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## EDITORIAL

Stewart Riddle

University of Southern Queensland

Where has the year gone? Here we are, already at the second issue for *Words'Worth* and so much has happened that it is difficult to keep up. It seems appropriate that our upcoming English Teachers Association of Queensland 2014 State Conference is entitled, *Great Expectations: Stability and Change in English Teaching*. I look forward to seeing many of you at Lourdes Hill College on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> August. The program is jam-packed with exceptional presentations and the day promises to be one of energetic and energising Englishing!

This issue has some interesting and hopefully useful contributions. We have the remaining 2013 literary competition winning entries and judges' reports. The writing is simply exceptional. There is also a call for entries to the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) 50 Word Fiction Competition to celebrate AATE's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Jennifer Alford reports on a fantastic workshop from Seminar II by Fiona Roush and Cheryl Moore. Anita Jetnikoff and Melissa Kelly provide us with some accessible texts for reluctant readers, while Amy Jays writes about the importance of technoliteracies in the digital age. John Acutt shares with us a Year 10 unit on rites of passage and coming of age, and Thomas Langford pens an enjoyable poetic techniques poem.

Please send through any articles, units of work, lesson activities or other things that you think might be of interest to other English teachers for inclusion in future issues of the journal. I would love to hear from you.

Warm wishes,

Stewart Riddle  
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## ETAQ PATRON'S MESSAGE

Professor Catherine Beavis

Griffith University

Dear ETAQ members,

Recently I was browsing through a recent issue of one of the most popular professional journals read by secondary English teachers in America, the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. This is one of a number of journals published by the International Reading Association, the counterpart of our own ALEA, the Australian Literacy Educators Association. You might remember ETAQ and AATE teamed up with ALEA to host the highly successful joint National AATE/ALEA conference in Brisbane last year.

As its name suggests, this journal ranges pretty widely across areas of interest to English teachers, and reflects a very diverse student cohort. It has a strong emphasis on articles written by teachers about work in their own classrooms, as well as articles by teacher educators and people based in colleges and universities. While the American context is very different to our own, many of the challenges faced by teachers and students are similar. Prominent amongst them for English teachers are questions about how to manage competing demands and priorities, in particular recognizing and responding to the diverse needs and interests of their students, in a context, which includes centrally mandated standards and assessment requirements and perennial issues of access and equity.

This particular issue, from late last year, included articles about a range of areas and activities, a rich snapshot of English curriculum and students' and teachers' concerns. There were papers on scaffolded silent reading and the need for school policy to support students becoming independent readers; on using drama and critical literacy as a way to help students understand and critique global markets; on genre and information writing

including writing in high school Science; on academic literacies; on teaching English as an Additional Language and more. But the article that really caught my eye was Janet Alsup's paper 'Teaching Literature in an Age of Text Complexity'. 'Text complexity' and 'Complex texts' are terms we are increasingly hearing here too. The first aim of the ACARA curriculum for English, after all, is to help students 'learn to listen to, read, view, speak, write, create and reflect on increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written and multimodal texts across a growing range of contexts with accuracy, fluency and purpose.'

What constitutes a complex text is a pressing issue for English currently. The complex texts that Alsup mentions, in the American context, include informational texts, nonfictional texts, and multimodal texts of many kinds. In Australia, we have a similar breadth and diversity. But Alsup makes a special plea for fiction, literature and the power of story. Amidst this range of informational and nonfiction texts she argues, literature and traditional fiction hold a special place. She reminds readers of the power of story – that we live in storied worlds. She talks about 'the centrality of story to human life in realms as diverse as fantasy play, dreams, movies, novels and memories.' Story, she argues, belongs centrally in English curriculum. Literature and fiction matter, both in themselves and in fostering social understanding, cognitive growth and empathy. 'Stories are important, and stories have power – to change minds, emotions and behaviour.'

It's a passionate argument. What's your view?

Alsup, J. (2013) Teaching Literature in an Age of Text Complexity. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 57(3) pp.181–184

# WHAT THE DICKENS IS A *WALL E* YOUTUBE CLIP DOING IN A UNIT ON VICTORIAN LITERATURE? WHAT HAS 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHIC REALISM GOT TO DO WITH ANDY MULLIGAN'S NOVEL *TRASH* ABOUT A DUMPSITE BOY? IS THAT JANE EYRE WEARING DOLCE AND GABBANA?!

Jennifer Alford, Faculty of Education, QUT

These questions were answered expertly by Fiona Roush and Cheryl Moore of Sunshine Coast Grammar School at ETAQ's "Power of the Visual" Seminar on May 31st. Fiona and Cheryl presented a stimulating, well attended and well-received seminar entitled: *Re-imagining the Classics: Accessible and practical approaches for using classic literature in the multi-modal 21<sup>st</sup> century English classroom*. The seminar outlined a number of innovative ideas for linking classic literature with digital texts and resources to both engage and sustain student interest in the English classroom. Rather than tuning out the "visual overload" that surrounds adolescents outside the classroom, or simply adding the odd digital image to an otherwise traditional lesson, Fiona and Cheryl showed seminar participants how to make judicious use of quality digital resources while teaching classic literature. Somewhat provocatively, they began their seminar by suggesting that even Van Gogh, Rembrandt and Frida Kahlo "took selfies" in the form of self-portrait paintings. In doing so, they connect the age-old fascination humans have had in representing their own image in paintings with adolescents' obsession with constructing their own image in public fora such as Facebook. Having captured our interest, they moved onto two key justifications for using powerful visuals and digital media when teaching the Classics. First, Generation Y are digital learners who prefer to:

- Receive information quickly from multiple multimedia sources
- Process pictures, sounds, colour, and video before text

- Have random access to hyperlinked multimedia information
- Network simultaneously with many others
- Learn "just in time"
- Have instant gratification with immediate and deferred rewards
- Have learning that is relevant, active, instantly useful, and fun

(Jukes, McCain & Crockett, 2010).

Second, they link their ideas directly to the AC:E which suggests students should: "*explore and explain the combinations of language and visual choices that authors make to present information, opinions and perspective in different texts*" and "*identify or comment on the author's approaches and use of techniques, design, form and style*" (ACARA, 2013) And why the Classics? They are a storehouse of literary style and ingenuity of expression, and are invaluable for their insight into the human condition.



Figure 1. Fiona Roush and Cheryl Moore presenting.



WHAT THE DICKENS IS A *WALL E* YOUTUBE CLIP DOING IN A UNIT ON VICTORIAN LITERATURE?  
WHAT HAS 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHIC REALISM GOT TO DO WITH ANDY MULLIGAN'S NOVEL  
*TRASH* ABOUT A DUMPSITE BOY? IS THAT JANE EYRE WEARING DOLCE AND GABBANA?!

inherent in visual texts. For example, the way visuals represent people, places and ideas in particular ways with particular interests at work.

Fiona and Cheryl showed that it is possible to blend their infectious passion for the Classics with an appreciation of digital and visual texts to both ignite student interest and maintain that interest in the study of literature. Participants took away fresh ideas to infuse contemporary visual resources into their units of work on beloved and timeless literary works. "There is no surer foundation for a beautiful friendship than a mutual taste in literature," said P.G. Wodehouse. Fiona and Cheryl's collegial friendship is testament to that. Let the friendship between the Classics and digital,

multimodal texts be forged and flourish in English classrooms everywhere!

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They also recommend the British Library collection called *Literary Treasures*. This site has a plethora of online resources for teachers to use and adapt.

#### Reference:

Jukes, I., McCain, T., & Crockett, L. (2010). *Understanding the Digital Generation: Teaching and Learning in the New Digital Landscape*. Vancouver, B.C.:21<sup>st</sup> C Fluency Project Inc; Corwin, Sage.

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50 years  
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To celebrate AATE's 50th Anniversary in 2014,  
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Associations affiliated with AATE as well as ETA  
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SENIOR (years 10/11/12)  
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Prizes will be awarded to the top 3 stories in each  
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Entries close end  
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# RESPONDING TO LITERATURE: ACCESSIBLE TEXTS FOR RELUCTANT READERS



Anita Jetnikoff and Melissa Kelly

The Australian Curriculum: English 5.2 states, across all year level descriptions, that “students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment”, with the level types of texts and levels of understanding developing over time (ACARA, 2014a). Problems arise when students are unable or unwilling to enjoy texts, and are reluctant to read, view, interpret, and evaluate written texts. This in turn impedes their ability to perform these texts for assessment purposes. The literacy abilities of students can vary widely within a single classroom, and it is a challenge for teachers to source and present texts which are accessible across the spectrum of reading abilities, as well as reflecting themes that are relevant and engaging for students, in addition to being consistent with the General Capabilities and Cross-Curriculum Priorities of the AC:E.

In senior English also, the mainstream Qld Senior Syllabus (QSA, 2010, p. 6) requires that students have learning experiences developed through 15-20 literary texts, including the in-depth study of a complete novel. In the leisure context of English Communications, students may also “write stories, poems, or song lyrics” (QSA, 2004, p. 14). Since students’ responses to literature often take the form of other imaginative text creation we address this in this paper.

We start by offering synopses of some accessible texts and strategies for teachers with these students who are unwilling or low literacy readers in junior secondary and senior level English. This paper canvases some easily read novels and some films with companion text suggestions which may serve as models for students’ responses. For the junior secondary texts, we identify how these align with the architecture of the Australian Curriculum’s General Capabilities and Cross Curriculum Priorities. Then, we will outline some suitable

imaginative responses as possible assessment outcomes, such as short stories and digital stories.

When it comes to composing, the drilling down from the top level structure of the short story into the appropriate language and grammar components are sometimes overlooked. This breaking down needs to be done with all students but especially low literacy students who might find writing even at the sentence level a challenge. To address this we suggest useful print and web-based resources that offer practical strategies for reading the literary works and scaffolding some imaginative written or multimodal responses.

Students are required to compose imaginative texts, often in the form of short stories, of varying lengths depending on year level. The term “short story” in itself is problematic, as it is broad and contextual. If we expect students to compose a short story of 500 words, then it makes sense to deploy models of similar lengths. Students can be reluctant to read stories of 2000 words, and may struggle to understand ways in which they can emulate this text within the set word limit. Further problems arise, as mentioned above, with providing students with accessible texts which investigate engaging themes and content.

In the case of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, teachers can be reluctant to provide culturally reflective texts for students experiencing poverty, homelessness, absent parents, addiction, teen pregnancy, and crime and violence, just to name a few. However, research has shown that young people who see themselves in texts “in terms of race, culture, and lived experiences in the literature they read, they benefit academically, personally and socially”, and it is these same life experiences

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that provide students with the opportunity to engage academically (Guerra, 2012, p. 388).

Texts produced by students can reflect these same themes, and teachers may encourage them to write what they know, as they draw on their hopes, fears and lived experiences. Reading for pleasure can benefit students through improved literacy, which is directly correlated to academic achievement, as well as developing a better informed perspective of their own lives, and enhancing their understanding and empathy for the lives of other people in different situations (Manuel, 2012, p. 46). An inability to access themes presented in classroom texts can reinforce students' image of themselves as inadequate readers, perpetuating their reluctance to participate in class and further impeding their opportunities to develop adequate literacy skills (Manuel, 2012, p. 49).

