Reluctant readers and game literature

An intertextual analysis of World of Warcraft: Chronicle I

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Abstract

World of Warcraft and World of Warcraft: Chronicle I are in this essay analyzed as motivators for reluctant readers. World of Warcraft: Chronicle I is analyzed from small-scale and large-scale intertextual comparison to Greek and Norse mythology. The aim of this essay is to introduce alternative literature outside the literary canon in the EFL classroom in Sweden. The aim is to connect gaming an outside school activity with reading. The analysis is divided into three parts, the first part focuses on the amount of reading that is done while playing a game like World of Warcraft. The second part focuses on intertextuality in the Chronicle to Greek and Norse mythology. Lastly, how the knowledge of intertextuality in the Chronicle can be used to interact with likeminded people by posting on forums in discussed. The goal is to connect gaming and reading to motivate reluctant readers.

Key words

World of Warcraft,
WoW,
World of Warcraft: Chronicle I,
Reluctant readers,
Intertextuality,
Upper secondary school,
EFL.
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“I play hearthstone and have played WarCrafts 1-3. Just hit page 94 of World of Warcraft Chronicle Vol. 1. SO MANY connections. I plan on reading the novel The Dark Portal after this. So pumped. I’m thinking of creating a story board to keep all the name straight. But seriously, I just learned night elves came from dark trolls that found the well of entirety and settled on its shores. That’s Crazy!!”

(Reddit.com, u/BellewTheBear).

1 Introduction

The enthusiasm expressed in the epigraph above is the reason for this essay: to encourage reluctant readers with literature that is personally interesting to them. *World of Warcraft* is a massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) produced by Blizzard Entertainment and first launched in 1994. The lore of *WoW* can be the motivating factor for reluctant readers, who might be: “gamers”, providing alternative literature which is not included in the classical literary canon. Many players that play *WoW* are interested in the lore, the history of the *WoW* world. This interest can be a way to create a sense of belonging for a reluctant reader that will hopefully spark an interest in reading in general. The main goal is to create interest and enjoyment for reading, that reluctant readers can see the importance of reading both in school and in private life. The motivation for the reluctant reader’s interest in *WoW* reading *World of Warcraft: Chronicle I* written by Chris Metzen, Matt Burns, and Robert Brooks and released 15 March 2016, is that the new knowledge about the history of the game can help them partake in communities surrounding *WoW*, both in-game and the various community websites, for example, Reddit, MMO-champion or *WoW* official website. Involvement in discussion creates a stronger sense of belonging that can provide the reluctant video gaming reader with a purpose for reading.
The evolution of games over the past century has been incredible. Many of the new games follow an archetypal historical game structure, an epic hero quest, where the hero faces different challenges and \textit{WoW} follows the epic hero quest narrative structure. The epic hero questline can be found in the mythology of most civilizations, for example, in the ancient Greek, the Norse, the Teutonic, the Babylonian, the Hebraic, the Hindu, and the Egyptian cultures. Stories and poetry were written to glorify the gods and celebrate the ruling classes, each adapted to the societies’ own specific cosmological traditions (Corneliussen et al. 126). The \textit{WoW} universe can, therefore, be compared several popular fictional universes, for example, \textit{Lord of the Rings}, \textit{Harry Potter} or \textit{Game of Thrones}.

In \textit{WoW}, the player gets to experience and take part in a virtual making of history, where the game provides the frame narrative through various quests and through cinematics.\footnote{Cinematics are connected to key featured quests in the expansions. They are story videos of, for example, historical events to provide context. In the latest expansion, \textit{Battle for Azeroth} (patch 8.1.5), there are 15 pre-rendered in-game cinematics.} The player is introduced to different worldviews while encountering several fictional races and cultures as he/she progresses in the game, and most of those races and cultures have their fictional historical background based on historical or religious mythology. The races’ histories are the basis for the dramatic tensions and alliances between the different factions in \textit{WoW}. At first, the player is put in the game as the hero facing problems without knowing this history of the tension and alliances. Then the lore of the game is introduced to the player in various ways. The virtual world (Azeroth) in \textit{WoW} has its own integrity and vivacity and it provides a dramatic gameplay experience for players (Corneliussen et al. 127-8). \textit{World of Warcraft: Chronicle I}, is the first of three chronicles released 11 years after the original game released to explaining the history of this virtual world.
Because of the connections to ancient myths, the idea of intertextuality seems to be a fruitful concept to use in analyzing the narrative of WoW. The world of WoW, Azeroth, contains several gods and creatures based on mythologies, which is shown in the analysis section of this essay. David Bamman explains intertextuality as sequences of characters, or words which he defines as strings (1). The level of similarity between two different texts he defines by which scale other texts are reused (1). Bamman divides the degree of intertextuality between document-level comparisons and character-centric (2). Bamman defines document-level comparison as topic models, where texts uses the same general themes as war or journeys (2). Bamman defines character similarities by comparing the actions characters take, the actions done to them and how these actions are described (3). Intertextuality will be studied from these two perspectives, which I define as small-scale (character similarities) and large-scale comparisons (topic models) with different mythologies.

The purpose is to explore if an intertextual analysis of World of Warcraft: Chronicle I is a viable topic to motivate reluctant readers within the EFL classroom in Sweden. The book is written based on the computer game and follows the in-game specific theme, style, and language which might interest students. Introducing gaming-literature provides the opportunity to point out to students that playing a video game requires the person to “interpret all sorts of different symbols systems – words, pictures, sounds, symbols, color, and so on – simultaneously as well as alone and in combination (Beavis 435). Therefore, the purpose is to connect students’ interest outside school to schoolwork. Kristie Jolley points out in an article that students can struggle to connect their gaming habits to schoolwork (81). Just because the student deems the activity as gaming it may not serve as literature (81). Therefore, connecting reading to their interest will hopefully
expand their view upon literature and inspire them to see the possibilities and advantages of reading.

The literature curriculum is dominated by a group of texts, the literary canon, which consists of books with agreed-on literary merit and cultural value like *The Great Gatsby* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Dierking, 407). Texts in the canon often deal with values connected with “cultural whiteness, masculinity, the dominance of heterosexuality, Christianity, the physical and mental ability” without problematizing them (Borsheim-Black et al. 123-4). *World of Warcraft Chronicle 1* is not considered a part of the literary canon in Swedish upper secondary schools. However, it deals with several other themes, for example, good versus evil, betrayal, love, humanity (courage, resolve, heroism), religion and sacrifice. However, introducing a game like *WoW* does not come without drawbacks. For example, issues of sexism and heteronormativity is a problem within the community surrounding *WoW*, which is elaborated on later in the essay. Moreover, the syllabus for English 5 is not specific about what to read, which leaves a space for teachers’ choice in material. Teachers of English in upper secondary schools in Sweden tend to have two book readings included in the course, one where student have a set list of books they can choose from and one where the student can choose freely. Proposing *World of Warcraft: Chronicle 1* to reluctant readers for the second reading is part of the teacher’s responsibility, to present literature suited to the students’ interest. This essay will explore how to motivate reluctant readers in the EFL classroom by using intertextuality in *World of Warcraft* and *World of Warcraft: Chronicle 1*, an alternative piece of literature outside the literature canon to connect reading with outside school interest.

2 Teaching Reluctant Readers

According to Aiden Chambers in The Reluctant Reader, all reading must happen somewhere, in a physical place, at school, at home, in a library.
or somewhere else (13). The place and setting can affect reading as well as our mood, time and interruptions. Another very important aspect of why someone reads is if it is for their own enjoyment or if they read for school or work purposes. These factors can all impact the reader’s general attitude towards reading. Therefore, as a teacher, it is important to create a good reading environment for the students (Chambers 13). This includes opportunities for browsing and book selection. Readers become willing readers when they read from their own instincts and taste. Therefore, the availability of books is where one should start, to give students the opportunity to read books that will suit their maturity and personality (Chambers 16, 31). This matches the Swedish National Agency for Education’s aim for the subject English, that “in teaching students should meet written and spoken English of different kinds and relate the content to their own experiences and knowledge”. The aim is to motivate reluctant readers by connecting reading with outside school activities, like gaming.

Being reluctant to read can be explained in several aspects. Some students might have trouble to imagine characters, visualizing what is happening, preference in genre/style or not comprehending plot, identifying characters (Beach et al. 115). Furthermore, the focus in this essay is the student that has all the tools for reading but refuses to read what is assigned (Beach et al. 115). There are several strategies for teachers to use when dealing with these problems. Making connections to prior reading experiences and pointing out that reading is not a singular experience but is tied to other experiences, can be useful when dealing with reluctant readers. Focusing on similarities in theme, style, and language, to make the connection easier to make for the student is another aspect (Beach et al. 121). Furman states that social accuracy is a key factor for reluctant readers. The reluctant readers need to find a good book, but also a platform where they can share with others their thoughts about what they have read, creating a
sense of relevancy (Furman 27). Thus, the act of sharing information and becoming a participating member of a group is an important factor (Furman 27). This is another point in favor of WoW since the platform, in this case, would be the communities surrounding WoW, either in-game or the community forums. Participating in discussion regarding WoW can provide a sense of belonging for the reluctant reader interested in gaming, by motivating them by providing a purpose of the reading outside of school. In the analysis part of the essay three concepts of how WoW and *World of Warcraft: Chronicle I* can be used in the EFL will be explored. Firstly, is to demonstrate and make connection between the reluctant readers outside activities with schoolwork. Playing an MMORPG like WoW requires an extensive amount of reading and many players might not reflect upon this fact. Jolley points this fact out in an article, that students struggle to see the connection because students separate an enjoyable outside activity from schoolwork (81). Therefore, is it important to establish this connection to motivate a reluctant reader with something they enjoy outside of school. Using *World of Warcraft: Chronicle I* connect the reluctant reader with the game and therefore, prior reading experiences which Richard Beach and others explain is a strong motivating factor for a reluctant reader (115). Because, while reading *World of Warcraft: Chronicle I* the student will see the WoW theme, style, and language, which will hopefully motivate them and change their attitude regarding reading in general. Secondly, the concept of intertextuality will be demonstrated in the *World of Warcraft: Chronicle I* and WoW, examples from the chronicle will be presented and connected to Norse and Greek mythology sources. The concept of intertextuality can be applied to most literature, whether it is looked from either as a topic model or character influence. Lastly, how the new knowledge regarding intertextuality in a book can be used and shared will be shown. When playing MMORPG like WoW, the player is not only playing but also conversing with other players inside and outside the game in the form of voice programs and
community-run forums. Forums have multiple purposes, for example, it is where players can help each other by creating guides or converse in general about the game. Therefore, the forums are included in the community surrounding the game. James Paul Gee compares gaming communities to workplace settings because while playing the game players collaborate with others, share knowledge and converse both inside the game and on community websites (3). This point correlates well with the syllabus for English 5, where students should actively participate in discussions connected to society and working life (Natl. Ag. f. Ed.) This point connects with Jolley’s point that students might struggle to see the value of playing online games, which could be another motivating factor for students to engage more with material connected to the game they are playing.

3 Intertextuality

According to Graham Allan, the term intertextuality explains how literary texts are built on systems, which are constructed from codes and traditions from previous literature and texts (1). For example, when reading a text, the reader tries to identify the meaning behind the words. This meaning is in turn connected by its reference to similar instances in other texts and hence a large part of the meaning comes from the relation that the text has to previous texts (Allan 1). In a piece of art, a novel or a painting, traces can be found from previous artistic objects within it; the new work is assembled from parts from already existing art (Allan, 1). The individual artistic originality of the creator comes from how the author recycles the previous works, how the concept or text have been interpreted or altered in response to the new context (Maclean et al. 1734).

According to Graham Allan, the meaning of the word text, originally meant a tissue, a woven fabric, intertextuality now means how a text has been woven together from already existed written texts (1). Texts can be connected to other texts in various ways by using similar plot, generic
features, aspects of characters, images, ways of narrating, even phrases and sentences from previously written literature or oral tradition (Allan, 11). The author’s originality comes from how the author creates a new version of meaning. Every reader brings their individual perspective, experiences, knowledge, expectations, interest, and viewpoint when reading a text which will affect what the text means specifically for them (Allan, 5-7). Readers can see echoes from previous read texts and see the significance of the related text more clearly (Coffee, 206). This relation responds to the audience expectations to find familiar words and concepts in their collective memory (Maclean et al. 1734-5). WoW is built upon intertextuality from previous released Blizzard Entertainment games and historical and religious myths.

