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EDITORIAL

Stewart Riddle

University of Southern Queensland

Welcome to a new year and a new issue of your favourite English teaching journal, *Words'Worth*. Much has happened since our last issue, including a new prime minister, a new version of the Australian Curriculum: English, and some interesting developments in Queensland around senior assessment and new curriculum development. It would probably be an understatement to say that I think we're in for a very interesting 2016.

Reading through the contributions for this issue got me thinking back to some of my pre-service teacher education, when I first came across the work of Brazilian critical literacy educator, Paulo Freire. If you've not read it before, I recommend checking out an interview with Freire, which was published in an article entitled, *Reading the World and Reading the Word: An Interview with Paulo Freire in Language Arts* (vol. 62, no. 1, 1985, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41405241>). In the interview, Freire makes the following observations:

The act of reading cannot be explained as merely reading words since every act of reading words implies a previous reading of the world and a subsequent rereading of the world. There is a permanent movement back and forth between "reading" reality and reading words - the spoken word too is our reading of the world. We can go further, however, and say that reading the word is not only preceded by reading the world, but also by a certain form of writing it or rewriting it. In other words, of transforming it by means of conscious practical action. For me, this dynamic movement is central to literacy (p. 18).

English teaching is so much more than reading and writing, and I think that Freire captures the idea of *reading the world* quite potently. The meaning-making practices that we ask students to engage with on a daily basis in their encounters with texts require deep skills of

analysis and critical transformation. These are so vital for tackling the great issues of our time (which our politicians currently seem largely unwilling or unable to address), and I believe that English teachers have a special role in helping young people in their efforts to read the word and the world.

In this issue, we have an interesting reflection from our patron, Professor Catherine Beavis, as well as copies of the ETAQ President's report and ETAQ Secretary's report from the 2016 annual general meeting. Reading Australia's Philip Jenkinson provides us with a useful guide to the resources available on the Reading Australia Website as well as some handy hints for engaging with quality Australian literature.

A group of teachers from Craigslea State High School share the trials and tribulations of working in a professional peer learning group, with Patsy Norton also offering us a moving poetic tribute to a *silent companion*.

We have a number of other articles, including an evocative essay on sparking an educational renaissance by Natalie Kennedy, putting grammar into context by Melanie Wild, and a second grammar serving with Garry Collins' views on grammar teaching. Danielle Crocker has kindly provided us with a multimodal resource on a *world of stories*, and to round off the issue we share the results of our recent member survey and have a stack of book reviews submitted by various English teachers from around the state.

Thanks to all the contributors for their efforts in making my job of editing really easy. I encourage you to send in any unit plans, resources, musings, or other English-related things you might be willing to share, as I am always delighted to receive offerings for the journal.

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ETAQ PATRON'S MESSAGE

Professor Catherine Beavis
Griffith University

Dear ETAQ members,

I hope the year has started well for you, and that you had a productive and restful break at the end of first term. Term two is such a busy one, but I hope you are finding time to sustain yourselves, and enjoy those central and pleasurable aspects of our subject that make it such a rewarding, if challenging, one.

It was good to see so many of you in March, at ETAQ's first seminar for the year. It looks as if we have a great program coming up in 2016 - events, the newsletter, competitions, the annual conference and of course, our Facebook page; the phantom presence behind much of the lively and exciting workshops and presentations on that day, not to mention the keynote!

One of the concepts right up front was 'Relevance'. It's a grand old term; a rich and generative concept that in many ways, underpins all we aim to do. Workshops and seminars demonstrated this amply, ranging from sessions modeling problem-based pedagogies, to presentations on poetry and poetry writing in senior years, assessing creativity and much more. The Seminar theme, Curiosity, worked hand in hand with 'Relevance', and provided the drive linking punk and Shakespeare, creativity and reflection, contemporary issues and the classics, analysis exploration, critical thinking, fun teaching and much more.

Given the way buzz words and issues of real importance circulate and overlap, the idea of *relevance* seems to be everywhere, currently. When it is open, enlarging and inclusive, as with the Seminar, it provides much of the *raison d'être* for our work in English, as in Education more generally, alongside critical reflection and analysis, and the development of strong and confident abilities to use words and all manner of communication forms in powerful and effective

ways. Broadly envisaged, relevance is central in supporting students to understand and live within their present and future worlds, to see what's at stake, what matters, whose interests are served, and how to address the big and little challenges facing themselves, each other and the world. Doing so is fundamental, and relevance understood and utilized in these ways draws strength from so many aspects of our work in English, through deep immersion, imagination, argument, awareness, currency, creativity and much more.

But I've been struck, lately, by a bit of blurriness around the term - about what it means, and the ways in which it gets used. The potential for relevance to slip into self-interest and a consuming concern with one's immediate wellbeing and surroundings to the exclusion of the larger world, is somewhat worrying. Some of you may recall a point made on the ABC program *Media Watch* some months ago, in relation to media ownership, independence and diversity. Attention was drawn to the distinction between 'What's in the Public Interest', and 'What Interests the Public'. It's our privilege, and role, as English teachers, to ensure such slippage does not happen. Rather, to serve our students best we need to ensure that curiosity, openness and generosity continue to characterise a keen and critical embrace of 'Relevance' and 'The Public Interest'. Whether concerned with local/global policies, people and agenda, past legacies and cultural richness, whether through new or traditional media forms, communication and communities we need to support students to continue to develop astute analysis, a keen sense of social justice and the need to be positively proactive in the world.

Happy Teaching!

Catherine



PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2015—2016

Fiona Lang

You are part of an august group — people with a passion for English teaching. In each of the schools in which I've worked, I've always been so impressed with the quality of the English staff.

But in my role of management committee member and now president of The English Teachers Association of Queensland (ETAQ), I have had the absolute privilege of working with a great many more who are part of this profession — in schools and within universities. Teaching is a noble profession and I like to think that English teachers stand very tall in this company.

Therefore, it is with pride that I stand here as your ETAQ president. We 'do' vital work with students in our classrooms and ETAQ's role of supporting English teachers is equally vital.

Our secretary, Bronwyn Darben, has outlined the detail of ETAQ's activities in the Secretary's Report. There are some copies available and it can be found on our website for your reference. Today, I'll share a few highlights.

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership is the core of our existence and individual membership has continued to grow in the past 4 years, up to 235 by the end of 2015. Student membership has almost doubled over the same period, whilst corporate membership has slightly reduced. The reach of our membership was, at the end of 2015, 2919, down slightly on the total for 2014. Interestingly, the number of recipients of E-pistles has increased strongly in 2015, sitting at 968 at the year's end and 1038 currently.

ETAQ has continued its practice of assisting 5 members to attend the annual state conference and assisting with registration for the national conference in Canberra for 6 members. This will continue for the coming national conference in Adelaide from July 7-10. Great PD, great company and some lovely wineries await you in Adelaide. I'd certainly encourage all to attend. Early bird registrations close April 30.

ETAQ is only as strong as its membership and we encourage all teachers to support your organisation through continued membership personally and on a corporate basis.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2015 was a very strong year for attendance at PD events. The year started with a focus on reading with guest speaker Associate Professor Jackie Manuel at seminar 1. Seminar 2 turned its eyes on middle school with Professor Donna Pendergast. But at the state conference, we experienced an exciting dilemma — how to cope with expanding our numbers from our regular 210-250 to an event with 330 delegates? With Professor Bev Derewinka and John Marsden as our keynotes, early registrations told us we were onto a winning formula. Workshops needed to be expanded and repeated to accommodate the happy throng at the Bernadette Centre, the new building at Lourdes Hill College. We also included drinks at the end of the day supported by our sponsors. It was lovely to share the beautiful river views and contemplate our learnings.

English Communication was the focus of our after-school seminar and the year was rounded off with a literary breakfast sharing with journalist Sally Browne at a new venue, eves on the river. We are hopeful to be back at eves this year, confident that we will fill this venue with our 2016 speaker for the literary breakfast, Courier-Mail cartoonist, Sean Leahy.

Townsville had a strong year of events with Garry Collins visiting to present two different grammar days for our northern Queensland members. Anita Jetnikoff will be speaking there on April 23.

The Darling Downs also ran a series of successful events whilst the Cairns branch

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2015 – 2016

struggled in 2015. Currently, members in the Wide Bay are working on reinstating their branch.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

2015 was the year where it became increasingly clear that ETAQ needed to set time aside for a thorough and far-ranging analysis of our plans for the future. We had pressing issues arising: matters of membership, best use of social media and sharing the resources of the organisation around the state. In response, ETAQ employed Jane Schmitt, CEO of the AMA, to lead a strategic planning day on February 27. Armed with the results of a membership survey, the management committee, as well as the presidents/ reps from the Darling Downs, Townsville and Cairns, collaborated to design a plan to take us forward. We are very pleased with the result which will take us through to the end of 2019. It lays out for us our roadmap, a series of projects which we believe will build the quality of what ETAQ offers to its members.

Our biggest proposed change is to reconsider the structure of our committee in order to better use our collective talents to pursue our projects. Our committee of 17 is not the norm for governance nowadays and, as such, our committee is likely to be bringing to the AGM in 2017 a new structure with a smaller executive and stronger sub-committees which we think will better allow people to contribute. ETAQ already has formal committees for Professional Development and, now, Social Media. If you are interested in taking on a role within one of the subcommittees, please let me or anyone on the current committee know.

ADVOCACY

ETAQ focused on two main areas of advocacy for 2015, the changes to senior assessment and NAPLAN automarking. In response to the QCAA's proposal to significantly change the senior assessment system, ETAQ conducted a forum for members around this at Seminar 1. Also, ETAQ responded, based on the results of this forum and the committee's deliberations, to the survey asking for proposals around elements

of the change. We advocated for a 30% quotient for the proposed exam (rather than 50%) as well as the need to maintain the strengths of the current panels.

ETAQ was represented on the QCAA's Senior Assessment Working Group for English in semester one 2015 and has also been consulted around the setup of the trial of senior assessment membership. This year, the new Learning Area Reference Group for English (LARG) has a position on it for an ETAQ delegate. This place on the LARG is something ETAQ had in the past and Garry Collins has long been advocating for a return to this situation.

Nationally, the issue of auto-marking of NAPLAN writing from 2017 has become contentious. ETAQ, among others, has argued that whilst a machine can easily assess grammatical accuracy as well as a range of other technical elements of writing, it cannot yet judge meaning accurately or suitably. ETAQ has written to the minister, the shadow minister and ACARA to advocate to separate the auto-marking of writing from the other elements of on-line NAPLAN. Nationally, AATE is preparing for a broader conversation about the amount of double-marking of language conventions (through writing and through the Language Conventions Test) as well as the artificiality of the writing task as it currently exists.

With all aspects of advocacy, we urgently need the responses of our members to such issues as they arise. ETAQ wants to speak for you and strongly needs your responses to the big issues of the day – through emails or blogs on our website.

COMMUNICATION

Communication continues to be an important element of ETAQ's work. ETAQ's Facebook account now has 243 members whilst ETAQ Epistles now reach 1038 recipients. *English Matters* is about to undergo a facelift and will come to you as an online newsletter from our next issue, as we adapt to what the technology can offer us. This will provide a more up-to-date product for members.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2015–2016

English in Australia, our national refereed journal, is also moving on-line in 2016 with ETAQ working towards just how this will be managed at state level for our members.

CONCLUSION

ETAQ remains very fortunate to have the talents of our administration officer, Trish Purcell, to support English teachers across the state. She brings a valued order and discipline to the careful stewardship of our money and resources but remains open to innovation, always in the best interests of English teachers. I'm sure all members would join me in thanking her for her contribution.

Many thanks to all the committee members for 2015-16. You have worked as a cohesive team to achieve important things for the benefit of members and your efforts are always very much appreciated. Thanks to Laura Cooke who is leaving us this year and welcome to Melissa Blacklock, who is our new committee member.

2015 was our year of planning. 2016 is our year of working on new projects as we prepare for 2017, our year to celebrate all that we have achieved, on behalf of our members, in the 50 years ETAQ has been operating. I look forward to working towards this celebration along with you, our most valued members.



THE ENGLISH TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC.



Curriculum in Flux with Anita Jetnikoff

Saturday 23 April, 9.00am – 11.00am
Pimlico High School, Townsville

Curriculum is always in a state of flux and so often the moves to 'reform' it are political rather than pedagogical. So often in these days of accountability we focus on the learner. I want to focus on the teacher in this presentation. As English educators we have to 'fit' whatever new policy model comes our way. The Australian curriculum seems to have tried to please every stakeholder in its process and as such has been formed without a single, unifying coherent theoretical basis. How do we challenge this paper tiger? We have to find the pedagogical models within the current framework and see what still works in practice. At the chalkface there are still teaching, learning and assessment practices in English surviving from the last few decades of pedagogical change; and there is also room for accommodating new practices. Embracing and adapting the old and the new may be key to staying creative and passionately engaged with our subject area.

Email enquiries: adminofficer@etaq.org.au

Online registration: www.etaq.org.au/event/event/detail/event/5143

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Presented to the Forty Ninth Annual General Meeting
of The English Teachers Association of Queensland, Inc.

Saturday 12 March 2016

This report aims to cover the activities and interests of ETAQ during 2015.

PATRON

Professor Catherine Beavis (Griffith University) was elected for a fourth term as Patron at the 2015 AGM. During the year Professor Beavis has contributed a regular Patron's Column for the association's journal, *Words'Worth*.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Management Committee met 8 times during 2015. Meetings were held monthly except for January, April, August and December. The February and March meetings comprised members of the 2014 –15 committee.

Those elected at the AGM held in March 2015 were:

Position	Name	Meetings attended
President	Fiona Laing, Forest Lake SHS	7/8 (1 x tele)
Vice President	Dr Kelli McGraw, QUT (on leave)	5/8 (1 x tele)
Secretary	Bronwyn Darben, Runcorn SHS	8/8
Treasurer	Trish Purcell	8/8
Membership Secretary	Diana Briscoe, The Gap SHS	5/8
Member	Peter Algate, Marsden SHS	6/6
Member	Julie Arnold, Corinda SHS	8/8
Member	Garry Collins, UQ School of Education (sessional)	8/8
Member	Laura Cooke, St Aidan's	4/8
Member	Sophie Johnson, Brigidine College	5/8
Member	Helen Johnston, Brisbane Grammar	6/8
Member	Debbie Peden, various schools	7/8
Member	Michelle Ragen, Brisbane Grammar	6/8
Member	Dr Stew Riddle, USQ	6/8 (2 x tele)
Member	Matthew Rigby, Go Grammar Consulting	4/8
Member	Jacqueline Rutter, St Aidan's	5/6
Member	Melanie Wild, Corinda SHS	7/8

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The following new member elected at last year's AGM in March attended the March meeting as an observer as shown: Jacqueline Rutter (March). Catherine Beavis attended the November meeting. A number of members have attended meetings electronically in 2015 (as shown above).

VENUE FOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Meetings of the Management Committee were again held in a board room at the offices of the IEUA-QNT (Independent Education Union Australia – Queensland and Northern Territory Branch, formerly the QIEU, Queensland

Independent Education Union) in Turbot Spring Hill. This space is provided free of charge and the union arranges for one of its staff to work late to allow us access to the building. This generous support has been in place for many years and is much appreciated by ETAQ.

ADMINISTRATION OFFICER

Trish Purcell continued in her role as the association's part-time Administration Officer and Treasurer.

MEMBERSHIP

The numbers of financial members of the Association for the last three years were as follows:

Year	Life	Full (i.e. individual)	Student	Retiree	Corporate	Total	Estimated total # reached
2011	10	184	34	6	155	389	
2012	10	191	38	8	177	424	3208
2013	9	175	23	6	166	379	2778
2014	10	210	64	8	164	456	3231
2015	9	235	64	7	156	471	2919

Membership has increased for full members with similar numbers in other categories, including a small decrease for corporate members in 2015. This almost maintains the significant increase from 2014.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

After bestowing life membership on Paul Sherman, one of ETAQ's foundation members, in 2014, ETAQ was very sad to learn that Paul passed away in 2015.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Face-to-face PD activities were conducted in Brisbane and Townsville during 2015 as detailed below. In addition, PD events were also conducted by the Toowoomba and Townsville branches.

