Adventures Of Kody A Children's Visual Storybook And Interactive Web Site

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ADVENTURES OF KODY: A CHILDREN'S VISUAL STORYBOOK AND INTERACTIVE WEB SITE

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2005

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ABSTRACT

In order to experience unconditional love, prejudices must be exposed and overcome. People often meet others with a disability or handicap and unknowingly treat these individuals negatively. As a middle school teacher, I have often witnessed students behaving cruelly towards those that are different. When my dog became a paraplegic I was inspired to develop a project to assist young readers in the development of conscientious actions towards individuals with disabilities. This document chronicles the development, procedures, and outcomes of the process behind that artistic endeavor. The artistic elements of this thesis project are a written children's storybook and an educational interactive Web site to further teach inclusiveness to young readers. The images are real photos that have been manipulated to look like illustrations that enhance elements that are visually appealing to children in order to increase the images' communication value. The site has been designed to integrate the look and feel of the book, complementing and referencing it.
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INTRODUCTION

The story detailed in the children’s book and accompanying Web site, Kody's World, follows the adventures of my dog, Kody. Kody became a paraplegic when he landed poorly after jumping off of the bed one night. Due to this accident Kody experienced many dramatic changes in his life. Helping Kody meet the challenges of these changes motivated me to share his story. While this project is geared toward young children ages 4-6 who are developing a social conscience, the message of empathy in the story can be adapted to children of all ages.

In order for the story to reach a broader audience, I chose to create an online presence to augment the book (http://www.kodysworld.com). This fusion of traditional literature and interactive media will create an innovative bridge between the two mediums. The Web site functions as an interactive portal, ultimately expanding the scope of the project. Thus allowing users to delve deeper into Kody’s life by using interactions to introduce themes of social awareness in the nonthreatening manner of story.

According to the Web site, Digital Storytelling - Using Technology to Tell Stories, "We embark on this endeavor [telling stories] because stories are ways in which we pass down information from one generation to another. Words and language are the threads of life, and from Homer's epics to Mark Twain's Mississippi adventures, stories are a way to engage the imagination of a reader or listener" (Hodgson). Growing up, children are often told stories by their elders about hardships and life decisions. The intention is for these stories to influence the children’s decisions later in life as a means to keep the children safe and socially acclimated (Hurst 130).

Children's books have been in existence since the 1600s with the first children's textbook called Orbis Sensualium Pictus by a Czech teacher named Comenius. It is considered to be the
first picture book and is often thought of as an encyclopedia for children (Epstein 2). Many children's stories, however, have been around even longer, such as Aesop's Fables and others. Aesop’s anecdotes, using animals as the main characters, were concocted with morals attached to them and use anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism, according to Merriam Webster's Dictionary, is when non-living objects or animals are given human attributes or characteristics ("Anthropomorphism"). Aesop's narratives were concocted to help teach the listener about a better approach to life. The story The Tortoise and the Hare tells a story of a race. The hare is the faster of the two animals, however, he makes a poor decision and the tortoise wins the race. Aesop then provides the moral of the story: "slow and steady wins the race." This is a common tale told in American culture that informs children that taking ones time on a task will ensure its correct completion and therefore, the student will "win the race."

Nancy Anderson in her book, Elementary Children's Literature: The Basics for Parents and Teachers, questions what is considered "children's literature" and challenges the common assumptions made within her field. She clearly states her belief that children's literature does not include comic, joke, and cartoon books, as well as nonfiction works such as dictionaries and other reference materials (2). I consider my book to be a picture storybook; as stated by Anderson, "picture storybooks are picture books with a plot, with the text and illustrations equally conveying the story line" (11).

The story structure of Kody's adventure follows the example of what author and mythologist Joseph Campbell identifies as "the Hero's Journey" ("The Hero with a Thousand Faces"). Joseph Campbell states in his 1988 PBS special Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth that "leaving one condition, finding the source of life, to bring you forth in a richer, or more mature or other condition" is the foundation of the hero's adventure. It is the hero's
adventure, that Campbell further states, "is worth writing about" (Campbell). Society has multiple versions of the hero's adventure, from classical mythology, such as *The Odyssey* to modern day film, such as *Star Wars*.

Kody’s adventure follows the classic hero’s journey format:

1. The hero starts in his or her ordinary world; Kody starts his day in his living room.
2. The hero receives a call to enter a new and strange world or event; Kody is told he will be going to the dog park. Kody is abandoned by the other dogs.
3. The hero must decide to accept the call and face whatever tasks are thrown at the hero; Kody is alone and must try to protect himself from another group of larger dogs. Kody does receive help from without. A larger dog protects Kody instead of leaving Kody to face the threat entirely on his own. The assistance by the larger dog influences the other dachshunds to accept Kody.
4. When the hero succeeds, a great gift will be bestowed to the hero and this gift will often improve the ordinary world ("The Hero with a Thousand Faces"); Kody returns to the dachshund group and their gift is a new vision of how to treat others.

This structure is used in many stories, including, as demonstrated in the above breakdown, my children’s book about Kody.

Having the reader connect to the story is crucial for the author and reader. As stated by Lesnick-Oberstein in *Issues in Children's Literature Criticism*, 1994, "Children's literature bases its validity, its very existence, on a relationship between the author, or the book, and the child - a relationship which postulates, in many forms, the emotions, consciousness, and morality of the child" (10). My goal is for readers to develop a personal relationship with the character of Kody. I am measuring this relationship by the reader’s desire to see more of Kody and express empathy
towards him. I further believe this book and its correlating Web site will be a useful literary device not only to entertain, but also to educate users. The underlying educational goal is to bring to light the concept that an individual or group with differences does not mean the individual or group has a less profound understanding of his/her/their world or a stunted emotional reaction to it. As the author, my desire is to inspire my readers to live their lives with their eyes and hearts open to others with differences and shed preconceived opinions.

