

## The Project eMysteries – From reading to writing<sup>1</sup>

### O Projeto eMysteries - Da Leitura à Escrita

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**Abstract.** Digital culture is impacting heavily on young people's lives, be it through their own attachment to social media through mobile devices, or the new Covid-19 demands on distance online education. Maryanne Wolf in *Reader, Come Home* (2018) argues through her cognitive neuroscientific studies on reading, that the mind of readers is changing given the media they are constantly using (mobile phones, computers).

One of the issues Wolf debates is the loss of deep detailed modes of reading comprehension or the willingness of today's (young) readers to engage with complex sentences or longer texts. She claims, however, that really good reading is close reading, a form of reading that requires intellectual effort from the reader involving the intellectual skills of reasoning, thinking and understanding (Wolf, 2018).

How can this be promoted in the digital age? This is the aim of a European Erasmus+ funded project the authors are involved in called *e-Mysteries: Detective Stories to Engage Students in Close Reading with the Use of Mobile Devices* (short name: e-Mysteries).

New forms of reading, such as those being developed by the e-Mysteries project, create opportunities for the participatory empathetic, critical, and analytical engagement of students with what they read as well as with individual and collaborative writing in a modern flux of consumer-producer.

**Keywords:** *digital culture; close reading; critical engagement; writing; detective stories.*

**Resumo.** A cultura digital tem um forte impacto na vida dos jovens, seja através da sua ligação às redes sociais usando dispositivos móveis ou, mais recentemente, devido ao surto do novo Covid-19 que exige educação à distância online.

Maryanne Wolf em *Reader, Come Home* (2018) defende, nos seus estudos sobre leitura e neurociência cognitiva, que o cérebro dos leitores está em mudança dependendo dos dispositivos móveis que eles usam com mais frequência (telemóveis, computadores).

Um dos problemas que Wolf apresenta é a perda de capacidade de compreensão de modos de leitura de pormenor e sentidos profundos e a dificuldade atual dos leitores (jovens) em decifrar frases complexas ou de se envolverem com textos longos. Ela defende, no entanto, que uma verdadeira boa leitura é sempre uma leitura atenta, uma forma de ler que exige um esforço intelectual da parte do leitor envolvendo competências intelectuais de raciocínio, pensamento e compreensão (Wolf, 2018).

Como pode este tipo de leitura ser promovido na era digital? Este é o objetivo do Projeto Europeu Erasmus+, financiado, no qual as autoras estão envolvidas, com o título *e-Mysteries: Detective Stories to Engage Students in Close Reading with the Use of Mobile Devices* (abreviado para e-Mysteries).

Novas formas de leitura como as desenvolvidas no Projeto e-Mysteries criam oportunidades para um envolvimento empático dos estudantes, participativo, crítico e analítico com aquilo que leem assim como com uma escrita individual e colaborativa num fluxo moderno de consumidor – produtor de conteúdos.

**Palavras-Chave:** *cultura digital; leitura atenta; envolvimento crítico; escrita; histórias policiais*

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## Introduction: Close reading in the digital age

Digital culture is impacting heavily on young people's lives, be it through their own attachment to social media through mobile devices or the new Covid-19 demands on distance online education. Maryanne Wolf in *Reader, Come Home* (2018) argues through her cognitive neuroscientific studies on reading that the mind of readers is changing given the media they are constantly using (mobile phones, computers). When it comes to the specific skill of reading, readers are skimming over texts, they are multitasking while reading, they are not paying close attention to what they read, they favour short sentences over longer, to name a few examples. This may account for the poor reading skills among secondary school youngsters, demotivation to engage with complex literary texts and eventually the rate of one in five adolescents in the low performer category across several countries (Hayles, 2010; Müller-Walde, 2010; Eurydice, 2011; ELINET, 2015; Thomson, De Bortoli, and Underwood, 2016). Some international studies have found a significant positive relationship between literacy attainment and employment in adulthood (OECD and Statistics Canada 2000 cited in Merga, 2019).

