

Secondary English Teaching Resource

Strand 2: Individual as Media Producer

Writer: Greta Caruso

Introduction

Individuals have long been able to record and promote themselves by various means but recently the internet offers an opportunity for anyone with a computer to become a broadcaster and inform the world about themselves, their history and their ideas.

Originally, the word 'broadcast' referred to the agricultural practice of sowing seeds over a broad area hoping that some of them would germinate. View the following web site to ascertain if this definition is not as old as it may seem.

The Free Dictionary, *Broadcast*

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/broadcasting>,

Currently, the word 'broadcast' means to transmit or communicate on mass. The internet allows anyone to broadcast or to view and hear the transmissions and messages of another. Internet broadcasting can be simultaneous and synchronised where one broadcaster is communicating with another who is also broadcasting.

Some of the more popular forms of broadcasting include.

Interactive websites which allow users to upload video footage

Dynamic websites including blogs (web logs) and vlogs (video logs)

Interactive social networks including MySpace:<http://www.myspace.com/>
and FaceBook: <http://www.facebook.com/>

Sites for publishing and sharing still photographs such as Flickr:

<http://www.flickr.com/>

For many people, the internet means the democratisation of broadcasting. One analysis of the phenomena argues that the simple accessibility of new media makes for a greater choice and represents real freedom of the press. A more critical view considers the ways in which big companies have purchased these facilities and use the free broadcasting media as a platform for the sale of their own products and advertising. Likewise the discussion about real and virtual persona, interaction and communication applies to media where the communication is disembodied.

For teachers and students the very notion of publishing and broadcasting can be powerful and often acts as a real life lesson in professional and polished expression.

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Overview

In the last decade it has become increasingly easy to broadcast using the internet. While some knowledge of hypertext mark-up language (html) and advanced computer skills opens up many possibilities, a diversity of products and programs have emerged that allow anyone with basic keyboard skills and access to the internet and to become a broadcaster.

At the following website collaborative, interactive broadcasting sites are explained and reviewed.

Care 2, *Home Page*:

<http://www.care2.com/>

Podcasting

Podcasting involves the broadcasting of sound files. This means anyone can produce their own radio show. Many radio stations offer their programs as podcasts.

ABC Radio National, *Podcasts and feeds: By program*:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/>

ABC Triple J: Podcasts:

<http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/listen/podcast.htm>

To download a podcast, you need a computer, access to podcast software (eg GarageBand) and an MP3 player that stores the portable audio files. The know-how and programs required are explained on the websites below.

How to Podcast Tutorial, *Home Page*:

<http://www.how-to-podcast-tutorial.com/>

Peachpit, *Creating a Podcast*:

<http://www.peachpit.com/articles/article.asp?p=603923&rl=1>

Uses for podcasting as a class may include recording students work such as poetry, creative writing, dramatic scripts or interviews, or music and lyrics. These students generated files could be broadcast through the school website, or to a more select audience using password protected areas of a school's intranet site.

Blogs

A blog is a web journal or log. Blogs are free and can be created in just a couple of minutes without specialised or advanced skills. Many blogs have a very limited audience, perhaps just a handful of people visit and read the blog. Journals of overseas travels or diaries are popular, for example:

Travel Blog, *Create a Free Travel Blog*:

<http://www.travelblog.org/>

Some blogs have a specific focus and operate as a special interest group; there are educational blogs, blogs for English teachers and blogs about how to use blogs in education. This site showcases educational blogs and includes plenty of critical discussion about educational issues plus a great many ideas on how blogs can be used for teaching and learning. In fact there are blogs for every hobby and interest from scrap-booking to trainspotting.

Some of the most entertaining blogs are set up as spoofs. These are fun and demonstrate the need for critical viewing of websites, for example:

The Spoof, *Fake Celebrity Diaries*:

<http://www.thespoof.com/diary/index.cfm>

On a more serious note, some blogs have emerged as influential alternate voices from conflict zones. Perhaps the most well known of these is the Baghdad Blog by Salam Pax. In this he reported on the war in Iraq and offered reports on the events that were not available through the mainstream media in countries that supported the war. Other blogs have provided social critique in a comic voice.

