

Krista Reutter

Professor Warner

English 112B

April 30, 2013

Meshing Literature and Technology

Unit of Study: The Importance of New Media

Introduction: Why Care About New Media?

Nearly thirty five years ago, the home computer went on the market. While computers and internet resources then were not quite as sophisticated as they are now, they introduced a lot to the modern world.

Today, the effects of computers and technology are seen everywhere: teenagers walk to class while talking on their Smart phones, businessmen take pictures of the meals they order in fancy restaurants, and drivers die texting behind the wheel.

The implications of new media on the world left unchecked could continue, or could be used to bring in a new era of critical thinking. There are many video game advocates who would argue that they foster creative and critical thinking. Blogging gives inexperienced writers a chance to explore their voice, syntax, sentence structure, tone, diction, detail, and imagery (to name a few). This avenue opens up a wide range of creative assignments for students to get excited about. By bringing a wide variety of new media into the classroom, students can learn about the social and cultural change that has resulted in a dependency on technology. It is important to look at how new media has altered our society's economy, politics, social interactions, art, education, and even literacy itself.

Before Approaching New Media:

Some students may not consider themselves technologically savvy, but this is why it is important to give young adults a safe place where they can explore their resources with peers who may be on equal footing. If you consider yourself inexperienced, maybe you should do some assignments or exercises yourself to get comfortable. By introducing new kinds of media to an English classroom, students can see how what they learn in English class and study in English literature is not limited to the classroom and helps foster a more profound love/appreciation of the subject. This is especially true of students who are not particularly fond of reading and writing, but prefer hands on interaction and engagement.

For students who have never read or written a blog before, you might want to get them started with Sustained Silent Writing exercises. Gradually, give students room to focus on what they want to write about. Finally, ask them to commit to a subject or topic that they will blog about (even if it's just a daily "journal" entry about their life). Be sure to provide students with a handout with instructions to start the blog. When they create blogs for the purpose of the class, you should ask that everyone use the same website (wordpress.com, blogspot.com, blogger.com, or xanga.com) so they are easier for you to keep track of.

Graphic novels are not all read the same; some are read left to right, others are read right to left. Panels on a page are organized from top to bottom, but once again, may be read in different directions. Because the page layouts and panel order varies, it is important that students get acquainted with how to read different graphic novels. Students should be given a guide to identifying what to look for in graphic novels that they won't find in other resources.

GetGraphic.org is a great place for teachers to find ways to introduce graphic novels into the classroom (they even provide power point presentations to show the students).

When approaching videogames, it is wise to start with a list of rules in regards to gaming conduct. Make some choices about the kind of language you will and will not accept in the classroom and while the students play the game. Then decide what you want to accomplish with your game. Try using videogames as a group activity and blogging as an individual one. Games can also be a bit pricey; you may want to weigh that into consideration when preparing to teach this unit of study.

Centerpiece, Canonical Work(s):

The blog that will serve as the centerpiece for the unit is Allie Brosh's *Hyperbole and a Half*, illustrated by herself. She has 166 blog entries total that she has written over the span of three years. Her success as a blogger has reaped some interesting rewards, one of which is the publication of a book that will be released this October. Her blog entries are usually dramatizations of personal childhood events that use humor in very clever way. Each article can stand as a point of study on its own. "The God of Cake" uses detailed imagery to hyperbolize and exaggerate her desire to eat her grandfather's birthday cake. "The Alot is Better Than You at Everything" takes a humorous stand on proper grammar and type-communication etiquette. Her blog explores fantasy ("Land Sharks: Why We're All Fucked"), dystopia/utopia ("Please Stop"), horror ("The Scariest Story"), and adventure ("Texas"), to list a few. Brosh's blog is a good place to start when teaching students about voice and humor; despite the range in genres, her work nearly always has a hint of humor to them. Using *Hyperbole and a Half* is a great way

to show students how more entertaining forms of literature can be relevant in the classroom and can be used to approach different genres. While writers choose to express their messages in certain ways, it is important to teach students how aspects of the writing process (creating a tone, changing syntax, ect.) should be used to make a certain effect. Rhetoric can be used to evoke intentional reactions from the reader.

