Multiliteracies, E-literature and English Teaching

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Multiliteracies, E-literature and English Teaching

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The impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is changing the nature of literary narratives for children and the contexts in which they experience and respond to such narratives outside of school contexts. However, in the main, teachers do not feel confident or comfortable in the world of digital multimedia. Children’s literature can bridge this intergenerational digital divide in the English classroom. This paper introduces frameworks that may assist teachers in negotiating curricular and pedagogic approaches with children using digital resources for developing literary understanding and literacy learning.

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Introduction

The current phenomenal success with young (and older) readers of J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter books confirms the enduring capacity of literary narratives to engage the enthusiasm of young people in the 21st century. But the interactions of many young enthusiasts with the story world of Harry Potter extends well beyond the covers of the books and their movie adaptations, into the world of cyberspace where today’s young people are so much at home. The plethora of Harry Potter websites, many of which are developed and managed by juvenile ‘webmasters’, demonstrates both profound and playful engagement with the book-based narratives through online chat room discussions, reviews and commentaries, as well as avid exploration of new forms of related game narratives, and the generation of adjunct ‘fan fiction’ and image-focused creations elaborating interpretations of the story worlds. The literacies entailed in these kinds of activities are multiple, involving not only the comprehension and composition of images and text, separately and in combination, and in paper as well as digital media, but also navigation though cyberspace to locate relevant sites, manipulation of electronic textual material and evaluation of information, reflected in what children choose to engage with and what they choose to contribute online. But, of course, the confluence of children’s enthusiasm for fictional narrative and the possibilities afforded by computer-based multimedia are not confined to the Harry Potter phenomenon. The online extension of young readers’ involvement with a host of contemporary authors, as well as with classic stories such as The Little Prince (de Saint-Exupery, 2000a) is
abundantly evidenced on the World Wide Web (www), as is the opportunity for creating online narratives and experiencing new forms of e-literature, including game narratives both online and on CD ROM (Unsworth, 2006; Unsworth et al., 2005). Children’s literature can bridge the intergenerational digital divide in the English classroom. But the evidence is that the majority of teachers, even younger, recent graduates, are in need of guidance in understanding the opportunities deriving from the impact on information and communication technologies (ICTs) on literary narrative for children and on the contexts in which it is experienced. This paper briefly reviews relevant literature outlining some aspects of that impact and proposes a taxonomy of approaches to its analysis as a basis for formulating frameworks that may assist teachers in considering how to manage effective classroom programmes using digital resources for developing literary understanding and literacy learning. The approaches canvassed here draw on only some of the dimensions of the impact of ICT on literary narratives and cannot address a range of other important perspectives dealing with such issues as the digital construction of literature (Moulthrop, 2005; Moulthrop & Kaplan, 2004) or debates around intellectual property and ‘who owns’ the literary text (Kapitzke & Bruce, 2006).

Aspects of the Impact of ICTs on Literary Narrative for Children

While ways in which children and young people interact with literary texts in book format are being profoundly influenced by the Internet and the www as well as other aspects of contemporary ICTs, in fact, the impact of ICTs is also changing the nature of literary texts and generating new forms of literary narratives (Hunt, 2000; Locke & Andrews, 2004). ‘Electronic media are not simply changing the way we tell stories: they are changing the very nature of story, of what we understand (or do not understand) to be narratives’ (Hunt, 2000: 111).

Detailed accounts of the literary aspects of various types of video game narratives are emerging (Gee, 2003; Ledgerwood, 1999; Mackey, 1999; Zancanella et al., 2000). However, as James Gee points out (2003: 204), video games are not threatening the continued existence of books:

Video games are a new form of art. They will not replace books; they will sit beside them, interact with them, and change them and their role in society in various ways.

More broadly, Eliza Dresang noted that her book, Radical Change: Books for Youth in a Digital Age, ‘. . . does not lament the digital world but celebrates it. It does not suggest competition between books and digital media but partnership’ (Dresang, 1999: 13–14).

