

Middle Years Teachers' and Students' Responses to Young Adult Literature with Online Content

by

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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Literature for young adults, which has undergone significant changes in the last few decades and continues to evolve rapidly, is increasingly accompanied by Internet materials which attempt to fulfill a variety of purposes. The overall purpose of this qualitative study was to develop an understanding of middle years teachers' and students' responses to these printed and online texts. This research explored the nature of the online content being created and the usefulness of Genette's (1997) concepts of paratexts in understanding these materials, as well as the responses of middle years teachers and students to a selected set of novels and the online content related to those novels. A collective case study approach was used to probe the responses of four teachers and six students from four mid-sized western Canadian cities. Data were collected through in-person and Skype interviews and through written response journals. Within-case and cross-case analysis occurred using thematic coding methods. Themes were identified in both the students' and teachers' responses, and these themes were observed to align in six significant ways. Both teachers and students agreed that audio and visual materials online may evoke a strong response and that the opinions and ideas of other readers are interesting and influential. The teachers predicted and the students confirmed that their response to the websites was largely determined by their response to the printed texts. The two participant groups both indicated that they viewed the printed texts as of primary importance and that the content of the websites had the power to

change their thinking about those texts. Finally, both teachers and students described a tendency to make quick decisions about their interest in the content of a website. Implications for pedagogy include the need for educators to investigate these online materials and to consider students' out-of-school literacy skills and preferences in order to make intentional, informed decisions about their use in the curriculum. Recommendations for future research include the exploration of a wider range of printed and online texts, examination of the responses of students from different age groups to these texts, and investigation of the impact of participation in the book-related websites on adolescents' identity development.

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Chapter One

Introduction and Overview

Establishing the Context

Walk into the teen fiction section of a local public library or chain bookstore, select a few recently published titles from the shelves at random, and peruse the covers. There is a strong probability that the cover copy of at least one of the novels will include a reference to a website connected in some way with that book. The blue and white Facebook logo may indicate that the book or the series of which the book is part has a presence on the popular social networking site. Website links may direct readers to an author's personal website or professional blog or to a complex publisher-created site where readers can post reviews, photos or videos, create fanfiction, join discussion forums, and interact with the author.

After I began to pay closer attention to these website notifications on selections of young adult literature, I spotted them more and more frequently, and I began to wonder how educators might think about, respond to, and use these digital materials connected to printed fiction. As I shaped my inquiry around four novels and the online materials connected with them, I developed a set of preliminary questions that guided my research. These questions were the following:

- What kinds of Internet materials connected with printed fiction for young adult readers are being created by authors, publishers, and readers of this fiction?
- Genette (1997) discusses paratexts—conventions such as cover art, title pages, endpapers, and publisher's advertisements that surround the text, mediating its presence to the world, but are not an essential part of the text itself. Do the book-related online materials fit into Genette's theory of paratexts? If so, in what ways?
- How do teachers respond to the books and to the associated online materials?

- How (if at all) do the online materials change the way the teachers think about and respond to the printed texts?
- How do teachers predict students will respond to the texts and online materials?
- How do students respond to the books and to the associated online materials?
- How (if at all) do the online materials change the way students think about and respond to the printed texts? Do these materials impact the personal connections students make with the novels or their motivation to read the novels?
- Is there a place for books like these and their associated online content in today's middle years classrooms? If so, how might they best be used?

A more complete list of the research questions and sub-questions is found in Chapter Three.

Research Objectives

The first of my research objectives was to develop an understanding of the ways in which authors, publishers, and readers are creating connections between printed fiction for middle years/young adult readers and content on the Internet. This objective was achieved through a careful examination of a wide selection of websites associated in different ways with 10 works of young adult fiction (see Appendix H) and then through a more intensive examination of the websites associated with the three young adult novels read by the teachers and students who participated in the study. A second objective was to develop an understanding of the ways in which middle years students respond to the online content. I wanted to determine if and how the online content changed students' perceptions of the printed texts. I also sought to explore the influences of the online content on the personal connections students made with the printed texts and students' levels of motivation and engagement. Additionally, I wanted to develop an understanding of the ways middle years teachers thought about the printed texts and their

associated online content, and about their beliefs and opinions about incorporating these texts and online materials into their classroom practices. Ultimately, my purpose was to enable both myself and other educators to make informed decisions about the effective use of these printed and digital texts in the classroom setting.

Literacy Today

These printed texts and the online materials that accompany them must be seen in the broader context of developments in modern society and culture and the impact of those developments on literacy and our current understanding of it. According to Jewitt (2008), modern society is increasingly “global, fluid, and networked” (p. 241). People and ideas are changing and moving between nations at unprecedented speeds; information about these changes is shared more and more frequently through digital media rather than through print media; and these societal changes are having a significant impact on the “communicational landscape,” affecting nearly every aspect of contemporary life and the curriculum decisions of schools in particular (Jewitt, 2008, p. 241). Kress (2003) posits that “it is no longer possible to think about literacy in isolation from a vast array of social, technological and economic factors” (as cited in Jewitt, 2008, p. 241) and suggests that the written word, dominant for centuries, may be yielding to the image, while the printed book, also long-favoured, may be surpassed in usage by the digital screen. When literacy is viewed against the backdrop of these changes and the diversity that accompanies them, it may no longer be seen as a “universal, autonomous, and monolithic entity,” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 244), but may rather be viewed as a set of “multiliteracies” which represent the multiple and varied methods of making meaning in today’s society (New London Group, 1996).

Lankshear and Knobel (2007) suggest that one of the unique aspects of the contemporary literacy scene is “the extent to which, and the pace with which, *new* socially recognized ways of

pursuing familiar and novel tasks by means of exchanging and negotiating meanings via encoded artefacts are emerging and being refined” (p. 224). The development of “Web 2.0” or the “read-write Web” allows unprecedented communication and collaboration online, Lankshear and Knobel (2009) state. Web 2.0 technology results in different kinds of products than Web 1.0 technology did, as Web 1.0 was focused on “material artefacts for private consumption,” while Web 2.0 focuses more on “services” and “enabling,” “celebrates inclusion,” and “decentres authorship” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007, p. 227). Many Web 2.0 practices are underscored by the understanding that “the more who participate, the richer the experience will be” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007, p. 228). As a result, today’s literacies involve far more participation and interaction than the literacies of the past. Similarly, today’s texts are “fluid, dynamic, nonlinear, and, very often, collaboratively constructed” (Curwood & Cowell, 2011, p. 110). Further, contemporary digital tools “readily allow for multiple, multimodal, and multifaceted textual representations” (Curwood & Cowell, 2011, p. 111). Although current literacy skills continue to be based in essential practices of decoding, encoding, and comprehension, these skills are being used in a growing range of modalities stretching far beyond traditional print texts.

Because of the possibility of near-instantaneous communication, online spaces offer unprecedented opportunities, and because digital tools are used in nearly every human context, educators must develop an understanding of the ways literacy practices operate in these contexts (Curwood & Cowell, 2011). Prensky (2009) suggests thinking in terms of “digital wisdom,” a concept that can refer both to wisdom that may result from using digital technology to access information and to wisdom in using that technology expertly and prudently. To build an updated understanding of literacy, Jewitt (2008) recommends that educators explore and investigate “the learning potentials of teaching materials and the ways in which teachers and students activate

these through their interaction in the classroom” (p. 242). This process of exploration will also foster teachers’ digital wisdom. Through my inquiry, I sought to understand the learning potentials and interactions for the online materials connected to the printed texts I selected. Jewitt (2008) posits that “the ways in which something is represented shape both *what* is to be learned, that is, the curriculum content, and *how* it is to be learned” (p. 241). I wanted to investigate the ways in which the presentation of the book-related materials in an online context shaped the ideas the students developed and the ways in which those ideas formed.

Online Connections

Statistics from the Pew Internet and American Life Project’s 2013 report on use of technology by American students ages 12-17 show that 78% of these teens now have a cell phone, and almost half of those phones (47%) are smartphones (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi & Gasser, 2013). One in four teens (23%) has a tablet computer, such as an iPad, and 93% have a computer of their own or access to a shared computer at home (Madden et al., 2013). Overall, 95% of teens are online and many of these students have constant Internet access (Madden et al., 2013). Statistics from the 2011 Pew Internet and American Life Project’s teen survey indicate that 80% of students use an online social networking site, such as Facebook or MySpace, regularly (Lenhart et. al, 2011). Commenting on the growth of online materials connected to printed fiction for young adults, Hamilton (2009) remarks, “No wonder that authors and publishers are going to where the teens are!” (p. 14). Hamilton (2009) suggests that “social networks offer authors and publishers a powerful and positive medium for connecting with readers in a personal manner that is energizing and engaging for both authors and teens” (p. 14). A number of young adult authors and publishers “tweet” (using the social networking site Twitter) for instant communication with the teens who subscribe to their posts. Facebook and

MySpace pages enable writers to share book-related events, photos, information, blog entries, and even musical playlists that may relate to a book or may simply reflect their own personal preferences. Some websites even feature scheduled live author chats. Publishers know that many teens frequent these sites; therefore, they see them as prime tools for sharing information.

Many writers also maintain dedicated blogs, the content of which may range from personal thoughts and experiences to information about publication dates and book signings. Authors and publishers may also use YouTube to post author interviews and book trailers. Some young adult authors make recommendations and share favourites through online social catalogues like GoodReads, Shelfari, and LibraryThing (Hamilton, 2009). Instead of seeing technology as competition for printed texts, Hamilton (2009) believes that social networks and other Web 2.0 tools “can enhance and inspire teens’ reading experiences while providing students multiple opportunities to interact with their favourite YA authors and learn more about the craft of writing” (p. 15). New media allow authors to create new kinds of literacy experiences for teens and increased Internet access allows teens to take part in those experiences. Young adult author Lorie Ann Grover asserts that her readers’ instant access to her through her presence on Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace has created a deeper, richer relationship between herself and those readers (Hamilton). Grover believes that young adults’ reading experiences are being enriched through online social networking tools that have the ability to bring readers and writers together (Hamilton).

The proliferation of these book-related digital materials led me to question my response, as an educator, to these materials and to examine my thoughts about their inclusion in the classroom. Jewitt (2008) shares Unsworth’s (2001) statement that “in the processes of ‘doing’ literacy, students learn ‘what counts as literacy’” (p. 248). Through the inclusion of previously

unconsidered text forms in the classroom curriculum, students can expand their ideas of “what counts.” However, digital texts must not be included haphazardly simply because they are digital texts; rather, curriculum decisions must be made with intentionality and purpose. Conducting an investigation into the possibilities of these digital materials being developed for a growing number of works of young adult literature and into the responses of teachers and students to these materials was a step toward making informed, digitally wise (Prensky, 2009) decisions about the potential use of these materials in the classroom. The existing body of research on this topic is limited and does not yet include Canadian content. The research that does exist is not focused on the responses of middle years students. Hayn, Kaplan, and Nolen (2011), after examining a broad spectrum of current research in the area of young adult literature, specifically voice the need for research to facilitate a deeper understanding of the transactional occurrences between teachers and students, students and other students, and readers and texts. While my inquiry did not examine teacher-student transactions, it did explore the ways that student readers interact with these online texts. Further, an examination of students’ interactions with one another online through the book-related websites provides a glimpse into some of the transactional occurrences between students.

Young Adult Literature Today

As the books selected for the inquiry demonstrate, today’s literature for young adults differs significantly from the literature produced even a few decades earlier. The fiction currently being written for young adults may be grittier and harder-edged, unflinchingly exploring realistic issues faced by today’s readers. Influenced by the uncertainty and questioning of postmodern thought (Courtland & Gambell, 2010), genres may blur, plots may be nonlinear, and endings may remain ambiguous (Puhr, 1992). Contemporary young adult literature is also influenced by the increasing interactivity, connectivity, and access of the society in which it is created, and it is

taking on new forms, embracing new perspectives, and pushing the boundaries of what is considered acceptable and appropriate for young readers (Dresang, 2005). In Chapter Two, I describe these changes in more detail and discuss current views and research on the use of this literature in the middle years classroom.

Motivation and Engagement Matter

My inquiry also addressed questions of motivation and engagement because, as most educators know intuitively and the findings from many studies clearly demonstrate, literacy engagement is a powerful force in students' lives, impacting reading achievement and general academic performance (Guthrie, 2008) as well as cognitive development (Guthrie, 1996). Students' motivation for reading and their reading preferences and interests, which are closely linked to issues of motivation and engagement, are discussed in Chapter Two. In brief, however, research results demonstrate that students have distinct ideas about their likes and dislikes when it comes to reading materials. The unique reading preferences of individual students and their responses to different types of texts are important factors in the context of the inquiry.

Connections to the British Columbia Language Arts Curriculum

The British Columbia language arts curriculum documents for Grades 6-9 make clear statements about the nature of literacy today (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, 2007). The Integrated Resource Package for Kindergarten to Grade 7 states that "people use language as a fundamental part of their personal, work, and social lives" for a variety of purposes, such as personal enjoyment, establishing and nurturing relationships, and gathering information (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 3). People in modern society use language to express their ideas through an assortment of media, print-based and screen-based, and learning to interact successfully with others through language in these media is necessary for students to succeed in school and to experience satisfaction in their lives in the community.

Because the use of technology and digital media is expanding so quickly, so also the definition of literacy must expand beyond print-based reading and writing. Instead, being literate today means “being able to understand and process written, electronic, and multi-media forms of communication” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 3). With these foundations in mind, the intention of the English language arts curriculum is to provide a framework that supports students as they learn to “use language confidently to understand and respond thoughtfully and critically to factual and imaginative communications in speech, print, and other media” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 3). The stated aim of the curriculum at each grade level is to provide students with the opportunities they need to grow personally and intellectually while they make meaning of the world through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing, and representing. These opportunities should prepare students to participate in and enjoy each aspect of modern society.

The curriculum documents also list specific goals for the teaching of English language arts. One of these goals is for students to “communicate ideas, information, and feelings critically, creatively, and articulately, using various media” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 2). My inquiry investigated the effectiveness of the opportunities afforded to students to communicate their feelings and ideas about printed texts through book-related websites. A second goal stated in the curriculum is for students to “comprehend and respond to oral and written language critically, creatively, and articulately” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 2). The websites investigated by the study’s participants offer students opportunities to respond to both the printed texts and to the written and audio- or video-recorded responses of other readers. A third goal of the curriculum is for students to “think critically and creatively, and reflect on and articulate their thinking and learning” (British Columbia Ministry of

Education, 2006, p. 2). Some of the websites investigated offer students opportunities to reflect on their ideas through discussion with other readers and to express ideas creatively through such activities as the production of fanfiction, book trailers, and imaginary characters. The last overarching curriculum goal is for students to “develop a continuously increasing understanding of self and others” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 2). A number of the websites investigated for this study solicit personal responses to the novels from students and enable them to view the responses of their peers. As such, these sites could potentially support students in developing deeper understandings of themselves and others.

From Kindergarten onward, one of the key expectations in the area of reading and viewing is for students to make and describe increasingly complex and meaningful personal connections to the texts they encounter (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, pp. 6-7; British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8). The emphasis in my inquiry on understanding the impact of the online materials on the personal connections made by students clearly supports this aspect of the curriculum organizers. The curriculum organizers also note that teachers should broaden the range of texts students are exposed to, “introducing texts in oral and visual forms, as well as written forms” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 15). Having students explore and respond to multimodal texts online could help build this textual variety. In addition, from the elementary years forward, students are expected to make personal text selections and to defend those text choices (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 7). Further, as one of the considerations for program delivery, the documents suggest that “building students’ choice into instruction helps keep students engaged” and increases motivation (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 32). The inquiry explored some of the student participants’ ideas

about text selection and their motivation for reading (or not reading) the texts they were asked to investigate.

Overview of Thesis

In this chapter, I have provided a brief description of the current state of literacy and of some of the key ideas and research which lead me to see the pursuit of a deeper understanding of this topic as valuable. In Chapter Two, I begin by describing some of the theoretical foundations on which my approach to the topic was based, then move into an examination of young adult literature and some of the current trends and issues in that field of research. Later in the chapter, I also discuss some research in the area of students' motivation for reading. In the third chapter, I focus on the methodology of my investigation, providing some background information on qualitative research and case study research as well as outlining the questions that guided my research and describing the specific procedures used for data collection and analysis. In Chapter Four, I describe the novels used in the study and their associated online materials in greater detail before considering Genette's (1997) theory of paratexts and some contemporary perspectives on the use of those theories to understand digital and online texts. In Chapter Five, I present case descriptions of each participating teacher and then discuss some of the common themes that I discerned in the teachers' responses. Similarly, in Chapter Six I describe the responses of each participating student and the shared themes that became evident through analysis of these responses. Finally, in Chapter Seven I compare the responses of the participating teachers and students, describe commonalities between their views, and address the overarching research questions with respect to the research literature and theoretical foundations. I close Chapter Seven with recommendations for classroom teachers and for further research as well as my personal reflections on the research process.

Chapter Two

Review of Relevant Literature

Literature for young adults has changed tremendously in the last few decades, and it continues to evolve at a rapid pace, shaped by and adopting some of the characteristics of the technology-focused culture in which it exists. Increasingly, this literature is accompanied by Internet materials which attempt to fulfill a variety of purposes. However, little research has explored the ways teachers and students respond to these materials and the ways these materials influence their perceptions and opinions of the texts they accompany.

This chapter opens with a brief discussion of some of the theoretical and conceptual foundations that guided my research: the tenets of social constructivism and the notion of affinity spaces, the concepts of multiliteracies and multiple modalities, and the principles of Rosenblatt's transactional theory. A working definition of young adult literature and a description of some of the key stages in its growth and development are followed by a discussion of three related topics: postmodern thought and its impact on this literature; the concepts of Radical Change (Dresang, 1999) and their application to young adult literature; and the growing number and variety of Internet-based materials being created in connection with this literature. A discussion of the importance of young adult literature includes explanations of some of the perspectives on its use, descriptions of classroom-based research that has explored its potential, and a discussion of teachers' views and thoughts about it. I conclude the chapter by considering research concerning students' motivation for reading and other literacy tasks and the preferences students express for certain types of reading material.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations

Certain foundational understandings underlie my approach to the topic and my interpretation of the responses of the teachers and students who participated in the project. Three of the most prominent of these understandings are the concepts of social constructivism and the idea of affinity spaces, the concepts of multiliteracies and multimodality, and the tenets of Rosenblatt's transactional theory.

Social constructivism.

The ideas of Lev Vygotsky, a Russian and Soviet developmental psychologist, are considered by many to be the roots of social constructivism, a theory in which learners are seen as "situated, active knowledge constructors" (Liu & Matthews, 2005, p. 387). At the core of Vygotsky's work is the view of humans as meaning makers, with both individual and group or social processes at work in "the co-construction of knowledge" (Mahn, 1999, p. 347).

Smagorinsky (2013) summarizes the components of Vygotsky's work he believes to be most relevant to English language arts teachers today. One of Vygotsky's ideas was that of "speech as tool"—the notion that one of the most significant functions of oral language is to explore ideas. Through the process of speaking (or writing), ideas may be transformed and meaning is created for the speaker (or writer). Thus, Smagorinsky suggests, teachers should allow students to use language to work through real problems and ideas rather than focusing on the preparation of products that adhere to the conventions of formal and written language. While Vygotsky discussed the importance of talk in developing knowledge and building understanding, Maloch (2002) clarifies that he was not referring to just any talk; rather, Vygotsky highlighted the need for a "more sophisticated other" to guide the language-based learning process (p. 97).

Vygotsky also explored the connections between emotion and cognition. Smagorinsky (2013)

explains that in Vygotsky's perspective, emotions and thinking cannot be separated. When individuals engage with artistic works, they have emotional reactions that allow them to reflect on the human experience with greater clarity and perspective. Vygotsky conceived thinking as not only connected to emotion but also as social in origin. Both language and methods or patterns of thinking are acquired through social interaction. As Smagorinsky (2013) notes, "culturally learned ways of knowing" have a deep influence on an individual's thoughts, understandings, and use of cultural tools like reading and writing (p. 197). Vygotsky also posited that learning occurs as people make things that are useful, important, and meaningful in the wider cultural context. In the school setting, Smagorinsky proposes, this understanding means that learning should take place through interaction and dialogue, weaving together out-of-school experiences and knowledge (what Vygotsky called *spontaneous* or *everyday concepts*) and school-learned principles and knowledge (what Vygotsky called *scientific* or *systematic concepts*) (Smagorinsky, 2013). Personal experiences, when used to build school understandings, can make academics meaningful (Mahn, 1999).

Using a social constructivist lens when approaching issues surrounding language and literacy acquisition can help to explain the ways that particular social contexts and practices influence the ways individuals use language and perceive different language forms (Black, 2007). Language use can "shape and transform social space, thus creating new possibilities for interaction" (Black, 2007, p. 386).

Affinity spaces.

Affinity spaces may facilitate the shaping of cognition by drawing individuals together and hosting continuous social interactions. Knobel (2006) explains Gee's (2004) concept of affinity spaces—interactive spaces (physical, online, or a blend of both) created by individuals who share

an interest of some kind. These spaces are often accessed in multiple ways (such as through blogs, message boards, social media sites, and in person) that Gee calls *portals* (Lammers, Curwood, & Magnifico, 2012). Affinity spaces (often assisted by electronic and digital media) may be used to share “memes,” which Knobel (2006) explains are “contagious patterns of cultural information” (anything from popular songs and catchphrases to videos and clothing trends) that influence the thoughts and actions of a social group (p. 411). Knobel believes that educators should carefully consider the act of creating and/or sharing memes through online affinity spaces as a literacy practice.

Black (2007) acknowledges the complex interactions and the wide range of opportunities for participation and learning that can occur in online affinity spaces, partially because these spaces are truly heterogeneous. Individuals of different genders, ages, races, social classes, abilities, and levels of education, as well as levels of expertise within the affinity area, interact regularly, coming together around a “common endeavour” rather than a geographical area or social commonalities (Lammers et al., 2012, p. 48).

As most adolescents’ access to the Internet increases, so does their ability to participate in online affinity spaces. Lammers et al. (2012) expand Gee’s ideas about affinity spaces in order to better understand current adolescent literacy practices. Participation in these spaces is “self-directed, multifaceted, and dynamic”—there is no single acceptable means or method of participation (Lammers et al., 2012, p. 48). Any person may create a new portal or new content in an existing portal. Participation in these spaces is frequently multimodal, with participants using a variety of technologies to create and share content in many forms. The participants in these spaces often create a “passionate, public audience” and are eager to respond and collaborate (Lammers et al., 2012, p. 48). Socializing is an important part of participation in

these spaces, and there are a variety of leadership roles that may shift frequently. The participants in these spaces distribute knowledge across the space, and various portals and participants may specialize in certain aspects of a topic. Many online affinity spaces also connect to social networking sites, creating initial access points for many potential participants. Lammers et al. (2012) describe the “interconnected relationship among media-specific, fan-created, and social networking portals” that “fosters growth and dynamic participation” within the affinity spaces (p. 49). Curwood’s (2013) examination of the online affinity space for Suzanne Collins’s *Hunger Games* trilogy is discussed later in this chapter.

Although participation in online affinity spaces may be closely tied to issues surrounding adolescents’ identity development, I have chosen to delimit the inquiry by not addressing those issues in my discussion.

Multiliteracies and multiple modalities.

The concepts of multiliteracies and multiple modalities, which are fundamental constituents of online affinity spaces, were two foundational understandings of the study.

Multiliteracies.

In 1996, the New London Group presented an overview of the “connections between the changing social environment facing students and a new approach to literacy pedagogy”—an approach they called “multiliteracies” (New London Group, 1996, p. 60). The New London Group asserts that traditional views of literacy are no longer sufficient because of the existence of so many channels of communication and the rich linguistic diversity in our contemporary world. The multiliteracies approach moves beyond traditional approaches to literacy education by focusing on the importance of the many linguistic and cultural differences in society and the way these differences impact the work, community, and personal lives of students. The New

London Group proposes that modes of meaning-making are increasingly numerous, complex, and integrated. The modes identified by the group are linguistic, audio, spatial, gestural, and visual; a sixth mode, multimodal, relates the other modes to one another. The ways in which these modes are used to design meaning depends on the particular context. New communication media are “reshaping the way we use language”; therefore, “there cannot be one set of skills or standards that constitute the ends of literacy learning” (New London Group, 1996, p. 64). The group also posits that the use of “multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns” is now necessary for effective interaction in all spheres of life (New London Group, 1996, p. 64). The New London Group (1996) suggests that when teachers use multiliteracies approaches, they are “creating access to the evolving language of work, power, and community, and fostering the critical engagement necessary for them [students] to design their social futures and achieve success through fulfilling employment” (p. 60).

Jacobs (2012) emphasizes the increasing “multiliterateness” of the world even since the New London Group’s 1996 publication, stating how we are immersed in print texts, images, video, and sound (p. 98). Jacobs (2012) affirms the value of the New London Group’s concepts for understanding the social and literate realities of the world, noting that students who “have access to digital practices outside school are able to act as producers and develop the skills identified as necessary for success in the 21st century” (p. 100). However, Jacob explains that students who have fewer of these opportunities remain consumers of digital materials and culture and often have more limited social futures.

Multiple modalities.

Multimodality, like multiliteracies, is a response to the social and semiotic changes in modern society (Jewitt, 2008). A key underlying assumption of multimodality is that meaning may be

made, distributed, and interpreted in many ways and that language, written and spoken, is only one of these ways (Jewitt). A multimodal perspective considers the ways non-linguistic methods or modes of communication (such as images, movements, gestures, music, sound, and colour) may be used together and separately to create meaning (Bearne, 2009). Hull and Nelson (2005) posit that multimodality provides “not just a new way to make meaning, but a different kind of meaning”—a meaning that “transcends the collective contribution of its constituent parts” (p. 225). Bearne acknowledges that the growing presence of the screen heavily influences understandings of literacy but asserts the importance of realizing that multimodal texts need not be screen-based as they may be created and communicated by any number of modalities. Jewitt (2005) notes that print-based texts “are and always have been multi-modal”—they require readers to interpret a number of modes including symbols, space, colour, font, and often image (p. 315).

Multimodality draws not only on the traditional psychological and linguistic foundations of print literacy, such as Halliday’s (1978) social semiotic theory of communication, but also on anthropological, sociological, and discourse theories and is influenced by cognitive and sociocultural research (Jewitt, 2008). A social semiotic approach to multimodality emphasizes the social relationships which are present in any act of communication as well as “the possibilities for transformation” created as texts are constructed (Bearne, 2009, p. 157). Jewitt explains that the use of particular modes tends to be context-specific and community-based. Patterns of use develop as particular sets of semiotic resources are used to support the social life of a community. These patterns of use are fluid and change in response to the needs of the community.

Modal affordance describes what may be easily expressed or represented by a certain mode (Jewitt, 2008). Social conventions and the history of the use of a particular mode influence its affordance, as do physical, material, and environmental factors. The growth of multiple modalities allows the “functional specialization” of each mode so that “each is used to do that for which it is best suited” (Kress, 2000, p. 339). Another assumption of multimodality is that no single mode is complete, but that all modes are partial and contribute unique elements to the construction of meaning (Jewitt). Bearne (2009) emphasizes that it is important to question the function of each element of a multimodal text and the ways that each element contributes to or modifies the overall meaning of that text. These questions are particularly important in the educational context as students must learn to select the modes that will best communicate the meanings they intend. When students are given the opportunity to experience and engage with a wide variety of digital and paper-based texts, they are better prepared both to understand other multimodal texts they will encounter and to compose their own. Mills (2010) notes that today’s students are often very comfortable with multimodal texts in various contexts.

My understanding of the value of multiliteracies in today’s world and my belief that the skills associated with these literacies must be explicitly taught in contemporary classrooms informed my questions about the online materials associated with current literature for young adults. It is important to ascertain the extent, if any, to which these materials are providing a valuable place for students to engage in the culture-creation and culture-participation activities that will build vital digital skills. Understanding the underlying assumptions of and the key concepts associated with multimodality helped me to interpret both the online materials created by authors and publishers and the responses to those materials created by students (both the students posting online and the students who participated in the study).

Rosenblatt's transactional theory.

Louise Rosenblatt was one of the first literary theorists to assert the importance of the role of the reader in the reading process, an importance that has become widely accepted and acknowledged. Rosenblatt (1982) summarizes her theory, explaining that reading is “a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances” (p. 268). Connell (2008) notes that a belief in “the transactional nature of all experiences” underlies Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading, a foundation Rosenblatt attributes to the ideas of John Dewey (p. 107). Rosenblatt (1982) emphasizes that both the reader and the text contribute to the reading transaction: the words of the text “stir up elements of memory, activate areas of consciousness” while the reader uses the sum of his or her previous experiences with language and with the world to create a “framework into which to fit the ideas” of the text (p. 268). This framework may change continually as the reader transacts with the text. Another core element of Rosenblatt’s theory is the reader’s stance or “mental set” (1982, p. 268), which the reader chooses early in the reading event. The reader may read for information (what Rosenblatt calls the “efferent” stance) or for the pleasure or experience of the text (the “aesthetic” stance). These stances exist along a continuum; rarely does a reader approach a text purely from one stance or the other.

Considering social contexts is essential when embracing the transactional perspective (Connell, 2008). Rosenblatt (1993) understands language to be “socially generated” but “individually internalized” through specific transactions with the environment (p. 381). In her view, each individual “brings to the transaction a personal linguistic-experiential reservoir, the residue of past transactions in life and language” (Rosenblatt, 1993, p. 381). It is impossible for educators to predict the texts which will evoke the strongest responses from a student without

intimate knowledge of that student's personal reservoir of experiences (Rosenblatt, 1982). A student may have had a particular experience or thought pattern which causes a certain part of the text to "come most intensely alive" (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 272). The reader selectively attends to particular elements in the text and to particular elements aroused in his or her consciousness through transaction with that text and "'meaning' emerges from the reverberations of all these elements upon one another" (Rosenblatt, 1993, p. 382).

In contemporary society, most students are immersed in a great diversity of cultures that create and shape their lived-through experiences of texts. Rosenblatt (1993) recognizes that "each individual absorbs the assumptions and values of the society or culture" but is also clear that the identity of the individual cannot be overlooked, writing, "there is always an individual human being choosing, selectively constructing meaning, and consciously or unconsciously responding in terms of the factors, contextual and human, entering into that particular transaction" (pp. 384-385). The environment, society, and culture influence the individual's response, but the unique personality and experiences of that individual determine his or her particular response within those environmental, social, and cultural parameters.

When the response of the reader to the text is seen as significant, understanding that response becomes of great importance. With these foundational understandings in mind, my study was designed to build my own understanding of the individual responses of the teachers and students to both the printed and the online texts. However, as Rosenblatt (1982) states, "recognizing that the reader's stance inevitably affects what emerges from the reading does not deny the importance of the text in the transaction" (p. 269). My acknowledgment of the importance of the texts themselves (both print and online) underscores my examination of those texts.

Young Adult Literature

What is young adult literature?.

Before exploring the definition of young adult literature, it is helpful to ask the question, “Who are young adults, anyway?” Crowe (1998) offers a working definition of young adults, suggesting that they are persons old enough to be in junior or senior high school. Latrobe and Drury (2009) specifically define young adults as students in Grades 6 through 12.

While scholars and practitioners agree about the intended audience of young adult literature, disagreement exists over the definition of young adult literature. Crowe (1998) defines literature for young adults as “all genres of literature published since 1967 that are written for and marketed to young adults” (p. 121). According to Courtland and Gambell (2010), “young adult literature is written to and about young people and speaks to the hopes, fears, problems, and emotions that comprise the landscape of growing up” (p. 13). Taking another approach, Latrobe and Drury (2009) define young adult literature as “whatever young adults are reading—from classic literature to poems to graphic novels” (p. xii). Johnson (2011) prefers to define young adult literature as the collection of works written specifically for young adults, and Bull (2011) concurs, describing young adult literature as “a wealth of genres (fiction, non-fiction, short stories, and poems) that are written for and about adolescents” (p. 223).

Crowe (1998) specifically disagrees with the idea that young adult literature is a collection of “classic works that have been deemed suitable for study in junior high and high school” (p. 120). He also addresses other mistaken notions of young adult literature, such as collections of series fiction and movie or TV tie-in novels, and he notes that the practice of categorizing books for various stages of childhood (juvenile, middle grades, adolescent, young adult) can create further confusion. Crowe explains that some individuals include certain classic works in this category,

but he chooses not to include anything published before 1967, the year Hinton's *The Outsiders* was released, because he views *The Outsiders* as the first novel to embody the full range of characteristics of contemporary young adult fiction. For the purposes of my investigation, I used the definition proposed by Crowe (1998), Bull (2011), and Johnson (2011)—young adult literature is written specifically for and often about adolescents.

The development of young adult literature.

Young people tend to enjoy reading about characters their own age or just a little older (Cart, 2001). American publishers “discovered” the middle school market in the late 1980s, and, as a result, the average age of protagonists in young adult novels began to drop, leading to a wider selection of novels published for 10-14 year-olds (Cart). Cart notes that the definition of “young adult” began to change at approximately the same time. While traditionally young adult literature was aimed at students aged 12-18, since the mid-1990s, the target audience for this literature has been expanded to include readers into their mid-twenties. Part of this market expansion may be due to the publication of increasingly sophisticated fiction with “unusually broad-based appeal” (Cart, 2001, p. 95) and picturebooks which appeal to older audiences. One result of this expansion, Cart states, is that the number of good books published for readers aged 10-25 has increased significantly.

Cart (2001) traces the evolution of young adult literature decade by decade, beginning with, as Crowe (1998) does, the publication of S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* in 1967. (In contrast, Hayn, Kaplan, and Nolen (2011) see J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, published in 1951, as the first teenage voice to reflect a harsher reality, rather than innocent fantasy.) Cart explains that books for young adults published in the 1940s and 1950s were generally clear genre fiction—books about romance, adventure, sports, careers, and science fantasy. In the 1960s,

however, authors like Robert Cormier, M. E. Kerr, Richard Peck, and Walter Dean Myers began to explore harder-edged, more realistic issues facing young readers. Works for young adults in the 1970s focused on social realism and problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, divorce, and poverty. In the 1980s, another wave of genre fiction, particularly romance and horror, was published, along with a slew of series novels. As noted above, in the 1990s, middle school literature emerged strongly, as did young adult picturebooks and works with deeper subjects, greater ambiguity, and more complex characters.

Courtland and Gambell (2010) briefly discuss the evolution of young adult literature in Canada, explaining part of the struggle of Canadian writers to find a uniquely Canadian young adult voice. Courtland and Gambell note that, traditionally, Canadian writers for children and young adults tended to focus on novels and picturebooks featuring Canadian history and Canada's indigenous people, both Aboriginal and Inuit. However, these authors are now expanding their work across many topics, genres, and formats, including the graphic novel.

What is Happening in Young Adult Literature Today?

An examination of the impact of postmodern thought on young adult literature and of the concepts of Radical Change proposed by Dresang (1999) is beneficial for developing an understanding of contemporary young adult materials. These perspectives may also help to make sense of the growing number and variety of online materials being created in conjunction with these printed materials.

Postmodernism and literature for young adults.

When considering current literature for young adults, it is necessary to examine postmodern thought and its effects on the texts being produced. An "elusive idea," explain Courtland and Gambell (2010), postmodern thought embraces uncertainty and questions assumptions (p. 26).

Coles and Hall (2001) explain that the meaning of the term postmodern is “contested terrain,” but state that some undisputed features of postmodern texts are “rejection of unity, homogeneity, totality, and closure” and that the overall postmodern perspective is “a questioning one” (p. 114). Knickerbocker and Brueggeman (2008) concur, suggesting that the term postmodern is “only one of several overlapping terms” (p. 66) that can be used to describe some of the current trends observed in literature. According to Puhr (1992), postmodernism is simply a fact of day-to-day life. Puhr (1992) posits that “we live in a world of uncertainty, of lapses in—if not absence of—authority, of fragmentation, of visual and auditory overload, of the blurring of lines between mass culture and elite culture” and explains that features which reflect these circumstances have worked their way into a number of works of contemporary literature (p. 64). Coles and Hall (2001) assert that one of the prominent features of postmodern texts is “a breaking down of barriers”—barriers between childish and adult tastes and preferences, barriers between author and reader and characters, and barriers between genres and formats (p. 112). Similarly, Puhr identifies the following features as typical of postmodern texts: mixing and subversion of the conventions of different genres, the use of nonlinear plots, intentional ambiguity of the identity of authors and narrators and their relationships to the text, narration from unusual points of view, metafiction (in which the text draws attention to its own fictionality), and the inclusion of alternate endings. Pantaleo (2008) notes that an author may leave apparent holes in the narrative or leave the ending entirely ambiguous. Further, Courtland and Gambell (2010) state that texts with postmodern tendencies “become more open and transparent about authorial intent,” yet blur the purposes of writing (p. 12).

Courtland and Gambell (2010) explain that postmodern-type characteristics may be noted in many traditional or historical texts. The difference between those texts and texts that are

classified as postmodern is “the transparency of literary devices and their multitextual and multiliterate use and application” (Courtland & Gambell, 2010, p. 31). Thoroughly postmodern texts call attention to themselves, their narration, their authors, and the devices used within. As Courtland and Gambell (2010) state, “the self-referential nature of metafiction draws attention to how texts are created, how they work, and how meaning is created not just as a manifestation of authorial intent, but also as creation of meaning and interpretation by readers” (p. 31).

Pantaleo (2008) provides a more comprehensive list of metafictional devices (summarized below) that are often observed in texts identified as postmodern. These texts may feature narrators who speak directly to readers, make comments about their own narration, and explain the intentions of the author. Authors may describe their processes of creation, drawing more attention to the literary devices they have used. Multiple narrators may be used to tell the story, or perhaps polyphonic narrators with multiple voices. Texts may include multiple interconnected narrative strands which may or may not merge into a single narrative. Authors may also use “narrative framing devices” (Pantaleo, 2008, p. 191), such as situating stories within other stories or having characters read about themselves in the narrative. In a postmodern text, Pantaleo further explains, temporal and spatial relationship may be shifted or disrupted. Plots may be non-linear or non-sequential, perhaps unfolding backwards or jumping back and forth in time. Authors frequently make reference to other texts (this practice is known as intertextuality); readers must understand the significance of these references in order to completely grasp the author’s intention. The referenced texts may include anything from songs, novels, and folk tales to television shows or movies, comics, and video games. Texts may parody other texts and genres, and other texts (visual or verbal) may be embedded within them. In addition, postmodern texts may experiment typographically, and graphics, illustrations, or

photographs may form an important part of the text. These texts may feature unusual designs or layouts which encourage the reader to reconsider the experience of reading a book. Pastiche techniques, either pastiche of illustration or of literary styles, may be used. Authors may also create situations where characters and narrators exchange places or find themselves in another narrative world altogether.

