

# Chalk House™

*Improving Literacy through  
Virtual Worlds*

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## Created Realities Group

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<http://created-realities.com>

## What is Chalk House?

This run-down mansion was once the ancient home of wealthy pioneers, now known to locals as *Chalk House*. The old house has a history waiting to be discovered. Students take on the role of a young reporter newly arrived at the *Farewell Telegraph*. This reporter investigates the strange disappearance of the last living members of the Forrester family, last seen entering this haunted place.

Based on research into problem-based learning and the use of other similar learning environments, when students solve the puzzles of the old house and file their reports with The Editor, their writing skills can be expected to improve along with critical thinking and reading comprehension.

Chalk House is the first narrative-based learning module being developed for the CRG 3D online learning environment. Student progress is tracked and reported to the teacher throughout the 20 hours of online content with more hours spent on writing exercises. Chalk House can be used over differing periods of time depending on classroom needs.

**Do your students  
have the literacy  
skills to solve the  
mystery?**



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## General Literacy

Technological tools for aiding students with writing have become prevalent since the boom of computers in schools starting in the mid-1990s. Microsoft Word™ is used by many teachers for publication of final student writing products as well as for its spelling, grammar checking, and thesaurus features that act as learning affordances to target writing skills. Technology for writing has also shown improved attitudes toward completing writing tasks. Chalk House combines the advantages of hypertext, existing use of word processors, and motivating power of 3D environments. It leverages pedagogical/intelligent agents to provide students with a safe, engaging learning space within which to practice writing and develop their reading skills.

## No Child Left Behind

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, students are held accountable through standardized testing that focuses on their ability to read and write effectively. Within Chalk House, student activity ties directly to Texas, Indiana, and MCREL standards, as well as technology skills from the ISTE NETS-S standards. Feedback, according to rubrics, helps students improve their writing skills. They take tests and quizzes in the system as part of the role-play experience. These assessments examine the degree of recall and comprehension achieved as part of their reading activity in the 3D learning environment.

## English as a Second Language (ESL)

The theory of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) focuses on using the audio-visual, tactile, and interaction affordances of computers to improve student acquisition of second and foreign languages. Traditionally users of stand-alone computer programs, ESL teachers are increasingly using online learning environments to improve language learning. Chalk House allows second language speakers the opportunity to clarify questions about idiom, grammar and spelling rules. They may also discuss cultural issues relevant to learning a foreign language from a peer or instructor.



## Computer Requirements

- Windows XP; Mac OSX 10.4 or later
  - Java 1.5 or later
- At least:
- 1 GB RAM memory
  - OpenGL v1.1 compliant video card  
(ATI Radeon or Nvidia GeForce 2 or greater)
  - Internet connection (28kbps or faster)
  - 150 MB hard drive space
  - Audio Card that supports Speakers/Headphones

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