

Online Book Clubs for the Net Generation

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Cassandra M. Scharber Doering

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Joan E. Hughes, David R. O'Brien, Co-Advisers

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Charlyss and Thomas Scharber, for instilling in me a love for and dedication to education.

Abstract

This dissertation examined *online* book clubs for youth offered during the summer by a metropolitan public library system. Voluntary reading rates for both boys and girls plummet as they move through adolescence (NEA, 2007, NAEP, 2005). Book clubs are one way to support youth in pleasure reading (Appleman, 2006). Although many book clubs geared for youth are school-based, researchers are beginning to take notice of the possibilities that exist for literacy and learning outside the classroom (Hull & Schultz, 2001). These online book clubs were viewed as *sites of possibility* -- lenses through which both schools and libraries can more readily understand the possibilities that exist in encouraging “old” and “new” literate practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 2005).

This case study utilized Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (Herring, 2006) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995) to understand more deeply the practices and discourse employed within these online book clubs. Three book clubs (one all-boy, one all-girl, and one mixed-gender) were investigated to understand (1) who participated in these clubs, (2) how both preteens and facilitators participated and (3) the ways in which the online context and gendered separation of the clubs shaped the clubs’ discourse.

Analysis of these clubs indicated the promise of online book clubs in (1) providing support for continued voluntary reading, (2) engaging non- and/or struggling-readers, and (3) offering a safe scaffold for youth to experience and broaden their new literacies skills and practices. In addition, a model that identifies the elements necessary for engaging youth in online book clubs was proposed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research continues to show a serious decline in both literary and book reading by adults and youth of all ages, races, incomes, and education levels (NEA, 2004 & 2007). In fact, voluntary, pleasure reading is down to minutes a day for young people. Juxtapose those bleak statistics, which are based upon people's engagement with traditional print texts (novels, short stories, etc.), against the exploding participatory digital culture that youth are engaging in outside of school (e.g., posting on MySpace, playing Webkinz, texting on cell phones, IMing with friends), and it is clear that texts as well as their associated literacy practices are changing. This changing nature of literacy (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004) impacts how we read both the word and the world (Freire, 2000) inside as well as outside the classroom.

Online, outside-of-school book clubs are one way to encourage pleasure reading in the next generation of American citizens. And, despite technology's purported role in the decrease in pleasure reading (NEA, 2004 & 2007), in this ever increasing technological world, online book clubs may offer a convenient and motivating, albeit ironic, forum to renew and inspire a love for literary texts and books in preteens as well as provide a bridge to connect both old and new literacy practices.

As an educational researcher interested in the affordances of online learning environments for encouraging new literacies skills in youth, I was motivated to study public-library-based online book clubs for preteens during the summer of 2007. Researching these book clubs provided a means through which to more readily understand the realities and possibilities that exist in offering online book clubs

through public libraries. These online book clubs not only encouraged pleasure reading but also provided online forums for preteens to socialize, discuss texts, and use both “old” and “new” literacy practices in out-of-school contexts.

Study Overview

This interpretive case study examined public library-based, online book clubs for preteens primarily in grades 4-6. Three book clubs (one all-boy, one all-girl, and one mixed-gender) were investigated in order to understand *who* participated in these clubs, *how* both preteens and facilitators participated as well the ways in which the online context and gendered separation of the clubs shaped the clubs’ discourse. Due to the lack of research in the area of outside-of-school book clubs for youth, this case study provides illustrations of how youth engaged with the books, each other, and the facilitators within online environments. In addition, this study helps further the understanding of possibilities, complexities, and realities that exist when youth engage in online summer, public-library based book clubs.

Research Questions

This dissertation was guided by the following research questions:

Q1: What characterized the involvement in these preteen online book clubs?

Q2: What literary and social practices were evident in the online book clubs?

Q3: How did gender shape, constitute and/or construct the clubs’ practices and discourse?

Definitions

The Net Generation. The preteens involved in the online summer book clubs are part of the Net Generation (Tapscott, 1998). The Net Generation is considered to be a sub-generation of Generation Y which is framed by the years 1979-1999 while the Net Generation falls in the 1980s-1990s. There are other names for this generation of young people, including "Millennials," "Generation Y" (the generation following Generation X), "Generation Next," and "Generation M" (for mediacentric). Similar to all generations, there is some overlap with subsequent generations. Preteens involved in this research could also be included in the very early portion of the Homeland Generation, which includes kids born in the early 2000s and ending sometime in the early 2020s (Howe & Stauss, 2000). I choose to situate the preteens involved in my research within the Net Generation, as the single most defining aspect of their lives is that they are the first generation to have their entire lives mediated by technology – they have been surrounded by and may have used the Internet and technology since they have been born.

Regardless of its name, this generation of preteens exhibits some distinguishing characteristics in regard to learning preferences. Tapscott (1998) contends that because of young people's access to digital media and the Internet, this Net Generation learns, works, thinks, shops and creates differently than previous generations. Teamwork, experimental activities, collaboration, multitasking, and the use of technology are keys to learning in this generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Oblinger, 2003; Raines, 2002).

New Literacies. The definition of literacy has changed dramatically in the United States over the course of its history, from being able to sign your name, to being familiar with certain canonical texts, to being able to read and write and make meaning from the written word, to being proficient in 21st century skills that are context specific (Kaestel et al., 1989; Myers, 1996; National Adolescent Literacy Coalition, 2007). Today, literacy is “no longer an end point to be achieved but rather a process of continuously learning how to be literate” (Leu, 2001, p. 568). Preteens of the Net Generation are literate in both “old” and “new” ways.

In this research, literacy is defined as “the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices [associated] with the texts of traditional [“old”] and new communications technologies [“new”] via spoken, print, and multimedia” (Luke & Freebody, 2000, p. 9). In this definition, the meaning of “text” has been expanded not only to include the printed word (“old”) but also electronic texts (“new”), whether they are print-based, sound-based, visual-based, or a combination. In addition, the definition of literate practices has been expanded from reading and writing (“old”) to include practices of skillfully using technologies (“new”). The “new” is not only about the new technology, though, it is also about new skills that are demanded by the new technologies. Participating in online book clubs is considered a new literacies practice in this research, where book clubs serve as forums for preteens to socialize, discuss books, and utilize new literacies including chatting and posting messages to discussion boards while being grounded in the “old” literacy of reading a printed text (Scharber, 2009).

New literacies studies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004), a theoretical framework within which this research is grounded, considers literacies to be situated, cultural, and institutional social practices. Leu et al. (2004) acknowledge that the term, “new literacies,” holds multiple definitions with no comprehensive theory, so they have outlined the following principles of a new literacies perspective (p. 1588-1599):

1. *The Internet and other ICTs are central technologies for literacy within a global community in an information age.* Historically, different literacies have emerged that have stemmed from the introduction of the printing press. Today, the Internet and its technologies are defining literacy within a more global context.
2. *The Internet and other ICTs require new literacies to fully access their potential.* Foundational literacies including writing, word recognition, and comprehension continue to be important but are insufficient to acquiring new literacies. Foundational literacies are transformed through new literacies practices.
3. *New literacies are deictic.* Technologies and the literate practices change rapidly due to the influx of new technologies. Literacy will become defined by a person’s ability to adapt to new technologies and their literacies.
4. *The relationship between literacy and technology is transactional.* New literacy practices are enabled by new technologies and new technologies

create new literacies. The use of technologies within teaching and learning contexts also transforms technologies and their associated literacies.

5. New literacies are multiple in nature. To be literate today requires multiple literacies that are context-specific. The multiplicity of literacy is also dependent on the changing nature of the Internet and the new skills that accompany these changes.

6. Critical literacies are central to the new literacies. Due to the ease of publishing information on the Internet, users must be even more critical of information's content and purpose. New literacies demand complex analysis skills.

7. New forms of strategic knowledge are central to the new literacies. Many new technologies are complex and require new strategies for effective use.

8. Speed counts in important ways within the new literacies. The speed with which a user can locate, interpret, use, and communicate new information are important in a global society.

9. Learning often is socially constructed within the new literacies. Due to the continually changing nature of technology, one person will not be proficient in every new technology. So, the teaching of new literacies will be assumed by different people within different contexts. Learning is increasingly dependent on the social nature of new literacies.

10. Teachers become more important, although their role changes, within new literacies classrooms. Teachers are no longer positioned as the most

literate people. This change has ramifications for their roles in classrooms and the pedagogies used to construct learning opportunities for students.

These principles underlie and support Luke and Freebody's (2000) definition of literacy (described above), which guides my research.

Overview of Chapters

In the following chapters, I describe and analyze summer online book clubs that were offered through a public library during the summer of 2007. In Chapter 2, I ground my interest in online book clubs for preteens through using data that exemplify the diminishing voluntary reading rates of adolescents. Previous book club research (school-based and outside-of-school-based) is also reviewed in this chapter. In Chapter 3, I describe the study context and discuss the methodology I used to construct my case descriptions and interpretations. In Chapter 4, I describe the first of three cases highlighted in this dissertation, an all-boys online book club. This all-boys club read and discussed the book, *Gregor the Overlander*. In the next chapter, Chapter 5, I describe how an all-girls club interacted online to discuss the book, *The Tail of Emily Windsnap*. A mixed-gender book club is described in Chapter 6. This club read and discussed online the book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. In the last chapter of the dissertation, Chapter 7, I discuss the insights gained in considering the collective case of three online book clubs. First, I examine my assumptions of the Net Generation. Then I discuss the evidence for and role of institutions (school, library, and book clubs) and gender within the clubs' discourse. Next, I present a working model of online book clubs that identifies necessary elements. I conclude with a discussion of the potential significance of my research as well as its limitations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine public-library-based, online book clubs for preteens in grades 4-6. Specifically, it examines a public library's summer online book club program for preteens. Due to my interests in understanding the literary and social practices preteens use in the clubs, I begin by describing the generation of preteens involved in these online book clubs and then explain my conceptualization and definition of literacy. Next, I explore the rapid decline in reading practices in the United States, with special attention to adolescents, which is one of the primary motivations for my research. Then I outline the scope of my interest in book clubs and then review the literature on book clubs, both off- and online. The goals of this chapter are to provide a framework and rationale for my research on preteen online book clubs offered through a public library as well as to identify gaps in the literature pertaining to this topic.

Decline in Reading

National Endowment for the Arts Reports. In November of 2007, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) (www.nea.gov) released its latest report on its study of reading, "To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence." This report summarizes and analyzes data from forty empirical studies of reading habits for children, teens, and adults and is an extension of the NEA's previous 2004 report, "Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literacy Reading in America." The 2007 report examined all kinds of reading (including online reading), not just literary reading (the focus of the 2004 study), and included statistics from the Department of Education.

Both of these reports paint a grim portrait of American's reading habits and are causing alarm not only in academic circles but also within the general public. Both call for a national debate about the crisis in reading.

These two national reports provide summaries of large-scale studies that have found that (a) Americans are reading less across all mediums; (b) less than half of American adults read literature (novels, short stories, plays, poetry) for leisure; and (c) literary reading is rapidly declining. NEA Chairman Dana Gioria cautions that if the current rate of decline holds steady, "literary reading as a leisure activity will disappear in half a century" (2004, xiii). Coupled with a decline in literary reading, book reading as a whole is also declining significantly with only slightly over half of the U.S. population (52%) reading any type of book over the course of a year for pleasure (2007, 7). These reports also discovered that literary reading strongly correlates to forms of active civic participation. So, "more than reading is at stake...readers play a more active and involved role in their communities. The decline in reading, therefore, parallels a larger retreat from participation in civic and cultural life..." (2004, vii-ix). Chairman Gioria, echoes the impending doom in the 2007 preface,

The story these data tell is simple, consistent, and alarming.

Although there has been measurable progress in recent years in the reading ability at the elementary school level, all progress appears to halt as children enter their teenage years. There is a general decline in reading among teenage and adult Americans.

Most alarming, both reading ability and the habit of regular

reading have greatly declined among college graduates. These negative trends have more than literary importance. As this report makes clear, the declines have demonstrable social, economic, cultural, and civic implications (5).

Even if readers and the public can cast aside the ominous prose of the prefaces in both reports, and quiet the “it’s correlational, not causal” argument in their heads, the findings of both reports do beg for pause and discourse.

Notably, the NEA reports highlight that the most significant decline in literary reading is with the youngest population surveyed. Statistics cited include that fifteen to twenty-four year olds spend only seven to ten minutes per day on voluntary reading, but almost 2 hours per day watching T.V. In addition, less than one-third of 13 year-olds are daily readers, and the percentage of 17-year-olds who read nothing at all for pleasure has doubled over a 20-year period (9% to 19%). Interestingly, the amount kids read for school has stayed the same (2007), so increased homework is not a contributing factor in the decline of voluntary reading among young people. These statistics hold particular importance for the present study because of its focus on preteens and voluntary reading.

According to the NEA’s 2004 report, the likely culprit fueling these declines is society’s shift to electronic media and the Internet; “Literature now competes with an enormous array of electronic media. While no single activity is responsible for the decline of reading, the cumulative presence and availability of these alternatives have increasingly drawn Americans away from reading” (xii). The 2007 report echoes the

blame on electronic media, although neither report proves this claim. NEA Chairman, Dana Gioia, cautions, “Whatever the benefits of newer electronic media, they provide no measurable substitute for the intellectual and personal development initiated and sustained by frequent reading” (2007, 6). Gioia is clearly defining reading in the NEA’s reports as print- and book-based and appears biased against the “multitasking” that is characteristic of the Net Generation.

In a press conference prior to the release of the latest report, Gioia commented that multitasking by kids is “scary.” The 2007 report noted that even when they are reading, 58% of middle and high school students are doing other things such as watching T.V., listening to music, or using other media (2007). Although the NEA report uses the term, “multitasking,” which refers to the juggling of multiple things, researchers in new literacies studies, including myself, refer to this complex, simultaneous use of multiple media at one time “multimediating” (Doneman, 1997; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; O’Brien, 2006). Whereas the NEA’s term, multitasking, can be associated with the metaphor of juggling, multimediating, a new literacies term, can be associated with the metaphor of composing. Multimediating is the norm for Net Geners and has a positive connotation in the new literacies arena.

There are several issues with the NEA’s reports, some of which should be highlighted to inform this research. First, many of the studies included are based on self-report data from people about reading. People’s definitions are different about what counts as reading and self-report data are typically unreliable. Few individuals would be able to identify with accuracy how much time they spent pleasure reading during the last year, last week or two weeks ago. In addition, the data analysis in these

studies reveal correlations, not causations. To his credit, Chairman Gioia acknowledges this fact in the 2007 preface, “Strictly understood, the data in this report do not necessarily show cause and effect. The statistics merely indicate correlations” (p. 5). Moreover, data from U.S. public libraries were not included in this report, due to “a lack of reliable national data on library circulation rates for reading material [separate from CDs, DVDs, etc.]” (NEA, 2007, p. 24), which is a significant corpus of data excluded from this research. Finally, the report holds a negative tone toward the impact of technology and the traditional definition of reading that the NEA subscribes to. However, despite these issues, and the doomsday-tone of the NEA’s reports, the reports have great value in sparking national attention to reading. As a whole, Americans are reading less, and American children are reading less as they get older. These facts should not be ignored by educators, parents, and community members.

Echoes of Reading Decline. Despite the criticisms of the NEA reports outlined above, the reports’ results are echoed by other recent research. The American Time Use surveys conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2005 and 2006 measured what youth do in their leisure time. The 2006 report indicates that young people read only seven minutes per day for pleasure but spend one hour a day playing games or using a computer for leisure.

Another large scale study that examined media use in young people but also reported on traditional reading activities was conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation in 2005, “Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year Olds” <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia030905pkg.cfm>. The findings of this report were included in the 2007 NEA report but are also highlighted in this chapter. The

Generation M study examined media use among a nationally representative sample of more than 2,000 3rd through 12th graders who completed detailed questionnaires, including nearly 700 self-selected participants who also maintained seven-day media diaries. Similar to the NEA data, the data in this report consist of young people self-reporting on media use, although they were reporting on media use *the prior day*. In a typical day, *seventy-three percent* of young people report reading for pleasure, a much higher percentage than what was identified in the NEA report. NEA may have ignored the Gen M study because NEA's literacy definition was more restrictive and did not include many of the media in the Gen M study (e.g., magazines and newspapers). The NEA is concerned with book reading, so its reports focus on that topic. The Generation M statistical data and results that were included in the NEA 2007 report were that less than half (46%) of 8-18 year olds spent at least 5 minutes of the previous day reading books, and 30% of young people spent at least 30 minutes reading a book (2005, executive summary, p. 35). Based on these reports, young people are reading fewer books, but may not necessarily be reading less -- they may be simply reading different texts or may be reading in ways that some researchers or organizations do not acknowledge as "reading."

Unlike the NEA reports that seem to frown upon multitasking and therefore did not include commentary on it within their reports, the Generation M researchers seemed to accept the reality of multitasking/multimediating in young people's lives and openly asked them about it:

Interestingly, those young people who spend the most time watching TV (the 20% who watch more than five hours a day)

don't report spending any less time reading than other young people do; and those who spend the most time playing console video games (the 13% who play for more than one hour a day) spend more time reading than those who play fewer video games (0:55 vs. 0:41 for those who don't play video games at all, and 0:40 for those who play one hour or less) (35).

It seems as though multitasking/multimediating are part of the Net Generations' way of being and learning. Furthermore, even though young people are engaged with other media, their reading time is not decreasing (in some cases, it is increasing); reading may simply be combined with or done concurrently with T.V. watching or game playing. This multimediating is a reality that the NEA's definitions and assumptions do not accommodate.

Relevance of Reports to This Research. Over the past 20 years, research continues to show that reading scores plummet and voluntary reading rates diminish as children move from childhood to late adolescence (NEA, 2007; NAEP 2005). Nine-year-olds read more than their 13- and 17-year-old counterparts (NEA, 2007). Fifty-four percent of 9-year-olds said they read almost every day for fun whereas only 22% of 17-year-olds did so in 2004. Reading comprehension test scores are lower for both 13- and 17-year-olds than for 9-year-olds; "From 1984 to 2004, while 17-year-old average reading scores weakened, 9-year-old reader scores climbed 8 points" (NEA, 2007, p. 57). The time between childhood and late adolescence is when kids move from readers to non-readers. It is imperative that we as educators, librarians, and

citizens accept the challenge to sustain and inspire voluntary reading in the next generation of Americans. Teenagers seem to be predisposed towards technology use: *Ninety-three percent of teenagers are online; nine in ten American teens between the ages of 12 and 17 are Internet users* (Lenhardt, Madden, Rankin McGill, & Smith, 2007). Therefore, online book clubs may be a motivating factor for preteens to sustain and encourage their voluntary reading of books and other print and multimedia as they move through adolescence.

Pleasure Reading and Book Clubs

Book Club "Explosion". Young people understand the difference between "serious reading, the reading that seems to count in school, and reading for pleasure" (Appleman, 2006, p. 4). Schools and community libraries can share a common goal of encouraging pleasure reading. Appleman (2006) suggests that book clubs can help foster pleasurable reading for young people, an activity that is often missing in school contexts. She believes that book clubs help children "negotiate the border[s] between school-sponsored reading and adult reading in hopes of increasing out of school reading" (p. 7).

It is fair to say that book clubs have "exploded" in popularity in this country and that "book club euphoria" (Hofferet, 2006, p. 37) has been an integral part of mainstream American culture for the past decade, due, in part, to the impact of popular media phenomena like Oprah's Book Club and the Harry Potter series (Farr, 2004; Hoffert, 2006; Rooney, 2005). Oprah's Book Club launched in 1996 has been a major catalyst to the up surge of all kinds of book clubs in this country (Rooney, 2005). Oprah's book selections are geared toward adult readers, but the reading and book

club craze ignited by her club have had a ripple effect that extended to book clubs geared toward young people.

It is impossible to ignore the impact of another major literary influence at work within the world of adolescent reading – J.K. Rowling, author of the renowned Harry Potter series. The first Harry Potter book was published in 1997 and the seventh and last book was published during the summer of 2007, during the time of data collection for this study. Collectively, the series has been published in over sixty-five languages and has sold nearly 400 million copies (<http://www.scholastic.com/harrypotter/books/author/index.htm>). Rowling has been credited with inspiring a new generation of young readers “at a time when children were thought to be abandoning the book for the computer and the television” (Yankelovitch & Scholastic, 2006). And, Harry Potter mania has extended beyond the book to have massive cultural impacts, including, but not limited to, inspiring movies, bookstore parties when new books were released in the series, and a reorganization of the New York Times Best Seller list to include a separate section on children’s literature (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_potter).

Both Oprah and Harry Potter use media (TV, Internet, film) to entice people not only to read but also to talk about books. Through media, these book movements encourage reading as social engagement.

Book Club Contexts: Inside and Outside of Schools. Book clubs are unique places/spaces where people gather together to talk about books – sometimes the book is the focus of conversation, other times the book is simply the medium that brings people together to be social. Appleman (2006) states that all book clubs have one goal

in common: “to provide an elective, nonschool context for adolescents to begin to read like adults” (p. 16).

There are two key components to book clubs that conflict with the institution of school, which makes book clubs within school not “real” book clubs: the social and voluntary nature of book clubs. There is danger in co-opting book clubs for use in school, similar to co-opting video gaming for educational purposes (see Gee, 2007, 2004). The primary goals of a book club change when you bring a book club into school for school-purposes. In-school book clubs are conceived of as *instructional* rather than *social* – this is the most significant difference between book clubs in school and those outside of school (Alverman, Young, Green & Wisenbaker, 1999; Moss, 2000). Book clubs that are conducted in classrooms during the school day typically have different goals and motivations than those that are held outside of school. The reading of the book that is the topic of book club conversation is typically not voluntary – there is a certain time of the day where students read the book, which is usually selected by the teacher (McMahon & Raphael, 1997). And, the book club talk is not primarily socially-motivated, but learning and comprehension-motivated (McMahon & Raphael, 1997; Moss, 2000).

Equally, as Hull and Schultz (2001) note, a false dichotomy exists in positioning and comparing in-school and out-of-school contexts such as book clubs, though they acknowledge value in the dichotomy:

By emphasizing physical space or time, we may ignore important conceptual dimensions that would more readily account for successful learning or its absence...we want to avoid the temptation to oversimplify

the creative powers of context...Nevertheless, school has come to be such a particular, specialized institution, with its own particular brand of learning (Miettinen, 1999), that to set it in contrast with other institutions and other contexts for learning seems useful. Doing so will allow us to reconsider what we have grown accustomed to taking as natural and normal and to recognize it as an artifact of a particular kind of learning that is associated primarily with school. (p. 577)

It is particularly because of the schooling aspect of school that I view book clubs that occur outside of school as more beneficial for preteens in promoting and sustaining voluntary reading, which is why I have focused my research on community-based book clubs.

Book clubs that are situated within public libraries, such as the ones included in this research, are also institutionally-situated, but, school libraries are culturally different places than public libraries (Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbaker, 1999; Dressman, 1997). Furthermore, the institution of the public library is not as familiar to or as intimidating to young people as the institution of school is -- it is likely preteens do not associate so many “have tos” with the library institution as with the school institution – the libraries’ agendas may be more hidden from them (Dressman, 1997; Moss, 2000). So, there may be more possibilities for enjoyment in out-of-school book clubs for kids that are offered through community-based public libraries. Furthermore, the possibilities of escaping institutions and their discourses may grow when preteen book clubs are moved online. Many preteens are very comfortable in online spaces, and online spaces may provide a safe place for preteens to voice their thoughts or use

a different voice or persona than they use in schools. The possibilities for nurturing pleasure reading and social interaction in preteens through online, public-library-based book clubs are very exciting and promising.

Book club literature. A search of the ERIC databases for the keyword, “book club,” returned thirty-one peer-reviewed articles. Only four of the thirty-one articles described outside-of-school book clubs (Burwell, 2007; Chandler, 1997; Hill & Van Horn, 1995; Smith, 1996); five articles described aspects of the Book Club (notice the capital letters) curriculum used in schools (e.g., Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2001); and the remainder of the articles had ties to education or schools or were not specifically about book clubs (e.g., McGinley, Conley, & White, 2000). There were no research articles about public library situated book clubs or online book clubs, in any context or with any population.

A search of the Education Full Text database yielded similar results. Thirteen peer-reviewed articles were identified with keywords, “book club” and “adolescent” – six of these articles were about outside-of-school book clubs (e.g., Twomey, 2007). Astonishingly, there was one article identified that dealt with kids’ book clubs offered through a public library (e.g. Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbaker, 1999). And, once again, no articles were identified as pertaining to online book clubs.

Most existing research focuses on book clubs in educational settings. Book club research pertaining to elementary and middle school classrooms and teaching is most prominent (Harmon & Wood, 2001; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2001) and research about using book clubs with various groups of people such as preservice teachers (Kooy, 2006), college students and middle school students (O’Donnell-Allen

& Hunt 2001), middle school students and their families (Dias-Mitchell & Harris, 2001), elementary teachers and parents (Zaleski, Duvall, & Weil, 1999) is also prevalent.

Although it is encouraging to observe some research being conducted on book clubs, book clubs within school contexts are not my area of focus due to the changed nature of literacy (informal to formal literacies) that occurs in different school settings (Moss, 2000). However, there one seminal text on in-school book clubs that deserves discussion here. McMahon and Raphael's (1997) research on the Book Club Program has informed book club practices in schools for over ten years. Grounded in the sociocultural, reader-response theories, the Book Club Program's purpose was to provide a social context where elementary students engage in exploratory talk about books within school. The Book Club Program had four components: community share, reading, writing, and Book Club. Of interest here is the Book Club component. "Book Club" was where small teacher-selected but student-led discussion groups talked about texts. Students explained that in Book Club, "we enjoy[ed] reading instead of having to look for answers to someone else's questions." Notably, the researchers make clear that the intention of "Book Club" was for "students to help one another construct meaning, fill in missing background knowledge, analyze and synthesize information, and solve problems" (p. 90). So, in addition to talking about books, there was also a writing component to Book Club, where students kept reading logs, think sheets, "stepping-in/out sheets" and evaluation sheets (p. 212). It is these pedagogical intentions and strategies of school-based book clubs, including The Book

Club Program, that distinguish in-school book clubs from outside-of-school book clubs, making them virtually impossible to compare.

Book clubs in libraries. Researchers are beginning to take notice of the possibilities that exist for literacy and learning outside the classroom (Hull & Schultz, 2001), including possibilities such as book clubs, offered through community libraries (Cuban & Cuban, 2007). With the exception of Alvermann, Young, Green and Wisenbaker (1999), there is no other empirical research to date on out-of-school book clubs geared toward younger readers. Alvermann, Young, Green and Wisenbaker (1999) studied four adolescent Read & Talk Clubs (R & T) situated in a public library and were interested in exploring who participated regularly in the clubs, how participants interacted, and how the young adults negotiated social and literacy practices within the institution of a public library.

The twenty middle and high school adolescents who participated in these Read and Talk Clubs were overwhelming voluntary, avid readers. In addition, the researchers concluded that “the sustained interest in the R & T Clubs was that they were perceived to be social outlets for young adolescents, especially for those who liked to read but who, by their own accounts, found that being viewed as a reader could earn one the title of nerd or worse” (Alvermann et al., 1999, 240). The adolescents in these clubs were not immune to the peer-pressures of adolescents or to the craving for socialization that adolescence brings. The discourse of the book clubs was found to be communal, with the adult book club leaders and adolescents creating and negotiating together literacy, institutional, and societal discourses within the context of the library-situated book clubs.

The space of the library turned out to be important to how these Read and Talk Clubs functioned and the freedom they afforded the book club participants.

Researchers concluded, the library “afforded a relatively safe niche in which both adolescents and adults felt free to experiment with alternative ways of doing discussion” and “...a climate of acceptance...in which adolescents who liked to read could experience both the welcoming of other readers like themselves and the shutting out of those who would taunt them for being avid readers” (Alvermann et al., 1999, p. 254-255).

Socializing was a central component to these clubs and provided a motivating factor for continued participation. Socialization is a key component to adult book clubs, so it is not surprising that it was an important part of adolescent book clubs. In addition, some talk during the book club that is *not* focused on the book is also a distinguishing feature of outside of school book clubs.

Online Book Clubs

Online book clubs are just beginning to be described in practitioner and editorial journals in education and library science, but there is no existing research to date on online book clubs in any context. My research seeks to address this gap in the literature in order to bring attention to the possibilities that exist for literacy within digital environments. Online book clubs are one example of how to effectively weave together old and new literacy practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Scharber, 2009). Internet-based book clubs capitalize on kids’ interest in new literacy practices while complementing, and hopefully encouraging, traditional reading practices.

Non-empirical chatter about online clubs. Currently, there are more frequent references to online book clubs in non-empirical journals, which is an indicator that these types of clubs are growing in popularity. Castek, Bevans-Mangelson and Goldstone (2006) identify online book clubs as one of “five exciting ways to bring the Internet into your literature program...online forums provide a worldwide audience for book discussions that enrich comprehension while exposing students to new perspectives” (717). And, in a journal geared for librarians, Starkey (2005) highlights the advantages and disadvantages of online book clubs, generally speaking, and provides tips for success.

Coupled with non-empirical chatter in magazines and journals, there is a rapidly growing popularity and presence of online book clubs. The Book-Clubs-Resource website provides lists of online book clubs, including clubs for kids (<http://www.book-clubs-resource.com/online/>). Also, many public libraries across the country offer a type of online book club in conjunction with www.dearreader.com where library patrons can sign up to receive a short, five minute segment/sample of a book each day of the week. By the end of one week, the patron has a “taste” of the book and can decide if s/he wants to physically check it out from her/his local library. Barnes and Noble, one of the nation’s leading bookstore chains, also has developed its own online book clubs (<http://bookclubs.barnesandnoble.com/>). Readers can participate in asynchronous chats via discussion boards with authors or can join ongoing conversations about bestsellers. There are also online clubs organized by genre or age – teen literature, mystery, food and drinks. What is interesting about these online clubs is that users can see the number of posts to a discussion thread as well as

how many times a thread has been viewed by other users. One of the threads in the Barnes and Noble Teen Club had been viewed over 3000 times in the summer of 2007.

There are also a growing number of online book clubs geared for preteens and adolescents (e.g., www.girlzone.com, www.spaghetlibookclub.org, www.scholastic.com/harrypotter), including online book clubs that are increasingly offered through public libraries around the United States and in Canada (e.g., www.wiredforwords.com, <http://www.midlibrary.org/library/children/forum/>, <http://www.roselle.lib.il.us/YouthServices/BookClub/BookClub.htm>, http://www.skokiellibrary.info/s_teens/tn_books/teenobc/index.asp). It is imperative that researchers begin paying attention to this rising tide in adolescent literacy.

Summary

Research shows a serious decline in both literary and book reading by adults and youth of all ages, races, incomes, and education levels (NEA, 2004 & 2007). In an era when voluntary, pleasure reading is down to minutes a day for young people and the growing participatory digital culture that youth are engaging in, out-of-school book clubs are one way to encourage reading in the next generation of American citizens. And, despite technology's purported role in the decrease in pleasure reading (NEA, 2004 & 2007), in this ever increasing technological world, online book clubs may offer a convenient and motivating, albeit ironic, forum to renew and inspire a love for literary texts and books in preteens as well as provide a bridge to connect both old and new literacy practices.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world
but to sophisticate the beholding of it.”

Robert Stake (1995)

Through conducting this research, I attempted to examine online literacy spaces for preteens sponsored by a large public library system. Due to my interest in studying the book clubs themselves and the possible role gender played in shaping the clubs’ discourse, an interpretive methodological stance was used in tandem with both qualitative and critical methods.

Purposes of Dissertation

This interpretive study examined public library-based, online book clubs for preteens primarily in grades 4-6. Three book clubs (one all-boy, one all-girl, and one mixed-gender) were investigated in order to understand *who* participated in these clubs, *how* both preteens and facilitators participated as well the ways in which the online context and gendered separation of the clubs shaped the clubs’ discourse.

Specifically, this study was guided by the following questions:

Q1: What characterized the involvement in these preteen online book clubs?

Q2: What literary and social practices were evident in the online book clubs?

Q3: How did gender shape, constitute and/or construct the clubs' practices and discourse?