Radical Change and literature for young adults.

Another useful lens through which to view current trends in literature for young adults is the Radical Change framework proposed by Eliza Dresang. Dresang (2005) explains that her Radical Change theory can be helpful for understanding certain facets of contemporary society. First created in the early 1990s, Dresang's Radical Change theory focuses on the concepts of interactivity, connectivity, and access—all aspects of the present digital age. Interactivity refers to “dynamic, user-controlled, nonlinear, non-sequential, complex information behaviour and representation in or related to books and other media” (Dresang, 2005, p. 41). Connectivity is about the “sense of community or construction of social worlds that emerge from changing perspectives and expanded associations in the real world or in books and other resources” (Dresang, 2005, p. 41). Finally, access refers to “the breaking of long-standing information barriers, bringing entrée to a wide diversity of formerly inaccessible opinion and opportunity” (Dresang, 2005, p. 41). While Dresang's theory was originally used to explain changes she observed in information behaviour and resources for youth, the theory seems applicable to “virtually any information seekers in a wide variety of information environments” and is “equally useful on and offline” (Dresang, 2005, p. 301).

When it comes to literature for youth, Radical Change examines three types of change that stem from increased interactivity, connectivity, and access in the social world: changes in form

and format, changes in perspectives, and shifts in boundaries. Dresang (1999) notes that books which have changed in form or format may demonstrate the following characteristics: “a) graphics in new forms and formats; b) words and pictures reaching new levels of synergy; c) nonlinear organization and format; d) nonsequential organization and format; e) multiple layers of meaning; and f) interactive formats” (p. 19). The second type of change occurs in perspectives. Books with Radical Change characteristics may be told from multiple perspectives (both visual and verbal) and may highlight voices previously unheard, as well as allowing youth to “speak for themselves,” sharing their own stories and ideas in their own words (Dresang, 1999, p. 24). Books with Radical Change characteristics allow youth to encounter “perspectives that were previously considered improper for them to encounter or too complicated for them to understand” (Dresang, 1999, p. 24), as well as multiple intellectual perspectives on the same topic, from one voice or many. Authors may use different methods (such as lists, reports, notes, graffiti, and screenplays) to show these different perspectives. Books that exhibit Dresang’s third type of Radical Change, changing boundaries, tackle subjects that may have been considered taboo and set stories in overlooked places and times. These books show characters in more complex ways, may leave endings unresolved, and create new types of communities. In general, these books give readers access to previously undisclosed information about themselves and the world they live in.

Dresang (2005) explains that she sees postmodernism as another concept which attempts to explain historic and current thought and events. Both Radical Change and postmodernism attempt to explain the widespread changes that have emerged in children’s literature since the early 1990s. However, Dresang notes, the explanations offered by each theory for similar literary phenomena differ significantly. Postmodernism tends to explain elements such as

parody, pastiche, bricolage, and irony in terms of the “ambiguity and fragmentation” in contemporary society (Dresang, 2005, p. 44), while *Radical Change* explains handheld hypertext and digital design in terms of their relationship to the interactivity, connectivity, and access of the present digital age. Despite, or perhaps because of these differences, Dresang asserts that *Radical Change* and postmodern theories may build on and strengthen one another. I believe, along with Dresang, that both of these theories suggest useful and valuable ways of understanding today’s literature for young adults.

Online connections and literature for young adults.

Some of the changes Dresang (1999, 2005) alludes to are occurring in the increasing connections between printed fiction and Internet content. Primary research on the growing body of online materials connected to printed literature for young adults is limited, but the topic is gaining attention and a number of literacy experts are offering their thoughts and perspectives. Hamilton (2009) suggests that today’s Web 2.0 tools allow authors of young adult literature to connect with their audiences in ways that were not previously possible. As described in Chapter One, author websites, blogs, Twitter feeds, and Facebook pages make writers much more visible and accessible to their readers. Author- and publisher-created sites and reader-created sites together form increasingly complex online affinity spaces for a growing number of novels. Curwood (2013), who completed an ethnographic study of online affinity spaces, conducting systematic online observations and interviewing 20 participants aged 11-17 from the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK, believes that students are “critically engaging with the text-based story in affinity spaces” (p. 417) and using the spaces to comprehend, analyze, and critique the printed texts. Students are responding to the texts through the creation of visual art, fanfiction, music, and video games, and the affinity spaces offer students an “authentic audience” and the

opportunity to “engage in thoughtful, critical discussion” about their work (Curwood, 2013, p. 417). To participate in these fansites, students must learn both “the formal rules and the informal expectations” of the site, complying with the online community’s norms for interaction and participation (Curwood, 2013, p. 421). Fansites serve different purposes, offering spaces to discuss characters, speculate on upcoming movies, and participate in role-playing games in addition to places for sharing multimodal creations (Curwood). To be successful in these online communities, adolescents must usually complete multiple readings of the text (Jenkins, 2006, as cited in Groenke & Maples, 2010). Groenke and Maples (2010) view some of the online links to printed texts as “broadening and deepening the reading experience” (p. 41), and Lammers et al. (2012) support Curwood’s assertion that these online spaces can promote critical engagement with the texts.

Curwood (2013) focuses on the experiences of Jack, a 13-year-old boy who was a “devoted participant” in the online affinity space for Suzanne Collins’s *Hunger Games* trilogy, a space that consists of more than 50 linked fansites based around the world (p. 419). Jack, who described himself to Curwood as a “mega-fan,” found the space through a Google search he conducted because he wanted to connect with other fans of the trilogy. Jack took on multiple administrative and participatory roles on several fansites over a number of years, building “online friendships and social capital” through discussion of the trilogy as well as off-topic personal conversations with other participants (Curwood, 2013, p. 422).

Kell (2009) focuses on the concept of fanfiction, an important aspect of many online affinity spaces. Participants connect with their favourite texts and socialize online by creating and co-creating stories using characters and settings from the established fictional worlds of books, movies, TV programs, comics, and video games. The fanfiction sharing site www.fanfiction.net

hosts a mammoth collection of these texts. Users of this site and similar sites offer feedback and commentary and may develop close relationships.

As Dresang (2005) explains, texts for young adults are changing forms and formats. Carter (2011) identifies some specific changes, noting that authors are “exploring hybrid forms” and “embracing textual conventions from sequential art, video games, film, and more” (p. 190). Moss (2012) discusses print books which use digital communication formats such as characters’ personal blogs, websites, and e-mails to tell stories. Moss also mentions multi-platform books which fuse print text with digital applications such as online games, videos, and discussion forums. Groenke and Maples (2010) suggest that these print-based texts mimic the online world and refer to them as “digi-novels.”

Genette (1997) discusses paratexts, conventions such as the title page, the table of contents, and the publisher’s advertising for a text that present the text to the public and invite potential readers to engage with it. I believe that the online materials associated with many contemporary works of fiction for young adults should be considered paratexts of those novels, as they bring the texts to the attention of potential readers, influence interpretations of the texts, and encourage text-related discussion and contemplation. In Chapter Four, Genette’s work and its relationship to today’s online materials are discussed in greater depth.

The Importance of Young Adult Literature

Perspectives on the use of young adult literature.

After considering questions about the definition and nature of young adult literature, it is also important to ask, “Why does it matter?” Crowe (1998) sees the potential of young adult literature to create bridges to classic works of fiction and to “hook” non-readers with high-interest fiction that may encourage them to read further (p. 121). Young adult literature, he says,

may also be used for the same language arts objectives for which traditional literature has been used, with the added benefit of increased relevance to students' lives. Bull (2011) posits that young adult literature is "rich and complex" (p. 223), and it uses authentic language to address real issues, allowing teachers to acknowledge their students' interests, develop literacy skills, and meet curriculum standards. Other scholars have identified more specific hopes for the use of young adult literature in the classroom: teaching social responsibility (Wolk, 2009); helping adolescents develop a more accurate understanding of diverse cultural groups (Baer & Glasgow, 2010); complementing the sex and sexuality education students receive in the school setting (Bittner, 2012); helping students and families better understand the issues and challenges faced by LGBT youth with physical and/or intellectual disabilities (Hazlett, Sweeney, & Reins, 2011); and fostering critical discussion of issues in global and national politics (Bean & Harper, 2006). Reading young adult novels that feature life-based literary narratives of adolescents facing contemporary issues (such as eating disorders, relational aggression, and questions of sexual identity) may help education professionals engage in meaningful dialogue about these topics leading to a deeper understanding of these issues (Bach, Choate, & Parker, 2011). Henderson and Buskist (2011) posit that reading young adult novels and discussing them with colleagues may help educators develop their understanding of the importance of dialogue and discussion in fostering reading comprehension.

Classroom research with young adult literature.

Stallworth (2006) believes "in the power of young adult literature to bring teenagers into an intimate relationship with reading" and proposes that "quality young adult fiction can help tweens and teens handle the plethora of emotional, social, developmental, and physical changes they experience" (p. 59). Including young adult literature in the curriculum may also increase

students' "life literacy" by helping them to develop both school-related skills and the skills that enable them to cope with life's problems successfully (Stallworth, 2006, p. 59). Stallworth shared case studies of two classrooms in which middle years teachers successfully integrated young adult literature in their curriculum. In Dina's Grade 8 class, 98% of the students were from low-income families and many struggled with reading. When Dina used books such as Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* (in which the protagonist, Melinda, is raped at a party but remains silent about her experience) in her language arts curriculum, she found that her frequently unmotivated students were eager to engage in discussion and were able to connect their understanding of the book to other life issues they faced. Leah, who taught Grade 9 students from affluent backgrounds, found that introducing young adult novels told from the perspective of adolescents from less sheltered backgrounds helped her students gain a deeper understanding of the world outside their comfortable communities (Stallworth).

Hillsberg and Spak (2006) described the ways that young adult literature was used as part of a comprehensive anti-bullying program with Grade 6, 7, and 8 students in an Illinois junior high school. Students read and discussed short stories that "empowered the victims of bullying" (Hillsberg & Spak, 2006, p. 25). The researchers noted that the students' written reflections demonstrated that the literature had provided some of the victims of bullying with both comfort and useful strategies for coping with the problem. Miller (2005), a high school teacher and researcher, conducted a project in which she and four teaching colleagues read *Shattering Glass* by Gail Giles with their students with the intention of fostering the students' understanding of the roots of human violence. Through writing activities and class discussions, the students made meaning of the main character's situation and demonstrated a heightened awareness of the cycle of oppression and prejudice that may result in violent behaviour (Miller). Glasgow (2001) also

investigated the use of young adult literature to foster learning about social responsibility and social justice. She created an e-correspondence project between university students and high school students in which the participants read novels selected from a list, discussed the novels online, and collaborated on PowerPoint presentations about oppression in society. After analysis of printouts of the students' presentations, as well as their response journals and reflection papers, Glasgow concluded that these articles evidenced the students' growing sense of social responsibility.

Research with young adult literature is also occurring outside the traditional classroom. Jacobs (2006) conducted a study with incarcerated male youths ages 13-17. The participants listened to contemporary young adult literature read aloud, and then responded using a variety of artistic media. The youth, initially unenthusiastic, became increasingly interested and involved as the sessions continued. Jacobs conducted and analyzed individual interviews with the participants as well as the participants' drawings and other artistic works. Her findings led Jacobs (2006) to suggest that the use of "literature that reflects the world around us" combined with the opportunity to respond through art may increase engagement with and understanding of literature, help develop communication skills, and build important self-knowledge and knowledge of the world (p. 118). The experiences and findings of these researchers, in addition to my own observations of and experiences with students, convince me that thoughtful, well-written young adult literature, used in combination with intentional personal response activities, may be a powerful tool for educators seeking to encourage positive growth in the academic, social, and emotional lives of their students.

Teachers' Perceptions of Young Adult Literature

Johnson (2011) affirms the role of young adult literature in developing and encouraging a lifetime love and habit of reading. Students are strongly influenced by the messages their teachers send about the value of young adult literature. These messages are communicated overtly and covertly by the inclusion or exclusion of particular types of young adult literature in the classroom and by teachers' recommendations or lack of recommendations for specific formats and genres.

Multiple influences shape students' and teachers' perceptions of young adult literature (Johnson, 2011). Using a survey about perceptions of young adult literature completed by pre-service high school teachers, Johnson found that more than a third of the participants held misperceptions of these books, often lumping classic works such as Dickens' *Great Expectations* and children's literature such as the books of Roald Dahl in with young adult literature and questioning the appropriateness of including young adult literature in a high school curriculum at all. According to Johnson (2011), "multiple selves" and "multiple sites of influence" help create teachers' and students' perceptions of the young adult literature they encounter (p. 217). The multiple selves of teachers may include their roles as professional educators, parents, aunts or uncles, and readers. Multiple sites of influence may include bookstores, libraries, universities, and schools. The materials offered in bookstores influence teachers' perceptions: if all that is available in the young adult or teen section is row upon row of series fiction, many will view young adult literature as very limited. Libraries may also have limited teen or young adult selections, and libraries may explicitly or implicitly discourage adults from browsing in these areas. Some younger teachers may feel more comfortable in these sections; they may be less likely to discomfit reading or browsing teens. In addition, some teachers may fear raised

eyebrows and general embarrassment when they are seen borrowing, buying, or reading young adult literature in public. Johnson also raises questions about the marketing of young adult literature. Do the publicity and piles of tie-in merchandise associated with series books (e.g. *Twilight*, Harry Potter, and Percy Jackson) lead teachers and students to see young adult literature as “synonymous with consumerism, and thus literary fluff?” (Johnson, 2011, p. 221).

Schools are also sites of influence on teachers’ perceptions of young adult literature. In Johnson’s (2011) opinion, the expectations for students in terms of reading tend to be fairly traditional, focusing on Rosenblatt’s (1978) efferent (information-seeking) stance much more than the aesthetic (enjoyment and experience-seeking) stance. In the survey Johnson administered to pre-service teachers, participants frequently indicated that works they read aesthetically (such as young adult novels) would not be appropriate for study in the classroom, where books are generally approached from the efferent stance. “Ironically,” Johnson (2011) states, “the very stance that may encourage lifelong reading is rejected as inappropriate for school” (p. 217). Johnson notes that both students and teachers may disdain or reject works of young adult literature or even the whole category because of deeply ingrained conceptions of their own superior intellect and ability. Another significant problem, according to Johnson, occurs when teachers make decisions about the appropriateness of certain young adult materials for classroom use based on their experiences and impressions of their own abilities, rather than those of their students. When teachers neglect their own leisure reading due to time pressures, misconceptions of the purpose of reading may also exert influence on their curriculum and instruction decisions.

In summary, multiple sites impact perceptions of young adult literature. Teachers’ experiences as young adult readers themselves, the culture of the schools in which they teach, the

instruction they received as students and in their teacher education courses, their current interactions with young adult students, and their impressions from libraries and booksellers interact to create their overall perceptions and ideas about young adult literature. These perceptions are important to consider as the beliefs of teachers, expressed in their teaching practices, contribute significantly to students' motivation for reading in the classroom.

Motivation for Reading and Literacy Tasks

As mentioned in Chapter One, motivation for reading and reading engagement may be powerful forces in students' lives. Guthrie (2008) cites a study he completed with Schafer and Huang (2001), in which they found that reading engagement had a more definite effect on reading achievement than a student's home environment or his or her parents' income level and education. Clark and Rumbold (2006) reference the work of Baumann and Duffy (1997), who found that motivation to read and reading ability work together and reinforce one another. Similarly, Guthrie (2008) states that "reading engagement and reading achievement act in a spiral," one which moves both upward and downward (p. 3). The findings from a National Literacy Trust survey revealed that the students who enjoyed reading the most were also the most likely to have above-average reading skills (Clark & Douglas, 2011). Guthrie also refers to the findings of an international report on reading among adolescents (Artlet, Baumert, Julius-McElvany, & Peschar, 2003) which showed interest in reading to be a strong indicator of general scholastic performance. The findings from a study completed by Mucherah and Yoder (2008) with Grades 6 and 8 students revealed that students who read for aesthetic enjoyment performed better on standardized tests than those who read for mainly social reasons. Guthrie sums up the connection between motivation and achievement by stating that, in order to achieve, students must want to engage with a variety of texts. Students who are working at, slightly below, or far

below grade level are often “demotivated, apathetic, or expressly resistant to reading school content” (Guthrie, 2008, p. 2).

Guthrie (1996) explains how motivation for reading is also linked to cognitive development. Sophisticated reading strategies such as summarizing, self-monitoring, making links to prior knowledge, and searching for information are valuable for all students but tend to be learned best by those who are intrinsically motivated to read. Non-motivated students often avoid using these strategies but motivated readers frequently “develop into self-regulatory strategy users” (Guthrie, 1996, p. 434). Guthrie also posits that motivated readers are better prepared to participate and find employment in the reading-rich culture of North America. Students who are engaged readers are more likely to be self-actualized, less likely to feel helpless, and more likely to make decisions, set goals, and take charge of their lives (Guthrie). “If students do not become self-directed readers in their elementary school years, there is little chance they will become self-actualizing adolescents” (Guthrie, 1996, p. 435).

Below, some of the issues that influence motivation for reading in general are explored before a discussion of more specific questions regarding students’ preferences for certain reading materials and the impact of online materials on students’ interest in and motivation for literacy activities.

Understanding motivation for reading.

Identifying factors that potentially undermine motivation and engagement is one important step toward developing practices that build motivated readers. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) believe that lack of motivation for in-school reading and the general decline of positivity toward reading have more to do with “the mismatch between what students need and the instruction they likely receive” (p. 353) than with fixed, defining characteristics of those students. Ivey and Broaddus

(2001) also mention a “mismatch between what students want to learn and the content requirements of schools” (p. 353), pointing out that young adolescents are often unable to connect the reading they do outside the classroom with the reading done inside it. The reasons students read (and write) out of school are very different from the reasons for which they read (and write) in school.

Guthrie (2008) describes some particularly de-motivating instructional practices commonly used in North American middle school and high school classrooms. In content-heavy courses like history and science, many teachers use only textbooks, most of which require advanced skills the majority of readers have not yet developed. Students are rarely given the opportunity to choose the texts they will work with and are only infrequently given the opportunity to work together to understand the texts they are assigned. The practices used most often (reading silently, having whole-class discussions, and writing about texts that have been read) may be “sensible,” but they are not particularly motivating for many students (Guthrie, 2008, p. 6).

American middle years students who completed a survey on reading motivation reported that they did not often find books or materials that attracted them to read in their classrooms (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Only 28% of the students surveyed agreed that they had materials they liked to read in any of their classrooms (Ivey & Broaddus), a situation that Farris, Werderich, Nelson, and Fuhler (2009) assert may be connected to the fact that the type of materials available in classrooms may be related more to teachers’ preferences than to students’ preferences. With 75% of American teachers (primary through high school) being female, and an even higher percentage of females at the elementary level, Farris et al. (2009) believe that teachers may unintentionally be allowing their personal preferences (for “chick lit” and emotionally-oriented fiction) to influence their choice of materials made available in the classroom (p. 181). Although

many teachers may find this suggestion somewhat offensive, it is an interesting idea to consider. While teachers' personal reading preferences may not lean toward "chick lit," as Farris et al. suggest, I believe it is important for educators to evaluate the decision processes by which they make selections for their classroom libraries.

Guthrie (2008) outlines five instructional practices that promote engagement and motivation for reading, noting first that "meaning is motivating" (p. 6). When students sense that the purpose of classroom literacy activities is to understand important ideas, they generally increase their intrinsic motivation, but if they believe that all a teacher wants to do is give tests, check scores, and compare students' achievement levels, they quickly become externally motivated. This tendency is unfortunate, because some teachers attempt to force unmotivated students to read by threatening them with testing—meaning that the teacher exercises even greater control and the students even less. Guthrie explains that offering students control and realistic, meaningful choice in significant elements of their reading (his second recommendation) can be highly motivating. Guthrie's third recommendation for promoting reading engagement is for teachers to afford their students with opportunities to interact with each other to understand a text. He states that students "seek to be connected to a social network that will sustain them in the challenges of reading for school" (Guthrie, 2008, p. 8) and notes that students often desire for their teachers to be a part of this sustaining network. Guthrie's fourth recommendation is that teachers do their best to build students' self-efficacy and confidence. He describes the despair felt by students when they face a text they cannot read fluently, much less understand. When students seem to permanently exist "in a state of low efficacy," it is natural for them to resist "the tasks that have punished them" (Guthrie, 2008, p. 9). Textbooks, Guthrie explains, are often two to four years above the average reading level of the students they are intended for, meaning that

it is crucial for teachers to select alternate materials that match the reading level of their students. The final recommendation in Guthrie's list is that teachers capitalize on what he calls "the potency of relevance" (2008, p. 11). Texts that are immediately relevant to students are intrinsically motivating and interesting and enable students to apply their prior knowledge and previous experiences when attempting to understand them. Because the relationship of choice and control and interest are so vital to the understanding of motivation for reading, they are discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

A study conducted by Pachtman and Wilson (2006) explored reading engagement by asking Grade 5 students open-ended questions designed to determine the practices they believed most contributed to their reading engagement. Having lots of books available in the classroom was very important to 86% of respondents, which, Pachtman and Wilson state, reinforces the research trend showing that proximity and regular access to books is crucial to developing motivation for reading. Findings from the Pachtman and Wilson study also revealed that students read less when the completion of a book was linked to a writing activity than when the completion of a book was linked to a social activity such as a book talk or small group discussion.

In a unique study that involved 20 middle school students, Pflaum and Bishop (2004) asked the participants to make drawings about a time when they were deeply engaged in literacy learning and about a time when they were detached. The researchers then initiated conversations with students based on their drawings. The results demonstrated a definite preference for collaborative reading experiences. Students expressed feelings of detachment especially when asked to do textbook reading or during round-robin oral reading. In general, the students found oral reading by their peers too slow and believed that they comprehended better when they independently read the text silently. Students "spoke warmly" about teacher read-alouds and

quiet independent reading periods when they were allowed to choose their own materials and “get lost” in a book (Pflaum & Bishop, 2004, p. 206). The students also specified that a teacher reading non-fiction was less engaging, as was being asked to write about the materials they read during silent reading periods. Although the students frequently stated a preference for independent reading periods, they also described being “put off by being isolated and not interacting with others” about the texts they read (Pflaum & Bishop, 2004, p. 204).

In another reading motivation study, Clark and Foster (2005) presented primary and secondary students with a list of 12 activities and asked them to select the options they felt would help themselves and others to want to read more. Analysis of the data revealed that among primary students, the most popular choices were reading games (selected by 62% of participants), helping younger children read (58%), and meeting authors or celebrity readers (57%). Among secondary students, the most popular selections were designing websites or magazines (51%), meeting authors or celebrity readers (35%) and helping younger children read (32%). It is interesting to note that nearly all of the activities selected by students had a social or collaborative component. For both age groups, writing book reviews and rating books were viewed as the least attractive choices.

Moley, Bandré, and George (2011) offer another perspective with respect to teaching for motivation, advocating a balance between “overtaching” (chopping a text into tiny, meaningless pieces and overanalyzing them) and “underteaching” (giving students difficult books and expecting them to make sense of them independently) (p. 250). Both of these scenarios can seriously undermine motivation, they explain. In choosing texts, teachers need to consider both the readability and level of the text and the ability of the students to understand the issues and themes contained in the text. For example, teachers must determine whether or not their students

are emotionally prepared to handle a text addressing incest, bigotry, and rape before handing that text to those students. Considering the culture, family situations, and lived-through experiences of students may help teachers select culturally relevant, age-appropriate texts that reflect the life experiences of those students who will be reading them (Ma'ayan, 2010).

Relinquishing control and offering choice.

To increase student motivation for reading, Fillman and Guthrie (2008) advocate a balanced move from “teacher overcontrol to student empowerment” (p. 35). They describe six realistic practices that cultivate motivation. First, teachers can help students to gain “ownership of text” by offering them control over what they read (Fillman & Guthrie, 2008, p. 36). According to Fillman and Guthrie (2008), many students do not read, “not because they do not enjoy reading, but because they do not enjoy reading what the school assigns” (p. 36). When given appropriate-level texts about topics that truly interest them, these students are happy to delve into reading. Fillman and Guthrie acknowledge that, in the reality of today’s school system, especially at the secondary level, teachers are not always able to provide students with a choice of which book to read. However, teachers may still be able to offer a variety of smaller choices, such as allowing students to select chapters in which to specialize or allowing students to select the order in which they will read specified texts. Fillman and Guthrie recommend giving students as much self-direction as they are able to handle successfully and note that this amount will differ for different readers. Ultimately, independent text selection should be the goal.

Clark and Phythian-Sence (2008), both involved with multiple literacy surveys of British students completed by the National Literacy Trust, caution that choice can have a negative impact on engagement if provided haphazardly. They believe that students must be explicitly taught to make informed choices. Without confidence in their own ability to choose well,

students may disengage due to the fear of making a wrong choice or may become overwhelmed by too large an array of options. Therefore, students must be taught *how* to make choices based on their individual interests (Clark & Phythian-Sence).

Pitcher et al. (2007) summarize two major themes that have emerged from research on adolescent motivation to read. First, educators must understand that most adolescents are competent “meaning-makers” in their own out-of-school literacy contexts (Pitcher et al., 2007, p. 379). Alvermann (2007) points out that today’s students are instant messaging, chatting, blogging, e-mailing, texting, using social networking sites, and playing online games, often simultaneously—in general, they are finding their own reasons to be literate, reasons that embrace communication and collaboration and stretch far beyond simply reading to acquire school content. The second theme expressed by Pitcher et al. is that schools typically devalue the literacy activities of adolescents, often technology-based or visually-oriented, in which students are generally highly competent. Instead, schools and educators tend to value print-based materials in school-mandated content areas—texts that students find increasingly difficult to comprehend. In each of the two themes, Pitcher et al. (2007) explain, “school practices act as disincentives because they fail to take into account what motivates adolescents to read” (p. 379).

Student reading preferences.

The discussion of motivation for reading is not complete without addressing the research on adolescents’ specific reading preferences. Most recent studies which have attempted to understand students’ reading preferences have examined students’ general reading interests, not just their preferences in terms of fiction. Examining the results of some of these studies does, however, reveal some clear trends. In a 2005 National Literacy Trust survey of 8,000 British students (primary through secondary), magazines topped the list of the reading materials most

popular outside the classroom (Clark & Foster, 2005). Findings from another National Literacy Trust survey in 2011 revealed that magazines remained exceptionally popular but had been matched in preference by text messages, e-mail, and websites (Clark, 2011). In a 2007 survey of urban American adolescents, Hughes-Hassel and Rodge found that girls preferred fashion or beauty and music magazines, while boys preferred magazines about sports, video games, or music. When they did read fiction, the students in this study enjoyed reading about celebrities, sports figures, musicians, “people or characters like me,” and “people or characters my age who are wrestling with tough issues” (Hughes-Hassel & Rodge, 2007, p. 25). Ercegovac (2012) used a questionnaire and focus groups to gather data about the reading preferences of 84 Los Angeles Grade 7 students. Data analysis revealed that, when selecting their own reading material, the students often looked for books about characters wrestling with issues similar to the ones they currently faced—issues surrounding family situations, sexual orientation, health problems, and race, language, and culture.

Coles and Hall (2002) discuss the results of a national English research project with students aged 10-14. Analysis of data gathered through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews revealed that the students demonstrated a strong preference for reading periodicals, such as popular magazines, comic books, and tabloid newspapers, in their out-of-school reading time. When it came to books, the students preferred books about adventure, horror, or ghosts, along with books about romance and relationships. The researchers noted the significant number of students who indicated that they were reading texts intended for adults, such as the horror novels of Stephen King. In another English study, Hopper (2005) used self-assessment questionnaires to explore the fiction reading habits and choices of 707 students aged 11-15. In this study, books related to movies that had recently been released topped the list of preferred books identified by

the students. Fantasy novels and books which addressed adolescent issues and the realities of life were also preferred by students, along with various magazines. In an earlier American study, Worthy, Moorman, and Turner (1999) used a combination of open- and closed-ended measures to investigate the reading preferences of more than 400 Grade 6 students from three Texas middle schools. Analysis of the data showed that the top four preferred categories were “scary” books or story collections, cartoons and comics, popular magazines, and books about sports. In a survey and interview study of 384 American adolescents, Pitcher et. al (2007) found that students talked frequently about reading magazines, especially magazines about cars, sports, and fashion. Focus group research with 41 Australian adolescents by Snowball (2008) also revealed that magazines were read by nearly all of the students—sports magazines were preferred by the boys, while the girls tended to enjoy fashion and beauty magazines. The students’ responses demonstrated considerable variety in the novels they read, but books with teenage protagonists were enjoyed by many of the participants.

Studies of the reading interests of more specific populations have also been conducted. In a 2008 study that used interview and the analysis of student talk and book selection at a book fair to probe the reading preferences of 293 economically disadvantaged black students aged 8-12 from urban Florida, L. Williams learned that the students preferred series fiction and books that reflected the media and mass marketing they were exposed to. In a narrative report that discusses the research of Morris, Hughes-Hassell, Agosto, and Cottman (2006) and Stovall (2005), Gibson (2010) explains that African-American adolescent girls are demonstrating increasing engagement with urban fiction (also known as street literature, hip-hop literature, black pulp fiction, ghetto lit, and gangsta lit). This fiction, which features a young female protagonist and a fast-paced, dramatic storyline, often incorporates slang and profanity and

addresses such topics as “incarceration, abortion, crime, drugs, teen parenthood, pregnancy, premarital sex, murder, violence, and abuse” (Gibson, 2010, p. 567).

Integration of online materials and activities.

Few, if any, studies have specifically explored the impact of the use of literature-related online materials on students’ motivation and engagement with literacy tasks. However, some researchers’ experiences suggest that the integration of online materials and experiences may positively affect students’ levels of motivation and engagement. Tarasiuk (2010) used classroom observations, informal interviews, and a “reading and technology” survey to gather data about her Grades 6, 7, and 8 students’ use of technology in their daily lives (p. 543). This data revealed that the students were using technology extensively in their out-of-school contexts. Tarasiuk then attempted to incorporate some of these out-of-school literacy practices into her classroom assignments, such as having students use collaborative wikis to record information about vocabulary and characters from the novels they read in class. Tarasiuk noted that her students put more effort into the assignment when it was completed online than when they completed a nearly identical task on a printed worksheet. In Tarasiuk’s opinion, the collaboration required her students to think deeply about the vocabulary they recorded and the insights they shared. Creating digital book talks (in the form of movie trailers) for the books they read led to heated discussions about choice of music, sounds effects, and images, and students frequently returned to the books for re-reading. Tarasiuk (2010) observed her own role shift to become a “guide on the side” (p. 550) as her students learned from and taught one another. Through the course of her digital projects, the students’ motivation and independence for online writing increased significantly.

In another Internet-linked research project, Schillinger (2011) asked adolescent girls from two different schools to read the same feminist texts and communicate through a wiki for eight months. Through analysis of student surveys, printouts from the wiki discussions, transcripts of student interviews, and student poems and artwork, Schillinger determined that the students found this collaboration meaningful and motivating and used it to strengthen social connections. The online space enabled the students to “branch out from established, assigned topics to pursue their own interests” (Schillinger, 2011, p. 406) and to assert greater control over their reading, writing, and learning. Witte (2007) uses a narrative report to describe a similar project in which her Grade 8 students and a group of pre-service teachers read the same novels and discussed their responses to these texts through an online blog. Witte observed that her students were much more engaged in the response activity when the writing took place online than when the format of the discussion changed to pen and paper following a security issue.

Although Curwood (2013) did not directly investigate students’ responses to the integration of online activities into the curriculum, she does describe students’ posts on one of the *Hunger Games* trilogy’s affinity sites suggesting classroom activities teachers could use in conjunction with the novels. The students’ suggestions include making a movie trailer and writing and performing a song about the books. The students’ discussion, Curwood (2013) states, demonstrates how they “crave experiences in school that allow them to closely analyze and transform literature” and how they “respond positively to creative, multigenre responses to literature that are shared with an authentic audience” (p. 423). Curwood believes that online affinity spaces can provide the supportive, positive audience students desire. Although further investigation is clearly needed, the observations and experiences of these researchers suggest that

the integration of online activities into the curriculum may have a positive impact on students' motivation and engagement with literature-related tasks.

Conclusion

If one word were to be used to describe the issues surrounding the online materials connected with contemporary works of fiction for young adults, it might be “complex.” The theoretical and conceptual frameworks reviewed at the beginning of this chapter highlight the fact that knowledge construction, including the development of the many literacy skills needed to fully engage in contemporary society, occurs in diverse social contexts. Much of the literature being written for contemporary young adults is increasingly edgy and challenges boundaries, influenced by postmodern thought and by the interactivity, connectivity, and access (Dresang, 1999) that characterize many aspects of life in modern society. Students' motivation to read in school contexts is influenced by a number of factors, including the increasing amount of time students spend engaging in digital or online literacy activities outside of school. Even a brief investigation of the existing research on these topics reveals that many questions have been asked, but few have been definitely answered, and more questions arise with each new study that takes place. My study adds to the growing body of knowledge on this topic.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter opens with the specific questions that guided my inquiry. A brief overview of qualitative research, including an explanation of its suitability for addressing the research questions, is followed by a description of case study research and the particular case study approach I employed. Description of the processes of participant selection and data collection are followed by an explanation of the data analysis strategies. Subsequent to describing the strategies used to ensure the trustworthiness of my findings as well as the delimitations of the study, I describe my personal stance as a researcher and acknowledge its potential impact on my interpretation of the data.

Qualitative Research

I created research questions based on the principal objectives of the inquiry. The first of these objectives was to explore the nature of the online materials being created in connection with printed fiction for young adults, and another objective was to understand the responses of middle years teachers and students to these novels and the related online content. Finally, I wanted to ascertain teachers' and students' ideas about the use of these materials for language arts instruction. The research questions, grouped according to these areas of focus, may be viewed in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Questions

Research Questions
Questions focused on online materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of Internet materials connected with printed fiction for young adult readers are being created by authors, publishers, and readers of this fiction? • Does this online content fit into Gerard Genette's theory of paratexts? If so, in what ways?
<p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific types of content are being offered on these sites? How and to what extent is the content connected to the print texts? • What kinds of interaction do these sites offer or encourage? • In what ways are these sites attempting to create communities of readers? To what extent are these attempts successful? • How integral are the online connections to the experience of reading the books?
Questions focused on teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do teachers respond to the books? • How do teachers respond to the associated online materials? • How (if at all) do the online materials change the way the teachers think about and respond to the printed texts? • How do teachers predict students will respond to the texts and online materials?
<p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact, if any, do teachers predict the online materials would have on their students' motivation to read the text and their students' abilities to make personal connections to the texts? • How do the teachers' responses correspond to the responses of the students?
Questions focused on students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do students respond to the books? • How do students respond to the associated online materials? • How (if at all) do the online materials change the way students think about and respond to the printed texts?
<p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which types of online content are perceived by the students as most interesting or engaging? Which elements are perceived by the students as least interesting or engaging? What reasons do the students give or demonstrate? • To what extent, if any, are students motivated to read printed fiction by the presence of online elements? What reasons do students give for their responses? • To what extent, if any, are students motivated to explore online content when they are aware of its existence? What reasons do students give for their responses? • Are there any ways in which the exploration of the online content helps students to create deeper, more complex, or more varied personal connections with the text? If so, how does this happen?
Questions focused on classroom use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a place for books like these and their associated online content in today's middle years classrooms? If so, how might they be used?
<p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the teachers' beliefs and opinions about incorporating some of the books and/or online content into their classroom curriculum? In what ways would they include these materials and why? If they do not believe these materials should be included, why not? • What are the students' beliefs and opinions about the incorporation of these books and/or online content into their classroom curriculum? In what ways do they believe these materials should be included and why? If they do not believe these materials should be included, why not?

Because my objectives focused on developing understandings of the responses and experiences of teachers and students, a qualitative research approach was most appropriate. Qualitative research explores human and social situations and allows the researcher to build a “complex, holistic picture” of the issues involved (Creswell, 2007, p. 249); thus, qualitative methods can be used to gain insight into the experiences of individuals and groups and the meanings connected with those experiences (Onwuegbuzie & Mallette, 2011). The major characteristics of qualitative research are “induction, discovery, exploration, theory/hypothesis generation, the researcher as the primary ‘instrument’ of data collection, and qualitative analysis” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 18). Onwuegbuzie and Mallette state that qualitative research approaches provide techniques that are useful for addressing literacy research questions that require the collection, analysis, and interpretation of nonnumeric data such as words, drawings, and images. Lincoln (2010) champions qualitative inquiry, asserting that qualitative researchers have purveyed “some of the most profound insights into Western society ever assembled” and that the qualitative research community has produced “deep studies of teaching, learning, and teacher practices,” studies which are “thoughtful, trenchant, [and] meticulously documented” (p. 4).

Because qualitative research is often based on small, non-random samples, its goal is not to generalize findings beyond the actual participants in the study (Onwuegbuzie & Mallette, 2011) but rather to produce in-depth descriptions (Creswell, 2007). As such, I do not attempt generalizations in my conclusions but rather present my interpretations of the experiences and understandings of a small group of individuals. Because of close proximity to the research subjects, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) caution that it is possible for researchers’ personal biases to influence the findings; however, this close proximity may also facilitate deeper

understandings of the participants' responses and the personal perspective of the researcher may add richness to the interpretation. Lincoln (2010) describes this richness, explaining that qualitative theories are "fat with the juice of human endeavor, human decision making, *zaftig* with human contradiction, human emotion, human frailty" (p. 6). Throughout the inquiry, I attempted to identify my own biases and to nurture an ongoing awareness of their existence in order to maintain both an open perspective and a unique personal viewpoint.

Research Design

Case study research.

I chose to use a case study approach, which, according to Stake (1995), is "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). Yin (2009) offers another definition, noting, "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (p. 18). Case study research can include studies of single or multiple cases and can examine both qualitative and quantitative evidence (Yin). Case studies may be used for the purposes of explanation (the most important application), description, exploration, illustration, or enlightenment, and may be motivated by a desire to simply present an individual case or to create broad generalizations (Yin). Stake explains that qualitative case studies may also be classified according to the intention of the case analysis. In a single instrumental case study, the researcher identifies a particular issue or problem and uses one particular case to examine that issue more closely. A collective case study (also known as a multiple case study) uses a number of cases to shed light on the identified issue. In an intrinsic case study, Stake explains, the researcher focuses on a particular case because he or she finds it particularly interesting. I chose to conduct a collective case study, looking at each participant as a separate case and then

comparing those cases to understand first their individual responses and then any similarities that might exist between those responses.

