Futures for

English

English in Australia Terms of Use

English in Australia

2019

Guidelines for Contributors

English in Australia is the peer-reviewed national journal of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE).

We welcome high quality, teacher-oriented and scholarly submissions in any relevant field of English, language and literacy education.

Your submission should reflect dilemmas, debates and concerns facing current contemporary English educators in Australia and elsewhere. Your submission may report on empirical research conducted with or by English teachers and students in classrooms, it may discuss the effects of policy on English teaching or it may elaborate on changes in the practices of teachers. It should be explicitly linked to issues of English teaching, pedagogy or curriculum and should demonstrate familiarity with current and pertinent scholarly literature.

The name of the journal is in no way parochial. Articles will be considered from anywhere which professes English as mother tongue or second language. However, if your article relates closely to a specific national context please ensure that it is appropriately pitched to readers in other national contexts.

Contributors are encouraged to read previous issues of *English in Australia* to get a sense of what is required in terms of structure and style.

1. All manuscripts should be submitted to **https://english-in-australia. scholasticahq.com**
2. Please provide all the author information requested on the site; ensuring that your name does not appear on the manuscript itself (to keep the blind review process intact).
3. The article should begin with an abstract of 100–150 words.
4. All references should conform to the American Psychological Association (APA) style. Please consult the *APA Publication Manual*, 6th edition, or any guide to APA referencing available through university library websites.
5. Please ensure that you have carefully edited and proofread your manuscript. Accepted articles that have style problems or inaccurate/missing references will be returned to the author for revision.

6. Please avoid footnotes. Usually it is possible to incorporate them into the text. Where they cannot be avoided they should be numbered with a superscript and listed at the end of the article (endnotes).
7. All manuscripts should be typed with double spacing on A4 paper with a 2.5 cm margin on all sides.
8. It is your responsibility to seek copyright clearance for any materials quoted.
9. All manuscripts are subject to double blind peer review by at least two reviewers. This means that the identity of the author is not divulged to the reviewers, nor are the reviewers' names revealed to the author.
10. Recommended length of articles for publication is between 4000 and 6000 words (including references).
11. You retain copyright of materials published in the journal; *English in Australia* holds first publication rights only. Authors retain the right to self-archive the final draft of their articles in their institution's eprint repository.

You can expect feedback from the reviewers and editor to help you shape your work effectively. Please feel free to contact the Editor or members of the Editorial Board to discuss any contribution which you may be considering.

Although *English in Australia* is predominantly a curriculum research and practice journal, occasionally poems and short texts of other genres relevant to the themes and readership of the journal are also published. Please only send short non-academic texts submissions to the editor. All academic papers should be submitted to Scholastica.

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SPECIAL EDITION

Editorial

Larissa McLean Davies, Kelli McGraw and Lucy Buzacott

We could hardly have imagined what the immediate 'Futures for English' would look like when we set out the call for papers for this Special Edition in 2019. As we write this Editorial, the world has been plunged into online and home-based schooling in response to the 'once in a century' COVID-19 pandemic: it is impossible, in the midst of this, to conceive what English, or indeed schooling will look like in the next months and years. English teachers at all stages of school and tertiary education have rapidly developed or expanded technological literate practices, as students encounter new approaches to the reading and production of texts in different forms and spaces. In Australia, this worldwide crisis follows an intense and unprecedented period of bushfire, where lives and livelihoods were lost, towns and national parks razed, smoke blanketed major cities, and dystopian accounts of destruction and survival dominated the media. We know that the stories that come from these unprecedented, life-changing local and global events will impact the nature of the texts we read and produce, and therefore the nature of subject English which has, since its inception, been responsive to changing contexts, discourses and social imperatives (McLean Davies, Doecke & Mead, 2013).

These crises have, in different ways, impacted on the publication of *English in Australia* and as a result, some articles for this Special Edition on 'Futures for English' will appear here, and some will be carried over into a special section of Edition 55.1. We were delighted with the response to this call for papers and are confident that readers will be engaged by the range of scholarly voices considering the pressing issues for the *Futures for English* over these Editions. We thank our international team of reviewers for their work over this period, in extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

In this Edition, speculations about the futures of school English are taken up in a variety of generative and powerful ways which reflect the diversity of English teachers' professional lives; new and enduring questions of the subject's knowledge structures; and, the complexity and challenges of teaching subject English amidst externally driven bureaucratic, neo-liberal and pervasive colonial cultures. Steve Shann's piece responds to these issues, and creatively explores the provocation offered by Sylvia Wynter's work that was evoked in this Edition's call for papers. Through telling the complex stories of one English teacher as she is located within various spaces and institutions, Shann prompts us to engage with the possibilities for research in English education. Although writing from a very different context to Shann, Andy Goodwyn's account of English teaching also offers an important perspective on the pervasive and damaging impacts of neo-liberal policies on English teachers' classroom practice and, most importantly, the way students are experiencing subject English. Goodwyn raises concern about the decline in demand for English studies in the final years of schooling, attributing this to students' disengagement with a subject that is being fundamentally impacted by high-stakes testing and limited teacher autonomy. He argues that school English in its current form risks turning students away from studying undergraduate English, which, while it can lead to many career outcomes, is also the means by which the profession is renewed and the subject able to evolve in the future.

The complexity of knowledge in subject English is a focus for Mary Macken-Horarik, Ann Small, Eva Gold and Mel Dixon, who report on a project focussing on 'Textual Concepts' undertaken in collaboration with the New South Wales Department of Education and the New South Wales English Teachers' Association. The case studies in this article show that the innovative professional learning at the heart of this project offered ways of meaningfully structuring knowledge in English, expanding teachers' repertoires of practice and students' engagement with texts.

Issues of teacher professional learning and knowledge development are further animated in articles by Angela Thomas and Vinh To, and Sarah E. Truman who offer perspectives on teaching literature for the purposes of exploring racial diversity, countering discrimination and promoting understanding of difference in the English classroom. Thomas and To's study, set in Tasmania, reports on teachers' attitudes and practices with regard to implementing curriculum priorities regarding Asian literature in Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary contexts. They find that while teachers are generally receptive to incorporating Asian texts in English, it is clear that some practices are more authentic and integrated than others, and in certain circumstances, the ways in which Asian texts are selected and studied is likely to be at cross-purposes with inclusive curriculum aims. Truman also raises concerns about the ways texts are selected and deployed in the 21st century English classroom. Using Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird* by way of example, Truman draws on affect theory to argue that canonical texts, such as Lee's, circulate whiteness even when teachers deploy them with social justice imperatives in mind. She argues that a new criticality is needed to address the kinds of imperial and racial inheritances that we are carrying forward into future English classrooms through our text choices.

It is productive to read the articles in this Edition in dialogue with Claire Woods' piece on 'Teaching Literature Now and for the "Net" Generation'. Woods' piece is this Edition's *Perspectives from the Past* article and was one of a suite of articles (see *English in Australia* issues 127, 128 and 133) published at the turn of the century which were concerned with designing curriculum which would take English as a discipline and a subject into the future. Wood's esteemed career has taken up questions concerning the knowledge and beliefs that underpin the work of English teachers. This article focuses on the kind of 'English' students need to study, and the way Woods and colleagues have reconceived their undergraduate literature offerings to reflect the influences of writing, media and technology on the discipline. Woods' piece speaks powerfully of a shifting subject and the centrality of students' current textual practices to English curriculum design. Although written nearly 20 years ago, the questions it asks and the practices of teacher reflection it captures remain highly relevant.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge that at the end of 2019, Kelli McGraw, who had been a member of the Editorial Team over the last two-year term, took up the role of Lead Editor of *English in Australia*. Kelli succeeds Larissa McLean Davies, who served as Lead Editor from 2018-2019 and will remain as part of the Editorial team. Other members of the Editorial team for the 2020-2022 term are Brenton Doecke, Philip Mead, Wayne Sawyer and journal intern Ceridwen Owen. The team would like to thank previous Editorial Team members Catherine Beavis and Lucy Buzacott for their significant contributions to the journal over the period 2018-2019, as well as Deb McPherson for her ongoing commitment to reviewing children's and young adult texts of interest to readers of *English in Australia*.

We hope you find this Special Issue stimulating and look forward to continuing the dialogue about 'Futures for English' in the next edition of the journal.

References

McLean Davies, L., Doecke, B. & Mead, P. (2013). Reading the local and global: Teaching literature in secondary schools in Australia. Changing English, 20(3), 224-240, DOI: 10.1080/1358684X.2013.816529

ENGLISH IN AUSTRALIA

The journal of the **Australian Association** for the **Teaching** of **English**

Call for Papers: *English in Australia* issue 55.2

SPECIAL ISSUE: ENGLISH @ HOME

Deadline for full manuscripts: 21 August 2020

The landscape of teaching English in 2020 is markedly different to any in recent memory in Australia and around the world. The catastrophic bushfire season across Australia was closely followed by the news of a pandemic that would alter the everyday lives of individuals and the institutional structures that we have taken for granted. On 22 March 2020, Premier of Victoria Daniel Andrews announced that Term 1 school holidays would be brought forward one week, starting 24 March. This was followed up on 7 April, with the announcement that Victorian students would learn from home starting the beginning of Term 2, until further notice. Victoria's announcements were eventually echoed by similar announcements in other states and territories. Although not all states and territories closed schools and the Federal Government was quick to endorse that schools remain open, many government authorities issued statements that authorise parents to voluntarily keep their children at home, even urging them to do so unless they are an essential worker. This message to stay at home mirrors those from around the world as nations form strategies to limit human contact, seeking to 'flatten the curve' and stop COVID 19.

The notion of 'until further notice', in a contest with desires to get 'back to normal', now frames the context of life in Australia and around the world. In this context, whether it is endorsed by the government or a choice by individuals, students are learning from home, parents/guardians are finding themselves in the position of educators, and teachers are virtually extending their classrooms to bedrooms, studies and living rooms. Departments of Education are pulling together resources to support these changes, with 'learning at home' or 'home-based learning' frameworks appearing that focus on easy-to-access resources and strategies. Education institutions and businesses are also releasing myriad resources. All of these are designed to assist those on the frontline of education–teachers, students and parents/guardians.

This issue considers how these changes have been experienced by individuals, schools and at a policy level in terms of the teaching of English. Manuscripts for this upcoming special issue are invited to explore overlapping fields and issues, including but not limited to the following questions:

- How has English teaching changed in the landscape of a global pandemic?
- How do teachers of English experience the transition from face-to-face to virtual classrooms?
- What are the institutional structures that have been developed to support teachers and/or students, and/or parents/guardians as the teaching and learning of English moves to the home?
- What does teaching and learning English at home look like?

- What are the experiences of English teachers in the current context?
- What are the limitations of teaching and/or learning English at home and the strategies being used to overcome these?
- How does closer involvement from parents/ guardians and other family members shape the teaching of **English @ home**?
- What does the virtual landscape of learning and/or teaching English look like?
- How are students experiencing the shift to learning English online?
- Where pedagogy and assessment take place online, what elements of the English curriculum might flourish and what might risk being lost?

The initial spread and threat of COVID-19 made the traditional space of classrooms unsafe and has resulted in broad changes to the learning environment in states where home-based learning was in place for a significant amount of time. The situation, for instance, has resulted in a dependence on virtual modes of teaching to enable remote learning, and exacerbated existing inequities relating to student and teacher access to a range of learning resources including connected technologies. It has also placed unprecedented pressure on teachers as they are forced to quickly adjust their teaching to suit a new platform of delivery. These changes may be temporary, but they may also have long term/permanent implications for teaching and learning.

Full scholarly papers of between 4000 and 6000 words (including references) should be submitted to https://english-in-australia.scholasticahq.com/ by 21st August 2020.

Guidelines for contributors and information about *English in Australia* can be found at https://www.aate.org.au/journals/contribute-to-english-in-australia

All manuscripts are subject to double blind peer review.

Questions about this CFP can be directed to the Special Edition Editors:

Dr Kelli McGraw kelli.mcgraw@qut.edu.au
Ceridwen Owen ceridwen.owen@monash.edu

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Integrating English
Dr Marcello Giovanelli, Aston University, UK.
Publication: *Studying Literature,* forthcoming 2020

How emotional do I make it? Rethinking composition in the English Classroom
Dr Jennifer Rowsell, Bristol University, UK
Publication: *Living Literacies: Rethinking literacy research and practice through the everyday,* forthcoming 2020

What does literature mean to the human species, will it help us evolve and survive?
Emeritus Professor Andy Goodwyn, University of Bedfordshire, UK.
Student and Teacher Voice, 2019 (with Janice Wearmouth)

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Live Bodies: A Provocation

A short story by Steve Shann

Abstract: What role might storytelling play both as a component of the English curriculum and as a way of re-envisioning what we do as English teachers? The following story asks questions about storytelling in the English classroom, its fit with current theory and practice, and its role in a contemporary world. *Live Bodies* is a fiction. None of the characters is based on a real person, and none of the events took place in the way described in the story, with one exception: all but the first two paragraphs of Oscar's first email are the exact words addressed to me more than a decade ago by one of my English students, as are the words of the second email.

Live Bodies (vertical text in left margin)

A note on fiction as a research methodology

There are now several ethnographic sociologists and educationists who include the approach of the creative artist in their scholarship. Their work goes by many different names – arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012), autoethnography (Bochner, 2012), fictional ethnography (Reed, 2011), postmodern emergence (Somerville, 2007) – and sometimes no particular label (Clough, 2002). There are differences and debates amongst practitioners about the extent to which their work exists to reveal hidden complexity (Barone, 2000; Britzman, 2003; Clough, 2002; Greene, 1995; Somerville, 2007) or create particular affects (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Reed, 2011; Richardson, 1997). I have written more about this in 'A mythopoetic methodology: Storytelling as an act of scholarship' (Shann, 2014).

* * *

1.
Linda's email to Kate, PhD supervisor Saturday July 20

From: Linda Hamon lindaj.hamon@ed.act.edu.au

Date: Monday, 29 July at 5:13pm

To: Kate.McAdam k.macadam@unican.edu.au

Cc:

Subject: Our chat

Hi Kate,

It was so good to meet you last week. Thanks for listening in a way that made me forget how nervous and uncertain I felt. You encouraged me to write down some thoughts, so here goes.

It's late on a Saturday night. Maybe even early in the morning. My partner has gone to bed and the house is silent save for the occasional crackle from a shifting log in the slow combustion stove. It's clear and frosty outside, and the possums are out and about. One just screeched close to the window.

I love this time of night, especially during stand-down time when I'm not exhausted from the day's English teaching. I'm a night owl. I've had coffee and I'm wide awake.

I want to write. I need to write. There's a lot churning around at the moment, a lot of sorting out that I need to do.

As you know, I've been in two minds about launching into a PhD. My friends think I'm nuts, but I loved working on my Masters, cutting myself off from the day-to-day to read and think and write. It's going to be harder now that I'm a full-time English teacher at school but it's still something I've wanted to do for a while.

You asked me what I thought my research question might be. Panic! I didn't have a specific research question in mind. I think I said something about the English classroom as a site for the telling of stories, and then I bumbled around vaguely and unsatisfactorily for a bit. Thanks for looking so interested. It was encouraging. I need encouraging!

So then you gave me this chapter to read – 'Unparalleled catastrophe for our species? Or, to give humanness a different future: Conversations'. Two authors are mentioned, but am I right that most of the thoughts are Sylvia Wynter's? Are these her words?

I didn't find it an easy read, I'll be honest. I'm going to summarise so you can correct me if I've not understood it properly.

Wynter is suggesting that we (in the Western world? No, I think she's saying it's more pervasive than just that) have an outdated view of what it is to be human. The Renaissance, capitalism, colonialism, neo-liberalism – all these have contributed to a conception of human-ness for which she has a number of different labels, *homo oeconomicus* being one: 'the virtuous breadwinner, the stable job holder, the taxpayer, the savvy investor, the master of natural scarcity' (p. 19). It's outdated, she says, not simply because it's an inadequate definition of what it is to be human, but because it's destroying the world. The climate crisis is making it urgent to re-define what it is to be human, a shift being articulated in different ways by the voices of all those who have been marginalised by this model of humanity: the colonised, women, non-whites, LBGTQ, etc.). It is these voices, telling the stories of their experience, which are rediscovering (or remaking?) their subjectivities, as well as hinting at an alternative view of humanness. So we move to replace the cult of *homo oeconomicus* with *homo narrans*, or (and this is typical of the complex language, which she would say is necessary because it's a multi-pronged working towards a way of complex thinking that has not existed before) 'a hybrid-auto-instituting-languaging-storytelling species: *bios/mythoi*' (p. 25).

Phew! Reading it is like hacking through thick undergrowth in a fog!

But having hacked, I'm going to have a go at simplifying what she's saying even further (and no doubt distorting it even more), and then I want to speculate about why you gave it to me.

I think she's saying we're doomed if we remain yoked to ways of understanding humanness defined by *homo oeconomicus*, and that the telling of the stories of the dispossessed is a way, or the way, to re-define, to realign, to shake free.

And I think I'm wanting to say that the English classroom ought to be a site where all kinds of stories are told and discussed and respected, but that a pervasive neoliberal or instrumental blanket has been thrown over the subject, threatening to take the air out of those who want it – the English classroom – to be a more vital mythopoetic space.

Or something like that.

Are there some links between Wynter's notion of *homo narrans* and what I'm advocating? I think so, though I'm not sure.

No need to respond, Kate. I'm asking myself these questions, not asking you for answers. I'll keep thinking and look forward to our next chat.

Linda

***

2.

Linda's dream: Sunday July 21

I am welcoming my new Year 10 class at the beginning of the school term. I recognise one of the students. It's Greta Thunberg, the Swedish activist whose speeches about adults' shameful inaction around climate change have sparked student strikes around the world. There are other students pressing in behind Greta. Some look angry, some distracted. As they take their seats, there's a restlessness present in my classroom, as if the students are waiting for something to happen, as if they're waiting for me to say or do something.

But I suddenly realise that I'm tied to a chair out the front, with a gag in my mouth. The students are now looking at me. Some are asking questions about my plan for the lesson, others are complaining that their time is being wasted. I want to tell them that we'll have a wonderful year together, that I've got some very cool things planned. But all I can do is struggle and moan impotently into the gag.

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3.

Linda's journal entry, Wednesday July 24

I'm starting with my new Year 10 class on Monday, and our first topic is poetry. Our first topic? There's something uncomfortable about that sentence. If it's true (as I think I'm wanting to say) that the English classroom is a site for storytelling, then what might be a better way to describe how we're going to begin the term? Something like this: *We're going to begin by listening to some stories about the world told in the form of poems.* That sounds a bit awkward, but I think it's better than saying that our first topic is poetry. Our aim is not to study poetry so much as to see the ways in which poetry can help us see stuff (I'm going to have to think of a more elegant way of saying that in my PhD!).

I've come late to loving poems. But over the years I've found ones that seemed like windows into worlds that were simultaneously unknown and familiar. What do I mean by that? Well, it was as if these poems were describing things I'd never consciously thought or felt, and yet they rang some kind

of authentic bell, as if deep down I'd experienced this thing all along, or had always understood the truth of what was being described.

The first time I felt this way was back when I was just beginning to teach, and my partner read me this Rilke fragment:

> *My room and this vastness*
> *wake over a darkening land – as One. I am a string,*
> *stretched tight over broad rustling resonances.*
> *Things are violin bodies*
> *Filled with murmuring darkness[1]*

Did I understand it? I'm not sure I did. Could I have explained to someone else what it was about? I doubt it. But I knew it described something I'd experienced, or something I knew.

So I'm looking forward to this poetry unit with my Year 10 class. I've collected a set of what I think are evocative poems. I'm going to begin with a stanza from a poem by a Gunai woman, Kirli Saunders:

> *DISCONNECTION*
> *I watch your*
> *trembling limbs*
> *ache to shake*
> *in dance*
> *and hear your lungs*
> *as they gasp with songs unknown.[2]*

I've even thought of a question that I'll use as a kind of provocation for the whole poetry unit: *Why would anyone want to write a poem?* It's a question that can be interpreted in lots of different ways. It could lead to some great discussions, and perhaps open up the bigger question of the unique ways in which poems work to evoke the ordinarily unseen.

***

4.
Screenplay: English Faculty staff meeting

FADE IN:

INT. EMPTY CLASSROOM – MORNING

Six English teachers sit at desks, several with polystyrene cups of coffee. The room is cold; it's school holidays and the central heating won't come on for another five days, when the students return.

We pan slowly with close-ups from one to another, with the voice of BRIAN, the Faculty Head, in the background. One young teacher is looking eagerly and anxiously to the front. A dishevelled older man looks as though he's had little sleep after a long night.

BRIAN

(Still off camera)

Well, good morning all, and I trust you've had a

refreshing break. Thanks for submitting your Unit Plans for the Year 10 poetry unit. I appreciate you've put a lot of time into these and I've got no major problems with most of them …

Camera is now on Brian, leafing through documents that he takes from a neat folder)

BRIAN

… especially where there are clear, explicit and measurable outcomes attached to each lesson. Most of them, though, could do with more of the language of the English 7–10 Australian Curriculum. You know the words: 'development of knowledge of how language works … how literature can be discussed in relation to themes …'

Camera pans to Linda, who is looking out the window. Brian's voice, now in the background, drones on. There's a pained look on Linda's face.

BRIAN

'… Students critically analyse and evaluate texts to develop understanding of purpose and audience and how language techniques are used to position the audience'… You know all this stuff. These are direct quotes. 'The study of English plays a key role in the development of reading and literacy skills which help young people develop the knowledge and skills needed for education, training and the workplace. … Australia is a linguistically and culturally diverse country, with participation in many aspects of Australian life dependent on effective communication in Standard Australian English. In addition, proficiency in English is invaluable globally.'

Brian's words are becoming more and more part of the background. Linda shakes her head and sighs.

FADE OUT

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5.
Narrative: First lesson, Monday July 29

She stands at the classroom door and, as her students arrive – some returning her smile, some chatting with a friend and pretending they don't notice her there, some self-consciously avoiding eye contact – Linda gives each a copy the 'Disconnection' poem and (following Brian's directive) a copy of the approved Unit Plan for the poetry unit.

'Don't read the Unit Plan with its goals,' she announces dramatically. This is unexpected. 'Ignore the rubric with its outcome-driven criteria. You are here … no, we are here … to experience some poems. To allow some poems do their thing. To have an affect.'

Brows are furrowed, looks exchanged. But she has their attention. The room is still.

'To kick us off, I'm going to read you part of a poem, a poem written by someone who describes herself as a proud Gunai woman. I want you to try to let this stanza do its work. Just listen to it, as if it was a piece of music. Don't try to analyse it or understand it. Just listen.'

Twice she reads the stanza. The first time most eyes are on her. The second, most follow the words on the handout.

> DISCONNECTION
> I watch your
> trembling limbs
> ache to shake
> in dance
> and hear your lungs
> as they gasp with songs unknown.

Silence. A slight shifting in some seats. Some are wondering what is expected of them. Others have been sung into a deeper reflective, or affected, place.

'I'm going to read this fragment a third time,' she says. 'Then I want you to write silently for five minutes on what you noticed or what you wondered as you listened. If nothing comes to you, just write about that, but keep your pen moving – write for the whole five minutes. You're not going to have to show or share your writing with anyone. It's just for you. But if you do as I say, you might be surprised at what comes if you just keep going.'

She reads the stanza for a third time. Then the students write.

A promising start, she thinks as she makes her way through the rows. Occasionally a student stops writing; she gestures silently to keep the pen moving. Most write for the whole time.

'OK,' she says. 'Now move to the perimeter of the room. Make a rough circle.'

A shuffle of adolescence. Some sit on desks, some on chairs, a couple on the floor. Linda joins the circle.

'Well?' she asks.

'It wasn't very long,' says one student. 'And I noticed it didn't rhyme.'

'There was a rhyme,' says another. '*Ache* and *shake* rhyme. It's just that the rhymes came within a line, not at the end of two lines. I wondered why she did that.'

'I wondered who the poet was watching. Was the person dancing? I wasn't sure.'

'I don't think the person was dancing. It was like the person was wanting to dance, was aching to dance, but couldn't.'

'Oh, I think I see something now!' This is a student who has been silent. 'The person is really old, I think. Or really sick anyway. The person's lungs are gasping.'

'With songs unknown,' says another. 'I don't get that. How can you gasp with songs unknown if you don't know the songs? It doesn't make sense.'

'Maybe it's the observer, the poet, who doesn't know the songs. Maybe it's an old woman dying from lung cancer or something, in the last throes, trembling and gasping, and the observer is imagining the old woman is remembering dancing and singing.'

'Or maybe it isn't an old woman at all.'

'I'll give you the whole poem to take home and read tonight,' says Linda. 'You'll see then whether it's an old woman or not. And this really good discussion, this close reading, will help you read the whole poem skilfully.'

'Is it Indigenous?' asks another.

'It's written by Kirli Saunders, a Gunai woman,' says Linda. 'The Gunai are Indigenous people whose traditional territory is most of present-day Gippsland and much of the southern slopes of the Victorian Alps. What made you ask the question?'

'I'm not sure. Maybe because I assume – I'm not sure about this, maybe I'm wrong – maybe because I assume that, for those of us who have European backgrounds, singing and dancing doesn't come to mind when we're sick or dying. Does it? It just felt like the old person, or whoever it is, in this poem … I was present when my grandmother died at her home. We were there looking after her in her last weeks, and it was like in the poem when she was near the end …'

The classroom is suddenly very still.

'… and she was shaking at times, and making some strange sounds. But they didn't sound like songs and I didn't get the feeling that my grandmother was thinking about dancing. In Indigenous culture, those things are maybe more important?'

'Why's it called *Disconnection*, Miss?'

'Any thoughts?' Linda asks.

'Is it because the old woman …'

'So we're assuming it's an old woman?'

'I think it is. But whoever it is, is it because she's now disconnected from her young days when she could sing and dance?'

'Because she's old.'

'Or because that's what's happened to so many Indigenous people. They've become disconnected from their culture.'

'Some of them.'

'Lots of them. The ones still alive after all the frontier wars.'

'You all keep talking about *them*. But I'm Indigenous.'

'Really? You don't look it!'

The conversation swirls and eddies, sucking in and spitting out first one loose collection of students and then, when the focus shifts, another: bloodlines, culture, dispossession, song lines, old age, the future, climate change. It is as if in the room these living organisms, Linda's students, are using the energetic throb of the poem, the thoughtful contributions of the students,

to grow something. Something is being vitally shared which is contributing to a certain kind of becoming. Or so Linda feels.

But she also notices Oscar. Oscar, she's been told by a former teacher, is a top student. 'Oscar is a straight-A student' was the phrase used, a phrase that Linda has never liked. For her, success is a process, not a fixed state.

Oscar seems disconnected from the lively conversation. Instead, he leans back on his chair, irritably tapping a pencil against his knee, looking out the window.

After the lesson is over, she asks Oscar to wait for a minute.

'You didn't look all that interested in today's conversation,' she says.

Oscar shrugs. He won't make eye contact.

'I'm guessing you were feeling something,' she says.

'Possibly,' says Oscar.

'I want you to do me a favour,' Linda says. 'I want you to help me see today's lesson through your eyes.'

'And how can I do that?' he says. There's resistance in his tone, but something else as well. It's as if he rather likes the attention.

'You could say something … or you could write.'

'I'll write,' says Oscar with a half-smile. And he turns away and walks out.

