A digital story clip with images, music, videos and voice-over

Dear Chris,

H

ow are you doing lately? It is freezing here in Hong Kong. I bet you must be having sunbaths with your family in Australia, right?

Indeed, things are not going great in Hong Kong. The suicidal rate among teenagers is constantly breaking the records. That’s why our school has decided to add warmth to the society. My principal has asked me to create a digital story clip to cheer citizens and my peers up. Does the following story sound appealing to you?

The story is set right here in Hong Kong and is about dancing. Legs are undoubtedly required for dancing and posing elegant movements. Yet, this was what Mary, the girl who dreamt to become a professional dancer, lacked. Mary was born with a leg defect. But dancing was in her blood and she could find no means to cover up her talent!

When she was in secondary school, at the same age as you and me, she joined the school’s dancing team---‘The Dauntless’. She thought naively that this team would live up to its name and accept her and her defective leg. Yes, she made it into the team but was only titled the ‘messy girl’, who had to do clean-up work after each training session. Her role was insignificant in ‘The Dauntless’. But it was her character that made her the most suitable person to stay in the team. She never bowed out in the face of challenges. Each time when she was teased for her flawed leg, she let go. When the team members were taking a break, she practised on her own. When she fell, she stood up and continued. Are you impressed by her determination? The climax of the story comes as ‘The Dauntless’ was offered a chance to perform in an opening ceremony in public. Mary knew that this was her chance and she needed to grab it. After begging her team leader for countless times, she was permitted to go on the stage but just stand at the uttermost corner of it.

You must be guessing the ending of it. If you expect Mary to be teased again, I am sorry that I let you down. Mary ended the show as the perfecter of dancing. Although she was at an insignificant corner on the stage, she claimed all the credits for giving a wonderful kick off to the ceremony.

How does the story sound to you? I entitled my story ‘The Dauntless who triumphs over fear’. I hope I can bring out the message of not giving up on hope; otherwise hope would give up on you. This story is indeed a splitting image of Ms Young’s experience. She is the best soldier of life and destiny. She was crowned the Outstanding Youngster Award a few years ago after becoming a professional dancer.

I believe it must be heart-breaking for her to have learnt the news of teenagers taking their own lives. That’s why I have chosen her story to inspire youngsters to hope in the things unseen. Ms Young, or Mary, had never foreseen what their future would look like. But they knew that if they did not uphold hope, they would become losers of their own destiny. Some may say “Luck yields success”. But I hope after releasing this story clip, people will live to another motto - ‘Hope yields success’.

I need to present the above story within four minutes. This is quite a challenge to me. But as Walt Disney said, ‘It is kind of fun to do the impossible’. I will try my best to take the lid off the story of Ms. Young to the teenagers living in doom and gloom.

Can you help me with the background music? I remember that you have bought the song “Still I Fly” on iTunes. Would you mind sending me a copy? I find the lyrics there thought-provoking, like ‘It’s my moment I’m gonna live a little wild’. Please do lend me a helping hand!

I am also finding a way to invite Ms Young to design some dance movements for my actresses. Do you think asking Ms Young to sing the background music to end the clip is a good idea? She is the jewel in the crown of my story. I could contact her.

There is a pile of work to be done. But ‘it always seems impossible until it is done’, as Mandela said, I hope I can finish the clip within this month. Do you want to be my first audience?

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Chris Wong

**Lau Tsz Yan Sabina**

Dear Chris,

H

ow are you? I was asked to create a digital story clip. This clip will last for 4 minutes, illustrating a short story with images, music, videos and voice-overs. I would tell you some details about the story and I hope you can give me some advice.

First of all, I have chosen a story with a dark and sad tone. The main character, Peter, was a man who didn’t care about lives, materials or anything. He was a poor and lonely person who only knew how to eliminate his targets. The villain in this clip is a police officer named Mr Smith. He didn’t care about lives and materials. But unlike Peter, he loved torturing and killing. Every criminal was afraid of him.

Do you think Peter and Mr Smith are quite similar? I think so. Let’s move on to the plot. One day, Peter was assigned to a mission which was completely different from his missions in the past. He needed to protect a girl called Mary until they got to the boundary. Meanwhile, Mr Smith received an order which was to arrest Mary since she knew the secrets of the country. Execution was allowed if she showed resistance.

Mary was unlucky as she knew the secrets accidentally. Now the country tried to eliminate her and its enemies whowanted to use the secrets against the country. No one really cared about her. After seeing how sad she was, love and sympathy started to grow inside Peter. He swore to keep her safe, not for completing the mission, but for her.

When they got near to the country’s boundary, a rapid gun fight occurred between Mr Smith’s team and Peter. To protect Mary, Peter got shot by Mr. Smith. Supporting forces then came to help Peter and led Mary away. Mr Smith was very angry. He started torturing Peter. Without noticing a C4 hiding beside him, a great explosion killed them both. Five years later, a woman put a flower on the place where Peter died. The clip then ends.

Now, do you think Peter and Mr Smith are similar? They are actually very different. Remember to tell me what you think about the plot.

About the arrangement of the clip, I want to put scenes of Peter killing targets and Mr Smith torturing criminals together, with a voice-over introducing them. Then I will show their facial expression after receiving the new mission. I think this part should last for at most 1 minute.

Then the video will show how unlucky Mary was and how hopeless she felt. During the scenes of Mary crying softly as she tried not to let Peter know, the camera will focus on Peter. The voice of Peter will tell the audience his thoughts. His face will also change from plain to determined. This part should last for another 1 minute.