Yin (2009) notes that case study research is generally appropriate when the research questions focus more on *how* and *why* than on “who, what, where, and how many” (p. 9). A case study is a good choice when a researcher is examining contemporary events that he or she cannot control or manipulate (Yin). Because I sought to understand how the participants responded to the print and online texts and why they responded in those ways (both events that could not be controlled or manipulated), a case study approach was an appropriate choice for my research.

A common objection to case study research by those who prefer quantitative methods is the fact that case studies do not, as a rule, lead to scientific generalizations. Yin (2009) responds to this objection by saying that “case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (p. 15). Stake (1995) notes that generalizations will be made within the case, such as a participant repeatedly making a similar response, and that those generalizations will be continually modified to support a common research theme. Case studies may also help to modify grander generalizations, but, Stake (1995) asserts,

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others, but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (p. 7)

Data collection in case study research.

Yin (2009) offers three basic principles to guide data collection. The first principle is to always use multiple sources of evidence, and, in fact, one of the strengths of case study research is that it makes the use of multiple information sources possible. Using a number of sources

enables the researcher to consider a wider range of issues and to develop what Yin (2009) calls “converging lines of inquiry,” a process of triangulation (p. 115). Yin’s second guiding principle is the creation of a case study database which, in essence, requires the researcher to separate the data or evidence base from the research report so that the data can be made available for individual review or assessment by another investigator. This database will generally be comprised of case study notes, documents, transcripts, and tables. Thirdly, Yin recommends that researchers maintain a clear chain of evidence in order to increase the credibility of the information. The research report should frequently cite items from the case study database, such as specific interviews or observations. The database itself should contain the actual evidence and information about the circumstances in which the evidence was collected. The collection circumstances should match the procedures laid out in the research design, and, finally, the research design should be clearly linked to the case study questions. My data collection procedures, described in further detail below, satisfy each of Yin’s three principles. Table 2 shows the data collection procedures used and their links to the research questions.

Table 2

Research Questions and Data Collection Methods

Research Questions and Data Collection Methods	
Research Questions	Data Collection Methods
What kinds of Internet materials connected with printed fiction for young adult readers are being created by authors, publishers, and readers of this fiction? Does this online content fit with Gerard Genette's theory of paratexts? If so, in what way?	Researcher investigation of online materials Researcher's reflective notes
How do teachers respond to the books? How do teachers respond to the associated online materials? How (if at all) do the online materials change the way the teachers think about and respond to the printed texts? How do teachers predict students will respond to the texts and online materials?	Teacher interviews Teacher notes/journals Researcher's reflective notes
How do students respond to the books? How do students respond to the associated online materials? How (if at all) do the online materials change the way students think about and respond to the printed texts?	Student interviews Student notes/journals Researcher's reflective notes
Is there a place for books like these and their associated online content in today's middle years classrooms? If so, how might they be used?	Teacher interviews Teacher notes/journals Student interviews Student notes/journals Researcher's reflective notes

Selection of the literature.

I began my research by reading a number of works of fiction for young adults and exploring the online content that accompanied those texts. The books were not selected by any particularly specific process; rather, I went to the young adult section of the local public library and searched for books whose cover copy made obvious reference to a particular website associated with that book. After preliminary exploration of about 40 novels and a closer look at 10 novel/website combinations, I selected the following four texts for in-depth investigation with middle years

teachers and students: *Thirteen Reasons Why* (Asher, 2007), *Tunnels* (Gordon & Williams, 2008), *The Amanda Project: Invisible I* (Kantor, 2009), and *Across the Universe* (Revis, 2011).

I did not select the books for their perceived value as literature (although each novel has certain literary strengths) but rather for the variety of the online materials associated with them, as well as their accessibility and relevance—I wanted to choose books students might easily pick up for their own pleasure reading. Another goal was to include materials that would appeal to both male and female readers. One of the books has a single female narrator (*The Amanda Project: Invisible I*), and one of the books has a single male protagonist (*Tunnels*). *Across the Universe* is told in alternating chapters by two protagonists, one male and the other female. In *Thirteen Reasons Why*, the thoughts of a central male character alternate with the narration of the female protagonist. While each participating teacher read all four novels, the student participants selected the novels they wanted to read. As none of the students selected *Tunnels*, I do not discuss that book or its associated online materials in the thesis because the examination would be unbalanced without the students' perspective.

Participant recruitment.

Creswell (2007) acknowledges his preference for selecting cases that will provide a variety of perspectives on the issue to be studied, but he also notes that cases may be selected because they are typical, unusual, or simply accessible. Stake (1995) clarifies the selection procedure, saying, “Case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case” (p. 4). The understanding that the cases need not and, indeed, could not represent either the full teacher or student population eased some of my anxiety regarding participant selection. My goal was to recruit 3-5 educators

who taught students in Grades 6-9 and 5-8 students who were enrolled in or had just completed Grades 6-9.

My initial recruitment of teachers was done in person and via telephone and e-mail. I began to recruit middle years teachers by contacting acquaintances in the profession whose contact information I had been given through involvement in community programs, volunteer activities, and professional coursework or professional development sessions. I invited those individuals to participate. I also encouraged them to share the information about the study and to forward my contact information to other middle years teachers who might be interested in participation. (Initial contact scripts are included in Appendix A.) After potential participants expressed interest in participating in the study, they were provided with letters of information and consent (see Appendix C).

I began to recruit students by contacting the parents of a few of my former students who were now in the target demographic. Because I spent several years teaching in a school that grouped students into multi-age classes and encouraged a great deal of parent participation, I had contact information for a number of parents. I encouraged these parents to share the information about the study and to forward my contact information to other parents. (Initial contact scripts are included in Appendix B.) After the parents or guardians of potential participants indicated that their child had expressed interest in joining the study, both parents/guardians and students were provided with letters of information and consent (see Appendix D).

It is important to note that (for the sake of simplicity when only a small number of participants was required) recruitment of teachers and students took place outside the jurisdiction of any school board or district and that the study was not associated with any such board or district. It is also important to understand that, although the participating teachers were previous

acquaintances or colleagues of mine, no teacher in a supervisory position over me was interviewed, nor was I in a position of supervision over any of the teacher participants. None of the participating teachers could be considered close friends of mine. Although the student recruitment process began with families of former students, none of the final student participants had ever been my students, nor did they attend a school in which I was currently or had ever been employed. Thus, I was not in a position of power over any of the participants.

When the recruitment process had been completed, four teachers (Sandra, Leona, Geri, and Megan), who were employed by a range of public and independent schools, and six students (Pauline, Althea, Gail, Ora, Haley, and Aileen), who attended a similar range of schools, had committed to participation. (All names are pseudonyms.) Details about each participant are provided in Chapters Five and Six, which explore the responses of the individual teachers and students as unique cases. The participation of only female teachers and students was a limitation of the investigation.

Signed consent forms were collected from each teacher participant before the interview was conducted. A copy of the consent form was left with each teacher participant. The parents of student participants were asked to indicate the individual books for which they gave approval for their child to read when they completed the consent form. Student participants were asked to sign the consent form before beginning the project and were also asked to initial that consent form before each interview in which they participated in order to indicate their ongoing consent. I collected the signed forms and copies were given to the student participants and parents before the study began. Copies of the initialized consent forms were also given to the student participants upon completion of the study.

Overview of Research Methods

Participating teachers were given personal copies of each novel. The teachers were asked to read each book, explore the online content that accompanies each text, maintain a simple response journal, and participate in an in-depth, in-person interview that covered content associated with each of the four books. The teachers received their books sets in June of 2012, and the interviews took place in July and August of that year. These interviews, which ranged from 70-160 minutes in length, were audio-recorded and transcribed.

My initial plan was for participating students to select one to four of the novels to read (each student was given personal copies of each novel) and then to participate in two focus group sessions for each of the novels they selected. The first of the two in-depth group discussions was to take place before the students explored the online content for that text, and the second discussion was take place after the students explored the online content. Students were to have time to explore the book-related websites together during group sessions, and I had planned to conduct observations during these sessions as well as to make audio recordings of the sessions and transcribe them. At each session, students were also to have been asked to use words, symbols, and pictures to describe their responses and personal connections to the text in a journal.

However, the logistics of my planned investigative procedures proved difficult to implement. Some parents expressed hesitation over what they saw as an overly heavy commitment required for participation in the study. Coordinating the schedules of the students who did wish to participate in the focus groups was nearly impossible. In light of these difficulties, the procedures were modified. Instead of the students participating in focus group discussions, I proposed that they be interviewed individually, before and after exploration of the online

materials for each book they selected, to accommodate diverse schedules. Students were also given the option of being interviewed via Skype rather than in person for added convenience. Student participants were given personal response journals to record thoughts and ideas as they read the novels and as they viewed the online materials. Implementation of the revised plan proved to be less complicated and acceptable to the participants. The students received their book sets in June of 2012. Student interviews began in July and continued through the summer and fall, with the final interview completed in December 2012. The students were interviewed from two to six times each, depending on the number of books they chose to read. The interviews ranged from 20-60 minutes in length. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and I collected each student's response journal when her interviews had been completed.

Thus, the main sources of data were the recorded interviews with the teachers and students and the response journals they maintained. As well, throughout the research process, I maintained a personal reflective journal, making entries after each teacher and student interview and at many stages during the analysis phase.

Interviews.

As in many case studies, the interviewing of participants was my primary method of data collection. Johnson and Turner (2003) define interviews simply as a method in which "the interviewer establishes rapport and asks the interviewee a series of questions" (p. 305). Kvale (1996) explains that interviews are "a specific form of human interaction in which knowledge evolves through a dialogue" (p. 125), and Rabionet (2011) considers interviews to be a "flexible and powerful tool" (p. 563) for capturing the voices and experiences of participants. Although interviews are time-consuming and may be difficult to conduct, they allow the interviewer to ask probing questions that deepen his or her understanding in a way that is not possible with a

questionnaire or survey. The interview conversation with the researcher may also influence the participants' understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Johnson and Turner (2003) explain that interviews can be thought of as existing on a continuum from qualitative to quantitative, ranging from unstructured, informal conversations to highly scripted ones in which questions are read and only preplanned probes or responses are given. The interviews I conducted would best be described as semi-structured or guided. I designed and used specific question guides for the student and teacher interviews (see Appendix E), but I asked non-scripted follow-up questions in order to probe more deeply into participants' emerging responses. The table in Appendix F demonstrates the relationship of the interview questions to the research questions.

Context for interviews.

Kvale (1996) explains that an interviewer must quickly establish rapport with a participant if the conversation is to move beyond a polite exchange of ideas. The subject must feel safe and comfortable enough to talk about personal experiences and emotions. Johnson and Turner (2003) remind interviewers to remain nonjudgmental to the responses of interviewees. Kvale outlines the importance of framing the interview with a briefing before and a debriefing afterward to provide the interviewee with an appropriate sense of context for the interview. Prior to the interviews, I explained the purpose of the interview (to understand the participants' thoughts and ideas), reassured the participants that there were no right or wrong answers, and explained the method by which the interview would be recorded. I also offered the participants the opportunity to ask questions. The debriefings were less formal but included thanks and another opportunity to ask questions.

Although interviewing children and youth presents unique challenges, an interview allows these participants to “give voice to their own interpretations and thoughts rather than rely solely on our adult interpretations of their lives” (Eder & Fingerson, 2001, p. 181). Interviewing also allows researchers a glimpse into important topics that are generally not discussed or addressed in daily conversation and interaction. Before interviewing young people, researchers must consider the power dynamics between adults and youth. Further, Eder and Fingerson highly recommend that researchers interview children as a group rather than as individuals, to help address the power imbalance. Because children learn social knowledge through interaction, interaction with their peers may be the best way for them to share their own meanings and knowledge (Eder & Fingerson). Eder and Fingerson identify several advantages of interviewing children in groups: children are more comfortable and engaged in groups settings, may express a larger range of ideas and build on one another’s thoughts, and tend to be more accurate because they must defend their statements to their peers. As described above, I intended to conduct group interviews with the students. However, during the individual interviews, I remained cognizant of the potential power imbalance and consistently sought to question and respond in a manner that underscored my belief in the value of each student participant’s thoughts and ideas.

Journals.

A second data source was the participants’ personal journals. Each student participant was given a blank journal along with her set of novels and was instructed to use the journal to record as many thoughts, feelings, questions, and ideas generated by her reading of the novels and her exploration of the websites as she wished. Student participants were told that they might use any medium or format they preferred to record their responses, including symbols, diagrams, and drawings, as well as words. I collected the journals from each student after her interviews had

been completed and returned them after analysis if the student had requested that I do so. Two of the students made no entries in their journals, two made simple, text-only entries, and two made extensive entries incorporating drawings and symbols in addition to written ideas.

The teacher participants were given similar instructions to record their responses as they read the novels and explored the websites, although they were not given blank journals. Two of the teachers used word processing documents to type their ongoing responses, one teacher used a notes application on her mobile phone, and one teacher made handwritten notes. None of the adult participants used pictures or symbols to record thoughts or ideas. I collected copies or printouts of each teacher's responses when her interview had been completed. Both students and teachers made reference to their response notes during their interviews.

Reflective journal.

As an additional source of data, I maintained a personal reflective journal in which I recorded my own thoughts and ideas. I noted my initial impressions immediately after each interview, attempting to capture the overall flavour of the participant's responses, my own feelings about those responses, and any ideas I had about the possible meanings the responses might have in relation to the research questions. I continued to make similar reflective entries throughout the analysis process.

Data Analysis

Transcription.

Kvale (1996) asserts that the transcription of interviews is not "a simple clerical task" but rather "an interpretative process" (p. 160). Creating a written text is the beginning of analysis, not a precursor to it. Kvale also points out that a recording produces only a "decontextualized," frozen version of a once-living conversation, obscuring both the setting and the facial and bodily

cues of the participants. Although the added layers of expression and facial/body cues would have provided another interesting element, I chose not to use a video recording process in order to streamline the data analysis.

Transcribing an interview, Kvale (1996) notes, may appear to be straightforward but actually involves several methodical and theoretical problems. One question a researcher must resolve is whether or not to relate the non-verbal aspects of the conversation, such as laughter, sighs, facial expressions, pauses, and changes in tone of voice. Whatever the decisions made, Kvale insists that researchers explicitly report the manner in which their transcriptions were made. Decisions to be reported include whether to transcribe verbatim, including frequent repetitions, or to smooth the comments into a more formal style.

In response to Kvale's (1996) commentary, I acknowledge that the artificiality of the Skype conversations held with students added another dimension of challenge to the student conversations. My decisions regarding the transcriptions of both the in-person and Skype interviews were as follows: for the initial transcriptions, I transcribed word for word, including repetitions and filler words such as "umm." Pauses were indicated by ellipses in the transcript, but the length of individual pauses in seconds was not recorded. Obvious emotional responses, such as distress or laughter, were noted, but less obvious instances (such as changes in facial expression) were not noted because of their frequency. When quotations were used in the final report, the wording was smoothed to eliminate filler words and pauses unless the pauses seemed to be meaningful in some way, such as indicating hesitation to express a thought or idea.

Like Sipe and Ghiso (2004), I printed the transcripts as single-spaced pages with a very large margin on one side and used the margin to write descriptive phrases beside individual comments

as well as footnotes about my own thoughts during the coding process. The transcripts included 115 pages of teacher transcripts and 207 pages of student transcripts.

Qualitative data analysis.

Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) assert that the real purpose of analysis of qualitative research is “to bring meaning, structure, and order” to what may be a “mountain of impressions, documents, transcribed interviews, and field notes” (p. 31). The process of “making sense” (Anfara et al., 2002, p. 31) of it all requires deep concentration and an awareness of and openness to the subtleties of social interaction. Through analysis, the researcher is able to tell the reader about the stories, themes, and patterns of language, thought, and belief that exist in the raw data. Anfara et al. note that there is no single correct process of analysis—qualitative researchers use an eclectic mix of approaches as they work to comprehend piles of data. However, one approach Anfara et al. (2002) recommend is a multi-step process in which the researcher first wrestles the data into “manageable chunks” (p. 32) by assigning names to certain relevant words and actions—in other words, coding. In the second phase, the researcher begins to bring meaning and insight to the codes by grouping them into larger categories according to the themes that connect them. In the third phase, the researcher draws hypotheses from the themes and relates the hypotheses to the research questions. Anfara et al. also recommend *constant comparative analysis*, a technique described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in which participant responses are continually compared within and between categories as codes are assigned to the raw data. As well, Anfara et al. describe Patton’s (1990) view of content analysis—the first task is to take a close look at the words, phrases, and patterns of thought and behaviour that stand out and label them. The explicit description of these steps during data analysis will build the trustworthiness of the study.

In light of the above comments and suggestions, I began my own process of analysis by simply sitting down with the transcripts and journals and reading them carefully and thoroughly several times. I did not mark or notate the transcripts or the text of the journals at all during these initial readings as my purpose was only to become comfortable and familiar with the data. However, I did refer to the reflective notes I made after each interview as I read the transcript of that interview. This referral refreshed my memory of my first thoughts and responses regarding the participants' ideas. I also made additional reflective notes during these readings.

After these preliminary readings, I returned to the transcripts to do what Roulston (2010) and Patton (1990, as cited in Anfara et al., 2002) suggest: see what stands out and label it. Sipe and Ghiso (2004) describe a "cluster of questions" (p. 474) that Sipe repeatedly asks himself during the process of analyzing his research transcripts. Similarly, I developed my own cluster of questions: "What is this teacher or student really trying to say? What does she really think about what she is reading and seeing? How can I describe her ideas most simply?" Kvale (1996) refers to this process of rephrasing interview statements into a few words as *meaning condensation*. I worked with each participant's transcripts separately, attempting to describe statements that seemed meaningful in a single word or a simple phrase (a code). As I finished coding each transcript, I recorded all of the codes I had used to describe that participant's responses in a chart. I also added each teacher's and student's individual codes to two larger code banks, one for teachers and one for students.

Both the teachers' and the students' code banks contained over 100 codes. Before I returned to the transcripts, I spent some time working with these two large code groups, sorting the codes into smaller groups of related ideas, 26 groups for teachers and 32 groups for students. I attempted to identify the concept that best unified the ideas in each of these smaller groups and

then labeled that group with a new code. For example, in the teachers' code bank, I grouped "fluffy read," "serious read," and "popular literature as hook" together as "ideas about good texts" because they were all used to label statements made when teachers were expressing ideas about what made certain types of literature important or valuable. Following this process, I returned to the transcripts, again focusing on each participant separately. I re-coded the teachers' and students' interview transcriptions and written journal responses using the revised code sets I had created by grouping and sorting the preliminary codes. A number of new codes were created at this stage as I began to notice ideas that I had not initially observed. I followed the second round of coding with more sorting and grouping, then approached the transcripts for a final round of coding, during which I relabeled responses according to the newest set of codes. After both the second and third codings, I updated the charts showing all the codes I had assigned to each participant's responses. All of my actions to this point may be seen as part of the first stage in Anfara et al.'s (2002) three-step procedural outline of coding, followed by categorizing and then hypothesizing; however, my sorting and grouping of codes may also be seen as preliminary categorizing. Indeed, Sipe and Ghiso (2004) express that building codes and categories is not a simple or tidy process.

Even with the grouping and re-naming of codes I had done after each round of coding, I still found myself with cumbersome sets of codes for both teachers and students. To create categories that organize large numbers of codes, Sipe and Ghiso (2004) recommend going over the same material repeatedly, gathering descriptive codes into groups if they can be seen to describe different aspects of the same thing. I found this suggestion helpful and completed a similar process, grouping together codes related to what L. Williams (2008) calls "central explanatory concepts" (p. 54). For example, I grouped "self-apology," "self-doubt," "uncertainty

of opinion,” and “change in opinion” together as “impact/influence of others” because each of these codes reflected statements made by students describing their response to reading the opinions of other readers online.

Once the process of categorization was complete, I examined each category carefully, attempting to identify the larger themes and concepts the codes in each category indicated. I returned frequently to my reflective journal to remind myself of the impressions I experienced during and after each interview and of the initial interpretations of the participants’ responses I recorded immediately after our conversations. Sometimes these journal consultations confirmed the interpretations I was making at this stage in the formal analysis; at other times, I was reminded of alternate interpretations I had made or of additional questions I had asked. I also continued to make journal entries throughout this process regarding my thoughts about the concepts I believed were developing. As an example simplifying the movement from categorization to theme development, I grouped the following list of student codes into a single category: interest in graphics, interest in symbols, inner visualization of characters, visuals don’t match mental image, visuals change thoughts, fear of change in thought, audio creates connection, visuals create connection, video creates connection. Each of these codes had something to do with the students’ response to audio or visual content on the websites they investigated. Looking back at my reflective journal reminded me of the strength of the students’ responses to the audio and visuals they encountered online and of the emotions that surrounded these responses. At different times, every student participant expressed a strong interest in or a strong positive or negative reaction to these online materials, so I decided that the theme that fit best with my interpretations of the students’ responses was “strong response to audio and visual

materials.” A chart simplifying the categorization and hypothesization process for some of the other student themes may be viewed in Appendix G.

At this stage, I also began to label the students’ and teachers’ responses according to their connection with the research questions. I created another set of charts which allowed me to cut the participants’ labeled responses from the digital versions of the transcripts and paste them into groupings according to their relevance to the research questions. For example, I moved Megan’s comment “I wasn’t sure whether it was for the kids’ benefit or the author’s benefit” (coded as “uncertainty of purpose”) into the column I labeled “Teachers’ Response to Websites.” This additional grouping highlighted the most relevant responses of each individual and allowed me to see which codes and themes occurred most often in relation to each research question.

The charting processes which occurred throughout these different stages proved invaluable during the cross-case analysis phase, in which I searched for themes shared between individual participants and then between the teachers and students. Cross-case analysis is important because it allows new knowledge to be created through the process of comparing and contrasting cases—identifying similarities and differences between cases can deepen the researcher’s understanding of the overarching questions and “mobilize knowledge” from the individual cases (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008, n.p.). The code charts I made for each participant at each coding stage helped me to determine which codes were present in the responses of multiple participants. By cross-referencing the charts with my reflective journal, I was also able to determine which themes I sensed to be the most common at each stage in the analysis. One of the final entries in my reflective journal centered around Sipe and Ghiso’s (2004) comment that there are often many moments of both “insight and confusion” (p. 478) during the analysis of

qualitative research. While the moments of confusion initially appeared to outnumber the moments of insight, I believe some valuable ideas emerged through the analysis process.

I present my findings as 10 separate cases, outlining the responses of the four teachers individually in Chapter Five, and then discussing the responses of the six students in Chapter Six. Chapters Five and Six also include discussions of the similarities the teachers shared and the similarities the students shared, discovered through the process of cross-case analysis, and the themes shared between both students and teachers, also determined through the cross-case analysis, are discussed in Chapter Seven.

Trustworthiness.

Anfara et al. (2002) review key aspects of the debate surrounding quality and rigour in qualitative research. They explain how early discussions about trustworthiness or validity tended to focus on internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity—issues typically of concern in quantitative studies. Anfara et al. discuss Lincoln and Guba's (1982) alternative but corresponding criteria—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Shenton (2004) explains the concepts in the following ways. Credibility asks whether or not the findings are in line with reality, and transferability asks whether or not the researcher has provided enough contextual information for the reader to determine when the results might be transferable to another situation and when they should not be transferred. Dependability refers to whether or not the processes are reported in enough detail that a future researchers could replicate the study, and confirmability asks whether or not the researcher has done as much as possible to determine that findings are based on the experiences and ideas of the participants, not the thoughts of the researcher. Anfara et al. assert that one of the strongest responses to criticisms regarding a possible lack of quality and rigour in qualitative research is for researchers to make all aspects of

their research processes open and public. Increased visibility and transparency allows readers and critics to determine the academic rigour of the data collection and analysis procedures.

Shenton (2004) outlines a number of suggestions for ensuring the credibility of a study. First, he recommends the use of established research methods and procedures, methods that have proven successful in similar projects. Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori (2011) explain that most qualitative research is based on interviews, because interviews allow researchers to connect with “areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible, such as people’s subjective experiences and attitudes” (p. 529). My decision to conduct interview research was based on this premise. Shenton also recommends triangulation of data collection methods, a recommendation underscored by Anfara et al. (2002), as using multiple methods may help compensate for the weaknesses of certain methods and capitalize on the strengths of each method. Although I was not able to collect the observational data I had originally planned, the teacher interviews, teacher response journals, student interviews, student response journals, and my own reflective notes provided multiple sources of data. Further, Shenton notes that triangulation may occur when participants come from diverse backgrounds or different sites. Each teacher participant taught at a different school in a different western Canadian city and both public and independent schools were represented. Student participants also attended a variety of public and independent schools in several western Canadian cities.

According to Shenton (2004), credibility is also strengthened when individuals approached as potential participants are given the opportunity to refuse, thus ensuring that the only ones involved in the project are those who truly want to be involved. In my situation, potential participants were given information about the study, and then asked to contact me if they were interested in taking part. The extra effort required to contact me (or, in the case of the students,

to request that their parents contact me) helped to ensure that only those who were truly interested joined the inquiry. The right of participants to withdraw at any point without giving any reason, another credibility enhancer described by Shenton, was also clearly communicated in the information and consent form. Furthermore, my pre-interview briefing included a reassurance that I was seeking only to understand the participants' true thoughts and feelings and that there were no right or wrong answers. These reassurances, Shenton notes, also build the credibility of a study.

Credibility can also be established by the researcher's own critical reflection on the project as it progresses (Shenton, 2004). I carefully maintained a reflective journal for this purpose. Shenton also asserts that member checking can do much to build a study's credibility. Participants may be asked to verify if the transcriptions of their interviews are accurate or to verify the researcher's theories and inferences or to offer explanations or reasons for patterns noted by the researcher. I offered each participant (both teachers and students) the opportunity to view their own transcripts and to read the description of their own case. One teacher (Leona) and one student (Gail) requested to view their interview transcripts. Both Leona and Gail affirmed that their transcripts were an accurate representation of our conversations. However, none of the teachers or students accepted my invitation to view their own case descriptions, citing such reasons as, "I just don't want to know what you wrote about me!"

Finally, Shenton (2004) explains that detailed description of the phenomena being studied may also boost credibility considerably as it helps the reader to gain a sense of the veracity of the findings. I attempted to include thorough descriptions in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. Anfara et al. (2002) recommend the establishment of a case study database and a clear chain of evidence. Yin (2009) explains that a case study database separates the data or evidence base

from the research report so that the data may be made available for individual review or assessment by another investigator. This database is generally comprised of case study notes, documents, and transcripts. I amalgamated my research information into this type of database, which consists of the marked and coded transcripts of each conversation with each participant, digitized versions of the participants' personal notes and journals (also marked and coded), my reflective journal, and the code banks and charts I created to organize my ideas at each stage in the analysis. Yin also explains that a clear chain of evidence is created when the research report frequently cites items from the case study database, such as specific interviews or observations. I attempted to use the specific words of the participants as often as possible when writing the research report. Anfara et al. provide strong examples of different types of documentation tables which may be used to explain the ways in which research questions are related to the data sources, the processes of developing codes, categories, and themes, and methods of ensuring triangulation. I modeled my organizational charts on those shown by Anfara et al. (see Appendix G) in order to help make my analysis processes explicit. Kvale (1996) notes that revealing specific interview protocols (see Appendix E) may allow readers to determine the strength of the relationships among the interview questions (the data source), the research questions, and the themes developed.

Delimitations.

Due to the constraints of time (significant time was required to conduct, transcribe, and analyze the interviews for each participant) and expense (each participant received new copies of four novels), I decided to examine a smaller number of participant cases in greater depth, rather than attempt to involve a wider range of participants. I also chose to make and analyze only

audio recordings for the interviews. While video recordings would have provided more information, the analysis of that information might have been overwhelming.

Another delimitation was my decision not to examine the current research surrounding Web 2.0 applications in literacy education. While this topic is certainly relevant to my research, I chose to focus on the novels as literature and on the online materials as paratexts of that literature. I further delimited my study by not addressing issues of identity and of gender identity. An unintentional limitation of the study was the fact that no male teachers or students volunteered to participate in the study.

Researcher's stance.

In the opinion of Sipe and Ghiso (2004), when researchers “hide” themselves in their own writing, using the passive voice and phrases such as “the analysis revealed” and “transcripts were coded and analyzed” (p. 474), the positioning of the researcher is obscured, sometimes in an attempt to present the analysis as objective and abstract, not connected with or contaminated by human emotion or experience. Creswell (2007) also asserts that researchers must acknowledge that “research is value-laden and that biases are present” (p. 17), openly sharing the personal values that may have influenced the interpretation of the research data. Creswell goes on to explain that each researcher also brings a particular paradigm or worldview to the inquiry, or perhaps several compatible or complementary worldviews.

Aspects of my personal identity and life experience certainly influenced both my approach to the investigation and my interpretation and understandings of the findings. As an adolescent, I was an exceptionally enthusiastic reader of young adult fiction and I carried my love for literature into my adult years. While young adult literature is no longer the mainstay of my leisure reading, I continue to enjoy browsing the teen sections of libraries and bookstores. As an

educator, I want to remain knowledgeable about current trends and authors, but I also simply appreciate these books and find value in them. When I completed Grades 6-9, current novels featuring students who faced contemporary issues and challenges were never included in the language arts curriculum. I can only imagine the enthusiasm and motivation I might have felt if these types of books had been included. With these thoughts in mind, I acknowledge my personal belief that these books have a significant place in the language arts curriculum. I champion not only their inclusion but also the offering of choice to students about which genres and novels they would like to read and work with.

Throughout this investigation, I have continued to embrace the social constructivist worldview from which I approach my work as an educator. Creswell (2007) explains that researchers who identify with this paradigm generally strive for “understanding of the world in which they live and work” and believe that the meanings of the experiences they desire to understand may be complex, manifold, and diverse (p. 20). These individuals focus a great deal of their attention and energy on the participants’ views and recognize that these views have been created through a web of social interactions within cultural and historical contexts. Patterns of meaning are developed inductively and refined as the inquiry progresses. Reminding myself of my own beliefs throughout the analysis process enabled me to relax my own thoughts, saturate myself with the words and ideas of the participants, and open myself to the messiness and complexity of human responses.

Conclusion

Although the study did not unfold as had I originally planned, the modified design allowed the participation of students who might not otherwise have been able to share their thoughts and ideas with me. The qualitative design of the study enabled me to begin building a better

understanding of the research questions by focusing intently on the responses of a small group of participants. The semi-structured interview format made it possible for me to engage in fairly natural conversation with the teachers and students, enabling them to freely express their opinions and ideas concerning the novels they read and the websites they investigated. Finally, my careful analysis procedures allowed me to be reasonably confident that my report accurately reflects the responses of the participants. In Chapter Four, I provide more detailed information about the books and websites investigated in the study and discuss the work of Gerard Genette (1997) in relation to these printed and online texts.

Chapter Four

Description of Books and Online Content

One of the first questions I asked when beginning this project was, “What kinds of Internet materials connected with printed fiction for young adult readers are being created by authors, publishers, and readers of this fiction?” One possible way to view and analyze these materials is through the use of Gerard Genette’s (1997) theories about paratexts. In this chapter I first provide a brief overview of the types of online materials that currently exist before describing the novels read by the teacher and student participants in the study. The short summaries of each novel are followed by a brief discussion of those Radical Change (Dresang, 1999) and postmodern characteristics that are evident in each book and a more detailed description of the various websites connected with each novel. Finally, I discuss the basics of Genette’s theories and some recent commentary on his ideas, and then describe the connections I see between Genette’s theories and the Internet materials I examined.

Overview of Book-related Online Materials

Before discussing the connections between Genette’s (1997) work and the specific Internet materials I examined, it is important to understand the types of materials that currently exist. Preliminary investigation of a number of books and related websites (10 of which are outlined in Appendix H) revealed great variety in both type and depth of content available online. Books that were accompanied by online materials were usually—but not always—part of a series or trilogy, indicating that the sites were likely developed, at least in part, for commercial reasons. The associated sites nearly always included images of and information about the next or upcoming books in the series and often had links to websites through which the newer books could be purchased. The sites demonstrated a wide range of ratios of content created by the

author, publisher, and readers—some sites were dominated by readers’ comments; others offered little or no content from readers. Some authors shared at length their creative processes and writing journeys on personal or professional websites and blogs; others offered no information on this topic. Many sites included links to pages created for the book or the author on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Some authors offered direct contact information such as an e-mail address; other authors interacted extensively with readers on the social networking sites or through the comments featured on their blogs; some appeared not to interact with readers at all. The sites presented a wide range of options for readers to generate content: some sites allowed readers to post comments or mini-reviews directly; others encouraged reader comments through specific questions posted on social networking sites. Some sites appeared to have fostered a distinct sense of community among readers, who interacted with one another multiple times, while other sites demonstrated little or no interaction among readers. Certain sites provided extra information about the events or characters within the books but many did not. A more specific examination of the particular materials used in the study follows.

Overview of Books and Websites Used in the Study

To better understand both the nature of the online materials and the student and teacher participants’ responses to those materials, it is necessary to be familiar with the books that were read and examined by the participants. As described in Chapter Three, the books (see Figure 1) were selected for variety of genre, characters, and the online materials associated with them. Although choosing novels with characteristics of Radical Change or postmodern texts was not a specific intention during my selection process, each of the three novels chosen by the students has features typical of both these types of texts. Tables 3 and 4 provide a visual summary of the characteristics present in each novel, and more detailed descriptions follow in the segments on

each novel. Table 3 is based on the characteristics of Radical Change texts described by Dresang (1999, pp. 19-26), and Table 4 is based on a list of metafictional devices associated with postmodern texts shared by Pantaleo (2008, pp. 191-192).

Figure 1. Covers of the selected novels.

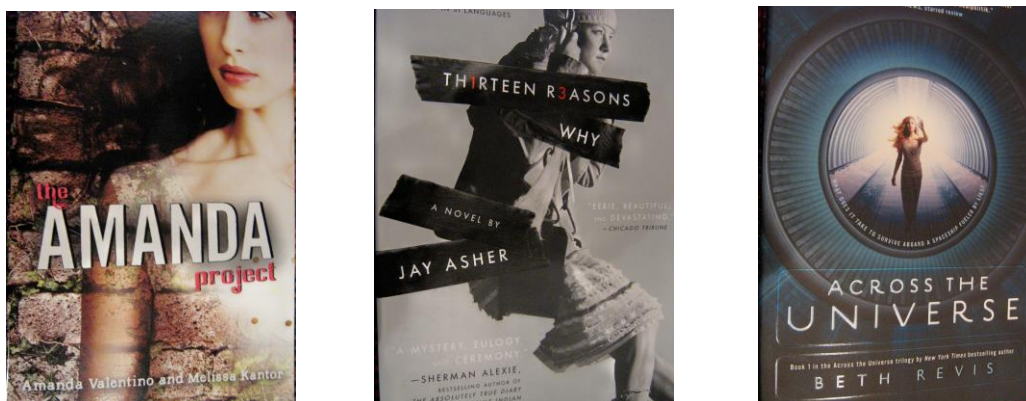


Table 3

Radical Change Characteristics Evident in the Novels

Radical Change Characteristics		<i>Across the Universe</i>	<i>The Amanda Project: Invisible I</i>	<i>Thirteen Reasons Why</i>
Change in Form or Format	use of interactive format		✓	
	nonlinear or nonsequential organization or format		✓	
	graphics in new forms or formats			
Change in Perspectives	story told from multiple perspectives	✓		✓
	inclusion of previously unheard voices			✓
	youth “speak for themselves”	✓	✓	✓
	inclusion of difficult or previously unconsidered perspectives	✓		✓
	use of different modes to share perspectives		✓	
Change in Boundaries	discussion of subjects previously considered taboo	✓		✓
	story set in overlooked place or time			
	complex characters	✓		✓
	unresolved ending		✓	✓

Table 4

Postmodern Characteristics Evident in the Novels

Postmodern Characteristics (Metafictive Devices)	<i>Across the Universe</i>	<i>The Amanda Project: Invisible I</i>	<i>Thirteen Reasons Why</i>
story told by multiple narrators	✓		✓
story includes multiple interconnected narrative strands		✓	
use of narrative framing devices			✓
narrator addresses readers directly			
non-linear plot			
non-sequential plot		✓	
inclusion of intertextuality		✓	
typographical experimentation		✓	✓
parody of other texts			
unusual design or layout			✓
apparent gaps in the narrative	✓		
possibility of multiple interpretations			✓
ambiguous ending	✓	✓	✓

The Amanda Project: Invisible I (Melissa Kantor, 2009)

The story, told in the young, naïve voice of Callie O’Leary, begins with Callie, Hal, and Nia, ninth-graders from very different social circles, being called to the office of the vice-principal on suspicion of vandalism to the vice-principal’s car. Although they are innocent, Callie, Hal, and Nia are given detentions and asked to clean up the mess. As the three students scrub strange chalk pastel designs from the administrator’s car, they discover that they were all secret friends of Amanda Valentino, a student new to the school that year who frequently surprised everyone with her outrageous costumes and unusual ideas. While initially hostile to one another, the trio find themselves drawn together when it becomes apparent that Amanda has disappeared but seems to be leaving odd clues for them about where she might be. By the end of the story, the

three adolescents seem no closer to Amanda but have become firm friends and have created a website for others to share stories and experiences about Amanda as the search for her continues. Woven through the story are flashbacks to Callie's earlier friendship with Amanda, in which readers learn about recent trauma to Callie's own family—her mother's departure and her father's devastation and descent into alcoholism. A secondary plot line follows a student who was disfigured in a car accident caused by one of Callie's friends from the popular crowd; Callie must decide whether or not to reveal what she knows about the accident.

The text is sprinkled with intertextual pop culture references (YouTube, TV shows, and Hollywood actors) as well as snippets from other print texts (including Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* and Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*)—a feature which may be considered postmodern. Handwritten notes and cell phone text messages are interspersed throughout the text and are indicated by different fonts—a format that is now very common in contemporary texts for young adults but may still be considered one of the changes in format typical of Radical Change texts. Typographical experimentation is also a feature shared by some texts described as postmodern. The plot is somewhat nonlinear, with flashbacks and memories used to create secondary storylines. The book's ending is ambiguous—Amanda has not been found, the mysteries are piling up, and there is no sense of closure, but rather an expansion of possibility with the creation of the website. Both nonlinearity and unresolved or ambiguous endings are features considered to be characteristic of both postmodern and Radical Change texts.