One of the issues Wolf debates is the loss of deep detailed modes of reading comprehension or the willingness of today's (young) readers to engage with complex sentences or longer texts. She claims, however, that really good reading is close reading, a form of reading that requires intellectual effort from the reader involving the intellectual skills of reasoning, thinking and understanding (Wolf, 2018). Close reading includes the critical analysis of the words off the text (Burke, n/d), reading reflectively, avoiding impressionistic reading and thinking about reading (Elder and Paul, 2004) with the result that learners learn to evaluate how language is used in texts (Snow and Connor, 2016) and thus gain deeper comprehension. Close reading is also connected to the development of inferential comprehension, beyond the explicit information in the text (Dakin, 2013).

How can this kind of reading be promoted in the digital age? It is known that books and mobile devices co-exist as media for reading, for diverse ways of reading, for deep involvement as well as for skimming. It is also known that the reading brain is developing into superficial skimming over ideas, multitasking while reading, and short spans of attention to the words on the page given the time young people spend on mobile devices and on the Internet. Hayles (2010) claims that literary studies, which continue to teach close reading to students, have been unable to bridge the gap between print reading abilities to digital and vice versa. She writes, "Students read incessantly in digital media and write in it as well, but only infrequently are they encouraged to do so in literature classes or in environments that encourage the transfer" (p. 63).

There is no going back on the media available for reading, but one might attempt to bring the reading experiences afforded by both media together through a particular genre, such as the mystery detective story, as it combines clear-cut writing (and reading) conventions and the reassurance of a well-told story with a beginning, a middle, and an end, with prompts for the reader to get involved with what s/he is reading, such as

keeping a focus on characters' credible motives, identifying implicit and explicit clues, detecting red herrings, coping with twists in the plot, in sum, co-producing meanings for the text in order to solve a mystery and thus getting involved in deep reading (Ibao, 2003; Sutherland, 2006; Reutzel et al, 2008; Stachalski, 2006; Rosebrock and Jörgens, 2012).

As P.D. James wrote in *Murder Most Foul*, her 1982 essay on the detective and mystery story, the mystery story is a "highly disciplined form", with very clear cut conventions: a central mysterious death, suspects with credible motives, a detective, clues which require attention to detail, a final solution based on clear logical deduction orchestrated by the detective. According to the author, there are many attractions to readers: a contrived mystery (or mysterious death), credible motives for several characters as perpetrators of the deed, a guessing game of whodunit, as well as a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end, which assures the reader that all will be right in the end in the sense that the culprit will be found out and exposed, and that reason will prevail.

In a world of high risk and anxiety, this kind of reading is reassuring as it offers the psychological comfort that human ingenuity and human intelligence (or human courage) will always be capable of solving the murder, argues P. D. James. This appeals to young readers. Furthermore, as she so rightly argues, reading mystery detective novels is about discovering new facts, gaining insights into characters' motives, situations and deeds, assembling a puzzle, while also being granted access to different worlds. It is about getting frightened and getting involved in the story. This keeps the young reader's attention on the plot development and on details, while also engaged and interested. Thirdly, as a constructed text, the mystery story is a puzzle of how to combine detective, victim, suspects, setting and denouement in a coherent whole through intellectually satisfying and exciting writing, which requires careful planning before writing. This is particularly useful to engage readers in thinking how they would write a similar type of story and to understand that their involvement as readers has a counterpart in detached planning of this kind of writing.

## Aims

The aim of this article is to explore how mystery detective stories can be used with upper secondary readers aged 15 to 18 years old as a means to promote close reading, while harnessing young readers' engagement with mobile devices as a motivation for reading attentively.

The authors are currently engaged in a European partnership that is developing this approach in a European Erasmus+ funded project called *e-Mysteries: Detective Stories to Engage Students in Close Reading with the Use of Mobile Devices*<sup>2</sup>, so they will explain

<sup>2</sup> Co-funded by the European Union. Project Number: 2019-1-DE03-KA201-060127. Partners are Jugendförderverein Parchim/Lübz (Germany, coordinator); CARDET and INNOVADE (Cyprus); IPCB (Portugal); JAITEK (Spain), Rural Hub CLG (Ireland). Project is in progress. Website: <https://emysteries.eu/en/>

how this project is currently unfolding: its involvement with local upper secondary school teachers to establish current practices in the area of close reading of mystery detective stories and the development of a Toolbox to assist teachers in implementing this kind of approach with their students.