Seminar 1

- Date: Saturday 14 March 2015
- Type: half-day seminar
- CPD hours: 3 hours 15 minutes
- Theme: Getting Reading Right
- Format: 1 x keynote address plus suite of

supporting workshops

- Keynote speaker 1: Dr Jackie Manuel
- Attendance: 212
- Venue: Corinda State High School
- Convenor: Julie Arnold

Beginning Teachers' Day

- Date: Saturday 9 May 2015
- Type: Beginning Teachers Day – This was the 5th year that ETAQ has run this activity.
- CPD hours: 5 hours 25 minutes
- Keynote speaker: Marian Wright
- Topic: Please like me: A Quest for Classroom Domination
- Attendance: 69 registrations plus 16 presenters, committee etc
- Venue: Brigidine College
- Convenor: Melanie Wild

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Seminar 2

- Date: Saturday 30 May 2015
- Type: half-day seminar
- CPD hours: 3 hours 40 minutes
- Theme : Meeting in the Middle
- Format: keynote address plus suite of supporting workshops;
- Keynote speaker : Professor Donna Pendergast
- Attendance: 106
- Venue: Brisbane Grammar School
- Convenors: Helen Johnston and Michelle Ragen

Grammar Refresher Course 1

- Date: Saturday 28 March 2015
- Type: full-day (9–3) class activity
- CPD hours: 4 hours 30 minutes
- Title : Grammar for the Australian Curriculum: English – a one-day crash course
- Format: presentations, exercises & discussions
- Presenter: Garry Collins
- Attendance: 75
- Venue: Townsville State High School
- Convenor: Heather Fraser

State Conference

- Date: Saturday 15 August 2015
- Type: full-day conference
- CPD hours: 7 hours 25 minutes
- Theme : For the Love of Language and Literature
- Format: 2 x keynote addresses plus suite of supporting workshops
- Keynote speaker 1: Prof Beverly Derewianka (U of Wollongong) – topic: Literature Meets Grammar
- Keynote speaker 2: John Marsden – topic: Way Beyond Zebra
- Attendance: 330
- Venue: Lourdes Hill College
- Convenors: Dr Stew Riddle and Matthew Rigby

Grammar Refresher Course 2

- Date: Saturday 31 October 2015
- Type: full-day (9–15) class activity
- CPD hours: 4 hours 15 minutes

- Title : Grammar for the Australian Curriculum: English – a follow-up day to develop understandings
- Format: presentations, exercises & discussions
- Presenter: Garry Collins
- Attendance: 50
- Convenor: Heather Fraser
- Venue: Townsville State High School

After-school forum 1

- Date: Thursday 26 February 2015
- Type: after-school forum
- CPD hours: 1 hr 45 mins
- Topic: English Communication, Queensland's Year 11 & 12 English subject alternative for non-OP students
- Format: Series of teacher presentations
- Attendance: 45
- Venue: Ipswich Girls Grammar School
- Convenor: Laura Cooke

Literary Breakfast

- Date: Saturday 17 October 2015
- Type: morning literary breakfast
- CPD hours: 1 hour 30 mins
- Format: address with breakfast
- Guest speaker: Sally Browne (Courier-Mail journalist/columnist)
- Attendance: 35
- Venue: Eves on the River, New Farm
- Convenor: Garry Collins

2015 AATE/ALEA joint national conference

The 2015 AATE/ALEA joint national conference was held at the Canberra Convention Centre over the period 3-6 July. The theme was *Capitalising on Curiosity*.

Assisted attendance at conferences

Assisted attendance was offered to the following for the state conference in August. This covered registration and \$200 towards costs for travel and accommodation:

Annalise Stephens (Blackwater State High School), Annie Price (Queensland University of Technology), Margaret Bailey (Marist College

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Emerald), Simone Sullivan (Griffith University) and Raelyn Potter (Griffith University).

The following were sponsored for the National Conference in Canberra with the payment of their registration expenses:

Fiona Laing (AATE representative), Stew Riddle (Editor of Words'Worth), Grace Loyden (Spinifex State College, Mt Isa), Dana Ellis (Charters Towers), Julie Burton (Wellington Point) and Jarred Adams (QUT)

UTILIZING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

ETAQ's new website continued strongly in 2015. Using the company, Bloomtools, the website offers a range of functionality, including online registrations for PD events, online membership payments, emails using ETAQ logo as well as a space 'behind the wall' for resources such as videos of PD presentations. Previous years' issues of Words'Worth are available in this area. Teachers in schools covered by corporate membership and non-members are also able to sign up to receive e-pistles and other news items which are regularly emailed out. Currently 968 people are registered for this service. This represents a strong outreach to members, shown by the vast increase in the number of recipients throughout 2015. The website has made registrations for events smoother and allowed ETAQ to venture further with a refreshed and more professional look as well as vastly improved functionality. Communications are also more efficient as they have links to registration forms and other key links from the website.

ETAQ currently maintains both a Facebook page as a wider public presence and a closed group for members to share resources and links. Currently the Facebook page has over 800 likes and the closed group hosts 243 members - both are primarily maintained by Kelli McGraw. Also, AATE continues to have a presence on Facebook with their 'open group' on Facebook. ETAQ has also continued to utilize Twitter as a social media communication tool - thanks to Michelle Regan for her contribution in maintaining the content in our stream.

Each seminar and state conference keynote in Brisbane, as well as several accompanying workshops for each, were recorded and provided in the Members Resources section of the website. This has replaced the efforts to set up Google Hangouts as a medium for providing quality PD for regional members.

COMPETITIONS

Literary Competition 2015

The 56th Annual Literary Competition was a very successful event. Once again we received just shy of 900 entries (similar to last year's submission figure) from students and teachers alike, across Queensland and the Northern Territory. The quality of these entries was 'exceptional', as several of our judges attested, reflecting the breadth of talent in the State and Territory. The winning entries were published in the November 2015 issue of the IEUA-QNT's journal, *The Independent Voice*, as well as featuring on ETAQ's official website.

The Presentation Evening was conducted on Wednesday 14th October, 2015 at the Queensland Multicultural Centre at Kangaroo Point in Brisbane and was attended by around 200 people. This number included the prize winners, their family members and friends, as well as dignitaries from IEUA-QNT and ETAQ. The highlights of the Evening included a student travelling all the way from Miles State High School: Angela Krause's entry for the Lisa Allen Memorial Poetry Prize for Years 9 and 10 was awarded a Highly Commended Certificate. From the Open Teachers Division, Frances Prentice of Chinchilla Christian School was in attendance at the Presentation Evening to receive her Highly Commended award. Another significant aspect of this division and the overall competition, was that we have our first prize winner from the Northern Territory - 2nd Place was awarded to Shona Ford of the Good Shepherd Lutheran College at Howard Springs, NT.

An inspiration to these talented writers was our Guest Author/Speaker, Mrs Cori Brooke, a children's picture book writer with several published works including 'Fearless with Dad' and 'Max and George'. She provided some brilliant insights into self-belief and persistence

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with writing, to inspire the young (and the not-so-young) writers.

On a sad note, we missed the presence of Mr Paul Sherman this year who passed away on 4th May. He has, for many years, made such a valuable contribution to our competition, to poetry and to literature in a myriad of ways, and after whom the Year 7 Poetry Competition is named. Paul will always be fondly remembered and it is with gratitude that we acknowledge his flair, expertise and passion for sharing his literary gifts with us.

One regrettable element to the competition this year was the discovery that a student's submission was plagiarised. Unfortunately this did not come to light until after the announcement of the winners. The prize was withdrawn and the student and their school subsequently contacted by the Secretary of the IEUA-QNT. As a consequence, ETAQ will implement an originality checking system such as *Turnitin* to all prize winning entries from next year. Mr Stewart Riddle of the University of Southern Queensland has offered to undertake this process on our behalf to confirm their authenticity and it will also be a measure to uphold the integrity of the competition.

This competition is, of course, made possible with the ongoing valued support and sponsorship of the Independent Educators Union of Australia, Queensland and Northern Territory branch. I would especially like to convey my appreciation to Kay Holloway, Michaela Brittain and the rest of the team for their invaluable help. We also acknowledge the ongoing support and sponsorship of the senior non-fiction section by James Cook University. Sincere thanks also to Random House in Sydney for their contribution of age- and category-specific book prizes for each place-getter.

My earnest acknowledgement goes to all students and teachers for their valued submissions. Congratulations to the winners, place-getters and highly commended awardees. The 1st place-getters for 2015 are:

Section A Non-Fiction Prose – Celine Chong, Somerville House

Section A Short Story – Mia Jones, Chancellor State College

Section A Poem – Rosie McCrossin, Sandgate District State High School

Section B Short Story – Elise Andreas, Loreto College

Section B Poem – Karima Hussaini, MacGregor State High School

Section C Short Story – Sally Park Weir, Maleny State High School

Section C Poem – Hannah Ostini, Somerville House

Section D Short Story – Ochre Howard, Yungaburra State School

Section D Poem – Emily Baxter, Mary Immaculate Primary School

Section E Short Story – Michael Houldsworth, Pimlico State High School

And to the wonderful judges for these various divisions, I extend my gratitude and appreciation for their time, commitment and expertise. These tireless individuals are Dr Karen Moni (whom we farewell from judging this year), Ynes Sanz, Esme Robinson, Dr Stephen Torre, Jeffrey Harpeng, Garry Collins, Duncan Richardson, Cindy Keong, Beryl Exley and Debbie Peden.

It has been six years since I first took up the mantle of Literary Competition Coordinator, and I'm as gratified as ever with the commitment and giftedness of the writers, the judges and the teams of people who all help make this event such a remarkable and wonderful experience. May the Queensland and Northern Territory writers continue their creativeness and celebrate their work through our literary competition.

Deb Peden continues to coordinate the competition, her sixth year in this role.

Digital Story Competition

In 2015, ETAQ's digital storytelling competition received a modest number of entries and it is hoped that student interest in this activity will continue to grow. We commend the schools on their work with students in understanding the importance of copyright regulations, particularly with regard to sourcing images and music. This had been an issue identified with some entries in 2014. Congratulations to Carissa Burton (Our Lady's College) who earned first

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place in the Junior Storyteller's category and to Dr Anita Jetnikoff, who was awarded first place in the Master Storyteller's category.

CURRICULUM MATTERS

Australian Curriculum: English

After the review of the Australian Curriculum instituted in 2014, several changes were proposed in 2015. These had impacts on teaching in the primary sector but did not substantively affect teaching in the Junior Secondary and Secondary sector. Queensland did not make any further moves to launch the Australian Curriculum in 2015. This was probably caused more by the major changes proposed in Queensland Secondary/Tertiary nexus.

Interaction with the QCAA

2015 represented a year of great change in senior assessment and also a year where there was significant improvement in the relationship between ETAQ and the QCAA. Following the release of the Senior Assessment and Tertiary Entrance review, conducted by Gabrielle Matters and Geoff Masters and released in 2014, the QCAA began preparing for a trial of external assessment in 2016.

ETAQ has been arguing for inclusion in the Learning Area Reference Committee (LARC) for English for some time. ETAQ has been invited to join the new Senior Assessment Working Group for English with the president taking on this role. Meetings occurred in semester 1 2015, resulting in a report being forwarded to the minister's reference group for decision making. The QCAA's Paul Ould, the person tasked with managing the implementation of the coming changes to senior assessment, has also held meetings of consultation with ETAQ. Following this, the QCAA invited ETAQ, as a member association, to nominate its delegate for the new Learning Area Reference Group for English. This represents a 'win' after years of campaigning for ETAQ to have the right to have a voice on such a committee.

A trial of external assessment in year 11 English will occur in May/June 2016 in preparation for moving towards implementing the new system of assessment.

AATE

AATE, the Australian Association for the Teaching of English, is the umbrella national body with which ETAQ and the other state and territory English teacher associations are affiliated. During 2015, Garry Collins, the immediate Past President of ETAQ, was in his second year of his 2-year term as the national President. He continued as past-president in 2015 and is succeeded by Monika Wagner from Victoria as president. As is ETAQ's usual practice, the President, Fiona Laing, served as our delegate to the AATE national council.

The 2015 AATE/ALEA joint national conference was conducted in Canberra in early July. The 2016 event will be held in Adelaide over the period 7–10 July.

Council business was conducted via email, teleconferences and two face-to-face meetings. One of these was held in Canberra following the national conference and the AGM was conducted in Adelaide on the weekend 24-25 October at English House, AATE's headquarters in Adelaide.

Besides this routine business, some key AATE advocacy activities during the year were:

- President and SAETA council delegate participated in a meeting with the federal Shadow Education Minister, Kate Ellis, in Adelaide in early January
- Responses were provided to ACARA re proposed changes to the Australian Curriculum flowing from the Wiltshire/Donnelly Review
- Delegates from AATE met with ACARA staff regarding the release of research around computer scoring of NAPLAN writing in November
- President, ETAQ president and another ETAQ delegate met with Simon Birmingham, Education Minister's Schools Advisor, Scott Prasser, around NAPLAN computer scoring and funding for national conferences in Brisbane in December.

Three reports on ETAQ activities were provided for publication in the AATE journal *English in Australia*.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

BOOK SALES

The bookstall which sells a selection of AATE and Phoenix publications was well patronised at the March and May seminars and the state conference. The financial results appear in the Treasurer's Report.

BRANCHES

During 2015 branches operated in Toowoomba under the leadership of Paul Irwin and Townsville under the leadership of Heather Fraser.

Each branch conducted a series of seminars for members including:

Townsville

Agency and the English Teacher presented by Ray Misson

Garry Collins presented his Grammar Refresher Course on March 28 and again on 31 October, 2015

PUBLICATIONS

Words'Worth

Three issues of Words'Worth were distributed to members in 2015 under the editorship of Dr Stewart Riddle. Articles and teaching resources included: lesson and unit plans, research papers, feature articles and opinion pieces, poetry, book and resource reviews, literary competition winning entries, and much more.

English Matters continued with its new design in 2015. Six editions were mailed to members in 2015 with all editions also being available on the website.

Email Bulletins – ETAQ E-pistles

Communication with members was also effected via more than 23 email bulletins entitled ETAQ E-pistles.

PETER BOTSMAN MEMORIAL AWARDS

The Peter Botsman Memorial Awards (school category) for 2015 were awarded to Kathleen Hannant from Centenary Heights Secondary College and Simon Kindt from Kelvin Grove State College. Kathleen's leadership of her English department, her wider Darling Downs community of English teachers and her academic work featured in her nomination. Simon's prolific work in supporting student voice in poetry, both within his school and within the Queensland Poetry Festival were cited in support of his nomination. Details of the achievements of both can be found on the website.

JCQTA

ETAQ continued its membership of the Joint Council of Queensland Teacher Associations (JCQTA) and was represented at meetings by the Immediate Past President, Garry Collins, and Vice President, Kelli McGraw. The two activities other than routine meetings were the Presidents Dinner on Wednesday 25 February and the annual forum on Saturday 22 August. Participation enabled ETAQ to stay informed of the activities of similar associations.

CONCLUSION

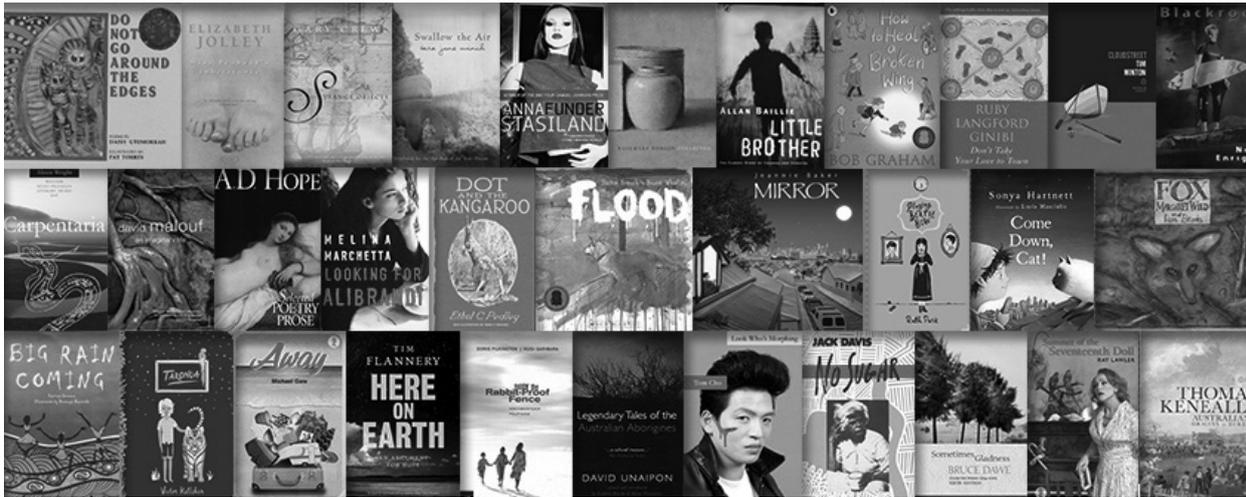
I would like to acknowledge the boundless energy and unceasing commitment contributed by members of the Management Committee and various sub committees. It is the effort of these educators that allows for these opportunities for teachers and students of English in Queensland.

Lastly, thank you to our members for your continued support. I trust your membership of the ETAQ has brought you opportunities to develop, improve and inspire.

Bronwyn Darben
Secretary
2 March 2016

START A REWARDING NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

Philip Jenkinson
Reading Australia



Now English teachers can find comprehensive online resources mapped to the National Curriculum, quickly and easily.

Once upon a time, in order to find a definitive list of quality Australian literature, you had to either search the internet or scour the library for hours on end. But with the launch of Reading Australia, English teachers are now just one click away from discovering the very best of Australian literature, in one convenient place.

[Reading Australia](#) is a readily accessible website, set up by the not-for-profit Copyright Agency. In addition to listing 230 important Australia works, it offers useful online teaching resources for books, plays and poetry from much loved high-profile Australian authors including Nick Enright, Richard Flanagan, Jackie French, Anna Funder, Libby Gleeson, Sonya Hartnett, David Malouf, and Tim Winton.

Literary superstar, David Malouf, invited teachers, librarians and students to discover Australian stories when he launched this initiative at the country's premier event for English educators, the AATE/ALEA Conference in Canberra, on 6 July this year.