Coles and Hall (2001) mention the breaking down of barriers between authors, readers, and characters in postmodern texts. The Amanda Project website asked readers to create characters and build stories together online, and then incorporated some of those stories into the next books

in the series. In this series, the characters are the authors and readers were asked to become characters themselves and thus authors of the story as it developed. A blurring of online and print formats is evident, as the online story eventually became the print story. Puhr (1992) mentions the intentional ambiguity in postmodern texts of the identity of authors and narrators and their relationship to the text, an ambiguity certainly evident in this text.

Websites Associated with *The Amanda Project: Invisible I*

The final chapter of the book finds Hal, Callie, and Nia working together with Hal's sister Cornelia to launch a website called The Amanda Project, located at www.theamandaproject.com. The characters hope that students who knew Amanda will come forward with stories and ideas about Amanda that might help them to find her. The book ends with Cornelia pressing "launch" and Hal saying, "No way to turn back now" (p. 288). The back cover of the book also states, below the book summary, "Read the book. Join the website. Create a character. Help us tell the story. www.theamandaproject.com." A QR (datamatrix) code gives quick access to the mobile version of the website for those using mobile phones.

The home page of the Amanda Project website (see Figure 2) echoes the graphic styling of the book, using the same embellished font and the same curling vines accented by flowers and birds. Tabs at the top of the home page are labeled Our Stories, Zine, Debate, Books, Quiz, Oracle, and Shop. A large banner reads, "Become a character, get published." A short embedded video, narrated by several teen voices, provides an overview of the project, ending with, "The book can be in our real lives and our online lives. This is going to be so amazing."

Figure 2. Home page of *The Amanda Project*.

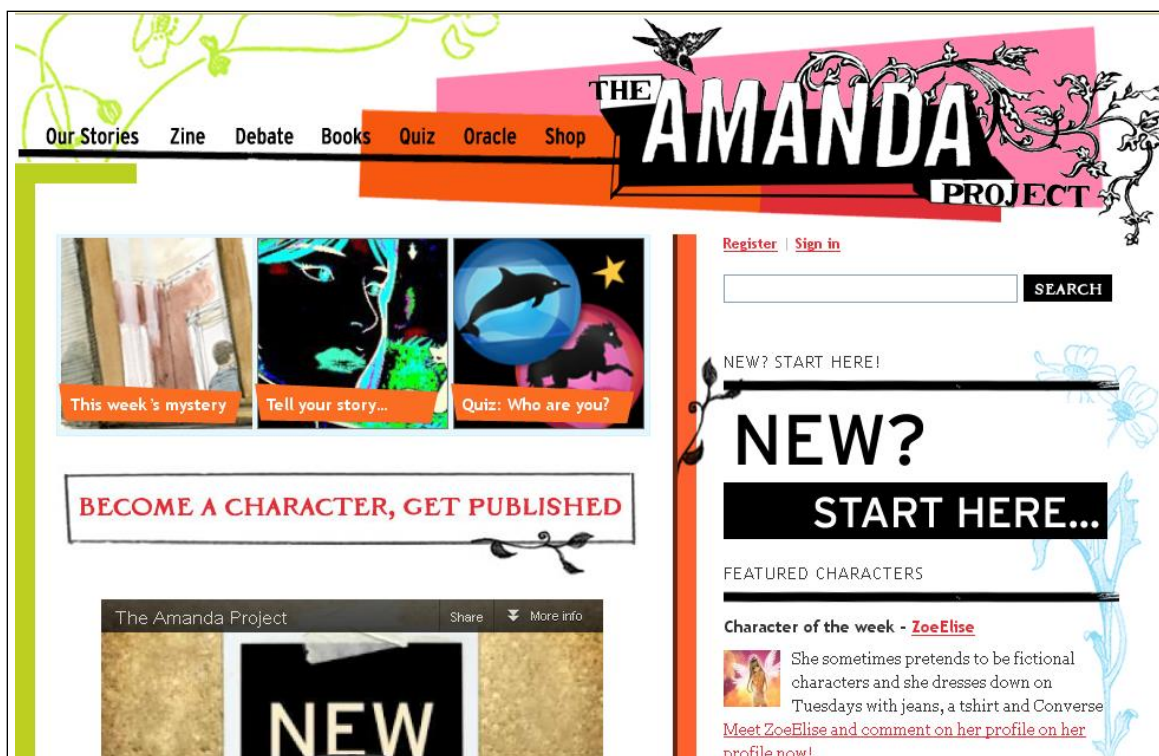


Image retrieved from <http://www.theamandaproject.com> on November 30, 2012

The “New? Start here” link takes browsers to a description page that explains the basic premises of the site and includes some frequently asked questions and answers. Scrolling down the home page reveals a post dated June 16, 2012, which details the history of the project and explains that it has now concluded. The latter post did not exist when I began this project—when I selected the book, I did not realize the *Amanda Project* site was in its final stages.

A sidebar on the home page includes links to whimsical profiles for the authors of the first and second books in the series and to a 29-page, downloadable guide for teachers and librarians that provides suggestions for using the novel to explore identity and characterization. Most of these class activities revolve around students creating characters on the website and making posts in different areas of the website.

The “Our Stories” section of the website appears to be the most frequently visited area. There are 16 pages of post topics created weekly between March 2009 and June 2012. Each topic generates anywhere between 20-130 responses. Usually created by Hal, Callie, or Nia, each post begins with a story of some kind and then asks for participants’ thoughts, ideas, or interpretations of the events described in the post. Some of these posts refer to texts that are available only online; others direct readers back to the book itself. On June 16, 2012, a post was made by “Amanda Valentino” herself, in which she addresses “My dearest, daring detectives,” sharing memories (but not revealing where she has been or where she is now) and thanking each participant for having faith in her and helping her. Two days later, another “Our Stories” post was created by “Hal Bennett,” describing the discovery of a mural that appears to have been painted by Amanda and includes the Beatles’ lyric, “Come together, right now, over me” and the words “see you soon.” These posts generated numerous responses, ranging from nostalgic to incredulous to disappointed to angry. Clearly, a sense of community had developed amongst the participants, and the loss of that community, coupled with the lack of resolution to the mystery, was distressing for some participants.

Clicking on the “Debate” tab at the top of the homepage brings the browser to a list of different Amanda-related forums, each with a number of different threads in which readers may post and respond. In the “Debate” forums, the responses tend to be more personal and less text/story-oriented than the responses in the “Our Stories” section. The “Zine” section of the website, which allows site members to view and submit art and writing, includes 788 pages of posted submissions, including poems, photographs, paintings, and drawings. The “Quiz” tab offers a short multiple-choice quiz for participants to determine which totem animal Amanda would have assigned to them (in the novel, she gives Hal, Callie, and Nia each their own totem

animal). The “Oracle” section allows participants to request one of Amanda’s homemade “oracle cards” (referenced in the novel) with a picture, a famous quotation, and some horoscope-like advice. The “Books” area shows photos of the first two books in the series and provides additional information such as release dates. Finally, the “Shop” provides links for the purchases of Amanda’s favourite songs on iTunes, as well as Amanda Project clothing, buttons, and jewelry. Following the “TAP Books” link leads to the HarperCollins website where readers can find purchase information for the books.

In addition to the main Amanda Project website, pages for the Amanda Project exist on MySpace and Facebook. The Amanda Project Facebook page had nearly 5,000 “likes” as of December 2012. Recent posts from participants include requests to other former Amanda Project participants to be added as Facebook friends, since the site is no longer accepting posts outside of the “Zine” section. Official content on the page includes weekly links to the “Our Stories” section of the official site as well as a featured member profile each week.

Thirteen Reasons Why (Jay Asher, 2007)

The actual timeframe of *Thirteen Reasons Why* is less than 24 hours, but the story reaches back and forth in time. High school student Clay Jensen comes home one afternoon to find a shoebox-sized package, addressed to him, on his front step. Inside the box are seven cassette tapes, with sides numbered from 1 to 13. Clay locates an old cassette player and begins to listen to the first tape. He is shocked and horrified to recognize the voice of Hannah Baker, a classmate who committed suicide two weeks earlier. Hannah’s introduction to the tapes explains that she has 13 stories to tell (one per cassette side) and a list of 13 people who should receive the tapes because of their involvement in her story. When each person finishes, he or she is to mail the package to the next person. Clay spends the evening and much of the night wandering

through town and listening to the tapes, visiting the places Hannah mentions, using a map he found in his locker the week before Hannah’s death along with a note that read, “SAVE THIS—YOU’LL NEED IT.” (An image of this map is printed on the inside of the front and back covers of the book—see Figure 3.) The tapes reveal the interactions Hannah had with her classmates, interactions that ultimately led to her decision to take her own life. Hannah’s stories, often angry and accusatory, address a number of relevant topics, including malicious gossip and rumours, sexual harassment and assault, and the complicated relationships between friends of both genders. Clay alone is mentioned on the tapes for his kindness, rather than his harmful actions. Hannah’s narration of the 13 stories focuses on their interrelatedness and the connections between each one, explaining how a thoughtless word or action may have far-reaching effects.

Figure 3. Town map (printed inside front cover of *Thirteen Reasons Why*).



Thirteen Reasons Why exhibits a number of postmodern and Radical Change characteristics. The dual-narration format of the book is somewhat unusual—we “hear” Hannah’s voice from the tapes, interspersed with Clay’s own thoughts in response, with the various perspectives indicated by different fonts, sometimes alternating line by line or phrase by phrase. The telling of a story from multiple perspectives or by multiple narrators is a feature of both Radical Change and

postmodern texts. The tapes themselves are an interesting narrative framing device. (Such framing devices may be characteristic of texts with postmodern features.) Hannah's stories are situated within the framework of Clay's listening to the tapes through one long evening and into the night. Hannah's narrative stops and starts as Clay moves around town, talking to various people, borrowing a friend's Walkman (portable cassette player) so he can move and listen at the same time, sitting at the café where Hannah used to visit with her friends, walking to the locations and intersections she mentions. Hannah's stories also move back and forth in time, with a general linear organization starting from her arrival in town during the summer before her ninth grade year. The story may be seen to lack closure, as it ends with Clay simply saying the name of Skye, another "loner" girl who tends to avoid people and with whom Clay has never spoken but now feels a distinct connection after hearing Hannah's story—but does not reveal the final outcome as the tapes move from person to person. As mentioned previously, one of Dresang's (1999) *Radical Change* characteristics is a change in perspective or the telling of a story with a previously unheard voice—a voice from a time, place, or culture not generally represented in literature. The point of view of a young woman who has committed suicide, while not uncommon, may still be considered a new perspective. The cassette tape format with the dual voices present on the page may be considered a new form or format, as readers are essentially taken inside two minds at the same time. The candidness with which Hannah describes her own sexual assault represents the ongoing stretching of boundaries beyond the "safer" topics editors and educators traditionally considered appropriate for young adults.

Websites Associated with *Thirteen Reasons Why*

The back cover copy of the novel directs readers to www.thirteenreasonswhy.com. The homepage of this site features updates such as information about the book's presence on the *New York Times* bestseller list and the creation of the *Thirteen Reasons Why* (13RW) online scrapbook. A "Buy Now" button leads to purchase information. A sidebar includes a direct link to the 13RW project as well as a rotating selection of short, positive reader reviews and a comment box in which a browser may write his or her own brief review.

The tab at the top of the home page labelled "The Book" leads to a synopsis of the book, a short excerpt, and a discussion guide with questions for book clubs. The "Author" tab leads to a brief author bio and provides links to audio podcasts in which Jay Asher gives a "book report" on *Thirteen Reasons Why* from his perspective as its author and is interviewed about the book by two of his friends. A link to Jay Asher's personal MySpace page reveals no recent commentary, but the photos section includes covers of *Thirteen Reasons Why* from around the world as well as real-life photographs of places that inspired the locations in the book. The tab reading "Jay's Blog" leads to Jay Asher's blog, which features slightly more detailed biographical information, a speaking schedule, updates on the progress of *Thirteen Reasons Why* into a movie and media interviews. Asher does not advertise a Twitter feed on these sites.

The tab marked "The Tapes" leads to a page with links to a video for each story Hannah tells in the book (see Figure 4). The videos are simple, showing only a small portable tape recorder and a hand inserting a cassette tape (numbered in the right hand corner with blue nail polish, just as the book describes) into the recorder. When the hand presses the "play" button, a voice (young, with wry overtones) begins to speak Hannah's words from the book. These same videos may also be accessed through the YouTube link shared on the back cover of the book.

Figure 4. “The Tapes” page of the *Thirteen Reasons Why* website.

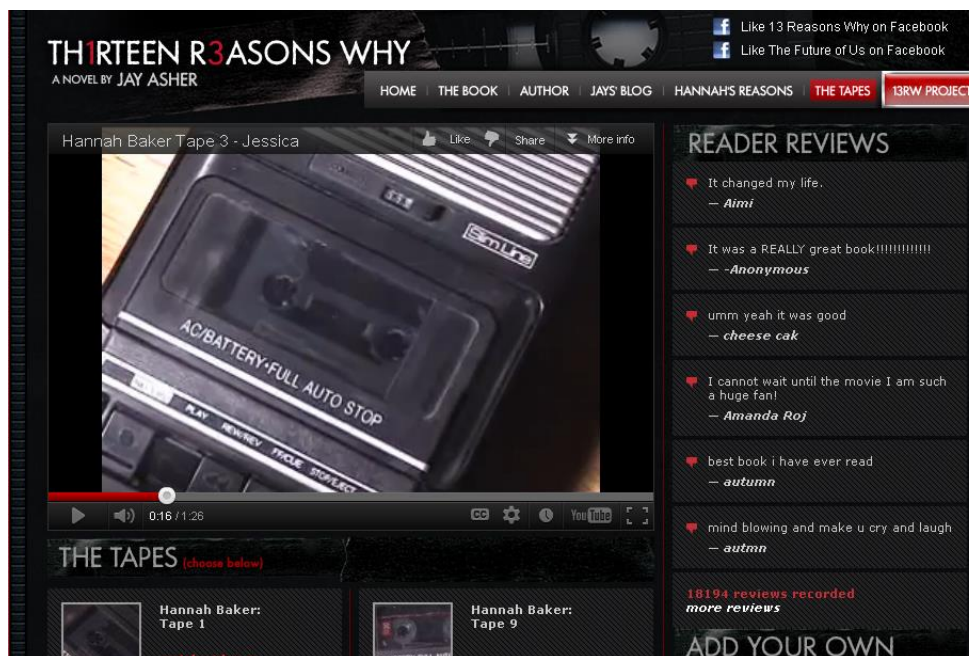


Image retrieved from <http://thirteenreasonswhy.com/tapes.php> on December 4, 2012

The tab “Hannah’s Reasons” on the main webpage leads to a blogspot.com page where the posts are signed “Hannahsfriend13.” Posts on the blog include the cassette tape videos and other images related to events in the book, such as a police incident report, a suicide prevention brochure, and a snapshot of key characters Bryce Walker and Justin Foley. Readers interact using the blog’s comments feature. Most of the comments surround the main themes of the book: bullying, rumours, gossip, suicide, and the interconnectedness of human actions.

Also at the top of the homepage is a link to the *Thirteen Reasons Why* Facebook page, which had nearly 250,000 “likes” in December 2012, perhaps because the book was listed on the *New York Times*’ bestsellers list for over two years. Recent posts by page administrators ask specific questions, most surrounding aspects of bullying. Each of the questions generates large numbers of “likes” (100-400) and 20-100 comments. Some of the questions make specific references to characters or events from the text; others are more general. Earlier posts on the page are

quotations from the book paired with a poignant photo (see Figure 5). Each of these posts tends to generate 300-1,000 “likes” and 20-100 comments. Page administrators also post updates about new editions and author tours.

Figure 5. Images posted on *Thirteen Reasons Why* Facebook page.

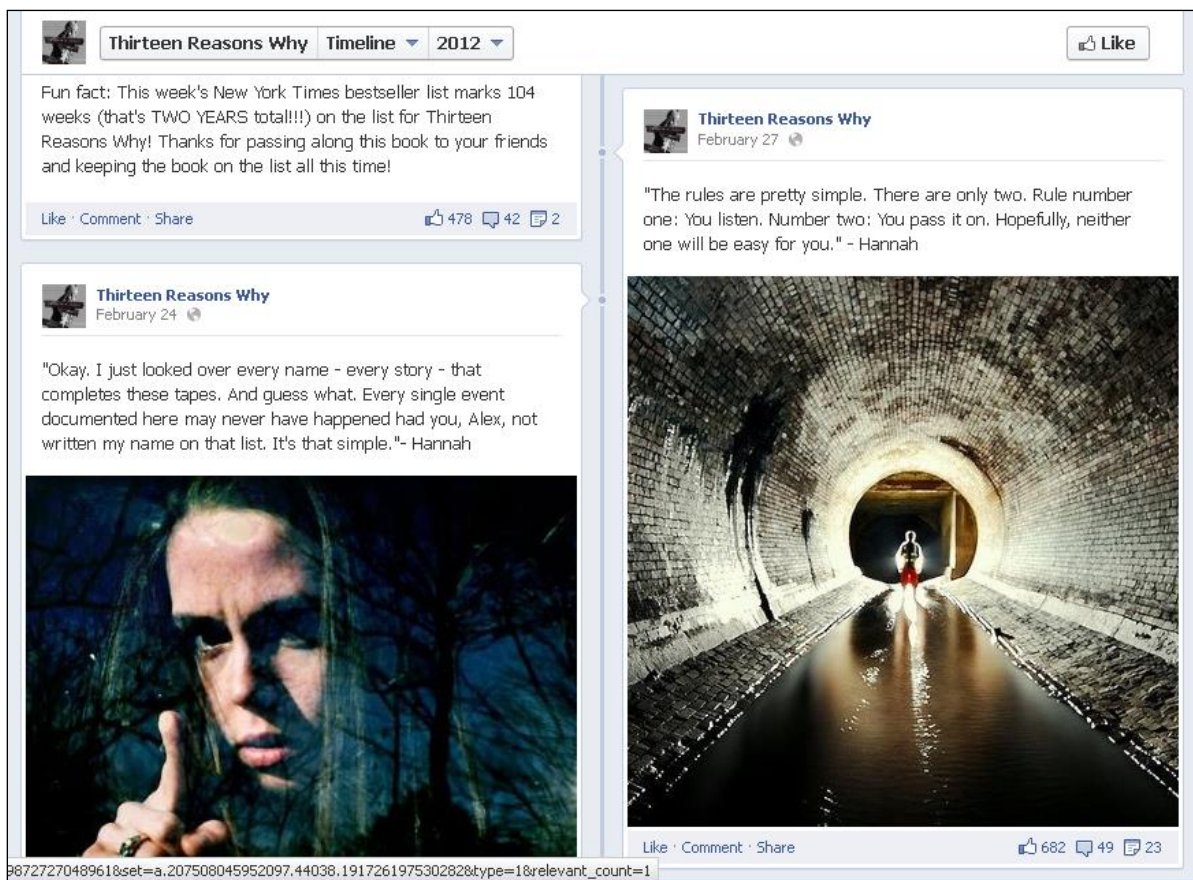


Image retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/thirteenreasonswhybook> on December 4, 2012

The 13RW Project (www.13RWproject.com) is an online scrapbook of responses to the book (see Figure 6). Some responses are simply text; others include photographs, artwork, and videos. Some of the videos are complex and expertly done, weaving segments from the tape videos with montages of other video clips; others are simple webcam videos of students sharing their thoughts. No option for commenting on specific posts is available.

Figure 6. Page from the *Thirteen Reasons Why* Project.

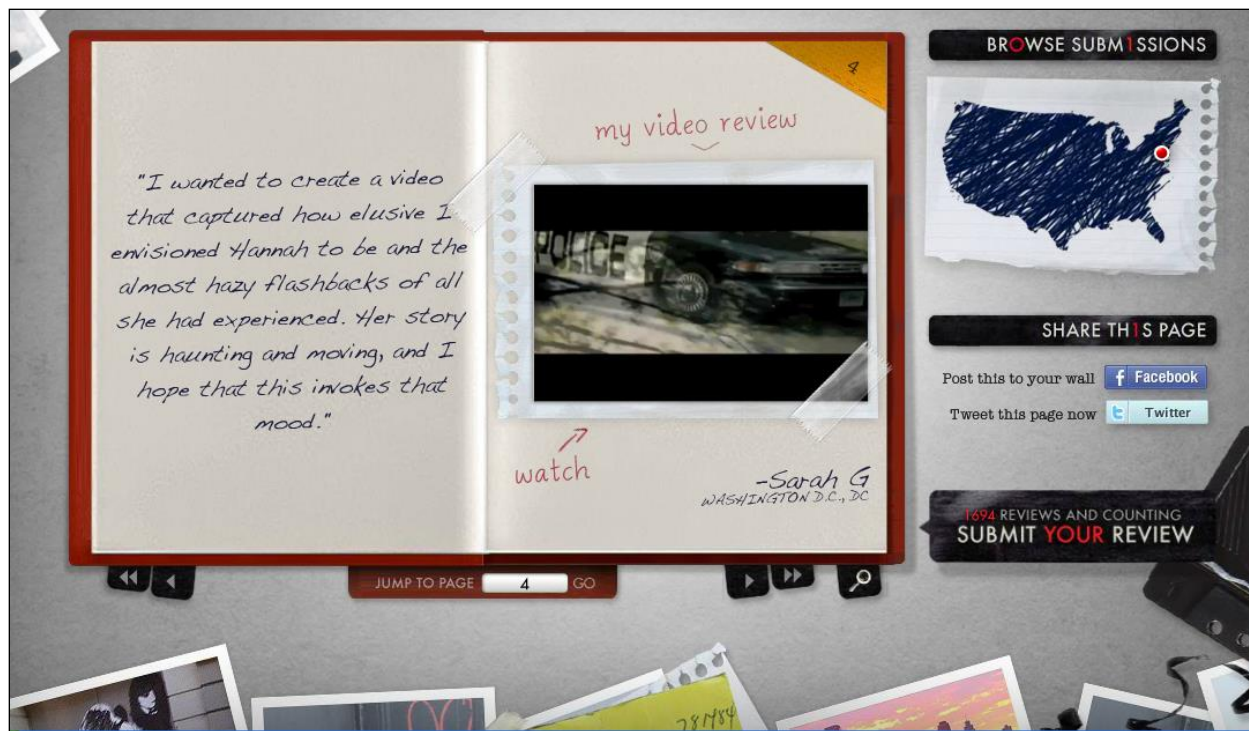


Image retrieved from <http://www.13rwproject.com/#/reviews/4> on December 4, 2012

***Across the Universe* (Beth Revis, 2011)**

Across the Universe, a futuristic novel, opens with an unsettling scene in which 16-year-old Amy watches lab technicians prepare her biologist mother and military tactician father for cryogenic freezing prior to what is intended to be a 300-year-long journey to a new planet, Centauri-Earth, aboard a generation ship, the *Godspeed*. Although Amy has the option of remaining on Earth, she chooses to join her parents in the painful, invasive process so that she can be awoken at the journey's end for life on the new planet.

The next chapter of the novel is narrated by Elder, a teenage boy born on *Godspeed* and primed from childhood to take over the leadership of the ship when the current leader, known only as Eldest, dies. Frustrated by Eldest's seeming reluctance to teach him anything relevant to his future life as ship's leader, Elder begins his own research, eventually discovering a hidden

level on the ship, where he finds storage lockers full of cryogenically frozen bodies and one storage box that has been improperly unplugged and unfrozen—Amy’s. Elder and the ship’s physician are able to reanimate her in time and bring her up to the living levels on the ship. As Amy adjusts to her new, contained life on the ship, other “frozens” are mysteriously unplugged and left to die. Amy and Elder search for answers and discover that Elder has been told lie after lie his whole life; in fact, nearly all the ship’s passengers have been kept in a drug-induced state that renders them docile and compliant. The book ends with Elder and Amy making a startling discovery about the identity of the person who has unplugged the frozens but also leaves many questions to be answered in the book’s two sequels. Strong themes of leadership and responsibility are woven through the book as Elder and Amy wrestle with their responses to their discoveries.

The book’s use of dual narrators (the chapters alternate between Amy’s and Elder’s perspectives) and its lack of an ending that satisfactorily answers all a reader’s questions may be considered postmodern features. However, the lack of closure at the book’s conclusion is probably better perceived as a factor of the book being part of a trilogy than as the use of a postmodern technique. The book also includes one significant gap in the narrative (narrative gaps may be a feature of postmodern texts) which creates much of the mystery surrounding Amy’s premature awakening. The most notable Radical Change characteristic in this book is its evidence of the shift in boundaries. The author describes a shipboard society in which heavily drugged men and women mate frenziedly for a few preselected days (the “Season”) in order to ensure a new generation of children exactly the same age. Revis also openly (but not explicitly) acknowledges Elder’s sexual attraction to Amy. The most graphic scene in the novel occurs

during the “Season.” Amy is pursued and injured by a “Feeder” (one of the ship’s manual labourers) who intends to rape her but is prevented from doing so at the last moment.

Websites Associated with *Across the Universe*

The back cover of the book directs readers to AcrosstheUniverseBook.com and the Facebook page for *Across the Universe*. The most striking element on the homepage of the main book website is a large interactive diagram of the ship (see Figure 7). Site visitors may click on the different levels of the ship (Keeper, Shipper, and Feeder) and zoom in for a closer look. Clicking on individual areas within the ship yields pop-ups with additional information about that area.

Figure 7. Interactive ship diagram for *Across the Universe*.



Image retrieved from <http://acrosstheuniversebook.com/#!/feeder> on December 4, 2012

Clicking on the “Select Operation” menu at the top of the page reveals the following options: Ship Nav (the interactive diagram), Book Info, Author Info, Community, and Downloads. The “Book Info” section provides a short synopsis of each book in the trilogy and a video trailer for

Across the Universe, narrated by the voice of “Amy.” The section also includes excerpts from the books and links for online purchase of the books and e-books.

The “Author Info” section consists of a brief written biography and a short video interview of Beth Revis, as well as options for connecting with Revis via e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and Goodreads. On the author’s Facebook page, she includes some personal photos and updates, although most posts are related to prize giveaways, book signings, contests, and book reviews. Revis’s Twitter feed contains mostly book-related posts, but it is interesting to note the frequency with which she responds to specific tweets (comments) from readers who follow her. Her Goodreads page includes both author information and book information and allows a reader to browse books she has read or plans to read.

The “Community” section of the main book website consists mainly of a link to the *Across the Universe* forum on the Penguin.com (publisher’s) website. This forum includes one discussion thread with a number of detailed responses.

The Facebook fan page for *Across the Universe* (not to be confused with the personal Facebook page for Beth Revis) had more than 10,000 “likes” at the time of this writing. Recent posts by the site administrators include photos of covers for the Croatian, Finnish, Greek, and Polish editions of the book, as well information about the same reader contests advertised by Beth Revis on her own page. Posts from fans include positive comments and photos. Very little discussion of the text itself appears to take place on this page.

The author’s personal website, www.bethrevis.com, is another rich source of book-related material. The “About” section features a list of frequently asked questions that address such queries as her reasons for writing science fiction and the sources of her ideas. The “Books” section contains basic information about each book and the text of some of Revis’s short stories,

as well as links to media reviews. The “Blog” section of the website links to Revis’s blog, which features “Writing Wednesdays,” in which Revis discusses aspects of the writing process. The “For Writers” section of the site features links to numerous resources, such as a page of simple grammar rules and the websites of various professional organizations and societies for writers and aspiring writers. The “For Readers” area includes information about the secret page on Revis’s website, which offers “insider information” about each book in the *Across the Universe* trilogy, such as the origins of some of the characters’ names.

The “Fan Art” page features video trailers and songs inspired by the book, cover redesigns, portraits of the characters, and more eclectic submissions such as photographs of an Amy cloth doll, an *Across the Universe* cake, a handmade quilt, and elaborate sidewalk chalk drawings. The fan art page also links to the fanfiction.net page for the novel, where fans have submitted a staggering number of written pieces. These fanfiction pieces cover a wide variety of topics, such as a story about an engineer’s attempt to fix *Godspeed*’s supposedly faltering engine, a what-if piece about Amy’s trunk of Earth memorabilia, and numerous stories about the potential romance between Amy and Elder. Although some constructive criticism is offered, comments on these submissions are usually positive, corroborating Lammers et al.’s (2012) statements about the supportive audience often offered by online affinity spaces.

Gerard Genette and Paratexts

I believe that the work of Gerard Genette, a French literary theorist and critic who has written extensively on the topic of paratexts, is a useful framework for viewing these online materials being created in association with current works of fiction for young adults. In a forward to Genette’s (1997) book, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Richard Macksey explains that Genette’s use of the word paratexts refers to “the literary and printerly conventions that mediate

the world of publishing and the world of the text” (1997, p. xvii). Genette studies not only the taxonomy but also the literary functions of these elements and the original and unique ways these paratextual devices may be used. Although some contemporary scholars may view Genette’s work, developed around traditional printed texts, as simplistic or dated at a time when online texts are proliferating and are often overtly commercial, others have taken up his ideas to discuss various digital materials (Birke & Christ, 2013; McCracken, 2013). While I acknowledge the potential limitations of Genette’s concepts, I found that his ideas provided language useful for discussion and a conceptual structure on which to build my understanding of the connections between printed texts and the online materials that may accompany them. It is important to note, however, that Genette’s work and ideas are complex; my discussion of them covers only some preliminary concepts.

Paratexts: Basic understandings.

Genette (1997) provides a partial list of paratexts, which include the author’s name, the title, the preface, and any illustrations, noting that for each text, the paratext will differ in appearance and extent, but ultimately, these elements make it possible for a simple text to become a book and to be presented to the public. Genette (1997) explains that “we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text” but “they surround it and extend it . . . to ensure the text’s presence in the world” (p. 1). He describes a paratext as a “threshold” that offers the choice of “stepping inside” or “turning back” (Genette, 1997, p. 2). The “inward side” of the threshold focuses on the text, while the “outward side” of the threshold focuses on the public discourses about that text (Genette, 1997, p. 2). A paratextual threshold is, however, an “undefined zone” with no clear boundaries (Genette, 1997, p. 2). Genette (1997) states that, despite the ambiguity and lack of definition of the boundaries of the paratext, even the

paratextual fringes are “authorial or more or less legitimated by the author” and that paratexts are “characterized by an authorial intention and assumption of responsibility” (p. 3). Genette notes that most paratexts are created by the author (*authorial* paratext) or by the publisher (*publisher’s* paratext), but that the author and publisher may give authority to a third party to produce certain paratexts (*allographic* paratext). Genette also points out that the responsibility for a particular paratext may be shared, such as when an author gives an interview but another person collates the author’s responses and shares them. According to Genette (1997), paratexts create a “zone not only of transition but of *transaction*,” a place where the author strategically influences the public in hopes of creating a better reception and interpretation of the text (p. 2). Genette (1997) acknowledges the great variety and diversity among paratexts, pointing out that the “ways and means of the paratext change continually, depending on period, culture, genre, author, work, and edition” (p. 3), and notes that the public and the reader are not “uniformly obligated” to engage with the paratext (p. 4).

Genette (1997) explains that paratextual elements can be categorized as peritexts, which are located around the text or within the book and include such elements as title, preface, chapter titles, and notes, or epitexts, which are located outside the book and are often assisted by media (interviews, conversations) or are more private (letters, diaries). To simplify, Genette (1997) states, “*paratext = peritext + epitext*” (p. 6).

Paratexts: Authorization and function.

When the author or publisher clearly and openly accepts responsibility for a paratext, that paratext may be considered *official*, Genette (1997) states, giving examples such as the title and the original preface. *Unofficial* or *semiofficial* paratexts, Genette explains, are generally authorial epitexts (such as interviews and conversations) for which the author is not necessarily

required to take full responsibility and may disclaim if he or she chooses. Genette (1997) points out that paratexts which the author asks or allows a third party to create may be considered “especially unofficial” (p. 10).

Another important aspect to consider is the ultimate function of the paratexts. Genette (1997) asserts that the paratext, in whichever form it may take, is “a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself”—the text (p. 12). Each paratext must always be considered “subordinate to ‘its’ text” (Genette, 1997, p. 12). Although paratexts may serve several purposes at the same time, each type of paratext tends to have its own group of functions. The converging or diverging effects of the whole paratext surrounding a particular text are “delicately complex” and must be analyzed (and synthesized) for that individual text alone—generic study is generally not possible (Genette, 1997, p. 13).

Genette (1997) also expands on the differences between epitext and peritext, with the essential distinction being that the epitext is “not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space”; therefore, the epitext may be “anywhere outside the book” (p. 344). Unlike the peritext, the function of which is nearly always to “present and comment on the text,” the epitext may have other functions (Genette, 1997, p. 345). For example, a conversation with an author may focus on the author’s personal life and preferences more than on his or her work.

The publisher’s epitext, Genette (1997) explains, exists generally for basic marketing and promotional purposes, and the author generally does not make a meaningful contribution to or exert much responsibility for this paratext. Genette refers here to items such as posters, advertisements, television and radio commercials, and press releases. When an author participates in decisions about this epitext, he or she may function more or less in the position of

an assistant to the publisher. Genette (1997) also refers to the semiofficial allographic paratext, which is “more or less ‘authorized’ by some authorial assent or even inspiration” (p. 348). In Genette’s view, the most common semiofficial epitext may be a critical article that is influenced by instructions from the author of which the public is unaware. Both the publisher’s epitext and the semiofficial allographic epitext “lie outside the declared responsibility of the author” (Genette, 1997, p. 351) even if the author has, to some extent, participated in the process of producing them. According to Genette (1997), these epitextual forms are “obviously marginal and somewhat deviant” because the epitext, is “overwhelmingly authorial, even if some of its forms involve the participation of one or several third parties” (p. 351). Genette explains that the public epitext is always created with the general public in mind, even if only a small percentage of that public is actually reached. Epitexts in the media are generally not autonomous but almost always mediated by someone other than the author. Genette notes that mediated paratexts are sure to increase. Both the autonomous epitext and the mediated epitext create opportunity for the author to share “dissociated commentary” that is independent of the text; it is “offered but not imposed” on the public (Genette, 1997, p. 370).

Genette (1997) insists that the most important issue to consider regarding paratextual elements is their functionality. Paratexts exist to “ensure for the text a destiny consistent with the author’s purpose” (Genette, 1997, p. 407). The text cannot change to adapt to changes in the public, but the paratext certainly can. Genette also points out that, while the paratext always exists for a purpose, it may not fulfill that purpose effectively or well. Many situations exist in which the author lacks control over the paratext and the interpretation of the text the paratext is facilitating. Genette (1997) mentions the tendency of the paratext to “go beyond its function and to turn itself into an impediment, from then on playing its own game to the detriment of the

text's game" and cautions both reader and author to "*watch out for the paratext!*" (p. 410). The experience of the paratext should not be the focus of attention but rather part of the journey towards the text itself.

Paratexts today: Two contemporary perspectives.

Some literary theorists have begun to ask questions about the ways in which Genette's framework of paratexts might require stretching and modification if it is to continue to be useful in understanding today's increasingly complex and multimodal texts. McCracken (2013) posits that the digital texts currently available for reading on devices such as Amazon's Kindle and Apple's iPad represent a transitional form between traditional print literature and "avant-garde, digitally experimental literature" (p. 105). McCracken (2013) suggests that Genette's ideas about paratexts require "augmentation and modification" to be useful for the analysis of these transitional texts, noting that not only are new paratexts nonexistent in print literature being developed but also that traditional elements such as covers, footnotes, and publishers' advertisements are evolving and performing new functions (p. 106). McCracken's (2013) key point is that these new and changing paratexts may be described in terms of the "centrifugal and centripetal motion to which they invite readers" who are using e-reading devices (p. 106). According to McCracken (2013), the principal text may be viewed as the "center" and paratexts may lead readers "both away from and more deeply into" that textual centre (p. 106). She explains that e-readers with Internet access allow readers to view blogs that mention the text, comments by other readers on a variety of websites, and the author's social media pages or personal website—all examples of paratexts with a centrifugal function. On the other hand, e-readers may also allow readers to format or change the font of the primary text, highlight passages of interest, type notes into the digital "margins" and search for particular words or

passages—centripetal paratexts which may encourage deeper engagement with the text. Devices such as the “Kindle with Special Offers” that feature banner and screensaver ads may create even more pronounced centrifugal motion as readers are drawn away from the text to make online purchases. McCracken (2013) suggests that the principal narrative may be “both enriched and impeded” (p. 120) when read in the e-reader format as readers create “new exterior and interior textual pathways” (p. 121). I believe that McCracken’s ideas address one of the most important questions to consider when evaluating online paratexts, particularly in terms of their potential use in the classroom—do these online pathways lead readers more deeply into the primary text or direct their attention away from it?

Birke and Christ (2013) focus on issues connected with the use of Genette’s (1997) framework for digitized print narratives, proposing some theoretical modifications regarding function—“the materialization, the boundaries, and the authorization” of the text in particular (p. 65). Birke and Christ also explore the potential of Genette’s framework for aiding in the discussion of “digital-born” narratives that are multi-modal in nature and converge naturally with media forms. The issue of authorization may be most relevant when considering the online materials connected to print texts. Birke and Christ (2013) consider Genette’s description of the function of paratextual elements “half-hearted” (p. 68) and “rather vague” (p. 67), suggesting that paratextual function could be described with greater differentiation, as an “interplay” (p. 67) of three aspects Genette mentions but does not formally systematize. First, Birke and Christ (2013) note that paratexts may function interpretively, presenting “specific ways of understanding” the text to the reader (p. 67). Paratexts may also function commercially, advertising the text and promoting its purchase. In addition, paratexts may serve as navigational aids to the reader as he or she orients himself or herself when approaching or moving within the

text. Birke and Christ explain that although Genette briefly suggests this purpose, mentioning such paratexts as tables of contents, they believe this function becomes much more obvious as readers navigate digitized texts on various devices. Birke and Christ's differentiation of the purposes of paratexts, primarily the interpretive and commercial functions, provides a useful update to Genette's ideas and helped me to identify situations in which the online paratexts the participants and I investigated were performing these functions.

