Exploring opportunities for literary literacy with e-literature: To infinity and beyond

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ABSTRACT

The place of literature is alive and evident in the Australian Curriculum: English. Whilst literature is more often considered as those texts that use aesthetic language and have enduring artistic value, literature is becoming increasingly electronic. Electronic literature or e-literature, which may include more contemporary popular texts, is acknowledged in the curriculum, but what opportunities do they offer for developing literary literacy? This article will provide an analysis of The Infinity Ring book series, which is an electronically augmented literary text published by Scholastic, for its affordances and constraints for developing literary literacy for upper primary and lower secondary.

Introduction

Whilst literature has always been an essential aspect of the English and literacy curriculum, its priority has varied over time. Beavis (2014) highlights its place as 'sometimes hovering in the sidelines, sometimes dominating other dimensions, or sometimes working in an integrated partnership with literacy and language' (p. 88). The Australian Curriculum: English documents (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2016) foreground literature in an integrated fashion as one of three interrelated strands. It is the intention that each strand (Literature, Language and Literacy) is integrated in creative ways in order to build student knowledge, understandings and skills in English. As students engage in literary ways, they are doing so through the exploration of language and they develop literacy with literary texts. Whilst there is an emphasis on integration, the designation of the literature strand is to encourage classroom teachers of all year levels (from primary through to Year 10) ‘not only to use texts conventionally understood as “literary”, but also to engage students in examining, evaluating and discussing texts in increasingly sophisticated and informed “literary” ways’ (ACARA, 2016).

The types of literary texts cited for interpretation, evaluation, appreciation and creation in the Australian Curriculum: English (ACARA, 2016) include novels, poetry, short stories, plays, film and multimodal texts in a variety of forms – spoken, print and digital or online. Of importance is that literary texts draw ‘from a range of historical and cultural contexts that are valued for their form and style and are recognised as having enduring or artistic value’, as well as ‘some that attract contemporary attention’, also allowing for student choice (ACARA, 2016).

ACARA (2016) foregrounds teachers and schools ‘as best placed to make decisions about the selection of texts in their teaching and learning programs to address the content in the Australian Curriculum: English while also meeting the needs of the students in their classes’. ACARA further elaborates that when considering text selection teachers should judge a text for its: potential for enriching the lives of students, expanding the scope of their experience … and the capacity for language to deepen those experiences. It builds students’ knowledge about how language can be used for aesthetic ends, to create particular emotional, intellectual or philosophical effects. (ACARA, 2016)
The influence of the internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) has impacted on the nature of literary texts, with literature available in multimodal and digital text forms. These types of texts have been coined as e-literature by some, although definitions vary in meaning. For my purposes in this article, I define e-literature as ‘a computer-based genre that merges literary arts with multimedia design’ (Luce-Kapler, Dobson, Samara, Iftody, & Davis, 2006). Not only are ICTs impacting on the form of texts, but as Hunt (2000) highlighted, ‘electronic media are changing how we tell stories, the nature of stories, and what we understand to be narratives’ (p. 111). As Beavis (2014) and others have reiterated, it is not the death or disappearance of what we have come to understand as children’s literature, but rather that these new digital forms of narratives ‘sit alongside print, oral, and picture book genres’ (p. 89).

If we consider that young children and adolescents are engaging with e-literature in their lives outside of school, then surely it has a place in the classroom. Mackey (1994) emphasised that, if children’s literary experiences are only limited to picture books, novels and poetry, then we disregard the multimedia skills and knowledge that students possess from their life-world experiences. Unsworth (2006) suggested that e-literature has the potential to ‘bridge the inter-generational divide in the English classroom’ (p. xi).

To support teachers to use e-literature in the classroom, Unsworth (2006) proposed an organisational framework which classifies the relationships between conventional and computer-based literary narratives (e.g., books, literary materials on the web, CD-ROM formats). This framework discusses three categories: electronically augmented literary texts, re-contextualised literary texts, and digitally originated literary texts.