The gun fight should be the best part of the video. We will use fake guns and add CG effects later, so you don’t have to worry about the safety problem. The camera will focus on how Peter protects Mary and the smile he first shows in this video before the explosion. This part should last for 1 minute and 45 seconds at most.

The last 15 seconds will be about a woman walking towards the area where Peter dies and leaving a flower. Camera will not capture the woman’s face but the audience should know that she is Mary.

If problems arise from the arrangement of the plot in the clip, feel free to tell me. For the cast, we will need 10 men, 1 girl and 1 woman. We will film the gun fight in the forest. I would like to use the music of *Two Step From Hell* as their music style is similar to that of our video, i.e. Cassandra. I will ask the company to see if they allow us to use their music. I will prepare some toy guns which look like real for the gun fight. But the problem is the cast. Who do you think is suitable to play Peter or Mr Smith? Please give me your opinion about the video. I am glad to have you here listening to me and giving me suggestions. Let’s hope that I can make an awesome video.

Love,

Chris

**Sze Ka Yu Harry**

Dear Chris,

How are you? Recently, I was asked to create a digital story clip. I wanna share some of my ideas with you.

The story is called “A well-planned life?” It is a story about a 16-year-old boy called Peter. Peter doesn’t like studying but he loves playing computer games. His parents always plan a lot of things for him. Peter hates that. One day, his parents had to go to the mainland to work for a week. Peter was very happy as he could finally do what he wanted. Peter felt like he had received the greatest gift from God. Freedom is what he wished to have for a thousand years.

When his parents were not at home, he played computer games from daw to dusk. He slept until noon. No one scolded him. He didn’t have to listen to his parents’ instructions. But, this happiness slowly faded out while boredom and loneliness faded in. He didn’t know what else he could do other than sleeping and playing computer games. The house was in a mess. No one talked to himl. He missed his parents. He wasted all the time. Suddenly, he realized that his life was actually aimless. It was going wrong as well. No one made plans for him and he didn’t know how to plan for his own.

The message of the story is that life is too short to waste a minute or a second. A well-planned life is important to motivate ourselves. A plan can also be a goal or a target. A life without planning is a wasted life.

Do you think this theme is good? I think it reflects the real situation of many teens. They don’t have their own plans. They simply follow the plans guided by their parents.

I am thinking of how many songs I should use in this clip. I think maybe around 3 to 4 will be enough. Also, I think I should create 1 to 2 songs by myself so that the clip is more unique. I will have to finish them soon and make some adjustments with my music teacher. Plus, I have to let more people give a review on the story. I am not sure whether the story is boring. My target audience will be teens so I will invite our classmates to take a look at the plot.

Besides, I would like to know if you can help me edit the videos. You’re an expert in editing videos. I will have to find some actors. I am thinking who will be suitable for playing Peter. Do you have anyone suitable in mind? I will also use my home for filming. So, I am going to be quite busy. I think I had better get into the business as soon as possible.

I am quite nervous about making this clip since I don’t have any past experience. As I remember, you have produced digital story clips before. Could you tell me kinds of things I should be aware of? Did I miss any crucial elements?

Please reply soon.

Love,

Mary

**Lam Chui Wing Kalysta**

Dear Chris,

Do you remember Mr Smith told us about a story creating competition last week? I have an idea and I think it will work out fine.

The story is set in the future, when advanced technologies are commonly used. Robots will be able to think and communicate with people.

Robots are mostly slaves and are at the bottom of the society. They work for humans and are not allowed to have any freedom. However, the main character of the story, Peter, a male robot, questioned this phenomenon about the status and importance of robots.

Peter escapes from his owner and gathers a group of robot friends who also think the society is full of unfairness. They fight for freedom and try to save others. The humans hear their voices very soon and start to think that all forms of lives should be respected. Sooner or later, the old beliefs are questioned and the pendulum has swung the other way. Robots and humans live happily and peacefully ever after. An exciting and enlightening story, isn't it?

It may seem a bit complicated for a four-minute story. But hey, don't worry. We can make it shorter by using pictures and musics to present the story. We can present them in the form of manga and play some battle music for background music, such as the fighting scenes. Mary is good at drawing cartoons, so let's ask her to help.

I am experienced in using computer software like flash, after effects, pencil, so just let me finish the animation-making. I'm sure that I can make the visual effects cool and realistic.

As you are talented in drawing and sketching, I would like you to design the characters, backgrounds and props. Your help is vitally important to our success in the competition.

Although we haven’t got great details of the story yet, for the voice-over part, I have someone particular in my mind. Wai Yee and Mr Wong both have a great voice. Wai Yee's voice is sweet and adorable, while Mr Wong has a manly voice. I will try to invite them to participate in the competition tomorrow; I hope they would promise to do us a favour.

By the way, the deadline of submission is 26th June, which is in two months, so we have to hurry up. You know, it can be really time-consuming to draw animations.

We will have to ask for permission to work in the computer room after school. Also, since we are usually not allowed to install any software in our school's computer, we have to ask for permission from teachers. A digital drawing pad will be useful; I think I may borrow two from Mr Smith this Friday.

After the story clip is done, we will have to make a CD copy and send it to the headquarter of Sing Tao magazine group. Before that, the script will be proofread by Mr Smith to make sure it contains no prohibited content like being too violent or sex-related.

In addition, we should make the fighting part of the story less realistic. After all, the aim of creating this story is to get viewers to rethink about their attitudes towards life, instead of showing them a series of explosions or fighting scenes.

How about discussing the plot in greater detail later, say tomorrow lunch time?

I am excited about the competition. Hope that we could win. I believe we can!

See you tomorrow.

Love,

Anna Chan

**Sin Pui Tung Stephanie**