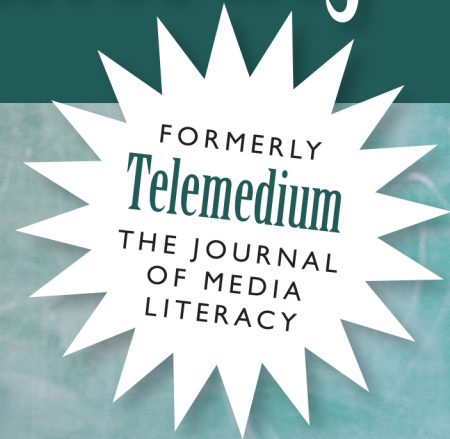


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English Teachers

Media Literacy 



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: INTEGRATING MEDIA LITERACY INTO THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

ALVERMANN • AMBROSH • ANDERSEN • BAKER • CALLAHAN • CONSIDINE • DUNCAN
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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: INTEGRATING MEDIA LITERACY IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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The Journal of Media Literacy

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The Journal of Media Literacy is published by the National Telemedia Council, the oldest media literacy organization in the United States, having been founded in 1953. *The Journal* reflects the philosophy of NTC, which takes a positive, non-judgmental approach to media literacy education as an essential life skill for the 21st Century. The National Telemedia Council is an organization of diverse professionals interested in the field of media literacy. NTC encourages free expression of views on all aspects of media literacy in order to encourage learning and increase growth of understanding of issues in Media Literacy. Any opinions expressed in *The Journal* or by individual members of NTC, therefore, do not necessarily represent policies or positions of the National Telemedia Council.

From the Editors

This issue of the National Telemedia Council's *Journal of Media Literacy*, designed for the 2006 National Council of Teachers of English Conference in Nashville, grew out of the collaboration of active members of both organizations. In fact, the editorial direction for this issue was done by committee. We would like to thank the editorial board for their continuous support and vision. Joining us for this issue and injecting our committee with enthusiasm and energy, Frank Baker provided so many valuable resources and brought in new authors that have enriched our journal. Thank you, Frank. And of course, we must thank all of our authors, who give freely of their time and talent. That we are able to assemble such a collection of great thinkers voluntarily is a tribute to the dedication of so many professionals who strive to grow the field of media literacy.

That is the purpose of our journal and of our organization. NTC is a council of diverse professionals interested in growing the field of media literacy and establishing a solid foundation for it in the academic world. And with growth, comes change. Our organization has not been afraid to embrace change as long as we remain true to the founding principles. With this issue, we are dropping the name *Telemedium* from our journal title and simply calling it *The Journal of Media Literacy*. We are in the process of revamping the design of the journal as well. It is an evolution that will take time and input from all. We ask you to share your creative ideas with us. We need a strong, active membership to sustain the efforts of our organization.

To that end, the National Telemedia Council is thrilled to be partnering with NCTE's Assembly on Media Arts through a reciprocal membership arrangement. This is not new. Our two organizations have a long history of collaborating. NTC's co-founder, Leslie Spence, an English teacher herself, forged these bonds from the beginning, helping to shape NCTE's policy on media literacy and building a reciprocal membership opportunity in the 1960's and 70's. In the 1980's, members of our organization were instrumental in developing NCTE's Commission on Media and the Assembly on Media Arts. In July of 1994, we co-sponsored and hosted the NCTE's assembly on media arts conference, "Media Education: Instructional Imperatives for the Year 2000," a conference "of, by, and for educators," chaired by Rich Fehlman. Today, many of our active members are continuing to foster this partnership. Mary Christel, an NTC board member, charter member of the AMA, and past director of the NCTE Media Commission, is leading the revival of the Assembly on Media Arts, with the vision of building a strong network of professionals interested in promoting the integration of media literacy and English Language Arts. We hope you will join us by becoming a member of both the National Telemedia Council and the Assembly on Media Arts. Please see our membership form in the back or contact Mary Christel directly for more information at mchriste@district125.k12.il.us. *



Karen Ambrosch
NTC PRESIDENT



Marieli Rowe
EDITOR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Off the Desktop:

REFLECTIONS AND DIRECTIONS
FROM EXPERTS IN THE FIELD...



Barry Duncan

ENGLISH AND MEDIA

We all have so much to learn from and to exchange with other countries' versions of media literacy. Certainly my colleagues at the Association for Media literacy in Toronto were instrumental, through two important conferences, in jump-starting the media education movement in the United States in 1990-92. Now many of our American cousins are returning the favour by showing us terrific, exemplary work—for which we are grateful. Personally, I enjoyed for several years—even if I was somewhat impatient—participating in the NCTE Media Commission and engaging with resourceful leaders who had earned their spurs in English and Media. Their reflections are in friendly juxtaposition here with my own, specifically, I want to recognize brave Jedi knights Rich Fehlman, Bill Costanzo, and Ben Fuller.

The Australians still lead the English-speaking world in the depth and variety of their media education initiatives. It is no surprise that the overlapping domain of Critical Literacy was fostered largely by Australian English teachers and theorists who wanted new ways of exploring texts through identifying their dominant discourses, critiquing gaps and absences and offering social justice projects.

When I was in Queensland last year as a visiting scholar, at University of Queensland, Technology I interviewed crit lit' guru and intellectual dynamo Wendy Morgan, a professor of English. Her new book, co-authored with Roy Misson, is "Critical Literacy and the Aesthetic: Transforming the English Classroom". That it is published by NCTE is a breakthrough and bodes well for its influence. In essence what Wendy accomplishes is to reconcile the aesthetic with

the political, a tough task for any scholar. Her texts vary from Macbeth to an episode of "Friends." I would like to have any feedback from English teachers who venture to read and apply its critical premises.

The best Media and English textbook I have seen is from Australia. It is titled *Queensland Senior English—Theory—Practice Connection* by Margaret Miller and Robyn Colwell (Macmillan, Australia, 2004). Using three organizers, representation, discourse, and intertextuality, the material ranges from decoding roadside kangaroo signs to exploring two film versions of Romeo and Juliet. The book is witty, imaginative and demanding, providing a kind of mini-cultural studies course for high school students.

There are many new faces in the converging media and English landscape. This issue of *The Journal of Media Literacy* includes the insights of New Literacy (Bill Crist; Critical Media Literacy (Donna Alvermann); Graphic novels (Ian Esquivel); the Scottish Film Council and the media triangle (Neil Andersen) There are many exciting classroom practices that they describe.

My one reservation concerns the combining of the insights of the various literacies. I am surprised that each of them access different scholars and seem unaware what others may be doing. For example, one area explored in media literacy is the commercial implications of media ownership and control—especially the influence on our media texts of mega corporations e.g. Time-Warner, Disney, Viacom etc. Corporate power is also in evidence in the amalgamation of publishing companies resulting in a handful of companies—all with the bottom line philosophy which impacts on what we get to read and what gets censored. I may be wrong but don't see this in the recent documents on Critical Literacy and the New Literacies.

It would be worthwhile to bring together the spokes people for the various literacies. Could we not stage think tanks in which the aim would be to see how we could intellectually nourish each other? What might a synthesis of the best ideas look like? It is exciting that new media have infiltrated English studies and the role of the multitasking, multimodal teacher has helped radicalized our profession.*

Barry Duncan is an award-winning teacher, author, and consultant and pioneering co-founder of the Ontario based Association for Media Literacy (AML). He co-authored the best selling textbook, Mass Media and Popular Culture, co-edited NTC's 2003 book Visions/Revisions: Moving forward with Media Education, and regularly shares his expertise in a monthly newsletter, "Barry's Bulletin," which can be found in the Media Awareness Network web site. A sought after speaker around the world, Barry serves on the editorial board of The Journal of Media Literacy. He received the Jessie McCanse award in 1990.

Neil Andersen

'Literacy' has become a woefully abused word over the last two decades. With media literacy, information literacy, visual literacy, multiliteracies and so many more hybridized monikers, the knowledge and skills students need to learn and how teachers might support them has become lost in turf wars. As educators expend energy arguing over which brand of literacy is best, and where it should and should not be taught, students suffer from neglect.

That communications technology is changing faster than anyone can keep up with is a given. That students need communications skills more now than ever before is a given. That missteps will be made as educators experiment with new strategies is a given. But we must remain open to innovations, both in communications technology and in teaching strategies. We must be prepared to make mistakes, and then learn from them. If we don't know as much as we could, or are not certain of the best educational approach, we must be prepared to collaborate with other teachers, and more importantly, with our students. Learning is a group activity, and including students as information sources and part of the decision-making process will expand and enrich literacy all-around. Teachers can learn. Students

can teach. Enjoy the explorations of new technologies and their new literacies.

Neil Andersen currently works with the Toronto District School Board as an instructional consultant and leader, English and Media Studies. A widely recognized author of teachers study guides, articles and books, Neil co-wrote the award-winning guide for the well-known television show, Scanning Television. Neil was awarded the Jessie McCanse award for leadership in media education, and is an executive member of Ontario's Association for Media Literacy.

Ben Fuller

My first exposure to media production occurred in junior high school in 1951. For the graduation ceremony from 9th grade a group of us wrote the script, a collection of poems focused on contemporary life, presented by a speech choir. The thrill we writers had hearing our poems spoken before a large audience was one I have never forgotten. Later, in high school, an inspired Latin teacher broke our fourth year class into small groups and asked each to prepare audiotapes on some aspect of ancient Roman life. My group's topic was the Roman working classes. We had a wonderful time doing the research and then presenting our findings on tape complete with sound effects and background music. We had taught ourselves how to do a radio documentary!

Later as a secondary and university English teacher, I remembered these experiences. I asked students individually and in small groups to record readings of poems and plays on audiotape for presentation and evaluation. At first, they were skeptical, but most managed to use the technology imaginatively and to perform perceptively. In addition, I advised yearbooks and newspapers and saw how students worked hard on their writing and photography when they realized that hundreds or thousands of students and faculty would peruse their efforts. For many years I had introductory university journalism students publish an issue of the campus paper instead of a final examination. Each student, the student editor and I collectively determined the student's performance.

I realized that I was not alone in my use of media when I joined the associates program of the Joint Department of English and Media Studies of the Institute of Education

of the University of London in the mid-1980s. My first intention was to learn how the British prepared beginning English teachers. However, once I arrived in London, I became fascinated with the work of two members of the department: Bob Ferguson and David Buckingham. Through attending their lectures and conferences organized by the British Film Institute and the Society for Education in Film and Television, I became aware that there was an international effort to move study and production of non-print media into the classroom to complement and modify what was already being done with oral and print media. I pulled together my study of traditional British language arts and innovative media literacy pedagogies into a report that focused on the underlying commonalities.

Back in the United States, I became more active in NCTE and searched for colleagues who shared my new-born interests. The Baltimore convention was where we found each other at a workshop led by Barry Duncan who brought news of media studies innovations in Ontario. The following summer I attended a seminal media conference in Guelph, Ontario. Soon I was asked to participate on NCTE's Commission on Media and helped to start the Assembly on Media Arts. We were a persistent group of advocates and gradually gained influence for including media literacy standards in both guidelines for student achievement and teacher preparation. Later as director of the Commission on Media I especially relished the opportunity to write widely disseminated annual reports calling for inclusion of media studies in the school language arts curriculum. I also became a reviewer for university teacher preparation programs seeking accreditation by NCATE. I was appalled to see how weak university programs were in this area and generally recommended refusal of accreditation to programs that lacked such requirements.

Now in retirement, I have limited my role primarily to reviewing books on media education or media history for either *Telemedium* or the *History of Education Quarterly*. In addition, I review media submissions for the *English Journal*. My biggest worry is that the progress we made in the late 20th century will be lost in the wave of assessment that relies primarily on multiple-choice tests and not on student production. Getting a good score on the SAT is fine, but pales in comparison to applause for a dramatic performance, a funny videotape, a startling painting, a graphic photograph, or a well argued letter to the editor. Fortunately, even if schools focus on

teaching for the tests, students in their spare time will seek to master the new media technologies that surround them. Ironically, my only concern is that they will overlook what society has achieved through print. Mastery of both the new and the old media is crucial in the 21st century.

Lawrence B. (Ben) Fuller is professor emeritus of English at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. An English major at Dartmouth College, he holds graduate degrees in American literature from Columbia University, journalism from Penn State University, and the history of American education from the Johns Hopkins University. Since retiring in 2000 he has continued to teach, primarily American studies, for the Fulbright program in the Czech Republic, Russia, and India.

William Kist

As we rapidly move from a page-based society to a screen-based society (Kress, 2003), we really need to make sure that our school literacies are as much in synch as possible with students' potential out-of-school literacies. As our students are immersed in IMing, blogging, podcasting, and surfing outside of school, their experiences of literacy at school are becoming more and more irrelevant. Many English classrooms I see are trapped in a model in which the whole class reads the same book at the same time and answers the same study guide (worksheet, fact-level) questions. Beyond the harm this kind of literacy pedagogy does to print literacy itself, we need to acknowledge that these kinds of classroom practices are simply not serving our students in a digital age. (I don't even think these kinds of practices are really preparing students for standardized tests, either, which is often an argument given by teachers who perpetuate this kind of one-size-fits-all pedagogy.)

And my concern is not only that we are out of step with the tech-savvy student born after 1985. My concern is that I'm seeing many undergraduates who were born after 1985 who have never sent an attachment via email or who have never inserted a hyperlink in a document. We English teachers must make our classrooms places for a broad kind of literacy not only so that we are relevant to the cyber-kids, but to those kids who are on the wrong side of the digital divide.

I'm glad that the National Council of Teachers of English is devoting more resources to what they call "multi-modal literacies." Each year, at the national conference, I am seeing more and more sessions devoted to new media. It concerns me, however, that many of these sessions center on using new media to get kids turned on to print, or to use new media to teach print conventions. I would hope that the organization will continue to challenge itself to see that, with these new media, come new conventions that are not always related to print literacy, and that, with these new conventions comes an new hybrid way of looking at "reading" and "writing."

William Kist is an assistant professor of Teaching Leadership and Curriculum Studies at Kent State University. He is a member of the NCTE Media Commission and is a Professional Development Consultant for NCTE (<http://www.ncte.org/profdev/onsite/consultants/kist>.) Dr. Kist presents nationally and internationally on literacy teaching strategies. In addition to his work in education, Kist has worked as a video producer and musician (www.williamkist.com.)

Frank Baker

ARE YOU UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

It came as no surprise to me in 1999, when a study of state teaching standards revealed that media literacy was found predominantly in the English Language Arts. (Elements of media literacy were also found in both Social Studies and Health).

In 1970, 36 years ago, the National Council for Teachers of English passed a resolution urging its members to strongly consider integrating "non-print" texts into their teaching. At that time, many English teachers took up the challenge—incorporating television (critical viewing) and motion pictures (the language of film) in their classrooms.

Today, teachers (and students) have so many "new" media to consider: iPods, cell phones, digital cameras, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), digital video recorders, video and game making software, and more.

The challenge, I think, is to help teachers understand and appreciate the culture and media of their students and how best to incorporate those into the classroom. At the same

time, teachers must be comfortable with the new media's tools and how they can be used to advance learning.

I leave you with some questions to consider:

- what skills, knowledge, abilities do you need in order to feel comfortable integrating media (and media literacy) into instruction?
- does your school or district offer professional development opportunities in new media or media literacy?
- does your school library media collection (student and professional) contain any resource that would help you (and your students) advance knowledge and understanding?

These are the challenges for you and for the future of media literacy education.

Frank Baker is a media education consultant and national presenter on integrating media literacy into K-12 instruction. A past President of the Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA) and former Vice President and Web Master of the National Telemedia Council, he maintains the Media Literacy Clearinghouse web site: www.frankwbaker.com. Frank resides in Columbia, SC.

William Costanzo

THE CHALLENGE OF MEDIA CONVERGENCE

Our students are learning to write and read in a multimedia world. Computer keyboards are their pencils, iPods are their close companions, and they treat DVDs like books. This we know, yet what many of us thought was cutting edge pedagogy just a few years ago is rapidly becoming obsolete. If we want our English classes to stay in sync with the times, what must we know--and do?

When I first became involved in the NCTE back in the seventies and eighties, I soon found other teachers who shared my vision of building a nation-wide media literacy movement. Together with these like-minded colleagues, I helped to form an Alliance for Media Arts, led an NCTE Committee on Film Study, and joined the Media Commission to foster media-related programs.

We discussed endlessly what seemed to be the key issues of the day. Why is it important to include non-print media in the English class? Should media be taught separately or integrated into the English language arts curriculum? Should we be teaching through the media or about the media? How can we get media education included in teacher training, state frameworks, and the schools? What are the best avenues of research, theories, and classroom practices?

Meanwhile, as we debated and explored the possibilities, the world continued to lurch forward. New media evolved and converged at several levels. At the level of technology, groundbreaking innovations in storage and delivery created videotape, laser discs, CDs, DVDs, satellite, cable, MP3 files, and the Web. The machines that used these media grew more complex and interdependent, so that computers, entertainment systems, handhelds, and mobile phones now seem to form a vast, interconnected media environment. At the level of the text, traditional boundaries between one form and another began to blur. It became harder to distinguish between television programs and commercials, between magazine articles and ads. Movies began to look like MTV and video games. Novels generated film scripts and films turned into novels almost instantaneously. On the page and on the screen, word and image merged as never before, while print, graphics, spoken language, motion pictures, music, and sound effects blended together into a seemingly seamless web. Today, our basic needs for stories, information, entertainment, communication, and community are all negotiated through these ever richer, multi-sensory texts on countless screens of all sizes and shapes, from the largest movie palace to the smallest iPod.

These convergences of technology and text are reflected in the corporate world, where industries have been merging for years. As we looked on, Time Inc. combined with Warner Bros to form Time Warner, which merged with Turner Broadcasting and AOL, forming a conglomerate of print, film, television, and Internet products. Other companies followed suit. Viacom (with its many cable systems and MTV) joined Blockbuster (with its video and music stores) to buy Paramount Communications (which already included publishers, television holdings, movie theatres, and theme parks as well as the movie studio). Disney acquired Capital Cities/ABC, Sony merged with Columbia, and so on. All these cross-media deals create a vast infrastructure that supports and perpetuates the

integration of visual and verbal forms that used to be distinct. As soon as a new Harry Potter story emerges, for example, it becomes part of a broad network of movies, magazine articles, advertisements, talk shows, blogs, toys, and computer games.

How will today's students learn to navigate this intertextual media stream? What skills do they need in order to read, analyze, evaluate, and create these intertwining messages? And what should we as teachers provide? If we see ourselves as teachers of English, of literature and the language arts, of critical and creative communication, then I believe we need to recognize how literature, language, and communication have changed and continue to change. Our students must add new codes to their repertoire of reading skills: the icons, scroll bars, fonts, sound effects, and transitional tricks that guide meaning on a computer or a television screen. They must understand how metaphor and alliteration work in poetry, but also how camera movement, lighting, music, and editing work in the literature of film. They should be able to compose with images and sounds as well as words. They need to develop mental habits for thinking critically and creatively across the media. And they ought to be aware of the agendas—cultural, commercial, personal, ideological—behind the media texts they encounter every day.

In brief, we need a convergence of educational initiatives to match the widespread, ongoing convergences of text, technology, and commerce in our media environment. Viewed from this perspective, many of the old issues seem irrelevant. In today's world, it makes little sense to separate English from media, print from non-print, teaching through media from teaching about media. In most states, media education is already part of the curriculum. The question now is not whether or not, but how. This is the great challenge to our profession, to organizations like the NCTE, to teachers and administrators, to teacher trainers, researchers, and creators of curricular materials. It's time for convergent education.

*William Costanzo is a professor of English and film at Westchester Community College, New York, where he has taught courses in writing, literature, and film for more than thirty-five years. Since receiving his Ph.D. from Columbia University, he has received state and national awards for teaching and scholarship, and for designing educational software. His publications include *Double Exposure: Composing through Writ-ing and Film* (Heinemann, 1984), *The Electronic Text: Learning**

to *Write, Read, and Reason with Computers* (1989), *Reading the Movies: Twelve Great Films on Video and How to Teach Them* (NCTE, 1992), and *Great Films and How to Teach Them* (NCTE, 2004). Dr. Costanzo has just completed a new college textbook on reading and composing across the media. *The Writer's Eye*, which integrates video documentaries, commercials, radio clips, and Web sites as well as print essays into the English curriculum, is scheduled for publication by McGraw-Hill in early 2007.

David Bruce

READING AND WRITING BROADLY: THOUGHTS TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS

We appear to be at an intersection in the field of English Language Arts regarding what can be considered *literacy*. On one hand, we have a rich tradition with print, and most of the end products of national assessments focus almost exclusively on print as well. On the other hand, our culture offers an array of “beyond print” forms of communication and our students are using a number of emergent technologies in their daily lives. What are we to do with these seemingly contradictory approaches?

Oftentimes, the conversation regarding what constitutes literacy becomes polemic, the argument being that one form is superior to another. We must reject this either/or thinking. Print literacy is still vital for survival in this culture. So is being conversant in a number of electronic modalities. I often refer to the literacies as being complementary rather than competing.

A complementary approach is what media literacy is all about. If one reduces the common definition of media literacy (to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms) to its core elements, it is about reading and writing. So, as English Language Arts teachers, what does it mean to teach reading? To teach writing?

The entire point of whatever approach one takes with print literacy (phonics, balanced instruction, whole language) is that the goal results in the students being able to decode the text as a meaning making activity, and to find aspects of

themselves in the reading. Teaching reading from a broad perspective, such as with a media literacy framework, includes decoding the print symbols on a page, identifying the use of perspective in a visual, recognizing ways video images are manipulated, understanding the shorthand of text messaging, identifying cues for completing a video game, to name a few. Despite the differing modalities, the outcome—student meaning making—is the same as with print.

Likewise, writing (or the more appropriate term, composition) is an activity for the students to articulate their thoughts on a given topic. Again, keeping in mind a media literacy approach, the *form* the composition takes—essay, PowerPoint, video, visual collage—is less important than the students’ understanding of the broader aspects of composition. These include being able to articulate an idea, using an organized structure, supporting with details, using appropriate transitions, etc.

Such an approach invites the strengths of students—being literate in emergent texts—as well as the strengths of the teacher—guiding students in meaning making. It is not competing student literacies against teacher literacies. Rather—like the print/non-print dichotomy—we should view this as a complementary approach. In order for us to not become obsolete, we must take what we know how to do with print and apply it to the wide variety of texts with which students are conversant. Using media literacy as a guiding approach will help us toward this goal.

David Bruce is an assistant professor at Kent State University. Prior to earning his Ph.D., David taught high school English and Media Studies for 11 years. He serves as President of the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (OCTELA) and as the Director for the Commission on Media for the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

Alive and Kicking:

MEDIA LITERACY IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

BY JOHN GOLDEN

THE LONG ROAD

When I was a student, I used to love it when my teachers went away for a professional conference. Not only did we get a sub for the day, but when they got back we always got to do some really cool activity they had learned, which had absolutely nothing to do with whatever we might have been studying at the time. I remember one time in the 80s (the actual date is kept intentionally vague to protect the increasing aged), all of my teachers must have gone away for some media-literacy conference because the next thing I knew we were studying television commercials in English class, the evening news in History class, and even fast-food advertisements in my Home Ec. Class. I was hooked. It was as if someone had ripped away blinders that I'd been wearing my whole school life, revealing new ways of understanding the world around me. Unfortunately, the luster must have soon worn off for the teachers and we went back to whatever we were "supposed" to be learning.

I thought that when I entered my own teaching preparation program several years later, media literacy would be a part of my coursework, but in-

stead I learned that everything in education exists on a pendulum and by the time I started teaching, the mood of the nation had begun swinging to the standards and testing movement. The room for seemingly "elective" courses got squeezed in favor of a much narrower, testable curriculum. As a new teacher in the early 90s, I was discouraged from teaching the media in favor of a more traditional, print-literature based English class.

Luckily, there were two transformative moments when I learned that the study of media could be fully and effectively integrated within the English classroom. My first "a-ha moment" was when I read *Reel Conversations* by early-adopters Alan Teasley and Ann Wilder (1996, Boynton/Cook). This book showed me that my interest in film and the media didn't have to stop at the classroom door, and it gave me the language and the confidence to incorporate film into my lesson plans. The second moment was my involvement in a senior English course developed by the College Board called *Pacesetter English*. Using the broad definition of "text" that Robert Scholes describes in *The Rise and Fall of English* (1999, Yale University Press), the course included units on film study and the media.

So, with these experiences and others since, I, like so many other English teachers, have grown comfortable using elements of media literacy in the classroom. There are so many natural overlaps between the goals of a typical English classroom and those of a media literacy program that it seems



JOHN GOLDEN teaches English at Grant High School in Portland, Oregon. He is the author of the NCTE publication *Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in the English Classroom* (2001). Read a review of his most recent work for NCTE, *Reading in the Reel World: Teaching Documentaries and Other Nonfiction Texts* (2006) later in this issue. Here, Golden shares his "aha" moment of seeing the media literacy connection for his own English classroom and offers suggestions and support for other fellow teachers.

almost unnecessary to identify them in the way I do below, but as my students point out often to me, I rarely shy away from stating and restating the obvious. There are, of course, many other ways that media literacy is being used in the English classroom, that are identified and explored throughout this issue of *The Journal of Media Literacy*, but for me these are some of the essential features that should be a part of any Language Arts curriculum.

TEACHING FILM

Probably the most natural and easily incorporated element of media literacy, the teaching of film has come a long way since the days when teachers simply showed the film version of a print text the class had been studying or when teachers showed a film to reward good class behavior. Thanks to works such as the Teasley/Wilder text mentioned above, as well as Bill Costanzo's *Reading the Movies* (NCTE, 1992), teachers began to see that by studying how films are constructed through the use of cinematic techniques like lighting, sound, framing, and editing, student analysis could go way beyond writing movie reviews or identifying differences between the film and the print texts. Students who study film in an English classroom learn how to see the ways that directors seek to influence responses through particular camera angles and editing choices. They also become critical viewers able to discuss media representations of gender, race, and culture. I remember one year, a student of mine, referring to some action movie he had seen, asked, "How come it's always low-key light when the black characters are on?" I didn't have an answer, but the question was a great one that showed that he was seeing the media's construction at work and beginning to question it.

I am also convinced that using film helps improve students' skills in the elements of a traditional English curriculum. As I tried to show in *Reading in the Dark* (NCTE, 2001) and *Reading in the Reel World* (NCTE, 2006), teaching students concepts like theme, tone, symbol, characterization, and so on, becomes much easier through the use of film. Ad-

ditionally, students can practice essential reading strategies, such as predicting, questioning the text, visualizing, etc. with the visual medium with which they are much more comfortable, and then transfer what they have learned to the print texts. I have seen students' abilities to analyze and to read critically improve dramatically through the use of film. Also, once armed with the knowledge of film techniques, students are in a much stronger position to examine how print and visual texts are similar and different. Just as when I learned more about English grammar by studying a foreign language, students learn a lot about literature by studying film. The term "interior monologue," for example, might leave most of my freshmen a little cold, but when we examine how a particular scene with an interior monologue from a print text could be filmed through, say, a voice over or through an eye-line match, students begin to see the purpose and function of that literary device.

STUDENTS WHO STUDY FILM IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM LEARN HOW TO SEE THE WAYS THAT DIRECTORS SEEK TO INFLUENCE RESPONSES THROUGH PARTICULAR CAMERA ANGLES AND EDITING CHOICES. THEY... BECOME CRITICAL VIEWERS ABLE TO DISCUSS MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER, RACE, AND CULTURE.

In no way, though, do I mean that the study of film and the media should be somehow subordinate to the study of the print text nor that its main purpose is only to somehow trick the students in reading. Rather, over the years in my classroom, I have seen too many natural overlaps between the goals of media literacy and the English classroom and I've seen too much student improvement to ignore the benefits of using film actively in the ways I describe above.

TEACHING ADVERTISEMENTS

Another natural overlap between the goals of media literacy and English Language Arts (ELA) is the study of advertisements. Most state ELA standards include requirements to introduce students to persuasive techniques, such as bandwagon, testimonials, transfer, and others, and there is no

MOST FRONT-LINE TEACHERS RECOGNIZE THAT NOT ONLY IS THE STUDY OF THE MEDIA ESSENTIAL TO ASSISTING STUDENTS IN NAVIGATING THE REAL WORLD AROUND THEM...

better way to do this (or a more successful and engaging lesson) than to ask students to bring in copies of print advertisements that demonstrate each of the persuasive techniques. Oftentimes teachers will then ask students to create their own advertisements for real or imagined products by using these techniques.

As with the study of film, students learn much more than you might expect when you include a close analysis of advertisements. For example, an easy way to expand the above activity is for students to begin examining the advertisements for gender representations. Have students make lists of the physical qualities of the males and females

...THE CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS THAT STUDENTS GAIN THROUGH MEDIA ANALYSIS ACTUALLY IMPROVES STUDENTS' ABILITIES IN OTHER AREAS AS WELL.

shown in the advertisements. Do these representations depict reality? Why or why not? Especially for middle school students, it's essential that they have the opportunity to examine the ways that the media (advertisements, in particular) can affect body image and self-concept; eating disorders and unhealthy eating habits often have been linked to media exposure.

This close reading of advertisements inevitably leads teachers and students to some of the key questions that the study of media literacy asks: who has created this message, how was it created and for what purpose? An easy answer for, say, a deodorant advertisement is that the company created the ad in order to sell more deodorant, but when students closely examine the message, they'll find that its real purpose is to make us worry about the way we smell and about our attractiveness to the opposite sex, which then, of course, leads us to want to buy the product.

TEACHING EDITORIALS

A third way that a number of ELA teachers incorporate media literacy standards in their classrooms is through the study of the news media, especially newspaper editorials. Students in most grade levels are expected to compose in, and improve their abilities to write in, the persuasive mode and a great way to do this is through the study of published models from the op-ed page of the local or even school newspaper. When students can examine the emotional, logical, and ethical appeals used by professional writers to persuade their audiences, they are much more likely to be able to incorporate them into their own writing. A project in many ELA classrooms is to have students create their own editorial pages in which they express their views about topics that matter most to them.

And just as with the two previous topics above, there are additional benefits that come about when examining editorials. Most important is that students quickly learn about bias and slant. When a teacher presents two editorials on the same topic from two different perspectives, students can see easily how an author's word choice can reveal the author's point of view and political perspective. A next step might be to allow students to see the whole *New York Times* editorial page, for instance, and to compare it to one from, say, *The Wall Street Journal*. Students can then be asked about what kind of information is presented in each and how the issues are presented, which are key concepts for both an ELA classroom and a media studies course. A

couple of easy extensions that get even further into issues of media literacy are to ask students to compare the coverage of various cable news stations, such as CNN and Fox News or to conduct research into the ownership of the various media outlets. The results of their observations always surprise students and lead to excellent class discussions about the roles and purposes of the media.

