

Introduction

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

- [Henry David Thoreau](#)

I went to new literacies because I wished to teach deliberately, to front only the essential facts of pedagogy, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to retire, discover that I had not taught.

- Adapted by Adam Mackie

Welcome to *A New Literacies Dictionary: Primer for the Twenty-first Century Learner*. This dictionary, available in print and digital formats, intends to serve twenty-first century teachers and twenty-first century learners. The hyperlinked entries are a resource, a reference, and a tool for those interested in teaching lessons in [new literacies](#) or for those seeking ideas, samples, discussions, and reflections on digital and multimodal texts. A discussion on a contemporary definition of new literacy can be found within the entry on "[Literacy](#)," but can be understood as a "sociocultural perspective on literacy" ([Lankshear and Knobel](#) 1) or a literacy accounting for the relational aspects of information exchange. An underlying goal of *A New Literacies Dictionary* is to connect teachers and students in the twenty-first century with a resource that offers multi-literate inspiration in an age of ever-changing literacy.

In the summer of 2009, I was reading *Walden* by [Henry David Thoreau](#) at my in-laws' house on Hatch Lake in Upstate New York. I remember becoming inspired about Thoreau's discussion on deliberation and his famous words about going to the woods to live deliberately. As an English Education graduate student and pre-service teacher, I wondered how I would bring deliberation into my pedagogy and go into the classroom to teach deliberately. I had no idea that asking a single question to myself about deliberation (What will it mean for me to teach deliberately?) would lead me down a road of [new literacies](#), teaching with digital technology and [multimodal pedagogy](#), and digitally composing a digital dictionary of instructional materials in a variety of genres.

I enrolled in a graduate-level, professional concerns English course, covering [teaching and learning in a digital age](#) taught by Associate Professor of English Dr. Cindy O'Donnell-Allen, the following fall. I was resistant to implementing digital technology going into the course and related to a poet likening computer and Internet technology to juggling chainsaws. I was taught as a younger student to turn to antiquity and the classics as a guide to my education, reading works by [Plato](#), [Aristotle](#), and [Lao Tzu](#). However, throughout the course on teaching and learning in a digital age, something happened. Call it a twenty-first century awakening. Call it an upgrade to my thinking application. Whatever you call it, there was a personality change that occurred. I realized, throughout O'Donnell-Allen's course, that I needed to understand [new literacies](#) better and effectively combine my classical education with the tools of the twenty-first century. [Juxtaposition](#) became a watchword. New literacies and teaching with digital technology would become a way for me to practice deliberation in my pedagogy.

The idea of writing *A New Literacies Dictionary: Primer for the Twenty-first Century Learner* came about slowly. First, I was inspired by poetic projects I saw where dictionaries were created from grouping many essays, meditations, and reflections together. Assistant Professor of English [Dan Beachy-Quick's](#) *A Whaler's Dictionary* was the work, in particular, that served as a catalyst for inspiration. I encountered Beachy-Quick's dictionary while completing a course through [Herman Melville's](#) novel *Moby-Dick*.

When I presented the idea to my academic adviser, Dr. Pamela K. Coke, I had not narrowed and arrived at the concrete proposal of writing a dictionary around new literacies. I just knew I wished to deliberately write a dictionary. However, the more I got engrossed in the reading and research of new literacies I realized that this was an avenue I desired to explore. After speaking with Beachy-Quick about an idea of writing an educational dictionary, he suggested I take a look at nineteenth century primers. I sought content and aesthetic inspiration in *The New-England Primer*, [1777 edition](#), as well as the revised version written by [Noah Webster](#) and the Westminster Assembly in 1789. As I considered the importance and relevance of these primers to eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century students, I realized the need for a twenty-first century primer.

It only made sense for me to choose a form that informed the content of the work I was setting out to do. Though *A New Literacies Dictionary* lends itself to a print-based, glue-bound form, an online web-based dictionary gives itself to a teacher/student audience, anywhere, given an Internet connection. Poetically speaking, [Charles Olson's](#) and [Robert Creeley's](#) famous words also influenced my decision to take a digital form for a project involving digital matter. Creeley once said in an interview, when addressing a concern of tone in poetry that “there’s an appropriate way of saying something inherent in the thing to be said” (Packard 197). I, therefore, set myself to the task of importing content onto a [Ning](#), a popular social networking site, which was free at the time.

Ning, however, changed their policies halfway through the construction of the dictionary and became a fee-based service. I was not interested in paying Ning to host the dictionary, so I migrated to [Google Sites](#). The dictionary you now see has gone through several aesthetic changes since its birth on Google Sites and the content can be revised, edited or upgraded if ever the need may arise. It's my highest hope that readers will read the entries as deliberately as they were constructed. Readers are invited to explore, navigate, and use this dictionary for teaching and learning all forms of literacy in the twenty-first century.

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