The mission of the project is to raise awareness about differences, while the reader and user interact with a lovable character. According to Leonard Marcus, "animals as images in our everyday thought and expression are among the most association-rich classes of symbols. Just under the surface of picture book fantasies, cultural meanings may well be at work" (qtd. in Nodelman 114). The Web site will grant the user an opportunity to learn and play not just through the electronic copy of the book, but also through Kody's biography. The site, in the future, will introduce the places and people that have assisted me and Kody along the journey. The user may only pick up the physical copy of the book once, but updated content on the Web site will encourage them to return to Kody’s online site multiple times. Users will be able to further explore the character of Kody and obtain helpful and useful information for others in a similar situation of caring for a disabled pet. The site will also provide the opportunity to reach additional users of multiple age groups, containing supplementary and broader objectives. Ultimately, this Web site will facilitate education and the ability to share the information with others within a narrative environment.

Future plans for the Web site include introducing the virtual care of a paralyzed or disabled dog. There are many organizations, including the Affiliated Veterinary Services, which specialize in animal care especially those animals that may be disabled. My Web site will offer a
way for the user to donate and assist in the care of an animal at one of these locations. An example of this type of Web site is the educational Web site *Free Rice*, a Web site run by the United Nations World Food Program. The site enables the user to strengthen their knowledge in key subject areas, such as Languages, English, Math and Geography. Each time the user gets a correct answer, the United Nations World Food Program donates ten grains of rice to a nation of the world that is in need. The rice is paid for by ads and banners located on the Web site at the bottom of the screen (Breen). One of my goals for *Kody's World* is to create fun games for the user to play and have sponsors that will donate money or time to an organization that assists the care of disabled pets. This care and assistance would help save a living, breathing animal therefore the site will have the opportunity to make a difference in the life of an animal when visiting *Kody's World*. The Web site will then contain the daily information of what it is like to care for a disabled pet with future directives thoroughly developed and researched before devising an implementation plan. Institutions that receive contributions will be asked to send images and stories of those animals being helped to encourage further donations and revisiting the site.
PROJECT DETAILS - WRITING THE BOOK / WHY WRITE IT?

There are often many reasons why someone undertakes the authoring of a book. These range from making money, fulfilling a contract, trying something new, or completing a personal quest. My purpose was to spread inclusiveness as a philosophy by sharing the insights I’ve gained through my own perception of Kody's experiences as an individual with differences. The book catalogs our journey and the accompanying Web site will serve as a place that can be continuously updated. My reason for telling this story is to spread compassion and empathy. He and I share the same story, including the hardships and tribulations he has faced. Just like a parent trying to decide when to intercede, I have to decide when to allow Kody the chance to experience pain in order to allow this little paralyzed dog to overcome his handicap and move forward.

The first task of this project was the subject and theme of the story. The theme of the story was chosen after I observed how several people and animals responded to Kody's paralysis. For example, individuals told me that if their dog had Kody's condition they would have put him to sleep. I soon realized that many people do not value animals’ existence to the same degree as I do. This directly correlates to my second task of developing the story: what adventure was I going to tell about Kody? People should look at the value of someone's life, not the inconvenience of paralysis. After several visits to the Orlando Dachshund Meet-up group, the theme was demonstrated in Kody's experiences.

The second task in writing a children’s book is determining the style and type of book that would be created. An option was the Wordless Picture book style that thrived in the 1970’s. These books utilize images as the words to move the story along. (Dresang 93). Children's
author Mercer Mayer created an entire book series based on only the illustrations of a boy and his pet frog. Image 3 is the cover of one of the books in that series, known as *Frog Goes To Dinner*. It is a story about a boy who takes his pet frog to a dinner out with his parents. This particular style was not the best way to tell a story about Kody. The intended audience of this book and Web site is age 4-8. These are developing readers for whom text will not only assist the telling of the story but also further develop their language skills and their understanding cause and effect ("Ages").

![Figure 1: Cover of Frog Goes to Dinner](image)

According to Anderson, picture books generally have thirty-two pages, including both sides of paper, and are often times unnumbered. (12). My book consists of fifteen pages of imagery and text. Fifteen pages clearly tells this story of Kody in a manner where the reader will comprehend and obtain the message without being clouded by extra text. Based upon Piaget's cognitive development, my selected age group is pre-school through grade level two. My writing
style and imagery have been adapted to the needs of this audience. I have also provided each page in my book with the page number. There are two reasons I chose to include page numbers for the reader. The first reason is to assist in teaching numbers. Each page contains the page number, allowing all readers the chance to comprehend numerical order; that is, page one comes before page two, and so on. The second reason is to aid in graphical asymmetrical balance. I have the number positioned at the top right corner of each page. Asymmetrical balance according to the article "The Principles of Design" "occurs when the weight of a composition is not evenly distributed around a central axis. It involves the arranging of objects of differing size in a composition such that they balance one another with their respective visual weights. Often there is one dominant form that is offset by many smaller forms" (McClurg-Genevese).

