

Transmedia Universes

Description Popular culture stories are often situated in transmedia universes, fictional worlds constructed through a wide variety of media, such as films, TV series, books, videogames, webisodes, comics etc. In addition to official content, user-created content such as fan fiction and fan art are an important, if contested, part of the fictional universes. Often there is one media format, like a TV series, functioning as the centre of the universe, and other media all play distinct roles in the whole. In this activity, the students are looking at how transmedia universes are put together, and what story-telling functions different media forms play in the whole.

- Tag**
- Book
 - Media
 - Movies
 - TV series
 - Videogames

- Skills**
- CONTENT MANAGEMENT**
 - Search, select and download
 - SOCIAL MANAGEMENT**
 - Collaborate
 - Teach
 - NARRATIVE AND AESTHETIC**
 - Interpret
 - Recognise and describe
 - Compare
 - Evaluate and reflect
 - IDEOLOGY & ETHICS**
 - Evaluate and reflect

- Learning areas**
- Foreign Languages
 - Language

- Card language**
- Spanish
 - English

Structure

Sessions	1
Duration	90' (Variable)
Number of participants	10-30
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 14-16• 17-18
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internet access• Mind map tool (e.g. Coogle, imindq, FreeMind, etc.)

Process

Key questions

- What are the main characteristics of various media forms in relation to story-telling and fictive world construction?
- How are media franchises constructed?
- What are the most popular media franchises?
- What is the core media in a specific transmedia universe?
- How does fan fiction and fan art conform or subvert the canonical world?

Development

The teacher gives a short introduction to the topics of the fictional world and transmedia storytelling where the story is spread over a variety of different media. The concept of a transmedia universe is introduced, where all transmedia elements come together: narrative (films, TV series, novels etc.) and non-narrative (games, toys, action figures, etc.), fictional and non-fictional (behind the scenes – documentaries, director and actor interviews etc.), franchise productions (official and licensed productions) and user generated content (fan fiction, fan art, fan driven wikis etc.). **(15')**

Small groups are established, and each group discusses for 5 mins to decide which transmedia universe they want to concentrate on. Each group quickly tells the others about their choice. **(10')**

Each group starts looking for information on their chosen transmedia universe. They should list all the official productions related to the universe (films, TV series, novels, games, comics, webisodes, pod casts etc.), make an overview of user-generated content (as popular transmedia universes may have tens of thousands of fan fictions and such, there is no way making this part comprehensive), and also seeing if there are toys and other merchandise available.

Then they should use a mind map tool of their choice, and create an overview of the chosen transmedia universe: What/which elements form the core? Which parts are official, which unofficial? Which parts are narrative, which non-narrative? etc. Specifically, they should concentrate on what is the main user experience related to different elements. **(45')**

Groups present their mind maps to each other and discuss which media forms are most often the cores of transmedia universes, and what is their overall scope. **(20')**

Evaluation

The evaluation should be focused on:

- Realization of the complexity of many popular transmedia universes.
- Recognition of the different characteristics of various media forms within transmedia storytelling.

References for professors

- Consuming and Constructing a Fictional World: Battlestar Galactica and Transmedia Storytelling (Raine Koskimaa, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen, Taná Välsälö, 2015):
https://www.academia.edu/19096774/Consuming_and_Constructing_a_Fictional_World_Battlestar_Galactica_and_Transmedia_Storytelling?auto=download

Author

Raine Koskimaa. University of Jyväskylä (Finland), raine.koskimaa@ju.fi