

Multi-Media Muses: Using Interactive Writing Sites

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<http://www.squidoo.com/multimediamuse>

Introduction

Inspire even the most reluctant writers using online, interactive writing sites! These simple yet elegant applications provide both the motivation and the means to create a classroom of world-class writers.

Categories

Not all writing sites are created equal, nor for the same purpose. Therefore I've coded the sites as follows:

R brainstorming and idea formation

d writing skills and writing process

A digital storytelling

W drawing and painting

U writing tools

Z for the teacher

Multi-Media Muse: the Web Site

In order to make these sites as accessible as possible, I've compiled them at Squidoo.com:

<http://www.squidoo.com/multimediamuse>

The Sites

1. Read Write Think

d Features dozens of Student Materials (writing machines) which prompt students to enter original ideas in order to accomplish a writing task. In addition, the site features hundreds of teacher-developed lessons (searchable by skill category and grade) which make use of these writing machines.

2. Writing Fun

d An informative, easy to navigate site which offers multiple examples of how to use each type of organizer, shows where this type of writing is used in real-life situations, and then, best of all, provides online writing prompts to guide students, step by step, through the process.

3. Model Bank

d Model Bank features dozens of clear, well organized models in a variety of genres and purposes including book reports, research papers, autobiography, cause and effect, personal narrative, and persuasive essay.

4. The Brainstormer

R The Brainstormer is a fun, interactive spinner that provides a random combination of conflicts, characters, and settings.

5. PimPamPum Bubblr

A Bubblr is a simple publishing application that uses the Flickr API (Application Programming Interface) to allow students to search for, and use photos from, Flickr's huge public collection to create a cartoon strip-like narrative.

6. Bookr

A Bookr works in the same way as Bubblr, but here students create what looks more like a book, and its pages flip virtually. Perfect for a picture book length publication, students can add more pages as they need them.

7. Tikatok

A Here students create a sophisticated "book" online. What's different about this site is that it provides not only story starter ideas (dinosaurs, heroes and villains), but also Story Sparks, which are basically sentence-long plots for your creation. As students work they're given prompts along the way, and plenty of tools for customizing text, images, and pages.

Finished projects can be saved in many ways, and even published as quality hard cover books. Highly recommended!

8. Story Bird

A Similar to **Tikatok**, but with one **huge** difference: the illustrations are provided. Professional illustrations in widely varying styles help writers become inspired.

9. Writing with Writers

d Students are guided through the writing process by children's authors who write in this genre. The genres, hosted by such writers as Jack Prelutsky and Virginia Hamilton, include Biography, Descriptive, Folktale, Mystery, Myth, News, Poetry, Speech, and a Book Review. Once done, the site offers students the chance to upload their writing to Scholastic's showcase of writers.

10. Bubble

R Bubbl.us is an online mind mapping tool that allows students to either brainstorm or organize thoughts.

11. Glogster

A Glogster allows text blocks, images, and even videos to be aggregated into a poster-type display. It's truly a mash-up of ideas (to use a phrase from the young folk). See the Multi-Media site for links to student projects as examples.

12. Instant Poetry Forms

U Allows students to enter prompted words and verses in order to form instant poetry. Some of the forms are purely creative and student-centered, while others allow students to enter researched information (such as data on an early explorer) to create nonfiction verse. Each prompt generator includes an example of a finished poem in that style, so students can get a good idea of how the finished poem might sound.

Once students have entered their responses in the prompts, the push of a button publishes the poem. This poem can then be copied and pasted into a word document and further edited, or combined with a free online illustration program such as Sumo Paint.

13. Lightning Bug

Z Lightning Bug is a cleverly designed treasure trove of writing inspirations, tips, and links for the upper elementary through high school crowd. Student users are provided with loads of jump starts such as ideas for plots, character names, and conflicts. Teachers can download related resources and worksheets for all topics.

14. AdSense from Google

R A student who has a general interest in a topic can use this tool to narrow down to a more specific focus. Horses, for example, returns 200 more specific ideas. Even better, a student with two interests (disabilities, swimming) can find a topic which includes both interests, as well as more specific search phrases which would help in researching the topics.

15. Wordle

U Wordle is an online app for generating "word clouds" from any text that you provide. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text (in other words, they make 'em bigger). The resulting images can be tweaked with varying colors, fonts, and layouts, and then used as you like.

16. Sumo Paint

W Sumo Paint is free and requires no registration or download. It is as fully functional and impressive as Photoshop, yet much easier to use. What's best about it, however, is that it's free, and any student with an internet connection would be able to create impressive masterpieces in no time at all.

17. Hero Factory

W allows visitors to custom build a hero of their choice (male or female), making it truly their own through countless combinations of hair color, eyes, noses, outfits, accessories, color schemes, and more.

18. Photo Peach

A Photo Peach allows students to combine text and images in the simplest way possible, with stunning results. Registration might be required the first time you visit.

19. Six Authors Blog

Z A fabulous site full of Writing Workouts, teaching tips, author interviews, book reviews, and current events in the world of writing. One feature I love is "Ask the Teaching Authors," where readers submit their real-world problems dealing with teaching writing.

See the site (<http://www.squidoo.com/multimediamuse>) for five more sites I couldn't fit here, and help to grow that site by emailing me your suggestions!

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