The basic aim of this development stage in the project is to enhance teacher's knowledge on how to teach and write detective stories using close reading activities.

## Method

Research design for this development stage in the *e-Mysteries project* is to address upper secondary teachers' needs and identify what they consider to be challenges in order to produce some guidelines they can easily follow. Three main steps were followed to produce the final *e-Mysteries Toolbox: Close reading Mystery Detective Stories (e-Mysteries, 2020)*:

- 1) A needs analysis questionnaire through face-to-face focus groups or e-mail (when necessary) addressed to a minimum of 5 upper secondary teachers and teacher librarians in each of the 5 participating country (Germany, Cyprus, Ireland, Spain and Portugal) on specific learning areas and subjects for the development of close reading activities to enhance reading literacy in upper secondary school students; teachers were inquired about how they understood close reading in connection to mystery detective stories, asked to provide reading recommendation in the genre, to indicate what they consider best practice in teaching mystery detective stories in connection to close reading, to suggest tools and resources for close reading, and to identify what they perceived as the needs of their students in terms of (close) reading skills.

- 2) Desk research to investigate tools and techniques on how to compose mystery detective stories and on methods for close reading activities at upper secondary level;

- 3) Feedback questionnaire through online focus groups, due to Covid-19 lockdown, addressed to a minimum of 5 teachers to establish an alignment of the e-Mysteries Toolbox to the realistic needs of upper secondary school teachers and students in different national contexts.

## The focus groups' recommendations

Feedback for the needs analysis questionnaire was provided by 29 teachers and/ or teacher librarians from the 5 participating countries (Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain). These teachers were both novice (with only one year teaching experience) and experienced teachers, some with up to 30 years of teaching practice, and they teach a very wide range of subjects: Languages, History, Religion, Civic Social and Political Education and Mathematics. This was intended from the beginning, as the project's



concept is that close reading mystery detective fiction can be used across several disciplines.

As was to be expected, some teachers weren't familiar at all with the concept of *close reading*, especially those in the field of Mathematics.

The main recommendations for developing the Toolbox in what concerns how teachers' perceive their needs in terms of *close reading detective/mystery* stories were very diverse and based on the teachers' own contexts. Some argued that they would like to understand how they could use close reading in order to address different needs and abilities of students. Others focused on how close reading could develop critical thinking and close reading as an interdisciplinary practice and project work. Others pointed out they would like to understand how close reading can be used for fostering argumentative skills during a dialogue. Suggestions for the Toolbox also included demonstrations of how one could use close reading for the development of specific skills, like solving problems in Mathematics; to get a better insight into subtext and understand symbolism; to improve vocabulary and grammar skills; or to teach the language of schooling as a second language to migrant students.

All teachers agree that it is vital to encourage pupils' motivation to read and promoting their reading competency. They agree that reading comprehension must be promoted more strongly, as well as the use of cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies.

Based on their practice and experience, teachers recommended reading short stories continuously, crosswise between different subjects, rather than large fragments of complex novels. They also recommended working with the imagination of students, by posing riddles from which they can create mystery stories, thus linking reading to writing in a flux of consumers of stories through reading to prosumers (creators of new similar stories).

In what concerns teachers' comments and suggestions of *best practice on approaches to detective/mystery stories and how they relate to close reading*, suggestions are grouped in three sections, namely: (section 1) What the toolbox on close reading mystery fiction should focus on in terms of characteristics of texts; (section 2) why close reading mystery fiction matters; (section 3) on methods to explore the stories.

### *Section 1. What the toolbox on close reading mystery fiction should focus on in terms of characteristics of texts*

Teachers associated close reading to poetry and informative texts, such as pieces of news, and less to fiction or mystery stories. They also tended to associate the concept to prescribed reading in study plans.