Background Information

During the past several years, I have been involved in an evaluation of a Guys Read Book Club Program (Dillon, O'Brien, Scharber, Nichols & Dubbles, 2007; Nichols-Besel, Scharber, Biggs, Brendler, Dillon & O'Brien, 2008; Scharber, Nichols-Besel, Biggs, Brendler, Dillon & O'Brien, 2007). Guys Read is a literacy program designed by Jon Scieszka (<http://www.guysread.com>), young adult author, for the purpose of helping boys find reading material of interest to them. Guys Read was designed to raise public awareness of the perceived crisis in boys' literacy. A public library system located in the Midwest, Evergreen Public Libraries (EPL) (pseudonym), offers Guys Read book clubs for boys in grades four through six that are facilitated by males of various ages in which the participants read books chosen by the librarians and facilitators.

As a complement to this evaluation work, in 2006 I approached EPL about studying their online preteen book clubs for my dissertation research. The face-to-face (F2F) book club discourse observed during the evaluation of the Guys Read clubs was compelling and complicated, and I became curious as to how preteens would talk about books within Evergreen's *online* book clubs, including but not limited to the Guys Read clubs. A preliminary analysis of the F2F discourse present in the all-boys book clubs (Nichols-Besel, Scharber, O'Brien & Dillon, 2009) illustrated the potential of these out-of-school book clubs to function as a "third space (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez & Chiu, 1999; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, &

Collazo, 2004; Soja, 1996) for boys and books to thrive together. As a student interested in the field of new literacies, I view the library's online book clubs as sites of possibility. These out-of school book clubs encourage pleasure reading as well as provide forums for preteens to socialize, discuss texts, and use both "old" and "new" literacy practices (Scharber, 2009).

Theoretical Frameworks

This online book club research was grounded in several frameworks. "The theoretical framework is derived from the orientation or stance that one brings to a study. It is the structure, the scaffolding, the frame of your story...this disciplinary orientation is the lens through which you view the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 45).

The first framework that guided this research is a sociocultural literacy perspective (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Gee, 1996) that considers literacy and discourse as situated critical social practices that occur within, shape, and are shaped by the social contexts in which people acquire and use social practices and literacies. Kist (2005) provides a clear description of the sociocultural literacy perspective; "literacy is no longer seen as situated only in cognition...literacy is deeply enmeshed in the culture, history, and everyday discourses of people's lives...to look at literacy out of these contexts is to miss most (if not all) of what is happening" (p. 6). This perspective is rooted in the work of Vygotsky (1978) who originally conceived of learning as a social practice.

This research was also framed by New Literacies Studies that considers literacies to be situated, cultural, and institutional social practices (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004). As

discussed in Chapter 1, new literacies scholars subscribe to a broader conceptualization of literacies to include not just print based texts (e.g., Luke & Freebody, 2000). The practice of participating in online book clubs is considered a new literacies practice in this research where preteens are discussing print books together within online, moderated synchronous and asynchronous spaces.

Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 2005; Rogers, 2004) is another theoretical framework used to frame my research, especially its analysis. Critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is grounded in poststructuralism (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998) and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994), explores the “negotiation of knowledge, identity, and social relations in the everyday patterns of institutional life. However, it departs from much mainstream research with its focus on how power and identity are legitimized, negotiated and contested towards political ends” (Luke, 1995-1996, p. 12). Although there are many ways to “do” CDA that vary according to discipline, theoretically CDA has eight underlying principles or assumptions (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997): (a) CDA addresses social problems; (b) power relations are discursive; (c) discourse constitutes society and culture; (d) discourse does ideological work; (e) discourse is historical; (f) a sociocognitive approach is need to understand how relations between texts and society are mediated; (g) discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory and uses a systemic methodology; and (h) CDA is a socially committed scientific paradigm. Within this research, CDA proved useful in understanding how gender and institutional discourses shaped the online clubs’ practices.

Researchers who use CDA “treat language differently than linguists, sociolinguistics or conversation analysts. Discourse within a CDA framework is not a reflection of social contexts, but rather constructs and is constructed by context. Discourses are always socially, politically, racially, and economically loaded” (Rogers, 2004, p. 6). A CDA framework brought a critical lens to my research, where “critical refers to a broad band of disciplined questioning of the ways in which power works through the discursive practices and performances of schooling (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 4)” (cited in Siegel & Fernandez, 2002, p. 72).

Within the field of education, language is the primary means through which learning occurs. According to Rogers (2004), CDA contributes to the understanding of learning because learning is closely tied to discourse and identity, which are closely linked with power. She argues that in the past sociocultural learning theorists “have not attended to matters of inequities and privilege nor have critical discourse theorists attended to matters of learning” (p. 12). Through combining sociocultural learning theories with CDA’s emphasis on power, Rogers and other literacy researchers, myself included, believe educational research and, consequently, students and teachers, can benefit.

Due to the naturally occurring gendered separation of the studied clubs, the final framework I brought to bear in my research in order to help illuminate the construct of gender is poststructuralist feminism. Rather than a biological definition, poststructural feminists believe that masculinities and femininities are constituted in relation to each other (e.g. Davies, 1993). Bronwyn Davies (1989) argues that “masculinity and femininity are not inherent properties of individuals; they are

inherent or structural properties of our society; that is, they both condition and arise from social processes...the language through which dualistic maleness and femaleness is constituted is both external and coercive, a structure through which one is shaped” (p. 238). Gender is understood as a social construction in this research.

These theoretical perspectives that are located within sociocultural and critical frameworks, which complicate literate practices as multiple, situated, and constitutive of and by identities and contexts, and view gender as a social construction, were used to guide and ground this research.

Study Context

Setting. As previously noted, the setting within which the online book clubs was situated is a public library system within a large metropolitan area that serves over 1 million residents. Although there are many libraries “doing” versions of online book clubs, EPL is a national leader in the area of online book clubs for children, preteens, and adolescents (Scharber, Melrose, & Wurl, 2009). Every young person in this library’s service area with access to a computer and the Internet (at home or through a public library) is eligible to participate in these free online activities. EPL decided to pilot *online* book clubs in an effort to reach kids in day camps and other care settings so they could engage in literacy activities during the summer without schedule or transportation conflicts. Starting in 2005, EPL librarians organized and facilitated online book clubs as part of their summer reading program. EPL also offers over 100 well-attended library-based book clubs for children, preteens and teens each summer, all of which are free to library patrons.

History of the Online Book Club Environment. The technological platform for EPL's online book clubs has improved dramatically since 2005, largely due to trial-and-error, and the discovery of better technology resources (Scharber, Melrose, & Wurl, 2009). In 2005, the online clubs were email-based. Book club members communicated through e-mail, which proved to be convenient, but clunky. The librarian mailed a "question-of-the-day" to each participant. All book clubs members then responded to the librarian, who then needed to create a digest for each day's response and send it to all members in a timely way. Alternately, members tried responding to all, which yielded too much email, and made it difficult to track the online discussion.

In 2006, the online book clubs moved to a blog format, which was created by the library's technology personnel and hosted on library servers. Members logged into a library web page geared towards kids. Again, the librarian posted a daily question, and members responded each day with postings similar in format to comments on blog postings. In 2007, the book club platform switched once again, this time to a free, open source course management system called Moodle (www.moodle.org).

Moodle A,B,Cs. After exploring different platforms for its online book clubs, EPL ultimately chose to co-opt the online course management software, Moodle, to house its online book clubs. Moodle is used by thousands of school districts around the United States; due to its use by schools, it provides the security and affordances the library also deems necessary to host safe, fun online book clubs for kids.

In 2007 when this study occurred, once preteens are registered for an online club, they were sent via email login information created by EPL librarians so that only

registered users can access the online book club space. In addition to necessary safety features, Moodle provides attractive options for book club facilitators while providing an interface that is fun and engaging for kids and easy for them to access. Moodle allows EPL to develop an entire environment for its book clubs that include multiple forums for asynchronous discussion and synchronous chats. Furthermore, each day new activities can be posted -- polls about snacks and summer activities, a “Kid/Teen Only” forum where book club members can “talk” about non-book related things, and hyperlinks to relevant web pages.

Not only does Moodle provide an engaging environment for young book clubbers, but also from a development side, it is easy for librarians to use. Book club facilitators need to understand neither web page development nor HTML to design a “cool” online book club. The many features that Moodle provides that are geared to its K-12 school audiences were either turned off (i.e., grades and quizzes) or proved flexible enough to make the online book club space unique. For EPL’s clubs, these Moodle features were used: profiles, forums, chats, resources, choices/polls. All users were also able to upload images, documents, and link to web pages as well as have the ability to play with formatting (text color, font, and emoticons). Remarkably, book club members reported no technical problems in using Moodle during the summer of 2007, which speaks to the user-friendly design of Moodle. With its flexibility, ease-of-use, safety features, and many options, Moodle proved to be an ideal environment for EPL to host its online book clubs for kids.

Participants. Participants in the study included (a) preteens primarily in grades 4-6 who were registered for and participated in EPL’s online book clubs; (b) these

preteens' parents/guardians; and (c) each book club's facilitator(s) during the summer of 2007 (see Table 3.1). Fourteen girls consented to participate from the club that read the book, *The Tails of Emily Windsnap*. Four boys consented to participate from the club that read the book, *Gregor the Overlander*. Eight youth (all girls) consented to participate from the book club that read, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

Assenting preteen participants received a \$7 gift card to a major bookstore (the equivalent of one paperback book) for completing either or both of the pre- and post-club surveys and granting permission to use her/his club contributions. In addition, each participant (book club members, parent/guardian, and book club facilitators) received a gift card to a major bookstore if they chose to participate in a phone or face to face (F2F) interview with the researcher, \$7, \$10, \$10 respectively. It is important to note that the unit of analysis for this research was the book clubs themselves, not the individual book club members, their parents/guardians, or the facilitators.

Table 3.1

Participants in Summer 2007 Online Book Club Research

Online Book Clubs	Number of Active Club Members	Numbers of Consenting Club Members	Number of Consenting Parent/Guardians	Number of Consenting Facilitators
<i>Gregor the Overlander</i> (all boys)	4	4	2	1
<i>The Tail of Emily Windsnap</i> (all girls)	17	14	5	1
<i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</i> (mixed gender)	11	8	3	1
<i>TOTALS</i>	32	26	10	3

Role of the researcher. Researchers are considered the primary instruments of qualitative research (Eisner, 1991; Merriam, 1988). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) offer an eloquent description of this interpretive assumption:

Researchers are inescapably part of the social world that they are researching, and, indeed, this social world is an already interpreted world by the actors, undermining the notion of objective reality. Researchers are in the world and of the world. They bring their own biographies to the research situation and participants behave in particular ways in their presence. Researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research; they should hold themselves up to the light, echoing Cooley's (1902) notion of the 'looking glass self.' Highly reflexive researchers will be acutely aware of the ways in which their selectivity, perception, background and inductive processes and paradigms shape the research. (p. 141)

My role as the researcher in this research was primarily as a human instrument. As a researcher and human being, I became enmeshed in this research. Therefore, I went through processes in order to recognize my beliefs, values, stances, and histories so that I could recognize them during the analysis and disclose them in the writing and sharing of this research.

My history and experiences as a white, working-class female educator colored my initial interest in and interpretations of this research. My professional life has been spent in many avenues of education, from years as a middle and high school English teacher, to developing curricula for online education programs, to experiences as a

master's and doctoral student interested in digital literacies. I believe in the possibilities education and technology hold for transforming teaching and learning, but am deeply troubled by the (a) narrow conceptions of literacy proliferated in schools and community learning settings and (b) educational inequalities that are indicative of differences in children's race, income, gender, and culture. By acknowledging my passion and excitement for reading, education and technology, I consciously reminded myself at times to bracket my enthusiasm and ascertain the limitations my views put on the research as well as consider other explanations for my inferences. Through the iterative processes of data analysis, I took "time outs" in order to question my own ideological understandings as well as to revisit literature that troubled and extended my interpretations.

As the primary instrument of research, I had multiple roles in the research that developed as the research project progressed. In the spring prior to the start of the book clubs, I was involved as a collaborator with EPL in redesigning their book club environment to make it more engaging. I hosted an informal Moodle training session for the three book club facilitators so they could better understand basic Moodle navigation. After this training, conversations ensued about whether to move the book clubs to the Moodle environment and, if so, which features of Moodle to use in the online book clubs. During this time, I made suggestions when asked, but the librarians ultimately decided how to structure the summer 2007 book clubs.

Once the book clubs began, I wanted to study the online book clubs in their natural states with no intervention in their occurrences (Stake, 1995). Therefore, I was a non-participant observer or "lurker" in online book club discussions. I did not

participate in club conversations. I logged on every day while the book clubs were being held in order to read through the discussions and take reflective notes on what was happening, but the preteens could not “see” me nor did I post any comments to the discussions. With the exception of one all-girls chat (described in Chapter 5), I was not “present” during the online or threaded discussions in the form of an avatar, which is how the preteens and facilitators were visibly present in the online book clubs. Finally, I neither encouraged nor discussed with facilitators their possible roles as book club facilitators prior to or during the summer.

As a researcher, I conducted, recorded, and transcribed face-to-face (F2F) and phone interviews. In adherence to human subjects guidelines, I did not contact parents or book club participants about my research. Instead, the organizing librarian introduced my research in an email message to registered club participants. If parents/guardians then sent me an inquiry via email, I followed up with more study details as well as assent/consent information and processes. Finally, I composed informal, researcher notes throughout the data collection and analysis processes as a way to (a) capture my observations and reflections about the book club conversations and (b) reflect metacognitively on how my beliefs, values, stances, and histories were “mediating” my research (Haas Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

Data Sources and Collection

Interpretive Methodology. This research was situated within the methodological framework of interpretive research. The interpretive research paradigm assumes that reality is constructed rather than objectified; that meaning can assume multiple “truths”; and is constructed rather than being inherently present; and

that a subject-subject, relationship exists between the researcher and the researched (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000. pg. 137-138). This interactive relationship is viewed as a strength of interpretive research. Finally, interpretive research is conducted in naturally occurring settings rather than laboratories where they are created. I embraced all of these assumptions of interpretive research and incorporated them into all facets of this research.

Methods. Within the broad framework of interpretive research, the research employed a case study method that was informed by and interpreted through a critical lens; “it is the messy complexity of human experience that leads researchers to case studies in the qualitative or interpretive traditions (Erickson, 1986)” (Haas Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 3). I immersed myself in more qualitative visions put forth for the case study (Stake, 1995), specifically within the field of education (Merriam, 1998) and the content area of literacy (Haas Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

This dissertation is an *interpretive* (Merriam, 1988), *embedded case study* (Yin, 2003). Merriam (1988) characterizes the interpretive case study as one that contains rich, “thick” description that is “used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data collecting” (p. 38). Modeled after Yin’s (2003) diagram of embedded case study, there were three units of analysis in my case study: one all-girls book club, one all-boys book club, and one mixed-gender book club. Each club was an embedded unit of analysis within the same case – the preteen online book clubs offered by the library (see Figure 3.1).

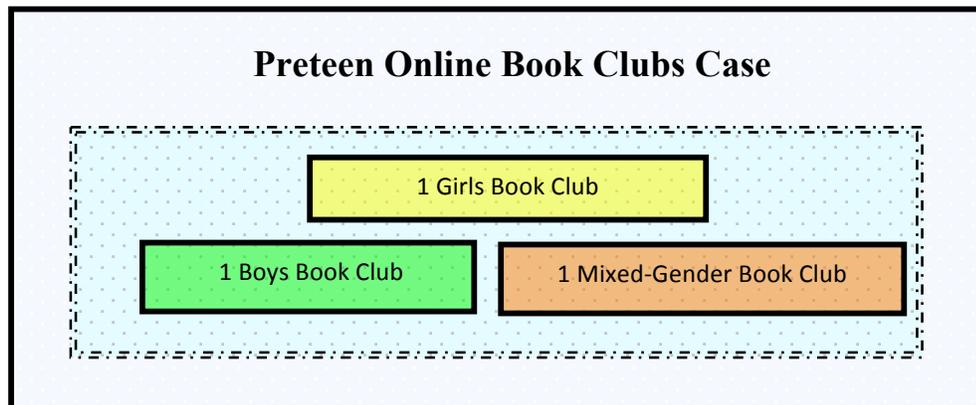


Figure 3.1. Illustration of embedded case study of preteen online book clubs.

Case studies are a legitimate, purposeful, and important research method (Yin, 2003) used to describe, understand and explain complex things that occur in real-life situations through multiple perspectives (Haas Dyson & Genishi, 2005). “Case studies strive to portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and ‘thick description’ of participants’ lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation” (Cohen, 2000, p. 182). Educational researchers, in using case studies, “ ‘combine close analysis of fine details of behavior and meaning in everyday social interaction with analysis of the wider societal context – the field of broader social influences’ – within which their everyday interactions take place (Erickson, 1986, p. 120)” (Haas Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 9).

Merriam (1988) explains that the “single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case. This research is bounded or “fenced in” (Merriam, 1988) by place, time and the gendered nature of the book

clubs. The online book clubs were offered through one public library system during the summer of 2007. There was no ongoing nature or history to these book clubs. In addition, the book clubs were historically segregated by gender by the library, so it made sense to bind the sub-units of the case by these naturally occurring separations.

Data sources. The University of Minnesota's Institution Review Board approved the collection of multiple data sources and multiple perspectives to compose and construct detailed descriptions and understandings of the case (see Appendix A). Data collected included (a) synchronous and asynchronous book club discussions, (b) interviews with individual preteens, (c) interviews with book club facilitators, (d) interviews with parent/guardians, (e) pre-, post-club survey responses, and (f) researcher notes (see Table 3.2 for connections between data and research questions). These multiple data sources allowed me to address the research questions from multiple perspectives (preteens, parents/guardians, facilitators, researcher) that helped me triangulate data points.

One the first day of the book club, registered preteens were asked to complete a pre-club online survey containing questions about age, prior book club experiences, reading preferences/habits and demographic information (see Appendix B). While the book clubs were in progress, data was collected from preteens and facilitators in the form of transcripts from the online book club environment. After the book clubs concluded, preteen participants completed post-club surveys (see Appendix C) to elicit opinions about the clubs and their experiences in it. Lastly, individual interviews were conducted with participants, parents/guardians, and facilitators (see Appendices D, E, F). These data sources helped shed understanding about the experience of being in a

book club, which could not always be deduced from the book club talk. These supplementary data of the surveys and interviews helped deepen, reinforce, and complicate things present in the book club transcripts.

Table 3.2

Connections Between Research Questions and Data Sources

Main Research Questions	Sub-Questions	Data Source(s)
<p>Q1: What was the involvement in these preteen online book clubs?</p>	<p>a. Who participated in the online book clubs? Who is absent?</p> <hr/> <p>b. Why did these preteens participate?</p> <hr/> <p>c. How did preteens' experience being participants in these online book clubs?</p> <hr/> <p>d. How did the facilitators view and enact their role(s) within the clubs?</p>	<p>- pre- and post-club surveys - registration lists and participation</p> <hr/> <p>- pre- and post-club surveys - individual preteen interviews - parent/guardian interviews - researcher notes</p> <hr/> <p>- individual preteen interviews - pre- and post-club surveys - parent interviews - researcher notes - transcripts of online discourse</p> <hr/> <p>- facilitator interviews - transcripts of online discourse</p>
<p>Q2: What social and literacy practices are present in the book clubs?</p>	<p>a. How were books discussed in the book clubs and what traces were there of book club discourses?</p> <hr/> <p>b. In what ways did the online context shape the book clubs' discourse?</p> <hr/> <p>c. How did each book club's discourse reflect local, institutional, and societal contexts?</p>	<p>- facilitator interviews - transcripts of online discourse</p> <hr/> <p>- transcripts of online discourse</p> <hr/> <p>- transcripts of online discourse</p>
<p>Q3: How did gender shape, constitute, construct each book club's literary practices and discourses?</p>	<p>a. How did the preteens enact gender and other socially-constructed identities in the online book club?</p> <hr/> <p>d. How did each book club's discourse reflect local, institutional, and societal contexts?</p>	<p>- transcripts of online discourse** - individual preteen interviews - researcher notes - pre- and post-club surveys</p> <p>** <i>primary data source</i></p>

Methods of Analysis

General qualitative concerns. Erickson (1986) asserted that the primary characteristic of qualitative research is its emphasis on interpretation (1986). Interpretation, and thereby analysis, are not straightforward feats. Indeed, in discussing the purpose of analysis in qualitative case studies, Haas Dyson and Genishi (2005), offer the following guidance:

Through analysis we are not on the trail of singular truths, nor of overly neat stories. We are on the trail of thematic threads, meaningful events, and powerful factors that allow us entry into the multiple realities and dynamic processes that constitute the everyday drama of language use in educational sites. (p. 111)

Using these perspectives on qualitative analysis and interpretation, I employed critical lenses and tools to facilitate my case analysis, which colored my interpretations in complex ways.

Another way that I attended to analytic rigor in the case study was through triangulation as defined by Stake (1995): working to substantiate an interpretation or to clarify its different meanings. I used multiple data sources (data source triangulation) and analytic lenses (methodological triangulation) to guide my interpretations and described in detail how I analyzed the data and arrived at my interpretations. For example, to substantiate what preteens noted on the pre- and post-club surveys, I engaged many parents in interviews for their perspective on their child's background and book club experience. In many cases, the parent interviews confirmed what the preteens shared on their surveys and in their interviews (data

source triangulation). However, the interview of parents, preteens and facilitators also extended and complicated my understandings of the club experience (methodological triangulation). Stake also notes that for many interpretive researchers, including myself, “the protocols of triangulation have come to be the search for additional interpretations more than the confirmation of a single meaning” (p. 115).

Analysis Tools. Data were analyzed recursively using complementary lenses of computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) (Herring, 2006) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 2005). CMDA is a methodological approach to researching online behavior that enabled me to analyze logs of “verbal” interaction that occurred via the online book club environment. Theoretically and methodologically, CDA enabled me to describe, interpret, and explain relationships among language and educational issues such as literacy and book club talk (Rogers, 2004). I used CDA as a theoretical framework and analytical method to add a “critical” dimension to my interpretive case study.

Technologies are not neutral (Ellul, 1964), so computer-mediated discourses, including online book club talk, may be shaped by the technology that is used to facilitate the discourse (Herring, 2001, 2006; Mazur, 2004). Therefore, a layer woven into all phases of data analysis was computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA), which attempts explicate the role of the online component to these book clubs. Coined in 1995 by Herring, CMDA is an analysis “approach” or “tool kit” grounded in linguistic discourse analysis for mining networked communication for patterns of structure and meaning (Herring, 2006). CMDA assumes three things: (a) discourse exhibits recurrent patterns, (b) discourse involves speaker choices which reflect social

factors; and (c) computer-mediated discourse may be shaped by technological features of computer-mediated communication systems (i.e. the book club) (Herring, 2006). Five levels of language can be analyzed using CMDA: (a) structure, (b) meaning, (c) interaction, (d) social behavior and (e) participation patterns. All levels of language were analyzed in this study.

According to Herring (2006), CDA is an analysis paradigm used in tandem with CMDA research and a strategy that I invoked in my case study research. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a method of data analysis that “examines how social and power relations, identities, and knowledge are constructed through written, visual, and spoken texts in social settings such as schools, families, and communities” (Lewis, 2006). Since the 1980s, there has been a “linguistic turn” in the social sciences (Luke, 1995-1996) and an increasing focus on analyzing discourse in order to help explain “how discourse systematically constructs versions of the social and natural worlds and positions subjects in relations of power” (p. 8). CDA has become an increasingly popular theoretical and methodological framework for research in the practices of literacy teaching and learning that combines the close study of language with larger social and cultural theories to illustrate the ways in which language-in-use is both constituted by and constitutive of the power relations that influence access to social and educational goods (Gee, 1996; Rogers, 2004).

Analysis Process. Juxtaposing CDA and CMDA allowed me to cross-validate my analysis. Fairclough (2001; 1995) suggested a three-tiered framework for CDA analysis that moves from micro to macro: *description* of text, *interpretation* of the relationship between text and interaction, and *explanation* of the relationship between

text, interaction and social practices. For each of these stages, Fairclough outlined questions that the researcher should ask of the texts being analyzed. While all of his suggested questions and elements were not utilized, Fairclough's underlying purposes for each stage were harnessed to make important connections between the data and the interpretive analysis.

In the *description* phase, which encompassed my initial passes through the online book club transcripts, I noted vocabulary usage, grammar, and textural structures through CMDA methods. In addition, I noted anything that seemed relevant, with the goal of "beginning to probe beyond the behavioral descriptions, considering the social meaning or importance of what's going on" (Haas Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 85). The second stage of CDA analysis was *interpretation*, which is a union of what is present in the transcripts (from the descriptive phase) and what exists inside the researcher's mind (via researcher notes). The final stage, *explanation*, involved connecting the interpretations and transcripts to the larger social contexts (situational, institutional, and social influences) in which they were embedded. This stage views discourse as a social practice that is packed with inherent power relations. Computer-mediated social behavior (e.g., power, conflict, gender, play) came into focus as age, class, gender, race, educational level are all identity markers that are apparent and influence online discourse (Herring, 2001). Throughout all three stages, I used all available data (book discussions, interviews, focus groups, and researcher notes) to help me draft a rich, complex, descriptive complex case study of the preteen online book clubs.

Despite the seemingly linear nature of the data analysis, I moved through these

stages recursively and across time -- they all informed each other. I began the analysis by considering each of the book clubs separately before moving to explore the case itself, an approach that is reflected in the chapters of this dissertation. With each club, I started by immersing myself in each data source separately (transcripts, interviews, survey data) and taking notes on my thoughts and reactions. Then, I began composing individual profiles of book club members using all available data in order to try to situate myself in each book clubber's experience. I also employed CMDA during this stage to look at different levels of the book club talk. These actions comprised the description stage of the analysis, which helped me focus on answering the first research question. Next, I dove into trying to understand the literary and social practices of each club as well as the role gender played in each club's discussions, which enabled me to address my second and third research questions. These interpretation and explanation stages of the analysis were especially recursive in nature. In my reflective notes, I captured my thinking as I poured through the data, in an effort to capture what was in the data and "in" me, the researcher. I also coded book club transcripts and interview transcripts for evidence of three contexts: *situational* (i.e., social conversations about pets), *institutional* (i.e., school, library), and *societal* (i.e., gender, race, class) (Fairclough, 1995). After I completed these processes for each club, I finally considered the case itself, examining my analyses for congruence and tension, which is discussed in Chapter 7.

In summary, I utilized a complex data analysis strategy that was guided by Fairclough's (1995) stages of CDA, situated within CMDA's assumptions and structures, and concerned about three levels of contexts. Together, these

complementary analysis tools helped me understand more clearly and deeply the practices and talk within the preteen online book clubs. The following four chapters report on the findings of my analysis. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 provide detailed descriptions of the participation and involvement in each of the book clubs, all-boys, all-girls, and mixed-gender, respectively. These chapters highlight the literary and social practices that emerged in the clubs, with emphasis on the first and second research questions. Chapter 7 discusses the entire case, with specific emphasis on the second and third research questions.

CHAPTER 4

ALL-BOYS ONLINE BOOK CLUB

This chapter provides a rich description of an all-boys online book club. First, a short overview of the club is presented that includes details on participants and data sources. Boys' pre-club survey responses are noted next followed by a description of the club's daily activities. Then, post-club insights are shared from multiple perspectives (boys, parents, facilitator, and researcher). Finally, a summary and discussion of the club's activities and the participants' experiences are shared.

General Boys' Online Book Club Details

Overview. Preteens registered for this online book club were encouraged to have completed reading the book, *Gregor the Overlander* (Underland Chronicles: Book 1) (2004) by Suzanne Collins, prior to the club starting. This popular fantasy-adventure book is the first in a series of three books about a young, likable boy named Gregor and his little sister, Boots, who fall down through a laundry chute into the Underworld – a world of giant, talking bugs and violet-eyed people. Geared toward readers ages 9-12, this book is 320 pages long and contains no illustrations.

The online *Gregor* club was an extension of EPL's successful Guys Read Program (see Figure 4.1). The goals of this program include (a) encouraging boys to read more over the summer months and beyond, (b) developing positive relationships between boys and male book club facilitators, and (c) fostering boys' positive attitudes/associations toward reading. There were two online Guys Read book clubs offered during summer 2007, with the *Gregor* club being the second club. The first club served as a pilot for this research.

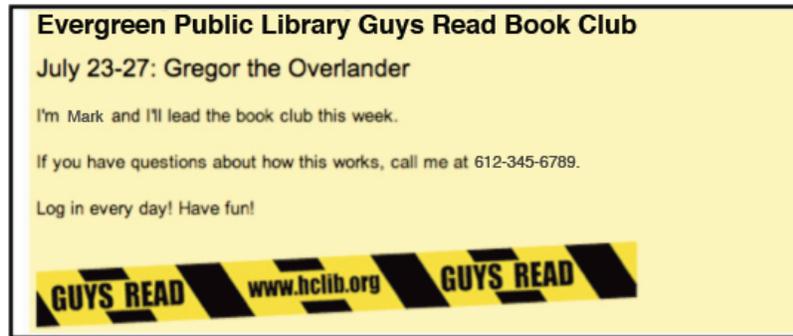


Figure 4.1: Welcome header in the online Gregor Book Club signifying the club is for boys only.

The *Gregor* boys' book club was held in July for a period of five days (Monday through Friday) with a male EPL web developer named Mark serving as its facilitator. Via email, the registered boys and their parents/guardians were sent daily initial login instructions, library contact information for help (names, phone numbers, email addresses) and reminders to participate in the online environment. Each day there were new activities for the boys, created by Mark, including polls about favorite snacks and summer activities, questions about the book in asynchronous, threaded discussion forums, and one real-time chat.

Boys' Club Participants. Four boys actively participated in the online *Gregor* club: ArcadeDude*, BattleDroid*, Dev, and Kenny (self-selected pseudonyms). Two additional boys (Boy1, Boy2) posted comments in the online club once during the week, but were not considered active members and did not consent to participate in research activities. Mark, the book club facilitator, designed the club's pages and created its questions and activities.

Data. I collected pre- and post-club surveys and interview data from consenting participants (see Table 4.1). All four boys completed pre- and post-club surveys, two of which also volunteered to participate in an interview after the club was completed. The mothers of these two boys also volunteered to be interviewed.

Table 4.1

Data of Consenting Participants in a Boys' Online Book Club - July 2007

	Pre-Club Survey	Book Club Talk	Post-Club Survey	Child Interview	Parent Interview
ArcadeDude	x	x	x	x	x
BattleDroid	x	x	x	x	x
Dev	x	x	x	-	-
Kenny	x	x	x	-	-
<i>TOTAL DATA POINTS</i>	4	4	4	2	2

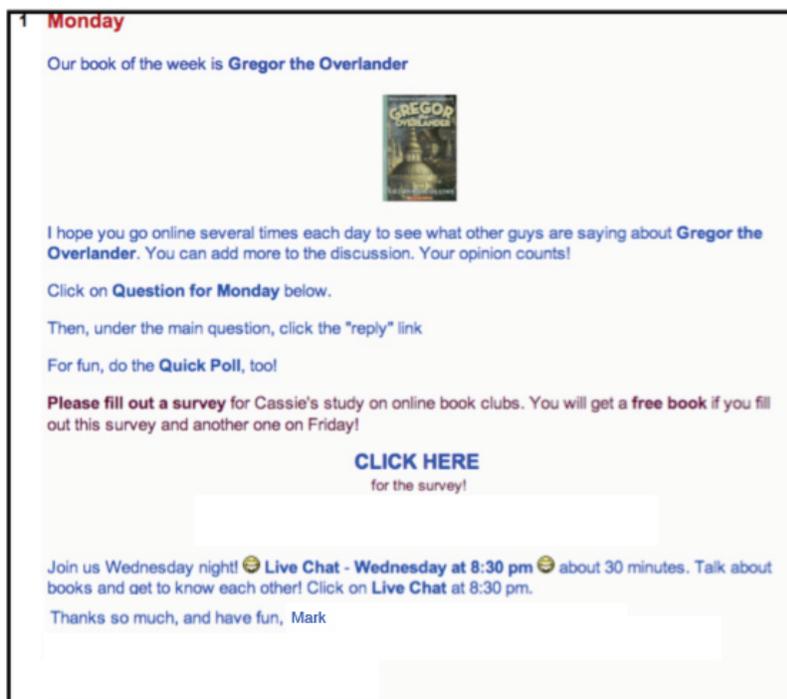
Boys' Pre-Club Survey Results

In the pre-club survey, I attempted to glean demographic and background information on reading opinions and preferences from the boy book clubbers. The boys ranged in age from 8-10, with three of the four boys attending public schools; one boy, Kenny, attended a charter school. Racial and ethnic backgrounds were self-identified as 50% white (ArcadeDude and Kenny) and 50% Asian or Pacific Islander (BattleDroid and Dev). All of the boys had been in a book club prior to or while simultaneously participating in this online club. Two of the boys had participated in the first all-boys online book club offered a month prior to the *Gregor* club. When asked about the type of reader he was on the pre-club survey, ArcadeDude and Dev

checked that they “like” to read; BattleDroid checked that he “loves” to read, and Kenny selected the response, “I read when I have to. It is not one of my favorite things.” All club members noted that books are one of their favorite things to read. Books in a series, magazines, comic books, poetry, and audio books were also well regarded (checked by 3 boys), with web pages and newspapers being checked as favorites for 2 boys (boys could check more than one response).