And Peter Hunt (2000: 118), expressing a similar view, at least in the foreseeable future, also suggested the need for schools to acknowledge digital fiction in negotiating the curriculum:

The most likely scenario, given the massive inertia built into social and educational systems, is that Linear and hypertext models of narrative will exist in parallel.
What we see emerging are strongly synergistic complementarities, where the story worlds of books are extended and enhanced by various forms of digital multimedia, and correspondingly, some types of digital narratives frequently have companion publications in book form. In Mackey’s (1994: 15) words, ‘Cross-media hybrids are everywhere’. She points out that children who come to school are already used to making cross-media comparisons and judgments whether the stories are about Thomas the Tank Engine or Hamlet, and that ‘to talk about children’s literature, in the normal restricted sense of children’s novels, poems and picture-books, is to ignore the multi-media expertise of our children’ (Mackey, 1994: 17).

However, ten years later, although literature for children and young people maintains its significant role in state and national English curriculum documents, such documents are silent about literary narratives in the digital sphere (Locke & Andrews, 2004). There is also relatively little use of ICTs in teaching literary texts in schools, according to national studies in Australia (Durrant & Hargreaves, 1995; Lankshear et al., 2000). This is in the context of a burgeoning of online and digital media resources for working with literature in the classroom, access to appropriate computing facilities in schools in western countries becoming routine and an emerging research literature dealing with the interface of ICTs, literature and literacy education (Jewitt, 2002; Locke & Andrews, 2004; Morgan, 2002; Morgan & Andrews, 1999). In the pressurised practical world of managing classrooms, many teachers are looking for some frameworks that offer a starting point for thinking about how the impact of ICTs on literary narrative can be taken account of in planning learning experiences.

Exploring the Pedagogic Potential of E-literature and Online Literary Resources

Three frameworks preparatory to developing classroom work with e-literature and online literary resources are outlined here. The first is an organisational framework describing the articulation of conventional and computer-based literary narratives for children and adolescents. The second is an interpretive framework addressing the increasingly integrative role of language and images in the construction of literary meanings in electronic and book formats. And the third is a pedagogic framework, describing various types of online contexts for developing understanding about different dimensions of literary experience.

An organisational framework describing the articulation of book and computer-based literary narratives

Here we are concerned with the relationships among literary materials on the www, on CD ROMs and in books. It is useful to think about the relationships among literary texts and digital media in terms of three main categories. The first refers to electronically augmented literary texts, or perhaps electronically augmented experience of literary texts. This category is concerned with literature that has been published in book format only, but the books are augmented with online resources that enhance and extend the story world of the book. This kind of augmentation is most frequently provided by the publishers and/or the
authors themselves. Sometimes it involves information about the genesis of the story, further details of artefacts or additional information about characters, and sometimes it involves presentation of selections from the story in print or by the author, or someone else, reading a sample chapter or segment, to entice the potential reader to invest in the whole story.

The second category of relationship among literary texts and digital media is the electronically re-contextualised literary text. In this category, literature that has been published in book form is re-published online or as a CD ROM. The online re-publication takes a variety of forms. Many works that are now in the public domain because copyright laws no longer apply (usually because it is more than fifty or seventy years since the death of the author) have been transcribed or scanned and located in online digital libraries. The most widely known of these is the Gutenberg Project (http://gutenberg.net/), but there are many other such online libraries, including some specialising in books for children, such as the International Children’s Digital Library (http://www.icdlbooks.org). The scanned books contain the original images, but since copyright is not an issue, some other sites provide the texts of these stories with new images interpolated. These online versions of published books can be accessed free of charge. The second type of online version of published books is usually contemporary stories that are provided by publishers and can be downloaded at a cost. It is also possible, at a modest cost, to download audiofiles for many current titles, including classics like Oscar Wilde’s *The Selfish Giant* (Wilde & Gallagher, 1995). Some books are also published as audio only CDs, such as Stephen Fry’s reading of the Harry Potter books, published by BBC Audio Books in the United Kingdom. But most CD ROM versions of literary texts include images and text, which vary to a greater or lesser extent from those in the book versions. In some cases, the images are static, simply transposed from page to screen. This is the case with *The Paper Bag Princess* (Munsch, 1994) for example. In other cases, the original images from the book appear as animations on the CD as in *The Polar Express* (Van Allsburg, 1997). In this CD, the animations activate automatically, but in others like *The Little Prince* (de Saint-Exupery, 2000b), the animations are controlled by the mouse ‘clicks’ of the viewer. In some cases novels for mature readers such as *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937; SteinbeckSeries, 1996), have been re-presented as CD ROM versions including images throughout.