Author Bruce Block in his book, *The Visual Story: Creating the Visual Structure of Film, TV and Digital Media*, states that the use of focus can alter the depth perception of the image (42). The produced images for my book occasionally had their depth of field altered by blurring the background out of focus. This effect was created to focus the viewer's perception on Kody and not on the location. The location in the particular example provided does not alter the story or provide necessary information and therefore being faintly out of focus does not hinder, but improves, the communication. Framing and composition techniques use this for when an artist wishes for the inner thoughts and feelings of the character to be the primary concern.
While researching this project, I described the Web site *Joyful Paws*, a site dedicated to the book and story of *Frankie, the Walk 'n Roll Dog*. It is a book and Web site written and maintained by Barbara Techel about her paralyzed dachshund. The book was published and the site became available online in 2008. Though I had been contemplating this project since 2006, I had not implemented it. Techel’s version is now available in full bloom on the Web and in print! After reviewing Techel’s site, I realized that while the overall theme of the story is similar to Kody’s, the way each story is told and visualized is uniquely different. Her book uses a traditional cartoon character style; my book uses photography that has been altered. Photography resembles a real instance that happens in time. This moment cannot be replicated and the experience the photograph captures occurred and had been witnessed by the camera lens. Paul Lester, in *Visual Communication Images with Messages* (2006), adds "most significant psychological effect of photography is that a picture constantly reminds us of our own state of mind at a particular moment and place" (241). Reviewing a photograph, the photographer will travel back to that moment when the image was taken and others viewing the image will try to
create those thoughts in their minds — attempting to bridge the photographer with the viewer. A cartoon character is created through the mind of the artist and lacks the physicality of the living — a cartoon can and will exist anywhere the artist wishes. A photograph has to have the character at the location or set at the exact time of being taken. Frankie's story is told through traditional illustrations by an artist and not the author. An illustrator must interpret the message and create his or her own unique version of the story to tell. In Kody's adventure, there is no illustrator; the author is also the photographer. This allows for the author's true vision of the story to be displayed because it is not going through interpretations from one individual to another. The originator of the idea is processing both the story and imagery to accompany the text on the page.

Techel's book is a longer, forty-nine page children's book about the Wisconsin dachshund that became paralyzed in 2006. Frankie's story is different from Kody's because Techel spends the first half of the book explaining Frankie's life before becoming paralyzed. Kody's story starts after he is paralyzed, while Techel introduces how Frankie was chosen and became her pet. The decision to exclude this information from my book is to focus the audience's attention upon the intended subject and theme. I believe that Techel's book provides too much history. Young readers may get lost in all of the information provided. In 2009, I discovered Techel's book and I made numerous attempts to contact her through her Web site. I intended to talk to her about Frankie and to learn about her audience and about her creative decisions for the illustrations. My goal was to use our conversations as part of a critique for this project. I unfortunately have never received a reply from Ms. Techel and assume that our audiences are in fact the same.

Piaget in the 1920s identified four stages of cognitive development within children. The first stage is the Sensorimotor Stage and is from birth until the child is two years old. The second
stage is the Preoperational Stage and is found around ages two to seven years old. The third is Concrete Operations and is when the child is between eight to ten years of age. The final developmental stage is Formal Operations and occurs until the child is around fifteen years of age. According to Piaget's theory on Cognitive Development, the primary readers of both Techel's and my books are currently in the second stage of development known as the Preoperational Stage. The traits of this stage are that children form judgments based on perception and do not understand that actions can be reversed. A child may understand walking in the house through the front door then exiting and returning through that door again. In contrast, a child will not understand someone can walk in the house through the front door, out the back door and return through the front door (Dixon). What this says is that children of this age often expect the entrant to exit through the same door. Exiting through the backdoor is not yet part of the child's cognitive awareness. Piagetian psychological Constructivism is based upon the theories of Piaget. Richardson states in *Constructivist Teacher Education: Building New Understandings* "In order to reach these higher levels, students must be actively engaged in reconstructing their existing understandings by restructuring their cognitive maps" (5) It is also during this stage that children will often transform objects from one state to another using their imagination. Therefore, a cleaning broom is now a wild horse meant for taming. Piaget's theory indicates that learners in this stage are open to learning and developing positive attitudes towards those that are different. Piaget's theory defines why books such as Techel's and my own are ideal for developing readers. When the learner is in the Preoperational Stage the child increases his/her understanding of using symbols. The reader begins the concrete operational stage around seven years of age. This transition begins the child's ability to think logically.
Using Lester's book as a reference, I believe Techel's story, in my opinion, has too many visual elements competing for prominence on the page. The viewer has no clear focal point to begin understanding the visual hierarchy of the layout. Due to the size of the typeface, color in the images, and the illustration size and location on the page, the viewer becomes confused as to where to look first. The pages should be balanced. Her pages have the weight of the visual elements unevenly distributed, causing there to be no balance, either asymmetrically or symmetrically. Block references this in his chapter "Space" (13-86). His use of film references demonstrate how the use of balance/symmetry of shots are created within a moving image. Block states that the frame "can be divided into halves, thirds, grids, squares, and The Golden Section" (66). The Golden Section is unequal division of the frame. Techel's pages can be broken into frame divisions as Block discusses; however, all of her focal points are centered on her pages making the usual experience for the reader monotonous.

Her page design has multiple paragraphs on each page and the text is written in a relatively small font size. The typeface size is appropriate for newspapers and adult literature; however, it is too small for the proposed audience here. The book uses a specific typeface, which Lester states includes "size, color, font, text block size, justification and white space. "In other words, it is the characteristics of the lettering" (144). The typeface font style in Techel's book, Times New Roman, appears without any additional attributes such as bold or underlining. This bestows the book with a research paper feel more so than a children's book. Furthermore, Lester continues that font is the "letters and symbols that are possible with an individual typeface (145). Techel's story uses the same size typeface throughout the book - it is monotonous and too small for a child to read. A young reader learning to read will struggle with the size of each word and the amount of words on a page and in each sentence. Epstein states "The text of a picture book is
a highly specialized form of fiction, more like poetry than storytelling in its tightness and rhythmic control" (81). Techel’s sentence structure appears to be written without iambic pentameter, displaying a more complex writing pattern and style, making the rhythm and beat of the reading more difficult for a young learner to read.