Thus, teachers highlighted the need to focus on stylistic issues, on details (of informative texts such as news items), as well as on keywords and their meanings in particular contexts. They would like the texts to yield rich meanings (i.e. to have explicit communicative intentions and implicit meanings) and have several layers of meanings, so there is space for students to develop their analytic skills through text analysis, deduction,

etc. They also expressed the wish that texts could highlight topics and arguments (to be used in oral or written discussions and presentations) in line with the students' study programmes.

*Section 2. What the toolbox on close reading mystery fiction should focus on in terms of why it matters*

Teachers argued that close reading mystery stories, in their view, could enhance complex reading skills based on decoding text layers and investigating reading clues, develop analytic skills, and develop critical thinking in students by aiming at rigorous analysis not only of the words on the page, but also of writing patterns and through multiple readings and interpretations that yield several comprehension levels.

On another level, teachers also argued that this type of reading and this type of text might improve student self-esteem and sense of achievement as it helps students deal with terms and chunks of text they might otherwise not be able to understand, and engage with a kind of plot that maintains their interest.

*Section 3. What the toolbox on close reading mystery fiction should focus on in terms of methods to explore mystery detective stories through close reading.*

Teachers shared some of their best practice in reading that they thought suited close reading mystery stories. They suggested several reading strategies, such as building a chronology of an event from dates in the text; finding clues for reading or interpretation in specific passages of text; close reading of a passage in order to profile a character; exploring and decoding images and symbols of the text in particular passages; exploring vocabulary in semantic webs of meaning; creating infographics of meaningful information in a text, etc.

In what concerns teachers' comments on what their students need *in terms of reading and the skills that might be developed through close reading mystery stories*, some teachers draw attention to the fact that students are engaged in fan fiction or fanfic; that they like reading games (e.g. Clementoni – a table game); enjoy book talks and book presentations (from one class to the other) and that they would be more motivated by interdisciplinary book projects (e.g. Arts and Literature to create visual poems).

Teachers highlighted that the majority of students at this age believe that school reading tends to be very boring, that the choice of reading is usually not related to their reading interests. Thus, reading mystery stories can be enjoyable and contribute to fascinating lessons for both boys and girls, as mystery stories seem to be enjoyable for both, for the elements of surprise, fear and thriller motives they may contain.

Teachers further highlighted the need to use reading in a context of a multimedia approach and a fusion of classic texts with new media productions: for example, the classic tale by Virginia Woolf "The haunted house" adapted to a parody comedy horror film in 2013<sup>3</sup> as suitable for interdisciplinary and cross-curricular work or in parallel when

<sup>3</sup> See the official trailer at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VoiD8Fr\\_SU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VoiD8Fr_SU), a movie directed by Michael Tiddes.

dealing with factual texts. The teachers pinpointed how this particular text and adaptation addresses Biology contents, Social studies content, Language, and Intercultural education. Through the reading of this text, one may learn about the phases of sleepwalking and snails, about the social conditions of becoming an outsider, the daily problems that may complicate the lives of today's young people, the importance of speaking a shared language for a sense of recognition and acceptance, as well as how it feels to be new in a foreign environment.

In what concerns using digital mobile devices to read and write, teachers' recommendations and perceptions were similar across the partner countries. They argue that reading on different media has to result in different kinds of reading. It does not do to expect readers to perform the same way on different media.

Teachers also expect reading on mobile devices to be easy to use, although they claim they need training on how to do it well.

Teachers' suggestions for the online virtual environment of mystery stories included basically two levels: the plot and the interface with the user.

