CHAPTER 1

New Literacies in an Age of Participatory Culture

Katie Clinton, Henry Jenkins, and Jenna McWilliams

At first glance, playwright, youth organizer, and community activist Ricardo Pitts-Wiley might seem a peculiar inspiration for a book about digital media and participatory culture. Although Pitts-Wiley is enthusiastic about the potential of new media, much of his work is distinctly low-tech. He writes and produces remixed versions of such classics as Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* for a traditional venue: the community stage.

But something magical—something *participatory*—happens on that stage. First, his plays' universal themes are seasoned with immediacy, with issues that resonate with his community. His play *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*, for example, intermingles the themes of Captain Ahab's obsessions, his fatalism, and his willingness to place his crew in peril with contemporary urban gang culture. The whaling trade from Melville's book becomes the drug trade in the contemporary retelling; Ahab becomes Alba, a teenage girl whose brother has been killed by a "WhiteThing" a mysterious figure for the international cocaine cartel; she devotes her life to finding, and killing, those responsible for her brother's death.

In *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*, Pitts-Wiley chose not simply to revise the story, but to incorporate aspects of Melville's version in counterpoint with Alba's quest for vengeance. As the young actors pace the stage, telling their story in contemporary garb, lingo, and swagger, a literal scaffold above their heads holds a second set of actors, who give life to Melville's original tale. The "then" half of the cast is generally older and Whiter than

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the adolescent, mixed-race "now" actors. The play's meaning lies in the juxtaposition between these two very different worlds, a juxtaposition sometimes showing commonalities, sometimes contrasts.

Reading in a Participatory Culture reflects an equally dramatic meeting between worlds. New Media Literacies (NML) emerged from the MacArthur Foundation's ground-breaking commitment to create a field around digital media and learning. The foundation sought researchers who would investigate how young people learned outside the formal educational setting—through their game play, their fannish participation, "hanging out, messing around, and geeking out" (Ito et al., 2010). The goal was to bring insights drawn from these sites of informal learning to the institutions—schools, museums, and libraries—that affect young people's lives. Right now, many young people are deprived of those most effective learning tools and practices as they step inside the technology-free zone characterizing many schools. Other young people, who lack access to these experiences outside school, are doubly deprived because schools are not helping them to catch up to their more highly connected peers.

New Media Literacies—first at MIT and now at University of Southern California—has brought together a multidisciplinary team of media researchers, designers, and educators to develop new curricular and pedagogical models that could contribute to this larger project. This initiative has been informed by Henry Jenkins's background as a media scholar focused on fan communities and popular culture and by the applied expertise of Erin Reilly, who had previously helped to create Zoey's Room, a widely acclaimed online learning community that employs participatory practices to get young women more engaged with science and technology. The NML team brought together educational researchers (such as Katie Clinton, who studied under James Paul Gee, and Jenna McWilliams, who has an MFA in creative writing and teaching experience in rhetoric and composition) with community-based media literacy veterans (like Anna Van Someren, who ran an afterschool program at the YWCA). Flourish Klink, who had helped to organize the influential Fan Fiction Alley website, which provides beta reading for amateur writers to hone their skills, and Lana Swartz, who had been a classroom teacher working with special need children, also joined the research group. And the development and field testing of curricular resources involved NML in collaborating with other academic researchers, such as scholars engaged in Howard Gardner's GoodPlay Project at Harvard and Dan Hickey, an expert on participatory assessment at Indiana University. NML also worked with youth-focused

organizations such as Global Kids, with classroom teachers such as Judith Nierenberg and Lynn Sykes in Massachusetts and Becky Rupert in Indiana—Nierenberg, Sykes, and Rupert were rethinking and reworking *TSG* materials for their instructional purposes—and with scholars such as Wyn Kelley who had long sought new ways to make Melville's works come alive in classrooms around the country.

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Popular media representations often set so-called digital literacies at odds with the values and norms of traditional print culture. This book's authors wanted to work across that divide, envisioning a generation of students who could read with a book in one hand and a mouse in the other. In this view, the new media literacies could supplement and expand traditional print literacies in ways that enriched our culture and deepened our appreciation of classical stories. New media platforms and practices were giving students much greater opportunities for communication and expression than could have been imagined by any previous generation. But to participate meaningfully, young people needed to be able to read and write; they needed to know how to connect their contemporary experiences to a much older tradition, and the literature classroom represents a particularly rich environment for fusing these different ways of learning.

Jenkins and Kelley knew when they first met Pitts-Wiley that they had found the perfect co-conspirator on this journey. Pitts-Wiley had gone into an institution for incarcerated youth and helped these young men to learn to read *Moby-Dick* by encouraging them to identify closely with a single character and speculate about what kind of person that character would be if he were living today. In the process, he encouraged them to reimagine *Moby-Dick* as a novel about not the 19th-century whaling trade but rather the 21st-century drug trade—both dangerous professions involving men on the margins of their society who were loyal to each other and to their leaders in their ruthless pursuit of their economic interests.