David Malouf said in his opening address, that "as an Australian writer and a lifetime reader,

I'm delighted to play a part in the launch of Reading Australia. It was always an ambitious project. A reading list, carefully chosen, and with a large body of supporting material, of books that over more than 200 years have recorded what it is to live, and work, and interact with one another, in this particular corner of the planet. All this, seen and recreated imaginatively through the eyes of men and women who in each case, bring to it their own personal vision of what they have seen and felt of it, and how it has played on their senses, and shaped their perceptions and views."

"Reading Australia is not just a list of Australian books, it is a list of books by Australians, who have themselves, read Australia," said Malouf. "That is, closely examined themselves and the world that produced and shaped them, and turned that reading into forms of writing, that we too, now, are invited to read."

Reading Australia was developed in partnership with the Australian Association for the Teaching of English, the Australian Literacy Educators Association, the Primary English Teaching

START A REWARDING NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

Association Australia, plus the Association for the Study of Australian Literature. All of the titles highlighted on the site are chosen by a selection panel from the Australian Society of Authors, with more titles and more resources being added on an ongoing basis.

The result is a site with over 230 quality Australian works listed, that is tailor-made for English teachers. That's because not only does Reading Australia showcase the work of popular Australian writers and illustrators, there are now almost 100 teacher lesson plans available for you to download and teach from – approximately 70% secondary school titles and 30% primary aged.

All of these lesson plans were very specifically mapped to the Australian Curriculum. The teacher/writers who were commissioned to create them were able to draw on their extensive skills and practical teaching experience to put together lesson plans that will really bring each work to life in the classroom. The relevant National Curriculum codes are displayed throughout each teacher lesson plan in light grey.

The website also features around 70 fascinating essays written by high-profile authors for secondary school and tertiary age titles, that delve deeply into the underlying themes of the work. It's all designed so that students can receive a greater depth of understanding about age-appropriate titles that enrich our Australian cultural identity.

With so much recent debate about improving literacy standards among students, Reading Australia provides a compelling argument to teach exceptional Australian works.

For any avid reader, the site is a real treasure trove, listing over 230 of Australia's best-loved stories ... from the latest page-turners, like Richard Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, to poignant stories reflecting our early urban life, such as Ruth Park's *The Harp in the South*, to collections of rich writing from icons of Australian literature like David Malouf's *The Complete Stories*.

The book titles on the site have been grouped into 14 categories, being Anthology, Biography,

Children's Books, Drama, Essays, Graphic Novels, Memoir, Miscellany, Narrative History, Novels, Opinions, Poetry, Short Stories, and Young Adult titles.

There's an advanced search engine, a 'recommended titles' section, and there is a handy personal bookmarking and notes feature that allows you to create a short list that's automatically saved for your next site visit that you can print, edit, and share with colleagues, at any time.

To use the bookmarking and notes function and some other features, the user needs to register, but that's quick and easy. There's also a helpful one-minute video that outlines how simple it is to navigate and find resources on the website.

A recent addition is a collection of informative and entertaining author interview videos. Reading Australia collaborated with ABC's 'Splash' online education portal, to film interviews with 10 of the best Australian writers and illustrators who feature in Reading Australia's list.

The authors and illustrators interviewed include Robert Adamson (*The Golden Bird*), Bronwyn Bancroft (*Big Rain Coming/Stradbroke Dreamtime*), Gary Crew (*Strange Objects*), Michael Gow (*Away*), Leigh Hobbs (*The Big Book of Old Tom*), Thomas Keneally (*The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*), David Malouf (*The Complete Stories*), Hannie Rayson (*Hotel Sorrento*), Nadia Wheatley (*Five Times Dizzy*), and David Williamson (*The Removalists*).

Designed by the Reading Australia team, these videos provide engaging multimedia material to complement the teacher resources on the Reading Australia website, with each video being accompanied by useful educational summaries for teachers, librarians and students.

In the interviews, conducted by Tom Tilley of Triple J's HACK program, the writers and artists discuss the inspirations, themes and construction of one of their works that appear on the Reading Australia list, providing an insightful, personal view from these talented storytellers.

COPYRIGHT AGENCY READING AUSTRALIA

Reading Australia focusses on Australian stories and Australian authors. The site doesn't feature downloadable books, but instead uses interactive links and digital resources to provide a rich diversity of content that is designed to assist English teachers, primary school teachers involved with literacy, and librarians, to teach and champion Australian authors. Each book title also has a link to the publisher, so copies can easily be purchased.

It's a terrific example of how the latest digital technology is supporting and promoting the teaching of many of the country's best-loved literary works, for now and tomorrow.

Details at a glance

Reading Australia website:
<http://readingaustralia.com.au>

Subscribe to the monthly newsletter:
<http://readingaustralia.com.au/contact-us/subscribe>

Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/ReadingAustralia>

Email: readingaustralia@copyright.com.au

Philip Jenkinson is the Digital Marketing and Content Producer for the Not-For-Profit Copyright Agency's Reading Australia initiative. He's been a member of the Society of Editors (NSW) Inc. since 2010.



THE ENGLISH TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC.

SEMINAR 2, 2016

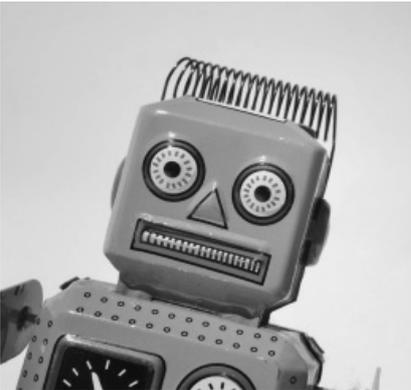
Saturday, 21 May, 8.30am – 1.00pm
The Gap State High School,
1020 Waterworks Road, The Gap

ETAQ's second seminar for 2016 will be on the theme:
Script, Stage and Screen in the English Classroom, with the keynote address to be presented by James Stabler and Carlton Leton.

Email enquiries: adminofficer@etaq.org.au
Go to the ETAQ site – www.etaq.org.au for updates

THE ROBOTS ARE COMING FOR YOUR JOB! WHY DIGITAL LITERACY IS SO IMPORTANT FOR THE JOBS OF THE FUTURE

Dr Stewart Riddle
University of Southern Queensland



In a report released last year, the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) claims that up to 70% of young people are preparing for jobs that will no longer exist in the future. The report also raises concerns about decreasing entry-level occupations for school leavers and the impacts of automation.

In another recent report, the Committee for Economic Development of Australia predicts that:

almost five million Australian jobs – around 40% of the workforce – face the high probability of being replaced by computers in the next 10 to 15 years.

Some of the jobs most at risk of being automated include office administration staff, sales assistants, checkout operators, accounting clerks, personal assistants and secretaries.

The collapse of Australia's manufacturing industries, the end of the mining boom and the impact of disruptive technologies is having a significant impact on the employment prospects, not only for workers being laid off from car factories and mine sites, but also for the students who are in our schools, TAFE colleges and universities.

In response to the changing work demands, a report by PriceWaterhouseCoopers argues for a focus on developing Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) as three-quarters of the fastest-growing jobs require these skills. The FYA report also makes the case for increased emphasis on developing digital literacy and the implementation of a digital technologies curriculum in primary school.

At the heart of addressing the demands of the new work order is literacy, which is becoming more high-stakes than ever before.

Why literacy is high-stakes

Literacy is often thought of as something that happens in school, yet low levels of functional literacy of adults are also a major concern.

Low literacy levels have a significant impact on the health, education and employment opportunities of workers and are connected to lower salaries, lower employment rates, poor health and housing, crime and poverty.

The question of how workers will be able to navigate the changing employment landscape with low literacy levels is an important one. We also need to strengthen our training opportunities through TAFE and the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system for workers seeking to transition from manufacturing and unskilled labour to the new working economy.

At the same time, the question of how we are preparing students in our schools for the new work order also bears serious consideration.

Is digital literacy the answer?

The increasing importance of digital literacy can no longer be overlooked, with the FYA report claiming that over 50% of Australian workers will need to:

be able to use, configure or build digital systems in the next 2 – 3 years.

Digital literacy includes skills such as coding,

THE ROBOTS ARE COMING FOR YOUR JOB! WHY DIGITAL LITERACY IS SO IMPORTANT FOR THE JOBS OF THE FUTURE

data synthesis and manipulation, as well as the design, use and management of computerised, digital and automated systems. Success in the new work order requires these skills alongside lateral thinking, innovation, problem-solving, collaboration and entrepreneurship. Add these to the traditional literacy skills of reading and writing and you have a very complex picture of what literacy is.

As such, our understanding of what literacy is and how it should be measured needs to be expanded from a simple view of reading and writing to one that encompasses a range of skills.

We are in a transition phase from old manufacturing industries, mining and the service sector economy to one that is about digital disruption, renewables and socially driven enterprise. As such, we need an education system that is responsive to the major shifts in Australia's social, cultural and economic fabric.

Teaching computer coding in schools is a good start, but is it enough to address the significant challenges of preparing young Australians for an uncertain world of work?

Perhaps a more thoughtful review of the curriculum is needed than the one recently conducted by Kevin Donnelly, who argues that:

computers should not be used in the early years of primary school where more traditional teaching methods need to prevail.

The current review of the curriculum has a backward-looking approach, with its

recommendations to delay computing until Year 9 and to focus on basic literacy and numeracy in primary school. We need a school curriculum that has a clear focus on the future, not a “back-to-the-basics” 1950s approach to literacy learning.

A recent report from the UK House of Lords provides some useful clues for what they call “future-proofing” young people:

1. Digital literacy fosters creativity and innovation, underpinning job creation
2. Digital literacy complements traditional literacy and more effort is needed to lift outcomes across all domains
3. Digital literacy is important not only in schools but also in further education
4. Stronger links need to be made between industry and education providers
5. There needs to be universal access to digital technologies and for all people to have access to digital literacy learning opportunities.

We need to do all of these things, and the sooner the better, before the robots come for all our jobs.

This article was originally posted on *The Conversation* (<https://theconversation.com/the-robots-are-coming-for-your-job-why-digital-literacy-is-so-important-for-the-jobs-of-the-future-46730>)

A STORY OF PRACTICE — TRUTH ON PROBATION



(The pragmatist James (1978, p.44) saw truth as always being “on probation”.)

**Patsy Norton, Angela Mason,
Elizabeth BurrIDGE, Peter Blakelock,
Craigslea State High School**

Introduction

Once upon a semester there were four secondary school teachers who met to collaborate with intent in the back room of a library. Their mission was to overthrow the mantra mouthed by their students that “English means words”. This alleged truth appeared to be validated by books, books, and more books. Words said something. But Cordelia disagreed. “Nothing, my lord,” she said. Should they test the truth? Was it a case of “That way madness lies”? Being brave and valiant souls, skilled in the ways of professional development, even within the confines of a pedagogical framework, they affirmed a commitment to testing the mantra. Could English be more than words? The story of their challenge to linguistic thinking follows, in traditional story format - orientation/context, complication/classroom practice, and resolution/reflection. It is the resolution/reflection aspect of the story that is of most interest. The coda considers whether the mantra has been debunked.

Orientation/context

The four were practising teachers in a large Brisbane secondary school where they formed a Peer Learning Group (PLG) dedicated to improving classroom practice. Two were experienced specialist English teachers (hereon known as AM and PB), the third an experienced Teacher-Librarian (EB), and the fourth a Master Teacher/English teacher (PN) with the responsibility of facilitating the activities of the PLG. Like other groups in the school, this

PLG was formed due to a common interest in a selected pedagogical strategy and a commitment to investigating the effectiveness of that strategy. The focus for the group at a point in time during 2015 was an investigation into the efficacy of non-linguistic representations in the classroom. These were strategies recommended within the school’s pedagogical framework, *Classroom Instruction that Works* (Pitler and Stone 2102). These representations of thinking were identified as appropriate for the second of three domains of teaching and learning, titled “Helping students develop understanding”. Members of each PLG worked through a process of meetings, classroom practice and observation, discussion and reflection. Collaboration was integral to the process.

In the first meeting – in the aforementioned back room – the teachers in this PLG established a base understanding of what was understood by the term non-linguistic representations. Not all representations are in fact free of words. Pitler and Stone (2102, p. 133) admit this in recommending that using such representations is “one of the strongest ways to teach vocabulary”. At the same time, the authors suggest that graphic organizers, rubrics, or checklists, as well as kinaesthetic activities, are valuable forms of mental representations. Given this context, the teachers decided to focus on the critical goal of guiding students to understand that they could represent their thinking about literature in a variety of ways, not just in essays and oral presentations.

A STORY OF PRACTICE – TRUTH ON PROBATION

More importantly, they were intent on guiding students to be more aware that different ways of representing thinking might increase or deepen understanding of literature.

Members of the group opted for alternative methods of trialling non-linguistic representations, although content with the common focus. It was an approach that allowed individual preferences to be given free rein and had the benefit of making later discussion of the benefits of alternative methods more interesting. Research (Meirink, Imants et al. 2010) indicated that productive learning could emerge from this starting point. PN (master teacher) was insistent that the concept map was the ideal representation of thinking and her passion was enough to convince EB (teacher-librarian) that it might be useful in the library context. Since neither was working in a classroom, they chose to construct a concept map about the role of metaphor in the novel *The Running Man* (Bauer 2004). This was being studied by AM's Year 9 students. (The novel concerned the relationship of a fourteen year old boy with a Vietnam War veteran and how their relationship resolved their fears.) The two specialist English teachers, PB and AM, resisted PN's obsession with the concept map as both were free souls and courageous practitioners. PB opted to trial the benefit of pictorial texts to student appreciation of the novel *Holes* (Sachar 1998). (This was a narrative about a teenager's experience in a juvenile detention camp in a desert.) AM, teaching an extended English class, decided to investigate the benefits of both drawing of pictures and kinaesthetic group movement leading to freeze frames to student understanding of key events in the novel *The Running Man*. The teaching and learning about the two novels thus became the focus of observation, discussion and reflection by all four teachers.

Complication/Classroom practice

Implementing a new approach or strategy in the classroom is not necessarily easy. Students, like teachers, are creatures of habit to some extent.

So when it was suggested to Year 9 students that they could do some "speed drawing" to "see what you are thinking" about the characters and events in a novel the reaction was a little mixed. Having teachers as observers was an additional catalyst, especially in PB's class, with its high ratio of boys to girls and a significant number of lower achieving students. In this class students were happy to draw and not write, since it was not real work. The complication was to convince them that a pictorial representation of their thinking might be valuable. That argument was stymied by the students' belief that they were not "good drawers". In addition, as one teacher/observer noted, students were unsure whether to use colours, tending to persevere with pencil drawings. They procrastinated more than a little. Initially, PB coaxed the students to draw from their imagination a hypothetical scene, such as a "bedroom of the future", before tackling more challenging pictorial texts about scenes from the novel *Holes*. Like this class, the second class of Year 9 students studying *The Running Man* was unhappy about drawing representations of thinking. As high achievers in an extended class, the students were most unwilling to be less than perfect and unprepared to take risks. One student commented that it was difficult for him to transform his "mental picture" into a pictorial text.

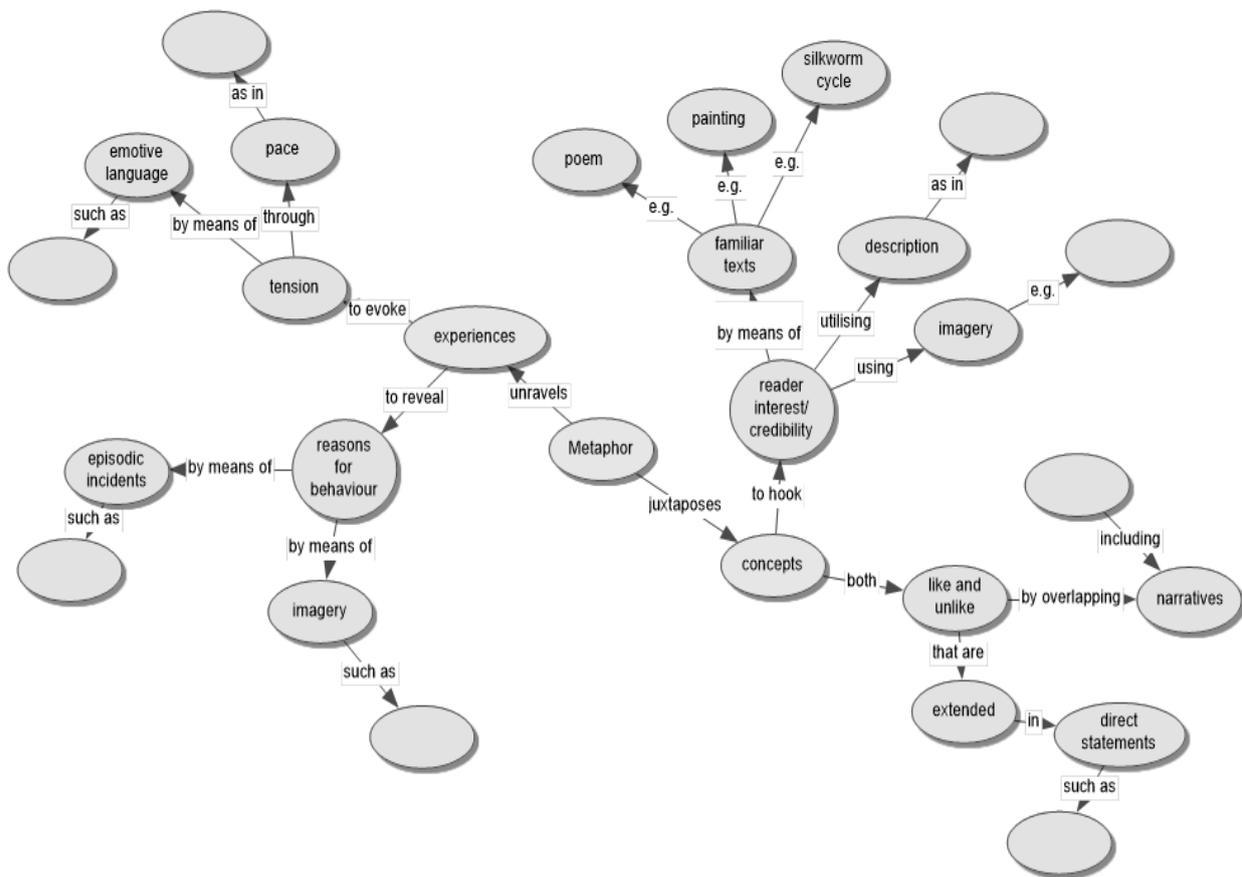
The classroom complication in both cases arose from both a fear of the unfamiliar challenge and an unwillingness to engage in an experience that seemed unwarranted in an English classroom. In contrast, the Year 9 students in the extended class engaged much more enthusiastically in the kinaesthetic activity. For this, they focussed on only four incidents from the novel studied and in a group of four, created a freeze frame for each scene. This entailed taking up physical positions, adjusting body shapes and constructing groupings to suggest the scene symbolically. Perhaps the demand for physical movement reduced the challenge of this approach, along with the sense that the traditional desk arrangement of a classroom was

A STORY OF PRACTICE – TRUTH ON PROBATION

irrelevant. This extended group favoured the kinaesthetic interpretation of scenes, evaluating the activity as useful.