***

6.
Linda's half-read copy of a document for English staff written by Brian, her Faculty Head
Success in English begins early

English is a subject that is highly developmental. Ensure that you keep the ultimate destination in mind as you construct your units 7–10. Results will not necessarily come overnight, but with a consistent, thoughtful approach, your 7–10 classes will lay the groundwork for ultimate success.

All our Year 7–10 classes are essential preparation … It is vital that all teachers of 7–10 – whether or not you are teaching a Year 11/12 class – have a thorough understanding of the nature of the Year 11–12 course … all units of work can be seen as preparation … every outcome has language at the heart. … a close exploration of a text … how a writer or director uses language to convey their ideas, themes and characters.

Students need to have a mastery of their texts, which can only come from multiple close readings or viewings …

… insights into the key themes, characterisations and ideas …

a thorough understanding of the structures, features and conventions …

… the limitations of their narration in respect to biases, personal beliefs and their world as they understand it …

… all writers or directors employ strategies … The task of the student … surgically analyse …

***

7.
An email: Monday July 29

From: Oscar Kennard Oscar7341@gmail.com
Date: Monday, 29 July at 5:13pm
To: Linda Hamon lindaj.hamon@ed.act.edu.au
Cc:
Subject: Playing the Game

Hi Miss,

Your class today confused me. I don't see what it has to do with English. I've heard from other students that your classes are a bit weird. You began by telling us to ignore the Unit Plan and the rubric. Weird.

But then you said you'd read a poem. Good, I thought. I'm good at analysing poems. I always get good marks. The poem you read seemed a bit simple to me, not something I could analyse to any great extent. But at least we were doing some proper English.

I've always done well in English. I've learnt how to play the game. In most subjects, the serious ones, it's barely about learning the subject matter in any real way. Instead we learn how to do well in tests and exams, and in English we learn how to deliver a speech the way the teacher wants it, how to write an essay, how to analyse a poem, etc.

I don't think this is what the people who planned this school system had in mind. I guess those guys think that the system as it stands is a genuine attempt to educate kids in the subjects they selected for us. Simply put, they're wrong.

The reason why I'm going to have trouble with your approach is because I have been trained to think like that. I do what I can to do well in the assessments. Discussions like today's aren't marked, so I don't spend time getting involved in them; you ask us to write and talk about what we notice and wonder as opposed to just knowing shit, and suddenly I'm confused. You ask for commitment and involvement, but you can't put a date or a number on it, so I just don't try.

Hope this helps.

Oscar

***

8.

Phone conversation, Monday July 29, 9:30pm

Kate: Hi Linda, hope this isn't too late to ring. I've just finished a tutorial and wondered if it might be a good time to check in and see how you're going.

Linda: I'm not sure that I've got much to report really. My brain is just full of unprocessed and unrelated thoughts.

Kate: Sounds promising.

Linda: Seriously?

Kate: Seriously. How else should you begin a PhD?

Linda: With something sort of focus. With a question. With something!

Kate: Well, it's clear that there's something there. A brain full of unprocessed and seemingly unrelated thoughts. Surely that's how all proper research begins?

Linda: But I haven't got back to the Wynter chapter, I'm afraid. I've been so tied up with what's going on at school.

Kate: I wonder if the Wynter chapter might have something to say about some of this.

Linda: What do you mean? How?

Kate: I want to read you a paragraph from the chapter.

Linda: OK.

Kate: Do you remember the bit about *homo oeconomicus?*

Linda: It's about the only bit I actually remember! She was saying that we've come to define *human* in terms of *homo oeconomicus*, the bread winner, tax payer, investor and so on.

Kate: She's saying that our acceptance of this way of defining *human* is destroying the earth. Here's the paragraph I want to read to you:

> This model's imperative supra-ordinate telos of increasing capital accumulation thereby predefines it as the only means of production indispensable to the enacting of the economic system of free-trade-market capitalism's unceasing processes of techno-industrial economic growth. This model can, at the same time, be enacted only on the homogenised basis of the systemic repression of all other alternative modes of material provisioning. In this mode of material provisioning, therefore, there can ostensibly be no alternative to its attendant planetarily-ecologically extended, increasingly techno-automated, thereby job-destroying, postindustrial, yet no less fossil fuel-driven, thereby climate-destabilising free-market capitalist economic system, in its now extreme neoliberal transnational technocratic configuration. The exceptions, however, are those clusters of still extant nomadic or sedentary indigenous traditionally

stateless societies – for example, those of the Masai, the San, or the Pygmy in Africa, as well as the range of other such societies in Australia, the Americas, and elsewhere.

Linda: There's got to be a simpler way to say that capitalism is stuffing up the world!

Kate: Very possibly. But she's saying a lot more than that. She's pointing out that we've allowed ourselves to believe the lie that the growth economy is self-evidently the only option, that the definition of *homo oeconomicus* functions to enmesh us in its system. Is this reminding you of anything?

Linda: Go on.

Kate: You're feeling trapped by a view of English teaching that somehow feels wrong but is so pervasive as to leave you feeling gagged, trapped, powerless.

Linda: I guess I can see there are parallels. But so what?

Kate: Maybe there are more than parallels. Maybe it's the same trap.

Linda: I don't get you.

Kate: What was your student's name again? The one who wrote you the email?

Linda: Oscar.

Kate: Oscar. Oscar seems to be something of an example of *homo oeconomicus.*

Linda: The boy who plays the game. Whose aim is to come out on top.

Kate: It's not a game he's invented. It's the way he's being constructed.

Linda: He'd be at home in Brian's class where the aim is 'mastery of texts', a 'thorough understanding of structures', and an ability to 'surgically analyse'.

Kate: And this definition of human is one that works to construct you as well. Or at least to gag the part of you that intuitively senses that there are alternative ways of being human.

Linda: Well, of course there are alternatives.

Kate: But they're not easy to articulate or to live, if I'm hearing you right.

Linda: No, they're not easy to articulate or live. What does Wynter say about how to resist this pressure?

Kate: From what you've read so far, what do you think she says?

Linda: While we've been talking, I've pulled out the article with all my highlighting. She says on page 20: 'For we cannot allow ourselves to *continue* thinking this way. This way of thinking is linked to the *same* ethno-class mode of behaviour-regulatory and cognitively closed order of knowledge that has led to our now major collectively human predicament: the ongoing process

of global warming, climate instability, and ecosystemic catastrophe.' Greta Thunberg would agree. But what's the alternative?

Kate:	Wynter is saying that we're not fixed by this definition of what it is to be human. She talks about the liberation movements – anti-colonial, feminist, LGBTQ, black – as movements that are finding a way to shift the definition of humanness by telling their stories. This is what she means, I think, when she writes '*humanness* is no longer a *noun. Being human is a praxis.*'

Linda:	So could the English classroom be a site for this praxis? Where students are developing their sense of what it is to be human by telling stories, by listening and being affected by stories of one kind or another?

Kate:	I guess that's what you're setting out to discover. Whether it's possible. Whether it makes a difference. Whether it's a part of a bigger movement exploring the possibility that being human is a praxis rather than a noun.

Linda:	It's my dream. Greta Thunberg and the other students are not just angry about the state of the world. They're expecting something of me.

***

9.
Linda's poem, Monday July 29, 1 am
RUSTLING RESONANCES
OVER A DARKENING LAND

i. *On reading Wynter*
Burning logs shift and hiss.
A mid-winter night as I, mid-Wynter,
Hack and rack my way through tangled phrase
On tangled phrase. Is there a promised land
To justify the pain?
Can scholars help me see and feel
What's clear and true beyond the half-blind I?

ii. *The dream*
Do they want answers?
I want to read them poems.
Are they seeking a place to vent their spleen?
I've songs to sing.
Their anxious, frightened eyes bore in.
There's something muffled in my heart.
My words won't work.

iii. *Beginnings*
Beyond appearance is where these words
Can take them.
Deeper than senses sense,
To underworlds they knew and know
But did not know they knew before the words.

My classroom space is where
We recreate what has always been.

iv. *Weighty words?*
The cycle ride to school. The coffee.
The bracing classroom. I should be wide awake.
But soporific words seep warm and thick
Through veins and make a heavy heart.
I cannot stay alert.
Am I allergic to what the experts say
Is what all students need?

v. *Classroom conversations*
Out of a silence an enigmatic voice is heard.
The still air is disturbed.
'Who's there?' 'Could it be?' 'I think I know.'
Echoes. Resonances. Associations. Questions.
There is a becoming becoming.
But is this a game of no consequence?
At least one seems to think so. At least.

vi. *It takes a team*
The Egyptian slave moved stone but never saw the pyramid.
Notre Dame was built on foundations laid by the dead.
Big things need teams. Team players.
The carping individualist can be ignored.
She's speaking only to herself.
Tune out, by all means, and feel superior,
While we get on with the real work.

vii. *Playing the game*
Picture this. Team A gets a new coach.
The coach doesn't like the game's rules.
He – or she – trains the team as if the rules are irrelevant.
The coach feels good. The team has fun.
But come game day, the referee plays the game
According to the rules. Team A is thrashed.
Hope this helps.

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10.
Narrative: Monday August 5

Linda stands by the classroom door, greeting each Year 10 student as they arrive for their second lesson. A week has passed, a week where the regular school schedule has been interrupted by a Year 10 excursion and a sports carnival. Linda is worried that last week's momentum will have been lost.

'Good to see you Oscar,' she says as he enters the room. He nods and smiles. Linda is not sure what that means.

Linda begins the lesson with another poem, one of Mary Oliver's.

Of the Empire

We will be known as a culture that feared death and adored power, that tried to vanquish insecurity for the few and cared little for the penury of the many. We will be known as a culture that taught and rewarded the amassing of things, that spoke little if at all about the quality of life for people (other people), for dogs, for rivers. All the world, in our eyes, they will say, was a commodity. And they will say that this structure was held together politically, which it was, and they will say also that our politics was no more than an apparatus to accommodate the feelings of the heart, and that the heart, in those days, was small, and hard, and full of meanness.[3]

She reads it twice. The students all have copies. Some follow the words as she reads; others just listen.

'How many sentences?' Linda asks.

Four.

'In that last sentence, the one beginning *And they will say*, how many parts has it got, how many different things will they say?'

Three.

'Right. Now remember your numbers.' She points to students and assigns numbers from one to six. 'Hands up all the Ones.' Hands shoot up. 'All the Twos.' And so on. The students are wondering where she is going with this. Linda, just as happens every time she does something like this, feels the students becoming more present.

'So,' says Linda. 'Ones, yours is the first sentence of the poem. Twos, yours is the second sentence. Threes, the third sentence.' She is pacing the room as she speaks. 'Fours, the first part of the fourth sentence ending *which it was*, that's yours. Fives, the second part of the third sentence ending *feelings of the heart*. Sixes, yours is the final part of the last sentence. Everyone with me? Right, Ones move to this part of the room around this table, Twos over here …' The room becomes alive with moving parts.

'OK,' says Linda when the groups have settled. 'There are four or five of you in each group. In each group I want a volunteer to read your bit to your group. Volunteers? Yes? Group Four? You do it, Stacey, if no-one else will volunteer. OK, we've got our readers. Now take five minutes for the volunteers to read to their group, and then for you to discuss whether it

could be read differently, what it's saying, and whether you agree with what you think it's saying.'

Students start to read, then to discuss. Linda moves from group to group, just listening. She notices that Oscar is silent, a bit restless. She wonders what's going on for him.

All groups are still talking when she calls time.

'So, you've talked about your section, and you've listened to what others have said. I'm going to read the poem again from start to finish, and then I'm going to get you to write for five minutes. I'll time you. Write about what you noticed, what you wondered, what you felt, what you thought. Any or all of the above. But write the whole time. I won't be collecting this; it's private writing, just to get the creative juices flowing.'

At the end of the five minutes, the discussion begins.

It is an angry, fractious discussion, difficult to manage at first because passions are high. Some students, including a couple who had taken part in the recent student climate strikes, assert that what the poem says about our society is obviously true, a set of inconvenient but undeniable truths. Others are angry with Linda for 'bringing politics into the classroom', for being part of the fashionable left that wants to tear down everything and replace it with another failed utopian experiment. These are eloquent students on both sides. The class teeters on the edge of an out-of-control slanging match.

But then a girl, Amira, puts up her hand. Linda has not heard her voice until this moment; nor have any of the other students. She is new to the school. The room is suddenly very quiet.

'I am Amira,' she says in a steady, self-assured and disarming voice. 'My family, we are from Iraq. We are here because we cannot stay in Iraq. We came to Australia with nothing. When we left Iraq, we did not know where we would end up. I now live in a house, not a big house like some but it is a house and we are safe. There are good people here who help us. We have a neighbour who takes my mother to hospital. She has bad legs, my mother. Some people don't like us and say unkind things. Some of the political people, they say bad things, and sometimes in the street people say bad things to us. But many many people here in Australia are good to us. Some hearts are full of meanness, here and back where I come from, but there are many hearts that are warm and good too. I don't know what I think of this poem. I hear it and it speaks true. I also know other things about this country. I think it is not

black and it's not white, as you say. It is confusing and complicated. But I like this poem. It has truth in it. And I like this class because we talk and we listen to each other and I feel good to be in this class. I think the hearts in this class are not so small, not so hard and not so mean.'

The previously fractious atmosphere in the classroom is gone. Some students ask Amira questions about her home in Iraq and why they left. Others talk about experiences they have witnessed of both meanness and generosity. Some talk about being confused.

'Life,' says Linda, 'can sometimes be too complex for our brains to comprehend.' She reads the class a passage from a David Malouf novel, *The Great World*, about the main character being 'dizzied by the world'.[4] She reads a passage from Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*:

> I have set off and found that there is no end to even the simplest journey of the mind. I begin, and straight away a hundred alternative routes present themselves. I choose one, no sooner begin, than a hundred more appear. Every time I try to narrow down my intent I expand it, and yet those straits and canals still lead me to the open sea, and then I realize how vast it all is, this matter of the mind. I am confounded by the shining water and the size of the world.[5]

After school she receives a second email from Oscar. This one is very short.

> *Hi Miss, Give me a prod every now and then, like you did the other day, because I am trying to untrain myself from what I know. Oscar*

Linda tells her partner Beck all about it at dinner that night. It should be a celebratory kind of conversation – the lesson had really zinged – but Linda had been aware as she cooked that she was feeling some underlying disquiet.

'It's like I'm living in two worlds,' she tells Beck. 'It's good – mostly – in the classroom. But I've always got the assessments looming, like a dark cloud hanging over my head. The assessments are set by the Faculty Head, by Brian, and the students are being tested on stuff that doesn't seem all that central to me.'

'Like?'

'Like they're given a poem, for example, and are asked to comment on how the language techniques are used to position the reader. Or they're asked to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular piece of writing. It's all so cerebral. It's all so … disembodied.'

'A strange word to use in this context, isn't it?'

'It depends on what you think a text is,' Linda says. 'Say more.'

'Well, if you think of a text as some artefact, a bit like a dead animal being studied by someone training to be a vet, then the kind of analysis that's being asked for – *How does this thing work? What are the relationships of the parts? What's the function of this bit?* – is obviously appropriate. But a text isn't like a dead animal. It's a live body.'

'Go on. I'm sure I agree with you, but go on.'

'I once heard an academic describe a work of art as an assemblage, 'a bloc of sensation' or 'shards of an imagined reality' which create an imprint on the body/mind of the viewer or reader. I think it's healthy … or right … or something … to think about texts as live bodies which attempt to create affects. They resonate, they evoke, they provoke, they move, they remind, they affect. This is why writers write, it's why those of us who love reading read. And yet we serve texts up in our classrooms as if they're inert objects to be judged, analysed, studied, objectified. We shouldn't be asking *How does this text work?* We should be asking *What does this text make you think about? What do you notice? What do you wonder? Where is it taking you?* Texts will take different students to different places. And that's good, because then the classroom becomes a live body as well.'

'Live bodies – the texts – from a live body – the author – meeting other live bodies – your class.'

'Exactly,' Linda says.

'You should read some Dewey,' says Beck. Beck is older than Linda, and often says that Linda's generation missed out on a good grounding in educational philosophy. 'I seriously think that Dewey needs a comeback. The neoliberal establishment would like to keep him in his grave, but I think we're ready for a second coming.'

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11.
Email to Kate, PhD supervisor: August 9

From: Linda Hamon lindaj.hamon@ed.act.edu.au
Date: Saturday, 10 August at 1:26 am
To: Kate.McAdam k.macadam@unican.edu.au
Cc:
Subject: Our chat

Hi Kate,
I need to write again. I feel simultaneously on the edge of some

kind of breakthrough, some clarity about my PhD focus, and at the same time stuck, blocked, unable to take the next step. I want to try to write my way out of this bog.

I've been reading Dewey. It is so refreshing. So illuminating of the frustrations I've been feeling about the official version of English teaching – as in, Brian's version of the Australian Curriculum. Let me try to explain. It's to do with ontology. With the nature of the human being. Including our students, of course.

Our sequenced syllabus and our pedagogical approach are both shaped by an implicit and unacknowledged view of the nature of the human being, and of how it grows. The implicit metaphor might be the construction of a building: first provide firm foundations, then add to it floor by floor until you have completed the object (I am using the word object deliberately, for reasons that I hope will become apparent). Every step along the way is a step towards a future goal.

> Dewey rejects this version of the human being. For him (and for me!) the human being is no different from animals or plants – in other words, no different from other live bodies – in its fundamental urge to use the surrounding environment in order to grow.

> As long as it endures, it struggles to use surrounding energies in its own behalf … To say that it uses them is to say that it turns them into means of its own conservation. As long as it is growing, the energy it expends in thus turning the environment to account is more than compensated for by the return it gets: it grows. (pp. 3–4)

I love (because I think it is true) this starting point, this reminder that every living thing is motivated, energised and impelled to make connections with the environment in order to grow. The desire to form relationships and to communicate is innate.

I think about my English lessons of the past week, and the way my Year 10 students grew through struggling to use the surrounding energies – the poems, each other, me, the aliveness in the classroom, when they were listening to Amira talk about Iraq and being a refugee. Or when Oscar wrote that he wants my help to 'untrain myself from what I know'. We're all no different (in this regard) from the plants, soaking up the sunlight, sucking up the nutrients, straining against the winds, sending out welcoming signals to the insect and bird life.

> For when the schools depart from the educational conditions effective in the out-of-school environment, they necessarily substitute a bookish, a pseudo-intellectual spirit for a social spirit. (p. 47)

So ontology – the nature of live bodies – is one step I'd like to take to free myself from the bog.

Some scholarly exploration of the nature of a text is another.

At the moment I've just got an intuitive, half-articulated notion which I was trying to explain to my partner the other night. Texts, I was saying to her, are live bodies that create affects, not dead specimens to be studied. They are a part of the living environment of an English classroom. When students are brought into relationship with texts, they are shaken up, affected, inducted, agitated, amplified. The kind of growth that Dewey describes follows when we work with an adequate grasp of the nature of a text.

And maybe my third step is some kind of return to the Wynter chapter you suggested I read. She often mentions Frantz Fanon, so I went searching and found the following sentence where he describes his experience of being black in a white colonial world:

> I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects.

There was something very arresting to me about this sentence. On a much smaller and less traumatic scale than that experienced by Fanon, it describes how I feel when I'm in English staff meetings: a pressure to be made an object in the midst of other objects, a denial of my instinctive desire to find a meaning in things. It describes, perhaps, what happens to a text – that live body desiring to create some kind of affect – when it is tamed and deadened through the kinds of analyses and dissections privileged by the formal English curriculum. More significantly, perhaps, it could be applied to a student like Amira or Oscar, both of whom, through some version of Wynter's *homo narrans*, are struggling to free themselves from being made objects in the midst of other objects, using the environments they now find themselves in to find meaning and to grow.

And somewhere, somehow, I want to keep in the picture the disquieting 'rustling resonances' that I've been sensing. I wrote about them in my poem the other night. They, too, are components of the quagmire.

Kate, all of this is very tentative, very early days. But I think it's providing me with some possible ways out of the bog. What do you think?

Linda

Notes

1. 'my partner read me this Rilke fragment'. Quoted p. 220 in Dowrick, S. (2009). *In the company of Rilke.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

2. 'a poem [Disconnection] by a Gunai woman, Kirli Saunders'. http://cordite.org.au/poetry/notheme7/disconnection/

3. 'another poem, one of Mary Oliver's' [Of the Empire]. https://ourbelovedearth.blogspot.com/2009/01/mary-oliver-of-empire.html

4. 'a passage from a David Malouf novel, *The Great World*, about the main character being 'dizzied by the world''. p. 296 in Malouf, D. (1990). The Great World. Picador.

5. Quote from Winterson, J. (2014). *Sexing the Cherry*. London: Vintage Books.

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Steve Shann is a retired teacher and academic, who has recently published his novel *The Worlds of Harriet Henderson*, set partly in a Melbourne secondary English classroom.
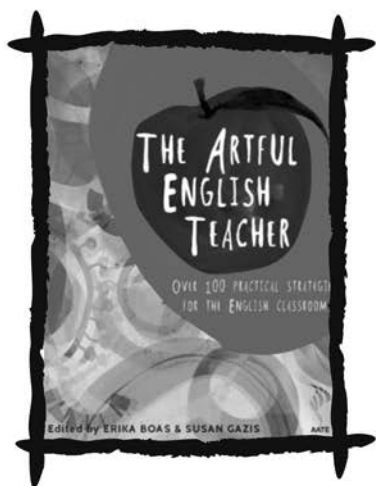
Othering or Inclusion? Teacher Practice Around Asian Voices and Identities in Literature

Angela Thomas, University of Tasmania

Vinh To, University of Tasmania

Abstract: 'Asia literacy' can be loosely defined as having 'some understanding of Asia and its languages in order to engage with it and communicate with its people' (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2002). The Australian Curriculum has prioritised children's development of Asia literacy, specifically through articulating the cross-curriculum priority defined as 'Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia'. In terms of the English curriculum, this priority is realised through an emphasis on the representation of Asian voices and characters in literature that is studied in the classroom. However, previous research undertaken in schools to explore the use of multicultural literature by teachers has demonstrated an uncritical approach to literature, with teachers tending to set up binary opposites of 'Australian' and 'the Other' (Leong & Woods, 2017; Mendoza & Reese, 2001; Rodriguez & Kim, 2018). This paper will present the complexities of practice with literature centred around countries from Asia as represented through research with five Tasmanian teachers – one early childhood teacher, three primary school teachers, and one secondary English teacher. It will examine the factors that influence teachers to use literature from Asian countries, their selection of literature, and their classroom practice with literature. Finally, it will make some recommendations for a stronger future whereby Asian peoples, voices and stories are integrated more inclusively and critically in teachers' everyday practice.

Introduction and research context: Australian policies about Asia literacy

Over the past two decades, the Australian government has produced a number of reports and policies to ensure that young Australians will become Asia literate, as Asia is Australia's neighbour. One of the earliest reports is the 2002 report *Evaluation of the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy*. This report evaluated the National NALSAS Strategy to support 'Asian languages and studies in all school systems in order to improve Australia's capacity' (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2002, p. iv). This report included evidence that 'there had been a significant cultural shift in the school education sector towards a recognition that Asian languages and studies of Asia are educationally and strategically important' (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2002, p. 7). Later important policies include the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians in 2008*, which emphasises the importance of engaging with Asian nations in the era of global integration and international mobility. The document highlights that 'India, China and other Asian nations are growing and their influence on the world is increasing. Australians need to become 'Asia literate', engaging and building strong relationships with Asia' (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). Other national documents include the 2011 White Paper *Australia in the Asian Century* and *the National Statement on Asia Literacy in Australian Schools* 2011–2012, which also support the inclusion of Asia literacy education to prepare students for success in today's

globalised world. The 2011 White Paper *Australia in the Asian Century in* 2011 states that

> Asia's rise is changing the world. This is a defining feature of the 21st century – the Asian century … The Asian century is an Australian opportunity … Our nation also has the strength that comes from a long history of engagement with countries in Asia … Australia is located in the right place at the right time – in the Asian region in the Asian century. (Australian Government, 2011, p. 1)

This White Paper also details how, by 2025, Australia can be a winner in this Asian century. In 2011, Prime Minister Julia Gillard likewise urged that 'all of us to play our part in becoming a more Asia-literate and Asia-capable nation' (Australian Government, 2011, p. 1).

Within the Tasmanian context where the researchers of this project are based and the present research was conducted, the 2013 White Paper *Tasmania's Place in the Asian Century* emphasises the crucial importance of engagement with Asia to enhance Tasmania's opportunities in the global market. It outlines the many challenges that Tasmania faces in the Asian century compared with other states in the nation. It states that Tasmania 'is less well equipped to engage with Asia than other states in Australia as a result of relatively limited existing economic links and a more homogenous community' (Tasmanian Government, 2013, p. 3). As a result, 'goals of socioeconomic and cultural enrichment will be difficult to achieve without increasing the awareness and recognition by the Tasmanian community of Asia, Asia's culture' (Tasmanian Government, 2013, p. 3). This White Paper also acknowledges the complexity and diversity of Asian histories, backgrounds and cultures, and stresses the importance of Tasmania's engagement with Asia reflecting this diversity (Tasmanian Government, 2013).

The importance of engaging with Asia and developing Australian students' Asia literacy has become one of the cross-curriculum priorities in the Australian Curriculum, under the heading 'Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia' (ACARA, 2015a), and 'intercultural awareness' is one of the general capabilities for Australian students in the twenty-first century (ACARA, 2015b). While all Australian curriculum learning areas have the potential to contribute to the 'Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia' cross-curriculum priority, the *Australian Curriculum: English* states that 'students can explore and appreciate the diverse range of traditional and contemporary texts from and about the peoples and countries of Asia, including texts written by Australians of Asian heritage' (ACARA, 2016). And in the Literature Strand which is one of the three strands of the *Australian Curriculum: English*, students can explore representations of Asian voices and characters (ACARA, 2016).

Literature review: Themes from the literature

In the research literature, three consistent themes were present. These included: (1) the tensions and ambiguities as to what Asia actually means; (2) ideological issues about the representation of Asian cultures in literature; and (3) a prevailing issue related to the uncritical use of literature related to Asian cultures and peoples in classroom contexts. Furthermore, the research literature presented similar calls to action for teachers to be more integrative in their approaches to Asian literature in the classroom, and to consider Asia as 'part of Australia's backyard' (Weinmann, 2015, p. 194). These themes will be discussed below.

Whilst policy and curriculum documents argue the importance of teachers becoming 'Asia literate' and using Asian literature in the classroom, what is meant by 'Asia' is problematic on two levels. One level is that Asia itself is rooted in geographical notions that actually span almost 50 countries over 44 million square kilometres. The Australian curriculum also draws on a geographical definition of Asia, limiting it to 24 countries within the sub-regions of North-East, South-East and South Asian regions (ACARA, 2013). As Bullen and Lunt (2015) argue:

> It [the curriculum] excludes countries like Afghanistan and Iran and, therefore, a significant body of recent Australian and international multicultural children's literature. The currently limited availability of picture books representing the diversity of Asia is therefore of particular import to Australian educators. (Bullen and Lunt, 2015, p. 161)

Even those 24 countries reflect a wide diversity of peoples, cultures, and languages – and no single country is entirely homogeneous, being made up of a multiplicity of peoples, cultures and languages. Halse raises the question, 'What is meant by 'Asia': a location, a geographical formation, or an ethnic, cultural, or a linguistic identity?' (2015, p. 1), and argues that the term 'Asia' is problematic for two reasons: (1) it is 'a label that erases the diversity within and across multiple cultures and societies into a single, homogenised entity', and (2) it is a 'construct that differentiates "us" from "them"

and thereby perpetuates Orientalist notions of Asia as exotic, foreign, and "Other" to Australia?' (Halse, 2015, p. 2). This idea of 'us' and 'them' leads to the second problematic level.