Launching the Unit:

Assign one article at a time and have students identify imagery, diction, tone, syntax, metaphor and as many other rhetoric devices as they find. After doing this exercise with a number of different articles and genres, students should have a better understanding of what kind of language evokes what kind of emotion.

“When I say "The good man gave his good dog a good meal," I use "good" analogically, for there is at the same time a similarity and a difference between a good man, a good dog, and a good meal. All three are desirable, but a good man is wise and moral, a good dog is tame and affectionate, and a good meal is tasty and nourishing. But a good man is not tasty and nourishing, except to a cannibal; a good dog is not wise and moral, except in cartoons, and a good meal is not tame and affectionate, unless it's alive as you eat it.”

— Peter Kreeft

Following each in class analysis, give students time to engage in Sustained Silent Writing inspired by the article that they've just read and critiqued. Some prompts might include:

- Write about a humorous childhood incident. Use the word "Unicorn" at least once.

- Draw a picture of a scary animal (real or imaginary). Write a descriptive paragraph about its appearance and behavior. If you have time, write a story about it.
- Invent a product and write a propaganda to advertize it. Explain why your argument is persuasive or not.
- Write an adventure inspired by a dream or goal that you have/had.

When students have adjusted to the unit and have set up their blogging accounts, keep a list of the URLs so to check and comment on their progress in the future. Have students write an intro/about me for their blog and to use one of their SSWs as a rough draft for their first post.

Let students decide the long term subject/genre of their blogs and ask that they post something once a week with a minimum word count of 150 words. Create a rubric for them to be graded by and make sure each student understands what you are looking for (probably based on proper grammar, tone, and voice). However, students don't have to create articles that stand on their own. If inclined, they can write a narrative that they add to each following week (the students should see this as a creative writing assignment). Encourage students to interact with each other on their blogs, commenting, giving feedback, and working together. Upon the completion of the project (approximately 8 weeks) students will write a reflection of their work where they will have a chance to explain how their work should be interpreted. They should also critique themselves just as they did with Brosh's articles, as well as provide feedback on the project. An alternative project for students disinterested in blogging could be to write a 10 page paper using tweets, texts, facebook updates, or tumblr posts to tell a story.

Expanding the Unit:

Conduct a book pass for graphic novels. Here is a list of works you should make a point of including in available books:

1. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman is historical non-fiction story about how Jews, drawn as mice, escaped the Nazis, drawn as cats, during the Holocaust.
2. *The Unwritten: Tommy Tayloe and the Bogus Identity* by Mike Carey and Peter Gross is a fantasy that follows Tommy Taylor, the son of a famous author whose books feature a character named Tommy. He is confronted by a villain from the book series and the lines between literature and real life is blurred.
3. *Persepolis*, created by Marjane Satrapi, is an autobiographical graphic novel that explores the authors childhood in Iran during the turbulent years surrounding the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which saw the government overthrown, theocracy introduced, and war with neighboring Iraq.
4. *Pedro and Me* by Judd Winick tells the story of Pedro Zamora, an HIV positive AIDS educator.
5. In *V for Vendetta*, Alan Moore shows readers a dystopian version of a totalitarian England. There is one person, V, who is willing to fight back against authority.
6. *City of Ember* is a science fiction novel written by Jeanne DuPrau, adapted by Dallas Middaugh, and drawn by Nikolas Asker. Lina and Doon must decipher a mysterious document that hold the key to their city's future.

Other books to consider (that are not graphic novels, but are written as e-mails, letters, or texts) using in the book pass are:

1. *Cruel Summer* by Alyson Noel, which is written with blog entries, letters, and emails while following Colby Cavendish as she spends the summer in Greece with her seemingly kooky aunt.
2. *An Order of Amelie, Hold the Fries* by Nina Schindler is a love story told through napkins, notes, texts, and other forms of communication other than dialogue. It follows Tim, falls in love with a girl, only to see her drop her name and address. He writes to her and discovers she is not the girl he originally saw.
3. *Heart on My Sleeve* by Ellen Wittlinger is told through e-mails and IMs. It's about two graduating seniors who start a relationship online and how they confront problems along the way.

