SPECIAL EDITION

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AATE

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The Journal of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English

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Guidelines for Contributors

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

The journal is committed to publishing material that is of importance to English educators. We welcome high quality teacher-oriented and scholarly submissions in any relevant field of English education, including literature and literacy education.

We are interested in submissions that reflect dilemmas, debates and concerns facing current contemporary English educators in Australia and elsewhere. Submissions may take the form of:

- A report on empirical research conducted with or by English teachers or students in classrooms
- A theorised discussion of English curriculum, or of the effects of policy on English teaching, or
- Practitioner inquiries, including reflective writing that takes a scholarly and methodical approach, that elaborates or illuminates aspects of the practices of English teachers.

Submissions should be explicitly linked to issues of English teaching, pedagogy or curriculum and demonstrate familiarity with current and pertinent scholarly literature.

Articles will be considered from any context where the learning and teaching of English is framed in ways that would engage and interest a secondary English teacher. Writers should take care to relate, early in their submission, the research context for the benefit of both Australian and international readers. The journal welcomes contributions that challenge traditional ways of thinking about English and that prompt readers to entertain new ways of conceptualising English curriculum and pedagogy

Contributors are encouraged to read previous issues of *English in Australia* to get a sense of the existing and ongoing scholarly conversations in our journal. Articles that share Higher Degree Research conducted by English teachers (e.g. Ph.D. and Ed.D. research findings) are welcome.

All articles are subject to double blind peer review by at least two reviewers. This means that the identity of the author is not divulged to the reviewers, nor are the reviewers' names revealed to the author.

Please refer to the following guidelines:

1. All articles should be submitted via Scholastica: https://english-in-australia.scholasticahq.com/
2. Recommended length of articles for publication is between 5000 and 7000 words (including references).
3. Ensure your name is removed from the article, including from the document properties.
4. All submissions should be typed with double spacing in an easy to read font (e.g. Times New Roman or Calibri, 11–12 point) with a 2.5 cm margin on all sides.
5. Your submission should begin with an abstract of 100–150 words that succinctly summarises the research: context; design or methodology; and findings.
6. All references should conform to the American Psychological Association (APA) style. Please consult the *APA Publication Manual*, 7th edition, or any guide to APA referencing available through university library websites.
7. Submissions are expected to have a high standard of written English. Please ensure that you have carefully edited and proofread your submission. Articles submitted with a poor standard of written English, style problems or inaccurate/missing references will be returned to the author for revision before being considered for blind review.
8. Where possible, avoid footnotes. Usually it is possible to incorporate them into the text. Where they cannot be avoided, they should be numbered with a superscript and listed at the end of the article (endnotes).
9. It is the responsibility of authors to seek copyright clearance for any materials quoted, as required.
10. It is the responsibility of authors to ensure that all required ethics approvals and relevant permissions have been received prior to the submission of an article for review. Please ensure that a statement about ethical issues appears in articles that include data collected from or about humans, including any pertinent information about approvals or permissions.
11. It is expected that a clear statement about the implications of the research for English education policy and/or practice appears in either the Introduction or Conclusion section of your article.
12. Please include in Scholastica a separate file with your full name and institutional affiliation for publication, and a 50-word biographical description.
13. You retain copyright of materials published in the journal; *English in Australia* holds first publication rights only. Authors retain the right to self-archive the final draft of their articles in their institution's eprint repository.

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

Although *English in Australia* is predominantly a curriculum research and practice journal, occasionally poems and short texts of other genres relevant to the themes and readership of the journal are also published. Such pieces should be relevant to the lives and work of English teachers and students and be accompanied by a short (300–800 word) abstract or reflection. Please email the Editor regarding submissions of this type.

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Editorial

Jaqueline Manuel and Wayne Sawyer

IFTE Edition

'If … inventing futures … ideas in flight … implementing frameworks'

To mark the success of the joint AATE/IFTE conference '*If* …' in July, 2020, we are pleased to offer this Special Issue containing a series of articles, resources and a poem that emerged directly from this unique, first-of-its-kind-online international event for English educators. At the outset, we wish to acknowledge and applaud the tremendous acumen, inventiveness and dedication of the ETA NSW team in hosting this conference in an entirely virtual mode. Over five days, presenters and participants from around the globe came together in *Zoom* rooms to share their expertise, research and practice, reconnect with colleagues, and engage in lively, provocative and energising sessions, that included keynotes, roundtables, panels, workshops, papers and quirky social interludes.

For those of you who may not be familiar with its formation and history, IFTE – the International Federation for the Teaching of English – grew out of the now famous international seminar on English teaching held at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, in 1966. Following this seminar, a series of international meetings and publications emerged, and more seminars held. These collaborative ventures eventually led to the formal constitution of IFTE under that name in 1983. Since 1966, a major international conference in one of the IFTE countries has generally occurred every two to four years. IFTE conferences this century have been held in Melbourne, Auckland, New York and Birmingham, as well as Sydney in 2020.

