Using Interactives to Understand a Process

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As the Nichani and Rajamanickam article points out, there are four types of interactives, Narratives, Instructives, Exploratives, and Stimulatives. Some of these are more "hands-on" than others in their level of interactivity, but this doesn't mean that the more passive interactives, like the narratives and instructives can be any less engaging in a learning situation. Below is an example of how to use Instructive Interactives to not only illustrate a process but to enable the learners to fully understand the process by not alone using the individual interactive but recreating the process utilizing multiple Web 2.0 applications.

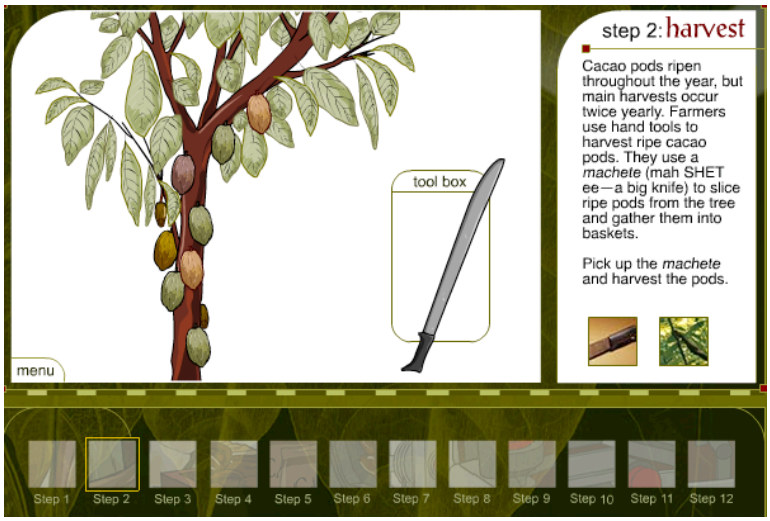
Step One: Choose an Instructive Interactive

In my experience, instructive interactives are one of the most popular interactives in use. I think this is because how natural processes and procedures can be easily applied to an interactive interface. Everywhere from libraries, museums, academic institutions, and news organizations utilize instructional interactives to clearly show a process or step-by-step procedure. With that being said, it should fairly easy to find an instructional interactive for almost any topic. Some ideas include manufacturing procedures, scientific processes (weather, plant germination, life cycle), or government procedures such as the electoral college or how a bill becomes a law. For the rest of this guide, I will be using an interactive developed by the Field Museum that details the process of manufacturing chocolate, from the planting of the seeds to the molding of the chocolate bar. It is sort of a mixture of interactives, because it not only gives the highlights of the process, but it also has a few game elements to make it feel like you are being a part of the chocolate making. This interactive can be found at:
http://www.fieldmuseum.org/Chocolate/manufacture_interactive/manufacture.html

This interactive would be perfect for those doing units or presentations on industry or manufacturing. It could also be a tie in for science or cooking lessons. Or maybe the class is reading *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and wants to know how chocolate is really made!

Step 2: Use the Interactive

Have the learners go through the instructional interactive. As they go through each step of the process, have them write down each step and at least one detail of why this step is important to the entire process. For example, in the chocolate interactive, there are a total of twelve steps. The first step is "Growth". The learner would write down "growth" and that it is important for the creation of seed pods.



