Storybird:
A Motivational Storytelling Website to Increase Students' Ability In Narrative Writing

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Abstract

Writing is an essential tool for communication. Good writing allows people to communicate clearly. Among the four basic skills, writing is the most complicated one. Writing has several types and one of them is narrative. The purposes of narrative are to tell story and share information whether it is a book, thesis, journal, and an article. Unfortunately, some students do not like to write. They think that writing is so complicated and they always feel that English is horrible. Such negative attitudes are problematic in ESL/EFL writing classroom. The arising of media techonology like Storybird as internet-based CALL and an interactive storytelling website helps to boost student engagement and the students' ability in narrative writing will increase. Meanwhile, by using Storybird, the students can study narrative writing at anywhere and anytime as long as each student has an internet connection and a laptop or netbook. The students can use it by themselves because there is a simple guide for them available in Storybird. Through Storybird, they can be autonomous learners and it is related to the Principle of Eclecticism. The aims of this article are to give a brief description about the importance and the guidelines of using Storybird in teaching and learning narrative writing. Storybird will promote literacy, enthusiasm, imagination, creativity and collaboration in learning narrative writing.

Key words: Basic Writing, learning material, digital module, Android, learning media.

1. Introduction

Writing is an important aspect in communication. It is frequently used in higher education and workplace. People write dissertation, thesis, journal, business letter and many more. Good writing allows people to express in communication clearly. Flyn and Stainthorp have stated that the purpose of writing is that the writers can communicate each other (2006). Moreover, Weigle has stated that writing is an important device in this globalization. Writing has a vital role not only to give information, but also to generate new knowledge (2002).

Spelkova and Hurst have stated that ranking from the four skills, writing becomes the most difficult one (2009). In addition, writing is absolutely complex and it needs some aspects which are done at the same time (Flyn and Stainthorp, 2006).

From these statements, it can be concluded that writing is the hardest skill among others. It pushes us to think and it is very painful to accomplish.

There are some different types of writing. According to Meyers, there are narrative, descriptive, report, process analysis, cause-effect analysis, classification, comparison-contrast, definition, persuasive argument and summary-response (2005). The writer focuses on narrative writing because narative is a way people convey an information whether it is a book, thesis, dissertation, journal and others.

According to Langan, narration is when a writer wants to write a story. He or she presents the details in the order (2001). Furthermore, Salmon has stated that people use narrative to share information, such as; a book or magazine story. If narrative is not availabe, no one will be interested to read (2009).

Unfortunately, some students do not like to write. They think that writing is so complicated and they always feel that English is horrible. Such negative attitudes are problematic in ESL/EFL writing classroom (Gebhard, 1996).

In the 21st century, technology becomes an essential part of lives. It is used in different fields from industry to education. Meanwhile, students nowaday are growing up with technology and they do love it. Therefore, technology can motivate

students to learn so that they have better achievement in education. Winthrop and Smith (2012) have stated that technology helps the poorest and event the hardest country to get better education to achive community. Moreover, according to Noeth and Volkov (2004), students love to use computer and their motivation in learning is improved by the use of it. In addition, Glenn (2008) has stated that the use of computer is appropriate for low students and even troubled students.

In English language teaching, the use of technology represents the application of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). This article focused on the use of internet-based CALL in the form of online writing named Storybird.

Floyd et al (2014) has stated that Storybird as "hybrids" or collaborative story telling is a free website in which the learners can compose their creative narratives from the artworks that they have been chosen. Furthermore, Menezes has stated that storybird allows students focus more on the content rather than drawing pictures. Storybird provides the students with various artworks. Those are available for any level from kindergarten to higher education (2014).

There are still few research on Storybird because this website was launched in 2010 and it was renewed for several times. An experimental study of Storybird by Utami (2014) showed that Storybird contributed to the students' narrative writing achievement in several aspects: first, the artworks in Storybird could help the students developed the content, organization, and vocabulary of their writing. Second, it facilitated the language use of the students' writing since the students were able to publish their stories and received the teacher's feedback and peers' comments. Third, the storymaker editor helped the students to use correct spelling in their writing. Furthermore, bringing the website into the writing class as an innovative way that can increase the students' motivation, interest and excitement to be involved in teaching and learning process. This research was conducted at MAN 1 Jember, Tenth Grade Students. Further, Giacomini (2015) has stated that her students in Spain were enthusiastic to use Storybird and they did not find any difficulty in using it.

From these findings, the writer can conclude that Storybird as an internet-based CALL and interactive storytelling website gives positive impacts in teaching and learning narrative writing.

This article reviews the role of Storybird, the advantages, how to create and apply it in the classroom. By reviewing this, the teacher will have a brief description about the importance and the guidelines of using Storybird in teaching narrative writing. Besides, Storybird will promote literacy, enthusiasm, imagination, creativity and collaboration in learning narrative writing.

1. Discussion

Storybird was created by Mark Ury and it was launched in 2010. Storybird was renewed for several times. In 2013, it was added by poetry application. Then in 2014, it was provided with the Longform Book to write long story with several chapters like novel and the appearance were also improved.

Stoybird is appropriate for any level of writer. Beginner writer can start to write a story in Picture Book or multi-page with simple artworks. In addition, Advanced writer can choose Longform Book or multi-chapter to create a novel with more detailed artworks. The writer can choose the artworks based on his or her level.

A research finding showed that Storybird motivated the students at Instituto de Lenguas de la Universidad Distrital (ILUD) in Columbia to compose narrative writing and their qualities were improved. Besides, they also had improvement in vocabulary and they attempted to use complex sentences (Ramirez, 2013). Further Dollar and Tolu have revealed that teachers of 5th grade in Turkey had positive attitude in implementing Storybird. In addition, students also had positive attitudes and high motivation. They could write story with fun, interesting and imaginative (2013).

The finding above showed that Storybird gave positive impacts for students at primary school and higher education. Their abilities in narrative writing were increased and they had improvement in vocabulary. Moreover, the students showed positive attitudes toward narrative writing.