THE FUTURE

In my work with ELA teachers around the country, I've found that many fully embrace the goals of media literacy, even as they grapple with balancing all of their state and local standards and requirements. English teachers today are besieged with more and more testing and packaged curriculum that purports to prepare students for the tests. But most front-line teachers recognize that not only is the study of the media essential to assisting students in navigating the real world around them, but that the critical thinking skills that students gain through media analysis actually improves students' abilities in other areas as well. I've also found that most states actually have some type of media literacy standards and it's only a matter of convincing school and district personnel that the movie you're showing or the advertisements you're presenting have direct links to specific objectives.

Teachers will find additional support for this from sources like The College Board, which has recently revised its own *College Board Standards for College Success* by adding a media literacy strand to go with the reading, writing, and oral literacy standards, and from the National Council of the Teachers of English, which has long championed the essential role that media studies should play in the ELA classroom. The media standards for both of these organizations are available online. An essential text for anyone who has bothered to read this far

into this article is *Seeing & Believing: How to Teach Media Literacy in the English Classroom* (Boynton/Cook, 2001) by media gurus Mary Christel and Ellen Kruger, which discusses, among many other topics, film and image analysis and gender/cultural representations in the media.

While much of this article has focused on the analysis of media, a final encouraging area for media literacy use is the growing number of teachers who are asking students to produce their own media. The lower costs of equipment and the easy-to-use post-production software available has allowed for teachers with minimal budgets and little technical knowledge to help students to create their own films, podcasts, and blogs.

MOST STATES ACTUALLY HAVE SOME TYPE OF MEDIA LITERACY STANDARDS AND IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF CONVINCING SCHOOL AND DISTRICT PERSONNEL THAT THE MOVIE YOU'RE SHOWING OR THE ADVERTISEMENTS YOU'RE PRESENTING HAVE DIRECT LINKS TO SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES.

Media literacy has never gone away, of course, but it's encouraging to see an increasing number of teachers who are able to use its goals in the classroom. Like fashion, everything in education really does exist on a pendulum; if you really liked something, like parachute pants or media literacy in the classroom, stick around long enough and it'll swing back around. Luckily, I feel that many signs are pointing toward a resurgence of media study, though remember that this means that leg warmers are just around the corner, too. *

Pointers for Introducing Critical Media Literacy to Your Students

BY DONNA E. ALVERMANN, PH.D.

Chances are if your students are anything like the young people who were part of an after-school media club study that my colleagues and I conducted (Alvermann, Hagood, Heron-Hruby, Hughes, Williams, & Yoon, in press), they will have developed a certain kind of critical awareness of how TV commercials, Web pop-ups, and other kinds of advertisements attempt to get them to respond in a particular way. What they may not know, however, is that all texts, including their textbooks, routinely promote or silence particular views. Critical media literacy (CML) is an important though too infrequently taught skill in the area of English language arts.

How you go about introducing your students to this skill will depend to some extent on what you



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know about the topic: its role in classrooms; the tensions at play between a media studies perspective and a cultural studies perspective; and four approaches to connecting students' popular culture to critical media literacy. This article will provide a brief overview of each of these subtopics, with an eye to offering a few pointers along the way.

CML IN CLASSROOMS

Although the notion that literacy is reinventing itself through new hypermedia and digital technologies (Luke & Elkins, 1998) is no longer novel, it continues to have enormous implications for teachers at the middle and high school level, as does the fact that these new media/technologies are fundamentally and irreversibly affecting how ideas get represented in texts and communicated. Central to most discussions of these implications is a perceived need to develop young people's critical awareness of how all authored texts (print, visual, and oral) situate them as readers, writers, listeners and viewers within particular cultural and historical contexts.

In today's media culture, texts are often multimodal; that is, they incorporate images, words, sounds, gestures, and even artifacts. They are commonly associated with television, video, hypermedia, the Internet, and with other forms of new information communication technologies (ICTs) such as instant messaging, chatting, text messaging, blogging, and

emailing. Less commonly thought of as media texts are the symbolically rich structures through which people make meaning when they engage in music, film, dance, drama, art, and other nonprint forms of communication. Becoming literate in a world that increasingly mingles print and nonprint texts is part and parcel of living in the 21st century. It is also a function of learning how to identify coercive power arrangements within the media establishment and what strategies are available for resisting them (Alvermann, 2002; 2004).

TENSIONS BETWEEN TWO PERSPECTIVES

As I have written elsewhere (Alvermann, 2002), critical media literacy may be defined broadly in one of two ways: a) it is emancipatory, or empowering, in that it seeks to free people from coercive practices, and b) it recognizes that knowledge constitutes power. Educators who teach critical media literacy within an emancipatory frame typically focus on creating communities of active readers, viewers, and listeners capable of identifying the various ideological positions that print and nonprint texts offer them. They also focus on teaching people how to make informed decisions about which ideological positions they will accept or take up, which they will resist, and which they will attempt to modify.

Some extreme forms of emancipatory approaches to instruction that attempt to free students from the perceived evils of popular media are criticized for their heavy-handed tactics, including censoring, boycotting, or blaming the media for society's ills. More typically, however, CML is seen as simply being concerned with helping students develop an awareness of the power of media messages so that informed, or empowering, decisions can be made about their use. This awareness is taught in various ways. Some literacy educators advocate identifying the various ideological positions that different media texts afford readers, viewers, and listeners. For this group of educators, knowing the ways in which individuals are marked by race, class, and gender is central to the work of doing criti-

cal media literacy. A major pedagogical objective from a media studies perspective is to assist readers (viewers, listeners) in becoming adept at resisting any attempt by the media to manipulate their world views. The potential for such manipulation is seen as a threat to personal freedom, and ultimately to society at large.

CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY MAY BE DEFINED BROADLY IN ONE OF TWO WAYS: A) IT IS EMANCIPATORY, OR EMPOWERING, IN THAT IT SEEKS TO FREE PEOPLE FROM COERCIVE PRACTICES, AND B) IT RECOGNIZES THAT KNOWLEDGE CONSTITUTES POWER.

Other literacy educators, and in particular those who view CML from a cultural studies perspective, are concerned not so much with countering the media's so-called threatening and manipulative hold on audiences as they are with striking a balance between pleasure and critique. Instead of requiring students to critique the very texts they find pleasurable, educators who take a cultural studies approach to CML look for ways to guide readers, viewers, and listeners through a self-reflective process aimed at teaching them to question their own pleasures within their own set of circumstances and with texts of their own choosing.

Viewed from a cultural studies perspective on CML, audiences are not passive. They do not merely reflect the images, language, and sounds of commercially produced media texts; instead, they actively engage in producing their own meanings that then become part of the historical and social conditions in which future media texts are constituted and consumed (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). It is this interactivity, coupled with the fact that the same text may evoke different meanings from people thought to share common cultural understandings, that makes analyzing audience consumption a valuable, but sometimes rather unpredictable process.

A word of caution is in order, here. To teach CML solely from a cultural studies perspective without also considering the coercive forces at work in media production can have potentially serious consequences. For example, it could blind both teachers and students as to how various media work on and through them. Another potential danger in focusing on audience consumption alone is that by privileging meaning that is constructed at the point of reception, teachers may run the risk of inscribing even further any stereotypical thinking and biases that students bring to popular media texts.

[THE] TENSION BETWEEN A CULTURAL STUDIES PERSPECTIVE (WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON AUDIENCE CONSUMPTION) AND A MEDIA STUDIES PERSPECTIVE (WITH ITS CONCERN FOR WHAT TEXTS DO TO AUDIENCES) IS REFLECTED IN MUCH OF THE DEBATE SURROUNDING MODERNIST PEDAGOGICAL DISCOURSE.

This tension between a cultural studies perspective (with its emphasis on audience consumption) and a media studies perspective (with its concern for what texts do to audiences) is reflected in much of the debate surrounding modernist pedagogical discourse. From a media studies perspective, teachers and students are viewed as inhabiting stable membership categories; for example, teachers are perceived as knowledgeable (the knowers), and students as learners (the naïve ones). However, from a cultural studies perspective, it is quite possible to imagine situations in which some border crossing between the categorical teacher-student “divide” might occur. For example, it is conceivable that students are not as naïve as some teachers might imagine.

FOUR APPROACHES TO CONNECTING STUDENTS’ POPULAR CULTURE TO CML

Teaching CML in conjunction with middle and high school students’ interests in popular culture texts is quite worthwhile and can lead to some interesting insights on how students process these texts. In previously published work (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999), we identified four approaches for doing so. One approach that I do not personally endorse views popular culture as being detrimental to young people’s development. In presenting popular culture as a degrading (low-culture) form of entertainment, teachers are sending the message that by engaging in it, students are losing valuable time that could more profitably be spent in developing their minds and tastes for “better” (higher?) forms of culture. Carmen Luke (1997), an Australian educator with many years of experience in researching and teaching CML, contends that when teachers think of popular culture in this way, their teaching leans toward proselytizing about mass media’s harmful effects.

A second approach to using popular culture in the classroom consists of teaching students how to critically analyze various forms of popular culture texts. For example, teachers might ask students to assume various roles—the “ideal” reader, viewer, listener. In this approach, popular culture becomes an object that is useful primarily for the lessons it can teach. Students learn to critique it such that the learning process becomes what Buckingham (1998) describes as one of “demystifying underlying truths that are normally hidden from view” (p. 8). When this approach is implemented, popular culture becomes a pedagogical guise for limiting the pleasures students can take from it. Not surprisingly, young people are quick to protect their own thinking by pretending to see the teacher’s perspective.

A third approach to using popular culture in the classroom emphasizes the pleasures students take in various forms of media-produced texts (e.g.,

magazines, lyrics, videos, rap lyrics, TV, movies, blogs). Teachers who favor this approach typically shy away from asking students to critique what they find pleasurable in these texts. The underlying assumption is that everything is relative, and thus everyone is entitled to her or his own pleasures. This view, however, has its drawbacks. When students are not shown how to be critically aware of media-produced popular culture texts, their thinking about such texts goes unchallenged. They do not develop tools for exploring their likes and dislikes of certain forms of popular culture. In short, their learning is truncated. For as Luke (1997) points out, "views and voices from everywhere are potentially views and voices from nowhere" (p. 25).

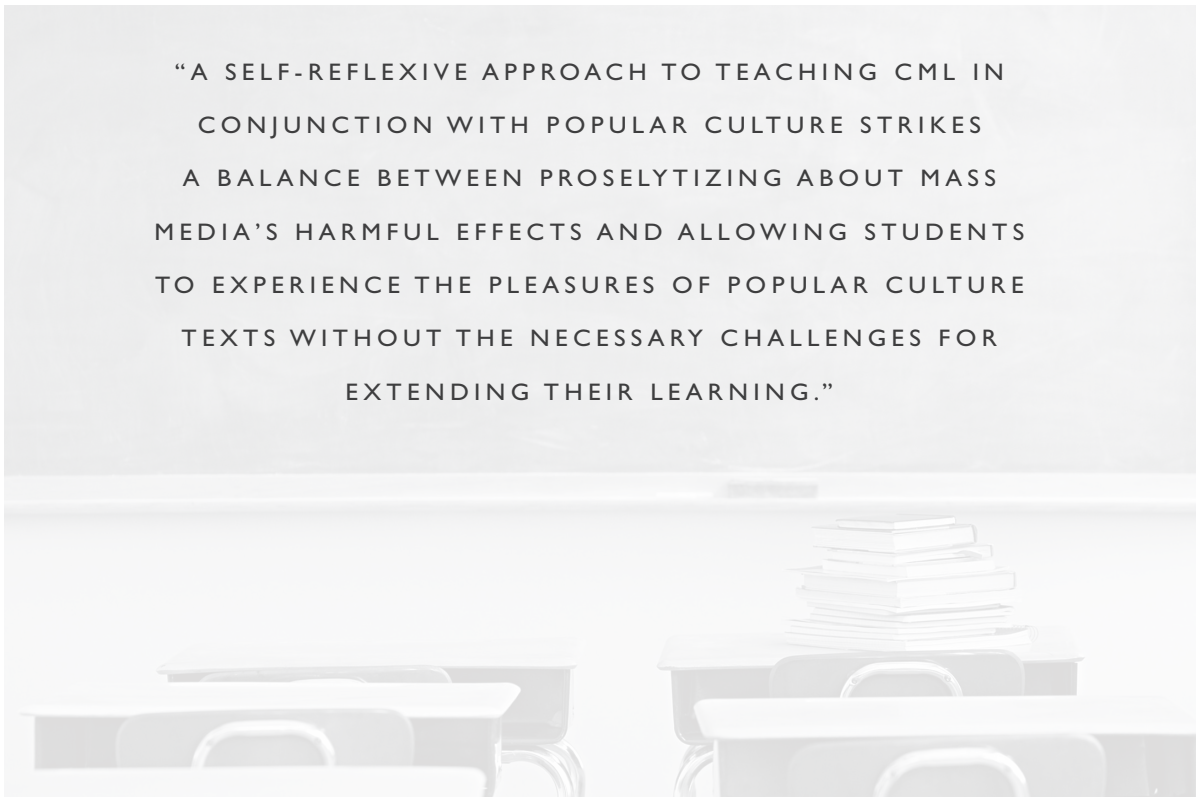
Finally, a fourth approach (and one that I favor) involves developing students' ability to be self-reflexive in their uses of popular culture. Teaching CML from this perspective provides students with opportunities to explore how media and the mass-produced icons of popular culture attempt to influence their emotional, social, and material lives, and how they in turn can resist or even redirect those attempts. This self-reflexive approach to teaching CML in conjunction with popular cul-

ture strikes a balance between proselytizing about mass media's harmful effects and allowing students to experience the pleasures of popular culture texts without the necessary challenges for extending their learning. *

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"A SELF-REFLEXIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING CML IN CONJUNCTION WITH POPULAR CULTURE STRIKES A BALANCE BETWEEN PROSELYTIZING ABOUT MASS MEDIA'S HARMFUL EFFECTS AND ALLOWING STUDENTS TO EXPERIENCE THE PLEASURES OF POPULAR CULTURE TEXTS WITHOUT THE NECESSARY CHALLENGES FOR EXTENDING THEIR LEARNING."



Integrating English and Media Studies

BY NEIL ANDERSEN

I spend a considerable amount of time talking to teachers about ways they might integrate media studies with their current teaching practices. I did this for seven years as a consultant for the Toronto District School Board, and am continuing to do so free-lance. The teachers I speak to may be pre-service or in-service, but they share the belief that media studies are important to their students' futures. They also share a measure of anxiety about how to teach media studies, as pre-service media education is still rare in Ontario.

Excepting for Additional Qualifications courses, where we have over 100 hours to gain a comfort level with media studies, many of my teacher encounters are only a few hours in length at best. I have to be focused and concise.

One of the technologies that teachers use when delivering curricula is a framework, many of which are graphic. A Venn diagram helps teachers explain the concept of compare and contrast. A flow chart helps them explain the concept of sequence and/or cause and effect. A framework I use to help teachers understand and implement media studies is a triangle based on one originated by the Scottish Film Council.

The Media Studies Triangle's sides are labeled Text, Audience and Production. Each of these qualities is

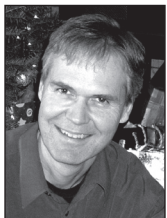
assumed to combine synergistically to create meaning, which is set inside the Triangle. See figure 1.

The Triangle is not the only framework teachers have at their disposal. *The Media Literacy Resource Guide* (Ontario Teachers Federation, 1989) contains a framework of 8 Key Concepts. *The Media Education Think Literacy* document contains a framework of 5 Key Concepts (www.aml.ca). David Buckingham's *Media Education* (Polity) describes a framework of four elements.

What sets the Triangle apart from these lists is its graphic nature. All of the other frameworks referenced above are described in words. That means that they are subject to the structures of writing. Some inevitably appear before others, and readers might infer a hierarchy that may not be useful. Number 3 on the lists may be equally important as any other concept, but is still number 3. A sequence is also suggested by the list, so that readers might assume they should begin with number one and proceed to numbers 2, 3 and 4, when it might be most useful to begin with number 4.

Because the Triangle is a graphic, its three sides suggest neither a hierarchy nor a sequence. Students can begin with any side, proceed to any other side, and revisit sides at will. Because 'meaning' resides in the center of the Triangle, they are reminded that all three elements are working to create their understanding. It is a powerful graphic organizer, and it facilitates an interactivity that can become powerful media analysis for novice and experienced teachers.

All of these factors aside, I find the Triangle particularly poignant because its sides represent my evolution as an English and media teacher. It also helps me understand some of the key differences



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between literary study and media study. I believe that my teaching of literature has improved as a result of my media studies.

When I began teaching, the meaning of a text was generally thought to reside within the text itself. The text communicated a significant cultural heritage. My job as a teacher was to help students understand and appreciate the text's meaning by revealing its codes and conventions. Much of my time was spent as an interpreter.

A decade or so later, reader response and audience theory emerged. My teaching shifted to include the audience as a key element in the making of meaning. The students and I negotiated the meaning of texts together, taking into account the terms on the Audience side of the Triangle. My role shifted from interpreter to facilitator, and class discussions became a great deal more enjoyable because they included personal responses. Cultural Studies also emerged, adding further richness and coherence to the range of discussions. Because Toronto is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, using a Cultural Studies model to understand texts is not just easy, it is necessary.

As the definition of 'text' expanded from novel and poem to magazine ad and music video, a consideration of production conditions became important to the meaning-making process. Because these played such a large role in the nature of the text and the ways in which it was delivered to audiences, we had to consider them.

Then it hit me. If including the role of audience in the process of literary meaning-making was exciting and enjoyable for me and my students, why wasn't I including the study of literary production, as I was when studying media texts? I realized that much of my literary study had treated novels and plays as if they were detached from their social, political and economic contexts. And further, I came to realize that some of my disaffected students were apathetic as a result of this disconnect. By failing to connect the literary texts to personal and cultural contexts, I was preventing my students from

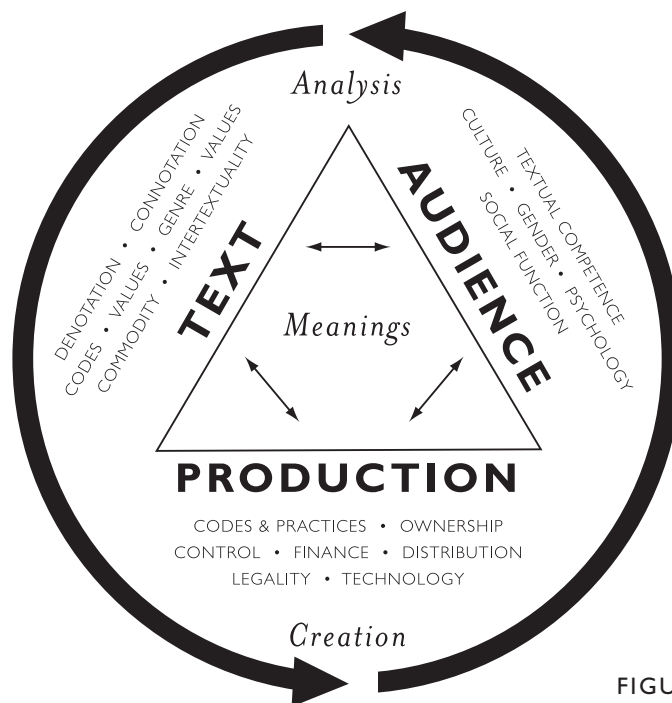


FIGURE 1

connecting with literature in ways that they were able to connect with media texts.

I changed the way I taught English. I began using the Triangle as often as possible to ground the texts and provide my students with multiple opportunities to make meanings. When I taught *The Great Gatsby*, I researched the genesis of the book so that we could understand not only its historical context, but also its personal meaning for Fitzgerald. There are several movie adaptations of the novel,

BECAUSE THE TRIANGLE IS A GRAPHIC, ITS THREE SIDES SUGGEST NEITHER A HIERARCHY NOR A SEQUENCE.

but I didn't show them. Rather than considering whether or not the actors fulfilled our expectations of the characters, or if symbolism was as powerful in the movie as in the novel, I showed *The Last Tycoon* (1976), a movie based on a novel Fitzgerald wrote 16 years later. This allowed us not only to consider the thematic and structural similarities between the two narratives, but also to discuss director Elia Kazan, writer Harold Pinter and Fitzgerald's fate after he wrote *Gatsby*.

When I taught Shakespeare, I invited students to find similar themes and plot elements in music videos. We examined posters for Shakespearean movies, discussing how effectively they captured the themes or plots, and inferring which audiences each poster was attracting. I invited them to cast a new movie adaptation with their favorite actors, interpreting the action and themes in different ways and defending their choices by referring to the text. My efforts were to move our study from a traditional Cultural Heritage approach to one of Personal Response and Cultural Criticism.

When I taught poetry, I invited students to suggest music that would support the moods and themes and images that might illustrate or symbolize ideas.

These strategies helped me provide new and useful contexts for our literary studies. In order to suggest actors or music, students had to do close readings of the literary texts. By exploring ways in which different actors might represent the roles, we could assess the cultural significance of both the literature and popular culture. By approaching through media and popular culture, we were better able to understand the literature.

WHEN I TAUGHT SHAKESPEARE... MY EFFORTS WERE TO MOVE OUR STUDY FROM A TRADITIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE APPROACH TO ONE OF PERSONAL RESPONSE AND CULTURAL CRITICISM.

These are the messages I am now taking to English teachers who want to integrate literary and media studies. The Media Studies Triangle provides an efficient and effective graphic framework for both the analysis and creation of media texts. Encouraging students to make popular-culture-based responses to literary texts helps them make connections between the texts and their own experiences. It also helps them understand the literary texts more comprehensively. Because it can also prevent some students from becoming apathetic or disaffected, it becomes a win-win situation for everyone. *

Harry Potter

BY NEIL ANDERSEN

ADAPTED FROM MEDIA STUDIES K-12,
TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD, 2005

New books are published every second of every day. Bookstores overflow with exciting new arrivals. Movies come and go regularly, some arriving with great fanfare, many fading quietly and quickly. Yet *Harry Potter* continues to succeed on a large scale, influencing children worldwide and generating profits for companies large and small. How can media consumers better understand why *Harry Potter* succeeds consistently in a high-risk cultural environment? How can they understand why so many people remain so enthusiastic?

A method, or framework, for examining media messages is the Media Triangle, which provides three different but complementary approaches to the study of any selected text. The three sides remind consumers to examine a text from multiple perspectives. This multiple-point-of-view approach is one of the greatest strengths of media studies.

The three sides of the triangle represent three different, but complementary views of a media message. They remind us that all three must be considered to fully understand a message's meanings. The 'Text' side encourages people to consider such qualities as denotation, connotation, codes, values, and commodity. The 'Audience' side encourages people to consider the audience's role in creating meaning, and includes such qualities as culture, gender, and psychology. The 'Production' side is one that most clearly distinguishes media

and the Media Triangle

analysis from literary analysis because it acknowledges the role of production practices and regulations, such as distribution, ownership, codes, and practices in the creation of media meanings.

LOOKING AT HARRY POTTER VIA THE MEDIA TRIANGLE

Harry Potter is a most-interesting and useful cultural phenomenon for media study. Harry began as the main character in novels—a traditional print form—but has evolved into images on clothing, dishes, notebooks, bedsheets, pajamas, and a character in movies and games. Characters from the stories are found regularly in conversation and during Halloween trick-or-treating, and Potter-world words (muggle, quidditch, howler) have entered daily conversation.

Harry Potter is a huge social phenomenon, but is neither unprecedented nor alone. His adventures descend from a long line of heroes, archetypes and story lines. J. K. Rowling has not created a new hero so much as re-fashioned a traditional hero in a new way. Her building blocks come from centuries of Western heroes, villains, quests, settings and plots. She has also highlighted or re-cast Harry in a way that makes his life and adventures compelling for 21st century children and the adults who willingly share his world.

Examining *Harry Potter* using the Media Studies Triangle can help people better understand the various meanings he has come to hold for different audiences and artists.

AUDIENCE

Audience characteristics include culture, gender, textual competence, psychology and social function.

The *Harry Potter* stories focus on the misadventures of a boy growing up in two worlds – modern-day London during the summers and a fantastical private school for wizards in the other three seasons. Most people have a sense of fantasy and pretend in their lives. Adults who purchase lottery tickets are manifesting their desire for fantasy. Children cannot legally purchase lottery tickets, but they can indulge their fantasy lives using their imaginations, wherein toy spacecraft journey to Mars or stuffed animals counsel them not to be afraid of the dark.

EXAMINING HARRY POTTER USING THE MEDIA STUDIES TRIANGLE CAN HELP PEOPLE BETTER UNDERSTAND THE VARIOUS MEANINGS HE HAS COME TO HOLD FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES AND ARTISTS.

A dominant fear for children is the fear of abandonment, and the *Harry Potter* stories resonate heavily with that fear through their main character's orphaning at an early age. Harry spends much of his time pining for a surrogate family, and finds one through his time spent with the Weasleys and with Hagrid (who helped rescue him as a baby). Adults can often relate to Harry's longings if they have moved away from their roots to pursue work, have experienced family break-ups or have changed

jobs frequently. Each of these traumatic experiences might increase their sensitivity to abandonment and need for feelings of security.

People might easily relate to Harry's abandonment, which in fact recurs each summer when he must leave Hogwarts to return to number 4 Privet Drive. Most will also relate to Harry's desire to be accepted by his peers at Hogwarts. All people, and especially tweens and teens, feel the need for peer acceptance. Harry's scar is a constant sign that he cannot achieve assimilation into the Hogwarts student body. His scar forces him not only to stand out, but symbolizes that he has a unique power relationship with the most dreaded villain in the world. His peers find him compelling, but with the exception of a few special students, most are afraid to get too close to him. Those who DO count him as a friend do so because they are themselves outsiders: Ron Weasley is a red-headed pauper, Hermione Granger is a gifted girl of mixed parentage, Neville Longbottom is an orphaned war victim like Harry, and Hagrid is part giant, part human. The *Harry Potter* stories are filled with issues of difference, prejudice and bias to which children of all ages can relate.

NO MATTER WHO IS IN THE AUDIENCE, THE
HARRY POTTER STORIES PROVIDE A VULNERABLE
CHARACTER WITH WHOM THEY CAN RELATE
ON ONE GROUND OR ANOTHER.

People who often find their responsibilities overwhelming can also relate to the *Harry Potter* stories. Harry just wants to be a kid and enjoy the simple miseries promised by a private school life – loneliness, malevolent teachers, gruelling homework, anxieties over tests, the big game or the weekend furlough. But in addition to these pressures, Harry must regularly fear and fight for his own and the lives of others. He is forced to grow up too early and face responsibilities and concerns that have mortal as well as moral consequences.

Male audience members who enjoy sports might relate to the fact that Harry is a male hero with a talent for Quidditch. But Harry has other characteristics that males may not commonly consider in their own lives. He longs for his parents' approval and companionship, or that of his surrogate parents: Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, Hagrid, Dumbledore, and Sirius Black. He has anxiety-ridden nightmares that cause his scar to burn and he has ongoing moments of near-paralyzing insecurity. Both males and females can relate to these feelings, although in different ways.

Hermione is a character that female audience members might relate to more easily than Harry. Hermione is clever, but like Harry, an outsider. She longs for a peer acceptance that her birth denies her, so she works tirelessly to compensate in an arena where she CAN succeed—academics and wizardry. She can never be the best pure-bred wizard, but she can be the best Muggle wizard.

No matter who is in the audience, the *Harry Potter* stories provide a vulnerable character with whom they can relate on one ground or another. Most children are accustomed to living in an adult-dominated world where their choices and decisions are constantly monitored, and sometimes prevented, by adults. Children are, by virtue of their diminutive size and positions, sensitive to power and power relationships. *Harry Potter* is largely about power and power dynamics between adults and children. Harry is subordinated to the Dursleys, even though he is smarter and more moral. Ironically, he can turn them all into furniture at the flick of his wrist, but compels himself to endure and civilly obey their inhumanity. Children and adults might easily relate to a wish to turn an unpleasant superior into a foot stool, and understand the power dynamics that make them obey those they might despise. In each story, Harry and his friends are forced to disobey adult edicts, take measures into their own hands, and defeat evil through extraordinary magic and courage. These moments speak to all people who have had power issues in their lives.

Because of his complex character and circumstances, Harry Potter's adventures appeal to a vari-

ety of audiences on a variety of levels. All of these contribute to his popularity and ambiguity, and allow many different audience members to interpret and use the *Harry Potter* messages in differing but important ways.

PRODUCTION

The production side of the triangle includes considerations of codes and practices, ownership, control, finance, distribution, legality and technology. These issues existed with the works of Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Virginia Woolf, and Margaret Laurence, and can add considerable interest and meaning to the study of their work. Study of the conditions of production is often neglected, however, because time has obscured them. In the case of *Harry Potter*, the entire history is recent, and production conditions are easily remembered or researched.

J.K. Rowling has licensed *Harry Potter* imagery and words to a variety of companies that produce a wide range of texts. The conditions of production influence the meanings that media consumers make. For example, Raincoast Books, the Canadian publisher, prints the novels on recycled paper, much to the delight of Ms. Rowling, who likes the idea of being ecologically responsible. This models ecological behaviour to all Canadian *Harry Potter* readers.

Harry Potter books are produced in several versions. Hard cover versions appeared first, followed years later by soft-cover versions. Two covers were designed, one for the child audience and another, more austere version, to appeal to adult readers. Boxed sets were created as soon as enough soft-cover books had been printed to fill a box. The novels were translated from English into more than 60 languages, including Latin, Greek, Welsh and Gaelic. The covers were also re-designed to suit the cultures for which they were intended. Special, celebratory, large-print and audio editions have all been produced for special audiences. (The first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, was re-titled *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* for the US market only. Rumour has it that the American

publishers were concerned that American readers would not understand what a philosopher's stone might be, and this lack of audience prior knowledge would harm book sales.) Each of these production changes were made based on a knowledge of audience.

WHAT MAKES THE *HARRY POTTER* STORIES SO GRIPPING ARE THE MANY POWERFUL AND COMPELLING ELEMENTS BLENDED SUBTLY WITH 21ST CENTURY ISSUES AND ANXIETIES. THE ELEMENTS ARE HISTORICAL, BUT THE BLEND IS CONTEMPORARY.

Anybody can purchase and read a *Harry Potter* book, but no one can adapt it into a movie without a legal agreement with its author. The agreement details both the degree of quality that will be committed to the movie and the amount of money that will be paid to the author. Warner Brothers has licensed the right to adapt the novels into movies, but Ms. Rowling has negotiated an unusually high level of control over the movie projects. This control has allowed her to influence many of the major creative decisions in the adaptation processes. She has been able to prevent the screenwriters from removing or modifying substantial portions of the stories. Included in the creative decisions was the choosing of unknown British actors rather than more well-known American actors. This fact allowed viewers to meet the movie characters without prejudice, as freshly as they had the print characters.

Harry Potter games have also been produced, but Ms. Rowling has been able to highlight the heroism and self-sacrifice rather than the potential violence that might reasonably arise from Quidditch matches, encounters with giant spiders or dragon hunts.

