

You saw the movie trailer – now read the *booktrailer

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Rhonda with Will [far right] and his mates demonstrating their booktrailer at a Conference.

Booktrailers bring a new way to review a book. They really let the student have more freedom, and let their creativity shine.

Daniel, my partner, and I had a lot of fun creating our first book trailer for *Nemesis: Into the shadows*.

The other boys from our school who participated chose to use still images, but not us. Trying to be unique and different, we actually made a mini—movie. We completed this after a few weeks of filming and a couple of months of procrastination and editing. The final product was great, and we naturally gave each other a pat on the back.

We are now on to our second booktrailer. We have been asked to make a trailer for Black Dog Books. The book is *Aussie Inventors* and we have teamed up with a few others at school.

It has only been a couple of weeks into the project, and we have already become closer as a group. I am very proud of what we have done, and hope that people in the future will use these as assessment pieces.

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Many students appear not only to be disengaged at school, but also to not be readers, and sadly, to write only what they absolutely must.

Outside school, however, it is a different story. Studies have shown that young people are reading and writing relentlessly, updating their MySpace/Facebook pages, and keeping blogs as well as WebPages.

In other words, they are reading and writing but they are using modes and media differently from the more traditional print literacies of the 20th century, thus giving pay to the evolving definition of literacy.

Today literacy includes the decoding of digital texts, hypertext, and images through using a plethora of communication media making up the complex systems that abound in today's world.

To add weight to the above understanding of the evolving nature of literacy, some studies have indicated that well over 70% of students use the Internet to either watch or download videos. Other studies indicate that around 50% of younger Internet users say they use/watch YouTube regularly.

Many young people are also posting videos to blogs and even more forward on a link in an email.

Whilst these multi-literate students are in fact socializing, researching, playing games, getting news via technologies, are they savvy users/ learners?

Critical literacy

The complexity of messages in today's world means that our students have to not only know how to read them, but also know enough about how they are constructed to enable them to be critical viewers with the power to analyse and understand the obvious and more obscure meanings of the messages around them.

In short, they must learn to become skilled critical thinkers so that they can confidently use all the media around them to learn, clarify and communicate information.

And this is our challenge—we need to look at innovative ways to develop deep thinking in our students through capturing both their interest and their commitment.

[students today
are] ...
multi-literate in
their use of
multi-media,
but are they savvy
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Booktrailers—a beginning**

Whilst looking at the websites of some publishers, I became engaged by some very clever booktrailers. However, they were not beyond the creative skills of our students and I could see an opportunity for meaningful learning tasks.

The online booktrailers were varied in the level of skills needed to develop and publish them as well as in purpose. For example, in the USA all sorts of people publish booktrailers including authors, readers at all levels and professional film makers.

The booktrailers were shown by libraries, used by publishers and included in educational activities. Competitions were run by publishers for the best booktrailers.

Purpose

Booktrailers offer an alternative way to respond to reading a book, encouraging creativity as well as critical thinking and analysis of ideas.

Through booktrailers, students can use:

- still or moving images,
- special effects,
- recorded soundtrack,
- voice-overs and/or music,
- print text, and
- cutting/editing techniques

to share their interpretations and critiques of what they have read.

Technology skills are secondary to the development of critical and analytical thinking. The technology becomes a means for students to explore a variety of literacies as well as a way of communicating their response to their reading. Many learning styles and modes, including visual and aural, come into play.

Booktrailers can help reluctant readers and writers by offering them a chance to use methods that interest them and that also make use of other strengths that they may have.

Showing students good examples of booktrailers is a great way to start. Let them see/hear and critique them. Some examples we used were:

< www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEWCK_DJZXI>

< www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXxSn7NScww>

< www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bVZQvy0vN8>

<www.youtube.com/user/PenguinYoungReaders>

Process

Initially, students choose the book they want. This is a critical first step.

After reading their chosen book, they are then asked to analyse it by thinking about what was good, unique, and/or interesting through listing, brainstorming or mindmapping.

It is crucial for them to write a first draft to include feelings, impressions, and what they consider are important points.

Creating a storyboard that relays their message can be daunting but again there are numerous examples of storyboards on the Internet.

They need to plan effects (transitions, sound, colouring) and engage in a written or conversational reflection—feedback is essential. At this point, the trailer is ready for creation and publishing.

Product

There can be an amazing array of approaches. The product can be used to entice other readers by linking it to electronic screens within the school/library. The booktrailers can also be inserted into blogs and web pages, and shared with others beyond the classroom/school.

This is powerful pedagogy. The booktrailer becomes an authentic assessment which has the potential of being viewed/reviewed by others.

Tools

Audacity [to put together sound] and *Ulead VideoStudio* [to create the video] are easy and available to schools.

It is also good to use *Creative Commons* sites to find licensed images and sounds/music [this also reinforces lessons in intellectual property].

Images

Original images entice the students to be creative. It also enhances critical analysis of images as they develop exactly the right message.

It also helps them to learn responsible behaviour when borrowing video cameras and other digital cameras [the tools become *valuable assets* as they go about creating their professional booktrailer].

A search in *Creative Commons* [CC] brings students into contact with high quality images and sound.

Sound

Music students might be happy to help create music/sound for the booktrailers. The sound sites listed have been trialled

and loved!

A bit of advice

At times students need a prompt to remember that audience and purpose are foremost in their booktrailer planning.

The following points are suggested:

1. Have a hook for the audience.
2. Get people interested in/ excited about the book.
3. Grab their attention immediately.
4. Don't have too much text.
5. Set the mood and convey the *feeling* of the book.
6. Length is important. Not too long or too short; just give a quick *taste* of the book.
7. Be mysterious.
8. Look at the concept behind the story and don't focus on the details of the book [the minutiae].
9. Music and sound is essential.

Assessment

An assessment rubric can be

found on my wiki at < <http://reading-active-and-engaging.wikispaces.com/Book+Trailers+-+Assessment+Rubric>>

What next?

Offer your students real booktrailer promotions by connecting with the publisher of the books they are reading; link the best booktrailers to educational sites; or hold your own booktrailer/ movie trailer competition and organise a viewing night.

R Powling

*The term *booktrailer/s* in this article has been written as one word. *Book trailer* has already been registered to *Circle of Seven Productions* [www.cosproductions.com/]

** You might also like to look at KidVidLit <www.kidvidlit.com/main>. The site is designed to stimulate young readers in a similar way that movie trailers tantalise viewers.

Suggested image sites

FlickrCC <<http://flickrcc.bluemountains.net/>>
FlickrStorm <www.zoo-m.com/flickr-storm/>
Compfight <www.compfight.com/>
FlickrLeech <www.flickrleech.net/>
Wikimedia Commons <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page>

Suggested sound sites

ccMixer <<http://ccmixter.org/>>
freesound project <www.freesound.org/>
ccMixer <<http://ccmixter.org/>>
Sound snap (sound effects and loops) <www.soundsnap.com/>