Journal of Technology-Integrated Lessons and Teaching
(2022) Volume 1, Issue 1

Exploring Copyright while Making Memes

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Overview

Copyright, fair use, and open licensing are essential terms for preservice teachers in what is often referred to as the information age. Digital resources abound, and it seems so easy to copy, paste, screenshot, download, or stream. This lesson invites preservice teachers to consider whether they are permitted to use everything found online, even if resources are used only in their classrooms.

Topics: Copyright, Open Licenses, Creative Commons (CC), Public Domain, Meme, Attribution

Time: 150 minutes to engage resources and create meme

Materials

- A web-enabled device
- Copyright and Open Educational Resources (OER) pre-assessment
- Digital Compass Game (https://www.digitalcompass.org/game/index)
- Introduction to Copyright Terminology video
- Copyright Basics for Teachers video with review questions on EdPuzzle (https://bit.ly/3fKzV4T)
- Copyright and Open Licensing textbook chapter (https://edtechbooks.org/k12handbook/copyright)
- Open Educational Resources textbook chapter (https://edtechbooks.org/k12handbook/oer)
- Software that supports image editing
- Creating Memes Video Tutorial

Setup

Using the phases of instruction described in this lesson, organize the materials and directions within a learning management system (LMS). Create the meme assignment with the associated rubric in the LMS. Ensure all learners have access to a device.

Context at a Glance

Setting
Educational technology course for preservice teachers at a mid-size, U.S., public institution

Modality
Online, asynchronous delivery

Class Structure
Students spend approximately 90 minutes interacting with instructional resources to learn the content and another 60 minutes to apply the content.

Organization Norms
This module was the first online lesson taught in a course that met in-person prior to the spring break of Spring 2020. The institution primarily offered in-person, undergraduate courses and students had little or no experience as online learners.

Learner Characteristics
Learners were in their junior or senior year in an inclusive childhood education or a childhood/early childhood education program completing their only required technology integration course.

Instructor Characteristics
One educational technology faculty member designed and taught this course. He was proficient with the basic image and video editing needed for this lesson.

Development Rationale
This lesson was designed to address digital citizenship standards and build online community through the comedic relief and shared experiences expressed in meme creation.

Design Framework
5E Instructional Model: Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Elaboration, and Evaluation

DOI: 10.13001/jtilt.v1i1.6895

Standards

Students and Educators

This lesson aligns with the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards for Students 1.2.c. (ISTE, 2016). It also aligns with ISTE Standards for Educators 2.3.a, 2.3.c, and 2.6.d. (ISTE, 2017).

Context and Setting

When it was first announced at this institution that students would not return to campus following the spring break of 2020, there was a sense of needing to begin the semester again. Although familiar with classroom norms and expectations for in-person interaction, students needed to acclimate themselves to the online environment. However, they were not simply making this transition in a single course. Now, students, who had never taken an online course, were enrolled solely in online coursework with many faculty who also had not previously taught online. Thus, this module was intended to establish a pedagogical home that valued community contributions, creativity, and the experiences of others (Smith, 2018) and designed to simultaneously address the associated learning outcomes.

In this module, students learn key definitions of copyright, its related terms, and its relevance for K-12 educators. Additionally, students are introduced to repositories of content that may be free to use, modify, and distribute. To practice identifying and revising openly licensed media, students learn a simple process for creating memes. When students create their memes in this module, however, the memes must be created with openly licensed media and include a complete attribution (i.e., title, author, source, and license).

The goal of this module was to address two of the broader course learning outcomes that emphasized attending to professional standards (i.e., ISTE Educator Standards; ISTE, 2017) and applying habits of critical analysis (i.e., Project Look Sharp Key Questions to Ask When Creating Media Messages; Project Look Sharp & Rogow, 2017) when creating digital resources for the classroom. The guiding learning objectives for the module were:

- Explain copyright, its purpose, and its relation to public domain and open licenses.
- Differentiate between the various CC licenses when selecting images that can be used, shared, and modified.
- Properly attribute openly licensed media by identifying the media's title, author, source and license.
- Reflect on how you can mentor and support elementary students' responsible media creation.

