

Hypermedia Authoring in Response to Literature and Life

JAMIE MYERS / FEBRUARY 5, 2003

The common pattern of literature study in a classroom is teacher led discussion which highlights and directs student response to specific “revealing” passages in the literary text. Reader response theories provided a foundation for the shift of this “new criticism” practice to the exploration of students’ (as readers) responses to the text, thus changing the teacher directed focus on specific excerpts to the orchestration of student consideration of different responses and what the author might have or have not done in the text to evoke those responses.

The consideration of ideas in the response can be pushed even farther away from the author’s intention and craft in some reader response classrooms, in which the primary text for discussion is the written response, and the literary text is seldom examined. When this is the case, the focus of discussion generates towards what life experiences, or cultural beliefs, might students have had which support their individual and collectively shared responses. Through such an approach the reader’s response to life in the text can provide a mirror which reflects consideration back upon the life of the readers and community. In your response to a text you provide the basis for a consideration of your own identity, relationships, goals, beliefs, and values.

In your examination of your own life through your response, you can push thinking into the vast array of other connected texts—print, music, video, image, gesture, art, and on—in which identities and values are mutually represented and constructed. Juxtaposing multimedia representations of our everyday life experiences generates the opportunity to critique those meanings which frame our possible worlds.

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

Characteristics of hypermedia Cut and paste collages, multimedia art works, slide shows, posters, illustrated texts, and many other forms juxtapose different forms for making meaning within the unity of an artifact. The multimedia computer makes it possible to produce and experience these types of activities in one space. The digital world makes it easy and quick to bring together a multitude of different texts, then organize them in multiple linking sequences which juxtapose texts to create unique experiences for the reader. The projects can be easily saved and transferred over time and space through the world wide web.

Some Possible Projects

Novels

- build a movie with music, image, and video connected to the experience of the novel
- email letters as characters of novels
- juxtapose quotes and music
- film your own version of scenes
- build a website which explores relevant themes within novel and in texts beyond the novel
- hyperlink words from quotes, responses, and images

Poems

- juxtapose reading your poem with images and background music
- film tableaux which represent an interpretation of the poem
- class members contribute one text to hyperlink from a word or phrase in the poem

Movies

- create a new movie from still frames of a film or multiple films
- voice over or new music for a film clip

Music

- add images for the song
- add a voice over or text over