The Village Voice News, *Cartoons*:

<http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0705,tomorrow,75669,9.html>

For students, blogs provide a publishing opportunity particularly for personal and factual writing. Most blogs also allow readers to enter comments within a discussion amongst a community of contributors. Blogging providers host the blog, usually at no charge and many blog hosting sites do not insert advertising. Some blog hosts include:

Livejournal.com

JournalHome.com

Blogger.com

WordPress.com

TheDiary.org
Mindsay.com
Blog.com
Diaryland.com
Blogdrive.com

Blogger, *Copyright's Blogs*:

<http://www.blogger.com/start>

Promotes itself as *push-button* publishing. This means that uploading text and images is easy and achievable just by following the instructions and pushing the indicated buttons. Most blog sites are pre-made with templates. For students and teachers, starting a blog is a very quick and easy process.

Machimina

Machimina is a new media form whereby game engines and existing code are used, and the individual composer writes their own story utilizing that code. Machimina uses computer game engines to create films and clips. While this does require some time to learn, for students who are interested, whole computer animated movies can be made from the computer games.

Machimina is creative, and occasionally irreverent. A machimina film is predicated on a computer game but restructured, as all the footage comes from the game. This restriction is balanced against the fact that the individual media producer does not have to write the code to produce the footage. The game's perspective is treated as a camera.

Red VS Blue is one of the most famous Machimina productions. It is made using the computer game Halo.

Machinima, *Home page*:

<http://www.machinima.com/>

This site gives instructions for those wanting to start making computer films. It is based on the SIMS and is a good introduction.

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Beaut Ideas for the classroom

Ask students to

1. For students aged 11-16

Read *Time Magazine's* Person of the Year article for 2006.

Time Magazine, *You – Yes, You – Are TIME's Person of the Year:*

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html>

Follow the link to *Citizens of the New Digital Democracy*.

Conduct a class poll of which of the 15 web *movers and shakers* impresses the most.

2. For students aged 11-14

Have students 'google' their name. Use the search engine, Google, and look under the section "Web", then under the section "Images".

How many find themselves, how many find people with the same name?

Have student look up the names of some of their teachers and their principal.

Is anyone in the school listed first under their own name?

3. For students aged 14-16

Find the names of some famous people in on-line product innovation. (Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Larry Page, Sergey Brin, Linus Torvalds)

Are any common attitudes or behaviour evident?

5. For students aged 11-14

Organise the class into pairs or groups. Each group should have one student who already knows how to set up a blog.

Organise a time trial to see how quickly each expert can instruct their novices and how successfully they set up a blog.

5. For students aged 14-16

Search the web using the term “social networking”.

Have students write a brief explanation about what is social networking. Have the class compose a list of possible uses for social networking in educational, social and economic contexts.

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Lesson activities for the secondary classroom

Blogs

ACTIVITY 1: Lower secondary

(a) Investigation

Research:

Blogger, *Copyright's Blogs*:

<http://www.blogger.com/start>

and assess how effectively it explains how to set up a blog and what the are other possibilities evidenced in the site.

Visit the website

BBC News, *Tsunami disaster spurs video blogs*:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/4173787.stm>

Clark Boyd, a journalist for the BBC comments on how news of the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami was reported by bloggers in his article *Tsunami Disaster Spurs Video Blogs*. How effective is this site to relate the event truthfully?

(b) Thinking it over

Complete the table below to explain what reading and thinking behaviours are built into the construction of blogs.

The Text Type: Blogs	The Reading and Thinking Behaviours
Blogs are a work in progress.	(Provide a sample here....)
Blogs are published when the writer chooses.	
Blogs can be intimate.	
Blogs can be current even instantaneous.	
Anyone can publish a blog.	
Blogs can be interactive	

Discuss the notion of “freedom of the press” and the emergence of thousands of news blogs in the internet in the last five years. Refer to this web-site for ideas and information.

News is Free, *Home Page*:

<http://www.newsisfree.com/>

List all the means by which people can express themselves. Think about different modes of expression that relate to text, visuals, sounds, movement.

ACTIVITY 2: Lower secondary

(b) Investigation

Read the following blog:

The New York Times, *My So-Called Blog*:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/11/magazine/11BLOG.html>

Print out a copy to read and use.

Ask students to answer the following questions in relation to the blog.