There are times when her imagery and text blend together and become difficult to read. Techel's font color changes from white to black depending on the main color scheme on each page. The color change in itself is not a problem; it is the lack of contrast with the background imagery that is problematic. This lack of contrast causes the text to become indistinguishable from the image. The following images are examples to provide demonstrations further clarifying the contrast issue as described. According to Block, “the greater the contrast in a visual component, the more the visual intensity or dynamic increases” (234). In Techel's book, the illustrator should have been more aware of the color of the typeface being used so the reader can visually distinguish the text from the background. This means, the closer the colors are in the gray scale, the more similar they are and the harder they are to see. This is demonstrated in the image below from Techel's book.

(All embedded images are available in a larger form in Appendix A at the end this document.)
Figure 3: Frankie Walk 'N Roll Dog 1

Techel's book uses illustrations built upon straight lines, creating a geometric feel. Three main basic shapes are circle, square and triangle. Circles and curvilinear lines are considered friendly and non-threatening (Block 108). The images provided above demonstrate an apparent use of circular and square lines providing an overly simplified visual language. Children may view these images as less realistic and therefore less believable than the photographs used within Kody's story. Frankie and the other animals display prominent straight lines, connecting points to create the illustration. This is the classic ink and fill approach seen in comic books and TV animation. Classic TV animation is often done on a low budget with quick deadlines. Therefore the artists must take shortcuts in their execution of style choices and make the expression less subtly developed. The examples clearly demonstrate this; if one looks at the top of both dogs, it is clearly drawn from connecting two points with a straight line. The images also contain static symmetrical balance as depicted by the image with the buildings; the trees and bushes look the
same with the color shifting in the same spots, and the buildings are all rectangular with similar

![Image](image.png)

Figure 4: Frankie Walk 'N Roll Dog 2

shaped windows, slightly scaled up or down in size to create the illusion of difference. This does not give the viewer a visually dynamic looking page. It is repetitious and lacks excitement.

If the photographs were unaltered they would resemble many modern children's books including other stories such as *Nubs* written by Major Brian Dennis, Kirby Larson and Mary Nethery; and *Owen & Mzee* written by Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff and Dr. Paula Kahumbu using photographs by Peter Greste. The look of these two books works for the story that the authors were telling; however, the unaltered style does not personally work for this tale. The most significant difference between these books and Kody's story is the stylistic differences in the images used. The illustrations in Kody's story have a fairytale-like quality because of the artistic alternations created in postproduction. This element of the story breathes a unique kind of magic into Kody, because unlike traditional storytelling, fairytale characters never have to die. According to both publishers, both of these books, *Nubs* and *Owen & Mzee*, are also designed for children ages four to eight years of age.
PROJECT DETAILS – STORY DETAILS

Kody has had many different adventures. The book introduces one of those adventures to its readers. The following is an account of that story.

It is a Saturday afternoon and Kody wakes up, hearing his name called out. A man, Kody's daddy, asks Kody if he wants to go for a ride. Kody's head perks up at the word "ride." He looks around the room - excitedly and a little dumbfounded - he isn't sure if he is sleeping or really awake. The man gathers up Kody and Kody's dog park necessities and places them all in the back seat of the car.

Kody and his Daddy arrive at the dog park. Kody gets strapped into his wheelchair and takes off. Kody loves to explore the park and be a part of the "wilderness" - even though the wilderness is controlled and fenced in. Kody is a paralyzed dachshund. He is unable to use his back legs. The wheelchair allows him move around and be able to feel like a "normal" dog again.

Kody finds another dachshund and runs up to him. Today is Dachshund Meet-up day. This event is for dachshunds to get together and explore and play together. A little red dachshund walks up to Kody and asks if Kody is a machine. Kody explains to the little red dachshund he unable to use his back legs.

A little black and tan dachshund sniffs Kody's wheelchair some more and decides that the machine is just a little too weird for him and the other dachshunds to play with. He runs back to the group and tells the others not to let Kody play. All of the other dogs stop playing to look at the strange beast. "Stay away; he's scary!" one calls out.
The other dogs start talking to each other about the strangeness of Kody and his contraption. Kody overhears their conversations, and feeling sad, runs off to another part of the dog park. As Kody runs through the park, one of the dachshunds notices two dogs running up to Kody. Kody also notices the larger dogs and gets scared just as the large dogs approach.

Kody stands perfectly still and hears someone call out, "Hey kid, you okay?" The voice comes from a very large Husky. He becomes visible to Kody from the right. Kody stands still, making sure not even to blink. The Husky tells the other large dogs to back off and to go play with someone their own size. They turn and leave Kody alone with the Husky. The Husky kindly informs Kody that he was okay and could return to the other dachshunds.

Kody thanks the Husky and runs back toward the group of dachshunds that are now cheering for Kody. The dachshunds apologize for treating Kody differently - many of them have never seen a wheelchair before and were scared themselves.

Kody accepts their apologies and joins them in their running around and chasing games. This leads to the second moral, that someone must forgive others of their ignorance. Kody’s experience in everyday living is different than that of others. His new friends reacted to Kody’s difference because of fear and ignorance. This second moral allows both parties the opportunity to understand how being different is hard. The other dogs now understand that having a wheelchair is not such a scary thing after all; in fact, they liked how the wheelchair allows Kody to chase the other dogs. Kody plays with the dachshunds until he hears his Daddy tell him it is time to go. Kody does not mind, because he has become so tired. He says good-bye to his new friends. Kody's Daddy takes him out of his "wheels" and places everything in the backseat. Kody curls up in his bed and sleeps the whole way home. He dreams of his new friends and all the fun they had playing together.
PROJECT DETAILS – HISTORY OF PROJECT / HISTORY OF KODY’S ACCIDENT

This project is an account of my own personal experience with Kody, as told through my memories of the events. For this project to begin, it was essential for me to mentally relive and acknowledge many things about Kody and his accident including the emotional agony that I personally experienced when this occurred.

