



Plan for Academic Technology Management

Faculty Project Manager: Mary Balkun

Faculty Campus Wide ID: 10169367

TLTC Team Members: Mary Zedeck, Heidi Trotta,

Start Date: June 14, 2007

Proposed End Date: Implementation Fall 2007

Project Summary

The purpose of this project is the development of a site in Second Life, *The House of The Seven Gables*, which will be an interactive learning experience for the study of literary texts. This project will virtually recreate *The House of the Seven Gables*, the classic Gothic novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, allowing students to engage the material on a more creative level and to understand the cultural and historical contexts for the novel. Based on the readings, students can choose from a variety of projects within The House of Seven Gables Second Life environment that could include, but not be limited to determining the appearance and content of the rooms in the House of Seven Gables, designing the landscape, identifying multimedia content, creating notecards adding important symbols and recreating the story characters. These activities and components will be based based on the student's close reading, analysis, and interpretation of the text. The interactions will lead students to an understanding of the ways cultural and historical materials can be used in the interpretation of literature. They should then be able to apply the same methods of inquiry to other texts. Participation in this project will also provide students with experiences in a technologically-advanced environment. Students will be asked to provide their rational for choosing specific character traits and objects and must post their observations in a course blog.

In the spirit of collaboration and giving among Second Life Educators within higher education and non-profit organizations, the House of Seven Gables and all activities should be donated and copied into the Second Life Teen Grid at the completion of the project.

Learning Objectives

The development of site materials and the interactions with others in the project will lead students to an understanding of the ways cultural and historical materials can be used in the interpretation of literature. They should then be able to apply the same methods of inquiry to other texts. The theoretical basis for this project is the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz, whose method of cultural interpretation, known as "thick description," was influential in the development of both material cultural and new historical analyses of literary texts. In addition to a specific text, the activities and resources in the site will help students better understand general concepts useful for the study of American Gothic literature: Gothicism, Puritanism, and Romanticism, as well as literary concepts such as symbolism, narrative structure, and character development. Since the group for this first phase of the project will consist of graduate students, many of whom teach, they will also be asked to consider the pedagogical implications of their activities and the materials they develop. Finally, they will be asked to reflect on the implications for literary interpretation; one assignment geared to this type of reflection will be an evaluation of the design and creation choices made by others in the class.

Learning Outcomes

There are several projected outcomes for this project: Students will become more aware of the kinds of interpretive choices they make and the implications for a reading of any text; students will become aware of the ways in which objects can provide new entry points into texts and actively engage in material culture criticism; and students will think more creatively about their own pedagogical practices and the ways texts can be "taught."

Project Audience

Students in The American Renaissance, a graduate course for the M.A. in English. Most students in this course are either Teaching Assistants for the department or teachers in elementary or secondary schools.

Faculty Needs

- Training in Second Life software
- Tutorials for students to use Second Life software (this will depend on which route we take – we need to create central avatars for students to use or will students tell the TLTC what they wish to have in their room and character attributes)
- Tutorials for students to use Skype or Second Life Voice
- Linden money to purchase items
- Second Life land
- Arranging to have a house built by a developer
- Create a Blog for group sharing, peer review, and discussions to be made within the Blackboard course "The House of Seven Gables"
- Costume boxes – all items must be transferable
- Theme-based Boxes with pre-purchased materials – all items must be transferable (landscaping materials, room contents)
- Create account avatar and dress as Hepzibah.

Budget – all \$750 to be spent on creating the building, landscape and objects needed within Second Life as needed and determined by the project team. The money in Linden dollars belong to the main character avatar, Hepzibah, which will also hold the inventory for the project.

End Product

The end product is a virtual “House of Seven Gables” with the following spaces in an advanced state of completion:

- The kitchen
- The cent shop
- The garden
- The landscape
- Other rooms in the house as needed

The house itself will need seven rooms, plus the garden area.

Since there is much to the book, this project will evolve each semester. Each semester students will be asked to provide more materials and rooms based on their analysis and interpretation of the book and their critique of the materials already in the virtual house. Later groups of students will be able to change existing rooms, materials, and characters in accordance with their own reading of the text. However, these changes must be justified with the text and recorded in the site Blog.

Team Members/Resources

Mary Balkun, Faculty Project Manager.SHU

Mary Zedeck, Instructional Designer

Heidi Trotta, Instructional Designer

Desideria Stockton (SL, aka [Beth Ritter-Guth](#)) , Women’s Studies and English Faculty at [Lehigh Carbon Community \(consultant\)](#)

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Detailed Timeline

Second Life Land purchased and made available Done

Faculty training June-July

Student support training materials August 15

Progress report – mid project October 19

Determination and creation of an assessment August 15

Second Life Tasks:

Determination of how much and which parts of the book will be developed in Second Life July 15

Terra Forming of Property – July 15

Creation of Building in Second Life – July 30

All Second Life Components – August 15

Student activities:

- Training – Sept. 10

- Discussion of novel – Sept. 17
- First writing assignment due – Sept. 17
- Second writing assignment due – Dec. 10
- Blog entries – bi-weekly throughout semester

Blog created Sept 1

Additional photos and media clips selected, scanned, and streamed for further context. August 15

Second Life project included in syllabus July 15

Assessment Plan

Students will be asked to complete two writing assignments connected to the project:

- First: a preliminary essay in which they consider what it would mean to interpret the novel according to material culture theory (using some assigned readings as a starting point) and propose some “entry” points for an interpretation (i.e. specific objects and why they might be important)
- Second: a final proposal (2-3 pages) for a material cultural reading of the novel based on their experience in the project, other readings we’ve done in the course, and class discussions.

Student blogs also will be assessed for their ability to support their rationale for choosing character traits, objects, and various symbols developed for their section of the virtual “House of Seven Gables”. Students will also critique each other’s work and the interpretation of the novel it suggests.