As to the plot, the following suggestions were made:

- use of images, text passages, play of pictures
- hidden clues and wrong clues to be discovered by the reader
- include death and macabre elements
- include romance
- include a 'bad guy'
- be somehow linked to TV series or film
- focus on language as a code used by each group of characters (such as happens on board games such as Time's Up)
- narrative should have diverse reading paths for the reader to select; text is non-linear, parallel narratives, non-sequential story lines, open endings, to select from
- close reading: focus on keywords, focus on close detailed reading and analysis of pictures
- gaming aspects: get somewhere; collect something; collect points; several levels
- emulate comic strips

As to the interface with the user, in teachers' opinions readers should be able to:

- Interact with the text/ image at the level of finding clues (they discover clues, they create clues, etc.)
- become a character in the story
- have links to external sources include outside the story for referencing authors, contexts, etc.
- Simulate other online situations such as Escape room (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dSKUoVoSNI>) and <https://pt.slideshare.net/bcgstanley/escape-room-elt>) or Geocaching (<https://www.geocaching.com/play>)
- Have the possibility for the reader to build own narrative (customised)
- Include the possibility of interacting with other readers in real time

## Desk research for the Toolbox

Desk research for the *e-Mysteries Toolbox* was developed chapter by chapter and then harmonised into a whole, which was then shared with local upper secondary teachers for comments and feedback before the final version in English was produced.

The main sections of the Toolbox were initially four modules preceded by an introduction. The introductory section, developed by the Portuguese team from IPCB, gave an overview of the topics of reading in the digital age, mystery detective fiction and reading guidelines for upper secondary students, close reading as used by upper secondary teachers, and the learning areas or subjects that could be engaged for the development of close reading activities to enhance literacy in upper secondary school students through detective stories. It also explained how to use the Toolbox.

Module 1 on “What is a detective story?” was developed by the German team from Jugendforderverein Parchim/ Lübz e.V. It explained what a detective story is (setting, mystery plot, suspects, detective, clues, sequence of events, mystery resolution), gave a sample of text-based, image and text-based, and digital popular mystery detective stories among upper secondary students, argued why reading this type of stories with upper secondary students is relevant and indicated where to find resources, besides providing a glossary of mystery stories terms.

Module 2 on “Close reading and creative writing” was developed by the Irish team from Rural Hub CLG. It explained the concept of close reading for critical analysis, strategic planning and focus of significant text details and patterns, besides highlighting key features of close reading, such as using short passages and excerpts, reading with a pencil in hand, paying close attention to details, discussing the text with others, looking for patterns in the text, and asking questions about text patterns. This module also provided examples of close reading, of scaffolding strategies, and of moving from close reading to creative writing of mystery stories.

Module 3 on “Methods for close reading detective stories” was developed by the Cypriot teams from CARDET with the support of INNOVADE. It collected evidence on how teachers teach mystery detective stories and introduced pedagogical methods and practices for close reading activities in connection to mystery detective stories. It also collected examples of best practice of paper and digital resources.

Module 4 on “Write your detective story” was developed by the Spanish team from JAITEK. It concentrated on collecting best practice on finding ideas and resources for writing mystery stories from well-known stories, plots, and detectives, besides highlighting collaborative creative writing techniques and digital apps, and pointing out re-reading and revising checklists for students.



## Feedback from teachers on the first version of Toolbox

After completion of the first version of the Toolbox by the e-Mysteries team, teachers were again asked to give feedback on the product, as teachers are the target group for this output. Due to the exceptional lockdown times due to the Corona virus pandemic, the number of teachers providing feedback was lower (n=23) than in the first focus group.

Teachers were asked to comment on the usability of the Toolbox in terms of content and structure. They all agree that it is a motivating project for students, because students will enjoy the mystery stories and this kind of reading moves away from heavy compulsory reading and the current division between fiction for boys and fiction for girls. In the opinion of teachers one of the strengths of the Toolbox are the resources provided, both digital and on paper, because they are very good and varied, as well as the active didactic approaches that are proposed. Some teachers also highlighted that the content of the Toolbox is comprehensible, practical and transferrable to their contexts. Other teachers chose to praise the great potential in the collaborative methods described in the Toolbox.

However, some of the teachers expressed their doubt whether this project could be implemented in schools, given the heavy schedule and the curricular demands. Secondary students need to be prepared for national exams. Nonetheless, teachers agreed that the Toolbox can be an important resource to supplement and support the implementation of curriculum and weaker students.