Pitts-Wiley, in turn, took inspiration from the stories these young men created for his own new stage production, *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*. In the process, Pitts-Wiley became a passionate advocate for getting communities to read and discuss classical novels together. While Pitts-Wiley saw remixing as an important strategy for constructing a productive dialogue with young people around literary works, he was also emphatic that remixing should

emerge from a meaningful engagement with the original work. As an African American, he was very aware of how his culture was often "ripped off" by White artists without any acknowledgment of its original meanings and contexts. He asserted his right to draw on the literary canon, but he also insisted that his students pay respect to those who came before. Creative reading worked hand in hand with critical and close reading.

When the Mixed Magic Theatre met NML, the collaboration took all involved outside their comfort zones, forcing each to think more deeply about core assumptions regarding literacy, learning, and cultural expression. Here's how Pitts-Wiley recalls this encounter:

> I didn't feel dumb or unprepared, but I doubted whether I had the language to translate what I was doing into a form that both sides would understand and appreciate. I knew I wasn't up to speed with the technology and concepts the NML team was working with and I wasn't sure they were going to be helpful in putting a play on stage. However, as the work proceeded, both sides realized that it wasn't about allowing technology to dominate. Rather, we were both interested in better understanding how pop culture, access to information, powerful sound, and visuals can hamper or enhance the learning process. I was doing things, as a theater artist, to get my cast to perform with informed honesty, and I came to see that NML was looking for ways to synthesize this process into something that was concise and replicable. As we did so, we were both looking for ways to work around generational, economic, and cultural differences that made the world of MIT and the world my young actors inhabited miles apart.

This book tells the story of what happened when these collaborators sought to bridge these two worlds, what they learned from each other about reading in a participatory culture, how they translated that learning into a framework and a set of classroom activities, and what happened when those approaches got into the hands of gifted teachers. As NML sought to explore how a curriculum for the English language arts classroom could draw upon the mindsets and practices of a participatory culture, it used Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* as its model text and Pitts-Wiley's play *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* as an example of a contemporary theater adaptation, to develop what NML calls the teachers' strategy guide. The *Teachers' Strategy Guide* (*TSG*) is not simply a lesson plan that tells teachers what to do, but rather represents an approach for teaching

literature that embraces and supports participatory practices while fostering traditional reading and writing skills.

The *TSG* was field tested in six schools in New England and Indiana, some public, some private; some urban, some rural; some involving high school students, some middle schools; some working with *Moby-Dick*, some adapting the approach to other literary works. Work with the Indiana teachers was overseen by a team of Indiana University educational researchers who were attempting to model new forms of participatory assessment. You have already heard from Becky Rupert (see the Preface), one of those educators, and you will get more such perspectives as our account continues. This book will combine some materials drawn from the "Expert Voices" section of our curriculum (New Media Literacies, 2008), essays that introduce our approach and provide some new ways of thinking about what it means to read and write in an evolving media environment, with some assessments of our field testing of this curriculum.

Throughout this book there will be recurring references to *Moby-Dick* to illustrate the NML approach. But you don't need to be teaching this particular book to take advantage of these resources. NML and its collaborating teachers have adopted this framework to teach a range of other assigned texts, and Pitts-Wiley has applied the remix practices he developed around the *Moby-Dick* project to other canonical works. So can you. NML's message to educators is simple: Appropriate and remix these practices for your students, apply them to any book you wish or are required to teach, create your own community of readers, and embrace those elements of participatory culture that you think may empower learners.

TOWARD A MORE PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

Over the past several decades, our culture has undergone a period of profound and prolonged media change, not simply a shift in the technical infrastructure for communication but shifts in the cultural logics and social practices that shape the ways we interact. As a society, we are still sorting through the long-term implications of these changes. But one thing is clear: These shifts point us toward a more participatory culture, one in which everyday citizens have an expanded capacity to communicate and circulate their ideas, one in which networked communities can help shape our collective agendas. The authors believe that these shifts require us to reimagine the nature of literacy itself.

New Media Literacies (Jenkins et al., 2009, pp. 5–6) defines a participatory culture of the following features:

1. Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement;
2. Strong support for creating and sharing creations with others;
3. Some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices;
4. Members who believe that their contributions matter; and
5. Members who feel some degree of social connection with one another (they care what other people think about what they have created).