This is the level of the Asia-Australian relationship. Iwabuchi (2015) states that 'a clearly demarcated dichotomy between Australia and Asia is conceptually and epistemologically problematic' (p. xv), arguing that Australia is a multicultural society, populated by people of Asian heritage, and that Australia already has interconnections, networks and flows with and between Asia. Koh (2013) also notes that 'Australians have not seized the opportunities to know the representations of Asians in their own country, let alone Asia. If Australia wants to know Asia … it has to begin to know the cultural Other in its own backyard' (Koh, 2013, p. 86). Indeed, Iwabuchi (2015) argues that as Australians, we need to contest the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy by asking ourselves 'how "us" has been perceived in a particular way that does not embrace 'them' as being with or part of "us"' (p. xvi). Furthermore, Weinmann (2015) proposes a re-theorisation of what is meant by 'Asia' to 'a hybrid geographical, social and cultural space,' and one in which there exists a cultural flow (Appardurai, 2013). Weinmann (2015) suggests that Australian teachers could be better placed to support both themselves and their students becoming Asia literate by shifting their own conceptualisation of Asia. Rather than a false 'us' and 'them' dichotomy, she suggests that teachers position themselves 'within a hybrid "Asiascape"' (Weinmann, 2015, p. 184). Asia has had a long historical relationship with Australia, and indeed, Asian immigrants played a significant role in Australian history. In summary, Asia is a complex, hybrid cosmopolitan of peoples, cultures and languages, and Australian is also a complex, hybrid cosmopolitan of peoples, cultures and language with Asian histories and influences embedded into the fabric of its identity. This exemplifies the reasons why becoming 'Asia literate' requires a rethinking of geographical boundaries as porous, and of Australian identity as inclusive of the elements of its Asian heritage and influences.

In terms of children's literature from Asia, the central issue raised in the research literature was ideological, in terms of the representation of Asian peoples and cultures in literature. Leong and Woods (2017, p. 376) argue that there is a latent 'Orientalism' manifested in the representation of Asian characters. The term Orientalism originated from Said (1978),

who argued that Western attitudes towards Eastern cultures and peoples viewed them as exotic, primitive and inferior. This attitude serves to mark Eastern peoples as 'the other', where 'the other' not only implied different and inferior, but also rationalised a Western imperialist attitude that historically aimed to oppress and conquer the Eastern world. Rodriguez and Kim (2017) drew on critical Asian race theory to analyse American children's picture books. Critical Asian race theory is underpinned by those ideas first raised by Said (1978) and is based on the premise that 'racial inequality permeates every aspect of social life' (Rodriguez & Kim, 2017, p. 19). Rodriguez and Kim found that many American picture books did represent Asian peoples and cultures as this stereotype of the exotic foreigner. A second stereotype found in the representation was that of Asian characters as overachieving model minorities, and a third stereotype was that of struggling immigrants. These three tropes – exotic foreigners, model overachievers and struggling immigrants – all serve to mark difference, often in highly negative ways, as opposed to equality, respect and intercultural understanding.

Research into representation of Asian characters and people in picture books published in Australia is limited, but some researchers have also uncovered problematic examples of manifest othering. For example, Bullen and Lunt (2015) analyse the autobiographical picture book *The Little Refugee* (Do, Do & Whatley, 2011), which recounts selected events from the childhood of Vietnamese-Australian comedian Anh Do. They argue that the implied reader of the picture book is not a Vietnamese child, but a child who has never been to Vietnam, positioning them as an outsider to Vietnamese culture. They cite the introduction of Do, Do and Whatley's (2011) text:

I was born in a faraway country called Vietnam. It's a crazy place – strange food, snakes in bottles, five people squashed onto the back of one little motorbike! (n.p.)

They argue that this is problematic:

This first-person introduction directly addresses a reader who lives in a country 'faraway' from Vietnam. The verbal text leaves a reader unfamiliar with Vietnamese culture with little option but to believe the author when he asserts that Vietnam is 'a crazy place'. The implication that this (Asian) place is 'crazy' relative to other (Western) places is later made explicit when, on the first page of the second half of the book, Australia is referred to as a 'great country'. The parallel phrasing constructs a binary opposition that emphasises Asia

as exotic, culturally distant, and different to Australia. (Bullen & Lunt, 2015, p. 157).

Further, they analyse the images and identify that the visual contrast between representations of Vietnam and Australia show Vietnam in a negative light, with Australia being represented as 'a cleaner, safer, more civilised, and better place to live than Vietnam' (Bullen & Lunt, 2015, p. 160). This once again reflects an attitude of Orientalism, whereby Vietnamese peoples and cultures are represented as inferior. Another point made by Bullen and Lunt (2015) was how a comparison of Do's adult memoir *The Happiest Refugee* (Do, 2010) and the picture book *The Little Refugee* revealed that the picture book version glossed over, erased or altered both his story and its historical, cultural and social context, choosing to sanitise it for a younger audience. This raises further questions about the authenticity of representation in memoirs written for a younger audience. There are pedagogical challenges and tensions around the use of memoir to interpret the past, these tensions being the issues of 'authenticity', 'representation', and 'fiction'. Such tensions around how 'creative interpreters' of history interpret the past, particularly when writing for a child audience, should be something teachers are aware of when working with such texts in the classroom, in order to use them critically.

The third theme from the literature related to the ways in which teachers are using Asian literature in their classrooms. Derman-Sparks (1993) first coined the term 'tourist multiculturalism' to describe and critique a pedagogical approach to multiculturalism which involved the occasional detour from the 'normal' curriculum to discuss another culture. She is cited by Abdullah (2009), who argues, '[t]hese tour and detour methods trivialize, patronize, and stereotype cultures by emphasising traditional costumes, foods, and dances while avoiding the true picture of the everyday life of the people from that culture' (Abdullah, 2009, p. 159). Rodriguez and Kim (2015) argue that this extends to the use of Asian literature. They note that teachers from P–12 classrooms typically use Asian literature in uncritical ways. They suggest that typically teachers will use Asian literature on special occasions, and focus on heroes, food and festivals. Bullen and Lunt (2015) argue that what is urgently needed is for teachers to take a critical approach that includes an understanding of how text and images work to position young readers.

These three interrelated themes – (1) the tensions

and ambiguities as to what Asia actually means; (2) ideological issues about the representation of Asian cultures in literature; and (3) the uncritical use of literature related to Asian cultures and peoples in classroom contexts – led to our research questions. Our overarching question was: How are Tasmanian teachers using Asian literature in their classrooms? We wanted to hear their stories and identify how they were using literature to address the cross-curriculum imperative of Asia literacy. We wanted to know how they were using literature within their considerably monocultural classrooms in ways that would foster genuine and authentic understandings about Asian peoples and cultures. We wanted to know whether they faced any challenges in their work with children around literature, and we wanted to hear their stories of success. To answer this, we asked three specific research questions:

1. What factors influence Tasmanian teachers' use of literature which includes representation of Asian peoples and countries?
2. What choices do Tasmanian teachers make when selecting literature which includes representation of Asian peoples and countries?
3. What kinds of approaches do Tasmanian teachers take when using literature and how might these approaches be inclusive or othering?

The overall aim of this research was to determine what we could learn that would further support teachers to work critically with literature from or about or including representation of Asian peoples and countries, and reimagine the complexities of Asian peoples and cultures.

Methodology

To answer the above research questions, this study employed a qualitative research approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2012) focusing on five Tasmanian teachers' practices relating to Asian literature. We interviewed five Tasmanian teachers to identify the factors influencing their use of literature which included representations of Asian peoples and countries, the literature choices they made and the pedagogical approaches they engaged in with students. In-depth semi-structured interviews with teachers were undertaken in situ in their classroom contexts 'to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena' (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 31). The five teachers self-selected to participate after

an open call for participants, and consisted of one early childhood teacher, three primary teachers and one secondary English teacher. Each of the five teachers was located in a different school within Tasmania. The participant profiles included:

Participant 1: Natalie, an early childhood teacher working in Hobart.

Participant 2: Jeff, a primary teacher working in Launceston

Participant 3: Penelope, a primary teacher working in Launceston

Participant 4: Diana, a primary teacher working in Bridport

Participant 5: Caroline, a secondary English teacher working in Devonport.

Whilst the small number and scope of participants was a limitation of the research, the in-depth interviews provided rich data and thick descriptions of practice.

Interview data were coded phenomenologically (Van Manen, 2016). That is, we examined teachers' responses both through the text of the interview transcripts and based on researcher field notes and observations from the in situ interviews. This approach allowed us to describe the experience and outcome of interview data with 'tactful thoughtfulness: situational perceptiveness, discernment, and depth understanding' (Van Manen, 1997, p. 156). This was particularly valuable for this study, as teachers would point out displays on their classroom walls, hold up examples of literature, open pages of students work, and show lesson plans. Visual methodology (Rose, 2011) was also used as part of the data collection process during the in situ interviews. This consisted of taking photographs of books and displays or of screens open to online resources to remind us of what we observed during the interview experience. These in situ experiences were unable to be captured fully by interview transcripts, but were recalled when coding the transcripts and used to enrich the interpretation of data. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour. Following the interviews, the two researchers engaged in writing field notes and discussing and debriefing initial impressions and interpretations with each other.

Findings and discussion

Research Question 1: What factors influence Tasmanian teachers' use of literature which includes representation of Asian peoples and countries?

The findings from the interviews show that factors influencing the participants' use of literature which includes representation of Asian peoples and countries include curriculum imperatives, personal values, school-based initiatives, teacher exchanges, study tours, personal experience in Asia and interactions with Asian communities. Some selected quotes demonstrating this are as follows.

- *And that year the principal, she actually organized a study tour for teachers who'd never been to Asia. And I was lucky enough to go. (Penelope, Year 6)*
- *We'd put in a submission and won some money that had to be spent on purchasing books to enhance the study of Asian culture. (Penelope, Year 6)*
- *In 2012 I was asked if I would like to go to China on an education trip, and I said, 'Absolutely.' (Diana, Year 6)*

Our finding is consistent with Weinmann's findings in 2015 that links to Asian communities, Asian-related experiences including work, study, travel and family, and school connections to Asia are the key factors for involvement in and commitment to teaching and learning about Asia. That may explain why there is a lack of engagement with Asian literature in an English classroom, if a teacher does not have any links to or experience about Asia. For example, this teacher said:

> If I had an Asian child in my room, I've tried to do a lot more, same as if they'd come from anywhere, I'd try to incorporate their cultural heritage, because that's a way of being inclusive and developing that sense of belonging. I don't have any children like that at the moment in my class, though. (Natalie, Year 1)

The response was commendable, as this teacher wanted to ensure that if there were any Asian students in her classroom, they would have the opportunity to maintain their cultural heritage, as she would acknowledge and incorporate their history, values and cultural traditions into her English classroom. However, due to the lack of Asian students in her classroom, she did not use literature which included representation of Asian peoples and countries as a mainstream practice, although this is a cross-curriculum priority. Natalie was engaging in the practice of 'tourist multiculturalism' – taking a detour to visit literature which included representation of Asian peoples and countries only once in a while depending on the demographics of her class. In Tasmania this is a particular danger given the low number of students of colour to be found in any classroom. The response by Natalie was a wake-up call to us as researchers. It raises an urgent need to

stress to teachers the necessity of engaging with Asia in the English Strand of the Australian Curriculum as mainstream, rather trying it out occasionally, to meet the demand for educating all Australian children to become Asia literate in the Asian century – the twenty-first century (Australia in the Asian Century White Paper, 2011).

Research Question 2: What choices do Tasmanian teachers make when selecting literature which includes representation of Asian peoples and countries?

In our information sheet for participants, we used the term 'Asian literature' and deliberately did not provide a single definition for what constituted 'Asian literature', as we did not want to limit teachers' responses when asking how they addressed the cross-curriculum priority. This was arguably a limitation of our research, as in hindsight we should have used more appropriate terminology, so as not to homogenise 'Asia', and been more inclusive from the outset by explicitly stating 'literature which included representation of Asian peoples and countries'. In trying to cast the net wide, we may have limited participant responses.

Nevertheless, our findings uncovered three common approaches to selecting 'Asian literature' to meet that priority, based on teachers' own understandings of the term. There was a relatively equal distribution of literature from each of these three approaches. These are listed below:

1. Selecting Australian literature which included representations of Asian characters and cultures (for example, the novel *Jasper Jones*, which includes a Vietnamese character, Jeffry Lu). This approach was taken by teachers in upper primary and secondary school.
2. Selecting literature with Asian-Australian representation and authorship (for example, *The Little Refugee*). This literature is commonly termed 'Asian-Australian' literature, and we had expected it to be the most typical choice, given the resources developed by the Asian-Australian Children's Literature and Publishing (AACLAP) project (Mallan, Borchert & Henderson, 2011–2014), the resources provided by *Reading Australia* (2019), the attention that has been given to Asian-Australian children's literature in the research literature (e.g., Henderson & Jetnikoff, 2013; Henderson, Allan & Mallen, 2013; Jetnikoff, 2013; Mallen, Henderson, Cross & Allen, 2014;) and the profile it has in public discourse (e.g., Mallan, 2013). This approach was

taken by upper primary and secondary teachers.
3. Literature from an Asian author not living in Australia, but written in or translated into English (e.g., manga or the animated films of Studio Ghibli, such as *Spirited Away)*. This approach was taken by all teachers.

For four of the five participants, the range of literature used was diverse and included picture books, short stories, fiction, non-fiction, animated film, graphic novels, manga, poetry, plays (wayang kulit) and oral narratives from internet sites such as YouTube. One participant, Natalie, tended to use only picture books in her Kindergarten class.

Research Question 3: What kinds of approaches do Tasmanian teachers take when using literature and how might these approaches be inclusive or othering?

We asked teachers to articulate the ways in which they used Asian literature (regardless of how they defined it), and as expected, most teachers outlined very rich programs of work focused on responding to literature in creative ways. For example, Diana used drama strategies to help students position themselves in the role of the characters. For example, she used drama to explore *The Little Refugee* and bring to life scenes in the boat to help students understand the refugee experience.

> So *The Little Refugee*, I did a whole unit on. I did a schema of journey, so push, the journey, and settlement; the three parts to the schema. My whole focus was around doing *The Little Refugee* for the journey. We did drama out of it. We mapped it on the floor, and we hopped in the space. Yeah, so nine metres by two metres is not very big. And there were 40 people on the boat, and we couldn't move. So then we discussed, how do you go to the toilet? How did you sleep? What happens when someone was sick? Where did it go? Where did the babies play? It was really quite good. We did a lot of poetry writing about it. We used the book, then, to prompt our poetry writing and getting our feelings, and the emotions of what it'd be like on the boat. (Diana, Year 6)

Other teachers, such as Jeff, were keen to help students make connections with the characters in literature:

> *The Lion* text, I use that because the children can, 'Ah, that boy, he lived in Hobart.' And they actually draw that parallel from there too. So it's basically just getting those links to their own lives and expanding that. (Jeff, Year 5)

Not all teachers approached teaching Asian literature in an inclusive way. For example, Natalie

intimated that she tended to use Asian literature only occasionally, and when she did, she focused on ideas such as clothing, food and festivals. Whilst teaching these explicit aspects of culture is appropriate, when they are the sole focus of occasional study of Asian literature, this approach tends to reflect the idea of 'tourism multiculturalism', whereby only differences are identified, and Asian cultures are 'othered'.

> We don't use a lot [of Asian literature], but the ones that we do use include Asian themes, you know? Things like celebrations with children around the world, I'm in a Year One classroom, so that's a subject that comes up. Things that connect with food, we've done books like *Dim Sum for Everyone*, *Suki's Kimono*, festivals, you know, *The Lantern Festival*, *I Live in Tokyo*, they're ones that we've accessed either from our library or we sometimes access a lot either from YouTube, through Epic Books and things like that. (*Natalie*, Kindergarten–Year 1)

This teacher is certainly addressing part of the curriculum requirements, which clearly states, 'In the Australian Curriculum: English, students can explore and appreciate the diverse range of traditional and contemporary texts from and about the peoples and countries of Asia' (ACARA, 2016). Furthermore, we would expect teachers of younger children to focus on explicit aspects of culture as those children are becoming more aware of the world around them, while teachers of older children would investigate the more implicit aspects of culture. However, it is important to be wary of only focusing on themes that mark difference, regardless of the year level, and it is problematic that only those themes that mark difference are discussed.

Caroline, a secondary teacher, focused on helping students acknowledge that Australia was a multicultural society, and on how all Australians experienced 'being Australian' in diverse ways.

> So one of the big things we do, we look at Australian identity and the complexity of that. And I really love that, with the Year Sevens talking about the complexity of Australian identity. They write a comparative essay about their experiences of being Australian. And because you've talked about that definition, you can talk about how their friends treat them, how their families treat them. So we structure in that sense. What's it like for their families? And they can talk about the parents, who are quite traditional. I want to normalise [the fact that Asian Australians are just Australians]. I want students to know that we're all just part of multicultural Australia. So that's probably my biggest hope is to just, rather than the stereotypes … or a romanticism of the past or

ancient times, just to say no, this is what Australia looks like, with [people like Jeffrey Lu … he is Australian as well]. You know, characters like that [Jeffrey Lu] in *Jasper Jones*: that's Australia. We're talking 1960s. That's Australia. You can go back and talk about the Gold Rush – you can remind them that Chinese immigrants have been here since the 1850s. (Caroline, Years 7–8)

In summary, our interviews uncovered a range of teaching approaches that included making connections with, responding to, and examining the representation of Asian characters and cultures in literature. What was surprising was that the tendency of almost all teachers was to primarily focus pedagogy on response, rather than on critical engagement with literature. These practices on the whole could be considered inclusive, but in some instances focused more on difference and fell into the trap of othering Asian peoples and cultures. As expected, practices with literature differed across the year levels, with the focus changing from explicit to implicit attention to culture. But critical practice should not be left for the older years; it is a practice that needs to span all years.

Discussion and conclusion
The call from researchers globally is to encourage teachers to be more critical in their use of multicultural literature in general and Asian literature specifically. The literature argues that teachers need to shift their own thinking about what Asian cultures and identities actually are and identify the following: that Asia and Australia have a history of a complex 'hybrid, heterogenous' interplay of social relations; that Asian peoples are a mainstay of Australian history and culture; that Asian representation in literature should be mainstream; and that when working with literature that features Asia, Asian culture or Asian characters in any way, that teachers need to take care and use a critical lens about how that representation positions Asian peoples.

Our key findings in this research were:

1. Teachers had a fluid and flexible definition of Asian literature when addressing the curriculum priority.
2. There was a diversity of approaches to teaching literature, but the predominant pedagogy used was to focus on response to literature.
3. There was evidence of some 'tourist multi-culturalism', particularly with lower year levels.
4. There was evidence of some (limited) critical

engagement with literature, particularly with upper year levels.

Drawing from both the literature and these findings, we identify two key recommendations for teachers. These are related to (1) literature selection; and (2) pedagogy.

To address the curriculum priority, teachers in our study chose a range of different kinds of literature with Asian characters and cultures represented. Following ideas from Bullen and Lunt (2105) and Rodriguez and Kim (2018), our recommendation relating to literature selection is that teachers use their awareness of some of the pitfalls of representation to select literature that is not marked by cultural bias or telling a single story, but instead that reflects complexities. For example, more complex stories of Asian immigration are needed, rather than triumphant tales of integration, for children to better understand the spectrum of immigrant experiences.

Bullen and Lunt (2015) offer teachers a set of criteria for selecting and using Asian literature in the classroom. We have selected three of these criteria to illustrate how teachers from our study responded in practical ways. The first criteria we have selected is: 'Identify, and invite students into discussion about, how narrative strategies in children's texts work to position the reader to accept particular ideological assumptions' (Bullen & Lunt, 2015, p. 162). One example of this came from Penelope. In her Year 6 class, Penelope was able to identify how the narrative strategy of point of view and the visual strategies of contact and attitude were used in the text and images of *The Royal Bee* (Park, 2000) to position the readers to consider issues of power and privilege in the Korean feudal system.

The second criterion is: 'Ensure the narrative is appropriately contextualised in terms of the ways history and culture are portrayed, unexplained, or stereotyped' (Bullen & Lunt, 2015, p. 162). An example of this came from Caroline. In Caroline's Year 7 and 8 class, she engaged her classes in a comparative study of the poem and film versions of *The Ballad of Mulan*.

> So we really looked at the text *Ballad of Mulan* and then we could look at poetry in ballads, and then of course we went and looked at the film version, and our focus being on visual techniques and multimodal techniques such as how the musical motifs represented the characters and the use of colors also to do that. But then there was also that opportunity to compare, you know, compare the representation of cultures [in poem and film version]

and question why people change text and how they are appropriated across times and cultures as it were. (Caroline, Years 7–8)

Caroline found that her students were very capable of identifying stereotypes and the constructedness of text and representations of culture by doing comparative studies.

The third criterion is: 'Use a range of texts to assess the authenticity of truth claims, or, as Mendoza and Reese (2001, n.p.) put it, 'seek out other titles to create a collection that provides an adequate window and an undistorted mirror' of Asia' (Bullen & Lunt, 2015, p. 162). In her Year 6 class, Diana examined both the picture book and the novel versions of the same story by Anh Do to tease out the differences between the two: where a child narrator told a simplified, glossed-over tale, the adult narrator was able to point out the dangers in great and excruciating detail.

Weinmann (p. 194) argues that teachers need to: (1) integrate the perspectives of Asian communities into the classroom; (2) consider 'Asia in Australian's backyard'. In some instances, this was evident in our study, but it was not consistent across year levels. Furthermore, Weinmann suggests that teachers need 'a stronger sense of identification with and belonging to the Asia-Pacific region' (Weinmann, p. 188) to ensure their work in classrooms is more inclusive. The continued practice of teacher exchange and study tours to Asian countries would certainly be beneficial for helping teachers to engage in and develop a sense of belonging in the broader 'Asiascape'.

Our second recommendation relates to the importance of critical approaches to pedagogy around Asian literature. As Rodriguez and Kim (2018) argue,

> An examination of Asian and Asian Australian literature in classrooms through critical perspectives can disrupt the monopoly of mainstream culture by portraying marginalized cultures and challenging texts through questions about who is represented, underrepresented, misrepresented, or invisible, as well as questions about how power is exercised. (Rodriguez & Kim, 2018, p. 26)

Research Question Three asked whether teacher practices were inclusive or othering. In fact, teachers' practices were nuanced rather than enacting any form of binary. We found that teachers fall somewhere along a continuum, from engaging with and responding to (sometimes stereotyped) representations of cultures from Asian countries, to examining the uniqueness of Australian identity by exploring the representation

of multicultural characters in literature. Natasha, for example, celebrated diversity by including picture books about Japan in her Kindergarten classroom. The picture books she used featured traditional Japanese dress and traditional Japanese food, among other traditions. To support her work on Japan, Natasha would bring kimonos into the classroom for children to try on, and hold a Japanese afternoon tea, where food from Japan would be provided to children. Although this is an appropriate activity for children at this year level, there is a risk that these celebratory practices around multicultural literature, as McKnight (2018) argues, 'may simply pay lip service to inclusion, or worse, perform exclusion' (p. 10). McKnight further argues that 'celebrating diversity while not challenging norms or initiating action … cannot ensure that these texts do not ultimately serve to reinforce negative, anti-inclusion values and attributes (McKnight, 2018, p. 10). Our study suggests that the tendency to focus on celebratory response to literature, while valuable, highlighted that more critical engagement with literature is needed.

Leong and Woods (2017) argued for the need for teachers to develop a community of practice around multicultural literature built on 'a culture of openness' (p. 378), whereby teachers are able to guide students to challenge identity politics and any notions of 'otherness' in literature. Caroline was able to do this with her students by tapping into stories told by YouTuber Lilly Singh. A feature of Lilly's stories is the clash of aspects of her Punjabi cultural heritage with her everyday life as a Canadian. By engaging with influential stories from real people in popular culture, the students in Caroline's class were able to have an open dialogue about their own everyday clashes and what it means to be 'Australian' in the broader sense of multicultural Australia. It may require significant work to shift student attitudes, particularly in primarily monocultural sites such as Tasmania, but this work is critical if we are to genuinely address the cross-curriculum priority, and beyond that, engender authentic intercultural respect and understanding. In a world divided by identity politics, such work is urgently needed.

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Building a Knowledge Structure

Building a Knowledge Structure for a Twenty-first Century Discipline: The Affordances and Challenges of Textual Concepts

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Abstract: Subject English is a knowledge structure that is hard to discern for many students and even teachers. The abstractions that underpin analysis and interpretation of texts can be fuzzy, even invisible. Furthermore, traditional knowledge is inadequate when it comes to websites, graphic novels and films. What guiding abstractions are relevant in studies of digital multimedia and canonical works such as novels? If we are building a knowledge structure for a twenty-first century discipline, can concepts embedded in the curriculum be rendered not just visible but accessible? This challenge is one faced by teachers at all levels of schooling.

This paper draws on findings from a small research project investigating secondary teachers' work with textual concepts in New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory schools. It builds on case study data from ten teachers who incorporated concepts like 'representation', 'point of view' and 'character' into units of work they implemented with Year 9/10 students in 2019. We interviewed teachers about the affordances and challenges of textual concepts and explored what they had learned with key students. Early analysis of the data reveals significant shifts in the understandings of some teachers and students and lines of inquiry for future research. Most striking are findings related to conditions necessary to creation of deep knowledge in English, including: active support from school leaders; willingness of teachers to grapple with challenging concepts and use them to design units of work; links between key concepts, essential questions and assessment tasks; access to professional dialogue; and contexts that encourage transfer of learning by students. The implications of our findings for future-oriented research in English are reviewed in the conclusions.

Introduction

Subject English is hard for many students, not least because its intellectual and communicative demands are often inscrutable. Whilst some learners appear to recognise what is required of them, others continue to struggle, even when remedial support is provided. Understanding 'what English is about' is dependent on teachers' capacities to bring the subject to life and to light. But many students fall behind as the linguistic and literary demands of the discipline become more onerous (Macken-Horarik, 2006; Maton, 2009, 2014). Disadvantages experienced as a result of circumstances external to the school are exacerbated as students advance up the years. Sociologist Richard Teese explains:

> Both the formal architecture of English as a codified school discipline (curriculum as law) and the way English is designed and taught in a school (curriculum as culture) enable advantages of cultural resources, economic power and early and continuous success in school to be applied in the cause of both individual distinction and school distinction. (Teese, 2011, p. 11)

Strengthening students' purchase on disciplinary knowledge is a priority for the profession. But if English itself is not explicit in its intellectual architecture, teaching students about this becomes much more difficult. Teachers play a crucial role in making learning visible (Hattie, 2008), and clarity about what the subject is on about is key here. One initiative that aimed to make abstractions buried in the syllabus visible is known as the English Textual Concepts. A joint initiative of the English Teachers' Association (ETA) and the NSW Department of Education (NSWDE), this project tracked the growth of conceptual understandings from Early Childhood to matriculation as evidenced in the content of the NSW syllabus. The initiative was spearheaded by teaching experts Eva Gold, Mel Dixon and, later, Ann Small from the ETA and a five-year collaboration with the NSWDE led by Prue Greene. These project leaders believed that the disciplinary structure of the subject itself risked being lost amidst a growing emphasis on generalist approaches to literacy, a welter of diverse outcomes, and conflation of English with the basics. Their excavation of key abstractions distinctive to English resulted in a set of professional resources called the English Textual Concepts™. These resources integrate form, mode and medium and provide teachers with a road map for negotiating disciplinary knowledge in an increasingly multimodal curriculum. In their current formulation, the resources provide teachers working from Stages 1–6 (K–12) with working definitions of abstract concepts extracted from the NSW syllabus, itself based on the Australian Curriculum for English (ACARA, 2012). Textual concepts such as 'argument', 'authority', 'character', 'code and convention', 'connotation', 'imagery and symbol', 'context', 'genre', 'intertextuality' and 'literary value' are explained in detail on the project website at www.englishtextualconcepts.com.au.

