2084: Junk Puppet Theatre

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The novel 1984 is considered by some to be prophetic, but in many ways it was just Orwell taking some of what was happening in his world to a logical extreme. Often in dystopian societies, the original intent is good, but when taken too far becomes harmful. Our project goal was to challenge students to think about the current controversial issues they were researching, while also reading Orwell's novel and then to imagine how these topics might develop in the coming future, whether good or bad. Next, they collaborated to create a future world and characters who exist in this fictional setting as the basis for their own short story. Finally, in small groups, students chose just one of their stories from which to create a screenplay for a narrated, "Dystopian Junk Puppet Theater Video" where they constructed the environment and characters mostly from recycled materials.

Teacher Reflections

Through the multiple layers of the process, this project built upon and pushed student understanding of dystopian societies and how and why they occur. By laying a foundation of understanding through our reading of 1984 and bringing like concepts into contemporary society, students came to view current topics through a different lens, one which allowed them to place a current issue in a sci-fi world with a cast of characters of their own making. Additionally, the level of student engagement in writing was heightened by concurrently creating and producing their puppet theater. Both imagining their story and seeing it come to life as a physical artwork helped to push and strengthen their vision, ultimately deepening the conceptual aspects of the project's goals.

Student Reflection

Have a great idea is one thing, but reenacting it and making the puppet show look professional was a challenge, requiring time, effort, and patience. I really enjoyed the collaboration, creativity and freedom we had in designing our puppets and backdrops. —Eric

To *learn more about this project and others, visit http://jfarson. weebly.com/junk-puppet-theater.html*