Many of the practices of traditional folk cultures embody these same features, with skills and knowledge passed from generation to generation through structures of informal mentorship, mostly involving learning by doing and creating within a shared social context. The institutional and industrialized practices of mass media allow for the mass production and circulation of culture but often at the expense of our abilities to meaningfully participate in those processes at a grassroots level. No longer cultural participants, we have become consumers of culture produced by others and often in the service of their goals, and not our own. Everyday people have lacked access to the infrastructure and resources needed to sustain their own forms of cultural production (Jenkins, 2006a). Digital tools have lowered the costs of production and circulation, decreasing the investment of skills and money required to meaningfully shape our culture, and thus have paved the way for more voices to be heard. In such a world, more and more people have the capacity to take media into their own hands, creating and sharing what they know and how they see the world beyond their immediate friends and families.

And young people are at the heart of these changes. Young people in online forums are engaging in close reading activities directed toward popular music or cult television shows, sometimes engaging in prolonged and impassioned debate about what such works mean and how they convey their meanings; they are recording their impressions, including their reflections on what they read, through blogs, online journals, video reflections, social networks, and microblogging platforms.

In describing steps toward a "more participatory culture," the authors are not asserting that everyone has had an equal chance to participate.

Schools, libraries, and other public institutions have a vital role to play in creating more equitable opportunities for participating. Our students need our help in making sense of a period of profound and prolonged media change that has affected every subject we teach. Ideally, each teacher would take ownership of those new media literacy skills that are part of his or her professional and intellectual domain. The literature teacher, thus, has an obligation to help young people think more deeply about what it means to be a reader and an author in a world where more and more of us can create and circulate what we create with others. To do this, though, we need to negotiate a new stance toward both print and digital culture, embracing new opportunities, even as we preserve older practices, texts, and values.

NML believes that the formal classroom can, should, and must align itself more closely with the clusters of practices that increasingly lead to success in out-of-school environments. Rather than supporting these forms of informal learning, classroom participation structures often minimize opportunities for effective collaboration, participatory engagement with curricular content, and communication practices that extend beyond the physical limits of the schoolhouse. When read through the lens of participatory culture, our formal education system, as it is currently structured, is deeply flawed; these flaws are not apparent through an examination of student test scores, college acceptance rates, or even student satisfaction with their educational experiences. The problem is deeper and much more insidious: The skills, practices, and dispositions students are encouraged to develop are filtered through a system designed for an outdated world. This system, built on a "just-in-case" model of learning (Collins & Halverson, 2009), prepares learners for a life of information consumption but not of active circulation, of critical analysis but not of creative activity (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007).

Clearly, the current U.S. educational system needs radical change. We need to envision an educational system that develops and draws on the diverse talents of all its stakeholders; courts diversity and cultivates creativity and innovation; and takes advantage of the new spaces, tools, and ways of "learning to be" (Brown & Adler, 2008). That said, changes in educational practices are more often evolutionary than revolutionary. There is much that schools and educators can do in the meantime, to make a difference in the lives of their students. And many educators are rising to the challenges of reimagining education for an era of changing opportunities to learn, communicate, and participate in cultural life. As

you do so, you may find yourself teaching in new ways, but this transition does not require you to give up on things you value—including books that have been meaningful to previous generations and deep-reading practices that have been productive in helping students understand what they are reading.

Reading in a Participatory Culture offers resources teachers can use in deploying these participatory practices in their classrooms. For us, teaching the new media literacies involves more than simply teaching kids how to use or even to program digital technologies. The new media landscape has as much to do with new social structures and cultural practices as it does with new tools and technologies. And as a consequence, we may be able to teach participatory mindsets and skills even in the absence of rich technological environments. Teaching the new media literacies means helping young people to acquire the habits of mind required to fully engage within a networked public.

DOES LITERACY HAVE A FUTURE?

Reading in a Participatory Culture offers an alternative approach to the many gloom-and-doom books that have depicted the rise of digital expression as a threat to traditional literacies. Nicholas Carr's best-selling book, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (2010), offers perhaps the most influential embodiment of contemporary anxieties about the "threat" digital media poses for traditional literacies. Carr sees a "literary ethic" as expressed not only through "what we would normally think of as literature" but also through the work of the historian, the philosopher, and the scientist: "None of these momentous intellectual achievements would have been possible without the changes in reading and writing—and in perceiving and thinking—spurred by the efficient reproduction of long forms on printed pages" (p. 76). Carr worries that the Internet's intellectual ethic creates states of perpetual mental locomotion. This loss of contemplation signals a whole cascade of other losses: "It's not only deep thinking that requires a calm, attentive mind. It's also empathy and compassion" (p. 220). In which case, according to Carr, our uses of digital media are altering the depth not only of our thought but also of our emotions. (For an alternative perspective on how human capacities to communicate have shifted over time see Figure 1.1.)