Some researchers use Lee Shulman's (1986) term 'pedagogic content knowledge' (PCK) to refer to knowledge that operates at the interface between knowledge 'in the abstract' (what teachers learn about at university, for example) and knowledge teachers make available through skilled teaching of a concept). PCK can be implicitly at work in our framing of a question or the way we direct students' activity in a task. It can also be made explicit in technical terms and 'grammars' of analysis. Whether implicitly or explicitly, however, teachers need access to knowledge that can be operationalised in classrooms, ways of inducting learners into new understandings. The English Textual

Concepts™ provided a rallying point for expert teachers and (later) academics with an interest in strengthening the PCK of the profession and thus improving students' learning.

The potential of Textual Concepts for building abstract knowledge

Following release of the resources, a two-year collaboration began between ETA, NSWDE and academics Theo van Leeuwen and Mary Macken-Horarik, exploring possibilities for research into teachers' work with textual concepts and their impact on students' understandings. Of special interest in building what Karl Maton (2009) calls 'cumulative learning' are Progression Statements that outline understandings of each concept likely to develop at different stages of schooling. When it comes to 'point of view', for example, students working at Stage 2 (Years 3–4) are expected to understand that meanings of stories change when they are viewed through the eyes of different characters. By Stage 3 (Years 5–6), they learn that a narrator may be 'inside' or 'outside' the world of the story. Then by Stage 5 (Years 9–10), they learn that narrators may be omniscient, limited, deceptive and 'mask the ideology of a text'. In concert with the Progressions, the English Textual Concepts™. include statements about Learning Processes that are either explicit or implied in the NSW syllabus: understanding, engaging personally, connecting, engaging critically, experimenting and reflecting. In essence, the aim of the Textual Concepts project is the belief that 'The explicit teaching of text as a study of textual concepts transforms and extends the learning experience into an understanding of the nature of textuality rather than seeing English as a study of a collection of individual texts' (Gold & Greene, 2016).

Teachers at all levels of schooling have accessed the English Textual Concepts™ via online and face-to-face professional learning. Some claim that these are 'essential guiding principles to support us in programming the complex "content" of the syllabus' (Reynolds, 2018). They are incorporating them into knowledge that is taught to students, thus making the concepts part of their PCK. These responses were encouraging, but we needed a more systematic investigation of teachers' uptake of the concepts and the impact of their work on students' learning. The current paper considers some findings from our investigation of teachers' work with the Textual Concepts, student uptake of new understandings, and

the influence of institutional factors on effectiveness of their interventions.

We applied four factors to the design of our research. Firstly, we agreed that teachers' work on textual concepts must be *related to 'essential questions'* (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013) such as the following: How does narrative teach? In what way does point of view influence an audience's identification with characters in fiction? How are values, beliefs and attitudes represented in multimodal texts? Questions such as these would 'drive' work on textual concepts so they would deepen students' interpretation of texts.

Secondly, any materials and input we offered would need to be *practically useful*. Where possible, we wanted teachers to turn textual concepts into 'rule-of-thumb' tools that were rhetorically productive (e.g., how to use point of view shot in a film sequence or generate interiority in a character in a short story). In this aspect of our research, we were drawing on work by van Leeuwen on 'new writing' (Andersen, Boeriis, Maagerø & Tonnessen, 2015; van Leeuwen, 2005). A rhetorical approach to concepts like genre, narrative, argument and style is vitally important to the profession and is a task facing all NSW teachers as they prepare Year 10 students for *Reading to Write* and *The Craft of Writing*, new modules in Year 11 and Year 12.

Thirdly, teachers would need to realign *analytical tools* to enable close study of multimodal texts. In a multiliteracies curriculum, teachers need new vocabularies for analysing image, gesture, audio and typographic choices and their contribution to the meaning of the whole (e.g., Callow, 2013; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Painter, Martin & Unsworth, 2014). Although images now have their own 'grammar' in the Australian curriculum (ACARA, 2012), many teachers are at a loss when it comes to multimodality. A recent survey of English teachers (K–12) revealed that, while 83.7% of respondents (n=373) see teaching of multimodality as important to extremely important, they need professional learning support if they are to implement this (Macken-Horarik, Love & Horarik, 2018). Our project aimed to bring out the multimodal affordances of the textual concepts.

Fourthly, teaching should enable students to transfer knowledge of concepts across contexts and build knowledge over time (Maton, 2009, 2014). In a *cumulative orientation* to knowledge building, students learn about a concept like 'genre' or 'representation', apply it to one or more texts and contexts and thus generate rich understandings. Transfer can occur both during a unit of work and over the course of longer phases of learning. The Progression Statements are a powerful resource here because they help teachers adopt what Peter Freebody (2007) calls 'a view across time' – a meta-perspective that is essential to cumulative learning.

In these four ways – disciplinary relevance, practical utility, access to tools of analysis and cumulative learning – our project aimed to support teachers working at Stage 5 in their planning of units, teaching strategies and assessment design. A key interest was how to scaffold higher order learning in mid-range achievers who often go 'under the radar' but stood to gain a great deal from the explicitness possible in the Textual Concepts program.

The research project – a brief description of methodology

Following a series of planning meetings between leaders in the ETA (Eva Gold, Ann Small and Mel Dixon) and in the NSWDE (Prue Greene) and academics (Theo van Leeuwen and Mary Macken-Horarik), a project was initiated using a methodology based on principles of design-based research (DBR). DBR is a 'methodology designed by and for educators that seeks to increase the impact, transfer and translation of educational research into improved practice' (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012, p. 16). It is more ambitious than a kindred methodology called 'action research' in that it is interested in theory-building as well as improved practice. The methodology has proven effective in the iterative development and testing of programs (McKenny & Reeves, 2013, p. 99). In keeping with the principles of DBR, we aimed to use mixed methods of data collection, including units of work, interviews with teachers and selected students and comparisons of students' written responses to a common prompt before and after each unit was implemented. We were sensitive to the need to account for local conditions in each school and the ways in which arrangements in each context influenced teachers' work with concepts.

In late 2018, we offered a two-day workshop to teachers working at Stage 5 who had expressed interest in the project during webinars or professional learning days. To ensure varied participation, we selected ten teachers from selective and comprehensive schools. Some taught boys, some taught girls and some worked in co-educational schools. Four teachers worked in private or selective schools whilst the other six taught

in more disadvantaged contexts. In addressing the first aim of our project above (disciplinary relevance), we asked teachers to adapt a pre-existing unit after participating in the workshop and then teach this in Term 1 the following year. In keeping with the collaborative orientation of DBR, we invited teachers to work as professional buddies to support one another in unit design, troubleshoot Textual Concepts and debrief about the challenges of their work with the concepts.

Two days of workshops were conducted in November 2018 and included theoretical and practical sessions on three major concepts – 'representation', 'codes and conventions' and 'character' – the use of Progressions, teaching sequences linking learning tasks to essential questions, and guidance on how to write a rationale for a unit of work and assessment tasks that are integrated with earlier work on concepts. Of particular importance were sessions on how to analyse visual and verbal texts using the concepts. For example, in exploring strategies of representation, teachers developed retrieval charts for analysing 'actors' and 'actions' and discussed the effect of choices on viewers/readers. In this way, workshops aimed to address Aim 3 of the project – development of a shared technical vocabulary for analysing each concept. Turning knowledge into know-how was also crucial. We were especially interested in changes teachers would make to their unit in the light of workshop input and how they would help students use the tools in composing texts (Aim 2).

Following input sessions, participating teachers worked with researchers as mentors on ways to adapt their units. In particular, they were asked to include a rationale for the unit, explaining links between selected concepts and essential questions guiding the inquiry. Where possible, assessment tasks would build on conceptual learning and give students opportunities for composing texts, thus turning the textual concept to rhetorical ends.

An outline of the participating schools and units of work is given in Table 1.

Prior to implementation of redesigned units, we interviewed each of the ten participant teachers. We were keen to generate a rich account of their orientation to English, their aims for the project, the place of concepts in their teaching, their preferred pedagogies and how they saw the relationship between planning, teaching and assessment. It was clear that making one or more textual concepts the basis of unit design was a new thing for most participants, and that some had only a cursory knowledge of key textual concepts. Four teachers were captive to timetabling arrangements and unit design regimes already 'in place' in their schools. This affected their ability to deal with textual concepts in ways we hoped for, as will be seen.

We were interested not simply in teachers' approaches to abstract concepts but ways in which these might influence students' understandings. Prior to the implementation phase, teachers selected five students representing mid-range achievement, or even struggle, for interviews. The researchers asked students about their attitude to English, ways of thinking about the selected concept, and current habits regarding reading and writing. We gathered written data from these five students too, along with samples from the rest of the class where possible. Teachers administered a pre-test to the whole class based on a common prompt and concepts of 'representation' and 'point of view'. These were concepts all teachers expressed an interest in during project planning. Samples of students' written analyses of two related images provided baseline data about their starting points. Then, at the end of the unit, students were given a similar task with different

Table 1. Summary of schools participating in the research and their chosen units of work

Type of school	Year	Unit	Concepts	Type of text
Public selective school	9	Allegory	Representation Figuration	Novel – *Animal farm*
	10	Comparative study of novels	Character Representation	Novel – own choice
Comprehensive Western Sydney	10	The Institution and Individual Experience	Point of view Character Code & convention	Film and short texts
Public regional comprehensive	10	Dystopian fiction	Genre Representation	Film and short texts
Independent	10	Macbeth	Character	Shakespearean drama
ACT public comprehensive	10	Australian identity	Representation Context	A range of short texts in different modes and media

images to ascertain what they had learned about their focus concept as a result of the unit of work. Between two and five focus students were then interviewed by mentors about what they felt they had learned and how they used the concept.

Once the unit of work was completed (end of Term 1 or early Term 2), teachers participated in a second interview in which they reflected on the effect the conceptual approach had on their teaching, successes and challenges they faced, how students responded to this approach and whether their work on particular concepts had affected their core beliefs about English. In this interview, we hoped to find evidence of the overall effect of building students' understandings of one or more textual concepts (Aim 4).

In some schools, teachers experienced a supportive, even encouraging executive; in others, such support was minimal. A dialogic professional environment influenced their enthusiasm and willingness to initiate class discussions, try new strategies or utilise tools of analysis with challenging texts. Teachers also approached unit re-design in markedly different ways. Some teachers redesigned their unit to focus on the concepts to be taught, whilst others included aspects of a focus concept but tacked these on to their original unit. Some teachers designed assessment tasks based on textual concepts, whilst others continued with tasks mandated by the school. Some schools had access to ongoing mentoring and even invited researchers into classrooms to observe teaching; others declined to continue the relationship. In significant ways, institutional conditions either facilitated or constrained teaching of the concepts as we highlight below.

General observations and initial findings

Participants involved in the project were mainly early career teachers, in their first four years of teaching. Three had wider experience, one being a head of department. Initial interviews provided crucial data about teachers' general orientations to subject English. All knew of the English Textual Concepts™, had seen the Progressions and saw the project as an opportunity to '*formalise and consolidate*' their knowledge or to see English '*more broadly*' and '*get a bigger picture*'[1]. Many reported that they elected to participate in order to expand their repertoire of skills and stimulate student interest: '*how to get through to the kids; to use the project to improve my teaching and improve what is happening with the kids, getting them engaged and keeping them there*'.

Some wanted to know '*how to make things explicit*', how to illustrate it [concepts] '*so kids understand*'. Others saw that the concepts allowed students to '*demonstrate outcomes in a range of modes, not just verbally*'. These teachers were particularly interested in the application of conceptual teaching to images, films or rap music and lyrics. A key factor was an interest in multimodality.

In general, we found that schools fell broadly into two groups: the *first* were schools in which the entire unit was structured around relevant concepts, with assessment as a natural culmination of the work done; the *second* were schools where programs were already firmly in place, and assessment tasks had been set and published for the year and could not be modified because they represented only one part of a scope and sequence for the whole year which could not be disrupted. The programs in the first group staged the learning *through* the concepts, which were applied to apposite texts in a range of modes, and assessment grew directly out of the teaching. The programs in the second group were either haphazard in their design (with the concept tacked on to other work) or taught in a 'business as usual' way. In some schools, concepts like 'character' or 'context' were seen as so 'familiar' that teachers felt they did not need to fine-tune their understandings of these using the Progressions. We saw the programs in the first group as more successful because teachers were able to integrate concepts, pedagogy and assessment, and the resulting unit was richer and more focused. In this context, textual concepts were vital not only to what was taught but to what was assessed. The stories of two case study schools in this first group are outlined below.

Case Study 1: ACT central school

ACT Central is like many in Canberra that caters to students in Years 7–10 and has a strong emphasis on assessment. Once students move into Year 10, they are in their last year of junior secondary school and are preparing either to leave formal education or to move on to TAFE or senior school in the College system. It is a vital transition for all students, and engaging substantially with disciplinary knowledge is crucial in matters of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

For Penny (a pseudonym), as new head teacher of English at ACT Central, formal assessment is often '*the tail that wags the curriculum dog*'. In our first interview in November 2018, she acknowledged that many teachers in her part of Canberra were tired of the usual regime – an essay task followed by a 'creative' assignment – but

unsure of how things might be different. Penny had been hired to change the status quo by a new principal determined to 'lift the bar' for students used to a steady diet of tasks that made predictable (but low-level) demands on their capabilities. At the first interview in November 2018, Penny stated, '*I am hoping to build a stronger, better program in English. I feel we've got really compliant kids but I want to extend them, to have programs that move them up*'. She claimed that ACT teachers tend to pay lip service to a national curriculum call for 'critical and creative capability' in students but '*don't really know how to make this a reality*'. She hoped that the textual concepts program would help students not just to build skills in English but to '*articulate what they know and can do*'. Her goals were to enhance meta-cognition, to make conversations about texts 'deeper' and thus to '*help the kids keep growing*'. Many of the units of work Penny inherited from earlier years were based on topics with '*a social science focus*' and, as she put it, '*could be part of any subject*'. Penny wanted to foreground concepts distinctive '*to English and to build knowledge about these from Year 7 up*'. In this way, she articulated a need for a more cumulative approach to knowledge building in subject English.

On the second day of the workshop in November 2018, Penny and her colleagues redesigned a unit on Australian Identity that they would teach in Term 1 the following year. Whereas in previous years, their students explored Australian identity by looking at a variety of texts by Asian, Indigenous and rural Australians, this time they would investigate the *representation* of 'Australian-ness' in these texts. Prior to her implementation of the unit in 2019, Penny said:

> The unit has been taught before but not by me. I will make it as explicit as possible using learning intentions. I aim to use the concepts in my teaching. The texts will change their version of what an Australian is and the concept of representation can help them get at this idea.

The workshop led by Theo van Leeuwen had given Penny '*some tools*' for looking closely at the representation of social actors and their actions. Theo's theoretical starting point was that '*every text does three things simultaneously: it represents goings on in the world; it evaluates those "goings on" and it constitutes a (mediated) interaction between composer and responder*'. This meant that texts Penny selected for her unit had thematic unity (about Australian identity) and could be analysed from point of view of representational

Unit	Driving question	Duration of unit	Google Drive Folder
Unit 1: Representations	How do texts <u>represent</u> Australian attitudes, beliefs and values?	9 weeks	<u>Representations</u>

Contents		Rationale
Assessment Information	3	The world is made up of texts and we interact with those texts all the time. We are both composers and responders to these texts. But how do these texts <u>represent</u> our views?
Part One: Introduction	4	All representations carry personal and cultural meanings and have personal and social effects. Sometimes these meanings are produced through a composer's conscious choices of language and structure and at other times they may be unconscious reproductions of attitudes, beliefs and values in the world. This leads to the potential for different readings of texts as representations are questioned and reinterpreted. Students need to be aware of the range of choices available to them in representing people, objects, experiences and ideas as well as how cultural convention may put limits on representation, so positioning them to respond to the world in particular ways.
Part Two: True Blue	12	
Part Three: Songs & Poetry	17	
Part Four: The Rabbits	18	
Part Five: The Essay	20	Students reflect on the representation of Australian identity in texts (written, visual and digital), analysing how visual and linguistic elements privilege a position by omitting or silencing the views of particular groups; in doing that they will explore character, context, and code and convention.
Part Six: Videos?	22	
Part Seven: Reflection	23	

Figure 1. Screenshot of the first page of Penny's unit of work on representation

strategies. Penny stated that she would focus on the 'how' of representation, and this is evident in the 'driving question' that heads the opening page of Penny's unit of work in Figure 1.

The links between big question, concept and assessment were also evident. The essay task that would cap the unit was formulated as follows:

> *Representation is a conscious act by a composer. How is Australian identity represented in two-three texts of your choice?*

What was new for Penny and colleagues was the strong focus on semiotic analysis. Having access to tools that enabled teachers and students to classify, describe and interpret representation is central to a question about 'how' texts work (Aim 3 of the project). Figure 2 is a screenshot from the workshop that inspired Penny's development of retrieval charts used to scaffold students' analysis of representation in a range of multimodal texts:

Representation

Goings-on in the world include
• **Actors, in different roles ('Actor' and 'Goal')**
• **Their actions**
• **The way in which they perform these actions**
• **The times and places of the actions**
• **The resources (tools and materials) that are used in performing them**

So looking at representation we ask:
   Who does what to whom, how, when, where, and with what?

Figure 2. A screen shot of the approach to analysis of goings on in the world.

Penny later introduced these understandings to students working on texts like *The Rabbits* (Marsden & Tan, 2010), stories by Peter Goldsworthy in his collection called *True Blue: On Being Australian* (2008), and poetry and song lyrics about being Australian. In this way, she aimed to deepen students' initial responses to depiction of social actors and actions through comparisons of choices made by one composer and another (see Chapter 5 in van Leeuwen (2005) for further explanation of the grammar of representation).

ACT Central was lucky in its access to a local mentor (Rita van Haren) who gave all Year 10 teachers in the school additional input on the Textual Concepts. This was supplemented by active support from the school principal who was not just 'on side' but keen to see results from the intervention. These institutional conditions were vital to the success of the project, as will be seen.

In the interview following the implementation of this unit of work, Penny was enthusiastic about what her students had done. Perhaps most tellingly, she was excited about dialogues between fellow teachers who shared resources and asked questions about concepts in staff meetings or corridor conversations:

> *The whole school is on it and we had Rita as a mentor too. This helped get teachers on the same page even if they approach a concept like representation differently. You need more than one teacher to be working on a concept because you need those conversations about what is and isn't working.*

Given the interest in cumulative learning and the potential of the Progressions for making this possible, some teachers who experienced success with Year 10 began to teach representation and other concepts like code and convention to Year 7, and told Penny that their students were now making powerful comparisons of characters in *The Bone Sparrow* (Zana Fraillon) and *The Princess Bride* (William Goldman). Penny said, '*Focusing on the concepts made the work much stronger and better directed*' and claimed that this had occurred for all staff working on units based on one or more textual concepts.

The impact on her students was important too, though less in terms of their ability to define concepts and more in terms of their ability to use these in conversations about texts. Penny also felt that her students '*now knew representation and walked away understanding it*'. However, a teacher's claim that students had 'walked away understanding representation' cannot stand on its own but requires corroborating evidence. Giving all students a common visual prompt prior to and following classroom interventions enabled us to investigate the impact on their interpretive strategies of teachers' classroom work. One example will have to suffice. Penny's student Linda had produced minimal responses to questions in the initial prompt. However, her second responses revealed a significant development. She had been selected to participate in the interviews because Penny felt that with a more explicit, knowledge-focused program she would find English more engaging and be able to tackle big questions like the one focusing on Australian Identity. Figure 3 presents a cartoon about the impact of war on child soldiers which we asked students to analyse.

Students who undertook the common prompt were first asked to write about 'what they noticed' in this and a second image. But the second question asked them to explain how the composer had arranged the image to communicate action and point of view. Linda's response to this second question is inserted as Figure 4.

Figure 3. One of the images given to students in the second prompt task (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Children_soldier.jpg)

Figure 4. Screen shot of Linda's response to second question about the cartoon

It is clear that Linda has not only noticed a great deal about the cartoonist's choices but can elaborate on relationships between them. For example, she notes that the fact that the gun and the bear are both smoking helps viewers make connections between the two 'actors' – that the bear has been killed and that the boy's 'childhood is dead' too. In this shift 'upwards' into abstraction, Linda demonstrates a telling ability to interpret visual choices symbolically. Like other students in her class, Linda struggled to define the term 'representation', even though Penny claimed she had '*got it*'. But in discussing her written responses, she was able to recall insights she had generated about the layers of meaning intended in the representation of the creatures in *The Rabbits*. She said, '*These things carried a hidden meaning – like they weren't telling you exactly what they were, but you figured it out later*'.

Crucial evidence of 'uptake' occurs when students apply what they have learned to a new text or context. Transfer of learning was evident to Penny in classroom discussions of internet images promoting different versions of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Penny presented three posters featuring Lady Macbeth to the class and one student commented that '*The artist has represented her as responsible by linking her with the witches*'. She challenged students to provide evidence for their interpretation by using the table of analysis of actors and actions employed in her earlier unit on Australian identity. In a final comment about what she felt students could now do, she said: '*They were able to substantiate their arguments about Lady Macbeth's guilt by analysing her depiction using the table Theo gave us. I was happy about that*'.

A crucial indicator of a change in the students interviewed in Penny's class was the increase in their levels of confidence in talking about representation and, in Linda's case, in discerning connections between formal arrangements and their 'hidden meaning'. This was encouraging news about the potential of the Textual Concepts for making English more visible (and learning more cumulative) for mid-range achievers like Linda.

Case Study 2: **NSW Western Sydney school**

This second school is a comprehensive 7–12 boys' school in Western Sydney. During 2017 the English faculty had been exploring different ways of refining their programs, particularly with a view to ensuring the requisite English knowledge, skills and understanding across units within a teaching program for a particular year group as well as from one year to the next. Teachers were keen to establish a coherent continuum of learning from junior to senior English.

In 2017, the English faculty enthusiastically accepted offers of professional learning support to experiment with transforming a pre-existing film unit into a concept-based unit. Several teachers had attended professional learning events on the English Textual Concepts™ conducted by the ETA NSW, and interest was strong. Teachers were looking for ways to improve learning outcomes and foster student engagement with the subject.

The Institution and Individual Experience was the first unit in Year 10 English. Mary Macken-Horarik and Ann Small visited the school and subsequently offered some teaching and learning suggestions and resources to reshape the unit into an exploration and

analysis of point of view in the films *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (for the advanced class) and *The Shawshank Redemption* (for the mixed-ability classes). The revamped unit met with some success. Teachers reported that there was a sharper focus through the foregrounding of concepts but that realigning the subject in this way required a rethinking of classroom practice, pedagogy and assessment. That text selection or theme and issues study need not be the sole drivers of the program offered a different approach, and there was some appeal in the rigour and opportunity for transference articulated in the English Textual Concepts™ statements and Progressions. After this initial experience, the faculty was keen to join the pilot project to be conducted in 2018–2019, to consolidate the work started on the *Institutions and Individual Experience* unit.

The teachers involved in the project were both in their first five years of teaching. In initial interviews they expressed a desire to broaden their repertoire of teaching styles and skills so that they could improve the learning outcomes of all students. Amy (a pseudonym) emphasised the need to engage boys as learners in her mixed-ability class and Azizah (a pseudonym) expressed a desire to raise the bar for the more able students in her advanced class. Both teachers commented on the challenge of accommodating the diverse range of students in their classes and anticipated that professional conversations with teachers from other schools involved in the project would be instructive. How teachers view the subject they teach is a critical factor in the classroom. Amy emphasised the importance of responding critically to texts. She wanted students to be confident in '*understanding how to pull apart language, visual language and written analysis and such …. grammar as well … and how to structure a response*'. Azizah emphasised the importance of seeing English in a contemporary light, focusing on digital technology. She emphasised independent learning and stated that '*students can demonstrate outcomes in a range of modes, not just in written text*'.

After the professional learning workshops in November, Amy, Azizah and Ann met in the holidays to prepare the *Institutions* unit for the beginning of the school year. During the workshop, they refined the unit to ensure that its 'core drivers' were framed by the concepts of point of view, character and codes and conventions. In this way, the concepts became the starting point for learning in the unit and chosen films and their attendant codes and conventions became

exemplars of how the concepts shape meaning in texts. We introduced additional texts to the chosen films to ensure that early phases of the unit focused on building students' understanding of concepts. The four figures below illustrate the rationale (Figure 5), essential questions developed and presented by Mary Macken-Horarik and aligned to the unit (Figure 6), a sample teaching and learning activity (Figure 7) and questions used in the assessment task (Figure 8). We present these figures to highlight the importance of linking textual concepts to disciplinary concerns and goals (Aim 1).

RATIONALE:

The major goal of this unit is to understand how point of view can be deployed to align (or dis-align) viewers with certain characters and how the strategic use of this resource can deepen understanding of the effects of institutions (gaols, mental asylums, schools) on an individual. Exploring a concept like point of view can happen in many ways. Here we focus on initial (non-technical) explorations of the concept of point of view. Students can approach it via role play, physicalising of social distance and angle of view and produce personal responses to images or verbal texts. They undertake first tasks on point of view in a general way, later applying what they have learned to the focal text – *Shawshank Redemption* or *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* in order to explore the effects of the institution on an individual.

In the course of this unit, students will come to take up and understand the viewpoints of key individual characters in the texts explored. They will look first at still images then at moving images and compare visual point of view to strategies in print narratives before creating their own text. Students will examine features of the film that illustrate the different attitudes and beliefs relating to the institution and individual experience and subtle societal critique by the director. Students are encouraged to reflect on and apply these concepts and ideas in their own lives.

Figure 5. Rationale for the unit

The intervention period proved effective in a number of ways. Both Azizah and Amy felt that their implementation of the revamped teaching unit strengthened their teaching and, as a consequence, their students' learning. Azizah noted that in the unit 'all the activities were linked and that this 'strengthened relevance and made it easier for teachers to introduce *new ideas or mix it up*. There was clear evidence of a burgeoning confidence enabling these young teachers to establish relevant priorities for their students by customising the unit using the concepts.

Both teachers affirmed that a concept-focused unit enabled the students '*to have something solid to grasp*' (Azizah). Despite its largely thematic orientation as suggested by the unit title, *The institution and*

Phase	Focus Questions
Concept exploration: (engaging personally, reflecting) POINT OF VIEW	What is point of view and how does it affect what we see and how we respond to what and who we see?
Concept analysis: (understanding, engaging critically)	How does point of view work in visual, verbal and multimodal texts?
Rhetorical application: (engaging critically, engaging personally, experimenting, reflecting)	How can we draw on resources of point of view to create characters in our own short movie? How do we incorporate analysis of point of view in our interpretive essays?
Intertextual and intermodal connections: (understanding, connecting, engaging personally, engaging critically)	How is point of view used in different texts, genres or modes? What alternative strategies are employed in each mode/text?

Figure 6. Essential questions aligned with unit structure.