Until his accident, I fortunately never had to conceptualize the frailty of life for a pet. Joseph Campbell once said, "It is by going down into the abyss that we recover the treasures of life. Where you stumble, there lies your treasure" (StevenRedHead). Six years ago, this Joseph Campbell quote would not have affected me. Today, however, I look back at that morning, realize where I stumbled, and I understand exactly what he meant. Over the past few years, Kody has become older, he is less likely to play with a stuffed toy or chase a ball. He hops along from room and very often is out of breath by the time he reaches one of his many beds scattered throughout my apartment. His body is just unable to keep up with the demands, much like any individual that is aging. The difference for Kody is that he only has access to two of his legs and the other two create dead weight.

From his birth, Kody was a special and unique little dog. Kody is a miniature red dachshund and currently lives in Central Florida. He was born on August 18th, 2000 in Tampa, Florida. Kody was born three hours after what was considered to be the runt of his litter passed away. The veterinarian was not aware of Kody until his mother, Pumpkin, went back into labor. Kody weighed no more than a pound for the first few months of his life! Kody loved adventures; he was always exploring new territory and discovering new grounds. The day I met Kody, he was placed on the couch beside me and as I was petting his little body, he stood up, leaped off
the couch, and hit the edge of the coffee table with his body. He immediately fell to the ground landing on his back. He instantaneously stood back up on all four legs, shook off the crash and continued to bolt to the kitchen to search for food.

Kody moved to Orlando, Florida in 2002, where he has been ever since. Kody loves to spend his days relaxing in the sun, eating, playing with his toys and of course – sleeping! Kody’s daddy learned of a group that meets once a month for dachshunds to get together and play. Kody has been a member of the Dachshund Meet-up group since December 2002. It is at one of these meet-ups where the Kody story takes place.

Kody’s life took a drastic turn of events in April of 2005. Monday, April 18, 2005, would become the last day that Kody would ever walk on all four legs by himself. The morning of the 18th, Kody jumped off the bed, and landed on the floor with a crack. He looked up and had an odd look to his face. He was monitored and appeared to be okay. This was not the case. He played and ate and went outside for bathroom use as usual. Around 1pm he went outside for his afternoon bathroom break. He lifted his leg as all male dogs do to relieve himself. This is when he started to wobble. He had never done this before, but when he was done, he put his leg down and continued to walk around and play as normal. Kody went out around 6pm to once again go to the bathroom and play around in the grass. He walked down the small step and found his favorite plant, he lifted his leg and almost as quickly as he lifted it, his little body wobbled and fell over. That was the last time Kody would stand and walk on his own.

Kody was rushed to the vet where they attempted to perform necessary back surgery on him. Vertebrae twelve and thirteen had both fractured, breaking into each other. The veterinarian mentioned to me Kody had a ninety-five percent chance of regaining his ability to walk after the
surgery. Kody, however, would once again show how unique he was, and remained in the five percent group, never regaining the ability to walk.

Immediately following his accident, Kody would lay and sit near me and very often have a look of confusion on his face, much like that of a child when you are trying to explain something intricate. Kody couldn't vocalize his confusion to me as I attempted to prevent him from moving. It was necessary to keep him still so his stitches wouldn't come out. A child can understand orders from a parent. If a child asks for some ice cream and the father says no, the child knows there will be no ice cream. How do you encourage a scared and injured five year old dog to obey your commands? I found myself staying awake, lying beside him, and cradling him in my arms preventing him to move.

After his surgery had healed, Kody immediately started physical therapy and received a wheelchair. The first time he was ever hooked up to the wheelchair was Memorial Day weekend in 2005. The image accompanied here is the first image of Kody taken in his wheels, used with permission of Brian Adams Photographics. It was after viewing this image that I decided upon developing the storybook and Web site for the Kody’s World.
Figure 5: Kody Wheels
PROJECT DETAILS – ILLUSTRATING THE BOOK / IMPRESSIONISM

John Berger writes in Ways Of Seeing, "If the new language of images were used differently, it would, through its use, confer a new kind of power. Within it we could begin to define our experiences more precisely in areas where words are inadequate" (33). Children's picture storybooks use imagery to speak the story. Children will often look at the imagery and not worry about the associated text. My images help the children understand the story, even if they cannot read the text. The imagery is my own original photography altered in Adobe Photoshop for a simplified graphic style. Theses altered photographs will stylistically resemble Impressionistic paintings incorporated into contemporary graphic design. The color palette references Kody's local color as well as representing colors children find appealing and pleasing. Birren states that these [warm] colors often bestow the feeling of joy and enthusiasm (qtd. in Hallock).

The French painting style of Impressionism took place during the 1800s and is named after Claude Monet's Impression, Sunrise. The main trait of Impressionism is to “accurately and objectively record visual reality in terms of transient effects of light and color” (Pioch). In paintings, the colors can appear over each other, blending the colors and mixing the two or three pigments. Schapiro references the poet Jules Laforgue and his astonishment for Impressionism. Laforgue affirms Impressionism is "the most advanced sensibility to color evolved by the human race" (304). He found the hues and tones in Impressionism to be the best way for his poetry to be expressed. Viewing an Impressionistic piece, one can not sit and look at the colors and without noticing shades and hues.
that may not have been seen before. Figure 6 is Claude Monet's *Impression, soleil levant*, painted in 1872 ("Impression, Sunrise"). Figure 7 is the original photo-illustration demonstration of Kody for the book (Walsh “Kody Field 1”). The most notable difference between the two, my photograph and Claude Monet’s work, is my artistic decision to not exclude brush strokes in my work. This is appropriate for the digital form because the image does not include the layering of paint. Due to the design of computer monitors, colors cannot be blended. Monitors display their
color through pixels and each pixel is a definitive color. They appear side by side with the function of the viewer's eye blending them ("Additive Color"). My inspiration for the imagery came from Impressionism, whilst my goal is replicate without making the images appear inauthentic by replicating within another medium.