All teachers were involved in moving in and out of neighbouring classrooms during these activities, so that there were shared experiences to support later reflection and evaluation of the pictorial or kinaesthetic representation strategy. The collaboration between PN and EB, however, took place outside the classroom, almost as a supporting act to the classroom activities. The two had agreed to focus on the concept map as the form of representation of thinking to be investigated. Hence, the complication they faced was the cognitive challenge of constructing a concept map that represented a conceptual argument in response

to the Year 9 literature task question “What role does metaphor play in the novel *The Running Man*?” At this point, it is worth remembering that the concept map is a construction of nodes and links, with each proposition reading as a sentence from the inside out (Novak 1990). It is not a brainstorming exercise of word bubbles. To develop understanding of the graphic organizer with these characteristics, PN completed some initial workshopping with EB, before the two engaged in much mental effort constructing their representation of a concept map that could scaffold student responses to the question. One reason for the cognitive effort was the disciplined layering of the propositions and consequent syntax, suggested by PN, as shown, working from the inside to the outside of the map:



concept (link – strong verb) **sub-concept** (link) **elaboration** (link) **technique** (link) **evidence**.

A STORY OF PRACTICE – TRUTH ON PROBATION

This experience gave EB the opportunity to evaluate how the strategy could improve her support for students in the library. The concept map follows:

Note that the blank peripheral bubbles were intended for evidence (such as sample images, quotations, incidents) from the novel.

Learning is a challenge for most people, teachers included. These teachers accepted the complication in their lives of investigating the benefits of non-linguistic representations to students' learning. They then engaged in both organized and ad hoc conversations that supported evaluation of the experience as well as written reflections documenting their thinking, which follow.

Resolution/Reflection

The statement that truth is on probation introduced this story of practice, so it is appropriate that this resolution to the story considers another key philosophical statement by William James (1969, p. 94), an early pragmatist.

We want to have a truth; we want to believe that our experiments and studies and discussions must put us in a continually better position towards it; and on this line we agree to fight out our thinking lives.

Fighting out thinking lives is an interesting description of collaborative learning, as well as an apt description of the challenge involved for teachers in aligning theory with practice, especially when practice probably represents the ultimate truth for practitioners. Investigating the theory after the classroom practice and observation stage enabled the teachers to be reflective thinkers (Dewey 1933) able to weigh competing claims, so that they knew what they knew in their subject knowledge landscape (Clandinin and Connelly 1996). Thus the complication of this story merged with the resolution, as teachers engaged in deliberative reflection (Valli 1997, Zimmerman 2002), consolidating what they knew and understood from different sources of information. Thus, they did not rely on an intuitive response of the

kind Schon (1983) would support, but focussed firmly on deliberate comparison of theory and practice, as well as on the social construction of knowledge made possible within the group. That is, their learning in this story of practice was not only located in the social and physical context described and social in nature, but each individual alone was not necessarily the owner of the knowledge constructed, given that learning was stretched over others, reflecting the principles of the situative perspective on learning (Lave and Wenger 1991, Putnam and Borko 2000). The co-authoring of this story is evidence of the process.

So...the story's complication has been detailed, so the resolution follows, detailing what truths emerged from deliberative reflection about the use of non-linguistic representations. The first truth is that although students enjoyed drawing representations of characters and events in the novels, teachers did not find that drawing improved understanding of the novel. It was fun rather than work, as the students saw it, especially the male students, while the teachers' perspective was that drawing acted as a summary of what was already known as fact or what was obvious. In addition, most students restricted themselves to drawings without colour, which could have improved the representation of thoughts or feelings (Whitin 2005). Higher order thinking did not emerge. This could, however, have been the result of an inability to construct a pictorial representation of concepts or themes conveyed in a novel. (For example, it would be difficult for students who had been asked to "speed draw" in a lesson to construct an image of the concept of bullying or evil, as represented in the novel *Holes* by the female protagonist.) It would seem that the classroom experience supported the belief that thought can be expressed by a sentence but not necessarily by a pictorial image (Schwartz 1996). However, there are conflicting perspectives in the theory (Sober 1976, Stich 1992) about pictorial representations of thinking. On the one hand, "The fact that pictures can't represent everything does not indicate that they play no role at all in psychological processes" (Sober

A STORY OF PRACTICE — TRUTH ON PROBATION

1976, p. 103) while on the other hand pictures can be “explanatory constructs” (1976, p. 104)). Given this situation, teachers were willing to acknowledge that this particular truth is on probation. More systematic classroom implementation of drawing to represent thinking and understanding is required.

The second truth emerging from deliberative reflection on theory and practice was that the kinaesthetic representation of thinking in AM’s class was an effective way of both extending understanding of the novel *The Running Man* and providing a different way for learners to communicate. Hence it validated the advice of theorists (New London Group 1996, Cope and Kalantzis 2000) about the value of multiliteracies. Both observers and the teacher acknowledged that the pedagogical shift from traditional linguistic responses to the literature encouraged AM’s very capable students to engage enthusiastically (rather than dutifully) with constructing freeze frames of significant events in the novel. More than that, as AM noted, they were able to “speculate” about how characters might have felt or acted, and try to represent those speculative thoughts through body language and group physical interaction. In this way they were showing that they were actively transforming what they had previously accepted or to a new and more innovative representation of thinking and doing this collaboratively. By constructing a freeze frame that was a coherent spatial relationship between body shapes, the students appeared to have moved through a mental process of visualisation that drew on their interpretation and memory of the event in the novel. An example is when students in a group contorted their bodies to represent a silkworm’s cocoon on a mulberry tree as a visualisation of the metaphor in the novel. The value of visualisation in thinking in the contemporary world is more often associated with design technology (Twissell 2014) than with the study of literature, but there were no limits to the investigation taken by the protagonists in this story of practice.

The final truth emerged from the exploration of the value of the concept map for conceptual thinking. It is not a fully non-linguistic strategy but is accepted as a graphic organizer, one that links verbal knowledge and visual imagery in a form of dual coding (Nesbit and Adesope 2006, Peskin, Allen et al. 2010). That the concept map was valuable was a truth accepted without reservation by PN due to her systematic classroom implementation and evaluation (Norton 2015). However, it was only after collaborative construction of a concept map (shown P. 3) and perusal of research papers, that her partner-in-practice, EB, arrived at the same truth. The map shown on page three represents their thinking in response to the focus question “What is the value of the metaphor in the novel *The Running Man*? Its labelled nodes and links between nodes create two key propositions in response to the question, each of which represents a unit of psychological meaning (Novak 1990, Nesbit and Adesope 2006).

It was not the organizer alone that represented value for EB, but what she termed the level of thinking achieved and the complexity of cognition and metacognition in aligning ideas with syntax (detailed p.3). In addition, she was appreciative of the level of cooperative learning and intellectual problem-solving demanded, as the two teachers worked on the map. Each was building her own understanding of the novel and the question in the process of constant organizing and re-organizing of the propositions. The approach represented a cognitive challenge given the syntax required as well as the level of abstraction of the discussion about metaphor. It was a challenge for teachers, much less for students (Thompson, Bonakdarpour et al. 2007, Shetreet, Friedmann et al. 2009). Given this, it may well be that EB, in her role as teacher-librarian, puts this aspect of the truth on probation, as it may not be generalizable to all subject areas. Like the drawing and the kinaesthetic representations, more focussed application of the concept map to classroom practice in future will validate or not validate what is perceived as truth.



AN ESSAY THAT SPARKED AN EDUCATIONAL RENAISSANCE

Natalie Kennedy
Northside Christian College

Although she was the first woman to receive a degree from Oxford, was lauded as a successful crime-fiction writer, playwright, poet and academic, and moved in circles where C S Lewis and T S Eliot could be counted as friends, it was her essay entitled: *The Lost Tools of Learning* that sparked an educational renaissance. Perhaps it is an ironic twist of fate that a woman, who in her own words, had “extremely limited teaching experience,” could have such far reaching effects on educational philosophy and reform in America and slowly around the world.

It was 1947 at Oxford University, where Miss Sayers first bemoaned the effect of modern educational practices. She felt modern students were supposedly free-thinking but were not able to question; they were more literate than ever but weren't reading; they were becoming mindless consumers of everything from soda to sex and weren't remembering much of anything. Maybe it was nothing more than a reactionary speech; echoing people's fear and embarrassment that they might have been swept up in the emotionalism of wartime propaganda. Once the dust had settled and their sons and daughters buried, a sense of determinism arose - they would never be tricked again by pernicious political propaganda. “Fixing” the education of the young seemed to be a good enough place to start.

So what was her answer to the pitfalls and problems of the industrialised and progressive education system? It was to return to the medieval approach of the Trivium and Quadrivium. When I first heard these terms, shrouded in the mystery of the glorious dead tongue, I was intrigued. What was this system? What is the Trivium in lay terms? And more personally, why hadn't I heard about an educational system that had successfully educated men for centuries in my Education

degree? The Trivium is a systematic approach that divides schooling into the Grammar Phase, Logic Phase and the Rhetoric Phase. New terms for Junior, Middle and Senior school? Not quite. If you were to step into a classical school in the Grammar phase, the first thing you would notice is the cheerful chanting, precise calling out drills, mnemonic songs, emphasis on memory work and a deep grasp of historical and literary information and facts from Ancient Egypt through to the modern era. These kids are familiar with the gods, goddesses, heroes and villains from Pharaoh's gilded empire, to the childish machinations of the Greek and Roman divine families, through to the stark reality of poverty and class structure in Victorian era novels. They are sponges filled with the knowledge, poetry and passion from the greatest minds. Not a bad place to begin their educational journey.

Once the student moves to year 7, they enter the Logic phase, and in accordance with their hormones, the focus in this stage is to teach the students how to argue and how to argue well. They are taught formal logic and begin to identify false arguments while formulating sound ones. Heated debates, disagreements and a sharpening of one's critical faculties are a hallmark of this middle stage of schooling. Finally, students in year 10 move into the Rhetoric stage of learning where they learn to articulate their opinions and the expert opinions of others with power, passion and beauty. If they are attending a classical school, not just a liberal arts school, they will also begin reading the rigorous Romans in their Latin tongue.

An aspect that most appeals to me though is the fact that within a Trivium-based education, students are required to complete three chronological sweeps through history, during the three stages of learning. It is within these historical periods that students read books (in

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an abridged or original form depending on their age), study art and music, learn about significant mathematicians and scientists, along with their theories, and become completely immersed in the reality of a particular time in history.

As a senior English teacher, I have noticed the lack of background historical context students approach literary and non-literary texts with, along with their lack of strong grammatical knowledge and the weakness of their understanding of logic (which is not their fault, it isn't offered as a subject). Students who do study History, study units in a fragmented and non-linear way, voiding a lot of clarity and cohesiveness of understanding as a result. In a recent year 12 un-seen Shakespearean essay, one student wrote that Macbeth "messed Lady Macbeth about the witches' prophecy". Students don't see themselves and their values and beliefs as a product of the age in which they live. Often they judge people from different times and places with their own fashionable and politically correct ideologies. In T.S. Eliot's words, this sense of superior "presentism" prevents students from stopping to ponder that their ideologies may be the topic for critical dissection and dismissal in a distant future. Eliot seemed annoyed that students and critics have no respect towards the "pastness of the past". With these sentiments in mind, there has been a re-birth of a trivium-based Classical education initially in America with the reverberations being felt faintly here in Australia and more specifically in Brisbane.

Under the directorship of Dr Ryan Messmore, *The Millis Institute* (housed within Christian Heritage College at Mansfield, Brisbane) creates an opportunity for students to experience a tertiary liberal arts course with a difference. The following information from the website sums up the radically different approach to receiving a higher education:

The Millis Institute is a new initiative promoting a revolution in Australian higher education.

We are inspired by a different vision of the university – not as an institution that simply provides job training but as a community of learning that also cultivates wisdom,

creativity and character. Housed within Christian Heritage College in Brisbane, the Millis Institute offers two unique accredited degrees: a Bachelor of Arts in the Liberal Arts and Diploma of Liberal Arts – Foundations of Learning.

Led by Dr Ryan Messmore (DPhil Oxford), the Institute encourages students to lay a strategic foundation in thinking at the undergraduate level and to specialise at the postgraduate level. With a 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year option, our liberal arts degrees help to liberate students from a single career track and open up a broader range of options for them. Students can also take advantage of a 5-week intensive at Oxford University in England.

The concept of the Liberal Arts degree as offered by *The Millis Institute* is so terrifyingly controversial – this degree doesn't lead directly to a job! Having said that, my first degree in Business specialising in Public Relations from QUT didn't lead directly to a job either. The degree functioned more like a ticket that opened the door to a potential job, where skills could be learnt and perfected while on the job. As an educator, with over ten years teaching experience, it is only within the last three years that I began to question and redefine what the true purpose of education was. Rather than the singularly utilitarian concept of education as a means to equip students with skills and knowledge for a particular career pathway, being well-educated should be seen as an end in itself and a starting point to a myriad of career pathways.

When I tell people I am studying Latin in a small group, people's first reaction is "oh I love Latin dancing too!" After I explain I'm learning the Latin language, I'm met with a perplexed "Why? Are you going to become a Latin teacher?" Does it seem like such a strange concept that I would choose to study Latin simply to improve my understanding of languages and how they work? Why is it so unusual to study something when there may never be a direct correlation to paid work as a result of this study? These questions really highlight how entrenched in economical imperatives our philosophy of education can become.

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My Teaching Practice Philosophy – small changes, big impact.

The first change a classical approach has directly had on my teaching, is how I present the subject of English to my students. I started my year 12 English class looking at how English is about philosophical enquiry on the one hand, and the craft of text production on the other. We explored the idea that if a school doesn't have philosophy or religious subjects on offer, English will be the only subject at school where abstract thoughts are explored, analysed and created. While text production is an important skill in the classroom, it is only the vehicle for transporting ideas, values and beliefs. Early in the year, I introduced my students to the work of Mortimer J Adler and his concept of the Great Ideas. My mathematically and scientifically minded students loved the concept that abstraction could be quantified and measured. Dr Adler, along with a team of researchers, constructed a work entitled *Syntopicon: An Index to The Great Ideas*, a systematic and comprehensive inventory of the fundamental ideas to be found in the Great Books of the Western world. With two indices, one that charts the author to the idea and the other that notes the author to author conversation. I purchased his collection of essays, *The Great Ideas – A Lexicon of Western Thought*, and started to approach my teaching of units with a broader philosophical approach. Students began to use similar language replacing the concept of themes with ideas. It was a small change, but it shifted the emphasis. If for example, we were to look at the theme of slavery, we would think in literal terms about people groups who have been slaves and people groups who have owned slaves. If we think about the Great Idea of Slavery, we begin to realise that we are all slaves to something or someone at various points throughout our lives. We are reminded of Rousseau's famous line "Man is free, yet everywhere he is in chains." This shift in thinking forces students to move beyond the surface and literal concepts and invites them to see themselves as a part of the ongoing conversation about humanity, the cosmos and everything in between.

Practical Implementation

I began again to keep a commonplace book (or reading journal) which I had abandoned at 18, and having never been encouraged to think to the contrary, put it aside as a childish practice. I noticed quickly that this journal practice was meaningful and very useful in helping me to remember information, facts and quotes that I was able to share accurately during casual conversations and during class discussions. The immediate benefit of having ideas, facts and quotes to hand was invaluable in improving the quality of my conversations and teacher-led discussions.