Activity 3 – Looking at focalisation in images – Jigsaw activity

Teacher will read the picture book by Armin Greder to the class. Students will then be placed in groups and be provided with pages from *The Island* and annotate choices in focalisation and interactive meaning (contact, social distance and attitude). A jigsaw grouping can be used. Each group will annotate the allocated images either in pairs or individually. After each student has annotated their allocated page/s, they rejoin their group and share their analysis of the page/s and listen to others present theirs.

As a group they will discuss the following:

• What is the intended effect of point of view?
• Why did the illustrator/composer decide to represent things in this way and at this point in the text?
• What is their own response to this representation?
• Discussion questions could focus on the degree to which they, as responders, take up the composer's position, the extent to which the representation is resonant or dissonant with their personal and cultural values; how this influences their response to characters.

The discussion can be linked directly to the institution and the individual in exploring the stranger in terms of the treatment of individuals in detention centres and have students re-examine their judgements in light of the exploration of detention centres in Phase 1(e.g. Don Dale Detention Centre).

Figure 7. Sample teaching and learning activity

personal experience, they felt they were successful in foregrounding the concepts and that the students were able to explain how the concepts shaped meaning in the text. How this was articulated varied: Amy reported that responses in the mixed-ability class indicated that students were more likely to comment implicitly on how point of view shaped meaning than to use the term explicitly. Even so, she felt encouraged that

Mixed-Ability Assessment Task (viewing, writing)	Advanced Task (viewing, writing)
Type: Short answer and short creative response	Type: Short answer and short creative response
Short answer • Analyse Tommy's development as an individual in Shawshank Prison. • What is the effect of the voiceover? How does it relate to what is happening on the screen? • How has the director presented Andy in this scene? Discuss *film techniques* AND *the image* below to support your response.	**Short answer** *Point of view* How has the director, Miloš Forman, developed the audience's point of view to critique the institution? *Characterisation* How does this scene develop the character of McMurphy and the importance of his relationships with the other patients? *Code and convention* The clip shown illustrates the constant struggle for power between Nurse Ratched and McMurphy. How have the dynamics of their relationship been illustrated by film code and convention?
Creative response Imagine you are Tommy. From his point of view, describe how he feels about his life and future.	**Creative response** Nurse Ratched has just returned to the Nurses' Station after the incident in the previous scene. She needs to document what has happened and why. Construct Nurse Ratched's notes from her point of view. You *may* use the quote below in your response: 'You're not going to win your money back, Mr Martini. That's all over. If you had obeyed the rules in the first place, you wouldn't have lost your money.'

Figure 8. Formal assessment questions.

in the succeeding unit when analysing book covers for Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men*, the more able students in her class had commented on the role of point of view in these multimodal representations. Azizah indicated that in the more advanced class, students were eager to look at ideas behind the concept, used terminology independently and that '*their answers were more focused*' and '*characterised by far less retell*'.

Classroom work on concepts had a positive impact on students. One of those in Azizah's class, for example, characterised point of view as 'seeing' what others are 'feeling' or 'experiencing' and, when pressed, explained it as a vicarious experience through which they would learn about themselves as well: '*I learn how to see through others' perspectives … You have to know about other's experiences*'. Such statements demonstrate the impact of work on learners. Amy was pleased that by foregrounding the codes and conventions associated with point of view, students were able to transfer this

learning to other texts. She said: '*I found that explicit teaching of codes and conventions for a particular concept allowed students to apply an idea or a concept*'.

One pleasing footnote to the implementation of this unit was the affirmation the faculty received during an external peer review conducted for registration and compliance. The faculty head reported that the *Institutions* unit piqued interest for its '*focus, the fact that it is conceptually driven, has a range of teaching and learning activities and challenges the kids to look beyond the text itself*'.

Further reports on schools where textual concepts were not aligned with assessment

Unlike the schools in Case Studies 1 and 2, the second group approached textual concepts in an additive rather than integrative way. Some teachers in this group reported a richer understanding of how textual concepts inform the discipline of English. One claimed that this work had extended '*my understanding of where I can take a text*' and '*promotes a breadth of activities I can use*'. Another commented about her improved capacity to choose texts for study: '*Now with the awareness of concepts my radar is out more and I am able to catch examples when this has happened*'. Several teachers acknowledged that their increased understanding of the concepts was reflected in their other classes. For example, '*I'm transferring it to other classes bringing it from a hazy background thing to the forefront and sharing the language more with the students*'.

On the whole, it was clear that several teachers were beginning to integrate textual concepts into their vision of English, even if this was a partial process. In the regional comprehensive school where only two teachers were involved in the project and assessment was not concept-oriented, one teacher found this project '*An eye-opening experience …* [a] *head-space shift*' that enabled her to clarify the direction of her teaching – '*what am I going to do and how am I going to do it*'. Both teachers were '*sharing it with other members of the faculty*' and one stated that '*the concepts are changing how we are planning units in the future, bringing the concepts more to the forefront*'.

However, it was clear that where the entire unit and, most importantly, its assessment had not been refocused on concepts, teachers were more affected by school busyness and interruptions. This combination of factors meant that some teachers depended on patterns of unit design and teaching which did not allow them to engage with the concepts or revise

essential questions. Instead, when learning was deemed concept-related, teachers in this second group focused on a single concept such as characterisation or genre. While this can be seen as moving towards conceptual understanding, we observed a tendency to repeat identification of particulars and lose an opportunity for shifting students into deeper interpretive practices. For example, students in the regional school were able to identify aspects of a particular dystopian text as involving '*control through fear*' or '*post-apocalyptic societies*'. While one student recognised texts in the same genre as having '*similarities of plot similarities of the world, such as control and dehumanisation*', we found no evidence of exploration of the concept itself in questions like 'Does genre stimulate or constrain ideas?' This meant that students at Stage 5 tended to work with the conceptual understandings of students at Stage 4. They typified the trend observed by Teese (2011) in which the formal architecture of English becomes increasingly hard to read.

Similarly, at the independent boys' school, where the concept selected for *Macbeth* was character, some students simply focused on knowing about characters in the play. As one said, it was about '*getting the main facts*'. Another more insightful response was that '*Certain characters through different eras are represented differently*'. He applied this concept to real life:

> For example, the role of women in Macbeth *hasn't changed in* [the new text we are studying]. *In the novel,* Of mice and men … *women are only there to procreate … Only recently have those things started to change.*

In this comment, we see evidence of a connection between characterisation and context as the student grapples with how values and culture affect interpretations of character.

In schools where arrangements made integrated approaches more difficult, teachers and students viewed assessment tasks as separate from classroom learning about concepts. At the selective high school, for example, one teacher acknowledged that '*It was too much; I tried to shoehorn it into this unit. I felt I was behind with other things in the unit because I was focusing on it too much*'. In this context, some students commented that they did not perceive any relationship between the concept of 'representation' and their assessment task, which asked them to compare two self-selected texts. These students defined 'representation' as symbolism or metaphor, indicating that they had not engaged with the breadth of the concept. There was no

reporting of close analysis of representation as evident in Case Study 1. Interestingly, some student interviews revealed great receptivity and a desire to know more about concepts, with one student indicating transfer by commenting that representation offered thinking that would enhance her love of painting. It is possible to see this as a lost opportunity to deepen and broaden learning on the part of her teacher. The influence of entrenched approaches to unit design and assessment also played a part.

This same loss of opportunity to deepen knowledge was evident in schools where concepts were viewed as 'extra' rather than integral to English. This was reflected in students' questions about whether there was a relationship between concepts and assessment. One teacher who claimed that '*love of books*' was a key purpose for English felt that she '*didn't agree with the premise that we should make English concept-based to show that English has a value*'. This was the only negative response to the usefulness of the concepts themselves that we received from teachers. Even so, it is clear that some teachers and students do not perceive textual concepts as permeating subject knowledge.

Conclusions

One of the purposes of this small pilot project was to test the design and lay the groundwork for a larger and more widespread research project, and in this it was successful. We have learned that, despite teachers' enthusiasm and good intentions, a lot more support needs to be in place for key abstractions and pedagogical designs to be fully enacted. Institutional support, mentoring by expert teachers, opportunities to share experiences with buddies working across the same year level and scrutiny by leaders keen to see change across the school were features of both schools reported in Case Studies 1 and 2. They are attributes that appear to have made a vast difference to the uptake of a new way of building knowledge in subject English.

In sum, there are four conditions that enable teachers to make their interventions productive for student learning. For teachers to re-design learning that is conceptually focused, practical and cumulative, they need to:

1. assimilate a selected textual concept in full and adapt it to guiding questions in the subject they want students to explore;
2. adopt teaching strategies that move students from first response, through close study of the concept and into more substantive discussion of the role of a concept in shaping meaning in texts;
3. give students opportunities to analyse the concept in depth in different texts and deploy it in their own compositions; and
4. ensure that summative assessment is in line with the essential questions underpinning the unit and with formative assessment during the course of teaching.

Given the pressures of school life – full of interruptions, distractions and decisions beyond the purview and reach of many teachers – those schools with strong and evident support of the Head of Department and the Executive produced teachers who felt more confident and optimistic about their work with the concepts.

Making knowledge structures visible is an enterprise to be pursued over a longer time frame, both for teachers and for students. The work on concepts has to be progressive and cumulative, and this is evident from the fact that the students who fared best were from schools where the unit was taught for a second time or where teachers were supported by an experienced mentor and the entire faculty was together in the enterprise, offering mutual support. Teachers' own understandings of a concept need to be secure if they are to ensure that they can elaborate it for their students and teach it effectively through PCK. In this way, they are able to build knowledge structures in systematic and powerful ways.

Three implications of our project need highlighting. Firstly, teachers need access to a rich set of resources for teaching the English Textual Concepts™, or indeed any conceptually based understanding of the subject, if they are to lift students into higher order interpretive processes. A key feature of successful units of work was the inclusion of essential questions that underpinned teaching and learning activities (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013). Formative and summative assessment tasks need to give students the opportunity to develop and demonstrate what they have learned about the concept.

Secondly, teachers need access to analytical tools to support close reading of print, visual and multimodal texts. A portable 'toolkit' will enable students to compare texts (short stories, images, graphic novels and films concerned with similar issues) and prepare them for the kinds of tasks they will face in senior years of study. Although this was not a feature of our study – at least as it was taken up by teachers – learning

to turn conceptual knowledge into rhetorical know-how is central to English. In future research, we would ask teachers to turn concepts to practical use in the making of texts. In this way, we would be supporting their transition to the rhetorically focused activities of senior English.

Finally, any conceptual architecture teachers work with should support cumulative learning in such a way that conceptual knowledge and know-how is deepened over time and becomes part of the ongoing repertoire of students. We have begun to see emerging evidence of this in some schools, but transfer takes time and could be missed if we focus only on the work done in one unit and learning reduced to one or two snapshots of a student's uptake. The learning Progressions in the English Textual Concepts offer resources for teachers to map their work against stage-based expectations.

The work is at a beginning.

Acknowledgements

Note

1 Relevant quotes from participating teachers are indicated in italics.

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Being 'Avocational'

Making a Living from English: How Being *'Avocational'* Means Becoming Profoundly Capable

Andrew Goodwyn, University of Bedfordshire

Abstract: Around the world attacks are being made on English as a degree subject because in neoliberal terms it is perceived as not leading to graduate level employment. The evidence is clear that this is not true, certainly in England, which is the focus of this article: English graduates go into professional and well-paid careers; some of course become English teachers. A degree in English provides a powerful experience, making its graduates excellent employees in a whole range of jobs. However, in England there is a decline in the number of students choosing to study English at the age of 16, when the subject becomes a choice, and this is happening in parallel with an increasing shortage of English teachers. There is also evidence that English in schools has become much less engaging for its students and its teachers because of the current assessment regime. However, what we need to do is articulate the deep value of English and the incredible capabilities that degree level study provides for its graduates and their careers. It can be argued that a strength of the subject is that it is '*avocational*': that is, not restricting to a vocation. We also need to ensure that the school experience for our students has the same power as for degree level students, linking it to the increasing recognition in society of the humanising value of the shared reading of literature.

Introduction: 'Engineers' Corner'?

Wendy Cope, an English poet, wrote in 1986 an amusing poem called 'Engineers' Corner', in which she responds ironically to an advertisement placed in *The Times* by the Engineering Council which stated:

'Why isn't there an Engineers' Corner in Westminster Abbey? In Britain we've always made more fuss of a ballad than a blueprint … How many schoolchildren dream of becoming great engineers?' –

She opens with the verse:

We make more fuss of ballads than of blueprints –
That's why so many poets end up rich,
While engineers scrape by in cheerless garrets.
Who needs a bridge or dam? Who needs a ditch?

And continues:

Whereas the person who can write a sonnet
Has got it made. It's always been the way,
For everybody knows that we need poems
And everybody reads them every day. (Cope, 1986, n.p.)

Cope is clearly enjoying the Engineering Council's rather bizarre reference to Poets' Corner, where indeed many famous English poets are buried or commemorated. Over thirty years later, there really is a sufficient change in societal expectations in many of the leading economies to reflect on why the joke is now rather more on us, the teachers of poetry. This is why we must argue that we do need poems and we should try to enable our students to read them, if not every day, then very often. In the 1980s there really were problems recruiting

engineers and scientists, and especially female ones. That tide has generally turned. This article is not intended to suggest that in societal terms this is in any way a bad thing; it simply has consequences that we need to address in considering the future of English and our belief in the deep value of reading and, for example, studying poetry. What has changed and requires a proactive response is that English as a degree level subject, and similarly other Humanities subjects, are being aggressively attacked as producing unemployable graduates. This article will demonstrate that this is manifestly untrue, but not by giving into the neoliberal arguments about there being no strict match to a job or vocation (Ruggeri, 2019, writing for the BBC *Worklife* blog, helpfully counters this argument). English can be characterised as 'avocational'; that is, not limiting but providing multiple opportunities for choosing a rewarding career/s.

Reframing the question: Not 'What is English?' but 'What does English do for you?'

The century-old debate about what constitutes English as an academic subject continues and shows no signs of coming to an end; for example, see the recent international collection that updates the debates (Goodwyn, Durrant, Sawyer, Zancanella & Scherff, 2019c).

For some this is a troublesome concern, but for others, like this author, it is sign of a healthy and necessary debate that keeps the subject 'alive'. John Dixon's metaphor of English as 'the quicksilver' subject (Dixon, 1967) remains a very apt characterisation to this day. Much evidence has accumulated over the last twenty years, however, of a very powerful attempt to force a narrow neoliberal definition on the school subject in Anglophone countries across the globe, including the 'Big 5' (B5) – Australia, Canada, England (not the UK, as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have separate education systems), New Zealand and the USA. These countries all have their individual versions of 'English', produced by their national histories and political systems, and for some the very word 'English' carries many complicated resonances of colonial relationships and imperial literary heritages. Despite their differences, a profound commonality in each of these contexts is the contested nature of the subject. The contestation is produced both by the 'external' forces in society such as politicians and employers and by the 'internal' debates of its teachers and researchers. 'English' is also, very obviously, a global phenomenon

not only as a language but also as a variegated subject for study; analysing this worldwide factor is outside the scope of this article.

England, which will be the case study in this article, now has a distinctive and significant history of these neoliberal trends and of the development of the panopticon of regulatory surveillance. Australia and the USA have shown rapid similar trends in the last ten years or so (see Goodwyn, Durrant & Reid, 2014), both being federal education models where the state level is the key factor for educational 'reform'. The term 'neoliberal' has begun, perhaps, to lose definition and become more like a basket full of elements that are vaguely characterised by being from the political right and economically obsessed with the 'market' and competition (for a history of the term, see Kean, 2018). For the purposes of this article, the context is the 'reform' of the education systems of the B5, reform being the word regularly used by neoliberals. Certainly, in England, the three sectors (primary, secondary and higher education) have all been profoundly affected. For example, all schools and all universities now literally compete with each other and are placed in league tables using all kinds of quantitative measures of 'outcomes'; for universities one is employability and another is salary levels at various times after graduation. Another neoliberal feature is the use of performativity measures (Ball, 2003) to measure the education workforce. In schools this has led to a marked decrease in professional autonomy (see O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2018, for a recent study of teachers in Australia and in England). In universities a similar movement has also led to high-stakes competitions such as the Research Excellence Framework, in which all 'research active' staff are judged on a range of factors but principally the quantity and 'quality' of their 'outputs'. Therefore, every English teacher and every English academic is caught in the neoliberal web.

However, despite all this neoliberal attention, there has never been a profound questioning of whether 'English' should be either abandoned or replaced: it remains a key subject and compulsory for all students. In the B5 there is a strong historical tradition of curriculum in which the content of English remains a combination of 'language' and 'literature'. In the B5, but especially England, those on the political right have strong views about what is meant by 'language': typically a strong focus on formal English, correct use of grammar, attention to spelling and a paradigm of neat politeness. For a useful review of attitudes to

grammar, see Watson and Myhill (2019). They also conceptualise literature as very '*English* literature' (the recent 'reforms' of Michael Gove will be discussed below), mostly from the canon. Broadly put, the term 'the English Literary Heritage' captures what they are focused upon, and to a large extent this focus also affects Australia and the USA especially, perhaps less so Canada and New Zealand (for recent evidence of this difference, see Marshall, Gibbons, Hayward & Spencer, 2018).

As we consider the 'usefulness' of English there are some interesting differences in the semantics of names for the subject within the B5 that suggest differing kinds of graduate; do they suggest vocations? At elementary and high school levels in the USA and Canada the phrase 'the Language Arts' is commonly used, yet the professional body is the National Council for the Teaching of English. Could a graduate be a Language Artist? In Australia the phrase 'English and Literacy Teacher' is in common use and accepted parlance. This seems to an outsider (like this author) to reflect the powerful influence of the Australian Critical Literacy movement, where literacy was conceptualised as (by its nature) a critical force engaging higher-order thinking, valuable to deconstruct ideological meanings in texts. Would a graduate be a Literate Literacy Critic? However, since 2008, the focus of the National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy has been on literacy as a basic skill, promoting a very different conceptualisation, and aimed at measuring school outcomes (like England). In England teachers absolutely rejected, without irony, the term 'literacy' when the governmental intervention the National Literacy Strategy was thrust upon them in a secondary 'reform' called the Framework for English, which was focused on a narrow, basic skills model of English (Goodwyn & Fuller, 2011).

This dance around the term 'literacy' leads to the main focus of this article and its concern for the future of English. The neoliberal marketising agenda is affecting all levels of education, but its most dramatic and draconian impact is, certainly in England, on degree level study. A raft of policy initiatives has combined to produce a performative model in which all degrees are measured by their employability outcomes, by which skills they develop, by how quickly graduates are working in graduate level employment, and then how well they are paid. Therefore, the neoliberals argue, the purpose of university is now judged by what kind of ticket a graduate is given to the material benefits of life

and to specified career outcomes. How does degree X guarantee a well-paid career that was made exclusively possible by taking a degree? One assumes Philosophy graduates must be existentially unemployable. What 'use' then is English?

What about English?

A real consequence of new liberal market-driven approaches to all levels of education has been to make students question whether English is 'worth doing' rather than whether it is a necessary and enjoyable thing to do. In the B5 a national or federal version of English is, as a minimum, a compulsory subject from ages 5–16. In England, after that the factor of choice enters the equation and raises the fundamental question, 'If you choose to study English at an advanced level, perhaps first aged 16–18 and then going on to a degree, what careers become available?' Put crudely by the neoliberals, does higher-level study of English make you employable and well paid?

An important piece of context, certainly in England, is the current 'double whammy' of a modest decline in student numbers taking English at university compared to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects which are seeing an increase, especially amongst female students. At the same time, there is a national recruitment and retention crisis in the teaching profession and there is now a genuine shortage of properly trained, degree level English teachers (Foster, 2019).

There is also plenty of evidence that the subject of English in schools is now also putting off students and teachers. A recent study of teachers in English and Australia revealed (O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2018; Goodwyn, 2019a) that English teachers, whilst remaining resilient and committed, are struggling with the nature of the subject as it has been externally designed and linked to high-stakes testing. For example, an earlier small-scale study in England (Goodwyn, 2018) found that teachers themselves find their lessons dull and disengaging. In part, these trends are related to the neoliberal agenda outlined above, but the period of office of Michael Gove as Education Secretary from 2010–14 was highly significant for English. He had an evangelical obsession with English and especially with the English Literary Heritage; he had an aversion to North American texts popular with teachers and students such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Of Mice and Men*. He returned the assessment of English to two two-hour terminal examinations, relying on students'

memorisation of texts and requiring formal literary analysis. This was the model used in the elite grammar schools in the 1950s. The combination of these factors means that English for students aged 14–16 is now a dull, exam-dominated experience taught reluctantly by English teachers, and measured by their students' grades.

There is therefore a triple sequence of causes and effects: English is putting off students in schools, fewer students go on to a degree, fewer English graduates are produced and fewer then apply to be teachers – a potentially downward spiral.

What is an Englishist?

There is one more semantic map to consider. If you study Science, you are adopting the approach of a scientist, and the same in Maths, History, Geography, Art – this does not neatly apply to all school subjects but it is suggestive of one clear vocational outcome. There are no 'Englishists'. A university degree is typically a training in literary criticism. The tiniest minority of English graduates will become literary critics by teaching in universities; even fewer will become professional critics. An equally tiny minority will go into the business of publishing. We should celebrate that English is not an 'IST', that it does not have a direct vocational imperative, that it is not *'nonvocational'* or even *antivocational*, it is *'avocational'*. There is not space here to discuss the early formation of English which might have been considered *antivocational* (see Doyle, 1989; Eagleton, 1975)

When English teachers in the past have argued for its plain utility, they have claimed that its teaching of basic skills makes every citizen literate and employable – what has been called in England the 'Adult Needs Model'. This was a model considered by Dixon in 1967 and rejected as inadequate and narrow and to be subsumed by a Personal Growth model. Also in England, in 1989 the first National Curriculum stated that there were five models of English, of which Personal Growth, Adult Needs and Cultural Heritage were three. The definition then was:

> An 'adult needs' view focuses on communication outside the school: it emphasises the responsibility of English teachers to prepare children for the language demands of adult life, including the workplace, in a fast-changing world. Children need to learn to deal with the day-to-day demands of spoken language and of print; they also need to be able to write clearly, appropriately and effectively. (DES, 1989)

This definition is somewhat dated but the fundamental point is not. Our students should leave compulsory schooling with a capability in what contemporary society, including employers, considers to be 'literacy'. One purpose of this article is to suggest that we can and should argue for the capabilities developed by studying various forms of language, but especially those capabilities developed by deep engagement with 'the literary'.

The current National Curriculum in England and associated assessment specifications do not provide for this deeper capability: they could be summarised as being constituted by a very strong emphasis on the English Literary Heritage, studied in order to be tested, combined with an equally strong emphasis on formal language skills. In that sense, the neoliberal version of English is firmly in place. English teachers in England dislike it intensely and find themselves trapped in a cul-de-sac of teaching to the test and teaching what is testable (see Goodwyn, 2019b; Marshall, 2013). This is certainly not a creative, Personal Growth model, nor is it, as is argued here, what employers want.

The deep value and usefulness of English

It is time to change the argument. Most children who spend 11 years (aged 5–16) studying English, do emerge from compulsory schooling with a decent grasp of basic skills. On international measures (whether they are reliable or not, they are certainly politically salient) show that the B5 do very well on measures like PISA, the Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD, 2015). So neoliberal obsessions with basic literacy are at least partly met by these measures, although such ideologues will always demand that their jurisdiction must come top of the league table, a fundamental, and of course hopeless, imperative of a performative rationale. League tables mean one's position is always interminably fragile. We do not help ourselves by allowing the neoliberal argument about whether the effectiveness of teaching of basic skills is successful or not to dominate the argument. This is the wrong question. We have a better question and an even better answer.

There is a good example of changing the question in the findings of the US National Research Council (2008). Their evaluation of the effectiveness of the Highly Accomplished Teachers program in the USA found a very modest relationship between these excellent teachers and higher test results (for an analysis, see Goodwyn, 2015). In other words,

in narrowly performative terms they showed only slightly better outcomes. The evaluation concluded that these teachers produced other valuable outcomes and reflected that the Council was looking at the wrong features of this form of excellence and so had asked the wrong questions, looking at simplistic measures. In the spirit of what really matters, the wrong question for English graduates is 'For what employment does studying English make you appropriate?'. The right question is 'What capabilities does the study of English give you when you study it truly, deeply and perhaps a little madly; that is, with emotional engagement and passion?'

In England there is now a real momentum to 'push back' against the false and damaging perceptions about the alleged uselessness of English when it comes to 'employability'. For that kind of concept we might return to the basic literacy argument. Students should leave school with sufficient basic skills to cope with the literacy demands of society. This is not to suggest that demands of twenty-first century literacy are in any way merely basic. One deep fault line in English in England is actually that all attention to the digital and to the media has been removed from the National Curriculum; however, this may turn out to be less significant than it sounds, as is argued later.

All the evidence we have about why people become English teachers demonstrates two major factors. One is a deep desire to work with young people and make a positive contribution to their lives as human beings, and this motivation includes employment but not to the detriment of a broader conceptualisation of citizenship and culture. Another key factor is generally expressed as a 'love of reading' and a belief that literature – broadly, not canonically, defined – is the key kind of reading that the aspiring teachers wish to pass on to young people. Recent evidence (Goodwyn, 2019a; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2018) also demonstrates that this belief in the intrinsic value of engaging with literature is what keeps English teachers robust and resilient in neoliberal and performative times.

One really 'big picture'

The very large project conducted by Google called Project Oxygen (2008–19) did not discover that the best managers were people with deep technical or business knowledge. On the contrary, their shorthand findings are that the best manager:

1. is a good coach
2. empowers teams and does not micromanage
3. creates an inclusive team environment, showing concern for success and wellbeing
4. is productive and results-oriented
5. is a good communicator — listens and shares information
6. supports career development and discusses performance
7. has a clear vision/strategy for the team
8. has key technical skills to help advise the team
9. collaborates across Google
10. is a strong decision maker (Harrell & Barbato, 2018).

These are not, simplistically, skills and competences that come *only* from studying English, but the argument here is that they are the capabilities developed in the process of studying English in depth.

English graduates and society

One unintended consequence of the drive for quantitative measures is that certainly in England we have 'evidence' of the success of English graduates, not only in being employed but also in terms of their earnings. The government's Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (UK Government website, 2019) show that after ten years, 83.7% of English graduates are in full time employment, compared to 82.5% of Physics graduates, 81.8% Maths , 81.3% Computer Science and 82.1% Law (for a good review of this issue see Eagleston, 2019). English graduates do not earn as much as doctors or lawyers, but they are on a par with Business Studies and Computer Science graduates. What is striking is that these two figures demonstrate real success in graduate level professions, and one assumes that very few have become critics or authors. How do we explain this success, given the perception amongst young people that English does not lead to successful employability?

Another feature of education in the B5 is that governmental style agencies create 'benchmarks' that describe subjects, and their main aim is often to make programs such as degrees *measurable* against these indicators. Simultaneously, but with much more real use, they are creating definitions that allow for common expectations about the value and purpose of the subject and the capabilities its graduates should develop. In England this agency is the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA); its most recent English 'Benchmark Statement'

was 2015 (QAA, 2015). It is a dense thirteen-page document, but a few excerpts are worth quoting. It must be stressed that this document was put together by leading experts in the field, first in 2000 and then (revised) in 2015 (see membership in 2000 and 2015); these are experts in what constitutes a good English degree, not what makes it measurable.

