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VIDEO BOOK TRAILERS: Coming to a Library near You!

by MariRae Dopke-Wilson



When most of us go to the movies, the 'coming attractions' or movie trailers are as anticipated as the popcorn! This Americana movie tradition hooks us again and again on what we'll come back to see next. So, it's no surprise that movie trailer-like video clips are getting high school students excited about reading.

Library Media Specialists Mary Gotham and Sharon Bush are getting rave reviews from students and teachers alike as they experiment with this concept in their West Genesee



High School Library. Stealing spin from Hollywood, the duo's 'Video Book Trailers' project is brewing new excitement about reading while creating valuable media for marketing the library's book collection! Collaborating English teacher, Tina Middaugh, says the video book trailers project is fun for her students adding it motivates them to read while gaining a deeper understanding of the books they choose.

"Often the students who participated in the book trailer project option were students who were typically "low achieving." What was amazing about their projects was that they had their moment to really shine in a class. Students who often hated reading were more apt to read their novels in full when this project was at the end of the process. Hours and hours of time were committed to making the projects perfect, which is clearly more time spent on the average paper projects. I loved seeing the looks on the students' faces when the trailers were being played. It was incredible. As an educator, my proudest moment of last year was seeing one student, in particular, fielding questions about his project like a scholar."

Mary Gotham and Sharon Bush enlisted the help of Tina and fellow teachers to launch the project after reading an article in "School Library Media" magazine discussing a book talk kiosk. Mary says that got their wheels turning about the possibilities for their own library.

"We realized this could have multiple benefits for our students and our program and decided to talk to a couple of teachers to get their feelings. After positive feedback from them, we applied for and received funding for a "Collegial Circle." This allowed us to work with 5 other teachers to further investigate implementing student created book trailers. We investigated grant opportunities for the hardware components for creating book trailers and the kiosk. We also had students create a pilot book trailer and investigated curricula possibilities and cross curricula options."

Today, twenty-five book trailers with music, sound effects and actors are among the library's growing collection. Some video shorts have been downloaded from Internet sources while others were crafted by creative students using their own video cameras and editing equipment. While the project waits funding for in-house gear, these librarians remain undaunted regarding the potential of their project. Mary adds it not only encourages reading but gives them a creative option.



"Right now students may create a book trailer as an option. Rather than write a book report, they can choose to make a PowerPoint

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or book trailer. As soon as we found trailers that "sold" books we have on our shelf, we started utilizing them with our book talks to students. It made our job easier and students liked them. I look at the trailers, if they are good; I grab the book off our shelf to promote it. If I don't have the book, I buy it."

STUDENTS FIND PROJECT COMPELLING

Fellow librarian, Sharon Bush, is excited about other project benefits. *"Our goal, first and foremost, was to get more students to read more books. By highlighting titles in our collection, our circulation statistics should increase. As librarians, we become more diversified and engaged and our book talks will be better and more interesting. Students will also have the ability to create their own trailers, which increases their tech skills and motivates them artistically."*

The two students who made a pilot book trailer commented on how much they enjoyed the project. They had the chance to learn more about making a movie, editing and evaluating literature in an expressive format. These students were inspired to make more trailers, in addition to using similar technology for other class projects."

The project enthusiasm Sharon mentions is mirrored in the following comments from respective West Genesee High School students: Aleks read, *'To Kill a Mockingbird,'* by Harper Lee.

"Our assignment was to make a short trailer for the book, without giving away too much about the book. We had to carefully pick certain scenes and then film them. The most difficult task was picking what scenes to film and what to put into the trailer. The best part of it, of course, was filming. The whole project was very enjoyable and helped us grow with our acting. We are all very proud of our trailer. It may not seem like much to most people, but the creation process is what made the whole thing as enjoyable as it was."

Mike read, *'The Road,'* by Cormac McCarthy.

"It was a great project that had me put on film the major events of the book and just to show brief details about it. It was a fun project that I got to work with my friends on. It wasn't a very difficult thing to do because it was so fun. The only problem is deciding what events to include into the trailer. It was well received by viewers and they loved it and even asked to watch it more times."

English teacher, Tina Middaugh, says the video book trailer project heightened enthusiasm and interest with the end result being better grades.

"I loved it. They loved it. This "outside the box" project targets multiple intelligences. Some of the most worthy projects came from the lowest achieving students with hidden talents! I adored the projects and have actually used the old trailers to introduce the novels this year! When the students saw them, they were more enthused to read because the 'hey, you should read this book' came from their peers."

HOW TO GET STARTED



Not having technology in place didn't stop Mary Gotham and Sharon Bush from beginning their book trailers project. They began by finding the trailers on the Internet and incorporating them in their books talks, and you can, too! One of their favorite sources of rich information on the topic is www.digitalbooktalk.com. This award winning site, created by the University of Central Florida, provides downloadable book trailers and valuable 'how-to' information on how to begin your own project. Teachers who register on the site have access to lesson plans, guidance on how to create video book trailers and instructions on how to add the best trailers from your class to this impressive database. Just perusing the trailers on the database is an eye opener. Many of the 45 book titles featured utilize impressive scenes in the one to two minute productions. Contributors range from 7th grade middle school students to college undergraduates. The wide array of skills used to produce each vignette are diverse, ranging from creative script writing, and production planning to talent casting, costuming and prop acquisition, post-production sound effects, music and editing. This website is only one of the numerous 'trailer' sources available on the Internet.

With a bit of research behind you including trailer examples, you may be ready to present

the project concept to faculty. Art, English and Social Studies teachers should be particularly interested by the cross-curricular opportunities. Both librarians agree that it should be easier to get the support of teachers and administration after they have seen a few exceptional trailers.

“We are waiting on money. Once we have the video creation and editing technology in place, more students will choose to create book trailers. We continue to gather book trailers from other sources. Once we have enough, we will present them ongoing through a kiosk in our library.”

When asked if they have any plans for the unveiling of their book trailer kiosk, Mary adds she and Sharon like the idea of hosting a “Premiere” party. What a great way to launch and celebrate a winning lesson that is getting rave reviews.

About the Author



MariRae Dopke-Wilson is a veteran media producer. She is the feature story writer for the *Educators' Spotlight Digest* and producer of many video clips for the *S.O.S. for Information Literacy* project. In the past several years, she has interviewed dozens of library media specialists and captured their stories in both print and video.