The *Harry Potter* saga has been fraught with groups who have tried to limit or prevent some people from reading or seeing it. The books are still banned in some places on the grounds that they promote an occult worldview. Had some of the novels' scenes

been rendered with their full degree of violence and horror when adapted for the screen, they would have received restricted ratings, preventing their primary audience from seeing them.

PEOPLE CAN USE THE MEDIA STUDIES
TRIANGLE TO HELP THEM EXAMINE A TEXT,
WHETHER IT IS AN INDIVIDUAL BOOK, STORY,
GAME OR THE ENTIRE COLLECTION.

Because Warner Brothers produced the movies, and because of the company's financial resources, considerable monies could be committed not only to the movies' production values, but also to the expensive computer-generated imagery (CGI) that made the magic seem real. Objects and people don't just fly, but do so in full motion and interact with one another along the way. Elves, furniture, dragons and goblins all move realistically and interact convincingly with their surroundings and human characters. The time and technological expertise required to accomplish this level of fantasy-as-reality is expensive, but the audiences' willingness to buy tickets and recordings help to make them possible.

MEDIA TEXT

Studies of texts involve examinations of denotation, connotation, codes, genres, values, commodity and intertextuality. Rather than probing how audiences interpret the messages (audience) or how the conditions of production have influenced the meaning (production), this perspective looks at the text itself.

Harry Potter descends from a long line of young and old heroes and wizards: King Arthur had Merlin, Frodo had Gandolph, and Alice had the Cheshire Cat. Each of these characters and their adventures provided a literary and cultural history for the *Harry Potter* adventures, and J.K. Rowling has borrowed liberally from these and many other stories.

What makes the *Harry Potter* stories so gripping are the many powerful and compelling elements blended subtly with 21st century issues and anxieties. The elements are historical, but the blend is contemporary. The boarding-school tradition has been a part of the European experience for centuries, and has customarily included initiations, orientations, rivalries and champions. The dissolution of the family unit, however, is a more contemporary experience, so Harry's dependence on the Dursleys and his longing for a family unit is a more contemporary issue. The conflicts that arise from his experiences help strengthen his character and allow him to survive under extremely hostile conditions, something that comes from a more contemporary milieu, where children might be abandoned by one or both parents, either through divorce or war.

Harry is constantly attacked by the Dursleys for being obnoxious and an insufferable obligation. He suffers constant persecution at the hands of Professor Snape or Draco Malfoy and his thugs. Yet he resists the temptation to give any one of them a well-deserved bad thought, let alone a spell. He refuses to compromise his values and beliefs in goodness by stooping to their level. He feels bad much of the time, but will not make anyone else feel bad. These qualities make Harry Potter a compelling character to study. Each time he gets into a new predicament, readers and viewers know that he will not take the easy way out, will not let someone else take the heat, that he will put himself in harm's way to protect others, and will not take retribution for transgressions against him. But he WILL survive and triumph over seemingly overwhelming odds. It is his faith and strength of conviction that keeps readers interested, that make him a figure in the pantheon of great heroes, and that keep his adventures popular as books, movies and games.

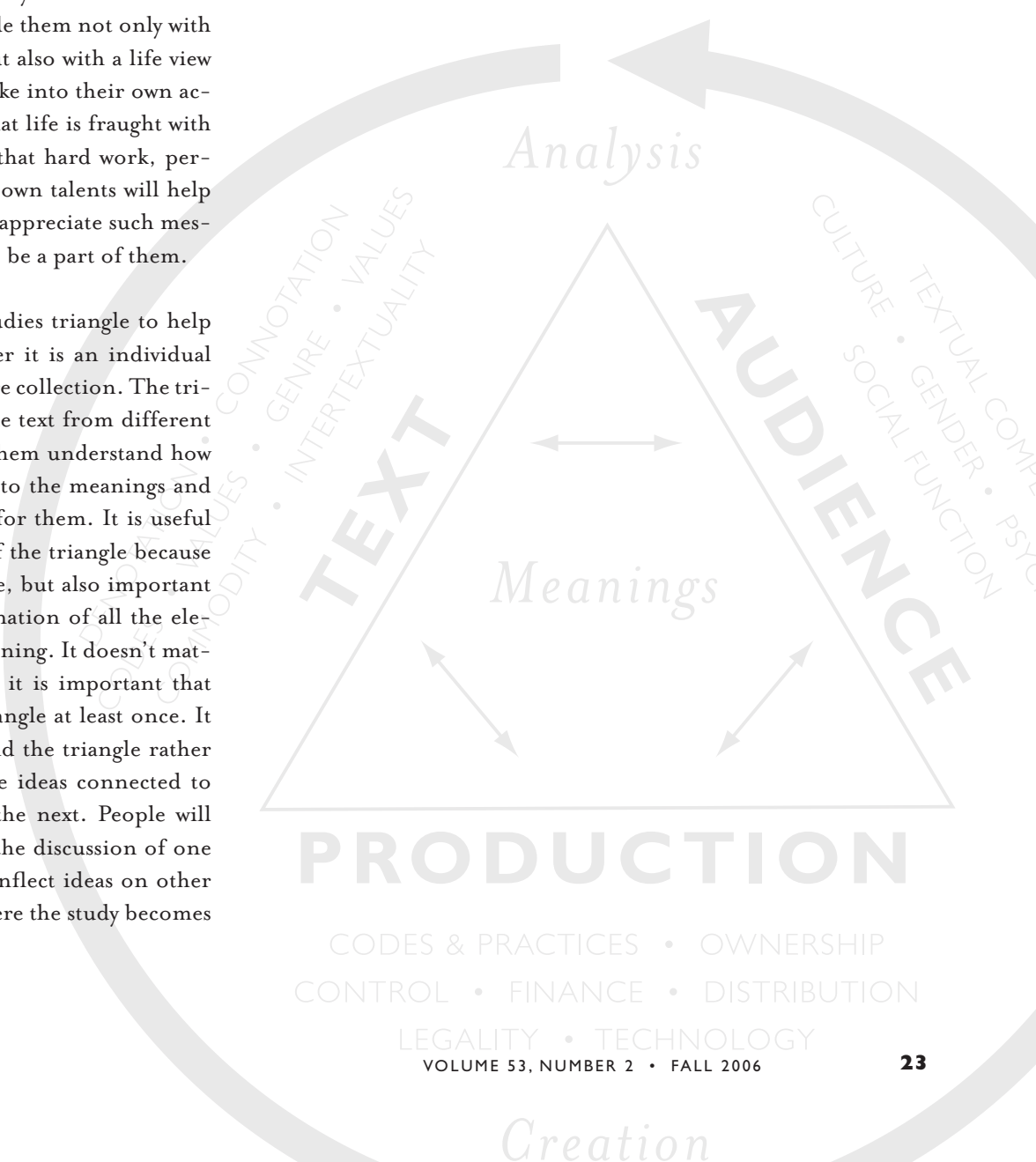
The familiar theme of an outsider at boarding school is combined with someone gifted in performing magic (although not always learning it easily). The familiar theme of someone having to deal with hostile adolescent peer groups is combined with monsters and mortal combat. The familiar theme of the home team vying for the

championship is given a magical twist where flying balls threaten to knock them off their brooms. It is the combination of the familiar and the new, the age-old issues of childhood combined with new childhood perils, that make the *Harry Potter* stories compelling. It is the highly-visual action and conflicts of the stories that help them become, with minimal adaptation, entertaining movies. It is the constant tension and competition that allow the stories to be adapted into popular adventure games. It is the David-and-Goliath sense of monstrous conflict that makes *Harry Potter* images so attractive on clothing.

Audiences constantly yearn for new and compelling entertainment. They appreciate the entertainment even more if it can help them understand and navigate the challenges they face in their own lives. *Harry Potter* can provide them not only with excitement and challenge, but also with a life view and a set of values they can take into their own actions. They can be assured that life is fraught with hazards and challenges, but that hard work, perseverance, and faith in their own talents will help them achieve success. People appreciate such messages, and are happy to pay to be a part of them.

People can use the media studies triangle to help them examine a text, whether it is an individual book, story, game or the entire collection. The triangle helps them consider the text from different perspectives, but also helps them understand how each perspective contributes to the meanings and uses that people might have for them. It is useful to see the differing aspects of the triangle because we can focus on one at a time, but also important to know that it is the combination of all the elements that constitute the meaning. It doesn't matter where people begin, but it is important that they visit each side of the triangle at least once. It is best to keep moving around the triangle rather than trying to exhaust all the ideas connected to one side before moving to the next. People will find that ideas arising from the discussion of one side will often connect and inflect ideas on other sides, and this dynamic is where the study becomes powerful and useful.

CONSIDER WHAT HAS BEEN STATED IN THIS APPLICATION OF THE MEDIA TRIANGLE TO THE *HARRY POTTER* PHENOMENON. DECIDE WHICH OF THE POINTS YOU AGREE WITH, WHICH YOU MIGHT CHALLENGE, AND WHICH MIGHT REQUIRE FURTHER ANALYSIS TO BE CONVINCING. CHOOSE A *HARRY POTTER* TEXT YOU KNOW WELL, AND TEST THE TRIANGLE TO SEE IF USING IT CAN ENRICH YOUR UNDERSTANDING.*



Focus on Film:

THEY LEARN IT THRU THE MOVIES

BY DAVID M. CONSIDINE & FRANK BAKER

“FILM HAS ITS OWN LANGUAGE, ITS OWN GRAMMAR.”

(Martin Scorsese, Director and Chair of The Film Foundation)

“I NEVER REALIZED HOW INEFFECTIVELY I USED FILM IN MY CLASSROOM UNTIL I CREATED THE MOVIE GUIDE. NOW I SEE WHAT A POWERFUL TEACHING TOOL FILM CAN BE.”

(Braley, North Carolina middle grades teacher)

“...JUST LIKE THE BOOK WITHOUT ANY OF THE INTERESTING PARTS.”

(Review of the movie, *The Da Vinci Code*)

“Kids love movies! This fact is evident when you tell them you’re about to show a clip of a movie, and the noise level in the classroom drops immediately.” That’s Belinha talking. She teaches 8th grade in Branford, CT. She explored the subject of historical perspective with her students using the MGM classic *Gone With the Wind* and the acclaimed Ken Burns documentary *Civil War*. The “students were able to see the burning of Georgia from two different venues and appreciate how movies can impact our thinking of history,” she said.

Belinha’s got that right. In *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, Sam Wineburg documented the way movies shaped the way students and their parents perceived eras like the 1960s and events like the Holocaust. As a mass medium that depends on the public, it is inevitable that movies will somehow reflect social attitudes and concerns about

individuals, institutions, and issues. *They Died with Their Boots On*, made during World War II, depicts a somewhat romanticized General George Armstrong Custer. By the time we get to *The Last Samurai* (2003), Custer is described as “a murderer who fell in love with his own legend.” Rather than lamenting the impact of the film industry and other popular culture, Wineburg said, “we might try instead to understand how they might be used... to advance students’ historical understanding.” Such a process would be compatible with many strands described by The National Council for the Social Studies, including those that address institutions, identity, culture, and change.

Unfortunately not everyone looks so favorably upon the idea of film in the classroom. Just ask Melanie. In an attempt to motivate and stimulate her students as they studied meteors and dinosaur extinction theories, Melanie used a clip from the popular movie, *Armageddon*. She was chastised by her department head and told that in the future she should use an episode from the TV documentary series NOVA. However well researched and produced that series may be, in terms of student engagement, (a necessary prerequisite for learning), it loses out to *Armageddon* and other Hollywood fare.

Suspicion about the contribution movies can make to the curriculum is hardly new. It is in fact rooted in the history of educational media and well documented in Paul Saettler’s excellent *History of Instructional Technology*. Almost from its inception, Saettler tells us, film has been recognized as a potentially powerful teaching tool and “a potent medium of education”, at the same time as it has confronted

widespread opposition and a pervasive “notion that entertainment, commercialism, and education do not mix.”

Tellingly, he also documents research from the 1920s that clearly identified the vital role the teacher played as an instructional intermediary, helping students understand key ideas and depictions in movies. “However inherently effective the photoplays may be” researchers wrote some 75 years ago, “it will only attain its highest degree of effectiveness when accompanied by good teaching based on the appreciation of the real goal to be attained and of the capacity of the material to contribute to its attainment.”

THE MOTION PICTURE STUDY GUIDE: A MODEL FROM APPALACHIAN STATE

One teacher training institute that has consistently recognized the potential movies offer as teaching tools, is The College of Education at North Carolina’s Appalachian State University, which houses a graduate and undergraduate middle school program and a masters in media literacy. Drawing upon the model established in the movie study guides developed by Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM), education majors are expected to work in teams to create interdisciplinary motion picture study guides. While the guides are frequently based on books in the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum, such as *The Outsiders*, *Ruby Bridges*, *Holes*, or *Tuck Everlasting*, teachers have also created fascinating guides from movies as different as *Seabiscuit*, *National Treasure*, *Fly Away Home*, *October Sky*, *The Mighty*, *Newsies*, *Remember the Titans*, and *My Dog Skip*.

In addition to including standards-based instructional strategies, these guides typically connect movie content to the developmental dimensions of early adolescence described in National Middle School Association’s (NMSA), *This We Believe* or to curriculum themes described by James Beane in, *A Middle School Curriculum: From Rhetoric to Reality*.

Themes and concerns related to identity, cultural diversity, class systems, independence, human rights,

and global conflict are evident in numerous study guides. Beyond learning facts and developing students cognitively, adolescent empathy and engagement can also be fostered through movies. The NMSA publication *Promoting Harmony* recognizes that the popularity of S.E. Hinton’s novel *The Outsiders* is based on the degree to which “it captures the emotional turbulence of adolescence” and the fact that many young readers will have experienced and shared, “the feelings expressed such as confusion, anxiety, excitement, the general sense of searching...”

Many movies can fulfill the same function as young audiences watch the trials and tribulations of people their own age, like PK (*The Power of One*), David (*I am David*), or Peter and Susan (*The Chronicles of Narnia*). Movies like *Big* and *13 Going on 30* allow them to consider what being an adult might be like. *Rebel Without a Cause*, despite the fact that it is now 50 years old, remains one of the quintessential screen representations of adolescent angst. Because it was made in the 1950s it has the added attraction of having no cussing and minimal violence. Teachers who do use this film report that once the kids get over the fact that it looks old, they get into the story about three confused and angry teens.

One of the most recent study guides developed by North Carolina teachers is called *Bridging Continents*. Designed for 7th and 8th grade and based on state standards, it addresses racial prejudice in Africa and Australia by using *Hotel Rwanda* and *Rabbit Proof Fence*. The interdisciplinary curriculum team was

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made up of one teacher each from Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science.

While the humanities teachers usually respond fairly quickly to their assigned tasks, the connections are not always obvious to teachers in other subject areas. In this case, the Math and Science teachers were more than up to the challenge. The subject matter in *Hotel Rwanda* included genocide, decaying bodies and refugees forced to live in unsanitary conditions that became breeding grounds for infection and disease. The study guide addressed state competencies, including scientific inquiry, water quality standards, and biological hazards such as viruses and bacteria. The subject matter was brought home even further when the teachers connected these issues to conditions faced by victims of Hurricane Katrina, the Indonesian tsunami and the earthquake in Pakistan.

A parent, principal, or administrator exposed to one of these movie guides is left with little doubt that teachers have created engaging, challenging resources that include taxonomies, rubrics and activities related to learning styles, multiple intelligences or brain-based learning.

Teachers describe the collaborative process of creating the study guides as “exciting,” “challenging,” and “time consuming.” Invariably they also report a sense of accomplishment and pride in the finished product.

One area that teachers are asked to include in every study guide, steps beyond the traditional subject areas and focuses on Media Literacy. This means addressing some of the central concerns of Media Literacy, which might include an understanding of the audience the film targets, the *values and ideology* in the film, or the way in which people, places, countries, cultures, events, and issues are depicted or *represented* in the movie. It always includes some discussion of the *genre, codes, conventions, and language* of cinema. For the most part, teachers become co-learners with their students, since few of them have had any formal training in the language of motion pictures. As Braley put it, “My students were part of my creative process so they cannot wait to complete some of the activities included in my Movie Guide.”

TEACHING WITH MOVIES: IT'S IN THE STANDARDS

The use of motion pictures in the classroom has been spurred by the endorsement of both major reading/language arts teaching organizations in the United States. In their joint declaration, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and International Reading Association (IRA) declared, “Being literate in contemporary society means being active critical and creative users not only of print and spoken language but also of the visual language of film and television.” This emphasis upon film language is increasingly evident in state standards.

In Texas, an influential state with textbook publishers, Viewing and Representing standards are contained in the ELA curriculum. They make specific reference to “character traits,” dialogue, mood, genre, and film techniques.

In 2004, the College Board included more than 30 contemporary films in SpringBoard, a new middle school language arts curriculum. The curriculum infused film around three themes: choice, changes and challenges all of which resonate with both middle school teachers and students. Students read novels and poems in addition to learning to critically view films. SpringBoard wisely encourages the use of film clips, rather than showing an entire film, so that student may focus on a specific topic.

This is pedagogically sound and invites an instructional strategy that Gavriel Salomon in *The Interaction of Media Cognition and Learning* described as AIME. The acronym stands for the Amount of Invested Mental Energy. When students are not cued and prepped prior to viewing media, Salomon argued, they frequently engage in “cognitive economy” or “shallow processing.” On the other hand, when teachers give them directions prior to screening and allow time for discussion and feedback after the screening, the students are more mentally alert, as result of which they comprehend and retain more ideas than students who received little guidance or direction from their teachers. *In short, for learning to occur the focus has to shift from what they watch to how they watch.*

SpringBoard provides numerous examples of this type of approach. Using the film *The Mighty*, based on the novel *Freak The Mighty*, student attention is called to the camerawork and editing used in the opening sequence, in which the larger than life Max walks through his middle school hallway, where he receives incredulous stares from his smaller peers. The camera perspective shifts from the objective (what Max sees) to the subjective (how others see him).

In the work based on Steven Spielberg's *E.T.*, students study tone and are guided in their viewing of the film's opening sequence, in which E.T. is abandoned on Earth by the mother ship. Students are assigned to groups and directed to pay careful attention to elements, including camera framing, camera angles, lighting, music, and sound.

Another cinematic device students learn to recognize, appreciate and identify is the flashback, which is often accompanied by the narrator's voice-over. Leonardo Di Caprio's voice over provides background information and character motivation at the beginning of the coming-of-age classic *This Boy's Life*: "It was 1957. We were driving from Florida to Utah. After my mother was beaten up by her boyfriend, we got in the Nash and high-tailed it for the uranium fields." In the Disney version of *Holes*, young Stanley Yelnats is being bussed to court-ordered detention at Camp Green Lake when he recalls both his family curse and the incident that sent him digging up holes. *The Sandlot*, *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, *The Outsiders*, *The Education of Little Tree*, *Clueless*, and *Spanglish* all use voiceover at the opening of the film. Perhaps one of the most compelling flashbacks is found at the start of *Stand By Me*, based on the Stephen King story. We see Richard Dreyfuss sitting in his car and his voice takes us back to his adolescence: "I was 12 going on 13 the first time I saw a dead human being. It happened in the summer of 1959; a long time ago, but only if you measure it in terms of years."

In the fall of 2005, the Film Foundation, unveiled a new middle school film curriculum, "The Story of Movies," designed to educate students about the language and preservation of motion picture classics. FF also has drafted National Film Study Standards for Middle Schools emphasizing not only the

language of film but also the historical and cultural contexts, production and creative expression, audience response, and aesthetic values. Similarly, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards expects students to be "intelligent readers of texts in different media," including film.

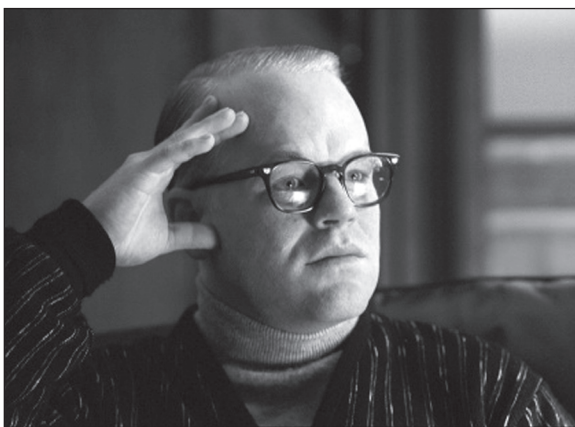
The first film examined in The Story of Movies is the 1963 classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* (www.storyofmovies.org). It provides an excellent example of an interdisciplinary approach to film. While most teachers are familiar with the novel and the movie, it is for the most part studied in English as a literary text. It obviously can also be examined from the context of history and social studies. For example, its representation of the South in the 1930s can be analyzed for accuracy and authenticity. It also can be viewed as a social-cultural artifact that tells us something about the era in which it was both created and consumed, which is to say America in the early 1960s. In what way was the production and marketing of this film a reflection of the Kennedy years and the Civil Rights movement? Finally, this film might well be compared to another product of that era, *Raisin in the Sun*, which depicted the Black experience not through the eyes and words of a White writer, but rather through the words of a Black woman, Lorraine Hansberry. Teachers looking for different approaches to teaching with and about *To Kill a Mockingbird* will find many useful activities at (<http://www.frankwbaker.com/tkam.htm>)



THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Photo courtesy of Walt Disney Pictures



CAPOTE Photos courtesy Sony Pictures Classic



Of course the study of film, if it is to have meaning for young people, should not be relegated to so-called classics. Contemporary movies, including controversial ones like *The Da Vinci Code*, can stimulate vigorous debate about the role of film in society, including issues of media *representations*, media *values*, and media *effects*.

Two notable films from 2005 are worthy of teacher consideration here. Both *Capote* and *Good Night and Good Luck* were recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Both films focus on journalists as individuals and journalism as a process and profession. Both films document the powerful storytelling capability of their central characters, author Truman Capote and veteran newsman Edward R. Murrow, who skillfully utilize words and images to get their messages across.

For English teachers, *Capote* has the bonus of featuring author Harper Lee (*To Kill a Mockingbird*) as

a secondary character in the story. Much of this film raises questions about professional integrity, journalistic exploitation, and the public's right to know—questions that are not locked in the historical past, but are as timely and relevant today as the nation struggles with issues of government surveillance and the right of the press to protect their sources.

A less controversial but equally engaging movie from 2005 was *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*. Based on the children's book by C.S. Lewis, the story has the universal appeal of other fantasies (*Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings*, *The Matrix*) that include the struggle between good and evil, and it provides an excellent opportunity to explore the archetypes, rites of passage, genre conventions, and themes and motifs described by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. The use of *Narnia* in the classroom could also be facilitated by screening relevant segments from *Shadowlands*, the 1993 biopic of author C.S. Lewis (Anthony Hopkins) and his relationship with the American poet, Joy Gresham.

LEARNING TO LOOK AND LISTEN: THE LANGUAGE OF FILM

Although many teachers are initially nervous about teaching a new language, our experiences with students and teachers in classroom, libraries, workshops, and conferences across the country is that they become quite comfortable quite quickly to the extent that they report noticing film style and techniques even when they thought they were viewing recreationally. This new attention or awareness in turn generates new opportunities for them to develop a list of titles and scenes they can use in their own classrooms.

Once students have been introduced to these concepts, their parents report that their children are now actively reading film and pointing things out to them that they themselves were not aware of. In turn the students share the new examples they have discovered with their teachers thus adding to the repertoire of potential clips the teachers have to utilize.

Rather than jumping headlong into visual analysis, a useful transitional exercise is to have students consider the way images and sound contribute to mood. Anyone who has ever seen *Jaws* is well aware, for example, of the powerful stimulus/response conditioning created by a few simple bars of music early in the film. Selecting a few brief scenes that are emotionally powerful can serve as a motivator to get students talking about and thinking about the discrete contributions sound and visuals make to a film and the way these in turn influence our feelings during the screening. It is also a good idea to show the scenes once without sound and then later with sound. An interesting variation on this is to break the class in two with one group focusing on sound (they cannot look at the screen during the time the scene is playing) and another group concentrating on only the visuals.

The very opening scene of *Jurassic Park* lends itself very well to such an exercise. The accident that involves the teenage girls, the truck, and the horse in *The Horse Whisperer*, is another very strong scene where editing, flashback, sound effects, camera angles, and music all contribute to the total impact. An emotional scene (without dialogue) that works well in both Language Arts and Social Studies can be found in *Snow Falling on Cedars* (DVD chapter, The Camps). It depicts the forced removal of the Japanese-Americans from their small town to internment camps during World War II. *Apollo 13* has useful applications in Social Studies, History and Science. It also has strong sequences to analyze in terms of mood, editing, and character development (see DVD chapter, Fall to Earth).

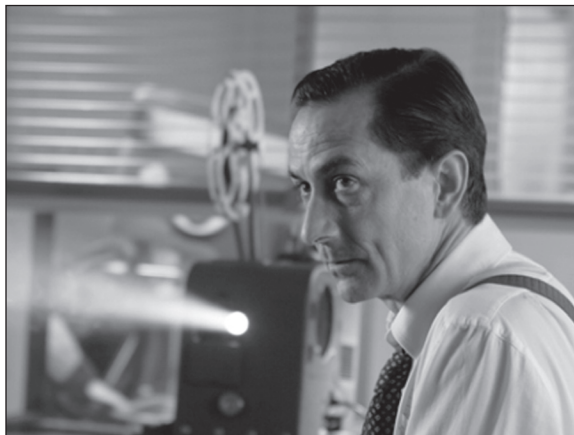
SPOT THE SHOT: GETTING STARTED

The growth of DVD technology, SmartBoards, LCD projectors, Smart Rooms, and other technology now permit large-screen, clear freeze frame images that greatly enhance the opportunity teachers have to foster visual discrimination skills.

One of the most successful exercises we have experienced with students and teachers alike is examining the director's design decisions in *A Beautiful*



GOOD NIGHT, AND GOOD LUCK Photos courtesy of Warner Brothers



Mind, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. Using only the first 4–5 minutes of the film's opening sequence, cue your own class by asking them to pay careful attention to the following two questions:

1. What do we learn about John Nash in this scene and how do we learn it? What does Russell Crowe do in the classroom sequence to let us know the way his character thinks and feels? He does not speak in this interior scene.
2. What design decisions has the director made in the classroom scene and the exterior courtyard scene that helps us learn more about John Nash? What does he show us, how and why?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32 >>

RICHER READINGS: LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF FILM

BY DAVID M. CONSIDINE

The French concept of *mise en scene* refers to the organization of a frame or scene and addresses the contribution separate elements cumulatively make in contributing meaning to a scene. The elements include Posture, Position, Point of View, and Props. More than an exercise in spot the shot, this technique helps students *recognize, read and appreciate the deliberate design decisions involved in making a film*. This is consistent with McREL ELA benchmarks that expect stu-

dents to “understand the way in which image-makers carefully construct meaning.” It is also consistent with ELA objectives from The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) that expect teachers to “go beyond the analysis of the narrative properties...and examine the effects of cinematic tools the director uses to create visual texts.”

FIGURE 1 • A BEAUTIFUL MIND Russell Crowe's posture, including bent shoulders, eyes cast downward, and fidgeting hands, contribute to our sense of the character. His position at the back of the room away from other students adds to the effect. Director Ron Howard said of the character, he is “socially clumsy, fundamentally alone.”



FIGURE 2 • REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE James Dean holds the milk bottle to his face. The prop has symbolic meaning. By using a close up, the director draws our attention to the object and its importance just as Ron Howard shows objects in close up in the courtyard sequence of *A Beautiful Mind*.



FIGURE 3 • LEGEND Traditional use of Point of View (POV). By placing the camera below the demon, the figure is made more powerful and menacing. Conversely the POV is reversed in the same scene and looks down on the vulnerable girl.

We encourage teachers to use short segments from film to provide students with a wide number of examples of each main element, allowing time for discussion and feedback. The selection of clips described here is intended to utilize films that clearly demonstrate key elements of film language rather than to view entire films.

A short (5 minutes) useful teaching scene that incorporates the 4 main elements of mise en scene and has youth appeal can be found in *Superman II* in the sequence when Lois discovers that Clark is Superman.

Once students and teachers learn to recognize these elements, they will have little trouble finding other examples. One of the most frequently used shots, for example, is a high- or low-angle point of view to emphasize power or vulnerability.

It is evident in historical dramas such as *Elizabeth* when the embattled queen tries to convince the bishops to support the Act of Unification. It can be seen in the death of Inman near the end of *Cold Mountain* and the death of Sylvia in *Searching for Neverland*.

It is visible in a boy's simple prayer to St. Elizabeth (*I am David*).

Illustrations by Caldecott medal winner Gail E. Haley.
Visit www.gailehaley.com

Teachers are encouraged to cut and paste these images on worksheets as they introduce their students to each element and/or to the relevant clips from each movie.

FIGURE 4 • MISSION IMPOSSIBLE The frame combines POV with Position and Prop. The high angle shot stresses the vulnerability of the man on the spiral staircase. The choice of a spiral staircase also functions symbolically and creates a greater sense of confusion than a traditional staircase would. As such, it reinforces the characters' state of mind.

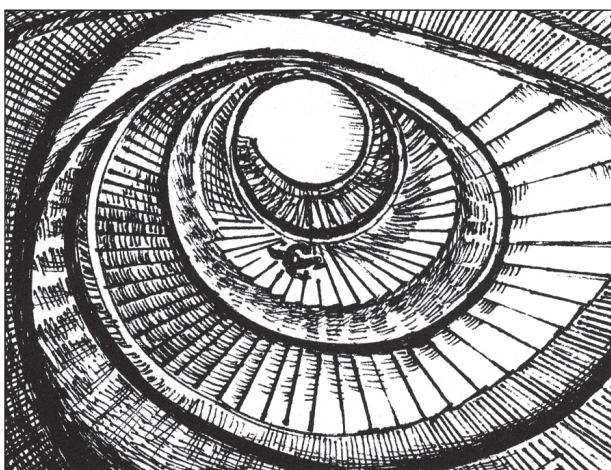


FIGURE 5 • MOTIF

Forest Gump opens and closes with a feather. The theme or motif of flight, running and destiny pervade the film visually and verbally including the use of songs like "Blowin' in the Wind" and "Freebird."



FIGURES 6 & 7 • FRAMING A director can emphasize something about a character, or draw attention to a character by composing a shot in such a way that it constructs a frame within a frame. Scott Hicks consistently depicts Ishmael this way in *Snow Falling on Cedars*. In the opening of the courtroom scene, Ishmael is shot through the bars of the balcony. This turns into a flashback to childhood and again the director frames him, in this case through fence panels. Repeated throughout the film, the technique often functions as a commentary on Ishmael's state of mind and the nature of his relationship with Hatsue.

Invariably, without having introduced the definition of *mise en scene* or explained key elements such as Posture, Position, Point of View (POV), and Props, teachers and students alike begin to discuss Crowe's body language and director Ron Howard's close-ups of various objects seen through Nash's eyes. Although some people worry that such an exercise reads too much into movies, in reality, it fosters a deep appreciation of the art of film and recognizes the directors design contributions. The marketing poster for *A Beautiful Mind* reinforces our interpretation of the opening scene by saying, "He saw the world in ways no one could have imagined."