**Electronically augmented** literary texts refer to an existing book (e.g., J.K. Rowling’s (1997) *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*) which has a range of online resources, such as website or blogs, to supplement the story world of the book. These online resources present opportunities for students to comment on, discuss and interpret the book.

**An electronically re-contextualised** literary text is where a book has been published, but then it has been re-contextualised in a variety of ways, such as text-based files, audio files or CD-ROMs. Some have been transposed from page to screen, whereas others may include animations or other features such as audio (e.g., Neil Gaiman’s (2002) *Coraline*) or picture books (e.g., Munsch’s (1992) *The Paper Bag Princess*).

As the name would suggest, the final category of **digitally originated** texts are those which have only been published in a digital format, usually on the web or as a CD-ROM. These types of texts are often linear e-narratives, hypertexts with either a focus on written text, or hypermedia texts with text and image. Unsworth (2006) includes in this category computer and video games which are narrative in nature as well as character and activity-based. Unsworth further distinguished between two types of game narratives, ones which are more story-focused and those that are more games-focused. Story-focused games are published separately from the story or they may have been created with game activities embedded.

As Beavis (2014) emphasised, ‘traditional forms of literary texts, where language is used in creative and imaginative ways, clearly remain central to the study of literature’ (p. 89). She continued:

To argue for the inclusion of a broader range of texts alongside traditional forms is not to deride the value of those forms. Rather, it is to recognise the diversity of children’s experience of finely shaped imaginative worlds and the ways in which new possibilities for meaning-making are creating new textual forms. (p. 89)

As a result, Beavis (2014) argued that ‘there is a place for both traditional and contemporary forms. New forms of narrative, new ways of positioning readers, and new forms of participation and engagement are emerging; these warrant attention alongside more familiar forms’ (p. 89). Beavis further accentuated that new cultural forms including e-literature and video games deserve close study.
for their potential use in literature classrooms. Their potential use raises many questions, including how might teachers approach the teaching of newer narrative forms.

The *Australian Curriculum: English* (ACARA, 2016) is underpinned by a variety of approaches to the study of literature, with each making ‘different assumptions about the purposes of literature study, the nature of literary texts and methods for analysis’. Differences in theoretical approaches may vary between primary or elementary levels of schooling (Beavis, 2013). Sometimes different approaches can result in philosophical tensions (Lehman, Freeman, & Allen, 1994).

Some teachers may focus on teaching with literature, implying a stronger literary perspective or they may focus on teaching reading with literature, suggesting a primarily literacy focus (Lehman, Freeman, & Allen, 1994). This notion has been termed literary literacy by numerous authors (Cai & Traw, 1997; Green, 2002; Lehman, Freeman, & Allen, 1994) and with different connotations, as it is a term consisting of two terms with diverse meanings. Cai and Traw (1997) defined literary literacy as ‘the ability to understand, interpret, and critique literature’ (p. 21). Lehman (2009) has questioned the dichotomy between the two terms of literary and literacy, suggesting that there is a synergy between them. Table 1 shows some of the synergies between literary understandings and related literacy concepts.

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<tr>
<th>Literary understandings</th>
<th>Related literacy concepts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of story</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plot of story</td>
<td>Sequencing</td>
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<td>Theme of story</td>
<td>Main ideas of story</td>
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<td>Language (e.g., sounds, images, word meanings)</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
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Lehman (2009) further proposed that teachers can use these synergies as they plan to develop students’ literary literacy or how ‘literacy can be taught in literary ways’ (p. 198). She shares the view of Lehr (2008) that such an approach would address the ‘frenzied responses to national mandates’ (p. xi), occurring in the United States and similarly in Australia, which prioritise scientific reading research. Such approaches focus on literacy at the expense of literature, literacy study and literary discussions. Comber (2016) cites recent Australian research which explores the impact of mandated literacy assessment on teachers’ work, finding that an ‘emphasis on high stakes testing closed down teachers’ opportunities for innovation and creativity in connecting curriculum with children’s lives and interests’ (p. xiv).