Have students assess their graphic novels in terms of text, space, imagery, and evoked emotions. Their book talk assignments will be 2 page evaluations and a five minute presentation. Finally, I recommend using one of the following games as a End-of-Unit wrap up on New Media.

1. Bioshock is a horror game where the main character fits the seeker, orphan, and warrior archetypes. There's a caregiver character, an excellent villain, and a friend who (spoilers) turns out to be a villain as well (end spoilers). There's a bit of moral choice as to how to solve certain issues, but other than that, it's got a very linear plot. You're in a plane crash, you wind up in the middle of the ocean, and you end up in this city built beneath the ocean called Rapture.

2. Bastion also has many archetypes and follows a linear plot. In the game, you play a kid who has survived the end of the world. You meet up with an old man who knew the world you lived in, and he helps you rebuild the Bastion, this floating haven in the sky where you can collect survivors. Unfortunately, it turns out your people caused the apocalypse to try and destroy the neighboring nation. It didn't work, and they're not pleased at all...
3. Psychonauts (also has a ton of archetypes and mostly linear game play!) requires you to play as a kid at a summer camp for psychics. Your dad disapproves, harboring a hatred for psychics, and you run away from home to be a Psychonaut. Psychonauts are the elite group of psychic government agents designed to protect our nation from attacks upon our psyche. Something's going wrong at the camp, though, and you have to help figure out what it is and fix it.

The students will have a final encompassing everything they have learned about rhetoric, creativity, and characterization. They will write an alternate ending for their game and make a video to show the class (it should be between 7-15 minutes).

Works Cited

- Moore, Alan, and David Lloyd. *V for Vendetta*. New York: Vertigo/DC Comics, 2005. Print.
- Brosh, Allie. "The Alot Is Better Than You at Everything." Web log post. *Hyperbole and a Half*. N.p., Apr. 2010. Web. <<http://hyperboleandahalf.blogspot.com/2010/04/alot-is-better-than-you-at-everything.html>>.
- Brosh, Allie. Web log post. *Hyperbole and a Half*. Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License., July 2009. Web. <Hyperboleandahalf.blogspot.com>.
- Carey, Mike, Peter Gross, Chris Chuckry, Jeanne McGee, and Todd Klein. *The Unwritten: Tommy Taylor and the Bogus Identity*. New York: Vertigo, 2010. Print.
- DuPrau, Jeanne, Dallas Middaugh, and Niklas Asker. *The City of Ember the Graphic Novel*. New York: Random House, 2012. Print.
- "GET GRAPHIC: The World In Words and Pictures." *Get Graphic RSS*. Buffalo and Erie County Public Library and Partnering Organizations., 2007. Web. 21 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.getgraphic.org/librarians.php>>.
- Kasavin, Greg. *Bastion*. 2011. Video game.
- Kreeft, Peter, and Trent Dougherty. *Socratic Logic: A Logic Text Using Socratic Method, Platonic Questions & Aristotelian Principles*. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's, 2010. Print.
- Levine, Ken. *Bioshock*. 2007. Video game.
- Nilsen, Alleen Pace. "Chapter 6 Poetry, Drama, Humor, and New Media." *Literature for Today's Young Adults*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2012. N. pag. Print. Accessed through Mary Warner's Web page.

Noël, Alyson. *Cruel Summer*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2008. Print.

Satrapa, Marjane. *Persepolis*. New York, NY: Pantheon, 2003. Print.

Schafer, Tim, and Erik Wolpaw. *Psychonauts*. 2005. Video game.

Schindler, Nina, and Robert Barrett. *An Order of Amelie, Hold the Fries*. Toronto: Annick, 2004.

Print.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. New York: Pantheon, 1986. Print.

Winick, Judd. *Pedro & Me: Friendship, Loss, & What I Learned*. New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2009.

