

23 March 2011

Jamie,

I really like your topic. It's helping me to see PostSecret, which I'm mostly familiar with through my girlfriend as a "time-wasting" site like fmylife, in a whole new way. In some ways, I have a lot of respect for people who are brave enough to send their terrible secrets out into the world; but in others ways, I feel like I'd respect them more if they were less anonymous about it and actually tried to confront the problems in their lives directly with some honesty (though I do understand that sometimes it's just not possible without putting lives in danger).

So yeah, there's really a lot to talk about there. Anonymity has always been a big topic on the Internet more so than in any medium before it, and PostSecret takes it to the extreme by making the reader want to know so badly who the person with this terrible or hilarious secret possibly could be, just in case it's somebody they know.

I made a lot of notes on your paper, so make sure to take a look, but I'll summarize them here. Make sure you give a solid, thorough definition/explanation of both PostSecret and expressive writing. For example, with expressive writing I was left wondering what the subject matter usually is and/or is supposed to be in order to be called "expressive". Does it have to be negative? You don't mention it but then you imply it later on.

With PostSecret, I think it's important to explain the whole process of how the site works so the reader has a full understanding—in particular, I was left wondering how the site's owner decides which postcards end up online and which don't. This information definitely would affect my evaluation of it in relation to the rest of what you're talking about.

I think the bits with psychology are very strong. Someone reading a PostSecret post can't help but wonder "What were they thinking? What are they like?". By breaking it down scientifically like you are, we can get some idea of what these people may be like and thus better understand the motivations for their writing.

On the topic of writing, make sure you don't just include the literal writing (the text), but also the visual design—the pictures, colors, size and shapes of letters and so on. Those elements are just as important in contributing to the message of each posted secret as the text is. The meaning would be way more different if the site just posted the text alone, instead of pictures of the cards.

That's all! Keep it up!

Your peer,

John Pray