Birke and Christ (2013) identify other areas of debate surrounding the application of Genette's ideas to digitized texts—particularly the areas of materialization, boundaries, and authorization. The issue of authorization is particularly relevant to this topic. Birke and Christ (2013) explain that although Genette seems to consider that only elements “attributed to” or “legitimated by” (p. 70) the author belong to the paratext, he also introduces the idea of the publisher's paratext. “Genette's implicit assumption of a multiplication of authorizing instances,” Birke and Christ (2013) say, lays “the groundwork for an extension of the concept of authorship and for a multiplication of authorizing figures behind a single text” (p. 70). (This extension of authorship and multiplication of authorizing figures is perfectly exemplified by the Amanda Project website and the printed texts it has produced.) Birke and Christ (2013) suggest that “the technological possibility to create paratext . . . engenders new ways of authorization” (p. 79) and wonder if this possibility, which may have the potential to increase the interactivity and sense of community of the reading experience, will ultimately appeal to readers. (The popularity of the Amanda Project website seems to indicate the appeal of this type of experience to certain young adult readers.) However, Birke and Christ (2013) also caution that the concept of paratext “loses its analytic value” online, where paratextual elements multiply rapidly and become “increasingly difficult to isolate and identify” (p. 80). In addition, Birke and Christ

mention Genette's own reminder to be wary of "rashly proclaiming that 'all is paratext'" (Genette, 1997, p. 407). As such, Birke and Christ (2013) propose that "new concepts and a new vocabulary" are needed to fully describe digital narratives, but they do believe that Genette's concepts of paratexts may help to understand the ways digital narratives differ from printed books (p. 81). The authors discuss the work of Stewart (2010, as cited in Birke & Christ, 2013) who suggests that instead of viewing text and paratexts as distinct entities the two might instead be viewed along a spectrum, with Genette's essential paratext at one end and the idealized text at the opposite end. While not a decisive answer to the conundrum of determining what is paratext and what is not at a time when Web 2.0 technologies allow the easy creation and sharing of book-related texts online, I find this notion of a spectrum between the printed text and the most loosely connected online materials to be a fairly satisfying solution.

Connections with Genette's Theories

If paratexts surround and extend a text, ensuring its "presence in the world" (Genette, 1997, p. 1), then there can be little question about whether or not these online materials are truly paratexts. Paratexts are "thresholds" that offer the reader the choice of "stepping inside" a text or "turning back" back from it (Genette, 1997, p. 2), and the online paratexts can certainly be seen to offer readers and potential readers these choices. Genette cautions against seeing everything as paratext, but also explains that the paratext has no clearly defined boundaries. If these online materials are mediating the text to the world, then, whether Facebook fan pages or author blogs, they must be acknowledged as paratexts of some kind, although perhaps with varying degrees of influence. Genette (1997) notes that readers and the general public are not "uniformly obligated" to engage with the paratext (p. 4). This statement holds true for the online paratexts associated with printed fiction as these paratexts are "offered but not imposed"

(Genette, 1997, p. 370). Readers must physically move beyond the printed pages to a computer or other electronic device to access these paratexts.

After recognizing the materials as paratexts, it is important to determine the functions they are performing. As mentioned previously, Genette (1997) differentiates between the “inward side” of the paratext, which focuses on the text, and the “outward side,” which focuses on the public discussion of that text (p. 2). McCracken’s (2013) notion of paratexts acting as centrifugal or centripetal forces provides an effective system for classifying the function of various paratexts. A high percentage of the online materials seem to be acting as centrifugal forces, pulling readers away from the text—perhaps into discussion of personal response to the text or into investigation of information about the author or of other books in the series or into purchase of related products. However, some of the materials may be seen as centripetal forces. For example, the discussion guide for *Thirteen Reasons Why* and the teachers’ guide for *The Amanda Project* both provide thought-provoking questions that could potentially draw readers’ attention back to specific elements in the text. In addition, the videos of Hannah’s stories from *Thirteen Reasons Why* use the exact words of the text. The *Thirteen Reasons Why* Facebook page includes specific quotations from the book as well. However, as these quotations are short, removed from their original context, and paired with photographs which may or may not distract the reader’s attention, their centripetal effect may be negligible.

Birke and Christ (2013) discuss the function of paratexts in terms of interpretation, navigation, and commercial purposes. Of these three functions, the commercial purposes seem most obvious in the online materials I investigated. The group of websites surrounding each book includes clear information about the availability for purchase of that book and other books in the series or by that author. Some of the sites offer frequent updates about new editions of the

novels as well. Genette (1997) suggests that the author generally does not have much to do with the marketing or promotion of a text; however, today's authors may do much to stimulate interest in their texts through online posts and interactions. The websites also function interpretively. Although the authors of the texts do not, for the most part, offer ideas about the intended interpretation of their texts, readers of the works share their personal interpretations which may influence the ideas of other readers who investigate the websites. The navigational function described by Birke and Christ, conceived in relation to digitized print narratives, is perhaps the least applicable to the online materials I investigated.

Another important element to consider is authorization of the paratexts. Although Genette (1997) speaks of the paratextual fringes as being an "undefined zone" without clear boundaries (p. 2), he also clearly states that paratexts are "characterized by an authorial intention and assumption of responsibility" (p. 3) and that "something is not a paratext unless the author or one of his associates accepts responsibility for it" (p. 9). Here some large questions about the online paratexts arise. Some authors clearly assume responsibility for at least some aspects of the online paratext. Beth Revis, the author of *Across the Universe*, participates regularly on her own Facebook page and, it seems, on the official Facebook fan page for the trilogy. She frequently updates her personal blog and website and interacts with readers extensively through all of these access points. For the online materials related to other novels, the assumption of responsibility is less clear. For example, Jay Asher (the author of *Thirteen Reasons Why*) does not appear to be connected with the 13RW Project in any discernible way; neither does the book's publisher, Penguin Razorbill. The posts on "Hannah's" blog are made by the mysterious "Hannah'sFriend13." Because neither the author nor the publisher seems to be taking direct or indirect responsibility for these sites (although the blog is directly linked to

thirteenreasonswwhy.com), they can be regarded as allographic or third-party paratexts. Another question is, “What about the contributions of the readers?” Interactive websites using Web 2.0 technologies allow readers not only to view but also to contribute to the paratext. Does an author’s or publisher’s authorization for the creation of an interactive website automatically confer paratextual status on the posts of those who use the site? Genette (1997) considers the semiofficial and unofficial paratexts “marginal and somewhat deviant” (p. 351), yet these sites have a significant impact on those who view them, as revealed by the responses of the teachers and students, which are described in Chapters Five and Six. This influence may be just as powerful, if not more so, than that of the book’s cover, a paratext often authorized by the author. Perhaps the function of an online element is more important than authorization in determining whether or not that element is to be considered a paratext.

Genette (1997) explains that the author may strategically influence the public through the paratext in order to create a better reception or to ensure the correct interpretation of the text, “a destiny consistent with the author’s purpose” (p. 407). However, when it comes to the online materials, it is sometimes unclear as to the influence the author or publisher is trying to exert or which interpretation of the text is being promoted. For many sites, the predominant message is certainly “read this book” or “buy this book,” but the purposes of other sites are more difficult to ascertain. In addition, when it comes to today’s texts, many of which exhibit postmodern characteristics, the author may not have a single “correct” interpretation in mind. Sites such as the *Thirteen Reasons Why* Project, which do not provide any overt authorial influence or interpretation but do allow readers to share various ideas about the text, may be seen as particularly appropriate for texts with postmodern characteristics.

One of Genette's (1997) strongest points is that, ultimately, the paratext serves the text and is subordinate to it. He warns that the paratext can "turn itself into an impediment . . . playing its own game to the detriment of the text's game" (Genette, 1997, p. 410). In the case of *The Amanda Project*, the printed text appears subservient to the website, existing mostly to build the foundation for the online world created by the publisher. In this case, one might ask which is truly the text and which is the paratext. However, this situation is certainly not the case for all of the online materials I investigated. As Genette explains, the effects of the paratext around each text are completely unique and must be considered individually. No sweeping generalities are possible.

The overarching question remains: are Genette's (1997) concepts useful in understanding the online materials connected with contemporary printed texts for young adults? I believe the concepts *are* useful—they provide a language, a way to talk about these online texts related to the printed texts. However, like Birke and Christ (2013), I also believe that the concepts lose some "analytic value" (p. 80) when applied to complex online materials, and I agree with McCracken (2013) that Genette's ideas require some extension to fully describe the range of materials that exist today, particularly materials like those associated with *The Amanda Project*. The printed text of *The Amanda Project* exists to point readers toward the website, where they are encouraged to contribute their own ideas to the online texts and, in so doing, to shape the next printed text in the series. In this case, the ideas of Stewart (2010, as cited in Birke & Christ, 2013), in which paratexts and texts exist along a continuum, may provide a more workable model for understanding these materials.

Conclusion

The websites being created demonstrate significant diversity and are fulfilling (or attempting to fulfill) a wide variety of purposes. The sites advertise new books to potential readers, providing convenient information and links for their purchase. The sites also provide an unprecedented degree of access to the authors of the texts. Social networking sites in particular can allow quick and easy interaction with the author (if he or she is willing) and can permit glimpses into the process by which books are produced and distributed. These sites also provide spaces where readers from around the world may easily find one another and exchange thoughts and ideas about the texts. Through participation in these activities, authors, publishers, and readers are contributing to a growing body of online paratexts that swirl around the original texts, shaping perceptions of and responses to those texts before, during, and after reading. The varying nature of these online materials affects the degree to which Genette's (1997) original ideas about paratexts are applicable. Chapters Five and Six discuss the specific responses of the teacher and student participants to the printed and online texts described in this chapter.

Chapter Five

Understanding the Teachers' Responses

In this chapter, I first explore the responses of the individual teachers to the novels and the websites, and then examine some of the common themes in those responses. I discuss each teacher's personal response to the books and websites and predictions about students' responses to those materials, as well as each teacher's ideas about the ways the online materials might influence students' motivation to read the printed texts and ability to make personal connections to those texts. I also discuss the teachers' thoughts about using the printed and online materials in their classrooms. At first, the teachers' comments appeared overwhelmingly diverse; however, more commonalities appeared with each re-reading of the transcripts. Each in her own way, the teachers expressed a number of similar opinions, ideas, and concerns.

All of the participating teachers read each of the selected novels and kept a response journal in which they recorded thoughts and ideas about the books and websites. Because the teachers referred to their written notes during their interviews, the content of the journals was generally repeated as part of the discussion.

Geri: "You want them to have their own ideas first"

Geri teaches Grade 6 at a public school in a mid-sized city in western Canada. Now in her seventh year of teaching, she team-teaches with a colleague and focuses on English language arts, social studies, and health and career education.

Response to the books and websites.

Geri was initially uncertain about her response to *The Amanda Project*, but quickly found herself drawn in by the mysterious elements of the story. She did not comment on the quality of the writing or any stylistic elements. Geri did not find herself compelled by the events of

Thirteen Reasons Why; she felt neither sympathy nor frustration with the characters. She enjoyed the premise of *Across the Universe*, but, in her opinion, the plot was complex and difficult to follow at times—“you couldn’t just put it down and pick it back up.”

Geri’s response to the *Amanda Project* website was almost entirely positive. She greatly enjoyed the interactive nature of the “Our Stories” portion of the site, considered the “Zine” part of the site in which students shared art and poetry “really cool,” and thought the discussion threads in the “Debate” section were well organized and easy to navigate. In Geri’s opinion, the teachers’ guide contained many useful ideas, which could be used as jumping-off points in the creation of a unit. Geri did not express a strong sense of being marketed to from any of the websites, but she disliked the online store on this website because of the additional products such as buttons and T-shirts available, saying, “The other ones were normal, almost, because it was just the books.” To Geri, the layout of the main website for *Thirteen Reasons Why* (www.thirteenreasonswhy.com) was busy and disorganized, and she suggested that her students would be confused and distracted by the design—“there was so much on it that you didn’t know where to start.” She enjoyed the short videos of the tapes and was excited by the ease with which students could create and post responses on the main website and in the visual scrapbook. She thought that the PDF readers’ guide contained strong discussion questions but noted that “there wasn’t much there” on the Facebook page and suggested that the content on Jay Asher’s blog was not useful in terms of deepening her own or her students’ understanding of the book. Geri appreciated the diagram of the ship on the homepage for *Across the Universe* but expressed a desire for further links to more extensive information about each part of the *Godspeed*. She stated that she enjoyed the video interview in which Beth Revis shared insights into her writing process and creative decisions as well as the Frequently Asked Questions and writing tips on her

author blog. Geri was intrigued by the discussion taking place in the comment threads on the fanfiction page but was of the opinion that the content on the Facebook and Twitter sites was repetitive and uninteresting. She noted that even if the social media content had been rich and valuable, students would not be able to view it in her classroom due to access restrictions on her school's computer network.

Overall, Geri thought that the websites seemed "very separate" from the printed texts and might encourage viewers to pursue sequels to novels they had read but would not necessarily draw their attention back to the original texts. She was concerned about the potential influence of extensive exposure to the ideas and opinions of other readers, saying, "You want them [students] to have their own ideas first and generate those ideas for themselves before they even go into something like this." However, Geri herself did not identify any specific ways in which viewing the websites had changed her own thoughts about or response to any of the printed texts.

Prediction of student response to the books and websites.

Geri believed that her students would love *The Amanda Project* "once they got into it." In Geri's opinion, her own Grade 6 students would not be mature enough to handle the difficult content and themes in either *Across the Universe* or *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Although she thought that her students would be interested by the interactive ship diagram on the *Across the Universe* site and the totem quiz for *The Amanda Project*, she did not anticipate that any of her students would voluntarily view the websites, participate in online discussions, or create fan art or fanfiction, saying, "They just want to press some buttons and play some games." She did suggest that her stronger readers and writers might be more interested than some of their peers.

Motivation and personal connections.

Geri found it difficult to say whether or not interacting with the online materials would make her students more interested in reading the printed texts; she suggested that students might, however, be more likely to read sequels to novels they had already read if they interacted with the associated online materials. She also stated that the impact on motivation would be related to the amount of time students spent viewing the sites but that, for the most part, students would be more interested in viewing sites for books they had already read: “Otherwise, they would probably look at it, click on a couple of buttons, but it makes no sense, right?”

Geri doubted that interaction with any of the online materials would have a significant impact on students’ abilities to make personal connections with the texts. She believed that participating in a threaded discussion on a topic of personal interest might stimulate some connections; however, because much of the online material mirrored content in the books, it would not necessarily generate any new ideas. Geri also noted that many of the comments, “reviews,” and scrapbook entries posted online were such general responses to the book that reading them would have little or no impact on a student’s ability to make connections.

Thoughts about classroom use.

Geri stated that she would be happy to include *The Amanda Project* in her classroom library and that she would strongly consider using it as part of her language arts curriculum. To Geri, the concept of collaborative fiction was particularly interesting and she envisioned a number of different ways to use the concept in the classroom. She also thought that the obvious symbolism in the novel would be a good way to introduce a discussion of the topic. Geri suggested that, because of the extensive material available to teachers online, it would not be difficult for her to develop her own unit. Although she would not use the ideas from the online teachers’ guide

exactly as they were presented, she stated that those ideas would help her to generate her own ideas more suitable for her particular group of students.

Geri mentioned several logistical issues involved in incorporating these materials into her classroom curriculum. First, she noted that her grade team is not often able to purchase new class sets of novels because other items, such as expensive science textbooks, are often higher on the list of priorities; thus, she finds herself teaching the same novels year after year. In addition, if she were to have her students investigate the online materials connected with the novel, the time needed for that investigation would have to come from her students' designated time in the school computer lab, time already allocated for keyboarding practice and research projects. Geri was also concerned that adding online investigation to a novel study unit would significantly lengthen the time required for that unit, suggesting that she would have to say, "Okay, this is our novel that we're going to do for the year." Geri also feared that it would be difficult to control her students' participation on the sites because her school does not have screen monitoring software that allows a teacher to view each student's screen. Furthermore, Geri was concerned that her students did not possess the necessary online navigation skills needed to work with the types of websites associated with the book because the students tend to use the Internet mostly for games, instant messaging, and social networking.

Geri would not consider using either *Across the Universe* or *Thirteen Reasons Why* in her own Grade 6 classroom because of the mature content and more difficult structure and vocabulary of these novels. In her opinion, these books would be more appropriate in Grade 8 or 9 curricula but she also suggested that the particular demographic of each student group should be considered when making novel study selections.

Summary.

The following statement, made by Geri near the conclusion of her interview, summarizes her thoughts regarding the difficulty inherent in actually using the websites:

I know that technology is a big thing nowadays, but honestly, I looked at them [the websites] and I was like, this is great . . . but to actually have the kids go onto this website and figure these things out—there’s a bit of a disconnect there.

Geri generally enjoyed the novels, although she expressed certain reservations regarding plot complexity and mature content and themes. She was enthusiastic about many elements of the websites, particularly the videos and other visuals and the materials designed for teachers. However, she did not feel that the online materials would have a significant impact on her students’ motivation to read the novels or on their ability to make personal connections with them, and she believed that the logistical difficulties of using the materials with her students might prevent her from incorporating them into her curriculum.

Sandra: “If it’s a good book”

Sandra teaches Grade 6 in a large western Canadian city at a small private school using the International Baccalaureate program.

Response to the books and websites.

Sandra found *The Amanda Project* frustrating, because “it ends, and it’s not even like a story. Nothing happens; it just sets up a website.” When asked for her initial response to *Thirteen Reasons Why*, she responded, “I really hated it.” She explained that she found the alternating voices and fonts confusing. She disliked the “teenage voices” but did acknowledge the characters’ realistic tone and their probable appeal to students. Sandra did, however, like the use

of alternating voices in *Across the Universe* and found the structure of that novel and the questions it raised concerning leadership and government more interesting.

Sandra stated that the online materials for *The Amanda Project* significantly impacted her thoughts about the text, saying, “I think it really paired well with the online material—the book is actually enhanced by it. And the whole concept of collaborative fiction is cool. I like the way it invites kids to respond and engage with the text.”

Sandra suggested that the online materials for *Thirteen Reasons Why* might provide important information and a forum for discussion for students who were struggling with some of the issues described in the book. She also expressed her hope that the sites were monitored by adults, “so it’s not just teenagers talking to teenagers—that there’s some valid and reliable information.”

Sandra liked that readers were given the opportunity to post reviews of the book for an authentic audience but thought that the content of the reviews was poor.

In Sandra’s opinion, the interactive ship diagram for *Across the Universe* might support struggling readers by helping them to envision the scenes they were reading about, but added, “I didn’t see it as really extending their engagement with the text.” She did not respond to any of the content on Beth Revis’s personal website or blog, noting that she had viewed the content quickly and “skipped over” much of it. In general, Sandra concluded that the social media (Facebook and Twitter) pages for all of the novels were lacking in depth of content; she could not recall seeing any meaningful comments from readers or authors.

When asked if she thought the online materials would draw students back to the original text, Sandra suggested that they probably would, but also noted, “I think the *Amanda Project* sites would also lead you in other directions, because it’s inviting you to write your own story.” Sandra pointed out that the numerous countdowns for various release dates seemed intended to

“build hype” for upcoming sequels, but overall did not believe that the sites were overtly advertising anything—“It didn’t feel like it was one big infomercial.”

Prediction of student response to the books and websites.

In general, Sandra thought that certain students would be interested in each of the texts but did not see any of them garnering widespread appeal. She mentioned that many of her students would appreciate the fact that most of the novels were part of a series or trilogy. She did not expect that any of her students would independently find and investigate any of the websites. While Sandra knew that one of her students had read *The Amanda Project* and subsequently gone to visit the website, Sandra’s perception was that the student had wanted to discover what happened next more than she had wanted to discuss the book with other readers. Sandra had not, apart from that incident, observed her students going online to discover more about books or series they enjoyed, but anticipated that once students discovered the extent of the materials available for many books and series, they would begin to look for that content.

Sandra believed that “browsing content from other readers” would be the most engaging aspect of the websites for the majority of students, noting that students would be interested in reading the responses of others even if they were intimidated by the thought of creating and posting their own responses. Sandra pointed out that, on one of the discussion forums, the number of views was in the thousands, while the number of posts was fewer than 100. Sandra also suggested that students would be interested in the video trailers and author interviews—generally, any type of audio-visual content would be appealing.

Motivation and personal connections.

Speaking of her own students, Sandra remarked, “I don’t think this [the online material] would make them more likely to read the book in the first place, but it may make them more

likely to read the sequels.” She also suggested that some of her students who read more avidly than their classmates might be motivated to engage in online discussions because they “don’t always have someone to talk to about the books they’ve been reading.” In addition, Sandra stated that her students might be more motivated to engage in reading and writing on the books’ websites because of the potential for a “broader and more authentic audience.” She reiterated, saying, “The idea that their story could be published could be a good motivator.”

Sandra acknowledged that some of the questions posed online (such as the prompts in the “Our Stories” section of the *Amanda Project* site) might lead students to think about their own personal connections to the text. She also suggested that the *Amanda Project* site in particular “invites students to make their own connections with the story and to write themselves into it.”

Thoughts about classroom use.

Although Sandra could not see herself using *Thirteen Reasons Why* in her classroom as a novel study, she suggested that it might be a good book to recommend to students struggling with certain issues addressed in the book. Later during the interview, she mentioned that she might consider breaking the book into chunks and using the individual stories as discussion starters. Sandra also thought the book could potentially be used to examine the use of alternating voices. She stated that she would not use *Across the Universe* for a whole-class study, but perhaps may use it for a smaller group of students during literature circles or might read excerpts from it to demonstrate the use of different voices. Similarly, Sandra did not believe that *The Amanda Project* had broad enough appeal for classroom use, but suggested that she would investigate the possibility of a collaborative fiction project centred on a different concept.

Overall, Sandra thought that “if it’s a good book, a worthwhile book, and there is quality online material, I can see that being really helpful.” She noted that much of the writing that was

occurring online (such as creating responses to or reviews of a novel) was similar to exercises that would typically be performed within the context of a novel study, but was being created for a “broader and more authentic audience. Instead of writing a book review for a teacher, you’re writing it for peers who are actually going to read it, so it just makes it a bit more real.”

Sandra did not foresee many logistical issues with using the online materials in the classroom, as she has “not quite unlimited, but pretty easy access to computers.” In addition, most of her students have easy access to the Internet at home, so she did not think that viewing book-related websites would occur at the expense of another activity for which computers were necessary. She did not look closely at the materials created for teachers, saying that she was a “reinvent-the-wheel kind of teacher.” If she were to use the teacher materials online, it would be as a starting point for her own ideas.

Summary.

Sandra’s comments about *The Amanda Project* and *Thirteen Reasons Why* were generally negative, but she did find some elements of value in *Across the Universe* and acknowledged that the three novels addressed some relevant issues. Overall, Sandra’s most significant concern was the quality of the online content. Sandra thought that the *Amanda Project* website combined well with the novel but did not believe that the websites for the other novels offered much to extend students’ engagement with the text. She expressed the need for adult involvement and moderation of the sites and suggested that students would likely be most interested in reading and viewing the response of other readers. Sandra also noted that the sites provided an authentic audience of peers for students’ writing. She believed that there needed to be a balance between reader-generated content and responses from the author or publisher to the readers’ posts.

Leona: “It kind of creates a world”

Leona has worked as an on-call teacher in a large western Canadian city for approximately four years, with a focus on students in the intermediate grades and above. Her preferred teaching areas are social studies and English language arts.

Response to the books and websites.

To Leona, *The Amanda Project* was somewhat juvenile (she found the teenage narrator’s voice off-putting) but she believed that adolescents would enjoy and relate to the text. She appreciated the back-and-forth structure of *Thirteen Reasons Why* and said, “It was great! It brought up topics of bullying, suicide, sexuality, depression, peer pressure . . . I think those are important to bring into the classroom.” Leona was quickly intrigued by *Across the Universe* and found the action strong and well-paced. She welcomed the more mature voices of the narrators and the themes introduced by the book.

After viewing the website for *The Amanda Project*, Leona said, “I kind of eat my words because I think it’s an amazing format. I love all of the material. I love that the kids can be interactive with it all—they can create a character and write their own stories and possibly become published.” She would not consider using the book on its own, but thought that the “extras” such as the extensive discussion forums added significant value to the concept.

Leona expressed strongly that *Thirteen Reasons Why* would require “discussion, almost debriefing” for students after reading and noted that some of this processing was occurring as students created online letters, pictures, and videos in response to the book. However, she believed that more could have been done with the online materials. Students were using the comments feature on “Hannah’s” blog as impromptu discussion threads, and Leona suggested that a more formal forum for discussion would be well used. In Leona’s opinion, the Facebook

page for *Thirteen Reasons Why* was “kind of a mishmash.” She was confused by the pictures and quotes and said they seemed almost “obsessive, just a little *too* into it.” She was surprised by the number of people who commented on the images or “liked” them but did note that the images were “very emotionally charged.” In her journal, Leona remarked that she could not see an educational purpose to this page.

Leona enjoyed the interactive map of the *Godspeed* on the main page for *Across the Universe*, saying, “It kind of made the story come alive.” She thought Beth Revis’s personal website and blog were “really good,” saying, “She had some great resources, going into rules of grammar and encouraging young writers if they want to pursue writing . . . she seemed to have a lot more to offer her readers than just the book.” She thought that Revis “focused on everything—the world that she created as well as how she created it.” Leona enjoyed the fanfiction and fan art online and could see these materials encouraging students to create their own. Leona’s quick viewing of the Facebook and Twitter pages did not show her much of interest, beyond information about book signings and author appearances.

Leona suggested that, overall, the websites might sustain mental or emotional engagement with the texts by “drawing readers back into the created world,” as she put it. She noted how the visual materials in particular “paint that picture more clearly in your mind, so you want to go back and read the text to compare it to the visual they’ve presented.” Later during the interview, Leona suggested again that the websites for *Across the Universe* and *The Amanda Project* had many extras that enriched the reading experience and allowed the reader to remain in the created world even when the initial engagement with the print text was complete. Leona found the amount of advertising present on the websites appropriate, suggesting that it is simply the nature

of online materials to include purchase information about relevant items such as the next book in the series.

Prediction of student response.

As mentioned previously, Leona thought that younger adolescent readers could potentially relate to and understand the voice and thought processes of *The Amanda Project*'s narrator. Even though one of the main characters was male, she did not think that the book would be particularly appealing to male readers. She also suggested that the book would be a refreshing change from the heavier classics often read in language arts classes. Leona thought that students of both genders would be interested in *Thirteen Reasons Why*, although she also suggested that, because of its focus on inner struggles, the book would still be more appealing to a female audience. She added that students who have experience with any of the issues addressed in the book might be more quickly drawn in. Leona described her uncertainty about students' possible responses to some of the more mature content in *Across the Universe*; however, she noted later during the interview that students would not likely be shocked or put off by the material that was more sexual in nature.

In Leona's opinion, students' responses to the websites would strongly depend on their responses to the books; the online materials would lack context if viewed before reading the book and would fail to intrigue a student who did not enjoy the printed text. She suggested that students would particularly enjoy those materials that allowed them to create or "made them into writers themselves." Leona explained that in her experience, students tend to want to respond to texts they enjoy by producing something, such as drawings or comics, and they want others to see these productions. She also predicted that when students have a strong positive response to a text, "they usually want more." When asked to describe what she meant by "more," Leona

explained that students tend to want both sequels to the books they love and “the culture that goes along with it.” She used the example of the created world and culture that surrounds J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter novels—movies, costumes, toys, spell books, and guides encourage extended involvement with the world of the text even though the series has been completed. Leona suggested that the online materials might play the same role for the novels in the study. She believed that strong readers and writers would be most likely to be engaged by the online materials but thought that the visual information might also draw in students who struggled with reading.

In response to the question, “Do you think interacting with the online content could help students to make stronger personal connections with the text?” Leona said that she thought it might, stating that students might be more comfortable discussing their thoughts anonymously online than they might in a crowded classroom, and with the wide variety of discussion forums such as the ones on the *Amanda Project* site, students could simply scroll to see if someone else had asked a similar question, then join that thread.

Thoughts about classroom use.

Leona stated that she would include *The Amanda Project* in her classroom library because of its appeal to female readers but would most likely use another format for a collaborative fiction project. She explained that she would use *Thirteen Reasons Why* with caution, making parents aware of the themes addressed before using it as part of the curriculum. Leona suggested that seeing the writing and art produced by other students in response to the book might help students work through their own responses to the difficult themes. Although she found the book valuable in terms of its plot and writing style, Leona explained that she would hesitate to use *Across the Universe* because of its description of the Season.

Leona liked the idea of fostering discussion through online forums, noting that she might need to stipulate the number of comments or responses students should make. She also suggested that it would be helpful for students to begin and lead their own online discussions by creating their own discussion threads. Leona thought that creating letters, reviews, artwork, fanfiction, and videos and posting them online would be a meaningful and motivating way for students to express their responses to the books and to respond to others' ideas. In general, she noted that she would avoid using content on social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter because of their lack of quality content.

Summary.

Although she did not personally enjoy *The Amanda Project*, Leona was positive about the other two novels and suggested that students would relate to the events and themes of each of the three texts. Leona believed that the websites generally added value to the texts, potentially enriching students' reading experiences and drawing them further into a created world. Leona thought that students would find browsing the responses and creations of other readers posted online meaningful and interesting, but she expressed some concern that the content of the sites was not as rich or deep as it might have been.

Megan: "It's got to be a good book"

Megan has taught at the middle and high school levels for the past seven years. She is currently the language arts coordinator for the middle years team at a large independent school in a mid-sized western Canadian city.

Response to the books and websites.

Megan found herself frustrated by *The Amanda Project*. In her opinion, Amanda is a grandiose, inflated character who does nothing to warrant the affection of her peers. Megan also

noted that she “couldn’t tell where the plot was going.” Megan indicated that she enjoyed *Thirteen Reasons Why*, particularly the quick-moving, mysterious plot with its focus on the interconnectedness of the characters. She was somewhat frustrated by Hannah’s character and found her to be overly dramatic at times. Megan was initially skeptical about the sci-fi elements of *Across the Universe*, but found the writing “super-descriptive,” rich in colour and imagery. Although she thought that Revis did not need to extend her graphic imagery to the description of the Season, she found the book “a compelling read.”

Even though Megan noted value in the collaborative fiction concept of the *Amanda Project* website, she thought it was poorly executed: “I think the idea of what they were trying to do was good—collaboration, let’s create something together through a community—but I’m not sure how much educational experience these people had.” She suggested that the site needed much stricter parameters in order to be useful in the classroom. Megan also noted that the site shared some of the same downfalls as the book itself: “The website is not going anywhere either! People were in dismay! They were in despair! Even eight books later!” Megan thought that it was almost unfair of the site administrators to “create this family of people on here, who are all really engaged in this” only to end the project without any real closure or resolution. She recognized that the site was “a valuable place” for many of its participants but believed that it would be healthier overall for the participants to engage in real-life collaboration with peers.

Megan expressed some confusion about the purpose of the 13RW Project site, saying, “The purpose of the site, I thought, was that kids would make reviews of the book, but I wasn’t sure whether it was for the kids’ benefit or the author’s benefit, because a lot of the reviews were, like, ‘I loved the book and I couldn’t put it down.’ I was, like, okay, thank you, now *why?*” In Megan’s opinion, the postings were not true reviews but simplistic emotional statements that did

not seem to reference any criteria or to offer any reasons for the statements made. Megan also expressed concern over the ways students were commenting on “Hannah’s” blog. She suggested that “there was a lot of speaking and very little listening”—that students were self-focused, expressing their own ideas but not thinking about or responding to the ideas of others. As well, Megan was concerned about the nature of the students’ responses, saying, “I noticed there’s a ton of blame-pointing and self-pity. That was really propagated by the book, in which Hannah is, like, ‘You did this, you did this; it’s your fault.’” Megan suggested that adults may recognize that Hannah is writing from an emotionally and psychologically unhealthy perspective, but students may not. She also found the Facebook page, with its pictures and quotes, even more “angsty,” saying, “It’s providing a well for a morass of emotion to stew, but it’s not providing a solution.”

Overall, Megan believed that the author and administrators of the websites intended to write the book and create the sites to “bring up these issues, to start a conversation” but thought that they failed to fully follow through. The students were responding to the content, but not in emotionally healthful, productive ways. “Where are the adults?” Megan questioned. “There wasn’t even an adult in the book who could have been helpful. At no point was it, like, here’s a helpline. Call it!” Megan’s strongest response to the online materials for *Thirteen Reasons Why* was to suggest that students must be drawn or pointed back to their real-life communities and to strong, supportive adults within those communities rather than being set adrift to search for emotional support online from same-age peers who are experiencing the same internal and external struggles but have no healthy, tangible support to offer. In her opinion, the online content should not be stretched to attempt something it cannot do. Indeed, Megan acknowledged

that the online materials for *Thirteen Reasons Why* made her like the book less, “because I could see how it was affecting the minds of the students who were reading it.”

Megan thought that the main website for *Across the Universe* existed primarily to advertise the trilogy but enjoyed Revis’s personal website. She believed that Revis’s material was created by an educator with students in mind (particularly her simple rules for grammar) and noticed that Revis was very involved with her readers, giving full, thoughtful responses to their questions and treating their fan art and fanfiction submissions as valuable and important. Megan suggested that Revis maintained responsibility for the materials she had created: “She hadn’t stepped back from it.” Megan also expressed the following: “I got the impression that she was interested in students and developing literacy and encouraging other people to become better readers and writers as a result of reading her book, rather than purely leaving it as an entertainment forum.” Megan noted that the online materials for the book made her think more positively about the book overall, “because I could see how involved the author was with what she’d produced and how she was evoking responses from her readers that were positive.”

Megan stated that the online materials for both *Across the Universe* and *Thirteen Reasons Why* drew her back into reflection on the text. She shared that, for *Across the Universe*, “I wanted to go back and discover what it was that evoked such strong emotion in a lot of the readers.” For *Thirteen Reasons Why*, she said,

I probably would have gone back to it [the text] to, thinking more critically, see how I would have responded differently to Hannah, what she could have done; at what point her life intersected with the lives of others who could have helped her.

Megan did not recall seeing the online store on the *Amanda Project* website and suggested that if she did view it, it did not make a significant enough impact to distract her from the main purpose

of the website. For *Across the Universe*, she sensed a certain amount of hype-building for upcoming novels but then said,

The more you got into the website, the more that went away, and it was more focused on the literature as a whole and people's responses to it Instead of being all, like, 'Buy this!' she [Beth Revis] was sharing her excitement as an author and she was still drawing you back to the text.

Although *Thirteen Reasons Why* is a standalone novel, Megan still had the sense that the website was being used to promote purchase of the book through positive reviews from readers.

Prediction of student response.

Megan anticipated that if any of her students were to read *The Amanda Project*, they would come to her feeling frustrated and confused about the book's plot. She suggested that her female students would become "emotionally involved" with Hannah's story in *Thirteen Reasons Why* and believed that, in general, those among her students who enjoyed sci-fi would like *Across the Universe*.

In general, Megan described the potential appeal of the websites to students in the following way: "I think a lot of the joy of it is the same appeal that blogging has: seeing your thoughts somewhere where they stay, that other people can read." Megan suggested that the students who would respond most enthusiastically to the online materials would be those who "felt like they needed an emotional outlet for something." More specifically, Megan believed that students would find the *Amanda Project* website relatively simple to use if they wished to register and create a character, even if the content of the site itself sustained confusion. "I can see it grabbing a target audience, and that's it," she said. "I think [it would be] mostly girls, ones who'd like the freedom of creativity they're given on the website." Megan also suggested that students who,

like the narrator Callie, find themselves at odds with the “in crowd” would gravitate to the site, because “you can be someone else in that place and feel like you had control over a high school environment.”

Megan believed that students with a strong sense of compassion or “unmet emotional needs” would be “drawn into all the angst surrounding *Thirteen Reasons Why*.” Megan did not believe that students would be significantly interested in the interactive ship diagram on the main site for *Across the Universe* but suspected that students who located the fan art and fanfiction would be compelled by those elements.

Motivation and personal connections.

Megan suggested that viewing the responses of other student readers on the websites might motivate some students to read the novels (students, in her experience, being more likely to read something if they know a peer has read and liked it). In particular, she thought that the artistic responses of readers to *Across the Universe* shared on Revis’s website would create a strongly compelling force. Megan also predicted that the positive statements about *Thirteen Reasons Why* on its websites would have a similar impact.

Megan found it difficult to predict whether or not interacting with the online materials would help her students to make deeper personal connections with the texts. Eventually, she suggested that interacting with the online content might stimulate students’ emotional response to the texts as they viewed the emotional responses of other readers.

Thoughts about classroom use.

Megan’s dislike of *The Amanda Project* would keep her from shelving the book in her classroom library. She explained that she would consider using the concept of collaborative fiction with her students, but would prefer to establish an in-person group rather than an online

group. Megan stated that she would keep *Across the Universe* in her classroom if she taught older students and would certainly recommend it to more mature readers, noting that she would like to discuss with her students whether or not Revis's use of graphic description enhanced or distracted from the overall impact of the narrative. Megan noted that she would also recommend that students who read *Across the Universe* visit Revis's personal website and blog. In addition, she talked about the possibility of sharing passages from the book to illustrate the use of imagery. Megan said she might recommend that older students read *Thirteen Reasons Why*, but she would again like to discuss the themes of the book with those students after reading. She also suggested that she might have students view the "reviews" on the *Thirteen Reasons Why* website and online scrapbook to illustrate "how not to write a review."

Megan communicated that, ultimately, her goal for any material that she uses in her language arts classes is "to make kids better readers and writers, not to have them explore their emotions." She described her perspective further, saying the following:

If you finish reading a book and you don't come out of it with a better understanding of what makes a good book or how to use better diction or how syntax can affect the overall tone of a book or if you don't come out of it with any meaningful language arts growth, then it's not really worth reading.

Megan mentioned that she rarely searches for material online when she prepares novel studies for her students, saying,

The book would have to be really good in order for me to look at online teacher stuff.

I wouldn't pick a book for the class based on the value of its online resources; I would pick a book based on the value it has as a piece of literature . . . but the bottom line is that it's

got to be a good book. If it's written well, if I'm excited about the literature itself, then I'll use the online stuff as a supplementary tool.

Summary.

Megan expressed personal frustration with *The Amanda Project* and with elements of *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Across the Universe* but did acknowledge that the books addressed relevant themes. Although she liked the collaborative fiction concept behind the *Amanda Project* website, Megan did not believe that the site would have been useful for classroom purposes. Megan communicated confusion regarding the purpose of the *Thirteen Reasons Why* sites and was concerned about their lack of adult moderation, but praised Revis's ongoing interaction with her readers online. Megan thought that reading the positive responses of others online might motivate students to read the novels; similarly, reading about the personal connections of others might stimulate students' own connections to the texts. Overall, Megan focused on the value of the novels as literature and on students' development of traditional literacy skills.

