# reading

# technology integration

## video book reports

**Equipment:** video recording hardware (camera or cell phones); video editing software (iMovie, MovieMaker, PiTiVi)

Book reports are a staple of many reading classes. But, unfortunately, they can often be boring for everyone involved – including the teacher. So why not make them a little more interesting? With video book reports, teachers can invite students to make movie-trailer-like videos for the books they've read, like the video for *The Book Thief* found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95s8GlKY40o.

Video book reports often require students to think more critically about what they've read, in order to depict them visually. Plus, the videos can be shared online with other students in the class, students' family members, and people around the world.

## social networking

**Tool:** Edmodo
**Equipment:** Computer, Internet connection
**url:** http://www.edmodo.com

Edmodo allows teachers to create closed social networks, like Facebook but only for a single class, grade level, or school. Social networks have a ton of implications for the general classroom, but reading teachers can take them even further. When reading a book in class, students can be assigned one of the characters. They can then start an Edmodo profile, posing as that character. Students will need to understand each character's personality and motivations well enough to pose as them online, as well as to interact with other characters (played by other students in the class). What would Harry Potter's status read on the first day of school at Hogwarts? What might Draco Malfoy post on Harry's wall? What sorts of web links would Hermione Granger post? These are all questions students would have to investigate on their reading class's social network.

## search stories

**Tool:** Google search stories
**Equipment:** Computer, Internet connection
**url:** http://www.youtube.com/searchstories

One of the most basic things students need to learn in reading class is also one of the most difficult – identifying the main idea and supporting details of a text. Google's search stories tool gives teachers a fun, interesting way to teach this concept. Google created the first search story as a commercial. It told the story of a couple meeting in Paris, getting married, and having a child, all through the man's Google searches. Google's search story tool allows users to create similar stories in just a few minutes. Students can create search stories to write a synopsis of a piece of text. Since they're only allowed to enter seven terms, students are forced to winnow down their reading into just seven words or phrases. Then, students must organize the terms so they re-tell the story in a way that a new audience can understand.

writing

# technology integration

## student blogs

**Equipment:** Computer, Internet connection
**urls:** http://classblogmeister.com;
http://kidblog.org;
or http://edublogs.org

Student blogs are perhaps the best writing tool of the 21st century. Much like a writing journal, students can write in response to prompts or even outside of class, whenever they feel the urge. But unlike with journals, student blogs have an audience. Teachers can make these blogs more private if they choose, but it's the idea of an audience that really motivates students. No longer are they simply writing for their teacher – they're writing for their friends, their peers, their families, and strangers who live across the globe. Blogs give students a platform to refine and make their individual voice heard. Research has found that student blogs increase performance on writing tests, increase student motivation, and increase the diversity of students' writing. Blogging students often write in a greater variety of genres than they're non-blogging peers. In addition, students can showcase multi-media projects – like videos or podcasts – by posting them on their blogs.

## poetry podcasts

**Equipment:** Computer with mic, Internet connection
**url:** http://audacity.sourceforge.net

Podcasts are basically talk radio programs created on computers. Some schools have students create a weekly news podcast, but podcasting is also a great way for students to publish their work. After a poetry unit, for example, students can choose their favorite piece to publish. Discussions about voice and mood will help students choose appropriate background music. And recording themselves reading the poems will help students with their fluency. Here's a sample poetry podcast from an ESL fourth-grader: http://digitaldollar.edublogs.org/files/2010/02/sylvia.mp3

Podcasting doesn't just have to happen with poetry, though. Students can create podcasts of anything they write – a multi-part podcast is a great way to create suspense for a mystery story. Or several students could work together to create a "Choose Your Own Adventure" podcast series.