It outlines what the subject 'is'. For example, it provides evidence of the wide scope of the subject:

1.1 English is a core academic subject encompassing study of the structure, history and usage of the English language, critical analysis of literature written in English, and the practice of creative writing … English is relevant to contemporary society as its focus on the production, interpretation and negotiation of meaning develops the capacity to understand the world from a variety of perspectives. (QAA, 2015, p. 3)

It highlights the contribution of English to national life and international appeal, and stresses how vibrantly the subject adds benefit to active participation in literature in adult life:

1.2 The subject makes a vital contribution to national cultural life through reading groups, theatre performances, screen adaptations, fiction and poetry readings, literary festivals, heritage events, and other forms of public engagement. English attracts international interest in the UK's cultural heritage and creative industries, stimulating tourism and other economic activity. (QAA, 2015, p. 3)

It sets out in considerable detail the capabilities that its graduates will possess. The list produced by Google (see Harrell & Barbato, 2018, above) is in no way to be viewed as a definitive humanistic authority but it can only be valuable to English – in resisting neoliberal reductionist dismissals of the subject – that there are so many resonances provided below:

3.3 Graduates who have studied English are effective researchers, good communicators and active learners. They contribute to society and are highly sought after by employers. (QAA 2015, p. 7)

3.4 English graduates are versatile researchers. They are able to:
- discover and synthesise complex information and diverse evidence
- respond creatively and imaginatively to research tasks; initiate projects of their own; present information within wider contexts
- test, interpret and analyse information and evidence independently and critically, producing from that analysis cogent arguments and decisive judgements
- plan, organise and report to deadline. (QAA, 2015, p. 7)

This stress on the creative and the imaginative, on the critical and on independent analysis actually contrasts strongly with the way English is now being taught in schools in England and is a further reminder that at secondary level English is becoming a dull subject.

3.5 English graduates possess advanced communication skills. They are able to:
- articulate their own and other people's ideas concisely, accurately and persuasively both orally and in writing
- develop working relationships with others in teams,
- especially through constructive dialogue (for example, by listening, asking and responding to questions)
- understand the role of narrative and emotion in decision-making
- be sensitive to cultural contexts when working with others. (QAA, 2015, pp. 7–8)

This section resonates with the Personal Growth pedagogy that survives in schools despite all the neoliberal restrictions (O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2018):

3.6 English graduates are active, lifelong learners. They are able to:
- adapt to different demands and tasks
- appreciate the benefit of giving and receiving feedback
- evaluate and reflect on their own practices and assumptions
- look beyond the immediate task to the wider context, including the social and commercial effects of their work
- initiate and take responsibility for their own work. (QAA, 2015, p. 8)

These capabilities are very much aligned to the behaviours identified by Google. No wonder English graduates can become such successful professionals with so many capabilities and also a deep knowledge of language, literature and culture, and in this respect, therefore, of what makes us fundamentally human.

There is now a real momentum to challenge the false perception of English as a 'useless' degree subject. Several organisations in England are combining to create strong evidence of the deep value of English. The National Association for the Teaching of English, the English Association and the English and Media Centre (EMC) are one such combination. The EMC is especially vocal in publishing material aimed at 16–18 year olds to demonstrate why English is a wonderful degree and also what capabilities it develops. For example, a current blog by Professor Katy Shaw, which will also be published (see the EMC website) in their

e-magazine for A-Level students, explains how sociable the subject is:

> English Literature is also a sociable subject – doing a degree should never mean three years of silent reading in a library. You will be encouraged to debate in classes, to speak about your thoughts and feelings on the texts we study, and to listen and value the opinions of others. The ability to form and communicate a compelling argument is a key skill in an English degree. We help you to develop this through oral assessments, group work and social activities designed to hone your creative practice and presentation skills. (Shaw, 2018)

She articulates how 'all round' English is, how different modes of assessment make strenuous, real life demands on students.

> In addition to essays, you may also be assessed through creative work, reviews, research papers, posters, discussion forums, portfolios and journalism. (Shaw, 2018)

She emphasises why employers 'love English graduates':

> Employers love English Literature students because a degree in English Literature trains you to be an independent critical thinker, someone who can process and communicate diverse data in creative ways, an individual who is reflective in practice, and analytical in approach. (Shaw, 2018)

She makes it clear that English graduates develop a global picture of contemporary life:

> More importantly, English graduates are global graduates – thanks to their studies, they have the intellectual prowess, leadership ability and world-class standards to understand the importance of breaking down relevant boundaries and to shape shaping and redefine the perceptions of others. (Shaw, 2018)

She provides really powerful evidence of just how 'employable' English graduates now are:

> The transferability and relevance of these skills enable our graduates to adapt and evolve in the rapidly changing socio-economic and political contexts of the modern world. It is no coincidence that the CEOs of many Fortune 500 companies are English graduates. (Shaw, 2018)

She points out how English students learn about how humans work in the world:

> This is because English degrees create individuals who are uniquely placed to offer innovative approaches as a direct result of their training in applying new ways of thinking to complicated contemporary problems. These core competencies are key to helping companies better understand the people who consume their products. (Shaw, 2018)

The EMC site contains many other examples of such valuable evidence.

English teachers

We must look after ourselves. As the previous section has argued, English graduates do fine in the real world: a significant number become English teachers. They become very good English teachers because of the combination of their secondary experience of English, which inspired them to take a degree in English, and their intense study at university, which provided them with the knowledge, the skills and also the passion and resilience to take on the very real challenge of making young people love English. Research suggests that a powerful influence on the formative identity of English teachers was at least one remarkable teacher who inspired the future teacher to take a degree in English (Goodwyn, 2010). We need to continue that tradition of teaching passionately to ignite that passion.

This is not a suggestion that current English teachers try to single out future teachers and, in some way, fast-track them into teaching. The argument is that they teach at the top of their game and let those future teachers select themselves – as has happened entirely successfully in the past. What needs to change – at least in England – is the kind of teaching that is currently happening.

There is clear evidence that neoliberal policies can produce unintended consequences. The first example of this is that a major such policy in England was to make schools become 'academies'. This a complex story, but in summary the idea was to replace the comprehensive school ideal of the seventies and eighties, i.e. an all-ability neighbourhood school for all children (in 1990, 92% of schools in the state system). These schools were part of a 'local education authority' whose remit was to ensure that all such schools in their area were equally good. This was distorted by neoliberals as being under 'local authority control'. Schools were either incentivised financially or punished by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) – i.e. they 'failed an inspection' – into becoming academies. Now nearly 60% of schools are academies. These schools do have a real degree of autonomy and do not, for example, have to follow the National Curriculum, and they are also not subject to OFSTED inspections.

This means English departments can design their own curriculum and approach pedagogy as they see fit. There are constrictions because of the current assessment system, which is a terminal exam model for 16 year olds with the content being dominated by the English Literary Heritage, leading to stultifying 'teaching to the test'. Current research is investigating this situation (Goodwyn, 2020).

For the state schools that remain, the exciting change is that OFSTED, after twenty-five years of measuring schools on test performance, is undergoing a radical shift to evaluating schools on the quality of their curriculum and the teaching that engages students with that curriculum (See the OFSTED & Spielman, 2018).

The other major factor is the teacher recruitment and retention crisis. The government has responded with the idea of an Early Career Framework (see the Department for Education website, 2019) to try and ensure that Early Career Teachers (ECTs) are supported for their first three years and so pass that early fragile threshold and become successfully committed professionals. How this will work in practice is unclear, but it provides opportunities for continuing professional development from English organisations that might engage and inspire these ECTs.

These factors in combination suggest that schools are returning to a more autonomous mode and that curriculum will be opened up to innovation and reform. The retention crisis is a real opportunity to point out to the government that teachers need more agency in their classrooms, more local curriculum control, and in English that will mean choices of texts and teaching that are aimed at the affective qualities of literature and not what is easy to measure in nineteenth-century style examinations.

English and society

As outlined above, English graduates clearly contribute powerfully to the economy in all kinds of roles, many as leaders. The momentum to defend the value of English is also part of a movement to extend the role of literary reading in what will be the second quartile of the twenty-first century. There is space only to touch on this development.

This century is marked by deep anxieties about the domination of social media, mobile phone and computer gaming addictions, the perceived threat of Artificial Intelligence to human expertise, and 'fake news' and populism. Simultaneously, more books are sold every year than ever before, and most of them are material, that is physical, books. Reading of literature (small l) is hugely popular and much of it is read on electronic devices. English teachers have mixed feelings about the rise of e-reading (Goodwyn, 2013, 2014), but they recognise that it may have real benefits for many readers.

More fundamental and more significant are societal developments around a model of the human being as a literary reader. A theoretical strand comes from Darwinian literary theory, which views literature as the most important source for understanding our own behaviours. However, this is a theory with very little empirical underpinning (see for example Carroll, 2004). It might be argued that it may well be impossible to produce evidence of something so difficult to observe as evolution. It may well be, rather like black hole theory in physics, that the theory arrives long before we have the means to know how to observe it.

A more 'down to earth' approach, and a more demonstrable one, is what reading literature can do for people in real time. The section on English graduates demonstrates that for deeply immersed literary readers there are lasting life-time benefits that seem both cognitive and affective. For the great majority of more typical readers, it seems likely that their high school experience will remain deeply important. That is why the experience for school students must be at least similar in impact to the experience of undergraduates.

Finally, there is evidence that the value of literary reading (its 'usefulness') is gaining recognition in the twenty-first century, not based on the old argument about it being 'civilising' but more on it being 'humanising'. For example, a recent report, *What Literature Can Do* (Davis & Magee, 2018), is based on research with reading groups for the Reader's Shared Reading Groups in Communities in South London Supported by the Guy's and St Thomas' Charity. Some of these groups are composed of alcohol and drug abusers trying to recover from addiction. The authors state:

> Shared Reading allows the strong language of powerful literature to get to people emotionally – to get under their defences and depressions, their defaults and their pre-formed opinions, to the emotions and memories of their core selves. In doing so, it shakes up mental patterns, and helps people get away from set attitudes or disappointing outcomes (Davis & Magee, 2018, p. 1).

The research by the Centre for Research into Literature, Reading and Society, University of Liverpool, supported

by the Reader (a national charity) is developing a strong empirical set of evidence about how shared reading of literature contributes to wellbeing and mental health. The Reader's mission is:

> We're a national charity that wants to bring about a reading revolution so that everyone can experience and enjoy great literature, which we believe is a tool for helping humans survive and live well. (The Reader, 2018)

English in school settings can also connect with students' mental health and wellbeing, creating a place where shared reading is normal in every classroom.

The way forward?

The English teaching profession can take enormous pride from the quality of the graduates who contribute so importantly to society in such valuable and humane ways. In schools, we need to champion those qualities and be more direct about the outcomes of taking English in the later stages of school, and why studying English at university is such a powerful and developmental experience. In the coming age of Artificial Intelligence neither English teachers nor managers will be replaced by the machine.

Perhaps in the past English teachers in England only demonstrated their love of the subject through the stimulating and exciting way they taught it. It was an unquestioned, compulsory subject but also genuinely popular with students. Science and Maths were never as popular. But things have changed and are continuing to change. We are not in the business of competing against the STEM subjects, but we are in the business of ensuring our subject has a vibrant future.

It is clearly not true that opting for English during high school and then going on to a degree can in anyway be seen as some mere literary indulgence. We 'produce' great graduates who get important and well-paid jobs. We need to wrest back more control of the school curriculum and develop assessments that fit with the deep capabilities of the subject, more difficult to 'measure' but far more important for society. We need to ensure our school students get the message about the deep value of English and so we will need to articulate this message very strongly, and not just demonstrate our values but describe them. In retaking the ground from the philistine neoliberals, we will also inspire our future teachers of English to keep the faith with the quicksilver subject that is such a joy to study and to teach and is, importantly, *'avocational'*.

Perhaps engineers do deserve more recognition. But in the current climate we need to champion we Englishists and our love of poetry. Cope concludes her poem:

> *No wonder small boys dream of writing couplets*
> *And spurn the bike, the lorry and the train.*
> *There's far too much encouragement for poets –*
> *That's why this country's going down the drain.* (Cope, 1986, n.d.)

We must ensure that English avoids that drain and that its teachers speak up proudly about the deep capabilities it develops in all its students.

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White déjà vu: Troubling the Certainty of the English Canon in Literary Education

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White déjà vu

This paper is prompted by my experience as a researcher of English literary education in three different geographies over the past three years: Canada, the United Kingdom and now Australia. In response to the call to consider Futures for English for this special issue, I begin by thinking about the English literary inheritances I've experienced across these three geographies and what I've come to describe as a feeling of affective *white déjà vu*. Affect theory, as I will discuss below, concerns atmospheres, surfaces, bodies, emotions, moods, vicinities and capacities. Sometimes affect clings to a body; other times it slides past it, landing elsewhere. Drawing on affect theory, critical race scholarship and discussions of whiteness, I argue that despite continued local attempts at diversification of English literary education, whiteness continues to circulate through and cling to many of the core texts, narratives and messages that make up English literary education (Bacalja & Bliss, 2019; McGraw & van Leent, 2018; McLean Davies, Truman & Buzacott, 2020). This whiteness is general and specific, global and local, obvious and hidden. Rather than attempting to discuss the literary canon as a whole, I focus on a specific literary text as an example of how whiteness circulates *as* neutral or normal in literary education, even in a text that's often framed as helping (white) students learn *about* racism.

The event that precipitated this paper occurred directly after my arrival in Australia as a postdoctoral research fellow in 2019. Originally from Canada, I had spent the previous year in England also researching secondary English literary education and was excited to arrive in the state of Victoria, Australia, ready to learn about the Australian National Curriculum and be introduced to some new Australian literary texts. Unsurprisingly, the texts I encountered on recommended reading lists and interview transcripts of teachers echoed a similar canon I was used to seeing in both Canada and the UK. However, I was surprised to learn that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is still widely taught in Australia. While the book is regarded as a 'classic', it resonated as odd that in 2019 it would feature in schools here in Australia when surely there are Aboriginal texts or texts by Australian writers of colour that address racism (because surely that was its purpose, not merely 'literary merit')? I asked a colleague who researches Australian literary education why she thought the text is commonly taught at Year 10:

> **Colleague:** Ironically, it remains a popular text because of its perceived 'universalism …'
> **Me:** But it is written from a white perspective during Jim Crow Alabama and the Black characters have no agency.
> **Colleague:** It's regarded as an enduring classic.
> **Me:** I have an overwhelming feeling of white déjà vu.
> **Colleague:** That's the canon.

I've since found the text on recommended text lists (Board of Studies NSW, 2012) and

discussed its continued use in metropolitan Victorian schools with secondary English teachers on research projects (McLean Davies, Truman & Buzacott, 2020). Further investigation revealed an email from VATE in 2012 charging educators to suggest other texts that might be appropriate or challenging for Year 10 English, entitled 'Anything but Mockingbird – what texts to study in years 7–10' (VATE, pers. comm., March 2012). Rather than suggesting texts to replace *To Kill a Mockingbird*, however, two of the responses in *Idiom* were from teachers outlining why the text should stay in schools, citing a variety of reasons including literary merit and the text's enduring ability to teach about racial injustice (Albrecht, 2012; Scholten, 2012).

Debates around text selection are ongoing in English literary education. However, my aim with this paper is not to count how many times *To Kill a Mockingbird* is still being used in Australian schools, nor criticise teachers who may be teaching the book using an anti-oppression framework. Rather, I aim with affect theory and critical race theory to consider *To Kill a Mockingbird* as an example of how whiteness circulates and clings to the literary canon and literary education *as if* white experience were universal. Before I do, I'd like to stress that for decades Black scholars have pointed out the whiteness of the English canon's narratives (e.g., Achebe, 2016; Morrison, 1992; Walcott, 1997), and academics in Australia and abroad have troubled the continued use of *To Kill a Mockingbird* because of its tendency to centre white experience, often at the expense of racialised bodies in the classroom (James, 2019; Spires, 1999), so this is not a new argument. Nor is *To Kill a Mockingbird* the only canonical text that might centre whiteness – although encountering its continued use in Australian schools in 2019 did force me to consider how whiteness reproduces itself around the globe through the texts we foreground. Indeed, perhaps, as my colleague says, the feeling of déjà vu is what we're supposed to experience when confronting the canon as something static, known, reproduced across continents: what is English literature if not a recognisable group of texts telling universal stories from predominantly white people's perspectives?

Affect

Literature is affective: it generates moods, emotive responses, agitated moralities and inspiration. Across academic disciplines, affect is understood in different ways (Truman et al., 2020). What most scholars agree on is the idea that affect is not neutral and that affective feelings do not affect all bodies in the same way (Palmer, 2017). Affect is frequently theorised as the capacities of bodies to act or be acted upon by other bodies, or as the *forces* at work in an encounter (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Such forces can build capacity and debilitate capacity as part of relational exchanges circulating through and transversal to individual bodies. Affects can be intimate (Springgay, 2018) and sticky (Ahmed, 2004) and cling to bodies (or texts); affects can also be deflective and slippery, and glide past particular bodies (Truman & Shannon, 2018). The feeling of what I call *white déjà vu* that I experienced through confronting the literary canon in Australia was affective: I felt the mood of 'I've seen this before', while at the same time the familiarity of the canon felt so certain that the affective moment could have glided past me and been forgotten. The feeling I experienced that particular day as a white scholar is likely quite different from what a student of colour sitting in a secondary literary classroom might feel when confronting the ongoing whiteness of the literary canon.

Whiteness

The historical White Australia Policy was an overt example of the attempt to create and maintain a white state through immigration policies. While the policy is no longer in effect, whiteness continues to function as an affective force that suffuses institutions such as schools and universities (Ahmed, 2012). As Bhopal (2018) argues, 'In such white spaces, whiteness and white Western practices are the norm and those which do not comply with these are seen as outsiders and others' (p. 25). Ahmed (2007), when discussing what she frames as the *phenomenology of whiteness*, considers whiteness as an 'ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they "take up" space' (p. 150). Ahmed draws on Black theorist Franz Fanon to articulate how a Black body moving into a space becomes racialised through limitations on what it can access and through not quite belonging. A world historically, materially and literally shaped by colonialism is a 'white' world '… a world "ready" for certain kinds of bodies, as a world that puts certain objects within their reach' (Ahmed, 2007, pp. 153–154). Indigenous scholar Kim Tallbear (2018) discusses how whiteness does not only refer to phenotype or skin tone but also to the Euro-Western 'rational' humanism that circulates as the 'correct' way of performing science, or cultural practices. Literacy

and literary practices taught in secondary English are rooted in and remain tethered to this Euro-Western humanism and enacted through the texts privileged, prescriptivism and assessment strategies (McLean Davies, Doecke, Gill & Hayes, 2017; Mishra Tarc, 2015; Truman, 2019a; Truman et al., 2020). I'm going to stop this paragraph right here, because already it sounds like what I'm saying makes perfect sense (of course English and the texts we study are rooted in humanist ideals!). My point – and the point that other anti-racist scholars make – is that the ideals of humanism rely on practises of othering that are historically tied to trans-Atlantic slavery, ongoing settler colonialism and a rejection of those who did not (or still don't) 'count' as fully human, e.g., Black people, Indigenous people, people of colour, queer, trans, and disabled people, and their stories (Hartman, 1997; Jackson, 2016; Wynter & McKittrick, 2015; Yusoff, 2018).

This white humanism is tethered generally to the English canon's 'great works' (typically British or American) as well as specifically to the geographies of settler states (like Australia and Canada) where, when a literary heritage is acknowledged, it comes in the form of white settler narratives rather than foregrounding Indigenous authors or authors of colour (Leane, 2016; Simpson, 2011).

Sarah Cefai (2018) draws from Lauren Berlant's notion of 'optimism' to describe how the cultural production of whiteness operates as an affective structure in the creation of nationhood in Australia. Cefai describes how affective whiteness is expressed as a surface that can be both absorptive and deflective simultaneously. In being *absorptive*, whiteness forces Indigenous people and other people of colour, and anyone or anything that does not uphold white optimisms, to be absorbed or assimilated, while in being *deflective*, it operates as a surface that 'non-white' people or ideas are occupying (which necessitates the need to preserve and promote the white state and its ideals). In both instances, whiteness is normal, ordinary and the basis of nation – and any person or cultural practice that is read as 'not-white' is used to reinforce whiteness through being 'Other', or through being assimilated into whiteness. Whiteness is always affirmed.

Thinking with Cefai and looking at the construction, circulation and upholding of the literary canon in the form of the secondary English curriculum, I see a similar affective ordinary whiteness clinging to the kinds of texts we value and measure others against,

the authors we celebrate, the narratives we continually return to in teaching English and how those narratives are framed. The affective structure of whiteness works on multiple levels through language use, through narratives that tug on emotions and centre white characters and ideals and allow *white* readers to feel particular ways. Many of the narratives we continue to teach are written by and for white people and *taught* in ways that continue to centre white experience (Borsheim-Black, 2015; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Spires, 1999; Stallworth, Gibbons & Fauber, 2006) and in the service of whiteness.

What do I mean when I say the books are written *for* white people in the service of whiteness: isn't literature for everyone (isn't it 'universal')? To explain, I'll return to the book that precipitated this paper, a book that's featured on recommended text lists and taught in Australia, Canada, the UK, and USA: *To Kill a Mockingbird*. After fifty years it continues to be framed as a novel that can help teach students *about* racism (Macaluso, 2017) as well as being an example of literary writing. Because of how familiar the book is to many readers it's a good example of how affective whiteness circulates and centres itself in canonical literature and interpretations of canonical texts, and perhaps why my feeling of déjà vu was so strong at seeing that it is still often recommended and praised as a text here in Australia.

To Kill a Mockingbird has been read in schools for generations. I read it in high school English in Canada in the 1990s, and it's still used in schools globally in 2019, although increasingly less so (Sampathkumar, 2018). *To Kill a Mockingbird*'s protagonist is a white lawyer called Atticus Finch. Finch has taken on the task of defending a Black man called Tom Robinson who is wrongfully accused of raping a white woman. Although Robinson is wrongly accused, he is found guilty. He tries to escape prison and is killed.

Affective whiteness permeates this story on several registers. Firstly, there's the banal whiteness that clings to everything in the story, always re-centring itself through prioritising white characters and perspectives. Pointedly, there's also the white moralism of the story that depends on Black suffering. What do I mean when I say the story re-centres whiteness? Significantly, the story isn't *about* Tom Robinson. The story is about Atticus Finch, as told through the narrative of his white child. Atticus' character is presented as a moral guiding compass for his white kids (and for the benefit of the white reader). Tom Robinson is nobody. He's

a prop, or an incidental character at best. Robinson could have been *any* Black man – and I mean *any* in at least two senses. Robinson could have been *any* Black man because we don't learn much about him at all as a character, and he could have been *any* Black man because *any* Black body will do as a prop for progressing the white narrative. I know the story in part is supposed to teach readers that racism is bad. But what the subtext, and the absence of character development for Robinson in the plain text, also teaches is that Black people are available as *props* for whiteness to re-affirm itself – in this case a particularly sticky moral whiteness that relies on Black death.

These paragraphs will perhaps raise furor among readers who may feel bad about how horribly Robinson is treated and are confident they would not be like/ are not like the racists in the book. Or make the case that white readers need to learn about racism through stories like Tom Robinson's. However, Patel (2016) has argued that '… the creation and consumption of Black suffering is as old as the project of racism, and coloniality has relied heavily on visible suffering and its consumption to deepen the strata between man and human' (p. 82). As such, in our contemporary milieu, as educators, we must consider whether Black and Indigenous students and students of colour need to read *To Kill a Mockingbird* to learn that racism is deadly? Do *they* need a novel that re-centres whiteness through Black death (again/still!)?

While I do not want to conflate Black North American youth's experience with Indigenous Australian youth's experience, it is important to point out that in an Australian context, there are a number of texts authored by white people *about* Indigenous people's experiences that are also taught in schools, such as *Deadly, Unna?*, *The Secret River* and *Jasper Jones*. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, like these texts, is a book written by a white person, quite likely *for* white people; as such, its use in English classes might attempt to critique racism but does so by re-inscribing a narrative where a moral whiteness reigns and Black people pay the cost. If I historicise it that's the case. And if I present-day contextualise it, it's still the case.

Tellingly, in July 2019 Professor Carl James at York University, Canada sent a report to Peel Board of Education (the place I went to school in Ontario, Canada and read *To Kill a Mockingbird* in Grade 10) regarding an ethnographic study he completed with Black male secondary school students. The study focused on Black student attainment across subject areas and the need

for culturally responsive pedagogies. Significantly, the students reported feeling uncomfortable reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*: they didn't like how the Black characters are treated in the book, and they didn't like the continual use of the racial epithet (n-word) in the book (James, 2019). Cultural analysis of whiteness aside, this knowledge forces me as an educator to consider why we would continue to teach a narrative that Black students who are consistently marginalised in mainstream schooling have explicitly stated is hurtful to them. School boards in North America are removing the text for precisely these reasons, or asserting that it can only be taught through an anti-oppression framework which may require specific training on the part of educators (Llana, 2019).

This leads me back to my colleague's comment at the beginning of this paper: that we persist in teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird* and other 'classic' texts due to its 'perceived universalism.' The book is set in a very different time and place from contemporary Australia (or Canada, or the UK): the American South, during Jim Crow and before the civil rights movement. Focusing on narratives about racism from a different time and place does not necessarily translate into critical reflection on the existence of racism in a specific time/space. There's no 'universal' narrative of racism; it is constantly re-produced locally as well as being part of larger racialising technologies or assemblages of oppression and supremacy (Euro-Western humanism).

Another recent example of *To Kill a Mockingbird* being used to re-centre whiteness culturally is an article by an Australian English teacher (O'Farrell, 2020) that compares the racial prejudice Tom Robinson experiences in *To Kill a Mockingbird* to white Catholic Cardinal George Pell's experience of being accused and convicted, and then acquitted, of the sexual abuse of children. Allegorically equating a powerful white man who is a senior official of one of the most powerful religious institutions on earth to a poor Black man condemned and killed for a crime he didn't commit both erases and instrumentalises the institutionalised racism Black people experience. However, such allegorical equivalencies of experience are common teaching techniques in English – after all, English is often touted as a subject where we read fiction and put ourselves into other people's shoes, or use fiction as a way of understanding larger social or historical issues. Scholars have argued that using pedagogical tropes such as asking students to draw parallels between their own experience of being falsely accused of something

and Tom Robinson's experience can 'trivialize the realities of systemic oppression [and]… may actually reinforce normative notions about Whiteness rather than interrupt them' (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 409).

While I believe that allegorical and speculative readings can be effective tools in English education for promoting empathy or affirming different futures, such endeavours must not be at the expense of actual human children in a classroom – particularly students who are already marginalised by mainstream schooling – and must not instrumentalise systemic racist oppression in the service of whiteness. White teachers, school boards, and nostalgic parents telling Black kids that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is an important text to teach about racism, or an important universal narrative that white people can use to draw parallels about being falsely accused, are quintessential examples of whiteness centring itself.

Disrupting white déjà vu

I've been focusing on *To Kill a Mockingbird* as an obvious example of how whiteness circulates through the English canon and literary education, and how it is mobilised in schools and beyond. As I said at the beginning of the paper, critiques of the whiteness of the English canon are not new, particularly critiques by writers of colour (Baldwin, 1961; Hartman, 1997). In 1975, Chinua Achebe delivered a lecture in Massachusetts that critiqued Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (another text that's still frequently taught in high schools), pointing out the 'preposterous and perverse arrogance' of the text for reducing the continent of Africa to a mere backdrop for Kurtz's (the white European protagonist's) decent into madness (Achebe, 2016, p. 21). While it is possible to do a 'post-colonial' reading of *Heart of Darkness* and demonstrate that the text highlights the flaws of imperialism, Achebe's critique of the text's racism renders any re-cooperative attempt at a 'post-colonial' reading moot. Achebe (2016) draws attention to the text's 'dehumanization' of Africa and African people, and asks whether a novel that 'depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot' (p. 21).