With this as our contextual background, we begin with some suggested accessible texts, though of course this table is by no means exhaustive. Some schools may already be using some of these and others may be useful if teachers and Heads of English are seeking some additions to their school book lists.

### General Capabilities Legend:

-  Literacy
-  Numeracy
-  Information and communication technology capability
-  Critical and creative thinking
-  Personal and social capability
-  Intercultural understanding
-  Ethical understanding

Accessible Literature for low literacy or unwilling readers for the Australian Curriculum	
<b>Novel: <i>Holes</i></b> Sachar, Louis (2000)	<b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 7
<b>Synopsis:</b> This easy to read dystopic, futuristic novel is about persistence, and distortions of the truth. The plot revolves around a group of young misfits who have been incarcerated at 'Camp Green Lake' in an American desert populated by venomous lizards. The mindless occupation of digging holes is the punishment meted out to young miscreants. The central character, Stanley Yelnats, quickly learns the power dynamic of the group, and tries to keep a low profile. He discovers something one day in one of the holes of interest to the brutal and treacherous warden of the camp and the consequences of that are personally damaging to him. He escapes into the desert and survives by finding a water source on a distant hill and another 'lost' boy. When he returns to the camp, a 'treasure' chest has been unearthed which leads to the breakdown of the deception that has been controlling the camp. Keeping people, especially children in such inhumane conditions is not sustainable.	
<b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b> <b>Short Stories:</b> There are a number of short, short stories from the collections <i>No place like home: Australian stories</i> (Dechian, 2005) and <i>Dark dreams: Australian refugee stories</i> (Millar, Sallis, & Dechian, 2004) that express similar themes from the perspective of children feeling trapped in detention and being deprived of human rights including: <i>Kim's story</i> (Huynh, 2004) A biographical recount of her uncle's boat journey to Australia told by a 15 year old Vietnamese girl. <i>Urgent request from Baxter Detention Centre</i> (Unknown, 2003) An unconventional narrative of helplessness in the face of authority. Film: <i>Holes</i> (adaptation) (Davis, 2003)	<b>AC:E GCs:</b>   <b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Sustainability;</i> <i>Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia.</i>

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<p><b>Novel: <i>Green Tara</i></b> Brower, K.H. (2013)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 7</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> Scientist-in-training and neophyte space pilot, Virginia, lives on a space ship colony permanently floating in space, many generations after the earth has been destroyed. She and her cousin, Gordy, break security to fly into a forbidden zone, to the legendary planet Green Tara, which has a sun and gravity, wildlife and oceans much like Earth.</p> <p>As a teenager she discovers a navigation chart marking her mother’s last-known destination. Her Green Tara expedition is motivated by searching for her mother who had left when Virginia was just five years old. She discovers that her mother became lost on a science expedition, illegally searching for a planet where colonists could breathe fresh air and drink clean water.</p> <p>Virginia finds her mother. Unfortunately, her mother’s mission to recolonise Earth has passed along her ancestral line, and seems more important to her than bonding with her daughter. Their mission is dogged by security agents of the Triumvirate — unwilling to relinquish control of precious natural resources — who track the party down and threaten the mission and the family’s freedom.</p> <p>This is a story about what can happen if we do not look after the planet and the importance of human relationships. <i>Green Tara</i> explores the need for taking informed action and caring for each other as well.</p>	
<p><b>Alternative Short Novel: <i>Refuge</i></b> (French, 2013) This short, speculative novel is set on a strange, Australian beach which is locked in a time/ space warp. The beach provides refuge for people who have had traumatic experiences and are seeking refuge in a new country. The novel provides a simple allegory for the asylum seeker experience.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b>  <b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Sustainability</i></p>
<p><b>Novel: <i>The Barrumbi Kids</i></b> Norrington, Leonie (2002)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 7–8.</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> Norrington’s first young reader’s novel demonstrates the complexities of cross-cultural living in a remote community in the Northern Territory. The easy to read novel follows the adventures and misadventures of primary school aged Indigenous children as they navigate their way through the blended culture of their community, demonstrating their lived social, cultural and sustainable practices. This novel can be read as a complete novel or episodes can be selected from the stand-alone chapters.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b> <b>Short Stories:</b> <i>Gami Munjal</i> (Cameron, 2013) Two Indigenous boys scare off an indigenous escapee from the Rottneest Island detention centre by tricking him into thinking a policeman is coming, only to miss the fish and meat he would bring to trade. <i>Inmates</i> (Hutchins, 1997) An unlikely alliance forms between two young artists after a shared petty offence and a school excursion to jail.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b>  <b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.</i></p>

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<p><b>Novel:</b> <i>Boy Overboard</i> Gleitzman, Morris (2002)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 8</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> This easy-to-read novel explores the serious issues faced by persecuted minorities and refugees, from the point of view of Jamal, a young Afghani boy who dreams of playing soccer for his country. When the government discovers his parents are a small school, and their home is destroyed, the family decide to seek asylum in Australia. Here, Jamal decides, he and his sister Bibi will become soccer stars and return to Afghanistan, change the government, start a national team for both boys and girls, and allow everyone to attend school. However, their journey is complicated as Jamal and Bibi are separated from their parents when they board different boats for the journey to Australia. Jamal and Bibi, along with Rashida and Omar who have also been separated from their parents, endure a difficult journey aboard the boat until they are rescued by the Australian Navy.</p> <p>This novel could be used to demonstrate how a serious issue can be examined from a different point of view. The use of young Jamal to frame the story of seeking asylum indicates the hopes of the people who decide to make a dangerous journey by the only means available to them in the hope of leading a better life free from persecution. The sequel to this, <i>Girl Underground</i> (Gleitzman, 2004), could be read as extension in Year 8, or followed up as a Year 9 text.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b> <b>Short Stories:</b> <i>Untitled</i> (Wazefadost, 2004) This non-fiction account of persecution of the minority Hazaras by the Taliban and school closures in Afghanistan, gives insight into the serious backstory to the refugee characters in the novel <i>Boy overboard</i>.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b>  <b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia.</i></p>
<p><b>Novel:</b> <i>Trash</i> Mulligan, Andy (2010)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 8</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> Set in Manila on a dumpsite, where young people sift through the trash, this novel is a page turning story of survival. The central characters are the dump kids, little more than street kids, but two of them are literate and find a wallet and a letter in a bag whilst sifting through the trash for recyclables. This leads to intrigue which uncovers criminals amongst the police and political corruption in the Philippine government. When the dump kids have to smuggle themselves into a prison to find the 'political prisoner' who is their link to the murdered owner of the wallet, they risk their lives. The story is suspenseful, full of everyday text types such as newspaper reports and letters and would provide a useful springboard to other imaginative writing.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b> <b>Short Stories:</b> <i>Inmates</i> (Hutchins, 1997) See synopsis under <i>Barrumbi Kids</i>. <i>An interview with Ali</i> (Bryson, 2004) Young Australian, Sarah-Jane Bryson tells the story of Ali's journey from Afghanistan and his traumatic life under Taliban rule, only to be held in detention in Australia.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b>  <b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia; Sustainability.</i></p>

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<p><b>Novel:</b> <i>Refuge</i> French, Jackie (2013)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 8</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> This novel is an interesting blend of magical realism, speculative fiction and the stories of refugees. Young readers will learn much about asylum seekers and the tragic circumstances from which they have come. This tale is set on a beach trapped in time and characters from different times and places come together to explore their readiness to leave and join the real world. It explores sustainability in the sense that it explores a ‘socially just world through informed action.’ Each of the characters in the refuge must decide to leave to face reality. The way we currently treat asylum seekers in this country is unethical and this novel offers an allegorical reflection on the journeys of some of these people.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b></p> <p><b>Short Stories:</b></p> <p><i>Waleed Alkharajy: Perseverance personified</i> (Aleem, 2004). A biographical account of a university graduate who escaped persecution in Iraq and his detention as a refugee in Australia. The account questions the treatment of refugees in this country through the eyes of a 17 year old writer.</p> <p><i>An interview with Ali</i> (Bryson, 2004) See synopsis under <i>Trash</i>.</p> <p><i>From a small detention centre, I am now in a bigger detention centre: the story of an Afghan refugee</i> (Darab, 2004) A story of escape and detention and feeling trapped even after release from detention.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b> </p> <p><b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia.</i></p>
<p><b>Novel:</b> <i>The Ink Bridge</i> Grant, Neil (2012)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 8</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> This novel is about the meeting of two mute boys. The first is a refugee boy, Omed, who escapes Afghanistan, after the Taliban have rendered him silent. Omed undertakes a perilous journey to seek asylum in Australia. Hector is a teenaged Australian boy who has given up on school and retreated into the silence of grief. Their paths cross when they are both working in Hector's uncle's candle factory. But the factory's core business is not just candle making and the hidden crimes of the factory have tragic consequences. Ultimately Hector must act to bring events to a head. Although the coincidences in this story are sometimes too frequent and the plot has some holes, it is an easy read and gives some insight into the terrible world from which asylum seekers are trying to flee.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b></p> <p><b>Short Stories:</b></p> <p><i>A refugee</i> (Zia, 2004). A personal narrative of an 18 year old refugee who tells of deprivation of human rights, both in his country of origin and on his harrowing journey to Australia as an asylum seeker.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b> </p> <p><b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia.</i></p>

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<p><b>Novel:</b> <i>Girl underground</i> Gleitzman, Morris (2004)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 9</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> In this comedic novel, Bridget Podger (aka Bridget White) finds herself at an elite boarding school, where her small time criminal parents have sent her to give her better opportunities than they had. Bridget feels marginalised and aligns herself with the bodyguard-protected Menzies, another outsider at the school. Bridget, whose brother is in prison, gets swept up in Menzies' passion for freeing incarcerated refugees, Jamal and Bibi, from a detention centre in the Australian desert. Can they free the young asylum seekers? The backstory of the refugee children's boat journey and their subsequent detention is told in the prequel, <i>Boy Overboard</i>, which we have recommended for year 8.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b></p> <p><b>Short Stories:</b></p> <p><i>Broken Hearts</i> (Smith, 2004) This is a biographical account of a young refugee activist like Menzies in <i>Girl Underground</i></p> <p><i>A dozen bloomin roses</i> (Jennings, 2012). This fictional short story, which deals with the tragic effects of marginalisation, has overtones of the supernatural. This story forces the reader to question their assumptions about the narrator.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b> </p> <p><b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia.</i></p>
<p><b>Novel:</b> <i>What now, Tilda B?</i> Lomer, Kathryn (2010)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 9</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> Tilda Braint is nearly sixteen, restless and having trouble figuring out her next step in life. Living in a small coastal town in Tasmania doesn't seem to offer much opportunity, as everyone knows everyone else, school is full of petty conflict and her family unit has broken down. When a mother elephant seal gives birth to a pup at the local beach and Tilda discovers them, and becomes involved in their care, her life changes irrevocably. Tourists flock to witness the novelty of these marine strangers so far from their usual habitat. The spectacle of the seals unites usually disparate people in the community. Alongside the seal's progress, Tilda's wild best friend, Shell, whose pregnancy parallels the seal mother, is forced to make decisions about her future. The sub-text of Tilda's newly arrived friend Bella, who is a teen mother also features in Tilda's dilemmas about her own relationships with boys. The importance of friendship and discovering 'who you really are' as a young Australian woman are central themes of this moving novel.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b></p> <p><b>Short Stories:</b></p> <p><i>Turnaround</i> (Wheatley, 1997) When the school book club is visited by a poet, a young blind girl finds herself with an unexpected advantage.</p> <p><i>The impossible Dreame</i> (Griffin, 1997) There's a new girl at school who started the term late and is causing a bit of a fuss. An unconventional narrative told from multiple points of view.</p> <p><b>Film:</b> <i>Juno</i> (Reitman, 2007) Faced with an unexpected pregnancy while still at school in North America, Juno must navigate the difficult world of adult decision making, and the realisation that being older is not the same as being grown up.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b> Eco - </p> <p><b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Sustainability</i></p>