Working in a modern digital medium has lead to altered styles due to the lack of a physical paintbrush. The details of the brush strokes are minuscule since the paint was applied on multiple layers and then blended together by changing the level of opacity. I purposely chose to exclude the prominent blue and yellow hues frequently used in Impressionistic painting in this demonstration from the background in order to enhance the layered space of the photograph and the viewer's attention to the character. I have since further developed the image of Kody, manipulating it to include more primary colors and also blend more of Kody's natural colors. The new image has fewer blend and blur effects while displaying a more noticeable use of blue and yellow tints (Walsh “Kody Field 1”). The addition of these colors assists the complementary contrasts of the reds and greens and the violets and yellows. This is explained as “reflections in neighboring objects or as subjective effects of interacting colors or lights” (Schapiro 23). The change in color adds depth and focus by using artistic devices such as "strokes of paint", that is changing the value and hue to separate elements in the composition into depths of field to attract the viewers eye to what I believe is important within the composition. This change in color divides the image into layers of a fore, mid, and background.

These images have gone through several different variations before achieving the look and style that I wanted. The question the look and design of the image had to answer was, "is this the most relevant use of visual language to communicate the story's message?" Each image is unique and has a different look about them. This is because Kody's natural color palette and each
photograph taken had subtle differences. These differences included variances in the lighting, location and even different camera models used attributed to the differences in the images when opened and altered in Adobe Photoshop.

Berger says, "Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak" (7). Observing young children and infants, one will notice how quickly they get excited when they recognize or see something or someone familiar to them. They may not yet comprehend the term "mommy" or "daddy" but they can identify their parents. The image is known without the word; therefore the word does not yet matter. This idea is important for a children's picture book because the images will be the story for the non-reader.

To produce the imagery, Kepes says in his Language of Vision that "sight is more than pure sensation, for light rays reaching the eye have no intrinsic order...the mind immediately organizes and molds them. Every image is based upon this...the unity of opposites" (31). Kepes pronounces our retinas bring in light and darkness then our minds break it into figures based upon the shadowing and coloring of the image until we "see" the full image. The use of painting over the images of Kody required understanding how Kody’s fur colors related to each other. Kepes speaks of "color harmony," that is, the idea of each color having an opposite match in the color spectrum. The color red will provoke a greenish blue tint. He believes this harmony creates a balance in visual experiences (35). Lester states that color has the ability to affect the viewer's emotions. How the artist uses color will enable the viewer to remember forever or forget what they had just seen due to the color choice of the artist (37). Wilhelm von Bezold, a meteorologist, is noted for describing color perception changes upon the colors closest to the original color; this is referred to as the Bezold Effect. Robert Burnham states "[Bezold's color designs lead] certain configurations led to an appearance of mixture, other to contrast, and still others to neither
effect” (378). Image 8 is an example taken from the British Web site telegraph.co.uk. It is a visual representation of the Bezold effect.

![Figure 8: Bezold Effect](image)

Using this knowledge, my images have been edited to maintain a symmetry and equilibrium pleasantly stimulating to the human eye. As previously mentioned by Birren, warmer palettes are more enjoyable to young viewers. I chose to work with warmer color tones in the foreground such as light browns, tans, reds and oranges, and used cooler tones such as greens, blues, and violets in the background. This is something that required many alterations and produced many challenges. The Bezold Effect is noticeable within several of the images created for the book. Choosing to alter the tint of Kody’s wheelchair was to bring the images into balance by altering the focal center for the audience.

This method of color manipulation is supported by Block. He states on page 159, "audiences have poor color memory". This means that when asked about a specific color viewed, the viewer may not be able to differentiate between one tint of black versus another. Block further states on page 40 that warmer colors such as red and orange and yellow often appear closer to the viewer and cooler images appear more distant. While working with many of the
images, the color tone of the grass was altered to appear warmer and is in the forefront of the images.
PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT – ALTERNATIVE STYLES AND DECISIONS

This project has two main portals: the book and the Web site. Each one designed to be independent of the other, yet still resemble each other, creating a symbiotic existence. The choices for the design and layout of the book were influenced by the decision to work in Impressionistic style and popular children's books. The purpose is to attract readers to get the message across. The decisions to use color and simply placed images without bleeding over into the wording is to assist the reader in visually "seeing" the narrative.

The first segment of the project I chose to approach was the book. Deciding on the particular style was a big task. After reviewing many different books including H.A. Rey's *Curious George*, I learned that I loved images bleeding through the page and the text floating near-by. I also looked through the incredibly drawn black and white Mary Howitt and Tony DiTerlizzi book *The Spider and the Fly* and realized I was not going to have the images be full page or black and white; it was something that I had contemplated and is shown below in an untitled black and white image (Walsh “*Kody Field B&W*”).

![Figure 9: Walsh Kody Field B&W](image-url)
I personally chose to contain my images within the page. This assists to keep the viewer's attention on the artwork and the text separately. It allows the reader to see the clarity between the images and the text. It was clear to me after seeing the image in black and white that power of manipulation may have been limited to line and value, but it is significant to me as an artist to use color as a way to manipulate depth of field and the viewer’s attention.
PROJECT DEVELOPMENT – WEB SITE

The second component of this project is an interactive web site. This site will give users a chance to further explore Kody and his adventures by providing supplementary activities that are interactive and an electronic version of the book that can be read on a computer screen. The Web site allows the user to experience some new and different interactions, peruse educational information, and share personal adventures. They will be able to meet the illustrated version of Kody presented in the book, but also and most importantly, see real photographs featuring Kody. The online project also creates some interesting story challenges, including how to navigate through it. The web is not a linear device therefore it was necessary for the Web site to be able to stand on its own without relying on any other medium to assist it. I did not want to force users to use the book as the only point of access to Kody’s story.

According the online Business Web site, Biz/ed, the number one reason someone views and visits a Web site is the content. Once a viewer is at the page, the site continues, “everyone has the right to access content on the web. Businesses have a social, moral and legal obligation to provide a Web site that can be used by anyone irrespective of their disabilities." This is especially true of the site designed for Kody's book. The book's theme is related to treating other individuals with disabilities better and I was sensitive to making the site accessible to all users.

A visually impaired person, for example, may want to increase the size of the text on a web page to make it easier to read. This functionality is present in most web browsers but Web site designers can disable this functionality through poor implementation of a Web site. This results in the surfer being unable to access the information on the Web site. (Biz/ed.com)
The site is scripted using PHP, a programming language using HTML (hypertext mark-up language) to embed and display the page to the viewer. The PHP code is used as container for all the coding, interactions and commands that the site requires. PHP does not require the user to have any specialized software or hardware requirements because the coding carries all requirements out on the server. This means that the viewer does not need to have any special software or hardware installed to viewer or interact with the site. This is useful considering the main audience of the site is intended to be young learning readers who are not at the stage of development to navigate advanced computer functions. The PHP language was chosen for the creation of this site to allow for additional dynamic expansions for user interactions in the future. Jonathan Schank, a teacher in Orange County Florida's Winter Park Tech, has been assisting and leading the programming for the Web site. He has been integral to the project and worked with me on the complex programming aspects of the site. Schank has been working under my direct supervision and guidelines to help implement the coding required to complete Kody's World in a timely fashion.

The Web site is currently housed at http://www.kodysworld.com. The Web site loads with a flash introduction featuring self created digital Polaroid-like images, through the use of Photoshop, of Kody throughout the various stages of his life. The use of Polaroid, gives the images a personal touch. Polaroid pictures are often associated with families and childhood memories. These images quickly tell the viewer about his life, opening up moments to the viewer. This brief introduction expedites Kody's biography to the viewer; the viewer knows Kody better and is interested in viewing the site. Viewers witness Kody as a typical dog, one that can and is able to walk. As the images progress, so does Kody's ability to walk until we see him in his current paralyzed state. The movement of images is like a slideshow of one's life, helping
to give understanding to Kody's life. If children know and understand that Kody was able-bodied before, they may be able to better relate to other beings who have disabilities and attempt to not make judgments on others.

The images start as stationary images and then slowly enlarge and then move off the page revealing the Doghouse underneath the Flash introduction. The movement of the images assists the viewer in watching and paying attention to the screen. When the images have moved off of the stage, the user will see a photo-illustration of Kody located in the right hand side of the page. The splash page also features a "skip intro" button located on the lower right hand side. This will enable the repeated user to bypass the moving images if they do not wish to sit through it. This progression from real to illustrated images advances the user from the real into the storybook character. This progression of images further illustrates my inspiration for this project. To the left of this image are color splashes, reminiscent of paint strokes used within Impressionistic paintings and the illustrations within the story. Within these paint splashes is text explaining the different areas of the site. Each splash contains a Kody paw print acting as a hyperlink, bringing the user to each of the rooms or pages of the site. The dachshund located at the top of each page will always bring the user back to the doghouse or homepage. The site's main content area is separated from the dachshund links by a border of multi-sized dog bones. The variation of the bones in both position and size, especially the use of the diagonals, add energy and excitement to the viewer. The bone borders are used to provide continuity from page to page throughout the site, creating the base for all content.

The color palette of the web site replicates the artistic decisions of the actual children's book. The basic design of the site transformed numerous times and has evolved into its current state. The original version of the site design consisted of a brownish red tint containing a paw
print background design. The buttons for navigation are located inside an elongated dachshund with a similar color palette to Kody. This design has been manipulated to incorporate a background that uses a texture resembling Kody's fur. The elongated dachshund still remains at the top of the page with the buttons for navigation. The homepage has been renamed the Doghouse and each page is now a playroom or location that is normally associated with dogs.

The original structure and design of the site - the language and rhetoric - was organized like a typical Web site. The page design and navigation of the site employs the book's syntax - creating symmetry between the two. It was built upon using traditional Web site words such as "homepage." As the designer, I did not want the children seeing Kody's World as a typical Web site: I wanted them to associate the online experience with Kody, a dog. The renaming of each location provides the children with an opportunity to visualize Kody's World as a physical location and not just a virtual one.

There are several links in *Kody's World* that will take you to different interactive areas. Kody's background can be found in the Dog Park location. This section is a letter written by Kody to the parents of the children who will be using the site. It is here where the viewer will interact with and read about Kody's life prior to the accident. The page contains unaltered pictures of Kody from the time he was a puppy up through his adulthood. In the future, the Dog Park will branch off to enable additional areas to talk to the viewer about his life post accident.

The book page can be found in the Den. This location will introduce the children's book and allow the user to view and interact with it. At the launch of the site the entire book will be available for the viewer to read. In time the site will not showcase the full book, only a page or two and explain the storyline. The rationale for this is to allow the book to exist in another physical form, giving the Web site an opportunity to use *Kody's World* in ways beyond the story.
The book page will give site space for additional content, including a new book, as it is developed for the readers and users of the site.