The Advantages in Using Storybird for both Teacher and Students
The following are the advantages in using Storybird for the teacher:
1. Teacher can easily create accounts for his or her students with no limitation to the number of students or classes.
2. Teacher can give assignment easily through Storybird and monitor whether his or her students participate in the discussion or not.
3. Teacher can identify whose student connects to others through the Class Graph provided by Storybird.
   Also, there are some advantages for the students:
- Students can develop their contents easily because of the artworks. A wide variety of artwork themes are available for any level of writer.
- Storybird provides discussion boxes for students in order that they can discuss each other.
- Students can collaborate with other students or writers to write stories.
- Students can publish and share their stories so that the readers can give feedback and comments.

Storybird Manuals and Guides

There are some elements that the teacher should prepare before applying Storybird in a classroom, such as; good internet connection, a computer, a laptop or a netbook and he or she has to make sure that each student has them also. Storybird can be applied both inside and outside the classroom as long as these elements are met.

The following are the steps to create an account, to apply in the classroom and to create a story in Storybird.

How to create an Account in Storybird
The steps are:
1. Go to www.storybird.com
2. Click on sign up.
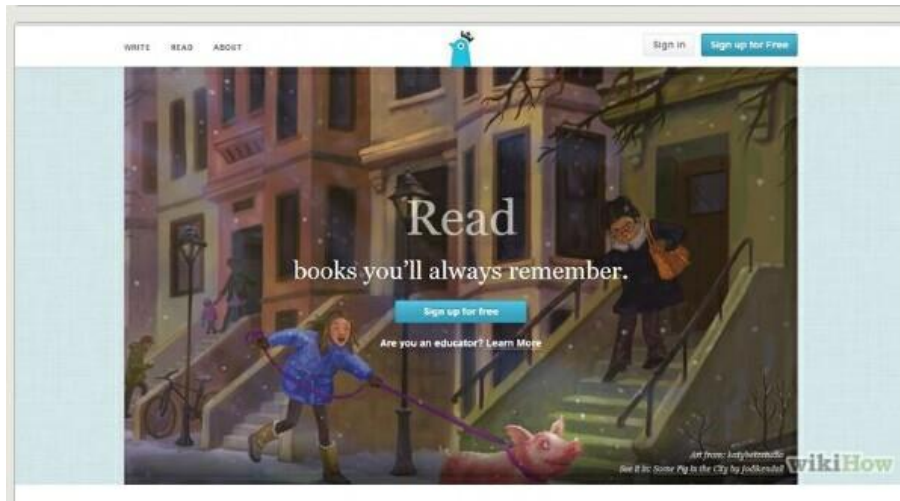
The picture is taken from wikihow

3. Choose an account type; regular user, educator/teacher, student, professional writer or professional artist.

The picture is taken from wikihow

4. Fill in the information requested, such as; username, email and password and click create account.
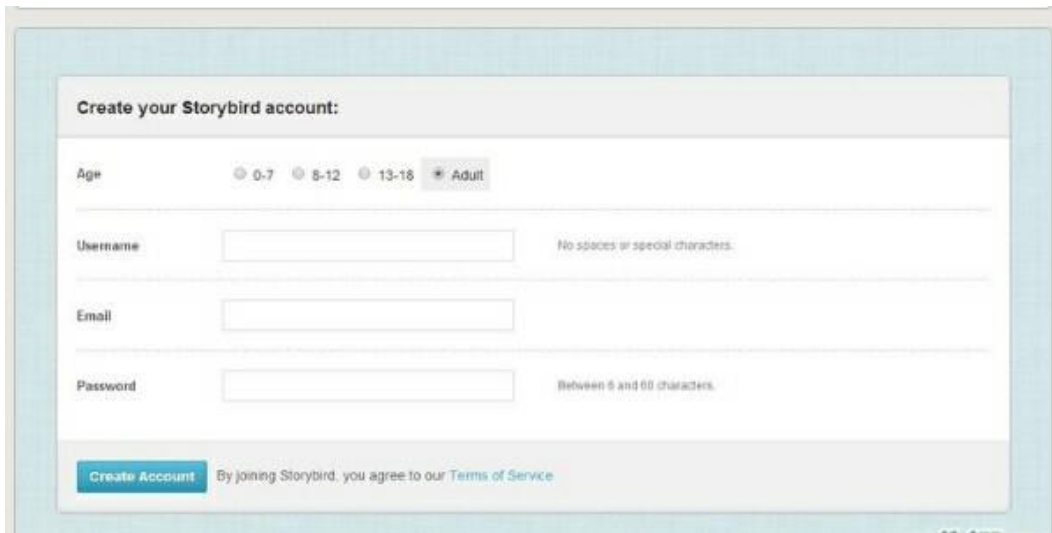
The picture is taken from wikihow

