*: one at the beginning that gives the title and one at the end that gives acknowledgements.
8. Narrate each photograph one at a time, reading from the script developed above. We recommend using an external microphone, although the built-in microphone on the computer can suffice if the noise level in the room is subdued.
9. Add music, usually about 2 or 3 songs. Instrumental music is preferable so as not to distract the listener from the narrator’s voice. It is easier to import music from a CD, although music from tape will also work.
10. Export the movie back to the video camera and then dub it to VHS tape. Send the tape home to be shared with the families who were celebrated.
11. Create a *QuickTime* movie for CD-ROM so that you can play your movie on the computer.
12. Delete your *iMovie* from the computer hard drive to maximize available storage space for the next project.

Classroom applications

Although this activity utilized family photographs, we could just as easily have created slideshows of the illustrations in a children’s storybook, frames from comic strips, children’s drawings or paintings, or even calendar pictures. The challenge is to select pictures and create sequences that lend themselves to narration (storytelling, story reading, oral reporting), so that children bring critical thinking and language to the task.

Stretching our imaginations: Dare to dream

Sometimes a video camera can be used to digitize an image that a traditional flatbed scanner simply could not. For example, some years ago while on Tutuila, American Samoa, we video recorded close-ups of the traditional Samoan tattoos of a teacher. Working outside in bright sunlight, we used the video camera as a scanner to record tiny details of the complex tattoos on his thighs and lower back.