As mentioned before, intertextuality will be the analytical tool which will be viewed in two ways, small-scale and large-scale comparison. Bamman divides the degree of intertextuality between document-level comparisons and character-centric (2). In other words, the small-scale changes from the myth, like name changes from Odin to Odyn. By contrast, the large-scale comparison is where entire topic model is reused from myths. For example, the creation of the character Odyn and Halls of Valor in WoW is a clear example of intertextuality of the Norse god Odin and Valhalla from the Norse mythology.

4 Problematizing WoW in the EFL classroom

Introducing World of Warcraft: Chronicle I in the classroom can have drawbacks, for example, it can lead to interest amongst student in trying the game. The game and the communities surrounding the game are not perfect, there are clear problems, for example, gaming addiction, power dynamics, and sexist players. WoW is based on the player choosing a faction, the Horde or the Alliance. The factions are at war, each side contains six playable races for the player to play. Each race has their own backstory and reason for
fighting for their faction. At the release of *World of Warcraft* (WoW), the player had the option to choose between eleven classes with different abilities and roles in the game. The players can embark on the adventure alone or with a group to encounter different designed challenges or meet other players in battle. Over the years the game has developed with eight additional expansions. *WoW* has since its release been the dominant Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) in the world with players all over the world. The biggest dominant factor for the game success is the communities formed in the game, called guilds. Guilds are formed by a player, which is called the guild master, the highest-ranking player in the guild. The guild master usually promotes officers, the next highest rank, to help with managing the guild. The player in charge of a guild usually set requirements for other players to join, for example, gear requirement, age, or nationality. Depending on the aim of the guild the power and responsibility for the guild master and officers’ increase, many of the top players work with only playing *WoW*. Raiding in Player versus environment (PvE)² requires a set number of players participating and, determining what players to choose is often based on previous performance. However, that is not always the case, guild masters and officers tend to have a raid spot despite previous performance. This increases the power of being a guild master or an officer in the game, forming a dictatorship of power over the rest of the members in the guild. The guild master and officers choose the best players in their guild to bring with them fighting on the highest level in the game. The selection process is based on the members’ previous stats (statistics), which have been recorded so they can be reviewed. The stats are numbers of how much damage, healing, damage taken, rotation of spells, movement and the like a player has done.

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² Player versus environment, players join groups and fight non player characters (bosses). One main of the end game feature of *World of Warcraft*. The other is called player versus player (PvP), where in open world and set location players fight off against each other.
The reason for a player to join a guild could be that the guilds are interactive, social and provides an enjoyable experience. The play gets connected to a guild in which a sense of loyalty is created, just as a commitment and responsibility to participate in scheduled guild activities. The reason for this is that a guild is dependent on the guildmember’s involvement to survive. Studies have been made about guilds in video games and partaking in activities such as a guild can have benefits for not only online but also offline social support (Odrowska 235-7). High-end hardcore guilds tend to have a problem dealing with this kind of problem because they do not want to exclude an officer or the guild master. The players leading the guild to justify this by pointing out that they have more responsibilities and duties outside of raiding, like recruiting or tactic preparation. The guild is run like a small organization, it is run by a set of rules for the members. These guilds are called hardcore, which requires the members to play several hours every week at specific times. However, casual guilds focus on having fun and not neglecting ordinary life (Odrowska 235).

Sacip Toker describes in *Computers in Human Behavior* the stereotype of “a typical addict is a social figure as a teenager, usually male, with little or no social life and litter or no self-confident” (668). Gaming addiction is a higher risk for a student owning their own computer, which is the case for most of the students studying in Sweden at Upper Secondary level (Toker 669). Toker continues with online gaming, which is one of the most addictive activities on the Internet, so it does not come risk-free. However, excessive online gaming does not necessarily mean that the person is addicted. In fact, excessive enthusiasm is considered healthy and adds to life (Toker 668). Gaming addiction is characterized as excessive gaming that impacts negatively on other areas of a gamer’s life. However, it cannot be classified as an addiction if the gamer suffers no negative consequences in ordinary life, even if it involves several hours each day (Toker 668). Toker
explains that newer games and Internet activities have increased stimulating visuals and auditory effects with a higher rapid event frequency than older games and activities. Toker’s research suggests that games like *WoW* encourage continuous use (668).

It is important not to forget that *WoW* and the *Chronicle* main objective is entertainment. Blizzard Entertainment’s main goal is to earn money, which is an important factor when analyzing their games. The referencing and intertextuality from historical facts have been altered to fit their context. Therefore, when analyzing the intertextuality from mythologies it is important to critically examine the game and book as part of popular culture and entertainment. This correlates with the syllabus for English 5, which states that students should critically review texts (Natl. Ag. f. Ed.).

The MMORPG players are more likely to be males than females. However, Toker’s research shows that the number of females playing MMORPG’s is growing, one reason is the gateway social network creates to gaming. Mostly girls use social networks and websites that provide access to “free-2-play” games. The social network sites provide accessibility for girls to get in contact with online games (Toker 669). Female players playing an MMORPG often play it to build up a social network to escape problems in real life (Toker 669). According to Toker’s research, it shows that there are possibilities to have both female and male “gamers” in the EFL classroom.

Young female players are discouraged from actively participating in the gaming culture, many of the top guilds in *WoW* do not allow female players. The argument that it can distract players from doing what they are supposed to. From personal experiences of the communities and guilds in *WoW* are that they often are sexist. Special treatment is not uncommon for female players, for example, giving extra equipment to female players or that they are excluded to participate in guild activities, for example, raids. The *WoW* communities exist on several different platforms, such as Reddit,
MMO-champion or *World of Warcraft*’s own website. On MMO-champion there is a thread named, “Why do HC raiding guilds say ‘no’ to females?” The thread is 46 pages long with hundreds of participants commenting. On page 36 a user by the username Shadylol writes “Even if the women doesn’t cause drama herself, a man will be there to cause drama on her behalf. If you just remove the women from the equation, you remove that as well” (MMO-champion 36). Another user who calls themselves Choloz “defends” women players by saying “I’m simply defending the fact that women are good players and not all of them causes problems” (MMO-champion 36).