5. Check your e-mail for a confirmation e-mail.
6. After your email has been verified, it will re-direct you to Storybird website.
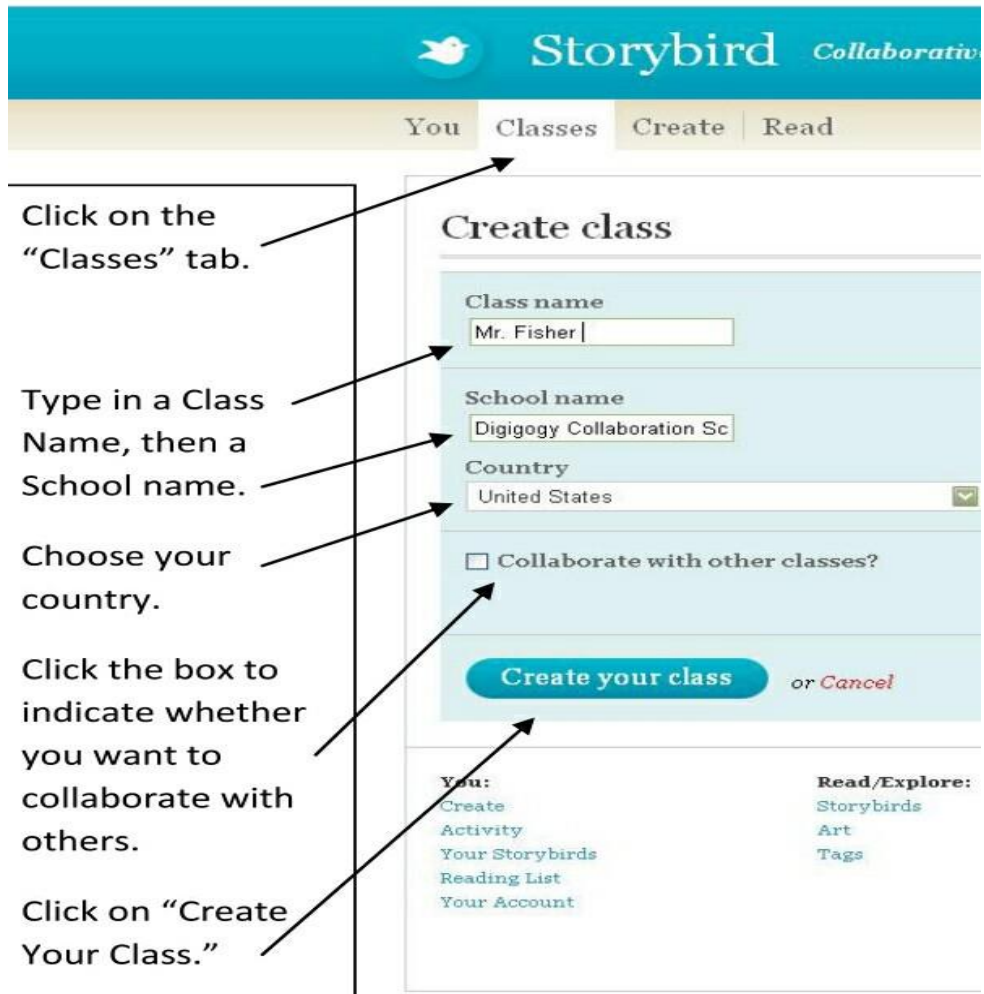7. Finally, you can sign into your new Storybird account.
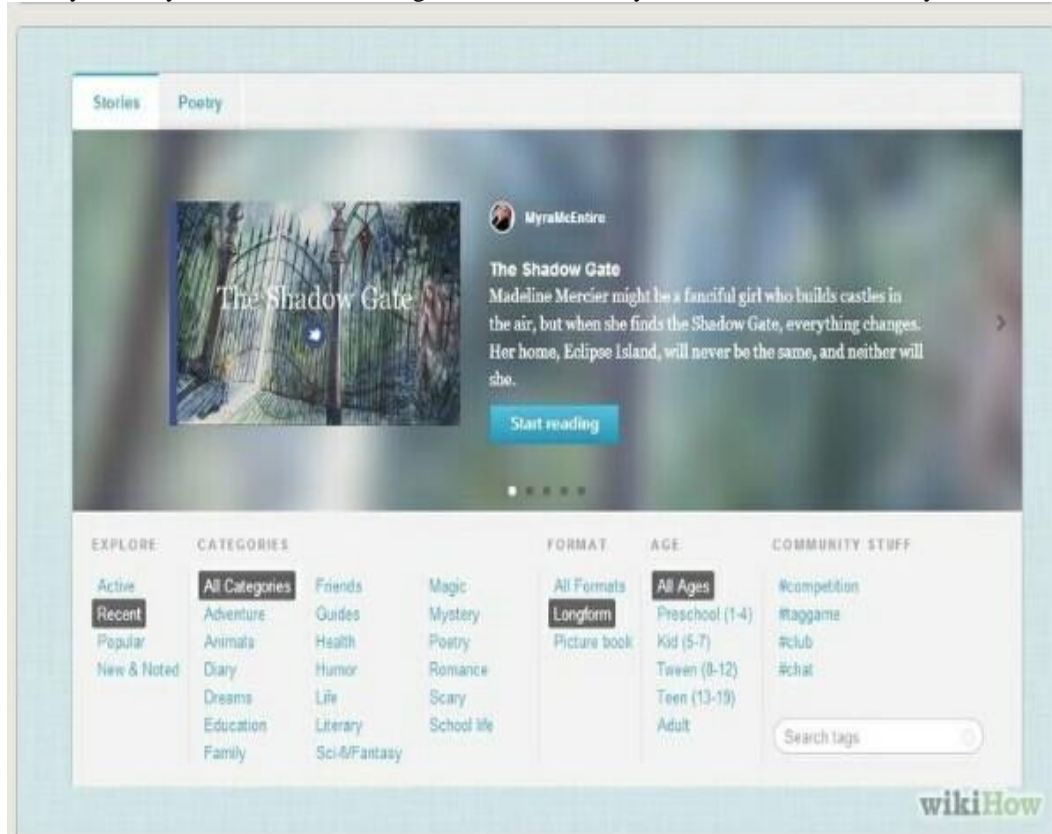
The picture is taken from wikihow
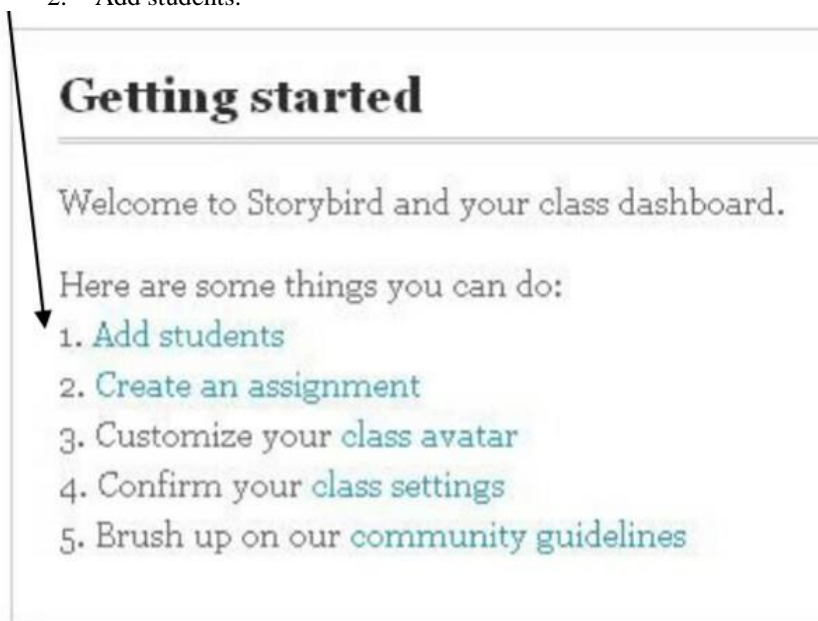
How to apply Storybird in the Classroom.

