

R U Really Reading?

What are the people in the picture doing?



The parents look like they are reading from traditional sources, a newspaper and a book. But the kids are reading (or posting on message boards) off of their Apple Macs.

Actual Caption: The Simses of Old Greenwich, Conn., gather to read after dinner. Their means of text delivery is divided by generation.

Do books and video games have anything in common?

If the video game is a word game, it might involve reading. Even a role-playing game I used to play, Runescape, involved quite a bit of reading, both out of the manual and in the game. But I don't know if it's the same level of reading.

Using Video Games as Bait to Hook Readers:

a. Do you agree or disagree with PJ Haarsma's statement that "You can't just make a book anymore"?

On some level, yes, on another, no. It depends what audience you're writing to. If you're writing to a crowd of kids that are already hooked by reading, then you just need an intriguing premise and a good plot to draw them in. But with other kids, who never willingly touch a book but have read through all their game manuals, a game would be helpful to draw them into reading.

b. According to the article, what do books and video games have in common, and how are they different?

They can both increase reading skills, they can both increase your imagination (in certain games), and games can make you want read message boards and manuals for new hints on the game. But games can also give you that square-eyed feeling, and you can't really curl up on the sofa with a good game, can you?

c. How might video games serve as a "gateway drug for literacy"?

By letting you play as a character in a grander story, the game might make you want to follow the plot to the very end, hooking you onto a good story and preparing you for reading. If your game has a lousy plot or none at all, well, you're out of luck there, pal.

d. What skills are essential to literacy? Which of these do video games foster?

Skills essential to literacy: A will to read, the skill of reading, a good imagination, and wanting more. Video games might give you a will to read, by giving you an intriguing plot or a good manual. There might be places in the game where you need to read, thus giving you a reason to enhance your reading skills. Most games leave you wanting more games, but I don't know about wanting more books. Not a lot of games foster imagination (the new game Spore being the most recent one I can think of), but when they do, they are usually good.

e. What useful skills might video games teach that books do not?

A lot of games teach good reflexes. They can also (in some games) give you a view of history that you just couldn't get from a book.