However, he categorizes female players only to be good at one specific role in WoW. By writing, “some of the best healers I’ve ever raided with happened to be women” (MMO-champion 36), healers are the support role in the game responsible for assisting and keeping the rest of players alive. The thread continues discussing why females should be excluded from raiding a certain difficulty in WoW. This exclusion is common in the WoW community and it violates the Swedish school values. In the virtual world, the human rights and values are not always upheld, such as the “inviolability of human life, the freedom, and integrity of the individual, equal value of all people and equality and solidarity between people” (Natl. Ag. f. Ed.).

Discriminating against women is common in the gaming community, here excluded from partaking in raiding, a main feature of the game. The online community is male dominated, however, Toker’s research proves a growth in female online gamers (669). So, to break the pattern of the male dominance surrounding online gaming a choice could be to focus on popular female streamers and YouTubers while discussing online gaming in the classroom. For example, to focus on the latest news regarding competitive play, FaZe Clan an American e-sport organization just signed their first female player Soleil ‘Ewok’ Wheeler (Good Polygon).
5 Method

The methodological approach of this essay will be hermeneutic since my interpretation of intertextuality in World of Warcraft and World of Warcraft: Chronicle I is the result of insider knowledge of the game and its universe. The hermeneutic process of interpretation is a spiral that can never be concluded, new perspectives and angles can always be found around phenomena (Allwood 110-1). I am aware of the fact that individuals have different experiences and personal interpretations. Therefore, several different interpretations can be made about the meaning of a text or a game. The hermeneutic method provides a lot of knowledge about the targeted subject of study and while working new nuances and more explanations will arise (Allwood 111). The hermeneutics method is classified within the relativistic knowledge view because absolute knowledge cannot be reached. Therefore, several different interpretations can be made about the meaning of a text and because of that the hermeneutic method is hard to intersubjectively test by others (Allwood 125). The hermeneutic method could be attractive to reluctant readers because no teacher tells you what or how to think.

My personal connection with Blizzard Entertainment and Wow goes back to my childhood. My friends and I grew up playing Warcraft III and later Wow. I will use my background knowledge of the game and sources when analyzing World of Warcraft: Chronicle I from the point of view of intertextuality. The world’s history dictates how the current state came to be in Azeroth and how it will form the future, where powerful enemies from the past threatening the world once again. This makes the lore of Wow a very popular discussion topic in discussion forums and among games at large. Knowledge of the origin of the characters and concept might, therefore, serve a great advantage in the discussions of where the story will be going next. The world Azeroth in Wow history is built on elements from several mythologies. As mentioned, theory crafting and making connections to
mythologies to predict the future of the game can be a motivation tool for reluctant readers interested in gaming. Theories about the future of the game can be discussed both in the game and at different community websites. Creating the platform for students to discuss their reading experience with others with similar interest, which will hopefully be sparking an interest in reading overall.

6 Analysis – Quests, Forums, World of Warcraft and World of Warcraft: Chronicle I

The first step approaching a reluctant reader interested in gaming is to point out how much reading is required when playing a game like WoW. This would address the problem Jolley points out in her article that students struggling with connecting outside school activities to schoolwork (81). WoW is like most fictional worlds based on a mythical structure, like genres in movies as for example, fantasy, horror, and science fiction. The mythical structure is often based on real-life myths for beliefs of the Celtic, Greek, Native North American, and the Nordic peoples. The structure is the basis of the narrative of the game, that is, it creates the world view in the game. Stories based on mythical worlds often expand beyond one single story, providing the basis for a range of interesting stories (Corneliussen 125).

WoW is based on a mythological worldview, however, most players might not see this since as consumers who inhabit they see the game as entertainment rather than understand the connection to reality (Corneliussen, 126). When playing WoW myth, fantasy and reality meet and players do real-life things in the WoW world without realizing it. They encounter several mythical non-player characters (NPC) that are based on myths when playing the game (Corneliussen, 126). The player must complete several quests, which can be delivering items, collecting objects, killing NPC or finding objects in the environment. The quests introduce the storyline to the player, and the player is playing a part in the history of the game. When progressing
in the game the player learns about the current state of the *WOW* world but also its history, thus creating a sense of knowledge of the world. The lore provides the *WOW* world with its own integrity (Corneliussen 127).

Below, in two examples are the starting quest for players choosing to play the races Orcs and Humans. The starting quest for Humans is called “A Threat Within”, the goal is to find the Marshal and the directions given to the player is that he is close to an abbey. Several of the quests in *WOW* is structured in this manner, that the player needs to read to figure out where to go next.

“We’re in a real mess here, young <class>³. Deathwing and his Twilight armies have launched a full attack upon Azeroth. The king has called for all able-bodied citizens of the Alliance to lend a hand. The Stormwind guards are hard pressed to keep the peace here, with so many of us in distant lands and so many threats pressing close. We’re enlisting the aid of anyone willing to defend their home. If you’re here to answer the call, then speak with my superior, Marshal McBride. He’s outside the abbey.” (Wowhead.com “A Threat Within”).

The quests in *WOW* serves as the main way of progressing to level up your character. While playing *WOW* players completes hundreds or even thousands of quests to progress their character future. Quest differs in importance regarding the progression of the lore (history) of Azeroth. Where, some quest might just be to slay some wolfs terrorizing an area, other quests like “A Threat Within” explains why Humans are taking up arms. However, the premises of design are the same, where the hero (player) is faced with a challenge that different NPC wants completed. The quest information varies

³ Depending on what class the player has chosen to play the <class> would be filled in with either Warrior, Paladin, Rogue, Priest, Mage, Druid, Shaman, Hunter or Warlock.
in detail, where some quest requires more thought than others. So, while playing and leveling characters the players perform actions like reading, problem solving and interacting with other players. Therefore, it is important to show the requirements for playing a game like WoW, a good first step to motivate a reluctant reader.

Moving on, the next example is from a quest called “Your Place In the World”. It is the first quest for the Orcs, which are the counterpart to Humans. The race Orcs belongs to the pact called the Horde and they are very different from the Alliance.