For those who wonder about the ability of students to grasp these concepts, listen to Stephen, a lateral entry teacher in Durham, North Carolina, who teaches both media analysis and media production: "I've used this with my kids and it has worked out well. *October Sky* has a great introduction that can be read visually to introduce the audience to the story, from the color palette of the shots to the miner's radio signal disappearing as they descend into the mine."

Stephen is the face of the future. A young media savvy teacher, he is aware of how turned on the kids are by media and he has the opportunity to bring the new technology into his teaching style. Not content to have his students read and comprehend other people's media, he teaches them to create their own media productions. In this he is greatly aided by a supportive administrator and new tools. IMac's movie editing system makes student production more attainable. Software including MovieMaker, Final Cut Pro, and Pinnacle Studio is increasingly becoming available in schools.

Now, today, like no other time in our past, we have the opportunity, tools, strategies, techniques, resources, and standards to make film, the powerful teaching tool Thomas Edison once thought it would be. Reviewing The Star Wars—Where Science Meets the Imagination exhibit at Boston's

Museum of Science, the Boston Globe proclaimed it "hugely enjoyable...eye-popping...breathtaking." "It's fun," they said. "You learn something. Best of all, the fun is in the learning." We couldn't agree more. When our students are having fun, they are engaged and they are being educated. Now in their second century, movies deserve a legitimate place in the classroom and the curriculum, with creative teachers skillfully employing them to both reach and teach their students. *

All teachers quoted in this article gave permission for the quotes to be used. Some names have been changed at the request of these teachers.

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RESOURCES

- Cinematique film study guides
http://www.cinematique.bc.ca/education/film_study_guides_intro.htm
- Secondary Study Guides
<http://www.filmeducation.org/secondary/StudyGuides/index.html>
- Scanning the Movies Study Guides
<http://www.chumlimited.com/mediaed/studyguides.asp>
- Walden Media Film Study Guides
<http://www.walden.com/>
- ATOM's The Education Shop
<http://www.theeducationshop.com.au>

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- Considine, David M. and Gail E. Haley (1999) *Visual messages: Integrating imagery into instruction*. Teacher Ideas Press: Englewood, CO.
- Costanzo, Bill (2004) *Great films and how to teach them*. NCTE Books: Urbana, Illinois.
- Golden, John (2001) *Reading in the Dark: Using Films as Tool in the English classroom*. NCTE Books: Urbana, Illinois.
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Graphic Novels:

A MEDIUM WITH MOMENTUM

BY IAN ESQUIVEL

TEACHING COMICS NOW

In my first year of teaching eighteen years ago, I introduced students in my media class to television shows, films and comics as 'legitimate' texts to be studied. I was not overly successful, largely because I assumed the students would share my enthusiasm for studying popular culture, but they did not. I was treading on the ground of their personal pleasure. They wanted to **watch** television shows and films, not analyze them. I was more successful with comics. These were seen primarily as texts for children so my students were willing to analyze them because they felt distanced from them – as young adults they had moved on to more "serious" literature.

As well, a number of my students were reading comics and graphic novels such as *The Dark Knight Returns*, *Watchmen* and *Cerebus* (by Canadian Dave Sim). They considered these texts to be a genre of underground literature that represented life in a way that few mainstream novels did. They *wanted* to read, analyze and discuss them. These comics certainly were not mainstream—back then, at least. Yet they were engaging and "literary" by any definition of the word. They contained topical subject matter, highly stylized writing and illustration, and stories with depth: complex characters, compelling plots, imaginative settings, mythic overtones, and profound themes. Needless to say, very few of my colleagues were using comics at the time, and I was hard-pressed to find any in the school library, but my students were an eager source.

How times change. The use of graphic novels (and comics) in schools in Toronto has increased significantly since then, and almost exponentially over the past five years. That's good news. Nonetheless, their inclusion seems driven by at least two contradictory impulses, each of which is problematic and requires examination, and each of which has merit and deserves recognition. **Where the two impulses—let's call them "literacy" and "literary"—converge, fortunately, is at the point of recognizing the importance of using resources that better meet the needs and interests of students whose lives outside of school are shaped by contemporary media. I would argue that this is what media teachers advocate.** In this article, I briefly describe the two impulses and position them in the context of a familiar paradigm, the low/high culture debate. My goal is to initiate a dialogue with the reader, using my experience as a point of departure, and addressing some theoretical and practical concerns in an attempt to bridge the debate. I also suggest a third impulse that is more conducive to the contemporary needs of our students, and one that I believe drives most media teachers: curiosity. As an English teacher, I am well acquainted with the low/high culture debate and regularly have to negotiate my way through it. Yet my background in teaching media informs my perceptions and causes me to view the debate, and

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the use of graphic novels, in a particular way. As a result, I eagerly advocate their use but also question how and for what purposes they are used.

“LITERACY” VS. “LITERARY” IMPULSES

The differences between the literacy and literary impulses are significant, although not irreconcilable. One impulse treats the graphic novel as a tool for literacy development, as part of a strategy to engage readers who are reluctant because their skills are “weak”; graphic novels are positioned as a narrative form that will lead to books with more “value” and “depth.” Research shows this to be true *under certain conditions*. The other impulse is to integrate graphic novels of a particular type—those deemed literary—as a way to entice resistant (not reluctant) readers

THE USE OF GRAPHIC NOVELS (AND COMICS) IN SCHOOLS IN TORONTO HAS INCREASED... EXPONENTIALLY OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS. THAT'S GOOD NEWS. NONETHELESS, THEIR INCLUSION SEEMS DRIVEN BY AT LEAST TWO CONTRADICTORY IMPULSES, EACH OF WHICH IS PROBLEMATIC AND REQUIRES EXAMINATION, AND EACH OF WHICH HAS MERIT AND DESERVES RECOGNITION.

for whom the traditional narrative structure of the novel, which they can navigate easily, is perceived as “boring” when compared to film, television or video games. This approach also is valid *in certain contexts*. In effect, the “literacy” impulse conceives of graphic novels as simpler than novels and thus easier to read, while the “literary” impulse sees both as equally sophisticated and therefore worth studying alongside other literary works. Each impulse has the potential to encourage students to read with enthusiasm, if thoughtfully integrated.

Teachers who view graphic novels as legitimate literary texts are still in the minority. In Toronto

and across the province of Ontario, we have a long tradition of prejudice against writing that doesn't meet certain standards of cultural “uplift.” We come by that honestly. In 1870, the founder of our education system, Edgerton Ryerson warned:

Trashy and positively unwholesome literature is so widely extended throughout the country... [that] persons who read little or nothing besides trashy novels of the day would be better not to read at all... The most popular and best thumbed works in any reading rooms are invariable those that are the most worthless—we might say dangerous. (*Edgerton Ryerson, quoted in Newkirk, 69*).

Ryerson captured a sentiment that continues today in schools, where the debate over what types of texts should be read rages on, and with it the question of how to improve students' reading and writing. This is the literacy impulse. It underpins and frames our perceptions, personal and public, of all novels, and especially graphic novels. English/Language Arts teachers are mandated to teach students to read so they will appreciate a range of texts that fall into the category of literature, from essays to poetry to plays to novels.

The corollary of this is that one of the objectives of teaching literature is to help students to develop their literacy skills to such an “advanced” level that they will “naturally” gravitate to literary works of “high caliber.” Related to this goal is the belief that it is essential that students read widely and extensively in order to become well-rounded citizens and “critical thinkers.” And yet, when it comes to popular texts, such as fantasy novels or comics, many educators refuse or hesitate to include them in their courses because they fall outside their definition of literature. Not surprisingly, these are the very texts to which students tend to gravitate, and to which they easily can relate. Why would an educator who values literacy pass over or disparage a text that promotes reading? The answer is partly that teachers ultimately are arbiters of ‘taste’. What they believe has merit, has merit, and vice versa.

LOW CULTURE VS. HIGH CULTURE

At the core of any discussion of literature, is the issue of taste, and the perception that certain artifacts are expressions of low culture while others capture the ethos of high culture. The notion that one type of text, that which is considered literary, has more intrinsic value than another, that which is seen as popular, is fairly prevalent. It is embedded in traditions, practices, institutions, discourses, and pedagogy; its pull is hegemonic. Following this questionable line of thinking, Shakespeare's plays, belonging as they now do to high culture, are literature and thus prescribed in the curriculum. So-called "pulp fiction"—horror, romance, crime stories, etc.—belong to low culture and therefore generally are excluded from curricula, except in so much as they are studied *as forms of popular or mass culture*. Ah, the good fortune of the media teacher who gets to use such texts as "content," and the librarian who has latitude to use them to encourage reading. (It is worth noting that the Japanese have been reading graphic novels for decades; they are an accepted cultural form and widely available.)

The "best" of these alleged "low-brow" texts occasionally gets the nod by pundits as a work of literary achievement, which thereby justifies its inclusion as a classroom text. This is the "literary impulse." *Frankenstein* and *The Lord of the Rings* seem to have attained this status, as has the graphic novel *MAUS*, which tells the gripping tale of a Holocaust survivor through the eyes of his son. One feels inclined to applaud the arbiters of taste for thinking outside the box in such cases. Yet how ironic it is that the low/high culture debate has insinuated itself even into people's perception of graphic novels, including those who create, publish and sell them. Rather than sidestep the debate and champion graphic novels of all stripes as a form suitable for study—acknowledging, of course, the usual concerns over racism, sexism, explicit content, etc.—many people resort to the same old argument: *These* graphic novels are "literary" and *those* are not. This stance supports the idea that some texts are not as "good" as others, which ultimately justifies the critics' claims that some types of texts,

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- AREN'T GRAPHIC NOVELS JUST FOR KIDS? THE AVERAGE AGE FOR THE GRAPHIC NOVEL READER IS 29 YEARS OLD.
- AREN'T THEY MOSTLY READ BY MALES? IT DEPENDS ON THE GENRE. SUPERHERO COMICS TEND TO BE READ BY BOYS/MEN, ALTHOUGH YOUNG WOMEN LIKE CATWOMAN AND SHE-HULK. MANGA, ARCHIE COMICS, BONE, AND THE SANDMAN SERIES ARE EXAMPLES OF TEXTS THAT ARE VERY POPULAR WITH A FEMALE AUDIENCE.
- DO THEY CONTAIN 'PROBLEMATIC' CONTENT? YES, SOMETIMES, AS DOES OTHELLO, CATCHER IN THE RYE, THE BLUEST EYE, THE SWEET HEREAFTER, ETC.
- WHAT IS "MANGA"? MANGA MEANS 'COMIC' IN JAPANESE. IT COULD BE CONSIDERED A CATEGORY OF ITS OWN, WITH SUB-CATEGORIES SUCH AS KODOMO, WHICH IS FOR 6 TO 11-YEAR OLDS, AND YAOI, WHICH OSTENSIBLY IS FOR GIRLS BUT IS ALSO READ BY GAY MALES. MANGA GENERALLY IS DIVIDED INTO STORIES FOR A MALE (SHONEN) AND THOSE FOR A FEMALE (SHOJO) AUDIENCE. THE TERM MANGA REFERS TO THE FORMAT OF THE BOOK RATHER THAN THE CONTENT. MANGA STYLE IS IDENTIFIABLE IN PART BECAUSE THE HUMAN CHARACTERS HAVE SHARP FEATURES AND EYES THAT ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY LARGE FOR THEIR FACES/BODIES. HIGHLY EXAGGERATED FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND REACTIONS ARE COMMON. THE BACKGROUNDS ARE ALSO OFTEN VERY DETAILED, ESPECIALLY IN CONTRAST TO THE CHARACTERS. MANGA STYLE HAS BEGUN TO MANIFEST IN NORTH AMERICAN COMICS SUCH AS SPIDERMAN, TEEN TITANS AND SCOTT PILGRIM (BY CANADIAN BRYAN LEE O'MALLEY).

e.g. *graphic novels*, are not as "good" as others, i.e. *novels*. It clearly fails to interrogate the dominant discourse around the selection of texts by endorsing a process of selection, which also implies that there is a need to select, and that the criteria by which a text is selected will be determined not by the reader but by someone with the requisite expertise to make such a selection. That is, someone with "authority"—and "good taste," obviously. Of course, the fact that the graphic novel is a site of

struggle subtly legitimizes it by making it like every other form of literature.

In my school board, at least graphic novels are on the map, even if they still are seeking a permanent home. At my school, our librarian has played a pivotal role in bringing graphic novels into the building and into the curriculum while managing to avoid the low/high debate. But just because she has avoided the debate does not mean she isn't involved in and contributing to it. She is trying both

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BUT WE ALSO PRODUCE MEANING. WE LEGITIMIZE
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to meet the needs and interests of the students, and keep her library relevant. If you build it, they will come. And they have! Students have formed a graphic novel club, are reading them as quickly as they appear on the shelves, and are asking for new titles. The political implications are clear: the librarian is endorsing graphic novels. She is legitimizing them and the repercussions are evident. Students have begun to ask their English (and Art) teachers if they can study graphic novels and create them in class.

A THIRD IMPULSE

For media educators, the low/high debate provides a backdrop for what we normally do. We follow a third impulse, basically. Call it the "Wow, that's cool. Let's take it apart to see what makes it tick" impulse. Thus, we find in *The Sopranos* a richness of language, imagery and invention that we also find in Shakespeare, or to use a Canadian context, Margaret Atwood. We dig through the layers of *The Matrix* like scholars sifting through *The*

Wasteland. We locate meaning in the texts we study, but we also produce meaning. We legitimize those texts as suitable for study. We acknowledge that some texts are more popular than others, but we don't suggest they are intrinsically better. High culture, we wonder? It takes a fair bit of work to make the art of *Hamlet* evident in the classroom. A whole industry—from filmmakers to textbook publishers—has arisen around the Bard to ensure that he remains in vogue among critics and audiences alike. English and Language Arts teachers are key players in that project. Suggest to them that we embrace Shakespeare too readily and see how they respond: Shakespeare is relevant, profound, elevated language, the universal human condition. Shakespeare is literature, which simply means that Shakespeare has some serious cultural capital.

Teaching media allows one to address the high/low debate by deconstructing it, stripping away the layers of ideology that perpetuate it and interrogating the discourse that nurtures it. And having some fun in the process. Nowhere is this more true than in the case of graphic novels. Instead of asking whether they can provide a bridge for a certain type of reader, we should be asking how schools privilege a particular kind of reading (and writing). In addition to accepting the paradigm shift that has created a reader who comprehends printed texts that meld the visual with the linguistic, we should be wondering, At what cost? Or, to loosely paraphrase Marshall McLuhan—which is mandatory since I'm a Canadian educator—we should ask, What will this new narrative form enhance and what will it obsolesce?

Without a doubt, graphic novels enhance creative expression. They constitute a unique medium of communication with its own aesthetic form, codes and conventions, language, and ideology. They are a hybrid of image and word, of art and literature. At their best, they are highly cinematic, relying on visual more than written language and the reader's ability to produce *closure*—to sustain the story across the spaces between the frames; spaces that are always literal but also often metaphorical. To read graphic novels requires a particular set of skills, a technique of interpretation that is similar to but

not the same as that required for a novel. If we teach students to read graphic novels, are we preparing them to read traditional novels? Or instead are we facilitating a means to interpret a specific system of signs in which the image and word are co-dependent? Such skill may assist them to read other compound texts like websites but it may also encourage the obsolescence of the ability to read a story composed just of words. Will the world of the “classic” literary text be lost to a future generation, except through adaptation?

You have to ask yourself these types of questions when you teach media. You have to know where you stand—and where others will place you. Am I contributing to the debasement of the culture by encouraging the use of graphic novels with their potential to supplant traditional novels? Only if I think the latter are intrinsically superior. Otherwise, the two forms can co-exist side by side perfectly well. What we do with them will determine what they mean to us. Students are curious consumers. They will buy into a text because it interests them, not because it is “better.” If it engages their imaginations, and lets them use them, they will keep reading, or viewing, or listening, or using their other senses to make sense of the text. You have to trust young people. It also helps to recall what McLuhan suggested in his Tetrad: Any emerging technology that is seen to enhance our ability to extend our senses—in this case the narrative form of the contemporary graphic novel—eventually will reverse on itself and aspects of the previous technology—in this case, the form of the novel—will be retrieved, its “obsolescence” revisited. It’s a cycle of struggle, an ebb and flow that graphic novels exemplify.

A BRIEF HISTORY: GRAPHIC NOVELS IN SCHOOLS

Graphic novels began to appear in North American schools—more accurately in school libraries—in the early 1990s, largely after the publication of Art Spiegelman’s *MAUS: A Survivor’s Tale*, which was critically acclaimed. Coupled with its sequel, *MAUS II*, the graphic novel won a Pulitzer prize in 1992.

REASONS FOR USING GRAPHIC NOVELS IN THE CLASSROOM

- THEY CONTAIN STORIES NOT TOLD ELSEWHERE OR OTHERWISE (E.G. BONE, PERSEPOLIS, HELLBOY, BLACK HOLE)
- THEIR USE CAN MEET THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE VISUAL/SPATIAL LEARNERS
- THEIR INCLUSION ACKNOWLEDGES/VALIDATES THE STUDENTS’ OWN READING CHOICES
- THEY PROVIDE A DIFFERENT/UNIQUE WAY TO EXPLORE NARRATIVE ELEMENTS, DEVICES AND TECHNIQUES OF STYLE (CODES AND CONVENTIONS), AND NARRATIVE PATTERNS AND ARCHETYPES
- THEIR CREATION INVOLVES A RANGE OF SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE, AND IS AN IDEAL PLATFORM FOR COLLABORATION
- THEY LEND THEMSELVES TO INTERDISCIPLINARY USE IN ART, HISTORY, SCIENCE, GEOGRAPHY, ENGLISH, ETC.

The public libraries played a key role in legitimizing their use in schools both in the United States and Canada. Yet it was only texts of a particular type that were favoured, and which we now perhaps take for granted as seminal works. *A Contract with God* (considered by many to be the first graphic novel in North America), *V for Vendetta*, *The Dark Knight Returns*, *Watchmen*, and *The Sandman*, were among the first to be accorded such status; *Bone* followed shortly thereafter. More recently, graphic novels such as *Ghost World*, *Safe Area Gorazde* and *Persepolis* have made the honor roll. In Canada, Chester Brown’s *Riel*, Seth’s *It’s A Good Life If You Don’t Weaken*, and Ho Che Anderson’s *King* are cited as literary works. All these texts fit the definition of literature as well as most of Shakespeare’s plays do. When librarians picked up the cause of the graphic novel in the 1990s and went public with their support, they were at the vanguard of a movement that picked up considerable steam a decade later.

The current support for the comic book form is a far cry from earlier responses. Serious criticism first surfaced almost a hundred years ago, prior to World War I in England where comics were highly popular among the working class. Comics were seen as:

a 'threat' to literacy on two, contradictory levels. First, any publication based on pictures was deemed to be automatically inferior to prose materials: reading was associated with an 'improving ethic', whereas [comic] strips and cartoons had the opposite effect. Secondly, it was argued that the close print in the new comics was bad for the eyesight... More than this, conservatives began to complain more generally about cultural debasement... Snobbery was at the heart of much of the counter reaction, with words like 'vulgar' and 'gauche' becoming common descriptions (Sabin 2003, 25).

READERSHIP OF GRAPHIC NOVELS HAS
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TO THE TOWERS OF ACADEMIA TO MAIN
STREET... SO, MOVE OVER SHAKESPEARE AND
MAKE ROOM FOR THE ZEITGEIST.

In the United States, "there was a backlash from certain sectors of American society. This shared much in common with the British attack on comics: the mix of words and pictures was similarly said to be intrinsically lowbrow, trash and 'detrimental' to 'proper' reading. However what was different about the American experience was that the inherent class prejudice took on religious and racial overtones" (Sabin 2003, 25). In the end, the opposition was poorly organized and faded out in the face of the popularity of comic strips—until the 1950s when an American psychologist, Fredric Wertham, launched a crusade against comics.

Wertham's 1954 book, *The Seduction of the Innocent*, claimed that comics were linked to teen suicides, aggression and disrespect for authority, and would "ruin an adolescent's taste for fine literature" (Weiner 2003, 8). He compared the consumption of comics to an addiction to drugs, and suggested that they led to escalating violent behaviour. The backlash reached a fevered pitch: "experts" warned parents of the imminent threat of reading comics; people gathered in public to burn them; conservative politicians and community leaders, particularly those from the Christian Right, called for the government to ban them. The backlash culminated in Congressional hearings that forced the creation of the Comics Code. The uproar then died down for a decade.

However, the critique of comics resurfaced in the late 1960s in response to the so-called "anti-authority" messages found in them—such as support for the Civil Rights Movement—and references to drugs, even when the purpose behind the latter was to warn people about the negative consequences of abuse and addiction. In the 1970s, the rise of "underground comics," which often dealt with sexuality, moral corruption, discrimination, and depictions of counter and sub-cultures, was the focus of calls for censorship under the mantle of "obscenity." At the same time as it pushed the boundaries of content, the underground comics movement also pushed the boundaries of form, which helped to keep comics relevant and broaden their appeal. It was not until the late 1980s, as noted above, that a shift in attitude towards comics finally occurred.

Readership of graphic novels has spread from the back alley to schools to the towers of academia to main street. Walk into any major bookstore today and you no doubt will find comics, graphic novels and books about them. Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, Trina Robbins' *From Girls to Grrrls: A History of Female Comics from Teens to Zines*, and Paul Gravette's *Graphic Novels: Stories To Change Your Life* are "must have" resources for teachers. The fact of their existence speaks volumes about the newfound status of the graphic novel. So, move over Shakespeare and make room for the Zeitgeist. *

THE COMIC BOOK CODE / THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

In the 1950s, the hysteria over the “corrupting influence” of comics on children—spurred on in part by Wertham’s *The Seduction of the Innocent*—led the U.S. Congress to force publishers to conform to certain “community standards” or else be put out of business. The perception was that because comics were full of depictions of gore, sex and violence, children who read them would turn into social deviants. These standards are inscribed in the 1954 Comics Code Authority (CCA).

The Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) reviews all comics and if appropriate, approves their publication; the comic is stamped with a CCA seal on the cover to show that it has ‘passed’ inspection. The CCA is actually a relatively short document of about 1,800 words. There are two main categories for standards: Code for Editorial Matter and Code for Advertising Matter. Below are some of its key regulations, as outlined in “Code Red in the new comicism,” by James Adams (*Globe and Mail*, May 2, 2000).

- IN EVERY INSTANCE, GOOD SHALL TRIUMPH OVER EVIL AND THE CRIMINAL PUNISHED FOR HIS MISDEEDS.
- SCENES OF EXCESSIVE VIOLENCE SHALL BE PROHIBITED. SCENES OF BRUTAL TORTURE, EXCESSIVE AND UNNECESSARY GUNPLAY, PHYSICAL AGONY, GORY AND GRUESOME CRIMES SHALL BE ELIMINATED.
- SCENES DEALING WITH, OR INSTRUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH WALKING DEAD, TORTURE, VAMPIRES AND VAMPIRISM, GHOULS, CANNIBALISM AND WEREWOLFISM ARE PROHIBITED. ALL CHARACTERS SHALL BE DEPICTED IN DRESS REASONABLY ACCEPTABLE TO SOCIETY.
- SEDUCTION AND RAPE SHALL NEVER BE SHOWN OR SUGGESTED.
- FEMALES SHALL BE DRAWN REALISTICALLY WITHOUT EXAGGERATION OF ANY PHYSICAL QUALITIES. ADVERTISING FOR THE SALE OF KNIVES, CONCEALABLE WEAPONS OR REALISTIC GUN FACSIMILES IS PROHIBITED.

Given the fact that the content of most other contemporary media falls well outside the Code’s boundaries, it’s no wonder that some comic book publishers have abandoned the Code in order to hold on to their readers and attract new ones.

For a detailed Graphic Novel Unit/Lesson Plan and Bibliography, visit the website of the Association for Media Literacy at www.aml.ca

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Enhancing Literacy Skills Through Digital Narrative

BY ROBERT KENNY & GLENDA GUNTER

ABSTRACT

One of the goals for the Center for Research in Education, the Arts, Technology, and Entertainment (CREATE) at the University of Central Florida is to investigate the role digital media can play in the curriculum plans of educators. Based on Doman's concept of teaching to the strengths to remediate the weaknesses, students learn "screen-to-page" concepts to strengthen their reading and writing skills. Results of preliminary and pilot studies indicate that designing instruction around digital narratives can be effective in significantly changing participants' attitudes towards literacy and mechanics of reading comprehension and creative writing.



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A CHANGING INSTRUCTIONAL PARADIGM

The uses and skills for using computers and other digital media on the part of today's youth is increasing exponentially. While adults label these advances as *technology* and *new media*, children view digital media as being neither technological nor new. Alan Kay once said that technology is only considered "technology" if it is invented after you were born (cited in Tapscott, 1998). Today's students do not know of a classroom that does not include the Internet.

Computers, videos, DVDs, and television appeal to a variety of learning styles because they combine moving pictures and audio (Fletcher, 2001, 2004; Honey, Pasknik & Saltrick, 2004; Mayer, 2001). What is different today is the pervasiveness of digital media in children's leisure time activities, (Rushkoff, 1997; Prensky, 2002) drastically changing the way they think, perceive, and learn (Dresang & McClelland, 1999; Neiderman, Kenny, Sanchez, & Croft, 2005). These changes in perceptual, cognitive, communicative, and learning skills bring up several interesting questions as to the kinds of instructional strategies that will motivate today's digitally-oriented reluctant readers whose preferred natural language is 'digital'. There is considerable research that links motivation to past learning experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and self-efficacy (Keller, 1983; Keller & Suzuki, 1988; Weiner, 1974, 1986). Based on the concept of "teach to one's strengths and then remediate the weaknesses" (Doman, 1984), the proper use of digital media

tools can be effective in attracting the attention of these reluctant learners.

STORY AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

While digital may be the current language of choice, story is one of the oldest and most elemental forms of knowing. Story has shown to have a powerful effect on cognition. Those who study narrative epistemology know that stories “effect a change in consciousness, a surrendering of defenses, and creative engagement with the imagination” (Bradt, 1997, p. viii). Many educators relate the use of story to Jerome Bruner’s (1986) ideas about situated cognition, in which he showed that situating information by embedding context helps learners retain and understand information for longer periods of time. Situating what is to be learned in the context of a story helps the learner select, arrange, and organize information into manageable chunks.

Research into the learning deficiencies experienced by disadvantaged students supports the belief that one’s ability to narrate a coherent story can actually predict future successful academic achievement in other school subjects. It supports our notions about how focusing on teaching narrative structure and story can significantly improve a child’s general cognitive abilities. Several educational researchers, who focused on teaching students from lower socio-economic classes (Feuerstein, 1980; Joos, 1967; Payne, 1996) over several generations, suggest that these students typically demonstrate delayed language development, a limited ability to understand and tell stories; they come to school with a completely different set of skills and rules for communicating, which result in their not fully developing the cognitive structures they need to learn at the levels required for successful completion of standardized reading and writing scales and statewide tests. Feuerstein (1980; Keller, 2006) further showed a causal relationship between the lack of development of formal story structure and general academic failure. Feuerstein also suggests that a casual language register is episodic and

random, and very often omits consequences and cause and effect. Consequently, a student lacking access to a formal story structure does not know how to plan. In formal register, the story structure focuses on plot (beginning–middle–end); it weaves a sequence, and studies characters, cause and effect, and consequences for one’s actions. In causal register, the focus of the story is interpersonal, and on intrapersonal relationships and characterizations.

DIGITAL STORY AS THE CENTRAL ORGANIZING CONSTRUCT

Today’s digital kids do not like to read because they feel it is boring and/or they have trouble visualizing the words they are reading. It has been shown that most of today’s media-centric youths demonstrate many of the same verbal communication deficiencies as those students from generational poverty. Our work with today’s digital kids has confirmed that a curriculum based on digital narrative is effective because it utilizes two very attractive motivators: digital formats combined with the power of interactive story (Kenny, 2004; Kenny & Gunter, 2004; 2005). If vocabulary and sentence structure are the mainstay of written communication and if vocabulary and syntax are a student’s weakness, then they are stumbling blocks

WHAT IS DIFFERENT TODAY IS THE PERVASIVENESS OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN CHILDREN’S LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES, DRASTICALLY CHANGING THE WAY THEY THINK, PERCEIVE, AND LEARN.

to the successful completion of writing and reading assignments, and lead to frustration and negative attribution. On the other hand, using familiar communication tools to first develop an understanding of underlying story structures, planning and critical thinking and to rely less on words and sentence structure heightens the chances for positive outcomes.

As an organizing concept, story is integrated immediately into the curriculum. Students first learn about the basic narrative building blocks like plot types, character archetypes, scenario, and environments (many of the same elements used to build narrative-based video games). In a round-table environment, students are presented with story-building activities and introduced to the historical

THIS SHARED ENVIRONMENT DEMONSTRATES THE POWER OF THE DIGITAL MEDIUM AND IS WHERE THE REAL LEARNING TAKES PLACE...

... THE CONCEPT OF ARTISTIC RENDERINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS ARE SEEN FIRST HAND. STUDENTS NO LONGER QUESTION DIFFERENCES BETWEEN READING AND WATCHING.

role story has played in learning. Students participate in story circles in which they are provided cues and insights on how stories are generated. They are then invited to tell personal stories about an important event that has happened in their lives. Other activities include those like the fantastic binomial generated from books like the *Grammar of Fantasy* by Gianni Rodari, and board games like *Pitch!*, developed by Rick Stone, a nationally known storyteller. They then use these newly-learned narrative building blocks to develop their own video-based personal stories. Next, they learn how to compare movies to written narrative forms, and, finally, stories are introduced to serve as advanced organizers to set the scene for math and science problem solving.

MATCHING BOOKS WITH RELUCTANT READERS

According to Diana Kimpton (2004), there are two types of reluctant readers—those who can read but do not enjoy it and those who find reading so difficult that they avoid it whenever they can. The majority of today's student population is probably

made up of some combination of these two groups. Both groups think reading is hard work and not worth the effort. Regardless if one agrees with the alleged positive effect of the various reading incentive programs such as *Reading Counts* or *Accelerated Reader*, classroom teachers have begun to recognize what reading teachers and media specialists have known for years—if you properly match potential readers to an author or genre, even the most reluctant will be more likely to complete the book and to read others from that favorite author or genre (Eriksson 2002). Stephen Krashen (2002) noted that increased availability of high interest books and opportunity for sustained reading that are provided to students with access to the rewards programs account for the lion's share of increased learning achievement.