Description of Boys’ Book Club Daily Activities

Monday. When the boys entered the *Gregor* club’s environment on the first day of the club, Mark had posted a welcome message for them with highlights of the types of activities they could engage in that day as well as contact information to peruse if they had any trouble or questions.



1 Monday

Our book of the week is **Gregor the Overlander**



I hope you go online several times each day to see what other guys are saying about **Gregor the Overlander**. You can add more to the discussion. Your opinion counts!

Click on **Question for Monday** below.

Then, under the main question, click the “reply” link

For fun, do the **Quick Poll**, too!

Please fill out a survey for Cassie’s study on online book clubs. You will get a **free book** if you fill out this survey and another one on Friday!

CLICK HERE
for the survey!

Join us Wednesday night! 🗨️ **Live Chat - Wednesday at 8:30 pm** 🕒 about 30 minutes. Talk about books and get to know each other! Click on **Live Chat** at 8:30 pm.

Thanks so much, and have fun, Mark

Monday’s activities included responding to the pre-club research survey, answering the question of the day, and taking the quick poll. Mark also provided some direction as to how to participate in the club: “I hope you go online several times each day...You can add more to the discussion. Your opinion counts!”

Despite the club being live at 8:00 A.M., the first activity in the club did not occur until mid afternoon at 2:33 P.M. when Kenny logged in. First, he took the quick poll.

Responses			
Playing sports	Reading the new Harry Potter book	Playing with friends	Being at camp or another vacation
0	0	0	0

Then, he responded to Monday’s question: “Has everybody finished reading the book? What did you think of it? Can you imagine living in a place like the Underworld?” ArcadeDude also logged in during the afternoon, with Dev logging in at 10:22 P.M. So, the first day of the club resulted in three posts.

Question for Monday
by Mark - Thursday, 19 July 2007, 12:04PM
Has everyone finished reading the book? What did you think of it? Can you imagine living in a place like the Underworld?
[Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

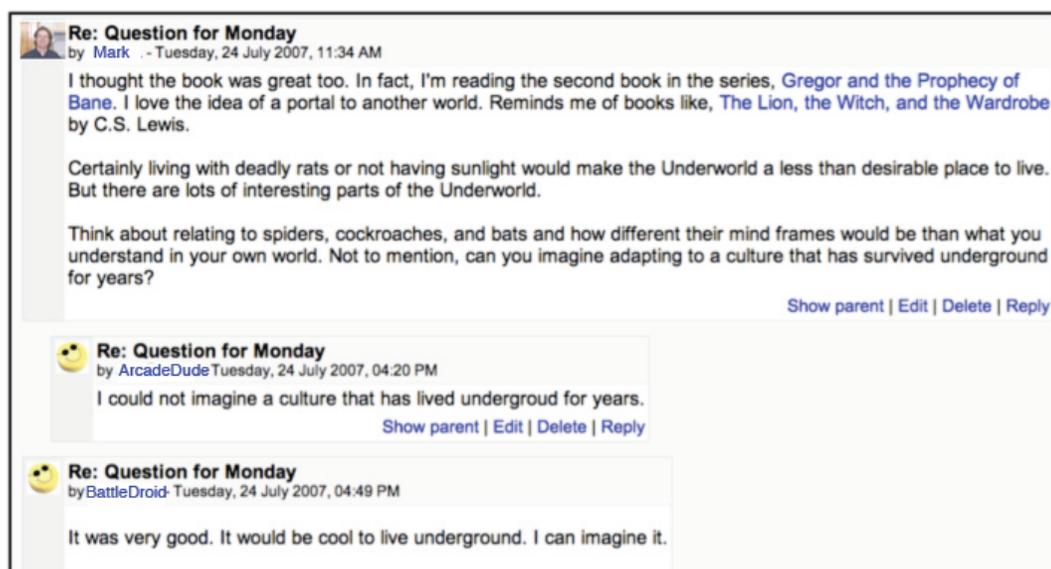
Re: Question for Monday
by Kenny - Monday, 23 July 2007, 02:33M
I did finish the book. We listened to it on tape. I can not imagine living in such a negative world.
[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Re: Question for Monday
by ArcadeDude - Monday, 23 July 2007, 03:18M
I have not yet finished the book but am working on it. I think the Underworld would be fun but also a little bit negative.
[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Re: Question for Monday
by Dev - Monday, 23 July 2007, 10:22M
I have not finished the book yet. I think it would be pretty scary if huge rats wanted to kill you. I don't think the Underland is a very fun place to live.

Interestingly, two of three boys who posted shared that they had not completed the book yet.

The posts to this threaded discussion did continue into Tuesday, with Mark posting a long response to his own questions late morning. He also added a new question within this post.



Kenny responds very briefly to Mark's Monday post at 4:20 P.M. after he posts in Tuesday's forum. The final post to Monday's forum occurred at 4:49 P.M. on Tuesday, with BattleDroid briefly responding to each of Mark's questions.

Tuesday. To help encourage boys to engage in the club's discussion, on Tuesday Mark asked the boys to respond to Monday's question of the day as well as Tuesday's question. He also highlights the chat that will take place the next day.

2

Tuesday

The question for Tuesday is ready. Click on the link below and hit "reply" to contribute to the discussion.

Since many of you did not login on Monday, please respond to Monday's question of the day too.

Have you filled out this survey for Cassie's study on online book clubs?
You will get a **free book** if you fill out this survey and another one on Friday!

Join us Wednesday night! 😊 Live Chat - Wednesday at 8:30 pm 😊 about 30 minutes.
Talk about books and get to know each other! Click on Live Chat at 8:30 pm.

🗣️ Question for Tuesday

? Quick Poll: Your favorite snack food

Following a similar structure as the previous day, Mark had two primary activities for the boys to do on Tuesday: a quick poll and a question of the day.

What's your favorite snack food?

popcorn ice cream chips candy

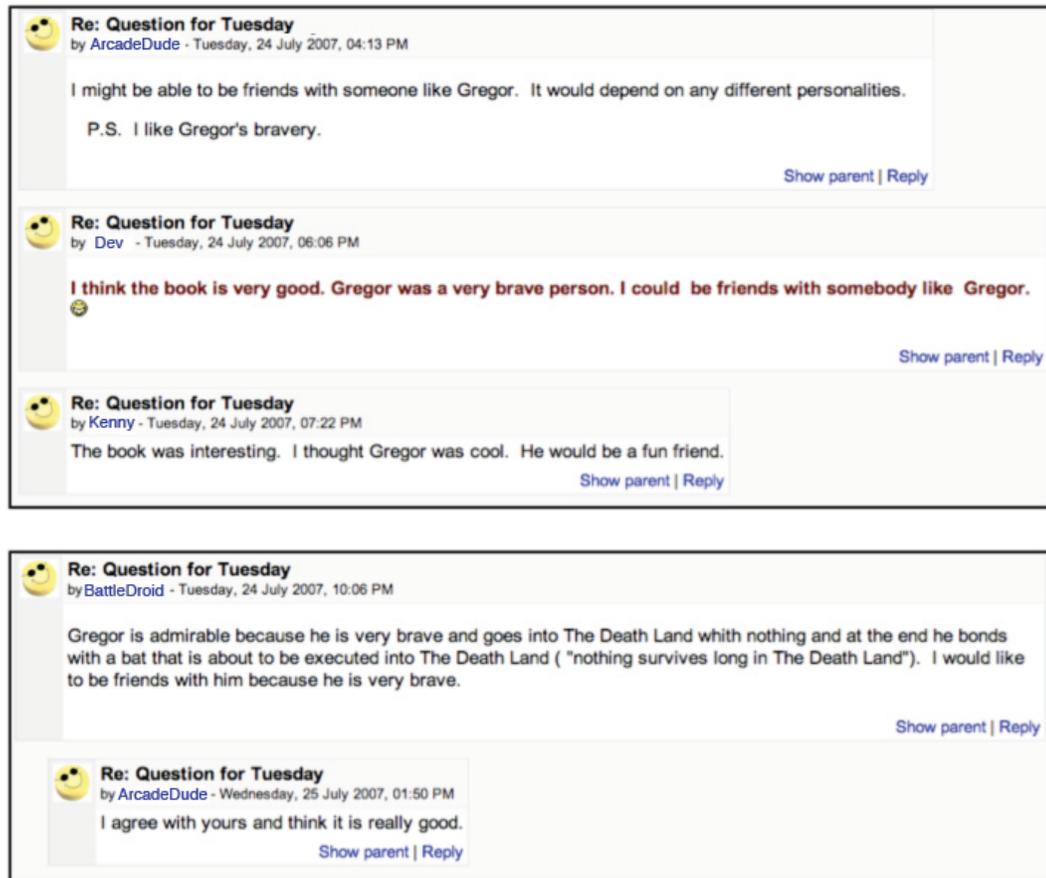
All four active participants in the club responded to this poll, which meant that they checked a box underneath the response they like best. Moodle then showed club members who voted for which response. Mark posted these directions for Tuesday's discussion.

 **Question for Tuesday**
by Mark - Monday, 23 July 2007, 10:16 PM

Talk more about your overall thoughts about the book. Also, consider Gregor's character and personality. What are his admirable traits? Could you be friends with someone like Gregor?

[Reply](#)

All four boys respond to Tuesday's thread, with the first response again occurring late afternoon at 4:13 P.M. The next responses followed at 6:06 P.M., 7:22 P.M. and 10:06 P.M.

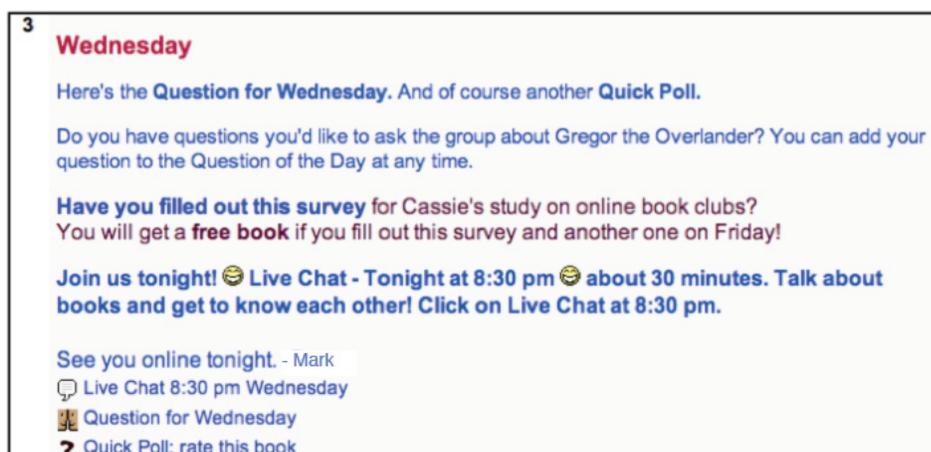


The screenshot shows a forum thread titled "Re: Question for Tuesday" with four replies. Each reply includes a user profile picture (a yellow smiley face), the user name, the date and time, the text of the reply, and a "Show parent | Reply" link.

- Reply 1:** by ArcadeDude - Tuesday, 24 July 2007, 04:13 PM. Text: "I might be able to be friends with someone like Gregor. It would depend on any different personalities. P.S. I like Gregor's bravery."
- Reply 2:** by Dev - Tuesday, 24 July 2007, 06:06 PM. Text: "I think the book is very good. Gregor was a very brave person. I could be friends with somebody like Gregor. 😊"
- Reply 3:** by Kenny - Tuesday, 24 July 2007, 07:22 PM. Text: "The book was interesting. I thought Gregor was cool. He would be a fun friend."
- Reply 4:** by BattleDroid - Tuesday, 24 July 2007, 10:06 PM. Text: "Gregor is admirable because he is very brave and goes into The Death Land with nothing and at the end he bonds with a bat that is about to be executed into The Death Land ("nothing survives long in The Death Land"). I would like to be friends with him because he is very brave."
- Reply 5:** by ArcadeDude - Wednesday, 25 July 2007, 01:50 PM. Text: "I agree with yours and think it is really good."

Each boy composed one response, with Kenny responding to BattleDroid's comment on Wednesday afternoon. This is the first and only time during the entire club that a boy responded to another boy's post. Additionally, Dev was the only club member to alter his font color and font type in his posts and insert emoticons (i.e., 😊), which he only did during Tuesday's threaded discussion.

Wednesday. The third day of the *Gregor* club was different than the other days because in addition to the question of the day and a poll that asked boys to rate the book, an additional activity was offered, a real-time chat that occurred at 8:30 p.m.



3 **Wednesday**

Here's the **Question for Wednesday**. And of course another **Quick Poll**.

Do you have questions you'd like to ask the group about *Gregor the Overlander*? You can add your question to the Question of the Day at any time.

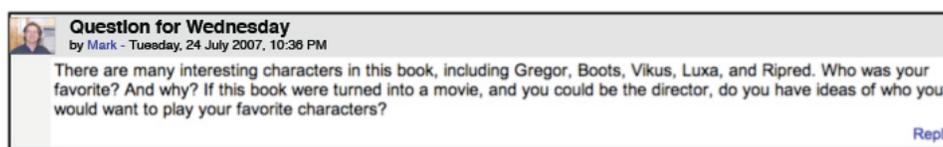
Have you filled out this survey for Cassie's study on online book clubs? You will get a **free book** if you fill out this survey and another one on Friday!

Join us tonight! 😊 **Live Chat - Tonight at 8:30 pm** 😊 about 30 minutes. Talk about books and get to know each other! **Click on Live Chat at 8:30 pm.**

See you online tonight. - Mark

- 🗨️ Live Chat 8:30 pm Wednesday
- 📄 Question for Wednesday
- 🔍 Quick Poll: rate this book

Three of the four boys posted to Wednesday's question of the day, with BattleDroid posting a response the following day. Mark, while trying to simultaneously engage the boys in a discussion of the book but limited due to the half of the boys having not finished reading it, asked a question that was an extension to the book.



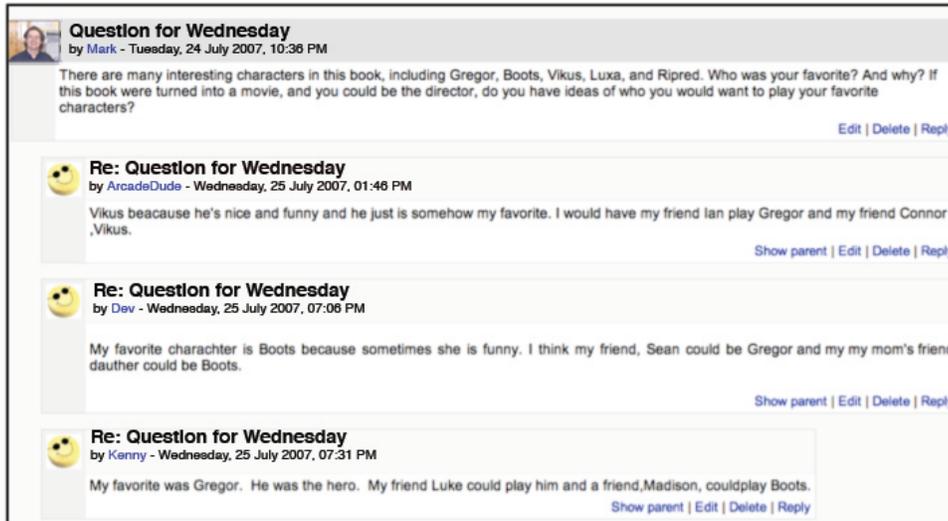
Question for Wednesday
by Mark - Tuesday, 24 July 2007, 10:38 PM

There are many interesting characters in this book, including Gregor, Boots, Vikus, Luxa, and Ripred. Who was your favorite? And why? If this book were turned into a movie, and you could be the director, do you have ideas of who you would want to play your favorite characters?

Reply

At this point in the club, Mark was also trying to get the boys to post longer messages through asking them multiple questions. The boys did respond to each of Mark's

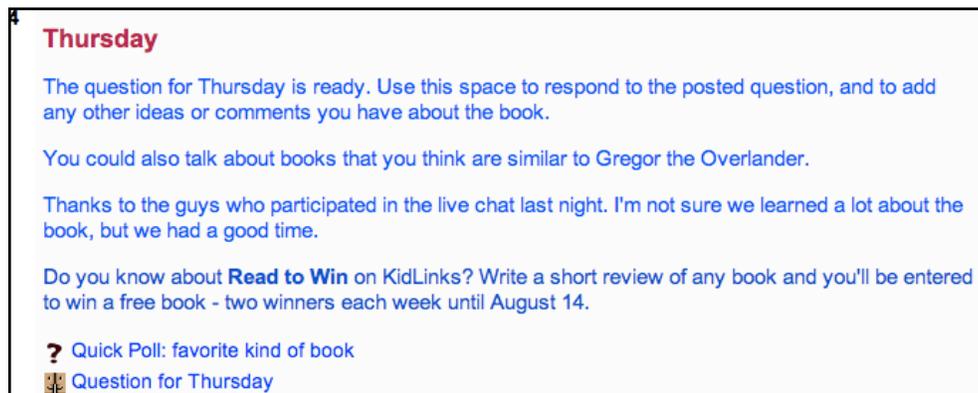
questions, but only briefly and in complete sentences, a pattern that was also evident in both Monday and Tuesday's posts.



The chat occurred Wednesday evening from 8:30 – 9:18 p.m. Although all book club members were invited to participate, only one of the active boys logged in to the chat in addition to a non-active, non-assenting club member (Boy1) who never posted in the threaded discussions before or after the chat. The chat covered a range of topics including the weather, status of book completion, school, *Gregor's* genre, guessing Mark's age, and Moodle's beeping feature. Mark initiated seven topic discussions and ArcadeDude started three, all of which were more social in nature rather than book related. Boy1 played a prominent role in the chat that impacted its tone. For example, thirty minutes into the chat, Boy1 left the chat for a few minutes and then logged back in. Then, he began "beeping" ArcadeDude and Ryan. "Beeping" is a feature within Moodle's chat environment where you can "beep" any of the participants for fun or to get their attention. The beeps do not show up in the chat

transcript, but rather come across as loud sounds on the individual's computer who has been beeped. In addition to beeping Mark and ArcadeDude, Boy1 also began typing gibberish text toward the end of the chat. Both Mark and ArcadeDude commented during their interviews about how Boy1's chat behavior was strange. On the next day's message to the boys, Mark wrote, "I'm not sure we learned a lot about the book, but we had a good time [in the chat]."

Thursday. The fourth day of the club was similar to the others, with a question of the day posted along with a quick poll about favorite kind of books (fantasy, adventure, history, sports, humor). Again, Mark encouraged the boys to contribute their ideas to the discussion as well as respond to the posted question.



Thursday

The question for Thursday is ready. Use this space to respond to the posted question, and to add any other ideas or comments you have about the book.

You could also talk about books that you think are similar to *Gregor the Overlander*.

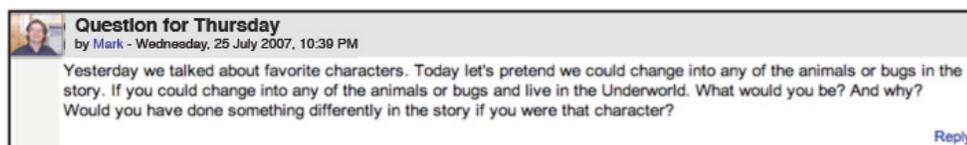
Thanks to the guys who participated in the live chat last night. I'm not sure we learned a lot about the book, but we had a good time.

Do you know about **Read to Win** on KidLinks? Write a short review of any book and you'll be entered to win a free book - two winners each week until August 14.

? Quick Poll: favorite kind of book

📖 Question for Thursday

The topic of Thursday's question was bugs.

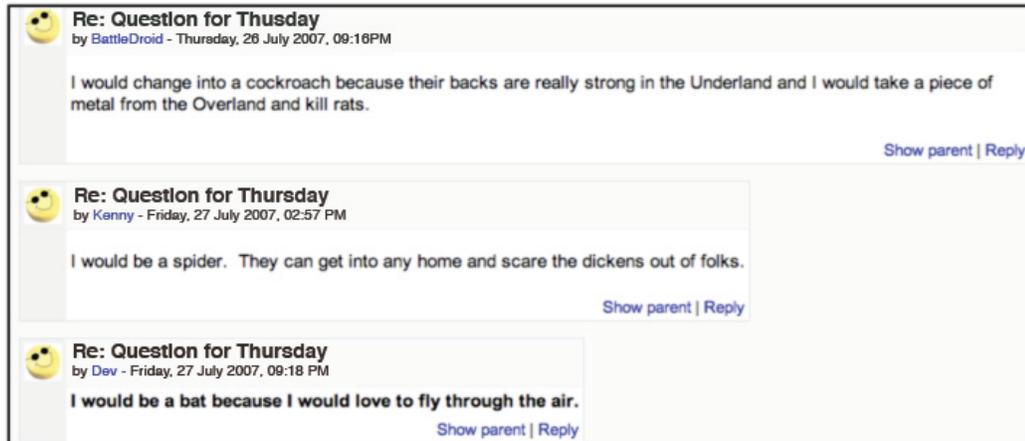


Question for Thursday
by Mark - Wednesday, 25 July 2007, 10:39 PM

Yesterday we talked about favorite characters. Today let's pretend we could change into any of the animals or bugs in the story. If you could change into any of the animals or bugs and live in the Underworld. What would you be? And why? Would you have done something differently in the story if you were that character?

Reply

This question received one response from each of the active book club members.



Similar to earlier in the week, two boys responded on Thursday and two responded on Friday. Mark also responded to the question, which he had done only one of the other days during the club. ArcadeDude, Mark, and Dev all chose bats while BattleDroid wished to change into a cockroach and Kenny wanted to be a spider.

Friday. The last day of the club asked boys to respond to (a) a poll about participating in another online book club and (b) to the question of the day as well as (c) the post-club survey. Mark kept an upbeat tone to his message, and thanked boys for participating.

Friday

One last day to contribute! Let's make it a great one.

Quick Poll and **Question for Friday** are ready for you today!

Don't forget to e-mail Jane your address so she can send you a free book.

jane@epl.org

Please fill out Cassie's **POST-SURVEY**. She will also send you a free book for filling out both of her surveys! 😊 **Click here to access the survey, or cut and paste this link into your web browser:** <http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB226MK22TC28>

Thanks everyone for sharing your opinions and thoughts with the book club. Enjoy the rest of the summer. Hope you can participate next year.

- Mark

 **Question for Friday**

 **Quick Poll:**

The boys' post pattern mirrored the previous days of the club. Three boys responded on Friday in the late afternoon or evening and one boy posted his comment on Saturday. Again, the boys responded directly to each of questions Mark posed.

 **Question for Friday**
by Mark - Thursday, 26 July 2007, 04:38 PM

Two unrelated questions for today:

1. Will you read the second book in the series, Gregor and the Prophecy of Bane? Can anybody guess what Bane is (if you haven't already read the 2nd book)?
2. If you could write a book like Gregor the Overlander, or Alice in Wonderland where there is a portal to another world, what would you choose to be the portal? And where and what would the other world look like?

[Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Friday**
by BattleDroid - Friday, 27 July 2007, 03:43 PM

1. I will read Gregor the Overlander and the Prophecy of Bane because I always read the whole series unless it's bad or it's too short of something.
2. My portal will be in my backyard and it will lead to a world where people use magnetic powered hovercars, use the sun for heat and other things that conserve energy.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Friday**
by Dev - Friday, 27 July 2007, 09:30 PM

1. Yes, I will read the Gregor and the Prophecy of Bane.
2. The portal would be a deep hole. The place would have trees, tall buildings and small animals.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

All four boys wanted to read the next book in the *Gregor* series. Also, in one or two short sentences, the boys responded to Mark's request to describe their ideas for portals.

Post-Club Insights

In contrast to the limited and subdued activity and talk in the online book club, the responses on the post-club survey were overwhelmingly positive in regard to boys' experiences in the online book clubs. All four boys would tell their friends to join online clubs. When asked to explain why they would tell their friends, one boy expressed that "it [the club] is healthy for your brain;" other comments included that the club was "fun" and "only if they [friends] are reading fans." All boys reported liking being a member of the club and would register for another online book club next summer. When asked why they liked being members of the Gregor club, Kenny typed, "It is fun, convenient, great to read others opinons." ArcadeDude echoed, "Yes it was fun to get to go online and post my opinions. I loved it and sad it's over." BattleDroid agreed the club was fun, and Dev tied liking the club to "really lik[ing] the book," which was his favorite part of the club. Additional responses to the question about a favorite thing about the club ranged from "posting my opinions" and "answering questions" to "reading what others think."

Next summer, if given a choice, three boys would choose online book clubs over clubs that met in the library ("online because in the library it takes a long time to drive;" "online because i like to type the answer;" and "online because it lasts longer.") Kenny would choose to attend a F2F club because he "like[s] to see people." Finally, boys were asked to identify their preferences for book club members: all boys,

both boys and girls, with adults, or no preference. Three boys favored all-boys book clubs and one boy did not have a preference.

Interviews with two of the participants and their mothers confirmed and extended the information obtained via surveys about the boys' overall experiences in this club. The purpose of these interviews was to triangulate boys' responses on the surveys as well as to obtain information about *how* these boys participated in the online book clubs.

ArcadeDude and His Mom, Peggy. I spoke with ArcadeDude and his mom, Peggy, over the telephone a few days after the *Gregor* club concluded. Similar to his responses on his post-survey, ArcadeDude was still raving about his book club experience. He gave it a "fun" rating of 5 on a 1-5 scale, with a score of 5 being the most fun; "I just thought it was a lot of fun. It was only the second book club I've ever done. I just thought it was a really great thing." I also asked him about which part of the club environment he liked the best. ArcadeDude shared, "I really liked the chat, but it was all fun. Getting to post stuff and then logging on later in the day and seeing what other guys had put on there." ArcadeDude participated in the club from a home computer typically once a day. His family uses a daily 15-minute turn at the computer rule, so he would access the book club during his allotted computer time. During the night of the chat, an exception was made and ArcadeDude was able to be on the computer longer. His mom, Peggy, sat with him during the chat. ArcadeDude typed, but together they "made up answers and stuff that made sense" (ArcadeDude). Peggy also commented that the chat "was really great because it made it a little bit more like

the F2F [club], to have some interaction with somebody else right away.” Neither ArcadeDude or Peggy had any previous chat experience – this was their first time.

During the interviews with Peggy and her son, I learned that although ArcadeDude’s time on the computer is limited each day, he does enjoy surfing ebay for baseball cards and model airplanes. He does not have his own email address, but would like one. Also, Peggy confirmed that her son does like to read, but “it is getting harder for him to read books...he does more reading of magazines.” He was not able to finish the book for either book club he participated because of late notice from the library that he was actually able to be in a club. Apparently, ArcadeDude was on a waiting list for a F2F Guys Read club at his neighborhood library when a spot opened up just a few days before the club started. This F2F club was held during the same week as the online club, which he signed up for only after a librarian called him (and others on waiting lists) to let him know that there were online Guys Read clubs, too.

When I spoke to ArcadeDude, I tried to get him to share why he preferred boys-only book clubs. He replied, “I thought that was really nice ‘cause, you know.” So, because I really did not know, I asked him how he thought his club would have been different if girls were in it. This time ArcadeDude shared a bit more information,

“It would be a little harder to talk about things because, you know, boys and girls sometimes will have a little bit different things that they think about. And I have experience with that because I am in a lot of enrichment classes at school, and that’s, that’s, it’s a little bit harder.” [interview, July 2007]

Clearly, the all-boy nature of the *Gregor* club was important to ArcadeDude, as it is to many boys who participate in EPL's F2F Guys Read clubs (see Dillon, O'Brien, Scharber, Nichols & Dubbels, 2007; Nichols-Besel, Scharber, Biggs, Brendler, Dillon, & O'Brien, 2008; Scharber, Nichols-Besel, Biggs, Brendler, Dillon & O'Brien, 2007).

Finally, I was interested in what Peggy thought were the advantages of having her young son in an online book club. Peggy replied that the online nature of the club "made it easier in terms of not having to be somewhere at a specific time and a specific day for him...so he could do it at whatever time and a little bit every day." The no-required transportation and flexible time frame of the club were perks for Peggy as well as for other parents. ArcadeDude also commented in his survey that he preferred the online club because it lasted longer (5 days) in comparison to his F2F clubs that met only once to discuss a book.

BattleDroid and His Mom, Ming. BattleDroid was an eight year old who loved to read. In fact, his mom, Ming, shared that he gets "crazy" about reading;

He reads the cereal box, everything on table.

When he is eating, he is reading as well. So, we have limits – 6 hours of reading. Because he is getting nearsighted now, so we don't want him to read too much...so when he gets too crazy, we ask him to stop [laugh]. [interview, July 2007]

Due to the family's Chinese cultural background, Ming shared that she and her husband do not read the books BattleDroid reads because English is not their first language. Which makes it difficult, then, to share in BattleDroid's enthusiasm for the

stories he reads. Ming was glad that he was in a book club because “ a group of crazy is better than one-person crazy at home when no one knows what he is crazy about!”

BattleDroid rated the club 4 out of 5 for fun “because the book was really good.” Due to his love of the book, his favorite part of the book club was answering the daily questions. BattleDroid had actually read *Gregor the Overlander* before, but re-read it for the club. He has also finished all of the books in the *Gregor* series. During his interview, BattleDroid suggested making the clubs one week longer and reading a series of books to talk about. He also thought that it would be “more fun” to read and talk about the book as week progressed, rather than having to read the entire book before the club started.

Like ArcadeDude, he participated in the online club because it was the only option available -- the F2F Guys Read clubs were booked. BattleDroid would choose an online club over a F2F club next summer because “it takes a long time to drive [to the library].” Also, Ming shared that his older sister would be at college next year and would not be able to drive him to the F2F clubs during the day when she and her husband were at work. So, the online clubs would be more convenient. Ming also noted that the main advantage of the online club was that “he will for sure participate, and say how he feels. When in a [F2F] club setting, he may refrain himself to say. So, in online he will say whatever.” Alternately, one disadvantage was that there was no physical interaction; “you don’t know how the other kids, you know, if ever they get crazy about books.” Finally, despite being in two Guys Read clubs, BattleDroid expressed no opinion about the gender of future book club members. It seemed to be all about the book for BattleDroid.

Mark's Perspective. Another important perspective that I wanted to capture was that of the club's facilitator, Mark. Unlike the other book club facilitators, Mark is not a librarian but rather an EPL web developer. While he has never been in a book club himself, Mark has a degree in English literature and considers himself a reader. He was recruited by the coordinator the previous year to lead the online Guys Read clubs due to his technology knowledge, and, of course, his gender. The *Gregor* club was the second online club that Mark volunteered to facilitate over the summer.

Mark shared that he struggled in facilitating this club. He attributed the lack-luster discussion to very few active participants, most of whom (2 out of 4) did not finish reading the book. For example, during the Wednesday evening chat, he was stumped as to what to talk about because both boys who participated "had barely even begun...so, it was hard to talk about the book without giving away the ending."

Mark took the club's discussion and his role as its facilitator very seriously. He viewed his role as a facilitator "as someone who would keep the discussion going. Although it really did not pan out that way." Most of the boys' entries occurred in the evenings, however he primarily was able to work on the club during the daytime at the library when there was little activity to respond to. In contemplating his own role in the club, he acknowledged, "It could be that my expectations were too high. Part of it could be on me."

Finally, Mark said that the amount of work he put into facilitating the club just did not match its output.

It was kinda disappointing...that was my biggest surprise.

It was a lot of work, not only did you have to read the book

but you had to think of all these questions and build a website ... and to get the type of responses was kinda underwhelming. I mean, it was good that the boys were doing this, and answering my questions, but it was kinda like pulling teeth to do anything other than answer my question. Ok, great, you answered my question, but come up with some other ideas. That just wasn't happening. [interview, July 2007]

He summed up his experience as a facilitator with this phrase: "rewarding but underwhelming."

