Media Creation Choices

In Mr. Hernadez's social studies class, students are learning about ancient civilizations around the world. Students note that while civilizations each had their own unique characteristics, they also had much in common. As a final project in the unit, Mr. Hernandez asks groups of students to compare and contrast two ancient civilizations of their choice. He creates a rubric to be explicit about expectations and assessment criteria. However, Mr. Hernandez encourages students to be creative in choosing the form of their final presentations. He welcomes students to use their mobile phones and smartphones.

One group that is studying the Maya and Aztecs decides to use mobile phones as audio-capture tools. The students use mobile phones to record staged audio clips of leaders of the two civilizations discussing aspects of their society, including government, religion, and social structure. The recordings are posted with brief written explanations on a Web site created for the project.

Another group chooses to compare and contrast Ancient China and Egypt. Their final project is a twist on a traditional Venn diagram. They take still pictures with mobile phones at various points in the creation of the diagram. They then email these images to one group member who compiles them into a digital presentation. As they share the presentation with their peers, each student has the opportunity to talk about one of the slides.

A third group focuses on the Ancient Romans and Greeks. This group decides to create a movie. Scripts created for different scenes outline major similarities and differences between the two civilizations. A smartphone app allows the group to not only capture video but to edit it into a sharp final product.

Mr. Hernandez is impressed with the quality of the final projects. Not only do students demonstrate attainment of the learning goals, but he also notices that the integration of mobile phones allowed for student choice and increased the level of engagement and excitement surrounding the project. He embeds the final presentations on his classroom blog for the community to view.

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