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<p><b>Novels:</b> <i>Deadly Unna?</i> (1998) and <i>Nukkin Ya</i> (2000) Gwynne, Phillip</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 9 and 10</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> <i>Deadly Unna?</i> is the prequel to <i>Nukkin Ya</i>. Both revolve around the literary young boy, Blacky, who is better at reading than he is at Australian Rules, much to his brutal father's disgust. Set in country South Australia, there is a cultural and racial divide between the Port and the Point. The best player in the team is Dumbly Red, from The Point, whose talent potentially offers him a way out of the empty small town existence. The violent events which transpire around Dumbly's being overlooked for 'best and fairest player', rock the town's foundations as relationships fall apart and tragedy unfolds.</p> <p>In the sequel <i>Nukkin Ya</i>, Blacky starts to fall for Dumbly Red's sister Clarence in defiance of the town's prying racist eyes and their opposition to cross cultural relationships. The opposition comes from both sides of the families and both are tested.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b></p> <p><b>Short Stories:</b> Extract from <i>Playing by the rules</i> (Clark, 2009) A short, short story about rivalry and perceived betrayal when a school team discovers one of their former members is playing for the opposition.</p> <p>Film: <i>Australian Rules</i> (Goldman, 2002) The film is based on the two Gwynne novel combined.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b> </p> <p><b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.</i></p>
<p><b>Film:</b> <i>Beneath Clouds</i> Sen, Ivan (<i>Sen</i>, 2001)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b> Year 10</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> Fair-skinned and blue-eyed Lena longs to escape her mundane life with her Indigenous Australian mother in a small country town. She dreams of the life she believes she could lead with her absent Irish father, and decides to escape to Sydney in search of him, as she believes if she stays she will become a single mother like many of her friends. However, she misses her bus, and takes up with escapee Vaughan, an Indigenous youth desperate to reach his sick mother. Lena endures much of Vaughan's derision in stoic silence, until they get a lift with a group of Indigenous people and one asks Lena about her mob, changing Vaughan's entire approach to his fair-skinned travelling companion. They face many obstacles on the journey to Sydney, and Lena must continue to make tough decisions as they arise, whether to yield to Vaughan's idea of what she should be, or to follow her dream.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b></p> <p><b>Short Stories:</b> <i>The stray</i> (Poulter, 1997) explores an ostracised, troubled youth who is dehumanised by his circumstances and struggles to make emotional connections when he experiences warmth and acceptance.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b> </p> <p><b>AC:E CCP:</b> <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.</i></p>

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<p><b>Short Autobiographical texts</b>  <i>Hong Kong to Fitzroy Crossing: the road less travelled to a familiar place</i>                  Bing-Ying Mak, Donna (2012)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b>                  Year 11</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> The intercultural experiences of a Chinese born doctor, raised in Australia and working and living with the Indigenous people of the remote Kimberley region. Mak’s reflections on intercultural understanding and the similarities between Chinese traditional culture and Indigenous culture makes very interesting reading.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts for models:</b>  <b>Short Stories:</b>  <i>River fever</i> (Corbett, 2012) A woman born in Africa is now living in the Kimberley. This text could serve as a model short story, as it revolves around a single incident.  <i>Leaf</i> (Toussaint, 2012). This models an autobiographical incident based around a symbolic natural object.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b>    <b>AC:E CCP:</b>  <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures; Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia.</i></p>
<p><b>Short Autobiographical texts:</b>  <i>Journey to freedom</i>                  Nguyen, Hai-Van (2002)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b>                  Year 12</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> This powerful and sensitive and short autobiographical essay expounds what happens when humanity is reduced to numbers, as so often happens in the case of war victims and refugees.</p>	
<p><b>Suggested Companion Texts for models:</b>  <i>The tattooist</i> (Vick, 2007) This short, short story shows the limits of “judging a book by its cover” when a Tattooist, proud of overcoming his personal disadvantage to open his own tattoo studio, decides to decline tattooing two inner-city girls that walk into his shop. The tattoo they eventually request opens his eyes to the hardship and disadvantage not always immediately recognisable in a person’s appearance. This story provides an excellent model for student learning to “show, not tell”.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b>    <b>AC:E CCP:</b>  <i>Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia.</i></p>
<p><b>Documentary:</b>  <i>The finished people</i>                  Do, Khoa (Do, 2003)</p>	<p><b>Year level suitability:</b>                  Year 12</p>
<p><b>Synopsis:</b> The fictional presentation of the real life issues of the young people in the film as they deal with homelessness, pregnancy, drugs and a bleak existence, and the ways they find to cope with their situation, as well as find hope for their future.</p>	
<p><b>Short Stories:</b>  <b>Suggested Companion Texts:</b>  <i>The stray</i> (Poulter, 1997) See synopsis under <i>Beneath Clouds</i>.</p>	<p><b>AC:E GCs:</b>    <b>AC:E CCP:</b>  <i>Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia; Sustainability</i></p>

## Possible Imaginative responses

- Year 7: Students understand how the selection of a variety of language features can influence an audience. They understand how to draw on personal knowledge, textual analysis and other sources to express or challenge a point of view (ACARA, 2014b, p. 14).
- Using a text such as *Holes* (Sachar, 2000), in addition to the companion texts suggested, students may compose a creative writing piece in the form of a short story, a memoir or a digital story describing a memory from their childhood.
- Year 8: Students understand how the selection of language features can be used for particular purposes and effects... Through combining ideas, images and language features from other texts, students show how ideas can be expressed in new ways (ACARA, 2014c, p. 2).
- Students may produce an imaginative response to literature in the form of an online journal or an intervention in the unit's parent text. For example, using *Boy Overboard* (Gleitzman, 2002), an event from the text could be told from the point of view of Bibi, Rashida or Omar instead of Jamal.
- Year 9: Students understand how to use a variety of language features to create different levels of meaning... In creating texts, students demonstrate how manipulating language features and images can create innovative texts (ACARA, 2014d, p. 22).
- Students may transform the experiences of characters in the texts they have read about into a different format. For example, if using *Girl Underground* (Gleitzman, 2004) as the parent text, students could transform the experiences of the characters in that book, or characters of their own making, to reflect the kinds of texts produced by writers in *Dark dreams: Australian refugee stories* (Millar, et al., 2004).
- Year 10: Students show how the selection of language features can achieve precision and stylistic effect... They develop their own style by experimenting with language features, stylistic devices, text structures and images. (ACARA, 2014e, p. 10)
- Students may explore the semiotic significance of symbols used in texts, such as in the film *Beneath Clouds*. They may produce an unconventional short story, digital story or dramatic performance around a chosen symbol.
- Years 11 & 12 : The texts suggested above have been selected for the specific purpose of demonstrating the performance of a short autobiographical text. The text produced by students could take the form of imaginative first person accounts, focussing on a single incident for mainstream English students (QSA, 2010) or a digital story for English Communication students (QSA, 2004).

## Teaching resources for engaging reluctant text producers

<p><b>My Read</b> (Years 7–10) myread.org</p>	<p>This useful website provides excellent reading strategies for middle years, underpinned by a multiliteracies framework.</p>
<p><b>Write Ways</b> Wing Jan, Lesley (2009)</p>	<p><b>Chapter 15: Fictional Narratives</b> A functional systemic approach and covers purpose, structure (of conventional short stories) and language features (the grammar of sentences, clauses, adverbial and adjectival phrases and also covers the word level). The chapter also offers teaching focuses, teaching and learning activities including pre-writing and planning phases; which covers useful questions regarding structure, plot, setting and characterisation, and dialogue and concept mapping.</p>
<p><b>Teenagers and Reading</b> Manuel, Jacqueline and Brindley, Sue (2012)</p>	<p><b>Chapter 16: Practical strategies for engaging teenagers in reading</b> This chapter provides a range of strategies for engaging readers of different abilities and willingness. Information is presented in 4 tables that provide both pedagogical and practical approaches.</p>
<p><b>Exploring narrative: A guide to teaching <i>The girl who married a fly and other stories</i></b> Kent, Val (2000)</p>	<p><b>Chapter 7: More ideas for writing your own stories... and a checklist</b> This chapter provides an extensive list of short exercises to engage readers with the short stories in the anthology, as well as general and accessible ideas for initiating writing. This book also provides activities specific to each story within the collection.</p>
<p><b>Five senses: 15 short stories</b> Housden, Elli (2009)</p>	<p>A collection of 15 short, short stories which includes read, talk, write, practise and extension activities for each. Suitable for lower secondary.</p>
<p><b>Writing and Responding: A guide for Senior English Students</b> Housden, Eli (2010)</p>	<p>Chapter 7 covers a guide to the conventional short story, and non-fiction is also covered as well as most of the genres required by current senior work programs in Queensland.</p>
<p><b>Responding through multimodal approaches at all levels</b></p>	<p>Audio books or files – sometimes available if schools are using iPads and purchasing novels online. Set up small groups of computers with iPhones or iPads.  Reading log can be kept as blogs, voice-threads or audiofiles</p>

We hope this list of texts and resources will be helpful to teachers looking for accessible text and ways to engage reluctant readers in their English classrooms, whilst responding to the new Australian Curriculum, and the current Queensland Senior curriculum.

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLITERACIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Students become literate by developing the knowledge, skills and dispositions that enable them to interpret and use language confidently so that they can participate effectively in society (ACARA, 2014). In the present age, this includes technoliteracies. The term 'technoliteracies' is used in this essay to refer to literacies associated with digital technology. The primary focus of this essay is to highlight the need for teachers to embrace digital technologies for the purposes of developing students' technoliteracies.

The English language is evolving; words, phrases and symbols invented by users of technology are increasingly being incorporated into mainstream speech (Strong, 2007). It therefore stands to reason that students would benefit from an understanding of these new language conventions. However, it cannot be assumed that this will be developed through students' out-of-school practices. Literacy programs should therefore be designed to ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop an awareness and understanding of these conventions so that they can become empowered, 21<sup>st</sup> Century language users and consumers.

Given the socio-cultural nature of language (Green, 2006), this initiative can be facilitated by the incorporation of these conventions in everyday classroom dialogue; particularly when digital technologies provide a valuable context. The use of digital technologies in classroom settings is a necessity nowadays; students need to develop the ability to use technology because society employs it so pervasively (Winch et al, 2010). This is why the development of technoliteracies is so important; particularly when combined with frameworks like the four resources model (Luke & Freebody, 1990) or the three dimensions model (Green, 1988), that enable the development of a technoliteracies meta-awareness and provide students with

the opportunity to benefit from operating as informed members of society.

