Social reading Feedback

The student view

- They could "think out loud" and receive almost instantaneous feedback
- Quick to type in thoughts - even if they were not shopping
- They could receive guidance on which ideas to discard and which ones to develop and through the use of questions, usually from the tutor, it would encourage students to think more deeply about a particular point
- Saves them having to constantly email the tutor - they felt like it was less invasive
- They visual - can see which passages have the most comments and focus on them
- A good way of recording ideas and it helps with note-taking
- Helped them order their thoughts - easy to pick out common themes - no need for index tabs
- Made the writing process much easier - could have it open in a separate window on the PC
- Reading the comments made by their fellow students
- Opportunities to engage in discussions with others online
- Drew their attention to useful quotes
- Facilitate reflection - no pressure to respond immediately to feedback
- Only 50% of students (of those who answered the questionnaire) registered to use one or more of the tools
- Impression of one of the students we interviewed: "lots of people that lotter round the edges"
- Many students suddenly decided it would be useful. In the last 10 days before the assignment was due in - too late to get any real benefit

The librarian view

As a librarian, I felt I became a more effective part of the teaching team, and more visible to the students in the module. Following or from hands-on workshops on citations, I began "surfing" the Goodreads discussions and discovering what students concerns were with linking their reading to the wider literature. On a number of occasions, I added a comment or contacted the student off the group to make suggestions or offer a one-to-one tutor. After answering the information skills query, the tutor added the subject perspective, giving a more fuller and beneficial response. I also got additional students contacting me off list, which may have been in part due to my being more visible and thus approachable in the virtual side of the module.

The academic tutor view

I wanted to find a way of encouraging students to engage more closely with the primary texts they were reading. Using social reading opened up new ways to do this. Students shared their highlights and then added comments to which I responded; sometimes I was guiding them to think differently and sometimes to probe more deeply. Their fellow students joined in the conversation and collaborative analysis started to happen.

Social reading allowed me to find ways of discussing and analysing primary literary texts inside the texts; it allowed students, tutors and librarians to get under the covers of the book to explore and critically analyze it. The app allowed these conversations to happen on-the-fly and was substantive different to the one-to-many discussions we tend to have in seminar groups. It also happened when and where the students needed it to - when they were working on their assessment - not just the slots available to us in timetabled classes. The social reading project allowed me to do things as a teacher that simply wouldn't be possible or feasible in a traditional classroom environment.

Having librarians hanging out in the social reading space with us was fantastic. I really felt like they were part of the teaching team and I know the students felt that way too. It was great to have them jump in to offer the students support in finding resources when and where they needed it. Again, this is something that simply wouldn't have been possible in a traditional classroom context.

Social reading is developing students critical literacy through digital literacy, both of which are vital attributes of English Literature graduates.