



Edge of Yesterday: Setting the Stage for Deeper Learning through Story

Young people possess a spark of curiosity that, when fanned, can lead to big learning. Too often, in our culture, we dampen the flame. Storytelling engages—whether through books, film, video, spoken word or song—and taps into something primal within us all, with the potential to turn learning into passion.

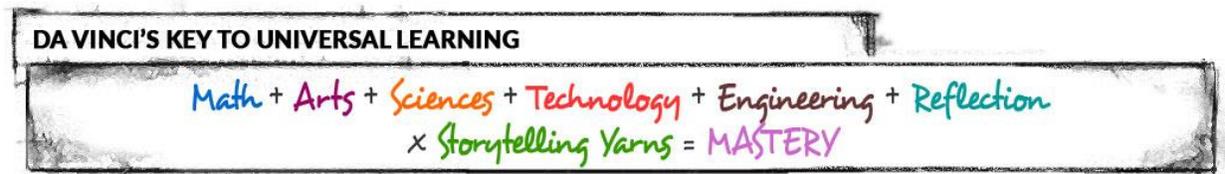
The research question: can narrative told across a variety of media and across disciplines increase learning salience, and produce a measurable enhancement that promotes and supports creativity, and that measurably improves learning? Can it be replicated?

EOY Media takes on transmedia storytelling for transdisciplinary learning with the teen time-travel fiction series and interactive web learning [platform](#), *Edge of Yesterday*, about a STEM-smart girl, Charley Morton, who builds Leonardo da Vinci’s plans for a time machine in order to meet her Renaissance idol, Leonardo, and [learn](#) from the Maestro himself.

Our mission is to inspire the next generation of exceptional scientists, artists, leaders, innovators and creators through story; to inspire learning by tapping into that intrinsic spark of creativity, ignite passion to promote the drive for discovery; and encourage exploration and deep learning. *Can a teen girl with a cell phone, a dream, and a passion to learn everything become a modern-day da Vinci?* Let her story inspire engage, and encourage young people to dream big, learn smart, and follow their dreams!

Engaged, Interactive Learning through Story

Growing out of the storyline, learning portal [Edge of Yesterday](#) brings story and learning together in one place (www.edgeofyesterday.com), where storytelling invites learning beyond STEM, and STEAM (arts and design integration), to a new level of broad **MASTERY**.



The story unfolds online with features, quizzes, games, puzzles, and an opportunity to engage and expand on learning. This project designed for “transmedia storytelling for transdisciplinary learning” is built around the premise that *learning through story* makes learning more salient.

From Storytelling to Learning Program

We are piloting curriculum in new programs from Washington, D.C., to California and beyond. Geared towards middle school-aged youth, we have tailored our content to encourage young teens to follow Charley's story to engage their curiosity to explore and discover the lives, times and places featured in the series, and compare that to their lives and circumstances, to deepen understanding, and pursue big questions, as Charley does: Why are we here? What makes life meaningful? How can I make a difference in the world? And what do I need to learn about to make that happen?

Why a storytelling framework?

Stories tap into a deep universal need for understanding and making sense of our place in the world (*Joseph Campbell on The Hero's Journey*). Now, researchers are also uncovering the biologically-driven mechanisms of building self-identification and meaning through story by measuring brain response and variations in memory to fact-based learning vs. story-based learning (*Paul Zak, Ph.D., talk at The Future of Storytelling, Empathy, Neurochemistry and the Dramatic Arc*).

Nowhere is this impulse towards identity-building stronger than among adolescents, for whom creating an identity outside the family and within their peer society is now seen to be a biological—and perhaps even evolutionary—imperative (*Laurence Steinberg, Ph.D., interview, "The New Science of Adolescence"*). And though teens may not want their entertainments mixed in with teaching, they do want their learning mixed with entertainment.

Edge of Yesterday provides the perfect mix.

Measuring impacts on learning, attention and social and emotional skills

When teens are engaged in deeper learning through story—no matter their point of entry, be it book, film, social media or through classroom or afterschool enrichment, we hypothesize that learning becomes more resonant and, in fact, sticky. By introducing games and puzzles, quizzes, contests, and calls for original creative content through EOY Media, research designs to test how story can enhance and create resonance for transdisciplinary learning and creativity using e-learning and mobile tools to create a Web-based, dynamic and engaged transmedia platform that appeals to teens' emerging sense of identity.

An original research design based on reading *Edge of Yesterday* and engaging with the interactive learning platform, supplement traditional learning to improve motivation, creative problem solving, critical thinking, team engagement, synthesis and analysis ability through story promote learning, memory, problem solving, and social and emotional learning?

Does such learning in turn facilitate creativity, innovation, discovery, and imagination? Through questions such as these, we hope to gain insights into how creativity enhances the learning process.

About Robin Stevens Payes

Robin Stevens Payes is founder of EOY Media, a transmedia storytelling project for interactive learning based on a novel, screenplay, and interactive learning adventure, *Edge of Yesterday*. As mom to three great kids, she drove a lot of carpools back in the day, and relished spying on the candid conversations playing out in the back of the car. Since her passion is storytelling, Robin surreptitiously listened in on the backseat banter, noting how their language, ideas and attitudes transformed along with their bodies and brains. And how they wanted to “do” everything.

The exercise represented a complete anthropological study in teen social psychology. For a mom, teen attitudes and behavior may be exasperating, but for a writer and science interpreter: priceless.

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