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Technology



Award

Exemplary Use of Technology
in a Methods Course

Using Technology Tools to Support Learning in the English Language Arts

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Hypermedia authoring, as taught by Dr. Myers, involves the process of juxtaposing, through video sequences or website hyperlinks, various multimedia "texts"—print, music, video, image, gesture, art, and more— to focus on a life relevant issue or experience represented by these texts. Through the process of creating a hypermedia project, the authors engage in the analysis and critique of the possible identities, relationships, and values signified by the texts and their multiple possible readings. This constructive process generates the critical literacy activity with texts that is a central content goal of the English language arts curriculum.

The critical literacy goal is layered with the more practical observation that both methods students and secondary school students become quite intrigued and enthused with the ability to create hypermedia projects. The English classroom takes on an air of language play and relevance as students find many ways to connect and manipulate their rich multimedia lives outside of school within the classroom, and slowly begin to discover how ideas within classroom readings permeate all the texts of the world.

Dr. Myers has been integrating hypermedia authoring for critical literacy since 1995 through English methods classroom projects that use commercially available software such as StorySpace, Adobe Premiere, Photoshop, SoundEdit 16, iMovie, and various web authoring products such as Dreamweaver. Most of the projects have originated in the reading of literature either as an entire class or in small groups. Because the study of literature is central to the secondary school English classroom, the transfer of critical hypermedia authoring to the secondary school classroom has been very successful for many students and their cooperating mentor teachers in field experience work Dr. Myers has supervised. Some projects have originated in the analysis of media texts and their powerful role in the construction of cultural identities and values.

Recently, Dr. Myers has framed the creation of electronic portfolios for English education students. They are now a multiyear, constructive process resulting in a hypermedia website in which preservice teachers explore their developing positions on educational issues and curricular ideas for English instruction. In 2000, Dr. Myers began applying hypermedia authoring in an international context. He now integrates into his English methods classes the critical analysis of textual meaning from multiple international perspectives and supports authentic second language learning through hypermedia authoring.

That work has most recently resulted in a 2003-05 U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant for A Pedagogy for Intercultural Critical Literacy Education. This project will integrate collaborative hypermedia authoring projects between students in methods classes in three US and three European universities. Examples of these projects are introduced in the following section with appropriate links to existing websites.

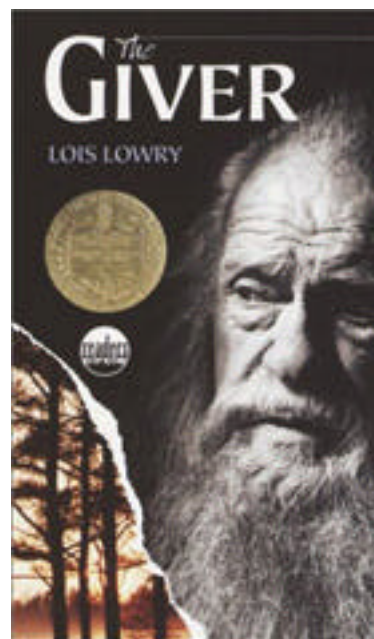
Examining Themes That Connect Literary Texts to Popular Culture Media Texts and Everyday Life

Methods class projects that inspire and motivate students require small groups of students to identify significant themes in a work of literature, then explore diverse perspectives on those themes through multimedia texts. The following websites created by small groups of English methods students connect novels in a thematic approach to raise questions about cultural ideals and beliefs.

Notions of Family
(<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/culture/family/ideas.html>)

Disillusionment (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/culture/disillusionment/>)

Survival (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/culture/survival/frstpg.html>)



America and Dreams in Literature
(<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/culture/themes/americadreams.html>)

Victims of Oppression (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/culture/opporession/default.html>)

The Analysis of One Work of Literature by an Entire Class

Traditional literature instruction focuses interpretive activity on a single text, and the teacher becomes the single arbitrator of correct meaning. While authors certainly have intentions, meaning is a constructive event that draws from the social lives of the readers. These whole class hypermedia websites involve students organizing and juxtaposing texts from their experiences to connect to the central piece of literature. This activity builds the intertextual context, or cultural schemas, required to debate potential meanings within the focal text of study. New computer digital technologies provide the teacher and student with tools for experiencing these connections in ways not previously available. These projects, in particular, generate relevance for traditional school readings in everyday life experience.