Matching books with reluctant readers is harder than it would seem. Other than the design and/or limited contents found on book jackets, there is very little that potential readers can use to identify books that they might want to read. Media specialists and teachers often find themselves being asked by students to make book selections for them. One alternative might be to first allow students to watch the movie made from the book. While some would argue that watching a movie first might ruin the intellectual experience found in exercising one's imagination while reading, some experimental research supports the notion that seeing the movie first might actually help the reader better understand and comprehend what he or she is reading (Gropper 1966; Nugent 1982). The question, then, is how to provide visual pre-reading organizers without spoiling the reading experience. Digital book trailers are an interesting compromise in the pursuit of these matchmaking activities. Just as movie trailers have been very successful in influencing audiences in selecting the movies they watch, trailers made specifically for the books should do the same for books. These trailers can be compared to an animated book jacket. Properly created trailers are produced in such a way to both attract potential readers and to crystallize the essence of the context of the books, using visualizations of the characters, themes, and metaphors, etc.

Digital Booktalk™ (DBT) (<http://www.digitalbooktalk.com>) is an online portal on which several successful pre-reading organizing strategies are used to match potential readers to books. The trailers provide a pre-reading visual to help potential readers become familiar with the characters and context found in the stories. The number of titles of books on the site is growing and follows school and state recommended reading lists. A suggest-a-book feature uses automated intelligence to replicate the traditional interest questionnaires developed by librarians, media specialists, and teachers.

READING VERSUS WATCHING

The videos found on the Digital Booktalk™ Web site serve as a role model for students to create their own book trailers. It is in this activity that the real learning takes place. Given the nature of today's media-centric students, it isn't surprising that teachers are all too often repeatedly asked why their students need to read the book rather than watch the movie made from it. A book's credibility is often enhanced once a movie has been made from it. In spite of their strong opinions about whether watching the movie first ruins the reading experience, teachers still struggle with how to answer that question in a relevant and appropriate manner. One way is to remind students that a movie is the result of someone else making creative decisions on what goes in it. Not all movies remain true to the book, and besides wouldn't they like to be the director of their own movie about the book (hence the title *UB the Director™*)? Planting the idea that reading the book as if they are going to make their own movie about it is a positive way to motivate students, provide a reason for him or her to read the book critically for content and context, and reinforce the concept of visualizing while reading. The problem is that there is not enough time in the classroom for each student to make a full-length motion picture about the books they read.

On the other hand, producing a one to two minute trailer is much easier to do in the time frame provided. To produce a trailer, the student still has to read the book and know enough of the details about

the setting and context and needs to make insightful decisions as to which scenes need to be put into it. Students learn the principles of dramatic beats and story arcs working in a mediated visual domain with which they are familiar. They act as the director who uses a camera and special effects to create the scenes and address state standards for benchmarks for the core competencies for literature. Students are motivated to read, research, and write because they are doing so for a favored and familiar medium, doing the identical evaluation for the book that they would be asked to do in a traditional classroom setting. Only this time the assignment has more relevance and offers a much higher prospect of success because it involves a technology they are already familiar with.

Once the trailers are produced, they are shown and evaluated in a shared environment by their peers. This shared environment demonstrates the power of the digital medium and is where the real learning takes place. If each student or student group is assigned the same book, differences in artistic interpretations and comprehension surface during the viewings. Students have to defend their decisions and have enough knowledge about the book's contents that can only be gathered by reading it. The concept of artistic renderings and interpretations are seen first hand. Students no longer question differences between reading and watching.

Based on the fact that the Web site is receiving hits from several schools across the country and in Europe, it is evident that the trailers are beginning to be used in classrooms. There are further reports from school media specialists who state that they can always tell when the trailers are shown in the classrooms because in the days that follow they run out of their limited supplies of those books featured on the Web site. Further research has to be done to determine if this increased usage of the site translates into actual increases in students completing the books with which they are matched. Further studies are being developed to review whether the DBT portal encourages students to critically analyze, reflect upon, and write about their selected

book. In other words, does the portal effectively increase the values associated with the traditional concepts of literacy?

The *Digital Booktalk™* program has been successfully implemented in several schools during the past three years. Preliminary research findings gathered during pilot studies show *UB the Director™* is particularly effective in positively changing students' attitudes towards reading and writing, has been a factor in increasing completion rates for the books they read, and motivates them in general towards reading. Two ten-question, Likert scale personal preference inventories were administered that ask various questions about the role reading and writing has in participants' lives and the way that they perceive their role.

STUDENTS WHO ARE LEARNING WITH NARRATIVE-BASED MEDIA SUCH AS DIGITAL VIDEO, INCORPORATE THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF CURRICULUM—READING, WRITING, LISTENING AND SPEAKING—INTO ASSIGNMENTS IN ALL ACADEMIC AREAS. THEY ARE DEVELOPING LITERACY WHILE USING A MEDIUM THAT IS ALREADY FAMILIAR TO THEM.

Responses and results for the narrative-based activities in other subject areas such as social studies and science are just as revealing. Students research, write, and create scripts, newsletters, flyers, and a variety of other projects that far exceed the traditional paper and text classroom assignments. The same students that typically do not do well reading a textbook or listening to a lecture, appear to flourish because they are actively engaged in a project that has meaning to them. One student remarked, "I don't mind learning if it's fun, I just don't think learning should seem like work all the time." Through this project, students were motivated to learn a variety of research, writing, critical thinking, and decision-making skills. Students in one elementary school were involved in a story-

based project where they ran a mock presidential election occurring simultaneously with actual current events and concurrent with a fictional national environmental disaster. Students followed the election coverage using televised media, the Internet, and newspapers. They also gathered political and scientific information to devise solutions to the pending catastrophe, analyzed various points of view, and made decisions about how to run their campaigns. Students wrote and edited scripts, assigned tasks, worked cooperatively, and managed other students cooperatively. These fifth grade students created group video projects to relate their point of view, presented their party's mission in the form of a story, and created election broadcasts. Their teacher stated that her students' literacy skills and reading and math scores improved, especially on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT), a statewide, standardized test that assessed reading, writing and math skills. Based on these assessments and in-class reviews, it became obvious that the students' literacy skills had improved. They were motivated to read more and complete assignments when the outcome is doing something that they enjoy instead of taking another test.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In our pilot studies we have achieved success using narrative-based digital tools with which students have shown improvement in word recognition, reading comprehension, and vocabulary skills, and have generally boosted their self-esteem. Students learn *with* media that are already familiar to them such as digital video, music, and photography and incorporate reading, writing, listening and speaking into assignments in all academic areas. Through their scripts, students retell events and facts in a logical and sequential manner in addition to summarizing and synthesizing facts from various sources. Students also gain fluency as they begin to produce their videos and they learn self-correct skills because they see and hear mistakes that they might not have caught by reading the scripts alone (Taylor & Gunter, 2006). We have found that these activities present opportuni-

ties for developing what David Jakes (2006) refers to as a 'competitive voice', one that can be shared with others because it uses multiple media simultaneously thus helping to remediate any differences or disability because it does not depend upon one medium to communicate.

For years most of the focus in literacy education has been to teach children to code and decode words. It is our position that new ways of teaching literacy should be investigated to meet the needs of today's media-centric youths who, we believe, will benefit from using mediated programs that help motivate, and that talk to them in their own language. Students who are learning *with* narrative-based media such as digital video, incorporate the most important aspects of curriculum—reading, writing, listening and speaking—into assignments in all academic areas. They are developing literacy while using a medium that is already familiar to them (Taylor & Gunter, 2006). They are motivated because they get to participate in the construction of their own stories without having first to learn vocabulary and formal sentence structure—those very things that seem to frustrate and demoralize struggling readers and writers. The order of instruction is reversed. Writing activities are introduced at the end, after basic storyline patterns are learned. Teachers also benefit from using narratives in their curriculum because they are no longer assessing students' recall of obscure facts. Stories provide an opportunity to conduct authentic assessment of the students' critical thinking skills. *

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LiteraryWorlds.org

VIRTUAL REALITY ENVIRONMENTS AND TEACHING LITERATURE

BY DR. ALLEN WEBB

Imagine students reading Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Nights' Dream," then finding themselves in the world of the play, performing the roles of Puck, Oberon, Lysander, Hermia or Bottom—not on a stage but in the setting of Athens and its forests. Or readers of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* suddenly waking up as members of an Igbo tribe in a Nigerian village, encountering Christian missionaries, and debating religious beliefs. Or, after reading Orwell's *1984*, students joining an underground revolutionary party and evading the Thought Police. These activities, and many more, are happening in free, on-line virtual worlds that my colleagues and I in the English Department at Western Michigan University are developing for literature students at secondary and university levels.

Our worlds develop the new media and technologies to discover possibilities for teaching and learning about literature. The worlds we are making include a portal to 19th Century England based on Dickens' works, to migrant labor camps based on *Of Mice and Men*, to South Side Chicago of the 1940, based on *Native Son*, and to a variety of other thoughtful virtual worlds designed by literary

scholars for teaching works by Shakespeare, Daniel Defoe, Virginia Woolf, Tony Kushner, and Judith Ortiz Cofer.

In the LiteraryWorlds.org project we are creating immersive, interactive, and engaging virtual environments to support reading, and more deeply involve students with the language, characters, and settings of literary works. In the free and accessible on-line spaces we are making, students can explore and interact, role playing and interrelating as characters, extending and altering character conduct in purposeful ways, exploring on-line museums and cultural materials, analyzing the impact of setting, language, and dialogue on behavior and events—all directly related to the specific works they are assigned to read in their secondary or university English classes.

In these virtual reality spaces, students are able to engage with literary works from the inside out, to enter into and more deeply understand specific cultural and historical contexts as they explore in their own imaginative voice the dilemmas, controversies, and issues that face literary characters. These environments are visually engaging in a way not before possible, and they are complex performative spaces where students engage in interactive writing. They offer an intriguing extension of reading and discussion, and, because they are involving and interactive, they create interesting spring boards to class discussion. It is our hope that these specific virtual environments can capture the imagination of students weaned on video games and the internet and draw them into serious



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literature and academic content in a truly creative and intellectually serious way. Several of the worlds have been created and beta-tested in classes over the last two years. Others are coming on-line in the fall of 2006 and Spring of 2007.

The potential of the new media to enhance teaching and learning is enormous, but we believe meaningful technological development will depend on an intense and sustained engagement with teachers deeply knowledgeable about learning content. The scholars designing these literary worlds include experts in early and contemporary British, American, postcolonial, and children's literature. After selecting a specific literary work these WMU English professors use a software called "enCore" to create an on-line learning environment that is something between a collection of interactive chat-rooms, an interactive video game, and an on-line museum. EnCore is an award winning, newly revised, open source software package, designed for university educational use built on LambdaMOO with a built-in server-side client called Xpress. It was awarded 1st place in the category "Rhetoric and Writing Soft-

ware in University Education" at the Computers and Writing Technology Competition (<http://lingua.utdallas.edu/encore>). The illustration shows the enCore user interface, allowing the presentation of images, objects, and sound files in a particular "room" or space, links to other spaces, a running record of places visited and conversations on-going, and an input screen where participants can input their "speech" and "actions."

While EnCore 4 has been used for other purposes, the model for using the structure in literature teaching emerges from Robert Rozema's 2004 doctoral dissertation that I directed, a dissertation that researched the impact on students of a virtual reality environment Rozema created for Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. In this environment Rozema's high school students deepened their understanding of the characters, imaginative world, and political analysis of the novel they were reading. Characters and their situations became more and more meaningful and "real" to students and this facilitated an increasingly complex ethical analysis of their conduct. Rozema's students were creative and analytical at the same time, writing dialogue

Literaryworlds.org homepage



Literary Worlds

Explore, research, interact, and role play in virtual worlds based on literary works -- a resource for students and teachers.

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and developing additional virtual spaces that demonstrated an understanding of Huxley's text at high conceptual level. Many continued their involvement in the activity long after the course was finished. Dr. Rozema's presentation about this experience at the 2003 NCTE Conference was given the National Technology Leadership Award, and an article about it appeared in the *English Journal* (Rozema, 2003).

My prototype environment, based on Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* has also been used successfully with high school and college students to engage them more deeply with the literary text and generate significant writing and critical thinking. Web English Teacher (www.WebEnglishTeacher.com) has given it an "A+" award. Students enter into this prototype virtual environment and "wake up" as a wide range of Igbo villagers, British missionaries, and colonial administrators in a visual space

THE POTENTIAL OF THE NEW MEDIA TO ENHANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING IS ENORMOUS, BUT WE BELIEVE MEANINGFUL TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT WILL DEPEND ON AN INTENSE AND SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT WITH TEACHERS DEEPLY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT LEARNING CONTENT.

based on an extensive archive of authentic black and white photography taken by an anthropologist in the turn-of-the-century Nigerian area where the novel is set. The village is filled with images, characters from the novel, and short recordings of traditional West African music. Students visting the "Village of Umuofia" have commented,

"I have never seen anything like it before. The most important thing for me was seeing the pictures of huts, walking sticks, and tools. I was amazed at the quality of craftsmanship and the amount of time these people must put into carv-

ing them. Also the website did a good job reinforcing how characters communicated with each other and how they came to their decisions."

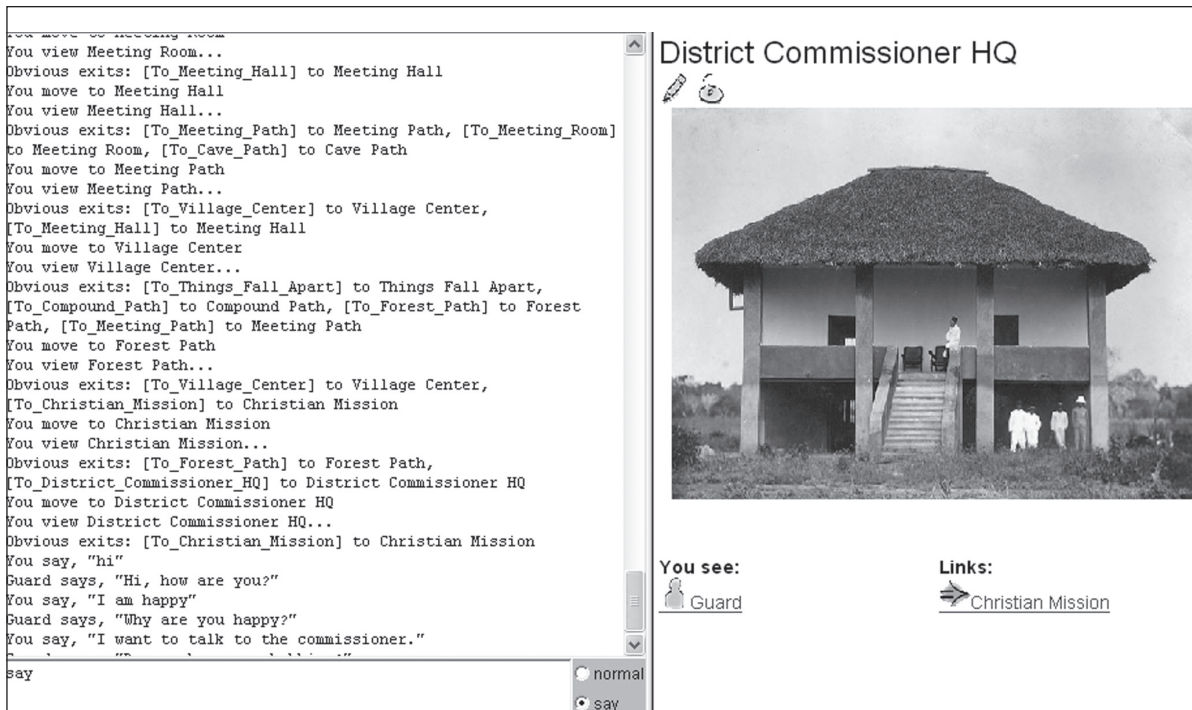
"This activity helped me to place myself in a villager's shoes and try to think like they did. I got to kind of experience first hand what they went through."

"I enjoyed my on-line experience in the Village of Umuofia. It really made you feel as if you were in the book and living as your character."

Teachers can examine this prototype environment and learn about using it with their own students, at www.literaryworlds.org/umuofia/.

English teachers may also enjoy taking their students to "Midsummer Night's Madness," doctoral researcher Joe Haughey's virtual reality space. In the world Haughey designed, students reading *Midsummer Nights' Dream* take time away from discussion to enter into an enormous virtual world paralleling the Classical Greek setting of the court and forests portrayed in the play. Taking on the roles of court society, working class guild members, imaginative fairies and sprites, such as Puck, students follow a series of role play activities in close parallel with the text, and experience virtually the confusion, magic, charm, and possibility of Shakespeare's most imaginative play.

Utilizing virtual reality environments in teaching draws on old ideas, such as the dramatic satisfaction from participatory story telling and the learning potential of entering deeply and imaginatively into specific informational contexts. These worlds also lead students and teachers into the future of teaching and learning where traditional values are extended and enhanced by the properties and pleasures of emerging digital environments. The kind of literary reading experiences we are creating was first described as a theoretical possibility in MIT professor Janet Murry's pathbreaking book *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (1997). In thinking about traditional teaching, Jeff Wilhelm (1997) writes about how important it is for successful teenage readers to enter imagi-



An enCore User Interface in Village of Umuofia Virtual World

natively into the story world of literary works. In helping language arts teachers to engage students with reading, Wilhelm particularly emphasizes the potential of dramatic roleplay. As we design these virtual environments for literary study, we wrestle with the degree to which this medium should be approached as a role play, a gaming activity, or as virtual museum spaces. The enCore medium makes possible all three types of experience and many of the virtual spaces we have made cross over categories. Those that have strong game characteristics, such as "Thoughtcrime" and "Midsummer Madness" still have an important narrative focus. Some worlds, such as "Village of Umuofia" or "Mice, Men, and Migrant Labor" emphasize virtual live action roleplay where inhabiting characters is basic to the immersive experience of active reading.

An important dimension of this new medium is the possibility it creates for exploring the time period and setting of literary works, that is diverse historical and cultural moments, locations that are often very different from the experience of student readers, yet critical to understanding the literary work. In this sense, in addition to supporting "reader response" teaching, these worlds open up possibilities

for historical, multicultural, and cultural studies teaching as suggested in *Literature and Lives* (Carey-Webb, 2001). At LiteraryWorlds.org three of the worlds emphasize the setting and geography of London, "Moll's World" in the 18th Century, "Dickens' London" in the 19th Century, and "Woolf's London" in the early 20th Century. "Woolf's London," based on early 20th Century photographs of the city, closely follows two walking trips that main characters in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* take through downtown London and explore the connection between their inner thoughts and the urban geographical landmarks in the novel.

NEW CONCEPTIONS OF PEDAGOGY

Game spaces and role plays call for new conceptions of pedagogy where teacher delivery of knowledge and information gives way to participatory and constructivist learning. Changing thinking about teaching is a greater challenge than learning new technologies. One of the questions that our Literary Worlds team wrestles with is, how can we create virtual environments where students will have significant freedom to make choices about

their activities or the roles they play, and still maintain close fidelity to the literary text on which the world is based? A sort of prototype for what we are doing can be found in “choose your own adventure” books or in hypertext fiction, such as *Patchwork Girl* by Shelly Jackson, that enjoyed a certain popularity in the 1990s, or even some of the fan zines and websites that have sprung up about popular television programs. James Gee (2003) has carefully described a wide range of skills developed when students are engaged in electronic games. When students enter into a virtual world, such as Thoughtcrime or the Village of Umuofia they are extending the plot, action, and characters of the novel beyond the text. Attempting to enter into the imaginative world created by the author, they are modifying that world based on their own insights and understanding, and based on the interaction they have with others in the virtual world. When students take the virtual activity seriously, we believe that they are being highly respectful of the source literary text. Indeed, the results can lead to most interesting reflections on the original work.

UTILIZING VIRTUAL REALITY ENVIRONMENTS
IN TEACHING DRAWS ON OLD IDEAS,
SUCH AS THE DRAMATIC SATISFACTION
FROM PARTICIPATORY STORY TELLING AND
THE LEARNING POTENTIAL OF ENTERING
DEEPLY AND IMAGINATIVELY INTO SPECIFIC
INFORMATIONAL CONTEXTS.

Writing and class discussion is important after experiencing a virtual world as students need to reflect on their experience and insights and they need to share those with others. Participation in this kind of activity can help students to imaginatively understand the perspective of characters far different from themselves. Andrew Burn (2005) writes about the role of narrative in games, “Narrative in games oscillates between offering information and demanding action, triggering a cycle in which the player acts, which functions as a demand

to the game (what next?), which replies with more information and demands, and so on.” (52) When the game activity has the dimension of live action role play, that narrative is a collaborative, collective creation. Teachers can ask students what they have learned about the work from taking the part of a character, and students can share with each other what it was like to be, say Puck, Titania, or Bottom. The exchange of perspectives thus greatly enriches understanding of the text, drawing in the experiences of all of the characters and all of the students. It is also important to explore how activities in the virtual world compare and contrast with events in the literary work. For instance, a teacher might have a rich discussion with a question such as, “why when we role played the characters in *Things Fall Apart*, did our Igbo villagers and British colonizers come to a mutual understanding about preserving Igbo culture and why does that not happen in Achebe’s novel?”

Not all works lend themselves to game or role play activities. Many of the spaces we are creating at LiteraryWorlds.org are more like specialized literary museums where students can engage with and explore a wide variety of materials that serve to supplement a particular literary work. “The Immutable Hill,” designed by Dr. Jon Adams, offers a foray into the historically and culturally diverse novel *Democracy* by Joan Didion. The novel, set primarily in Hawaii, also involves scenes in California and South East Asia and refers to a wide spectrum of international events during the Vietnam and Cold War. Adam’s virtual world introduces students to this panoramic backdrop in a way that enriches their reading and understanding of the novel. Museum-like spaces in LiteraryWorlds.org allow students to make individual or group visits. When they visit with others, students can participate in conversation about the spaces they are exploring. Often those spaces include quotations or passages from the literary work set in juxtaposition with images, links, and other resources. In this way we hope both to support close reading and help students learn about the historical, social, and cultural context of specific works.

Teaching in a virtual world environment does pose certain challenges. Our own redesign of the open source enCore means that students and teachers will be sent a transcript of their activity and dialogue whenever they visit a virtual world. These transcripts allow teachers to assess, evaluate, and hold students accountable for their participation – something that we have learned is important since the teacher can not be everywhere at once in these virtual worlds. Indeed, the virtual worlds are not simply places where teachers can “drop off” students – instead they are spaces that invite teacher themselves to develop academically meaningful activities tied into their curriculum. The more that teachers explore and understand the virtual world they want to use, the better they can direct student activities in that environment.

Because I want students to develop their own imagination, for years I have recommended that they read the book *before* they see the movie. The LiteraryWorlds.org team sometimes wonders if by building these spaces we might, in some ways, be scripting students’ imaginative experience. Reading good literature already invites readers into a virtual world in their own heads. A good writer helps us “see” from the point of view of characters, and discover new historical, cultural and geographic spaces, and “There is no frigate like a book to take us lands away...” This is, of course, the very power of literature. We do not believe that this new digital teaching medium we are pioneering will ever replace the imaginative worlds that literature creates for the reader. Indeed, we hope that using these virtual spaces will be an interesting, creative, and fun activity for students and thus stimulate their desire to read and enjoy literary works. LiteraryWorlds.org is attempting to create virtual activities that will be intellectually and academically meaningful, as well as fun. Our worlds are inspired and deeply engaged with the language, setting, and imagination of literature. *

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“TV is funny, it’s good, and I really like it”

YOUNG CHILDREN TALK ABOUT TELEVISION

BY PETRA HESSE & FEONA LANE

“BOYS ARE DIFFERENT FROM GIRLS. GIRLS LIKE BRITNEY SPEARS AND BOYS HATE HER”

(Girl, age 5)

“WHEN I WATCH TV, I GET GLUED TO IT. THAT MEANS I AM HYPNOTIZED.”

(Boy, age 7)

According to the recent report *Zero to Six: Electronic Media in the Lives of Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers* (Rideout et al., 2003), young children interact with screen media two hours daily, just as much time as they play outside, and much more time than they spend with print media (39 minutes). Many young children have a TV in their bedroom. Children with a TV in their room average 22 minutes more a day watching TV and videos.

Contrary to the earlier report *Kids & Media @ The New Millennium* (Rideout et al., 1999), which suggested that half of all children do not have any rules about television, this latest study indicates that 90% of young

children have rules about content, and 69% have time limits. Children with time limits tend to watch half an hour less a day (Rideout et al., 2003).

Many media researchers and child and family practitioners are concerned about the long-term impact of the media on children’s physical and mental health (Rideout et al., 1999). Childhood obesity, eating disorders and depression in teenage girls, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders, and antisocial tendencies and aggression in boys have all been associated with children’s media exposure (Huston et al., 1992; Singer & Singer, 2000; Strasburger & Wilson, 2002).

Media literacy education has become widely recognized as an antidote to the negative effects of children’s media exposure. Media literacy has been defined in fairly general terms as “the ability to read, write, and produce” in a variety of media, and more specifically as “education that aims to increase students’ understanding and enjoyment of how media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized, and how they construct reality” (Tyner, 1998, p. 119).

In a recent issue of *Young Children*, we made a case for the integration of media literacy and literacy curriculum in early childhood classrooms (Hesse & Lane, 2003). We showed that media literacy education with young children is possible and introduced several children’s books about the media as resources in this process. We would like to continue this discussion by talking about an action research project about television we have been working on with our students who are training to work with young children.



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FEONA LANE holds undergraduate and graduate degrees and a media literacy certificate from Wheelock College. She has also been an early childhood educator for the past 25 years.



Petra and Feona have teamed up in recent years to develop media literacy curricula for young children and opportunities for teacher training in media literacy. They have presented their work at national and international media conferences, and have published their work in the US and abroad.

The project grew out of our students' questions about media-related practice with children and their parents. Our students were wondering how to talk to children about the media and how to support parents in their efforts to communicate with their children. We decided to develop a series of simple, straightforward questions that would provide opportunities for dialogue with children. The questions are engaging for children. They defer to children as experts on electronic media while originating in researchers' and practitioners' concerns about the effects of troublesome media content on children's development. Many questions are quite open-ended and exploratory, while others ask children to address and explore adults' specific concerns about media violence, stereotypes, and commercial messages. In the process of answering the questions, children begin to reflect on media content and form, and on themselves as an audience. They think about the creators of media and develop their own ideas for media production. According to Kathleen Tyner and other media educators, they begin to be media literate (Tyner, 1998).

QUESTIONS ABOUT TELEVISION FOR CHILDREN

Dear Children,

We are interested in what you have to say about television. Many grown-ups believe that you watch too much TV, that you see too much violence, that you don't read and play enough. We would like to hear directly from you. How do you think and feel about TV? What do you like and dislike about TV? What would you change about TV?

Please, answer the questions on the following pages by drawing and/or writing your responses. We will put together a book based on your drawings and ideas.

We will share your ideas with other children and with grown-ups.

1. Draw anything that comes to your mind when you think of TV.
2. Does your family watch TV? Draw your family watching TV.
3. Do you watch TV? Draw where and with whom you watch TV.

4. When do you watch TV?
5. Why do you watch TV?
6. How much TV do you watch? Guess how many hours you watch every day, every week, every month.
7. Does your family have rules about watching TV? If yes, what are they?
8. Why do you have these rules?
9. If you were a parent, would you have rules for your children about watching TV? If yes, what rules would you have?
10. Why would you have these rules?
11. What do you watch on TV now?
12. What did you watch on TV when you were younger?
13. Do you have a favorite TV show? Draw your favorite TV show.
14. What do you like about your favorite TV show?
15. Do you have a favorite character? Draw your favorite character.
16. What do you like about your favorite character?
17. Do you have a least favorite show? Draw your least favorite show.
18. What do you dislike about your least favorite show?
19. Do you have a least favorite character? Draw your least favorite character.
20. What do you dislike about this character?
21. If you could write your own TV show, what would it be about?
22. Draw and describe some of the characters that would be in your TV show.
23. Have you seen any violent shows on TV? Draw a violent scene you remember.
24. How does the violence make you feel?
25. Do you remember any of the commercials you have seen on TV? Draw a commercial you remember.
26. Why are there commercials on TV?
27. Have you ever wanted anything you saw advertised in a commercial?

28. Have you ever been disappointed by something you bought after you had seen it advertised on TV?
29. Do boys and girls like the same TV shows? Why?
30. Draw a show a girl would like. What would she like about the show?
31. Draw a show a boy would like. What would he like about the show?
32. What have you noticed about the way boys and girls are portrayed on TV?
33. How do you feel about the way boys and girls are portrayed on TV?
34. Have you seen people of color on TV? What have you noticed about the way Black people, Hispanic people, Chinese and Japanese people, and Native American people are portrayed?
35. How do you feel about the way people of color are portrayed on TV?
36. Do you like TV the way it is? Why?
37. If you could, what would you change about TV?
38. What would your life be like without a TV?
39. Draw what your life would be like without a TV.
40. What would you do instead of watching TV?
41. Draw what you would do instead of watching TV.

Our students discussed these questions with 3- to 8-year-old children in their field placements and practica, with young relatives, and with children they babysat or nannied. They gave one or two questions at a time to the youngest children and transcribed their responses. Older children wrote their own answers and responded to several questions at a time. Only children who had an ongoing relationship with the students over an extended period of time addressed all of the questions.

Children watch television at all times of day. Asked **"When do you watch TV?"** their answers range from "Before breakfast and after lunch" (girl, age 6) to "at night" (boy, age 4) and "anytime, anywhere" (girl, age 8). Most children watch TV because they like it, because it is entertaining, and "because there is nothing else to do" (boy, age 7). Children's estimates of **how much TV** they watch start out pretty fantastic in the early years, "100 hours. I watch every

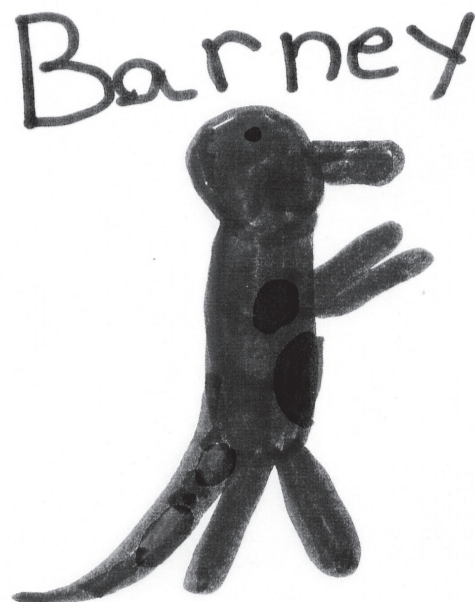
time I eat Cheerios for breakfast, and my mom has a TV in her car" (girl, age 6), and become much more precise as they get older, "A lot. 3 hours a day, 21 a week, 84 a month" (girl, age 8).

Asked about their families' **television rules**, children's responses reflect what the research suggests, namely that parents impose time and content limits on their viewing. Several children commented on time limits: "We have to finish lunch before watching TV" (girl, age 6) and "I can't watch TV after 8:00 on week nights" (boy, age 7). Many time limits are tied to other conditions, for example, being ready for school, "When I have homework I can't watch TV" (boy, age 7).