NML rejects the premise that the new digital mind will render the literary mind obsolete. Rather, the new media literacies build on older

print-based literacies, expanding opportunities for human expression, as more and more people pool knowledge and learning together within online networks, as teachers expand the learning ecosystem by connecting their students to a larger community of readers, and as writers deploy new media-rich and media-diverse modes of expression and experiment with new literary forms. Our society is at a significant turning point that will redefine how knowledge is produced and stories shared for future generations. What happens in your classrooms is a vital part of the process by which our culture negotiates those changes. The goal should be to embrace those changes that deepen and enrich human consciousness, and to push back on those that trivialize and distract. It would be tragic if we allowed new media literacy practices to totally displace traditional print literacy practices, but refusing to engage with new media out of a misplaced fear of change would be equally tragic.

A well-designed curriculum will help students to develop both the literary mind, as traditionally conceived, and the new competencies required to more meaningfully engage with the new participatory culture. Reading can be both personal and social, both public and private. For this book's authors, deep reading is just one form of a reflective practice. Our expanded access to how other people read as we enter digital networks has left us with a deeper appreciation of the breadth of different ways people make meaning from literary texts. Throughout this book, the authors are asking teachers and students to reflect more deeply on their motives for reading, to take greater ownership over the meanings they produce and communicate with one another, and to lay claim to certain kinds of expertise that emerge from their unique engagement with shared texts. Contrary to Carr, this book suggests that *deep reading* can be an umbrella term for a whole host of practices, with the goal of readers' finding the particular practices that deepen their engagement with a literary text.

It is problematic to imply that humans could not have "deep thought" or "higher emotions" before the invention of writing, it is simplistic to assume that technologies can support only one mindset, and it is wrong-headed to assume the Internet's intellectual ethic is in direct and total opposition to that associated with books. The history of media change throughout the 20th century suggests that one medium does not displace another, but rather, each adds a new cultural layer, supporting more diverse ways of communicating, thinking, feeling, and creating than existed before. But each new medium also disrupts old patterns, requiring us collectively and individually to actively work through what roles different forms of media are going to play in our lives.

DESIGNING FOR FUTURE LITERACIES

The future of literacy *is* a battleground for what we want and what we need the future to be. We can help to shape the meaning of these new social

Figure 1.1. How Literacies Evolve

Neuroscientist Merlin Donald suggests that the evolution of the human mind is "largely the story of the development of various semantic representational systems" (1991, p. 160), with each new system offering the human mind a new way of representing reality and of generating culture (1993, p. 737). Proposing that humans have passed through three major cognitive transitions, Donald's theory describes how each new form of representation (mimetic, language, external memory) builds on previous forms and arises during a period of rapid, radical change, involving dramatic cultural shifts (1991, p. 16). During the first two transitions—as humans moved from the culture of apes to the culture of *Homo erectus*, and then to the culture of *Homo sapiens*, the major adaptations were biological. The third transition, however, Donald proposes, was technological, whereby new cognitive skills result from the externalization of memory.

Donald suggests that each new skill was layered on the existing set of competencies and practices. In the first transition, humans mastered the expressive potentials of the body-in-motion, adopting mimetic skills, such as the ability to rehearse and refine the body's movements in a voluntary and systematic way, to remember those rehearsals, and to reproduce them on command. These skills, in turn, enabled the development of pre-linguistic symbolic traditions such as rituals, dance, and craft. Next came the emergence of human speech, along with a new cognitive capacity for constructing and decoding narrative (1991, p. 16). The result was an oral culture that supported a much more complex mythology. The next major adaptation involved the development of what Donald calls "external memory," through the written word and, later, through print. During this transition, "thought moves from the relatively informal narrative ramblings of the isolated mind to the collective arena, and ideas thus accumulate over centuries until they acquire the precision of continuously refined exterior devices, of which the prime example is modern science" (p. 16).

Donald argues that

> in principle, this process [of human cognitive evolution] could continue, and we may not yet have seen the final modular configuration of the modern human mind. Theories of human evolution must be expanded and modified to accommodate this possibility. (1991, p. 382)

David Williamson Shaffer and James Kaput (1999) build on Donald's theory by contending that we are currently undergoing a fourth major transition—one

based on the ability not simply to store knowledge outside the brain but also to perform new kinds of operations on that knowledge, because of the affordances of digital technologies for externalized processing. We can see and act on the world in new ways as a result of digital modes of representation (e.g., algorithm-based simulations, visualizations): This new system for representing reality enables the development of new ways of meaning—ways that we are only just beginning to explore through our preliminary experiments with these digital affordances.

