

# Ten Great Tools for Telling Stories With Pictures



Composing a story from scratch comes naturally to some people. For the rest of us, it can be a struggle. Over the years I've found that using pictures helps a lot of students get started on crafting stories. In some cases I've had students create collages to represent elements of a story. In other cases I've had them choose five pictures and write two hundred words about each. Being asked to write two hundred words about five pictures feels a lot less daunting than being asked to write one thousand words in one shot.

Here are some of my favorite tools for students to use to create image-based stories.

## **Creating Collages**

Canva (<http://canva.com>) is a great service for creating infographics, slides, and photo collages. On Canva you can create infographics, slides, and photo collages in much the same way as selecting a template then dragging and dropping into place background designs, pictures, clip art, and text boxes. Canva offers a huge library of clip art and photographs to use in your designs (some of the clip art is free, some is not). You can also import your own images to use in your graphics. Your completed Canva projects can be saved as PDF and PNG files. Canva offers a free iPad app that works in much the same way as the web version of the service. Check out Canva's education page (<http://bitly.com/ftcanva>) for lots of great lesson plans built around the idea of telling stories with visuals.

PicCollage (<http://pic-collage.com>) is one of my favorite Android and iPad apps (iPad users should check out the PicCollage Kids <http://apple.co/1HAtGXh>). It is a free app that allows you to quickly arrange pictures, video, text, and stickers into collages. From the app you can share your collage to Google Drive, Instagram, Facebook, Dropbox, and many other file sharing services. You can also simply save your collage to your tablet's camera roll.

Google Drawings and Google Slides can both be used to create simple collages. Into each service you can import images from your desktop or your Google Drive account. You can drag and drop images into any placement that you like. Both tools now include options for cropping images and adding borders. Word art is available to use in each service too. When you're ready to use your collage in ThingLink, download it as a PNG or JPG file.

PicMonkey (<http://www.picmonkey.com>) is a browser-based tool for creating collages. PicMonkey provides image filters like those you find on Instagram, image cropping tools, and templates for building collages. PicMonkey doesn't require students to register in order to use the service. Collages can be downloaded directly from the site.

Once your students have finished their collages they can enhance them by using ThingLink (<https://www.thinglink.com/edu>) to add an interactive element to their collages. A video tutorial for that process can be found at (<http://bitly.com/ftcollage>).

### **Threading Images Into Stories**

Thematic (<http://www.thematic.co>) is a service designed for building and sharing visual stories. Thematic allows you to display up to twenty pictures organized around a theme of your choosing. You can add one line of text to each image in your story. Your completed story is displayed in a vertically scrolling format with each of your images occupying all of the available space in your browser. Creating a Thematic story is rather easy. After creating an account you can import pictures from your desktop and or from Dropbox. I recommend importing high resolution images as smaller images will become pixelated when enlarged to Thematic's full size. After importing your pictures you can add text and rearrange the sequence in which your images appear on your screen. Completed stories can be shared publicly or kept private. Each public story can be shared via Twitter, Facebook, email, or by embedding it into a webpage.

Storehouse (<http://apple.co/1QfpNLM>) is a free iPad app for telling stories through images, videos, and text. Each story has a vertical layout reminiscent of a widescreen blog post. To create your stories you can import pictures and video from your iPad's camera roll, from Instagram, from Dropbox, and from Flickr. You can arrange the sequence of the media by dragging and dropping it into place. You can add text above and below each picture or video clip in your story. Completed Storehouse stories can be shared via email, Facebook, and Twitter. Stories published through Storehouse are given their own URLs for online viewing. You can see my sample story at <http://bitly.com/ftstorehouse>.

Adobe Slate (<http://apple.co/1HABcBn>) is designed to help you create a visual story from the pictures on your iPad, from the web, from an Adobe online account, or from a Dropbox account. You start your story by importing a cover picture and writing story title. You then add pictures one-by-one and write captions for each. You can also write headlines for each image.

One convenient feature of Adobe Slate is that the integrated image search tool will import Creative Commons attributions with the images you select. Adobe Slate has a dozen or so filters or themes that you can apply to your story. Completed stories can be published online through a variety of channels including Adobe's platform, Facebook, Twitter, or by embedding it into a blog post.

### **Creating Picture Books**

MyStorybook (<http://www.mystorybook.com>) is a nice online tool for creating short story books. MyStorybook provides blank pages on which you can type, draw, and place clipart. Your storybook pages can also include pictures that you upload. After signing into your MyStorybook account you can start creating your first book. Click on the text fields to edit any existing text in the title and author fields. You can add more text by clicking "text" in the editing menu. To add a picture of your own select "items" in the editing menu. At the bottom of the "items" menu you will find an option to upload your own images. MyStorybook provides lots of stock imagery that you can place on a page or use as the background to a page. If you want to branch-out beyond text and images, use the drawing tools on your pages.

Picture Book Maker (<http://bitly.com/ftpicturebook>) allows students to create six page stories by dragging background scenes into a page, dragging in animals and props, and typing text. All of the elements can be sized and positioned to fit the pages. Text is limited to roughly two lines per page. Completed stories are displayed with simple page turning effects. Stories created on Picture Book Maker can be printed and or saved as PDFs.

Little Story Creator (<http://apple.co/1Rv3KU6>) is a free iPad app that students can use to create multimedia stories on their iPads. The app was designed with students in mind and is therefore rather easy to use. On the app students can create multiple page stories. On each page of their stories students can add images and videos, type text, draw, and apply digital stickers. Students can also record audio on each page to narrate their stories. The stories that students create on Little Story Creator are automatically saved on their iPads. Students do not have to register on the app in order to use it or save their work. To share work students must have a parent or teacher log-in and share the story.

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