I decided to abandon chapter questions for our two novel studies and replaced that with a reflection style journal. For each chapter students were required to make notes under the following headings:

- Plot points – a brief summation of the events
- Craft – figures of descriptions used, symbols etc.
- Great Ideas – the main idea noted and the questions that emerge as a result.
- Vocabulary – new words, complex words, fun words.
- Research - unfamiliar ideas/concepts/ persons/events that the student will need to do some background research on.

I was surprised at how enthusiastically students responded to this simple practice. I had to emphasise to them that I wasn't looking for quantity but quality. Some chapters wouldn't elicit much of a response while other chapters would, and that was ok. I also had to stress to my class that I wasn't interested in them regurgitating an expert's interaction with the text: I wanted to hear *their experience* with the text. They began to relish the opportunity to share their favourite events or quotes from the novel, and they also felt more qualified to participate in the discussions. Like any English teacher will know, discussion, great discussion, is the life-blood of our subject. And ultimately shared passion and enthusiasm for language and great literature is contagious.

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I also explicitly tested spelling and vocabulary every week which surprisingly they all loved, especially the boys. We would play vocabulary games, like Vocab Pictionary and Concentration along with our, tongue-in-cheek, Vocab Testimonies – which in a religious school is uniquely funny. People would share how they had used one of the “vocab” words in conversation, or how they had begun to see a particular vocabulary word everywhere. One boy shared that “when I was on the Goldie Mrs K, I saw the *Hotel Halcyon* and knew what it meant!” I have always loved words, and being able to focus part of my teaching on fostering this love with my students, has enriched my teaching, and their learning experience.

Final Thoughts

Although I’m still on a life-long journey of refining my teaching practice, the best PD I believe I can do, is read more, maintain a commonplace book, think philosophically and practise my craft as a “writer.” When we come into the classroom with that mindset, I feel as though we become more than the “facilitator” guide on the side, we become the fellow sojourner, participating together in the Great Conversation as both the receiver and creator of ideas.



THE ENGLISH TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC.

Beginning Teachers' Day, 2016

Saturday, 7 May 8.30am – 3.00pm
Brigidine College, Indooroopilly

The Beginning Teachers' Day is designed to support beginning teachers in their first 5 years of teaching and those new to teaching English.

The day will consist of a keynote address titled *Beginnings, Challenges and Aspirations: First Year and Beyond*, presented by Jessica Matthew plus supporting workshops.

The program is now available and can be downloaded from the ETAQ

Register online www.etaq.org.au/event/event/detail/event/51431 or download the registration form and email your completed form to trish.purcell@bigpond.com. Registrations close on Sunday 1 May, 2016.

ETAQ will be selling a range of books on the day.

Email enquiries: adminofficer@etaq.org.au



GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC WRITING OF EAL/D LEARNERS IN QUEENSLAND STATE SCHOOLS

Melanie Wild
Corinda State High School

In Queensland, approximately 11.7% of state school students have a language background other than English (Education Queensland, 2012) more commonly known now as students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D). These students not only need to acquire basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) in order to participate in ordinary conversations in the English speaking community but must also master cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), the language of instruction and academic texts, if they wish to achieve academic success in this education environment (Gunderson, Murphy & D'Silba, 2011). Myers-Sotton (2006) also identifies two different competencies that second language (L2) speakers need to obtain: grammatical and communicative, and these can have significant implications on how well these students succeed in an academic context. Grammatical competence is the ability of the speaker to "recognize and produce well-formed utterances in the language in question" (Myers-Sotton, 2006, p.40) while communicative, also referred to as pragmatic or sociolinguistic, competence refers to the ability to use these utterances in a way that is appropriate in the context it is being used in. In the Queensland education system, students must be able to analyse and construct a number of text types, including narratives, feature articles, analytical essays and now even multimodal texts, according to different contextual situations, in order to obtain communicative competence in this academic environment. It is this understanding of the different genres, and their purposes, structure and linguistic choices, required in the academic environment that is the key to success for second language learners in their academic writing.

While the 'genre theory' approach has been embedded in Queensland schools since the 1994 syllabus (Luke, 2001; Dooley, Exley & Comber, 2013), and now in the Australian curriculum (Exley & Mills, 2012), it is clear from the work Allan Luke, Peter Freebody and Ray Land undertook as part of Education Queensland's *Literate Futures* research that there is still a lack of explicit teaching of the lexicogrammatical structures of different genres (Luke, 2001; Dooley, Exley & Comber, 2013). While this investigation of Queensland education occurred over a decade ago, the current body of scholarship seeking to remind teachers about the need for and approaches to teach the grammar skills required for the genres found in the Australian curriculum (Exley & Cottrell, 2012; Exley & Mills, 2012; Exley & Wilson, 2012; Exley, Woods & Dooley, 2013) suggests that this is still a problem in schools today. Luke (2001) indicates that this problem stems from a lack of investment in teacher professional development in this area. This is significant for the second language speaker: while they may have control over specific grammatical categories this is not always the case even in the English language (Myers-Sotton, 2006) and certainly not in every context. Increasingly, schools are instead relying on packaged curricula programs to assist with their teaching, particularly for disadvantaged and non-mainstream students (Luke, 2001; Luke, Dooley, & Woods, 2011) and this perpetuates the problem as teachers become less responsible for the pedagogical approaches they employ. Therefore, it is important to re-examine the history of 'genre theory' in Australia in order to understand the best-practice approaches promulgated by the early researchers and practitioners and identify how this can be utilised more comprehensively by classroom teachers today.

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There are a number of different pedagogical approaches to genre teaching that can be used as a tool for developing L2 instruction including English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and North American New Rhetoric studies (Hyon, 1996). In Australia, genre theory sits in the framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) inspired by Michael Halliday's research at the Schools Council Programme in Linguistics and English Teaching in the United Kingdom and formulated by Jim Martin and Joan Rothery in Sydney (Christie, 2013). All three approaches are becoming recognized worldwide for their ability to improve the writing of L2 learners (Hyon, 1996). The Australian framework of genre theory was developed around 1980 in response to the educational focus at the time on the personal growth model and 'process writing,' at the expense of more structured and goal-oriented approaches (Rose 2008; 2011). Research at the time showed that this method limited students' writing ability to simple accounts of personal experience and significantly this limitation was even more profound for students from less mainstream backgrounds (Rothery, 1996). The aim, then, of genre theory was to "open up access to genres, especially those controlled by mainstream groups" (Martin, 1999, p. 124) in order to empower minority groups and enable them to participate in society.

It does this by providing EAL/D learners with communicative competence through an understanding of the purpose, structure and lexico-grammatical choices of a number of different genres. Particularly, genre theory in Australia in the tradition of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, views context and text as intertwined so that "context is only known because of the text that gives it life, while text is only known because of the context that makes it relevant" (Christie, 2013, p. 12). Thus, the purpose and audience become just as important as the structure and language choices. Students are therefore taught a number of elemental genres, including narrative, persuasive exposition, and recount, that form the basis of different text types in the culture they are

being educated in. It is through learning the genres of a particular culture that students can understand how meaning is created in that culture (Martin, 1999; Christie, 2013). This learning is also deliberately structured and scaffolded by the teacher to ensure students are not just taught the genre but are encouraged to become independent in their own analysis and construction. This is achieved through a three step process of deconstruction of the genre by the teacher, joint construction of the genre with the teacher and students doing this together, and finally independent construction by the learner on their own (Martin, 1999). In this way, the pedagogy provides a framework for teachers to enable their students to be able to create the genres of the culture they needed to be able to use in order to participate in society. This was subsequently released as the text-context teaching-learning cycle model.

However, while genre theory purported to be empowering non-mainstream learners by providing them access to the genres of the culture they were living in, some critical literacy proponents such as Luke (1996) argued that teaching the genres that have gained cultural capital in society, reinforces the power structures that have promoted inequality among minority groups in the first place. Genre theorists such as Martin (1999) and Christie (2013) disagree, however, and contend that without the opportunity to participate in the genres of power, disadvantaged students from non-English speaking backgrounds and other minority groups will be even more disadvantaged than they already are. In fact, genre theorists suggest that genre theory and critical literacy can work together. Once students have mastered the basic elements of the genre they can also critique it and manipulate it to suit their own purposes (Christie, 2013). Appropriately, after this debate, a model that incorporated critical literacy into the text-context learning cycle model was released in order to accommodate these dual processes (see Figure 1.) (Martin, 1999) and cement their reliance on each other.

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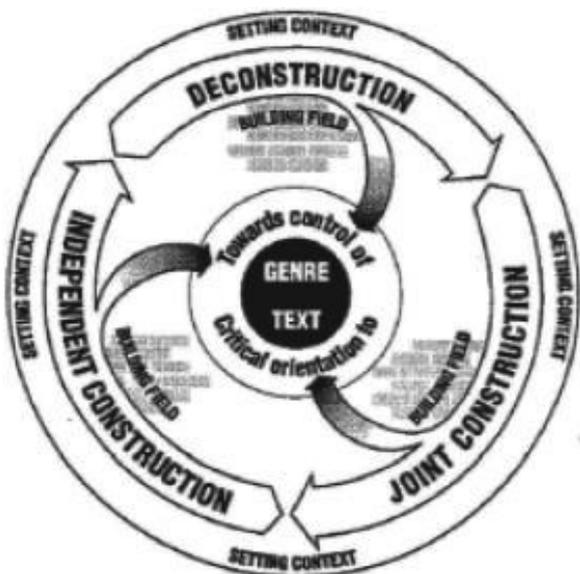


Figure 1. The teaching-learning cycle (Rothery and Stenglin, 1994, in Martin, 1999).

Hammond and Mackin-Horarik (1999) support this claim by prominent genre theorists as their own extensive research with ESL students suggests that without a focus on both genre and critical literacy, students were only able to engage with texts on a superficial level or relied heavily on scaffolding from their teachers. Their work has significant implications for teaching writing to EAL/D students using the genre theory approach as “students will be able to undertake effective analysis and critique of any text only when they are able to engage with the text” (Hammond & Mackin-Horarik, 1999, p. 531) and be able to master the technical requirements of it. Even Freire (2006), one of the preeminent critical literacy theorists claims that “the technical mastery is just as important for students as the political understanding is for a citizen” (p. 41). Thus, engagement with and technical competence of genre allows students to understand and work with texts in a way that enables critical approaches to both reading and writing.

Incorporated into Hammond and Mackin-Horarik’s (1999) paper is an example of best practice approaches to using genre theory with ESL students in the classroom. They particularly draw attention to the way a focus on the

linguistic choices inherent in the construction of written texts and the metalanguage of functional grammar used to describe these enabled students to be able to participate in discussions about the choices made in the texts and, significantly, to do this independently. In fact, Hammond and Mackin-Horarik (1999) suggest that it is precisely this discussion using metalanguage or “functional ways of talking and thinking about language” (p. 541) that allows for critical analysis and manipulation of texts to take place. This is supported by genre theorist Martin (1999) who emphasizes that a shared knowledge of functional grammar *and* generic structure is needed to maximize the effectiveness of the pedagogy and not just one or the other.

In Queensland, this text-context model of genre theory was incorporated into the 1994 English syllabus and the *Literate Futures* work of the Queensland government found that the focus on genre had improved the teaching of writing to a “more or less satisfactory” level (Luke, 2001). However, knowledge of functional grammar was still found to be insufficient. Dooley, Exley and Comber (2013) claim that the relative newness of this metalanguage meant that teachers used it in different ways in their classrooms. It is clear that more needed to be done to assist teachers in embedding the use of metalanguage in their genre teaching to allow students in Queensland schools to move to a much higher level of ability in their writing. In particular, Hyon (1996) points out that it is in understanding the linguistic features of the various text types that ESL students need the most instruction in.

Part of the problem is that teachers themselves lack the skills to apply functional grammar in the classroom environment as they themselves have a variety of experiences with grammar at school. Even in the current teacher education environment, there are still difficulties with providing comprehensive functional grammar instruction to future teachers. Dooley, Exley and Comber (2013) point out that teachers “bring a range of grammatical knowledge and dispositions to the formal study of grammar” (p. 70) and even those that have some knowledge still require more in order to be able to bring this

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to their classroom practice. A more significant impediment to training pre-services teachers in this pedagogical approach is that even if they are taught how to utilize grammar in context in their university studies, they are not seeing this incorporated in practice in their school based practicums (Dooley, Exley & Comber, 2013). This means they can have a difficult time putting into place their new-found knowledge. Luke (2001) argues that part of the problem in Queensland, despite the strength of the genre approach, is the lack of focus and investment in teacher professional development and while subsequent policy directives have attempted to address this (Education Queensland, 2006), this has not involved systemic change. For example, some teachers already in the state system in Queensland, received five days of training in functional grammar between 2006 and 2010 from Education Queensland (2006) but this has not been replicated since. Hence, those who received the training have not been able to revise and redevelop their pedagogy over time and those new to the system have missed out altogether.

In order to cater for the approximately 11.7% of EAL/D students (and rising) in state education in Queensland, a more systemic approach to developing teacher competence needs to be embedded from initial teacher education training right through to those already practising in the classroom. Even though the new Australian Curriculum does not mention functional grammar explicitly, the components of functional grammar are clearly outlined in the content descriptors (Exley & Mills, 2012) and it is important that teachers are aware of and confident with this in their everyday pedagogical practice in order to ensure EAL/D learners and their writing improve beyond satisfactory levels in the near future. It is clear then, in order to improve the next generation of EAL/D school students' writing it is important to advocate for more of a focus on teacher professional development in a continuing fashion to ensure competence and confidence in this highly developed pedagogical approach.

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THE ENGLISH TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC.

Garry's Grammar Day 2016

Garry's very popular Grammar Workshop will be held again in Brisbane this year on Saturday 4 June, 9.00pm – 12.30pm, at University of Queensland

Further details later. Registrations will open in early May.
Go to the ETAQ site – www.etaq.org.au for updates



SOME VIEWS ON GRAMMAR TEACHING

Garry Collins

The Comment section of *The Sunday Mail* of 18 October 2015 included an opinion piece by journalist David Penberthy with the headline “TXT SPEAK IS KILLING LITERACY”. I was not particularly interested in the supposed threat to literacy standards posed by the use of text messaging but what Penberthy had to say about the teaching of grammar caught my eye. The article began thus:

“One of my earliest school memories involves an English teacher called Mrs Tucker, with a stern bun and thick spectacles, who would stand at the front of the class with a canvas-covered grammar book and make us conjugate verbs.

Mrs Tucker would write the verb in its present form on the blackboard in cursive.

To do.

For the next 20 minutes we would silently fill in the missing verbs in the sentences in our grammar books.

Do, doing, does, done, did.

We did this every day, along with a spelling test of 20 words, one of which always included a word none of us had heard before.

This was traditional rote learning in an age when structure and accuracy trumped creativity. It had at its core the sensible conviction that there was no point encouraging young people to be creative if no one could understand a word they wrote or said. There was no room for error, no dismissal of mistakes on the basis that readers could get the gist of what you were saying anyway.

I was thinking about Mrs Tucker this week while reading reports of the latest blow-up by tennis player Nick Kyrgios. The world does not need another column chastising this gifted but boorish man for his

behaviour, and this is not such an item.

But if Mrs Tucker had been watching that game, I suspect she would have been less troubled by his obscenities and histrionics on-court than his press conference afterwards, where he made this statement:

‘I didn’t think I behaved bad at all out there today. I showed emotion, but at the same time I played great.’”

This prompted me to submit the following letter:

Texting not a crisis for literacy

In warning about an apparent threat to literacy, David Penberthy extolled the virtues of the sort of grammar teaching he had at school (“Txt speak is killing literacy”, 18 Oct).

There are always some who hanker to return to an imagined golden age in education but Penberthy should know that there is an overwhelming body of research showing that the sort of barren, decontextualized grammar exercises he described did little to improve the language competence of most students.

Some young people may fail to apply what they are routinely taught about making language choices appropriate to purpose and audience. However, that does not mean we should return to teaching methods long since shown to be ineffective and a waste of precious time.

I was amused to note that Penberthy began a sentence with the conjunction “but”. This is, of course, both effective and acceptable, but his former English teacher is sure to have considered it to be a serious grammatical sin.

Garry Collins

President, Australian Association for the Teaching of English

SOME VIEWS ON GRAMMAR TEACHING

The next Sunday, 25 October, the following edited version of my letter appeared:

Grammar lessons are ineffective

(the paper's headline)

In warning about texting being an apparent threat to literacy, columnist David Penberthy extolled the virtues of the sort of grammar teaching he had at school (S-M, Oct 18). There are always some who hanker to return to an imagined golden age in education, but Penberthy should know that overwhelming research shows the sort of barren, decontextualized grammar exercises he described did little to improve the language competence of most students. Some young people may fail to apply what they are routinely taught about making language choices appropriate to purpose and audience. However, that does not mean we should return to teaching methods long shown to be ineffective and a waste of precious time.