Summary and Discussion of Boys' Online Book Club

Book club members and its facilitator experienced the *Gregor the Overlander* all-boys online book club differently. The interviews with boys, their moms, and the facilitator alongside the book club discussion transcripts gave perspective on why this club was fun for boys but disappointing for its facilitator.

Each day, Mark wrote a note in the welcome page of the club to remind boys that they could post their own questions in addition to simply answering his question. Despite Mark's encouragement, none of the boys ever posted a question to the larger group during the week. Furthermore, boys did not even respond to each other's comments. Many of them commented on the survey or in the interview that they liked reading each other's posts, but the concept of responding to other's posts never caught on. Only once, in Tuesday's discussion forum, did this online behavior occur, when ArcadeDude responded to BattleDroid's post, "I agree with yours and think it is really good." This absence of conversation bothered Mark, but it did not seem to bother the

boys. In fact, many commented that they liked “answering the questions.” As a researcher, I also noted this question-answer pattern to the posts and was confused. However, after talking to the boys and their moms, putting aside my expectations for the online book club conversation, and analyzing the talk using CMDA, I realized that for all the boys in the club, this was their first experience “talking” online. They had never participated in an asynchronous threaded discussion or a synchronous chat before. So, the boys (and their parents) did not have any knowledge about how to engage in online discussions. In fact, many of the boys did not spend much time on the computer at all and lacked basic keyboarding skills.

This lack of experience also helps explain many things about the posts themselves. Using CMDA, I analyzed the structure, meaning, interaction, social behavior, and participation patterns of the boys’ threaded discussions. All of the boys and Mark used formal sentence structure, punctuation, and correct spelling in their posts. In many online discussion boards, these language conventions are not as highly regarded and not used. The focus is more on the content of the post and the interaction between members. In addition, none of the boys employed a hybrid of written speech with semiotics or emoticons (i.e, LOL, BFF), which is typical in chat or online conversations. Due to their inexperience, the boys used standard written English in the online book club.

Their inexperience also explains the interaction patterns and social behaviors evidenced in the club’s talk. As mentioned earlier, the boys responded to Mark’s questions, but with the exception of one interaction, not to each other’s posts. I believe this is because boys did not fully understand that responding to each other is

considered a norm of online talk. The threaded discussions in the *Gregor* club assumed a question-answer pattern, similar to book conversations in school where the teacher asks a question and the student responds. This interaction pattern was also observed in many F2F Guys Read Book Clubs (Nichols & Scharber, 2006). It makes sense that boys would fall into this pattern of interaction given that school is one of the most common places where books are discussed in these boys' worlds. Also, although Mark referred to himself by his first name, he was clearly in a position of power in the club, similar to that of a teacher. He developed the questions and polls and monitored the chat. His role as an adult within the institution of the library mirrors quite closely the role of a teacher within a school.

Interestingly, although Mark strove to explain the type of interaction he wanted the boys to use in the club, he never modeled this behavior for boys. Only once did he respond to a boy's individual post (Thursday's forum). Mark knew he wanted the boys to interact with each other, but did not realize that they may have benefitted from being shown how to "do" online talk. Like me, he did not recognize the newness of this experience for boys. Also, he viewed his role as that of facilitator (rather than teacher?), so he tried to balance encouraging discussion without dominating the book club talk.

The boys enjoyed the club for many reasons. First, the newness of being online and talking to other boys about books was fun and adult. They were able to engage in practices their older siblings and peers engage in. If we look beyond the posts to consider everything that went into the crafting the posts, the fun for novices in participating in the club becomes more apparent: using a computer, logging on to the

Internet, navigating to an online place to talk about books with boys, reading about the activities for the day, participating in an online poll, reading the interesting question posed for the day, thinking about how to respond to the question, considering what to type, typing or “hunt-n-pecking” on the keyboard, reading what other boys said, signing out of the book club, logging off of the Internet. Considering all of these digital literacies that the boys were asked to partake in, which were made easier via the environment of the book club, it is really not a surprise that the boys enjoyed the clubs.

Another primary reason the boys liked the club is because they liked the book, even if they did not finish reading it. The boys participating in the club were primarily readers, so it was fun for them to talk about the book. Another reason was the allure of a guys-only space. Most boys expressed a preference for club participants to be male, although there were no direct comments made during the club about it being boys-only or no girls allowed, etc. The only indicator that it was a boys-only space was the picture of the Guys Read tape that Mark posted on the front page of the book club environment. Just knowing that the club members were only boys seemed to be special.

Next, although the club’s daily discussions appeared formal and school-like, the type of questions that the boys were asked to answer is what sets it apart from school-based reading discussions and makes the experience of talking about books pleasurable and “fun.” The boys liked answering questions. The questions Mark posed did not deal with school terms and concepts such as plot, character development, or theme. Instead, Mark asked questions about being friends with the main character,

living in the Underworld, imagining being a bug, selecting people to play book characters in your movie version of the story, and where you would put a portal to another world if you were an author. These were book club questions - questions that connected the boys personally to the stories, extended their imaginations about its characters and settings, and sought and honored their opinions.

CHAPTER 5

ALL-GIRLS ONLINE BOOK CLUB

This chapter provides a detailed description of an all-girl online book club. First, a short overview of the club is presented that includes details on participants and data sources. Girls' pre- and post-club survey responses are noted next followed by a description and analysis of the club's daily activities. Then, further insights are shared from the perspectives of two club members and their parents. Finally, a summary of the club's activities and the participants' experiences is provided.

General Girls' Online Book Club Details

Overview. Prior to the club starting, preteen girls were encouraged to have completed reading the book, *The Tail of Emily Windsnap* (2006) written by Liz Kessler. This book is the first in a series of three books about a seventh grader named Emily who discovers she is half-mermaid after she attends a swimming class during school. The adventures both above and below the water begin once Emily finds her tailfin. Geared toward readers ages 9-12, this fantasy book is 244 pages long and contains no illustrations.

The *Emily Windsnap* book club was held in early July for a period of five days (Monday through Friday). Via email, the registered girls and their parents/guardians were sent initial login instructions, library contact information for help (names, phone numbers, email addresses) and daily reminders to participate in the online environment. Each day there were new activities for the girls including polls about favorite snacks and summer activities; asynchronous, threaded discussion forums

focused on questions about the book and its characters; two real-time chats; and a girls' only forum for girls to talk about non-book related things.

Girls' Club Participants. Fifteen girls actively participated in the online *Emily Windsnap* club, with fourteen of them assenting to participate in this research (see Table 5.1). Jane, the senior EPL web services librarian whose work emphasized youth services, selected the book, designed this club's web pages and created its questions and activities. In fact, she had been organizing and facilitating EPL's online clubs since their outset in 2005.

Data. Pre- and post-club surveys, book club transcripts, and interview data were collected from assenting and consenting participants (see Table 5.1). Eleven girls completed both pre- and post-club surveys and six girls completed surveys as well as both parent and personal interviews. I was also allowed access to all fourteen of the girls' contributions to the online book club discussions.

Table 5.1

Data of Consenting Participants in a Girls Online Book Club – July 2007

Girls	Pre-Club Survey	Book Club Transcript	Post-Club Survey	Child Interview	Parent Interview
Abby	x	x	x	--	--
Cami	x	x	x	x	x
Christina	x	x	--	x	--
Encalles*	x	x	x	x	x*
Widget*	x	x	x	x	x*
Gwynn	x	x	x	x	--
Isabella	--	x	--	x	x
Jenna	x	x	x	x	x
J.J.	x	x	x	--	--
Liz	x	x	x	x	--
Mala	x	x	x	x	x
Melissa	--	x	--	--	--
Michaela	x	x	x	x	x
Reggie	x	x	x	--	--
TOTAL Data Points	12	14	11	10	6

* = sisters; same parent interview

Girls' Pre-Club Survey Results

In the pre-club survey, I attempted to glean demographic and background information on reading opinions and preferences from the girls. Twelve girls completed the pre-club survey and ranged in age from 8-11, with the seven of them age 10 and three of them age 11. Racial and ethnic backgrounds on the pre-survey

were self-identified as Caucasian (9); Asian or Pacific Islander (2); and “Iceland, France, & American Indian” (1). All twelve girls attended public schools. Nine of the girls had participated in a book club previously, with four girls members in the first all-girls EPL online book club offered a month prior to the *Emily* club. Notably, most of the girls (11) either loved or liked to read books. Books and books in a series topped the list of favorite things to read, with magazines and audio books being the third and fourth favorite items to read, respectively.

Another point of interest revealed through the pre-club survey responses was that ten of twelve girls listed that they like to play games on computers. The two websites mentioned by more than one girl were Club Penguin (<http://www.clubpenguin.com/>) and Webkinz (http://www.webkinz.com/us_en/). Both websites are actually virtual worlds geared for kids where members use cartoon-like avatars to interact with other kids online. In fact, many kids actually play online together with relatives and schoolmates that they know in real life as well as with those they kids do not. Compared to the boys in the all-boys clubs, the girls in this book club seem to spend more time online interacting with other people rather than playing web-based computer games.

The pre-club survey also contained questions about why girls registered for an online book club verses a club that met face-to-face in a library. From the responses, it was clear that the primary draw to the *Emily* club were the girls’ interests in reading and books (9 girls). Two girls participated in the club for the purposes of earning a Girl Scout badge (Isabella and Christina). The most frequent responses about why the

girls wanted to be in an online club referred to “busy” schedules and how “easy” it was to stay at home rather than go to the library.

Description of Girls’ Book Club Daily Activities

The *Emily* club was five days in duration, Monday through Friday. Each day, Jane posted an overview for the day along with the activities. Due to the length of the girls’ book club transcripts, only parts of the threaded discussion are used to illustrate each day’s discussions. In addition, the quick poll questions were identical to those asked in the boy’s club, so they are not focused on in this discussion.

Monday’s Asynchronous Discussion. The first day of the book club provided the girls with four activities: a poll about a favorite summer thing, a pre-club research survey, a question of the day, and a live chat. When the girls logged on this day, they saw the following messages from Jane:



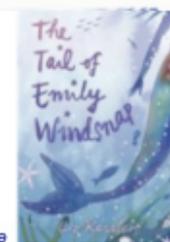
Monday

Hey everyone! Welcome! Get started by clicking on **Question for Monday** below. Hit **reply** and you're on your way! Check back to read what other girls have added. You can comment as many times as you'd like!

For fun, do the **Quick Poll**, too! 😊

Please fill out this survey for Cassie's study on online book clubs. You will get a **free book** if you fill out this survey and another one on Friday!
<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB226MJZSTBVC>

Join us tonight! 😊 **Live Chat - Monday at 7 pm** 😊 about 30 minutes. Talk about books and get to know each other! Click on **Live Chat** at 7 pm .



See you online. - Jane

- 📖 Question for Monday
- ❓ Quick Poll: What's your favorite thing about summer?
- 💬 Live Chat 7 pm Monday

Due to the club actually being accessible Sunday evening, the first activity occurred around 5:30pm on Sunday when Isabella logged in, added a picture to her profile, completed the poll, and responded to the daily question.



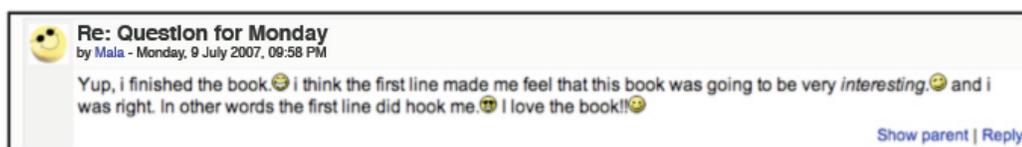
Question for Monday
 by Jane - Sunday, 8 July 2007, 09:27 AM

Have you finished reading the book? What did you think of the first line: "Can you keep a secret?" Did it hook you?

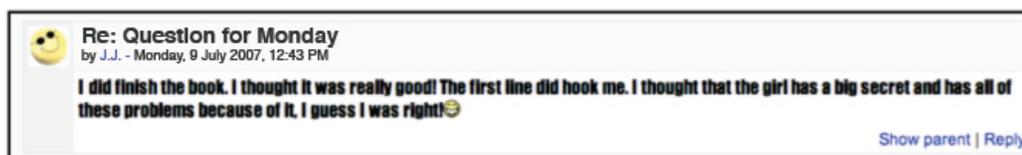
[Reply](#)

At the end of the first day of the online book club, thirteen of the fourteen girls were active in the daily threaded discussion about the questions for Monday. All of the girls completed the poll, many completed the pre-club research survey, and four girls logged in for the chat at 7:00pm.

The most obvious feature of Monday's asynchronous discussion was that the visual nature of the discourse – the postings were loaded with color and emoticons. In Monday's eighteen total threads, fifteen emoticons were used, in eight separate threads, by eight separate girls. For example, Mala used four different emoticons in her post:

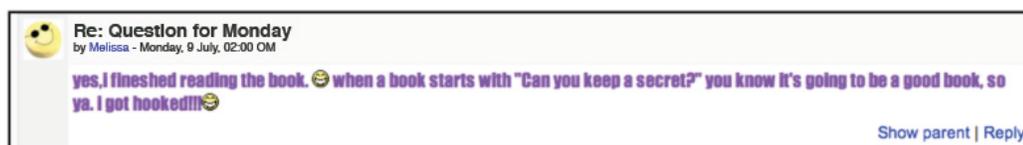


In addition to emoticons, Mala also used two exclamation points to emphasize how much she loved the book club book. The use of exclamation points and emoticons is significant because people use them in writing to convey emotion, which was an element that seemed to be lacking in the boys' book club discussions. Five other girls used exclamation points, usually more than one:

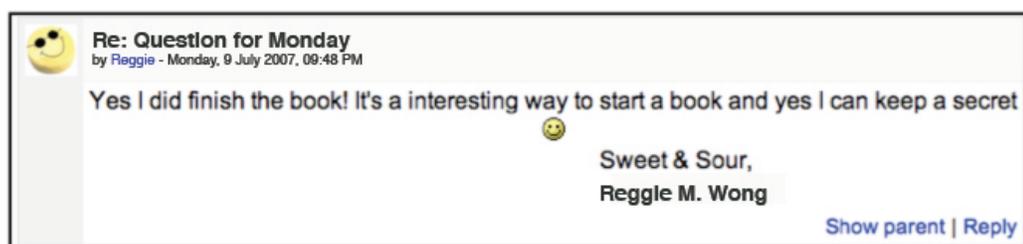


From the first day of the girls' club, it seemed that the girls were or wanted to be emotionally connected to the text and, perhaps, to the club itself and its members.

During the first day of the book club, five girls also altered the typography of their posts (font type, size, and or color). These same girls also coupled these changes with emoticons and sometimes, exclamation marks.



One of the playful, yet powerful, affordances of Moodle is that it provides its users the ability to manipulate their font (and use emoticons), helping users set themselves and their postings apart from the others in the online environment. The girls in the *Emily* club recognized, learned, and used features during the first day. One of the members, Reggie, also signed her first post with her signature like it was a letter or email message.



Coupled with the bolded text of her name, her signature put an individual stamp on her post. She continued to do this throughout the book club, although not with every post. Interestingly, Reggie never uploaded a different picture for her profile picture, leaving

it instead as the default smiley face. Seven of the girls had uploaded a profile picture by the end of the book club.

In addition to the emoticons and font alterations in Monday's posts, the orthography and overall sentence structure were less formal than standard written English. Colloquial "yea," "yup," "ya" and "yeahs" were used as well as expressions such as "that is so cool." The girls also did not consistently use capital letters, periods, contractions, or formal sentence structure. Compared to the boys' posts in the *Gregor* book club, these girls seemed to be more familiar with norms of online talk. Noticeably absent, though, was chat speak (e.g., BFF, LOL). Based on the interviews, most of these girls were not experienced with IMing or chatting.

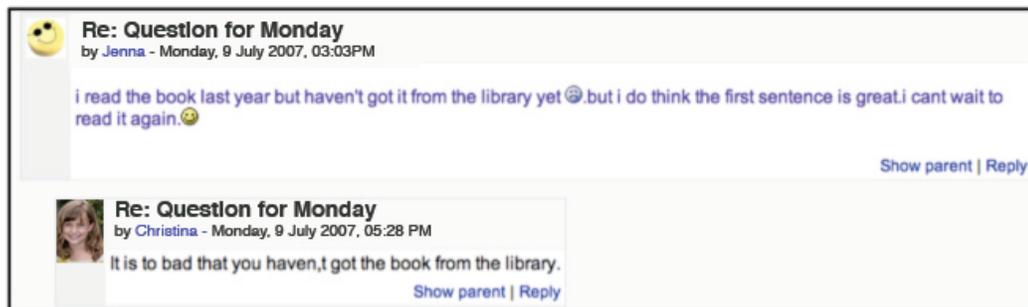
In taking a more macro-view of the Monday discussion, the intricacies of the interaction between Jane and the girls and the girls with each other come into focus. Similar to the boys' club, Jane posted the question on Monday, but she was not involved any further in the daily discussion. Each girl posted one response to Jane's question and that was the end of the discussion, establishing an 'instructor' question-'student' answer pattern to the threaded discussion that continued for the duration of the book club. During her interview, Jane commented on this pattern:

I loved setting up pages but I don't think that once I put my question out there that I was as good as the kids might have expected with jumping back in. You know, I sent the question up, and I would always check to see how many responses there were, but I wouldn't necessarily jump back in. I didn't want it to be too adult-dominated, but I might have missed the point of

making my leadership role as known to them as I could have (interview, July, 2007).

Jane felt a lot of tension in what role to assume in the book club; was she a facilitator? A book club member? Should she participate in the conversation or let the girls talk amongst themselves? Mark, the boys' club facilitator also noted this tension.

Notably, one girl, Christina, did respond to two girls' individual posts on Monday. Christina attempted to make a personal connection with Isabella because they are both Girl Scouts (Isabella had provided this information in her profile description), and empathized with Jenna about not having access to the book yet.



Re: Question for Monday
by Jenna - Monday, 9 July 2007, 03:03PM

i read the book last year but haven't got it from the library yet 😊.but i do think the first sentence is great.i cant wait to read it again.😊

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

Re: Question for Monday
by Christina - Monday, 9 July 2007, 05:28 PM

It is to bad that you haven,t got the book from the library.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Question for Monday
by Isabella - Sunday, 8 July 2007, 05:28 PM

yes i did finish the book. i thought it was kind of weird like i reply to a book so why are is the book asking that? yes it hooked me.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

Re: Question for Monday
by Christina - Monday, 9 July 2007, 03:32 PM

I am doing this book club for my "Summer Reading Pach" too!! That is so cool. I am also a Junior.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

Neither Isabella nor Jenna replied back to Christina, nor did they comment on Christina's response to Monday's questions. It is not surprising that Christina did not attempt to further engage in this online behavior during the rest of the book club. Sadly, one of the goals Jane had for the club was for the girls to engage each other in conversation with her question only serving as a discussion starter. While Christina did reply to other girls, her efforts had no uptake. It appears Christina was shut down because she disrupted the dominant question-answer pattern with no encouragement or modeling by Jane or the other girls to continue to engage in girl-girl interactions.

Although the discourse pattern was dominated by the question-answer pattern on Monday, the girls tended to add an emotional or personal tint to their responses beyond simply replying to Jane's question. Garrison (2000) defines these bits of added emotion/personal within comments as "self disclosure;" an emotional expression that contributes to the development of social presence among individuals in an online environment (p. 100). This self-disclosure was not present in the boys' responses where the boys mostly tended to answer Mark's questions directly with no further comments. For example, consider Liz's and Widget's responses.

**Re: Questions for Monday**
by Liz - Monday, 9 July 2007, 08:57 AM
Yes, I have finished the book. The first line did hook me. At first I thought about my secret and then I thought about Emily's.
[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

**Re: Question for Monday**
by Widget - Monday, 9 July 2007, 08:28 PM
I liked the secret line because everybody has a secret. Friends trust each other with secrets 🗨️
[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

Liz directly responded to Jane's questions and then added a personal connection to the first line of the book, "at first I thought about *my* secret [emphasis added] ...". Bridget also makes a personal connection to the idea of secrets, and implied in her posting that she felt as though Emily, the main character in the book, was her friend because Emily was sharing a secret with her. In summary, the girls tended to answer Jane's questions in the order they were presented on Monday, but then also provided opinions about the book and/or made personal connections to the storyline of the text and its characters.

Monday's Synchronous Discussion. The first chat of the Emily book club was held on Monday at 7:00 pm. Four girls participated in the chat: Jenna, Christina, Cami, and Isabella. Jane facilitated the chat, and I was also logged in to the chat. By logging in to the chat, girls could see my profile picture and I was listed as a participant with my screen name, "MoonFrog" (see Figure 5.1). My purpose for logging in was to introduce myself to the girls and to see if any one had any questions about the research. Towards the beginning of the chat, Jane introduced me to the girls, and we had a brief discussion of where I go to college and why I am doing my research. The conversation quickly shifted to wondering what the beep link does in Moodle's chats (see Figure 5.1) as well as answering a question that Isabella asks the girls, "whats is your fav. part of the book everybody". Although I stayed logged in to the chat until it ended, I did not participate in the conversations because I was not a book club member.

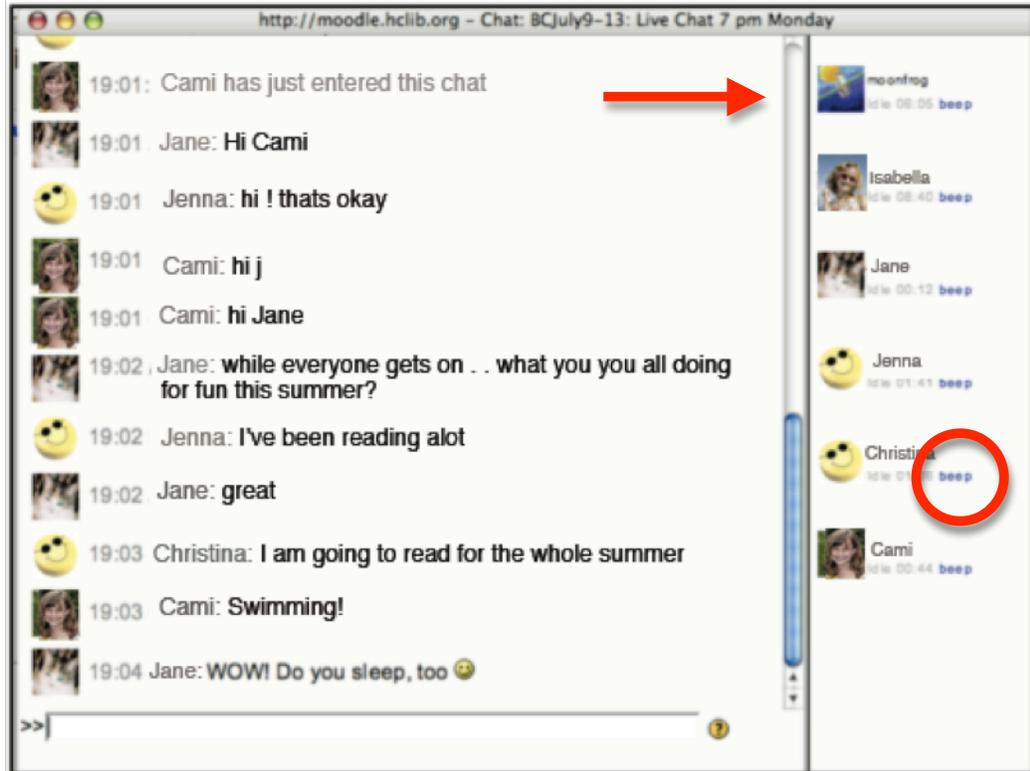
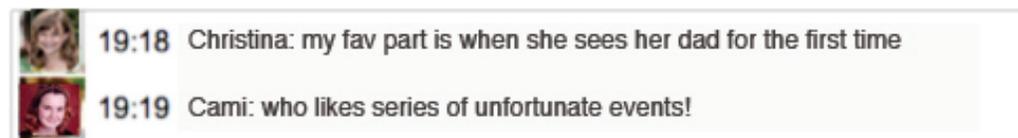
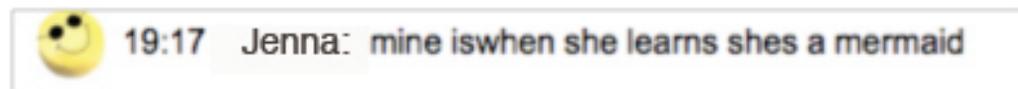
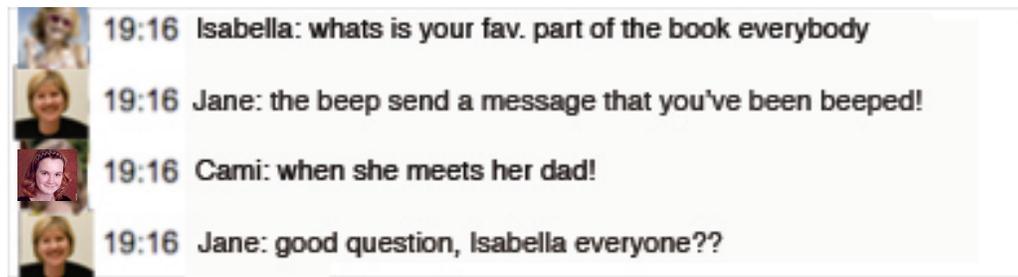


Figure 5.1: Screenshot of Monday’s Chat Discussion with Researcher’s Presence and Moodle’s Beep Feature Highlighted

The chat discussion was scheduled to last for thirty minutes, but it lasted forty-four minutes. A wide variety of topics were covered during this time, including the latest *Harry Potter* movie, the favorite part of Emily Windsnap, “must reads,” people’s ages, profile pictures, and schools. Of the girls, Cami posted the most number of times (51) with Christina following close behind with 41 posts. Jenna and Isabella had significantly fewer posts, 27 and 23 respectively. Jane, in her role as the chat facilitator, posted 66 comments.

There were several moments of silliness in this chat discussion. First, the girls accessed the beep feature throughout the entire conversation. So, while the girls were

typing, they were also beeping each other constantly. Another example of playful behavior is when Isabella directed a question to the group. Two girls responded, but then out of nowhere Isabella posted a strange comment:



The girls all responded to Isabella's question, but they ignored her "I like cheese" comments while Cami moved the conversation in the direction of another popular

fantasy series, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* by Lemony Snicket. Interestingly, one minute later, Cami threw out a silly comment herself, “i like foop!” This time, the girls and Jane questioned the silly word before moving on to another topic.

 19:20 Jane: Lemony Snicket is definitely fantasy

 19:21 Jenna: whats foop?

 19:21 Cami: my teacher loves count olaf!

 19:21 Christina: I have that series

 19:21 jane: yea what is foop?

 19:21 Cami: a kid in my class made it up

 19:22 Jane: and foop means what?

 19:22 Cami: so i dont know...

 19:22 Jane: OK

 19:22 Cami: he never told us!

 19:22 Jenna: thats weird

 19:22 Christina: thats odd

 19:23 Cami: he just kept saying ... foop foop foop!

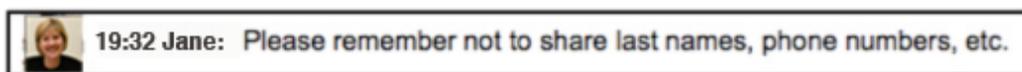
 19:23 Jenna: totally weird

 19:23 Jane: So did you see Harry Potter 5 movie just out?

During the first day of book club and its first chat, the girls feel comfortable enough with each other to verbally play.

The typed speech of these girls was also reflective of their comfort with each other and the medium of online chat given their previous experience with Webkinz and Club Penguin websites. Full sentences were rarely used, and capital letters, spelling, and punctuation rules were relaxed or ignored (e.g., “thats weird,” “well it probaly was not me I just moved here from UT”). However, there were very few instances of chat-speak in the entire transcript, which is indicative of their relative inexperience with strictly chatting using IM services (e.g., AIM, MySpace) or cell phones. Cami used short hand, “u” instead of “you” and “havta” instead of “have to” but did not use any distinctive chat features or language (e.g., LOL, <smile>). All of the girls who were interviewed claim to never experienced chat before.

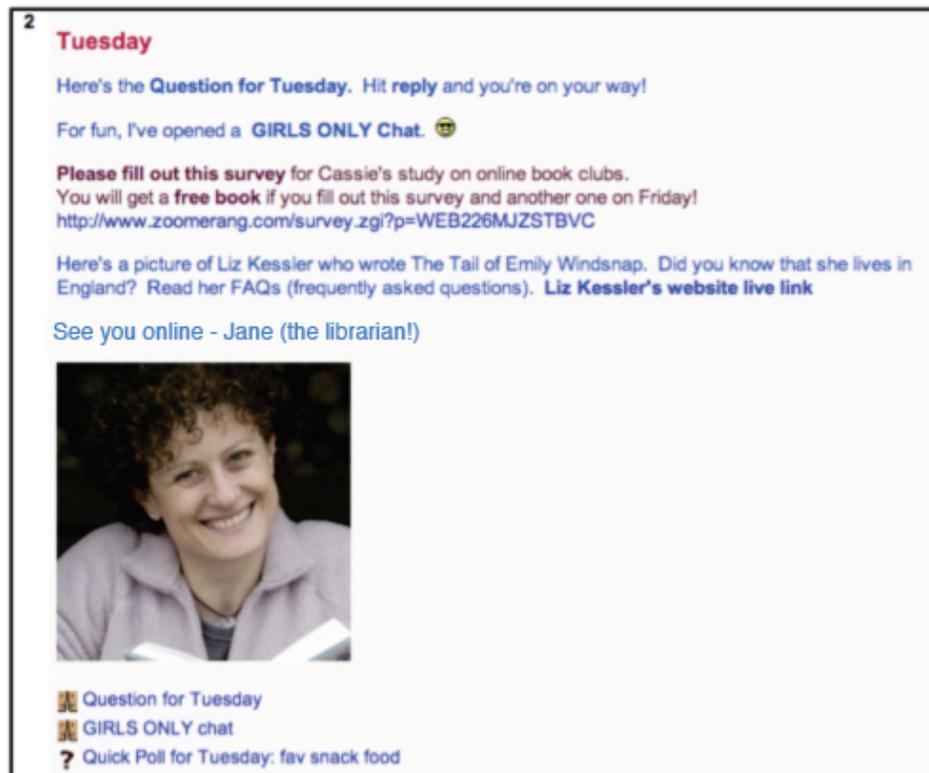
Finally, in comparison to Monday’s threaded discussion, Jane directly asserted her role as facilitator of the club and the chat. She posted the most comments in the chat, with her comments, while friendly in tone, primarily authoritative and regulatory in nature. She greeted each of the girls, kept track of time, inserted questions to keep the conversation moving, and reminded girls twice of library rules about sharing personal information when Isabella asks Christina what her last name is.



Jane defined her role in the chat most succinctly for the girls when they asked her how old she was. Jane never directly shared her age, but instead said that she had a sixteen-year-old son, commenting, “Yeah, I’m more like a mom or a teacher!”

Monday’s chat concluded with good-byes and directions from Jane on how to update their individual profile pictures.

Tuesday. Tuesday’s activities consisted of a daily poll, a question of the day, and a new threaded discussion forum called, Girls Only.



The question for Tuesday asked girls to think about why they enjoyed reading, *The Tail of Emily Windsnap*.

 **Question for Tuesday**
by Jane - Monday, 9 July 2007, 08:00 PM

Was this story fun to read because Emily was a mermaid? Or were you hooked into the book for another reason?

[Reply](#)

Similar to Monday's posts, Tuesday's fourteen threads were full of color, interesting fonts, and emoticons. Not only did each of the girls reply to Jane's question, but ten of the fourteen responses used emoticons in their comments, and six girls used both emoticons and altered text.

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by Melissa - Tuesday, 10 July 2007, 11:04 AM

I liked that it was about a mermaid, but i also liked it because it was different. You know alot of books are about people with normal lifes and this one was different. i also like it, because i could relate to her life. 😊

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by Jenna - Tuesday, 10 July 2007, 12:09 PM

i thought it was cool 😊 to read that emily could become a mermaid because no books i have read had characters like that.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by Michaela - Tuesday, 10 July 2007, 12:33 PM

I liked the book not just because Emily is a mermaid (but that does have something to do with it) but because I thought it was interesting that the author didn't write about a mermaid, but a girl who one day goes swimming and finds out she's a mermaid, and is determened to find out why. That made the book great. 😊

Three additional girls, Liz, Encalles and J.J., also followed Reggie's example on Monday by signing their posts with their names. Whether these unique changes to

posts were the result of play or the need to set posts apart, it is clear that the girls were aware that others were reading their posts. Therefore, girls crafted their posts both with care and creativity.

