

Tip Sheet for Using Xtranormal

The tips/suggestions listed below are the result of an assignment that asks students to create a video and then write a paper analyzing the choices they made in creating the video.

1. Have students create an account in class and walk them through some of the basics.
2. Discuss the fact that the free Xtranormal account provides students with a limited number of “tokens” with which to “purchase” different characters, settings, voices, etc. The tokens are not “spent” until the students “publish” their videos. They may not have enough tokens to “purchase” all the options they want. Also, if students will be using Xtranormal for more than one assignment, they might need to create a second account under a different email address.
3. Have a backup plan in case the Xtranormal website crashes and is unavailable.
4. If you are going to ask your students to write a paper analyzing the choices they made in creating their videos, you might not want them to use historical figures; some of my students had trouble with this because they wanted to make grand generalizations about the figure without evidence for support.
5. If you are going to ask your students to write a paper analyzing the choices they made in creating their videos, create a sample video for demonstration purposes and then use that video to help students practice analyzing.
6. Students will struggle with analyzing videos, especially ones they created. A few of my students got hung up on the fact that when they initially created their videos, they were not conscious of the reasons for their choices or what those choices suggested; they felt weird analyzing their choices after the fact. I had to reassure them that it didn’t matter if they thought about the implications of their choices initially.
7. When analyzing the videos, it helps if students think about the video in terms of setting, character, costume, gestures, etc. Have students describe the setting, for example, and then try to brainstorm ideas about what the setting suggests. In other words, there are the things you see/hear in the video and then there’s the question of what those things suggest (i.e. the analysis).
8. If you are going to ask your students to write a paper analyzing the choices they made in creating an Xtranormal video, have them present their videos to the class and talk about the choices they made because the students in the audience will see things that the presenter doesn’t and, thus, help them to analyze the video.