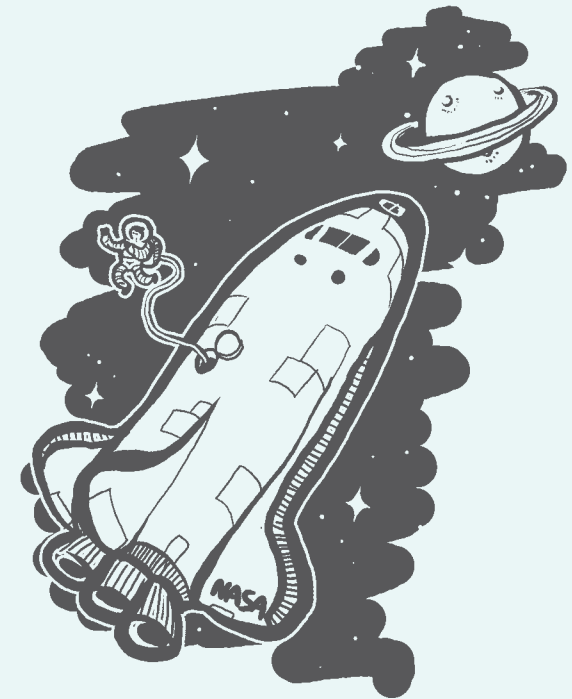


Digital Captain's Log

Your mission: Create a video diary to describe to your class the experience of exploring another planet. Use internet research to boost your imagination and creativity.



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Digital Captain's Log

Laraine Harris, Deputy Head at Charborough Road Primary School was planning a themed cross curricular unit of learning entitled 'Space: the final frontier' for her Year 3 students. She wanted to use this as an opportunity to support students' digital literacy.



The project aimed to improve the children's **internet research skills**, particularly their ability to assess the **relevance and reliability** of digital sources.

In the past, when starting a new topic of learning in class, children would often come in to school with pages of information downloaded from the internet that were difficult to understand and often not relevant.

"There's no selectivity. They just think 'oh there's a page about Romans'. They don't actually read it, they print it out and bring it in, but they think they've done some research and that's it. They haven't actually got any content from it."

Year 3 teacher

The project would also explore the use of digital video cameras to support the development of descriptive language and **effective communication**, as well as asking students to consider how to represent information in video format.

Following a piece of drama, in which Laraine blacked out the classroom and used a film of a rocket launch to support the children to imagine starting a journey into space, they were given a mission to produce a video diary documenting their travel to another planet.

To do this, the students researched information about a particular planet and developed their use of sensory and descriptive language. The aim of the project was to **create** a Digital Captain's Log to describe for their peers the fictional experience of exploring the planet using what they had learnt from their internet research to inform their imagination and creativity.

As a class, they looked at some websites together and discussed how to search within a particular webpage to find the information they needed.

"At first it was hard, we didn't know where to find the information. Our teacher helped."

Year 3 boy

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Laraine then provided them with five key questions about the planet they were investigating, to focus their research. The children worked in small groups to search for the information from a given set of three websites.

"The internet helped us, we found out more facts."

Year 3 girl

Laraine encouraged her students to **engage with the content** of their research by reminding them that they would need to **re-contextualise** this information in order to successfully communicate their learning to others.

Laraine felt it was important to let the children have time in which to explore and play with the new cameras. The children used these sessions to rehearse and reflect on their learning and used the cameras to record what they had learnt during the research process. They practised sentences using the descriptive and sensory language they had explored in a previous lesson to describe the planet they had researched.

During these sessions the teacher also supported the children to consider the **functional skills** needed to use the cameras effectively, such as how to hold the camera and how far to be from the person they were filming. They also discussed the limitations of the cameras and were asked to **evaluate** their suitability for the purpose. They discovered the cameras picked up a lot of background noise and were encouraged to consider this when they moved on to film their Captain's Log.

"Instead of having to write it down, you can film yourself saying it then you can just look back and see what you've done."

Year 3 boy

In the final sessions, Laraine supported the children to plan their Captain's Log, thinking about their **audience**, what information to include and how to use descriptive language to enhance their communication. The children worked in pairs to film their Captain's Logs, which they then showed to each other in class.



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Successes and next steps

The children articulated two clear benefits of using the digital cameras in this way. They found them useful as a way of recording their own learning and were excited about the possibilities of distilling the information they had found out into a short film that would support their peers to learn. They showed an awareness of purpose and audience.

"People we're telling will get to know more facts."
Year 3 girl

Providing the children with research questions and three websites to choose from helped them to focus their research and not to become overwhelmed by the amount of information available to them. As the children's independent research skills develop Laraine will be able to gradually decrease the amount of support she gives them.

In order to for students to develop their digital literacy they need to be supported to think critically about the information they are researching on the internet. There was some indication that these children had considered the sources of their information.

"Some websites may not tell the truth."
Year 3 girl

"Some websites were better than others."
Year 3 boy

As their digital literacy skills develop, **critical thinking** around the reliability and veracity of websites should go beyond concepts of truth and usefulness. As they continue to create with digital technology themselves, students can be helped to question and to understand how the digital media world is created by others. Just as they have created a digital film for a particular audience, so websites they visit have been created for certain audiences.

Encouraging students to make reasoned choices between different sorts of creative outputs such as, for example, videos, websites and podcasts, will also support digital literacy development if children are helped to think critically about the suitability of the technology for their purpose.