



### *Jowen Hillyer*

With the mandated teaching of multimodal texts and creating multimodal presentations in the new HSC English syllabus those of us in regional, remote or low SES schools were left in a quandary. How do we deliver the multimodal components without reliable technology? How do we deal with lack of resources in places of abject poverty? What do we do with students who lack the cultural capital required to both analyse and create digital multimodal texts? While we may be 17 years into 21<sup>st</sup> century learning it is difficult to BYOD when you can't BYO lunch.

Some confusion comes in when we try to conflate multimodality and technology. Multimodality, simply put, can be word, image, gesture, sound and speech and combined in many ways. So, students do not need to produce a sophisticated digital narrative or make a film to meet the outcomes. When thinking multi-modally, look to a mix of old and new technologies and pedagogies: books, comics, posters, slide presentations, e-books, blogs, e-posters, web pages, and social media, through to animation, film and video games.

### **Transmedia**

Where the story is told using multiple delivery channels through a combination of media platforms, for example, book, comic, magazine, film, web series, and video game mediums all working as part of the same story.

Some ideas for presentations without technology but still meeting the requirements could be:

- Reader's theatre
- Hot seating characters from a novel etc. using costuming, voice, acting, props
- Talk shows with props and images
- Novel or concept show bags (tangible object which need explaining orally)
- Radio plays
- Develop an interior monologue of one of the characters at a particular moment in the novel or film, or, illustrate a particular concept, or, perform it to the class.
- Exhibition booths where they present to assessors
- An "unconference" where students join in to different presentations based on interest
- Comic strips or graphic displays where students present to peers and analyse their own work
- A story which they write, analyse and explain to peers in a literature circle/book critic show
- Newscasts
- Scrapbooks or yearbooks created and then presented
- Elevator pitch



- Pecha Kucha (20 slides, images only and 20 seconds of talking per slide) might be an effective way to move beyond 'PowerPoint and talk'

And, if you are feeling brave then interpretive dance could be on the agenda!

### What about *teaching* the multimodal text?

The syllabus offers an amazing array of suggestions for those with technological capabilities but it is an equity issue for those of us who do not even have NBN in our towns or who have laptops with keys obscenely rearranged or missing on the Department laptops. There is also the provision to teach film and while it may not be the preferred option it is where many of us will start.

### *An example using The Dressmaker for Standard Year 11 Contemporary possibilities*

- Context expert jigsaw. Using the context notes from the novel (Duffy and Snellgrove) I divided the reading into:
  - "Background of rural Australia"
  - "Themes" of fashion, landscape, significance of naming
- Group research into specified aspects of 1950's Australia
- Investigation into the genre of the "revenge tragedy", making comparisons to other texts and examining the manipulation of audience
- The notion of hybridity through the 'Western' staging
- Intertextuality via musical theatre
- Multimodal presentations could springboard from:
  - "Who caused Teddy's death?" A group trial or debate with evidence
  - "The hero of this story is?" Present a dossier of evidence explaining audience manipulation via film devices
  - A presentation of the secrets kept, using props, film extracts and maybe some dress-ups
  - A slide show explaining the significance of landscape to socially acceptable boundaries

### *How can we use the same film for year 11 Advanced?*

For Advanced Module A, the same text with a different approach could include:

- A study of how narratives are shaped by context and how narratives influence the way communities understand and represent themselves
- Analysis and evaluation of one or more texts
- Use of narratives in their own compositions



- Investigate author's use of structures for audiences and effects

This could form part of a unit such as, "Representations of Australia", "Revenge tragedy", or, "Metanarrative of family conflict". Composition and representation ideas include:

- A series of mixed media communications between Tilly & Molly over time (diaries, postcards, extracts from newspapers, advertisements, sketches)
- A persuasive text about the casting of an American actress in a film which is distinctly Australian
- Consideration of the actors chosen: "The aristocracy of the theatre" adds to the value of the texts and the weight of the narrative
- Compare this revenge tragedy to a Shakespearean one and write an investigative composition
- Examination of the setting- compare and contrast different views of the Australian landscape in this film, Kenneth Slessor, Banjo Patterson, Dorothea McKellar and Indigenous texts
- Compare to other Australian representations in language and theme such as, *Muriel's Wedding*, *Tirra Lirra by the River*, *The Drover's Wife*, *Jasper Jones* or *Blackrock*
- A critical response about manipulation and oppression through time in Australian texts.

## Want something engaging other than film?

Do not dismiss gaming, even in a low-tech classroom. Gaming comes with rich narratives and deep societal concerns.

*In games we've slain mighty dragons. We've explored alien worlds. We've met amazing characters and spent hours bringing them into our lives. We've been overjoyed, outraged, and terrified.*

<http://www.gamesradar.com/the-best-videogame-stories-ever/>

## Another one for Contemporary Possibilities Year 11 Standard - for Objective A

Inspired by *Exactly How to Teach with Video Games in the Classroom*, by Terry Heick:

- PLAY THEM, using walk-throughs or play throughs in the classroom
- SPRINGBOARD off them to include reviews, art, fan fiction
- ANALYSE - compare, contrast, evaluate, deconstruct, reconstruct
- RE-IMAGINE - the narrative backstory as a short film, the characters into another text they have studied, communication between characters, and new roles, eg. didactic vs. playful
- PRESENTING - pitching a video game idea with a rich narrative backstory
- MAKE THEM - use Minecraft (even I can do that) or Game Maker



- MASH THEM - make a mash up using characters, setting, and stories mixed with video clips, music, books. Mash form, content, theme, tone and use of literary devices, and so on and then analyse the effectiveness
- SOCIAL ISSUES - Video games are used to look at all kinds of social issues. This could springboard into investigation, report or extended response, and of course these strategies apply to ALL texts. Have fun taking a character from a short narrative and placing them in an 18th century poem or take a setting and put a character from a different text in it!

So, while this syllabus offers challenges for those of us in low SES, rural and remote locations, it also offers us a chance to explore multimodality in creative and engaging ways. Our 21st century learners need to be adaptable, flexible and fearless - with or without technology.