

The magic of secret islands creates safe haven for literary classics on Minecraft.edu

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A scene from the new Treasure Island Litcraft project on the Minecraft.edu gaming platform. Credit: Lancaster University

The magic of Treasure Island, complete with swashbuckling pirates and buried gold, is captured in a pioneering project, created by a Lancaster University team, which brings gaming and textual worlds together to re-engage schoolchildren with literary classics.

And the first of many new inspiring game-worlds, which uses the popular Minecraft platform, has even caught the eye of global technology giant Microsoft with whom the Lancaster University team have agreed a new partnership.

The adaptation of the adventure novel, by Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson, is the first joint venture between the two organisations and is featured on Microsoft's Minecraft.edu website as part of their new strand on Literature in Minecraft.

Lancaster University's Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project 'Chronotopic Cartographies', which aims to bring literary classics to life in a variety of ways, set up their LITCRAFT gaming platform as a spin-off project.

LITCRAFT uses the Minecraft platform to create accurate scale models of literary islands such as those of Treasure Island, Robinson Crusoe and The Lord of the Flies.

No research project has, up until now, mapped place-related information in this manner.

Linked educational resources are then used to re-engage children and adults with 'classics' that might otherwise not be read.

The Lancaster University team are also interested in developing in-game resources that will encourage reluctant readers gain confidence in relation to literature and this is the focus of the second Minecraft world

for Kenzuke's Kingdom by Michael Morpugo.



A scene from the new Treasure Island Litcraft project on the Minecraft.edu gaming platform Credit: Lancaster University

Lead researcher and Head of Lancaster University's English and Creative Writing Department, Professor Sally Bushell explains: "We have created an educational model that connects the imaginative spatial experience of reading the text to an immersive experience in the game world.

"It then returns to the text with a new understanding through experience.

"This is very exciting for us and it far exceeds our expectations for making our research work accessible to the public around the world."

She added: "The resource is proving very popular with schools and libraries and the first created world of Treasure Island is the flagship project in the launch of literature as a new field on Minecraft.edu"

The [project](#) creates a series of interactive interdisciplinary lessons which each involves different stages including:

- A textual stage in which children must interact with various sites across the island landscape and undertake related activities
- Mapping activities moving around the island
- Interactive activities in which the children re-shape or recreate the landscape and, importantly, consider the consequences of doing so

The lessons focus on such themes as place-naming, orienteering, choosing and creating routes and re-enacting narratives.

The worksheets and activities have been trialled in schools and will be made freely available in due course.

Provided by Lancaster University

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