Donald's stage theory, and Shaffer and Kaput's proposed extension, illustrate how each new form of representation—each new way of representing reality—expands the human cognitive repertoire, even as we preserve and protect the gains of earlier stages in the evolution of human communication. So, mimesis (the body-in-motion as a form of expression) remains a vital mode of communication as deployed in theater and dance, or as captured in the visual arts, and we still rely heavily on gestures and body language in communicating our meaning to each other through face-to-face exchanges. We did not stop speaking once we had the capacity to write, but the functions and status of oral communication shifted as written and printed language could make some tasks easier to perform and allowed knowledge to be more fully exchanged across geographic and temporal distances. Since capacities linked to each previous semantic representational system (mimesis, language) are still with us today, there is no reason to believe that the unique thought patterns and capacities enabled by the technology of writing will be lost. New media have absorbed and enhanced many pre-existing communication capacities, allowing us to deploy sounds and images alongside printed texts, for example, to create a new kind of "writing space" (Bolter, 1991).

Within this new writing space, all previous forms of representation can coexist. And, as it includes wholly new forms of representation, it introduces a new kind of literacy experience. As studied by Clinton (2006, p. 193), a digital technology–based movement (the sort of movement experienced in video games) enables a form of learning-by-being. In games where the player controls the actions of a game character, the process of playing the game (of "reading" the video game) is a process of "writing" the experience of the game character, who could be a specific person (maybe Hamlet, Helen Keller, or a famous peace activist, explorer, or religious figure), a specific *kind* of person (good for teaching disciplinary forms of knowledge [Shaffer, Squire, Halverson, & Gee, 2005], ideologies, and religious perspectives), or even a nonhuman animate form (perhaps a lion, a hawk, or whale). Learning-by-being is similar to the experience of identifying with a character in a book, yet, because of how the process of "being in the gameworld as the game-character" solicits our pre-linguistic sense-making capacities, the feeling of identification is generated at a bodily level. By supporting ways of experiencing stories and data "from the inside," digital technologies open up possibilities for creating literacy experiences that address the problem of student readers' sometimes feeling no affective connections to what they are reading.

practices only if we experience the new modes of action, reflection, and response that they enable. While traditional reading and writing skills remain essential, print-literacy ways of reading, writing, and interacting with text are not enough to satisfy the needs of an increasingly participatory culture.

What follows is a statement of the core principles that guided the design and deployment of the *TSG*. Consider these principles a potential blueprint for other future developments in this space. It is necessarily a statement of values and beliefs, since in designing a curriculum, NML is also laying down stakes for a particular kind of future.

1. Address the Participation Gap

> Access to technology is necessary but not sufficient; all learners must be supported in learning how to contribute, in believing that they can contribute and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued.

The goal of a "participatory" curriculum is to offer strategies for narrowing the participation gap: the unequal access to opportunities, experiences, skills, and knowledge that will prepare youth for full participation in the world of tomorrow (Jenkins et al., 2009). The participation gap is perhaps the most significant and enduring barrier to artistic expression and civic engagement; it is the perception, and often the reality, that even in an increasingly participatory culture not all community members must or even *can* contribute. Technology is pervasive, and young people's access to networked tools is near universal in the United States (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010; Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010); but that matters very little if many lack the skills required to meaningfully participate or fear that they do not have anything of value to contribute. While some youth are already quite fluent in new media practices, others have had little or no exposure to the "affinity spaces" (Gee, 2004) wherein these new social and cultural skills are being used and, consequently, are at a disadvantage when it comes to knowing how to think and act in a networked society.

Describing a role for schools to help students on both sides of the gap, Jenkins (2007b) notes,

> Even if we see young people acquiring some of these skills on their own, outside of formal educational institutions, there's still a strong role for adults to play in ensuring that young people develop a critical vocabulary for thinking about the place of media in their lives and

> engage in meaningful reflection about the ethical choices they make as media producers and participants in online communities." In designing the *TSG*, NML attempted to create a participatory curriculum by harnessing the skills some students already have acquired through new media practices and by expanding access and participation to those who have otherwise been marginalized and excluded from participation.

Key to our efforts to narrow the participation gap is the belief that all writers are also readers and that every reader has the potential to become a writer. Within this model, reading is an essential starting point for creative work. Alongside a notion of reading for mastery, we can add an understanding of reading that crucially links with creative and generative processes that include writing (Brandt, 2009) as well as communication through other genres (video, songwriting, and other forms of expression). Participatory reading is a matter not only of knowing how to respond to a text creatively and critically but also of knowing how to create and circulate content. Proficiency in these practices requires students to define personal motives for reading and to have opportunities for participating in interpretive communities connected to their interests.

Of course, "participation" isn't something that can be taught in a single class or even over the course of a school year. There are many routes to—and diverse forms of—participation, and providing all students the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for meaningful participation is a long-term endeavor. Our schools need to make a commitment, at each grade level, and in all subject areas, to support the development of the skills necessary for engaging with the world critically and creatively.

2. Bring New Expertises and Perspectives into the English Language Arts Domain

> There are many different forms of literary scholarship, and "literary analysis" is not a monolithic set of practices and skills.