Cross-Case Analysis

A number of common themes were evident in the analysis of the responses of the participating teachers. A general acknowledgement of the potential impact of audio and visual materials was one of these themes, as was the recognition of student interest in the thoughts of other readers and the potential influence of these ideas. Other themes included teacher agreement that students' response to the books themselves would largely determine their response to the websites associated with those books, teachers' tendency to make quick judgments or snap decisions about the websites, teachers' view of the printed texts as of primary importance, and teachers' opinions about what makes a book "good" or worth reading. Finally,

the four teachers expressed some common ideas about the need for ongoing adult moderation or involvement with the websites, the value of discussing mature themes and ideas in the classroom, and the potential of the websites to change their own thinking in some way.

Impact of audio and visual materials.

The interactive diagram of the *Godspeed* and the YouTube videos of the cassette tapes were highlights of the online materials for Geri. She thought that her students would particularly enjoy these elements, along with the author video of Beth Revis, saying, “You actually heard her and saw what she looked like, which was awesome.” Sandra suggested that the visual content for *Across the Universe* (the fan art and the ship diagram) might engage and support reluctant or struggling readers. Leona noted that the YouTube videos in particular seemed to have a strong impact on the students who viewed them, even convincing some of them that Hannah was a real person. She suggested several times that the audio and visual materials “create a world” and that the photographs, images, and videos seem to be “artifacts from that world.” Leona also thought that the interactive diagram of the *Godspeed* “made the story come more alive” and suggested that the printed map on the inside covers of *Thirteen Reasons Why* added depth and clarity to the novel. The fan art for *Across the Universe* was a personal highlight of the material for Leona.

Interest in and impact of the ideas of other readers.

Each of the teachers commented on the potential interest of students regarding the thoughts and ideas other readers shared online and on the possible impact of those opinions. Geri expressed concern that viewing others’ responses would influence or shape the responses of her students before their own ideas were fully formed. In contrast, Leona stated that one of the most valuable aspects of the online materials was the potential for students to read, view, and respond to the thoughts and ideas of other student readers about the books. Sandra believed that

“browsing content from other readers” would be the most engaging aspect of the online materials for students, suggesting that students would enjoy viewing new additions to discussion threads even if they did not actively post or participate. Megan suggested that some students would be drawn in by the emotional (“angsty”) responses of other readers to the books and might be motivated by these intense responses to read the books themselves. However, she did not view this possibility as a healthy phenomenon.

Response to books determines response to websites.

Overall, the teachers seemed to agree that students’ responses to the websites would be determined by their responses to the books. Geri and Sandra believed that students would be more interested in viewing sites for books they had already read and enjoyed; otherwise, the materials would lack context. Sandra also suggested that students might seek out information about new books in a favourite series. Leona stated strongly that students’ responses to the websites would depend on their responses to the books, saying, “If they really enjoyed the book—I mean, they are online beings—they’d go right to the online content.” She also noted that, “If they really didn’t like the book and they had to go online and do stuff, it would be tedious.” In Megan’s opinion, browsing the author-created content on the websites before reading the novels would not motivate students to dig deeper into the sites.

Quick decisions.

The teachers shared the tendency to make quick judgments about the online materials. If their interest was not immediately sparked or they experienced any confusion, they left the site quickly. Geri briefly browsed the Facebook and Twitter pages; because she does not use Twitter herself, she exited almost immediately, saying that she felt confused and that “there wasn’t much there.” Sandra also mentioned that she skimmed the Facebook pages because she did not

immediately see any content that struck her as meaningful. Leona gave the social media pages a cursory viewing, explaining that the first one she visited seemed to repeat information from the main website, so she paid minimal attention to subsequent pages. Megan admitted to skimming several websites because the associated books had not maintained her interest.

Importance of printed texts.

A topic on which the teachers' opinions were strong but divided was the primacy of the printed texts. Geri clearly stated that she would consider using a text in her classroom because of the quality or extent of its online resources. Leona also suggested that she would use *The Amanda Project* in particular because of the value of its accompanying material: "If it was just based on the book alone—no, not a chance. But because of all the extras that came along with it, I thought it was really well done." However, Sandra emphasized that the quality of the printed text was always her first consideration. Megan was also clear about the primary importance of the printed text, saying, "It would always be literature first" and "If it's not a good book, it doesn't matter."

Ideas about "good" texts.

Sandra, Megan, and Leona communicated their strong thoughts about "good" and "worthwhile" texts. Sandra used the phrases "good book" and "worthwhile book" frequently throughout her interview. In reference to *Thirteen Reasons Why*, she said, "It raises some valid points . . . but the writing is so bad I wouldn't use it." She did not elaborate on the particular elements to which she objected and I did not think to pursue the topic at the time of the interview. Megan commented specifically on certain textual aspects such as the use of imagery which would contribute to the value or "goodness" of a text. As mentioned previously, Megan saw "good" texts as ones which demonstrate principles of strong writing such as effective diction

and syntax; texts which did not evidence these characteristics would not be worth reading. When asked to name some “good” texts, Megan mentioned some classic materials for younger readers, including L. M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*. Leona viewed all the novels as jumping-off points for more “important” reading, saying,

I think the classics are important. You want to read through the classics in the classroom, but there are benefits to reading even just popular literature . . . something that they can interact with more may spark an interest in reading and give them confidence that they can actually understand a book instead of starting with something that has a more sophisticated theme—then you can build on that and introduce the classics.

Adult moderation.

Another theme evident from the cross-case analysis was the need for continuing adult involvement with or moderation of the online materials. Sandra stated that the websites for *Thirteen Reasons Why* might be a valuable source of information and connection for adolescents struggling with related issues—if the sites were monitored and moderated. Later, Sandra confirmed that she would be more likely to use the sites if she were confident they were overseen by “a trained counselor” but did acknowledge that this suggestion might not be realistic. Leona suggested that the online materials for *Thirteen Reasons Why* could have been strengthened by more adult guidance, direction, and information on topics such as supporting friends experiencing difficulty or exhibiting signs of possible suicidal thoughts. Leona also noticed that some students appeared to believe that “Hannah’s” blog was actually written by her. Other students responded to those comments with laughter, as Leona noted, but the exchanges emphasized the following to Leona:

With the online material, it's more than just a book. It kind of creates a world with artifacts from that world on these websites. It makes it really fun and interesting, but at the same time, with a book like this, it can also make it kind of traumatizing or scary if they are not sure that it's real or not. Some of the stuff, especially the audio tapes on the YouTube videos, does look a little morbid. So I can understand why some people might think, "Is this real? Is it not real?"

In Leona's opinion, more intentional adult involvement might mitigate the potentially frightening effects of the materials and could perhaps prevent their misinterpretation. Megan suggested that the sites would have deeper educational and overall value with a stronger adult presence and more intentional moderation as well as more clearly defined parameters and guidelines for acceptable posts. In the case of *Thirteen Reasons Why*, she wished that adults online would direct students to seek support from the appropriate adults in their own real-life communities. Geri did not directly address this topic but did note that she would need to supervise her own students while they viewed any of the online materials.

Mature themes.

The teachers generally expressed similar responses to the mature themes addressed in the novels. Sandra and Megan acknowledged the value and importance of some of the themes in the books but also thought that the novels should be taught carefully and reserved for older readers. Leona also recognized the necessity of addressing the mature themes and communicated that she would consider using the novels with older students while maintaining clear communication with parents. Geri would simply avoid using *Across the Universe* and *Thirteen Reasons Why* with students in her classroom because of these themes.

Change in thinking.

A final theme evident from the cross-case analysis was the acknowledgement of the power of the websites to impact the teachers' thoughts and ideas about the printed texts. Sandra admitted that the website for *The Amanda Project* changed her predominantly negative initial impressions of the book when she saw how well the book and the website worked together to create a community of collaboration. Leona also acknowledged a considerable shift in her thinking about *The Amanda Project* after viewing the related site, saying, "When I first read it, it seemed like a silly little girl book, but the book became part of something much bigger." However, Megan stated that she was less positive about *Thirteen Reasons Why* after viewing the websites connected with it and seeing the apparent impact of the book on its readers. Conversely, she expressed a more positive opinion about *Across the Universe* after viewing the associated sites, which gave her a glimpse of the author's enthusiasm for her craft and her created world as well as her encouraging, ongoing interaction with her readers. Geri alone was unable to identify any ways in which the websites influenced her thinking about the texts.

Conclusion

When viewing the teachers' responses to the online materials through the lens of Genette's (1997) concept of paratexts, it is apparent that the issue of authorization was an area of concern. The teachers were not satisfied with the level of responsibility they perceived was being taken for the websites by the authors and publishers who established them. The teachers sensed both centripetal and centrifugal forces (McCracken, 2013) at work in the online paratexts they investigated. After viewing the fan art students had created after reading *Across the Universe*, Megan wanted to return to that text to "rediscover what it was that evoked such strong emotions in the readers" (a centripetal force). Sandra saw students turning away from the text of *The*

Amanda Project to write their own stories after viewing the website (a centrifugal force). The teachers believed that both of these types of forces could be beneficial to their students for different reasons. Although the teachers did not use the language of paratexts to express their ideas about *The Amanda Project* and its connected website, their responses indicated their view that the printed text existed more to draw readers' attention to the website (a seeming paratext) than the other way around. However, each of the teachers believed that the printed text and the website worked together to create something of value. Overall, the responses of the teachers demonstrated a deep concern for the safety, security, and socio-emotional wellbeing of their students, a concern paralleled by their equally deep concern for the ongoing literacy and academic development of students. While many responses indicated an openness to and enthusiasm for new literacies and teaching methods, other responses suggested some lingering fondness and value of more traditional methods and texts.

In the following chapter, I discuss the students' responses to the books and to the websites, and in Chapter Seven, I examine in more detail the connections between the concept of paratexts and the teachers' and students' responses to the materials they investigated.

Chapter Six

Understanding the Students' Responses

The students' responses to the interview questions demonstrated a range of ideas and opinions. In this chapter, I first describe the responses of the individual students to the books and to the related websites as well as each student's thoughts about the potential use of these materials in the classroom. Secondly, I examine some of the similarities and common themes that became evident through the cross-case analysis of the students' responses.

Ora: "Was that really how I felt?"

Ora was enrolled in Grade 10 at a large public school in a mid-sized city in western Canada at the time of the interviews. She agreed to participate in the project during the spring of her Grade 9 year but found that it took her longer than she had anticipated to read *Thirteen Reasons Why*, the book she had selected. She was interviewed two times and did not make any entries in her response journal.

Response to the book.

Ora described *Thirteen Reasons Why* as "intense" and "suspenseful." Although she "hated the ending," she thought the mingling of the two voices throughout the text was "really cool," enjoyed using the printed map to trace Clay's journey through town as she read, and summed up her response by saying, "This is probably my favourite book now."

Response to the websites.

Ora explained that she spent most of her online time flipping through the pages of the 13RW Project scrapbook, but she also thought that there was a lot to read and hear on www.thirteenreasonswhy.com (the main website for the book). In her opinion, the cassette tape videos were "pretty cool" but also "creepy-sounding." She suggested that it was much more

interesting to read posts made by other readers than to read the content produced by the book's author or publisher. Ora found the Facebook page for the book the least interesting, saying, "There wasn't a lot going on," but did posit that if the Facebook page had stronger content, other students her age would be likely to visit it: "Everybody has Facebook these days, so I'm pretty sure more teens would check out the page on Facebook than check out the ones that you have to search and find out yourself."

Ora explained that although she had noticed the websites mentioned on the back cover of the book, she did not investigate them until she was asked to do so. She explained her thinking: "I did want to look at them, because I thought it was cool how it says, 'Listen to the tapes on YouTube!' but then I read the whole book and it was, like, cool, so I just left it." She acknowledged that in the future, she would probably be more likely to investigate websites connected with other books, noting that she was intrigued to discover that "the book is active online" and that there was "more going on" than just the printed text.

During the interview completed before she viewed the online materials, Ora described some strong connections with Clay, the male narrator, and his frustration with Hannah's decision not to tell anyone about her experiences and feelings. Ora also identified with some of Hannah's own thought processes and feelings. In contrast, during the second interview, Ora noted several ways in which the audio and visual content online created distance between herself and the book's characters because the voice and images presented did not align with her inner depictions.

Ora suggested that the online materials drew her back to the printed text to evaluate the ways in which her own thoughts and opinions meshed with those of others:

I think looking at what people said about the book made me think more how much I liked it. Because they said a bunch of things how it was really touching or inspirational and all that,

and then I thought to myself, like, was that really how I felt? And then I found reasons and then I thought again that I really liked this book a lot.

Ora did not think that the websites were trying to sell her something and suggested that the information about various editions and release dates could be useful to her or other readers.

Classroom use.

Ora thought *Thirteen Reasons Why* would be a valuable book for a class to read (“This book is really powerful, and I think it could change people’s lives in, like, the way they talk to people and react and their decision making”) and suggested that the websites would also be valuable for helping students to understand “what people think about it and that there are other people who actually read the book . . . and that it’s got a big message.”

Summary.

Ora enjoyed the suspense and intrigue of *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Her response to the online materials for the book focused on the comments of other readers, which led her to re-think her own opinions, and the audio and visual content presented online, which caused her to mentally pull away from the book’s characters.

Hailey: “Most people I know don’t really care that much”

Hailey had just completed Grade 9 at a large public high school in a mid-sized western Canadian city at the time of the interviews. She chose to read only *Thirteen Reasons Why*, used her response journal minimally, and was interviewed twice.

Response to the book.

Hailey described *Thirteen Reasons Why* as “disturbing, because it’s really, like, about someone committing suicide” but “interesting—it kind of shows how everything interlocks in a

life.” Although she thought the ending was somewhat unsatisfying, she was very positive about the book overall.

Response to the websites.

Hailey clearly identified reading the responses of other readers (specifically the comments made by readers on “Hannah’s” blog) as the most interesting aspect of the websites but also noted that she particularly enjoyed the videos of the cassette tapes and the photographs on the Facebook fan page. However, she found the video trailers created by other readers among the least interesting aspects, suggesting that the trailers were often poorly done and were not “actual reviews” in which readers explained their thoughts about the book.

Hailey communicated that she would not have viewed most of the online materials if she had not been requested to do so; however, she conveyed that she might have viewed some of the materials if she had visited the Facebook fan page for the book first. Hailey was the only student interviewed who noted that she “looks up” books on Facebook to “like” them, but she also made it clear that, although she would view other readers’ comments on a Facebook page, she was not likely to comment or participate in a discussion herself. Hailey did not expect that any of her friends would visit book-related websites, saying, “Most people I know just don’t really care that much.” Hailey also explained that she found it more natural and satisfying to discuss books in person with her friends than to talk about them with strangers online.

Hailey shared that she had some difficulty creating personal connections with the characters in the novel because their experiences seemed so different from her own. In Hailey’s opinion, viewing the websites did not impact her ability to make these connections. She said, “I don’t think it was any easier or more difficult, actually, after. It’s the same.”

Classroom use.

Hailey's responses to the questions about classroom use of the materials were vague and somewhat negative in tone. She suggested that, if teachers were to have students read the novel, viewing "Hannah's" blog might help students "get a better understanding of the book." This comment is interesting in light of Hailey's previous statement that the websites did not enrich her own understanding of the book.

Summary.

Hailey was interested by the premise of *Thirteen Reasons Why* even though she had difficulty connecting with the characters. She enjoyed viewing the videos and photographs online and eagerly perused the contributions of other readers but criticized some of their postings for lack of meaningful content.

Aileen: "It makes you think more about everything in the book"

At the time of the interviews, Aileen had just finished Grade 9 at a large public school in a mid-sized western Canadian city. She chose to read *The Amanda Project*, she did not make any entries in her response journal, and she was interviewed twice.

Response to the book.

While Aileen's initial response to *The Amanda Project* was, "It was kind of confusing—with Amanda, you don't know who she is or what she's doing the whole time or even when you've finished it." Aileen also remarked during the interview that she "really liked it" and wanted to finish reading the series.

Response to the websites.

Aileen was captivated by the idea of creating her own character for the *Amanda Project* website and participating in the online discussion: "It lets you be whoever. Like, you can be

someone in the book, and you're not just you." She found the "Debate" portion of the website interesting and specifically commented on the fact that the participants were "all nice to each other with stuff they post . . . They're all here because they like the books." Aileen enjoyed reading the responses from other readers, particularly in the "Zine" and "Our Stories" sections of the website, but she did not articulate exactly why the responses were so engaging. She said that she was surprised by how much content readers had created, saying, "There's lots of people who have posted lots of big long stories they wrote or art they spent lots of time on." When asked about the online element she found least interesting, Aileen found it difficult to respond, saying, "I don't know. I liked it. It's cool."

Before viewing the websites, Aileen suggested that it was difficult to create personal connections with any of the characters in the novel because their lives were so different from her own and she had trouble understanding their motivations. After viewing the sites, she said that the characters seemed "more realistic" and that she knew more about them, but that her ability to connect with them remained the same.

Knowing that other readers who visited the main website were highly engaged in analyzing and examining the events in the novel drew Aileen's attention back to those events in the text: "I thought more about them because there were other people who were thinking and looking for clues . . . it makes you think more about everything they mentioned in the book in an offhand way." Realizing that others believed there were hidden depths made Aileen think there might be more, too.

Aileen noted that she probably would not have viewed the website without prompting, even though she had seen it mentioned at the end of the book and on the back cover. She said, "Most websites for books aren't that interesting . . . there's normally not much." However, having

enjoyed this site, she thought she would be more likely to view websites connected to other books that she read and enjoyed. Aileen also suggested that the site would appeal more to those who already enjoyed reading and writing.

Classroom use.

In Aileen's opinion, teachers could assign students to participate in a thread in the "Debate" section of the site or to create a contribution to the "Zine." When asked if she thought her classmates would find that interesting, she responded, "I don't know. I think it would be cool because you get random other people's feedback, not just your teacher's and your class's."

Summary.

Aileen enjoyed *The Amanda Project* and was fascinated both by the premise of the companion website and by the postings of other readers on the site. The attempts of other readers to solve the puzzle of Amanda drew Aileen back to the printed text. She also suggested that feedback from other readers could motivate students to post contributions online.

Pauline: "Because I really like the book, I've been on the website a million times"

At the time of the interviews, Pauline had just finished Grade 6 at a small International Baccalaureate school in a large city in western Canada. She read *Across the Universe*, *The Amanda Project*, and *Thirteen Reasons Why*; used her response journal extensively (making both notes and drawings); and was interviewed six times.

Response to the books.

The first words Pauline used to describe *Across the Universe* were "sick" and "irrational," but she later said, "It wasn't the best story I had ever read, but I liked the way it was written. I didn't really like the concept, the story itself, but I definitely wanted to read the next ones!" *The Amanda Project* was her favourite of all the project books. She stated, "I definitely loved the

drama and I just loved how Amanda just suddenly disappears and Amanda as a character. She is pretty interesting.” Pauline’s summative response to *Thirteen Reasons Why* was, “It was a good book, but just kind of sad, and I didn’t really like the way it ended.” She enjoyed the book’s alternating voices and never found herself confused by the format.

Response to the websites.

For *Across the Universe*, Pauline explained that she spent the most time looking at the interactive ship diagram on the main website but particularly enjoyed the Penguin (publisher’s) community discussion thread in which readers offered their opinions of the novel. She thought the responses from other readers were more interesting than the content posted by Beth Revis. In Pauline’s opinion, the Facebook and Twitter sites associated with the book and author were the least engaging. For *The Amanda Project*, Pauline shared that she initially spent the most time in the “Our Stories” section in hopes of figuring out what was really going to happen. On subsequent visits to the site, she discovered the “Zine” section and loved it, expressing how much she enjoyed the artistic interpretations shared by other readers. In her opinion, the “Debate” section of the site was a little confusing, and she was frustrated that others were beginning discussion threads not directly related to the book’s content. Pauline enjoyed browsing the online scrapbook for *Thirteen Reasons Why* and particularly liked the visual presentation of the scrapbook, such as the way the “pages” seemed to flip. She was also compelled by the cassette tape videos and other readers’ video trailers. As with *Across the Universe*, the Facebook page was the least interesting to Pauline, and she remarked, “They were just repeating quotes. I didn’t really see the point of that. At least, put some kind of explanation for how the picture connects to the quote!”

For all three of the books she read, Pauline expressed her difficulty in making personal connections to the characters because their lives and experiences were so different from her own. When she identified connections, they tended to be obvious or somewhat shallow; for instance, she suggested that she connected with Callie from *The Amanda Project* because she and Callie share a love of classical furniture. After viewing the main characters' profile pages on the website, Pauline suggested that learning the characters' preferences in music, clothing, food, and quotations helped her to visualize the characters more clearly, and, in turn, understand them better. When asked if she thought that any of the *Across the Universe* websites had changed anything about her personal connections with the book or its characters, Pauline said that one of the fan-submitted paintings of the stars in space had really impacted her. The painting brought to mind a trip to rural Alberta, during which she viewed the night sky more vividly than ever before. Recalling her own feelings of that night helped her to understand the feelings of Elder when he first glimpsed space through the window in the hatch door. Pauline also had strong feelings about the cassette tape videos for *Thirteen Reasons Why*, explaining that she felt closer connections to both Clay and Hannah after viewing these videos.

Pauline noted that the websites drew her attention back to the printed texts in different ways. With *Across the Universe*, Pauline thought that the websites led her to question her initial responses to the book because they seemed to be so different from the responses of the majority of the readers. Similarly, Pauline found herself returning to the text of *Thirteen Reasons Why* to re-examine how she "should be" perceiving it. With *The Amanda Project*, Pauline shared that the websites evoked questions about the text and led her to wonder if, in fact, the book might be based on a true story. Because the online participants seemed to be dissecting every detail within

the printed text, she also found herself going back to the text to see if she had missed or misinterpreted a clue when she first read the book.

Pauline explained that she did not notice the website suggestions on the back cover of *Across the Universe* but believed that she would have investigated them independently if they had caught her eye, with her motivation being to find out what was going to happen in the next novel: “I probably would have gone on the websites in hopes of getting a sneak peek.” Pauline shared that she visited the website for *The Amanda Project* on her own immediately after finishing the book and said, “Because I really like *The Amanda Project*, I swear I’ve been on the official site, like, a million times.” Pauline would not have viewed the *Thirteen Reasons Why* sites on her own, she said, but after visiting them she could definitely envision herself creating a contribution for the online scrapbook.

Classroom use.

Pauline shared that she would “love it” if her teachers introduced a book like *The Amanda Project* as part of the classroom curriculum. She suggested that creating contributions for the online “Zine” would be a great class project and believed that viewing the contributions already posted would inspire students to produce something “good.” Pauline also thought that having students take the totem quiz might help them become more interested in the book if they were having a tough time getting started. She could “definitely see” her teacher using the online materials, particularly the scrapbook, for teaching *Thirteen Reasons Why*, suggesting that it offers students the point of view of other students their age “and they can maybe question their thinking about it—they can look back and think twice.” She thought that viewing the videos of the cassette tapes along with reading the text would increase the novel’s impact “because plain text just gets boring” and “because it’s always nice to have something visual.” Similarly,

Pauline believed that the ship diagram for *Across the Universe* would be useful for students studying the book because it would help them grasp “the intentions of the book.” Although Pauline did not find the content of Beth Revis’s personal website interesting, she suggested that teachers might find the website useful because of Revis’s comments about her inspirations for the book.

Summary.

Pauline expressed some resistance to events in the novels that did not align with her personal experiences but enjoyed the novels despite this sense of disconnection. She preferred the written and artistic responses of other readers online to commentary from the books’ authors and found that the visual elements and extended detail about the characters increased her feelings of closeness to those characters. The interpretations and opinions of others drew her back to the text to reconsider her own opinions and ideas.

Althea: “It could change what you thought, in a way”

Althea had just completed Grade 9 at a mid-sized public high school in a large western Canadian city at the time of the interviews. She read *Across the Universe*, *The Amanda Project*, and *Thirteen Reasons Why*. She used her response journal minimally and was interviewed six times. She was often distracted during the interviews and her responses tended to be brief.

Response to the books.

Althea described *Across the Universe* as “suspenseful” and “adventurous.” Frustrated with the unfinished ending, she indicated that she would be reading the final books in the trilogy to find out what happened next. She found *The Amanda Project* “mysterious” and said that she “really, really liked it” but was unhappy that she was unable to locate the next books in the series. Althea also enjoyed the mysterious elements of *Thirteen Reasons Why*, explaining that

she kept reading to find out how Clay fit into the story. She thought that some of the characters, such as cheerleader Courtney Crimson, were flat and stereotypical and saw Hannah as emotionally unstable and unhealthy, but described it as “a good book” overall.

Response to the websites.

Althea thought the fanfiction was the most interesting element of the online material for *Across the Universe*, especially the submissions in which other readers wrote about what they thought would happen in the next books in the trilogy. In her opinion, the interactive diagram of the ship was “pretty cool” but she thought it would have been better if there had been even more details about each part of the ship available when you clicked on a section, perhaps details not available in the book itself. Althea also enjoyed reading the responses from other readers to *Thirteen Reasons Why* on “Hannah’s” blog and noted that “it was interesting that people put their own stories and then other people were responding to not only the actual story but also to the other people’s stories.” Althea was unable to identify any aspect of the *Amanda Project* site she found particularly engaging.

Althea explained that, in general, she thought the information from or about the authors of the novels was the least absorbing. For *Across the Universe*, Althea found Beth Revis’s personal website the least interesting element, saying, “I don’t care about what the author wrote, because it really doesn’t matter to me.” She did not understand why she had been asked to view the author’s Facebook page, saying, “It had nothing to do with the book.” Althea said much the same thing in regard to the materials for *Thirteen Reasons Why*: “I don’t really care that the author wrote in this spot or has this many kids or has been writing for this long and tried this hard to get this book published. Blah, blah, blah. I don’t really care.” She seemed to separate

the book from its creator and any factors that shaped him or her: “You wrote a good book—that’s nice, but I don’t really care about your back story.”

For the *Amanda Project* website, Althea found the “Our Stories” section the least compelling, saying, “They were so long. I didn’t want to read them all.”

Althea’s responses to each book demonstrated that she identified and described personal connections to the characters in each novel. For example, she explained that she felt a strong connection with *Across the Universe*’s Harley and his longing for freedom and his desire to respond to the world around him through painting. She also identified with Tony (from *Thirteen Reasons Why*) and his deep sense of responsibility for ensuring the wellbeing of each person to whom Hannah’s tapes were sent. After viewing the websites for each novel, Althea emphatically stated that the sites had no impact on her ability to make these connections—“it didn’t really affect me personally.” Later during the interview, she suggested that she felt closer to the characters before looking at the online materials than afterwards. According to Althea, viewing images of the characters that did not align with her own mental images and reading opinions of other readers that differed from her own opinions created distance between herself and the book’s characters. She expressed her thoughts, saying, “That [the online material] could confuse you more, because it could change what you thought, in a way. Because this is what another person thought of it, and then your personal headspace could be, like, whoa, that’s not what I thought.” Further, Althea was unable to identify any ways in which the online materials had drawn her attention or focus back to the printed text.

Classroom use.

Althea did not believe there was a place for any of the online materials in the classroom. When asked if she thought her teachers could or should use these or similar online materials in

any way, she responded with an emphatic, “No.” When asked to explain, she said, “Because you don’t need it” and followed this statement with an anecdote in which her math teacher had asked the class to investigate a website related to the current material but none of the students had actually viewed the site. She did acknowledge the possibility that some of her teachers might be interested in the sites but suggested their interest would depend on their level of comfort with technology: “We have some pretty old-school teachers who don’t like computers at all, and then we’ve got some techie teachers who love computers. It kind of depends on which teacher it is.”

Althea did not like the idea that a teacher might ask her to write something and post it online, saying, “I really don’t want a bunch of people I don’t know reading my things . . . most people would write bad things about it.” In her experience, online communities tend to be “very, very negative. You may get the odd positive comment, but everything’s negative, pretty much.”

Summary.

Althea enjoyed the mysterious elements of each of the three novels she read. She found the fanfiction for *Across the Universe* particularly interesting and generally appreciated the responses of other readers but did not care to read content from the books’ authors. Online images that did not align with her own inner vision of the characters created a sense of disconnect for Althea.

Gail: “I like seeing what other people thought of the book”

At the time of the interviews, Gail had just completed Grade 9 at a large public high school in a mid-sized western Canadian city. She read *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Across the Universe*, used her response journal extensively, and was interviewed four times.

Response to the books.

Gail said that *Thirteen Reasons Why* “felt a bit more like a biography” than the material she usually reads. She commented positively on the dual-narrator format, saying, “I really liked this one because of how the author wrote it—it’s different from every other book I’ve read.” In her journal, Gail wrote, “I didn’t find it so much mystery. I would explain it as being more of a tragedy . . . because to me, that’s what it was. My heart went out to both characters.” To Gail, *Across the Universe* was “very gripping” and she said, “I raced through it in two days, because it really called to me. It was kind of an edge-of-my-seat kind of book.” In her journal, Gail wrote, “I loved this book. I loved all the detail she put into it and how well thought-out the plot was.” Gail suggested that the more mature content in the book plays an important part in the plot and helps to emphasize the effects of the drug Phydus. She noted that she intended to finish reading the trilogy because “it would drive me crazy if I didn’t.”

Response to the websites.

Gail shared that she spent the most time interacting with the author’s materials on the websites for *Thirteen Reasons Why*. She watched some of the videos of Jay Asher and particularly enjoyed the video in which he gives a “book report” about his own novel. (She suggested that she was a “weirdo” for reading information about the author.) Gail also enjoyed the posts on “Hannah’s” blog, both the posts that appear to have been written by Hannah and the later posts by “Hannah’sFriend13.” She stated that she was very interested in the trailers made by fans “because it was kind of like how each person sees the book themselves . . . they put it together with the parts they thought would grab your attention the most or would kind of pique everyone’s curiosity the most.” For *Across the Universe*, Gail explained that she spent the most time looking at the fan art on Beth Revis’s website, saying, “I like seeing what other people

thought of the book and how they interpreted it.” However, Gail also suggested that the information posted by Beth Revis herself was more “valuable” than what readers said (no matter how interesting those views might be) because Revis revealed background information about her writing decisions that could not be determined simply by reading the book.

For both books, Gail found reading online content that was repetitive or that mirrored content within the books themselves the least interesting. For *Across the Universe* specifically, Gail thought the main website with the ship diagram and book release dates featured prominently was the least engaging. However, she acknowledged that she enjoyed the ship diagram to some extent, saying, “I liked seeing it, and seeing it in total, because when you open the book, it’s cut in half.” Gail was the only one of the six student participants who mentioned the connection between the diagram on the inside covers of the novel and the interactive diagram online.

Prior to viewing the websites, Gail described a strong sense of personal connection to Clay from *Thirteen Reasons Why*. She felt the agony of his suspense in waiting to hear his part in Hannah’s story. Gail also shared that she felt very disconnected from Hannah’s wild fluctuations in mood and tone and suggested that “her slice of life was so different from my own.” Gail did not feel a strong connection to any of the characters in *Across the Universe*, stating, “They were all kind of insane and crazy in their perspective and how they acted and everything.” To Gail, Harley’s character was especially difficult to understand because “at some moments he was really kind and deep, and in the next moments he was just insane and obsessed.” After viewing the websites for *Thirteen Reasons Why* and listening to the tapes with Hannah’s voice, Gail felt a softening towards Hannah and suggested that hearing “her” voice was “almost like knowing her a little bit more.” Gail could not discern any change in her personal connections to the characters from *Across the Universe* after viewing the websites, citing the general repetitiveness of the

online content. However, she explained that she thought the fanfiction helped her to understand some of the connections that other readers were making with the characters—the aspects of the characters on which the fan writers focused their attention indicated their own points of personal connection, Gail thought. Later in the same interview, Gail also suggested that viewing the fan art may have added depth and breadth to her understanding of the book’s characters by giving her glimpses of others’ responses to those characters.

Gail did not identify any specific ways in which the online materials drew her attention back to the texts themselves. She suggested that the websites might actually have drawn her away from the printed texts if she had viewed the sites before or during her reading of the books because of the information about the plot that they reveal: “If I hadn’t already read the book I would have pushed the book away, because I would have felt like I already knew what was going to happen.” On the other hand, Gail noted that if she had viewed the websites before reading the books and had seen the number of positive responses from readers, she might have been more motivated or curious to read the books.

Gail acknowledged that she would not have viewed the websites for the novels without having been asked to do so, but suggested that she would be more likely to visit similar websites in the future, saying, “I think I will probably pay more attention now.” However, she also noted that she would be more motivated to view book websites to assist her with school-related projects than simply to enhance or supplement her pleasure in the book itself.

Classroom use.

Gail communicated that *Thirteen Reasons Why* might be a good choice for students in a social studies classroom, saying, “I think it kind of pertains to everything, like suicide and rumours and fitting in.” She thought that reading a chapter, then viewing the video of the tape connected with

that chapter would be a good way for students to process the book as a class. She also stated that the websites could be a reliable source of information about the book's author and his "original message" and intentions for the book.

Gail believed that *Across the Universe* would make an interesting novel study and suggested that a teacher could show Beth Revis's website to help students understand more about Revis's inspirations and purposes for writing the novel. In Gail's opinion, students would be more motivated or interested in creating fanfiction or fan art for the book if they knew they could post it online and get positive responses from other readers. She also noted that the fan art posted on Revis's website was "all very well done" and believed the quality of that work might inspire higher-quality work from other students. However, Gail did express some concern that posting items online might expose students to the potential of negative comments from peers, which would, she said, have a negative impact on students' motivation.

Summary.

Gail enjoyed *Thirteen Reasons Why*, despite its sadness, and found herself gripped by the action of *Across the Universe*. Unlike some of the other student participants, she saw the authors' notes and commentary as a highlight of the websites. She was also very interested in the written and artistic interpretations of other readers. She stated that the audio content for *Thirteen Reasons Why* increased her sense of connection to Hannah but did not identify any ways in which the online content drew her attention directly back to the text.

Cross-Case Analysis

Analysis of the student interviews revealed a number of common themes in the responses of the students. One of the seemingly strongest of these themes was the potential of audio and visual materials to evoke responses from the student readers. Another prominent theme was the

significant interest expressed by most of the students in the opinions and ideas of other readers. In addition, the students generally agreed that the websites had the power to change the way they thought and that the printed texts were more important than the websites. Final themes evidenced by the cross-case analysis were the students' belief that most people's response to the printed texts would highly influence their response to the websites for that text and the students' tendency to make quick decisions about their interest in the content of a website.

Response to audio and visual materials.

For Ora, hearing and seeing audio and visual material online that clashed with her inner view of the characters created a sense of internal disconnect. She pronounced the videos of the cassette tapes from *Thirteen Reasons Why* "kind of cool" but commented on how different Hannah's voice sounded on the tapes than it did in her head. In addition, Ora thought that the photographs intended to be Hannah differed from her inner vision and said that it "bugged" her when she found out that the movie version of the book was going to feature Selena Gomez as Hannah because "she [Gomez] doesn't seem like the right kind of person."

Hailey remarked that she particularly enjoyed the videos of the cassette tapes because "it was exactly how I'd imagined her voice to be." She also commented on the Facebook page for *Thirteen Reasons Why*, saying, "It was nice, because they had lots of pictures and stuff, so it made it a bit easier to visualize stuff from the book." Further, Hailey suggested that she felt a little closer to the book's characters after viewing some of the photos on the Facebook page, saying, "A picture can tell you a lot you can imagine them [the characters] better, so it's easier to know them." However, Hailey also acknowledged that the pictures she viewed and the voice she heard aligned fairly closely with her inner vision of the characters and stated that "it

probably would have been a bit disappointing” and that she might have felt more distant from the characters if they had not looked and sounded the way she thought they should.

Pauline spent more of her time on the ship diagram for *Across the Universe* than on any of the other online materials for the book and shared that viewing the interactive diagram answered some of her questions about the book, convincing her that it was more “rational” than she had originally thought. Pauline also described a strong emotional response to one of the fan art paintings submitted by an *Across the Universe* reader. Pauline commented specifically on how much she had enjoyed the fan art on the *Amanda Project* site. To her, the visual elements of the online materials for *Thirteen Reasons Why* (the cassette tape videos, the trailers, and scrapbook) were the most compelling. Pauline shared that she spent a lot of time watching the tapes and said, “Actually hearing them—it has a lot bigger of an impact than just reading it. Every time I’d listen to a new video, I would kind of get this little pang in my stomach.” According to Pauline, watching the videos helped her to better understand Clay’s response to Hannah’s tapes. She also stated that the video trailers created by other readers had a similar effect: “Actually seeing it, instead of reading it, has a lot bigger of an impact than you think. It brings me closer to the characters. It makes me understand them better.” She said that her interpretation of the book’s overall theme or message did not change, but she felt it “more powerfully.”

Althea acknowledged that she would actually be afraid of visiting websites for a book she truly loved for fear of seeing something that would “ruin it” for her. When asked to elaborate, she explained, “For one thing, they’d probably have pictures of the characters, which would change what I thought the characters looked like It might make me dislike characters that I like. I just wouldn’t do that.” Althea thought that listening to Hannah’s voice on the videos

might confuse readers by changing their thoughts about her as a character, even saying, “The character would probably fall apart in your head.”

Gail found some of the images on “Hannah’s” blog quite striking. She specifically mentioned the “police report” from the night of the large party, saying, “I liked looking at that and reading over it and just kind of re-immersing myself into how it would have been.” She also enjoyed the videos of Hannah’s tapes “because it’s kind of like being a part of the book.” She noted that “listening to the tapes, it was kind of like knowing her a little bit more.” In contrast, Gail explained that the various photographs on the Facebook page for *Thirteen Reasons Why* “kind of weirded me out because it was not the same person [as Hannah] every time . . . when I read a book, I have very specific images of what everyone looks like and it’s kind of weird to see them looking different than I had imagined them.” Gail went on to say, “I’m always very worried about movies” based on books she enjoys because she fears the characters will not be portrayed the way she imagines them to be.

Interest in the opinions and ideas of other readers.

The students acknowledged their interest in knowing the opinions and ideas of other readers and the strong influence of other readers’ thoughts. Ora’s first response to the online materials for *Thirteen Reasons Why* was “I realized that there’s a whole bunch of people who like the book.” She commented that responses from other readers were much more interesting to read than the content from the book’s author or publisher. Ora also stated that, given a choice between two novels, one with online content and another without, she would probably select the one with online materials because “I would think that people might have read the book more and liked the book more so it’s more famous. They probably thought it was cooler so they actually took the time to make stuff online.” Her comments reflect the common belief that what others

think is both interesting to and influential for young readers. Hailey and Aileen expressed comparable opinions, stating that reading the responses of other readers was the most interesting thing about the websites. Aileen also stated that, “It makes it [a book] more interesting knowing that there’s lots of people writing and, like, making poems and pictures about it.”