Given the inclusion of multimodal and digital literature in the *Australian Curriculum: English* and the importance of these types of texts in our students’ life-worlds – as well as the need to engage students in reading actively in the upper primary and lower secondary – this article will discuss the affordances and constraints of using *The Infinity Ring* series. Published by Scholastic, this series is classified as an electronically-augmented text series (Unsworth, 2006) that aims to develop literary literacy.

First, I will introduce the series and then exemplify with some examples from the first book in the series, *A Mutiny in Time* (Dashner, 2012) and its associated materials. Suggestions will be made as to how to address any potential constraints and what literary literacy might look like with this electronically-augmented text.

**What is The Infinity Ring series?**

*The Infinity Ring* (Scholastic) is a series of eight books in a time travel adventure story that is targeted
at readers from 8 to 12 years of age. The series is written by six well known best-selling authors: James Dashner, Carrie Ryan, Lisa McCann, Matt de la Pena, Matthew Kirby and Jennifer Nielsen. Dashner and de la Pena have each authored two books in the eight part series. Dashner was the overarching author and, along with the other authors and Scholastic staff, he worked to maintain a consistent voice across the series whilst allowing for individual author style. For each book in the series there is an accompanying visual guide and role-play computer game. Each book offers an ‘electronically augmented experience’ (Unsworth, 2006, p. 6) where the visual guide and computer game expand the story world of the book.

In the subsequent sections of this article, I will follow the sequence of the reading experience. First I will explore the affordances and constraints of reading *The Infinity Ring* book series and exemplify with the first book, *A Mutiny in Time*. Next, I will discuss the visual *Hystorian Guide* and finally play the computer game, *The King of Diamonds*.

**Read the books**

On first inspection, each book in *The Infinity Ring* series presents as an appealing and colourful hardcover volume. Figure 1 shows the first book in the series, *A Mutiny in Time*. The back cover provides a synopsis of what is to come: ‘Read the book. Follow the guide. Play the game’ and suggests that there is more to this book series than just the story. The back cover also provides an image of the three main characters (Dak Smythe, Sera Froste and Hystorian Riq). The book is 190 pages in length and is structured with a prologue and 36 chapters of varying page lengths. The use of titles for each chapter clues the reader into the subject matter discussed in each chapter.

![Figure 1. Cover art by Shane Rebenschied from *Infinity Ring: Book One – A Mutiny in Time* by James Dashner. Cover illustration copyright © 2012 by Scholastic Inc. Used by permission.](image)

Whilst genre conventions are not fixed (Winch et al., 2010), *The Infinity Ring* series has the trademark conventions of a fantasy genre, but it includes elements of contemporary realism and humour. The narrative starts somewhere in contemporary America. A hand-held infinity ring allows the main characters to time travel between their contemporary world into past historical contexts.

In order to gain power and influence, a secret society called the SQ has changed key historical events dating back to Aristotle’s times. Another secret group called the Hystorians work against the SQ and go back in time to fix some of the Great Breaks in time. The Hystorians recruit Dak and Sera and, together with teenage Hystorian-in-training Riq, they use the infinity ring to travel through time. Each book in the series is a quest to fix a particular Great Break, to remove the Remnants that haunt them, set the world’s course and prevent reality from ending in a fiery Cataclysm.
The Infinity Ring series allows readers, through engagement with the two main characters, to explore ‘possibilities of the human imagination outside the boundaries of the real world’ or beyond the ‘here and now’ (McDonald, 2013, p. 17). It ‘advocates the need for perseverance in the face of adversity’ as the characters fight to overcome the forces of evil that threaten to destroy the world (McDonald, 2013, p. 17).

Further, the text provides access to ‘particular ways of thinking about the time, space and characters and events … through what is valued and believed in the story’ (McDonald, 2013, p. 9). The Infinity Ring series provides a gloomy, futuristic version of American life with a range of environmental catastrophes, such as volcanoes and earthquakes, and other problems which would allow students to consider how notions of greed impact upon the environment. Other key themes explored are the importance of friends and family, the unknown, good versus evil, and courage.