The youngest children have trouble thinking in terms of general rules; as a result some of their answers are quite funny: "Be quiet when the weather is on" (girl age 5). Many young children have to consult adults before turning on the TV: "Don't turn on the TV without asking for permission" (girl, age 6). Parents seem to have many rules about TV violence: "We only watch good shows not scary ones" (girl, age 5), and "No guns. We can't watch shows with guns because guns are bad" (girl, age 6). Some children can only watch children's shows.

Not surprisingly, some young children provide fantastic reasons for parents' TV rules, "We don't

What did you watch on TV when you were younger?



Do you have a least favorite show?
Draw your least favorite show.

The McNeil-
Lerher News
Hour



want to watch it all day and turn into a TV" (girl, age 6), or admit that they don't understand the reasons behind TV limits, "I don't know, cause it was mom and dad's idea" (girl, age 6). Many others, however, have some understanding of the time limits on television: "So I won't be late for school and stuff" (girl, age 5). They also express an understanding of the content limits imposed by their parents: "I told you guns are bad. The guns hurt and make blood" (girl, age 6).

Asked what rules they would have for their own children, most children seem to have internalized their parents' rules as their own and suggest time limits on television viewing: "You can only watch TV for an hour when you come home from school" (boy, age 7) and "No one should watch too much TV" (girl, age 7). The older the children, the more specific their rules become: "Two TV shows on a weekday. Four TV shows on the weekend" (girl, age 8) and "1. Only three hours a day. 2. You have to do homework first. 3. No bad TV shows" (girl, age 8). Similar to their parents, children would impose content restrictions: "No guns" (girl, age 6) and "No changing the channel without telling the grown-up. Don't watch scary movies without telling the grown-up" (boy, age 7).

Children's reasons for the rules also mirror their parents' reasons. The youngest ones struggle with the explanation, express fairly vague concerns about television content, "Because they get silly ideas" (girl, age 6), and stress the importance of rules, "Cause it is a good idea" (girl, age 6), without knowing why. By the end of early childhood, children are quite articulate about their reasons for TV rules: "because I'm afraid my children would have a scary nightmare" (boy, age 7) and "because you could just watch anything without rules so that's why we need rules" (girl, age 8).

We asked children to draw their **favorite shows and characters** (see illustrations). Asked what they like about their favorite show and character, boys and girls have quite different ideas. Boys clearly favor action, humor, and adventure: "They go on cool trips" (boy, age 4); "It is funny. It is a cool show" (boy, age 7); "The show has action and it is a crazy show" (boy, age 7); and "He is silly and always gets into trouble" (boy, age 7). Girls prefer shows with themes of nurturance, friendship, and beauty: "I like Barney be-

Draw anything that comes to your mind when you think of TV. Explain your drawing.

When I think of tv
I think fun and
laughter!



cause he sings songs and I dance with him. He has lotta friends like me at school. And we always talk and play and stuff" (girl, age 5); "Sagwa teaches her little sister how to be a big cat and I love her because she always saves the day and she's so beautiful" (girl, age 5); "Because the girl helps lots of animals to find their way back home" (girl, age 6); and "She is funny, pretty, and has great style" (girl, age 8).

Asked about their **least favorite shows and characters**, gender themes resurface, but also age and generational differences. Shows watched by parents and younger children are among the least favorite: "Watching mommy's TV shows. My favorite not TV show is the Wedding Show or the news" (boy, age 4), and "I don't like to watch the news, but dad watches the news for 300 minutes every day. Sigh." (boy, age 6). "It's boyish" (girl, age 6) and "It's a baby show" (girl, age 8) are also trade-

marks of least favorite shows. By the end of early childhood, gender themes solidify: "It's really for boys and it's about sports. I really am a fashion kind of girl" (girl, age 8).

Asked to come up with themes for their own television show, the gender themes continue, girls write about love: "I would write about Barbies and Ken" (girl, age 6); "They would kiss" (girl, age 6); "Barbie has yellow hair and lots of shoes and dresses. Ken is the boyfriend, just like the toys. They would get married on the show" (girl, age 6). Boys write about action and adventure: "A dino chase. It would be like cyberspace but with dinosaurs" (boy, age 7).

Young children are aware of the **gender differences** in their viewing preferences. Asked, "Do boys and girls like the same TV shows?" boys' and girls' answers indicate that boys like fun, action, and adventure, and girls like nurturance, romance, and "nicer things." Girls put it this way: "I like Barbies and Dora, but my cousin Tyler likes Power Rangers. I hate that show, boys like to fight in that show" (girl, age 5), and "Boys like sports and bad guys, and girls like nice shows" (girl, age 5). Boys agree: "Girls sometimes want to watch Barbie shows and boys like watching Sponge Bob or Rugrats" (boy, age 6), and "Girls like different things. Girls like more stories and less funny stuff" (boy, age 7).

Asked to draw and comment on **violent shows** they have seen on television, most children have something to say: "I saw a gun once and a bad guy. My mom said I shouldn't draw guns with blood once" (boy, age 6), and "It is too scary to draw. I saw someone cutting another person's neck. It was only pretend. They use ketchup for the blood" (boy, age 7). It is rare that children have not seen any violence on television.

Children's responses to television violence are very interesting. Asked to comment on how the violence makes them feel, children's reactions range from fear, to sadness, to feeling "bad": "It makes me scared when I go to sleep so I go to sleep with mommy and daddy sometimes. I don't like guns, they (are) bad" (girl, age 5), and "Sad, because people get blood on them and die" (boy, age 6). Older

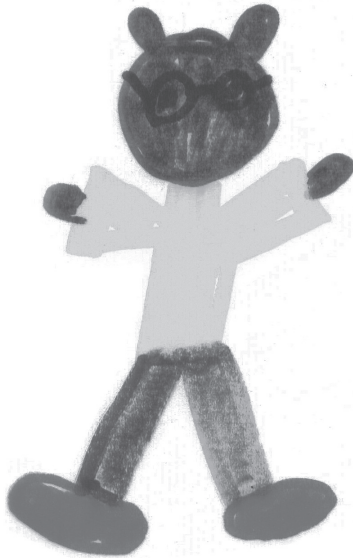
Do you have a least favorite show?
Draw your least favorite show.

Tom & Jerry



Do you have a favorite character?
Draw your favorite character.

Arthur



children are more likely to say that the violence does not bother them.

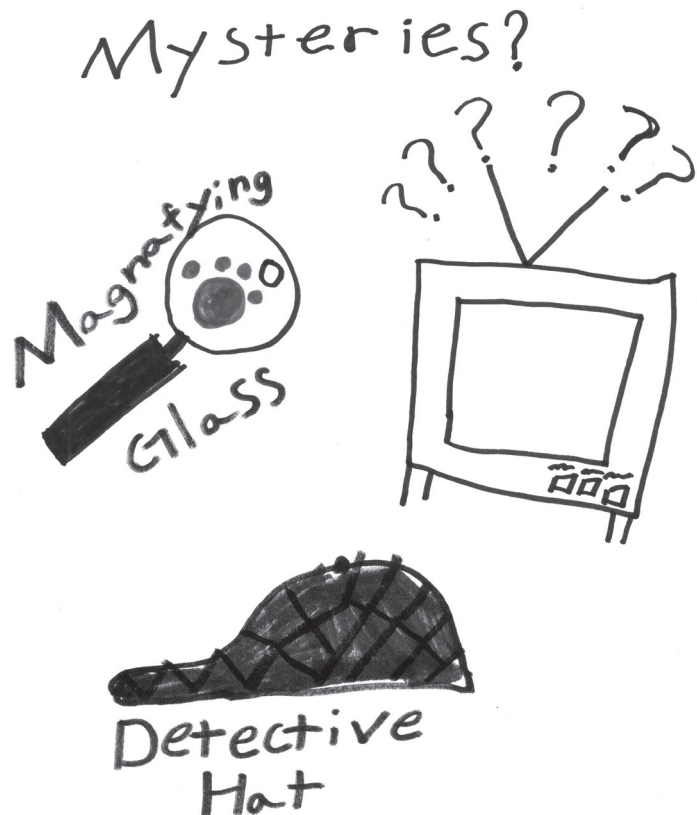
The research suggests that children are exposed to 20,000 to 40,000 **commercials** a year (Huston et al., 1992; Jordan & Jamieson, 1998; Singer & Singer, 2000), are highly affected by the messages, but do not understand the differences between commercials and programs until age 5 and the intent of commercials until age 7 or 8 (Kunkel & Roberts, 1991). Asked by us, "Why are there commercials on TV?" the younger children's responses reveal some confusion: "I don't know. So the shows won't start and end" (girl, age 5); "To show us how the toys we get work" (boy, age 5); and "They are like shows with lots of food and toys, and you can get them in the store" (girl, age 6). As the research suggests, by age 7, children understand the intent of commercials: "To advertise stuff" (boy, age 7), and "So people will buy stuff" (girl, age 8). Even one precocious six-year-old got it: "Cuz they want you to buy stuff so they can get more money" (girl, age 6).

All children are aware of toys they have wanted after seeing a commercial: "Barbie nail polish, Rainbow paint and markers, sniffle doll, trace over markers" (girl, age 5); "I wanted Olympic swimming Barbie, but mom said it didn't really swim, but I still want it" (girl, age 6); and "I wanted the N'sync Hotline" (girl, age 8). Girls tend to want dolls; boys want motorcycles and hot wheels.

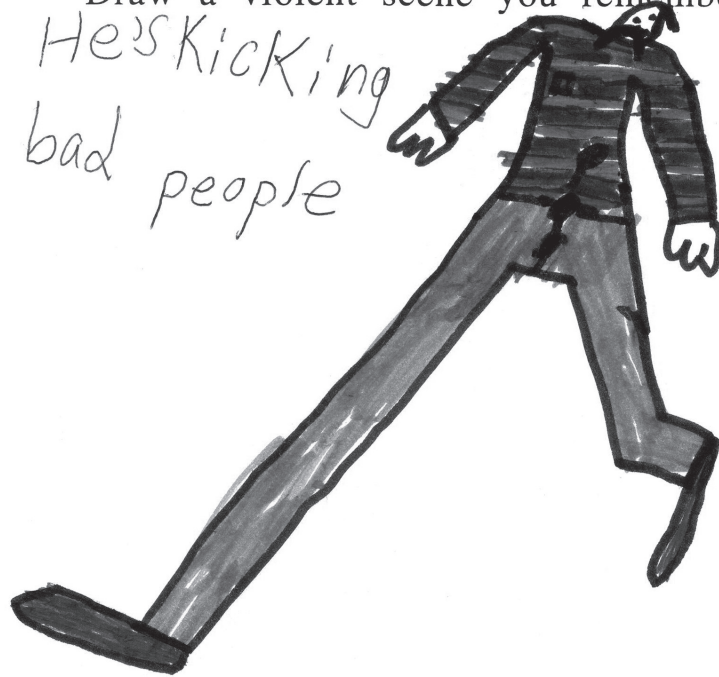
All children have a story to tell when asked, "Have you ever been disappointed by something you bought after you had seen it advertised on TV?" One five-year-old girl said about Barbie, "Barbie doesn't work right—she doesn't walk." A seven-year-old boy shared, "Yes, a Hot Wheels snake track. The head broke off." A six-year-old girl had mixed feelings about Barbie Swimmer: "I wanted Barbie to really swim, but mom said it cannot, so you will have to move her legs, but I still like Barbie Swimmer."

Asked whether they "like TV the way it is?" most children say they do. A six-year-old girl commented, "I can't say I don't because I know there is something in my brain that makes me watch TV. I don't know what it is. I don't think I have a rea-

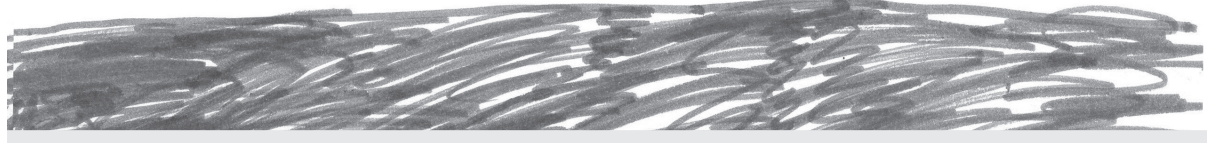
What do you watch on TV now?



Have you seen any violent shows on TV? *yes*
Draw a violent scene you remember.



*Violence is ok if you
are helping good people.*



son." A seven-year-old boy said, "I just like it. I don't know why," and another seven-year-old boy responded, "Yes there is a lot of channels." Children who are critical of TV want more children's programming: "I wanna see Barbie on every channel, and Ken too" (girl, age 5). A boy requested, "There should be a channel that only plays Scooby-Doo" (boy, age 5).

Asked to make more specific changes, children reiterated wanting less adult television and more children's television. A five-year-old girl and a six-year-old boy summarized most children's requests: "There would be no grown up shows" (girl, age 5), and "I would put just kid shows on

TV" (boy, age 6). Variations on the theme were "I would make cartoons play all day long" (boy, age 5), and "I wanna change the channels that scare me, so I don't wanna sleep with mommy and daddy. I wanna laugh." (girl, age 5).

Many children cannot imagine **life without television**. Asked, "What would your life be like without a TV?", a three-year-old boy expressed all children's sentiments: "If you don't have a TV you gotta buy one." Most children believe they would be bored. A five-year-old boy said, "I would be bored like when it is after supper." A six-year-old girl bemoaned, "I would have to go to school without watching cartoons." A seven-year-old boy was

convinced, "I would faint." Finally, an eight-year-old girl made the most extreme statement: "There would be nothing to do."

While life without television is hard to imagine for most children, they are aware of alternatives to watching television, such as playing with siblings and pets, playing indoor and outdoor games, and engaging in arts and crafts activities. One six-year-old boy expressed what many children said: "Make things, paint, play games, and help people."

We concluded the questioning by asking children to come up with **questions of their own**. They had all sorts of interesting concerns. A five-year-old girl asked, "How do people get in the TV?" Another five-year-old girl had many questions: "'Okay, how do they make TV? How do they put the picture and Barbie in the TV? Can I be inside TV? Can I come back to mommy, daddy, and sister?" An eight-year-old girl asked more philosophical, technical, and scientific questions about television: "Why does TV exist? Who invented it? How do they make TV magic? Why does TV hurt your eyes when you sit too close?"

It is unrealistic to tell families to turn off the television. The average U.S. household has the television running for close to 60 hours a week. It might be a good idea to limit and monitor children's media consumption and to take TVs out of young children's bedrooms, as the American Academy of Pediatric is suggesting, but television is too much a part of the culture to promote turning back the clocks to an oral- and print-based society. Discussions like the ones summarized in this paper support the integration of traditional notions of oral- and print-based literacy and more recent ideas about media and technology literacy. We hope that the questions for children we shared in this paper, and the discussions we had with children in response to these questions, give parents and teachers the confidence that discussions about television are possible even with young children, and that they pave the way for more sophisticated approaches to media literacy in the course of the elementary and high school years. *

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Media Literacy for Children of the New Millennium

BY JEFF SHARE

Most children born in the United States in this millennium have never known a time without the Internet, cellular phones, or television.¹ Current research about literacy acquisition suggests that “the early childhood years—from birth through age eight—are the most important period for literacy development” (IRA & NAEYC, 1998, p. 1). Since television programs, video games, music, and even toys have become our current transmitters of culture, tellers as well as sellers of the stories of our time, it is now more important than ever to teach media literacy to children as early as possible.

Some teachers are taking on this new challenge, but unfortunately many who work with young children are still following the old literacy paradigm that fails to engage with the current realities of the information age. This article offers examples from a practicing teacher who expands the notion of literacy to include much more than merely print and encourages her students to think more critically about the media they use. Patty Anderson teaches kindergarten and first grade in a large urban school district. Working with the same 20 bilingual children for two years, Anderson created a multimedia classroom that integrated technology and media literacy into her core curriculum. For two years, my son was a student in her class and I regularly observed and assisted.



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Anderson is a young teacher who enjoys using technology in her daily life and recognizes the importance of teaching her students to become technologically literate as early as possible. In kindergarten, Anderson began teaching her four- and five-year-old students how to take photographs and use photography to communicate. She comments, “I think a lot of us use pictures in our daily teaching, but I think it’s more powerful to use pictures that the kids actually take.” She explains how most kindergarten teachers she knows purchase commercial packets of photographs that illustrate specific themes or concepts; however, by working with her students to create their own images, she finds that abstract ideas become more concrete and the students take more ownership of their learning.

Her students began kindergarten studying the theme of “caring,” so Anderson had them discuss how they could visually show this idea. Once a student was able to act out caring, another student would photograph one moment that the class all agreed conveyed the idea of caring. Using a digital camera, Anderson then downloaded the images that the children took and printed them out as mini-books with just the pictures and the title in Spanish, “Cariño.” Each child was able to take home her/his own book that same day to reinforce her/his learning and encourage a love of books. During math, Anderson had her students take the digital camera around the room and around the school to photograph all the different shapes they could find. By searching for shapes in their everyday environment through the lens of a camera, they were connecting math to their real world and seeing the familiar with a new set of eyes. These pictures were printed for the students to cut out and sort according to different attributes. The students’ experiences with photography were also supported by mini-les-

sons about photography that can be found online at the Center for Media Literacy Web site (Share, 2005).² Throughout the year of kindergarten and much more in first grade, the students were allowed to use the digital camera often as another instrument in their literacy tool kit.

Anderson teaches in a low socioeconomic area and has many students who begin their education in kindergarten without any preschool experience. Therefore, one of her first goals in kindergarten is to teach the children how to recognize and form letters. One activity that supported this learning required the students to lie down outside on the grass so that they could be photographed from above as they used their bodies to form different letter shapes. These photographs were displayed in the classroom and printed on homework pages as friendly graphic reminders. Along with the use of photography, Anderson used her own laptop computer and an LCD projector to demonstrate concepts visually whenever the lesson warranted it. Her school has a broad vision of literacy and the arts, therefore all the students have an art and music teacher visiting their classrooms on a regular basis. During kindergarten, Anderson videotaped all her students for a movie they presented to the parents at the end of the year. This was something that in first grade, her students were able to play a much greater role in the production process.

In first grade, Anderson moved into a room with four computers and was able to finally implement her desire to have her students create multimedia projects. During that year, I was able to volunteer a couple of days each week and work with small groups of four to eight children at a time. Most of the children had no experience with a computer and took considerable effort to learn the most basic concepts, like how to double click and drag and drop. Since the children were already familiar with photography and visual imagery, we began teaching them *PowerPoint*. We scaffolded the teaching of new computer skills incrementally: the first computer writing they did was with *Word Art* and then later they learned to insert a text box. Inserting pictures and animation was simple and fun, so it made it easier for them to learn about folders and

subfolders. As their skills progressed, the tasks became more sophisticated, and the students began creating more computer projects that addressed the themes and content from their core curriculum. They used *Word* for publishing their Writer's Workshop stories and *PowerPoint* for creating posters and presentations. The Internet was occasionally used with adult guidance, but the students were not permitted to surf the Web alone. Anderson's incorporation of information communication technologies (ICTs) into the core curriculum added to the student's literacy development but did not replace other experiential and developmental activities, like drawing, painting, printing, acting, singing, discussing, experimenting, playing, and socializing.

SHE EXPLAINS HOW MOST KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS SHE KNOWS PURCHASE COMMERCIAL PACKETS OF PHOTOGRAPHS THAT ILLUSTRATE SPECIFIC THEMES OR CONCEPTS; HOWEVER, BY WORKING WITH HER STUDENTS TO CREATE THEIR OWN IMAGES, SHE FINDS THAT ABSTRACT IDEAS BECOME MORE CONCRETE AND THE STUDENTS TAKE MORE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR LEARNING.

While the school had a computer lab, other students rarely had the opportunities that Anderson's students had to use technology to communicate and create. This is in large part because of Anderson's philosophy that media and technology should be tools to empower students.

Unfortunately, her school administration, as well as many others, viewed media and technology as neutral conveyers of content for transmission, as opposed to teaching students to analyze these new tools and use them to create their own messages. At Anderson's school, most of the computers in the lab did not have a writing program, but they all had a math game. While the kids loved to play it and the teachers saw their students' math skills and

spatial reasoning improve, it would be a mistake to assume that this was computer literacy. Each child logged on to her/his own computer and for 30 minutes to an hour, she/he answered math questions with plenty of audio and visual stimulation. While students interacted with the computer game, it was a closed type of interaction, one in which choices were limited by the few options provided. This contrasts greatly with Anderson's classroom where the projects that students created on the computers entailed much more open interactivity and student control as the children had many more choices about both content and form.

At the beginning of first grade, each student created a guide book about another student in which they had to photograph and interview a partner. Anderson gave each child a blank book in which to write about her/his colleague based on her/his interview and attach the photographs to accompany the text. The four- to six-page books were shared with the whole class and swapped around during reading time. The series of photographs each student took of his/her partner were archived in all four classroom computers for use in other literacy and art projects. These archives grew as students photographed every field trip, guest speaker, and numerous class activities. They also began using the teacher's mini-DV camera to document their interests with sound and motion.



One of the obstacles keeping many teachers from even considering these types of activities is the fear that young children cannot be responsible with expensive equipment. Anderson states, "It's true that a lot of the fear I think that teachers have, that probably I had at the very beginning of kindergarten, is that they're going to ruin these things and that they're going to drop them or they're going to not be safe with them. But obviously, teaching them from the very early age how to handle that, then you get past that." Beginning in kindergarten, Anderson taught her students to always wear the strap around their neck and treat the camera as an important tool, not a toy. Since the technology has become so simple, no longer does the

photographer have to set the light meter or even focus the lens. The old Kodak slogan, "You press the button and we do the rest," has been surpassed as now any child who can press a button, can take a picture and see the results immediately. In the 21st century, any school or teacher who can afford a digital camera, can easily make photography a valuable literacy tool for young children.

Throughout the two years, Anderson had her students create many projects, individually and collaboratively. The use of technology in the classroom was greatly facilitated by group work and peer teaching. The final culminating projects that Anderson's first graders produced included a movie about first grade and a PowerPoint show on endangered species. The purpose of their movie was to reflect on and document their learning and also to show new students what to expect when they begin first grade. Because of technology limitations (only one camera and no editing software in the classroom), the students could not physically edit their movie. While they were able to film most of the scenes, narrate voiceovers and discuss planning and editing choices, Anderson did most of the editing work herself.

For the final PowerPoint show, students were able to do everything. They worked in pairs to create 4 to 8 slides about an endangered animal of their choosing. They researched about the animal from books and Web sites and then inserted photographs, Word Art titles, and text boxes with information for each slide. Following the writing process, they wrote, shared, revised, edited, and published their work with the help of their partner as well as other students. The process required considerable work to make sure the photographs and the words worked well together, a literacy skill important for reading and writing. Anderson reflects on this process, "I hear them having this conversation about, 'Well we shouldn't put a picture of an animal that's playing around when we're talking about something that's bad,' which I think is really good. And I've heard other pairs talk about the kind of pictures they want to include and where." After one pair discovered a mistake or something new, they would share it with others and

before long everyone was making similar changes. Experts in early childhood literacy assert that children learn literacy best, not by working in isolation, but through actively constructing meaning in an interactive and purposeful process (Neuman & Roskos, 2005a & 2005b). The sense of ownership and exploration that students felt while working on this project led some to take the project beyond the teacher's expectations. On their own, one pair discovered symbols and inserted a red circle with a slash through it, and soon others began inserting different symbols to accompany their photos and text. Working with the music teacher, the students wrote their own song about protecting endangered animals and performed it for their parents.

Another important aspect of both culminating projects was that the students were creating their presentations for real audiences beyond the teacher. Performing their PowerPoint show for other students and their parents gave the first graders a strong sense of purpose for their work and genuine feedback. By reading the text they had written in each PowerPoint slide, the students had the opportunity to read and present publicly to an audience, thus meeting many state standards for Language Arts. Creating and presenting projects for a real audience is one of *Foxfire's*³ *Eleven Core Practices* and is an important element of good pedagogy because it motivates students and provides deeper learning opportunities that are less likely to arise otherwise. After presenting to a kindergarten class, Anderson's first graders returned to their classroom and debriefed the presentation. The students were disturbed by the reaction of the kindergarteners to a photograph in the show of a dead whale with red blood in the water. They discussed the picture further and talked about the reasons for the presentation and the seriousness of the topic. While some students expressed their dislike of the picture and felt it shouldn't be in the show, others discussed the importance of saving the animals and the need to have a serious photograph, like that one, to communicate to others that animals are dying. The discussion that evolved from a real audience response to their work and picture choices took these six- and seven-year-olds into an analysis of the power of visual imagery and the appropriateness of their choices for specific purposes and

particular audiences. This inquiry linked their concerns and use of different media with much deeper theoretical concepts of semiotics, audience theory and the politics of representation. Susan Neuman and Kathleen Roskos (2005b) state, "Literacy development is not just a matter of learning a set of technical skills. It is a purposeful activity involving children in ways of making, interpreting, and communicating meaning with written language" (p. 5). Anderson's students accomplished this purposeful content-rich literacy description and bumped it to a higher level by expanding the notion of literacy beyond just written language.

DISCUSSING AND QUESTIONING

While Anderson did not design her class around critical literacy principles, she did engage her students in many critical concepts through questioning, discussing, and taking action by creating their own media messages. The atmosphere of open inquiry that Anderson created encouraged the autonomy and curiosity necessary for the development of critical thinking. Barbara Nicoll asserts, "Critical thinking skills can only be taught in an environment that encourages the children to ask questions, to devise ways of answering those questions, to make decisions about how to proceed, and to evaluate the quality of their answers." Engaging with the students' popular culture and asking questions (such as who created the message, how, and why) encourages students to critically reflect on the media they use and the media they create. Anderson also used interactive journaling, where she corresponded one-on-one with students, to encourage critical reflection.

For young children, posing questions that aim to reveal the construction of media messages can help them start to think about media differently and consider different ways of knowing. While it is important not to negate children's media culture nor destroy the pleasures they get from it, the denaturalization of media is necessary for children to be able to ask different questions. For example, when a movie is considered as just entertainment and not understood as a construction of reality, then

the questions that one can ask tend to be limited to the content of the movie. Anderson mentions:

I think in this age group, they have a tendency to think they know the difference between fantasy and reality, but a lot of the times, they struggle with it; they really don't know what is true and what isn't true. In a movie like *Ice Age*, there are elements of it that are true, that are based on the fact that there was an ice age, but what about the animals and what is created and what isn't. I think we talked that day about, someone had to write the movie, someone had to animate it and draw the pictures, because of the cartoons, so we got into a conversation about that.

Many of the mandated standards that students are expected to learn cover media literacy concepts such as the California State Content Standards for Language Arts that list that kindergarten students should "distinguish fantasy from realistic text" and "identify types of everyday print materials (e.g., storybooks, poems, newspapers, signs, labels)."⁴

Anderson clearly demonstrated that integrating media literacy concepts and technology skills into a kindergarten and first-grade curriculum is not only feasible but also can be highly successful. While she faced many obstacles in terms of limited resources and difficulty in negotiating time constraints, she managed to make the lessons developmentally appropriate for her students and provided numerous opportunities for them to communicate with different ICTs. Educators need to embrace these new tools and new literacies as exciting opportunities to link classroom learning to students' lived experiences and mediated lives. Technology must not replace drawing and other experiential activities; instead it should expand children's full capacities by providing more developmentally appropriate opportunities to communicate and create (Miller, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Nicoll states, "From a developmental perspective, the process of growing toward being a critical thinker occurs very early in life. A necessary characteristic of critical thinkers is autonomy. As

infants move into the autonomous stage of toddlerhood the seeds of critical thinking have the potential to grow." Mandates from above are needed to create space in the overcrowded curriculum for these ideas, and support at the school site is necessary to train and assist teachers in their efforts to integrate and transform their teaching practices to become more inclusive and critical.

Anderson offered many examples of the production possibilities that five- and six-year-olds are capable of creating. If we expand literacy beyond print to include media and technology and immerse that broader understanding of communication into an inquiry framework, we can teach media literacy for children from preschool on up. It is not enough to begin teaching media literacy to teenagers; we must start as early as possible, even if we are just planting seeds. *

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ENDNOTES

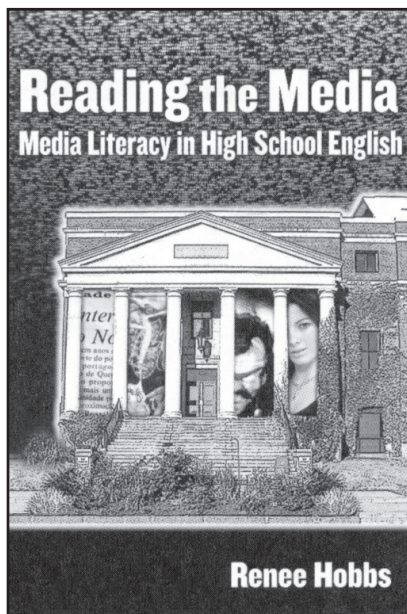
- 1 While all people born in this millennium have been alive since the invention of the Internet, cellular phones and television, this does not mean that everyone can access this technology. Since approximately one third (about two billion) of the world's population still live without electricity, it is important to remember that billions of people are being left behind the so-called technological revolution.
- 2 Activities 2A and 2B are photography lessons that were taught to these kindergarten students.
- 3 <http://www.foxfire.org/teachi.html>
- 4 Available online at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/engkindergarten.as>

Reading the Media at Concord High School

BY RENÉE HOBBS, PH.D.

In this article, Ren Hobbs takes some pages from her new book, Reading the Media: Media Literacy in High School English (New York Teachers College Press, 2006) to share her insights and reflections on the English Media Literacy initiative at Concord High School. Her dedication to excellence in research, her deep involvement throughout the project and her experience as an educator make a major contribution to the progress of Media Literacy Education.

—Editor



Concord High School in Concord, New Hampshire began its English II media literacy curriculum in 1998 and the program continues to this day. The course is a required year-long English course for Grade II students entitled, "Media/Communications." Teachers include these focus themes for the course:

- a focus on advertising, persuasion and propaganda in contemporary society;
- the role of point-of-view in storytelling in dramatic film, television fiction, and contemporary and classic literature;
- the theme of man's relationship with technology;
- the role of journalism in society, including print, television news and non-fiction genres;
- the process of literary adaptation from literature to film;
- entertainment culture in historical context, including a focus on the role of global media corporations;
- the representation of race, gender and ideology in media messages; and
- the personal and social impact of media violence.

When Concord High School faculty described their new initiative and invited me to develop a research project on their work, I was delighted. I first met these teachers when some of them attended an urban education staff development seminar that I offered at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts entitled, "Teaching the Humanities in a

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Media Age” in the summer of 1998. By then, the curriculum plan had already been approved by the school board and teachers were spending the summer developing curriculum materials, purchasing instructional resource materials, and developing their own knowledge and skills through staff development programs like the one I was offering at Clark University.

Teachers at Concord High School invited me to come and observe their classrooms, interview them, and develop a research project to assess the value of the new curriculum on student learning. It seemed like a perfect opportunity to develop design-based research, a long-term enterprise involving intentional design coupled to empirical research and theorizing about what takes place in authentic contexts. Such work incorporates mixed-methods research in order to cross traditional boundary lines both methodologically and theoretically.

AT CONCORD HIGH SCHOOL, ENGLISH TEACHERS BELIEVED THAT IN HELPING STUDENTS TO ENGAGE ACTIVELY WITH MEDIA TEXTS IN THE CLASSROOM, THEY COULD BUILD DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF KEY IDEAS IN LITERATURE AND LITERACY.

The research presented in this book is, to the author’s knowledge, the first large-scale qualitative and empirical measurement of the implementation of media literacy at the district level in the United States. For the past nine years, I have interviewed teachers, observed classrooms, and interviewed students in order to document teachers’ approaches to implementing the curriculum. I also collected quantitative data to more closely examine student skill development over the course of one year and compare their performance to a matched control group. This research is presented in the book, *Reading the Media: Media Literacy in High School English* (Hobbs, 2007).

MAKING LEARNING MEANINGFUL

In designing their new course, Concord High School English teachers needed to emphasize strategies that would build students’ understanding of the ways texts of all kinds work for readers and writers. They embraced the definition of texts to include all the forms of symbolic expression that convey meaning from authors to readers. They recognized that media, technology and popular culture present texts for people to interpret—actively or passively—and they sought ways to design learning experiences that would build what my former teacher David Perkins at Harvard Graduate School of Education has called *learning for understanding*. Understanding (as distinct from knowledge or skills) is a matter of being able to carry out a variety of performances—performances like making predictions and inferences, or composing messages for a wide variety of purposes and audiences.

Teachers aimed to make classroom learning a long-term, thinking-centered process, providing for rich, ongoing assessment and guidance. They used powerful representations and heuristic devices to help students build conceptual models and inducted students into the discipline by showing them how people formulate and solve problems within a shared intellectual framework. Most importantly, teachers attempted to teach for transfer by helping students apply what they’ve learned in a variety of new contexts and encouraging them to see connections between ideas and information and their own lives.

At Concord High School, English teachers believed that in helping students to engage actively with media texts in the classroom, they could build deeper understanding of key ideas in literature and literacy. In preparing students for life in the 21st century, they wanted students to become reflective and thoughtful and highly aware of the processes involved in accessing, analyzing, evaluating and communicating messages.

Teachers began the school year with critical viewing, writing and discussion activities designed to showcase the power of critical questions to strengthen analysis skills. For example, one teacher would bring in taped examples of advertising, entertainment and informational programming

(from her ever-growing stockpile of videotaped episodes) and work through the process of involving students in exploring these questions. Sometimes this teacher asked students to freewrite their responses, then read them aloud to share. Other times she asked small groups of students to work through the questions through discussion, making notes of the key ideas and sharing them as a large group afterwards.

In another class, the topic was gender representations in the mass media. Boys had to watch a TV show from a list of shows targeting women, and girls had to watch a show from a list of shows targeting men. Students had to watch a single show three times and look at how their own gender was being portrayed, examining the characters, plots and themes. They wrote essays that were detailed and rich in expression, reflecting on their perception of gender bias in a single episode. Students discovered the power of looking closely at how dialogue, image, plot and characterization work together to shape representations of gender in ways that reproduce or challenge stereotypes.

A CHALLENGING RANGE OF PRINT AND MULTIMEDIA TEXTS

Teachers actively involved reading of books, magazine and newspaper articles, Internet source materials, and videotapes and films in this course. Based on the themes they identified, they started with a set of 60 copies of *Team Rodent* (Hiaasen, 1998) a critical commentary on the Disney Corporation and its social influence on American culture. They had chosen a reflective book-length essay on the practice of journalism entitled *News is a Verb* (1998) by veteran journalist Pete Hamill. They bought copies of Steven Stark's *Glued to the Set* (1997), a book of short essays about television history and cultural influence framed by a focus on thirty influential television programs from the 1950s *The Howdy Doody Show* to the 1990s *Roseanne*.

Among the works of classic and contemporary literature to be included in the Grade II curriculum there was *Frankenstein* (1994, 1818) by Mary Shelley, *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner (1963), *Beloved* by Toni Morrison (1987), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's*

Nest by Ken Kesey (1962), *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley (1946) and *1984* by George Orwell (1959).

KEY THEMES UNIFY AND DEEPEN DISCOURSE

In the journalism and information unit, students explored the process of learning to develop intellectual curiosity. They analyzed newscasts, including local, national and newsmagazine broadcasts. They critically examined newspapers and web sites, comparing coverage of an event or individual across multiple sources. They examined the process of remembrance, reflecting on how both literature and media messages shape our understanding of history by transmitting cultural understandings from one generation to the next. They studied communication techniques by analyzing word choice, images, sequence of information, content emphasis and omission. They learned strategies for evaluating the quality of information. They discussed the economic structure of the mass media which emphasizes ratings and money as the only meaningful markers of quality.

IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR LIFE IN THE 21ST CENTURY, THEY WANTED STUDENTS TO BECOME REFLECTIVE AND THOUGHTFUL AND HIGHLY AWARE OF THE PROCESSES INVOLVED IN ACCESSING, ANALYZING, EVALUATING AND COMMUNICATING MESSAGES.

In the unit on advertising, propaganda and persuasion, students applied their ability to analyze messages by looking at television, advertising and journalism. In analyzing advertising, students analyzed the techniques and approaches used in print and TV advertising. They determined target audiences and noted the use of emotional appeals and graphic design. Some students visited an advertising agency, taught a mini-unit on advertising to younger children, created ad parodies, or constructed consumer awareness campaigns. They read Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1967), and a young adult novel by M.T.

Anderson, *Feed* (2002), a tragic romance/science fiction story about young people growing up in a culture where all their media comes to them from a chip implanted in their brains.

In the unit on the representation of race, gender and social class, students examined the concept of representation and reflected on the role of media and popular culture in shaping personal identity and an understanding of the social world. How do gender, race, age and class shape our understanding of our own power or powerlessness? Whose voices are portrayed in the mass media and whose perspectives are omitted? What ideas and values are depicted in media representations? Students looked at changes in media representations of romance and dating from the 1950s to today by looking at patterns of relationships depicted in television programs from different time periods. They discussed the issue of media violence by examining the role of conflict in storytelling, the impact of violent media on children and young people, and its function in maintaining cultural myths of power, independence and freedom. They read *Glued to the Set* (Stark, 1997) to learn how specific shows reflected and shaped cultural values. They read Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, a story with many voices that shows slavery as a paradigm of the complex power dynamics that exist in social relationships. They viewed Spike Lee's film, *Bamboozled* (2000), a satiric look at racism in American television that shows how America's racist past still impacts the present.

In the unit on storytelling, students explored the question: Who are our heroes? What is the relationship between the individual and the community? Students examined how point of view shapes the nature of a story. For example, students analyzed point of view in Ken Kesey's book, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), examining how the book and the film use different strategies to tell the story through manipulating point of view. They read and watched *A Perfect Storm* (Junger, 1997) to examine how the economics of the film blockbuster shape differences between storytelling in literature and film. Students analyzed Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, examining the different depictions of the birth of the monster in the many different film versions, from the 1931 *Frankenstein*, the 1974 *Young Frankenstein* parody, and the more recent

film adaptation, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. They got the chance to become storytellers themselves, writing screenplays to adapt Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* to create a film scene, composing creative fiction, examining storytelling structures used in film, and creating videos to capture their ideas using images, language, editing, and sound.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SCHOLARS AND PRACTITIONERS

As a scholar, advocate and practitioner, I have always appreciated the ways in which education research, because it is essentially interventionist in nature, may directly contribute to the improvement of local practice. Case studies in school settings have greatly helped us to visualize the nature of the learning experience inside particular classrooms where teachers are exploring innovative instructional practices. Good examples abound in the work of Donna Alvermann and her colleagues (1999), William Kist (2005) and Andrew Hart and his colleagues (2002). This scholarship has helped practitioners recognize how the specific choices, priorities and decisions of individual teachers contribute to creating learning environments that support media literacy and the development of analytic and expressive communication skills. However, there has been little research that has examined media literacy as integrated into curriculum at the school district level. What new institutional challenges are evident when a group of teachers in a large high school incorporate popular culture and mass media texts as study objects in high school English?

Qualitative research was used primarily to gather information to document the nature of the instruction used in English II and to learn more about how teachers and students perceived the learning experience as they implemented media literacy into a high school English language arts curriculum. As a graduate student, I had first recognized the power of qualitative research to directly impact the practice of education when I read Theodore Sizer's *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School* (1984), the first of a bold three-volume series that laid out a plan for school reform and improvement. This book used thick description,

thematic analysis and reflexive writing to illustrate the problems of a high school teacher, a composite character created by Sizer to represent the many English teachers he has met in his roles as teacher, headmaster, professor of education and Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

In the book, I also present the results of quantitative inquiry which was used in order to better understand changes in student performance over time and to support the development of theory-building. While some scholars find themselves aligned with one particular research methodology, my own interests push me towards both methodological and disciplinary boundary-crossing. As a young scholar, I was most impressed by the groundbreaking work of Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder, whose book, *News that Matters* (1987) used experimental research to demonstrate that television newscasts powerfully affect public opinion. By unobtrusively altering the order and emphasis of news stories in broadcasts shown to viewers, they showed how issues emphasized by television news become more important to viewers while those that are ignored lose credibility. I have long appreciated the real power and value of quantitative research as a tool for theory-building, the exploration of causality and in contributing to policy change.

Reading the Media paints a portrait of English II at Concord High School using both qualitative and quantitative accounts of the learning experience. Qualitative methods help readers understand the contextual details of local practice at Concord High School and quantitative methods offer a means to better understand the program's impact on student performances, attitudes, behaviors and print literacy practices. As we strive to help American educational leaders understand the challenges of integrating media literacy into the K-12 curriculum, it is important to document the complex powerful work which is occurring daily in the classrooms of pioneering educators like the teachers of Concord High School. *

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What Can You Learn in a Week?

INTEGRATING ENGLISH AND MEDIA LITERACY IN A PRESERVICE COURSE

BY MEG CALLAGHAN

It is a Monday morning in early August, close to noon, and nervous graduate students begin to make appearances at my office door, tentatively knocking to see if I need any help “getting things ready.” It is almost an hour and a half before our official start of class, but this week’s classes will be quite different than the usual graduate course in their Master’s program. It is the second-to-last week of our six-week course, “Integrating English and Technology,” and I smile to myself, thinking that maybe I have found an effective way to energize my required summer course. I put the students to work in the technology room at the Warner Graduate School of Education as we nervously anticipate the arrival of our “campers” at 1 pm. The graduate students have been spending the month of July exploring issues and theories of technology and literacy through assigned readings (Callahan, 2003; Dyson, 2003; Hobbs, 1998; Jonassen et al. 2003; Lankshear & Snyder, 1999; Semali, 2003) and classroom discussions, but they have also been creating their own public service announcements in order to gain hands-on experiences with multimedia editing technologies. A pretty standard blend of traditional and hands-on learning—what you might expect from such a course. But the culminating experience for the course is not the presentation of their multimedia projects to the group; the culminating experience is a one-week

media literacy camp, conducted with area middle-school students, in conjunction with the Warner School’s science education program.

Each morning of camp week, the middle schoolers spend time with science education graduate students formulating questions and hypotheses and conducting scientific investigations about water quality issues in the local watershed. They will take a field trip to a local beach, collecting water samples and other data to test their hypotheses, and come back to the university science labs to analyze their results and create scientific presentations (for more information on the science portion of camp, see <http://www.rochester.edu/warner/get-real/>). A far cry from the English classroom, right? Well, not really. In the afternoon, these same middle schoolers will work with English education graduate students to study media literacy persuasive techniques, choose a local environmental issue, and compose a 60-second public service announcement raising awareness about how citizens can make a difference in local water quality. And yes, they do all this in one week—thus the nervous energy (from me and my students) on Monday morning. There’s a lot to pack into a week, but the results—for both the graduate students and middle-school students—seem worth the worries.

The design of the graduate course has allowed me to integrate several important components of literacy pedagogy that I want my preservice graduate students to understand deeply:

1. Twenty-first century literacies are multimodal (Kress, 2000), thus literacy instruction needs to embrace multimedia rather than



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compete against it—media literacy is contemporary literacy.

2. Just as reading and writing are best taught as integrated elements (Callahan, 2003; Scholes, 1987), so multimedia analysis and production are best taught as integrated elements.
3. Literacies are embedded in social contexts and practices (Street, 1995), so as often as possible, classroom literacy pedagogy should have authentic purposes and authentic audiences.
4. If literacy is a social practice, then literacy pedagogy works best when classrooms function as communities of learners (Rogoff, 1994)—media literacy and technology in classrooms can be particularly suited to developing an interdependent community of learners. Armed with these undergirding principles, my graduate students and I dive into a week of unknown promise, with a group of unknown middle-school students (recruited by the University of Rochester Scholars program).

MONDAY: INTEGRATING ANALYSIS AND PRODUCTION

On Monday, our young students arrive, and after ice-breakers, introductions, overviews, and “production group” formation, the graduate students fan out to surrounding classrooms, conducting four “media persuasion stations” that they designed—asking each group of students to analyze print ads, television commercials, Web sites, and video public service announcements using the following questions as a guide for conversation: (1) Who do you think created this piece? (2) Who is the intended or target audience for this piece? How do you know this? (3) What is the purpose of the piece? What does it hope to convince the viewer to do? (4) What persuasive techniques are used by the person(s) who created this? (5) What lifestyle is being presented by the piece? (6) What is being left out? What things are they not telling you? When the group reconvenes, we discuss commonalities and differences among the media and which persuasive techniques get the most “play” in these various formats. We used the following ques-



tions to guide the conversation, but it quickly takes on its own life, with enthusiastic contributions from most of the middle schoolers: Who found an example of X persuasive technique? What are some ways that you figured out the target audiences for each piece? How did you figure out the purpose of each piece? What people or groups of people made these pieces? The questions and the persuasive techniques have been researched by the graduate students online as part of our July exploration of Web-based teaching resources. We used the opportunity to explore how we search the Web, how we determine reliable sources of information, and how much useful information is available on various media literacy Web-based resources.

MOVING FROM MEDIA ANALYSIS DIRECTLY TO PRODUCTION SEEMS TO WORK WELL; IN ADDITION TO PLANNING OUT WHAT MIGHT BE THE MOST “FUN” WAY TO PRODUCE A VIDEO PSA, THE STUDENTS BEGIN TO IDENTIFY SOME OF THE PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES THAT THEY WILL USE TO THEIR ADVANTAGE.

As the middle schoolers begin to exhaust their reporting of the “persuasion stations” work, I begin to transition them quickly to the work at hand:

What did you think of all the different ways the people who make the media used to persuade you



to do a certain thing or act a certain way? When you watch TV, do you think about all these techniques? Do you think these techniques sometimes work on you or some people in your family? Why would it be important to think about the questions we asked you to answer at each station? During the course of a regular day, you hear and see so many messages from all kinds of media—tv, radio, Web sites, newspapers, billboards, magazines—and many of them are trying to persuade you to believe or do something. We are going to give you the chance to create your *own* messages related to some of the science investigations you'll be doing in the morning part of the camp. This way, you can have a better understanding of how such messages work. This is also a chance to get a different kind of message out there. Aren't you sick of all the ways the media tries to sell you stuff? You're going to create a message that uses the same techniques to "sell" some important messages about our environment, and how we can be more responsible citizens. You're going to make a public service announcement, also called a PSA." [excerpt, planning notes, 8/2005]

After this introductory conversation, four groups of middle schoolers are led rapid-fire through the selection of PSA topics from eight predetermined choices. Because of the incredible time restrictions of a week-long camp, we decided that giving students a limited choice seemed most efficient. The topics are drawn from a local Water Education Collaborative Web site: Annual Coastal Clean-Up, Grass Cycling, Household Hazardous Waste

Disposal, Community Water Watch Program, Car Washing, Water Conservation, Great Lawns/Great Lakes Program, and Environmentally-Friendly Household Products.

Once each group agrees on a topic, the work of planning an effective PSA begins. Moving from media analysis directly to production seems to work well; in addition to planning out what might be the most "fun" way to produce a video PSA, the students begin to identify some of the persuasive strategies that they will use to their advantage. Media production allows students to play with their tacit knowledge of how, for example, music may signal and attract target audience, but combined with analysis, they begin to name these features. Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994) have argued that "writing in popular genres... provides opportunities for students to exercise control over those genres, to make their meanings and their pleasures in them explicit, and (potentially) to manipulate and change them" (p. 109).

In their groups, the students discuss what "feel" they want their PSA to have, based on their myriad viewing and listening experiences, and with some support, they can begin to articulate why, for example, a certain piece of music "feels right" for their message. And given that these groups of students are usually quite diverse, and from different schools and communities, these discussions can be lively.

TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY: CONFRONTING RISK

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of camp week are primarily taken up with group work on PSAs—research, planning, storyboarding, taping, and editing. Only a short amount of time is spent introducing the video editing application *iMovie*, because we have found that students come with widely varying experience with such applications, and most learn best from supported, purposeful work with the program itself. The graduate students assigned to each PSA Production Team have spent the month of July making their own PSA's and gaining at least some expertise with *iMovie*. Between the graduate students, the undergraduate workers in the in

the university multimedia lab, and the middle schoolers themselves, we have never encountered a “glitch” that couldn’t be solved in some way, but there’s always a sense of risk going in.

At some point in the production process, the graduate students are persuaded to share their PSAs to serve as models for the kids. As the graduate students make themselves vulnerable through sharing their work with all its triumphs and imperfections, the middle schoolers make supportive comments and build respect and rapport with their “camp counselors.” My graduate students also come to my course with a wide variety of expertise and experiences with technology—from the self-described technophobe to the arrogant computer science—English double major. The course has revealed a lot to me about the power of risk-taking for the creation of learning communities. As a person with no formal background in technology, I face a class with computer science double majors with a fair amount of trepidation. After all, what can I teach these students about technology? After several iterations of the course, I have learned to allow myself to reveal the (many) limitations of my technical knowledge. In the July sessions of the course, we discuss the emotional aspects of technology; it seems to bring out the insecurities of many (including myself), but because of this, it also provides opportunities for building community. The enormity of our task and our limited time frame forces us to take advantage of each person’s strengths. Some are confident troubleshooting computer glitches, some have expansive musical knowledge and collections, some are willing to do extensive Web research on a topic, some have a great eye for the camera, some are willing to act or provide voice-over, and some enjoy storyboarding, planning, and directing. I always make sure that I have “back-up” support just in case, but I have never needed to use a lot of outside consultants. More than any other course I teach, I find that this technology-based course most quickly forces me to rescind the “expert” role and become a team leader and facilitator. Some students don’t necessarily want a college professor to take on this role; in their minds, they’re paying for an “expert.” But successfully or unsuccessfully, I have to convince them that my expertise shapes the culture, structure, and guidance they receive in the course, not the “delivery” of

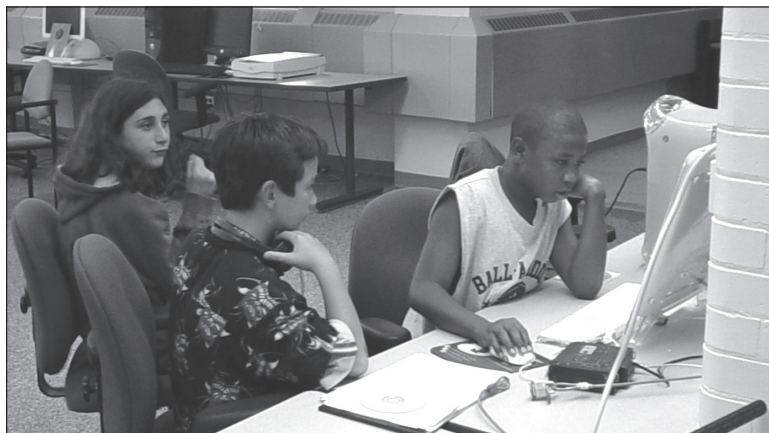
technical information. And by the end of the course, I think most of them are convinced of the value of the experiences we’ve created together.

It’s important for them to have this kind of experience, because I’m hoping that they will be the kinds of teachers who will create collaborative projects with their students, especially in the area of media literacy, where many of the same insecurities may prevail. Teachers of literature are often steeped in knowledge of “the classics”—medieval British literature, literary modernism, or Shakespearean English—but many lose confidence when faced with popular culture. How can they possibly keep up with “the latest” craze in fashion, music, television, or Internet culture? With this course as a model, I’m hoping that they begin to see the possibilities of the distributed expertise among their classroom community (Callahan & Low, 2004) and the necessity of risk to learning, for teacher and students.

FRIDAY: REFLECTION, AUDIENCES, AND IMPACT

Friday is presentation day. Along with the science education cohort, we host a showcase event in the afternoon for parents and the community in the university library. That morning, we screen the PSAs with the group, and each group reflects on what they’ve learned from the project. The first year we conducted the camp, I was so relieved that





all the groups finished their PSAs for the public showcase that I forgot to take the time to have them reflect on the experience and their learning. When it came down to the presentations that year, the videos were fantastic, but the student presentation fell flat. The following year, I discussed this shortfall with the graduate students and we brainstormed an all-important reflective component on Friday morning. Each student simply wrote a sentence or two about what they learned from the experience and how they will use this learning in the future. This simple addition created more powerful presentations; the students framed their PSA screening with observations about their own learning. Hearing them explain how the experience taught them to see and harness the media, in their own middle-school voices, made these video presentations more poignant for the audience. It also created a more comprehensive learning experience for the camp. Ultimately, having the students reflect

THE BEAUTY OF THE MEDIA LITERACY CAMP IS THAT ITS AUTHENTICITY WORKS ON TWO LEVELS. WHILE THE COMMUNITY SERVES AS AN AUTHENTIC AUDIENCE FOR THE MIDDLE-SCHOOL STUDENTS, THE MIDDLE-SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE BEEN SERVING AS AN AUTHENTIC AUDIENCE FOR MY PRESERVICE TEACHERS.

on their learning cemented this camp as a media literacy experience, rather than just a “fun technology activity.” This was an important reminder of the power of student reflection in project-based learning. In future iterations of the camp, I would like

to further reinforce the connections of the Monday media analysis experiences to the Tuesday-through-Thursday production experiences.

The Friday afternoon presentations are a celebration of the students’ work and a chance to share their learning with the public. Parents, university community, and even some local media participate. Most comment on the creativity and professionalism these young people put into delivering their messages. Most, including myself, are humbled by their earnest enthusiasm and the simple ideas they provide for a more ecologically friendly lifestyle. Each summer, I leave these presentations ready to make changes in the way I buy cleaning products, wash my car, and utilize water in my home. And the students’ pride in their work shows—knowing that their messages will be heard by a real audience is powerful. Knowing that they can harness media for their own purposes, to begin to address, in some way, the problems their scientific testing has identified in the local water quality, empowers them visibly.

The beauty of the media literacy camp is that its authenticity works on two levels. While the community serves as an authentic audience for the middle-school students, the middle-school students have been serving as an authentic audience for my preservice teachers. With my guidance, they have designed and implemented a technology-rich, cross-disciplinary literacy experience for real middle-school students—and they did it in a week! Part of my motivation for implementing this kind of assessment for my course came from the fact that I was tired of motivating through grades and assignments. I wanted my students to understand how technology and media literacy can foster intrinsically motivated learning, and I wanted them to feel intrinsically motivated by the responsibility of creating a fantastic camp experience for the kids. We weren’t getting this locked away in the basement of Dewey Hall on beautiful summer days.

FINAL REFLECTIONS: WHAT’S IN A WEEK?

The first year of the camp, I was amazed on the final day at how perfectly the science content dove-

tailed with our media literacy work. My colleague, April Luehmann, had created her science camp experience for graduate students several years before I added the media literacy component. In a casual conversation one day, she invited me to include a media literacy experience, and this cross-disciplinary collaboration was born. For the most part, our graduate students worked parallel to each other, with almost no time for collaborative work, except to coordinate schedules for the middle schoolers. And yet, on the final day, the content flowed together in a seamless presentation of problem and promise. The scientific investigations identified real water quality issues at the local beach, and the PSAs created opportunities for action. One reinforced the importance of the scientific investigative process, and the other reinforced the importance of impassioned and creative communication to the public.

When April and I first discussed this collaboration, my biggest concern was that the English education students not be used in the service of “delivering” science content. I didn’t want my graduate students’ role to be in coaching the oral presentation of science experiments, for example. Certainly, this is something students need to learn, but because literacies are socially situated, and the scientific community has its own discourse, this discourse is best taught by scientists. My students didn’t have science backgrounds and, therefore, were not best qualified to teach the conventions and idiosyncracies of the scientific discourse community. I held onto media literacy as the content of our portion of the camp, and this made the experience a rich and varied adventure for the students. The PSAs required creative uses of language, combined with video and audio, all orchestrated to persuade an audience to care about how they can affect local water quality. It provided a forum for students with different aptitudes and strengths to challenge themselves and to shine. This content also served to reinforce for my English education graduate students the importance of providing students opportunities for composition that go beyond pen and paper (Callahan, 2002). Twenty-first century literacies comprise multiple media and multiple modes of expression, and students need guided

experiences to become more savvy consumers and producers of such media.

So what can you learn in a week? Based on feedback from the middle schoolers’ parents, the kids learned a lot about the scientific process and media literacy, but more important, they learned that their voices and actions can make a difference in our community and that learning can be fun. I hope that the graduate students learned some of those same lessons. I also hope they learned that integrating technology and media literacy into the English classroom may entail a certain amount of risk, but that such risks may have valuable benefits. And while these future teachers may not have the resources to re-create our camp, they have experienced the power of technology, media literacy, authentic project-based learning, and reflection in English, and ideally, can find ways to creatively integrate these elements into their future classrooms. Not bad for a week’s work. *

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Duncan & Tyner Teach at Appalachian State's Summer Session

BY DAVID M. CONSIDINE

Two of the most respected leaders of media literacy in North America anchored a week-long class last July at North Carolina's Appalachian State University (ASU).

Barry Duncan, founder of Canada's Association for Media Literacy and co-author of *Mass Media and Popular Culture*, teamed with University of Texas (Austin) instructor Kathleen Tyner, author of *Literacy in a Digital World*.

The two guest instructors worked with David Considine (*Visual Messages*), the coordinator of the graduate program in Media Literacy, now in its seventh year at Appalachian State.

The students for the session included two tobacco control educators from North Carolina, a high school science teacher from Chicago, two social studies teachers, two elementary school administrators from North Carolina, an art educator from New York, a school library media specialist from Maryland, college faculty, a 9th grade English teacher, a sex educator from Boston, several students taking their doctorate in Educational Leadership, as well as students from South Carolina, Ohio, and elsewhere.

The group also included students working on their masters in media literacy or their 18-hour certificate in media literacy, as well as students taking their first formal media literacy class.

On the first day, Dr. Considine indicated that rather than focusing on media analysis as he usually does, his presentations would concentrate on a review of the literature that would help students understand the origins and foundations of media literacy outside of

"I have spent each night this week in a dorm room at Appalachian State—blissfully, hungrily immersed in the study of media literacy. I have gone to sleep thinking about the myriad issues and possibilities surrounding this work and have ultimately unconsciously incorporated some component of the field in my dreams every single night. When I awake from the reveries of this week, I will move to make those dreams a reality."

—(First-time student at ASU summer program)

the United States. He called this the "ABCs of Media Literacy," which meant addressing the contributions to media literacy of Australia, Britain, and Canada.

Dr. Considine's sessions also addressed strategies for growing support for media literacy by connecting it to state and national standards or to mission statements and guiding philosophies of groups like the National Middle School Association. This work was supported by the inclusion of evidence from various proj-

ects that documented the efficacy of media literacy through different forms of assessment and evaluation.

The work of media analysis was left to Barry Duncan and Kathleen Tyner whose, approach resonated with students. Said one, "Kathleen's presentation was spot on for me. While still needing to make the terminology my own, I gained a valuable understanding how media language impacts the message. Her concrete examples expanded my imagination. I was like a kid in a candy store. I loved the activities she used to support her point. I felt so aligned with what I perceived to be Barry's worldview. His style was straightforward and clear. The information he provided was the nuts and bolts that will bring together my project."

Like all of the summer sessions in the ASU program, students spent an entire week viewing, reading, critiquing, and debating media literacy, all while being challenged to locate themselves within the traditional paradigms of the field.

The hefty binder of readings included scholarly chapters and articles by leading contributors to the field, such as the late Andrew Hart, Len Masterman, and David Buckingham, as well as engaging case studies. One reading that was well received was taken from Gregory Michie's *Holler If You Hear Me*, which chronicles the story of a young teacher in Chicago and his attempts to interest a class of adolescents in a course he calls Media Studies. He shares his success stories and the frustration he feels when the kids don't buy into some topics and issues with the passion he thinks they entail.



Some of the summer students with two guest instructors

Although ASU's summer class lasted only one week, the work load is not completed for several months. Throughout August and September, the students will evaluate media literacy curriculum from organizations as different as Adbusters, Project Look Sharp, Flashpoint, New Mexico Media Literacy Project, United Church of Christ, Flashpoint, and the Center for Media Literacy.

In October and November, they will complete work on the development of their own media literacy curriculum, which can be for adults, children, or teens in school or nonschool settings.

Responding to the week students said:

"Kudos on putting together such a substantive course with contagious passion and scholarship."

"Barry Duncan's Mall Crawl was both unique and entertaining. It has led me to conceptualize several ideas for a new consumerism unit."

Lisa from Ohio wrote: *"Willingness, desire, enthusiasm would be the best words for what I experienced this week. I find*

myself constantly thinking of ways that I can utilize the information in my classes. I also plan on sharing various pieces with colleagues and sharing some things with the vice president of academic affairs at my university and the Teaching Learning Committee that I am part of."

A 9th-grade English teacher wrote: *"The evaluation assignment had rigor in it that definitely required more than a casual perusal of the materials. I was happy to have this opportunity. It is the first time I have had access to coherent, comprehensive media curricula."*

As has been the case since ASU's first media literacy summer session, students recognized the opportunity to bond with those who shared their interests: *"Perhaps the most meaningful outcome of this week has little to do with course content or even the instructors. It was the opportunity to meet with other educators who have similar passions and interests and who are struggling to integrate media education into their practice. The networking opportunities here are endless."*

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

Sorry you missed this summer session? A new opportunity is right around the corner. CI 5830-375 Media Literacy will be offered ONLINE in Spring 2007.

WANT MORE DETAILS?

Contact the instructor, David Considine, at 828-262-2270 or e-mail Considinedm@appstate.edu.

WHAT ABOUT NEXT SUMMER?

Yes, ASU will have another week long course. Media: Image and Influence will meet on campus July 15- 20, 2007. Contact Dr. Considine or look for details of courses at www.ci.appstate.edu/programs/edmedia/medialit or see PDF files at www.gaile-haley.com

David Considine, the program's founder, with Kathleen Tyner and Barry Duncan, the two guest instructors of the ASU 2006 summer session on media literacy.



