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Web Development

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Digital Translation Project - “The Tiny Sea” Short Story

This website represents a digital translation of a short story that I wrote for a creative writing assignment in 2020. “The Tiny Sea” was inspired by my grandparents’ home in Puerto Rico which faces the ocean. The home is a short drive from *Mar Chiquita* beach, which means the “tiny sea”. The characters were partly inspired by the kind of games my cousins, sisters, and I would play. Some of my cousins would teach everyone how to catch lizards and hang them on their ears. I am not sure if they fully recognized the level of trauma, injury, and/or death that the activity could inflict on animals, but this activity is not something I condone or am trying to promote by sharing the story.

I chose to translate this piece digitally because it has not previously been shared publicly. Also, this translation allowed me to play with the story’s color and visual descriptions. I have memories and photos of the places that inspired the story, so I knew that I would be able to implement photo and drawing representations into the website. The photos also allowed me to focus on shades of blue, green, and orange when choosing the website’s color palette. I created all of the drawings that needed to be hovered over to view. These were drawn on a notes app on my iPad. I then converted each drawing into a png to download onto my Digital Translation folder. I hope that these drawings and the interactive elements allow for the reader to stay more engaged with the text.

I started this digital translation by re-working my original story. The three main characters had longer descriptions of their visual appearances and personalities, but they were cut down due to length. In this digital version, I replaced much of the character descriptions with dialogue so that each character could have their own designated font. The font could perhaps allow the reader to interpret certain qualities about a character based on their actions and reactions to the situations they encountered. I chose all playful serif fonts. The fonts of “Gloria Hallelujah”, “Laquer”, and “Schoolbell” represented the children. I also chose a “stick font” when I introduced the brown lizards. The main font was “EB Garamond” to allude to children’s storybooks.

These multimedia elements came at the expense of accessibility as I have some text and images hidden under hover effects. I tried to maintain color contrasts within the text and the background, but this is something that I would need to consider more deeply as I move forward with web development projects.

With this project, my original website plan was reimagined many times as I encountered coding barriers. One of the biggest challenges included wanting to have buttons in the container that, when clicked, would display an image in the background. I attempted to create these buttons using just HTML and CSS by creating custom checkboxes. I managed to have these buttons work outside of the container, but when I put them within my container of text, the images would either not display or display within the container. Since all of these elements made the website more confusing, I switched to showing an image within the container using the hover method. This allowed me to more freely work with the flow of the text and the images together.

This container with the story text was originally intended to have a max height of around 230px with a separate scroll bar. This meant that a user would be only able to see a few lines of text at any given time. I adjusted this in order to make this more user-friendly. When I tested the website on users, the hover was not intuitive and people would move their mouse around the entire screen outside of the container. Allowing the container to flow out without a height limit made it clearer to users where they could hover their mouse to view an image.

Reimagining *The Tiny Sea* into a digital format allowed me to be more creative with how I told the story. The original text was eight pages, which I cut down to five pages. Hopefully these elements might open the story up to be read by others who might not otherwise sit down to read a short story.