Like Monday's posts, each of the fourteen girls directly answered Jane's questions in a single post. Each girl posted only one response as its own thread and did not reply to any of the other girls' comments. Based on analysis of the Moodle log for Tuesday, the common pattern of use when the girls logged in this day was: girls first answered the daily poll question, read through the previous threads, and then posted a comment to the daily question. After that activity, the girls signed off until the next day of the club.

In addition to answering the daily question, the girls' comments on Tuesday also contained personal reflections. For example, in Melissa's comment above, she noted, "i also like it [the book], because i could relate to her life. ☺." Assuming Melissa is not a mermaid herself, she was more than likely alluding to one of the other problems Emily experiences in the book that Melissa also deals with, such as trouble with parents, school or a mean, popular girl. J.J. also shared a very personal reflection about herself in her Tuesday post.

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by J.J. - Tuesday, 10 July 2007, 04:16 PM

I was more hooked on the book, because there was a mystery and a lot of action. I am not a girly-girl, AT ALL! 😊 So girly stuff like pink, shopping, and mermaids don't really appeal to me. I am a western girl of soulful horses, farms, mountains, and country, not mermaids. Remember it did hook me, just in different reasons, if it didn't, I wouldn't have finished the book in one day! Really good book,

J.J.

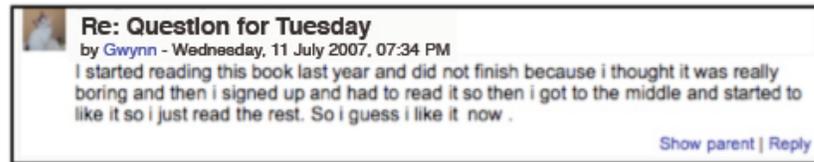
p.s. Sorry about missing the live chat, something came-up.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

In a moment of self-disclosure, J.J. risked alienating herself in an all-girls book club by sharing she is not a “girly-girl, AT ALL! 😊”. She also took a risk by sharing that she did not like the book for its mermaid-theme, which is what many of the girls loved about the book, which she believed was girly. J.J. identifies herself as a different type of girl, but still as a girl who enjoyed the book. Aware that other club members would be reading her post, she also apologized for not being able to join the previous evening’s chat. Clearly, she felt an affinity and responsibility towards the club and its members, even if she is not a “girly-girl.”

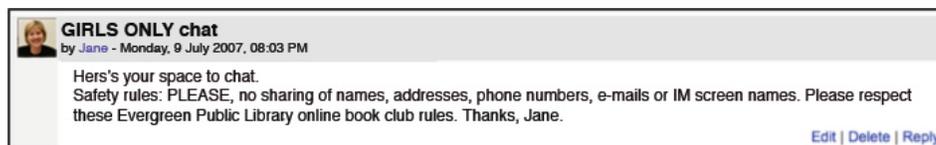
One more additional insight into Tuesday’s posts is that, on average, they were 14 words longer than Monday’s posts. Monday’s posts averaged 24 words in length in comparison to Tuesday’s posts that averaged 38 words in length. This increase in post length could be indicative of the girls’ comfort level with each other, as also evidenced by their increased frequency of self-disclosure.

For example, Gwynn felt comfortable enough to share that she thought the book was boring at first and admitted to only reading it because of signing up for the book club.



Gwynn was really the only book club member to not rave about the book; but, she seems to have felt comfortable enough to share her opinion and experience with the book with the other club members.

Jane created another book club space on Tuesday for girls to access, Girls Only. She promised girls this place to talk during Monday’s chat when girls were asking each other personal questions. The purpose of the space was to give girls a place to talk to each other about non-book related topics.



Five of the girls accessed this space on Tuesday. However, due to the title, “Girls Only chat,” the girls thought it was a real-time chat space rather than the asynchronous threaded discussion place it was.

 **Re: GIRLS ONLY chat**
by [Liz](#) - Tuesday, 10 July 2007, 04:38 PM
Hey!! Is anybody there? 😊
[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: GIRLS ONLY**
by [Isabella](#) - Tuesday, 10 July 2007, 05:40 PM
ya im here
[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: GIRLS ONLY**
by [Isabella](#) - Tuesday, 10 July 2007
ANY BODY THERE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: GIRLS ONLY chat**
by [Reggie](#) - Tuesday, 10 July 2007, 07:25 PM

HELLOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

IS ANYBODY HOME?       

[Insert Smiley](#)













[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



In the surveys and interview, the girls communicated how much they enjoyed participating in the chats, or simply being provided the opportunity to chat. By the posts above, it is clear that the girls were eager to talk to each other in real time, and, that they did not understand the format of the space Jane had created for them. Jane cleared up this misunderstanding up in her email reminder to girls for Wednesday and on Wednesday's welcome message.

Wednesday. In addition to the daily question of the day and the quick poll asking girls to rate the number of stars they would give the book, Jane created another space for girls to leave personal messages for each other. On the welcome message, she also provided a “fun fact” about the author, Liz Kessler, and created a link to her website for girls to visit.

3 **Wednesday**

Here's the **Question for Wednesday**. And of course another **Quick Poll**.

The **Girls ONLY talk space** is still open. 😊 I think I forgot to tell you that Girls ONLY is not live chat like we did on Monday night. Leave your comments and girls will read them later. We'll do another live chat on Thursday at 5:30.

Author fun fact: She lived on a boat on a canal in England for about ten years. Did you read the **Liz Kessler website**?

Have you filled out this survey for Cassie's study on online book clubs. You will get a **free book** if you fill out this survey and another one on Friday!
<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zg?p=WEB226MJZSTBVC>

See you online - Jane (the librarian!)



famous statue of a mermaid in Copenhagen, Denmark.

-  [Question for Wednesday](#)
-  [Quick Poll - rate this book](#)
-  [Girls ONLY talk space](#)

Despite the Girls Only space being asynchronous instead of real-time, three girls left short greetings to each other.

 **Re: GIRLS ONLY talk space**
 by Liz - Wednesday, 11 July 2007, 12:46 PM

HELLO?!

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: GIRLS ONLY talk space**
 by Christina - Wednesday, 11 July 2007, 01:02 PM

HI!!!!!!

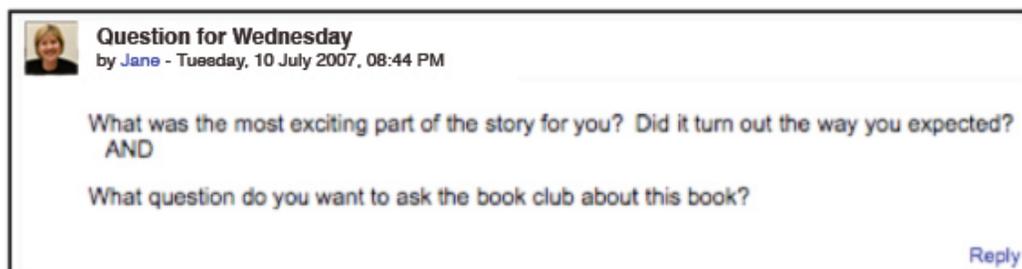
[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: GIRLS ONLY talk space**
 by Meliesa - Wednesday, 11 July 2007, 02:56 PM

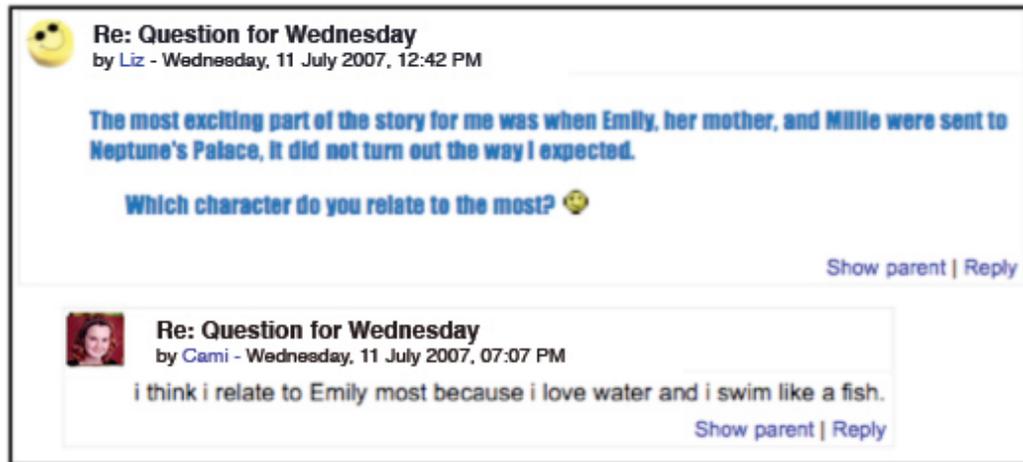
HI WUT'S ^?!?!?!?

Christina (and Liz, but not illustrated above) used the “reply” link to respond directly to other girl’s greetings, actions which rarely occurred in the daily question forums. Perhaps the girls understood that the point was to talk *to* each other in this forum, and were less clear that they could or should have engaged this behavior within the question forums. Text color, font size and look, and chat speak (wut’s ^ for “what’s up) were utilized by the girls to give personality to their posts. Interestingly, the threads in this space never move beyond greetings except midweek where it took on another purpose.

Wednesday’s posts mirrored those of Monday and Tuesday. Again, the question-answer pattern was evident. In the questions for Wednesday, Jane attempted to engage the girls once again with each other.



All fourteen girls responded to Jane’s questions, but two of them (Reggie and Encalles) do not address her last question, which involved directly engaging the other book club members. It was unclear if Jane’s third question’s intention was for the girls to post and respond to each other’s questions in this day’s thread, or if she was attempting to gather ideas for the last two days of discussion. Regardless, during the entire thread, only one girl, Cami, responded to another girl’s question.



The screenshot shows a forum thread with two posts. The first post is by a user named 'Liz' and contains a question about a story. The second post is by a user named 'Cami' and provides an answer to the question.

Re: Question for Wednesday
by Liz - Wednesday, 11 July 2007, 12:42 PM

The most exciting part of the story for me was when Emily, her mother, and Millie were sent to Neptune's Palace, it did not turn out the way I expected.

Which character do you relate to the most? 😊

Show parent | Reply

Re: Question for Wednesday
by Cami - Wednesday, 11 July 2007, 07:07 PM

i think i relate to Emily most because i love water and i swim like a fish.

Show parent | Reply

The extended personal sharing was not evident during Wednesday's posts, but the extension that Jane made in asking girls to generate other questions for the book club members perhaps dampened that sharing and focused the girls' energy on a different type of book club contribution – shaping the book club's direction and discourse.

There was a surprise that occurred during Wednesday's activities that many of the girls I interviewed mentioned. The author of the book, *The Tail of Emily Windsnap*, joined the book club conversation. The girls were not aware that Jane had contacted the author, Liz Kessler, about the online book club and had invited her to join. So, on Wednesday afternoon, the author posted threads in both Monday's and Wednesday's asynchronous discussion.

 **Re: Question for Monday**
by Liz K - Wednesday, 11 July 2007, 02:42 PM

Hi!

This is Liz - creator of Emily Windsnap! 😊

Thank you for inviting me to take part in your online chat forum. (Is that the right expression?) I'm glad that so many of you like the first line of the book. I like to jump straight in and try to get the reader to be right there with me from the start, so I'm glad if it seems to have worked.

When I'm trying to decide whether to buy a book or not, I usually read the first line and if it grabs me I'll buy the book, but if it doesn't I won't bother, so I think the first line is really important!

Best swishes

Liz 😊

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Wednesday**
by Liz - Wednesday, 11 July 2007, 02:48 PM

Hi! 😊

I'm going to give my answers to your questions. (Not sure if I'm meant to be doing that but I'm going to anyway!)

I relate mostly to Emily I think. I didn't even realise how similar she was to me till the other day when my dad said something about what Emily's like, and I suddenly thought - hey, I'm just like that too!!

I think Millie is a bit like my mum. I got a few ideas about her from things my mum does. For example, my mum said something about taking Gingko Baloba tablets, and I thought oh yes, I bet Millie takes them too!

It would be hard to say who's my favourite character. I think as their creator, I love them all in different ways. Even the kraken. Who's the kraken? You mean you haven't read Emily Windsnap and the Monster from the Deep yet...?

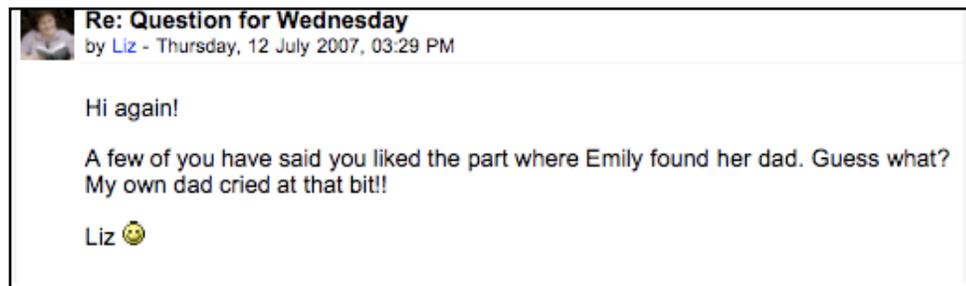
Best swishes

Liz 😊

Only four girls had posted in Wednesday's forum before Liz had, so her post seemed to have a ripple effect on the structure of posts after hers, with posts resembling email messages in regard to sentence structure, capital letters, salutations and closings, and a signature. The girls who posted afterwards used slightly increased formal sentence structures and punctuation besides exclamation points and questions marks. They

seemed to be aware that their club audience now included the book's author, and that Liz Kessler might be reading their posts.

The author's initial postings were warm and open in nature, fully embracing the club nature of the discussion. Also, after she had perused the rest of the book club environment, Liz posted one final message to the club.



Although the girls I interviewed were ecstatic that the author joined the book club for one day, none of the girls or Jane directly or indirectly replied to the content of her posts within the book club environment. The enthusiasm for her participation was expressed outside of the book club in Jane's daily email messages to the girls and in the girls' interviews.

Finally, the typography of Wednesday's posts was similar to the previous days of the book club, although the number of exclamation marks was decreased and emoticon usage increased. Many of the girls still liked to play with the appearance of their posts.

 **Re: Question for Wednesday**
by Reggie - Wednesday, 11 July 2007, 10:04 PM

The most exciting part was when Emily first finds out that she is a mermaid. The first time I read it I wouldn't have thought that Mr. Beeston was a mermaid and that he worked for Neptune. It was also pretty interesting how Shannon describes all the things, and mermaid school and all.

 +  = SMILE!

 girl kitty cat + boy kitty cat = smiling kitty cats

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Wednesday**
by Mala - Wednesday, 11 July 2007, 07:25 PM

the most exciting part was when she found her dad. It did not turn out the way i expected.

What are some books you would reccomend?

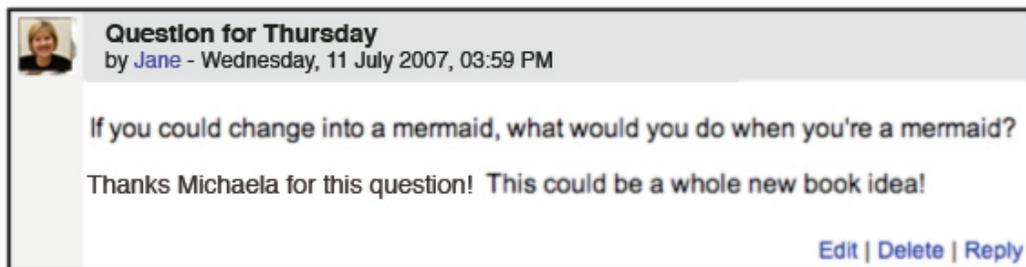


[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

Six of the girls altered the text of their posts, and five of those six also included emoticons in their comments. Eight girls and Liz Kessler utilized emoticons – thirty six in all, but Encalles used all twenty possibilities within a single post.

In the welcome message, Jane drew the girls' attention to the fact that the author of *Emily Windsnap* had joined the book club. She also provided a book recommendation about another book about a girl who lives in the ocean in an effort to keep the girls reading after the club was over.

The question Jane posted for Thursday was the question Michaela suggested during Wednesday's discussion.

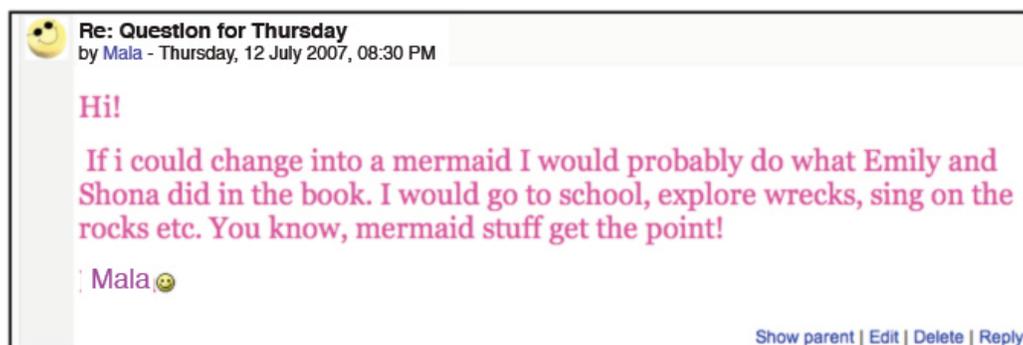


Question for Thursday
by Jane - Wednesday, 11 July 2007, 03:59 PM

If you could change into a mermaid, what would you do when you're a mermaid?
Thanks Michaela for this question! This could be a whole new book idea!

[Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Michaela's question required girls to make a very personal connection with the book and imagine themselves as mermaids. Judging by the responses, the girls enjoyed answering this question. Thirteen girls posted responses, with ten of them using emoticons, seven girls using exclamation points, and six girls altering their text. The girls' responses also expressed enthusiasm about the idea of being a mermaid.



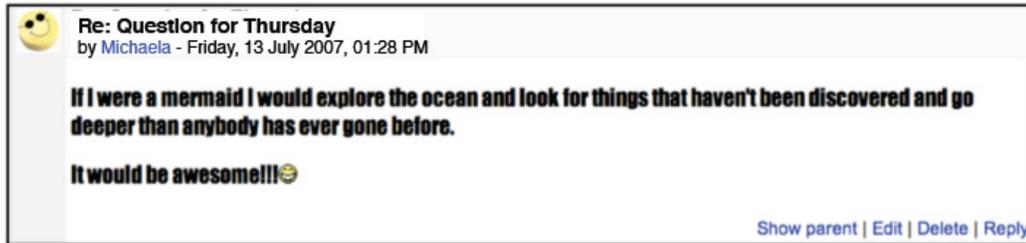
Re: Question for Thursday
by Mala - Thursday, 12 July 2007, 08:30 PM

Hi!

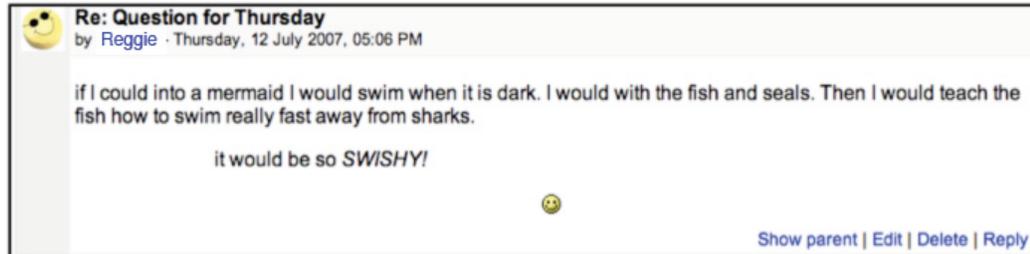
If i could change into a mermaid I would probably do what Emily and Shona did in the book. I would go to school, explore wrecks, sing on the rocks etc. You know, mermaid stuff get the point!

Mala 😊

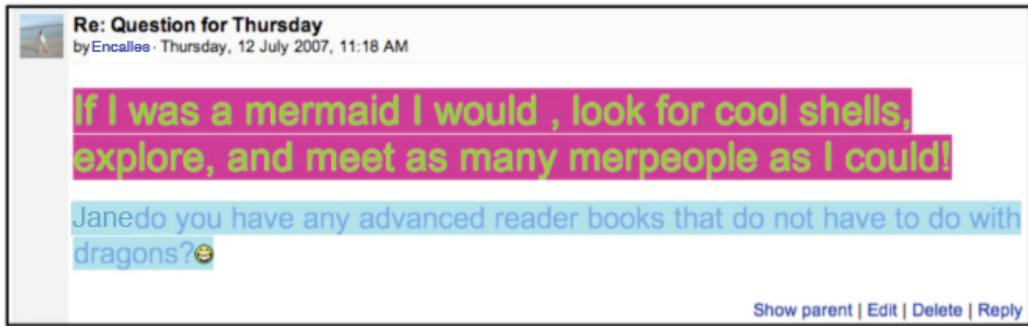
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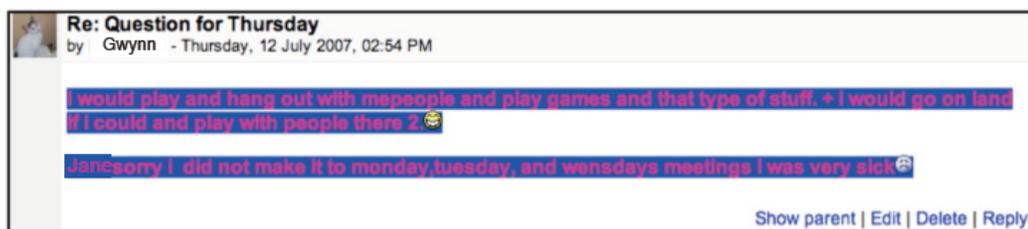
Reggie even incorporated the adjective that Emily used throughout the book to refer to something that is “cool” – “swishy”. Liz Kessler used “swishy” within her book club posts, too.

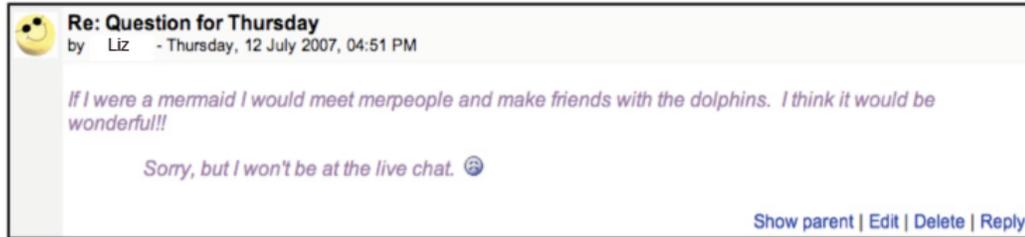


The primary pattern of the book club discourse on Thursday was once again question-answer. There was two moments, however, on Thursday that disrupted this dominant pattern. First, Encalles inserted a question directly to Jane in her response post about suggestions for additional books to read -- and not just any books, “advanced reader books” with no dragons.



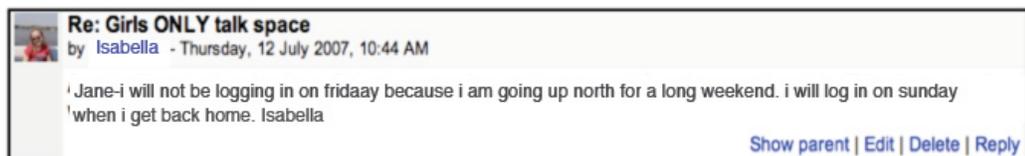
Encalles seemed to be hinting at the fact that many advanced books are fantasy with slightly more appeal to boys. Jane replied to Encalles' questions with two suggestions of EPL resources that could help her in her quest for these types of books. When I spoke to Encalles over the phone, she said she had used the resources right away and had found some more books to read during the summer. The second disruption to the book club's talk occurred at the end of both Gwynn and Liz's posts where they expressed apologies for not being able to participate in some of the book club's activities.





These expressions of remorse illustrate that the girls were not only sad about not being present in some of the club's activities, but that they were socially connected to the book club itself.

There were additional apologies posted in the Girls Only space of Thursday's activities. Three additional girls left messages for Jane specifically letting her know when and why they could not participate in some of the book club activities. Isabella, Melissa, and Abby assured Jane that they either had or would be logging in at a later date to complete the club's activities.



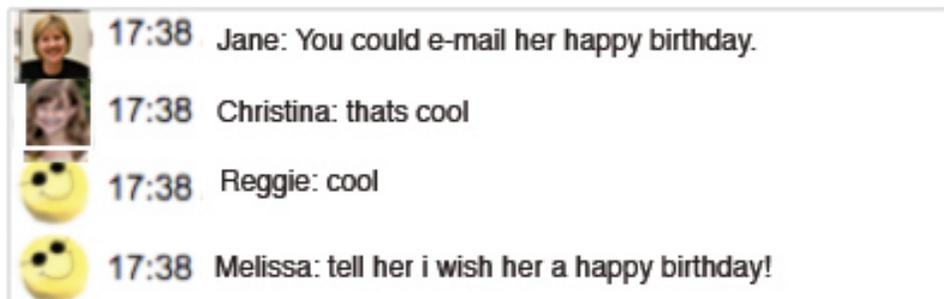
During her interview, Jane expressed that she believed their motivation to complete all of the activities was due to EPL's offer of mailing a free paperback book to club members who participated in all days of the book club. This practice was in no way tied to research activities, but rather something that EPL has done for many years for its kids' book clubs. Girls did not find out about this gift until after the book club had started. A few of the girls mentioned this incentive as a surprise during their

interviews, but no girl or parent said that it was the motivating factor for participation in the online book clubs.

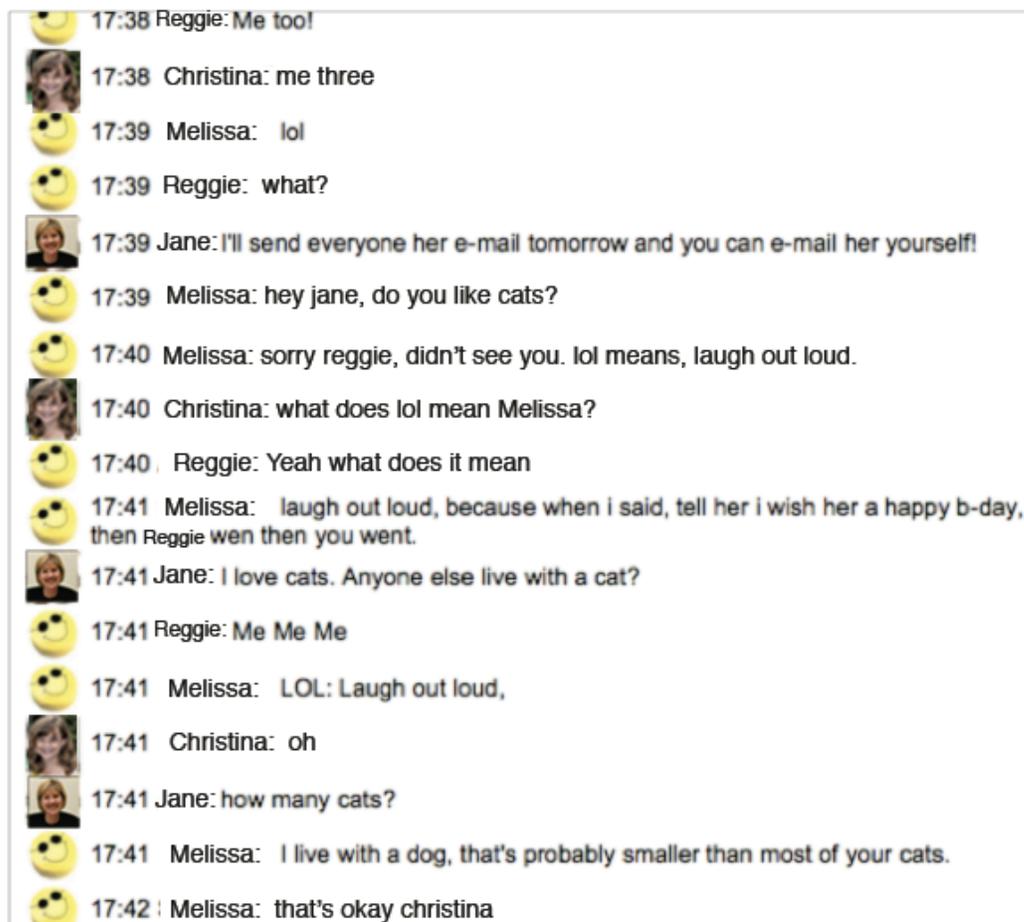
Thursday's Synchronous Discussion. The second chat occurred from 5:30 – 6:05 p.m. on Thursday. Of the four girls who participated (Melissa, Reggie, Christina, and Encalles), only one of them had participated in the previous chat. Overall, this chat's discussion was playful in nature, with the book only serving as the introductory topic.

At the beginning of the chat, Jane asked the girls if they had seen the author's comments in the book club threads. The girls responded that they had seen them, but did not provide any further comments. Jane then mentioned that the author's birthday was the upcoming Monday and that the girls should email her. Christina and Reggie typed, "thats cool," and "cool", and Melissa responded, "tell her i wish her a happy birthday!" After this exchange, the girls quickly moved to other chat topics. Clearly, as evidenced by the rest of the chat transcript, chat is what they came to do on Thursday evening. Reggie even declares, "Let's talk!" a few minutes into chat.

It is clear in the transcript that Melissa is the one girl in the book club with previous chat experience. Consider this exchange when Melissa mentors the rest of the girls in what LOL means:

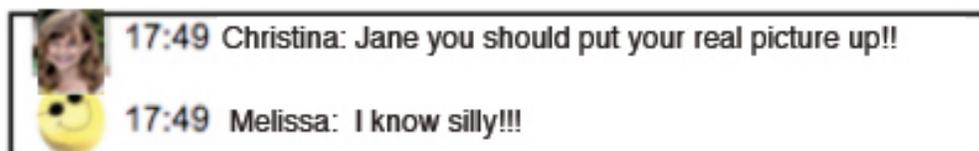


(chat continued on next page)



Melissa kindly explained to both Reggie and Christina what LOL means. Neither of the girls seemed embarrassed or uncomfortable asking Melissa what LOL meant, either. The girls were comfortable with each other. Melissa used and modeled other chat speak during the chat, too, including inserting emoticons in many of her comments: “Encalles, wut’s ^?”, “Copyers i beeped you first!!!(jk)☺”, “(shedding a tear)”, “(shedding long tears).” Noticeably, Melissa did not use these chat conventions in any of her asynchronous posts. She seemed to know the difference between text conventions in threaded discussions and real-time chats.

After the LOL lesson, Jane turned the chat topic to cats. This topic was extended to also include dogs, pets, and a book about dogs. The sharing and chatter lasted for almost six minutes before it was turned to teasing Jane about her profile picture, which was a picture of her cat.

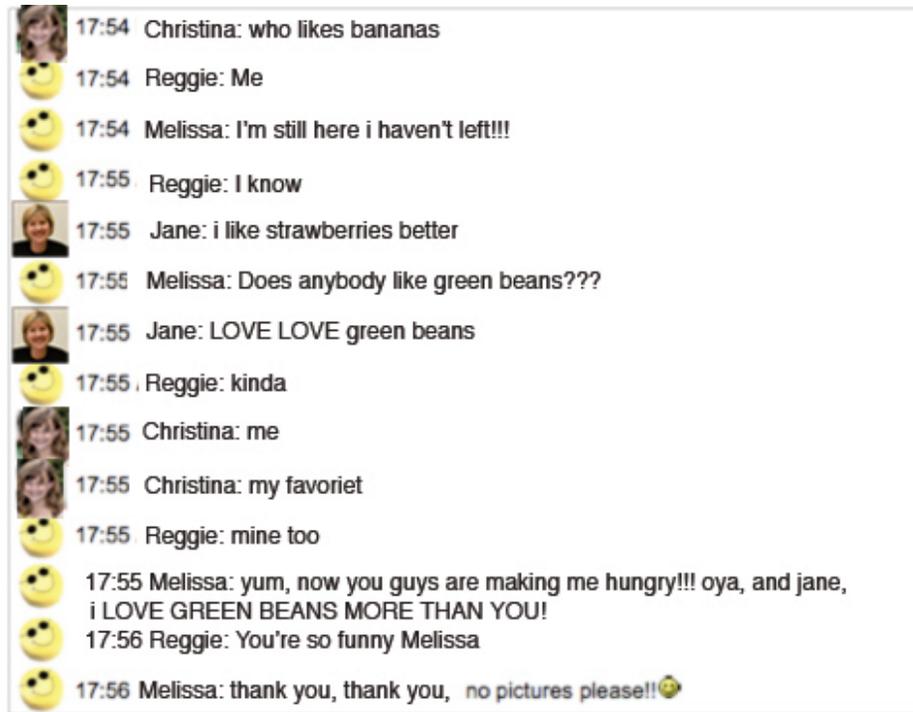


The girls really wanted to see what Jane looked like, even though only two of them had pictures of themselves for their profile picture. During this exchange, it was apparent that the girls viewed Jane not only as their facilitator but as a fellow book club member with whom they were comfortable playing. In addition, they also really wanted to connect with each other visually – to see to whom they were talking. So, during the chat, Jane tried to upload a picture of herself in response the girls’ teasing. This move further encouraged the girls to play as they expressed feigned sadness at

the departure of Jane's cat profile picture, another indicator that Jane was considered by the girls to be "one of the girls."