Some of you will have attended the IFTE conference held in Melbourne, 2003. *Sans* a global pandemic, when 'zoom' was a term mainly associated with camera techniques, and the word 'lockdown' rarely found expression in our conversations or media headlines, the 2003 joint AATE/IFTE conference was only the second time an equivalent event had been hosted in Australia – the first being in Sydney in 1980.[1] So many of those extraordinary English educators who were instrumental in shaping and driving the 1980 event in Australia are sadly no longer with us. The gift of their legacies, however, remains palpable and vibrant, especially, in Australia, such as that of the late Ken Watson who played a pivotal role in establishing and sustaining IFTE as we know it today. In terms of international participation, that 1980 event was a 'who's who' of leaders in English education, with James Britton, James Moffett, Douglas Barnes, Harold Rosen, John Dixon, Leslie Stratta, Nancy Martin, Margaret Meek, Bob Shafer and Ian Pringle all in attendance.

In the most recent edition of the journal (55: 2), 'Perspectives from the Past' presented a piece from Vince Catherwood that had first appeared in the conference edition of *English in Australia* following that 1980 Sydney conference (55, March, 1981). In preparing this present edition, we kept in this tradition and revisited the IFTE Special Issue of *English in Australia* published in 2004 following the Melbourne IFTE conference. That conference included a Strand on Literacy for a Democratic Society and its Strand Report is presented again here as this edition's 'Perspectives from the past'. Despite the passage of 17 years between the 2003 Melbourne AATE/IFTE conference and the 2020 Sydney event, there are observations and questions raised in 2003 that find strong resonance with those apparent in 2020. The introductory paragraph could not only be re-written today, but highlights key aspects of what Sahlberg has famously referred to as GERM (the Global Education Reform Movement – Sahlberg, 2011), itself the manifestation in educational terms of the 'audit society' (Power, 1997) and 'policy as numbers' (Rose, 1999):

> In recent years educators have witnessed some disturbing developments across major democratic nations. These include government centralising of curriculum, the narrowing of the language curriculum … government imposed testing, attacks on, and withdrawal of resources from, public schooling, the de-skilling of teachers … (2004, p. 9)

student learning when teacher agency is affected by a constellation of systemic, cultural and material forces. These forces can seem hegemonic and insurmountable. However, drawing on research and their own lived experience as educators in the field, the authors offer a range of 'practical suggestions for claiming agency'. Their suggestions and examples from practice serve to raise our consciousness of the ways in which, individually and collectively, we can speak back to ideologies and regulatory regimes of performativity and compliance.

The article by O'Sullivan and Goodwyn focuses on a range of significant findings from their international comparative research study with 33 English teachers in NSW and England. A key feature of this paper is the foregrounding of the voices of teachers themselves – voices that are still too often marginal or absent in the research literature. Thirty years ago, Goodson (1991) advocated for the need to 'know more about teachers' lives' and to 'assure that the teacher's voice is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately' (p. 36). O'Sullivan and Goodwyn respond to this call. Through in-depth interviews, teachers working in both countries articulated their hopes and aspirations for students and for the future of the subject in schools. While recognising the constraining impact of regulatory policies, increasing workloads, an intensified culture of performativity, and curricular reforms, teachers' visions for students and the subject cohere around tropes of optimism, holistic student development, passion for the subject, and fostering connections. One teacher's comment captured the tenor of many in the study, regardless of their work context: 'What I would love would be to have English where we re-inspire, we re-engage. Where we make links throughout the world … the reason I went into it in the first place'. The insights shared by the teachers in this article will certainly chime with anyone who wants to pursue a generative vision of English and student learning, sustained by a keen sense of purpose and professional identity, even amidst the pressures and tensions that characterise the work of teachers in the twenty-first century.

One of the more powerful ways of manifesting a generative vision of English is through the informed selection of, and enjoyment-filled pedagogical approaches to, texts in your English classroom. In this Special Issue, we are treated to a bumper version of the regular *Reading and Viewing* column of the journal which is based on a presentation Deb McPherson and Jane Sherlock gave at IFTE. It features an extraordinary array of carefully curated texts to engage and excite secondary students from Year 7 through to the senior years. The *Reading and Viewing* section, titled 'If only … we had all these texts in our classrooms' is well worth becoming the go-to resource for planning and programming, and for deciding on additions to your book room. Not only have the authors done much of the hard work in compiling suggested texts – they have also organised these suggestions into groupings that will prove invaluable when you are making choices that align with the Australian Curriculum's Cross Curriculum Priorities. Added to these groupings are multimodal and non-fiction texts, texts for author study, and texts around specific thematic study.

Rounding off this rich collection of articles and resources is the poem 'If' by Karoline Hlawatsch, the winner of the AATE/IFTE conference poetry competition. The competition entailed writing a poem based on the concept of 'If'. Hlawatsch's poem evokes a scene in teaching that is emblematic of those exhilarating moments when a student's passion and enthusiasm take flight, affirming what matters, vindicating our decision to teach, and bolstering our belief in the transformative potential of our subject in the lives of young people. Of course, as readers, you must make its meanings your own, though the situation is one you will recognise.