To apply Storybird, the teacher can create classes and accounts for his or her students, participate in a discussion and collaborate with his or her students.
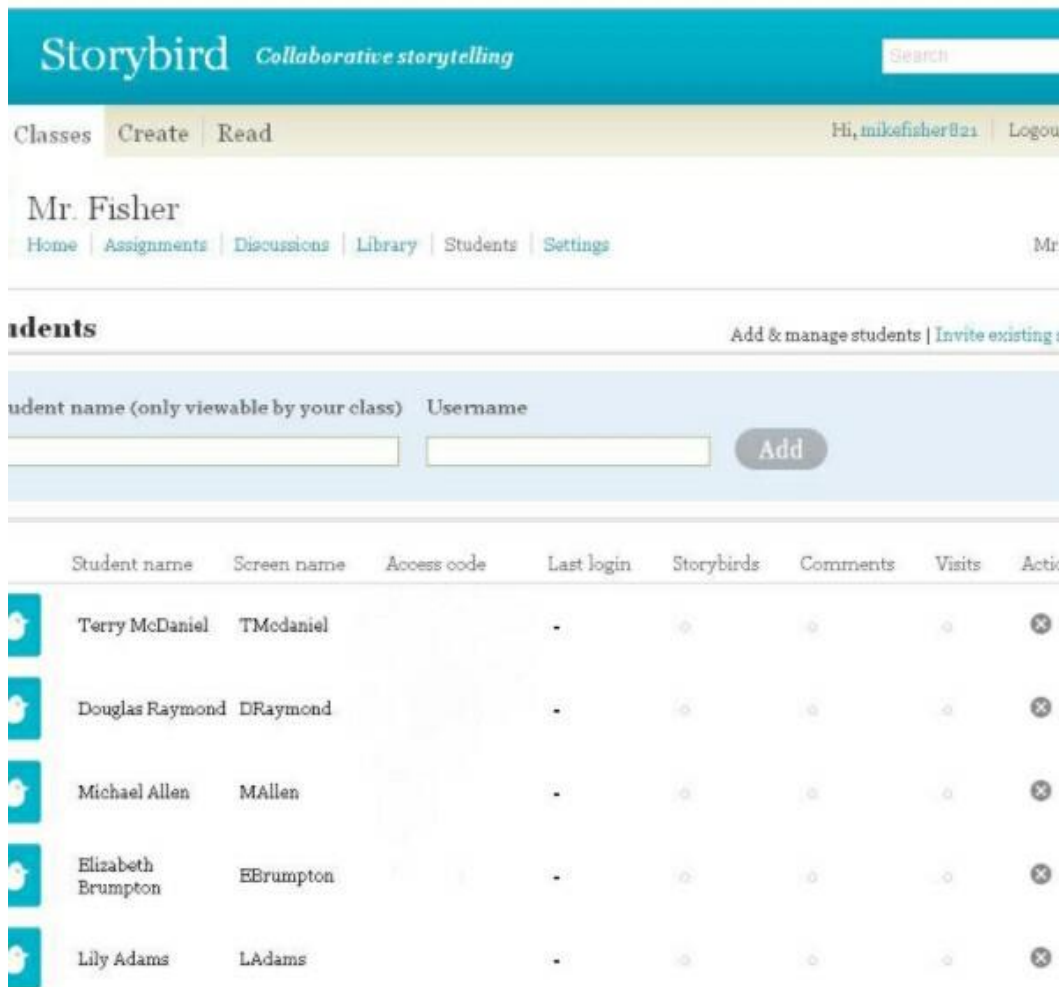
1. Create classes.