The contextualisation of the story in contemporary times allows readers to connect to familiar relationships with friends, families and school subjects and settings (e.g., Science, History, field trips), in spite of some variance due to the American language, terminology and spelling. McDonald (2013) proposed that realistic texts are particularly suitable for reluctant or less advanced readers, as characters’ lives may resemble their own. As a set of literary texts, The Infinity Ring series could provide opportunities for students to engage in a variety of ways, from their own personal preferences for literature and responses, to the way in which texts reflect the context of culture and situation in which they are created. This will allow students ‘access to mediated experiences and truths that support and challenge the development of individual identity’ (ACARA, 2016, p. 6). Engagement with The Infinity Ring series provides students with opportunities to explore themselves, each other and the world.

This contemporary fantasy narrative also employs a variety of forms and conventions of humour to arouse amusement for the reader (McDonald, 2013), including humorous language play, humorous situations and humour through characterisation. In A Mutiny in Time, we can, in particular, see a comfortable relationship between the two main characters and humorous language play, with Sera saying to Dak, ‘You’ve got the personality of a monkey. And the smell’ (p. 1) There is also a friendly rivalry with sarcastic name calling between Dak and Hystorian Riq.

Situations which would be considered serious, such as an uncle’s funeral, are treated in a humorous way. And then there is humour through characterisation, with the personality of one of the characters, Eyeball, exaggerated. McDonald (2013) suggests that humour ‘offers readers the opportunity to chuckle at representations of their younger selves, their parents, or indulge in out-loud laughter for laughter’s sake’ (p. 24). Often writers use humour to ‘alleviate the seriousness of the moment (danger, illness, social issues)’ and ‘as a way of escaping conventional behaviour and language’ McDonald (2013, p. 24). This can be seen at key dangerous moments in the series, such as the mutiny on the Santa Maria.

Exposure to genres and conventions of narrative, such as those discussed, provide not only opportunities for reading literary texts, but they also support adolescent writers to apply narrative structure and to use language in imaginative ways. Even though narratives are a text type that students are exposed to from an early age, McDonald (2013) emphasised that it is one of the most complex texts to compose. A Mutiny in Time is structured using a prologue, which young readers may not have been exposed to before. As such, it offers an opportunity for discussion around its purpose. It further allows students to see that the ‘act of creating texts, by its nature, involves experimentation and adaptation of language and textual elements’ (ACARA, 2016, p. 5). This text could provide a model for exploring and creating texts considering textual elements, structure, language use, as well as literary conventions.

In order to develop literary literacy, Cai and Traw (1997) stated that reading needs to move beyond reading a text literally to reading in a more literary way. This involves understandings of
literary conventions. They proposed that ‘knowledge of literary conventions is the foundation of literary interpretation and criticism’ (p. 25). Different literary genres use different literary conventions. For novels, key literary conventions which students can examine include point of view, plot structure, characterisation, dialogue, setting, theme and symbol, style, mood and vocabulary (ACARA, 2016; Cai & Traw, 1997; McDonald, 2013).

The books in *The Infinity Ring* series are told from a third person point of view. From this perspective, the reader is privy to the thoughts, fears, emotions and motivations of the protagonists. This perspective moves the story along and creates sympathy and understanding for the plight of all protagonists, and it gives the reader insight into the battles and challenges the protagonists face and their reactions to other characters (Seely-Flint, Kitson, Lowe, & Shaw, 2014).

A key feature of this series is that it has a strong, fast-paced, plot line which would appeal to adolescent readers. Despite the opportunities afforded by time travel to a range of seminal historical settings, these have not been described and developed in historical depth and detail in the books. Description appears more secondary to a focus on a fast-paced action plot. This, however, opens up the opportunity for students to research various settings and historical events for themselves and to create multimodal backdrops and descriptive passages to supplement those in the novel.

Cai and Traw (1997) proposed that ‘if teachers have a clear goal of developing literary literacy, they will more consciously combine learning language with learning literature’ (p. 24). The vocabulary range of the series is appropriate to its intended audience and purpose and would open up many opportunities for a range of contextualised vocabulary extension activities in the classroom. Whilst there is the use of figurative and descriptive language (e.g., alliteration, the use of similes, metaphors, extended noun groups), it does not offer the highly descriptive language opportunities of text series such as Emily Rodda’s (2000) *Deltora Quest*, which contain richly created settings of time and place through the use of figurative and descriptive language. However, the contrast and comparison of quests like *Deltora Quest* with *The Infinity Ring* books could allow for ‘a range of literary experiences’, as well as create ‘a balanced reading diet’ (McDonald, 2013, p. 8).