The setting for this module's design and implementation was an educational technology course for pre-service teachers at a mid-size, public institution in the Northeast United States. This institution is home to one of the largest, public, teacher education programs in the United States. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the institution's teacher education programs primarily offered face-to-face courses. This module was initially implemented in two face-to-face course sections that were moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Course sections ranged from 20-25 students.

The module was designed within the Blackboard LMS. Although this was the first online module of the semester, each module in the course began with an introduction and a numbered list of tasks which students were expected to complete by the end of the module. Learning resources and activities appeared below this list and were correspondingly numbered. The norms for each module were for students to complete a learning check following the readings and instructional videos. Most modules ended with an application of learning task by involving students in digital resource development and an accompanying reflection. Students frequently shared their final products with peers and were encouraged to think of their peers as the primary audience for the meme artifact in this module.

Learning Representation

Engage: Copyright Considerations

In my teaching practice, I use personal narratives as topic introductions followed by questions for students to consider. For this lesson, I tell students how much I loved to create greeting cards on my father's desktop computer as a child. The following represents a personal narrative used for this lesson.

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When I was in elementary school, my father purchased The Print Shop Pro Publisher Deluxe 12.0 software, and I would run the inkjet printer dry creating cards and brochures. Instead of going online to search for images, this program came with 12 compact disks (CD) that stored a gallery of 1.25 million images. As I created media and inserted images, the program displayed a popup that indicated what CD to insert to locate the image. I am not sure what I enjoyed more - searching through seemingly endless images or pressing the button to open and close the CD drive.

Not only are computers today produced without CD drives, but most of our first instincts are to search the internet for media needed in class projects, presentations, and lesson plans. We download, take screenshots, screen capture videos, and stream media from various sources. While my print shop software had to be purchased for access to the image gallery, the openness of the internet can tempt us to think that we may freely use what we find.

Think about the last time you used an image for a class project. For example, some of you included images in your presentations last week. Can you tell with certainty whether your use of this image abided by copyright laws?

Let's consider another example. A teacher is a paying customer of a popular streaming service. In the service's library, the teacher finds a documentary on elephants that would be perfect for an upcoming lesson on animal habitats and adaptations. Can the teacher legally show the documentary to the class. How can you know for sure? Why does this matter to us as future educators?

In this module, you will learn how to identify copyright guidelines for various media and explore web-based repositories of content that are free to use—legally. Of course, we will also discuss that the ways we are permitted to use these resources may still depend on the specific license, context, and use.

Explore: Digital Compass Game

In the next part of the module, learners explore additional copyright scenarios by playing one of the storylines in Digital Compass game. Common Sense Media (2020), creators of Digital Compass, describe the game as the following:

> Digital Compass is an innovative way to give students age 11–14 the freedom to explore how decisions made in their digital lives can affect them. Through the popular choose-your-own-path format, students play through the perspective of one of eight characters, each of whom is facing a different digital citizenship dilemma. The varied story paths and multiple decision points encourage students to play repeatedly and explore alternative actions (p. 2).

Because this is an educational technology course, students are frequently introduced to new digital resources. The Digital Compass game was selected for its copyright storyline and to introduce students to Common Sense Media educator resources.

Activity Overview

In the Digital Compass game, student can choose to play eight different storylines that are each designed to teach aspects of digital citizenship. Games focus on topics such as news and media literacy, cyberbullying, digital identity, privacy and security, and copyright. While I encourage students to try several storylines, learning outcomes for this module are focused on legal and ethical practices when curating resources for online classrooms. Therefore, students are required to play the "Hack-a-Wrong" adventure. To assess students' participation in this activity, they are asked to submit the certificate of completion which is awarded at the end of the game.