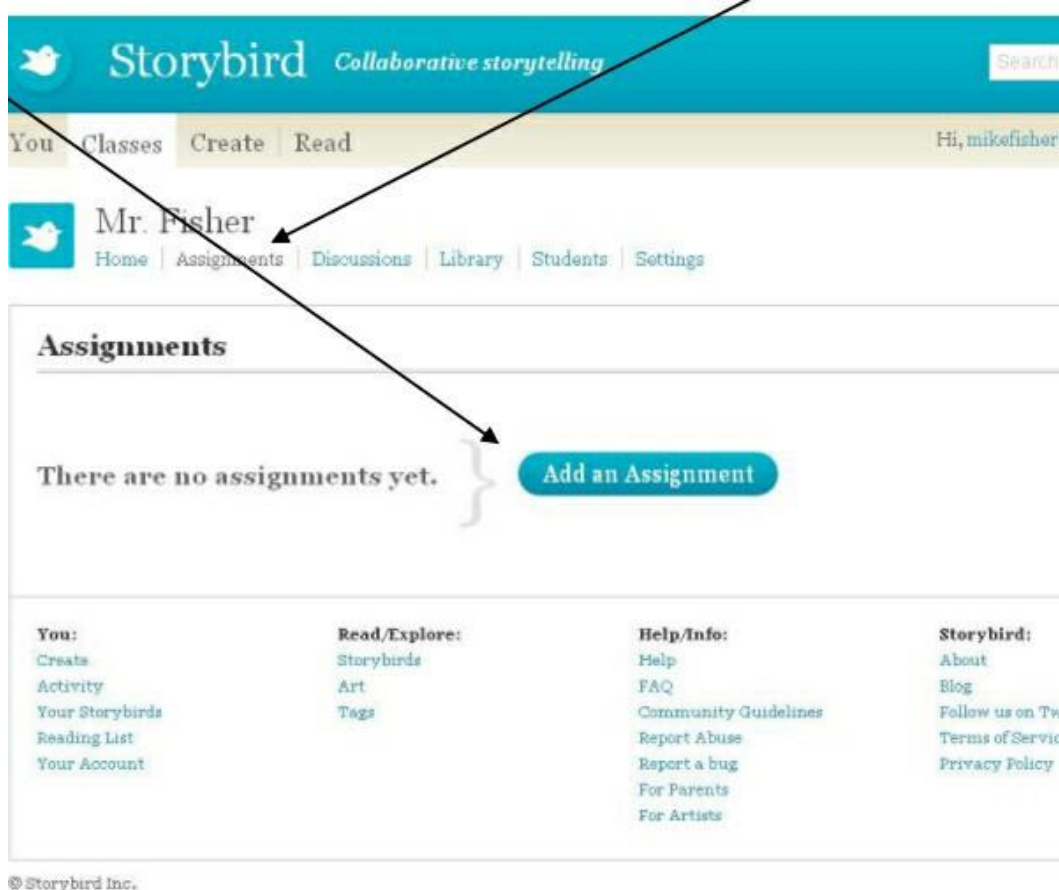*The picture is taken from wikispaces*

2. Add students.

The picture is taken from wikispaces

3. Put student's first and last name into the available box, then choose a username for your student (to make it easier, you can use first initial and last name). When you click add, Storybird will automatically assign and access code for your student.
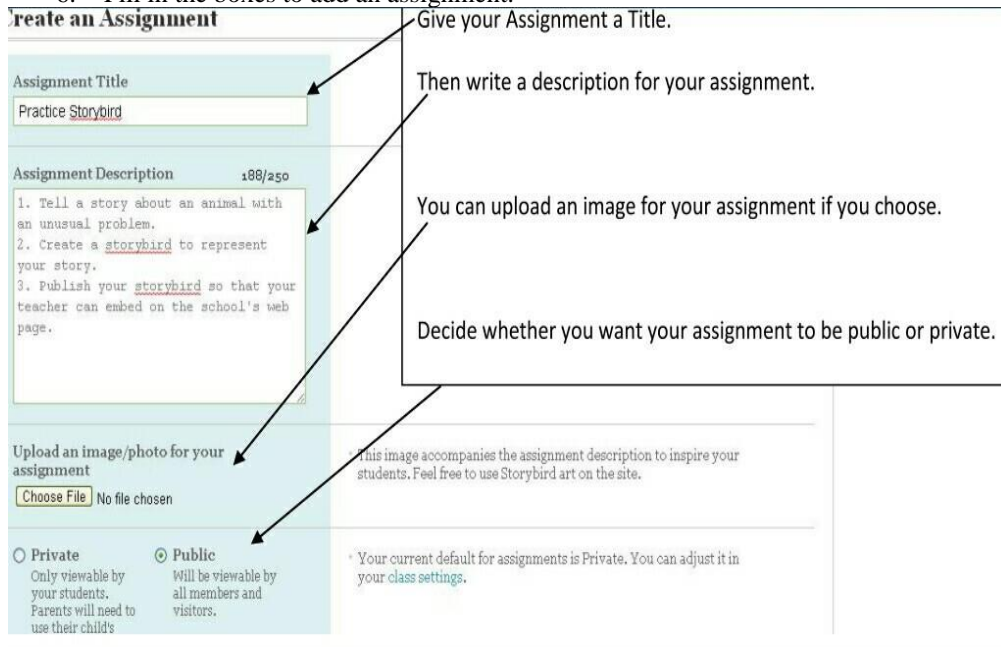

The picture is taken from wikispaces

4. Share the username and access codes to your students in order that they can log in and start to write.
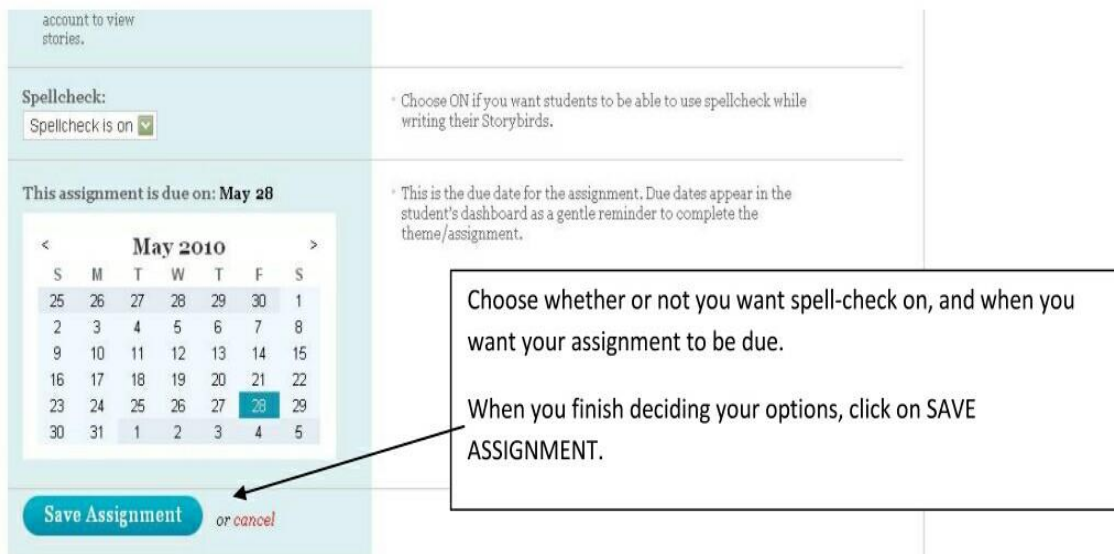5. As a teacher, you can add an assignment for your class.

