

Using Photo Story 3 for Windows

Bury St Edmunds Project



Photo Story 3
for Windows

For this project you will need:

- Access to photos of Bury St Edmunds
- Photo Story 3 for Windows

The purpose of this project is to create a short video presentation of a market town in Suffolk UK.

The video's purpose is to use six images of Bury St Edmunds to make students in a link school in Sri Lanka aware of the variety of the features of this market town.

Find your resources

Locate the folder containing the images of Bury St Edmunds or use an internet search engine to find a number of images. If you decide to use a search engine like Google remember to add 'UK' to the search words you use.

Folder: www.micktruman.com/teaching/

The images in this folder are designed so the style of the final video appears 'wide screen'. This could be a discussion point for now or later when the images have been imported into Photo Story about the style or effect it makes on screen.

Preparing the resources

Ideally save all the images in one folder and, to aid discussion and decision making, print out a contact sheet so the students can see the images they are going to be using.

Use the Creative media planner worksheets as the introduction to the lesson where you can outline the project and discuss roles and responsibilities, costs, equipment needs, etc. These sheets can be used throughout this project and as a way of recording successful outcomes. This, unfortunately, requires writing as a method of recording. It could be done as a group effort and writing scribed. Or you could be shooting yourself in the foot as we are trying to get away from this! You decide!

Getting started

Having used the contact sheet to discuss which images to use, we now need to get started using Photo Story to import the images. There is a prepared file (see link below) that contains all images. By starting with this file you can dispense with the initial difficulties of locating the images and importing them. This means that you have to start by deleting the images not wanted for this piece of work.

Link: www.micktruman.com/teaching/

When you have your chosen images in the correct order on the screen, click the 'Next' button at the bottom right of the screen. You will be prompted to remove the black borders from the slides. This happens automatically at this stage. As we want the black borders at the bottom and top of the screen, say 'Yes' to continue! You can always return to the 'Import and arrange your pictures' stage by using the 'Back' button and make any changes later if you change your mind.

First decisions

I like to remind students that when working with videos it is not necessary to use titles or text on every image. Refer to their own knowledge of watching TV and films. They will be able to recall that the most important times for adding text are the introduction titles and information and the closing credits. Which programmes have they seen with titles and text on every part? Other than news programmes or interviews when new characters are introduced, the only need for text is if you are adding subtitles.

Using the titles area of Photo Story select the images used at the beginning and end and add appropriate text. Use the formatting buttons above the text editing area to make necessary changes to font size and colour and to the placement of the text on the image.

This is a good time to discuss contrasting colours. Dark background – light text or visa versa is a good rule but with photo and other images it is not always the most reliable. It is important to allow the students to try

different placements and colours so they can find this out for themselves. Encourage experimentation until the students are happy with the results. This can be added as one of the success criteria – that all text is easily read by the audience.

Lost work

Don't forget to save the work as you go. Despite the fact that computers and technologies are becoming more stable, there is always the fear that the 'blue screen of death' will appear to tell you that all work (and often hope) is lost. Encourage the students to get into the habit of saving their work as they go. Each time they finish a small piece of editing or change something – save it. Show them the Save project button at the bottom left. Go through the process with them a couple of times, reminding them that it always asks if you want to use the same filename and location (once you have saved it for the first time).

Narration

The next screen in Photo Story invites the team to provide a recorded sound track, a narration, to give appropriate information for the audience to discover more about the topic. The beauty about this area of Photo Story is that you can re-record any narration and add to existing narrative without having to edit audio files separately.

Basically, each image can have its own narration recorded. The length of time the image stays on the screen will be directly related to the length of the narration. If there is no narration attached to any individual slide it will automatically remain on the screen for a default 15 seconds. You can alter the length of time using the 'Customise Motion...' button underneath the display screen.

This screen introduces the 'Preview...' button. When you click this button you will see a small screen appear and the application will run the video including any narration or changes you have made so far. It is a good way of checking the volume level of the narration. Re-record any narration that is too quiet or too loud. Encourage the students to moderate the levels of their own voice to make the narration sound the same volume throughout.

The previewed video also contains automatically added effects – zooming in or out of images, tracking shots (starting focusing on one area and moving to another), etc. These effects can be changed or removed as desired using the various options in the customise motion dialogue box. For now, encourage the students to leave it as it is and concentrate on the narration.

Customising motion

The application automatically adds motion to the images which helps the audience see the finished video as a motion video. It adds effects (motion) to simulate movement and give the impression that what is seen is not static. This can be used to great effect to enhance the narration. Want to play? Go ahead and give it a go! Note of caution: just how much time do you have? Maybe the students would like to come back at break or lunch to make changes to this part of the video to see what they can do improve the presentation of the ideas. (Always worth a try!)

Roll over Beethoven!

The next screen 'Add background music' is another area where the students can be encouraged to experiment to find a suitable soundtrack to add to their video. The teaching points for this area are, however, very important and it may be necessary to remind the students that the finished piece is intended for a *specific* audience who may not appreciate their favourite song playing in the background! The music needs to be unobtrusive but at the same time support the message being made in the video. By all means allow experimentation, but once the criteria (an assessment point) have been established allow sufficient time for the students to make appropriate choices. Do not allow 'because I like it' statements.

The length of the background music is determined by the length of the visual elements. If you decide to import music as the background music it will be automatically faded out at the end of the video. You might need to make changes to the length of each of the images (see Customising motion) or the track itself. What an excellent time to start talking about copyright and its use. There has been debate on this for many years and the music industry will continue to fight its corner. It is something that I, as a musician and composer, have conflicting views but it is not my livelihood. Another important teaching point and discussion to be had is the use of others' music. Who does the music belong to? Is it right to use it without asking permission of the composer or 'owner'?

Once the music has been chosen click the 'Preview...' button to see the impact the music makes on the video. This is a good time to use peer assessment to help moderate the musical decision-making. Ask other students to watch the preview and mark the use of music on a scale of 1 to 5 based on the appropriateness of the music supporting the purpose and audience. This is no different to how the media industry has decisions ratified or changed. Another fine teaching point! Hits those Work-related education outcomes too!

The application has a volume slider to allow the students to reduce the volume of the background music. It's default setting is on 'High'. I start by moving it down to the first notch above 'Low' on the scale and make upward adjustments if necessary. Background music is important and expected in all programmes seen on TV or on film. What is the impact if music is not used? Does it detract or enhance? What is the impact if music is not used at all?

And finally...

The final screen is the 'Save your story' area when you are prompted to save the working file and the final video. The application gives you a number of options. I usually make no changes here and allow the application to make a video that is optimised for viewing full screen on a computer.

The final video will, invariably, be seen via a computer screen. Even if the video is uploaded to the internet, the advent of 'Web 2' means that broadband capacity and video streaming is the norm now. It is more unusual for internet access to be 'dial up' now and the vast majority of schools in the UK are connected to the internet using broadband. This means that most people are able to download or stream video files with the minimum of difficulty so reducing the size of the video is probably not an advantage.

When the application has made or 'rendered' the video file you will be prompted to view the final product. Now is the time to review the decisions made in this process. Have the students successfully achieved the assessment criteria of the overall project and each production stage. The worksheets Creative media projects templates have an assessment page at the back which can be used to facilitate this discussion or as a way of recording the outcomes of the debate.

What now?

There are number of more projects available to try at www.micktruman.com/teaching which use the skills learned in this project. Use the worksheets as a starting point for further projects.

If you found this useful please let us know and tell others – share and pass it on!

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