Young adolescent readers would relate to the character representations in *The Infinity Ring* series in terms of age and would engage with the motif of young people being empowered in ways that the adult protagonists are not, as occurs in many other adolescent dystopian novels, such as John Marsden’s (1993) *Tomorrow, When the War Began*. Whilst the character representations reverse and contest some typical stereotypes (e.g., the girl Sera as the Science geek) and provide a range of culturally diverse characters, they are perhaps not as psychologically complex as other quest series, such as J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter*. Further, over the course of the series they do not develop and mature in any real sense as the characters do in *Harry Potter*. However, the fairly limited development of character representations in *The Infinity Ring* series opens up opportunities for students to create fictional spaces, such as fictional Facebook pages for the central characters, where they explore their actions and reactions and feelings in more nuanced imaginative depth and detail.

The use of dialogue is important to ‘the development of characterisation and shifting relationships across a whole text’ (McDonald, 2013, p. 85). Dialogue is a consistently well-used feature of the novels in the series and generally sounds authentic and realistic. Some of the dialogue is clearly Americanised and some usage may be unfamiliar or strange to Australian student readers.

*The Infinity Ring* books are also available as an audio book. This type of format would particularly support readers who struggle with decoding, providing an opportunity for them to listen whilst reading along with the text, with the provision of two modes of communication (Mayer, 2005). The final chapter of the book creates the context for the next episode of the story played out in the online game. Prior to interacting with the game, readers are prompted to explore the *Hystorian Guide* (a fold up poster), which comes secured in a hidden tab at the front of the book.
Follow the guide: *A Mutiny in Time*

The highly visual *Hystorian Guide*, which comes with every book in the series, provides tips, hints, clues and a map for the online game or episode. From the image in Figure 2, it is possible to see the *Hystorian Guide* for Episode 1: *The King of Diamonds*. As the figure shows, there is a variety of text types evident in the *Hystorian Guide*, including instructions (or commands, such as ‘Steal the French Crown Jewels before the SQ can!’), transactions for social purposes (memo from Arin, the Hystorian who guides them through their travel in time; post-it notes), and informative to descriptive texts (what a timebox is for; a map with a legend).

In order to access important information to be able to engage in the story world of *The King of Diamonds* game, readers draw on linguistic, visual and spatial modes of this multimodal text. The linguistic modes provide information about the task, the revolutionaries, King Louis XVI, timeboxes, and the French Blue or Hope Diamond. The writing style is informal, with personal commentary provided by Arin. The use of personal pronouns (e.g., ‘It is up to YOU to save the French Revolution’) works to engage the reader in the next task. Evaluative language is used to make a judgement (e.g., about King Louis’s rule).

Historical context-specific language (e.g., pantaloons, pike, cockade, including French language such as Sansculottes) identifies its setting, which is Paris in 1792 at the time of the French Revolution. The visual modes support the reader to recognise key characters in the game (e.g., a revolutionary, King Louis XVI), and key symbols (e.g., timebox, jewels, bonnet, rouge).

Salient items or information are foregrounded through the use of colour (e.g., yellow arrow post-it notes, highlighting the jewels, and a pink post-it note with ‘VS’, implying a division between the revolutionaries and King Louis). Further, numbering assists readers to order their progress through the information on the guide. The map and its legend play an important role in helping readers navigate a story world filled with marketplaces, streets, bridges and sewers. In addition, information is provided that alerts readers to what not to do (e.g., ‘Don’t go swimming’).
Play the game: *The King of Diamonds*

The online game or episode (which comes with every book) can be played on a number of devices: on a personal computer, on a mobile device or on a tablet. The *Hystorian Guide* provides the code which readers need to input to access the online game. As readers sign in to play, a brief synopsis of the episode is provided. The game was very slow to load initially, but this will depend on internet download speeds and the device used.

