Why adapt classic texts with digital tech?

+ They offer stories, characters, and language that can inspire.

+ They occupy a central place in culture that you can both participate in and challenge.

+ Familiar titles can help attract audiences who might otherwise be unsure about digital work.

+ They are often copyright free. This saves money and offers total freedom to experiment.

+ Digital tech can help audiences see old stories, often studied in school, in a fresh light.

+ Digital tech can promote access to classic texts, both practically and conceptually.

What are some of the challenges?

+ Non-linear, sprawling works can become confusing for audiences. Keep an eye on coherence.

+ Archaic or intricate language can be a barrier to engagement. Think about how to translate that language for audiences.

+ Digital tech simultaneously increases access and creates new barriers. Internet access among audiences is uneven and some technologies are not readily accessible to people with disabilities.

+ Audience interaction requires time to manage. If you invite audiences to participate through social media but don’t respond to them it can create frustration.

+ It can be hard to monetize and also to preserve digital adaptations. Tech changes fast and future-proofing is difficult.

Top tips:

+ Think about your audience from the outset. Who are they and how will you connect with them?

+ Online audiences often want to be heard and seen in some way. Build this into your design and factor in the time it will take.

+ Design inclusively from the start, rather than thinking about accessibility after the fact. Work with colleagues who have expertise in this area.

+ Test drive a first version or concept with a small audience in order to get feedback.

+ Episodic or fragmented texts can work especially well in a short-form, online context.

+ Just because you can do something doesn’t mean you should. Think carefully about the match between medium and text.

+ Mixing digital modes of engagement with analogue ones can be a powerful combination, helping audiences explore the relationship between online and ‘real’ life.

+ The best adaptations teach audiences something new about the texts they retell.