The Shipping News (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/shippingnews/default.html>)

Romeo and Juliet (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/culture/rj/default.htm>)

Asynchronous Communication About Literary Texts

Discussion of responses to the characters and events in literature has often been embedded in the process of creating hypermedia projects. In the *In Country* cross-cultural website project (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/incountry>), methods students in the US, Sweden, and South Korea participated in various message boards on the following topics:

Role of family relationships in growing up. How do cultures differ in their family relationships, especially those that surround the teenager graduating from school?

- *Media portrayals of others.* How does the media of one culture portray the people of another culture? This question is explored in war movies and shows like M*A*S*H.
- *Soldier's experience of being in a war.* Exploring the soldier's experience of being in war, especially the Vietnam war, and how it is represented in books and media. Was the Korean soldier's experience in Vietnam similar to the United State's soldier? Is war the same for all soldiers?
- *Teen Culture in the 80s.* Comparing the culture of Korean teens and Samantha. How are the cultures of teens from these different times and geographic spaces represented?

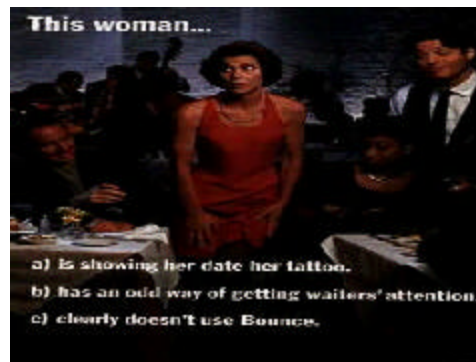
- *How we look at war.* We look at war in many different ways depending upon who we are and our culture. How do different countries look at a war? How do soldiers look at war before going and after returning? How do those who stay at home look at war?
- *Becoming a woman.* How is growing up for a woman represented in books and media? In the book *In Country*, the character Samantha has many experiences in the summer after her graduation that are part of her maturing. What does she learn and how does it compare with the way growing up is experienced in different cultures?
- *Love.* What does it mean to be in love? In the novel *In Country*, Samantha explores this question through her own and others' love relationships. How is love represented in other books and media across cultures?

Other projects engage students in secondary school classrooms or methods classes in the exchange of ideas about the characters in one or more novels. On one occasion, classes of students spread throughout central Pennsylvania wrote electronic pen pal letters to each other from the point of view of the novel's protagonists (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/culture/penpal/default.htm>). At the conclusion of the novels and the exchange of email letters, the students in each class analyzed the similarities between the lives of the characters they met through the letters, enabling more extensive and critical connections to experiences within their own lives.

The Analysis of Popular Culture Media

Beyond literary texts, English classrooms often study film and media. Dr. Myers has engaged his methods students in the creation of hypermedia websites that organize the analysis of media to explore the ways it contributes to the cultural construction of our possible identities, social relationships, and values. The "What Shapes Us?" website examines the construction of cultural difference and gender identity.

The "Multiliteracy film critique" website began with each student identifying one of their favorite movies, then selecting the most significant scene, then choosing a single frame that represented most of their reasons for valuing the film. All of these explanations were then interconnected to construct a set of cultural beliefs and values held in common across the class members and held uniquely by individual class members. Three small groups then used the single frames from the films and built a quicktime movie with a voice over analysis to communicate a new layer of ideas about the images.