Further, players need to download prescribed, dedicated web-playing software. After initial loading, a multimedia video plays with a voice-over by Arin Cole (the Hystorian referred to on the Guide) reiterating the task to be carried out. Figure 3 shows a Screenshot for Episode 1, *The King of Diamonds* multimedia video.

![Figure 3. Screenshot from The King of Diamonds](https://example.com/figure3.png)

From *Infinity Ring: Episode 1 – The King of Diamonds*. Copyright © 2013 by Scholastic Inc. Used by permission.

The graphics, fast-paced action, drama from the audio track, as well as the parting words, ‘Fix the past, Save the future’, are enough to entice and engage readers into the game (Park, Lee, Jin, & Kang, 2010). In the classroom, this short video presentation could be used as a hook prior to reading the book, so that students get a sense of what awaits them. They can thus be ‘excited about reading’ (Simpson, 2008, p. 6). This discussion of the game reflects my own playing of the game, ‘which is idiosyncratic and particular’, with my experience of playing ‘situated within the possibilities’ of the game, ‘as well as the social practices which surround’ the game (Bradford, 2010, p. 63).

Computer games, such as *The King of Diamonds*, as a hybrid cultural form have much to offer in regards to literary literacy in relation to notions of narrative, games as text and action, and multimodal literacies (Apperley & Beavis, 2013; Beavis, 2014; Bradford, 2010). *The King of Diamonds* is a role-play game where readers/players take on the role of a character (Dak, Sera or Riq) at the start of the game, but they can also change characters depending on the task to be completed.

Embedded narrative content forms a large portion of the game-time in *The King of Diamonds* (Moser & Tang, 2015). The narrative structure is linear in nature, with a single authored story direction and game objectives for a variety of tasks that lead to stealing the crown jewels before the evil SQ (a secret society) can. As readers/players engage with narrative-based games, such as *The King of Diamonds*, they need to draw upon their knowledge of narrative genre and link in the backstory provided in *A Mutiny in Time*.

The book provides reader/plays with the knowledge of what the characters are like and the types of actions that they are capable of (Beavis, 2014). This is important to the types of tasks they might...
be more suited to (e.g., strength for physical tasks, able to speak different languages, knowledge of history). Readers/players are able to check their understandings from the book and use hints and tips from the menu option of the game.

The book (or backstory) also gives readers/players an idea of what sort of action scenarios they can expect to find in the game. This means that readers/players draw on generic and intertextual references, not just in relation to the book, but also their knowledge of games and the similarity between games and stories (Beavis, 2014). Whilst the guide and the introduction in the game provide the general mission of the game (e.g., steal the French Crown jewels), clues (e.g., the map, the written and visual clues on the screen and tutorials) help readers to read between the lines and to solve a series of tasks (problems and complications in the story). There is a particular sequence of events to go through to complete the mission.

As Bradford (2010) has suggested, computer games, like those with *The Infinity Ring* book series offer readers ‘new forms of textual pleasure and new forms of sociality; and because like other kinds of texts, their possibilities are never exhausted or their meanings ever absolute’ (p. 63). This means that, like the book version, there can be literary discussions around the narrative and how it is crafted in the game, as well as how characters are represented through action and dialogue.

In the game, *The King of Diamonds*, dialogue is used to move the game forward and to reinforce character dispositions and their relationships. Paul Miette, a thief engaged to help steal the French Crown Jewels comments to Dak, Sera and Riq, ‘Ha Amateurs. I can see you really thought this through’. Here we can see the same sense of humour (sarcasm) used in language, even in the introduction of new characters.

Computer games, including *The King of Diamonds*, are cultural forms which ‘reflect aspects of the society in which they are produced; they also shape players’ perceptions and promote values both implicitly and explicitly’ (Bradford, 2010, p. 54). *The King of Diamonds* computer game, like all other narrative texts including *The Mutiny in Time*, allows for opportunities to explore the underlying ideological content, representations and worldviews that they promote (Bradford, 2012). In particular, there could be discussion about how these values are promoted explicitly and implicitly in and across the book and the game.

