**How to create a Common Craft Style Videos**

**What are Common Craft style videos?**

CommonCraft videos are made using simple paper cut outs and dialogue that focuses on explaining concepts “in plain English”. This style of video utilizes a white background and will have all elements planned out to make a complex subject simple. Another key to the video style is that it is short--usually around 2-4 minutes.

**Tasks for Creating Common Craft style videos**

* **Storyboard a script for the video**. This will involve making sure students are explaining how something works, or why it was important. Encourage students to time their explanation in order to reduce it to it’s most simple form.
* **Creating props for the video**. Props in this case will largely be paper cutouts of simple drawings. Students can plan to use printed words as part of their props. Ideally, printed words should be used for a title slide and a bibliography slide. It will take students a few extra minutes to type but will result in a more professional looking product.
* **Filming the video.**.. usually best left to the teacher when there are time constraints. Students familiar with video production can be trained to take on this task.
* **Narrator.** 1-2 students can be assigned to this task. Students can narrate as the action is taking place, or narration can be added on a separate voice-over.
* **presentation specialists** (2 -3 students) These students are involved in manipulating the paper cut-outs in sync to the narration/explanation of the historical event.

**Suggested CommonCraft Style Videos to use to introduce the Common Craft Style:**

# Electing a US President in Plain English: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ok_VQ8I7g6I&feature=fvsr>

Wikis in Plain English: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dnL00TdmLY&NR=1

Zombies in Plain English: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVnfyradCPY>

**Timeline for a Common Craft Style Video Project**

Day 1

* Assign topic
* Students determine images central to project
* Students script or “storyboard” their topic.
* Students find clip art or draw their figures for the presentations.

Day 2

* Students participate in a trial run of the shoot where they practice the script and manipulation of figures and words.
* Students will need a template for the area the camera will see when they are practicing.
* Students are encouraged to make changes to their script and use a timer to make sure they are talking about the most important aspects of the historical event.
* There will likely be time to start filming on Day 2.

Day 3

* Teacher or student videographers continue filming student projects.
* Students who are finished with filming may then add a voice-over if time permits, or edit out any parts they feel detracts from the expository nature of the film.
* Students complete a group project evaluation form.

Day 4

* Videos are shown to the entire class. This would be appropriate as a test review or as a culminating project for the entire unit. This activity does not have to be done directly after filming.

**Filming Tips for Common Craft Style Videos**

* film on a table
* use white butcher paper as a background
* lightly draw lines with a pencil to indicate the area the camera will see
* angle the camera so it is shooting straight down.
* use a tripod
* add light using a clip on desk lamp
* using zoom will sacrifice clarity, better to angle the camera closer to the table.
* ask that students use continuous motion, rather than stop motion in order to make the project manageable within a few class periods. If students want to make this a longer independent project they can use the stop motion technique featured in the sample videos.

**Film Making Programs to Consider for Common Craft Style Videos**

* Windows Live MovieMaker
* i Movie

**Blog Posts:**

<http://blogush.edublogs.org/2010/12/27/commoncraftvideosmiddleschoolsocialstudies/>

<http://speakingofhistory.blogspot.com/2009/03/podcast-184-creating-common-craft-type.html>

<http://www.commoncraft.com/making-election-video-behind-scenes>

**Sample Rubric:**

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/15710149/Common-Craft?secret_password=2amwras0xk3rrzkhixjs>