

Bias in Articles



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Highlight the OPINIONS in green

Reading and the Cell Phone: An Up and Coming Romance

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In this article, Dr. Cavanaugh stretches our notions of literacy by providing examples of how technology, in this case cell phones, can be used for reading and writing.

Cell phones and schools are not usually associated together, at least not in a good way. But this form of technology is one that has been undergoing great leaps and improvements, and perhaps one day soon teachers will be reprimanding students for forgetting to bring their cell phones to class, or teachers will be listening to excuses from the student who didn't complete his reading homework because the phone battery was recharging.

Today cell phones seem to be everywhere and in nearly every hand. While driving past a middle school the other day, I saw school let out. Just as always, children came hurrying out the doors, some going to the bus, others starting the walk home, and some getting their bikes. One of the differences "from always" was how many children I saw getting out their cell phones and making calls (even the kids on bikes).

First let's think about the phone. Today's cell phones have a number of interesting functions and abilities beyond just voice communication. One factor of the constant technology growth is that today's better cell phones actually have the computing power of a mid 1990's personal computer (Prensky 2004). Now, a number of cell phones also have the ability to use removable memory cards, which can be used in the phone and in a computer. Almost all cell phones now can send and receive text messages, do note-taking (as voice or text), have calendars, and the ability to play games – which actually means that they can run additional software programs. Many phones have abilities, such as being able to browse the Internet or play MP3s.

What does this have to do with reading? Well for one thing, students are already reading their phones: texting or messaging has become a common tool for students. What I'm suggesting is that teachers start thinking about using the communication tools that students already have, are using, and are quite comfortable with. Let's start having our students use their cell phone also as a reading tool – Books on Phone. One of the early cell phone books to receive a lot of attention was written by an author in Japan named Yoshi, who self-published a book titled Deep Love as a serialized book that was distributed as downloadable text files to be read on cell phones (Steuer 2004). Within three years of its release the cell phone book's download site had accumulated over 20 million hits, being very popular with female teen readers.

Already there are a wide variety of book types available for cell phones, including non-fiction, poetry, graphic novels, short stories, and whole novels. For the cell phone, these electronic books break down into three basic formats: audiobook, web book, and Java book. If the material that you want your students to read doesn't already exist, it is possible to create your own cell phone friendly book versions. If you really want to know what your cell phone can do, sit with a teenager and get him or her to take you through step by step some of the options and abilities of your phone.

In some ways the modern cell phone is like the VCR of yesteryear – remember the flashing clock that perhaps you or your parents couldn't get to stop. Enter the digital native: children took to VCRs and cable television programming and used them with what seemed like instinct. Today cell phones occupy a similar niche in the technology environment, so if you really want to know what your cell phone can do, sit with a teenager and get him or her to take you through step by step some of the options and abilities of your phone.

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How do you know the tone is positive or negative? Write at least 2 examples from the article that demonstrate that tone.	
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Is the article biased? (yes or no) Why do you think this?	
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Can the writer be trusted? OR Is the bias too strong for a clear understanding of the topic?	