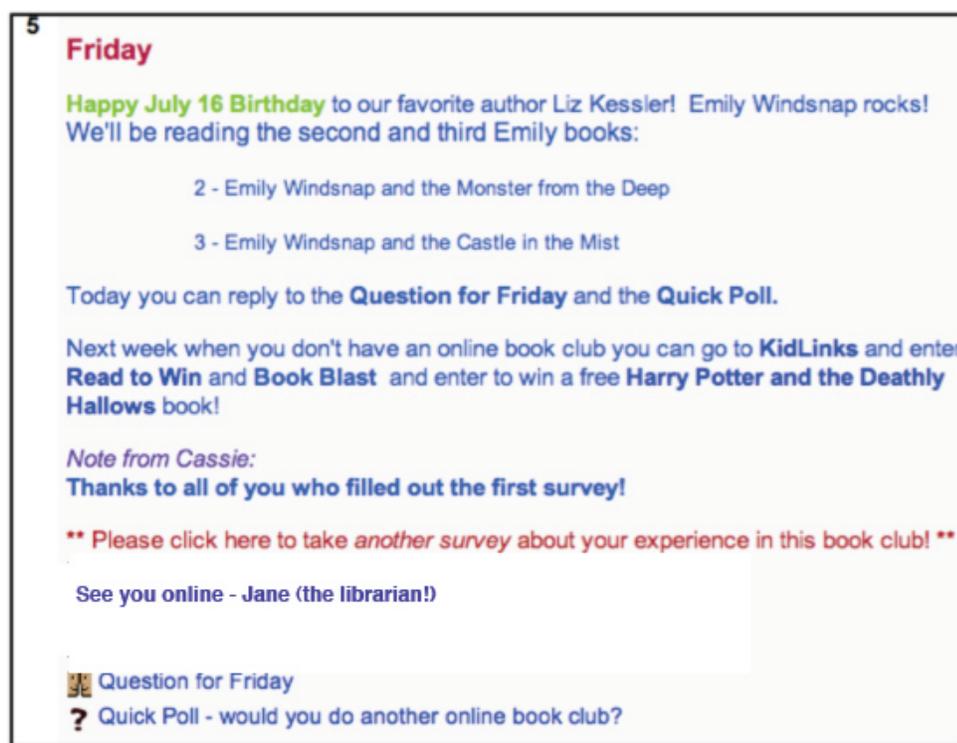
Melissa also teased Jane during the short conversation on fruits and vegetables.



Although Jane did not respond directly to the girls’ playful banter during the chat itself, during her interview she commented on how much fun the chat was, which was also echoed during the girls’ interviews as well.

In summary, the chat seemed to serve as the social glue for the *Emily* book club, which was a book club that was not terribly book-focused. In F2F book clubs, girls may be more apt and able to play verbally with each other, but in this online space, the real-time chat seemed to provide the medium to replicate F2F conversational play. J.J. noted in her post-club survey, “i liked the live chat even though we didnt really talk about the book we sort of got to know the other girls that were reading the book.” Even though the book was the main draw to the book club, the social element was equally important for the book club to seem like a “club” verses a different type of conversation about books.

Friday. The last day of the *Emily Windsnap* book club provided girls with two book club activities, a quick poll, a question of the day, and my post-club research survey. Jane also provided girls with information about other reading activities at EPL the following week and the names of the other two books in the *Emily Windsnap* series.



5 **Friday**

Happy July 16 Birthday to our favorite author Liz Kessler! Emily Windsnap rocks! We'll be reading the second and third Emily books:

- 2 - Emily Windsnap and the Monster from the Deep
- 3 - Emily Windsnap and the Castle in the Mist

Today you can reply to the **Question for Friday** and the **Quick Poll**.

Next week when you don't have an online book club you can go to **KidLinks** and enter **Read to Win** and **Book Blast** and enter to win a free **Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows** book!

Note from Cassie:
Thanks to all of you who filled out the first survey!

**** Please click here to take another survey about your experience in this book club! ****

See you online - Jane (the librarian!)

 **Question for Friday**

 **Quick Poll - would you do another online book club?**

All fourteen girls took the poll and replied to the question by Sunday night.

For the final day, Jane asked the girls to think about what would happen in the *next Emily Windsnap* book. Liz Kessler herself had also alluded to this book in her Wednesday post.

 **Question for Friday**
by Jane: Thursday, 12 July 2007, 06:09 PM

What do you think will happen in the sequel called Emily Windsnap and the Monster from the Deep?

[Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Girls were enthusiastic in their responses. Emoticons, exclamation points, and altered font were again used in the responses to express the delight and individuality.

 **Re: Question for Friday**
by Christina - Friday, 13 July 2007, 06:12 PM

I think that Emily and Shona will be swimming deep in the ocean, and the monster will capuure them! 😊

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There were also a few comments about how excited some of the girls were to read the next book. In fact, Reggie mimicked Encalles' description of her excitement, suggesting that the girls were readily reading each other's posts.

 **Re: Question for Friday**
by Encalles - Friday, 13 July 2007, 01: 08 PM

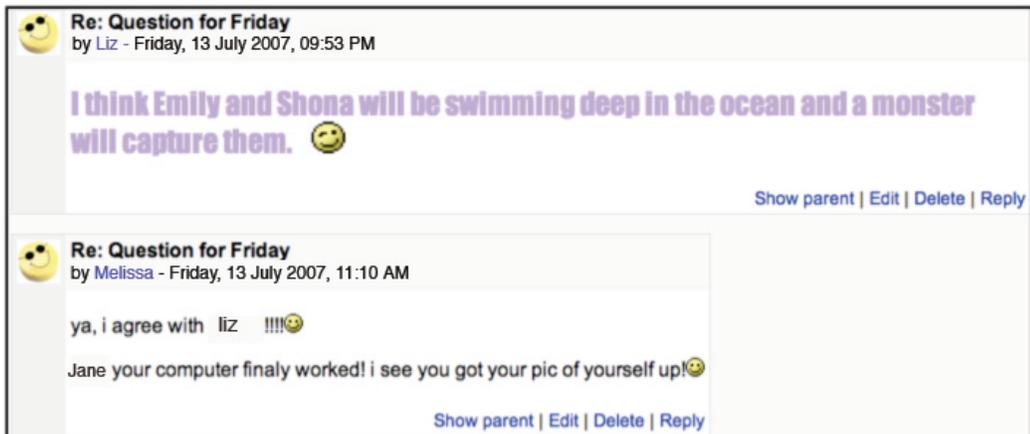
I think theres going to be something hapening with a monster from the deep!

P.S. I am jumping up and down (waiting) to read the second book!

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During this last day of the book club, there was a change in how Melissa composed her post. In contrast to the all the club's previous posts, Melissa incorporated Jane's and Liz's names in her post. She referred to Liz's post and made a direct comment to Jane based on the previous evening's chat.



Through using Liz's name and referring to a previous discussion, Melissa shifted her club discourse from collective to individual, in an explicit way that none of the other girls had done.

This final day of the book club ended with no hoorays, no good byes, no thank yous; the club was simply over. Jane thanked them for their participation in her daily email message to them, but that was the extent of closure. There was no Girls Talk space offered for this day. The average length of Friday's posts was 21 words -- the shortest of the week. Despite this quiet ending to the book club, the girls raved about their experiences on the post-club survey and during their interviews.

Girl's Post-Club Survey Results

On the post-club survey, girls were asked to identify where they accessed the computer and Internet in order to participate in the club. All of the girls accessed the club at home, with the two sisters additionally using the computers at an EPL library. Over the five days, one girl, Abby, accessed the club from home, from an EPL library, and a YMCA.

Girls were also asked about their preferences for book club venue: online or meeting in EPL libraries. Next summer, if given a choice, four girls would choose online book clubs over clubs that met in the library (e.g., "online, because since I am really busy it is much easier to go to the computer any time at home or anywhere;" "online because it fits into my schedule.") Not a single girl would register for a library-based club if given they had to choose between online and F2F. But, six girls would choose to participate in both clubs (e.g., "both. they're fun either way. at the library you can see the person;" "I'd choose either one. I think they're both great.") Finally, girls were asked to identify their preferences for book club members: all girls, both boys and girls, with adults, or no preference. Seven girls favored all-girls book

clubs and four girls did not have a preference. No one selected “both boys and girls.” These girls seemed to like the all-girl nature of this club.

Similar to the boys’ post-club responses, the responses on the post-club survey (11 total) were overwhelmingly positive in regard to girls’ experiences in the online book club. All eleven girls would tell their friends to join online clubs. When asked to explain why they would tell their friends, comments included nine enthusiastic references to “fun” and the explanation, “yes because it’s a different experience and it’s always fun to try new things.” All eleven girls reported liking being a member of the club. When asked why they liked being members of the *Emily* club, four girls made reference to the flexibility of the online club (e.g., “you can do it whenever you have the time”) and three girls mentioned talking about the book (e.g., “because it’s fun to talk to other girls about the book;” “it was cool talking about the book.”) Other comments were more generally related to having fun, loving reading, and liking book clubs. Perhaps it is the type of questions that the girls were asked to answer that made the experience of talking about books pleasurable and “fun.” Perhaps the types of questions are what sets these online book club conversation apart from school-based reading discussions, which is discussed in Chapter 7.

The girls were also asked to specifically identify what their favorite thing was about the book club. The most frequently mentioned aspect of the online book clubs was the social element (5) (e.g., “being able to know what other girls thought of the book;” “talking to other people that already read the book.”) The live chats and daily questions were also referenced as favorites. When asked what they would change about the online book club, seven of the eleven girls replied to change nothing – they

liked them as they were. Two girls shared that they would like to have more chats, and two other girls wanted to have the book club last longer. Collectively, the girls were satisfied with the clubs as they were designed and enjoyed the social nature of talking about books in an online environment.

Overall, the responses to the post-club survey questions illustrated that the online *Emily* book club was overwhelmingly well received by the girls. Detailed in the next section, the transcripts of this book club's discourse exemplify these positive assertions and the girls' enjoyable experiences.

Interview Insights

Interviews with ten of the participants and their mothers confirmed and extended the information obtained via surveys about the girls' overall experiences in this club. The purpose of these interviews was to triangulate girls' responses on the surveys as well as to obtain information about *how* these girls participated in the online book clubs. Although multiple interviews were conducted, two girls are highlighted here who participated in all facets of the research activities (pre- and post-club surveys, book club transcripts, individual interview, and parent interview).

Mala and Her Mom, Anju. Mala was a ten year-old girl of Indian descent who participated in several of EPL's activities including this online book club, chess meetings and a writing contest. Her mom, Anju, shared that Mala "loves reading, loves math, and she is funny." In fact, Anju encourages Mala to stop reading and to go outside and play.

During her interview, Mala shared that she would rate the club a 4 out of 5 for fun because, "it was really fun, fun to talk about the book and read about the book. It

wasn't a 5 because I like want to see the people." She had previously been in a book club that met in the library, and liked that you could "meet and talk with real girls – not on the web." Mala shared that she really wanted to see pictures of the girls, but that few has posted them, including herself. When I asked her why she left her profile picture as a smiley face, she replied that she did not know how to post a picture.

Despite not having a visual connection with the other book club members, Mala loved the book club. Her favorite part of the club was "the book. Basically everything." She also really liked that the author joined the conversation. Interestingly, although she did not participate in either of the chats, Mala said that the live chats were her favorite part of the club environment. The girls were able to read the transcripts of the chats, which Mala did, noting, "girls were silly and just wanted to talk about nothing specific."

Being silly sounded like fun to Mala. Mala's mom, Anju, noted that one advantage to F2F book clubs is that the girls can get to know each other and become friends. In the online clubs, "you don't know the girls." However, due to the family's work schedule, Mala will need to participate in online book clubs again rather than the ones offered through EPL that are offered during the day time.

Jenna and Her Mom, Rose. Jenna was a ten-year-old Caucasian girl who preferred girls-only book clubs. According to her mom, Jenna is a very quiet, thoughtful, and intelligent girl who loves to read; "Books are her best friend. I need to coax her to do other things besides reading." She participated in three book clubs (one online) offered through EPL the summer of 2007.

Rose described the primary advantage of the online book club for Jenna as being a place where she could open up: "She may have been in a little more friendly

because she's kinda quiet whereas when she's talking face-to-face, she may act a little more shy. When she is online, she can say what she is thinking without feeling uncomfortable about it." Rose also noted that the downside to online book clubs was that they did not give Jenna "face-to-face practice" talking with people.

When I spoke with Jenna on the phone, she described to me that she accessed the book club on a home computer, "I just went online whenever I had time. My mom usually reminded me to go on." Jenna also gave the club as rating of 4 out of 5, with her favorite thing about the club being, "I liked to hear what the other girls had to say about the book." The chat feature was new to her and her favorite part of the environment. Jenna commented, "I liked the live chat 'cause even though we didn't talk about the book that much...I liked it because sort of in a way you got to know what the other girls you were discussing the book with were like." Although she does email her friend, she had never experienced chatting before her online book club experience.

Summary of Girls' Online Book Club

From the first day of the girls' club, it seemed that the girls were emotionally connected to the text and, perhaps, to the club itself and its members as evidenced through their expressions of emotion, playful manner in the chat, and engagement in creative, colorful posts. In fact, this connection to the club lasted throughout the entire five days of the club. All fourteen girls were active in the club during the entire five days. There were norms established in relation to how to respond to a daily question and playful banter between the girls and Jane in the real-time chats. Jane was clearly viewed as and exhibited the behaviors of the facilitator of the club. Like the facilitator

of the boy's club, she did not actively participate in the book discussions but rather built the structures of the club and encouraged girls to participate, safely, in the club's activities.

Due to the unanimous adoration of the book by the book club's members, this online club had a collective club feel to it rather than as a group composed of individuals. When I asked Jane and the girls if there were specific book club members whose posts they looked forward to reading each day, no one identified anyone. Rather, the threads seemed to be viewed simply as comments with no authors attached to them. The girls did not seem to have an affinity to any particular club member, but rather to the club itself. Several girls mentioned in their interviews that it would be nice to see the other club members, either through posted profile photos (which many girls did not know how to do and had family members do this for them), or, as Christina suggested, through webcams. Many of the girls expressed missing that physical, personal connection that is part of face-to-face book clubs.

Chatting was a favorite part of the club environment for most girls. In her interview, Christina commented that she liked the chats "because everybody is in there and you don't have to wait for a response. I would have a chat every day so we could talk about what we did that day." So, the chats seemed to help facilitate the social connection that was missing for many of the girls in the club's main discussions. The chat is the place where the girls got to personally know each other and Jane.

Finally, the discussion pattern of the girls' club conversations mirrored that of the boy's club's conversations. The dominant pattern in the girls' asynchronous discussions was facilitator question- kid response. Girls could have posted additional

questions to each other in their posts, but did not engage each other this way. The girls expressed thoroughly enjoying the book and answering questions about it. And, similar to the boys' club, the questions Jane posed did not deal with school terms and concepts such as plot, character development, or theme. Instead, Jane asked questions that sparked girl's imaginations and asked for their opinions. Like the questions asked in the boys' club, these were book club questions.

CHAPTER 6

HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS' ONLINE BOOK CLUB

This chapter provides a detailed description of a mixed-gender online book club. First, a short overview of the club is presented that includes details on participants and data sources. Book club experiences and insights from three participants and their parents are described next followed by a description and analysis of the club's daily activities. Finally, the online book club's activities are summarized.

General *Harry Potter* Online Book Club Details

Overview. Prior to the club starting, registered boys and girls were encouraged to have completed reading the book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007) written by J. K. Rowling. This book is the seventh and final in a series of books about a boy wizard named Harry Potter. The entire *Harry Potter* series continues to be immensely popular around the world, and to date, has sold 44 million copies. Geared toward readers of all ages, including adults, this fantasy book is 759 pages long and contains no illustrations.

The eagerly awaited release date of this last *Harry Potter* book occurred at 12:01 am July 21, 2007. Bookstores around the United States were open throughout the night in order to hold book release parties. For example, the national bookstore chain, Barnes and Noble, held "Midnight Magic" themed-celebrations where fans were invited to dress up as their favorite character, play wizard games, and, of course, purchase the book. In efforts to capitalize on the excitement surrounding the book and to provide readers with a space to talk about the book, EPL offered an online book club that was held two weeks after the book's release, from August 6 - 10 (Monday

through Friday). Despite the book's length, EPL was confident that the book club participants would have finished reading the book in time to participate in the book club.

Just like EPL's previous online clubs, the registered book club members and their parents/guardians were sent daily initial login instructions, library contact information for help (names, phone numbers, email addresses) and reminders to participate in the online environment. Each day there were new activities for the club members to engage in including quick polls; daily questions about the book and its characters in asynchronous, threaded discussion forums; one real-time chat; and an open forum for members to get to know each other. In addition, there were many Internet links posted in the online environment for members to access that pertained to the book (e.g., J.K. Rowling's website, MuggleNet Games).

Harry Potter Club Participants. Unlike the previous clubs, this book club was open to both boys and girls. The club audience was also extended to include kids in grades 4 - 8 due to the overwhelming popularity and broad appeal of the book. Prior to the club starting, twenty-nine kids registered for the *Harry Potter* club (19 girls, 10 boys); however, only ten kids participated in the club in any capacity – seven of the ten actively. So, despite EPL's intention of this club being mixed-gender, the active club participants included only one boy, and, unfortunately, he did not assent to participate in the research study.

The EPL teen librarian, Monica, volunteered to facilitate the *Harry Potter* book club. She was a huge fan of the entire *Harry Potter* series and had expertise in

working with teens and participating in book clubs. She was the designer the club's web pages and developed its questions and activities.

Data. Eight girls assented to participate in the Harry Potter research activities. Pre- and post-club surveys, book club transcripts, and interview data were collected from these eight assenting club participants (see Table 6.1). Five of the members (Erin, Janea, Gwynn, Isabella, Melissa) were considered active participants who logged in for four days or more. Four girls completed both pre- and post-club surveys and three girls completed surveys as well as both parent and personal interviews.

Table 6.1

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Online Book Club Data – August 2007

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Interview	Parent Interview
Erin*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x*
Janea*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x*
Isabella	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Gwynn	x	x	x (sat)	x (sat)	x (sat)	x	x	x	
Melissa	x	x		x	x				
Jenna	x (tues)	x	x						
Encalles**	x	x				x			
Widget**	x (tues)	x				x			
TOTAL DATA POINTS	8	8	5	5	5	6	4	4	2

* sisters (same parent) / ** sisters (same parent)

Harry Potter Survey and Interview Insights

The *Harry Potter* book club began with enthusiasm, but participation rapidly faded as the week progressed. This club's participation patterns, pre- and post-club survey completion rates and their results, as well as comments made during individuals interviews clearly illustrate the diminishing nature of club activity and discussion through the five days.

Demographic and background information were gathered from pre-club surveys. The research participants, all female, ranged in age from nine to 13-years-old. Four girls self-identified as having Caucasian ancestry and two girls (sisters) self-identified as having Asian or Pacific Islander ancestry. All six girls who completed the pre-club survey attended public schools. All of the girls except for Erin had participated in book clubs previously, with six of them having participated in the *Emily Windsnap* online book club three weeks prior. Similarly to the reading interests expressed by girls in the *Emily Windsnap* club, all of the girls except Isabella checked, "I read all the time because I love to read" when asked what type of reader s/he was.

Next, to illustrate the wide range of participants' and their experiences in the *Harry Potter* book club, three book club members are described using their survey responses as well as individual and parent interview comments.

Erin, Janea, and their Dad, Thomas. Erin and Janea are sisters, 13 and 11, respectively, who were avid readers and active participants in the online book club. I had the pleasure of meeting Erin, Janea, and Thomas in person at a T.G.I.Friday's restaurant for lunch a week after the book club concluded to discuss their experiences and comments on their post-club surveys.

The oldest member of the book club, Erin “prefers typing to talking” and signed up for the book club after a suggestion from her dad because she “needed something to do” over the summer (post-club survey). Younger Janea decided to register for the *Harry Potter* club because she “like[s] to chat online more than to other people” (post-club survey). Janea liked to “read strategy guides (online) for some of the games [she] plays on [her] Nintendo DS” (post-club survey). Both girls had their own personal computer and spent time almost every day on the Internet playing games, building websites, and participating in virtual world sites similar to WebKinz that used human avatars to “talk with people in Australia and stuff” (Erin, interview).

Both girls expressed great disappointment over the lack of participation by others in the book club, which greatly affected their overall enjoyment of the club. Janea commented on her post-club survey, “Well, it was ok, the Daily Questions got dull after awhile and we didn’t talk about anything fun. It seemed like only ¼ of the people who signed up partisipated.” Erin commented, “No, I did not like being a member of the club. It was very shallow and nobody really posted anything that made me think” (post-club survey). Over lunch, the girls shared that initially, at the beginning of the club, they would check the book club “every hour” and “there was nothing new,” so they stopped logging in so frequently; “I didn’t have people to talk to” (Janea); “Is there anyone else out there? I wanted a debate” (Erin). After a day or two of the book club, Erin and Janea were frustrated with the lack of participation by others; however, “we were told to go post every day” (Erin) by their dad. Janea rated the book club a 2 for fun while Erin rated it a 1.5 out of 5.

The girls' dad, Thomas, shared that the three of them interacted at home about the book club questions. Thomas mentioned that they brainstormed together a few times about how to respond to the daily questions, and that Janea had even stolen an idea from Erin and posted it online first. In fact, not only did they all talk about the book club, Janea and her dad actually read the book out loud together in the evenings prior to the club starting. They purchased a family copy of the book the night of its release at midnight. Erin took the book first and finished it in a few days. She then passed the book to Janea and her dad to read.

It was clear after talking with girls and their dad, as well as after analyzing their online posts, that both Janea and Erin were very advanced readers with technology savviness and previous online social experience. Unfortunately, the *Harry Potter* book club failed to capture their interest and enthusiasm mainly due to maturity differences between these sisters and the actual participants, and the promise of many kids participating but the reality of very few contributing. Thomas commented that he saw the potential of the online book club in being a medium that could allow them to “participate in a way they like to participate – online. They are children of the twenty-first century.” In the end, the girls very much enjoyed the book itself, but they found the book club “boring.” Both girls expressed that they would not sign up for another online club the following summer. Janea commented, “I didn’t like this bookclub, all the people who signed up and actually did anything sounded like they were going into 3rd or 4th grade (I mean they need to learn how to spell) everyone except me and my sister, Erin” (post-club survey).

Isabella and her Mom, Meghan. Meghan described her daughter, Isabella, as a bubbly ten-year-old who really liked to chat with her friends. Also a member of the *Emily Windsnap* online book club, Isabella participated in the *Harry Potter* club every day. Isabella's motivation for participating in both of these online clubs was to work towards earning a Girl Scout reading badge. Unlike the majority of kids who participated in EPL's online book clubs, Isabella did not love to read. On her pre-club survey when she was asked to identify her favorite things to read, Isabella checked "magazines" and typed in, "I do not read for fun most of the times." During her interview, Isabella explained, "I read pretty fast in my head and pretty slow when I read out loud. And I really can't remember things when I read in my head. So, I usually get these tapes that we put in the DVD player and you just listen to it and follow the words." Meghan confirmed that Isabella has to be enticed into reading, but does enjoy reading along with audio recordings of books. In her spare time, Isabella said that she spends time on the computer accessing the websites, www.neopets.com, and www.webkinz.com in order to play games and chat with other neopets and webkinz, who, like Isabella, are real people.

During the online book clubs, Isabella's mom and dad both helped her. Her mom uploaded a photo of her for her profile picture, which was a picture of her on a boat. Her dad helped her go online and access the book club website. Meghan also sat with Isabella a few times when she was answering a question or participating in the *Emily Windsnap* chat. Her parents helped her initially navigate the book club website until she felt comfortable doing it herself.

On her post-club survey, Isabella noted that she “liked the books and reading the questions and answers every day.” The *Emily Windsnap* book was Isabella’s favorite book, but *Harry Potter* made her “kinda doze away” when her mom was reading it out loud to her. In fact, she still had two hundred pages left to finish when the book club ended. Interestingly, Isabella was not afraid to share in the online discussions (1) that she had not read any of the other *Harry Potter* books prior to *The Deathly Hallows* and (2) her ambivalence towards the book itself.

The book itself would be the deciding factor for Isabella next summer if she would participate in another online club, although she would prefer a F2F club but “can’t get there during the day” (post-club survey). Meghan viewed the F2F clubs as “more beneficial” but liked that Isabella could practice her typing skills and “Internet maneuvering” in an online club; “by the end of the summer, she knew exactly what she was doing.” Isabella also preferred all-girl book clubs. She explained, “Like you can say things more that a girl would understand more than a boy. Like for *Harry Potter*, my favorite character is Hermione. I think that girls would agree with that. Unlike boys, they would be like Harry or Ron.” The chats were Isabella’s favorite thing about the book clubs themselves, although she was not able to participate in the *Harry Potter* chat, she was able to participate in the *Emily Windsnap* one. Overall, Isabella rated her *Harry Potter* book club experience a 3 out of 5 for fun, and the *Emily Windsnap* club a 5 out of 5. She explained her ratings this way: “I liked the book better and had more fun” (interview).

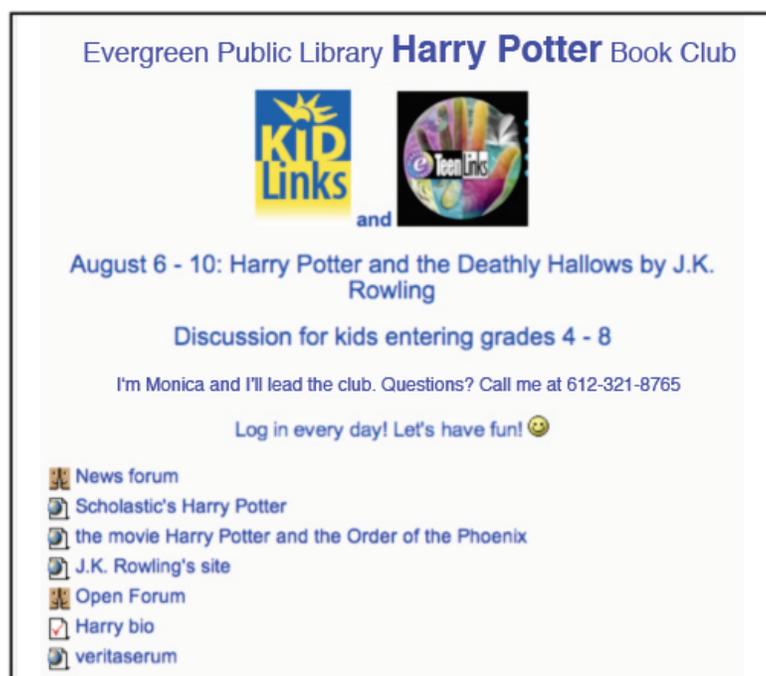
Given the range in reading abilities, interests, maturity levels, and technology savvy of the book club participants, the online discussions and level of involvement in

the *Harry Potter* club varied greatly. The following description of the club’s activities and discussions illustrate the discrepancies in individual club members’ and facilitator’s expectations and realities.

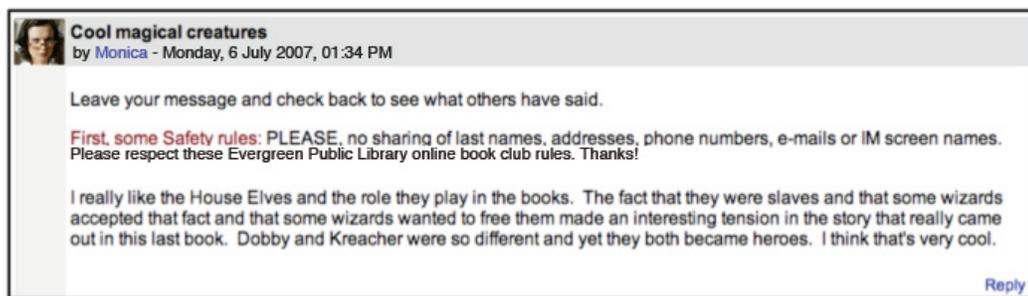
Description of the *Harry Potter* Book Club Daily Activities

The *Harry Potter* club environment was not only a place to talk about the book but to “do stuff” about the book (Monica, interview). Monica explained that she designed the club to be “content heavy” due to the energy around the book and the plethora of online resources about the book. So, each day for the online *Harry Potter* book club, Monica posted a greeting prompt that contained an image related to the book, the question of the day as well as multiple activities.

Monday. When the girls logged on the first day of the book club, they saw an inviting welcome message from Monica:



The welcome message contained links to other web pages about the author, the films based on earlier Harry Potter books as well as to a quiz on the main character's biography. There was also a link to an "open forum" that Monica created for the club members to talk about the book, other fantasy books or any other topics the kids wanted to so that "they could get to know each other." This forum had one discussion thread started by Monica on "cool magical creatures" from the Harry Potter series.



Monica first provided some basic online "safety" rules and then shared her favorite magical creatures from the books, modeling for the members how they could interact in this open forum. Only two members, the sisters, posted to this forum over the course of the entire book club, with their posts occurring on the first day of the club.

 **Re: Cool magical creatures**
by Anna - Monday, 6 August 2007, 05:36 PM

I really like the centaurs because they are always in the Forbidden Forest, but they seem to know what is going on before other people know. I like how they help Harry defeat Voldemort in the end. I also like how they are half-human and half-horse

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 **Re: Cool magical creatures**
by Erin - Monday, 6 August 2007, 0601 PM

I agree, the house elves do add a fascinating twist to the story. I find it rather interesting how they've been serving wizards so long that nobody really notices it anymore and now, in the new generation, more and more people seem opposed to it but, the house elves don't really seem to want to leave their masters because, since they've been serving them their entire lives they don't know what to do other than serve. Also, I liked how the house elf's magic was different than wizard's magic because, I had it in my mind that there was only one type of magic and all creatures that had magical abilities used that magic, not that all creatures could have different forms of it. I think, in my thinking I was quite a bit like Voldemort as, in the cave, he had not prepared defense against any type of magic but wizarding, enabling Kreacher to apparate out.

I also agree with Anna about Centaurs, in the first six books, they were there but they were never actually involved, even though they knew about everything that was happening I don't think they ever really felt a need to participate because, what's the point in joining a war if it's not absolutely necessary? Although, I was glad they did join in they end and help save the day!

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Cool magical creatures**
by Monica - Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 10:20 AM

I like what you all said about the centaurs. It would have been great if the wild magical creatures in the forest could have gotten more involved. I was pretty bummed the wild giants sided with Voldemort. At least no one tamed a dragon to fight for them! 🐉

Erin and Anna's responses were thoughtful and loaded of insights about the book and its complex magical characters. Monica responded to their posts on Wednesday, again modeling, albeit perhaps too late to be effective, how to thoughtfully reply to a member's post. She also demonstrated deep knowledge about the *Harry Potter* books. No further threads or discussions were held in the open forum for the rest of the book club.

In addition to the welcome message and activities, book club members also were able to access Monday's greeting and its activities.



Monday

Hey everyone! Welcome! Get started by clicking on **Question for Monday** below. Hit reply and you're on your way! Check back to read what other people have added. You can comment as many times as you'd like!

For fun, do the **Quick Poll**, too! 😊

Please fill out this survey for Cassie's study on online book clubs.

