

An interview with Kimberly Burke DeRose, 1/26/16

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Further Reading: <http://www.textmapping.org/whyUseScrolls.pdf>

I met Kim by email in 2005. At the time, she was teaching at Pumpkin Center Middle School in Lincolnton, NC. She had found my work with scrolls and textmapping on the web¹ and wanted to know how she could get started using it in her classroom. I gave her a few ideas. Then off she went.

A few weeks later, she emailed me again. She was hooked. Within a month, she was telling me stories about taping scrolls to the walls in the hallways -- young-adult fiction and textbook chapters -- and how she'd leave pens and stickie notes on a chair in the hallway; how the students would come by, between classes, and use the stickies to share their comments and their thinking; how conversations erupted and spread across the scrolls like interwoven trails of confetti; how the kids became energized by this playful work. Most important, she told me how much fun she and the kids were having, and how much they all were learning.

Eleven years later, Kim -- who now teaches 6th grade Remedial Reading, Language Arts, and Social Studies at Dawson County Middle School in Dawsonville, GA -- says that she uses scrolls and textmapping almost every day. I asked her to share some of her more recent classroom stories. As you will see, Kim had a lot to share.

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DM: So it's been eleven years since you first emailed me. How are you using scrolls and textmapping in your classroom today?

KBD: I use them for everything -- for comprehending big chunks of information, for teaching strategies, for learning content, for reviewing before a test. I put them in the cafeteria line, down the lunch line. I'll take the scroll, like a social studies chapter, and I'll put it up and I'll give kids a question of the day. They're standing there anyway. I put them up in the hallways, so that's often when I have other teachers say, "Can you make me one?"

For my classroom, I go to the dollar store and buy rolls of cheap wrapping paper. We glue the text pages down the middle and then we have all this writing space around it. I'm looking right now at this basket full of -- each class has a color, and they know what color wrapping paper their scroll is on, and they can grab it and unroll it; they can

¹ <http://www.textmapping.org>

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walk on it and write on it, whatever, just get interactive with it. Scrolls and textmapping take students through the work faster and deeper. I see the excitement and the engagement. I can't imagine not using scrolls.

DM: You talk about your students getting interactive -- unrolling books, walking on them, writing on them. You say that you can see the excitement and the engagement. Can you tell me more about the interactivity that scrolls provide?

KBD: Sure. They'd rather have the book unrolled on the floor so they can crawl around on it. Anytime they have an excuse to work on the floor, it's great. It's a very tactile exercise when you tell students to stand on the question or stand on the paragraph that supports that answer. They also like to hang it on the wall, where it's easier to stand back to see it. You can't do either of these things with a book.

DM: Does this work for your strugglers as well?

KBD: Absolutely! I've got students in my classroom who are reading at second- and third-grade levels. Having these kids physically in the text -- and highlighting similes and metaphors, making connections with their pencils and really thinking while they're reading -- is not something remedial readers typically get to do.

This works with any level of text. I incorporate college-level material when I'm teaching my 6th graders about text features. My remedial students do just fine with this. The scroll enables you to side-step text complexity and focus on a specific reading skill or strategy. In the process, you're able to accelerate remedial readers and give them confidence by ignoring all the stuff that's slowing them down. You can say, "First we're going to highlight every instance of his name. Next we're going to highlight every instance of his interaction with this character. Next we're going to highlight every emotion that we see." This allows them to break down a very complex text -- to use color to break it into something that everybody can understand. Then they can back up and see the whole thing -- a literal map of the content. This goes to the heart of what remedial students -- all students, really -- need to learn how to do: They need to dig through the fluff and get to what's important. That's what's going to help them survive in college. So I rip out the chapter and pin it to the wall and get out my markers. Whenever something gets boring or hard to understand, we rip it up and turn it into a scroll.

DM: You literally rip out the pages? I've always used a razor knife to slice off the spine. I use a metal ruler as a straight edge -- a guide for the knife blade. I take a craftsman's pride in the work of making my scrolls. But you just rip out the pages? That sounds so... savage! It's so spontaneous. And fun!

KBD: Yes! And it's so important! The kids want to rip up books! It's like the Dead Poet's Society²: "Rip out that page! Rip out that page!" Who doesn't love to do that? The novels I give my kids were not bound to last forever; they're just glued in. If you bend them backwards and break the spine, the pages peel out very easily. The kids love it.

Just the metaphor of tearing in to a book is huge. We talk about that -- we talk about devouring books. It's very physical. We'll take the scrolls outside if it's nice, and we put the picnic tables together and we'll rip apart some books and stretch them out. It's just fun.

Of course, some of my colleagues think I'm crazy. We were reading "Walk Two Moons"³ and we had this nice library-bound class set and I thought to myself, "I can't rip these up. What am I going to do?" A colleague gave me five or six extra book copies that somebody had donated, and I was so excited and I said to her, "Now I can rip them up!" and I proceeded to rip out the chapters that I needed, and her jaw just dropped! She was like, "Oh my gosh! I can't believe you're ripping up these books!" And I said, "I can guarantee you that these kids will get way more out of this book ripped up."

It's much more meaningful, that way. You can do so much with the scroll that just is not -- you're not able to do with a book that moves from page to page. It's just so much easier to deal with the whole text at once.

Scrolls give my students power that they've never been given before. My remedial students, in particular, have this anger against books to start with. The struggle is so great; they're so far behind. They're so used to skill and drill, which is what these kids have to do. There's just not much fun left that you can do with them. So anything that keeps them motivated and engaged is good in my book. When you give them this way to take their anger out on the book -- to rip it apart and then make it a positive by re-creating the book in a form that they can really use -- it's empowering.

I'll say, "We're going to rip out pages 10-20...", and I get instant engagement, instant buy-in. What other strategy gives you that?

My kids know me as the teacher who rips up textbooks! I have these social studies workbooks and we've used them so much that the pages were coming out and one of my students just said, "Don't worry. She's going to eventually rip them up anyway." And I said, "You're probably right!" After all, I don't have a textbook in my classroom that does not have pages ripped out to make scrolls.

DM: Can you tell me more about what it looks like when you integrate scrolls into your classroom?

KBD: I use scrolls for shared reading and readers' workshop. For example, recently we started a new novel. We lost a lot of time for snow days, so we made scrolls of the four chapters we had read but not yet discussed. I put the kids in differentiated groups and

² Touchstone Pictures, 1989

³ Sharon Creech, 1994, New York, HarperCollins

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we jigsawed the chapters in the room so we could catch up on the discussion. Each group mapped a different piece -- character development, theme, main idea, etc. One group marked all of a particular character's actions in yellow; another traced evidence of the theme green. After they had finished, they hung the chapters on the bulletin board -- we have a blank bulletin board where we go and staple our chapters in consecutive order so that we can follow through whatever book we're working on. So if we're plotting actions of a character or changes of a character, I'll say, "today we're working on yellow" then we just look at the yellow. This way each group becomes an expert on something and can answer questions and sum up what happened, to speed us up to where we need to be in the text. It works really well. I do this often. We'll jigsaw it up by giving each group a textbook chapter. In Social Studies, we're starting on Canada next week, so I'll rip up a bunch of textbooks and we'll do maps on that.

Doing this enables us to work faster and dig deeper. It's not really necessary that we walk through every little piece of a text. Instead, we just kind of skim through it and have somebody in the class who can fill us in if we have a question about what happened in this scene or that scene. This is very effective. It's a way to speed up the novel -- especially for my lower readers and dyslexics, who we're really trying to focus on strategies and big ideas. It's not really necessary that they walk through a text that's above their lexile level, but in terms of exposure -- so they can participate in the class discussions -- it gets the job done.

DM: Can't you jigsaw just as well with regular books?

KBD: I don't think so. I don't see any other way to do it without the scrolls. I mean I guess... No, I'm going to say no. I guess I've just been doing it so long. I can't imagine. Your alternative is having lower-level-readers flip, say, from page 50 to page 80. Number 1, they're not going to do it. Number 2, they're gonna get lost. Number 3, they can't hold a thought that long. You've got to make it linear for them to be able to see it. You're talking about big ideas -- the idea of comprehension. To really get it, you've got to be able to visualize the whole; you've got to see it from 10 feet away.

DM: Can you say more about big ideas?

KBD: So like I said, we're starting on Canada next week. What 6th grader cares about historical details? We're doing this for a test, but we're also doing it for a big idea, and I've got to get through all that "blah blah blah" test stuff quickly, so that we can have a Socratic seminar on why it matters to us today. The scroll helps us frontload quickly; it helps the kids engage with the big ideas. It's a visual representation. You can throw it up on the wall; you can see it from across the classroom. You can't do this with a textbook. You can map the scroll on the wall; they can see the larger context. You can't do this with a book. You need a scroll.

DM: Can you talk about finding content for your scrolls?

KBD: I scavenge; people give me stuff all the time. If I find a book that I like, I'll usually write the company and request two copies and I just slice those up. And I have had really good success finding them in thrift stores because there are a lot of textbooks that nobody uses anymore. So my texts for social studies -- I buy books for for 50 cents a piece at the thrift store. I cut those up. I have a whole closet full of unwanted textbooks because people bring them to me.

Science texts are the best because the text structure in them is so awesome. You can teach anything with a Science textbook. My colleagues tease me about it, but then they'll come to me and say, "Hey, I think this might be a good idea for that scroll thing you do. Do you have suggestions?" We did some Pythagorean Theorem work with it, where they had a situation where this textbook has one page and this workbook has some pages that I like, and this web site has a good page, and so I said, "Well let's just put them all together, make your own customized thing, laminate it. Then you got it forever, and you put some vis-a-vis on there and you got a remediation plan.

DM: Do you laminate all of your scrolls, or just some?