Another reason that the incorporation of digital technologies within classroom settings is so important is because of the implications for equitability. Nowadays, students enter classrooms with increasingly diverse textual experiences (Healy, 2006) and so, to only use traditional, print-based texts for literacy education is to intentionally marginalize some students (Mills, 2009). However, it is important to note that although the multimodal nature of digital technologies may enhance inclusivity, it does not guarantee it; the perpetuation of dominant cultural values may be implicit. It is therefore the responsibility of teachers to think critically about their teaching practices and how classroom discourses, texts (including multimodal texts), routines, etcetera, may be contributing to the exclusion of some students (Mills, 2009; Anstey & Bull, 2006).

Although the use of digital technologies may foster inclusivity, it can be argued that this is not applicable in settings where marginalized students have already disengaged from learning. However, Purbhai-Illich (2010) found that students are naturally attracted to digital technologies and that their incorporation within classroom settings can help to re-engage and motivate the disengaged, making the above inclusivity viewpoint, valid once more. This is important because inclusivity is commonly associated with maximized educational outcomes (Ashman & Elkins, 2012); the implication being that inclusivity will help to maximize the development of technoliteracies.

The cited benefits of using digital technologies within classroom settings have a number of implications. Henderson (2004) claims that the foundation for successful literacy learning is students' strengths; what students can do. This means that any pre-existing textual knowledge

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in any form of digital technology that students possess, could be useful; for example, Beavis & O'Mara (2010) demonstrate that computer games can be used to target a wide-range of traditional and new literacies. However, this greatly increases the number of potential resources that teachers can employ and so, the ability of teachers to identify whether or not a potential resource will operate as a connected and meaningful part of intended instruction becomes very important (International Society for Technology in Education, 2010). Teachers are not always adept at this; studies suggest that instead of using technology in innovative, authentic and purposeful ways that are supportive of higher-order thinking, teachers generally use it for convenience (Shofield & Davidson, 2002). An improved curriculum that better reflects the wide variety of text forms and changing nature of language in contemporary life is therefore needed (Beavis & O' Mara, 2010; Walsh, 2010) to support teachers to select resources that can be used in more meaningful ways; it can be argued that currently, the meaningful use of digital technologies and hence, the successful development of technoliteracies is highly dependent on individual teachers, their knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitudes.

Another complication that teachers may face is the controversial nature of some resources. For example, concerns may be raised about the use of computer games within classroom settings because of the amount of research published about the negative effect that this technology can have on the brain (Poulter, 2008; Gentile, 2009). However, teachers can address these concerns by sourcing technologies that are positively influential (Gentile, 2009), applicable to learning, and meaningful. If this is achieved, literacy learning will benefit.

Teachers decide how technology is used in classrooms (Dawson, 20012); they therefore play a critical role in aiding the development of technoliteracies and hence, provide students with the opportunity to participate fully in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. However, further work is

required to develop a curriculum that will better support teachers with this endeavor (Beavis & O'Mara, 2010). Theoretical frameworks such as the Four Resources Model (Freebody & Luke, 1990), Three Dimensions Model (Green, 1998) or Productive Pedagogies, do provide some support (Anstey & Bull, 2006), but it is not enough to ensure that the development of technoliteracies is successful, particularly given the degree of diversity between teachers.

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## rites of passage: coming of age in year 10 english

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### Introduction — Justification

In the movie, *Shadowlands*, about writer C.S. Lewis, the character makes a speech about suffering in our lives. He says that suffering in our lives is a gift. “Through suffering, we release our hold on the toys of this world ... We’re like blocks of stone, out of which the sculptor carves the forms of men. The blows of His chisel, which hurt us so much, are what make us perfect.”  
(*Shadowlands*)

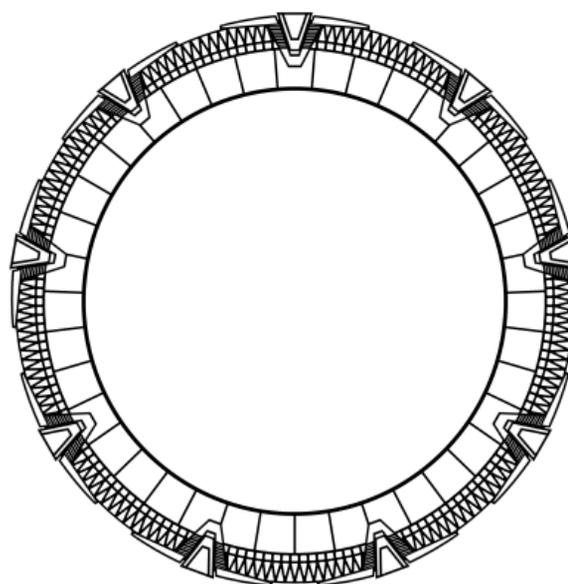
In the context of an all-boys school, the question is, can a boy become a man without some discomfort, without facing some test, without suffering in some mental or physical way and coming out of that experience transformed? At the end of the trial does a boy make a clear decision in his head that he is a man?

For a number of years at Ipswich Grammar School we’ve taught a unit that gets called Rites of Passage, Transition to Manhood or Stargates, depending on who is talking about it. It was an opportunity to get boys talking about and writing about issues like growing up, being responsible, masculinity, cultural rituals and other related ideas.

*Of course at an all-boys school the focus is on boys but the ideas in this unit are universal. We all must experience rites of passage, we all go through transitions in our lives and we all can write reflectively, descriptively and creatively about our trials.*

As far as English goes we need to get students to write and this unit provides very interesting fodder to write about. It also provides us with opportunities to teach some writing skills that are further developed and refined in their later years of school.

We start by looking at stories from various cultures and how they celebrate and orchestrate a boy’s change of status in his community



from childhood to adulthood. Thankfully, in our society we do not need to be publicly circumcised at sixteen years of age or leap from a tower with a vine tied to our ankles or hunt and kill a leopard seal or a polar bear.

We then look at what it means to be a man in our society and the various views of masculinity; both positive and negative.

Students then work towards a piece of writing where they will write from their own perspective about a trial that they have endured and was an important step on their journey to become a man. If they do not have a story of their own to tell then they can take on the character of a boy in a culture we’ve studied, like: the Vanuatu boy making his first leap from the tower on Pentecost Island or the Inuit boy who must hunt and kill a seal. Writing from another’s perspective about a rite of passage is also a good way of luring students into writing.

In both cases, they get a chance to write reflectively – for boys it is a skill in which boys are apparently very poor.



## rites of passage: coming of age in year 10 english

writing is the deliberate and thorough way we address boys' thinking and writing about how they "feel" about the stories they encounter and the experiences of their own that they relate.

In more formally articulated terms, the aims and outcomes of the unit are as follows:

### Aims

In attempting this course of study we aim to develop in the boys:

- an understanding of creative language for a specific purpose.
- an awareness of self, their own and others' cultures;
- skills with the use of personal language in reflecting on their own and others' experiences;
- an understanding of their changing role in society;
- a broad awareness and understanding of other cultures;

- a respect and enjoyment of their own and other cultures.

### Outcomes

At the end of the unit students will have:

- read, viewed and listened to a variety of texts about the transition from childhood to adulthood;
- discussed themes and issues in texts and related them to their own lives;
- developed expert knowledge of the language features needed to develop creative/narrative/reflective texts of their own;
- planned, edited and reviewed their own work;
- successfully written with sensitivity and empathy about boys facing major transitions in their lives;
- developed a greater understanding and appreciation of various cultures in the world.

## Unit Overview

<b>Rites of Passage: <i>Transition to Manhood</i></b>		
<b>Weeks</b>	<b>Sequence of the learning teaching activities</b> – <i>with particular reference to the ways multiple intelligences and different learning styles</i>	<b>Resources and Rationale</b>
<b>1 and 2</b>	<p>Discuss various cultural practices and rituals that students with which are familiar. These could be from their own experience or learned experience.</p> <p>Briefly outline the aims and objectives of the course in plain English. That is ... <i>“that the course will be looking at some amazing stories from various cultures about boys becoming men. At this stage in your life it's important to think about this transition in a boy's life. You will also be thinking about your own life and eventually, once you've learned and practised some easy writing skills, you'll be writing some 'ripping yarns' yourself.”</i></p> <p><b>Discuss:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– cultural practices;</li> <li>– definitions;</li> <li>– own experiences;</li> <li>– identify similarities and differences in the class.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Course Booklet</b></p> <p>Each student will receive a course booklet that contains various stimulus, stories, activities, discussions, samples and writing strategies.</p> <p>It will be used to initiate discussion, to develop and record definitions and vocabulary and as an ongoing reference/resource.</p>

## RITES OF PASSAGE: COMING OF AGE IN YEAR 10 ENGLISH

<p><b>Weeks</b> <b>1</b> <b>and</b> <b>2</b></p>	<p><b>Invite</b> fathers or other teachers from various cultures to tell the stories of growing up in different countries and cultures.</p> <p><b>Develop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– vocabulary;</li> <li>– understandings of religious and cultural differences;</li> <li>– an <i>ongoing montage</i> in the classroom of pictures and words.</li> </ul> <p><b>Complete:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– personal timelines</li> <li>– illustrate personal timelines with photos, objects, cards ...</li> </ul> <p><b>Research groups in the library or on the internet:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– use the stories and cultures from the guest speakers/ documentaries/YouTube clips to kick-off lines of <i>research</i>;</li> <li>– continue to develop and record vocabulary;</li> <li>– understandings of religious and cultural differences;</li> <li>– add to the <i>montage</i> in the classroom of pictures and words.</li> </ul> <p><b>Share findings in groups:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– include culturally specific <i>music</i> where possible;</li> <li>– talk in small groups about your findings.</li> </ul> <p><b>Boys reflect on what they have discovered:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– write in a journal;</li> <li>– write a short poem (List poem – <i>I never knew ...</i> );</li> <li>– write a short piece ... <i>How would I feel in that situation?</i></li> <li>– visually represent their reflections.</li> </ul> <p><b>Guided Writing (Recommended)</b></p> <p>View a ritual initiation scene on a documentary. Take bullet point notes of the key points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replay clip and pause on a shot of the landscape/environment.</li> <li>• Guide students through a short writing task. They are to write from the POV of a participant in the initiation.</li> <li>• Describe the place. Sights, smells etc. on your journey to a sacred place for a ritual</li> <li>• Explain why you are there</li> <li>• Describe the other participants with you</li> <li>• Zoom in on the body language of one</li> <li>• Speculate on what he is thinking</li> <li>• What are you thinking?</li> <li>• Describe a sight or a sound to show you have reached the place</li> <li>• What are you thinking now?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Fathers other teachers in the school</b> – as cultural storytellers</p> <p><b>Photographs and artefacts</b> from home (suggest boys do not bring original artefacts but to scan or photograph pieces)</p> <p>It will be an exciting and ongoing task to develop a montage of the boys’ learnings and shared findings.</p> <p>This will be the beginning of boys thinking about and reflecting on the key themes and issues of this unit.</p> <p>Specific language skills addressed.</p>
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## RITES OF PASSAGE: COMING OF AGE IN YEAR 10 ENGLISH

<b>Week 3</b>	<p>Depending on his availability, a professional storyteller could speak to the children. For example an Aboriginal speaker could be used. The speakers will be asked to address cultural tales, myths and legends related to the topic of the unit.</p> <p><b>Boys listen and reflect:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– about the stories, the characters and morals as well as the skills and techniques of storytelling.</li> </ul> <p><b>Complete:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– create a new cultural ritual for a fictitious community</li> </ul> <p><b>Design:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– based on the previous task, a new ritual that serves to celebrate the crossing from boyhood to manhood.</li> </ul> <p><b>Continue to develop:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– vocabulary;</li> <li>– understandings of religious and cultural differences;</li> <li>– the montage in the classroom of pictures and words.</li> </ul>	
<b>Week 4/5</b>	<p><b>Develop and practice:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– see support materials that follow for other materials/ activities etc.</li> </ul> <p>Look at examples of appropriate writing styles – the metaphoric/ descriptive and the plain English recount and reflect styles. The ABC <i>Heywire</i> recordings and transcripts are very useful.</p> <p>See support materials for developing ideas from the class that would be suitable writing topics.</p> <p>Email <a href="mailto:jacutt@ipswichgrammar.com">jacutt@ipswichgrammar.com</a> for workbook with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stargates activity</li> <li>– Draw a map</li> <li>– Identify theme</li> <li>– Model task</li> <li>– Show samples</li> <li>– Working with metaphors and similes</li> <li>– Structure</li> <li>– Three sentence types (Reflection)</li> <li>– Develop writing skills and work through activities</li> </ul>	<p>ABC Radio <i>Heywire</i> recordings and transcripts</p> <p>Specific modelling and teaching of the task.</p> <p>Use of joint construction to be used on a sample story.</p>
<b>Week 6</b>	<p><b>Drafting/Writing/Presenting:</b></p> <p>Their final tales of a boy's change to adulthood. Boys tell a story from their own lives of transition. They can also choose to put themselves in the shoes of a boy from another culture. In this way they can avoid, if they wish sensitive and/or embarrassing tales of their own, and put themselves in another's situation. In these cases they will still be considering and writing about the thoughts and feelings of the character and reflecting on how the ritual or life incident affected the boy.</p>	<p>Guided and independent work on the task to allow boys to demonstrate their understanding and appreciation of the elements of the unit.</p>



# POETIC TECHNIQUE POEM

By Thomas Langford 2014

I write alliterations, like a simile snake  
I speak in hyperbole, a million words a day  
These internal rhymes lie inside my writing  
Yeah, I crush connotations, if you know what I mean...

These backwards poets, they write puns inverse  
My metaphors sting, and this hyperbole hurts  
All this onomatopoeia, it ticks and it tocks  
Just one minute left to win it with this consonant clock.

The sun smiles upon me, a personified friend  
He's as bright as Einstein, that's where this allusion ends  
I shoot assonance, a stun-gun, full of fun  
Cause I'm stupidly smart like an oxymoron.

A verb is a doing word, so I'll offer you advice  
Use a figure of speech, or you might just think twice  
Knowledge is power, Ignorance is bliss  
But choose your words carefully or risk an ellipsis...



Thomas is currently an English/Drama teacher at Camden High School. He writes songs and poetry in his spare time and is always looking for creative and fun ways to engage his students in their learning.

# 2013 LITERARY COMPETITION

## JUDGE'S REPORT

### Section B — Poem, Years 9 & 10

Judge: Chris Lynch

As always, this year's entrants in Section B poetry explored a wide range of subjects, encompassing both adolescent experience and the world in which we live. I spoke last year of three criteria for a good poem: authenticity of experience, specificity of image, and freshness of language. I want to focus this year particularly on language, because for the most part this is what set the winners apart from the Highly Commendeds and the other entrants.

The poet Anthony Lawrence says that the subject of every poem needs to be subordinate to language, that every poet should have that written on a card and stuck to their monitor or the front of their notebook. Subject must be subordinate to language. I take that to mean that subject matter might be the excuse for a poem, but the language, in particular, is why we love them as poems. Fiction writers have been described as story geeks, and poets as word geeks, and I think that's true. One of my favourite writers growing up was Roald Dahl, who was both a word and story geek, and I still love his way with words in particular. Once heard, who can forget the *Oompa Loompas* and *Hornswogglers* of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, or the BFG's *scrumdiddlyumptious snozzcumbers*? The BFG says Sophie shouldn't gobblefunk about with words, but of course that's exactly what Dahl was doing, and that's exactly what we should be doing as poets too.

Not every poem needs neologisms, of course. English has the largest vocabulary of any language. At home I have a large treasure chest, in which I've put all my favourite words on slips of coloured paper. I add to it regularly, because I'm constantly finding new words. Most new words and expressions in any language come from teenage slang, so I always look for them when I read through the competition entrants. I don't often find them. I've wondered

why that is, and I suspect one reason is that we immediately think a poem has to be *about* something. Especially if it's for an English class. The first question we ask ourselves is: what is my poem going to be *about*? Otherwise, what's the point? The result is often poems that describe something very prosaically, that lack linguistic spark. Rarely do we start with a phrase or word that means interests us as individuals, and play with it until it expands into something larger.

The poem that wins first prize this year, *Suburban Storm*, is a clear winner. As the title suggests, it has a simple subject, but it uses the familiar experience of a thunderstorm as a springboard for a series of images interlinked by the metaphor of the storm personified as an illusionist. The very first line announces that "The storm is an illusionist", and we get raised eyebrows, an unsuspecting audience (who become drugged), curtains opening, the swoosh of fingers, the illusionist's assistants, and merchandise. The poem ends, surprisingly, in the foyer, with an ad for "the wondrous magician—the suburban storm". If the entire poem consisted of metaphor, the reader might grow tired of it. But here the poet has also used a whole range of recognisable, concrete details: a housing estate, languid clouds, royal blue-black sky, streaking silver slices, tin roofs, cumulus clouds, thin fog, puddles, broken twigs, and still warm bitumen. Some of these are surprising combinations, like an "aubergine eyebrow", or wind that "infiltrates" deep into bone—in other words, sneakily, like a magician. Congratulations to the poet on a vivid, imaginative poem that describes, surprises, and delights in equal measure. A well-deserved win.

The second and third prize winners also made use of fresh and cryptic language, the experimental cinquain *Ballad of Our Articulation* with its "morbidly uneducated" breakdown of meaning, and *The Human*

## 2013 LITERARY COMPETITION

*Livestock of Camp 14*'s fabulously dark and specific title informing the slippery exploration of pain in the poem.

The Highly Commendeds are less successful in their use of language, though the line from the *Hole in the Sky*'s "We could skim up the drain pipes and up on the roofs" makes fantastic use of the verb to skim. *As the Sun Goes Down*, an evocation of insomnia (and the only poem that made me laugh), and *The Game*, about a rugby league match, convince because they feel like real, contemporary experiences. As poets, we can always learn from old poems, but we have to speak in our own voices.

For winners, highly commendeds, and entrants alike, keep gobblefunking about with words, and putting them into poems.

Chris Lynch

### **Prize Winning Entries**

1st Prize: Suburban Storm

2nd Prize: Ballad of Our Articulation

3rd Prize: The Human Livestock of Camp 14

### **Highly Commended Entries**

1st HC: Hole in the Sky

2nd HC: As the Sun Goes Down

3rd HC: The Game

4th HC: N/A

## SUBURBAN STORM

By Rosie McCrossin, Sandgate District State High School

The storm is an illusionist  
Spying from behind the housing estate  
At the gentle glow of suburbia  
It smiles  
Raising an aubergine eyebrow  
At its unsuspecting audience  
*Time to put on a show*

First come the clouds  
Dark and thick  
Heavy bodies undulating across  
The royal blue-black sky  
Then a soft sprinkling of rain  
And thin breezes  
Which cut through the thick air  
Like cheese wire  
It is drugging the audience  
Waiting  
For the curtains to open

And it begins  
Streaking silver slices through the languid clouds  
Blinding the spectators  
And the freezing rain  
Which falls in swollen drops  
On the tin rooves  
The deep snarls of thunder  
Which seem to sync with the sleeping suburbia's heartbeats  
And the thin insidious winds  
Which infiltrate deep into bone  
The illusionist scrapes at every sense  
With sharpened fingernails

And then with a quick swoosh of its fingers  
It departs  
Followed by its cumulus assistants  
Leaving a layer of thin fog  
Which hovers above the still warm bitumen  
Puddles and broken twigs in its wake  
Like merchandise in the foyer of the show  
*Come and see the great illusionist*  
*Be shocked*  
*Be astonished*  
*Be stunned*  
*By the wondrous magician – the suburban storm*

## JUDGE'S REPORT

### Section B – Short Story, Years 9 & 10

Judge: Garry Collins, President, English Teachers Association of Queensland

#### Results

First *Camphor Laurel Summers*

Second *Scapegoat*

Third *The Nightmare Within*

Highly Commended

1. *She didn't believe in love*
2. *Ability*
3. *The Crystal*
4. *Clara Returns*

A healthy crop of entries was received in this section this year. The quality was generally high and a good number of really quite effective stories had to be relegated to the discard pile even before the final stage of elimination which produced the prize winners. The subject matter was varied but there was a noticeable preference for material that could be aptly described as a tad macabre.

Most of the young authors involved had a very good grasp of the structure of an effective short narrative and were alive to the potential of the language to bring events, characters and settings to life in the reader's mind. As was the case last year, the overall standard of adherence to the conventions of grammar, spelling and punctuation was pleasingly high and only a small number of lapses had managed to slip through the editing process.

Interestingly, the piece that I judged to be the most appealing breached what is usually offered

as one of the standard guidelines for effective short narratives – that they should occupy only a limited time period. This one successfully spanned the years of primary and secondary school for a group of characters who were not sharply delineated as individuals. Structurally, it tended to be an interwoven series of vignettes rather than a more conventional plot line. This piece pushed the usual boundaries of this text type but did so very effectively.

The winning entry dealt evocatively with the important and universal theme of growing up and how some young people perhaps want to grow up too fast without fully appreciating the value of what they currently have. I was reminded of some of the lyrics of a Joni Mitchell song from the 1970s, "Big Yellow Taxi" – "don't it always seem to go; you don't know what you've got till it's gone".

## CAMPHOR LAUREL SUMMERS

By Rosie McCrossin, Sandgate District State High School

The end of primary school smelt of melting bitumen and sweet after-rain. There had been eight summers of clingy school uniforms under the camphor laurel, wishing for these days which seemed to have come far too quickly. The class was a mix of half-cooked teenagers and children, mismatched and colliding with each other. The end of primary school was a strange awakening of razors, hushed whispers and bra shopping. A familiar world was collapsing under the weight of adulthood.

Clay club was established when the summer got too hot for the lady bugs on the camphor laurel tree to be collected. The supply of clay was found under a stone near the out of bounds area at the top of the oval; it was wet and soft and smelt of ancient rain. The stone wall under the camphor laurel became the clay club. All of that summer was spent creating tiny snakes, pots and dreams which dried in the sultry air of the classroom, stored carefully on tissues in the under-desk trays. All of that summer the clay hole was watered, precious liquid stored in water bottles, squeezed from hats, carried in lunch box containers. The popular girls laughed from the other side of the oval, flickers of envy flashing across their eyes. Eventually, though, everyone became bored with clay club. It only took one week for the clay hole to dry out.

Before their swimming lesson, they sit on the whitewashed grandstands, squinting at the too-blue pool. All girls. The teacher explains to them that if they have their periods she can take them out of swimming. She will put a tick next to their name. She smiles warmly as if she has just saved them from every possible embarrassment of burgeoning womanhood. Some girls giggle, others nod solemnly. In the changing room there is secrecy; towels, still patterned with the princesses and flowers

of childhood, draped around as they change. Some still change openly in the corner, unaware of what is coming.

School camp comes that same summer. Many of the girls wear tight fitting clothes, which cling to their half-developed body parts. They separate themselves from the boys but their bodies betray their age. Yet for boys and girls alike this is a foreign and strange time, though they don't admit it to themselves. They stumble, the way they always have, through camp activities, not admitting their enjoyment of these childish games, hiding the dull ache for the childhood they miss. On the last day they all jump into the dam. They are all laughing together, slippery fingers grabbing at finger and legs and toes through the pond weed. They are together, they are smiling, they are enjoying childhood in its purest form. It won't ever be quite the same again.

At the end of that year they change the game they always played: the game of innocent fun where you asked questions to each other and traced the answer on another person's back and they guessed whose answer it was. At the end of that year they make it something that combined their tiny knowledge of the adult world and their need to know more about it without explicitly asking each other. They run up and down the stone wall, which is still stained with clay. They giggle into the trunk of the camphor laurel, yellow and red ladybugs crawling along their faces, trying to compensate for the childhood that is disappearing. They laugh at things they don't understand and feel somehow adult, making jokes about rose petals and the school principal.

They finish primary school together. They have the graduation at night time at the local bowls club, arranged by various mothers, who



## 2013 LITERARY COMPETITION

buzz like moths around a light bulb watching their daughters' every move. The girls try to be adult in any way they can; they follow the conversations, dance and drink soft drink and talk. But there is something very childish about the event, about the way they feel, about the lost sandals and the way the boys throw lawn bowls at the toads on the floodlit grass, about the way the outfits, bought from adult shops, feel like dress ups. But they are happy and they dance on the neatly mown grass, falling and revealing flashes of childhood-pink underwear. Smiling. The night is perfect in its innocence.

By the time they finish high school not many of them remember the game rules or still have the

delicate clay pots on their duchesses or can still imagine the smell of pond weed and happiness. They cannot remember the years they sat under the camphor laurel, sweaty and dirty and yet somehow more beautiful and clean than they are now. They could not remember the summers that changed them. It wasn't adulthood like they had imagined it; they had dreamed of maturity, but the difficulties maturity brought seemed not to be worth the sacrifice of childhood innocence. As children they had held a hand towards the future, a hand stained with clay and grass and a love of life. They will grab for this hand far, far later in life, not understanding what they had wanted all those years ago. Not understanding why they had let the clay go dry

## JUDGE'S REPORT

### Section C — Poem, Year 8 Judge: Zenobia Frost

Mid-last year, the eminent – and eminently down-to-earth – author Neil Gaiman gave a keynote address to graduates of the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. That speech has been dubbed “Make Good Art”.

With this year’s Paul Sherman Prize, I was thrilled not just by the size and weight of the envelope that arrived on my doorstep, but – once I’d opened it and begun reading – also by the quality. This year’s entries adeptly mastered metaphor, experimented with form, and evoked familiar and fantastical scenes.

In Gaiman’s address, he said, “A freelance life, a life in the arts, is sometimes like putting messages in bottles, on a desert island, and hoping that someone will find one of your bottles and open it and read it, and put something in a bottle that will wash its way back to you: appreciation, or a commission, or money, or love.”

This year’s entrants, your messages-in-bottles were found and received – and you have bottles full of admiration and encouragement washing back your way.

I also noted, with pleasure, that this year’s poems were almost universally well proofread. The only criticism I have is of decoration of entries: teachers, if you encourage every entrant from your school to use the same colourful background, those gorgeous poems are often made illegible. Keep it simple.

This year’s entries, in terms of theme, seemed less internal; poets were more concerned with the world around them – the environment, travel, refugees and war, family. This strikes me as an interesting trend in an election year! The most successful entries explored these diverse issues through language that made abstract ideas concrete, relatable, and fresh.

## 2013

The highly commended entries were each chosen for a certain spark. “**A Bat Without a Robin**” builds a humorous Batman narrative; “**Hope Is**” uses repetition beautifully to explore the central concept; “**My Tears Still Flow**” makes excellent use of metre and rhyme in a poem about grief; and “**What I’ve Done**” develops a central metaphor – memory as shelter.

In third place, “**Hail Storm**” glows with evocative metaphors. The poet exercises restraint, with line breaks that highlight each personification of nature. There’s a great build here, from the rain “tip-toeing across the roof” to strobed lighting and pushy winds, and then to a wonderfully understated ending.

“**Red Rock**” earns its second place for its imagery: the “dried-tomato sands” of outback deserts, the “unkempt hair” of bristly scrubs, and Uluru as a monolith ...

“who flares and dims,  
like a neo light that slowly morphs  
when the sun floats.”

The poet sketches the scene with careful attention to pacing.

In first place, “**Shipwrecked Memories**” certainly resonates with Neil Gaiman’s concept of art as message-in-a-bottle! The poet crafts a seafaring adventure narrative in which the damsel is not the only one in distress; the ship’s floor itself “shudders beneath her in fright” under “famished winds”. Against pirates and sirens, the poem invokes the help of Davey Jones, Neptune, even the Taniwah in a world where ...

“hope needs to be buried  
beneath mountains of reason.”

## 2013 LITERARY COMPETITION

Layered over this narrative, the poet – never making anything explicit – juxtaposes piratical violence with modern-day battles: internal and external, physical and social. I can't wait to hear the poet read her/his work.

**Zenobia Frost** is a Brisbane-based poet, editor and critic. She services as Cordite's assistant editor as well as a poetry editor with Voiceworks

Magazine, which edits and publishes the work of Australian writers under the age of 25. Zen also runs the Ruby Fizz Salon poetry series at Bird Gallery and Café in Brisbane's CBD. Her forthcoming full-length manuscript, 'Salt and Bone', was recently shortlisted in the Thomas Shapcott Prize.

### SHIPWRECKED MEMORIES

By Luana Lima, St Andrew's Anglican College

Terror hits her like a drum  
Pounding on her whole body  
Her throat is twisted into knots  
As she was left to be tied to the stake to burn  
And all she can hear is her ticking heart  
The door is icy against her back

As she struggles to hold it up against the famished winds  
The floor shudders beneath her in fright  
As it suffers from the blows from the foaming waves  
Memories flash past her eyes  
Like the trees past a racing car  
Flashes of blue and green and grey  
And despair fills her eyes  
As she watches the sun sink into its watery grave  
As every hit echoes in her very soul.

Hope that needs to be buried  
Beneath mountains of reason  
Parched tears on the corner of glazed eyes  
Grim countenances brightened by the biting blue light  
And all their hopes are placed on a hero  
Taking his last breaths  
Whispered lies and tear-stained kisses  
Shouts to kindle lost courage  
Die on leaden tongues  
And children playing on an emerald field  
Scream as the bombs start falling  
And the earth lays barren on the battleground

With the siren's screeching  
And Davy Jones' Locker  
With Neptune's wrath  
And the Taniwha's rage  
How is a sailor supposed to live  
To see the next day?  
How is a sailor supposed to escape  
That Grim Reaper?  
How is a girl going to survive?

## JUDGE'S REPORT

### Section C — Short Story, Year 8 Judge: Deb Peden

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

I was delighted to see an even greater number of submissions for this Section to that of last year's competition. And the quality of writing has again lifted significantly: for that, I would like to acknowledge the writers themselves, but also their teachers and their families: for good writing starts with reading well and wide and it's those around them that often model good reading and writing practices.... There was a delightful diversity of genres: from fantasy, horror, science-fiction, drama and adventure. I noticed the absence of humor this year and while writing can be a serious practice, it's also fun and I would encourage writers with a humorous vein to also consider making a submission. What influenced my decision about the place-getters and highly commended entries was their ability to captivate the reader from the opening lines: a decisive or appealing narrative hook is essential for the short story writer. I also recognized in these winning entries, effective use of economy wherein the writer is able to convey a sense of place, character and crises within the word limit and sometimes powerfully with single words and clause-like sentences.

#### PLACE WINNERS

##### Third Place: 'The Swing'

As I mentioned in my opening address, there is a power in economic use of language. In *The Swing*, the writer uses this tool very effectively during the climax of their story: *Then a screech shatters the air followed by a loud CRACK.... She sprints outside.... And the scream goes on and on. CRACK. Diana lying spread eagled on the grass. CRACK. the two frayed ropes from the old swing.... CRACK. Diana's limp hand held tightly in hers. CRACK... And so on, the word 'crack' punctuating the air, delivering powerful sound bites to create tension and a sense of*

the critical moment. The writer has also made good use of dialogue and provided an important message about an appreciation and love for family. This writer has a promising future.

##### Second Place: 'The Ambush'

I really enjoyed this story, despite (or perhaps because of) the violent themes of attack & defense. The writer had me from the opening lines: *the creak of the floorboards under soft leather boots was enough of a warning in itself*, the story opens. And from there the tension builds as the reader vicariously experiences the threat of ambush through the perceptions of the victim. What this writer also does very well is shift from action to thought in a fluid writing style while maintaining the plot's momentum. A subtle yet powerful twist in the denouement, completes a satisfying short story. This writer has a natural storytelling ability, and I would encourage them to pursue their craft.

##### First Place: 'Phials of Hope'

What appealed to me most about this short story is not so much the vocabulary & imagery – although they are sophisticated especially in light of the fact that this a Year 8 student submission – the appeal and respect for this piece of writing and the writer comes from the writer's ability to use this language in context and powerfully, to convey a sense of place and emotion. 'Phials of Hope' is an extended metaphor of Hope & Fear as portrayed through the key character, Salem, who harnesses Hope from unsuspecting others and secures it in his phial. That is, until he encounters a five year old child who is "gifted with curlicues of black wind-battered petals and a porcelain countenance". The story ends with the innocent child extending her hand in Hope to Salem, who, smiling, takes it. The reader is left to determine whether Salem or the child remain

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hope-filled or hopeless. This is a beautiful piece of writing and I encourage the writer to pursue their narrative ability and their imagination: a powerful story with an enduring theme.

### HIGHLY COMMENDED AWARDS

#### 1. 'H-A-T-E'

Despite its provocative title, this short story is about confronting the antagonism and perceived hatred of others. Basically it's an anti-bullying tale over one school day in the life of a victim. The use of present tense is powerfully used here and the reader is transported through the fears and experiences of the key character until she stands up to her nemeses. While the denouement is a little clichéd, it is very satisfying story.

#### 2. 'Sarah'

The writer has used the fantasy genre to construct a fascinating storyline for the reader. Sitting at a park bench, the key character from the title, Sarah, converses with Thomas. The reader is taken back in time: but what is real and what is not real is left to the reader's imagination. Greater economy of words would be effective, but the writer uses dialogue and vocabulary well and constructs plausible characters.

#### 3. 'Murky Water'

This is one of those frightening stories that conjures up images of the film *Jaws*. A chilling account of a young boy, Arnold, and his companion Sam. Arnold finds himself in murky waters with the threat of something unknown beneath him. Written in an unorthodox style from two perspectives – one in the water, one on dry land – the tension is built as the threat becomes real. A digital watch becomes the warning beacon for the danger. This is a well written story but it could have been expanded on a little more to further develop the characters.

#### 4. 'The Singing Doll'

*The Singing Doll* is a supernatural tale of a girl and her doll. A sort of Armageddon descends upon the village and it is the doll that emerges from the mire to transform into a real live girl – her song the only aspect she remembers from her former life as a doll. The writer demonstrates a good imagination and a flair for the written word. I would recommend however that the writer maintain a single event over a brief period of time to adhere to the short story writing genre: nevertheless, a commendable piece.

## PHIALS OF HOPE

By Priyanka Iyer, Mary MacKillop College

Hope. A small inexpressible throb of unfathomable fantasies, of beliefs so evangelical and evanescent that it transcended the strongest emotion of all, fear, and it alone thrived and basked in its burnished luminescence, thrusting towards the absconding shadow, who, in an abrupt instance sensed its beckoning.

The eloping darkness shrouded the figure in a cascade of clandestine secrets, threatening to unveil and reveal the unknown atrocities of his wicked accomplishments. Yet, this black knight had no fear, no fear that would penetrate his solidarity and unacknowledged incompetence, no fear that would languish over his heart of insatiable greed, and no fear that would lure him right into the yearning hands of his assailants. For Salem was a man of no emotions, no emotions that is, other than his famishing greed for Hope.

He was tampering with fire and ice, dawn and dusk, unsurmountable mountains and turgid seas. He was tampering with Hope. Oh, such simplistic beauty, with all its soft reminder of fulfilling one's wants and desires, a sure work of great devilry. Of such endeavouring passion, unmolested by prying change of thoughts, an everlasting tongue of seething dreams. Salem was drawn to it, as he always was, and always would be.

He crept stealthily towards its coaxing and lustrous aura, an intermittent ray of tantalising poetry, full of mirth and a capricious mind of its own. In his coiled sack jingled phials of unaccomplished dreams, for in each phial enclosed and imprisoned, was an innumerable quantity of Hope. Salem smirked at his own malicious doing, and with swiftness, so tender, almost caressing the earth with gentle placements of his experienced feet; he bounded on towards the alluring songstress.

Clouds gathered overhead, obscuring the pale and insipid gleam of the moon, who seemed to

mourn the blackness that transpired inside Salem. She mourned with Hope. The trees began to whisper secrets, passed on from single falling leaves to another, and so loquacious were their conversing, laden with Hope. One of the secrets that unravelled was like a flume of autumn leaves, a pure mist of their auburn tufts, a past that formed into a tale about Salem.

Salem stole Hope. He stole it because he himself had none, none that is, until after the disappearance of his sister. She had meant to him what Sun means to Day, and what Moon means to Night. She was the single most joyous presence of light in his darkness, she was the water in his well, she was the azure in his sky, and she was the Hope in his soul. Ever since her traceless departure from his life, Salem's irrevocable love for her grew into a wanton craving for depriving others of Hope.

As he trekked onwards, he saw an abandoned horse cart, strewn across the haughty landscape. A dull **hush-hush** sounded behind it, like gauzy silk being scraped against bundles of hay. Salem walked towards it, and found a man lying suspended in between two different worlds. He knelt down beside him, and produced an empty phial from his bag, and placed his palm over the dying man's heart, muttering what seemed like vitriol gloating, but was actually an incantation that would wrought the man of his Hope. His wishes and dreams for the world flashed before his eyes in effervescent shades of unruly hues, and Salem shaped the loose tendrils into an orb of intermingling colours, vaulting it into a phial, and placing it back into his sack. An incorrigible smile displayed across his face as he left the Hope bereft man to his endless rest.

Yet that wasn't the one that Salem wished to capture, **this** was most lacklustre in comparison to **that** one's eddy of tumultuous whiplash. Its presence was as strong as the amicable



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attraction between Moon and the Sea, a ruthless yearning, and this Hope tapered in a chain of the same magnetism.

Salem ran towards it in a restless flurry to extricate that rose, and an augmenting desire for it increased. Suddenly, a small girl standing with great prudence, bathed in a cloud of soft rosy pink, shot thought with trains of dusky crimson, and showered with delicate drops of celestial beauty and Hope, cocked her head in curiosity.

She exuded such waves of exuberance that Salem became unduly irresolute under her prowess, which exacerbated his awe for her. She was the quintessentialism of benign femininity, gifted with curlicues of black wind battered petals, and of a porcelain countenance. Her eyes twinkled with understanding, with knowledge, with Hope, and the blue of her

vision pierced him through the heart. Yet, such deep and intricate wisdom for a child of her years pained him. She was no more than five, yet the ricochet of her Hope astounded him.

She padded towards him and studied his grave visage. Her face was like a vista of enduring beauty, too magnificent, too Hopeful. She held out her hand, the only feature which betrayed her innocence. It was soft and pudgy, smooth with sea shell pink fingertips. Her palms were lined with entwined etchings, each a constellation, a tell-tale sign of her future.

Her hand so childlike, was the epitome that Hope was never lost within Salem, he had just failed to welcome it. Her hand remained motionless, with great patience, with a sign of Hope, urging him to take it.

Smiling, he took it.



## JUDGE'S REPORT

### Section D — Poem, Years 6 & 7

Judge: Cindy Keong

This year's entries were a delight to read from our budding young poets. A vast array of themes were explored from the tragedies of war, our natural world, relationships, hobbies, happiness, and animals. Many of the poems were descriptive and attempted to employ poetic devices to engage and capture the attention of the reader. The prize winning poems all had one thing in common in that their poems gave the impression the poet had a strong connection with the places and situations described in their writing. If any advice could be offered it would be to encourage students to select topics they have a connection or deep understanding of. The winning entries displayed these qualities as their images and language choices were more developed and engaging for the reader. Whilst there can only be one overall winner the efforts of all who entered should be commended.

#### PRIZE WINNING ENTRIES

**1<sup>st</sup> Prize: The Cemetery**

This poem is a mature piece of writing that demonstrates a strong sense of place and conveys to the reader a deep connection with the subject matter. The reader is engaged by stanza's packed full of imagery and subtle use of poetic devices; as well as managing to engage the five senses throughout. Overall an engaging piece of writing.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Prize: Forget Me Not**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Five Mile Creek**

#### HIGHLY COMMENDED ENTRIES

**1<sup>st</sup> HC: Woman of the Future**

**2<sup>nd</sup> HC: Crystal Creek**

**3<sup>rd</sup> HC: Deserted**

**4<sup>th</sup> HC: The Tricks of Time**

## OUR CEMETERY

By Seisia Luxford, Ingham State School

The grey graves exudes thousand-old memories  
in an infinite parallel of tales.

The names on the graves are epochs,  
epochs of a life once vibrant,  
vibrant of the existences of many.

The cane bends with a beautiful grace,

imprisons, the dead essence  
in a square of ageing memories.

Grass, fresh and young, barely hides the truth  
of this place. The flora stating otherwise.

Trees' branches cascade over the remnants of many,  
locks them in a shadowy cocoon.

In a paddock short distances away,  
cattle overlook this place as sentinels for the resting.  
Who knows how many requiems they have forseen?

I stand amongst the graves and catacombs

Two of my ancestors slumber here.

Familiar yet distant faces grin to me  
they succumb to the abyss of existence.

Aroma of countless wildflowers a soft tune in the  
background. Cattle never daring to infringe the waft  
of fragrance. Mother Wind dehydrates the flora, yet  
the scent lingers, livening the memories of the dead.

Slow wind ruffles the trees, tickles your hearing vessels  
with a harmonial thrust. Cows cry in the meadows, a low  
peaceful call. The wind against the headstones transform  
a mournful whistling of those past, like angels weaving  
transparent satin through the atmosphere, dropping  
onto restful men as a silky melody.

The sight of the dead can rip at the essence with an impossible  
strength, even the strong of heart feel the nip of its hunger.  
Hunger for the tears that caress down the face, the stomach  
weakens even a grown man will dread, the black in your memory  
like a fresh bucket of paint over white sheets on a clothesline.

The disappearance of any gaiety that comforted your life.

The soft soakiness of the green grass,  
the tingling of your fingers running across the granite  
And the dryness of wilted flowers.

The smooth concrete slabs that sit atop the graves,  
a square of senses in a quiet place.

## JUDGE'S REPORT

### Section D — Short Story, Years 6 & 7

Judge: Associate Professor Beryl Exley, Faculty of Education, QUT

Award Presentation: Peta Egan, English Department, Ormiston College

#### GENERAL REPORT

Warm red ochre and blue sky greetings from the land of the Larrakia Aboriginal people in the NT where I am currently enjoying my Long Service Leave. My long term colleague and an esteemed English teacher from Ormiston College, Peta Egan, has kindly made herself available to deliver this report on my behalf.

This year entries in Section D were once again variable but stimulating reads. I am excited to think that so many young adolescents are enjoying writing and are confident enough to share their work with an audience. This year three prize winners and four highly commended awards have been given in Section D Short Story for Years 6 & 7.

4<sup>th</sup> Highly Commended, 'Wolf Hunt' presented a fast moving but highly descriptive fight narrative. The author expertly wove in a range of sophisticated literary devices, including descriptive noun groups, metaphors and excessively short sentences to speed up the action. On this occasion, the author brought the story to a close with an unexpected emotional twist, that of introducing the reader to a den of four month old soft grey furred orphaned wolf pups.

3<sup>rd</sup> Highly Commended, 'Sydia', was a more challenging read as the new world of Sydia was carefully created and tremendous spirit was given to Ruby and her foe, a Russian mutant lizardman. The author used comparison to quickly engage the reader with the active and emotional realities of the characters. The subtle use of alliteration gave the text rhythm and phonemic cohesion. This author was able to include a complex plot in the space of two pages.

2<sup>nd</sup> Highly Commended, 'The Lost Tomb', was a well-paced action drama, featuring Professor Richard Lenniste as an archaeologist and expedition leader searching for the lost tomb. This author showcased an extensive subject-appropriate vocabulary and balanced description of visual action against innermost turmoil. The plot took a surprising turn in the last two paragraphs to offer a satisfying conclusion. I'd like to encourage this author to write another few chapters about this adventure.

1<sup>st</sup> Highly Commended, 'The End', showcased a more mature writing style comprised of descriptive noun groups effectively masquerading as complete sentences. Other sentences showcased a range of sophisticatedly built embedded and interrupting clauses to ensure detail also featured in the text. I was captured by the way this author mixed literary and informative genres to provide a compelling account of the end of the world. This was a brave piece of work and I have awarded it 1<sup>st</sup> Highly Commended to encourage this author to continue to explore this rather unique writing style.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> placed entry, 'Mirage', required re-reading to fully appreciate the effort put into an extensive plot that transverses time. This author obviously has a talent for creating action and emotional drama. Reinforcing the same point twice or thrice added to the intensity of this text. I found myself closing my eyes after each poetic sentence to fully absorb the magnitude of meaning. This text also included a very effective paragraph structure to emphasise the protagonist's decisive action. I really enjoyed this young writer's style.



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The 2<sup>nd</sup> placed entry, 'On the Run', was a more traditional narrative about the trials and tribulations of Vicky, a young 11 year old female pick-pocket who escapes the law on Lady, her trusty chestnut mare. The author took a risk by interrupting the escalating drama with a flashback about her recently departed mother. However, the layering of drama and lament reduced me to tears as I came to appreciate the reasons behind Vicky's criminal actions. The hallmark of this author's work is the development of character through descriptive action.

Finally to the winning entry, 'The Silent Carriage'. This author did not waste a single word and I kept thinking about this story for days as I recalled the particularities of carefully crafted phrases. It's a sign of literary talent in

the writer when readers start to recall specific phrases. Many of the carefully crafted sentences created a fulsome picture of past action, the present situation and opened up my mind to possibilities for the future. Space was spent setting the scene before moving through a somewhat perplexing drama before time was transcended and we met another character. It was only when the unnamed protagonist interacted with the new character that all of the pieces of this ghost story fell in place. This author, quite significantly, required the reader to do some of the work of filling in the meaning. One comes away from this reading with a sense of having engaged with the author rather than just being told a story. I offer my sincere congratulations to this young writer.

## THE SILENT CARRIAGE

By Clare White, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School

Silence. Complete silence...complemented by arctic coldness that shook me like an alarm clock going off. I had been impatiently waiting on that desolate train station for over an hour, contemplating every speck of stray gravel and dirt that caught my short attention span. My watch had stopped at one o'clock in the morning, a few minutes before I had arrived at the station. A moonless sky gazed down at me and I now found myself standing rigid and upright with loneliness as my solitary companion. Childish fears paid no mind to my inner demands for their life-long banishment from my troubled mind.

"...You **are** all alone... and the damn train is unusually beyond providing believable reasoning as to why it is late..." I attempted to reassure myself. I paused for a couple of seconds as the two sides of my mind went about their daily conflict. My rational side took control and began to ramble, a good sign that meant I wasn't **really** scared. "Stop tricking yourself into believing that sort of repetitive literary junk! The only out-of-place scenario **here** is you talking yourself!"

The train which was stationary in front of me was not my ride home. Upon my bombarding arrival, though I had been rushed to reach the train I wanted to catch, I had stopped to interpret text on the train's front. 'Special', it read. There was an ominous atmosphere about that train. I ran my eyes around the platform as an automatic response that served no real purpose. In dire need of some common sense, I reached for the button to open the doors that stood directly in front of me. Out of the blue, it turned green and the doors slid eerily sideways to invite me inside. Surely anyone with a shred of intelligence would make for the nearest bus stop and take the next ride out of there, but

not me. I got on, not all cautious as the doors closed behind me and the train sped off down the tracks.

Inside, I was still alone. I noticed there were no buttons for the doors on the inside, which deeply concerned me. The ebb and flow of my increasingly evident fears matched the constant sway of the carriage in an odd melody. Suddenly, the PA tuned in and a voice, ghostly slow and steady, stated that the train would be making a detour. I got up with widened eyes and stumbled over to a window as to study my surroundings. There was a sound from above me that wiped the look of thorough scrutiny from my face. I thought the noise was one of like a system rebooting itself and so very accurate I was. The lights had gone crimson red and stained the room accordingly. The screen usually for showing the next destination of the train turned on, so I looked up and...

"The next stop ..." I began, ready off the screen, "is **Eternal Damnation?**"

No sooner than when I had finished speaking the lights shot off and I felt a cold hand constricting my throat. Short desperate gasps were all I could manage as a cackle burst out from my attacker. I felt a sharp pain in my skull as the grip on my neck clenched tighter. In a frantic instant I was freed and I fell, breathless, with salty tears swelling up in my eyes. Symphonies of banshee like cries echoed through the carriage and for the first time in a while, I knew the position I was in, was one I wouldn't get out of. The torment continued for as long as I was able to cry out in terror. At times when I was unable of even standing, the train spoke to me, asking if I was having a good ride or if I wanted to hear a joke. I replied with the tears...and only tears.



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Many moons later, I found myself bedraggled and given up on all hope. Attempts at escape left claw marks on the windows and blood spurt from my fingertips. I had even written on the windows with that clotted, foul smelling ink. Living off the cockroaches underneath the seats and drinking the water which dripped from the air conditioner for so many days, I was fine physically, but mentally I was crippled beyond repair. Then, on that very day, train stopped.

The doors to my carriage opened and a young girl of about twelve stepped in.

**“No! Get off! This thing is alive! Just run!”**

I screamed in desperation. I knew those doors would close with the girl in between if I approached her. The girl didn't react; she didn't even notice me, as the train again sped off. Sobbing, I embraced the child sympathetically. But I passed right through her.

## FRIDAY NIGHT INTERSECTION

By Sue Grotherr, Calvary Christian College

“Five o’clock. Time to pack up and start the weekend,” Sarah announced as she logged off and shut down her computer.

She looked across at Jessica.

“Any plans for the weekend?” she asked.

“No, not really. Sleep, read, maybe do the markets on Sunday. Tim’s still away. He won’t be back until late next week.” She thought fleetingly of her mining engineer boyfriend and shut down the niggling thought of how much she was looking forward to a weekend without him and the implications of such a thought.

“Come on,” said Sarah. “Turn off that computer and I’ll walk to the station with you.”

“No, you go,” replied Jessica, “I’ve got some work that James wants ready first thing Monday morning. I’ll stay and get it finished so that it’s not hanging over my head all weekend.”

“Well don’t work too late,” she warned, “I’ll see you on Monday.”

Scooping up her bag, she headed for the door, turned, waved a jaunty good-bye and was gone.

Jessica settled back to the work on her desk. She knew she had been lucky to land this job with such a prestigious law firm. Her uni grades hadn’t been that great but her work with the firm as a casual copy clerk had been enough for them to offer her a place in their graduate program. She worked steadily until she had the notes for James, her supervising lawyer, completed. She gathered up the papers and headed for his secretary’s desk. A quick look at the office clock told her it was almost seven o’clock.

“Not too bad,” she thought to herself. Provided she didn’t have to wait too long for a train, she would be home before eight. A lazy, indulgent weekend would be the reward for her Friday night diligence. She shut down her computer, slung her bag over her shoulder and headed for Central.

Joshua sat on a seat in the mall eating a fast food burger and slurping on a frozen coke. He watched the people around him – the Friday night mix of workers heading home, late night shoppers and those heading off to party. He identified with none of them. He sat alone, unconnected and isolated. The few passers-by who noticed him made a quick and brutal judgment – another disenchanting, resentful youth who thought the world owed him.

Joshua didn’t care. A childhood distinguished by neglect and abuse had left him with no illusions about the goodness of others. Nobody cared about him, nobody watched out for him. It was him against the world. His only constant companion was the anger compressed into a small, hard ball lodged deep inside him.

He stood up, leaving the remains of his meal on the seat. As he turned to join the Friday night throng, he felt a bump on his shoulder. He swung around. A young woman with long brown hair had accidentally tapped him with the bag slung over her shoulder.

‘Sorry,’ she murmured with a smile before continuing towards the pedestrian crossing.

Jessica had been focused on catching the green light and hadn’t noticed the unkempt young man move from the seat. The corner of her bag had nudged his shoulder. She had smiled politely and apologised, barely breaking her stride as she dashed for the light.

“Homeless guy by the look of him. How does that happen to people?” she wondered as she jostled her way across Edward Street and started the trudge up the hill to the station.

Joshua pondered on what to do with the evening. The Valley? Too packed with fancy clubbers on a Friday night. Stay in the mall? Too many police on a Friday night.

He decided to head for Redbank. Thommo and Georgie would be at the tavern. He’d catch up

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with them and see what the evening held from there. He made his way toward Central.

Jessica sank into a seat, thankful that she had to wait only a few minutes for a train. She took out her phone to check whether Tim had messaged her. She didn't notice the young man she had bumped with her bag get into the carriage and move down the aisle.

Joshua had ducked through the ticket barrier behind another commuter. He couldn't remember the last time he had paid for a ticket. Why pay, when you could ride for free? He had seen the train at the platform and pushing his way down the escalator, managed to jump on board just as the doors were closing. Joshua felt the tightly coiled ball in the pit of his stomach begin to fracture – the way it always did when he knew he had beaten the system. “Josh – 1; the world – 0,” he thought triumphantly. The cracks in the ball widened and tantalising wisps of anger transformed into invincibility seeped out.

He swaggered down the aisle and, suddenly, he saw her – the bitch who had hit him with her bag. Sitting there without a care in the world, checking her goddamned phone. Surprise turned to fury. She had hit him back there in the mall. Had pounded him with her bag. She deserved to be punished, she deserved to be hurt.

He noticed no-one else in the carriage – only the woman who had attacked him. She was no better than his mother, his stepfather, the schoolyard bullies – all those who had hit him and walked away unpunished. Well this time it wasn't going to go unpunished. Someone was going to be taught a lesson. See how she like being used as a punching bag. He imagined her pleading as he held her on the ground. He knew she would – she would mewl and whimper like a helpless kitten. Not like him – he had learned very early in life never to cry, never to beg. Doing so only increased the pleasure for the one doing the thrashing.

“Next station is Taringa. Platform is on the right-hand side.”

Jessica put her phone away and closed her bag.

Joshua was watching her through hooded eyes.

“The bitch is getting out,” he thought, “just getting up and walking away as though slamming me with her bag means nothing.”

The ball splintered into shards of white hot anger. His world narrowed to one other single human being – the cow who had attacked him. A lifetime of pain and humiliation was about to be avenged. Joshua felt powerful, he felt strong, he felt good.

Jessica felt her usual frisson of nervousness as the train rounded the corner toward the station. She knew it was silly but, at night, the streets around the station were dark and quiet. Trees and shrubs provided safe hiding places for those seeking them. She always breathed a sigh of relief when she reached her front door.

The train pulled into the station. Jessica stepped on the platform and headed for the stairs. Two railway security officers stood at the top of the stairs. She smiled at them as she swiped her travel card across the sensor and started down the stairs.

Joshua followed her down the platform. His eyes saw nothing but the head of long brown hair swinging from side to side. He planned his next move. Follow her through the darkened, winding streets. Wait for the right moment. Grab her from behind. He could almost hear her choking for breath as his arm tightened around her neck. A smirk of sadistic pleasure rolled across his face. He was ready.

“I need to see your proof of purchase of travel, sir.” The sharp, controlled tone of the speaker caused Jessica to turn and see what the issue was. Surprised, she recognised the young man she had bumped with her bag in the mall. Apparently, he couldn't produce a ticket.

Joshua froze. Tears of defeat and frustration pricked his eyes.

Jessica felt briefly sorry for the man cornered by the burly security guards.

‘Bummer of a way to start the weekend,’ she thought wryly as she skipped down the stairs and out into the crisp winter night.