“Finally, you are of age, <name>4 . . . of age to battle in the name of the Horde. To conquer for the glory of the Warcheif. Yes . . . <Kaltunk (NPC) looks you over.> You will do nicely. No doubt you wish to find a great dragon or demon and strangle it with your bare hands, but perhaps it would be wise to start on something less . . . dangerous. <Kaltunk laughs.> Report to Gornek, he should be able to assign a task better suited to a young <class>. You will find him seated at the fire behind me.” (Wowhead.com “Your place In the World).

Playing the game equals reading, which is an intellectually provocative activity that allows the reader to examine thoughts, actions, and beliefs from the various perspective (Langer 5). By progressing through the game, the player will face different races and cultures with their own histories and backgrounds. Each race and culture have its own set of myths and legends creating the races’ worldview. The player accumulates knowledge of how the tensions and alliances were created in the game when encountering the different stories (Corneliussen 128). Combining this with reading the lore

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4 In World of Warcraft the player names their characters, instead of <name> the NPC Kaltunk says each character’s name.
and story in the books about the history of the WOW world could create better knowledge of the history and the future of the game, enabling more high-quality participation in the game and in discussion fora.

This matches the National Agency for Education Sweden’s aim for the subject English, “teaching should … help students develop language awareness and knowledge of how a language is learned through and outside teaching contexts”. WOW is a good example because it demonstrates how a student can learn English outside of school, by playing an MMORPG.

6.1 World of Warcraft: Chronicle I and The Pantheons

This section on World of Warcraft: Chronicle I is the second stage regarding using intertextuality and gaming literature in the EFL classroom. The WOW universe is based on many different historical influences and while playing and reading WOW the reader is exposed to intertextuality.

The origin of the keepers of WOW is clearly influenced and based on Greek mythology. But the Keepers are based on different kinds of mythologies, primarily Norse mythology. The gods or Pantheons as they are called in the WOW universe are a key feature to understand the creation of Azeroth since for players they act as both allies and foes to the heroes of Azeroth. Many of the gods and champions in WOW are based on gods from the Norse mythology. My chosen limitation for this essay is to focus mainly on the intertextuality to Norse mythology and Greek mythology, because they are fused with each other.

However, all gods are not based on the Norse mythology, for example, the Egypt sun god Ra which the WOW keeper Ra is based upon (Chronicle 32). Moreover, regarding Greek mythology in WOW, there are no gods or champions inspired by it, but the origin of the keepers in WOW is

5 In the World of Warcraft universe, the players are referred to as heroes.
based on the Titans from Greek mythology. Therefore, to give a holistic view of the Norse gods an analysis of the Pantheons is required. Regarding intertextuality from the Greek mythology, many of the creatures in WoW are based on it, for example, in the World of Warcraft: Chronicle I creatures like centaurs, satyrs, and titans appear which are references to the Greek mythology.

The story of Azeroth begins with the explanation of the universe as whole:

The Great Dark Beyond represents the physical universe. It is an infinite living realm composed of innumerable stars, worlds, and mortal civilizations. Azeroth – the World of Warcraft – is merely one of the countless worlds drifting through the vast reaches of the Great Dark Beyond (Chronicle 12).

No one knows why Aman’Thul the first titan woke from his slumber. Aman’Thul was certain he was not the only one of his kind, setting out to search the Great Dark Beyond for other titans. On his search, he discovered sleeping titans inside worlds (Chronicle 19). These titans are known to players in WoW as the Pantheons:

The titans are colossal godlike beings composed of the primordial matter from which the universe was born. They roam the cosmos like walking worlds, imbued with the raw power of creation itself. The titans use this incredible force to find and awaken others of their kind – others who still slumber within the far corners of the Great Dark (Chronicle 13).

The latest world soul the Pantheon has found, is sleeping inside the world Azeroth. The Pantheon Aggramar found this world on his search for others of his kind, sadly that was not the only discovery he made encounter with in Azeroth. The world was infected by the Old Gods, servants of the
void lords\(^6\), who had built a temple trying to poison the titan sleeping inside (Chronicle 28). The Pantheons were too big to fight or to engage the Old Gods themselves without risking destroying Azeroth. The Pantheons created an army instead of the resources on Azeroth. The created two types of titans, the Aesir and Vanir. The Aesir was created from metal and was given the power of the storms. The Vanir was created from stone and had power over the earth. The Pantheon selected a few of the Aesir and Vanir and infused part of their own power to them. These infused Aesir and Vanir became the titan-forged, which are more commonly known as the Keepers of Azeroth. In time the Keepers developed their own personalities, like Keeper Odyn, Thorim, Loken and Ra (Chronicle 29-31). The Keepers won the war and the Pantheon left Azeroth for the Keepers to guard to continue their search for others of their kind (Chronicle 42).

Comparing the WoW titans to Greek mythology, the concept of them is closely alike to that of the Titans, like Kronos, Rhea, Iapetos, Okeanos, and Tethys. These Greek titans and titanides were the parents to the first generation of Olympian gods (Hard 35-36), just like the Titans are the creators of the Keepers in WoW. The Titans in Greek mythology were banished by their creations but in WoW history, the Pantheons chose to leave themselves to continue their search.

In terms of intertextuality, the concept of the Pantheons is rooted in Greek mythology. By having knowledge of mythology, references and connections can be made to other works which use the same historical base. What makes the intertextuality in WoW unique is that several mythologies are fused to create the different gods and guardians. Therefore, is it important

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\(^6\) “The void lords are monstrous entities composed of pure shadow energy. These beings are cruel and merciless beyond mortal comprehension. Driven by an insatiable hunger, the void lords seek to devour all matter and energy in the physical universe” (World of Warcraft; Chronicle I, 13).
to understand the motifs of why the creators have chosen to alter mythologies. Blizzard Entertainment’s aim and motive is to sell the game and they have based their topic model on mythology but altered it to fit their new context, which is to create a unique and interesting player experience when playing WoW. Working with intertextuality in the EFL classroom it is, therefore, important not for the students to forget to critically review texts which is part of the syllabus for English 5 (Natl. Ag. f. Ed.). With the chosen method of hermeneutics, it gives the option for students to interpret the text from their own experiences, however, it is important to use credible sources to back up the interpretation.

6.2 Norse Mythology

Intertextuality in both the book and the game can be found both small and large-scale levels to several mythologies. The choice to narrow down the essay by focusing on Norse mythology is because it is a personal interest of mine. At the small-scale level names can be found which are very similar to the Gods of the Norse mythology, such as Thorim, Sif, Loken, Freya, Hodir, Tyr and Odyn. These characters have their own backstory in the chronicle which is very close to that of the old Norse gods. The Norse mythology is dominant in WoW, but not the only one.