You will get a **\$7 gift certificate** if you fill out this survey and another one on Friday! Click **HERE** for the survey, or cut and paste this URL into your browser:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB226S59SLMBL>

Join us tomorrow night! 😊 **Live Chat - Tuesday at 7 p.m.** 😊 about 30 minutes. Talk about books and get to know each other! Click on **Live Chat** at 7 p.m.

See you online - Monica the Librarian

-  [Harry Potter book covers](#)
-  [Mary GrandPre's site](#)
-  [Quick Poll](#)
-  [Question for Monday](#)

The first day of the book club provided the book club members with many activities: a poll, a pre-club research survey, a question of the day, and links to two websites about the Harry Potter book covers and the illustrator of them.

What will you do now that Harry Potter's story is finished?

cry find other fantasy books re-read the series hope Rowling writes more

[Save my choice](#)

Six book club members logged in on Monday and participated in its activities. All of the book club members responded to the poll and accessed one or both of the Internet links. Two additional members logged in on Tuesday and contributed to Monday's discussion.

 **Question for Monday**
by [Monica](#) - Monday, 6 August 2007, 10:20 AM

The artist who drew Harry Potter, Mary GrandPre, used to live here in the Twin Cities. Which book cover is your favorite? Do you think these pictures and the way the movies look are important to telling Harry Potter's stories?

[Reply](#)

Minutes after the question of the day was posted, Anna and Erin replied. Monica then replied to their posts less than an hour later to make sure the girls knew that there was a link to all the book club covers inside the book club.

 **Re: Question for Monday**
by Erin - Monday, 6 August 2007, 10:45 AM

I really liked the *Order of the Pheonix* cover the most.

No, I don't really think the covers and movies are important because, I think the story is detailed enough to enable readers to draw their own image of the characters, and therefore, not need other pictures to describe for them.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Monday**
by Anna - Monday, 6 August 2007, 10:52 AM

I personally like the Half-Blood Prince cover the best

I like the pictures because they help you understand the books a little bit better, and act as a guideline to what the author wanted you to think they look like after the description of a character, but I don't think they are too important.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Monday**
by Monica - Monday, 6 August 2007, 11:31 AM

I included a link to all of the book covers on the Scholastic site called Harry Potter book covers in the same list that had this question. It's pretty cool to look at because it includes an online magnifying glass so you can see the details of the artwork.

[Show parent](#) | [Reply](#)

The next posts to Monday's forum occurred during the early evening hours by the girls who participated in the *Emily Windsnap* club. These girls carried over their flashy, colorful posting style to this club.

 **Re: Question for Monday**
by Encalles - Monday, 6 July 2007, -6:52 PM

I really liked all of the books covers so I don't really have a favorite. The pictures /drawings are really important so the producer knows what kinds of physicial features to look for in actors, also so they can be accurate with the descriptions in the books.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Monday**
by Gwynn - Monday, 6 July 2007, 07:15 PM

I like the Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallow book cover. Yes.



[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

During their interview, Anna and Erin made fun of Encalles' hot pink and green posts, saying, "they hurt our eyes – seriously." In the context of this book club, color and emoticons seemed to be uncool or immature, at least from the perspectives some of the club members. The content of Gwynn's and Encalles' posts were also less sophisticated and shorter than Anna and Erin's comments. None of the girls or Monica replied to or commented any of the individual posts.

Tuesday's Asynchronous Discussion. The second day of the book club was the most well attended day – all eight girls posted on Tuesday. Tuesday's activities included a daily question and poll as well as link to an online Harry Potter game, a list and description of the book's characters, and a live chat.



Tuesday

Here's the **Question for Tuesday**. Hit **reply** and you're on your way! Check out the **Quick Poll** while you're at it.

Join us tonight! 😊 **Live Chat - Tuesday at 7 p.m.** 😊 about 30 minutes. Talk about books and get to know each other! Click on **Live Chat** at 7 p.m.

For fun, I've opened an **OPEN Forum**. 😊 This is not live -- you don't get to talk back and forth immediately like tonight. This is a place where you can leave a comment, read what other people have to say, and respond whenever you happen to be logged on.

Quick Quiz: Do you know what the characters above called themselves in the Order of the Phoenix?

Please fill out this survey for Cassie's study on online book clubs. You will get a **free book** if you fill out this survey and another one on Friday!
<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB228MJZSTBVC>

See you online! - Monica the Librarian

- 📖 Wikipedia's List of Harry Potter characters
- ? Quick Poll
- 📄 Sorting Hat
- 🗣️ Open Forum
- 💬 Live Chat
- 👤 Question for Tuesday

The girls accessed most of the “extra” activities as well as completed the daily poll. Unlike the previous online clubs’ polls that asked questions about summer, the Harry Potter club polls were directly related to the book.

Which subject do you wish you could study at Hogwarts?

Potions
 Care of Magical Creatures
 Charms
 Defense Against the Dark Arts

[Save my choice](#)

Tuesday's discussion revolved about the book's characters, although the question was not a school-like question on characterization or flaws. Rather, it asked book club members to share their opinions about characters and imagine who they would like to be, which is similar to the question in the Emily Windsnap book club that asked its members what they would do if they were mermaids.

 **Question for Tuesday**
by [Monica](#) - Monday, 6 August 2007, 10:20 AM

Who was your favorite character? Who did you love to hate? Who made you laugh the most? If you could be a character in Harry Potter's world, who would you be?

[Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Anna and Encalles were the first members to respond to Monica's questions.

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by [Anna](#) - Tuesday, 7 August 2007, 10:32 AM

My favorite character would have to be Dobby, he is extremely loyal to Harry after Harry had freed him from the Malfoys, and I think that is very cool. I don't like Lucious Malfoy. Hermoine made me laugh alot in the 7th book when she got mad at Ron after he comes back. If I were a character in Harry Potter I would be... I really don't know

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by [Encalles](#) - Tuesday, 7 August 2007, 10:50 AM

[I would probably be either Ron or Hermoine in all of those sections](#)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Again, Encalles' post was shorter and more colorful than Anna's as well as less sophisticated in its content. These differences exemplify the frustrations that Anna and her sister had with the book club's discussions. There was little substance to some of the girls' posts with little for other members to react to or think about. This tension was illustrated throughout the remainder of Tuesday's discussion.

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by Gwynn - Tuesday, 7 August 2007

In the book I like Hermoine.
I hate Lucion Malfoy.
Ms. Weasley made me laugh the most and so did Hermoine.
I do not know who I would be if I was in one of the Harry Potter books.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by Erin - Tuesday, 7 August 2007, 03:19 PM

My favorite character would have to be Snape because the entire story he was drawn to be an evil, and it seemed like through the entire series that was one of the big questions, "is Snape a good guy, or not?" and I think it was great to have that question answered.

I really didn't like Draco much, I didn't hate him, exactly, I just didn't like the way he turned out. I expected a lot more from him, I thought he might have to choose to be a good guy but, that didn't happen and I was a bit disappointed.

I think Ron was the funniest because it seemed like he was growing up story, and it was interesting to learn how about it.

Although, I do have to admit, Mrs. Weasley had a rather amusing line, near the end.

I'd love to be Hermione because she's smart and she tends to know what's going on and I think it's great, she also seems like a really nice person, I wish I could more like her.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by Isabella - Tuesday, 7 August 2007, 02:53 PM

my fav. character is harmione. draco and his dad.i never really laughed.i would be harmione.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by Jenna - Tuesday, 7 August 2007, 07:00 PM

i liked hermione, luna, and ginny the best.i liked hermione because she was such an important character,luna because i thought she was mysterious and i liked all her odd beliefs plus she was so nice,and ginny because so much adventure happened to her.

i loved to hate snape and bellatrix, because snape seemed bad but was really good, and bellatrix just because she was so evil!

lots of characters made me laugh, it just depended on what they were doing and saying.

if i could be anybody in Harry Potter i would be hermione, luna, or ginny because i like them so much. but it might be fun to be bellatrix for a while just to see what it was like.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Tuesday**
by Melissea - Tuesday, 7 August 2007, 07:31 PM

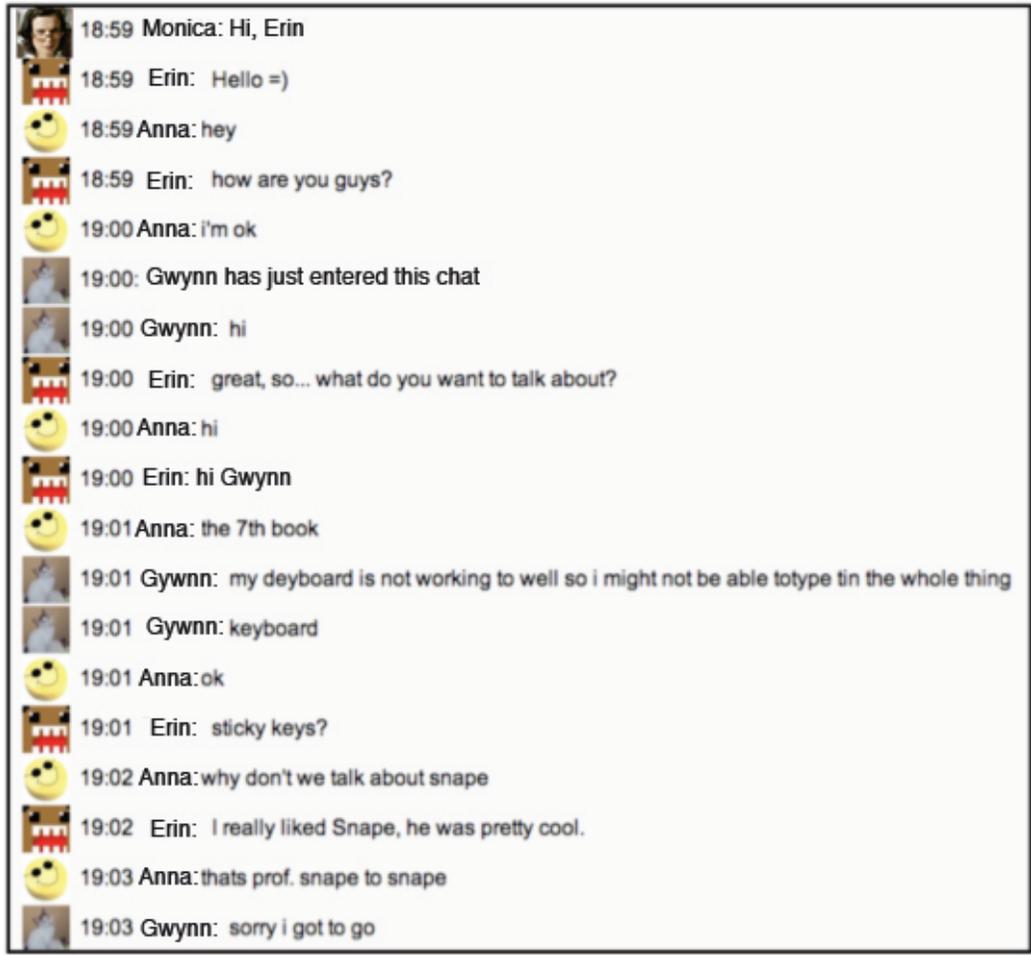
My favorite characters, would have to be: Herminone, Ron, Harry, Ginny, Kreacher, Snape, Voldemort, Neville, Luna, and hm.....that's all i think. I loved to hate Malfoy and is Fam and Crabe and Goylie. I don't know who made me laugh. I think I would want to be Ginny. 😊

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

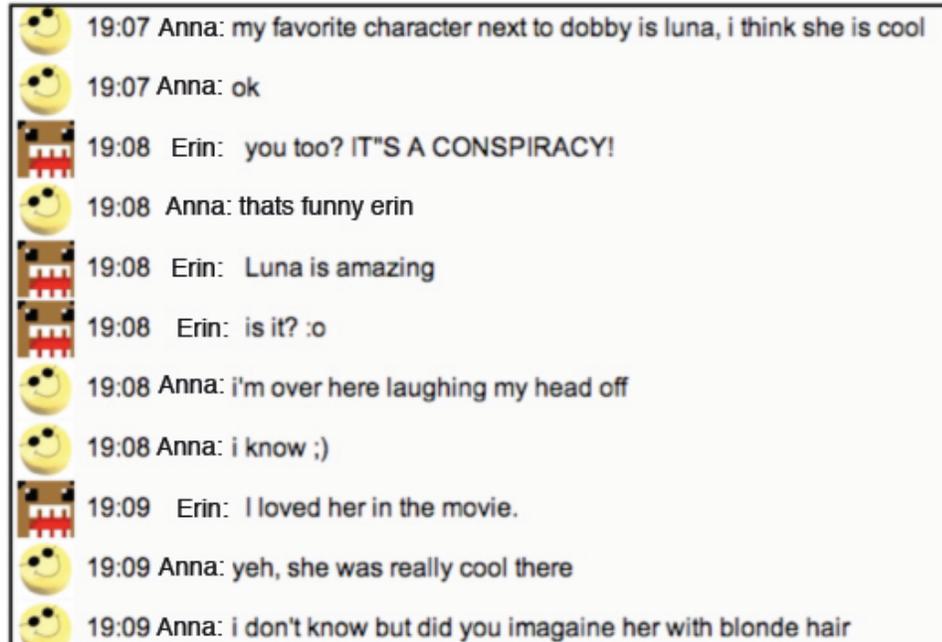
For the most part, the girls replied in a similar pattern as the previous book clubs, replying to the question/s in the order they are asked. In contrast to the all-girls club, they primarily used full sentences, punctuation, and capital letters with the default book club font. The average length of a post this day was sixty-two words, an inflated number partially due to the number of questions asked as well as to the initial enthusiasm of the Erin and Anna in reading Harry Potter and having the opportunity to talk about it with others. Monica did not post at all during Tuesday's discussion.

Tuesday's Synchronous Chat. The only chat of the book club was held on Tuesday evening from 7:00 - 7:30 p.m. Anna, Erin, Jenna, Melissa, and Gwynn participated in the chat, with some of them logging in late or logging out early. Monica expressed that facilitating the chat was the most challenging part of being the book club facilitator. She strove to "guide the chat without taking it over. . . asking leading questions every once in a while and then back[ing] away" (interview).

The chat discussion actually began ten minutes before the official start of the chat, with Gwynn logging in first, followed by Anna and Erin at 7:00. The chat discussion focused primarily on the book, with Monica asking initial questions of Gwynn such as, "What was your favorite part of the book?" and "What did you think of the ending?" When Erin logged in, she demonstrated her previous chatting experience by asking, "so... what do you want to talk about?" She did not expect Monica to direct the chat rather she worked under the assumption that this book club chat would be like other chats where kids log in to talk to and with each other.



Erin and Anna continued to engage in typical chat behavior, using expressions of emotion, familiarity. However, they seemed to be talking only to each other.



After Jenna logged in at 7:09, the five girls talked about the book's ending, its epilogue and their favorite characters. Monica welcomed Jenna to the chat, but did not post at all until eleven minutes later to chime in with her favorite characters. She explained,

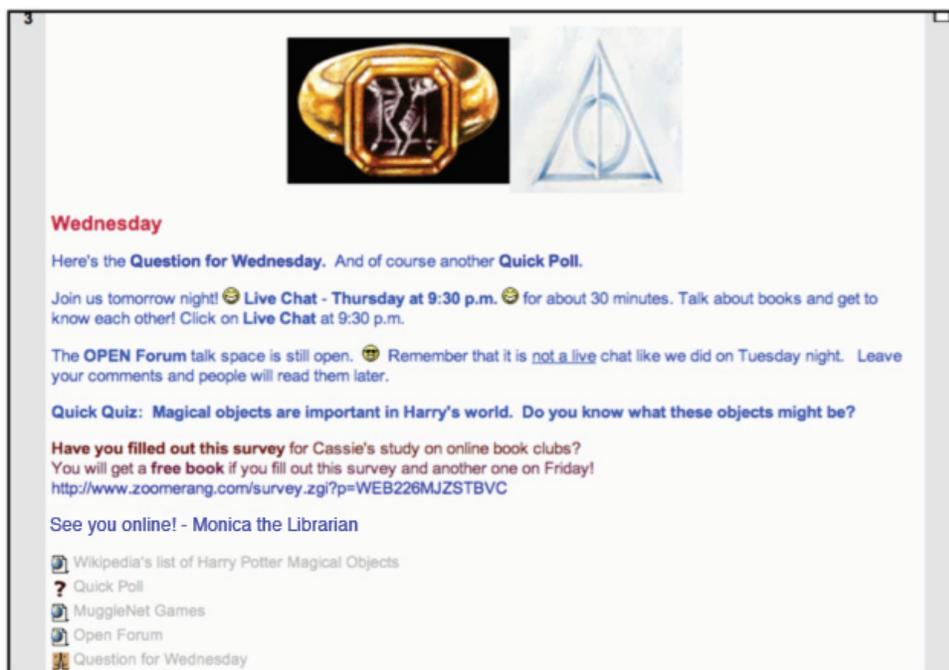
my perception was that I was there to keep the momentum up. And hopefully spark the ideas by giving them enough stimulation so that they could come up with things to talk about. That is one of the things in youth development for teens, you want them to be self-directed and let them charge over things as much as they can. So that is one of the reasons why I approached this in a less nurturing fashion (interview).

Given her philosophy of “wanting to keep the momentum going but not take over and be a teacher and get didactic,” Monica continued to post only responses to the girls’

questions in the chat and also thanked girls for chatting when they logged off and signaled the end of the chat.

Erin and Anna logged out of the chat at 7:17pm; Melissa logged off at 7:27 pm; and Jenna and Monica logged out at 7:35 p.m. Overall, the chat discourse never seemed to get into a groove or rhythm. The girls, although they asked questions to the group, rarely responded directly or emotionally to each other's comments, behaviors that were apparent in the interactions between Erin and Anna as well as in the *Emily Windsnap* chats. The girls' posts as well as Monica's tended to be very short, generic, and almost strained (e.g., "yeah," "the movie was so good," "i like luna."). Monica attributed the stilted conversation more to typing skills, "during the chat there was this time delay because they weren't as adept at typing. . . But it did kind of stilt the conversation a bit. Because people were a beat behind each other when trying to respond to questions" (interview)

Wednesday. The third day of the book club marked the beginning of its decline. Four girls posted on Wednesday, with Gwynn posting her comment to the discussion on Saturday. Similar to the other days, Monica provided book club members with access to a link to descriptions of magical objects and MuggleNet games as well as a poll and a question of the day.



Wednesday

Here's the **Question for Wednesday**. And of course another **Quick Poll**.

Join us tomorrow night! 😊 **Live Chat - Thursday at 9:30 p.m.** 😊 for about 30 minutes. Talk about books and get to know each other! Click on **Live Chat** at 9:30 p.m.

The **OPEN Forum** talk space is still open. 😊 Remember that it is not a live chat like we did on Tuesday night. Leave your comments and people will read them later.

Quick Quiz: Magical objects are important in Harry's world. Do you know what these objects might be?

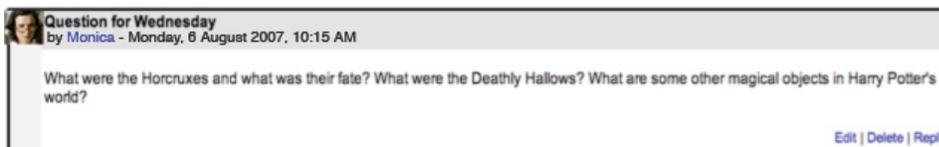
Have you filled out this survey for Cassie's study on online book clubs? You will get a **free book** if you fill out this survey and another one on Friday!
<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB226MJZSTBVC>

See you online! - Monica the Librarian

-  Wikipedia's list of Harry Potter Magical Objects
-  Quick Poll
-  MuggleNet Games
-  Open Forum
-  Question for Wednesday

Monica also kept encouraging the book club members to use the open forum, but no one accessed it after Monday.

The question of the day on Wednesday was different than the other days. The first two parts of the question resembled a school quiz whose purpose is to check for content knowledge whereas the third part was more opinion-oriented, more book-club-like.



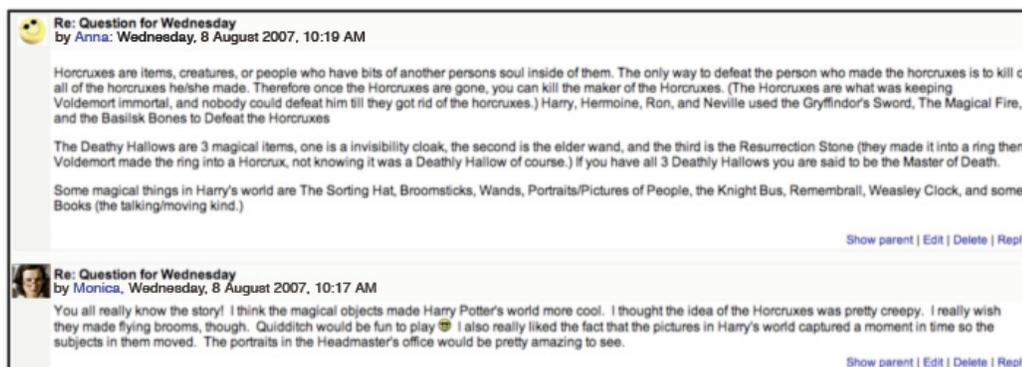
Question for Wednesday
 by Monica - Monday, 6 August 2007, 10:15 AM

What were the Horcruxes and what was their fate? What were the Deathly Hallows? What are some other magical objects in Harry Potter's world?

[Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Anna was the first member to reply, and her lengthy post (185 words) answered the daily questions in great detail, so much so that Monica realized that the other club members might not feel as though they had anything to contribute. So, Monica replied

to Anna's post in an effort to get the other club member's to reply to the post in an extended fashion about identifying the magical objects they liked.



The screenshot shows a forum thread with two replies. The first reply is from Anna, dated Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 10:19 AM. It contains three paragraphs of text explaining Horcruxes and the Deathly Hallows. The second reply is from Monica, dated Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 10:17 AM. It contains one paragraph of text expressing her thoughts on the magical objects and the Headmaster's office portraits.

Re: Question for Wednesday
by Anna: Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 10:19 AM

Horcruxes are items, creatures, or people who have bits of another persons soul inside of them. The only way to defeat the person who made the horcruxes is to kill of all of the horcruxes he/she made. Therefore once the Horcruxes are gone, you can kill the maker of the Horcruxes. (The Horcruxes are what was keeping Voldemort immortal, and nobody could defeat him till they got rid of the horcruxes.) Harry, Hemoine, Ron, and Neville used the Gryffindor's Sword, The Magical Fire, and the Basilisk Bones to Defeat the Horcruxes

The Deathly Hallows are 3 magical items, one is a invisibility cloak, the second is the elder wand, and the third is the Resurrection Stone (they made it into a ring then Voldemort made the ring into a Horcrux, not knowing it was a Deathly Hallow of course.) If you have all 3 Deathly Hallows you are said to be the Master of Death.

Some magical things in Harry's world are The Sorting Hat, Broomsticks, Wands, Portraits/Pictures of People, the Knight Bus, Remembrall, Weasley Clock, and some Books (the talking/moving kind.)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Re: Question for Wednesday
by Monica: Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 10:17 AM

You all really know the story! I think the magical objects made Harry Potter's world more cool. I thought the idea of the Horcruxes was pretty creepy. I really wish they made flying brooms, though. Quidditch would be fun to play 🍌 I also really liked the fact that the pictures in Harry's world captured a moment in time so the subjects in them moved. The portraits in the Headmaster's office would be pretty amazing to see.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Three other girls respond to Monica's original questions. In contrast to her previous posts which were lengthy and insightful, it was obvious from her post (pictured below) that Erin had checked out emotionally and mentally from the book club's discussions.



The screenshot shows a forum thread with three replies. The first reply is from Erin, dated Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 01:26 PM. The second reply is from Jenna, dated Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 04:11 PM. The third reply is from Isabella, dated Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 05:36 PM.

Re: Question for Wednesday
by Erin: Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 01:26 PM

Horcruxes are pieces of a person's soul that are found in objects or animals, the horcruxes made by Voldemprt were all destroyed.

The deathly hallows were 3 magical items given to the brothers after they outwitted death.

The broomsticks, pictures, stairs, and wands

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Re: Question for Wednesday
by Jenna: Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 04:11 PM

the horcruxes are things that voldemort made. if they are all destroyed he will die because part of his soul is in each of them. he had to kill people to make them. their fate was to be destroyed.

the deathly hollows are three magical items in a story one is the resurrection stone, which makes people come come back to life. the other is the elder wand, which cannot be defeated and can only be passed on to a person if he kills the person who owns it, and in the end is what killed voldemort. the last is a true invisibility cloak, which harry owned.

some magical items are porkeys,wands, and broomsticks there are also all the things fred and george made there are tons other.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

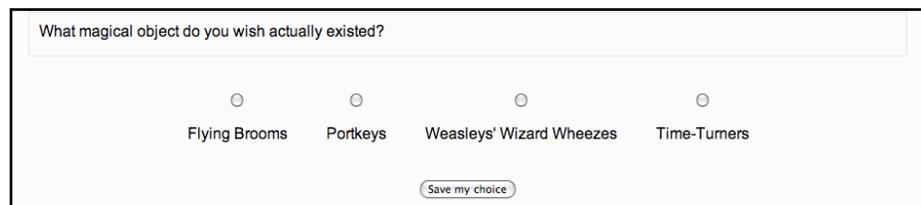
Re: Question for Wednesday
by Isabella: Wednesday, 8 August 2007, 05:36 PM

pieces of voldemorts soul and there fate was to be destroyed by harry potter they are three objects wished for from three brothers who met death one day.they are the elder wand,the invisible cloak and the resurrection stone.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

In this post, Erin used only one sentence to respond to each of the questions with no expression of opinion. Her post is only forty-three words long compared to the previous day's post of 176 words.

Not only were the discussions beginning to deflate, the girls were not accessing all of the additional activities that Monica had built into Wednesday's book club. Erin and Anna continually checked for additions to the open forum, but the other members did not. The only book club activity besides the daily question that club members continued to access through the duration of the book club was the quick polls.



What magical object do you wish actually existed?

Flying Brooms Portkeys Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes Time-Turners

[Save my choice](#)

None of the girls clicked on the link to the MuggleNet games, but two of them accessed the list of magical objects prior to responding to the daily question. Jenna did not log in to the club again.

Thursday. On Thursday, Monica provided book club members with links to the official Harry Potter website as well as its movie website. She also directed them to lists of other fantasy books that EPL had compiled for its constituents.

4



Thursday

Have you had a chance to check out [Scholastic Books Harry Potter website](#)? You can also check out the [Warner Brothers movie website](#) as well.

Here's the **Question for Thursday**. Don't miss today's **Quick Poll**.

Live Chat - today at 9:30 p.m. Click on **Live Chat** below to join us.

The **OPEN Forum** talk space is still open. 😊

Book to recommend: Fantasy fans, check out this [KidLinks booklist for grades 6 and under](#) or this [TeenLinks booklist for grades 6 and up](#).

See you online! - Monica the Librarian

- ? Quick Poll
- 📖 Wizard Challenge
- 🗨️ Open Forum
- 💬 Live Chat
- 📅 Question for Thursday

Despite the efforts by Monica to engage the book club members in more than discussion about *Harry Potter*, very few members accessed the media and Internet links she embedded in the daily content. Only Erin accessed the link to Scholastic's Wizard Challenge Game. The quick poll, however, was taken by all four members who posted on Thursday, with each member selecting a different response.

Which of Hagrid's pets scared you the most?

Aragog the spider Fluffy the 3-headed dog Norbert the dragon Buckbeak the hippogriff

Thursday's question of the day assumed that the kids in the book club were *Harry Potter* fans through and through, who had watched the movies as well as had read all seven books.

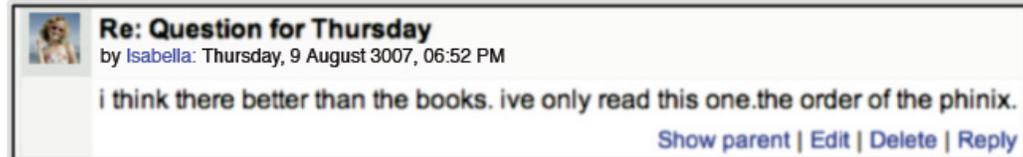


Question for Thursday
by Monica: Monday, 6 August 2007, 10:18 AM

Movies and books tell stories in different ways. How do you feel about the movie versions of the books? What's your favorite book in the series? Which is your favorite movie so far?

[Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Isabella responded honestly to the question, perhaps further signaling her “outsider” status as reluctant reader and non-Harry Potter enthusiast within a book club composed of opposite minded, I-love-to-read, Harry Potter-is-so-cool members.

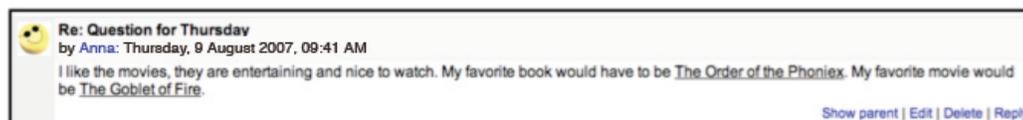


Re: Question for Thursday
by Isabella: Thursday, 9 August 2007, 06:52 PM

i think there better than the books. ive only read this one.the order of the phoinix.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Four girls replied to Thursday's question, with the average post length declining to thirty-two words. Again, the girls answered the questions, but with little explanation. Anna and Erin were the first two members to post.



Re: Question for Thursday
by Anna: Thursday, 9 August 2007, 09:41 AM

I like the movies, they are entertaining and nice to watch. My favorite book would have to be The Order of the Phoenix. My favorite movie would be The Goblet of Fire.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Thursday**
 by Erin: Thursday, 9 August 2007, 02:40 PM
 At first I really didn't like the movies because I imagined everybody differently but, after awhile I got used to it. My favorite book is Sorcerer's Stone and my favorite movie is Chamber of Secrets.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Compared to their Monday posts, both Anna and Erin, based on their dad's interview comments, seem to be responding due to their dad's firm coaxing rather than from being personally motivated to talk about the book. Their Thursday responses resemble students responding to questions posed at the end of a textbook chapter or worksheet rather than engaging in a discussion.

Perhaps due to sensing the lack in enthusiasm, Monica posted in Thursday's threaded discussion, which was the first time she had done this since Monday. In her post, she tried to sprinkle in other ideas to extend this day's discussion.

 **Re: Question for Thursday**
 by Monica: Thursday, 9 August 2007, 02:52 PM
 I thought the movies did a good job of using the pictures in the books to find the right actors and make the sets look good. I'm glad really good special effects exist so there are so many cool things in the movies! My favorite movie is Goblet of Fire because I thought the Tri-Wizards Tournament with the dragons was awesome. My favorite book, though, is Prisoner of Azkaban. The Dementors were introduced to us in that book and they scared me (in a good way!).

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Isabella and Melissa responded after Monica's post, but their responses are more reserved than Monica's exclamation marks and personal connections.

 **Re: Question for Thursday**
 by Isabella: Thursday, 9 August 2007, 06:52 PM
 i think there better than the books. ive only read this one.the order of the phinix.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

 **Re: Question for Thursday**
 by Melissa: Thursday, 9 August 2007, 10:21 PM
 I think that the books, are way better. The movies are okay, but sometimes they leave out a lot of stuff. My fave book would be HP, and the DH. HP=Harry Potter, DH=Deathly Hallows. I like the 4th movie, they left out a lot of stuff in the 5th. But that's just my opinion

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Friday. Book club members were greeted on the last day of the book club by the scary, snake-like face of the villain in the *Harry Potter* series, Voldermort.

5



Friday

Today you can reply to the **Question for Friday** and the **Quick Poll**. This is the last day of this online book club. Thanks for participating! We'll have more online book clubs this year so keep an eye on **KidLinks** for more information!

See you online! Monica the Librarian

Note from Cassie:
Thanks to all of you who filled out the first survey!

**** Please click here to take *another survey* about your experience in this book club! ****

- ? Quick Poll
- 📄 Duel with the Death Eaters
- 🗨️ Open Forum
- 📖 Question for Friday

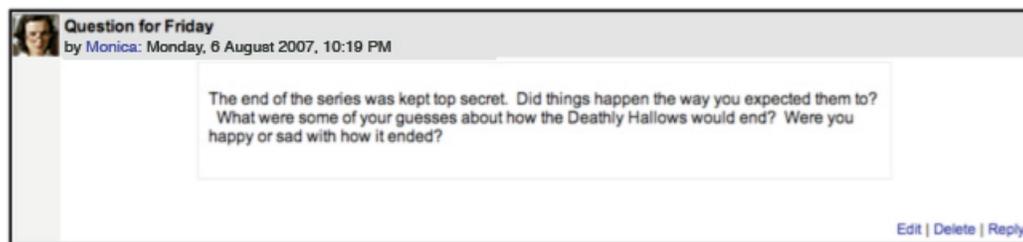
Activities and extra information were kept to a minimum on the last day, with only one link to a Death Eater game and the post-club research survey in addition to the standard quick poll and question of the day.