Pauline specifically noted that she did not spend much time on Beth Revis’s personal website because she found responses from other readers more interesting than the thoughts of the author: “I liked seeing the various interpretations of the book, like, what did other people think of it, what did they like and not like It was more of a surprise than just the author saying something about the book.” Her commentary about the reader responses on the *Thirteen Reasons Why* website revealed the impact of these responses: “I like having other people’s opinions on the book and how they perceived it—it helps me think, should I read more of this author? Because if people like it, that’s a good sign.” Later, Pauline said, “As I started reading the blog and everything, it made me realize that a lot of other people like this book, so maybe it’s not as bad as I thought. And then I kind of thought more about it, and I realized it was actually a pretty good book. It [the websites] made me think about the book and how I should be perceiving it.”

In Althea’s opinion, the fanfiction for *Across the Universe* was the most interesting because so many readers shared their thoughts about what would happen next. For *Thirteen Reasons Why*, Althea expressed that “the most interesting [part] was reading the stories—hearing about other people and how it affected them.” When Gail initially viewed some of the websites for *Across the Universe*, she thought the content was simply release dates and other repetitive information. However, as she went deeper, she realized that she “got to see what everyone else thought of it,” which in her opinion was significantly more intriguing. Gail particularly enjoyed

the fan art on Revis's website, saying, "I liked seeing what other people thought of the book and how they interpreted it. I liked seeing what really influenced other people's view of the book." Later during that particular interview, Gail noted that reading some of the online opinions before reading a novel would influence her decision whether or not to read the book, "because then I know that a lot of people like it, or that this book isn't that popular. If people say this book really isn't that good, I guess I'm less likely to read it."

Change in thinking.

The students shared a variety of thoughts about the potential ability of the websites to change their thinking, either about a novel itself or about their interest in reading it. Ora pointed out that a well-designed Facebook page would influence students her age to read a book, but also noted that a "lame" Facebook page might deter people from reading a book, even if the book was "actually good." Aileen found that knowing that the next books in the *Amanda Project* series were the result of the online collaboration made her think that the books were more "cool." She thought that viewing other people's ideas and opinions about the characters gave those characters greater depth because she realized there were numerous ways to interpret their actions.

Pauline's ideas were closely linked to her interest in the opinions of other readers. For *Across the Universe*, she stated that, as she viewed the online materials, she was "torn between thinking if the book was good or if the book was bad." When asked to explain further, she shared that viewing the websites made her realize that "a lot of people enjoyed this book a lot," leading her to question her initial negative judgment about the book: "Maybe I didn't see it as it was intended." Pauline also expressed some thoughts about the way that reading some of the fanfiction affected her view of Amy, one of central characters. Throughout her reading of *Across the Universe*, Pauline saw Amy as strong and purposeful, but reading some of the

fanfiction pieces that focused on the possibility of romance between Amy and Elder made Pauline see Amy as “somewhat sappy.” When it came to *The Amanda Project*, the website made Pauline wonder if, in fact, the book might actually be based on fact.

Gail did not think that viewing any of the websites significantly changed any of her responses to the books but acknowledged that reading some of the questions from other readers caused her to re-think some of the assumptions she made about events in the novels. Althea acknowledged that viewing the websites and being exposed to other readers’ interpretations of the characters’ responses and actions gave her a “different perspective” and “opened up” some new ideas, but she firmly stated that “it didn’t really affect me personally.” However, a few minutes later during the interview, she shared, “Having all of those different opinions kind of changes your own.” Althea, more than any of the other students, seemed concerned that the responses of others would draw her away from something she loved.

Importance of printed texts.

Most of the students agreed that the books themselves were more important than the websites. Ora believed that her *Thirteen Reasons Why* reading experience was complete without viewing the websites, explaining that, although she saw the link to the YouTube videos for *Thirteen Reasons Why* on the back of the book, when she finished reading, she thought that “the book was cool, so I just left it.” A few minutes later during the interview, she reiterated, saying, “I think just reading the book was really good enough.” Hailey also suggested that viewing the websites was not an integral or necessary part of the whole book experience, stating, “It’s nice to have the online thing, but you could go and read the book and be able to interpret it and stuff by yourself. So I don’t think it’s that important.” Aileen expressed that knowing that a book had online content would not make her more likely to choose that book over another one without online

materials—she would make her decision based on the back cover or, she said, “I’d read a bit of each and then choose the one I thought would be better.” To her, the printed text mattered more: “If it was a really horrible book but had a really cool website, I wouldn’t go to it if the book wasn’t good.” Althea summed up her opinions by stating, “The online material doesn’t matter to me. It’s the story itself. Sure, this one has cool online material, but if you don’t like the story, what’s the point, right?” Later, when asked if she thought teachers should use any of the materials in the classroom, she said, “No, because you don’t need it.” Gail noted that she would probably never have viewed the websites if she had not been asked to do so, because, she said, “I like to leave books where they are and take them at face value.” In general, she thought that looking at the online materials had been a good experience but that her overall experience of the books would have been complete without the online component. Thus the students’ comments communicated their belief that the websites were secondary to the printed texts.

Response to books determines response to websites.

All of the students agreed that a reader’s response to the websites would be closely linked to his or her response to the printed text. Pauline, Ora, and Aileen all commented that only people who truly enjoyed the book would take the time and effort to investigate the sites. Althea was unequivocal: “You’re not gonna go and look at this stuff if you don’t like the book.” Hailey thought that the people most likely to visit the websites would be those who had read the book and felt personally connected to the events or themes. Gail suggested that the person most likely to view the sites for any book would be “someone doing a book report on it, probably.”

Quick decisions.

Several of the students described their tendency to make quick decisions about the websites and, if the pages did not spark immediate interest, to move on quickly as well. Ora openly

acknowledged, “The ones that I thought were boring I just kind of left.” Similarly, Pauline said, “I just flipped through the ones like Facebook and Twitter. They don’t really interest me . . . I didn’t get it, so I just exited.” Althea was quick to note that several of the sites bored her and that she spent only a few minutes on these sites. When asked to elaborate, she cited text length and density (some of the stories on the *Amanda Project*’s “Our Stories” section looked long and the font was small) and confusion (she was not immediately certain what she was supposed to do on the main page for *Thirteen Reasons Why*) as her top reasons for moving on quickly.

Conclusion

While the students described a wide range of responses that varied in many ways, they also shared a number of opinions and ideas. Beyond the consistencies in their thought patterns, however, another mutual quality was evident in the students’ responses: the general strength of their convictions. The students appeared to exhibit little or no reluctance or apprehension to express their thoughts to me and rarely seemed concerned about producing a “right” or “wrong” answer. This general certainty of opinion during the interviews is noteworthy when viewed against the backdrop of their expressed uncertainty about their own responses in comparison to those posted by their peers online.

If paratexts offer readers the choice of stepping into or turning away from the text (Genette, 1997), then the students I interviewed seemed to be making the decision to step in or turn away based more on the paratexts created by their peers than on those created by authors or publishers. Like the teachers, the students sensed both centripetal and centrifugal forces (McCracken, 2013) at work through the online paratexts, identifying both ways in which the online materials drew them into deeper engagement with the printed texts and ways in which the materials drew their attention away from those texts. Pauline went back to the text of *The Amanda Project* to see if

she could discern significance in the plot details other readers were discussing online, while Gail noted that reading others' discussion of plot details in *Across the Universe* would have made her "push the book away" if she had not already finished reading it. As part of my concluding commentary in Chapter Seven, I look more closely at the relationship between the concept of paratexts and the responses of the teachers and students to the materials they investigated.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions

This chapter begins with a summary of the answers to the overarching research questions that I developed through analysis of the participants' responses. The thoughts and ideas of the teachers and students are addressed separately, and then the similarities between the responses of the two groups are highlighted with respect to the themes identified in Chapters Five and Six. The teachers' and students' responses are also briefly discussed in terms of the functions of paratexts. An examination of the limitations and shortcomings of the study, along with an acknowledgement of some of its strengths, precedes some recommendations for classroom teachers that align with current research and the theoretical foundations of the inquiry. Finally, some suggestions are offered for areas of further research.

Understandings of the Research Questions

To review, the purposes of the study were first to develop an understanding of the Internet-based materials being created in relation to contemporary printed fiction for young adult readers and then to learn how middle years teachers and students responded to both the literature and the accompanying online materials. A further objective was to identify ways in which the online materials influenced the teachers' and students' perceptions of the printed texts, as well as the materials' impact on students' motivation to read the texts and ability to make personal connections to them.

Before addressing the overarching research questions, it is important to note that it was not my goal to make broad generalizations about the potential impact of book-related websites, but rather to develop a clear, in-depth understanding of the unique perspectives of the specific teachers and students who participated in the inquiry. As such, I do not attempt to draw

conclusions about the potential responses of middle years teachers and students in general, but I do describe some similarities between the responses of the individual participants.

Teachers' responses.

How do teachers respond to the books?

The teachers' responses to the collection of novels were varied and unique. Their responses seemed to demonstrate that the teachers moved back and forth along the spectrum between the aesthetic and efferent stances (Rosenblatt, 1982) as they read, at times experiencing the novels simply as readers of fiction and at other times donning their "teacher hats" to examine what they might take away from the novels to use in their classrooms with their own students. Geri's comments were largely personal, focused on her thoughts about the plot of each novel. She did not comment on the written quality of the novels or any stylistic elements but did assert that the mature themes would be inappropriate for her Grade 6 students. Sandra shared a strong negative response to several of the novels, focusing on their juvenility of plot, voice, and tone, but she did acknowledge that the novels addressed some valuable themes. Similarly, Leona acknowledged the value of the topics and themes introduced by the novels and their relevance to students' lives but also described her personal sense of the books' juvenility. Megan focused her response on character construction, plot development, and the quality of the written texts, lauding the use of language in *Across the Universe* but expressing frustration with the plot and characters in *The Amanda Project*. Thus, the responses by Sandra, Megan, and Leona support Johnson's (2011) statement that a number of today's teachers perceive contemporary young adult literature as flighty, fluffy, or shallow, preferring more serious classic works.

How do teachers respond to the online materials?

The teachers' responses to the questions about the online materials also varied to some extent, but some general similarities were also prominent. The teachers shared the opinion that the materials would be more valuable to educators if they were developed by other educators and if they were monitored more closely by adults or featured more adult participation. The comments surrounding the importance of adult monitoring of online conversations echo Vygotsky's assertion that the assistance and participation of a "more sophisticated other" in social situations is vital for children to develop new cognitive skills (Gredler, 2012; Maloch, 2002). In general, the teachers saw the social media pages as repetitive and uninteresting, lacking significance and meaning, but they appreciated the visual elements available online and acknowledged the importance of these multimodal texts for student engagement. The teachers' frequent statements regarding the importance of student interest and motivation echo the commentary of researchers such as Clark and Rumbold (2006) and Guthrie (2008), who describe the close connection between motivation for literacy tasks and literacy achievement. The teachers expressed a general dislike of the websites' marketing attempts similar to the objections voiced by Groenke and Maples (2010), but none of the teachers indicated a feeling that the marketing strategies overpowered the rest of the book-related content. Finally, the teachers shared a sense of separation—an acknowledgement that the websites were not, with the exception of the website for *The Amanda Project*, an integral part of the experience of the text. The teachers expressed a desire for deeper, more extensive (perhaps more traditionally "school-like") online content, content that would, in their opinions, extend and enrich students' experience of the printed text.

It is interesting to contrast the teachers' comments about the online materials with those of Curwood (2013), who investigated students' participation in online affinity spaces for Suzanne

Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Curwood (2013) describes 13-year-old Jack's dedicated participation in multiple affinity websites for the trilogy and asserts that the online paratexts for these books "support readers' intertextual connections and multigenre response to literature; as such, they extend the books in ways that are personally meaningful and engaging to readers" (p. 423). Clearly, not all online paratexts are of equal quality; however, the question may not be how authors and publishers might be encouraged to create deeper online content, but rather how students might be encouraged by teachers to participate more fully in these online spaces, thus creating more meaningful content themselves.

How do the online materials change teachers' thoughts about and responses to the texts?

Three of the four teachers acknowledged a distinct shift in their thinking about the novels after viewing the online materials. Sandra thought that the website for *The Amanda Project* strengthened the weak premise of the novel. Leona also indicated a significant change in her thoughts about *The Amanda Project*, noting that the website added depth and value to the printed text. Megan explained that viewing the websites made her feel less positive about *The Amanda Project* and *Thirteen Reasons Why* because she believed that the online materials were leading students to interact with one another in overly emotional and thus psychologically unhealthy ways. While I acknowledge the potential dangers in these student interactions, Rosenblatt's (1982) comments on emotional response may provide an alternate perspective on Megan's concerns:

It may be that the particular experience or preoccupations the child brings to the spoken or printed text permit some one part to come most intensely alive. Let us not brush this aside in our eagerness to do justice to the total text or to put that part into its proper perspective in the

story. It is more important that we reinforce the child's discovery that texts can make possible such intense personal experience. (p. 272)

In Rosenblatt's view, the conversations that troubled Megan may indicate deep personal engagement with the texts.

How do the teachers predict students will respond to the online materials?

The interview questions asked the teachers to describe their predictions regarding the potential impact of interaction with the online materials on students' motivation to read the printed texts. The teachers were also questioned about their thoughts regarding the impact of the materials on students' ability to make personal connections to aspects of the printed texts, as well as their beliefs about the online elements students would find most engaging. As a group, the teachers did not anticipate that interaction with the websites would have a significant impact on students' motivation to read the printed texts but suggested that students would be more likely to visit the sites if they had enjoyed the books. The teachers, in general, acknowledged the possibility that viewing the sites could help students create more meaningful personal connections to the texts but were not highly optimistic about this possibility. Leona suggested that students' participation in conversation about the texts through online discussion threads might help create personal connections, and Megan predicted that seeing the emotionally charged responses of other readers might help students reflect on their own emotional responses to the texts. Geri stated that the student responses on the websites might be too general to prompt specific connections. Although they highlighted different online elements in their individual responses, the teachers indicated that they saw the social aspects of the websites and the audio and visual components as likely to be the most engaging for students. The teachers' comments echo those of Jenkins (2006, as cited in Groenke & Maples, 2010), who suggests that

the social appeal of sharing ideas with others draws students to book-related sites online. Lammers et al. (2012) also emphasize the appeal of the social aspect of affinity spaces, noting that participants may develop relationships that move beyond the affinity topic. Curwood (2013) suggests that positive interactions within book-related affinity spaces can ultimately create greater motivation to read.

Students' responses.

How do students respond to the books?

The students' responses demonstrated that they had, for the most part, read the novels from the aesthetic stance (Rosenblatt, 1982). The students expressed significant emotional positivity about the novels, commenting most frequently on specific elements of the novels' plots they had enjoyed (such as suspense, mystery, and important ideas) and on their perceptions of the characters. The concept of absolute interests—topics, such as death or sexuality, which have some appeal for almost everyone (Clark & Phythian-Sence, 2008)—seems to be at play here, as the selected novels address such universally relevant topics as suicide, friendship, peer pressure, and romantic relationships. Guthrie (2008) posits that such topical relevance can be highly motivating for students.

How do students respond to the online materials?

In general, the students found repetitive content uninteresting and wanted “more”—extra items or information about the plot or characters that was not included in the printed texts. Each of the students expressed particular interest in the responses of other readers. The students' positive responses to the online elements that encouraged peer interaction around the text support Guthrie's (2008) statement that allowing students to interact to understand a text is highly motivating. Their responses also support the assertion of Pachtman and Wilson (2006) that

students are more motivated to read when a social activity or discussion follows the reading. The students' interest in the audio and visual elements available online reflects the tendency of many students in Western society and culture to gravitate toward multimodal texts online because of their relevance, connection, and applicability (Jacobs, 2012; Jewitt, 2008; Tarasiuk, 2010). The students' interest in the audio and visual aspects of the websites may also have been connected to a general appreciation of elements that make abstract concepts more concrete.

Do the online materials help students to connect with the printed texts?

The students' responses to the questions about personal connections varied significantly, so I hesitate to make any generalizations between them. Ora explained that the audio and visual materials actually created distance between herself and the characters because the materials disrupted her inner vision of their voices and appearances. Althea also shared that the visual materials online clashed with her inner visions of the characters. Smagorinsky (2013) describes Vygotsky's understanding of the deep connection between emotional response and cognition—engagement with artistic works may lead to emotional reactions that influence thinking. The students' responses to the visuals they encountered may be demonstrations of this principle.

Unlike Ora and Althea, Pauline believed that learning additional details about the characters from *The Amanda Project* through their online profiles helped her to visualize them and thus feel closer to them. (It is important to note that while the online profiles for Hal, Callie, and Nia include such details as their favourite foods and outfits, the profiles do not include actual photographs of any kind.) Hearing "Hannah's" voice on the cassette-tape videos helped Pauline feel closer to Hannah and to Clay, who listened to them. Gail expressed a similar experience regarding the videos. Hailey and Aileen noted that the online materials had no impact on their ability to make personal connections with the characters or text. Thus, some of the students

identified increased personal connections to a text after interacting with the online materials, some of the students felt a decrease in connection, and others were unable to identify any change in their sense of connection.

How do the online materials change students' thoughts about and responses to the texts?

Most of the changes in the students' thinking occurred through viewing and hearing the responses of other readers. Ora changed her thinking on a number of topics when she realized that her ideas and responses did not align with the responses of other readers who posted online. Pauline explained that reading the responses of other readers caused her to question her own responses. Aileen noted that seeing online respondents attribute deeper significance to events in a novel than she did caused her to rethink the importance of those events. On a different note, Althea feared the changes in her own thinking she believed the audio and visual elements online could make. The changes in the students' thoughts in response to encounters with the ideas of others demonstrate social constructivism at work. Through interaction with others, thought patterns and ideas are formed and transformed.

Using the online materials in the classroom.

Teachers' responses.

In general, the teachers were open to the idea of investigating online materials for novels they chose to use and were receptive to the possibility that the materials might spark ideas for classroom activities. The teachers were somewhat open to the use of the novels in the classroom as long as they determined their specific use. Geri, the most enthusiastic about using the novels for whole-class study, saw the online materials as a good starting point from which she would tailor activities for her unique groups of students. Sandra believed that the use of excerpts to illustrate literary concepts would be the most effective use of the novels and would consider the

use of online materials on a case-by-case basis. Like Sandra, Megan stated that the novels would best be used in excerpt form. Sandra and Megan would use online materials as supplements to printed texts they might choose. Leona would consider using each of the novels in her classroom in different ways and was quite open to the idea of asking students to participate in online discussion forums or to post art and writing online for their peers to respond to and discuss.

The participating teachers' positive comments about using the online materials in the classroom reflect the enthusiasm of Witte (2007), Tarasiuk (2010), and Schillinger (2011), educators who used online materials or digital technologies with students. These researchers acknowledged difficulties along the way but were encouraged by their experiences and their students' responses to these literacy activities. Similarly, Curwood (2013) believes that online affinity spaces may have "a profound impact on young people's literacy practices, identities, and affiliations" (p. 421) and asserts that, in the case of 13-year-old Jack, "technology, rather than encouraging passive participation or usurping books, has actually promoted his critical engagement with literature and fostered his development of advanced literacy practices and leadership skills" (p. 417).

However, beneath the teachers' expressed interest in the books and online materials ran a distinct coolness or wariness. Comments made by each teacher demonstrated an underlying commitment to traditional literacy skills and classroom practices. Although I acknowledge the validity of the teachers' comments regarding the literary shortcomings of the novels and the weaknesses of some of the accompanying websites, the teachers' hesitance to incorporate contemporary texts (printed or online) that reflect students' out-of-school literacy practices, along with their insistence on strictly controlling the use of those texts if they were to be

included in the curriculum, is a matter of some concern in light of current research demonstrating the value of the integration of students' out-of-school literacies into the classroom.

Students' responses.

In my personal reflective notes, I described my feeling that the students had been surprised when I asked for their opinions regarding the use of these materials in the classroom. Perhaps they considered it unusual for an educator to be asking for their point of view. Although it is not possible to definitively state the reason for their hesitancy, the students had some difficulty answering this question. No clear similarities were apparent in their responses. Ora and Gail thought the books would be worth reading in class because of the relevant, important themes they addressed. Gail believed the websites could provide interesting background information about the authors, useful for book reports, and Ora suggested that the websites would help students understand how others had responded to the novels. Pauline was enthusiastic about the use of similar books in the classroom, and, in her opinion, sharing ideas online would be motivating for students, and viewing the additional visuals online would make the reading experience more interesting and complete. Hailey did not seem very positive about the use of the books in the classroom, but mentioned that the online materials might help others "understand the books better." Althea clearly stated that the online materials were unnecessary and had no place in the classroom. She also mentioned her discomfort at the thought of being asked to post a personal response online because she feared negative commentary from others.

Althea's fear may have stemmed from her experiences with the social networking sites used by her peer group. Gail made a similar comment about the general unkindness of students online and was surprised by the positive commentary she viewed on the *Across the Universe* fanfiction site. Lammers et al. (2012) note that online affinity spaces often provide a positive, supportive

audience for their participants; perhaps students, who may generalize on the basis of limited experience, need more exposure to online spaces where written and unwritten protocols ensure that commentary is constructive and affirming.

Comparison of students' and teachers' responses.

Analysis of the data revealed that the responses of the students and teachers aligned in six significant ways, which are discussed individually below. However, three additional themes not evident in the students' responses appeared in the teachers' data. The teachers' ideas about "good" texts, their belief in the need for increased adult moderation or involvement on the websites, and their consensus that discussing mature or difficult topics in the classroom is valuable were discussed in Chapter Five.

Audio and visual materials evoke a strong response.

The teachers expressed personal interest in the audio and visual materials offered online and predicted that students would also be intrigued by these elements, such as the fan art, the interactive ship diagram, YouTube videos, and fan-created video trailers. The students' responses to these materials focused on two elements: a professed enjoyment of these materials and a negative reaction when the materials depicted characters in ways that did not align with the students' inner vision of those characters.

The opinions and ideas of other readers are interesting and influential.

The teachers anticipated that students would be interested in the responses of other readers shared online and also predicted that those responses would have an impact on the students. Two of the teachers expressed concern that the responses of others would have a negative impact. Geri was concerned that the ideas of others would shape students' ideas about a text before they had the opportunity to fully develop their own thoughts. As mentioned previously,

Megan feared that the responses of others would draw students into emotionally unhealthy thought cycles. The teachers' predictions were quite accurate: the students' responses demonstrated that they were indeed both interested in the responses of others and that their thinking was significantly influenced by those responses. The students' responses are also evidence of social constructivism—the students' views and understandings of the texts were shaped and refined by interaction with others. The social media pages and online discussion forums are examples of the affinity spaces described by Knobel (2006) and Lammers et al. (2012). In these spaces, students are negotiating their understandings not just of the texts but of the world and their place in it. Megan and Geri saw students in the process of developing these understandings but did not view the fact of these processes occurring online as positively as do Knobel and Lammers et al.

Students' response to the websites is determined by their response to the printed texts.

As a group, the teachers predicted that students' response to the books would determine their response to the websites, rather than the other way around. The teachers anticipated that the online materials would only be interesting or even comprehensible to those who had already engaged with the printed texts and enjoyed them. All the students agreed that their responses to the websites were closely linked to their responses to the books.

Primacy of the printed texts.

While there was general agreement among the teachers that the novels themselves were more important than the online materials that accompanied them, there was some difference of opinion regarding their use. Geri and Leona would use novels they considered to be of lesser quality if they believed that the online materials added significant value to the texts. Sandra and Megan firmly stated that the books would always come first and that they would not use what they

considered to be an inferior novel even if the accompanying materials were excellent. The students also considered the printed texts more important than the websites, concluding that a great website could not make up for a text they did not enjoy. These thoughts were linked to a conclusion that viewing the websites was not an integral part of the experience of the novels. This conclusion is understandable considering that most of the novels discussed (with the exception of *The Amanda Project*), were not true “digi-novels” (Groenke & Maples, 2010) in which the online material is an essential component of the story, but were instead printed texts, complete on their own, with related materials available online.

Change in thinking.

Both teachers and students made statements acknowledging the power of the websites to impact their thoughts and ideas about the printed texts. Sandra and Leona were more positive about *The Amanda Project* after viewing the project website, and Megan experienced a similar increase in enthusiasm about *Across the Universe* after investigating its online materials. However, Megan thought the online materials for *Thirteen Reasons Why* detracted from the value of the novel. The students also identified specific ways in which the online materials had influenced their thinking, ranging from Aileen’s increased interest in the sequels to *The Amanda Project* after realizing they were the product of the online collaboration to Pauline’s growing conviction that *The Amanda Project* might actually be based on real-life events.

Quick decisions about online materials.

As a group, the teachers expressed their tendency to make quick decisions about their interest in the websites. If they were at all confused or their interest was not immediately sparked, they left the site quickly. The students were equally open about their tendency to move on quickly. If their attention was not piqued in the first minute or two of browsing, they assumed there was

nothing of interest on the site. While a direct relationship with this phenomenon is difficult to ascertain, a number of researchers who have investigated students' reading interests (Clark, 2011; Clark & Foster, 2005; Coles & Hall, 2002; Hughes-Hassel & Rodge, 2007; Pitcher et al., 2007; Snowball, 2008) have found that many students prefer to read magazines, which offer multiple short articles (with enticing images and catchy openers) and allow a reader to flip quickly to the next page if the current page is uninteresting. The same tendencies that lead students to enjoy magazines may also be at work in their online reading habits.

Paratexts and the Teachers' and Students' Responses

A final way to examine the teachers' and students' responses to the materials they investigated is to view them through the lens of paratexts. As mentioned in Chapter Four, McCracken (2013) describes the ability of digital paratexts to exert centripetal and centrifugal forces, drawing the reader's attention deeper into or away from the central text. Both students and teachers identified ways in which the online materials encouraged more intense engagement with the printed texts and also distracted their attention or decreased their level of connection and engagement. Curwood (2013) asserts that "media paratexts extend and enhance young adults' experiences with literature" (p. 423). Although she acknowledges that paratexts are separate from the texts they accompany, Curwood (2013) believes in the ability of online paratexts to support students as they "access schema, critically understand themes, construct knowledge, and engage in multimodal content creation" (p. 423). After considering the responses of the participating teachers, I believe that they would respond to Curwood's statements with "Yes . . . sometimes." The teachers saw a number of positive possibilities offered by the online paratexts but did not see those possibilities used consistently or to their full potential.

Birke and Christ (2013) suggest that paratexts have the potential to function interpretively and commercially. (Birke and Christ also discuss the navigational function of paratexts in relation to digitized print narratives but that function is not relevant in this context.) In general, the teachers acknowledged that interpretation was occurring in and through the online materials but had a variety of ideas about that interpretation. Sandra and Leona believed that the websites could offer avid readers a forum to engage in positive interpretive discussion. Geri feared that exposure to others' interpretations online might prevent students from fully developing their own views, and Megan believed that emotional response was frequently eclipsing thoughtful interpretation on the websites. As a group, the students expressed significant interest in the interpretations of other readers they encountered online, but Hailey noted that the other readers did not always explain their thoughts very well and Gail commented that she would also enjoy more interpretive commentary from the authors. Thus, the participants demonstrated differing opinions regarding the value and quality of the interpretation occurring through the websites.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the participants generally acknowledged that the online paratexts operated commercially, but neither the teachers nor the students believed that marketing was the only or the strongest function. Leona stated that the level of advertising was appropriate, and none of the students appeared to find the amount of advertising overwhelming or off-putting.

A Brief Critique of the Research

It is important to note that a number of factors influenced and limited the study and may have affected these results. First, because participation in the study required a significant commitment from each participant, the number of interested volunteers was small. Thus, I had little ability to select who did and did not participate, and this limitation led to a mismatch in the grade levels of

the teachers and students. With the exception of Leona, each of the teachers' careers focused on students at the lower end of the Grade 6-9 range, while, with the exception of Pauline, each of the students was at the upper end of the Grade 6-9 range. Neither the teachers nor the students represented each grade in the 6-9 range. Furthermore, although the teachers represented a variety of public and independent schools and taught students from various cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, each participating teacher had taught for fewer than 10 years, and thus the teacher participants did not represent the full spectrum of educators currently teaching in the school system. Another limitation is the fact that all of the participating teachers and students were female; the male point of view was not presented. Finally, it is important to consider the impact of the selected novels themselves. Different novels with different associated online materials may have elicited different responses from the teachers and students.

As mentioned previously, another noteworthy limitation was the necessity of interviewing students individually, rather than in a group setting, as Eder and Fingerson (2001) recommend. The Skype interview format for the students, which allowed participation by certain students who might not otherwise have been able to participate, meant that I was not able to observe the students as they investigated the websites, limiting my understanding of their navigation and focus to their replies to my interview questions. In addition, the students' ability to comment on the full range of online materials was limited because each participant did not read all of the four novels or investigate all of the groups of websites. Finally, the decision of two of the students not to make any entries in their response journals significantly limited the data set.

As the investigation proceeded, I began to realize that I could have gathered more specific data and strengthened the study by using several different procedures. I could have given more specific direction to the students about the websites I asked them to investigate. Instead of

simply giving them a list of websites, I could have directed them to specific places within those websites. As it was, each student did not necessarily view the same aspects of the websites. Alternately, understanding that each student was drawn to different aspects of the sites was also interesting and informative. Another option would have been for me to limit my study to a specific type of online material for each book—for example, I could have focused on only publisher-produced material or only material on social networking sites.

The interview questions could have been designed differently to elicit participant responses that answered my research questions more effectively. I could have referred to more specific aspects of the websites when I spoke with teachers and students rather than asking for general impressions. I could also have been clearer about my definition of personal connections. I often found myself explaining this concept to students during the interview, and my explanations were not always entirely consistent. Providing more specific examples within the interview protocol might have been helpful.

However, the investigation had many strengths. Working with a small number of participants allowed me to interview each participant extensively. In addition, conducting repeated interviews with some of the students enabled me to build a comfortable rapport. Throughout the interviews with teachers and students, my personal sense was that each participant spoke freely and honestly. I did not have the impression that any of the participants were attempting to answer the questions in the way they thought I wanted. This openness enhanced the trustworthiness of the investigation. Other strengths of the study included comprehensive data analysis procedures and the development of a clear audit trail that allows themes to be traced directly to the words of the participants.

Recommendations for Teachers

As mentioned previously, it is not possible to make generalizations based on the data from this inquiry. However, reflection on the responses of the participants informed the following suggestions for educators who may be considering the use of young adult literature accompanied by online materials. The recommendations focus on the use of contemporary young adult literature, the use of related online materials, and the promotion of social interaction amongst students around this literature.

Using contemporary young adult literature.

Read it!

The first set of recommendations has to do with the use of contemporary young adult fiction in middle years classrooms. Middle years teachers need to read young adult novels—not just efferently (asking, “Could I use this text with my students, and if so, how?”) but also aesthetically, simply to enjoy their freshness and to experience the many ways in which these texts are evolving to reflect modern society and culture. Teachers need to give new works of fiction a chance, to read “deeply and widely” (Stallworth, 2006, p. 63), and, in doing so, to open themselves and their classrooms to unexpected possibilities. Latrobe and Drury (2009) urge teachers (along with public librarians, school librarians, parents, and school counselors) to not only read works of young adult fiction, but also to find delight in reading them and talking about them. The teachers in my inquiry demonstrated varying levels of belief that contemporary fiction for young adults was fluffy and inconsequential. Johnson (2011) acknowledges that these beliefs are widespread among North American educators but shares Atwell’s (1991) assertion that when teachers take the time to read young adult literature aesthetically, not just efferently,

their conception of the purpose of reading is transformed. Intimately enjoying new literature, not seeking to extract information or lesson plans from it, may begin to undo this prejudice.

Honour students' enjoyment.

It may be tempting for teachers to thoughtlessly dismiss or underestimate students' enjoyment of texts they themselves consider to be juvenile. Pitcher et al. (2007) describe the tendency of educators to devalue the out-of-school literacy activities of adolescents in favour of more traditional in-school activities. However, teachers must resist the urge to devalue texts which bring students genuine pleasure, remembering Rosenblatt's (1982) statement that a student's emotional response to a text may be "a sign of the intensity of the lived-through transaction with the text" (p. 272). Those intense responses, Rosenblatt posits, create deeper engagement with literature. It follows that a deeply pleasurable experience of one text will prepare and encourage students to take pleasure in other texts; however, pleasure in "fluffy" texts should not be seen merely as a stepping stone to enjoyment of more mature texts.

Consider content.

When selecting young adult fiction to use in the classroom, an important question to ask is whether or not the content reflects the interests and experiences, personal and vicarious, of the students who will be reading it. The situations of individual students should be considered—students need texts that evoke "their past experiences and present preoccupations" (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 67, as cited in Connell, 2008, p. 114). Ma'ayan (2010) posits that students' motivation for school reading may be low if their preferred texts are "not sanctioned within the school setting" (p. 646) and if the pressing topics of their lives outside school are not addressed or considered appropriate for discussion. However, Connell (2000) notes that Rosenblatt (1938) offers some words of caution in this area. When educators place too much emphasis on student

readers' external lives, they may keep those readers from textual experiences that move beyond their immediate situation. Readers need texts that engage their current interests, but they also need to interact with texts that will help to build bridges between old and new experiences and that will expand their ideas about the world (Connell, 2000). Students should be encouraged to connect in both intellectual and emotional ways with the lives of others. Rosenblatt (1938, as cited in Connell, 2000) also cautions against overly simplified notions of student interest, such as an assumption that students experiencing certain problems should be offered texts in which the characters deal with those same problems. As each of the participating teachers mentioned and as Moley et al. (2011) recommend, any texts selected should also be appropriate for the developmental level of the students who will be reading them.

Allow choice when possible.

“To be relevant, learning processes need to recruit, rather than attempt to ignore and erase, the different *subjectivities*—interests, intentions, commitments, and purposes—students bring to learning” (New London Group, 1996, p. 72). Offering a choice of texts is one way in which students may reveal their subjectivities and teachers may recruit them. Offering meaningful, realistic choice may increase students' sense of empowerment (Fillman & Guthrie, 2008) and encourage their motivation to read (Guthrie, 2008). As Rosenblatt (1982) explains, educators must acknowledge the individuality of the reader, understanding that they cannot predict which texts will evoke the strongest responses from a reader without first fully knowing the reader and his or her unique collection of experiences. Students know themselves better than their teachers ever will, and they likely have strong opinions about their personal preferences, just as the student participants in my inquiry did.

Respect intrinsic pleasure.

When selecting texts for curriculum use and classroom criticism, teachers must tread lightly around texts which students enjoy in out-of-school contexts. Mackey (2010) cautions educators “not to destroy students’ private pleasure in recreational texts, no matter how inane or uninteresting they may seem” (p. 264). Kell (2009) also acknowledges that institutionalizing or formalizing students’ out-of-school literacies may destroy their pleasure in these activities and recommends that teachers proceed with caution. Teachers should remember that aesthetic reading is valuable for the personal pleasure it brings, and Rosenblatt (1982) reinforces this idea by stating that, “paradoxically, when transactions are lived through for their own sake, they will probably have as by-products the educational, informative, social, and moral values for which literature is praised. Even enhancement of skills may result” (p. 275).

Using online materials.***Be open.***

After investigating the online materials for myself and speaking with both teachers and students about these materials, my first recommendation regarding them is simply for teachers to be aware of their existence and to be open to the possibilities they might offer. When considering a new novel for classroom use, teachers should conduct an online search to see what additional materials or opportunities might be available. Hammett and Toope (2010) remind educators that many of their students have grown up using a variety of digital technologies and spend a great deal of their time outside school using various media forms—texting, instant messaging, social networking sites—but may be cut off from these technologies during the school day. Hammett and Toope recommend that teachers incorporate students’ out-of-school literacy practices to address in-school curriculum objectives, perhaps through the use of activities

such as creating blogs, podcasts, and movies; remixing content, sharing images, and creating or participating in affinity spaces on social networking sites. Using these tools, Hammett and Toope propose, can facilitate engagement in collaborative learning projects and critical examination of a variety of social issues involved in online activities. Mackey (2010) posits that many adolescents in wealthy Western nations such as Canada are highly capable of responding to literature using various technological formats even if they have never been formally taught to do so in a language arts classroom. According to Mackey, today's young people are increasingly responding to out-of-school media experiences through production. No longer purely receptive, adolescents are participating in threaded discussions, writing online reviews, remixing music, modifying games, and creating fanfiction, artwork, trailers, and collages. Mackey recommends that educators consider the implications of these changes. If today's youth are media-savvy and expert in the use of digital production technologies, teachers must learn to appreciate, develop, and challenge their students' skills in the classroom.

Choose well.

Online activities should not be used simply because they occur online, but rather because they support particular curriculum objectives and aid in the development of digital wisdom (Prensky, 2009). Prensky (2009) asserts that it is not enough for students to know how to use a particular technology easily or creatively; rather, students must learn to make wiser decisions because of their interaction with that technology. Educators must become “guides, context providers, and quality controllers” as they support students in learning through technology (Prensky, 2009, p. 6). Teachers must be careful not to make assumptions about any student's level of ability and should always explore ways to scaffold their students' skills in interpreting and creating multimodal texts online (Mills, 2010).

Approaches to the integration of technology in the classroom must give sufficient attention to content and pedagogy and to the differences between individual classrooms, students, and subject areas (Harris, Mishra, & Koehler, 2009). Harris et al. (2009) recommend an approach they call “Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge” (TPACK) which “emphasizes the connections among technologies, curriculum content, and specific pedagogical approaches” and identifies the ways in which teachers’ understandings of the ways these elements interact can lead to effective teaching in content areas using technology (p. 396). Essentially, teachers must have clear understandings of the content to be taught, best pedagogical practices, and the technology being considered in order to make wise decisions about the use of that technology. The teachers in the study made comments that demonstrated their awareness of the importance of focusing on content knowledge and of pedagogical practices that encourage student motivation but did not demonstrate equal concern about developing students’ technological or multiliteracy skills.

As with the selection of printed texts, teachers should also consider the emotional and psychological development of their students when selecting online materials and activities. As each teacher in the study expressed, these developmental levels require just as much care and attention as students’ specific skill levels. Similarly, teachers should carefully assess the safety and security of any website before asking students to engage in any kind of posting or participation. Teachers should investigate the amount and type of information students are required to provide in order to participate and whether or not the posts on the site are controlled or moderated in any way. An unmediated site need not automatically be eliminated from consideration, but teachers should be aware that the content on the site can change quickly and that posts by others cannot be controlled. Although teachers must exercise care and caution in

selecting online activities, it is perhaps even more important to teach critical media evaluation skills and to discuss the decision making process with students. B. Williams (2008) asserts that “the most important thing we can do is talk with our students about how and why they read and write online” (p. 685). Groenke and Maples (2010) also note that book-related sites can provide opportunity for critical discussion about issues surrounding advertising and consumerism.

