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Title: The Mysterious Messages (Just temporary, until I think of something better. I generally prefer to finish writing a piece, and then think of a title, usually an odd quote from what I have written that only makes sense after you have read the story.)

Thesis/Main Idea: For my project, I would like to create a piece of e-lit. It would be a fictional tale, told through digital mediums, such as Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, and other websites, and would use maps, video, images, and different styles of text.

Format: E-lit, based on an HTML website which I will create, but may link to outside websites such as Facebook and Twitter, where part of the story will be posts on a fictional character’s page.

Description of project: My story will begin with an introductory chapter on an HTML website I will create that introduces the main character(s). From there, it is a bit of a treasure hunt. I have not decided whether to directly link to outside websites, or to leave clues and make the reader figure out the path, but I think I am leaning towards direct linkage because, while I want my story to be interactive, I want to focus more on the story, rather than the hunt. Also, I plan to make this a first-person narrative, and I want to post things from the perspective of my main character(s). That would require me to post things at certain times, or fake the time, and let my readers know that there is nothing more to the story yet. It would work out more like a TV show, rather than a book, where the reader would have to wait until the next episode; they can not just read all the chapters in one day because I want my story to happen in real time.

As far as the plot goes, it is about an orphaned female college student, introverted and cowardly, paying for college by scholarship and a part-time job, who has been receiving mysterious messages on her computer from an unknown sender. Sounds cheesy, I know, but I do not want to tell you the rest of it, because it would spoil the surprise ending. I do have most of the story constructed in my head already; I just need to flesh out the details, and do a bit of research and fact checking to add an element of reality (which, in my opinion, makes it more exciting). But basically, my character wakes up one morning feeling more tired than when she went to sleep and she discovers an odd email message. She does not recognize the sender, so she just junks it. She gets a new one every morning for a week, and then blacklists the sender. After that, she starts getting tweets on her Twitter account and posts on her Facebook page. She blocks them. Finally, she gets a digital sticky note on her computer. Now how could that have gotten there? Obviously, she is very creeped out, so she tells the police she is being stalked. They tell her they will look into it, and take her computer. There isn’t a virus on it, it has not been remoted into, and it has not been hacked. Someone physically opened her computer up the previous night and left her that message. And that is really all I can tell you without giving the whole thing away.

I want to do e-lit because the DCC class I am taking this semester, HDCC208D Digital Storytelling: Persuasive Authoring and Digital Spaces, is really awesome and one of our lessons was on e-lit. The stories generally sucked, but I thought the methods the authors used to tell the stories were very cool. There was one piece, called [*The 21 Steps*](http://www.wetellstories.co.uk/stories/week1/), which I was particularly impressed by (although, again, I must state that I thought the actual story was rubbish and I do not believe they used the medium to its best effect). So, my goal is to create a better storyline and involve the reader in it as best I can through the use of the World Wide Web. I think traditional, plain-text-only stories fail to capture young readers’ attention these days, not because they are uninteresting, but because of modern distractions. Why spend 20 hours reading *Pride & Prejudice*, when you can watch the movie in two? Why bother reading all the detail in the *Lord of the Rings* when you can see and hear everything in the films in such grandeur? Why purchase an expensive math textbook when WolframAlpha has hundreds of searchable examples *and* it gives you the answer to practically any math question you ask it? My story will allow readers/viewers to see and imagine all the scenes I want them to, but in less time, and they will be able to experience everything the character experiences, just the way the character experiences it.

Skills & Tools: I will be using an HTML webpage, so HTML skill or familiarity with a program like Dreamweaver will be necessary. I have experience with both, but I have only HTML text-editors, nothing fancy like Dreamweaver. Still, I think my HTML skills will be adequate. I do, however, need to learn a little more about social media sites. I generally do not use them, so I am not as familiar with Facebook and Twitter as I will have to be for this project. Photoshop would also be very handy. I have experience with that, and I plan to buy the application in the near future, for the purposes of this assignment and others. My advisor gave me an excellent idea about how to control what the reader/viewer sees when. He suggested that I use JavaScript to get a date stamp off of my readers/viewers computer to see when they are reading/viewing my piece. That way, my readers/viewers could join in the story at any time, and they would see my posts just the same as if they had started reading when I was originally posting my project. I unfortunately have minimal JavaScript experience, and so would need to learn more about that.

Anything else: As I said above, I want to make my story have the pace of a television show, where the reader is left with a cliff-hanger until the next week, rather than a book with chapters that can be read whenever the reader wishes. I just want to know, is this possible, as far as grading goes? If I release my story out bit by bit, how much of it needs to be done by when? Should everything be up by the designated day that projects are due, or is that when I should start posting my stuff?