An Interview with William Kist

AUTHOR OF *NEW LITERACIES IN ACTION: TEACHING AND LEARNING IN MULTIPLE MEDIA*

BY KAREN AMBROSH

While working with Bill on the NCTE Media Commission and through reading and discussing his research, I have come to appreciate his deep understanding of literacy and his ability to show how alternative ways of knowing can make for meaningful learning in school. Many of us working in the field of media literacy instinctively know what we are hoping to achieve in the classroom, but often we cannot qualify it in a concise, systematic manner that meets the standards of academic research. Bill has proven that he can do that with his qualitative case studies outlined in *New Literacies in Action: Teaching and Learning in Multiple Media*, published in 2005 by Teachers College Press. The following interview which captures the essence of his work is the result of several email exchanges over the summer.

How did your research on new literacies evolve?

In 1997, I began a line of inquiry, seeking out and profiling classrooms in which teachers and students work daily with many forms of media. Coming from a background as both a high school English teacher and video and filmmaker, I sought to combine these two passions of mine: teaching and making and enjoying film. My early readings took me down paths relating to arts-based education and multiple intelligences, new literacy stud-

ies, and, of course, media literacy. Many of these writers were saying some of the same things about literacy, but from different perspectives. The arts-based educators believe that the arts provide alternative "ways of knowing." The new literacy scholars look at literacy events in the daily lives of children and adults. And media educators seek to help kids be better "readers" and "writers" of media, particularly nonprint media.

As I read all of the persuasive work surrounding new media, I wished that there existed some portraits of teachers and students who were really using these new media. Before I could profile these classrooms, I had to find them, and before I could find them, I had to define what I was looking for. I decided to use a quote from Eisner (1997):

In order to be read, a poem, an equation, a painting, a dance, a novel, or a contract each requires a distinctive form of literacy, when literacy means, as I intend it to mean, a way of conveying meaning through and recovering meaning from the form of representation in which it appears. (Eisner, 1997, p. 353)

As a foundation for my research, I formed some characteristics that I felt would exist in a classroom of "new literacies."

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW LITERACIES CLASSROOMS (KIST 2000)

- New literacies classrooms feature daily work in multiple forms of representation.



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- In such classrooms, there are explicit discussions of the merits of using certain symbol systems in certain situations with much choice (Eisner, 1994, 1997; Greeno & Hall, 1997; New London Group, 1996).
- There are meta-dialogues by the teacher who models working through problems using certain symbol systems (Tishman & Perkins, 1997).
- Students take part in a mix of individual and collaborative activities (John-Steiner, 1997).
- New literacies classrooms are places of student engagement in which students report achieving Csikszentmihalyi's (1990, 1991, 1993) "flow" state.

How did you come to embrace the term new literacies and what are some of the major distinctions you see between that and media literacy?

Some of the terms currently being used to discuss a broader concept of "literacy" are "new literacies," "multiliteracies," "multi-modal literacies," "media literacy" and "digital literacies." I suppose the term "media literacy" has tended to connote a focus on "reading" such media as film and television—being able to spot a product placement of a Coke can sitting in the corner of a frame of a Hollywood movie, for instance. Other strands in this line of inquiry include "arts-based education" and the "social nature of literacy." I have used the term "new literacies" in my book because I see it as a broader umbrella term for the huge menu of media available to kids today.

All of these terms are getting at a broader notion of what a "literate" person needs to be in this 21st century. Our conception of literacy will need to go beyond just being able to read and write print. Being literate will involve the ability to "read" and "write" in many different forms of media, sometimes more than one at a time!

One of the frustrations you express in your book is that too often educators are using new media as "the spoonful of sugar to help the print go down." How can educators break out of this mindset?

I am concerned that many teachers who are using "new literacies" have as an ultimate goal getting their kids to be more print literate. No one is arguing that kids need to be able to read and write print. But as Gunther Kress (and others) have noted, we are rapidly becoming more of a screen-based society, rather than a page-based society. The new media are seen as ways to make Shakespeare, for example, more hip, rather than as legitimate forms of expression, worthy of both "reading" and "writing" in and of themselves. And again, does this mean that we aren't teaching kids how to read and write print? Of course, not! One could probably argue that kids are reading (and writing) more words on screens than they ever did on pages.

OUR CONCEPTION OF LITERACY WILL NEED TO GO BEYOND JUST BEING ABLE TO READ AND WRITE PRINT. BEING LITERATE WILL INVOLVE THE ABILITY TO "READ" AND "WRITE" IN MANY DIFFERENT FORMS OF MEDIA, SOMETIMES MORE THAN ONE AT A TIME!

One of the most frustrating issues I encounter as a teacher educator is the mindset that many teachers have that they need to "cover" the curriculum and that the only way to truly "cover" material is by telling it to students. In fact, one of the instructional strategies I am increasingly witnessing is the playing of an entire recorded book to the class as the kids follow along in their copies of the book. The rationale behind this instructional strategy is: "If I don't play a book-on-tape, the kids won't get it." "Get what?" I ask. "The plot," is the answer. (Yet, if they are really being true to the standards, there are no plots of books that are supposed to be covered according to any statewide standards that I know.) There is a great reluctance on the part of teachers to let go, to provide assignments that have frameworks that are standards based, but then to let the kids have some freedoms and choices and, yes, this must include choice of medium of expression.

I suppose that the first step in a school's true integration of new literacies would be an explicit statement of philosophy that the school believes that

all communication media are inherently equal, and that all media have the ability to express and come to terms with the essential questions facing humankind.

A challenge to creating new literacy classrooms is being able to duplicate model programs. What changes are needed to establish a foundation that can be replicated on a larger scale?

THE NEW MEDIA ARE SEEN AS WAYS TO MAKE SHAKESPEARE, FOR EXAMPLE, MORE HIP, RATHER THAN AS LEGITIMATE FORMS OF EXPRESSION, WORTHY OF BOTH “READING” AND “WRITING” IN AND OF THEMSELVES.

What I discovered in my research is that, frequently, the spark of one or two teachers’ passion for new literacies didn’t spread throughout the schools. Once the teacher retired or moved on, this kind of innovative teaching seems to dissipate. Of the six classrooms profiled in my book, two are already defunct, and one more is teetering on the edge.

One of the exceptions would be my chapter on Sandy Bernhahl, the school media specialist in Itasca, Illinois. Because the school media specialist has contact with all teachers in the building, this person may be the crucial spark to help new literacies catch on beyond just one or two passionate individuals. The principal, if he/she is the school’s true instructional leader, may also provide that spark, but principals tend to come and go.

Of course, one hopes also that as a new generation of teachers enters the profession—young teachers who grew up with the Internet and all the other new media—that it will be a given that these new media will be integrated schoolwide.

Have you followed the case studies beyond your original research? Are there any interesting developments or changes since you wrote about them? Any new insights/questions/ideas you’ve discovered since the book was published?

I do stay in touch with all of my case studies. There are no new developments except for one—sadly, it appears that a few of the key teachers at Bowness High School in Calgary are about to retire, and it looks doubtful how much of their innovative program will continue beyond their retirement.

As far as any new insights, my publisher has asked me to do a sequel to the book, this time focusing on primary-level classrooms. I am attempting to find primary level teachers who embrace new literacies. I’m having a little difficulty finding new literacies teachers at this level, although one could argue that primary-level teachers have always integrated all kinds of media (music, dance, visual art) into their classrooms and may have never really considered this as being “new literacies.” *

(Editor’s note: If you know of a K-4 classroom you’d like to nominate to be profiled in Dr. Kist’s sequel, please contact him at: wkist@kent.edu.)

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Reading in the Reel World

TEACHING DOCUMENTARIES AND OTHER NONFICTION TEXTS

(NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH, 2006)

BY JOHN GOLDEN

GRANT HIGH SCHOOL, PORTLAND, OR

Reviewed by Dominic Inouye

ENGLISH TEACHER, PIUS XI HIGH SCHOOL AND FOUNDER OF MILWAUKEE'S
SPOTLIGHT STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL, MILWAUKEE, WI

John Golden has created a fitting companion to his widely used text on film analysis, *Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in the English Classroom* (2001). Five years ago, he guided English teachers out of the outdated teaching model which worships the novel and poetry and treats film only as a convenient supplement or babysitter. Instead, his approach honors both literature and films as *equally* important and influential: both can be “read,” both possess a language, grammar, and syntax, and therefore one can inform and enliven the other. The same practical, innovative, and engaging advice—indeed, a very similar format—is found in his new *Reading in the Reel World: Teaching Documentaries and Other Nonfiction Texts*.

In his new book, Golden explores the power of documentaries, which have “a truer sense of connection to the real world” (p. 2), but which are still constructed and manipulated as much

as any Hollywood movie. Throughout the book, Golden deconstructs a wide variety of documentaries clip by clip, revealing how careful juxtaposition of visual, audio, and text tracks can create powerful emotions and ideas. He gives middle and high school instructors tools to teach students *how* nonfiction films are made, instead of just expecting them to take notes on *what* the content is. He relies on the notion that young people perk up when “real life intrudes” (p.2), and provides from relevant films as varied as *Hoop Dreams*, *Born Into Brothels*, and *Super Size Me*. His goal, in tune with the push toward greater media literacy, is that students will begin to actively critique the kinds of films they’ve been conditioned to find boring.

In chapter 1, Golden charts the history of nonfiction film, the various forms it takes, and the ethical dilemmas that face both documentarians

and audiences alike. More importantly, he examines the ways in which nonfiction films often blur the lines between reality and story, between what happened and what was constructed. In characteristic form, on every page he includes examples from films, including his own, revealing with honesty and humor the difficult transformation of truth to screen.



In chapters 2 and 3, the examples and questions continue as Golden, like he does in his first book, outlines practical skills for reading nonfiction texts.

Golden offers classroom-tested activities to teach students how documentaries compare and contrast, present problems and offer solutions, and argue causes and effects. He also offers activities to teach theme, tone, and point of view. In turn, then, students can apply the same skills in their own reading, writing, and thinking, no matter what class they are taking.

The final chapter, which comprises half the book, will have teachers running to their video stores or online bookseller for at least one of the fifteen fascinating documentaries (as recent as 2006) Golden has analyzed. He provides a rationale for teaching each film, previewing activities, a suggested viewing schedule, reproducible charts, discussion questions, and closing activities. The beauty of this chapter is that a teacher in any discipline can find at least one valuable teaching resource which will give students “an opportunity to view the world in a way they have not had before” (p. 135).

Every page of John Golden’s book is engaging and personal, realistic and relevant. The only thing he doesn’t explore, in either book, is the possibility of students creating films. The focus on analysis is still primary, and necessary, but we can only hope that Golden’s next book will take the best of the first two and show students how to tell their *own* stories and document their *own* worlds. *

Media Studies K-12

TEACHING DOCUMENTARIES AND OTHER NONFICTION TEXTS

(TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD, 2005)

BY NEIL ANDERSEN & SYLVIE WEBB

TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Reviewed by Mary Moen

“Media Studies are mandated from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in Ontario, Canada public schools. This, however, is one of the last reasons teachers and students should pursue media studies. Better reasons arise from the energy generated by students’ compelling interest in the many forms of popular culture.”

So begins the Introduction to this lively book, created by teachers, for teachers; a working companion steeped in the richness of vast experience, deeply rooted in the theory, process and practice that validate media education for our children of today. Such a book is greatly needed and will be received with enthusiasm and thanks.

Neil Andersen, award-winning teacher, author, pioneering leader in media education—and friend, sent us a copy, adding, “This book redefines literacy and media studies in subtle ways and I am keenly interested in learning how teachers respond to, and use, it.” The review below, by Mary Moen, is from one who has shared these many experiences. Mary, like Neil, is herself an award-winning teacher, Board member, pioneering leader and indeed, friend.

—Editor

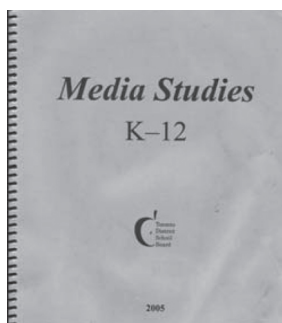
I would make it mandatory that everyone teaching media literacy read the introduction to this textbook. The author makes it crystal clear why the study of media in all its forms is necessary for any classroom subject. He clearly illustrates how writing, reading, viewing, and creative artistry are all a part of learning about media. He also skillfully refutes any objection a teacher might have, such as “That’s all kids do is watch the ‘Boob tube,’ or play dumb computer games!” He carefully explains that truly understanding media is like understanding a piece of literature in which a student must see how each element gives a different view of the whole, and leads to a complete picture of what the author, artist, and filmmaker are trying to get across.

I taught media classes for 30 years in high school. Then, for 10 years, I was a presenter for the Discovery Networks, teaching educators of all grades and disciplines how to use media as a learning tool as well as giving workshops for teachers and other interested groups. I identified strongly with the concepts, exercises, applications, projects and ideas in this book, “Yes,”

I thought, "I did that!" But the vast amount of information and number of exercises contained in this text far surpasses any work I have done. That is why I think every teacher should put this on their "must read, must absorb, and must use in my classroom" list.

Here are some of the exciting materials teachers can use in their classrooms, whatever age they teach:

- **Key Concepts of Media.** He puts the analysis of media studies into simple terms, using the text, audience and production from many sources. He uses the term, "Reading Media Works" to describe how to READ the media process. Examples include how to examine newspapers, short stories, plays, novels and textbooks as well as tips for analyzing websites, videos, magazines, and using media production tools. He includes teaching guides and multiple activities for each form of media.



- **Subjects Students are Familiar with and Excited about.** A large section of the text is devoted to *Harry Potter*. In this he creates a detailed analysis of both book and film, using the "Media Stud-

ies Triangle" of the text, the audience and the production. Other topics students will warm up to range from media reports on global conflicts to back-to-school clothing as a media event to production of a scene from *Hamlet*. All units are suitable for elementary, middle and secondary schools.

- **Using the Web.** As a grandmother of high school students, I have seen what a struggle it is to find valuable Web Searches for book reviews or oral presentations. I was excited to find a detailed analysis of 13 possible web sites that might be used for reports about subjects such as the dolphin family. These pages are also a golden find for any teacher or student studying why some web sites work, and why others do not.
- **Recognition of English Teacher Traps.** English teachers sometimes praise only the best literature or film version of a novel and treat other media forms such as teleplays as inferior. Andersen stresses instead choosing to "explore the interesting aspects of all media." Teachers should also be careful in their assessment of students only on their written work as opposed to including students' creating appropriate media production. This suggestion proved very important in my media teaching. Some students, I found, had trouble using just the printed word. But when they could combine their media interpretation with a written or oral presentation, they were

more successful. The results were a source of pride for them, and their writing and speaking skills showed amazing growth.

As an aside, I would also give two laws, which must never be broken by educators:

1. NEVER use video in the classroom while you sit in the back getting your paperwork done.
2. NEVER have a substitute teacher do the same, which implies, of course, that a mere substitute could never handle YOUR Subject Matter! The resulting message is that media is a time filler and a poor substitute for learning. Students catch on quickly how much value a teacher places on such use.

I just heard about a friend of mine who has for the first time been assigned to teach both literature and media for high school students. I am sure to tell her to buy *Media Studies K-12*. With this text, she will have 149 classroom applications for her media classes and 76 suggestions for ways to include media in her literature study. Her success and the students' excitement will be guaranteed. *

For an additional review of *Media Studies K-12* see the Summer 06 issue of Barry's Bulletin found on the Media Awareness Network web site:

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/barrys_bulletins/

Teaching MediaLiteracy.com

A WEB-LINKED GUIDE TO RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES

(TEACHERS COLLEGE PRESS, 2005)

BY RICHARD BEACH

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, MINNEAPOLIS

Reviewed by Frank Baker

MEDIA LITERACY CONSULTANT AND WEBMASTER OF THE MEDIA LITERACY CLEARINGHOUSE

"A new media literacy text that provides excellent background, practical advice and resources."

How nice to find another new text that is not only readable and resourceful, but also filled with testimonials from teachers who are practicing media literacy education. Dr. Beach's new text *'teachingmedialiteracy.com'* joins 2005's text by Kent State Professor William Kist: *"New Literacies In Action."*

This new text reminded me of our ever-converging media world. Here is a book that is designed to tell the reader where to go online to locate additional information. Beach has organized a vast and comprehensive list of Internet resources (no small task) and combined those with testimonials from high school teachers who document their media literacy lessons and activities.

It is rare when a new media literacy text meets all of your personal criteria. For some time I have been searching for a text that would help teachers not only understand media literacy and

its place in the K-12 classroom, but also provide advice from practicing teachers. This one does. And it does it quite well. Readers should be advised that this text is aimed at secondary (middle and high school) audiences. Because it is so comprehensive, it belongs in every secondary school media center collection. In addition to helping teachers understand media analysis, Beach provides strong examples on implementing the production element of media education.

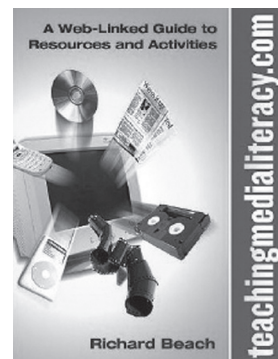
I first became aware of Dr. Beach's textbook companion Web site: <http://teachingmedialiteracy.com>. Here you will find an extensive, well-designed Web resource related to almost every facet of media literacy education. (His site reminded me of my own: media literacy is such a huge topic and organizing it for the reader is a challenge for both a Web designer and an author.)

You could use the Web site without the text, but I wouldn't advise it. The text puts all of the concepts into context.

And it is this Web site that is the strength of the text. Although some

textbooks can get dated in time, Beach has a placeholder (the Web site) on which to post new links, relevant news, and resources.

Throughout the book, Beach utilizes a numbering system that guides the reader to that resource on the Web site. Here is an example from Chapter 6 Media Ethnography Studies:



"Through this participation with texts, audiences are constructing modes of escape, daydreams, social relationships, and alternative identities (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). All of these activities occur within social and cultural contexts or 'fan subcultures' in which fans construct their identities and stances consistent with the culture of, for example, a SIMS online user club (6.2.1-3)."

The 6 obviously refers to Chapter 6. And if one surfs over to <http://teachingmedialiteracy.com> you will find Chapter 6 listed along the top of the page and in the left hand column of the Web site. On the Web page for Chapter 6, on the left hand column, you will find a link to [6.2] What do media ethnographers study? this leads you to [6.2.1] Summary of fan sub-culture research [6.2.2] David Moley: History of audience research [6.2.3] Reception studies of media

In the chapter on Film Techniques (Chapter 3), Beach uses the testimonial of a high school teacher, who offers others this insight into how he engages his students:

“Each student is assigned one of five film elements to examine: lighting, sound, camera angles, framing, or editing. The class views from one to three clips chosen from the films they have brought in, and each student takes notes on their particular technique. Then students sit in groups of five, with one student representing each film element. Groups must discuss the effectiveness of the clips and then rate the film based on the use of each film technique. Groups also must reach consensus and report to the larger group the choices they made and why they made them.”

It is this practical advice, sprinkled throughout the book, that makes this a “must have” for novice or experienced media educators. *

Link to book Web site: <http://store.tpress.com/0807747440.shtml>

Link to Dr. Beach's homepage: <http://www.education.umn.edu/CI/Faculty/Beach.html>

The Story of Movies

CURRICULUM SERIES

(THE FILM FOUNDATION)

Reviewed by Mary T. Christel

LITERATURE AND FILM TEACHER, ADLAI E. STEVENSON HIGH SCHOOL,
CHICAGO SUBURBS

Established in 1990 by Martin Scorsese, the Film Foundation has pursued a mission of film preservation through restoring and archiving a wide spectrum of films that clearly embrace the full range of cinematic movements and genres. It is vital to have films preserved for research and scholarship, but the Foundation has expanded its mission to develop and distribute high quality teaching materials to facilitate the integration of classic film texts in middle school curricula. The first arrival in this series is Robert Mulligan's adaptation of Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The website (www.storyofmovies.org) also announces that materials for *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *The Day the End Stood Still* are “coming soon.” And the best part of this initiative is the cost. Materials are sent to teachers free of charge.

Those materials arrive in a sturdy box which includes a DVD copy of the film, a supplemental DVD, a teacher's guide, a student activities booklet, and a series of graphic organizers formatted as overhead transparencies. Upon initial examination, the wealth of materials is a fairly overwhelming in its volume and quality. It is certainly impractical to think that a

teacher would use all of the materials included in this program, and the materials do lend themselves to flexible reorganization and adaptation. It is just a matter of carefully sorting through all the possibilities.

The teacher's guide is organized into four chapters: “What Is a Movie?,” “The Filmmaking Process,” “Film Language and Elements of Style,” and “Historical and Cultural Contexts.” The first three chapters meticulously outline a method of examining film as a cinematic text that will help teachers move away from examining film as a narrative in a manner that is not much different from how literary texts are discussed (character, plot, theme). All the necessary vocabulary is provided, defined, and illustrated. Individual lessons are presented to help both novice and experienced teachers initiate a meaningful analysis of film using still images and specific clips from *To Kill A Mockingbird* as well as from other films that are found on the supplemental DVD. It is as thorough and engaging an introduction to film analysis as any that I have ever come across in a curriculum kit. Most



of these activities could be applied to the teaching of any film.

The "Historical and Cultural Contexts" section of the teacher's guide showcases the interdisciplinary mission of the series. For this film, the chapter focuses on "The Link Between History and Culture," "Civil Rights Issues, 1930s and 1960s," "Repre-

sentations of Race in Film," "Do Films Influence Society?" as well as a series of activities examining Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." These topics are linked to reading, writing, viewing, and image making that can be tailored to specific classroom situations and students' abilities or interests. I find that the materials are sophisticated enough to use with high school students since *To Kill A Mockingbird* is a novel taught both at the middle and high school levels.

The support of IBM and Turner Classic Movies should be acknowledged to

bring this project to fruition. Teachers should also routinely access the website www.storyofmovies.org for lesson ideas, especially "Beyond Read-the-Book, Watch-the-Movie," as well as other resources and links.

Strangely enough, I learned about the project from a small ad in *Vanity Fair* several years ago that put me in touch with the Foundation. I personally look forward to a further expansion of the series into the elementary and high school. *

THE Journal of Media Literacy

CONGRATULATES THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH (NCTE) AND ITS ASSEMBLY ON MEDIA ARTS FOR THEIR INITIATIVES IN THE REALM OF MEDIA LITERACY, THE "NEW" MEDIA LITERACY, CRITICAL LITERACY AND 21ST CENTURY LITERACY SKILLS;
WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN OUR RENEWED
NTC/AMA PARTNERSHIP.

Channels

Upcoming Events

JANUARY 12-14, 2007
MEMPHIS, TN

**THE
NATIONAL
CONFERENCE
FOR MEDIA
REFORM**



Organized by Free Press. Focus on media policy, media literacy, critique and accountability, and media reform activism. www.freepress.net/conference.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2007
NASHVILLE, TN

**NCTE ASSEMBLY FOR RESEARCH
MID-WINTER CONFERENCE**



The Web site for the 2007 Mid-Winter Conference of

the National Council of Teachers of English Assembly for Research is now available. The conference theme is **What Counts As Literacy? Living Literacies of the Body and Image**. Contact Kevin Leander ([kevin.leander@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:leander@vanderbilt.edu)) or Cynthia Lewis (lewis@umn.edu) with any questions. We look forward to seeing many of you there! <http://education.umn.edu/NCTEAR/>

JUNE 22-26, 2007
ST. LOUIS, MO

**ALLIANCE FOR A MEDIA
LITERATE AMERICA
NATIONAL MEDIA
EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

This year's NMEC theme, "iPods, blogs and beyond: Evolving Media Literacy for the 21st Century," focuses on the on-going investigation of media literacy as a critical life skill for the 21st Century and the recognition that evidence-based practice is the best way to improve and advance the field. More information at <http://www.amlainfo.org/home/conferences-and-events>

JUNE 23-24, 2007
ST. LOUIS, MO

**ALLIANCE FOR A MEDIA
LITERATE AMERICA
RESEARCH SUMMIT CALL FOR
PAPERS**

A Research Summit Conference to explore the efficacy of media literacy education. With increasing frequency, researchers are assessing and measuring the impact and effectiveness of media literacy programs. Here is an opportunity for researchers, scholars and practitioners from numerous fields to share research and ideas about the evaluation of media literacy programs. Not intended to cover research of media effects.

Submissions from all fields of study, using appropriate theoretical approaches and methods, are welcome, including focused, evidence-based studies, conceptual reviews that capture the current state of outcome research or pose solutions to specific issues and methodological problems in the fields.

Abstracts must represent original work, no greater than 500 words. Up to one table and one figure may be added. The deadline is March 1st, 2007. For more information and submission details contact Marilyn Cohen, Summit Chair (summit07@u.washington.edu) College of Education, University of Washington. More information at <http://www.amlainfo.org/home/conferences-and-events>.



**WINTER-SPRING 2007
APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY
MEDIA LITERACY COURSE
[CI 5830-375] OFFERED
ONLINE**

Appalachian State University's on-line graduate course in media literacy, with Dr. David Considine, runs from January 2, 2007 until the end of April 2007. For more information contact the instructor, David Considine, at (828) 262-2270 or considinedm@appstate.edu.

[Appalachian State University](http://www.appstate.edu)

JULY 15-20, 2007
BOONE, NC

**"MEDIA: IMAGE AND
INFLUENCE" COURSE**

Watch for dates of Dr. Considine's excellent intensive one week long summer session. See report on 2006 event in this issue. Contact Dr. Considine at (828) 262-2270 or considinedm@appstate.edu. You can also look for details at www.ci.appstate.edu/programs/edmedia/medialit or see PDF files at www.gailehaley.com

**CULVER CITY, CA
MASTER TEACHER
CERTIFICATE IN MEDIA
LITERACY**

The Pauline Center for Media Studies is pleased to announce a Master Teacher Certificate in Media Literacy. Begun on September 23, 2006, the program is recognized by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Department of Catholic Schools and the Department of Religious Education for continuing education and recertification.

Classes are held every 3d Saturday of the month from September through June at Pauline Center for Media Studies: 3908 Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City, CA 90230. Cost is \$275.00 and includes all textbooks (except one) and coffee breaks.



[pauline center for media studies](http://www.paulinecenterformediastudies.org)

More information online at: <http://www.daughtersofstpaul.com/mediastudies/masterteachercertificate.html>

Resources

CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF PARTICIPATORY CULTURE: MEDIA EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

MIT's Henry Jenkins has released this major report via MacArthur Foundation. It can be downloaded from <http://www.macfound.org/site/c.1kLXJ8MQKrH/b.1038727/apps/s/content.asp?ct=2946895>.

ARTOPIA: ART EDUCATION ON THE WEB

Watch and listen to artists as they work in their studios. Try your hand at interactive art processes. Get to know about famous artworks and artists. Write about works of art, films, TV shows and advertisements. Send art cards to your friends. Participate in an online discussion of the arts. Save your work to an online portfolio – all at SCETV's arts education website, Artopia (www.knowitall.org/artopia).

Funded by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and developed by the Creative Services Department at ETV in collaboration with prominent arts educators, Artopia is a valuable new tool for teachers and students. It covers painting, sculpture, dance, theater, music and media arts in an engaging, thought-provoking style.

Of particular interest to readers of this magazine, of course, is the media arts section,

which was created in consultation with well-known media educator Frank Baker. Artopia's Media Arts features the fields of photography, radio, film, television and electronic arts as well as critical viewing segment based on cigarette ads. In addition to the critical viewing feature, the Media Arts section is replete with content and activities. The One-Minute Movie is a rapid-fire animation that takes you through the whole history of media, from illuminated manuscripts to Marshall McLuhan. In the Studio you can create a short animation, watch a movie clip with different soundtracks, or put together a storyboard.



There's more to Artopia – lots more than we can describe here. It has had an enthusiastic response from teachers all over the country. Try it out for yourself. We think you'll be glad you did.

NCTE-Related Articles, Essays, & Resources

COMPILED BY **FRANK BAKER**

DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Digital Storytelling reflects both a broad reference to the emergent new forms of digital narratives (Web-based stories, interactive stories, hypertexts, and narrative computer games) as well as the specific approach of creating short digital films developed by the Center for Digital Storytelling. From Beliefs About Technology and the Preparation of English Teachers: <http://www.ncte.org/groups/cee/positions/122936.htm?source=gs>

Sara B Kajder offers a step-by-step plan for replicating this project, grounded in sound theory and research about how adolescents expand their literacies (*English Journal*, Vol. 93, No. 3, Jan. 2004).

GRAPHIC NOVELS

- Using Comics and Graphic Novels in the Classroom (The Council Chronicle, Sep. 2005) <http://www.ncte.org/pubs/chron/highlights/122031.htm?source=gs>
- In Graphic Novels, the Pictures Are the Story (The Council Chronicle, Sep. 2005) <http://www.ncte.org/pubs/chron/arc/122082.htm>
- Using Graphic Novels, Anime, and the Internet in a Urban High School <http://www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/ej/articles/115119.htm?source=gs>

MULTIMODAL LITERACIES

NCTE is taking the lead in defining how emergent technologies are used to teach language, literacies, and critical thinking skills as well as how ethical considerations can guide the use of various technologies. The research, policy statements and resources collected here demonstrate how multimodal literacy can be enacted and supported. By exploring the information here and becoming aware of the initiatives that contribute to the development of

new approaches, you can learn more about how to extend the reach multimodal literacy: <http://www.ncte.org/edpolicy/multimodal?source=gs>.

OTHER INTERESTING INFORMATION ON NCTE WEB SITE

- Media Literacy.
- On Composing with Nonprint Media (NCTE 2003 Position Statement).
- Improving Reading Comprehension by Using Media Literacy Activities (Voices from the Middle, Volume 8, No. 4, May 2001).
- English Journal Themed Issue on Media Literacy (Jan. 1998).
- Film and Reading Strategies (excerpt from Reading in the Dark).
- Film as Film: Using Movies to Help Students Visualize Literary Theory (English Journal, Volume 95, No. 3, Jan. 2006).
- Let's Go to the Movies: Rethinking the Role of Film in the Elementary Classroom (Language Arts, Volume 76, No. 2, Nov. 1998).

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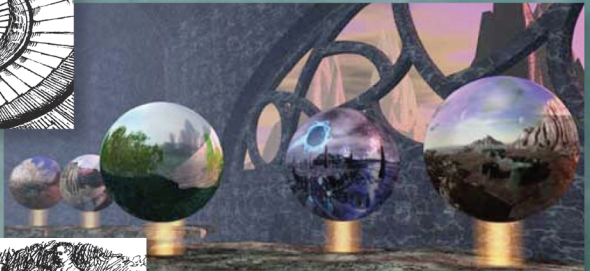
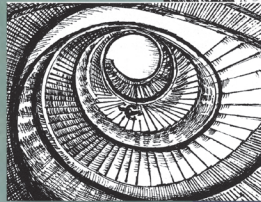
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