However, games are more than narratives. Gee (2003) referred to video games as ‘embodied’ stories (pp. 81–82), as they are embodied in the participation, actions and choices of the player/reader, which is not available in a book version. Bradford (2010) commented that:

Like books and films, video games do not constitute systems of meaning which exist to be unlocked or decoded. Rather, players behave like readers and film audiences in that they negotiate the meanings dialectically, so that no two experiences of a game, are exactly the same. (p. 54)

As readers/players interact with the game, they make choices as the characters, so there is a meshing of the readers/players’ real world identities to establish virtual identities (Unsworth, 2006). Gee (2003) proposed that readers/players project their own hopes, values and fears on to the character to produce virtual identities which are really projected identities of the players. This type of relationship goes beyond mere identification with characters in the book version and as such is active and reflexive (Unsworth, 2006).

Exploring this relationship between the action – how players interact with the virtual world of the game and the objects in it; whether they play with the rules of the game or against it – is a key defining feature of computer games (Beavis et al., 2015). It is in this action with multimodal computer games that readers/players become ‘both consumers and producers; readers/viewers/players and creators’ (Beavis, 2013, p. 245). The final product or text that readers/players produce and the ‘paratexts’ they engage with (e.g., a journal which records game actions to check progress in the game) or create through game-play (e.g., create their own computer games) enact particular literacies worthy of study. This is certainly the case with *The King of Diamonds*. 
As with the *Hystorian Guide*, the computer game *The King of Diamonds* provides a shift from print to multimodal literacies, in that it uses multiple elements or semiotic systems to make meaning. These include visuals, symbols, linguistic (written), colour and audio. Bull and Anstey (2010) commented that linguistics may not always be a dominant mode, but in *The King of Diamonds* the use of conversational textboxes are important for following what characters/players are doing, as well as indicating who is speaking. The conversational textboxes also signal the status of tasks (e.g., ‘journal updated’), how to do particular tasks (e.g., ‘Follow the ARROW in the top right corner to get to your next destination’), what is available (e.g., take a photo), as well as when to progress to the next screen (e.g., ‘End tutorial’).

These linguistic modes are also supported through visuals and symbols (e.g., arrows, buttons, compass, role – a pink badge for the Time Traveller). Jewitt (2006) discussed how different semiotic systems have different functional specialisations, such as time or space, and different ways of processing, which impact the roles of the systems. In other words, readers/players ‘select, attend to and use modes because they are best suited to the task we are trying to achieve’ (Bull & Anstey, 2010, p. 26). In *The King of Diamonds*, meaning is located using both space in relation to the visuals (e.g., computer screen/game virtual world) and time-based modes (e.g., connected tasks, building atmosphere through audio) which build meaning over time. As students engage with *The King of Diamonds*, they could come to understand, learn about and appreciate how different semiotic systems make meaning individually and across systems and how these systems work to create cohesion (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Gee, 2003). Beavis (2014) further suggests that computer games offer opportunities to explore not only multimodal literacies, but they also build appreciation, exploration and discussion around game design and design principles.

**Conclusion**

The visual and electronically augmented experience of *The Infinity Ring* series not only offers opportunities for being ‘excited about reading’ (Simpson, 2008, p. 6) and moving beyond reading for meaning (e.g., learning to read), but it also offers opportunities for literary literacy or learning to read with multimodal literary texts. As contemporary fantasy novels, *The Infinity Ring* series has been designed for readers who are also gamers and who inhabit richly developed virtual worlds, in which they are active participants. The series balances both print and non-print in a transmedia world (Beavis, 2013).

As discussed in this article, Scholastic’s *The Infinity Ring* series has a range of affordances and constraints for developing literary literacy. However, by recognising and building on the affordances of what the book, the guide and the game offer in relation to literary literacy, and coupling it with other quest-based texts of a more literary nature, using *The Infinity Ring* series offers young adolescents opportunities to draw on their own experiences in rich life-worlds of digital culture.

**References**


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