6.3 Odyn

In the game, Odyn is a titan keeper who rules the Halls of Valor. In the chronicle he and Tyr battle and defeat the fire lord Ragnaros. Odyn has been awarded the title of Prime Designate for his leadership, determination, and courage. Odyn creates Halls of Valor by asking Helya a sorceress Odyn sees as his adoptive daughter, to use her magic to raise part of Ulduar up in the sky (Chronicle 47). Odyn is creating an army to defend Azeroth from danger, his

7 Ulduar is the prison guarding the old God Yogg-Saron.
plan entails creating wraithlike servants cursed to exist as phantom beings for all eternity. He calls his new servant race Val’kyr’s. Helya does not agree with Odyn about creating the Val’kyr’s, they fight and Helya was defeated. Odyn twists her soul and Helya becomes the first Val’kyr (Chronicle 48). The Val’kyr’s duty is to guide fallen warriors who had died a glorious death in battle to the Halls of Valor. The Val’kyr is most likely based on the Valkyrjor (Valkyries) in the Norse mythology. Valkyrjor were servants in Valhalla and Odin sent them to every battlefield to choose who was to die and decide who should be victorious (Sturluson 291).

Looking at intertextuality from the Norse mythology regarding the character Odyn, small-scale and large-scale comparison can be found. The name Odyn is based on the Norse god Odin. The large-scale comparison between the mythology and WoW is the concepts of Halls of Valor and Valhalla. All fallen men who died in battle from the beginning of time would go to Odin in Valhalla (Sturluson 294). Both places are cities in the sky and warriors who died a glorious death are welcome to enjoy the feast. These parallels can mean different depending on each player, because, every player bring their personal experience when finding intertextual links between different works. The links can create a newfound interest in mythology, which might lead to the feeling of knowing more or it can influence in-game decisions like choosing a class or a character name. For example, Odyn played a big part in the story in the previous expansion World of Warcraft: Legion. Odyn opened parts of Halls of Valor called Skyhold, to the players playing the class Warrior. In Skyhold players met Odyn and could find a runestone. Players can press on the stone and interact with it and read its content. Players playing WoW is constantly provided with information about the game and this information acts like a gateway which opens up new aspects of Azeroth. The stone contains several short stories, which includes “The Wanderer and the Serpent” and “The Keeper’s Eye”. In the story “The Keeper’s Eye” Odyn
explains how he lost his eye and the story is about the Shadowlands in WoW. Odyn fears that fallen soldiers who should be present in the Halls of Valor are stuck in the Shadowlands and therefore, seeks the ability to see into the Shadowlands to search for fallen warriors who died a glorious death in battle. Odyn begins a ritual to see into the Shadowlands, however, a wraith appears and starts a conversation with him. The wraith asks Odyn what he is willing to give for the ability to see. Odyn answers that he has two eyes, plucking one of his eyes out and give it to the wraith who swallows it and grants Odyn the ability to see into the Shadowlands (Gamepedia.com). In Norse mythology, Odin loses his eye when he seeks out knowledge from Mirmir’s well: “Mirmir the owner of the well is full of wisdom because he drinks the water of the well from the horn Gjoll every morning. One day Odin came and begged a draught of this water, which he granted, but was obliged to leave one of his eyes as a pledge for it” (Sturluson 271). Intertextuality is the main concept of Odyn/Odin sacrificing their eye to gain a new ability to obtain knowledge consisted of Bamman’s definition of large-scale intertextuality.

In the short story “The Wanderer and the Serpent” Odyn explains how he takes on different forms to interact with people in Azeroth. No matter what form Odyn chose he always has two ravens, Huginn and Muninn (Sturluson, 294), sitting on his shoulders (Gamepedia.com). The concept of Odyn and Odin both having ravens called Huginn and Muninn are clear references to the Norse mythology. Similarly, with Odyn and Odin both sacrificing their eyes as payment for knowledge, Odyn for the ability to see into the Shadowlands and Odin for wisdom. Odyn as a character has both

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8 "The Shadowlands represent death. They are nightmarish realms of decay, labyrinthine spiritual planes teeming with the souls of the dead who have passed from the world of the living. The origins of the Shadowlands remain uncertain, but they have existed ever since mortal life first arose in the physical universe. Many believe that mortal souls are drawn into this dark place at the point of death, where they remain forever after. Still others hope that their souls will go on to a brighter place, rather than languish for eternity within the cold confines of the Shadowlands” (World of Warcraft: Chronicle I, 12).
small-scale and large-scale intertextuality from the Norse mythology. Readers and players may pick up references and echoes of the Norse mythology by playing *WoW*. The point is that for reluctant readers it is important to connect reading to a personal interest. Meeting different mythological characters while reading or playing *WoW* might spark an interest in other works featuring characters based on Odin. Or discovering the hidden stories inside *WoW*, like the stone in Halls of Valor. The goal is to use the reluctant readers personal interest to demonstrate that reading can benefit them positive outside of school. As according to Chambers enjoyment is a key feature of reading. To summarize the key point is to motivate the reluctant reader by connecting reading to something they enjoy outside of school. So, the reluctant readers’ attitude towards reading change in general.

### 6.4 Hodir

Hodir is a titanic watcher placed in Ulduar to guard Yogg-Saron. Hodir is associated with the race frost giants called the Sons of Hodir. The name originated from the time Hodir spent in the area called the Storm Peaks before taking his position in Ulduar. When interacting with the giants in Storm Peaks they refer to Hodir as their creator and father (*Chronicle* 31-32). Hodir is most likely based on the frost giant Hymir in the Norse mythology. Hymir meets Thor on his quest to find the Midgard serpent. Hymir lets Thor accompany him on his boat out to sea. Thor and Hymir face the Midgard serpent, Thor first catches him with a fishing line which he severs with his hammer, Mjolnir. After severing the fishing line Thor throws Mjolnir into the sea, some say the hammer hit the serpent, some say the serpent still swims at the bottom of the sea. Thor strikes Hymir with all his might with his hand, who fall into the sea, before he returns to land (*Sturluson* 313-315).