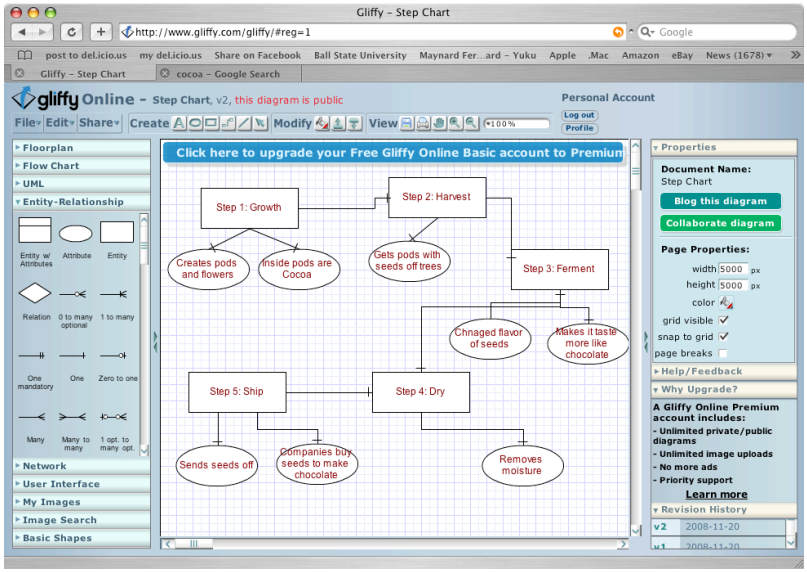
Above: Instructional interactives guide learners through each step of an intricate process. In the Manufacturing Chocolate interactive, users can actually cut off cocoa seed pods from the tree.

Step 3: Recreate the process

Now that the learners have used the instructional interactive, let's reinforce the ideas of process and procedure by having the learners recreate the steps. They could simply retell the process to the rest of the group, but why not use a concept map or flow chart to reinforce that one step leads to another. I will be using a Web 2.0 application that I have never used before, Gliffy (www.gliffy.com).

Gliffy is one of those applications that can be as simple or as complex as you wish it to be. I see the potential of Gliffy as a powerful tool for making large, high quality concept maps, but Gliffy will serve our purposes of making a small flow chart just as well.

Have the learners create an "entity" box for each of the steps and connect them in the proper order from one step to another. For every step, have them create "attribute" circles for each of the important details they wrote down. Every detail can be attached to the corresponding step.

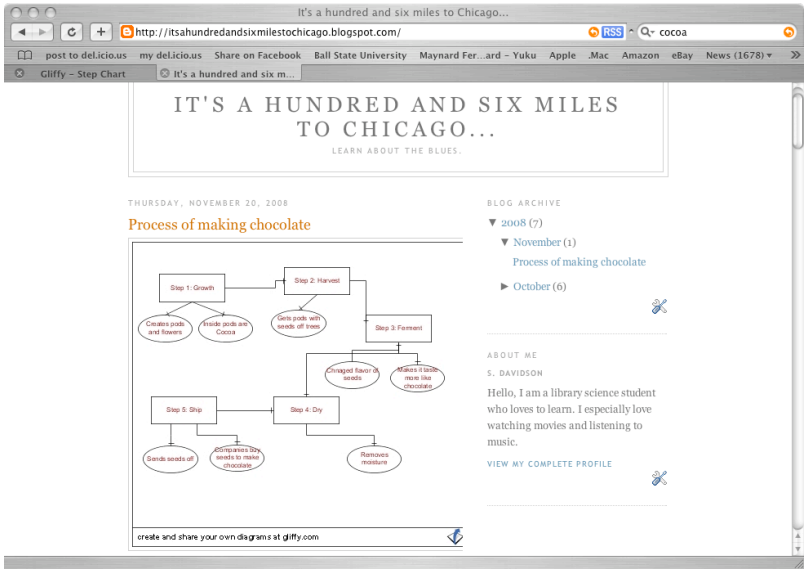


Above: Here is my work in Gliffy showing the first five steps of the Manufacturing Chocolate interactive. The boxes are the steps themselves, and the circles are information about each step. Notice how Gliffy can be used to illustrate the flow from step to step.

Step 3: Share your process

Now that the learners have recreated the process on their own, have them publish their hard work. A great feature that Gliffy has is the ability to *easily* publish your creation. Not only can you save it as a file, but Giffly automatically creates html code as well as image links in various file sizes so you can embed your chart in blogs and web sites.

Create a "Process Blog" or a page on your class website for each learner to post the process that they recreated from their interactive. This lets them share what they learned and learn from other processes that their peers created in addition to utilizing a web publishing tool. Below is the flow chart embedded in the blog I created in an earlier Fiesta.



Gliffy creations can easily be embedded in your blog or website.

I hope that this short guide gives an idea of how interactives can be used to show a process and that the interactive is really just the beginning. Using other applications can enhance the message of the interactive and engage learners even further.