Activity Directions for Students

1. Click to start Digital Compass game.
2. Create a username.
3. Watch the introduction video.
4. Click on the **last letter E** in the word ANYWHER**E** to begin "Hack-a-Wrong" story.
5. Play through the story as often as you like. In future playthroughs, make different decisions to see how it affects the storyline.
   a. Optional exploration: Try other stories to learn additional aspects of digital citizenship or explore the Common Sense Digital Citizenship Curriculum to see how this game can be incorporated into future lessons.
6. Once finished, click on the certificate icon. Click to save your certificate.
7. Submit the image to our online classroom.

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Explain: Key Terms and CC Searches

After learners have explored copyright dilemmas in the Digital Compass game, they will interact with online textbook chapters and video resources to further comprehend the lesson's underlying concepts. In these resources, key terms are defined (e.g., copyright, open, open licenses, Creative Commons (CC), public domain, open educational resources, and attribution), and relevant examples are provided. The following list of tasks and resources guide learners through this explanation phase.

1. Watch the Introduction to Copyright Terminology video (https://youtu.be/eOshbw1u6fU)
2. Read the Copyright and Open Licensing textbook chapter (Kimmons, 2018)
3. Respond to questions* in the Copyright Basics for Teachers video on EdPuzzle (https://bit.ly/3fKzV4T)
4. Read Open Educational Resources textbook chapter (Liao, 2018)
5. Explore the OER list for educators (Liao, 2018)
6. Watch the Creating Memes Video Tutorial

*These questions are an informal assessment intended to encourage students to explore relevant copyright scenarios. To answer two of the questions correctly, it is expected that students evaluate website terms of use or media licenses.

Elaborate & Evaluate: Open Licenses

The goal of the elaborate phase is for students to practice skills and knowledge within a new context for learning (Bybee, 2015, Chapter 1). In this lesson, students practice identifying openly licensed images for the meme they wish to create. For many students, this may be the first time they have practiced searching websites such as Pixabay (https://pixabay.com/) or Unsplash (https://unsplash.com/). Other students may choose to practice searching for openly licensed images using the Creative Commons filter in Google's image search function. Finally, students may also practice searching Flickr (https://www.flickr.com/) and attending to the various licenses which creators select for their images. It is during the elaborate phase that students may refer again to the Creative Memes Video Tutorial for assistance with identifying openly licensed images. Additionally, it is during this time when the instructor may respond to e-mail inquiries about whether the identified image is licensed for use in the project.

Although some 5E lessons may have clearer delineation between the elaborate and evaluate phase, the meme project for this lesson presents a somewhat seamless transition. After students have identified an image for their meme in the elaboration phase, they are asked to provide attribution for the image. This assessment task is critical as it evaluates whether students have properly distinguished the license for their image and have attended to its author, source, and title. To close the evaluate phase and generate further evidence of understanding, students are prompted to reflect on the design of their work throughout the lesson. The following paragraphs detail meme assignment directions and grading criteria (shared with students).

Assignment Directions for Students

The following represents the directions used for this assignment. A meme has been defined as a "unit of cultural information spread by imitation" (Rogers, n.d., para. 1). With the internet, these cultural snippets are often sent as images with captions at the top or bottom (see Figure 1). If an image holds significant cultural weight, it may be repeatedly adapted with new captions. Memes are not limited to still images but may take the form of a gif or video clip as well. As shown in Figure 1, cats and other animals are frequent subjects of memes.

"Tired Angry Cat" by Loïc. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Figure 1. Instructor meme example with attribution.

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As we have now moved online for the rest of the semester, the topic of your meme should be experiences in online classrooms. Reflect on your first week of online courses, find an image that represents it, and caption it accordingly.

After reviewing submissions, I will compile a short video montage of select memes (see Figures 2-4).