Teachers made several suggestions, such as that the Toolbox should be divided into chapters which can stand alone, independent of each other, so that the reader has the option to choose which one/s to read; that the concept of close reading might be better placed at the beginning of the Toolbox before the chapter on teaching methods so the reader may reflect appropriately on the concept, especially on how it can be used in teaching practice; and that project promoters should emphasise how and why the *e-Mysteries Toolbox* promotes reading skills (besides motivation).

Chapter by chapter comments included a request to update the list authors and reading materials in chapter one, to include contemporary authors and texts.

Teachers considered that chapter three needed to be enriched with more practical examples for each method and passages from mystery stories. In their opinion, it would be great to see some examples in the classroom so that teachers can relate to them and understand how to adjust their teaching practice.

A second suggestion for chapter three was a revision on the concepts on multimodality and multiliteracies to become more clearly woven into the Toolbox. A clearer connection was needed between readings on several media: how to link the detective mystery story to films, to excerpts from other books or even to plays. This was announced as particularly useful for helping students put a modern twist on classic detective mysteries. A third suggestion for chapter three was to include pictures in the resources for better navigation.

In relation to chapter four, on collaborative writing, suggestions were offered on additional examples of collaborative writing tools and to link the ideas for clues and for mystery resolution with specific examples.

Given the length of the Toolbox, teachers suggested a quick guide that would suggest the different steps when the work with students is in progress and for teachers who are not so confident in implementing the Toolbox.

All suggestions were taken into account in producing the final version of the Toolbox by the authors of this article, who were responsible for this particular output in the project.

### **Results: The *e-Mysteries Toolbox***

As a result of the feedback by teachers, the authors of this article proceeded to a thorough revision and reorganization of the *e-Mysteries Toolbox*. In terms of structure, each module was revised into a self-contained chapter, so teachers could use it independently to research any particular topic or its associated resources. Module structure was also altered in order to avoid repetition and create a meaningful reading flow, according to teachers' suggestions. A quick one-page visual step by step guide was added to the *e-Mysteries Toolbox* on how to set up an *e-Mysteries* reading and writing project with students. The final content organization of the *e-Mysteries Toolbox* is the following:

**Module 1 (Mystery Detective Stories)** explains how mystery detective stories are structured and highlights why and how they should be read with secondary school students who are reluctant readers or lack reading competence. It also offers a glossary of most common terms of mystery detective stories and a table with well-known mystery detective stories and contemporary ones.

**Module 2 (Teaching Mystery Detective Stories to upper secondary school students)** highlights examples of how teachers have used mystery detective stories in and out of class to offer methods and practices to introduce close reading activities with these kinds of stories, as well as paper-based, digital, and verbal-visual examples to explore mystery detective stories in practice.

**Module 3 (Close Reading)** explains and details the concept of close reading in opposition to other modes of reading, highlights which types of text are more suitable to be used for close reading and how to do a close reading in three steps (annotating text on the margins, looking for patterns and asking questions and to further deeper interrogation of the text). The module closes with a reverse strategy from close reading to creative writing of mystery detective novels.

**Module 4 (Creative Writing of Mystery Detective Stories)** starts by exploring collaborative creating writing techniques and a selection of apps and then proceeds to illustrate how to find ideas for mystery plots, detectives, secondary characters, creating true or false clues, and consider open or closed endings. The module ends with some suggestions on how to review writing individually and collectively.

The *e-Mysteries Toolbox* is available as flipbook online in English, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Greek<sup>4</sup> (<https://www.emysteries.eu/en/outputs>) and can be easily downloaded from the e-Mysteries website at <https://www.emysteries.eu/>.

## Discussion

The approach purported by the project, which is reflected in the *e-Mysteries Toolbox* is based on several decisions. The first point is that the project explores the narrative concept of the mystery detective story across several media (in narrative, comics, graphic novels, digital, multimodal text, television, series, etc.). There may be differences afforded by each medium, but the cross-media range ensures that the concept of a mystery detective story is known to readers. The multimodal channels of such texts are an example of what young students may find appealing to watch or read today. Moreover, by existing on multiple platforms and devices, these stories may reinforce the use of several media for learning, explore types across a range of disciplines and promote students' engagement with several media forms for reading.