The third category relating literary narratives to digital format is the digitally originated literary text. These are stories that have been published in digital format only – on the www or CD ROM. Relatively few such stories appear on CD ROM. Some notable examples (James, 1999) such as *Lulu’s Enchanted Book* (Victor-Pujebet, n.d.) and *Payuta and the Ice God* (Ubisoft, n.d.). The great variety of literary narratives for children and adolescents published on the www can be categorised as follows:

- **E-stories for early readers** – these are texts which utilise audio combined with hyperlinks to support young children in learning to decode the printed text by providing models of oral reading of stories and frequently of the pronunciation of individual words. For examples, of such stories, see the ‘Children’s Storybooks Online’ site (http://www.magickeys.com/books/) or the Tumblebooks site (http://www.tumblebooks.com/syndication/chickadee/indexwWF.html).
• Linear e-narratives – these are essentially the same kinds of story presentations which are found in books, frequently illustrated, but presented on a computer screen, such as *Wollstencroft the Bear* (see the ‘Children’s Storybooks Online’ website).

• E-narratives and interactive story contexts – the presentation of these stories is very similar to that of linear e-narratives; however, the story context is often elaborated by access to separate information about characters, story setting in the form of maps, and links to factual information and/or other stories. In some examples, it is possible to access this kind of contextual information while reading the story. Examples of such stories are *Banpf* (Left Handed Creations, 1994–2004) and *The Relic Triangle* (Matus, 2002).

• Hypertext narratives – although frequently making use of a range of different types of hyperlinks, these stories are distinguished by their focus on text, to the almost entire exclusion of images. There appear to be very few such hypertext narratives specifically for children and early adolescents. While not designated for a teenage audience, stories on some sites such as Word Circuits (http://wordcircuits.com/gallery/) are suitable for this age group (although teachers need to review stories before recommending them to students to ensure they are appropriate).

• Hypermedia narratives – these stories use a range of hyperlinks involving text and images, often in combination. The relationship between linear and hypermedia models of narrative is what Joellyn Rock set out to address in *The Vasalisa Project* (http://www.rockingchair.org/) (Rock, n.d.). At the centre of the project is the story *Bare Bones*, which is a new version of the Russian fairy tale, *Vasalisa and the Baba Yaga*. By reshaping the original story’s text, imagery and format, Rock indicates that she is attempting to build a bridge for the fairy tale audience between traditional media and new media. A very different kind of e-narrative on the Eastgate site (http://www.eastgate.com/LastingImage/Welcome.html) is *Lasting Image* (Guyer & Joyce, 2000), set in Japan in the time just following the second world war. In this story the interactivity is primarily achieved through a range of different kinds of hyperlinks.

To this list must be added some types of video games, defined as electronic game narratives and discussed in detail in Unsworth (2006). Examples of such games include *Snow White and the Seven Hansels* (Tivola, 2001), *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 2000) and Libby Hathorn’s online game-narrative *The Wishing Cupboard* (Hathorn, 1999).

All three of the above categories relating literature to the resources of the www and CD ROM technology vary from monomodal (print only) to multimodal presentation, involving print, images and sound. The digitally re-contextualised and digitally originated e-fiction also vary along the continua of linear to hyperlinked and from conventional story structure to innovative game narratives.

**An interpretive framework addressing the joint role of images and text in constructing literary narrative**

Over the last decade images have become increasingly prominent in many different types of texts in paper and electronic media. Recent publications of
popular fiction and new editions of classic literature are now frequently richly illustrated. This can be seen in novels such as Terry Pratchett’s Discworld Fable *The Last Hero* illustrated by Paul Kidby (2001), and the edition of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* illustrated by Alan Lee (2002), as well as in illustrated novels for young readers such as Isobelle Carmody’s *Dreamwalker*, illustrated by Steve Woolman (2001). The kinds of images and their contribution to overall meaning vary with the type of narrative. However, overwhelmingly, both the information in images and their effects on readers are far from redundant or peripheral embellishments to the print. Because images are used increasingly, and in a complementary role to the verbal text, it is now inadequate to consider reading simply as processing print. The need to redefine literacy and literacy pedagogy in the light of the increasing influence of images is widely advocated in the international literature (Andrews, 2004a, 2004b; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Goodman & Graddol, 1996; Lemke, 1998a, 1998b; Rassool, 1999), drawing attention to ‘the blurring of relations between verbal and visual media of textuality’ (Richards, 2001).

