

Submitted for your approval

If you're of a certain age, you'll be happy to know that your mother was wrong: watching *The Twilight Zone* is educational.

Students at St. Mary's School in Riverside, in fact, put Rod Serling's drama to good use, when they developed "The Rest of the Story: Monsters on Maple Street," in Julia Keehn's seventh-grade class.

The project started several years ago, when Keehn's classes read the teleplay to Serling's 1958 episode, "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street," which tells the story of a neighborhood that turns on itself when an alien invasion is threatened. The ending, says Keehn, is left to the imagination, and when the class reads the script, "they start asking 'what if' questions."

Each year, the answers got a little more elaborate—students acted out the screenplay or discussed different endings. Last year, the students decided to write and record a third act to the teleplay.

But Keehn first wanted them to have a good sense of the original. They did online and library research on the time period, on Serling himself, and on television as an emerging medium. They discussed how television and video techniques have changed, and they watched a newer—and somewhat different version—that was filmed in 2003.

They worked in groups of five to write the third act and to develop a PowerPoint presentation that would include the recorded version of the new third act and background on the era and on *The Twilight Zone*.

Once they'd written their scripts, the students worked with St. Mary's technology director Donna Veverka to start filming with digital video cameras. They learned to edit their work with iMovie and use Inspiration to insert elements into the PowerPoint.

"They all had completely different takes on

how the drama should end," says Keehn, "and they all had things to contribute. Some were quite good writers; others were more visual."

As the project has evolved over several years, Keehn reports that students continue to find new approaches to the teleplay—as does Keehn herself. "I keep thinking," she says, "What can I add to it? It's growing all the time."

Podcasting their arguments

Cells really do function as building blocks in Sydney Schuler's microbiology classes at Park Junior High in LaGrange Park.

In this case, students use the study of cells to launch their own inquiries into issues of health and technology, research and defend a position and ultimately present their positions in podcasts.

As the seventh-graders begin the cell unit in the class, they're presented with a question to research; the questions cover areas such as government involvement in cloning or stem cell research; gene therapy, or public spending on cancer cures. Students use Internet and print sources and Internet video interviews with experts to conduct their research. They have to reach a viewpoint and once they do, says Schuler, they also have to develop their argument, including answers to opposing viewpoints.

Students with similar viewpoints are put into small groups, where they use their research to create a group script and record it, using GarageBand or iMovie. They then create podcasts, using the information they've gathered.

The final results are presented in a "live museum," where students move from table to table, listening to each podcast (which run under five minutes). It's an exciting culmination to the project, says Schuler; students see not only their own critical-thinking process, but also that of their classmates. "They reach their own conclusions," she says, "because it's based on their own research."