Hodir is a minor character in the Chronicle and is classified as small-scale intertextuality. However, Hodir plays a larger role in the lore of *WoW* in the third expansion *Wrath of the Lich King*. So, an experienced *WoW* player
would be able to make a greater analysis of Hodir by using facts from both the book and the game. Having the option to use both the book and the game as references when analyzing character, students that play the game would have a big advantage. Regarding the hermeneutic method, the students that play the game would be able to incorporate more of their own experiences with the character. Megan Glover Adams points out that modern video games may help students find relevance in reading (56). So, for students to use an outside interest for schoolwork will hopefully help with motivation to continue reading in the future.

6.5 Thorim

Thorim is a titan keeper who received his power from the Pantheon Golganneth to serve the Pantheons and fight the Old Gods on Azeroth. Golganneth granted him part of his power, the domain over the storms and skies (Chronicle 31). Thorim was one of the guards guarding the Old God Yogg-Saron in Ulduar, together with other keepers including his brother Loken. Over this Loken was corrupted by the Old God, who whispered in his ear to betray his fellow keepers. Loken confided in Thorim’s wife Sif about his inner emotion and struggle, and in time they started to develop feelings for each other. The kept their affair, a secret from Thorim and the other keepers. Over time the influence of the Old God drove Loken mad and extremely jealous, which led him to kill Sif. Loken convinced Thorim that the king of ice giant Arngrim had slain his wife. Therefore, Thorim attacked and slew Arngrim, which became the start of a war between Thorim’s storm giants and Arngrim’s ice giants. Loken later blamed Thorim for starting the war, since it would cause a rift between the keepers in Ulduar. Thorim was overcome with

9 “The Old Gods are physical manifestations of the Void. They are nightmares incarnate: mountains of blighted flesh and writhing tentacles that grow like cancers within the worlds of the Great Dark. These malignant entities serve the void lords, and they live only to transform the worlds they infest into places of despair and death” (World of Warcraft: Chronicle I, 13).
regret and, depression which led to him going into solitude (Chronicle 32). The reference and influence from the Norse mythology regarding Thorim is his name and lightning nature. The addition of just two letters and the fact they are both lightning based and both Thorim and Thor have a wife called Sif (Colum 28). Thorim, Sif and, Loken are all based on the Norse mythology and they are part of the topic model. Their story has been altered to work with Blizzard’s purpose. Thorim shares with Thor his appearance, nature of ability lightning and they both have wives called Sif. Loken shares with Loki his mischievous nature and they are both villains. So, in terms of intertextuality, the three characters are a mixture of large-scale and small-scale. Moreover, a motivational factor can be that Thor is a key features character in the Marvel universe, with independent movies and the Avengers series. That the reluctant reader can see characters connected to different fictional universes may spark interest in acquiring more knowledge about their individual story.

6.6 Tyr

The Pantheon Aggramar infused part of his strength and courage into Tyr, who would be the greatest warrior of the keepers (Chronicle 31). The keeper Tyr is similar to the Norse god Tyr. They share more than just names, both of them have lost one of their hands. The Norse God Tyr lost his hand when the gods shackled the wolf Fenrir (Sturluson 281). Tyr lost his hand battling a proto-dragon, Galakrond, who had gone mad by eating other proto-dragons and replaced his lost hand with a silver forged hand, which is of most significance in WoW (Chronicle 43).

The Keeper Tyr has had a big impact on the virtual world of WoW. Azeroth is filled with creatures and monsters created by the Old Gods. Among them were the race called C’Thraxxi, they were generals to Yogg-Saron. Tyr set out to fight the general called Zakazj and they fought for 6 days and 6 nights. Tyr won by sacrificing himself to protect his friends, by releasing all his energy and creating a big explosion (Chronicle 63). Tyr might have died,
but his legacy lived on by storytelling from generation to generation. Tyr is the inspiration, especially for the class of Paladin in WoW. His sacrifice led to the creating of the Order of the Silver Hand of Paladins. They wear a tabard with a silver hand as their symbol, which all WoW would recognize (Gamepedia.com Knights of the Silver Hand online). The losing of hand and replacing it with a forged hand is something that can be found in both the Harry Potter and Game of Thrones universes. Peter Pettigrew a servant to Lord Voldemort and Jamie Lannister the king slayer of Westeros shares the same story of losing one of their hands and replacing them with metal. The intertextuality in WoW interlaces to more than just mythologies. Intertextuality both in the game and books includes several connections to popular fictional universes that might inspire the reluctant reader to read similar texts of the same nature. Learning more about how texts are connected will maybe spark and interest in a specific genre, for example, historical fiction.

6.7 Community Forums

My WoW journey begun in 2006 and I have played on and off ever since. Expansions and content are released in stages and pull me right back into playing. My favorite was the original game Vanilla and over the years the charm and essence of Azeroth have been lost on me. The spark for this essay came with Blizzard announcing that they will be re-releasing the original game. With the announcement I decided to refresh my knowledge of the original state of Azeroth and started to read World of Warcraft: Chronicle I and participate in discussions on various forums to share my excitement with likeminded people. Forums are a big part of the WoW community, where players like me join together to discuss various topics connected to the game. In forums, players can widen their worldview of Azeroth, which can influence choices in the game. Participating in forum discussions does not require knowledge but reading the lore of Azeroth could enhance participation. This matches the English 5 syllabus, where the student should
actively participate in various written interactions related to their social life (Natl. Ag. f. Ed.). Furthermore, it also matches their stated aim for the subject English, where “students should be given the opportunity to interact in speech and writing and to produce spoken language and texts of different kinds, both to their own and together with others, using different aids and media” (Natl. Ag. f. Ed.). The various forums surrounding WoW serve as the media, where the students could discuss and interact with others.

In this following paragraph, I have chosen to look at one of the most extensive discussion topics regarding WoW on forums, the question of where Blizzard will take the journey next. The lore in WoW is extensive and it spreads over several worlds, mythologies, and religions which is an incredible resource for Blizzard for future development of Azeroth. The usual method of creating new content in WoW is to bring forth a forgotten foe that has lingered in the shadows for the time to be right. With them, they bring new monsters and creatures for the players to fight leading up to the final battle. In retail WoW the next foe the players will be facing is the forgotten Queen Azshara. Queen Azshara lost her empire over 10,000 years ago and has been mentioned in previous expansions giving out small hints that she will soon return to Azeroth.