New media technologies make it possible for people to engage with source materials across multiple disciplines and perspectives. In such a culture, meaning-making increasingly extends beyond traditional domain boundaries. How might new voices be brought into the English classroom?

The movement toward multiculturalism has focused on expanding the canon, affecting *what* is read in the English classroom. It is equally important to bring alternative motives for reading into the English classroom in order to expand *how* the canon is read. Bringing new voices (identities, perspectives, expertises) into the English classroom adds new content and introduces new practices. Ideally, doing so also acknowledges how people across fields and domains are working with literary texts in interesting ways, using various media platforms and artifacts; shaping, reshaping, and taking things apart and putting them back together; putting classic texts "in conversation with" contemporary culture.

When we read a text for different reasons in the service of different goals and interests, we read it in different ways, asking different questions, noticing different things, and generating different responses. In school, there has too often been a tendency to reify one kind of reading—one that can easily be reduced to SparkNotes—as if that were the natural or logical way of responding to particular texts. Students are not asked to think about why they, personally, individually, or as members of a larger learning community, might be reading *Moby-Dick*; they have simply been assigned a book, and they are reading it because the teacher, the school board, or the national standards dictate that they should do so. This framing cuts reading in the literature class off from the other reasons young people might choose to read outside the classroom and thus diminishes the relevance of the skills we are teaching.

What if young people were asked to identify their own goals for reading a text, to take responsibility for shaping what they learned from each other, and to translate their engagement with the text into a springboard for other creative, critical, and expressive activities? These questions require teachers to embrace a much more collaborative atmosphere in their classrooms, allowing students to develop and assert distinctive expertise as they pool their knowledge to work through complex problems together.

If literary scholarship is understood as a diverse set of practices, beliefs, and goals, then the notion of reading "as a literary scholar" can be decoupled from generalized expectations about what it means to read. Instead, this approach to reading is understood as being defined by the specific needs of members of a particular discipline, profession, or community. Reading as a literary scholar is certainly valuable, but it is scarcely the only option for a meaningful engagement with a classic text. Indeed, we also find deep value in considering the practices of a broad spectrum of experts and artists as they engage with literary works.

3. Begin with Core Literary Concepts/Practices and Expand

Traditional literacy practices take on new meaning when extended into participatory cultures.

Working from the assumption that traditional literacy practices are necessary, but no longer sufficient, for full social participation in the new digital culture, a strategy for creating activities in the *TSG* was to extend or expand core literary concepts and practices (close reading, allusion, multiculturalism, and structural analysis) to include characteristic "moves" and "moods" of a digital culture. For example, in one early unit, the *TSG* begins with the idea of "close reading," a foundational practice that is traditionally understood as *critical* engagement with a text, and we "expand" this notion to include both the idea of *creative* engagement with a text and a movement from a focus on personal to collective meaning-making. Accordingly, while close reading is traditionally taught as individual engagement with a text, our expanded form of "close reading"—what NML calls "annotation and ornamentation"—suggests that creative reading can work hand in hand with critical reading, and that pooling individual insights can deepen the class's collective comprehension of a text.

Learning to read in this context of shared and dispersed expertise is "messier" than learning to read in a traditional classroom, much as the mixing and matching of production practices within any given creative community is much messier than trying to deal with the practices individually. Teachers reported struggling with their own entrenched assumptions about what forms of culture or what types of reading were valuable and often got caught off guard by materials students wanted to bring into the discussion that had not yet been vetted for their appropriateness or by directions where students wanted to take the conversation that were far removed from the instructor's own expertise and training. Often, students were most engaged when the *TSG* practices felt least like normal schooling and were least engaged when the bureaucratic structures reasserted themselves.

4. Media Studies Approach

Comparative perspectives encourage an exploration of the intersection between literature and other media, often deepening an appreciation of the cultural impact of classic texts.

Students should be taught that a book like *Moby-Dick* is a foundational text that continues to leave its mark on contemporary society. Perhaps the best way to convey this insight is by actively studying the marks that it continues to leave. As *Moby-Dick* is taken up in popular music, film, television, and theater and as the story migrates across space and time, it becomes a site for studying contemporary media practices. Studying these related texts helps students not only to master the text but also to develop a deeper understanding of the contexts through which it circulates, to understand the roles that canonical texts perform in the contemporary media landscape.

Moby-Dick not only is one of the most widely remixed English-language literary texts but also is itself a classic example of a remix. As Kelley points out in Chapter 11 of this book, Melville mixed together travel narratives, scientific treatises, philosophical texts, and myths and Bible stories to craft *Moby-Dick*, and its multigenre characteristics present much of the challenge of reading the book. Since *Moby-Dick* is both a masterful remix and an easy text to repurpose, it makes it an excellent source text for practicing the new media literacy skill of *transmedia navigation*: the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities (Jenkins et al., 2009, p. xiv).