The purpose of this assignment is to practice finding and providing proper attribution to openly licensed media. Please complete the tasks below:

1. Find an image that has a Creative Commons (CC) license.
2. Attribute the original work. If needed, refer to the Best Practices for Attribution webpage.
   - For attribution of CC media, it is helpful to remember the TASL acronym.
     - Title, Author, Source, License
   - In the example meme (see Figure 1), a good attribution would be the following:
     - "Tired Angry Cat" by Loïc, used under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 / Text added to the original
     - The Title links to the page with the image, Author links to the author's webpage, and License links to a webpage detailing the license. These links are your Source. You should *always provide a link to the image*. In some cases, the author will not have a webpage or the link to the license is not found. Links to the author and license are appreciated, but not required.
     - *Note:* This is different than APA; in some ways it is more straightforward. You may find an openly licensed image that has most but not all the TASL information with it. In future cases, depending on the license, it may be okay to include as much information as you can find. However, to receive credit for this assignment, you must include all TASL information.
   - To identify changes to the original image, add a forward slash followed by text that describes the change.
3. Lastly, consider the below questions as you create your meme. Submit a one-page reflection along with your meme file.
   - What techniques did you use to communicate a message in your meme for this class and why did you include these techniques (Project Look Sharp & Rogow, 2017)?
     - *Note:* Techniques may include discussing why you chose the image used for the meme. You could also discuss your font selection, color choice, caption placement, and font size. You might also consider how and where this meme should be shared. Think how each technique was applied to communicate the intended message to your audience.
   - Describe how your meme creation and your work in this lesson demonstrate your mastery of ISTE (2017) Educator Standard 2.3c?

Grading Criteria (10 points total*)

_____ Meme is created with an openly licensed image (3 points)

_____ Meme is a single file with an image and text that respond to the given prompt (1 point)

_____ Image attribution accurately includes the title, author, source, and license (4 points)

_____ Learner's reflection details techniques used to enhance communication with audience (1 point)

_____ Learner's reflection describes proficiency demonstration with ISTE standard 3c (1 point)

*Points are presented to demonstrate the weighting and emphasis placed on associated skills.

"Woman With Headache" by Andrea Piacquadio, used under Pexels License

Figure 2. Student-generated CC meme with attribution.

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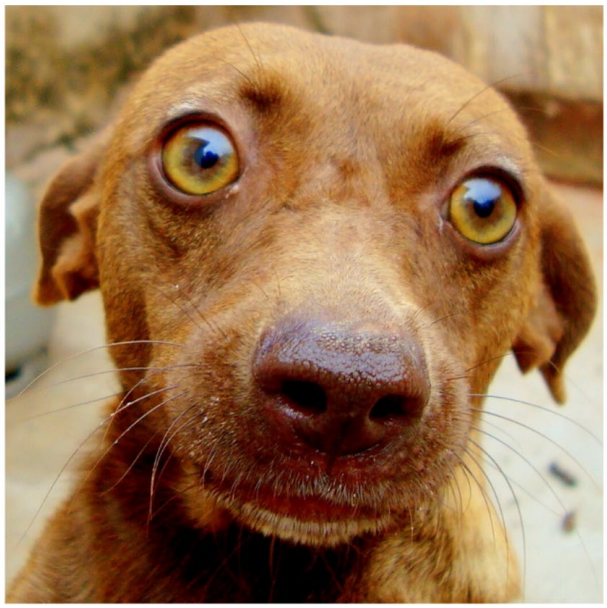

Toddy Dog by Joao Paulo Correa de Carvalho used under CC BY 2.0

Figure 3. Student-generated CC meme with attribution.

"Disgusted" by iwishmynamewasmarsha used under CC BY-NC 2.0

Figure 4. Student-generated CC meme with attribution.

Reflection on Teaching

After initially implementing this lesson online with two sections of undergraduate preservice teachers, the lesson has been adapted and implemented with an online, graduate, educational technology course and five sections of a blended, undergraduate, educational technology course. The culminating meme assignment has been incorporated in all instantiations of this lesson, but other aspects of the lesson have varied. For example, the graduate students completed an additional elaboration activity where they curated, adapted, and showcased OER within an online lesson plan they were creating. The blended courses, following a flipped model, incorporated the Engage, Explore, and Explain phases online for completion prior to the in-person class meeting. During the in-person meeting, students worked on the Elaborate and Evaluate phases with the support of their peers and just-in-time instructor guidance.