Achebe's refusal to call *Heart of Darkness* a 'great' work of art strikes at the heart of debates around the English canon, and the persistence of whiteness as an affective force in literary education. It's so pervasive that I think in many ways white people cannot even see it: we don't question the certainty of whiteness because we don't

know it's there. I'm saying this as a white middle-class academic who has been schooled in the canon. English literary education has created a white echo chamber, where white voices are prioritised, white feelings more important than any others, and everything is calibrated and measured against European humanism. Hence this overwhelming feeling of déjà vu on confronting the secondary English curriculum in Canada, the UK and Australia; but particularly through seeing *To Kill a Mockingbird* still touted as a recommended 'classic' text to teach in secondary schools. And yet, I'm not saying we shouldn't teach it. I'm saying we need to think about who and what we serve in teaching it, and most importantly *how* it is taught.

Although I have used *To Kill a Mockingbird* as an example in this paper, I don't think that the text itself is the problem. For the purposes of this paper, the book has been a catalyst for considering how a beloved text that did a particular job in the past might not be the kind of text/narrative we need for the future of English. Or at least how we must re-evaluate the risks and impacts that are concomitant with retaining and teaching 'social justice texts' that centre whiteness not only in the narrative, but also through pedagogical practices of drawing false equivalencies of experience.

We know from research that many English teachers have expressed how they would like to bring culturally responsive pedagogies into their classrooms and engage with texts that are reflective of cultural diversity, but often cite lack of time and resources as barriers for implementing change (McLean Davies, Truman & Buzacott, 2020). These are material realities that must be acknowledged; however, in order for the future of English to rupture the certainty of the canon and the primacy of white experience, we have to stop centring it. One way to approach this is to change up text lists, and invest in teachers and allow them time to read and develop new materials for teaching. We also have to allow teachers (who remain predominantly white) time to develop more understanding of systemic structures of racism and settler colonialism. Additionally, teacher education and school hiring practices should invest in and acknowledge Indigenous teachers and teachers of colour and cultivate their experiences and expertise as literary educators (Hogarth, 2020; Skeeter, 2001). We also need to take a situated look at the students in English classes and their interests, as well as assessment regimes and bureaucratic structures that continually constrain the work that teachers do. English teachers know that stories have material effects on readers

(Truman, 2019b), and that the methods we bring to analysing texts and the comparative texts we put them in conversation with can have radical effects on textual reception and understanding. A renewed critical literacy perspective for the future of English might require not just different stories that foreground diverse characters' perspectives, but methods of analysis and reflection that do not reproduce dominant worldviews, regardless of the texts being analysed; otherwise we will continue to reproduce this white déjà vu in literary education.

Notes

1 Déjà vu in French means to have already seen something. It is often used in English to express a feeling of having lived through something before.

2 In Australia, *To Kill A Mockingbird* remains a text recommended by curriculum authorities (Board of Studies NSW) and the Premier's Reading Challenge Victoria (https://vprc.eduweb.vic.gov.au/home), and argued for by teachers in *Idiom* (Albrecht, 2012; Scholten, 2012), and it has been consistently mentioned to me in discussions with my tertiary colleagues, secondary teachers, and students.

3 Black scholars of affect have drawn attention to how when there is a 'subject' in affect theory, they are a transparent subject 'endowed with the capacity to affect *and* be affected' (Palmer, 2017, p. 37). Palmer (2017), following de Silva, argues that while the transparent subject, or Man, is endowed with a capacity to affect and be affected, a Black body 'stands as endlessly affectable but unable to "affect" or have agentive power within an affective economy' (p. 37).

4 A current discussion about media and the viral sharing of the video showing the murder of Black jogger Ahmaud Arbery in broad daylight relates to this ongoing practice of 'consuming' Black suffering and its affects on racialised people. See https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/may/07/ahmaud-arbery-video-shooting-sharing-viral

5 In many ways this paper *is* written to enable white people to think about how whiteness circulates in the curriculum and at what cost. Black scholars have been calling out the whiteness of the canon and curriculum for decades.

6 I know that this book has the potential to be taught through an anti-racist lens, and I'm not suggesting it be banned – I am suggesting that we consider why we still think it's a 'go-to' text for talking about racism or literary merit when there are a lot of other current, local books that address racism written by racialised authors.

7 The ongoing murders of unarmed Black youth on American streets – most recently the killing of Black jogger Ahmaud Arbery mentioned above – demonstrate how the racial logics of white supremacy continue to operate in America and globally.

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Perspectives from the Past

Teaching Literature Now and for the 'Net Generation'

Author: Woods, Claire

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Introduction

This edition's Perspectives from the Past is Claire Woods' 'Teaching literature now and for the "net generation"' from the April 2002 edition of *English in Australia*, the year that Woods was made a life member of AATE. This article uses an undergraduate course on 'Literary Practice' at the University of South Australia to raise broader issues of the changing nature of literary study and English in the early 2000s. Woods' concern with issues of emerging technology, digital textual production and reception, and the knowledge teachers need to develop in order to meet the needs of the next generation of students remains relevant for contemporary readers of *English in Australia*. She considers both emerging technologies and their role in subject English and literary study, but also the changing face of the student body, asking:

> How do we create an education in the new Humanities that acknowledges our students' backgrounds, as well as both the local and global contexts in which they live and will work? How should a curriculum be presented and organised to suit the information society and the 'techno' and 'wired' world and the new economies and social structures of such a world?

These questions continue to resonate in 2019 where the effects of globalisation and digital technology offer both greater access to information and resources, but at the same time, can exacerbate inequity and flatten diversity and difference.

Woods highlights the need to 'engage students in understanding the *tekhne* – the art and craft of making or representing the world'. While in the early 2000s this involved considering the emerging technologies of video games and eBooks, in contemporary contexts, in the current context, where online spaces are more prevalent and necessary than ever, we might continue to think about social media such as TikTok and how students and teachers can both receive but also produce new kinds of texts and textual engagements via these channels. Ultimately, the article implies that if technologies and their social relations are constantly being revised and remade, so too must subject English itself: this arguably remains as true now as it did nearly twenty years ago.

Teaching Literature Now and for the 'Net Generation'

Claire Woods
University of South Australia

In so far as we manifest ourselves as flesh and blood, we are largely bundles of genetic determinations, but in so far as we reveal ourselves in texts, as script or as print, we are largely the product of other texts. How we do stagger about, carrying on our humped backs such a mountain of books, poems, articles, paintings, epigrams, tunes, hymns and even advertisements. And the products of this mountain tumble over into our oral selves, and into our reading selves, as well as guiding the pen of the writer within us. (Wallace-Crabbe 1990, p. 117)

Chris Wallace-Crabbe, with a dramatic image of the burdened reader/writer, reminds us – if we ever needed to be so reminded – that we are bound to a world of textual activity and embedded in a world of literary practice. Our students as well, though they may be members of what Tapscott (1998) has called the 'Net Generation' are in many ways even more likely to stagger under the burden of new and different texts and modes of discourse. They will be, and are already, part of the electronic text revolution which as Roger Chartier (2001) comments 'is at once a revolution in the technology of the production and reproduction of texts, a revolution in the medium of writing, and a revolution in reading practices'. How might the university respond to this revolution in offering an undergraduate education in the arts and humanities? How might it provide a program for prospective teachers in the world of texts, and for different ways of reading and writing?

At the University of South Australia, within the School of Communication, Information and New Media, we have developed an undergraduate sequence of study titled 'Literary Practice'. How does such a study fit into an undergraduate education? Is this study a redefinition of Literary Studies? Of Literature? What seems to be important is to consider how studies like this fit into a University education in the Humanities and to reflect on what such studies today offer students for their tomorrows.

Early in 2001, the members of the School of Communication, Information and New Media met to discuss the directions we might take in reviewing, revising and redeveloping the offerings in the undergraduate program. The discussions at this meeting have generated an ongoing process of revision of the School's BA programs, including those in Communication, Multimedia, Professional Writing and Communication, Information Management, Journalism, Communication and Media Management.

Two discussion papers were presented. The first, prepared and circulated in advance by David Homer and Jackie Cook, provoked discussion about what Tapscott has called the 'Net Generation' – and thus about how we might review and revise the undergraduate program to take this group of students into account. Tapscott suggests that this group (1990–2015) can be characterised by such things as:

- valuing material things but being idealistic with a strong social awareness
- believing they must find their own way in life without relying on institutions or Government
- prioritising good education
- valuing personal competence
- relying on networks of friends and family – including on-line contacts and communities
- actively defending electronic culture.

They are a generation that is 'interactive' and 'networked' (Tapscott 1998).

The second paper was offered as a reflection and extension on the ideas offered by David and Jackie. In that paper, I posed some questions about our current undergraduates and those we might teach in the future.

Consider who our students in 2001–2004 are.
Consider what they know and what they have experienced.
When were they born?
(First-years today were born in 1981–82. They were in High School from 1994–2000)
What have they grown up with? What artefacts are they familiar with?
What technologies? What national or world events occurred in that time?
What political and social issues are part of their life experience?

Consider the students of 2005–2008
Consider what they know and what they may have experienced.

When were they born? (1985–86) They are in High School now.
What have they grown up with? What artefacts? What technologies?
What films? Music? TV? What national or world events will be part of their experience? What political and social issues will be part of their life experience?

These are the students we are currently teaching or for whom we are planning curriculum. It is salutary to reflect on the dramatic differences between their experiences and ours.

The School of Communication, Information and New Media staff discussed what sort of education a university should offer such students. How do we create an education in the new Humanities that acknowledges our students' backgrounds, as well as both the local and global contexts in which they live and will work? How should a curriculum be presented and organised to suit the information society and the 'techno' and 'wired' world and the new economies and social structures of such a world?

To help answer this question I turned to points made by Professor Roly Sussex (2000). He suggests that an education in the Humanities should make provision for the development of what he calls the nine wisdoms of the modern world citizen. These are in brief:

Textuality: students need to know how to read texts – informative, political, emotive, creative and artistic – and to evaluate their content and purpose

Historicity: understanding the dynamics of the development of ideas, societies and human principles

Cultures: cultural knowledge – power and advantage/disadvantage, globalisation, inter-cultural communication

Critique: analysis, synthesis, argumentation

Linguistic abilities: IT, multimedia, different genres and media

Values and ethics: personal, societal, ethical

Argumentation: dialogue, monologue –ideas, evidence, evaluation; rhetoric – the arts of discourse in socio-cultural contexts

Technological literacy

Interdisciplinarity.

I find this a useful framework for considering what students at the University of South Australia might expect when they enter the BA program. It provides a

conceptual checklist that enables us to reflect on the curriculum in the School of Communication, Information and New Media. In particular, the points are reflected in the sequence of studies on which I will focus here – a sequence in Literary Practice.

The School is an interdisciplinary school situated within the new Humanities. Students study courses within the major communication domains familiar to us all, such as global communications, cultural studies, screen studies, creative writing, linguistics, media communications, information and knowledge management, electronic publishing, media production, text studies, gender studies and so on.

In one sense, we are already offering studies that would seem appropriate to the present and future interests and needs of our students. However, we are aware that we need to keep considering how and what we teach in order to stay abreast of developments in technology. Further, we need to offer students, particularly teacher education students who will take a General Studies sequence from within the BA, studies that will be seen as acceptable in a school system that still values more traditionally framed literature courses or literary studies.

In relation to the other Universities nearby in the city of Adelaide, the School of Communication, Information and New Media stands out not only because of the department 's name but also because of its interdisciplinary stance. We do not have a department of literature or of English because we do not offer a traditional sequence of studies in literature. Instead we have redefined the study of literary texts to take into account the world of 2001 and to anticipate 2005 and beyond.

Through much of the twentieth century English departments have been the locus for literary studies in English-speaking Western countries. English as a discipline has been substantially defined by its focus on literature and, for the past 40 years or more, by its focus on literary theory and analysis. In some universities the impact of cultural studies/communication studies led to a schism between those who remained closely aligned with traditional studies of literature and those who adopted the perspectives offered by the proponents of cultural studies and the allied approaches of feminist and Marxist scholarship.

In the US this seems still to be a source of division in some quarters. In Australia, as in the UK and Canada, there has been an accommodation of varying kinds. Some university departments retained the literature focus but with acknowledgement of the theoretical

territory derived from cultural studies. Others, as is the case with the University of South Australia, established schools of communication with an emphasis on communication/cultural studies and ceased offering traditional literature-based programs. The University offers a BA program in which students take a 'professional major' in communication studies, professional writing and communication, multimedia, journalism or information management. Students choose submajors and minors from across these and a range of related interdisciplinary areas. Teacher Education students similarly can choose from any of these areas for their General Studies. It continues to be a concern that the employing authorities often do not recognise the new Humanities interdisciplinary areas as domains of expertise, despite the firmly theoretically grounded and clearly articulated curricula in which students have been engaged.

In particular the BA (Professional Writing and Communication) has developed as a field of study firmly based on five framing perspectives: an ethnographic perspective grounded in the ethnography of communication; a perspective on discourse and construction of knowledge; language studies – linguistics and sociolinguistics; rhetorical practice – text studies and textual practice, including the idea of *tekhne*, the art and craft of making texts; literacies in context – encountering and investigating reading and writing practices. It is in this program that students are engaged in creative and critical approaches to text production and reception. David Homer (2001) described one course from the program in a recent *English in Australia*; illustrating how students 'Write the City' as ethnographers/writers/researchers/readers/ creative and critical makers and designers of texts. It is on the foundations of the professional writing program and the related programs in communication and multimedia studies that the sequence in Literary Practice has evolved.

A focus on 'making' as a creative and critical endeavour enables a refocusing on texts and literary practice. This is territory in writing pedagogy and curriculum that we have already mined and continue to explore. It is for us interesting to see how scholars elsewhere, particularly in the US, are arguing for a practice that we have comfortably set in place over the past eight years.

For example, composition scholar Alan France responding to the US debates about the conflict between literature and composition[1] within English

departments comments that the current American disputes can be resolved by drawing on 'two decades of cultural critique' and refocusing the work of interacting with texts.

> In literary studies such a reform would refocus attention from critical strategies for reading literary texts to critical strategies for representing (in writing) the *experience* of reading a literary text. (France 2000, p. 146)

His interest is in developing a 'post humanist' pedagogy that will allow the student to develop critical thinking skills and related knowledge, and an understanding of aesthetics, values and so on, that are associated with a 'Liberal Education'. Thus:

> My argument, then, is that English studies must work towards a post-Foucauldian 'technology of the self' by developing a theoretically informed, meta-discursive writing pedagogy – for both composition and literature – that focuses on students' understanding of the dialectic between self and culture. (France 2000, p. 149)

France puts the burden for enabling such a positive relationship on composition scholars:

> Those who teach composition in English Studies curricula at any level should realise that such instruction occupies a central and medial position in preparing students of this postmodern world (the global discursive economy), which Readings suggests will be the cultural milieu our students will inhabit. With literary and cultural studies, linguistics and semiotics, composition studies ought to assume full partnership as one of what Ronal Schleifer calls 'the disciplines of language'. (France 2000, p. 150) [2]

His point is that curricula and assignments in English should involve students in developing their capacity to read and understand the world through writing and related reading tasks that enable them 'organise and validate knowledge' for themselves (163). (He offers three exemplar assignments as evidence of such pedagogy in practice.)

James Berlin takes a similar position in arguing for a redefinition of English in terms of a social epistemic rhetoric:[3]

> The materials and methods of all courses should be organised around text interpretation *and* construction – not, as previously, one or the other exclusively – leading to a revised conception of both reading and writing as acts of textual production. (Berlin 1996, p. xxi)

This is territory the Marxist Literary scholar Terry Eagleton claimed when he dismissed literature as a distinct field of knowledge. Instead he asserted that English should be seen as a field of study that is centrally concerned with rhetorical practice. Acknowledging rhetoric's past acceptance as a form of critical analysis of all kinds of texts, he writes:

> It was not worried about whether its objects of enquiry were speaking or writing, poetry or philosophy, fiction or historiography: its horizon was nothing less than the field of discursive practices in society as a whole and its particular interest lay in grasping such practices as forms of power and performance. (Eagleton 1983, p. 205) [4]

The emphasis on acknowledging and then building a curriculum on the production and consumption of texts, including an understanding of the ideological contingencies of textual and discursive practice, is a consistent theme for scholars intent on remaking the area of study known as Literature/English/Literary Studies. Thus have many literary and composition, communication and cultural studies scholars reconceptualised the study of literature. In a recent article for example, Trimbur (2000) revisits the notion of textual exchange and production and theories of cultural materialism in order to make a claim for conceptualising writing as a cycle of distribution or circulation. Such a cycle includes composing, producing, distributing, exchanging and consuming writing.

Trimbur claims that teachers of writing have been concerned only with composing and have thus isolated students from the 'complex delivery systems through which writing circulates' (190). Refocusing on the cycle of circulation would ensure that the teaching of writing is concerned not only with composing but also with document design, the practicalities of document delivery and circulation as well as the circulation of knowledge, information, ideas and opinions. The cycle should be seen as centrally concerned with the 'diffusion of socially useful knowledge' (191). For teachers he suggests that this is an essentially democratic and civic issue.

The BA (Professional Writing and Communication) established at the University of South Australia in 1994 might be seen as exemplifying this bringing together of literature, writing and language in a forceful and vital curriculum. I have described this elsewhere (Woods 1999, 2001). In one sense, the program in Professional Writing and Communication can be viewed as a redefined English major. In another, it is clearly something different. More than being a hybrid of territories, it is a truly interdisciplinary territory with a focus on discourse and language in society.

After completing five compulsory courses,

students can take optional studies that allow them to specialise in language studies, creative writing, technical writing and document development or literary practice. For teacher education students, who take a general study in the Humanities, two sequences are available: *Communication: Writing and Language* or the sequence in *Literary Practice*.

The courses in these two sequences are underpinned by clearly formulated theoretical and pedagogical foci. At all points we engage students in understanding the *tekhne* –the art and craft of making or representing the world. Their focus is rhetorical; exploring the arts of discourse in many contexts as researchers, writers, readers, and as makers of texts both in print and on-line. They become ethnographers of diverse contexts with a particular eye on textual relationships.

Here I describe briefly the sequence in *Literary Practice* and show why we believe that this is a sequence of study that is directly relevant to students.

> **Literary Practice**
>
> * 6 courses
> Writing and Reading Across the Disciplines (Compulsory)
> Writing and Text Workshop (C)
> Reading as Cultural Practice (C)
>
> **Three courses from the available list including:**
> Text, Co-Text and Context
> Classic Theatre
> Australian Theatre
> Interpreters Theatre
> Shakespeare Reworked
> Reading the Screen
> Writing and Reading Poetry
> Writing and Reading the Short Story
> The Informed Writer: a study of the Essay
> Issues in Language and Discourse
> Others

The courses together contribute to the student understanding aspects of textuality, including the production and reception of texts. However, the sequence takes them further than a critical response to texts. The courses allow students, through their own practice as readers, writers and producers of a range of texts – in print, on-line, on screen, in performance – to consider the place of texts and the valuing of particular forms of representation (whether written, visual, aural) in society. By means of practice and critique we chal-

lenge students with the problematic issues of defining what is meant by 'literature' and 'literariness'.

For our purposes we accept a notion of 'literature' that is inclusive of all kinds of writing and not just the kind of fictional writing that is valued for its claimed aesthetic merit. Students need to understand how different kinds of writing are valued differently in different cultural contexts. In this we are in tune with what Milner (1996; drawing on Raymond Williams) describes as an 'immodest version of cultural studies' in which the broad range of texts are available for study – thus cultural studies includes literary studies. However we go further than this, since our concerns are not just with critique but also with productive practice that enables critique, and conversely with critique that has an impact on practice.

This is not a study built on the activity of literary criticism, which was for most of the last century the domain of and justification for Literary Studies/ (English) Literature curriculum. This is a study firmly grounded in the cultural and theoretical space of the interdisciplinary new Humanities and the issues and questions raised *inter alia* by cultural studies, feminist critiques and new rhetorical criticism. We problematise the idea of the reader and the author and the relationship between them. We also engage students in activities that draw them into understanding what Eagleton (1978 p. 3) called 'the literary mode of production'. Milner (1996) describes it this way:

> The forces of literary production consist in material technologies on one hand (printing, paper manufacture and so on), cultural forms on the other (the novel, the newspaper). The relations of production are constituted by the social relations between publishers, writers and readers (and various intermediary 'gatekeepers'). (p. 65)

The next generations of students will deal with entirely different means of production from those with which we grew up or to which we are now adjusting. The material technologies are already changing; the cultural forms now emerging with new technologies demand new ways of responding; and the social relations of new technologies are constantly being revised and remade.

For example, computer games are remaking story telling by means of differently organised and created visual spaces to which the reader responds by navigating the space and interacting to build the narrative. Computer games, says Jenkins (2001) are 'transmedia storytelling'. Visual metaphors and spatial images offer dense layers of information that the reader/game player

must process. New forms of narrative have emerged in the electronic medium.

Hypertext-linked documents also offer and demand a different reading process: a process Burbules has labelled 'hyperreading' because it 'involves the reader making connections within and across texts, sometimes in ways that are structured by the designer/author … but often in ways determined by the reader' (Burbules 1997, p. 105).

Writing is also clearly a different process in an electronic environment. Burbules again:

> Where traditional text depends upon the disciplines of the Outline and the Syllogism, hypertext opens up the additional textual possibilities of Bricolage and Juxtaposition: assembling texts from pieces that can be represented in multiple relations to one another. (1997, p. 107)

The impact of the new ways of representing via the web suggests that readers and writers learn to deal with the 'rhetorics of the web'. Whether they do this uncritically or critically is an important consideration according to Burbules, who proposes a taxonomy of rhetorical devices specifically applied to web links as a basis for critical analysis. His intention is to 'show links as rhetorical moves that can be evaluated and questioned for their relevance.' He continues:

> They [links] imply choices: they reveal assumptions: they have effects – whether intentionally or inadvertently. Judging links, then is a crucial part of developing a broader critical orientation to hyperreading: not simply to follow the links laid out for us, but to interpret their meaning and assess their appropriateness. (Burbules 1997, p. 117)

Computer games make the 'rhetorics of the web' particularly observable. On-line documentation and web sites are also part of this new territory of reading and writing. So too are e-books. An exploration of the world of 'e-books' illuminates the forces of literary production at work today. With electronic communications we have access to a material technology that enables the production and distribution of a novel. It provides access to an audience for writers who might otherwise not be able to enter the public literary sphere because of the 'gatekeepers' – the editors and publishers who have rejected them. Alberto Manguel, for example, writes about the impact the new technology on the 'literary industry':

> Essays on the Internet, poems transmitted through a modem, books copied onto disk and passed from a friend to a friend have begun to bypass publishers and booksellers. Interactive novels question the very notion of authorship. Who will be paid royalties for a text scanned in Salamanca, received on e-mail in Recife , modified in Melbourne, expanded in Ecuador , saved on a soft disk in San Francisco? Who in fact is the author of that multifarious text? (Manguel 1999, p. 267)

What do new electronic texts – e-book novels, for example –look like? How are they designed? How are they read and by whom? Is this the codex of the future? What does it mean for the idea of the Author? What does it mean for the idea of the Reader? These questions are not new but they do prompt consideration of how a future curriculum might deal with them.

These are not questions for which we in the School of Communication, Information and New Media have ready answers. Yet we have made a start in the specific sequence of studies we have titled Literary Practice.

As students move through the sequence there is a subtle shift of emphasis, signalled in part by the course titles. The shift is from a broad consideration of rhetorical practice, through to more specific focus on the writer as both creative and critical producer and consumer of texts, then to a focus on the reader and the process of reading as a cultural practice, and finally to literary practices as exemplified by texts produced in a range of genres and media.

Writing and Reading Across the Disciplines: This is an introduction to rhetoric as both the 'arts of discourse in context' (Andrews 1992) and as 'the study of the effects of language in human affairs' (Berlin 1996). Here students are readers and writers, engaged as researchers (ethnographers) and faced with the problems of representing a situation in words. They read a range of texts, undertaking exercises that demand particular interactions with perhaps a poem or a newspaper article or a research report, or a creative non-fiction essay, or with a passage from a novel or from a history book or a sociology text.

In one such exercise, students are asked to paraphrase a passage – which demands of them particular skills as a reader. They are then asked to use the passage as a catalyst for their own writing – which might be a poem, a commentary, a persuasive essay, or a short story.

Students produce a Folio of work and a final major piece of writing of 2500 words based on participation in or observation of a cultural scene. These documents

must be presented in publishable form – word-processed, presented with covers, title pages, contents page and the other requirements of a public document.

Writing and Text Workshop: This is a more overtly creative course in which the focus is on writing in or on an established text as a means for reading and interpreting. It is based on the idea of Textual Invention – that one can intervene in a text at different levels and thus interpret that text on the basis of the work one does not only as a reader but also as a writer.[v] This is not a course in literary criticism, although students are introduced to different critical perspectives for reading and interpretation.

Students in this course read widely and respond to a range of texts – print, on screen and visual. Their responses are creative and critical and include the same range – print, visual and oral or performance texts. In this course, the writer-reader nexus as a creative and critical activity is highlighted. Students become producers of texts in a more overtly creative way. Yet the creative text produced is also the critical since the creative must represent a critical reading of the base text.

Reading as Cultural Practice: Here the shift is to the Reader in social and cultural contexts. Reading here includes viewing and spectatorship. The text for this course is *A History of Reading* by Alberto Manguel, and a set of selected articles and extracts covering a range of issues in reading practices and theory.

Students consider specifically what it means to be a reader and viewer of texts. How do reading publics form? How are literary publics sustained? How is literary merit determined? Who makes decisions about what will be published or distributed? And what of censorship?

Of interest here is what Eberly (2000) has described as 'Literary Public Spheres'. Eberly describes four case studies of literary texts published in the twentieth century and their public reception. She suggests that classrooms can become 'protopublic spaces' where students would thus be able to learn about how texts operate in the public domain and would be able to study texts as they are produced, distributed and received in different social contexts.

The work our students do in this course as in the other options available to them in the Literary Practice sequence enables them to enter the literary public sphere as both readers and writers.

The titles of some of the optional courses suggest the territories students explore.

Shakespeare Re-worked is representative of the work students might be engaged in. Course leader Paul Skrebels describes it this way:

> *Shakespeare Re-worked* deals with 'Shakespeare' – as 'author-function' or 'piece of discourse' (Desmet 1999, p. 5) – as a cultural phenomenon rather than as a set of texts for close reading. Its overall aim is to examine the ways in which Shakespeare has been appropriated, reworked and reproduced since his own time, and to explore the techniques and cultural contexts that inform such reworkings. A key concept in the course is that of Shakespeare as cultural capital,
>
> > circulated through different ages and social strata, in turn accruing and conferring symbolic value on cultural projects from both highbrow and lowbrow culture – to use Lawrence Levine's (1988) seminal construct – and sometimes both together. (Desmet 1999, p. 5)
>
> Given the students' own immersion in global techno-culture, the major focus tends to be on the place consistently found for Shakespeare in the mass media. However, the course encourages students to contrast modes of production and reception through history and across cultures, and to reproduce and re-present elements of the Shakespeare canon in their own ways and for their own purposes. Students therefore investigate where and how Shakespeare 'fits' into their lives, and so learn to identify and understand their own subject positions as investors in and consumers of this particular cultural capital, as they engage anew with the manifold Shakespearean products and artefacts. (Skrebels, personal communication, 15 June 2001)

Whether they are involved as writers or as editors and designers, our students are drawn into the production aspects of literary practice. They are not only consumers but also producers of texts. It is commonplace of course for students to word-process their writing. They might also create video or film text, and integrate this with electronic publication on a website.