The impetus of the advent of widely used digital multimedia in heightening the imperative to address the integrative role of images and print in both digital and paper media has been emphasised by several scholars. In fact, Bolter (1998: 7) claimed a pre-eminent role for images:

> Literacy in electronic environments may have more to do with the production and consumption of images than reading and writing of either hypertextual or linear prose.

However, most have drawn attention to the integrative nature of image/text relations:

> …many contemporary texts make use of image and of writing at the same time, using both to carry meaning in specific ways. In that context, a theory of reading which relates to the graphic material of ‘letters’ alone is no longer able to explain how we derive meaning from texts. (Kress, 2003: 141)

Serial cognitive processing of linear print text no longer adequately characterizes contemporary reading and writing, which now involve ‘parallel processing of multimodal text-image information sources’. (Luke, 2003: 397)

Writing about *Books for youth in a digital age*, Dresang noted that ‘In the graphically oriented, digital, multimedia world, the distinction between pictures and words has become less and less certain’ and that ‘In order to understand the role of print in the digital age, it is essential to have a solid grasp of the growing integrative relationship of print and graphics’ (1999: 21–22).

And recently Richard Andrews (2004a: 63) has noted the importance of the visual/verbal interface in both computer and hard copy texts:

> It is the visual/verbal interface that is at the heart of literacy learning and development for both computer-users and those without access to computers.
There is also a strong consensus that the knowledge readers need to have about how images and text make meanings, both independently and interactively, requires a metalanguage, or a grammar, for describing these meaning-making resources.

In the book *Tellers, Tales and Texts* (Hodges et al., 2000) Bearne (2000: 148) noted that ‘Once readers develop a metalanguage through which to talk about texts they are in a position to say – and think – even more.’

And earlier in his classic study, *Words about Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children’s Picture Books*, Perry Nodelman (1988: ix) noted that the interpretation of the narrative role of images in children’s books would be enhanced by

...the possibility of a system underlying visual communication that is something like a grammar – something like the system of relationships and contexts that makes verbal communication possible.

The development of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2003; Matthiessen, 1995) and its application to the work with literature for children (Austin, 1993; Hasan, 1985; Knowles & Malmkjær, 1996; Stephens, 1994; Williams, 2000), as well as the extrapolation from SFL of a grammar of visual design for reading images by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and its application to work with children’s literature (Lewis, 2001; Stephens, 2000; Unsworth, 2001; Unsworth & Wheeler, 2002; Williams, 1998) has brought Nodelman’s earlier wishes to reality. The interpretive frameworks offered by this work, and their use in understanding the role of images and text in constructing meanings in literary narrative, are now readily accessible to teachers using examples from children’s literature with suggestions for classroom work (Unsworth, 2006; Unsworth et al., 2005).

**A pedagogic framework for e-literature and classroom literacy learning**

The interpretive tools provided by functional descriptions of verbal and visual grammar enable teachers and students to read literary texts grammatically, so that they are able to read the ‘constructedness’ of the texts, simultaneously focusing on the ‘what’ of the story and the ‘how’ of its verbal and visual construction. This perspective on developing children’s literary understanding and concomitant literacy development does not currently find explicit expression in the online resources for using e-literature in the English curriculum. Nevertheless, there are richly inspiring online resources for extending children’s literary experience, and a useful approach is to co-opt such resources for infusion with the above perspective forming a basis for enhancing children’s experience of e-literature in school contexts. Here we will briefly indicate the range of such online contexts for developing understanding about different dimensions of literary experience:

- **Composition/story genesis.** This includes information about actual events, places, artefacts, etc. which the author drew on in composing the story. It could also include manuscript data about earlier drafts and episodes/events/characters that were excluded or changed, as well as additional information provided by the author to elaborate aspects of the story world constructed in the narrative. Examples include the the J.K. Rowling official website...
Multiliteracies, E-literature and Teaching

(http://www.jkrowling.com/) which contains a great deal of such information about early drafts of the Harry Potter novels, and the Philip Pullman site (http://www.randomhouse.com/features/pullman/index.html), which includes additional information about aspects of the books in *His Dark Materials* trilogy that extend beyond what is provided in the novels.

