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SHORT PIECES
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

TREVOR J. TEBBS

“Art is the representation, science the explanation – of the same reality”
—Herbert Read, *Education through art* (1943)

“In search of Arthur” is the title of an interdisciplinary field trip dedicated to the exploration of traditional – and not so traditional – sites of the legendary King Arthur in England and Wales. It took place during spring break of 2002 but was tied to a semester-long special Honors course entitled “Interpreting Arthur.” The courses were altogether rich and fascinating, affording opportunities to visit several centuries of texts from Wales, Ireland, ancient Britain, France, and modern England, while also wending our way from hill fort to cathedral to Stonehenge to castles perched upon cliff tops to Roman temples to ancient amphitheaters. It was truly memorable, but how to record it? A traditional essay? A final exam? A standup presentation of some sort? PowerPoint?

PowerPoint presentations are either very dry and boring, or the technology becomes an end in itself providing little more than testimony of someone’s ability to include all the bells and whistles imaginable but *very little content!* Only when PowerPoint is carefully and consciously allied with higher order, critical, and creative thinking do we have at our fingertips a superb means of ordering thought, bringing disparate elements together, communicating, and teaching. Through inclusion of digital photographs, scanned pictures and text, music, recorded interviews and other commentary sensitively blended using various techniques built into the program, an audience may be captivated and a point forcibly made.

Students were given the option to use technology as the prime means to finalize their course of study. Several chose this route, and their product was impressive. They had a complex mass of material from which to work, but technology helped them synthesize ideas, make connections, evaluate the purpose and meaning of the various elements of the course, reflect what they had learned, and decide how best to convey that knowledge to others. Their presentations were clearly products of much thought. They documented deep interest in and knowledge and enjoyment of the subject; provided a record of an experience that was both academically and creatively satisfying; and made it abundantly clear that the task was *fun*. A perfect blend of “art” and science ...and who said learning shouldn’t be fun?

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