5. Stance on Popular Culture

Popular culture offers a culturally contested and therefore valuable and necessary avenue for developing new media literacies skills.

The *TSG* proposed ways that meaning-making practices developed in the world of popular culture can offer powerful new approaches for reading literature. New media practices represent shifts in the ways we understand ourselves, media, and the world around us; this shift is first enacted in our relations with popular culture, but then the skills we acquire through play are adapted and reapplied and come to have implications for how we learn, work, participate in civic life, and connect with other people around the world (Jenkins, 2006a). People engage with popular culture in part in search of shared and meaningful resources through which they can construct their identities and give expressive shape to their own lived experiences. Bringing such materials and practices into the classroom may give students a chance to reflect more deeply on their own emerging interpretive and creative skills, and deploy them in relation to the kinds of content schools have traditionally promoted.

A core premise of this book is that the English classroom can be a hybrid space in which some pop culture material does have a reason to reside. But doing so means addressing a range of ethical issues that can arise when bringing popular culture content and resources into the English classroom and providing supports and guidance for teachers and students to together negotiate this new ethical territory. Lacking clear guidelines about how to support popular and participatory culture in their classrooms, educators need to proceed at their own risk, a prospect that can be frightening to those used to state-approved curricula and textbooks.

6. Stance on Technology

> There are multiple avenues to participatory culture, and many barriers that limit students' access to these cultures. Our hope is to offer a range of activities, both high- and low-tech, to support as many different kinds of classroom communities as possible.

One aim for creating the *TSG* was to take a first pass at considering how new media practices and mindsets can be applied to reading classic texts. But too many teachers put off introducing new media literacies to their students because they feel that they do not have the right tools and infrastructure to support those digital practices, because they are working with computers clogged with mandatory filters and with policies that block their use of key web 2.0 platforms, because they can't access YouTube or Facebook or Twitter or . . . .

Given the current budget crisis in American education, teachers may be waiting a long time before they achieve those ideal conditions. In the meantime, however, they might introduce *some* of these basic skills and dispositions through offline activities. NML's pedagogical commitment is to create a curriculum that introduces (and offers all students a chance to practice) social and cultural skills valued in a participatory culture, using both online and offline activities. The *TSG*, which offers activities that require minimal access to digital technology in addition to more high-tech approaches to instruction, attempts both to prepare learners for an increasingly participatory, digital future and to acknowledge the realities of our current educational and economic climate—a climate characterized by deep disparities in distribution of technologies and support for their use.

This approach came in handy for Laurel Felt (Jenkins & Felt, 2010), a PhD candidate who joined the NML team after it moved to USC. Laurel found herself teaching the new media literacies in a Senegalese school

where the power generator went down at the beginning of the term and stayed down more or less continuously throughout her course. She was able to adopt clotheslines, which are widespread through this community, as a means of identifying and displaying the participatory skills that emerged throughout her interactions with her students.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Reading in a Participatory Culture is not simply a celebration of an innovative educational experiment: It will also reflect on what went wrong, on some of the ways that schools, students, and teachers struggled to incorporate participatory culture into their pedagogical practices, and on the ways our university-based research team was out of touch with some of the realities that teachers face in the day-to-day practice of schooling in the United States. For example, some of the highest-rated students, those involved in advanced placement classes, were the most impatient with the creative and playful aspects of the curriculum, having already internalized a culture of standardized tests, while other students had difficulty fully grasping what it might mean to embrace a public voice that extended beyond the school itself and to engage others in the larger community. NML also struggled, for example, with filters on school computers that blocked access to *TSG* materials because the title of Herman Melville's literary classic had the word *dick* in it, or principals who were resistant to allowing students to share what they knew on Wikipedia because they had been taught not to trust its contents.

Part I, "Fundamentals," offers an overview of NML, its goals and activities, and the ways it translated a particular understanding of "new media literacies" into a curriculum for teaching canonical literature in the schools. By now, you have already learned about the *TSG* and what NML hoped to achieve by testing this approach through classroom interventions. In the next chapter, you will read more about some of the activities and approaches included in the curriculum and how they emerged from the theoretical commitments described above.

Part II, "Motives for Reading," encourages students to become more familiar with the different kinds of things professionals (literary and media scholars, actors, playwrights, directors) do with classic texts. By examining the process of writing and staging *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* and the trajectories that led participants to their involvement in developing the *TSG*,

we share the ways different specialists' reading practices (those of a literary critic, a media scholar, a director/playwright, an actor, etc.) provide a basis for creating different kinds of products (a media analysis, a literary essay, a play, a performance, etc.). Each expert offers an example of how reading is a different kind of thing as it is enacted using different strategies and goals. But why stop there? A more participatory approach to learning demands that students and teacher alike come to grips with their own motives, take ownership of the knowledge they help to generate, and respect the different kinds of expertise that get mobilized through their classroom discussion. Call this situation *co-created learning*.

This unit also links these motives to specific reading practices, making a case for the value of nonlinear reading as a means of extracting meaning from a digressive text like *Moby-Dick*. Drawing on his extensive research into the interpretive communities around fandom, Henry Jenkins explores the diverse ways fans make meaning of the texts that matter to them and then extends this analysis to look at the way Herman Melville represents his own relationship to a community of people invested in whaling within *Moby-Dick*. Wyn Kelley extends this focus on Melville as a reader (who became an author) in her examination of the book's ramshackle structure, its many different goals and the voices through which they are expressed, and the marginal annotations that survive, suggesting the way that the author sought inspiration and critically engaged with a range of different source texts.

Part III, "Learning Through Remixing," digs deeper into the new media literacy skill of appropriation, seeking to understand how a deeper engagement with remix practice might revitalize the study of literature. Many educators confuse the rich forms of appropriation and remixing that characterize participatory culture with the kinds of plagiarism that they have long sought to discourage in their classroom. In practice, remix is much more closely linked to what early literary scholars might have described as "allusions." That is, meaning is created by linking the current text back to earlier works, showing how the author builds upon a larger literary tradition or on the vocabulary of particular genres. Sometimes, the goal is to reference a specific work either to carry forward some of its original meanings or to contest them in ways that may push the cultural conversation to the next level. Henry Jenkins explains the distinctions between artistic debates about appropriation, legal debates about copyright infringement, and ethical debates about plagiarism. Then he offers a series of close readings of how subsequent authors have appropriated and remixed elements from

Moby-Dick in their work, concluding with a consideration of how popular culture references work in Pitts-Wiley's stage play. Wyn Kelley, in turn, examines the processes by which Herman Melville himself created *Moby-Dick* through a similar process of absorbing and remixing elements of the 19th-century whaling culture and previous literary materials and the ways that various characters in the novel model different forms of appropriation as they draw insights from the culture around them.

If *Moby-Dick* can be understood as a series of meaningful fragments, some of which, such as the contents of 19th-century commonplace books, were taken more or less directly from what Melville was reading, the text can also be read in terms of its gaps and silences that have often provided spaces for subsequent readers and authors to insert themselves into the narrative. Wyn Kelley, for example, explores the ways readers are asked to fill in the gaps within what seems at once an exhaustive and elliptical narrative. In particular, she discusses the absence of women in the novel as a challenge that readers, critics, and artists have confronted in various ways. Henry Jenkins, again dipping into the literature on fans and fan fiction, describes some of the properties of texts that have inspired fan authors to write in the margins of existing media narratives, suggesting how teachers might harness this same process to get their students to engage critically and creatively with literary works.

In the final section, Part IV, "Beyond *Moby-Dick*: Challenges and Opportunities," project participants offer reflections about what they learned when NML field tested the *TSG* and the challenges of bringing participatory culture practices and logics into the classroom. NML researcher Hillary Kolos and classroom teacher Judith Nierenberg discuss the ways they adopted the *TSG*'s framework and activities to engage with a young adult novel, *Twists and Turns* (McDonald, 2003), and to help their students develop a richer sense of their own identity as readers and to facilitate new insights into the concept of culture. Jenna McWilliams then describes what happened when a school board decision threatened to close Aurora High School, where Becky Rupert and McWilliams were seeking to expand the *TSG* to provide greater focus on improving students' writing skills. Suddenly, the teacher had a much more applied context that required her to help students improve their communication skills in order to save their school. As McWilliams notes, that initial effort proved unsuccessful in protecting this alternative school from closure and thus raises questions about how the empowerment shaping our concept of participatory culture may

or may not prepare students for experiences of disappointment and disillusionment. Learning scientist Daniel Hickey and his collaborators, Michelle Honeyford and Jenna McWilliams, examine the politics of assessment, arguing that our current regimes focused on high-stakes testing often discourage educators from embracing more experimental approaches such as the ones proposed by *Reading in a Participatory Culture*. They propose alternative models for testing participatory learning and illustrate what happened when they adopted these approaches for measuring the success of the Aurora High School students.

In the Conclusion, Katie Clinton and Jenna McWilliams reflect on the tensions encountered in putting some of these ideals about participatory culture into practice within schools as they currently exist. This closing chapter points to the need to negotiate change at the most local level, adopting those practices that can be absorbed by a particular community at a given moment, accepting those conditions that cannot be changed, but continually struggling to transform the nature of schooling as we seek ways to ensure that all students have access to the skills and technologies they need to meaningfully participate in the culture around them.