- **Invitation/enticement to read.** The www provides ‘teaser’ sample chapters/segments of stories, often available with audio and sometimes with the author as reader, as well as online reviews and reactions from readers, and more recently online story-derived games designed to arouse reader interest in the narrative. Paul Jennings and Morris Gleitzman now promote their *Wicked* stories (Jennings & Gleitzman, 1998) through animations preceded by online games (http://www.pauljennings.com.au/), and Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith promote their book, *Henry P. Baloney* (Scieszka & Smith, 2001) with a related online game (http://www.baloneyhenryp.com/).

- **Appreciation/celebration.** There are many examples of ‘fan’ sites on the www where individuals or groups of readers manage a site that celebrates a particular author and his/her work. These often contain biographical information, testimonials to the impact of books, favourite quotations, images of covers of different editions and a range of other features, which are listed below in other dimensions of literary engagement. One such fan site for the Harry Potter books is Mugglenet (http://www.mugglenet.com/) managed by a 17-year-old webmaster Emerson. Further examples include the obernewtyn.net club (http://www.obernewtyn.net/) for author Isobelle Carmody, and tribute pages to William Golding (http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6249/), Gillian Rubinstein (http://www.carnelianvalley.com/hearn/) and Patricia Wrightson (http://www.bowjamesbow.net/2004/01/12-were_back.shtml).

- **Interpretation/response.** Two main types of online resources offer opportunities for interpretive responses to the narrative. One type is the fairly traditional lesson plans and learning tasks for teachers to download, although some of these include online learning experiences that make more use of the affordances of the online digital environment. The second type is the opportunity for readers to participate in online discussions about the books they have been reading via chat rooms and forums. An impressive school site showcases the work of teacher Monica Edinger at Dalton Elementary School in New York (http://intranet.dalton.org/ns/alice/alice.html). This site shows Grade 4 children’s work creating videos of toy theatre dramatisations of segments of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll & Browne, 1988). Elsewhere I have detailed accounts of work by children on various discussion forums (Unsworth *et al.*, 2005). For further information on bookraps, see Simpson, 2004.

- **Adjunct composition/creation.** This kind of engagement is frequently evidenced on ‘fan’ sites (such as those for Isobelle Carmody noted above) where contributors to the site write stories in the style of particular narratives, sometimes additional episodes, sometimes parallel or related stories, often involving the same characters as the original. Some fan sites conduct competitions involving this kind of writing, with strict rules relating the new fiction to parameters of the source story. Other contributions include the creation of images, games
and puzzles based on the stories. Another kind of creative composition activity adjunct to the source story is the co-creation of multimodal story episodes in virtual worlds known as palaces. Story palaces involve participants adopting character roles and representing these characters visually on screen using ‘avatars’ as well as verbally by the input of dialogue, so that they ‘act out’ stories in this multimodal virtual world. Of particular interest is the Middle Earth Palace (http://www.middleearthpalace.com/palace.html), celebrating Tolkien’s world, and Harry Potter Palaces, such as Hogwarts (Maykitten, 2004), Harry Potters (Aurora, 2004) and Bloody Brilliant (Layke, 2004). (For further information on Story Palaces, see Thomas, 2000, 2001, and Unsworth et al., 2005).

Principles for the design and implementation of coherent classroom programmes of work

The burgeoning of children’s literature sites on the www reflects not only the popularity of children’s books and other forms of literary narratives, including electronic game narratives, but also the integral part played by the www in children’s experience of such story contexts. Nevertheless, the majority of teachers of all ages do not feel confident or comfortable in the world of digital multimedia. At the same time more and more children routinely use computers outside of school to access a variety of forms of digital narrative on CD ROM and the www, and more and more they are communicating their experience around story via email, ‘blogs’ and various forms of electronic forums and chat rooms. A growing number of educators are now advocating the need for curriculum design and classroom teaching to be responsive to these changes and, in so doing to acknowledge the relevant experience and expertise of children, which many adult educators do not possess (Alvermann, 2004; Andrews, 2004a; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Gee, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Lankshear et al., 2000; Sefton-Green, 2001; Sefton-Green & Buckingham, 1998). However, it is also obviously the case that teachers are in a position to mediate areas of new knowledge and understanding that are not so readily accessible to children. An example relevant to this work is the theoretically articulated functional grammars of language and image that facilitate explicit discussion about relationships among narrative form and the interpretive possibilities constructed by the multimodal texts. There is an opportunity in working with e-literature and online literary resources to bring the complementary expertise and experience of children and teachers together in their shared enjoyment of exploring children’s literature. This entails a framework for pedagogic practice that simultaneously acknowledges children’s expertise and their inexperience in a range of aspects of learning.