To conclude, we thank the contributors for their work in the conference itself and for sharing that work through their writing as presented here.

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1 Why 'equivalent'? Officially, Sydney held in 1980 what was billed as the 'Third International Conference on the Teaching of English', which is sometimes credited as being an IFTE event and sometimes not. IFTE was not formally constituted under that name until three years later. Nevertheless, there is a direct line from Dartmouth in 1966 through to today.

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Evolve and Survive?

What does literature mean to the human species: Will it help us evolve and survive? The Garth Boomer Address 2020

Andrew Goodwyn, University of Bedfordshire

Introduction

I was greatly honoured to give the Garth Boomer address in 2020. I had sat and listened to it a number of times in what now seems a peculiar luxury – a real seat in a real auditorium, surrounded by my fellow human beings, with that special conference camaraderie and joie de vivre when like-minded people collectively celebrate a very special occasion. In the strange year 2020, I 'spoke' at the superbly organised online event, the combined AATE and IFTE conference – so we made history, it being the first 'virtual' address. I write in the spirit of a 'talk', a set of rhetorical flourishes where to quote literature is as important as any statistic. I very much felt I was in Sydney in spirit and that the sense of community and celebration were still there – and Garth's spirit was surely there too, enlivening us all.

He was, of course, a literary man and loved 'Ulysses' by Tennyson and especially the lines:

> We are not now that strength which in old days
> Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
> One equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

The last line is on Garth's plaque. The poem includes the line 'I am become a name …' and Garth's name lives on in many ways, not least in this annual celebration. In these extraordinarily difficult times for humanity, I begin with two salutary verses from Tennyson's less well-known contemporary, Arthur Hugh Clough. This is the opening verse:

> Say not the struggle nought availeth,
> The labour and the wounds are vain,
> The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
> And as things have been they remain.

In the final verse he proposes some hope:

> And not by eastern windows only,
> When daylight comes, comes in the light,
> In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
> But westward, look, the land is bright.

In this quietly stated way, he offers us a better future, although we must wait for the slow ascent of that welcome sun.

These portions of poems are from the nineteenth century. They are both of their time and yet of our time – because you just read them and know they are effective in the twenty-first

century. Through literature, not science, we invented time travel.

In this article I restate and reframe the case for literature teaching in English classrooms across the globe by arguing for it from the perspectives of modern interpretations of Darwinian theory. I touch on the current plague that we are all experiencing; it is a phenomenon as old as humanity and a reminder of our fragility and singleness as a species, however 'divided' by nationalisms and populisms. What have we learnt from history and literature? We can both explain and justify why reading literature is so important for young people by considering literature as a special source of knowledge and understanding for all human beings, one that is part of our evolution and our adapted minds, and a part of 'culture' – and of a culture that is itself evolving quite rapidly.

We do share much that is universal, that is common to humanity, and many of the narratives of literature deserve to be called widely significant – we can let the word 'grand' rest with the proponents of Postmodernism. In recognising the power of nationalism, we must teach literature as one means to escape its insidious mind-forging manacles.

We might think about our literary language. Take love and sex. Could we cut through some centuries of censorship and talk about, for example, 'mating'? This is a basic term about choosing who we want to produce children with – it is what humans do. Such a basic term raises the shibboleth of reductionism, as in, 'Surely, we cannot be reduced to being animals?'. Is all this glorious literature just the result of some particles and chemicals? To which the plain answer is simply, 'Yes'. But that is not the point: we are not reduced by it, we are explained by it; we are empowered and emancipated by it. We are all the same stuff, the stuff that dreams are made on – and this little life really is rounded by a sleep.

A final opening point is that this is not an argument for what can be called 'speciesism' – that is a position which simply assumes the 'superiority' of humans to all other species. On the contrary, we must face up to the domination of all other species by humans and we must ask our students to understand how literature also tells the story of that domination. Much literature describes and celebrates nature in all its forms and helps to place the human in a relationship to the natural world. In a Darwinian perspective we are just one species amongst many.

Human experience: Making meaning?

We begin not with the question, 'What is literature?'. This question has occupied far too much time. Our question is what does that bunch of stuff – novels, stories, short and long poetry, plays, all that other confusing genre twitching – actually do for us? And cinema and television have confused us even more about what we should watch. We have struggled to try and separate the great from the ordinary and the attempt has failed. Hamlet's depression is as typical and ordinary as your own or mine; it is just made available to us because is it written down. It is written down in a way that defies time and psycho-gurus; it was indeed not for an age but for all time. It is also contained in rather a good play (or film), and its embodiment reminds us that Shakespeare loved the biology of drama, enacted by real bodies in real time.

In Tennyson's poem, Ulysses reflects on the paradox of human learning: the more we know, the more we sense what is yet to be known – that ceaseless restless quest that partly distinguishes our species from others:

> I am a part of all that I have met;
> