

Smagorinsky, P., & O'Donnell-Allen, C. (1998). Reading as mediated and mediating action: Composing meaning for literature through multimedia interpretive texts. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33, 198-226.

Key Words: diverse texts, response to reading

Summary: Researchers analyzed how a group of five high school seniors interpreted the character of Laertes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* through a body biography, which included a life-sized human outline with images and words. Researchers sought to examine the group's discussion and composing of meaning for Laertes to identify the social processes, intertextual connections, and constraints associated with their composition. Findings revealed that the process of collaborative multimedia composing provided the students with multiple tools for producing a shared representation of texts and new forms of representation to better understand the meaning in the interpreted text.

Assumptions:

- Readers' different perspectives provide them with different tools to understand literature.
- The expressive and designative functions of language are complementary rather than competing or separate.

Findings:

- The process of composing through the collaborative body biography required the students to clarify their own understanding of relationships between characters as they came up with an agreed-upon material form.
- Students made few personal connections to the literature in the beginning but had opportunities to expand their exploratory talk as the teacher emphasized the importance of reader-oriented responses.

Conclusions:

The findings of this study give evidence that reading is a continually mediated process. Throughout, readers assign meaning to the text and create new interpretive texts.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Consider the role that multimedia activities might play in your literature classroom.
- Help students develop comfort with reader-oriented responses as they explore the meaning of literature.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Help teachers consider the role that multimedia activity can play in their instruction.