Predicting and discussing the next step of the journey is featured both in communities in the game and on websites assigned to WoW, like Reddit and MMO-champion. Theory crafting of what is to come can be a great starting point for reluctant readers who may want to participate in detailed discussions of the lore of WoW, but this requires extensive reading. To analyze the past to predict the future is something that students could benefit greatly from because it applies to our world as well. With each new expansion the option for future development becomes narrower since key characters’ narrative are being explored. However, the options for expansions become more elaborate and impressive theories are being pitched
almost daily either in game or online. For example, at Blizzard
Entertainment’s own forum page, Us.battle.net, a person with the alias Âli
started the thread “Fan Theory: Next Expansion”, with the theory that after
the Legion expansion the Lich King will return to Azeroth. The Lich King
was the main villain in the third expansion of WoW (Us.battle.net).

Another example, u/BellewTheBear posted on Reddit the thread
“Theory on what comes after Battle of Azeroth” starting a discussion of what
might possibly come next. The question of where the story will be going next
is a popular topic on the forums. With Blizzard having several open-ended
endings the option of where the players will be going next is a mystery. Âli
and u/BellewTheBear are both interested in what other players might think
about where the battle will continue and what foes they will be going up
against. An exercise for students could be to make their post on one of the
forums tied to WoW. The students will have the chance to explore what
personally interests them regarding WoW and the lore.

In another post on Reddit created by AutoModerator “Weekly
Newbie Thread – Ask A Lore Expert”, an adventurer called
BrugokTheFriendlyOrc asks the question

“I tried searching but didn’t see it answered. Why is Jaina a
raid boss? Do the alliance fight her too? If so why? Been outta
the loop for a bit but I like to keep in the know cuz wow lore is
dope” (Reddit.com).

The person with the username AutoModerator presents themselves as
a Lore Expert, in this case, a self-given title. However, as mentioned above
many of the forum sites where WoW is discussed are built on a title system to
determine the relevancy of a person’s post. The relevancy is shown in
different ways, some sites use color indications of how active someone is or
keeps track of in how many posts they are active. These kinds of tracking
system work as the reputation of a person but also as motivators. Receiving a good reputation as someone who is very knowledgeable about the game can carry over not just to the game WoW but in general, to feel the feeling of satisfaction accomplished by one’s knowledge.

In this case the tread is open for everyone, so anyone can answer any question that they like, in this case, an adventurer by the name Warpshard answered BrugokTheFriendlyOrc question in this manner,

“The Alliance decided now was the best time to attack the Zandalari in their capital, Dazar'alor. Jaina is the final boss of the Raid because she is leading the assault on the city. Alliance players do fight her, but not as Alliance characters. One of the gimmicks of the raid is that, for Alliance/Horde exclusive bosses, you turn into the opposite faction and get their abilities. This happens for 6 of the bosses in the raid, including Jaina and Gelbin Mekkatorque” (Reddit.com).

To provide some context, they are discussing the latest patch and raid of current World of Warcraft: Battle for Azeroth, where the Alliance allied Jaina Proudmoore and Horde allied Gelbin Mekkatorque is fought by the respective factions. Alliance and Horde have separate storylines which makes it so that the storyline of WoW is not always easy to understand especially in situations with this type of raid, where the player changes faction to fight every boss available.

These types of discussion forums are a good outlet for reluctant readers to share information and thoughts with likeminded people. Reading becomes second nature when discussing and making an accurate statement based on facts from sources to be credible. Reading happens naturally, just as inside the game. Seemingly, players read an extensive amount of texts when playing without many of them noticing doing so. Practicing and using their
English every day in many cases, a WoW player will read, write and speak English if taking part in active guilds and forums in the game.

Forums can used both in the classroom or as homework, the point is to let students share their new gained knowledge regarding intertextuality and share it with other likeminded individuals interested in the same type of game and literature. Using online forums allow students to adapt to the purpose and the situation, which is part of the syllabus for English 5. The students also must review others’ written representations and after processing writes a response. By doing this, students participate and contribute to discussions related to the game, which hopefully will prepare them for participating in discussions related to social and working life (Natl. Ag. f. Ed.). Demonstrating the requirements for playing a game like WoW and by letting the student participating in online forums will hopefully serve as a motivational factor for a reluctant reader interested in games.

7 Conclusion

Firstly, the main point of introducing World of Warcraft: Chronicle I in the EFL classroom is to motivate the reluctant reader, by connecting reading to a personal interest outside of school, for example, WoW. For motivation it is important to provide suitable books to the student’s own taste with their maturity and personality in mind. It is the teacher’s responsibility to create awareness of language acquisition outside the school environment. Therefore, the first step to motivate reluctant reader is to point out how much reading is required when playing a MMORPG like WoW. For the purpose of ultimately trying to establish a purpose for reading, which might create a feeling of enjoyment from reading.

Secondly, introducing literature like World of Warcraft: Chronicle I may excite and motivate the reluctant reader, to find the same enthusiasm that the reader found in the epigraph. To let the student, explore and find
connections that excite them, by finding out the influences of mythology in the creation of the characters and villains in Azeroth. To explore the depth of the intertextuality of a character to see if the answer to where the story of Azeroth will go next can be found in the origin of the characters. There are many subjects and perspectives to study about WoW and I believe it can help a reluctant reader who is interested in gaming. The conclusion is that *World of Warcraft: Chronicle I* can connect to the student’s personal interest and it, therefore, may work as a viable material in the EFL classroom just like other fictional universes like *Harry Potter, Game of Thrones* or *Lord of the Rings*.

Lastly, at forums the readers can join discussions regarding specific topics that interest the reluctant reader. Students share their newly acquired information and knowledge from reading with other likeminded individuals’ interest in the same type of games and books. Forums provide contacts to people all over the world and provides students with the opportunity to interact and produce texts of different kinds with others on different media. By letting students participate in discussions on online forums provides the opportunity to practice and prepare them for a situation which closely resembles the work environment.

For future research I would have liked to look at other games that have written books tied to the game. For example, another Blizzard Entertainment game *Diablo*, which is tied to the devil or the *Final Fantasy* series.
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