Another question to ask when selecting book-related websites is whether or not the site adds something fresh and new to the experience or understanding of the text or to the discussion about it. The teachers and students in the study both commented on their dislike of content that was repeated across multiple sites and of online content that parroted content in the printed texts. Bull (2011) explains that interaction with texts in “meaningful, multidimensional ways” (p. 227) fosters literacy growth. To promote active reading experiences, students should be prompted to make connections within a text, connections among texts, and connections outside of texts. Teachers should ask whether or not a site provides any elements that will help their students make these types of connections. Knowing that students will quickly disengage if a site does not immediately capture their interest should also guide the selection process.

Consider the impact of visuals.

Keeping in mind the strong response of the students in the study to the visual materials, teachers should carefully consider the types of visuals a website offers and the potential impact these visuals may have on students. Teachers should not underestimate the possible effects of viewing images of characters or scenes students have only imagined previously.

Acknowledgement and discussion of these effects with students is important and may deepen students’ understanding of their own reactions to the materials.

Just as teachers must be careful not to destroy students' intrinsic pleasure in particular printed texts, so must they tread carefully when incorporating online activities students enjoy outside of school (such as participation in social networking sites) into the classroom context. Adolescents may enjoy these activities precisely because they perceive them to be outside the realm of institutions such as their schools (van den Beemt, Akkerman, & Simons, 2011) and may resent teachers "intruding" in their out-of-school social spaces.

Consider teaching about paratexts.

It may be valuable to teach students about Genette's (1997) concept of paratexts in as much depth as is developmentally appropriate, using accessible language. The prescribed learning outcomes of the British Columbia language arts curriculum for Grades 6-9 call for students to examine the structures and features of texts and the ways those structures and features work together to develop meaning (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006, pp. 83 & 89; British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007, pp. 51 & 58). The language of paratexts may help students to frame their understanding of how online textual elements are negotiating printed texts and shaping and influencing their interpretations of them. McCracken's (2013) differentiation between centrifugal and centripetal paratextual forces might be especially useful in teaching students to identify whether online elements are directing them away from or deeper into a text.

Promoting social interaction.

The responses of the student participants clearly demonstrated the importance of social interaction and the ideas and opinions of their peers to middle years students. From a social constructivist perspective, this interaction is vital for social, emotional, and cognitive growth. Jacobs (2012) also asserts that engaging students in participatory culture in the school setting is

vital to encouraging them to participate in the global information-based economy and online and offline communities as adults. Beyond fostering growth, social interaction is also highly motivating. “When learning is relational, it is always more engaging and richer than learning when alone” (Wilhelm & Smith, 2007, p. 232).

Whenever possible, teachers should create opportunities for students to share their responses to the texts they read. Rosenblatt (1982) states, “as students grow older, sharing of responses becomes the basis for valuable interchange. Discovering that others have had different responses, have noticed what was overlooked, have made alternate interpretations, leads to self-awareness and self-criticism” (p. 276). The sharing of responses may occur in person or online; the important fact is that it occurs. Online affinity spaces may provide a variety of options for personal responses to texts through conversation or productions such as fanfiction, fan art, or movie trailers (Black, 2007).

The teachers in the study expressed some concern over the quality of the responses students were posting online. Megan emphasized the importance of students using criteria to frame their responses and of giving examples to support their positions. Not only should students be given the opportunity to share responses to texts with their peers, but they should also be taught *how* to respond. Rosenblatt (1982) recommends that teachers foster aesthetic responses by helping students focus on “expressions of response that keep the experiential, qualitative elements in mind. Did anything especially interest? annoy? puzzle? frighten? please? seem familiar? seem weird?” (p. 276). These questions are good starting points for helping students to delve deeper into their textual experiences and to identify the reasons behind their initial responses. Jacobs (2006) recommends teaching students to respond through the use of an artistic medium.

Latrobe and Drury (2009) summarize Probst's (1984) comments on the characteristics of settings that enable and encourage young adults to think creatively and reflectively about the texts they have read. Young adult students need to feel emotionally secure and certain that their ideas, comments, and perspectives are desired and welcomed; feel free to speculate, offer tentative thoughts or the beginnings of ideas; and feel comfortable changing their minds. As mentioned previously, online settings may be excellent venues for student response—but only if they are safe. While teachers cannot shelter their students from all negative responses from their peers, they can ensure that their classrooms are safe, supportive spaces for discussion and response. Teachers can help students to develop the skills they need to respond positively and constructively to others' ideas both online and in the classroom. Teachers can also assist students to develop the skills necessary for managing their reactions to responses they perceive as negative and help students to identify online situations that are unhealthy or unsafe.

Recommendations for Future Research

My inquiry served only to scratch the surface of a topic which is growing rapidly in breadth and complexity as more online materials are created daily. Lammers et al. (2012) note the difficulty for researchers caused by the “porous boundaries” (p. 54) of the online materials and the fact that these materials are continuously changing. Future research might involve a much larger number of middle years teachers and students, including male teachers and students, from a wider geographical area, to represent a broader range of opinions and perspectives and to determine if geographical factors influence results. Research into the responses of elementary and high school students to the same types of printed texts and websites might also be completed, in order to understand if and how age or developmental maturity plays a role in determining student response. Research might also occur with a wider selection of novels and

with novels in which the printed texts and online materials are more deeply integrated, as well as with texts that exist solely online, to determine the impact of specific types of texts. Finally, studies focusing on social media sites and their unique impact on reading motivation would be beneficial, as would studies that investigate the impact of participation in these sites on identity formation, including issues of gender identity.

Conclusion

I entered this investigation with strong feelings of curiosity regarding the growing swirl of websites surrounding more and more contemporary works of fiction. As I conclude the inquiry, I realize that my curiosity has really not been satisfied but rather has expanded and taken new forms. Although many questions remain and I am eager to answer them, I also want to ensure that my attention continues to be directed to the issues that matter most. Latrobe and Drury (2009) believe that the primary roles of the adults who work with adolescents in the area of literacy are to “motivate reading and to encourage reflection after the book is closed” (p. 43). With new technologies and ways to experience text constantly emerging, it is easy to be distracted by the excitement of novelty and innovation. However, it is critical for the energy of educators to remain focused on those elemental roles and to continually evaluate whether or not a practice or technology is sparking students’ interest, compelling them not only to read texts but also to engage in deep reflection and meaningful personal response.

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Across the Universe website. <http://acrosstheuniversebook.com/>

Penguin Community Discussion: Across the Universe website.
<http://community.penguin.com/service/displayDiscussionThreads.kickAction?w=355464&as=150186&d=634582>

Facebook: Across the Universe. <https://www.facebook.com/acrosstheuniversebook>

Facebook: Beth Revis website. <https://www.facebook.com/authorbethrevis>

Beth Revis website. <http://www.bethrevis.com/>

Twitter: Beth Revis website. <http://twitter.com/#!/bethrevis>

Fanfiction: Across the Universe website.
http://m.fanfiction.net/book/Across_the_Universe_Beth_Revis/

Appendix A

Initial Contact Script for Teachers

Hello,

You may remember from previous conversations that I am currently completing a Master of Arts degree in Language and Literacy, with a focus on students in the middle years, through the University of Victoria. I'm in the process of setting up my research, which focuses on the response of students and teachers to young adult literature that is linked to different kinds of content on the Internet.

I'm looking for teachers who would like to participate in the project by reading four young adult novels, investigating the online content associated with them, keeping a simple response journal, and meeting with me for an in-depth interview to discuss their responses to the material.

If you are interested and would like to learn more about the project and what participation would entail, please contact me by e-mail (raeginther@gmail.com) or by telephone (604-215-2253).

In addition, if you know of other colleagues or acquaintances in the profession who may be interested in the project, please forward my contact information to those individuals as well.

Your consideration is appreciated, and I look forward to the possibility of partnering with you in this project. However, please do not feel in any way obligated to participate in the project or to forward the project information. Your decision to participate or not to participate will have no bearing on our personal or professional relationship.

Sincerely,

Ruth Ann Ginther

Appendix B

Initial Contact Script for Parents

Hello,

You may remember from previous conversations that I am currently completing a Master of Arts degree in Language and Literacy, with a focus on students in the middle years, through the University of Victoria. I'm in the process of setting up my research, which focuses on the response of students and teachers to young adult literature that is linked to different kinds of content on the Internet.

I'm looking for students who would like to be involved in the project, and I wondered if your son/daughter might be interested. Involvement would include reading one to four young adult novels and participating in individual Skype interviews before and after investigating the online materials associated with each novel. Students will also keep a simple response journal that records their impressions of the materials.

If you think your son or daughter might enjoy this opportunity and you would like to learn more about the project, please contact me by e-mail (raeginther@gmail.com) or by telephone (604-215-2253).

In addition, if you know of other parents with children in Grades 6-9 who may be interested in the project, please feel free to discuss this opportunity with them and to forward my contact information as well.

Thank you for your consideration! I look forward to the possibility of partnering with you and your son/daughter in this project. However, please do not feel in any way obligated by our previous relationship to allow your child to participate in the project or to forward the project information. Your decision regarding this project will have no bearing on our ongoing relationship.

Sincerely,

Ruth Ann Ginther

Appendix C

Letter of Information and Consent for Teachers

Middle Years Teachers' and Students' Responses to Young Adult Literature with Online Content

You are invited to participate in a study entitled "Middle Years Teachers' and Students' Responses to Young Adult Literature with Online Content" that is being conducted by Ruth Ann Ginther.

Ms. Ginther is a graduate student in the department of Education Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria. You may contact her with any questions by telephone at (604) 215-2253 or by e-mail at raeginther@gmail.com.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Language and Literacy. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sylvia Pantaleo. You may contact her at (250) 721-7845 or by e-mail at pantaleo@uvic.ca.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to develop an understanding of the ways that middle years students and teachers respond to the online content that is being developed by authors, publishers, and readers in connection with a number of current novels written for young adults. Understanding that student engagement is a key element of motivation for reading, the project seeks to determine whether the use of online content can increase students' motivation for reading and deepen the personal connections students make with the printed texts.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because online content is being developed for a growing number of works of young adult literature. Many of today's students are increasingly heavy users of the internet and social media, and the impact of online content on students' motivation for reading and engagement with printed texts should be investigated. The existing body of research on this topic is limited and does not yet include Canadian content.

Participant Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because, as a teacher of middle years students, your ideas and opinions on the topic are valuable.

What is Involved

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include reading four current works of fiction for young adults, investigating the online content that exists in connection with these works, keeping a simple response journal, and participating in a single interview with me. The interview will take approximately one hour and will occur at a time and location that you deem convenient. Your response journal will help you to recall your thoughts and impressions during the interview. The

proposed books are *Across the Universe* by Beth Revis (2011), *Tunnels* by Roderick Gordon and Brian Williams (2008), *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher (2007), and *The Amanda Project: Invisible I* by Melissa Kantor (2009).

To make sure that I understand and recall your thoughts and ideas accurately, I will make an audio recording (for my own use only) of the interview session. A transcription of the interview will be made later.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the loss of time required to read the novels, investigate the online materials, and participate in the personal interview.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include an increased understanding of the web-based content that is being developed in relation with certain works of literature for young adults and of its potential use in your classroom practice. Your participation will benefit teaching colleagues who may also gain an understanding of the impact of the use of online content on student engagement and motivation for reading.

Compensation

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be given copies of the four books to be used in the study, which may later be added to your personal or classroom library. Please do not consider these books as compensation for your participation, as it is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the books were not given to you, then you should decline.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, your data will not be used. You would be free to keep the books that were given to you. Please do not feel in any way obligated by our previous relationship to participate in the project. Your decision to participate or not to participate will have no bearing on our personal or professional relationship.

Anonymity

Your anonymity will be thoroughly protected. Your name will never be used (a pseudonym will be used instead) and no identifying information (such as your school or district) will be revealed.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be carefully protected. Interview data and transcripts will be stored in password-protected files on a protected personal computer that is accessed only by the researcher.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in a graduate thesis. There is some potential that an article may later be published in an academic journal.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of when the study is complete. Electronic data will be erased and paper copies will be shredded.

Contacts

If any questions arise during the course of the study, you may contact me or my supervisor using the contact information given at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study or raise any concerns you might have by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher, and that you agree to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix D

Letters of Information and Consent for Parents and Students

Middle Years Teachers' and Students' Responses to Young Adult Literature with Online Content

Letter of Information and Consent for Parents

Your son/daughter has been invited to participate in a study entitled "Middle Years Teachers' and Students' Responses to Young Adult Literature with Online Content" that is being conducted by Ruth Ann Ginther.

Ms. Ginther is a graduate student in the department of Education Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria. You may contact her with any questions by telephone at (604) 215-2253 or by e-mail at raeginther@gmail.com.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Language and Literacy. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sylvia Pantaleo. You may contact her at (250) 721-7845 or by e-mail at pantaleo@uvic.ca.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to develop an understanding of the ways that middle years students and teachers respond to the online content that is being developed by authors, publishers, and readers in connection with a number of current novels written for young adults. Understanding that student engagement is a key element of motivation for reading, the project seeks to determine whether the use of online content can increase students' motivation for reading and deepen the personal connections students make with the printed texts.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because online content is being developed for more and more works of young adult literature. Many of today's students are increasingly heavy users of the Internet and social media, and the impact of online content on students' motivation for reading and engagement with printed texts should be investigated. The existing body of research on this topic is limited and does not yet include Canadian content.

Participant Selection

Your son/daughter is being invited to participate in this study because, as a middle years student in 2012, his or her ideas and opinions on the topic are valuable.

What is Involved

If you allow your son/daughter to participate in this study, he/she will be asked to read one to four current works of fiction for young adults and to participate in individual Skype interviews before and after investigating the online materials associated with each novel. The proposed books are *Across the*

Universe by Beth Revis (2011), *Tunnels* by Roderick Gordon and Brian Williams (2008), *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher (2007), and *The Amanda Project: Invisible I* by Melissa Kantor (2009). Each student will be given a personal copy of each of these books, and he/she may select which of the books he/she will read and for which he/she will participate in Skype interviews. Skype interviews will be scheduled at each student's convenience. Students will also be asked to keep a simple response journal in which they record some of their thoughts and ideas about the books and websites using words, symbols, or pictures. Before you consent to your son/daughter's participation to this project, please make sure that he/she has access to a computer with Skype capabilities.

To ensure that I understand and recall students' thoughts and ideas accurately, I will record the Skype interviews for my personal use only. Transcriptions of the interview sessions will be made later. I will make and retain copies of the students' response journals (any identifying comments or markings will be removed).

Inconvenience

Your child's participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the loss of time required to ensure a working Skype connection.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to your son/daughter by participating in this research. However, you should be aware that the books we will discuss are written for young adults, not for children, and they contain some mature content. A synopsis of each book follows.

Across the Universe is the story of Amy, a teenager who has been cryogenically frozen for a three hundred-year space voyage to a distant planet. She is mysteriously unfrozen partway through the journey and must learn to live aboard a ship where life is very different from anything she's ever known, while investigating her own attempted murder and uncovering the lies on which the ship's society is based.

In *Tunnels*, fourteen-year-old Will Burrows and his father share a passion for archaeological digs and tunneling beneath London. When Will's father disappears after noting some mysterious characters around the city, Will and his friend Chester follow him into his diggings, where they discover an extremely unusual (and dangerous) underground colony and some secrets about Will himself.

At the beginning of *Thirteen Reasons Why*, high school student Clay Jensen comes home to find a package containing seven cassette tapes on which classmate Hannah Baker has recorded thirteen stories explaining her reasons for taking her own life. The book, which alternates between Clay's perspective and Hannah's voice on tape, explores a number of mature themes, including sexual assault.

In *The Amanda Project: Invisible I*, ninth-graders Hal, Callie, and Nia are drawn into an uneasy friendship with one another when their classmate Amanda Valentino disappears, leaving them a series of mysterious notes and clues which they attempt to decipher in order to determine her location and bring her home.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your child's participation in this research include an increased understanding for your child's teachers of the potential impact of online content on student engagement and motivation for reading, leading to more effective classroom practice. Your child will be introduced to new authors and fiction genres, investigate new types of online content, and develop his/her ability to think critically, respond to texts, and make personal connections with them.

Compensation

If you agree to allow your son/daughter to participate in the study, he/she will be given copies of the four books to be used in the study. These books should not be considered payment for participating in the study. If your son/daughter would not participate in the study if the books were not offered, please encourage him/her to decline.

Voluntary Participation

Your child's participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If he/she decides to participate, he/she may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If he/she does withdraw from the study, his/her interview responses and journal entries will not be used. He/she would be free to keep the books. Please do not feel in any way obligated by our previous relationship to allow your child to participate in the project and please ensure that your child does not choose to participate from any sense of obligation that may stem from that relationship.

Anonymity

Your child's anonymity will be thoroughly protected. His/her name will never be used (a pseudonym will be used instead) and no identifying information (such as his/her school or school district) will ever be revealed.

Confidentiality

Your child's confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be carefully protected. Interview recordings and transcripts will be stored in password-protected files on a protected personal computer that is accessed only by the researcher.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in a graduate thesis. It is possible that an article may be published in an academic journal.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of when the study is complete. Electronic data will be erased and paper copies will be shredded.

Contacts

If any questions arise during the course of the study, you may contact me or my supervisor using the contact information given at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study or raise any concerns you might have by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher, and that you agree to allow your son/daughter to participate in this research project. Your initials next to each book title indicate your permission for your son/daughter to read and participate in the discussion groups for that book.

<i>Name of Parent/Guardian</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
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Name of Student Participating in Study _____

Consent is given for the student mentioned above to read and participate in discussion sessions for each of the titles initialized below:

____ *Across the Universe* by Beth Revis

____ *Tunnels* by Roderick Gordon and Brian Williams

____ *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher

____ *The Amanda Project: Invisible I* by Melissa Kantor

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Middle Years Teachers' and Students' Responses to Young Adult Literature with Online Content

Letter of Information and Consent for Students

You are invited to participate in a study entitled "Middle Years Teachers' and Students' Response to Young Adult Literature with Online Content" that is being conducted by Ruth Ann Ginther.

Ms. Ginther is a practicing teacher and a graduate student in the department of Education Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria. You may contact her with any questions by telephone at (604) 215-2253 or by e-mail at raeginther@gmail.com.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Language and Literacy. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sylvia Pantaleo. You may contact her at (250) 721-7845 or by e-mail at pantaleo@uvic.ca.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to help teachers understand what students think about the online content that is being developed by authors, publishers, and readers in connection with a number of current novels written for students your age. Understanding what students think and feel can help teachers make better decisions about the books that should be used in the classroom and whether or not the online content should be part of the work that students do in the classroom.

Importance of this Research

This kind of research is important because more and more online content is being developed for books that students your age are reading. Because many students your age are using the Internet and social media more and more frequently, it's important for teachers to understand how you respond to these books and the online content that is associated with them. The research that has been done on this topic is limited and does not yet include information about Canadian students.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because, as a student to whom these books and their online content are being targeted, your ideas and opinions on the topic are valuable.

What is Involved

If you volunteer to be a part of this study, you will be asked to read up to four current works of fiction for young adults. The proposed books are *Across the Universe* by Beth Revis (2011), *Tunnels* by Roderick Gordon and Brian Williams (2008), *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher (2007), and *The Amanda Project: Invisible I* by Melissa Kantor (2009). You will be given copies of each of these books to keep, and you may choose which of the four books you will read.

For each book you choose to read, you will participate in Skype conversations with me at times that fit into your schedule. We will have two conversations for each book you choose to read: one conversation about the book before you investigate the websites associated with that book, and another conversation

after you have investigated them. You will also be asked to keep a simple response journal in which you record some of your thoughts and ideas about the books and websites using words, symbols, or pictures. Before you commit to participation to this project, please make sure that you have access to a computer with Skype capabilities.

To make sure that I understand and recall your thoughts and ideas accurately, I will record our Skype conversations. (I will be the only one who will have access to these recordings.) Transcriptions of the recordings will be made later. I will also keep copies of your entries in your response journal.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the loss of time required to read the novel(s) and participate in the Skype conversations.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. However, you should be aware that the books we will discuss are written for young adults, not for children, and they contain some mature content. A synopsis of each book follows.

Across the Universe is the story of Amy, a teenager who has been cryogenically frozen for a three hundred-year space voyage to a distant planet. She is mysteriously unfrozen partway through the journey and must learn to live aboard a ship where life is very different from anything she's ever known, while investigating her own attempted murder and uncovering the lies on which the ship's society is based.

In *Tunnels*, fourteen-year-old Will Burrows and his father share a passion for archaeological digs and tunneling beneath London. When Will's father disappears after noting some mysterious characters around the city, Will and his friend Chester follow him into his diggings, where they discover an extremely unusual (and dangerous) underground colony and some secrets about Will himself.

At the beginning of *Thirteen Reasons Why*, high school student Clay Jensen comes home to find a package containing seven cassette tapes on which classmate Hannah Baker has recorded thirteen stories explaining her reasons for taking her own life. The book, which alternates between Clay's perspective and Hannah's voice on tape, explores a number of mature themes, including sexual assault.

In *The Amanda Project: Invisible I*, ninth-graders Hal, Callie, and Nia are drawn into an uneasy friendship with one another when their classmate Amanda Valentino disappears, leaving them a series of mysterious notes and clues which they attempt to decipher in order to determine her location and bring her home.

Benefits

Your participation in this study will help teachers to better understand the thoughts and ideas of the students they teach. Your suggestions may help teachers to teach literature in new ways that students like you will find more interesting and engaging.

Compensation

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be given copies of the four books that will be used in the study. Please do not consider these books as payment for participating in the study. If you would not participate if you did not get to keep the books, then you should decline.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may choose to withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, your entries in your response journal would not be used. I would not use the comments you made in the Skype conversations. You would be free to keep the books that were given to you. Please do not feel in any way obligated by our previous relationship to participate in the project. Your decision to participate or not to participate will have no negative effect on our ongoing relationship.

Anonymity

Your anonymity will be thoroughly protected. Your name will never be used (a pseudonym will be used instead) and no identifying information (such as your school or school district) will ever be revealed.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be carefully protected. Interview data and transcripts will be stored in password-protected files on a protected personal computer that is accessed only by me.

Sharing the Results

The results of this study will be shared with others in a graduate thesis. There is a possibility that an article about the results may be published in an academic journal.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of when the study is complete. Electronic data will be erased and paper copies will be shredded.

Contacts

If you have any questions now or during the course of the study, you may contact me or my supervisor using the contact information given at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study or raise any concerns you might have by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher, and that you agree to participate in this research project. At the beginning of each Skype conversation, you will be asked to initial this form beneath the title of the book being discussed in order to indicate your ongoing consent to participate.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
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Across the Universe by Beth Revis

_____ Session A (before investigation of online content)

_____ Session B (after investigation of online content)

Tunnels by Roderick Gordon and Brian Williams

_____ Session A (before investigation of online content)

_____ Session B (after investigation of online content)

Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher

_____ Session A (before investigation of online content)

_____ Session B (after investigation of online content)

The Amanda Project: Invisible I by Melissa Kantor

_____ Session A (before investigation of online content)

_____ Session B (after investigation of online content)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix E

Interview Questions for Students and Teachers

Questions for Students

Questions asked after students have read each book, but before they have looked at the online materials

- S1** What are some words you would use to describe the book as a whole?
- S2** What did you think about the book after the first few pages? Did your impressions change as you moved deeper into the story? If so, how?
- S3** How did you feel when the book ended?
- S4** What did you find interesting or surprising about the book? Why?
- S5** Which character did you feel like you connected with the most or understood the best? Why?
- S6** Which character was the most difficult to connect with or understand? Why?
- S7** Which events in the story did you connect with the most? Why?
- S8** Which events were the most difficult to understand or relate to? Why?
- S9** In what ways is this book similar to or different from the books you usually read?
- S10** Would you choose to read another book similar to this one or one written by the same author? Why or why not?

Questions asked after students have looked at the online materials for each book

- S11** How much time in total did you spend looking at the websites?
- S12** Which website did you spend the most time looking at?
- S13** What was your first reaction to the online material for this book?
- S14** What parts of the online material did you find the most interesting? Why?
- S15** What parts of the online material did you find the least interesting? Why?
- S16** Did your impressions of the online material change as you navigated deeper into the different web sites connected to the book? If so, how?
- S17** Did your thoughts about the book itself begin to change as you looked at the online material? If so, how?
- S18** Did the online material draw your mind back to the book or its characters and make you think more about them?
- S19** Which online elements changed your thinking the most? Why do you think this happened?
- S20** Did the online content change the way you thought about the book's characters? If so, why do you think this change happened?
- S21** Did you feel closer to the book's characters before or after looking at the online material? What makes you think this?
- S22** Did the online content change the way you thought about the book's plot or events? If so, how? Why do you think this change happened?
- S23** Was it easier to connect events in your own life to events in the book before or after you looked at the online material? Why do you think this?
- S24** How important do you think the online material is to understanding the story itself?
- S25** In what ways, if any, does the online material help you to understand the book's characters or events more deeply? Examples can help explain your answer.
- S26** Would you have looked at the online content on your own if no one had asked you to investigate it? Why or why not?

- S27** Could you see yourself posting/commenting/participating on any of the websites? Why or why not?
- S28** In the future, when you see that the books you have already chosen to read have online material, do you think you will investigate it? Why or why not?
- S29** Who do you think would be most likely to look at the online material for this book and other books like it? Why do you think this?
- S30** If you were choosing between two books on the same topic, and one had online materials and the other one didn't, would you be more or less likely to choose the book with online content? Explain the thinking behind your response.
- S31** Could you tell which parts of the online material were written by the book's author?
- S32** Which parts were written by someone at the book's publishing company? Which parts were written by fans or people who had read the book? How could you tell?
- S33** Was it more interesting to read material written by the book's author or publisher or by people who had read the book? Why do you think this?
- S34** When you were looking at the websites, did you ever get the feeling that someone was trying to sell you something?
- S35** What would you change, if anything, about the online content for this book that would make people your age more likely to read it? Why would you make these changes?
- S36** Do you think your teacher could use this online content in your classroom? If so, how? If not, why not?

Questions for Teachers

Questions for Teachers

- T1** Describe your current teaching position. What grades and subjects do you currently teach?
- T2** What were your initial impressions of each of the four books you read (before you looked at any of the online material)?
- T3** Would you have considered including any of the books in your classroom library before you looked at the online material? Why or why not?
- T4** Would you have considered using any of the books in your language arts (or other) curriculum before you looked at the online material? Why or why not?
- T5** Describe your initial response to the online material for each book.
- T6** Did you find that the online materials drew you back to the text or made you think more deeply about the book or its characters?
- T7** Did your response to the online material change as you navigated deeper into the sites? If so, how?
- T8** Did your perceptions of the books change after you investigated the online material for each one? If so, how?
- T9** What do you think your students' initial response to the books would be without investigating the online content?
- T10** How do you think your students would respond to the online content for each book?
- T11** Which aspects do you predict would be most engaging for them?
- T12** Which students would respond most positively to the content? On what basis do you make these predictions?
- T13** What kind of impact do you predict interaction with the online content would have on your students' motivation to read the printed books?

T14 What kind of impact do you predict interaction with the online content would have on your students' ability and motivation to make personal connections to the texts?

T15 Do you believe that books like these and their accompanying online content could be used successfully in your middle years classroom or those of other middle years teachers? Why or why not?

T16 If you believe that these books and their accompanying online content could be used successfully in the classroom, in what ways would you incorporate the printed and online texts into your curriculum or instruction? What goals would you have for their use?

T17 How did you respond to the online materials which were specifically created for teachers/librarians? What value or use, if any, would you have for these materials? How could they be improved?

T18 What changes to the online content would make the material stronger or more useful for use in the classroom?

T19 When browsing the websites, did you ever have the sense that someone was trying to sell you something? If so, how did you feel about that sensation?



Appendix F

Relationship between Interview Questions and Research Questions

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions
How do teachers respond to the books?
T2, T3, T4
How do teachers respond to the associated online materials?
T5, T6, T7, T19
How (if at all) do the online materials change the way the teachers think about and respond to the printed texts?
T8
How do teachers predict students will respond to the texts and online materials?
T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T14
How do students respond to the books?
S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10
How do students respond to the associated online materials?
S11, S13, S13, S14, S15, S16, S26, S27, S28, S29, S31, S32, S33, S34, S35
How (if at all) do the online materials change the way students think about and respond to the printed texts?
S17, S18, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S30
Is there a place for books like these and their associated online content in today's middle years classrooms? If so, how might they be used?
T15, T16, T17, T18, S36

Appendix G

Development of Themes from Students' Responses

<p>resistance to reality difficulty connecting to characters not obviously like self cursory viewing doubt of own interpretation apology for ideas/self-apology desire for extra information frustration with unsatisfying ending little notice of marketing interest in graphics quick loss of interest readers' ideas more interesting than author's websites don't matter lack of criticism of author book separate from author self-doubt interest in symbols pictures don't "match" mental image disinterest in author disinterest in writing process visuals change thoughts created world bored quickly confusion of fact/fiction book stays in mind interest in others' opinions stereotypical characters instant gratification pictures create connection fear of change in thought interest in others' personal stories no attention-grabber inner visualization of characters video creates connection interest in posting go to website if enjoy book audio creates connection visual detail creates connection interest in others' emotional responses others "ruin" the book positive response from peers negative response from peers fear of posting lots of text = offputting difficulty navigating sites easily bored can't determine purpose focus on text text most important website interesting if book interesting online content changes thought</p>						<p>Code Development</p> 
<p>go to website if enjoy book website interesting if book interesting</p>	<p>focus on printed text printed text most important websites don't matter</p>	<p>interest in graphics pictures don't "match" mental image visuals change thoughts interest in symbols pictures create connection fear of change in thought inner visualization of characters video creates connection audio creates connection visual detail creates connection</p>	<p>fear of change in thought online content changes thought change in opinion doubt of own interpretation</p>	<p>doubt of own interpretation apology for ideas/self- apology readers' ideas more interesting than author's self-doubt interest in others' opinions interest in others' personal stories interest in others' emotional responses others "ruin" the book positive response from peers negative response from peers fear of posting</p>	<p>cursory viewing quick loss of interest bored quickly instant gratification lots of text = offputting difficulty navigating sites easily bored can't determine purpose no attention- grabber</p>	<p>Category Development</p> 
<p>response to website determined by response to book</p>	<p>primacy of printed text</p>	<p>strong response to audio and visual materials</p>	<p>website affordance (impact on thinking)</p>	<p>interest in/influence of ideas of peers/other readers</p>	<p>quick decisions about response to websites</p>	<p>Theme Development</p>

Appendix H

Additional Young Adult Literature and Related Websites

Bracegirdle, P. J. (2010). *Unearthly asylum*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Summary: Sixth-grader Joy Wells, convinced that the eerie tales of her favourite author are based on supernatural events in her hometown of Spooking Hill, pits herself and her younger brother against the sinister mayor's assistant in order to rescue her beloved pet from the grounds of the town's mysterious asylum.

The Joy of Spooking website. <http://joyofspooking.com/>

P. J. Bracegirdle website. <http://pjbracegirdle.com/>

Facebook: P. J. Bracegirdle website. <https://www.facebook.com/pjbracegirdle>

Carey, A. (2009). *Survival of the fiercest*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Summary: When teenage stepsisters Cate, Stella, Andie, and Lola are left in the care of Stella and Lola's grandmother while their parents are away, the situation gets out of hand as Cate and Stella plan a stylish party, Lola is offered a modelling opportunity, and Andie navigates complicated relationships with several boys.

Sloane Sisters: The Official Book Site website. <http://sloanesisters.com/>

Facebook: Anna Carey Books website. <https://www.facebook.com/AnnaCareyBooks>

Facebook: The Sloane Sisters website. <https://www.facebook.com/TheSloaneSisters>

Flanagan, J. (2005). *The ruins of Gorlan*. New York, NY: Puffin Books.

Summary: Fifteen-year-old Will, an orphan and a castle ward, is disappointed to be chosen as the apprentice of the enigmatic Ranger Halt, but comes to enjoy learning the skills of a ranger and proves himself a worthy student in a battle against the gruesome Kalkara, allies of an evil warlord.

Ranger's Apprentice website. <http://rangersapprentice.com/>

Facebook: Ranger's Apprentice Book Series website.

<https://www.facebook.com/rangersapprenticebooks>

Grant, M. (2008). *Gone*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Summary: When everyone over the age of 15 vanishes from the town of Perdido Beach, the town's young residents must learn to survive in a new world where certain children have devastating supernatural powers.

The FAYZ website. <http://www.thefayz.com/>

Twitter: Michael Grant (@thefayz) website. <http://twitter.com/#!/thefayz>

MySpace: Michael Grant website. <http://www.myspace.com/michaelgrant1>

Facebook: Author Michael Grant website.
<https://www.facebook.com/authormichaelgrant>

Facebook: Gone Series website. <https://www.facebook.com/gonebooks>

Michael Grant website. <http://themichaelgrant.com/>

Harrison, L. (2007). *It's not easy being mean*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.

Summary: Claire Lyons and the rest of the fashion-obsessed Pretty Committee must use all their skills and wits to discover a hidden key that will grant them access to a legendary secret room at their private school and guarantee their social standing in the year to come.

The Clique – The Official Site website. <http://www.jointheclique.com/>

Lisi Harrison website. <http://lisiharrison.net/>

Facebook: The Clique website. <https://www.facebook.com/TheClique>

Twitter: The Clique website. <http://twitter.com/#!/theclique>

Twitter: Lisi Harrison website. <http://twitter.com/#!/lisiharrison>

Facebook: Lisi Harrison website. <https://www.facebook.com/people/Lisi-Harrison/1387076108?sk=wall>

Kaye, M. (2010). *Gifted: Now you see me*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Teenager Tracy Devon, who can make herself invisible, is part of a small class of students with various supernatural gifts and must learn to control her ability to vanish in order to save herself and her gifted classmates from the school principal, who wishes to use their powers for his own corrupt plans.

Gifted Book Series website. <http://giftedseries.com/>

Limb, S. (2006). *Girl, going on 17: Pants on fire*. New York, NY: Delacorte Press.

Sixteen-year-old Jess Jordan, a budding comedian who is devastated by her boyfriend's request to keep their new relationship private in the upcoming school year, finds that a series of lies make her life very complicated.

Charming but Insane website. <http://www.randomhouse.com/teens/charmingbutinsane/>

Naylor, P. R. (2011). *Incredibly Alice*. New York, NY: Atheneum.

Summary: Alice and her friends navigate relationships and make important life decisions during their final semester of high school.

The Official Alice Blog website. <http://alicemckinley.wordpress.com/>

Stephens, J. (2011). *The emerald atlas*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Summary: Kate, Michael, and Emma, separated from their parents for 10 years, move from one orphanage to another before being sent to a strange home in Cambridge Falls, where they discover a mysterious book that allows them to travel through time.

The Emerald Atlas website. <http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/emeraldAtlas/>

Facebook: The Books of Beginning website.

<https://www.facebook.com/thebooksofbeginning>

Young, A. (2009). *Faketastic*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Best friends Hally and Avalon co-write a fashion blog for their middle-school friends but their relationship is tested by school gossip, the merging of the gymnastics and cheerleading teams, and their decision to falsify the end of their friendship so Hally can pursue the boy she likes.

Alexicon website. <http://alexayoung.blogspot.ca/>

Frenemies website. <http://bestfrenemiesforever.com/>

Alexa Young website. <http://www.alexayoung.com/main.html>

Facebook: Alexa Young website. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Alexa-Young/152279034567?ref=ts>

Twitter: Alexa Young/Sherman website. <http://twitter.com/#!/bestfrenemy>

Characteristics of Websites Connected with the Novels								
Title	Series?	Reader-Generated Content	Comment on Creative Process	Contact or Interaction with Author	Marketing/Purchase Info	Community of Readers	Links to Social Networks	Extra Content
<i>Unearthly Asylum</i>	trilogy	comments on Facebook page	comments on author's blog	direct e-mail or author's Facebook page	purchase info.	minimal interaction on Facebook page	Facebook	none
<i>Survival of the Fiercest</i>	series	extensive comments on blog posts	none	author's Facebook page	- purchase info. - contests and giveaways	extensive interaction through comments on blog posts	Facebook	- blog posts by different characters - photos and bios of characters
<i>The Ruins of Gorlan</i>	series	comments on Facebook page	detailed Q & A about creative process	none apparent	purchase info.	some interaction between readers on Facebook page	Facebook	- maps - music to download - character bios - images of weapons
<i>Gone</i>	series	comments on Facebook page	some comments on author's website	significant interaction via social networks	purchase info.	some interaction between readers on Facebook page	MySpace Twitter Facebook	15-entry diary written by secondary character
<i>It's Not Easy Being Mean</i>	series	- comments on Facebook page - reader art and writing on author's website	minimal commentary on author's website	interaction on author's blog and Facebook page	- purchase info - full chapters of new books	some interaction between readers on Facebook page	Facebook Twitter	none
<i>Gifted: Now You See Me</i>	series	several fan-created Facebook pages	none	simple bio but no contact information	- purchase info - excerpts of new books - audio chapter of each book	minimal	Facebook pages created by readers	- photos of characters - bios of characters
<i>Girl: Going on 17</i>	series	several fan-created Facebook pages	some comments in author bio	none apparent	- purchase info - excerpts of books	minimal	Facebook pages created by readers	first-person description of main character
<i>Incredibly Alice</i>	series	reader e-mails and questions posted on website	extensive commentary on author's personal writing process	e-mail address for author; note that author responds to each e-mail received	- purchase info - excerpts of books	minimal	Facebook pages created by readers	none

<i>The Emerald Atlas</i>	trilogy	comments on Facebook page	extensive commentary on author's personal writing process	contact through Facebook page	- purchase info - excerpts of books	some interaction between readers on Facebook page	Facebook	- additional facts about characters - short animated video
<i>Faketastic</i>	series	comments on Facebook page	minimal commentary on author's blog	- direct e-mail - comments feature on author's blog - Facebook - Twitter	- purchase info - full chapters of new books - contests and giveaways	some interaction between readers on Facebook page	Facebook Twitter	- short bios of each character - style blog by characters

Note: "Extra content" refers to additional visual or written information about the plot or characters of the novel not found in the novel itself.