The picture is taken from wikispaces

6. Fill in the boxes to add an assignment.

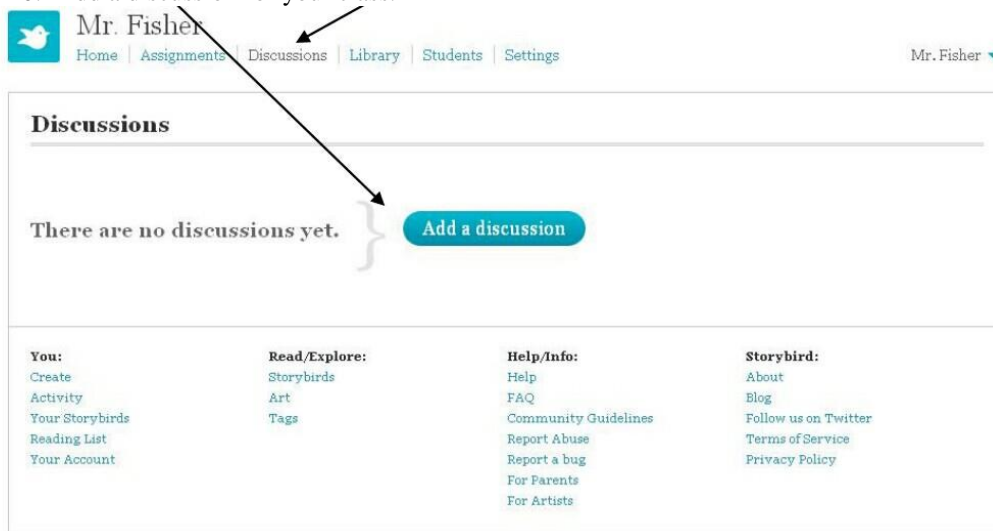*The picture is taken from wikispaces*

7. Choose spell check is on, if you want your students to be able to use spelling checker when they write story in Storybirds.
8. Click the due date of your assignment.
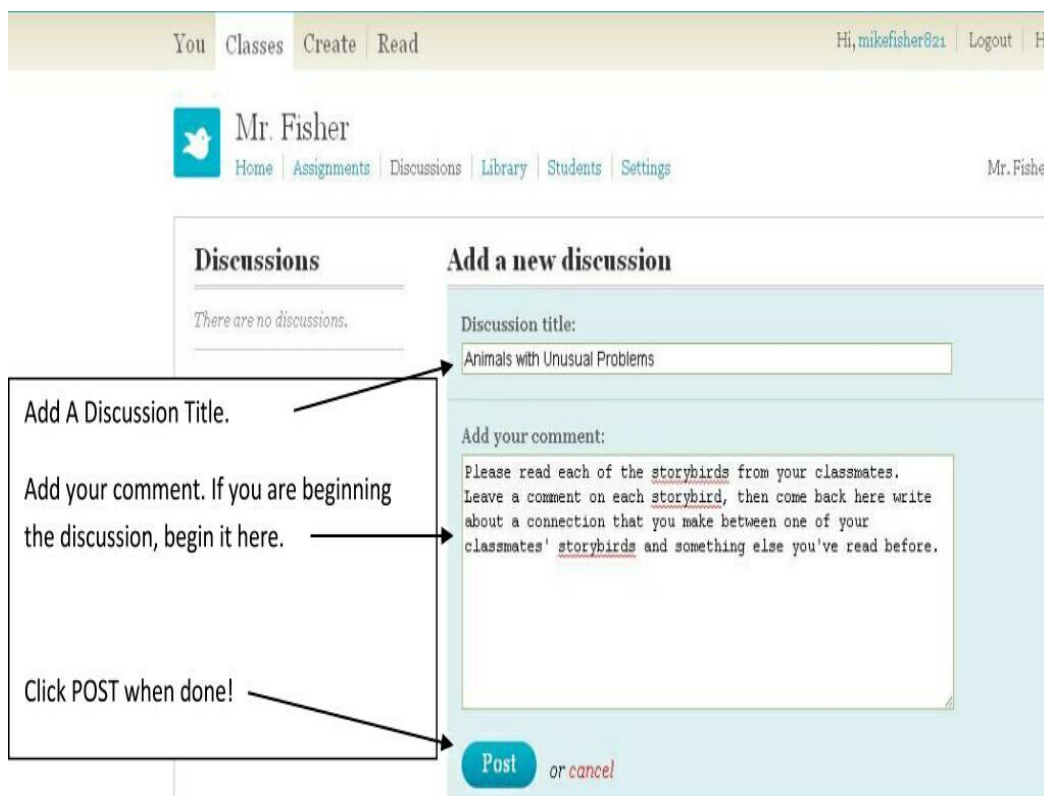9. Click save assignment