Print.

Wittlinger, Ellen. *Heart on My Sleeve*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2006. Print.

ie Alot is Better Than You at Everything

I grammatically conscientious person who frequents internet forums and YouTube, I have found it necessary to develop a few ing mechanisms. When someone types out "u" instead of "you," instead of getting mad, I imagine them having only one finger on h hand and then their actions seem reasonable. If I only had one finger on each hand, I'd leave out unnecessary letters too!

If someone says something like "I feel lonely alot" or "I'm angry alot," I'm going to imagine them standing there with an emo hai sharing their feelings with an Alot.

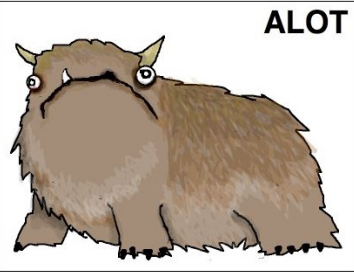


come across a person who seems to completely ignore the existence of apostrophes and capital letters and types things like "im eagle and im typing with my talons, so dont make fun of me cuz this is hard," I like to imagine that they actually are an eagle ing with their talons. It would be a hassle if you had to hop in the air and use your feet to karate-chop two keys simultaneously ry time you wanted to use the shift key to make a capital letter. Also, eagles lack manual dexterity, so I can understand why r'd want to leave out apostrophes. Eagles are all about efficiency.

The Alot is incredibly versatile.



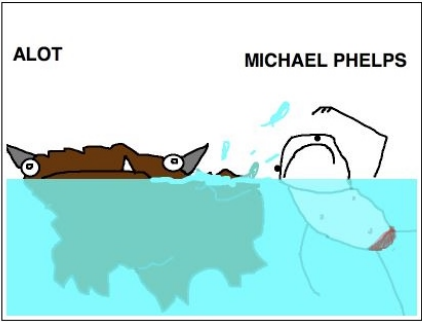
: there is one grammatical mistake that I particularly enjoy encountering. It has become almost fun for me to come across people o take the phrase "a lot" and condense it down into one word, because when someone says "alot," this is what I imagine:



The Alot is an imaginary creature that I made up to help me deal with my compulsive need to correct other people's grammar. It kind of looks like a cross between a bear, a yak and a pug, and it has provided hours of entertainment for me in a situation where I'd normally be left feeling angry and disillusioned with the world.

So the next time you are reading along and you see some guy ranting about how he is "alot better at swimming than Michael Phe instead of getting angry, you can be like "You're right! Alots are known for their superior swimming capabilities."

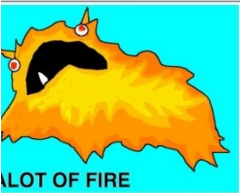
For example, when I read the sentence "I care about this alot," this is what I imagine:



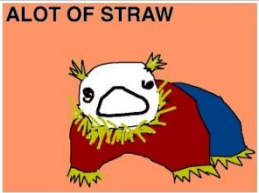
EMAIL THIS • STUMBLE IT! (89 REVIEWS) • SHARE ON FACEBOOK • DIGG THIS!
TWEET THIS!
POSTED BY ALLIE AT 4:02 PM

<http://hyperboleandahalf.blogspot.com/2010/04/alot-is-better-than-you-at-everything.html>

ly, when someone says "alot of _____", I picture an Alot made out of whatever they are talking about.



ALOT OF MIST



ALOT OF BEER CANS



New Media: Blogs, Graphic Novels, and Videogames

Focus on Rhetoric, Creativity, Characterization, and

Unit of Study: Why Teach New Media?

I felt a Unit of Study would give me an in-depth look at what New Media has to offer and to assess to what length it can be used in a classroom for young adults.

1. Blogs, written for personal use, are great to look at for well crafted rhetoric devices (especially tone and voice).
2. Graphic Novels extend over numerous genres and help reluctant students transition to more difficult novels
3. Videogames are a great way to explore characters and archetypes. Even game narratives are have the potential to be analyzed according to the “Hero’s Journey.”



