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Information vs. Content: Second Life in the Literature Classroom

Abstract

Like a large number of educators worldwide, I am convinced that Second Life (SL) is a powerful tool for education in general and at all levels. However, its usefulness for teaching literature seems to be more limited. With this project, I intend to show that we as teachers of English literature are still awaiting the “aha!” moment which will show us the truly unique things we can do in SL. There are a few excellent examples of SL’s potential for English education, such as the Dante’s *Inferno* or *Tintern Abbey* sims, but these require pretty large investments of time and energy from an instructor and possibly for the students as well. At smaller scales, SL’s affordances for pedagogy become a bit less inviting. In the specific case of English education, SL definitely has potential. However, its potential and its affordances for use—in our section of the academic arena—are not sufficiently unique to be absolutely compelling. Indeed, it is still the case that the barriers to entry are enough to make an English teacher think twice about this tool, especially at the current moment. Concerns about economic, technological, and other resource issues can easily outweigh an argument for adopting SL in a situation where, on one hand, widespread adoption is not the norm and, on the other hand, it can be shown that many of the benefits that might be gained from adoption are to be found in other resources that do not require as great an investment or commitment.