Which villain did you find most interesting?

Voldemort (Tom Riddle) Bellatrix Lestrange Lucius Malfoy Dolores Umbridge

A link to the open forum was also still listed on the greeting, but book clubbers had not accessed it in the prior two days and did not click on it on Friday, either. Monica also hinted at the possibility of another online book club (for teens only) that would be held later in the fall.

The last day of the Harry Potter book club ended appropriately with the daily question asking book club members to talk about the end of the book and the entire *Harry Potter* series.



With all of the anticipation of this last book, I had hoped that this question would really inspire book club members to share their personal reactions despite it being asked the last day of the club. However, the responses continued with their subdued quality, with the last discussion of the book club being similar to the week's previous discussions.

 **Re: Question for Friday**
 by Anna: Friday, 10 August 2007, 10:29 AM

Well, the ending was kind of like I expected it, because my sister told me everthing about the ending, but before that I didn't expect Ginny and Harry to get Married. I thought that Harry would own all the Deathly Hallows. I was sad because the series ended.

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The average post length on Friday was thirty-one words, the lowest average of the entire week. Four girls posted responses (Anna, Erin, Isabella, and Melissa), with Gwynn posting her final thought on Saturday. Monica also posted on Friday, sharing her anxiety about the characters' futures prior to reading the last book in the series as well as her feelings after having finished reading *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

 **Re: Question for Friday**
 by Monica: Friday, 10 August 2007, 02:00 PM

I kept hearing that major characters were going to die so I kept trying to think...what if Ron or Hermione died during the story? What if Harry died at the end of the story?! 😞 How would the story work out? I'm glad that those 3 friends all survived and were able to build happy lives for themselves. They sure deserved it after defeating evil a bunch of times. I felt really bad for Snape. He didn't get much happiness in his life. 😞 It's really cool that he was revealed as a big hero at the end.

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 **Re: Question for Friday**
 by Erin: Friday, 10 August 2007, 03:27 PM

Most of the things turned out the way I expected, I figured Harry would be a Horcrux, I knew Snape would die, and I was fairly sure Harry & Ginny would get married. I was happy that Harry lived but, I wished some of the other people hadn't died.

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 **Re: Question for Friday**
 by Melissa: Friday, 10 August 2007, 07:48 PM

I kept thinking that Ron or Hermionie, would die, i never thought the people who died, died. No, i never imagined the book like that. I thought that Harry, would die and Voldemort Would take over the whole world, and that harry wold own all of the deathly hallows. Kind of both. I liked that Harry and Ginny got Married, and Ron and Hemionie, but i kind of wish, there were more books.

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 **Re: Question for Friday**
 by Isabella: Friday, 10 August 2007, 08:08 PM

not really i thought that harry would die.i was happy hary didnt die and sad that theres not a nother one[nother book].

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Erin, Melissa, and Isabella shared little about their pre-reading hunches, so there was little description in their posts. Monica attributed the lack-luster quality of the book

club postings to some of the participants' maturity levels and computer skills. In fact, she believed that online book clubs would be a "very popular tool" for the EPL's teens "because they have strong typing skills. They like have strong opinions, whereas some of it was that some kids were so in love with the *Harry Potter* books and said, 'isn't it great?' and then they had nothing else to say" (interview).

Summary of the *Harry Potter* Online Book Club

The book club's members' motivation seemed to deflate over the course of the week despite its flashy media and Internet elements and the zealotry surrounding the text itself. For its participants as well as for its facilitator, this online book club did not have a club-like feel to it. Instead, the expectations of what it could be shattered in the reality of what actually transpired within the club. It seems that for all of the participating book club members, they were eager to discuss the last Harry Potter book and the conclusion of the popular series. But, with only five active participants, one of whom had not finished reading the book, talking about the book proved to be strained. The factor that perhaps contributed the most to the book club's decline was the maturity levels of its five participants. With the youngest girl being a fourth grader and the oldest member being an eighth grader, the gap between reading and comprehension abilities as well as life experiences, conversation was hampered, for some participants, to the point of annoyance.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of case studies is to emphasize interpretation and understanding (Stake, 1995). This chapter discusses the insights gained from considering the three online book clubs collectively and holistically. While the previous chapters focused on providing detailed descriptions as well as some interpretation of the clubs' discourse and activity, this final chapter uses those description chapters to further support "thick interpretation" (Denzin, 1989) and synthesis. First, a short overview of the dissertation's purposes is reviewed. Then, my assumptions of the Net Generation are discussed followed by an examination of the social practices, institutions, and ideological contexts that were apparent in the book clubs, with the role of gender in the book club discourse specifically discussed. Next, a model that identifies the elements necessary for engaging youth in online book clubs is proposed. Finally, I conclude with identifying the potential significance of my research as well as its limitations.

Restatement of Dissertation Purposes

Through conducting this research, I attempted to examine summer online literacy spaces for preteens sponsored by a large public library system. Three book clubs (one all-boy, one all-girl, and one mixed-gender) were investigated in order to understand *who* participated in these clubs, *how* both preteens and facilitators participated as well the ways in which the online context and gendered separation of the clubs shaped the clubs' discourse. Specifically, this study was guided by the following questions:

Q1: What was the involvement in these preteen online book clubs?

Q2: What literary and social practices were evident in the online book clubs?

Q3: How did gender shape, constitute and/or construct the clubs' practices and discourse?

Using a complex data analysis strategy that was guided by Fairclough's (1995) stages of CDA (description, interpretation, explanation), situated within CMDA's assumptions and structures, and concerned about three levels of contexts (everyday social practices, institutions, ideological contexts), these complementary analysis tools helped me understand more deeply the practices and discourse within these online book clubs.

Revisiting Net Generation Assumptions and Expectations

When I began planning for this research, I made the general assumption that the children and youth who participated in these book clubs would be fairly Internet savvy given that the children fit into the descriptions and parameters of the "Net Generation" (Tapscott, 1998). In fact, now that my research has been completed, it seems that only small number of young people who participated in these summer online book clubs fit the Net Generation description. Only Erin and Anna, the sisters in the *Harry Potter* club, and Melissa and Reggie possessed the Internet and technology skills that I anticipated.

Across the three clubs, many of the children did not know how to upload a picture to their individual profiles nor did they even grasp the concept of having an online profile within the book club environment. Only eight of the twenty-seven

participants uploaded a photo. Most of the members utilized family email addresses and had assistance in logging on to the Internet and their book club's website. In addition, many of the book club participants had engaged in online chatting and/or did not recognize that playing on the Webkinz website with other Webkinz is a form of chatting. Finally, their typing skills were slow and mostly "hunt-n-peck." Similar to other educational researchers, I discovered that the assumptions of the Net Generation are not substantially supported by research (e.g., Downes, 2007; Lohnes, Wilber, & Kinzer, 2008), including this research.

The book club facilitators also made similar assumptions about the skills of the young book club members. As previously mentioned, Jane, Mark, and Monica all struggled with their roles as book club leaders, not wanting to dominate the book club talk. So, to the detriment of the clubs' discussions, the facilitators rarely, if ever, modeled online, digital talk for their club members because of their concern for being too strong of a presence in the clubs. As a result of their inaction, and coupled with most of the club members' novice technology and Internet skills and experiences, the book club members did not understand how to engage in threaded, online conversation. To their credit, however, all three facilitators described how to respond to other club members both in their daily greetings and email messages. Despite the facilitators' efforts, book club members did not utilize the "reply" feature in the daily question forums, and for the most part, never commented on or directly responded to other book club members' posts. The end result was that the club discussions did not resemble conversations but rather guided question-and-answer sessions.

Examining and Explaining Social Practices, Institutions, and Contexts.

With the transcript and interview analysis guided by critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), I gleaned many insights from this case study research that helped me respond to this study's second and third guiding questions. Fairclough (1995) encouraged data analysis through the lenses of three contexts (every day social contexts, social institutions, and broader ideological contexts). Of course, these lenses were intertwined with each other, but by artificially bracketing my thinking into these three contexts, I was able to scaffold my analysis, helping me to not overlook important elements of the discourse.

Social Practices. The primary social practice that was evidenced in the online book clubs was talk about books. In each of the three book clubs, the book served as the anchor for the club. The daily question(s), any additional links or activities as well as the chat discussions (with the exception of the all-girls club) all revolved around the clubs' text. Registering for these online book clubs was initially and primarily motivated by reading a specific text that the children were interested in and wanted to read and/or discuss.

In addition to the social practice of talking about books, the all-girls club discourse was also composed of a social component. The non-book-related discussions about pets, school, and sports in the chat, for example, illustrated that being in this online book club, for these girls, was not only anchored in the book, but in forming a social connection with the other book club members. The girls not only wanted to read and talk about the book, they wanted to talk about the book *with each other*. Many girls expressed in their interviews wanting to meet each other, about figuring out if

they knew each other. For example, Isabella shared during her interview how excited she was to meet Christina at Girl Scout camp a few weeks after the *Emily Windsnap* book club and that she had asked others on her soccer team and school if they were “in” the book club. Notably, the all-girls club met online for a second online book club during late August in 2007 in order to read and discuss the second book in the *Emily Windsnap* series with each other. Although not discussed in detail here, I believe that the motivation for this impromptu club was the direct result of both reading and talking about the book as well as socially engaging with other book club members.

Echoes of Institutions: Public Libraries, Schools, and Book Clubs. There were indicators of three institutions at work within the online book clubs: public libraries, schools, and book clubs. Historically, public libraries are places where people of all ages go to access reading materials for pleasure and/or information. The children who participated in these online book clubs all were motivated to engage in pleasure reading and discussion over the summer months. So, they headed to their communities’ public library system. Also, being regular EPL constituents, most of the book club members checked out their book club books from the library rather than purchasing them from a bookstore.

In addition to the physical place of the library being associated with pleasure reading, the selected club books were also geared for pleasure rather than education. *Gregor the Overlander*, *The Tail of Emily Windsnap*, and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* were not part of the traditional school canon. These are books that children (and adults) read for pleasure rather than the type of books that are discussed as required, assigned reading in English/Language Arts classrooms. These books were

“fun” reads, the kind of books that kids in book clubs would like to read and talk about.

In addition to the institutional traces of public libraries, the discourse within these online book clubs contained traces of both school and book clubs (Alvermann, 1999; Maybin & Moss, 1993; Moss, 2000). There were two indicators of the institution of school within these online book clubs. The first indicator was the authority role of the facilitators (“Jane, the librarian;” “Monica, the librarian”). Despite their passive and sometimes non-participatory involvement within the book club discussions themselves, the facilitators were in control of (a) design of the club environment, (b) posting the book club questions, and (c) monitoring the chats. These roles are very similar to the work teachers do in designing and facilitating classroom activities.

The second indicator of the institution of school within these online book clubs was the pattern of the clubs’ discourse. The primary pattern of discourse across the three clubs was question-response. The book club facilitator posted a daily question, and the book club members individually and directly replied to that question, usually breaking their responses into the number of questions that were asked. So, if the daily question had two parts, so did the responses. This dominant discourse pattern mimics practices of primary school reading and discussion (Baker, 1991; Luke & Freebody, 1997) and the ceremonial order of the classroom that contains a version of the “teacher-student couple” (Hunter, 1991). School reading discussions typically follow a teacher question-student response-teacher evaluation pattern (Luke & Freebody, 1997; Mehan, 1979). These online book club discussions were dominated by facilitator

question-book club member response pattern with, notably, the evaluation piece missing. This question-answer pattern was also observed during preteen boys-only book clubs that also met at EPL (see Scharber, Nichols-Besel, O'Brien & Dillon, 2009).

Together, the types of books read for these book clubs, the types of questions asked, and the missing evaluation step to the online discussions were indicators to book club members that the online book club environment was not for the purpose of talking about books like they would in school. Instead, these indicators collectively and immediately disrupted school-like discussion of the books and made possible book club discussions.

Book clubs are specific social spaces (clubs) for a group to talk to each other about a common book. These preteen online book clubs attracted primarily readers. Alvermann, Young, Green and Wisenbaker (1999) also found that the library-based clubs that they studied supported adolescent readers and served a social outlet for them. In addition, Alvermann et al. expressed that the preteens in their study expressed that their book discussions were “interesting” rather than boring (p. 243). I argue that for most of the children in these online book clubs, the “fun” factor (“interesting”) was part of the book discussions being not school-like (“boring”). The book club members liked the clubs because they were clubs; the questions and responses allowed them to share ideas and opinions about books along with bits of personal information (Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbaker, 1999). In other words, these preteens experienced the adult literacy practice of being a member of a book club (Appleman, 2006) rather than the schooled practice of discussing books.

In addition, book clubs support informal literacies (Maybin & Moss, 1993; Moss, 2000). Moss (2000) described informal literacies as those that enable “reading as a social activity between people in particular contexts over time...talking about texts is one of the key ways in which readership networks are established. It is through talking about texts that what it means to read and be a reader are jointly negotiated” (p. 48).

For children, informal literacies and their associated readership networks, such as online book clubs, are typically short-lived and associated with a specific place and time (Moss, 2000). Moss contrasted informal literacies with formal school literacies, where pedagogical intent changes the nature and structures of knowledge and reading. The few scholars that actually write about book clubs (Appleman, 2006; Moss, 2000; Marshall, Smagorinsky & Smith, 1995; McMahon & Raphael, 1997) argue for appreciating the important distinctions between different types of book clubs (e.g., public library based book clubs that support informal literacies and in-school book clubs that support formal literacies). Children understand the differences (Appleman, 2006), which is demonstrated through their discourse.

Looking More Closely at Gender. It was the *explanation* stage of data analysis that encouraged me to connect my descriptions and interpretations to the larger contexts in which they were embedded (Fairclough, 1995). This final stage of discourse analysis prompted me to (a) consider how the book club discourse sustained or transformed power relations and (b) to explore the ways in which my understandings limited my analysis. This stage also supported me in exploring any evidence of the ideological context of gender in these online book clubs.

Historically, EPL has separated its preteen book clubs by gender; therefore, I was intrigued to understand if and how gender presented itself through each club's discourse. Despite my interest and the analysis tools of CDA and CMDA, I cannot highlight major differences between book club talk between the all-boys club, the all-girls club, and the pseudo mixed-gender club.

After my initial gender analysis, I perused the literature on language use in online contexts and the impact gender may have on online discourse. Research conducted on adult online discourse illustrates that male linguistic features generally include the use of boosters (e.g., of course, obviously), universal qualifiers (e.g., all, never), profanity, commands, and sarcasm (Herring, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998). In contrast, female linguistic features typically include hedges (e.g., just, sort of, like), adverbial qualifiers (e.g., maybe, possibly), politeness, hesitation fillers, personal pronouns, and emoticons (Herring, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998).

Taking this literature into consideration, I again combed through the each club's discourse. While I did not find significant gender discourse discrepancies between book clubs, there were subtle differences between the all-boy and all-girl club discussions that may be attributable to gender. For example, the girls in the *Emily Windsnap* book club used expressions of emotion (e.g., emoticons, exclamation marks) that were rarely present either of the other online book clubs. Although, the *Harry Potter* club was made up of mostly females, so the absence of emoticons in its discourse is problematic. Perhaps the expression of emotion within the all-girls book club had more to do with the general enthusiasm for the book itself and/or the age of the participants. In addition, there were many more participants in the all-girls club,

which added a social element that again was not apparent in the either the *Gregor* or *Harry Potter* clubs' discourse. Due to the overlapping intersections between literacy and gender (Sanford, 2005), I cannot state with confidence that these subtle discourse differences were due to gender when in fact gender may be just one of many elements that contributes to the cultural context of online book clubs for children and preteens, a tension that is discussed next.

Elements That Support Engaging Online Book Clubs for Children and Preteens. During my preparation for and work during this dissertation research, I struggled to find research that described and analyzed outside of school book clubs for kids. As discussed in Chapter 2, to date, there is very little research on book clubs in general, and even less on outside-of-school, online book clubs for kids and preteens. In her book, *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life*, Long (2003) described the “invisibility of book clubs to scholars” (ix). While the focus of her book was on studying women’s book clubs in the nineteenth century, Long used one chapter to contemplate today’s adult book clubs and the impact of bookstore chains, mass media, and the Internet on them. In fact, she discussed online book clubs specifically and identifies them as an area for future research (p. 189). Long contemplated some of the challenges and idiosyncrasies of online clubs that were evidenced in the preteen clubs I studied such as the integral role of the moderator to suggest issues for discussion (p. 212), the lack of “deep literary discussions” (p. 212); and the use of chatting to “recreate a feeling of face-to-face discussions” (p. 208). Lacking in the scant literature are descriptions of the elements that are needed to

support book clubs for kids along with descriptions of what book club discourse looks like.

While the purpose of case studies is not to generalize or produce theory, case studies in tandem with other case studies and research can begin to provide deeper insights that can help support structure future research (Merriam, 1998). In conjunction with Alvemann, Young, Green, and Wisenbaker's (1999) research on book-n-talk clubs, Marshall, Smagorinsky and Smith's (1995) research on adult book club discourse, my additional research on online book clubs for kids (Scharber, in preparation-a), my own experience facilitating an all-girls online book club for EPL during summer of 2007 (Scharber, in preparation-b), as well as two summer's worth of observation and research on all-boys F2F book clubs (see Dillon, O'Brien, Scharber, Nichols, & Dubbles, 2007; Nichols-Besel, Scharber, Biggs, Brendler, Dillon & O'Brien, 2008), this dissertation research has informed the beginnings of a model that identifies the elements necessary for successful online book clubs for children and preteens.

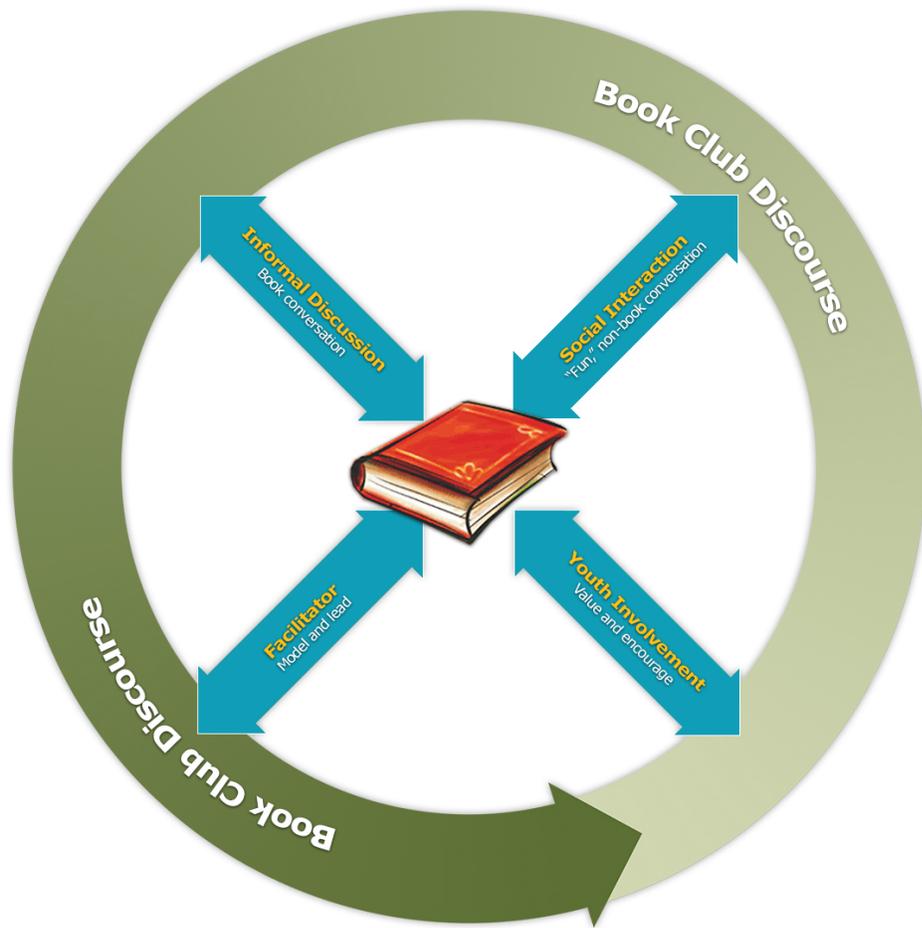


Figure 7.1: Elements Needed for Successful Online Book Clubs for Children and Preteens.

This model, which resembles a bicycle wheel, has at its center the book – the book is the heart of book clubs for children and preteens in book clubs for kids regardless of if the book club is held online or F2F (see Figure 7.1). In order for an outside of school, Internet-based book club to be successful, the book club members

must enjoy being in the club. In order for “fun” to happen, there are at least four additional elements that must be present:

1. An active book club facilitator that organizes and directly facilitates the book club details, contributes to discussions through providing the questions, initiates and provides modes of question responses and comments to other members.
2. Active, continual book club member involvement for the duration of the book club, including all members who have either finished reading the book or are in the process of reading the book.
3. Social space(s) for book club members and facilitator(s) to engage in related or non-related book club discourse as well as a social presence through direct F2F involvement or an online profile.
4. Welcoming, open, safe discussion where book club members and the facilitator feel safe to share their opinions about the book as well as bit of personal information and feel that other members value and are curious as to what they are thinking.

When these four elements plus the book work together, book club discussion ensues and cycles. When all elements are strong, the book club discussion is strong and successful. When one of the four elements is weak or absent, the wheel of discourse bumps along and slows down, like a bicycle with a flat tire. Finally, the online environment in which the book clubs are situated within play a very important role in the success of a book club. An online book club environment must support and encourage all four elements. Moodle and Ning are examples of online environments

that have the necessary structures to effectively support online book clubs for kids and preteens. So, in my analysis of these three preteen online book clubs, it appears that it is the dynamic interaction between multiple elements that impacted discourse rather than one dominant factor such as gender.

Significance of Research

There are several note-worthy outcomes of my dissertation research. First, this research has helped contribute to the scant literature on book clubs, specifically online, outside-of-school book clubs for children and preteens. In the limited publishing that has resulted so far from my work that has been centered on the practice of how to “do” online book clubs (Scharber, 2009), I have received several enthusiastic responses from teachers and librarians around the country with questions about how they could implement online book clubs in their work with children, preteens, and teens (see <http://jaaldigitalliteracies.wordpress.com/>). In addition, by creating awareness for the potential of online book clubs in bringing together people from diverse geographic areas, the EPL librarians are sharing their journeys and expertise with other librarians (Scharber, Melrose, & Wurl, 2009) so that online book clubs can be used to support rural library constituents.

Second, while public-library-based book clubs tend to primarily support children and preteens who are readers (Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbacker, 2009; Dillon, O’Brien, Scharber, Nichols, & Dubbles, 2007; Nichols-Besel, Scharber, Biggs, Brendler, Dillon & O’Brien, 2008), my research illustrates the power that online book clubs can have in supporting young people like Christina and Isabella who do not like to read or struggle with reading. Through participating in outside-of-school

book clubs, struggling readers may be encouraged to read more often and in different ways, aiding in the development of their informal literacies, which may support their school literacies. Research shows that adolescence is the time when voluntary reading rates for both boys and girls plummet (NEA, 2007; NAEP 2005). So, book clubs that target children and preteens play an important role in supporting readers who may be in danger of becoming non-readers.

Next, parents enthusiastically supported these online book clubs. All of the parents I interviewed noted the convenience of the clubs. While the book clubs were on family's calendars, there were no driving and specific times involved, making book club participation flexible and inviting. EPL's online summer book clubs clearly supported working parents and busy children in the practice of voluntary reading.

Fourth, online book clubs for children and preteens are an effective way to bridge old and new literacies practices (Scharber, 2009). As discussed earlier, many of the book club members gained valuable new literacies practice through participating in the online book clubs. For example, both parents and facilitators commented that these online book clubs provided a "safe" place for young people to play with chatting and talking online. Many parents were willing to have their children participate in the book clubs chats because they were associated and monitored by EPL. While the Internet has become almost ubiquitous for many adults, the younger book club members did not have the Internet and computer experience and expertise that one might expect. By tying the old practice of reading books to the new practices of discussing books via the Internet, online book clubs provide a safe, fun scaffold for children and preteens to experience and broaden their new literacies skills and practices.

Finally, research on summer, online book clubs for young people has the potential to be extended. Cuban and Cuban (2007) propose the technological partnerships of the “promoters and guardians of literacy” (e.g., schools and public libraries) to “foster lifelong learning, build diverse educational opportunities in local communities, promote literacy development, and nurture community generation” (p. 10). Online book clubs can be one part of realizing this partnership. Cuban and Cuban offer that such partnerships help address the inequities that exist in our public schools due to the digital divide (Warschauer, 2003). For example, while many young people, including the ones in this research, access the Internet from home, fifty percent of teenagers access the Internet at public libraries (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005). Due to a recent merger of EPL with an urban library system, EPL is dedicated to attracting diverse populations of preteens and adolescents (gender, race, ethnicity, class, readers and non-readers) to participate in these online clubs, a diversity that has not been reflected in past EPL book club participants.

Limitations

There were limitations to this study. One of the major weaknesses of my study is the limited number of participants in the all-boys and mixed-gender book clubs. Due to low participation rates, the book club discourse was not as plentiful or as interesting as I had hoped. If greater numbers of youth had participated in these two clubs, the online discourse may have been not only more plentiful, but also richer. Richer discussions may have enabled more extensive discourse analysis thereby allowing me to see more accurately the role gender may have played within the all-boy and mixed gender book clubs.

Another weakness of my research is that the interview data I gathered were not as rich as I would have liked. I found it difficult to talk to preteens that I had never met over the telephone, and I think that many of them felt equally shy. I sent the questions to many of the participants before the phone call, but that act did not even seem to help spur the conversation on. So, instead of semi-structured interviews, most of the interviews tackled only the questions I had outlined prior to my research. Also, due to my interests in considering these public-library book clubs in opposition to school-based book clubs, I decided not to refer to school in my survey or interview instruments. I wanted to see if any of the book club members would draw the comparisons themselves. In retrospect, I wish I would have directly asked the book club members to talk to me about how these clubs were similar or different to book discussions that they experience at school.

Despite these limitations, this study makes a valuable contribution to the literature about the practice of online book clubs for children and preteens. I hope that these online book clubs can provide both inspiration and models for libraries and classrooms that wish to engage youth in book clubs that encourage both old and new literacies practices.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval

From: irb@umn.edu
Subject: **final approval letter**
Date: July 2, 2007 3:34:42 PM CDT
To: scha0809@umn.edu

07/02/2007

Cassie M Scharber
Curriculum and Instruction
125 Peik Hall
Minneapolis Campus

RE: "Online Book Clubs for the Net Generation"
IRB Code Number: 0706P10988

Dear Ms. Scharber

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) received your response to its stipulations. Since this information satisfies the federal criteria for approval at 45CFR46.111 and the requirements set by the IRB, final approval for the project is noted in our files. Upon receipt of this letter, you may begin your research.

IRB approval of this study includes the consent forms and assent form dated June 29, 2007.

The IRB would like to stress that subjects who go through the consent process are considered enrolled participants and are counted toward the total number of subjects, even if they have no further participation in the study. Please keep this in mind when calculating the number of subjects you request. This study is currently approved for 300 subjects. If you desire an increase in the number of approved subjects, you will need to make a formal request to the IRB.

For your records and for grant certification purposes, the approval date for the referenced project is June 20, 2007 and the Assurance of Compliance number is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003). Research projects are subject to continuing review and renewal; approval will expire one year from that date. You will receive a report form two months before the expiration date. If you would like us to send certification of approval to a funding agency, please tell us the name and address of your contact person at the agency.

As Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to inform the IRB of any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Unanticipated problems or serious unexpected adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

The IRB wishes you success with this research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at 612-626-5654.

Sincerely,

Cynthia McGill, CIP
Research Compliance Supervisor
CM/egk
CC: David O'Brien

8. Why did you decide to register for this online book club?
9. Why did you register for an online book club rather than one that met at the library?
10. Think back to yesterday. From the moment you woke up until you went to sleep, check all the things that you did. (list of 16 items to choose from)
11. What are your favorite things to read? Check all that apply.
 - Books
 - Books in a series
 - Magazines
 - Comic books
 - Web pages/Internet
 - Poetry
 - Newspapers
 - Audio books/ CD or tape
 - I do not read for fun
 - Other
12. What type of reader are you?
 - I never read.
 - I only read things for school.
 - I like to read.
 - I read when I have to. It is not one of my favorite things.
 - I read all the time because I love to read.
 - Other, please specify
13. What kinds of things do you like to do on the computer?
14. Can I interview you after the book club is over?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Maybe

Appendix C
Post-Club Survey Questions

1. Please type your name.
2. Which online book clubs did you register for this summer?
 - 5 possible clubs
 - Other
3. Did you like being a member of this book club? Why or Why not?
4. What was your favorite thing about the book club?
5. What would you change about the online book club?
6. Where did you access a computer and the Internet to participate in this club?
Check all that apply.
 - Home
 - Library
 - Friend's house
 - Community center (like YMCA)
 - School
 - Other, please share.
7. Would you sign up for another online book club next summer? Why or why not?
8. If you were going to be in another book club, would you choose a club that meets online OR in the library? Please explain your answer.
9. If you were going to sign up for another book club, who would you like to be in the club with?
 - ONLY boys [girls]
 - Both boys and girls
 - An adult (parent, grandparent, etc.)
 - It doesn't matter
 - Other, please share
10. Would you tell your friends to join an ONLINE book club? Why or why not?
11. What suggestions or ideas do you have for the book club website?
12. Please share anything else about the book club and your experiences in it.

Appendix D

Preteen Interview Guide

- Is there anything you would like to know about me before we start talking?
1. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest, how much fun was the book club?
 2. What was your favorite thing about being the book club?
 3. Were there any surprises that happened during the book club?
 4. What was your favorite part of the book club environment? The polls, live chats, discussion forums, boys/girls-only forum.
 5. Now that the book club is over, how do you feel about being in it?
 6. Tell me about your profile picture. Why did you choose that picture/that name to represent you in the online book club?
 7. Did you look forward to reading any of the other boys'/girls' comment? Was there anyone in particular that you looked for?
 8. Tell me about *how* you participated in the book club. Did you have a time you went online each day? Did someone at home remind you to go online? How long did you spend online? Did anyone at home help you/sit with you? Where did you access the Internet?
 9. If you could change one thing about the book club, what would it be and why?
 10. How would have the book club been different if girls/boys would have been in your club? Do you think you would have talked about different things?
 11. Tell me about other things you do on the computer. Have you chatted before? Do you have any favorite websites?
 12. Which would you like better? The way the book club is organized now, when you read the book BEFORE the book club starts and talk about it all week? OR, if you read the book DURING the week. For example, on Monday, you would read chapters 1-3 and discuss, on Tuesday you would discuss chapters 4-7.
 13. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experiences this summer in the book club?
 14. When I write about you in my research, I will use a fake name for you. Many authors do this, have a pen name (not their real name). Is there a fake name you would like me to use for you?

Appendix E
Parent/Guardian Interview Guide

1. Three words to describe your child.
2. What kind of reader is your child?
3. Why did your child decide to participate in the ONLINE book club this summer?
4. Tell me about how your child participated in the club. Where did he/she use the computer? How long on the computer? Each day? Did they talk about the book club to you during the week? Something they did on own?
5. Did your child enjoy the book? Talk about it? Read it? Listen to it?
6. Describe any advantages and disadvantages to having your child participate in an ONLINE book club.
7. Next summer, if you had a choice, and your child was interested, would you sign your child up for an ONLINE book club or one that met f2f in the library? An all-boy/girl club or a mixed gender?
8. Any feedback? Suggestions for next year?

Appendix F
Facilitator Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your involvement with HCL book clubs. How long have you been involved? What got you interested in them?
2. How was the book selected for your book club?
3. How did the book go over with the kids in your group - how well did they like it?
4. Are there one or two book club members that stand out for you this summer? Can you tell me about them?
5. What was the most interesting or most surprising thing about the book club for you?
6. Can you tell me about the gendered history of HCL's book clubs? What advantages/disadvantages do you see by offering gendered book clubs for this age group?
7. Tell me about facilitating on ONLINE book club. Struggles, triumphs, confusions, etc.
8. How do you view your role as facilitator of the book club?