

Megan K. Mize, @merryquinn

#HUODU2015, @oduhuconf

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<http://bit.ly/50gifHU>



50 Shades of GIFs: The Pedagogical Potential of Animated Interpretation



This presentation considers the possibilities for the use of GIFs in connection to course reading (interpretation, peer review, etc).

Initial Case Study

June 2, 2012:

Katrina Passick Lumsden's review of [50 Shades of Grey](#), in which she used GIFs to vividly capture her retroactive reactions to passages

- "What in the hell just happened? Did I really read that? Oh, my god, I did. I did read that."
 - Examples
- GIFs used in instant messaging, as grading, in course notes, etc
- Years later, I remember this text through the filter of Lumsden's GIFs that interpreted the characters, scenes, and her reaction as a reader.
- *Why? What do the GIFs do that other strategies of interpretation don't?*

Theory (Gloss) on GIFs Functions/ Advantages

Why use them? Logistics:

Lack of sound, low-quality, on loop (a digital flipbook): “more than image” and “less than video”

- Not a video, so don't need to hit “play” or wait for it to load - removes obstacle
- No sound, so can be used in spaces where sound would signal your actions or disrupt - private

Communicative Function

- Andy Orin: “Typically a GIF in conversation is used as a **visual analogy** to a relevant topic.”
- Abigail Posner writes: “In the language of the visual web, when we share a video or an image, we're not just sharing the object, we're also sharing in the **emotional response** it creates.”
- In Thought Catalog, Leigh Alexander claims a GIF connects the viewer to a **universal situation they are already familiar with or some media that they have encountered before** (shared experiences/concepts)
- Posner: desire for **new perspectives** on things we're already familiar with.

GIFs in the Classroom

GIFs vs. Memes

Humor is Important in Both

- [Memes function as established topoi - recognizable rules/conventions](#)
- GIFs require additional interpretation, as they are less constrained, both decontextualized but also holding the remnant of their original context

GIFs are effectively **kairotic** in nature

their automatic play/loop function offers an immediacy

- how does the looping enhance their effect?
- what is the [affective nature of GIFs](#) when compared to more static forms of responding/interpreting?

For an upcoming literature course, I am considering an assignment in which students are given portions of a larger reading, in which they follow Lumsden's example and do a retrospective summary and response using GIFs, or even possibly, if available, give them digital copies of sections (perhaps in Google Docs) and have them concurrently interject GIFs, so that they capture their immediate responses.

Possible Results of this Assignment:

1. makes readers linger on the text,
2. it also values their response as reader (recalling the “emotional” nature of GIFs, a part of interpretation which is often obscured),
3. highlights the creative component of interpretation through play,
4. may lead to a more communal experience of reading the text,
5. it might allow students to recall that portion of the text more effectively,
6. with a small reflective writing prompt, lead them to describe why they used the GIFs and responded in such a way, marking the start of a different approach to textual interpretation.

What other ways might we incorporate them into the reading/writing process as a means of thinking through course concepts?