KBD: Most of my scrolls are laminated. I prefer them laminated. I have covered some of the small ones with just clear contact paper. That works as well. Either way, we can write on them. I use vis-a-vis overhead projector pens. The color is easy to remove; it will only stain if left for a very long time. When we start scrolling at the first of the year, I'll do a chapter, like if we're looking for a particular character and I'll highlight underneath the laminating and then the kids can go on top of it and add annotations, and then we go from there to sticky notes, which go in to their regular pages. It's a good scaffold. I don't use them writing on it so much in novels, but in the textbooks I do because the questions are there. The kids fill in the blanks and then we wipe it off for the next class. They use their iPads to take a picture of their scroll and put it into the class dropbox⁴, so wiping clean the scroll is not a problem. It's an assessment piece. I don't have to be right there at the time; I can grade their work later.

DM: Do you ever combine scrolls with books or other materials, as sets?

KBD: Yes! Sometimes I store my scrolls in pizza boxes. I glue the back page of the scroll into the pizza box and then I fanfold it back and forth so that it stays with any related manipulatives or other stuff. So say that I have a box for main idea or short vowel

⁴ www.dropbox.com

sounds. I put my manipulatives in the box and then glue the scroll in the base of the box so when we open it up we have the scroll to pull out and then all the manipulatives or worksheets or whatever are already in the box, and they're very easy to store that way, and if they're laminated, they fanfold very well. The kids love this. They just get their box and go do whatever they need to do.

DM: Do you ever make your own customized scrolls -- combining bits and pieces from different texts to teach one idea or story?

KBD: I do. Once you get in the mindset of it, you see the possibilities everywhere. I use a variety of textbooks and articles from a range of sources -- open content textbooks, web sites, power point slide shows, and discarded books. For novels that don't have pictures, I have the kids insert their own.⁵

Everywhere I go, I think, "Oh, this would make a great scroll", or "This would be a great addition to my whatever scroll". I merge them all together -- the best of this one and that one -- to draw out the features that I know that are going to be on the test or that are interesting.

I also insert the standards, so kids can understand what they should be looking for, and why. It doesn't make sense to have this information way off at the end. The kids do better when the relevant standards are near by. I'll have them highlight where they see something that ties to a particular standard, because one of the things that works for the kids is to be able to say what they're learning in the verbiage of the standard. If they find evidence that lines up with standard 6.32, I'll have them put a stickie note there, so they'll know what -- and why -- to study.

I also have the kids participate in making these collected scrolls. What we usually do is break the information down by standards. One standard is geography, one is economics, etc. I have them sort those as they take the textbooks apart. And then they have to make some decisions: They get together and decide what is unimportant, and they x that out; they modify it to suit our class purposes and then they tape it all together. They make it into a scroll. It's fun for them. And then to have a scroll that stretches from one side of the room to the other, and the kids say, "Look! We made this book!"

DM: How do you deal with different editions -- such as a paperback edition versus a PDF⁶ found on line?

⁵ Don Holdaway, who invented Big Books, describes a similar process in his classic work, *The Foundations of Literacy* (Ashton/Scholastic, 1979, pp.64-80).

⁶ PDF is Adobe Systems Inc's Portable Document Format

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KBD: Sometimes I can find a certain text on line, but so often the pagination is different. It's better to have make scrolls from the same edition as the classroom book(s). The problem is, teachers don't often have a budget for obtaining extra book-copies. It kind of takes a new teacher's motivation to try something new like scrolls, but new teachers aren't the ones who will know where to get the material, and they're not going to have the money to go make the copies or be comfortable enough to ask for donated copies and things like that. It helps to have a veteran teacher who will say, "Oh, hey! Here's a way to get textbooks!"

DM: New technologies are changing classroom practices. Are there any new approaches to teaching that scrolls can improve?

KBD: I used the flipped classroom model. I have the kids learn the material at home -- do their flipped lesson that night -- and then come back to a scroll ready to look for those particular things, ready to answer the questions. They're ready to dig in -- to drill down into that text. That's half the job right there. If you have the scroll up on the board, those students who did their homework -- did the flipped lesson -- go there. That frees you up as a teacher to get back with the other group and remediate what they did not do.

Nobody's really talked about what you do in the classroom the next day, when half of your kids are into the text and half aren't. I think scrolls and textmapping are great for this.

DM: How do you know which students are ready to dig in -- and which are not?

KBD: You can see from the front of the room. When you have 30 kids in the room with textbooks open, you can't see if they're looking at the right page. With the scroll you can say, "Everybody move to the answer", and there's this one kid standing in one place and everybody else in standing in another place, you see the miscue; it's obvious.

Using scrolls turns out to be an easier thing to do with your kids than using a regular book. At first it looks like a lot of work, but in the long run it makes your job easier. I've had colleagues who've said, "You know, you were right. And I've got to teach that yucky chapter that I don't like, and then I thought to myself that I had the scroll and that made me excited to teach it again. It's another way to keep the text alive.

The kids aren't getting a chance to dig in because of technology. Scrolls give them another chance -- and another reason -- to dig back in. There are so many things you can do with scrolls.

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