The second argument is that the starting point for winning over young people to deeper cognitive understanding through reading is to make use of their own popular digital reading practices outside the formal educational setting and extend them to meaningful learning and reading promotion through active engagement with reading and close reading they may bring readers close to the desired target of critical analysis, empathetic reading and attention to details and the words on the page.

The third point is that this kind of reading can still be done on mobile devices, provided some other conditions are observed that may enhance deep engagement with reading, such as, first, that, highlights teaching methods of reading that are student-centred, collaborative, interactive, creative and cooperative in connection to reading. Secondly, that close reading strategies are introduced in reading routines. All these methods make use of the popular digital practices of young people outside the formal educational setting and extend them to meaningful learning and reading promotion through active engagement with reading.

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<sup>4</sup> Version in English: <http://flipbooks.emysteries.eu/toolbox/en/>; Version in German: <http://flipbooks.emysteries.eu/toolbox/de/>; Version in Spanish: <http://flipbooks.emysteries.eu/toolbox/es/>; version in Portuguese: <http://flipbooks.emysteries.eu/toolbox/pt/>; version in Greek: <http://flipbooks.emysteries.eu/toolbox/gr/>

Close reading offers a more focused mode of reading that builds critical, analytical processes, and promotes slower modes of reading that contradict superficial skimming over texts.

Fourthly, in order to boost students' deep reading comprehension (Elder and Richard, 2004), the close reading of mystery detective stories should promote the readers' own creative writing within the same genre. Digitally enhanced environments can support students in creating various mystery detective stories using the information they gathered from their close reading.

### Conclusions - What is new?

New forms of reading, as those being developed by the *e-Mysteries Project*, create opportunities for the participatory empathetic, critical, and analytical engagement of students with what they read as well as with individual and collaborative writing in a modern flux of consumer-producer. Furthermore, reading is not offered as a passive activity, but it is transformed into an opportunity to circulate information and knowledge, to do critical analysis and engage in creative activity that may extend from inside the classroom to larger communities (communities of writers, fans, etc.) and thus connect students to wider ecosystems digitally.

Upper-secondary teachers can find support for the kind of pedagogical approach described in the online *e-Mysteries Toolbox*, localised in four languages (Spanish, Portuguese, German and Greek), besides the English version.

The *Project eMysteries* is an Erasmus Project focused in *Detective Stories to Engage Students in Close Reading with the Use of Mobile Devices* wants also to develop knowledge and imagination to contribute for better literacy and consequently better way of life.

The *Toolbox on Close Reading Mystery Detective Stories* offers stand-alone modules on the different instructional aspects of mystery detective stories. These modules can be read as a sequence of suggestions for teachers on how to work with mystery detective stories through close reading in an entertaining, interactive way for students. The fictional examples in the e-Mysteries Toolbox are drawn from contemporary multimodal mystery detective novels. The multimodal channels of such texts are an example of what young students may find appealing today. Moreover, they reinforce the use of several media for learning, explore types across a range of disciplines and promote students' engagement with several forms of the artform. The Toolbox is available in a flip book format to the project's website in English, German, Greek, Spanish, and Portuguese.

The project explores the narrative concept of the mystery detective story across several media (in narrative, comics, graphic novels, digital, multimodal text), highlights teaching methods that are student-centred, collaborative, interactive, creative and cooperative in connection to reading. All these methods make use of the popular digital prac-



tices of young people outside the formal educational setting and extend them to meaningful learning and reading promotion through active engagement with reading.

The emphasis is placed on the mode of reading that builds critical, analytical processes, and promotes slower modes of reading that contradict superficial skimming over texts.

It also highlights the importance of collaborative writing by suggesting activities that students can carry out together, as well as digital apps that can assist them.

The development of the project includes work on the development of the interactive environment. The environment will be fully aligned to support the creation of detective stories and will allow students to create various stories using different characters and plots from a rich-media resources.

At times of risk and anxiety, as those brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, finding solace in mystery detective stories because of their familiarity and thrill may be a good strategy to enhance the reading skills of young people across paper and digital media, through exploring what each media can afford to younger generations.

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