Typography:

launching the unit

- Sherlock Holmes
- Harry Potter
- Pulp Fiction
- Surprise!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJ1uxNI2fUg>
(1:06)

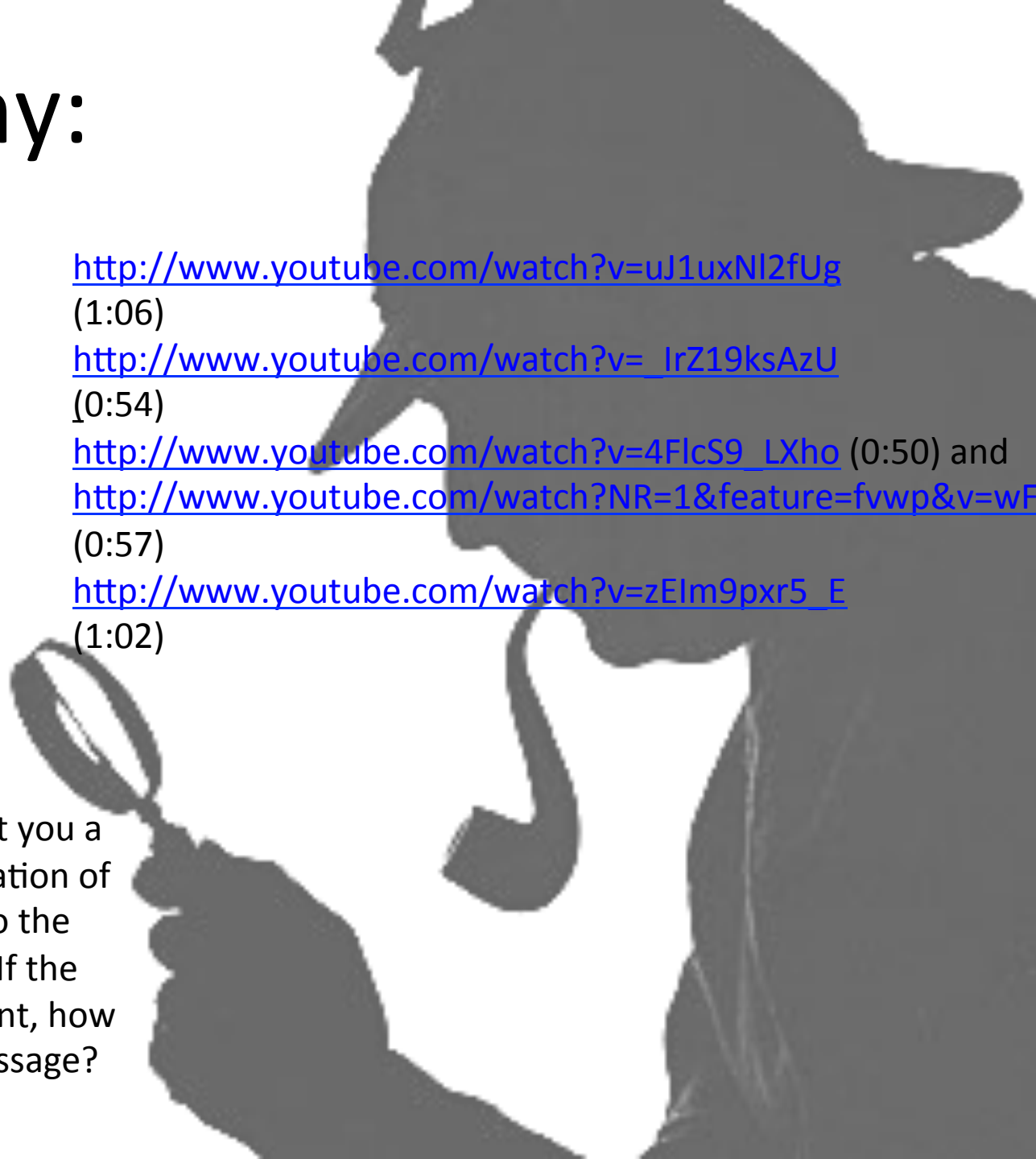
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lrZ19ksAzU
(0:54)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FlcS9_LXho (0:50) and
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&feature=fvwp&v=wF>
(0:57)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zElm9pxr5_E
(1:02)

Generate Discussion!