1. Investigate other some web-logs. Copy the URL of one that you liked. Explain why you liked it.
2. Who was Marcel Proust? (Check the internet or an encyclopaedia.) Why is he relevant to this blog?
3. Explain what is meant by, *the blog explosion*.
4. What is a *hive mind*?
5. The last sentence of *My so-called Blog* points to an amazing irony. Explain what this is.
6. Which of the following statements are represented in the article

STATEMENT	In the article	
Teenagers spend too much time on-line.	Yes	No
Teenagers don't spend enough time on-line	Yes	No
Blogging is a communal activity	Yes	No
Writing with pen and paper is antiquated	Yes	No
Things that were once private are now public	Yes	No
Parents should be more involved with their children's on-line activities	Yes	No

7. Work in pairs or small groups to find definitions for the words listed below.

Word	Definition
multi-tasking	
wry	
blog	
confessional	
koan	
pundit	
obsessive	
compulsive	
chronicle	
modicum	
sardonic	
operatic	
commiserates	
choral	
unison	

8. Argumentative essay 350-400 words

Write an essay giving your opinion on the following topic:

“The online world is safe, comforting, communal and a positive activity for teenagers.”

(b) Thinking it over

Below is a list of some actions that writers undertake in order to assist the thinking and writing process.

Re-read over the available information

Highlight a text

Underline a text

Write the introduction first then work the rest out

Make notes in dot point

Write sentences as they come to mind then organise them later

Cut and paste

Cross out

Draw arrows on the page

Read the work of a peer

Ask for help

Write an essay plan

Write one paragraph at a time, then read it over

Which of these thinking/writing processes did you use and in what order? Please circle the ones/ones that best suit you.

ACTIVITY 3: Upper secondary

Poetry on *YouTube*: a focus on Philip Larkin

1. Investigation

Ask students to look up the description of *YouTube* at <http://www.youtube.com>

What Is *YouTube*?

YouTube is a way to get your videos to the people who matter to you.

With *YouTube* you can:

Upload, tag and share your videos worldwide

Browse thousands of original videos uploaded by community members

Find, join and create video groups to connect with people with similar interests

Customize your experience with playlists and subscriptions

Integrate *YouTube* with your website using video embeds or APIs

2. Thinking it over

Ask students to

1. Write one paragraph on *YouTube* using at least four of the phrases listed below

democratic

chaotic

lowest common denominator

white noise

sound and fury

15 (or fewer) minutes of fame

2. Search for an author of classical or canonical poetry on *YouTube*. Some suggestions are

Margaret Atwood

W. H. Auden

John Donne

Philip Larkin

Christina Rossetti

Emily Dickinson

3. Watch a few clips and locate one that particularly enhances your understanding of the poem or poetry. Record the URL and write 150 words explaining exactly how viewing and hearing altered your understanding.

4. Read Philip Larkin's poem, *An Arundel Tomb*. Ask students to

(a) Record it in your own voice and listen to it played back.

(b) View the following

YouTube, *Philip Larkin – An Arundel Tomb*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acXxM2WAeNE>

(c) Listen carefully to the first few minutes where Larkin introduces the poem. Notate how does the context of the poem influence your reading of the poem?

(d) Locate one section of the poem where your reading differs markedly to Larkin's. List and explain what are the differences in both vocal productions of the poem.

(e) Play the clip without the sound. Describe the images in terms of content, colour, tone, mood, speed, editing. Write down how have these elements been used to create atmosphere and expression?

5. Read the poem *Aubade* by Philip Larkin to yourself, and then watch and listen to Tom Courtenay reading the poem.?

YouTube, *Aubade*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdN7wsmshgk>

Then watch Alan Bennett and New Order performing the poem

YouTube, *Your Silent Aubade*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaG8IzSmdYI>

(a) In the production, what differences do you notice most sharply? Read through the comments on both clips and answer which comments do you most agree/disagree with? Explain your preference. Enter at least one of your comments on *YouTube*.

(b) In viewing the two presentations, explain the impact of the more literal images compared to the more metaphoric images.

(c) What impact do the images of Larkin have on your impression of his poetry? Describe precisely the sound of his voice. How does his voice impact on your interpretation?

YouTube, *Philip Larkin – The Lost Tapes*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QugmT1SElcg3>

6. Record one of Philip Larkin's poems that is not already on *YouTube*. Make a short film using a series of still images. When and where permitted, upload these to *YouTube*.