Such a pedagogic framework involves the strategic use of student-centred, discovery learning as well as teacher-directed, overt teaching and intermediate, guided investigations of various kinds (Unsworth, 2001). Managing classroom learning also includes designing learning experiences based on collaborative small group activities, individual independent work and common whole class tasks. The teacher at times will be a facilitator and guide or a co-researcher and co-learner, but at other times will be an authoritative (but not authoritarian), leader and direct instructor. Initial work on a topic, for example, may involve
sharing of informal knowledge, observations, and opportunities and suggestions for extending understanding. This may be highly student-centred and exploratory, but as the teacher begins to bridge towards negotiating a more systematic knowledge, the pedagogic orientation shifts to a more guided investigation and direct instruction. On the basis of students’ greater familiarity with systematic knowledge of the topic, the teacher then moves to emphasise more critical framing to provoke critical questioning by students and a shift towards transformative knowledge. This kind of work may entail more collaborative group work and independent research and may also shift back to more student-centred, student-initiated learning. As the classroom work progresses through these phases, teaching is differentiated to optimise the engagement of all students in essentially the same learning tasks. This means sophisticated planning and preparation. It might include providing scaffolded learning guides and opportunities for peer support for some students. It could also involve grouping students with high support needs together to ‘prime’ their understanding of subsequent tasks through direct teaching while more proficient learners operate independently. Then it includes regrouping students heterogeneously so that highly proficient students and high support students are able to work productively together on collaborative tasks.

It is not possible here to exemplify these principles with specific learning tasks and programmes of classroom work; however, extensive collaborative work with teachers has provided guidelines and samples of practical interventions working towards the implementation on the principles outlined in this framework (Unsworth, 2006; Unsworth et al., 2005). An acknowledgement of the ways in which exponentially expanding and improving technology is changing the dynamics of pedagogic practices is essential to maintaining children’s engagement with learning through literary texts – and technology.

Conclusion

The potential of the expanded digital context of story worlds as a resource for encouraging sustained reading of literary narratives among young people (Mackey, 2001) needs to take account of the impact of ICTs on the textual practices surrounding literary texts and indeed on the character of literary narratives themselves (Locke & Andrews, 2004), changing the very nature of what we understand to be narratives (Hunt, 2000). Locke and Andrews cite Donald Leu (2000) in suggesting that in responding to the imperative for research into the impact of ICTs on how students are working with traditional and new literary forms, it may well be that ‘teachers themselves, exploring in their own classrooms hunches and intuitions about the implications for their teaching’ can ‘provide the strongest lead as to how the future research agenda should be formulated’ (2004: 148). In seeking to encourage this kind of teaching/research interface, this paper has focused on the traditional and new forms of literary narrative, but equally important is work towards a ‘literacy of fusion’ that promotes a merging of literacy practices entailed in children’s engagement in popular culture with the literacy practices associated with established school curricula (Marsh, 2002; Millard, 2003). This paper has provided, through the organisational framework, a basis for teachers to take a more informed position
in negotiating with students the nature of learning to develop literary understanding in the online world of digital multimedia. Through the interpretive framework, it provides access to some key aspects of facilitating knowledge that teachers need in order to mediate metasemiotic understanding to students, as a practical tool for interpreting multimodal literary narratives. And through the pedagogic framework, it takes account of the pragmatic prominence for teachers of managing the day-to-day classroom practicalities in providing learning experiences to meet the differential needs of the range of students they meet in any one teaching context. Much more collaborative work is needed in interfacing research and teaching in this area of the English curriculum. It is hoped that this paper will stimulate critically constructive responses to, and envisioning beyond, what is presented here to maintain and enhance a vibrant engagement of ‘net-age’ students with past, contemporary and emerging forms of literary narrative.

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