Does any particular font effect you a certain way? Does the combination of movement and sound add to the meaning behind the words? If the choreography had been different, how might it have changed the message?



Before Looking at the Canonical Work...

Blogs, Graphic Novels, and Video Games should all be approached differently; students may be more comfortable with one than the others. Start with Blogging because it is most tradition media found in the classroom.



Canon- Fire! Canonical Work



Allie Brosh's blog entries range from dramatized personal experiences and adventures, fantasy, and horror, to dystopia, and how-to guides.

She creates all her own illustrations.

This October she is expected to release her first book.

Brosh's style of writing and unique voice make her a great choice for teaching humor, hyperbole, imagery, diction, and other various rhetoric devices.



Drawing Connections: Writing, Literature, Language, and Meaning

How Rhetoric Helps and Why We Should Identify it

“When I say ‘The good man gave his good dog a good meal,’ I use ‘good’ analogically, for there is at the same time a similarity and a difference between a good man, a good dog, and a good meal. All three are desirable, but a good man is wise and moral, a good dog is tame and affectionate, and a good meal is tasty and nourishing. But a good man is not tasty and nourishing, except to a cannibal; a good dog is not wise and moral, except in cartoons, and a good meal is not tame and affectionate, unless it's alive as you eat it.”

-Peter Kreeft



Class Assignments

Following each in class analysis, give students time to engage in Sustained Silent Writing inspired by the article that they've just read and critiqued.

Once students have adjusted to the unit, have them create their own blogs. They should post once a week with a minimum of 150 words.

Upon the completion of the project (maybe 2 months) students will write a reflection of their work where they will have a chance to explain how their work should be interpreted. They should also critique themselves just as they did with Brosh's articles, as well as provide feedback on the project.

An alternative project for students disinterested in blogging (or those who didn't update regularly) could be to write a paper (where the number of pages equals the number of blog posts they missed) using tweets, texts, facebook updates, or tumblr posts to tell a story.

Assign one article at a time and have students identify imagery, diction, tone, syntax, metaphor and as many other rhetoric devices as they find. After doing this exercise with a number of different articles and genres, students should have a better understanding of what kind of language evokes what kind of emotion.



Expanding on New Media

Graphic Novels

Have a book pass with graphic novels and let students do book talks. Students should be able to point out significant moments and assess their graphic novels in terms of text, space, imagery, and evoked emotions. They should also connect the graphic novel to at least one other work (what is it a good transition piece for?).

Video Games

Finally, students can use video games to explore character archetypes and narrative. When they finish, they can complete a comprehensive final project. Have them write an alternate ending for their game and adapt it for filming. The video to show the class should be between 7-15 minutes.

Suggestions

Graphic Novels

- Maus: A Survivor's Tale by Art Spiegelman
- The Unwritten: Tommy Tayloe and the Bogus Identity by Mike Carey and Peter Gross
- Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi,
- Pedro and Me by Judd Winick
- V for Vendetta by Alan Moore
- City of Ember (novel written by Jeanne DuPrau) adapted by Dallas Middaugh, and drawn by Nikolas Asker



Video Games

- Bioshock
- Bastion
- Pyschonauts



Powerpoint image sources

- <http://wlt.typography.netdna-cdn.com/data/images/2009/04/979921237699188.jpg>
- http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/c/c7/Harry_Potter_and_the_Goblet_of_Fire.jpg
- Hyperboleandahalf.blogspot.com
- <http://www.rgbstock.com/bigphoto/nIMK48m/Blog+text>
- <http://awesomegraphicnovels.blogspot.com/p/graphic-novel-is-novel-that-has.html>
- <http://www.parentsconnect.com/product-review/video-games/>