Kittens! Inspired by Kittens! Undergraduate Theorists Inspired by YouTube

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Abstract
A professor and students in an undergraduate honors research seminar were inspired to playfully link old and contemporary literacy theories to a 2.0 media artifact, the popular YouTube video Kittens! Inspired by Kittens! (KibK) starring 6 year-old Maddie. In this article KibK is theorized drawing on frames of school-based reading instruction, social identities, identity formation in communities of practice, Bakhtin’s theory of intertextuality, and Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction. The authors found that KibK was a powerful touchstone and Vygotskian tool for their project of linking theory to practice. They found that pre-digital literacy theories designed for paper texts were appropriate and useful to understanding web-based media such as KibK. This interpretive project also supported the seminar’s goal of learning to see and appreciate the value of literacy practices in places that were previously invisible, such as on YouTube and in children and adults everyday creative human endeavors. Participants also found KibK to be a powerful medium for constituting the seminar as a community of practice.

Comments
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Kittens, Inspired by Kittens. By Kristi Olofson. Mar. 29, 2010. Ever question what kittens are actually thinking? Wonder no more. When an adorable 6-year-old inserts her own literal narrative to the photos in a children's book titled Kittens, the result is obnoxious (but endearing) hilarity.