Students are encouraged to submit their work to a wider audience. They can perform their work at a student Pub Reading – Written Off – and submit their work to the Writing students' newsletter *Ormulum*. This is edited, designed and produced by group of students who earn course credit for their work. They can submit work for publication in the anthology *Piping Shrike* which is edited, designed and taken through printing and publication by students. This anthology is distributed for sale in bookshops. Finally, students publish

work on *MAGNET*, the on-line journal run by students within the School.

When we involve students in any of the courses we ask them to engage in the sort of practices that enable them to make the connections between theory and practice: Literary Practice is centrally an exercise in praxis. In the final or Honours year, students often undertake work that firmly situates them in Literary Practice. Some examples of this will show how this happens.

Carole has written an autoethnographic account of her life in an environmental community in the '70s. She works not only from personal documentation (diaries, letters) and public documentation relating to the community, but also from oral history interviews with friends and colleagues, as well as her own recollection of events some 15 years on. As she produces this text for possible publication, she explores the theoretical and practical issues of text construction, of the blurred boundaries between genres (autobiography, memoir history) and of the responsibilities of the ethnographer as researcher and autobiographer.

Kara has chosen to use the Short Story as a mode for entering the public sphere to explore her ideas about women's bodies, images and identity. Her reading and research take her into feminist theory, art history and short story writing over the past 150 years. She will write a set of short stories which she hopes to see published in contemporary women's magazines.

Simon undertook to prepare a new style cookbook for publication. He gathered recipes and information from professional and amateur chefs and interleaved their stories with his fiction and non-fiction, with recipes gathered from family members and with recipes from the people he interviewed. He then designed the publication templates and prepared the manuscript for publication.

Ynys completed a study of creative non-fiction essays and concluded the thesis with her own essay – an exercise in creative/critical and reflective commentary. This was published in an on-line journal devoted to creative non fiction writing.

The examples given above demonstrate that the Literary Practice in which the students are involved is still primarily that of traditional print technology with some extensions into other media. Increasingly, however students work across the blurred boundaries of print and electronic and visual media. The cyber/ electronic world is an intricate mix of print and visual/ graphic modes to which they as writers and readers must respond. Arnold Bennett, late nineteenth-century novelist wrote:

> Graphic art cannot be totally separated from literary art, nor vice versa. They encroach on each other.
> (Quoted in Childers et al. 1998)

The cyber world ensures that this must be the case. Students increasingly treat such a world as normal.

Notes

1. English departments in the US often comprise staff who might teach either composition or literature. There is often a chasm between the two and the debates about ways of adjusting the status of one (composition teachers) and/or merging the two areas are played out in many professional publications and forums.

2. The late Bill Readings in his posthumously released book, *The University in Ruins*, looked sceptically at the future of the university and in particular noted the impact of cultural studies on traditional literary studies.

3. 'Social Epistemic Rhetoric is the study and critique of signifying practices in their relation to subject formation within the framework of economic, social and political conditions'. James Berlin (1996) *Rhetorics, Poetics and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies*, Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, p. 77.

4. Other scholars have taken a similar position in relocating English studies within a rhetorical frame; e.g. Reid, Culler, Frow, Andrews, Hunter.

5. See Rob Pope, *Textual Intervention*, Routledge: London, 1994.

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READing VIEWing

with Deb McPherson

The focus for this column is multimodal texts; some of these types of texts are very familiar while others are texts that reflect contemporary and emerging technologies and look to the future. Multimodal texts use more than one mode. The NSW Stage 6 English Syllabus glossary defines multimodal texts as using 'a combination of two or more communication modes, for example print, image and spoken text as in film or computer presentations'. Examples such as picture books, cartoons and films have entertained readers, old and young for many years while graphic novels, websites, apps, TED talks, Pecha Kuchas, digital essays, digital games, podcasts, digital narratives and infographics are more recent textual forms. Increasingly multimodal presentations in the classroom are being used to assess student skills, knowledge and understanding. The more models of these different kinds of texts students see, view and interact with, the better their ability to create their own. The first text to be reviewed, *Sea Prayer*, actually appears in two mediums; as an illustrated short story and an animated one.

Multimodal texts: illustrated and graphic novels and picture books

For Stage 4

Sea Prayer **Khalid Hosseini illustrated by Dan Williams (2018) Bloomsbury hardcover 44 pp.**

Sea Prayer **Khalid Hosseini,** *The Guardian* **and Liz Edwards (2017) https://www.theguardian.com/ world/2017/sep/01/sea-prayer-a-360-story-inspired-by-refugee-alan-kurdi-khaled-hosseini**

Sea Prayer, as an illustrated short story in the form of a letter, and, as an animated story, is a compassionate and empathic response to a traumatic event, the death of a small refugee. Alan Kurdi, was a three-year-old Syrian, who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea and the photograph of his tiny body being carried from the water sparked worldwide remorse and grief. Khaled

Hosseini commemorated the second anniversary of Alan's death with an illustrated story which was animated in a virtual reality film in a 360 degrees format, as part of a collaboration with *The Guardian* newspaper and UNHCR.

Alan's death is not represented in either of these mediums. Instead, readers and viewers are taken, through the narration of the father, back to the life of a family before they fled their home. We can see their daily life and then the impact of war and the terrible decisions that must be made to keep the family safe.

Sea Prayer is a short and powerful text in both its mediums and will appeal to students as they consider its purpose and the impact of the differing forms used. *Sea Prayer* has strong connections with the poem, 'What they took with them – a List'.

A readers' theatre version of this poem is available at https://www.unhcr.org/refugeeday/what-they-took-with-them/ and 'What They Took With Them' was reviewed in *English in Australia*, Volume 52 Number 1 2017.

Cicada **Shaun Tan (2018) Lothian Children's Books hardcover 32 pp.**

It would be hard to find a better text on being different and alone than the picture book, *Cicada*. Tan tells the tale of a suit- wearing cicada who works in a grey office. He enters data, day after endless day, making no mistakes and earning no praise. He takes no days off and makes no friends. He works for 17 years alongside humans who bully him and then ignore him. Tan portrays his life in monochromatic greens and greys. On cicada's retirement there is no party of farewell. He goes to the roof to the building and transforms to a different life.
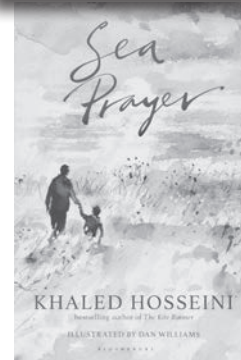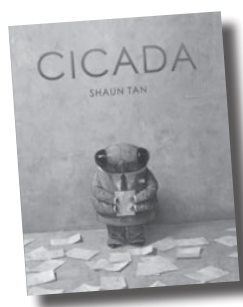
Students of all ages will find this story of endurance, amid a disheartening environment, a fascinating text to explore. It could be considered in conjunction with Tan's delightful website http://www.shauntan.net where he discusses his work. On Cicada he notes:

I was thinking about friends and family who have worked in places where they felt underappreciated, including my father who had mixed experiences in his professional life, and has since happily disappeared somewhere in his garden since retirement, growing everything from olives to custard apples.

For Stage 5

Tales from the Inner City
Shaun Tan (2018) Allen & Unwin hardcover 211 pp.
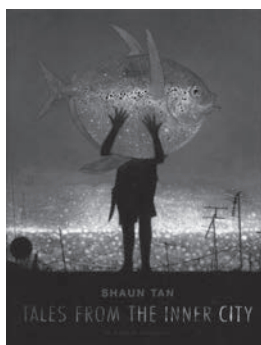
This is an astonishing collection of twenty-five stories about human relationship with animals, both real and imagined. Stories are accompanied by mesmerising paintings showing humans and animals connecting, or not, with one another. In the case of a dog there is a suite of paintings to parallel the human/animal partnership. The cover illustration concerns urban fishing. Pim is part of a group who fish in the sky. He never catches anything so when he does catch a Moonfish, 'sparking like a disk of gold', from the rooftop of the apartment it is unforgettable. As is the story that unfolds. Other stories are about the rhino on the freeway, the bears suing humans for murder and genocide, and for crimes under the bear legal code, and the crocodiles on the eighty-seventh floor. These tales are the product of a fabulous imagination and I can imagine nothing more wonderful that letting students select stories to read and view, then consider, debate, review and emulate. Tan says that the basic premise he set was quite simple: 'think about an animal in a city. Why is it there? How do people react to it? What meaning does it suggest?' Much of his work 'deals with the separation or tension between natural and artificial worlds, provoking a sense of longing for something lost, or something that can't be fully remembered'. From http://www.shauntan.net/books.html

***To Kill Mockingbird* Harper Lee adapted and illustrated by Fred Fordham (2018) Penguin Random House hardcover 273 pp.**

This powerful adaptation of Harper's classic novel offers new perspectives and startling representations of pivotal scenes. For example, on one-page Atticus faces the reader, as well as the rabid dog, as he lifts his rifle to fire and this is vividly conveyed in three large boxed illustrations. On another page we look down on the courtroom from the 'coloured' balcony as we sit with Scout and Jem and recoil from the guilty verdict. And on a heartbreaking two-page spread Tom Robinson's death is conveyed in a silent anguish. At the end of the book Boo Radley, after saving Jem, is welcomed by Scout with a moving montage. Her simple 'Hey Boo' can be found in a small text bubble to one side.

Any classroom in which *To Kill a Mockingbird* is being discussed would benefit from a few copies of this graphic adaptation. At 272 comic book style pages it will provide a swift understanding of the novel. It would be useful for students who seek greater clarity about the text and Lee's purpose in writing it. Fordham notes at the end of the book that the text is, as far as possible, taken directly from the novel and any changes 'have been for the sole purpose of best representing the story and sentiment of Lee's original work in this medium'.

This graphic novel could be used in a task where students consider the change in the 'voice' of marginalised and disparaged black people in the USA and Australia from the 1930–60s to the present day. They could compare the voice of Tom in *To Kill a Mockingbird* to that of Starr in *The Hate U Give* (USA) and that of Jasper Jones in either the novel or play of the same name and of Charlotte and Ray in Nakkiah Lui's play, *Black is the New White*.

For Stage 6

The Handmaid's Tale **Margaret Atwood, art and adaptation by Renee Nault (2019) Doubleday hardcover**

The handmaids' red cloaks in Atwood's novel, and in the television series it inspired, are instantly recognisable across the globe. The highly visible cloaks are often used in protests against oppressive laws and

gender inequality. Here is a stunning visual representation of Atwood's classic dystopian text about the rise of theocracies and the subjugation of women in watercolours that evoke and reinforce her prose on every page. Nault's description of her process in an online interview for CBC Books is useful for students:

My first task was to adapt it into a script that would work as a graphic novel. A lot had to be cut out and shifted around. I made a movie-style script for the publishers and for Margaret. I went through the novel over and over again with a highlighter and tried to figure out what passages made the novel what it is, the essence of it. Jane van Koeverden (posted May 6 2019)

While I regret the ethnic diversity apparent in the television series has not been reproduced here it is a still a text that will resonate with students and aid them in any study of *The Handmaid's Tale.*

Multimodal texts: poetry

For Stage 5

Poems to Share II
AATE and Red Room
Poetry (2019) AATE

In *Poems to Share 11* students and teachers will find much to inspire and enthuse them. There are forty poems and activity cards to foster creativity in a specially designed box. They can be used individually, in groups or as a class in a random or structured way. The poems on the cards are written by student poets, teacher poets and commissioned poets and display a rich versatility in subject, mood and form. Students can explore these poems and the techniques the poets use and in turn experiment with some of the ideas in their own writing. The forty cards are colour-coded, covering a range of poetic techniques based around form and structure, language, sound and imagery. The boxed set comes with access to linked digital resources that can help to deepen students' understanding of the selected poems and provides the impetus to write their own.

Poems to Share II is the winner of the Secondary Teaching Resource category in the Education Publishing Awards (Silver). It has also been recognised as 'the best of the best', winning the Outstanding Secondary Resource Award (Gold).

Multimodal texts: videos on websites

For Stages 4 and 5

Give Nothing to Racism video advertisement
Directed by Taika Waititi (2017) NZ Human
Rights Commission https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=g9n_UPyVR5s

Racism starts small. Sometimes it lives in everyday actions and comments that we laugh off, nod in agreement to, excuse, and therefore accept. But we don't have to. We can stop casual racism from growing into something more extreme. We can give it no encouragement. No respect. No place. No power. We can give it nothing.
NZ Human Rights Commission.
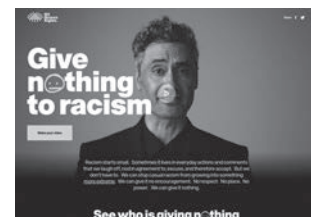
This short black-and-white video, by Taika Waititi, supports the New Zealand Human Rights Commission's 'Give Nothing to Racism' campaign. In a series of answers to short, frequently asked questions Waititi asks viewers what they can 'give to racism'. He explains that racism needs viewers' help to survive. This wonderfully satiric clip is perfect to use in the classroom from Year 7 to Year 12. It's classic Kiwi humour from the creator of *Hunt for the Wilderpeople.*

The Guardian advertisement (2012) https://www.
youtube.com/watch?v=vDGrfhJH1P4

The Guardian's 'Three Little Pigs' television advertisement appeals to us through the use of a well-known fairy-tale. It imagines the boiling of the wolf, by the three little pigs, as a modern news story. It demonstrates how a story can grow and change due to the collaboration of the society in which it appears. Modern news gathering and responses are examined through the use of parody, appropriation, twitter, humour, animations and rapid-fire scenarios. The soundtrack is gripping as the paper commits to revealing 'the whole picture'. In a world of fake news accusations, it seems to offer an optimism about news coverage that is still refreshing and uplifting. The 'Three Little Pigs' provides students with a wonderful text to explore and emulate and

many teachers confirm it has lit up (rather than boiled up) a classroom.

Adweek chose 'Three Little Pigs' as the best single advertisement of 2012. For a behind the scenes look at the advertisement go to https://www.theguardian.com/media/gallery/2012/feb/29/three-little-pigs-behind-scenes

Multimodal texts: app

For Stages 5 and 6

Florence app/game/graphic novel Ken Wong (2018) Mountains

Florence Yeoh is a young woman looking for love, and when she runs into cellist, Krish, her entire perception of the world begins to change. Over a number of years, they grow close, entwine their lives together and then eventually fall apart. This interactive app is endearing and authentic and divided into a series of chapters which introduce different game mechanics. This is not just a puzzle game but a story, and it plays like an interactive graphic novel. Melbourne based Wong said, 'I wanted to explore what kind of stories and what kind of dynamics we can get without resorting to violence'. This is certainly a game that can be enjoyed and explored in the classroom and could elicit imaginative and creative responses from students. *Florence* won the Apple Design Award in 2018. A preview of *Florence* can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPUwFEhgvVA

Multimodal texts: drama

For Stages 4, 5 and 6

A Midsummer Night's Dream RSC School Shakespeare (2017) Oxford University Press 192 pp.

The Tempest RSC School Shakespeare (2018) Oxford University Press 200 pp.

Macbeth RSC School Shakespeare (2017) Oxford University Press 232 pp.

If you are looking to upgrade your Shakespeare plays do have a look at the Royal Shakespeare Company school collection. I asked OUP to send me some plays for review consideration and the three listed above arrived. All the plays are a blaze of colour with images from RSC productions. There are stills from the plays on every double page and the vibrant and accessible layout invites the reader /actor in.

The RSC approach is explained and then a two-page spread shows how the text is set out. This practical outline of how the text is structured is a very helpful introduction for students and gives teachers the opportunity to preview the text.

A section on the play in performance is followed by the chapter, *The play at a glance*, which describes the scene with helpful headings and a brief summary.

When the reader/actor moves to the actual play the script is found on the right-hand side. On the left-hand side is a performance photograph surrounded by a summary of what is happening on the facing page, an activity, a glossary and some contextual ideas and key terms. It's wonderfully helpful for both students and teachers and vividly brings the play to life. In between each act there is a two-page colour spread with group activities that can really engage the students.

The final section in the text, *William Shakespeare and his world*, looks at Shakespeare's life, language and context. The commentary is individualised to each play.

The RSC is a world leader in peforming Shakespeare's plays and it brings its expertise and vast experience to making these texts exciting to pick up and easy to use and explore. It also makes the teacher's task a delight. Other plays in the series are *Much Ado About Nothing, Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice.* Highly recommended.
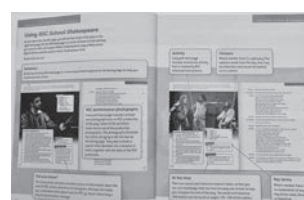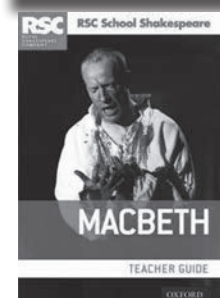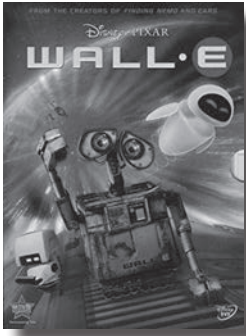
Multimodal texts: film

For Stage 4

WALL.E directed by Andrew Stanton (2008) DVD

WALL.E is an animated film about a future earth that is covered in garbage. Humanity has fled into space and Buy N. Large, the corporation who produced the products littering the earth, has created robots to clean up the planet. Through some accident, only WALL.E (Waste Allocation Load Lifter: Earth-Class) remains active and he goes about his impossible task with quiet determination. He finds a small plant but this evidence that life is starting to appear again on Earth is taken by EVE, a visiting space robot, on a reconnaissance trip to earth. WALL.E hitches a ride on her drone ship to the *Axiom*, the spaceship where the people from Earth have sheltered for over seven hundred years. The inhabitants of the *Axiom* are obsessed with aimless consumption and spend their lives in hover chairs. But WALL.E and EVE become a great team and win a battle to give humans the opportunity to learn how to plant and grow crops on their abandoned planet. Gradually earth begins to mend and the closing credits use different historical art styles to show the earth healing and repopulating.

WALL.E pays homage to other texts, including films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Star Wars*, and books such as *Robinson Crusoe*. This simple tale of robot love and human waste and irresponsibility is told with humour and affection. Students will enjoy connecting *WALL.E* to other texts such as the ABC's *War on Waste* and Andy Mulligan's *Trash*.

For Stage 5

They Shall Not Grow Old directed by Peter Jackson (2018) DVD

This extraordinary documentary brings the British soldiers of the First World War back to life in voice and image. Traditional footage from this era is black and white and runs to a different rhythm. It is jerky and rapid and tends to distance the viewer from the reality of the war. Jackson and his team, commissioned by the Imperial War Museum, have manipulated footage from the museum, slowing it down to normal speed and carefully colourising it so it appears more familiar. The soundtrack we hear are the 'voices' of the veterans (recreated by voice actors); they are the only narrators, together with the sound effects of mud squelching and tanks grinding and the thud and thump of military fire.

The film begins with recruitment and it is only when the soldiers begin to march towards the front that the black and white film changes to full colour. Our veterans' voices take us with them from Dover to France and into the trenches, and we see all the horrors of war they experience. We advance with them as they attack the German lines and see the dead, the wounded and the dying. We also see the terrible physical conditions they live in, the rats, mud and misery of the trenches. We see them at ease and fighting to simply survive, as well as defeat their enemy. The different voices and experiences they recount are compelling.

With the Armistice we hear and see contrasting responses as the veterans try to return to normal life and the colour goes out of the film as Jackson returns to black and white. Few non-military people seemed to understand the horror they had been through and, for many, there were no jobs to ease them back into civilian life.

Watching this film is a profound experience and it certainly has a place in the English, as well as the history classroom. Year 10 or 11 students could explore and discuss the choices and skills of the filmmakers and the impact it has on the viewer. Teachers could link the film with the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon to broaden the context and importance of these representations of World War 1. The film is available on Netflix so teachers with a subscription could preview it before purchase.

The Final Quarter directed by Ian Darling (2019) DVD

This feature documentary tells the story of the last three years of the career of AFL champion Adam Goodes from 2013 to 2015. Goodes is a celebrated Indigenous leader and former Australian of the Year. When he was abused as an 'ape' by a young Collingwood supporter he publicly called out the racist epithet. A storm of heated debate and commentary sprang up following the incident and Goodes was booed at every AFL match he played in. He left the game in 2015.

The film uses only archival footage aired at the time

and the director looked at many hours of broadcast and online footage and newspaper articles to create the film. There is no commentary by the director; he lets the footage speak for itself.

This powerful film needs to be seen and discussed in many classrooms.

The film, with a suite of educational resources, is freely available as a DVD to every school in Australia. To request a DVD go to https://thefinalquarterfilm.com.au

***Between the Flags* directed by Jayce White (2007) At https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWLb8d_cxPU**

This short, seven-minute film was a Tropfest entrant and starts when two young men head to the beach where the Cronulla riots are meant to take place. They are on opposing sides but they get there early, and it's hard to have a riot with just the two of them. Conversation ensues and they find lots to talk about from cars to speakers and technology. To pass the time they have a two-man cricket game. When they get a call and find out they are at the wrong beach neither feels like going to the riot and they head off together. It's funny and frank and really endearing and a wonderful way to explore prejudice and find the things we have in common.

Multimodal resources

Over the years, many other multimodal texts have been reviewed in this column. The list below will direct you to the volume and number of the *English in Australia* journal in which these reviews can be found.

- *A Child of Books* (picture book) 52 Number 2 2017
- *A Monster Calls* (illustrated novel) Volume 46 Number 3 2011
- *A Monster Calls* Special edition (illustrated novel) Volume 52 Number 1 2017
- *Anne Frank the Diary of a Young Girl* (app) Volume 48 Number 2 2013
- *Australia A to Z* (picture book) 52 Number 2 2017
- *Avatar* (film) Volume 46 Number 2 2011
- *Bend it Like Beckham* (film) Volume 46 Number 2 2011
- *Blue Suburbia* (website) Volume 50 Number 1 2015
- *Boy* (film) Volume 46 Number 1 2011

- *Bran Nue Dae* (film) Volume 46 Number 2 2011
- *Brand New Ancients* (audio poetry) Volume 51 Number 3 2016
- *Cambridge Explore Shakespeare* (apps) Volume 50 Number 2 2015
- *Cronulla Riots* (interactive website) Volume 52 Number 3 2017
- *Edge of the World* (picture book) Volume 47 Number 3 2012
- *Exit Australia* (interactive website) Volume 52 Number 3 2017
- *Folger Luminary Shakespeare* (apps) Volume 50 Number 2 2015
- *Gemina* (graphic novel) Volume 52 Number 1 2017
- *Hamlet* (graphic adaption) Volume 46 Number 1 2011
- *Hugo* (graphic novel and film) Volume 47 Number 1 2012
- *Illuminae* (graphic novel) Volume 50 Number 3 2015
- *Inanimate Alice* (digital novel) Volume 46 Number 3 2011
- *Inanimate Alice* (graphic novel) Volume 51 Number 1 2016
- *Instant poetry* (app) Volume 48 Number 2 2013
- *Invictus* (film) Volume 45 Number 2 2010
- *K'gari* (interactive website) Volume 52 Number 3 2017
- *Kafka's Wound* (digital essay) Volume 51 Number 2 2016
- *Kidglovz* (graphic novel) Volume 51 Number 1 2016
- *Laskar Pelangi* (film) Volume 48 Number 2 2013
- *Let Them Eat Chaos* (audio poetry) 52 Number 2 2017
- *Lighthouse Girl* (picture book) Volume 45 Number 2 2010
- *Mao's Last Dancer* (film) Volume 46 Number 2 2011
- *Maralinga* (picture book) Volume 46 Number 2 2011 and Volume 44 number 3 2009
- *Maralinga's Long Shadow* (illustrated non-fiction) Volume 51 Number 3 2016
- Missing (Interactive website and Digital Essay) Volume 54 Number 1 2019
- *Mirror* (picture book) Volume 45 Number 3 2010
- *My 24* (app) Volume 51 Number 3 2016
- *My grandmother's lingo* (interactive website) Volume 52 Number 3 2017

- *Obsidio* (graphic novel Vol 53 Number 2 2018
- *Our Choice* (app) Volume 46 Number 2 2011
- *Playground* (picture book) Volume 46 Number 2 2011
- *Poe: Stories and Poems* (graphic novel) Volume 53 Number 1 2018
- *Sabrina* (graphic novel) Vol 53 Number 3 12018
- *Searching* (film) Vol 53 Number 3 12018
- *Secret Technology* (poetry website) Volume 50 Number 1 2015
- *Seven Ages* (poetry with music) Volume 50 Number 1 2015
- *Shakespeare Uncovered* (video) Volume 49 Number 3 2014
- *Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek* (digital essay) Volume 52 Number 3 2017
- *Spark* (picture book) Volume 51 Number 3 2016
- *Steve Jobs: Insanely Great* (graphic novel) Volume 50 Number 2 2015
- *Sweet Country* (film) Volume 54 Number 1 2019
- *The Artifacts* (picture book app) Volume 48 Number 2 2013
- *The Boat* (interactive website) Volume 52 Number 3 2017
- *The Dream of the Thylacine* (picture book) Volume 46 Number 3 2011
- *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr Morris Lessmore* (app) Volume 48 Number 2 2013
- *The Graveyard Book* (graphic novel) Volume 4 Number 3 2014
- *The Great Gatsby* (graphic adaption) Volume 45 Number 2 2010
- *The Great Gatsby* (film) Volume 48 Number 2 2013
- *The Hollow of the Hand* (illustrated poetry) Volume 53 Number 1 2018
- *The Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (film) Volume 51 Number 1 2016
- *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (graphic novel) Volume 47 Number 1 2012
- *The Invention of Lying* (film) Volume 50 Number 1 2015
- *The Island* (picture book) Volume 46 Number 1 2011
- *The Marvels* (graphic novel) Volume 50 Number 3 2015
- *The Rules of Summer* (app) Volume 50 Number 1 2015
- *The Silence* (graphic novel) Volume 45 Number 2 2010
- *The Sonnets* (app) Volume 48 Number 2 2013
- *The Truth is a Cave in the Black Mountains* (graphic novel) Volume 50 Number 2 2015
- *The Waste Land* (app) Volume 46 Number 3 2011
- *tseliot.com* (website) Volume 52 Number 2 2017
- *Tyranny: I Keep You Thin* (graphic novel) Volume 46 Number 3 2011
- *Ubby's Underdogs: The Legend of the Phoenix Dragon* (graphic novel) Volume 47 Number 3 2012
- *Unforgotten* (picture book) Volume 47 Number 3 2012
- *Vampyre* (picture book) Volume 46 Number 3 2011
- *Wadjda* (film) Volume 50 Number 2 2015
- *Welcome to Country* (illustrated travel guide) Volume 54.1 2019
- *Welcome to Night Vale* (podcast) Volume 54 Number 2 2019
- *What they took with them – a List* (poetry video on website) Volume 52 Number 1 2017
- *Young Dark Emu A Truer History* Volume 54. Number 1 2019
- *Wonderstruck* (graphic novel) Volume 47 Number 2 2012
- *X+Y* (film) Volume 50 Number 3 2015

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