What Shapes Us? (http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/hypermedia/indecisive/What_Shapes_Us_.html)

Multiliteracy film critique (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/hypermedia/multiliteracy/default.htm>)

The Extension of Hypermedia Authoring for Critical Literacy Beyond the Methods Classroom and Into the Field Experience for Teacher Education Candidates

Many methods students have worked with mentor teachers in secondary school classrooms to implement hypermedia projects. In the Teen Issues website, ninth-grade students read various short stories, worked in small groups to write individual essays on subgroup themes, and created a QuickTime movie that took a position on the overall group theme by connecting popular culture texts with quotes from the literature. In a similar fashion, 10th graders identified five major issues in the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, then created QuickTime movies to communicate their perspectives on that theme by juxtaposing quotes and media from everyday life.

Teen Issues (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/teenissues/default.html>)

Fahrenheit 451 (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/fahrenheit/default.html>)

Electronic Portfolios for English Education Students

While the use of electronic portfolios for job searching is important given today's digital world, Dr. Myers has framed the ongoing creation of portfolios as hypermedia projects that occur across multiple semesters of education methods courses and into field placement experiences. As such, methods students take positions in their portfolios and continually revise and update their presentation of ideas about being teachers of the English language arts.

Carla A. (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/edpgs/2003/cma178/index.htm>)

Dan S. (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/edpgs/2003/dms459/>)

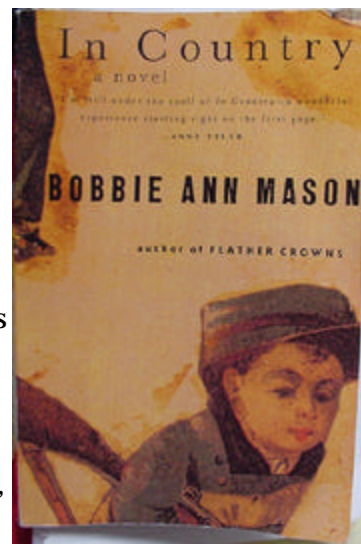
The Critique of Classroom Literacy Instruction

Dr. Myers has just introduced QuickTime video authoring to support the systematic process of teacher reflection. During field experiences, English methods students use video and still images to construct a reflective interpretation on some instructional activity or literacy skill. The methods students use voice-over audio to create their mini-documentaries that inquire into English language arts instruction and issues.

(<http://www.ed.psu.edu/englishpds/inquiryvideos/>)

The Internationalization of English Methods Courses Through Hypermedia Authoring for Critical Literacy

The globalization of future English language and communications teachers lies on the horizon of Dr. Myers' work with integrating hypermedia authoring in school classrooms. The cross-cultural web site on *In Country* (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/incountry/index.html>) described above illustrates a process for bringing students in multiple universities together to critique the representation of meaning from multiple cultural perspectives. In a different project with Korean teachers, Dr. Myers integrated a hypermedia project in which small groups of students explored how Korean identities and values are constructed through social activities with cultural objects and literacy, as well as multimedia texts. In this Korean Literacies project, students explored how cell phones, popular media, Japanese animation, commercial products, and children's literature all played roles in constructing cultural values for heroes, teen identity, environmental movements, reunification, and gender identity (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/koreanliteracies/index.html>).



The recent grant award from FIPSE for Dr. Myers' project "A Pedagogy for Intercultural Critical Literacy Education" will lead to the dissemination of a model for the teaching of intercultural literacy through hypermedia authoring. Five different structures for interpretation will guide transnational student teams from Sweden, Germany, Finland, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Virginia to identify the cultural values and perspectives constructed through language, print, and media texts from respective cultures, and to author web publications to analyze and critique the texts' cultural representations (<http://www.ed.psu.edu/k-12/piccle>).

Conclusion

These descriptions are a sampling of the hypermedia projects Dr. Myers has integrated into this university methods course, and his student have implemented in their field experiences with secondary school students. They illustrate the significant pedagogical goals of Dr. Myers' application of technology tools to support content learning in the English language arts. The hypermedia process that generates critical literacy in English classrooms might also have application across other content areas in which students must analyze texts, events, and objects in order to compose and critique understandings about the world, others, and the self.

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