The picture is taken from wikispaces
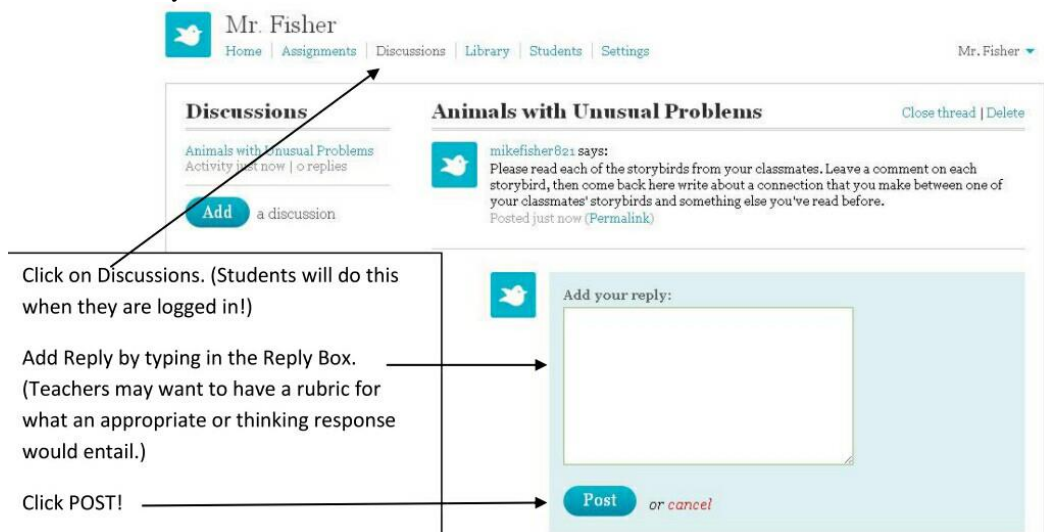
10. Add a discussion for your class.

The picture is taken from wikispaces

11. Fill in the boxes to add a discussion.

The picture is taken from wikispaces

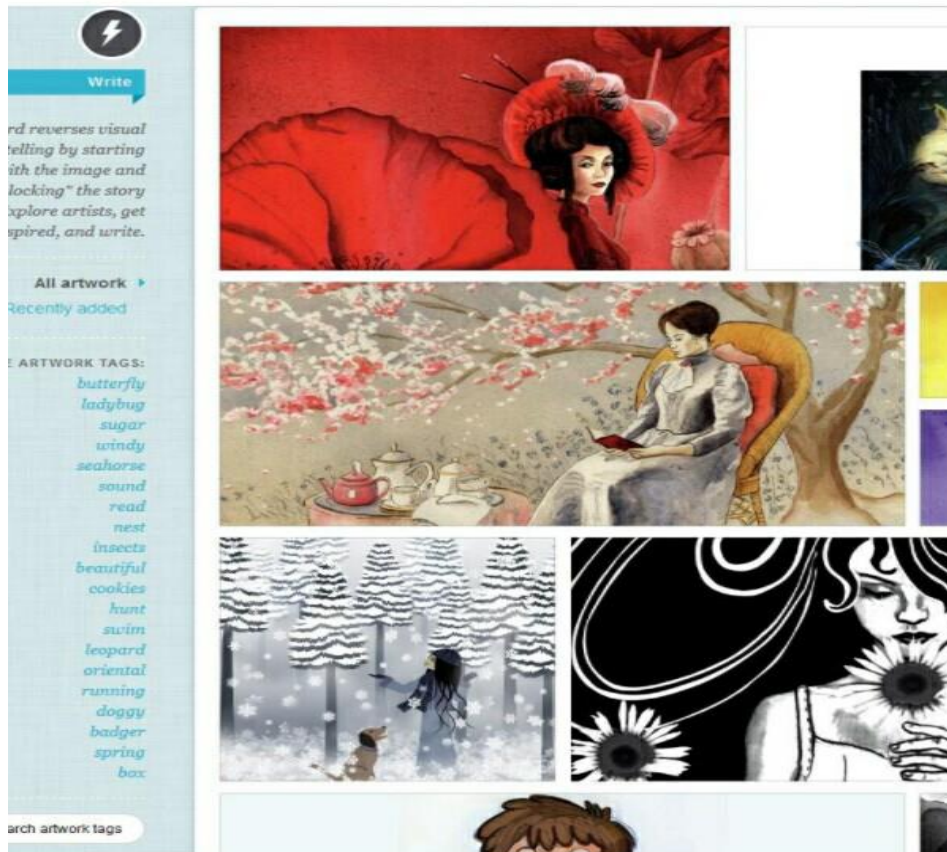12. Show your students how to contribute in a discussion.

The picture is taken from wikispaces

How to Create a Story in Storybird
Here are the steps to create a story in Storybird:
1. Scroll the artworks down until you find one you like or you can choose the artworks based on the themes available.
2. Click the artwork you like.

The picture is taken from Wapiti Library

3. Click use this art. There are three options after you click use this art; Longform Book (multi-chapter), Picture Book (multi-page), or Poem (single image). if you want to write a narrative, you can choose Longform Book or Picture Book.
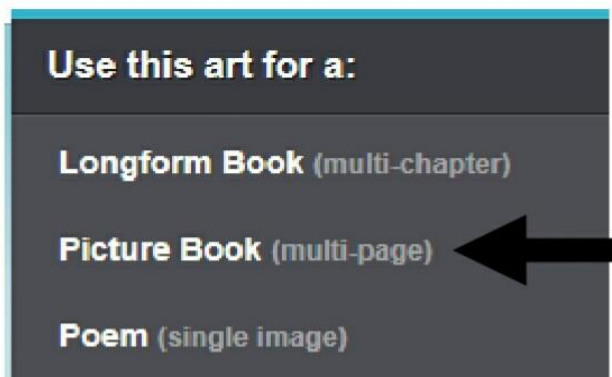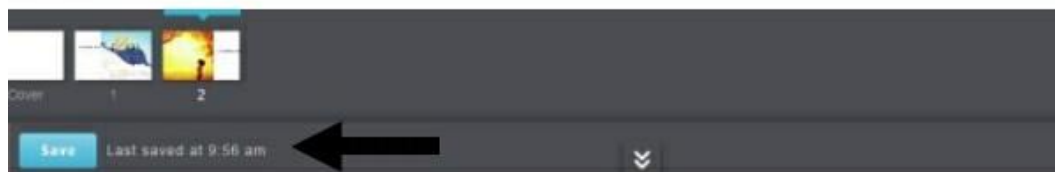