Across these various implementations, the lesson appears to have helped learners identify openly licensed media, distinguish between CC licenses, and properly attribute media. Figures 2-4 showcase student examples from the first implementation of this lesson. In many reflections, learners expressed not previously considering copyright on the internet and even wishing they had learned these skills earlier in their college experience. For example, a learner wrote the following in the course evaluation, "My only suggestion is this course should be at the start of the program. The course offers valuable information that can be practiced and used throughout the program in lessons plans, presentations, and assignments. I cringe at all the times I have violated copyright! ☺." I, too, cringed at the original placement of this lesson within the course. When first implemented, the lesson occurred over halfway through the course. This meant that initial course projects were completed with no instruction on how to respect the intellectual rights and property of media creators (ISTE, 2017). Since the first implementation, the lesson has now been moved to the third week of the semester; students are then expected to apply these skills in subsequent media creation projects.

The lesson may also have fostered a shift in attitudes toward copyright and a newfound sense of responsibility to model these practices for students. "I take my responsibility to model proper citation and usage of materials seriously, knowing that my

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students will be learning their usage from the choices I make," a learner wrote at the end of her reflection. For every student who takes this responsibility seriously, however, there are students who dismiss these skills and knowledge in future projects. I have received e-mails or in-class questions asking if openly licensed media is required when making a digital story or whether background music necessitates attribution. To my dismay, I have evaluated end of year portfolios that incorporated memes from this lesson without displaying the corresponding attribution. Adding instruction to this module on the complexities of Fair Use guidelines may help learners see the limited capacity they have to freely use copyrighted works without permission and help them perceive the benefits of open licenses.

Library media specialists play a critical role in working with teachers to abide by the principles of Fair Use and identify openly licensed resources. Future iterations of this lesson could be improved by modeling this collaborative relationship and demonstrating that teachers are not alone in their attempts to respect copyright laws and Fair Use principles. Working with the institution's education librarian can enrich the lesson's content and can demonstrate the expertise and support available in the school community—expertise and support which will likely be available in students' future school contexts. Engaging students with multiple stakeholders who are committed to responsible and ethical uses of copyrighted materials may shift their perceptions of the social norm related to this practice (Teo, 2012) and further encourage their adoption of openly license media in their teaching.

Yet, there appears to be a persisting gap for some preservice teachers in their attitudes toward openly licensed media and intentions to adopt these practices (Teo, 2012). To encourage perceptions that using openly licensed media can be easy, I follow-up the lesson by noting how certain websites (e.g., Pixabay, Unsplash, FreeSound) abound with media that require no attribution. Furthermore, I model how websites, such as Pixabay, will even provide users with the attribution. Lastly, I demonstrate how some media creation platforms, such as Storyjumper (https://www.storyjumper.com/) and Adobe Spark, have applied a filter in their search engine to display only images with CC licenses. The hope is that by weaving these various methods throughout the semester, preservice teachers will have ample opportunities for practice and sense that the "rights and obligations of using and sharing" (ISTE, 2016, Standard 1.2.c) media are not overly burdensome.

Regarding content understandings, the initial implementation of this lesson did not adequately explain the No Derivatives (ND) license. When part of a CC license, this indicates that the media can be copied and distributed, but it cannot be altered. In short, ND licensed images should not be reconstructed as memes. Since this was not clarified with the first group of students, the initial meme submissions included several ND licensed images. The meme directions in this lesson have been updated and now include an explanation of the ND license. However, I still find it beneficial to explicitly discuss this license with students. Another area of confusion has been websites that do not follow the standard CC licenses. For example, Unsplash publishes their material under an Unsplash license. To address this misunderstanding in future implementations, I plan to list a few of examples of site-specific licenses. It may also be worthwhile to offer additional practice simply identifying TASL elements on assorted websites as a formative evaluation prior to the summative evaluation phase, when learners independently format the attribution for their meme.

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