

#MyZeitgeist Project – Lesson Plan

By Katie Gould, PBS NewsHour Extra Teacher Resource Producer

Introduction

In this lesson plan, students will choose the top 10 news stories from 2013 and present them using the online storytelling platform Meograph. The best projects will compete for a place on the PBS NewsHour website and win a Google Nexus 7 Tablet. Students can either work individually or in groups no more than three.

Subjects

News and current events, science, technology, social studies, world, arts and culture, economics, government and civics, geography, media literacy and social issues.

Estimated Time

One class period to go over the information students will need to start working on their project, an estimated two hours at home on their own and one class period to present projects (optional). Students will be able to work on their project at any computer they use without having to move their file physically or email it to themselves. Their projects will live on the PBS NewsHour Extra page <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/2012/12/my-zeitgeist-2013/> .

Materials

-A computer with access to internet

-Handouts

- #MyZeitgeist Introduction
- What is Newsworthy?
- Copyright and Fair Use
- Events Outline
- How to Search for News Stories
- Complete How to use Meograph Instructions

Grade Level

Middle School and High School

Warm Up Activity

1. Start by asking students “what makes something news? How do they know something is news?” and allow for a short class discussion.
2. Then ask “what makes you interested in a story?” Try to get students to give specific examples. Some possible examples are:
 - a. The topic matters to you or someone you know
 - b. Something crazy/good/sad happened
 - c. It just happened
 - d. It happened to someone like you or someone you care about
3. *Optional: Ask students what makes a news story boring? Keep these adjectives for later to help guide students away from choosing boring events for their project.
 - a. Not relevant
 - b. About something that is boring
 - c. Old people, or people not like you
4. Pass out the “What is Newsworthy?” handout and go over the five characteristics that make a story newsworthy:
 - a. Timeliness
 - b. Proximity
 - c. Conflict and Controversy
 - d. Human Interest
 - e. Relevance
5. Write the word “Zeitgesit” on the board and ask students if they know what it means? Here is the definition: **zeit·geist** - *noun*, \ 'tsīt- ,gīst, 'zīt- \ : the general beliefs, ideas, and spirit of a time and place. German. Zeit means time, and Geist means Spirit.
6. Explain to students that we often use the word Zeitgiest to describe the energy or feeling of a whole people and frequently when describing an era or a special event.
7. Now ask students to remember what was personally going on in the year 2012 for them. What was the spirit of 2012 mean for them?
 - a. What grade were you in? Who was your teacher?
 - b. Who were your friends? Who did you have a crush on?
 - c. What was your favorite thing to do? What was your favorite food?

8. Once students are in the mindset of the year 2012 they are ready to watch the Google Zeitgeist video.

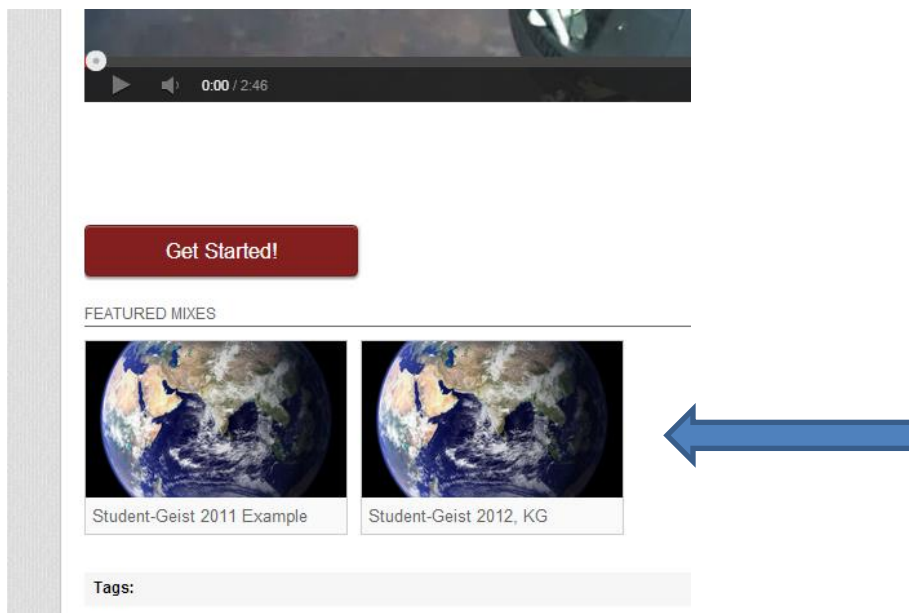
There are two ways to watch the video:

9. Go to http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons_plans/myzeitgeist-project/ and scroll down to play the Google Zeitgeist video and then the corresponding Meograph example

Or Open the PowerPoint “#MyZeitgeist” and show students the Google “Zeitgeist” year in review video from 2012 on slide 2.

10. As a class, ask students to explain what parts about the video made it so powerful and write their answers on the board creating a list that they can draw from later when creating their own #MyZeitgeist Projects.

11. Now watch a Meograph example (you can find it at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons_plans/myzeitgeist-project/ at the bottom of the page) to show students how they are alike and different from the Google Zeitgeist videos.



The image shows a screenshot of a video player interface. At the top, there is a video player with a play button, a volume icon, and a progress bar showing 0:00 / 2:46. Below the video player is a red button labeled "Get Started!". Underneath that is a section titled "FEATURED MIXES" with two thumbnails. The first thumbnail is labeled "Student-Geist 2011 Example" and the second is labeled "Student-Geist 2012, KG". A blue arrow points to the "Student-Geist 2012, KG" thumbnail. Below the thumbnails is a "Tags:" section.

*You can use the same warm up exercise in number 7 to get kids thinking about the year 2011 and watch the 2011 Zeitgeist video

Main Activity

1. Hand out the “#MyZeitgeist Introduction” and read through it with students.
 - You can also visually walk students through the rest of the project by playing the PowerPoint which explains Meograph- a digital storytelling tool that makes it

easy to create interactive video out of video, audio, pictures, text, maps, timelines and links.

2. Refer back to the “What is Newsworthy?” handout to help them choose the most newsworthy stories from 2013. Go over an example of a newsworthy story with them to help them apply what they have learned. Examples to use might be the George Zimmerman Case, the Boston Bombings or the Miley Cyrus Incident at the VMAs.
3. Give each individual/group a copy of the “Copyright and Fair Use” handout and have them read through it. After groups have finished, ask students for remaining questions and answer them together.
4. Pass out the “Events Outline” handout to students (which will help them organize their research) and then pass out the “How to Search” handout.
Play the audio (video is not appropriate for school) on this viral YouTube video to help kids get in the 2013 mood and get their memory of the year going, [click here](#) for video. Have students work together or individually on their projects using their phones, tablets or computers to research the year’s most important news stories.
5. Before class ends handout the “Complete How to Use Meograph Instructions” handout. Students will make their projects right on the website and they will live there- no need to publish or to put it on a flash drive.

IMPORTANT: Make sure that students give their Meograph a title and use their first and last initial, i.e. “We Didn’t Start the Fire, KG”. This way we will be able figure out created each Meograph. Students are required to give their teachers their projects’ URL and then teachers should send an email with their students Meograph URL, the title of the Meograph and the teacher’s contact information to kgould@newshour.org so we can contact the winners. See example below:

<http://www.meograph.com/newshour/81607/myzeitgeist-example>

My Zeitgeist Example, KG

Differentiation

For younger students and those who have less experience with a computer, we highly encourage that you print out the step by step directions to guide students through the process. It is also helpful for teachers to learn the Meograph platform which is self-guided, but still a new tool.