The Backyard takes the user to the games area of *Kody's World*. The user gets an opportunity to play and interact with Kody here. The first game currently playable is an Adobe Flash based matching game. It was developed and programmed by Schank under my supervision by using Gary Rosenzweig's framework (Rosenzweig Flash). The user is given the opportunity to match three images together that are associated with dogs. The user will have to line up three images either vertically or horizontally to remove the images and score points. The second game is a puzzle game. The user is given the tools to rebuild an image taken from the book. The picture was broken up into pieces and scattered along the page. In the upper right hand side of the page is a representation of the image the builder is trying to achieve.

The best way to get in contact with Kody is through his Mailroom or what would be his contact page. This page contains a form for Kody's new friends to fill in information and send Kody a message. Kody's personal email address is also provided for the user in case they wish to contact Kody at a later time.

The final page link is the Kennel; this is the project information page, basically a summary of the thesis paper and project. This section of the site will focus on some of the details of the project, highlighting some of the research and decisions that have assisted in the development of this thesis project. It will reference the artistic choices in the artwork, the programming decisions and management of the site.

Once the user has left the home page, the navigation for the site is located at the top of the screen in the aforementioned elongated dachshund. The navigation bar is permanent and will never change locations, therefore allowing the user to see every accessible area at all times. I
made a conscious artistic decision to have red-orange color of the dachshund separate from the brown background so it would stand out. There is a slight drop shadow below the brown container, to give a sense of elevation and depth to it. The container's internal border is made of dog bones that vary both in size and direction. All information about Kody, the project and the games will be housed within the dog bone border on the container page. The following images are screen captures from the Web site illustrating the aforementioned content.

Figure 10: Kody's World Original Web site Image 1
Figure 11: Kody's World Web site Image 2
Figure 12: Kody's World Web site Image 3
CONCLUSION

There were three objectives that identified the purpose and scope of the project. The first was to incorporate a moral that someone with a disability should not be treated differently from someone who is nondisabled. The second was to use a traditional artistic style combined with modern illustrations to enhance the educational experience with energy and vibrant look to entertain my audience. The third was to bring the book into the contemporary world by implementing a modern Web site design that will give access to the book and interactive games. Like most art projects, it is a personal endeavor that can speak to the public as well as fulfill the artist’s need for expression. Everyone suffers from being different at one time or another. While most adults have learned ways to cope with these feelings of being different, children often struggle and need guidance with their feelings and emotions. Kody's story is an outlet to demonstrate and assist in discovering that when someone is handicapped, his or her difference is acceptable and should not merit shame or cause fear. The Web site allows the viewer to become an active participant and interact with Kody and his world, furthering the experience beyond a written page.

Children's books are written in multiple styles and designs. The book written for Kody uses a style based on Impressionism. The focus on changing moods through the use of colors and light is evident in both the book and Impressionistic art pieces. Impressionism utilizes complementary color systems to express light and energy; Kody radiates liveliness and energy.

Digital technologies open up thoughts and communications, expanding horizons in addition to printed mediums. Kody's Web site is an ever changing medium that incorporates parts of the original story and real facts and aspects of Kody. The colors have been chosen to
match those of the book, but also to resemble what you see when you look at Kody. This project
had to resemble Kody's energy and passion. His ability to constantly make someone smile
wherever he goes had to be prevalent throughout the site and book. The Web site can in the
future be a tool to assist in the aid of paralyzed and handicapped pets like the Free Rice project
which donates food to countries in need, which is a model I would like to consider replicating to
raise funds for aiding handicapped pets.

The goal of this project is to assist children in developing moral guidelines for how to
treat others. Cultures teach its members to have preconceived notions about people and
stereotypes of the handicapped. Kody's book and Web site will assist in combating some of these
misconceptions. A single book alone will not remove these misconceptions, but help raise to
raise awareness and tolerance toward those that are different and help to share a more inclusive
viewpoint.
Figure 1: Cover of Frog Goes to Dinner
Figure 2: Example of Focus vs Depth - Kody in Front of Bed
Figure 3: Frankie the Walk "N Roll Dog
The next eight weeks, I begin my recovery. I have medicine to take. The pills make me feel better. I also have to stay in my crate for eight weeks and am not allowed to chase after bunnies, play with my toys or cuddle with Kylie. This is hard. But Mom and Dad set my crate in the kitchen. I watch Mom cook dinner, while Dad plays ball with Kylie. Every night, Mom and Dad say, “We love you Frankie. You’re looking better and better every day.”

Before my accident, I sometimes slept snug in bed next to Dad. After the accident, I sleep in a crate in the bedroom. Mom makes my bed soft and warm with lots of blankets and toys. I learn to sleep by myself and not be scared.

As soon as I can travel, Mom takes me to a specialist in the big city. Trucks rumble by and I bark at the tall buildings in the sky. I feel small. The specialist teaches Mom how to do physical therapy for me.

Figure 4: Frankie the Walk "N Roll Dog 2
Figure 5: Kody Wheels
Figure 6: Claude Monet's *Impressionism, Sunrise*
Figure 7: Walsh *Kody Field 1*
Figure 8: Bezold Effect
Figure 9: Walsh *Kody Field B&W*
Figure 13: Kody's World Original Web site Image 1
Figure 14: Kody’s World Web site Image 2
Figure 12: Kody's World Web site Image 3
APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


Obille, Lafferty, Iris. *Technology & Learning; Ready, Set, Read? Put Reading First this Fall with Six Titles that Deliver Interactive Literacy Lessons for the K-3 Crowd. (Picks of the Month)*. Vol. 23. CMP Media, Inc, 2002.


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