Garry Collins

President, Australian Association for the Teaching of English

I appreciate that there are always limitations on space and I assume this was the main reason for my final paragraph being removed and the remainder combined into a single paragraph. However, I objected to the headline which I thought misrepresented my position and, by association, that of AATE. I therefore then sent this follow-up letter:

Not all grammar lessons are ineffective

Last Sunday the paper was good enough to publish an edited version of a letter which I had submitted in response to an article by David Penberthy on the impact of texting on literacy standards.

Unfortunately, the heading you provided, "Grammar lessons are ineffective", gives the impression that I am opposed to all forms of grammar teaching. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, as English teachers go, I am an absolute enthusiast for the sensible teaching of grammar and regularly present professional development sessions for teachers on the topic.

The approach to grammar underpinning the English component of the national curriculum is significantly different from what was available to teachers when Penberthy and I were at school. In addition, savvy teachers now know that it is best to teach about grammar in the course of working with authentic texts for other worthwhile purposes. Traditional grammar teaching of the sort that Penberthy described typically involved artificial texts in isolation.

Garry Collins

President, Australian Association for the Teaching of English

This produced the following email from the paper's letters editor:

From: Kuczynski, Marcus [mailto:marcus.kuczynski@news.com.au]

Sent: Thursday, 29 October 2015 11:35 AM

To: gazco48@bigpond.net.au

Subject: SM letters

Hi Garry,

I would like to apologise for the ambiguous heading on your letter last Sunday. Fortunately, upon reading your letter the reader would have realised that the "lessons" in the headline referred to the old ways of teaching grammar as described by David Penberthy. Nevertheless the headline should have been clearer.

Cheers,

Marcus Kuczynski

To this I replied as follows:

Hi Marcus

Thanks for getting back to me and acknowledging the problem with the headline.

I hope that you will still publish my follow-up letter next Sunday so that any readers who might have been misled can be put straight. Via the AATE website, I have received an email from one reader who seemed to have the impression that I thought all grammar teaching was a waste of time.

SOME VIEWS ON GRAMMAR TEACHING

Incidentally, I will be in Townsville this Saturday presenting a professional development program on grammar for members of the English Teachers Association of Queensland.

Garry Collins

The letters editor responded thus:

From: Kuczynski, Marcus [mailto:marcus.kuczynski@news.com.au]
Sent: Thursday, 29 October 2015 12:03 PM
To: Garry Collins
Subject: Re: SM letters

Hi Garry,

The person who wrote to you must not have actually read your letter to have come to that conclusion. I have very little space for letters on Sundays, but I will try to include the key points of your letter.

Cheers,

Marcus Kuczynski

Letters Editor

On Sunday 1 November this edited version of my letter appeared in *The Sunday Mail*:

Modern grammar lessons effective

Last week I responded to David Penberthy's column (S-M, Oct 18) on the impact of texting on literacy standards. Unfortunately, the heading, "Grammar lessons are ineffective", could give the impression that I am opposed to all forms of grammar teaching. As an English teacher, I am an enthusiast for the sensible teaching of grammar and present professional development sessions for teachers on the topic. The approach to grammar in the English component of the national curriculum differs greatly from when Penberthy and I were at school.

Email in response to my first published letter

As mentioned above in the email to the letters editor, I received the following email via the AATE website:

Subject: Garry Collins President AATE
Grammar Lessons Are Ineffective

Hello Garry

With respect to your letter **Grammar Lessons Are Ineffective** (SM, Oct 25) I make the following comments.

Penberthy argued that texting, with all its shortcuts and textspeak, is a threat to traditional literacy. In contrast, your counter-argument seems to focus on written expression where writers are required to make "language choices appropriate to purpose and audience". Written expression is not literacy. The distinction is clear. Creative writing, or written expression, requires the use of competent literacy, but it is not literacy. Literacy teachers teach reading, basic writing skills such as punctuation and grammar, as well as the mechanics of sentence and paragraph construction. When making decisions about literacy writers do not consider the purpose of their prose nor the audience. Correct literacy is not dependent on genre or audience. There is only one form of correct English literacy regardless of genre or audience.

You make a broad assertion that "overwhelming research shows the sort of barren, decontextualised grammar exercises he (Penberthy) described did little to improve the language competence of most students". Really?

First, I'm uncertain what you mean by "language competence". Do you mean oral English? If you do then modern ESL courses are "a waste of precious time".

Do you mean "literacy"? If you do I find it difficult to imagine how grammar could be taught out of context. The decline in literacy standards in Australia, and in other Western countries, began when "barren" spelling, punctuation and grammar teaching was jettisoned in primary schools in favour of a concerted thrust to teach creative writing. Rote learning is anathema to some educators who seem to blithely ignore the fact that they learnt to speak by the constant repetition of words and phrases until they

SOME VIEWS ON GRAMMAR TEACHING

achieved fluency. Thankfully, there are government initiatives afoot which will see the reintroduction of essential literacy teaching. Some progressive schools have already implemented this measure.

By “language competence” do you mean “written expression”? If you do then how do you explain the proliferation of literacy courses taught by a growing number of universities for first year students, particularly Bachelor of Education students? There was no need for these remedial courses in the days of presumably archaic “teaching methods long shown to be ineffective (do you mean for teaching literacy?)” during “an imagined golden age in education”.

Second, your claim that there is “overwhelming” evidence which supports your argument is risky, even dubious, when you omit to mention any of the confirming research. Furthermore, the absence of any mention of disconfirming evidence makes it difficult for readers to treat what you write as credible and, hence, to make an informed and educated decision with respect to your argument.

Regards

A name was provided but I have not included it here.

I sent the following reply:

Response to letter on grammar teaching in The Sunday Mail

Dear NAME

Thanks for taking the time to respond to one of my letters-to-the-editor. I am always happy to engage in discussions about aspects of English teaching and this is particularly the case when the specific topic is the teaching of grammar, an issue which I am quite passionate about (or would you perhaps wish to insist on “about which I am quite passionate?”).

The heading of the letter in *The Sunday Mail*

The first point that I wish to make is about the heading “Grammar lessons are ineffective”. As is usually the case with letters-to-the-editor, this was provided by the paper. My own heading for

the letter was “Texting not a crisis for literacy”. The paper’s use of the present tense “are” seems to suggest that I think that all grammar teaching is ineffective. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, as English teachers go, I am an absolute enthusiast for the sensible teaching of grammar. Some of my colleagues consider that it amounts to a minor obsession. That said, I certainly do think that the sort of grammar exercises described by David Penberthy in his article, while no doubt well-intentioned, constitute outdated and very poor pedagogy. I currently work part-time in pre-service teacher education at the University of Queensland and a student who proposed such activities in a lesson plan would be counselled that change was needed if they wished to gain a passing grade for the assignment.

Research about the teaching of grammar

My reading of your letter is that you doubt the existence of the research about the effectiveness of traditional grammar teaching that I referred to. (My apologies if my ending a sentence with a preposition offends your notions of “correct English literacy”.) You suggest that I was remiss in failing to include in my letter any of the details of this research. Here, you seem not to understand the limitations on space that apply to letters-to-the-editor. As it was, the paper edited out the final paragraph of the version that I submitted. This was:

- I was amused to note that Penberthy began a sentence with the conjunction “but”. This is, of course, both effective and acceptable, but his former English teacher is sure to have considered it to be a serious grammatical sin.

For a survey of the relevant research, I refer you to the useful 2010 book *Beyond the grammar wars*. It is edited by New Zealand academic Terry Locke and published by Routledge. The ISBN is 978-0-415-80265-9. I think it worth noting that a good deal of this research was available before I began teaching in 1969. Two quotations from Page 31 are as follows:

- “The most influential of the meta research reports was that by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Shoer (1963), which contained the

SOME VIEWS ON GRAMMAR TEACHING

oft-quoted statement that: “The teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing” (pp. 37-38).’

- ‘Hillocks Jr’s (1986) meta-analysis largely backed up the Braddock report conclusions.’

In case the term is unfamiliar to you, the meta-analyses cited above involved the amalgamation of the findings of multiple individual research studies.

The sort of grammar teaching described by Penberthy in his article would fit accurately into the sorts of classroom practices investigated by this research.

I would be interested to hear your views after you have had the opportunity to familiarise yourself with some of this research.

Effective grammar teaching

A notable feature of the English component of the relatively new Australian Curriculum is a focus on how the language works, in particular its grammar. Sensibly, this goes beyond the necessary but insufficient avoidance of grammatical errors and concentrates to a greater extent on the effects produced by particular language choices. Intelligent implementation of the curriculum will involve teaching aspects of grammar, not in isolation as used to be the case, but in the course of working with texts being studied in class or the ones that students are asked to produce. Such an approach has much more potential to achieve the interest and engagement of students than when grammar is done in isolation and focuses solely on the avoidance of errors.

In addition, the description of how the grammar of English works underpinning the English element of the Australian Curriculum is a much more useful and productive one than was available to teachers when Penberthy or I or, I presume, you went to school. This view of the language derives from systemic functional linguistics based on the work of Professor Michael Halliday, formerly professor

of linguistics at the University of Sydney. If you were interested, I could recommend some books on the topic.

Literacy and language competence

You write that you are uncertain what I meant by “language competence”. I used this noun group to mean students’ capacity to use the language appropriately and effectively in both writing and speaking. While I could have gone into more detail, I know from experience that if letters are too long they are not selected for publication.

In turn, I am a little puzzled by your statement that “written expression is not literacy”. Definitions of literacy have expanded considerably in recent times but the traditional one was “the ability to read and write”. I am happy to concede that written expression on its own does not constitute literacy but a person who is not at least basically competent in written expression could not, in my view, be considered literate.

In conclusion, I thank you again for responding to my letter.

Regards

Garry Collins

President

Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE)

I originally concluded this article by writing: “To date, I have not received any further messages from this interested member of the public.” However, after a hiatus of several weeks, I did receive another lengthy email which ranged over a variety of aspects of contemporary schooling. At that stage, I did not feel it worthwhile to continue the correspondence.

Author: Garry Collins is a retired high school English teacher who now works part-time as a sessional tutor in pre-service teacher education courses related to secondary English teaching in the School of Education at the University of Queensland. He is ETAQ’s immediate past president and was AATE president in 2014 and 2015. He will complete his time on the AATE national council as past president during 2016.



SILENT COMPANION

By Patsy Norton

Filling up space with sound
Is a favoured friend's contribution
to sanity.
But the words are sushi-like,
Tainted fishy morsels in white padding
And flesh-coloured gift wrap.

You never spoke to me.
But what was mute morphed,
Burrowed into my senses
with unerring knowledge
of me.

But I spoke – knowing
sound sensed was computed,
warmed and made OUR truth –
bonded in code.

Now the empty silence
tantalizes tear-ducts with loss
of black 'n tan shadow.



ENGLISH MULTIMODAL RESOURCE: A WORLD OF STORIES

Danielle Crocker
University of Southern Queensland

<http://misscrockersenglishlearningexperience.weebly.com/>

The Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals (MCEETYA, 2008) highlights the importance of developing students' information and communication technology (ICT) skills, viewing ICT capability as a foundation for success in all learning areas. Considering this, the website designed for unit "A World of Stories" has been developed in order to utilise various ICTs to facilitate, amplify and transform student learning. This rationale highlights the learning purpose, uses of and justification for, the development of this resource.

This resource is designed to achieve three learning objectives, which are underpinned by the Australian English curriculum (ACARA, 2015). First, students will be able to identify and analyse literary techniques, devices and text structures operating within various texts. This aligns with English curriculum content descriptor ACELA1542 (ACARA, 2015). Second, students will be able to understand and explain how texts utilise literary techniques and devices to create representations and influence the audience's perception, aligning with content descriptor ACELT1628 (ACARA, 2015). Finally, students will create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts by using deliberate text structures, language techniques and language devices, thus aligning with content descriptor ACELY1736 (ACARA, 2015).

The website also aligns with the Australian Curriculum ICT general capability, which requires students to use "ICTs effectively and appropriately to access, communicate information and ideas" (ACARA, 2014). Additionally, it will assist students in completing their assessment task, which requires them to analyse a text that creates representation of

specific populations. Year 8-10 English students and beginning teachers will benefit from this resource as it covers information regarding textual analysis, a concept throughout the English curriculum. For example week three poetry analysis can be utilised in a poetry unit to teach students the basics of analysing any poem. Ultimately, this resource aligns with curriculum content, learning objectives and assessment.

The website provides a student-centred approach, facilitating engagement and learning. Weekly introductory activities align with the TPACK model (Koehler, n.d.), particularly content knowledge dimension, as these activities are designed to support students in developing subject specific knowledge, understandings and skills. For example, in week one students are required to complete a timeline of historical events in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories and cultures. This activity takes an inquiry-based approach requiring students to independently research, interpret, analyse and evaluate information on the internet; a key skill needed to participate effectively in a globalised society (Pritchard, 2008). Online inquiry-based approaches allow for self-paced learning and active construction of knowledge. Thus increasing student's motivation, engagement and persistence in learning, especially when compared to traditional instructional methods (Waxman, Lin and Michko, 2003). Additionally, the website allows students to experience (written, visual and audio content) and demonstrate (choose multimodal presentation) learning in multiple ways, catering to students' differing levels of ability, interests and learning needs (Tomlinson, 2001).

ENGLISH MULTIMODAL RESOURCE: A WORLD OF STORIES

Weekly forum activities require students to apply their knowledge and understanding to novel situations, thus promoting higher-order thinking (Dooly, 2008). Students will be required to collaborate with peers, industry experts and the teacher. Collaboration transforms student learning and feedback by allowing students to receive instant feedback (Waxman, Lin and Michko, 2003). The University of NSW (2014) found collaborative blogging assists students in knowledge construction as it allows for exchange, distribution, negotiation and consolidation of information. The collaborative glossary fosters interaction and assists students in interpretation and retention of subject specific terminology (NEALS, 2009). Furthermore, the use of ICTs and guest speaker provide authentic learning experiences. Rao (2013) recognises this approach amplifies student learning, as students are able to make connections between what they are learning and the real world, thus increasing students' interest and engagement (Waxman, Lin & Michko, 2003).

ICTs have transformed the way individuals learn, interact and contribute in a globalised society. These technological developments require a shift in pedagogical practice to ensure learning experiences connect with students' digitalised lives. In English, the emergence of ICTs has brought about a multiplicity of communication avenues. This has altered the term literacy from a singular term, traditionally defined as the ability to read and write, to a plural concept, which encompasses a range of practices. Students need to be able to comprehend and compose texts of various forms, for varying purposes, contexts and audiences (Henderson, 2012). The New London Group's (1996) 'Multiliteracies' recognises successful pedagogy incorporates a range of texts (oral, print, multimedia) and considers textual design elements (audio, linguistic, visual, gestural and spatial). Additionally, AITSL (2014) standard 3.4 advocates for the use of a range of ICTs to engage students in learning. Considering this, it is imperative teachers are proficient in the use of ICTs and incorporate/model a range of ICT in their learning experiences (Sandretto & Tilson, 2013).

The website has both strengths and weaknesses. Key strengths are self-paced and student-centred activities. It has educational value as content is linked to curriculum and students' current ability levels. The design is effective as it provides clear and easy to read font, easy navigation and a variety of media texts. Its accessibility and visibility are ensured with the page catering for computer, iPad or mobile phone use, whilst also being accessible at any time and location. Weaknesses include functionality, as hyperlinks provided do not open in a separate window. Secondly, some activities such as the worksheets, could be just as effective using pen and paper methods and consequently do not enhance learning. Finally, the web resource only covers part of the unit, this could be expanded to incorporate activities for the whole unit and embed information about the assessment task. The website needs to be implemented alongside face-to-face learning, providing a blended learning experience which utilises effective practices from both methods. Whilst, there are weaknesses, I believe that this resource facilitates and enhances student learning.

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THE ENGLISH TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
OF QUEENSLAND INC.

SAVE THE DATE

Annual State Conference 2016

The Annual State Conference will be held
on Saturday 13 August, 8.30am – 5.00pm
at Lourdes Hill College (TBC).

Go to the ETAQ site for updates - <http://www.etaq.org.au/event/event/detail/event/49679>

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

How does the management committee know what it should be doing to best meet the needs of members? Ask them of course. Members are ETAQ's lifeblood and their feedback on our recent survey has dishd up some very helpful information. With the expert assistance of Jane Schmitt, CEO of the AMA, ETAQ's Management Committee spent a full day planning the way forward for the next 3 years on February 27. The results of the planning day will be outlined in the next issue of Words'Worth. Here is the data which has come from our members. Any more feedback is always welcome by emailing president@etaq.org.au.

The survey was sent to all members and registered contacts on 11 February in E-pistle 3.16 with the subject of "We want you".

Question 1: What type of membership do you currently hold? [Select one]

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
personal member (full)	57.69 %	30
personal member (life)	3.85 %	2
personal member (student)	0.00 %	0
personal membership (retired)	1.92 %	1
corporate member	28.85 %	15
not currently a financial member	7.69 %	4

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

Question 2: How long have you been teaching?

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
0 - 3 years	11.54 %	6
4 - 6 years	3.85 %	2
7 - 10 years	13.46 %	7
11 - 15 years	13.46 %	7
16 - 20 years	15.38 %	8
21+ years	42.31 %	22

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

Question 3: Which age group do you belong to?

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
under 21	0.00 %	0
21 - 35	25.00 %	13
36 - 55	53.85 %	28
56 +	21.15 %	11
Answered: 52 Skipped: 0		

Question 4: Where are you currently teaching?