The picture is taken from Whsd

4. To write story, drag picture on the space available.
5. Add pages by clicking on the add page button. On the other hand, click remove page if you want to remove the page.
6. If you want to see your pages just click previous or next button.
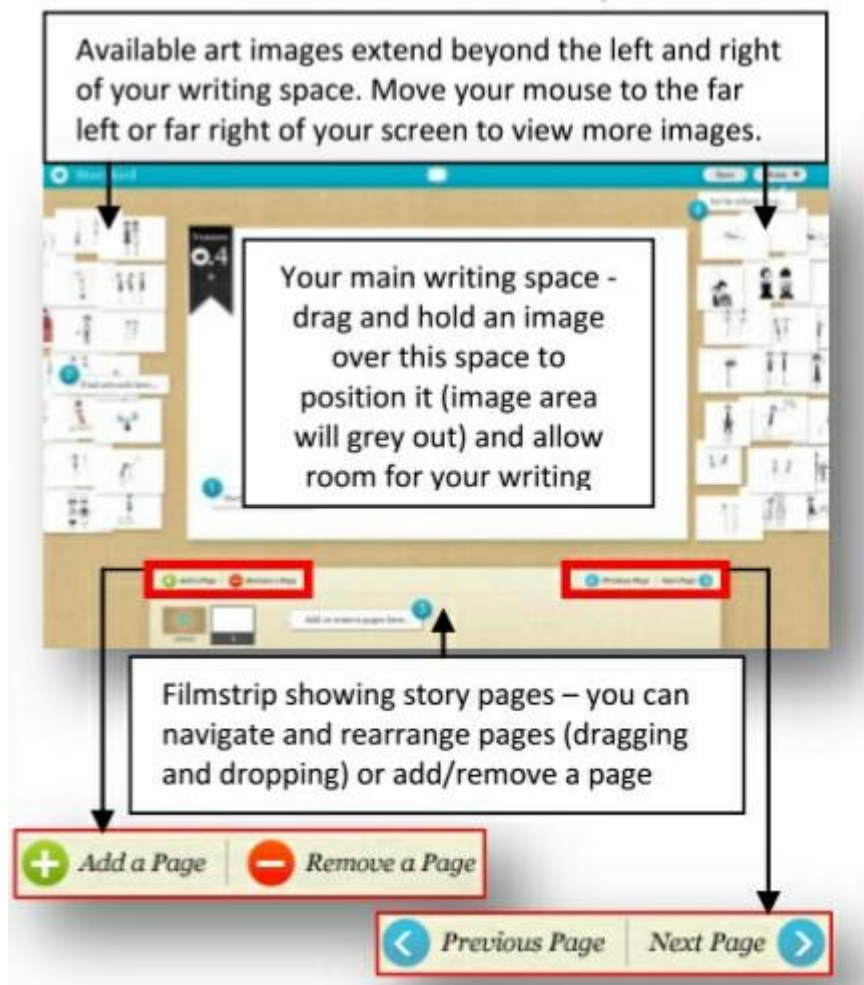
The picture is taken from Web Essentials, Issue 09

7. Continue to write your story.
8. If you have done, save your story by clicking save button.

The picture is taken from Whsd

9. Click invite collaborator to invite your friends or the other writers work on your story. If you think that your story is done and ready for others to read just click save and close.
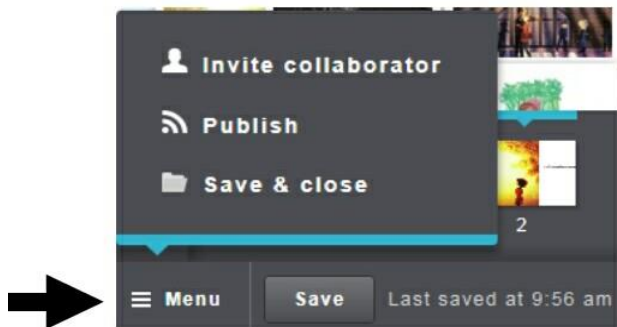
The picture is taken from Whsd

10. If you want to publish your story, clik publish. Storybird will automatically eliminate the story which contains inappropriate material.

When a student wants to give comments or feedback to his or her friend's story, he or she can find it through a class library or search in order to find it easily.

Storybird promotes literacy, enthusiasm, imagination and it is suitable for various levels.

Other website which almost similar to Storybird is Bitstrips. Bitstrips is a place for a student to create a comic. The Student also can create his or her avatar as an icon of his or her story. However, to create a comic, he or she do not need to write longer or complex sentences. He or she just write a phrase or a sentence in the form of saying or dialogue. While Storybird is designed to create a story and the sentences tend to be much longer and more complex.

Storybird helps students to study narrative writing at anywhere and anytime. They can use it by themselves because there is a simple guide in Storybird. Through Storybird, each student can be an autonomous learner and it is related with the Principle of Eclecticism. Taylor (2015) has stated that Principle of Eclecticism is an approach in which a student is encouraged to be an autonomous learner.

2. Conclusion

In English language teaching, the use of technology represents the application of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). The use of internet-based CALL in the form of online narrative writing like Storybird promotes literacy, enthusiasm, imagination, creativity and collaboration. Also, it is suitable for various levels.

In Storybird, teacher can create accounts for his or her students without limitation to the number of students or classes. Then, he or she can give an assignment and see through Storybird whether his or her students participate in the discussion or not. Besides, he or she can monitor whose student connects to other students through the Class Graph provided in Storybird. On the other hand, students can develop their contents easily because of the artworks that they have been chosen. A wide variety of artwork themes are available for any level. Moreover, They can discuss each other through discussion boxes. Furthermore, they can use spelling checker application provided in Storybird. Also, they can collaborate with others to work on their stories. Finally they can publish and share their stories so that the readers can give feedback or comments.

In teaching narrative writing, the teacher can apply Storybird as a new teaching innovation in 21st century. Teaching with technology is innovative, authentic, reliable (do not lose content) and ease of sharing.

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