

Section 2

Chapter 7 - Videogames as educational tools

Case Scenario 1

Title: **Gone Home**

Description:

This real case scenario ([Darvasi, 2014](#)) presents the approach of Paul Darvasi, a high school English teacher, who used the story exploration videogame [Gone Home](#) as a literary text in three senior English classes for 3 weeks within 2013. During that time, students played the videogame and were assessed by a series of responses and activities that were in line with the aims of a typical high school English curriculum.

The videogame environment is set in 90s and the players take the role of 19 year old Katie Greenbriar, who has come home after a year backpacking in Europe. While she was travelling, her family inherited and moved into a big old mansion on the outskirts of her town. Katie arrives from the airport to the unfamiliar house only to discover that nobody is home (**Figure**). The player, as Katie, has to resolve the mystery of where the family is while being free to search for clues in notes and personal belongings. Each item is a small windows into the private lives of the family members and gradually reveals a net of family secrets.



Figure: Screenshot from Gone Home game (source: <http://www.ludiclearning.org>)

The teacher obtained a bulk discount on game licenses so that each student in his English class had their own login. Then the teacher created six topics for students to "track" as they played. Students selected a topic that interested them, wandered around the game environment, being alert to find, note and document artifacts that supported their topic. The tracking assignments allowed for unguided but purposeful exploration. Namely, one topic challenged students to collect the hidden references to game genres, whereas another one required finding objects from the time period of the game narrative (i.e. 1990s), such as telephone books, VCR tapes and audiocassettes. Then students had to create slide presentations to present their findings on each topic to the class as a "visual museum". Students were assessed on their presentations.

Keeping the students' assessment close to the gaming spirit and encouraging participation, the teacher then asked each student to write a review for the game, similar to those posted on gamers' community forums. This was a way for students to express how they felt about their experience, think critically about their play, as well as experiment with a contemporary form of writing.