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Far North Queensland	1.92 %	1
North and North West Queensland	3.85 %	2
Central Queensland	7.69 %	4
Wide Bay	3.85 %	2
Darling Downs and South West	13.46 %	7
Sunshine Coast	1.92 %	1
South East Queensland	61.54 %	32
Interstate	0.00 %	0
Not currently teaching	5.77 %	3
Answered: 52 Skipped: 0		

Question 5: How would you describe your approach to ETAQ membership?

[Select all that apply]

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
I always/often join each year as a personal member	53.85 %	28
I am always/often covered by my school/ employer's corporate membership	30.77 %	16
I join ETAQ sporadically, when I attend events or need resources	3.85 %	2
I have been a member but am unlikely to re-join the association very often/at all	3.85 %	2
Other	13.46 %	7
Answered: 52 Skipped: 0		

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

Question 6: What do you value about your ETAQ membership? [Select all that apply]

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Access to up-to-date information on English via Epistles and English Matters	80.77 %	42
Members' rates for PD	44.23 %	23
Access to members' only section of the website	19.23 %	10
Connection with like-minded colleagues	63.46 %	33
Facebook page	17.31 %	9
I'm not a member	7.69 %	4
Answered: 52 Skipped: 0		

Comments on value of membership

PD offered is current, valuable and relevant. Links to sites and resources of interest.

I look forward to the mail outs. There's a variety of information and even if I find only one or two articles that are of interest and use to my current situation, it's better than not having any.

I didn't know there was a Facebook page until I read this survey. I joined to attend a PD but I'm not really sure what benefits there are and whether I should keep my membership. I'm also in PETA and ALEA.

I didn't know there was a Facebook page until I read this survey. I joined to attend a PD but I'm not really sure what benefits there are and whether I should keep my membership. I'm also in PETA and ALEA.

Value English Matters greatly. Should be an online journal only...no need to publish hard copy and make everything more cost effective. Epistles are over done. People find conferences and seminars very useful.

For me, membership is as much about contributing to an ongoing professional conversation as it is about what narrowly conceived benefits I get for my dues.

I find both the professional development opportunities and the publications very useful. I also appreciate the advocacy role which ETAQ plays with bodies such as QCAA.

I find the Saturday PD useful and usually the only ones I can attend.

It's vital that there is a forum for English teachers to be exposed to the latest trends in the context of like minded professional subject specialists. It's also important that English teachers have a voice.

Interesting and useful PD

Value lies also in the sense that a professional association should represent one's interests.

excellent professional development; professional support and enthusiasm that boosts my own passion for English every time I attend; friendships/connections with English teachers in other schools and networks;

I have valued my membership of ETAQ ever since I joined (around 1969 I think). I found the publications helped enormously when I was a young teacher in country high schools, then, in Brisbane, the activities became an extra support. I spent some years as secretary and enjoyed that greatly. It's a wonderful community of professionals.

annual conference is a must event for all members

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

like the variety of PDs offered

I think it is great for networking and PD. I want to be more involved to forward my career.

We don't get many emails or notifications of events forwarded to us as staff so I'm not sure what the association provides.

Interesting & varied range of PD at affordable prices.

Would be great to offer more opportunities for country members

Opportunities to hear from others at PD, especially keynote speakers.

Question 7: Annual State Conference

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	71.15 %	37
Somewhat Helpful	3.85 %	2
Not Helpful	0.00 %	0
I don't attend / use this	25.00 %	13

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

Question 8: Saturday Seminars

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	53.85 %	28
Somewhat Helpful	13.46 %	7
Not Helpful	0.00 %	0
I don't attend / use this	32.69 %	17

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

Question 9: Beginning Teachers Day

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	9.62 %	5
Somewhat Helpful	3.85 %	2
Not Helpful	1.92 %	1
I don't attend / use this	84.62 %	44

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

Question 10: After school workshops

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	23.08 %	12
Somewhat Helpful	11.54 %	6
Not Helpful	3.85 %	2
I don't attend / use this	61.54 %	32

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

Question 11: Literary Breakfast

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	13.46 %	7
Somewhat Helpful	19.23 %	10
Not Helpful	0.00 %	0
I don't attend / use this	67.31 %	35

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

Question 12: English Matters (newsletter)

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	50.00 %	26
Somewhat Helpful	38.46 %	20
Not Helpful	3.85 %	2
I don't attend / use this	7.69 %	4

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

Question 13: Words'Worth (journal)

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	57.69 %	30
Somewhat Helpful	32.69 %	17
Not Helpful	0.00 %	0
I don't attend / use this	9.62 %	5

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

Question 14: Literary competition

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	28.85 %	15
Somewhat Helpful	15.38 %	8
Not Helpful	0.00 %	0
I don't attend / use this	55.77 %	29

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

Question 15: E-pistle (email updates)

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	51.92 %	27
Somewhat Helpful	34.62 %	18
Not Helpful	5.77 %	3
I don't attend / use this	7.69 %	4

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

Question 16: Digital Story competition

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	26.92 %	14
Somewhat Helpful	13.46 %	7
Not Helpful	0.00 %	0
I don't attend / use this	59.62 %	31

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

Question 17: Facebook group

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	25.00 %	13
Somewhat Helpful	7.69 %	4
Not Helpful	0.00 %	0
I don't attend / use this	67.31 %	35

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

Question 18: Twitter

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Very Helpful	15.38 %	8
Somewhat Helpful	9.62 %	5
Not Helpful	0.00 %	0
I don't attend / use this	75.00 %	39

Answered: 52 | Skipped: 0

Question 19: What do you like about Words'Worth and/or what would you like more of?

Current research that is useful

The variety (as I discussed above). Sometimes I find nothing of use, however in most I will find an article that is beneficial and relevant to what I am teaching at that point in time.

Not sure

Not sure

Would like access to information about teaching to the Queensland style of assessment and marking. Having taught in NSW for nearly 30years I have found little here or from the History association or QLD board of education to provide accessible information on how to teach to your expectations.

Articles of value...some seem to reflect more about the author's need to be published than real value.

more member profiles

If I'm honest, I mostly like having articles published.

Practical information. Units of work. Strategies to approach content and managing pedagogical processes (hints/suggestions for digital classrooms)

I don't read it.

It's great to see what's going on in other schools.

I like all of it, especially the sharing of classroom practice and the reviews.

Creative writing samples

Teaching ideas

Units of work

More practical and less theoretical articles. A regular section on technology useful to English teachers.

Amazing articles, beautifully written and always topical. I'd like to see more on reflective practice.

Practical unit and lesson resources

It's an opportunity for regular teachers to be published. Interesting articles generally. Would like more classroom-based strategies (with less focus on the canonical classics). More focus on differentiation for Yrs 7-10 would be helpful too.

I would like my HOD to pass the copy around to staff. We rarely get to see it.

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

Resources for teaching indigenous (incl Torres Strait Island people) & Pacifika students

When teachers share their best practice. Hearing from other professionals what they are trialling and willing to give a go in their school context is always an exciting read for me.

Units of work that teachers share. Theory/research that is shared.

I contribute articles and have done so for decades. I enjoy reading the journal and keeping up with what others are doing.

Perhaps themed editions - e.g. creativity, digital literacy, English for EALD learners and so on.

Articles on current texts/trends.

I like the publication of winning entries from the Literary Comp each year; I enjoy the articles most of the time although I read what interests me rather than reading everything.

Maybe more reviews?

some of the ideas presented

The same and more of the same.

I like that members and non members can contribute. I like sharing my work in there, and seeing the work of others.

Articles are a good length - enough detail to be practical but not too long. Also they are more hands on and that is good.

I like seeing what other teachers are doing. I'd like more resources for dealing with low literacy students.

Practical input from teachers.

More very short refresher articles from academics, not thick academic language but pieces that provide insight into current theories that are relevant to practice. A downloadable sample article could be emailed out to members, along with the table of contents, each time a new issue is ready. Sometimes I forget to even open the front cover of Words'worth before it goes in a pile 'for later' and never comes out. The 'free' teaser article could go up on Facebook to as a downloadable file.

Question 20: What would you say your biggest current professional challenges are?

Changes to NAPLAN marking and changes to senior assessment

Students with low level literacy expected to work and achieve at years 9 and 10.

workload management. Since I began teaching in the mid 2000s the amount of extra paperwork needing to be completed by teachers has increased.

Teaching of writing, producing capable writers.

Marking to an A to E standard

Reading to Learn, time keeping up to date across multiple curricula - English is not my only area

I am semi-retired and currently work part-time in teacher education. I have now not taught in a high school since 2005.

Understanding impact of national curriculum/assessment changes

Differentiation and co-teaching.

Only being able to get short contracts at schools and not permanency.

Maintaining my competence in the use of /teaching of digital literacies.

Work load

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

Time management; Data pressure; Access to English specific PD which supports pedagogy related to classroom implementation

Integrating technology into my teaching - finding new resources.

Relentless focus on developing basic literacy skills amidst other demands.

Encouraging school leadership staff to take an interest and develop their knowledge in research methodologies. This would help them develop a deeper understanding of evidence based literacy practices.

Preparing the current Grade 7 to 9 students for exams, for the new senior assessment model that we still know nothing about.

Lifting student motivation, finding adequate time to differentiate resources for EAL ASD and II students as well as just varying abilities. Finding texts that suit such a wide range of needs without creating even bigger time commitments from me (e.g various texts/novels for one class isn't practical)

Over emphasis on NAPLAN preparation at the expense of critical thinking and more complex literacy skills.

Administration making unilateral decisions on best curriculum & best way to teach English skills.

Paucity of trained & experienced English teachers available to staff faculty. Moves to Direct Instruction models in FNQ schools.

Digital resources in the classroom - Trial of external English exam - Term 2 - Keeping my praxis current and not slipping into old ways of doing things. Therefore, I question whether I am being effective. Continuous improvement.

Access to subject-specific PD in North Queensland. The high turnover of staff, and inexperienced staff.

Remaining focussed on student learning, and critical in a positive way of fads and some frameworks that obscure the valuable goals of learning.

To resist the standardisation of curriculum and classroom practice.

Fitting everything in! too much to do and too little time More broadly, I think one of the greatest challenges in Qld is the isolation of many schools/teachers in regional and remote areas and I hope that digital technologies have addressed some of these issues.

Students achieving QCE and improving NAPLAN writing

As I am now with QCAA, keeping up to date with what's happening in English classrooms is important to me.

I am a beginning teacher, so navigating the schooling world!

Differentiation of work for students below minimum standard (some as low as five years behind)

I'm time-poor like everyone else.

Time management!

Senior English marking and general experience in this area

Being the only year 9-10 English teacher and not having as much support with likeminded colleagues.

Access to professional discussions and seeing what is going on in other schools.

Workload associated with constant change and keeping colleagues optimistic about their work.

Trying to experiment with innovative teaching approaches within a risk averse environment.

Rigid approaches to assessment restricting the content that can be covered.

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

Question 21: What else could we offer to provide you with professional support?

Around new senior assessment procedures

I would like PD on senior criteria dimensions - ie what exactly are they and what am I looking for!

Anything that improves the efficiency of our job

A bank of quality vignettes

More concrete support with teaching units, programmes and marking guidance eg samples across the grades to compare my students with,

You do enough

Hands on workshops on electronic whiteboards and their application in English

Regional services, or support to build them.

Avoid allowing particular positions on aspects of English teaching, such as approaches to grammar, becoming factions that dominate the association.

Time during PD events to apply learned knowledge to classroom practice by goal setting.

Instead of rushing through 4 or 5 seminars, choose only 3 and give us time at the end of each session with the instructor to plan for change in our classrooms so we walk away prepared, not just inspired.

Advocating for a more balanced approach to teaching and learning to assist those of us drowning in data driven programs. Programs not run in Brisbane, especially after school sessions. I am an hour's drive without traffic from where many of these sessions have been held. Perhaps webinars?

Conferences / workshops in FNQ

Encourage members to share their practice. Build a culture of sharing / giving / promoting rather than of taking and using.

The Saturday PD sessions held in Townsville last year were really valuable. Being able to access experts from other regions is always valuable. We are unable to access the PD sessions held in Brisbane after school and on weekends, so the Saturday workshops a great alternative.

Seminars closer to the city rather than too far south.

Making Words'Worth digital.

I have no clever ideas to offer, I'm afraid.

Small, frequent meetings

Any thing you think will be useful is good to hear about.

Extending kids and catering for low level literacy students

Development days or weekends for country service teachers, Brisbane is a long way away for us and I often crave to attend these PD opportunities, but where I work limits that.

Development days or weekends for country service teachers, Brisbane is a long way away for us and I often crave to attend these PD opportunities, but where I work limits that.

Info to complement QCAA change

More discussion/comments on the Facebook group.

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

Question 22: Are you interested in becoming more involved with the work of the Association?

	Answer Percentage	Total Response
Yes, I'd like to help with hosting or running a PD event	22.22 %	10
Yes, I'd like to interact more on social media	13.33 %	6
Yes, I'd like to contribute an article to Words'Worth	28.89 %	13
Yes, I'd like to join the Management Committee	8.89 %	4
No, although I'd like to, I don't have time to volunteer	57.78 %	26
No, I'm not really into those kinds of things	8.89 %	4

Answered: 45 | Skipped: 7

Question 23: Is there anything you would provide feedback on to our Management Committee for future planning?

Thank you for your efforts, I have been greatly impressed with the quality of the events you organise.

No.

Communication is too frequent. There are lots of other valuable channels of information and communication...do a few things well and cut back on trying to expand and do more. The history of ETAQ is that it comes from a time when there was so much less. We are very connected now and can find so much in so many places: ALEA, PETA etc. Carve out something small and meaningful to members and don't bombard them with emails and reminders or you will lose the core purpose. There have been 9 at least since 22 August last year?

Generally speaking, I think the Management Committee is doing a fine job. Keep up the good work, folks. Garry Collins P.S. I already do most of the things listed in Item 24.

It is my perception from talking to colleagues and working in schools on a casual basis that there are still huge gaps in teachers' knowledge of and ability to teach the grammar of the Australian Curriculum.

Thank you for the way you work to support English teaching in Queensland.

I'd really like to join the management committee but I am concerned about attending the meetings - is it possible to send me details of when and where you meet?

I am also a member of the Qld History Teachers Assoc. and have found it a brilliant support in terms of practical teaching resources that I can either use, or to give me ideas for my own units (unit outlines, teaching materials including handouts/powerpoints/lesson plans) as well as sample assessments and materials designed to help students understand and meet assessment criteria. I wish ETAQ had more of this kind of support.

ETAQ MEMBER SURVEY

Maybe a buddy system would be helpful! I came alone to the first few events and everyone seemed to know everyone and although I'm outgoing, I couldn't connect with anyone. Some way of matching up people 'alone' could be an optional thing e.g provide seating in the first seminar that is signed for people there alone...?

For remote rural teachers, the chance to peruse resources & meet with suppliers is valuable. Ditto, the chance to speak with metro colleagues to discuss their regional priorities & experiences (with Ed Qld). Also good to discuss literature being studied in various schools.

Consider varying dates of seminars / workshops / annual conference so that they don't fall on the same weekend of each month. Variety is the spice of life and consideration should be given to changing dates and venues so that the organisation doesn't become stagnant.

As per point 23. Corinda, e.g. would entail a total of 3 hours driving on a Saturday there and back.

I think there is value in working more with students in future events - offering teachers an opportunity to hear their views on the various aspects of contemporary English education.

I really appreciate the time and effort of all those who work on the Management Committee and running PD. English teachers in Queensland are very fortunate to have such an active professional association and I know that this rests on the people involved.

Just keep doing it. Don't stop.

n/a

Up-dating us on curriculum development & changes to senior assessment would be good to continue. I really enjoy listening to guest speakers & attending the theatre outings. Thanks for doing a great job for the ETAQ members.

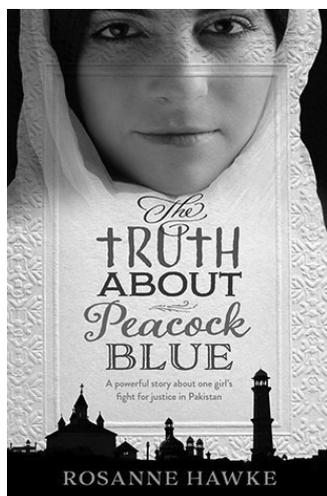
Some Saturday seminars in the afternoons rather than mornings for those who have compulsory Saturday school sport commitments.

Beware too much input from academics (not you Stew)

Would be good if you help us stay in touch with what's happening in our field, like the Brisbane writers festival, the Queensland poetry festival, literary award shortlists and prizes etc.

BOOK REVIEW

Melissa Blacklock



The Truth About Peacock Blue

by Rosanne Hawke

Allen & Unwin, 2015

ISBN: 9781743319949

With modern social interest situated firmly in the debate of criminality and innocence (see: Netflix Original *Making A Murderer*, *The people V OJ Simpson* etc.), the arena for literary engagement has been thrown wide open to the exploration of the social, cultural and psychological. Stepping up to the ring are young adult novels such as Rosanne Hawke's *The Truth About Peacock Blue*, which explores unspoken cultural norms with candid honesty.

Written in Hawke's gentle, first person narrative style, *The Truth About Peacock Blue* draws readers into the life of 14 year old Aster Masih, in a small Christian town in rural Pakistan. Basic details of Aster's schooling, chores, interest in cricket and family life act to compare and contrast, uncovering that Aster's life is not so different to the lives of regular Australian teens. However, before the first chapter has passed, the reader, like Aster, is forced to face some of the harsh realities of life in a developing nation, such as fearing religious persecution and unchallenged and unpoliced rape.

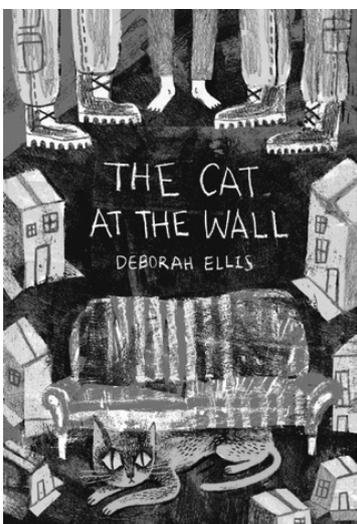
The narrative follows Aster as she navigates the path away from childhood, beginning with the unexpected death of her brother. The loss

leads to Aster's increased importance as her family's hope for the future, and in a whirlwind she is enrolled at a Muslim girls' high school. As a religious outsider, Aster struggles to prove herself, determined and relentless. However, the worst happens when bullying leads to an accusation of blasphemy that lands Aster in prison. The ensuing narrative then follows Aster's story through a combination of narrative prose, and Facebook and blog posts – headed by Aster's Australian cousin – which highlights the global reactions and responses to Aster's situation.

This text is touching and easy to read. It would be highly functional within the classroom context to help situate students within life in other cultures, and aligns with ease to the ACARA *Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia* priority. The perspectives presented within the text would fit within many pre-existing units, and can act as a powerful discussion link for topics of religious diversity, tolerance, and the various issues emerging within contemporary societies. Perfect for critical and creative tasks, the novel is well resourced online and is a must read for students and teachers alike!

BOOK REVIEW

Tamara Broughton



The Cat at the Wall

by Deborah Ellis

Allen & Unwin, 2015

ISBN: 9781760112448

Bethlehem – a town which is a stark contrast to the gentle, meek and oasis-inspired imagery portrayed on Christmas cards. The reality is somewhat different. In 2009 I had the privilege to travel to Israel and my adventures had me meandering down the narrow, cobble-stone streets within the confines of the looming wall that separates two peoples.

Dark, dirty grey in colour and littered with graffiti of a strong anti-Israeli persuasion, the wall is daunting and says a lot for the atmospheric tension I felt whilst on my visit. As a strong symbol of division, the wall acts as a pivotal starting point for the novel *The Cat at the Wall*.

Lost in some sort of reincarnated limbo-state, Clare – an eighth grade student from Bethlehem Pennsylvania, finds herself stalking the streets of Bethlehem, Israel, as nothing more than a dingy alley cat – a mangy stray desperate to secure her next feed of garbage. Having witnessed a horrific scene of conflict between a Palestinian couple and Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint along the wall, Clare flees the surrounding alley cats and takes desperate refuge in a small house. The house, however, is not vacant. Inside are two Israeli soldiers and a small Palestinian boy, quivering and hiding in the shadows.

Loaded with themes of regret, distance, division and atonement, Deborah Ellis has crafted a powerful novel. Readers are taken on a journey as Clare reflects on her past life as a bratty teenager who defied the good values her teacher tried to install. Initially, Clare the cat comes across just as mean-spirited and self-centred as she was in her past; however, with a dramatic shift in events, we see a maturity, a clarity that comes with a changing perspective of her own actions and a deeper awareness of the conflict entrenched in her surrounds, the historic town of Bethlehem.

Ellis' political standpoints and passions for social justice are made evident through characterisation

within the novel. Offering an insight to both Israeli and Palestinian viewpoints, Ellis reminds readers that people are quintessentially similar in many ways, doing everyday things with everyday pressures, cares and concerns – no matter which side of the wall they reside. Compassion, longing, love and fear resonate throughout people regardless of culture or religion.

Clare's teacher, Ms Sealand, is the reason I really enjoyed this book. Whilst flashing back to Clare's school days in Pennsylvania, Ms Sealand tries to teach her students about context. She teaches that people's thoughts and actions need to be considered within the wider context in which they are surrounded. Rather than passing quick judgement or condemnation, we are to strive for happiness, peace and to be understanding of others; solid values which carry much weight in modern times. For this reason alone, this novel offers a plethora of opportunities for discussion around issues of tolerance, war, solidarity and humanity.

Captivated by the historical tapestry woven throughout this novel, I think this novel is a worthy contribution to junior work programs in English. The book is relatively easy to read; however, would require a lot of clarification for students on the religious, political and social contexts in which this book is framed. Simplistically told through the eyes of a young teenage girl and a street cat, this brief novel opens up a labyrinth of complications essential for discussion for young people who are soon to be independently embarking into our modern world.



BOOK REVIEW

Melanie Currie
Head of Department – English
Bundaberg State High School

Green Valentine
by Lili Wilkinson
Allen and Unwin
279 pp
ISBN: 9781760110277



It's hard for one person to make a difference in this world, but that's exactly what Lili Wilkinson's character Astrid Katy Smythe – “Lobstergirl” – tries to do in her hometown of Valentine. For Astrid, living in a *bleak dystopian wasteland* and trying valiantly to save the Margaret River Hairy Marron whilst being one of the school's popular *Missolinis* is an on-going juggling act. Throw in “Shopping Trolley Guy” – Hiro Silvestri, a sullen, disrespectful, Missolini hating teenage boy - and divorcing parents and this becomes a story about more than just a good cause. It's a story of balancing life in order to make yourself, and the world, better.

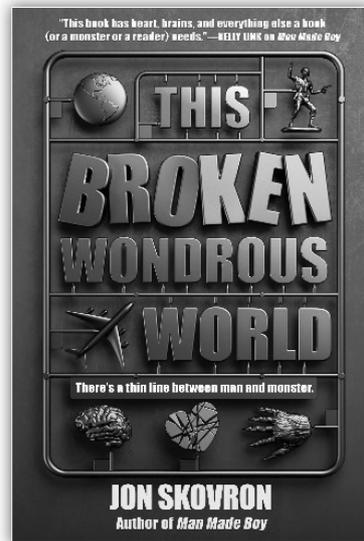
Green Valentine is a perfectly obvious Young Adult (YA) novel with its mix of “typical” teenage characters trying to find their identities

and maintain friendships and relationships. Wilkinson has allowed her readers to connect with the characters through their construction and her use of footnotes, as an alternate way of explaining some of the internal thoughts or providing additional information, is interesting. Her inclusion of a diverse range of adult characters also provides another layer of consideration when some other YA novels fail to even acknowledge the existence of parents and grandparents.

Students from year 10 would engage with some, if not all, these characters in some way and the issues of identity and fighting for what you believe in would be realistic to the majority of teenagers in our society. The late-night guerrilla gardening may be a little far-fetched and the boy-girl romance a touch clichéd but overall, it's a quick, light read that delivers a clever message and a feel-good sentiment.

BOOK REVIEW

Melanie Currie



This Broken Wondrous World

by Jon Skovron

Allen and Unwin

365pp

ISBN:9781743315972

Classic literary characters from writers including Robert Louis Stevenson, Mary Shelley and HG Wells alongside fantastical faeries and other mythological characters are seamlessly integrated into *This Broken Wondrous World*, creating an enjoyable glimpse into a futuristic society where man and monster are faced with the choice to live or die.

As the successor to Skovron's *Man Made Boy*, this novel continues to tell the story of Boy, the son of Frankenstein's monster and the Bride, who is struggling to accept living as part of The Show in the shadowy underground of Times Square away from humans. In this adventure he travels away from the safety of everything he has known in The Show to Switzerland to attend university. It is here he stays with his 'family' the Frankensteins, descendants of his father's creator, and becomes best friends with Henri – his cousin essentially – whilst battling to function completely in the human world, trying to maintain his long distance relationship with Claire Hyde/Sophie Jekyll and escape the villainous clutches of Dr Moreau and the

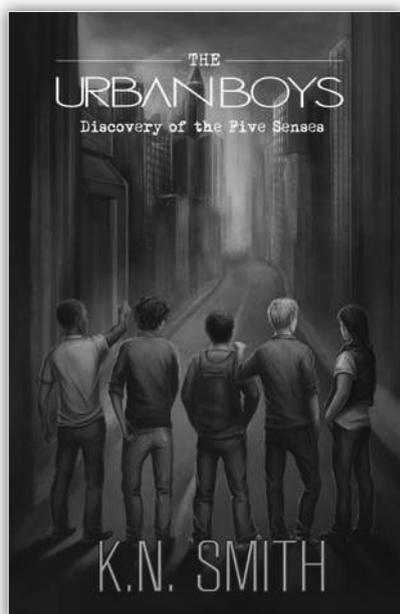
Invisible man. Sounds a bit far-fetched really, doesn't it?

The "monsters" of the underworld engage in a fight with the humans after they decide to expose themselves and come out of the shadows. Skovron has included werewolves, vampires, the Sphinx, dragons and more in his commentary on a world still trying to accept difference – which seems to be the underlying message.

Whilst this novel can stand alone, I'd recommend reading *Man Made Boy* first. It sets the background up nicely and the gaps that would exist by only reading *This Broken Wondrous World* are filled. Sure, the additional characters may be a little hard to believe at times but the central issue of Boy's development and emerging identity are well-relayed in this novel and it really is an engaging and enjoyable read. With Skovron paying homage to Sherlock Holmes, Dr Moreau, Jekyll and Hyde, and of course the monster, the bride and their son, perhaps he may also inspire teenage readers to explore these canonical texts and broaden their horizons just a little more.

BOOK REVIEW

Veronica McDermott,
Mt Maria College



The Urban Boys: Discovery of the Five Senses

by K. N. Smith

Paperback, 292 pages

Two Petals Publishing, 2015

ISBN 0989474755

Forget spellbound. This novel will have you transfixed. Not wanting, but needing more.

Darkness. Destruction. Emptiness. And the truth. What if your sense of 'normal' suddenly spiraled out of control and your senses of hearing, sight, smell, touch and taste not only became your greatest gifts but also your weapons of survival?

As the title suggests, *The Urban Boys: Discovery of the Five Senses*, cues curiosity and **ricochets** readers on a sensory journey. K.N.Smith masterfully crafts the characters using relatable dialogue. She navigates readers through a narrative that shifts between the protagonists' ordinary life at Danville Heights High school to the extraordinary world that is Sandry Lake. Here, corruption and crime manifest in mysterious and evil ways. Through a series of confrontations, where the central characters not only wrestle with the 'other' beyond themselves, they soon discover that they must overcome a battle that is closer to their hearts than they realize. Strange happenings, mysterious disappearances, and enthralling escapades encourage readers to delve into the depths of the pages without looking back.

It can be challenging to source a resource that both entices young adults to read *and* has age-appropriate content. Smith orchestrates a book that ticks all of the boxes. *The Urban Boys* is a non-cursing, no sex, no drugs, no guns, action-adventure/ paranormal novel. Remarkably, Smith's articulate word imagery is all that is needed to transport readers to a mysterious paranormal world where good and evil collide and the future of Danville is on death's door.

While the genre is action-adventure, touching on the paranormal, the themes are universal. Power, community, loyalty, honesty, fear, risk-taking and comradeship run through the veins of this piece. Using these themes, Smith entices her readers to consider their reactions to these concepts in their own lives, making the text relevant and meaningful to young adults and adult readers alike.

Smith's novel is like a dose of good coffee; tempting, enlivening, smooth, powerful, addictive, occasionally bitter but ultimately warm. However, I must warn you - this book should come with a warning:

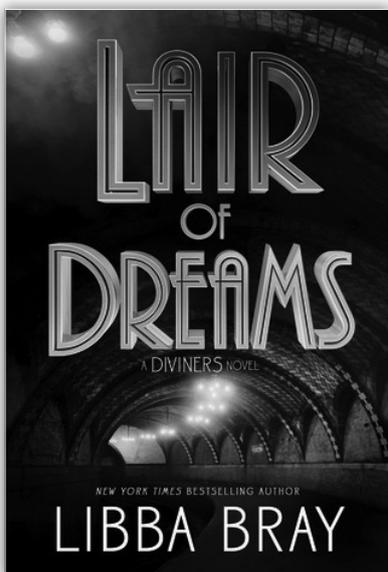
“Warning: do not begin reading this novel unless you have time to read it all in one satisfying hit.”

I implore you to put your phone down, turn off the television, and close the laptop lid. Make the time to connect with this piece of literary prowess. You will not regret it. I dare you. What will it take for you to walk on the dark side?

The Urban Boys truly is a gift to the imaginations of our young people. I thank K.N.Smith for breathing life into this unique story, keeping creativity and therefore hope alive in the lives of those who read this novel.

BOOK REVIEW

Emma Monfries,
Ryan Catholic College



Lair of Dreams

by Libba Bray

Allen and Unwin, 2015

ISBN: 9781742375236

Every city is a ghost.

New buildings rise upon the bones of the old so that each shiny steel beam, each tower of brick carries within it the memories of what has gone before, an architectural haunting.

So begins Libba Bray's novel, *Lair of Dreams*, the second of a trilogy, set in glamorous 1920s New York, where the residents are afraid to fall asleep, lest they fall victim to the spreading Sleeping Sickness from which victims never wake.

The cover design does not do justice to this novel, and its appeal is not limited to Fantasy fans. The narrative follows a fatal illness' spread throughout a terrified city. Fearsome, snapping, undead monsters lurk beneath the city, devouring anyone who wanders the tunnels alone. The fate of the city lies in the hands of a group of supernaturally gifted misfits, who are being ruthlessly hunted by menacing FBI agents. There are many levels to the plot, and it makes for a real adventure for the reader.

The novel includes numerous well developed characters; even minor characters are fleshed out with a back story. To avoid confusing the reader, the author has cleverly structured the novel into two parts, and each part is divided by the number of days the Sleeping Sickness spreads through the city. This allows readers to comfortably interact with the many and varied characters in the story.

Each chapter alternates through the main characters, who are interesting and diverse, and who will resonate with adolescent readers: Ling Chan, a Chinese girl whose legs don't work in real life, but who can walk in dreams and talk

to the dead; Evie, a fashionable flapper who divines for soap radio and whose pretty smile masks dreadful memories and fears; Henry, a young musician struggling to live in a society that does not accept his homosexuality; the list goes on.

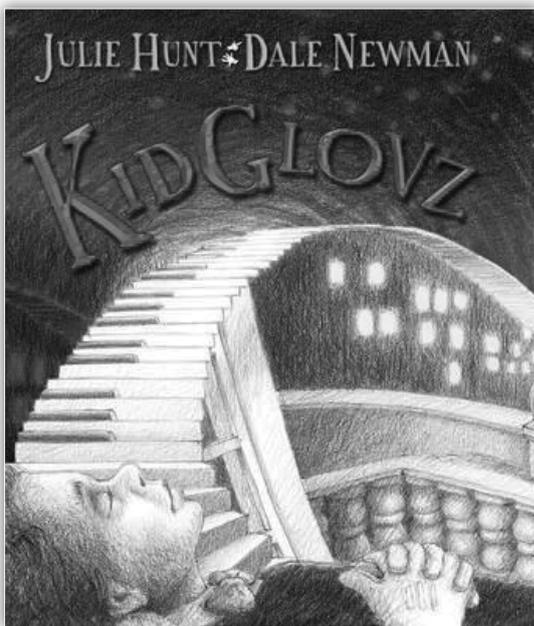
While the novel is highly entertaining, it deals with some very serious social issues and introduces complex historical context. Readers learn about the injustices faced by Chinese immigrants ruled by the Chinese Exclusion Act, as well as the intensely racist attitudes which black Americans faced. Homophobia, sexism, and prejudices of every sort are explored through characterisation and a vivid setting.

Libba Bray's writing style is beautiful and engaging. Her imagery and description place the reader firmly within the world of the novel. The story's monsters are genuinely creepy and will make you look over your shoulder. Symbolism is used heavily, particularly in the underworld to convey a deep feeling of loss, sadness and injustice. The writer's style allows her to add many layers of meaning to her story.

Students from Year Ten and up would thoroughly enjoy the novel, and it would spark many interesting and challenging discussions and debates.

BOOK REVIEW

Emma Monfries



KidGlovz

by Julie Hunt and Dale Newman

Allen and Unwin, 2015

ISBN: 9781742378527

KidGlovz is a graphic novel about a child prodigy being exploited by his evil uncle. The little pianist is locked into rooms, forced to practise endlessly and only allowed out to perform for paying crowds. Suddenly, a young thief shows up in his chamber, and a plot to escape his prison is hatched.

The two boys go on a fantastical adventure, encountering gangsters, goatherds and venturing into the underworld. There are not many connections made between each setting, and each is divided into separate parts. The boys' quest for freedom and justice takes the reader on a bizarre journey.

The artwork is lovely, and the dialogue straightforward. Hence, I would recommend the novel to reluctant readers, or fans of the genre. The musical focus of the story may appeal to specific student's interests.

This novel could be a good addition to a classroom library.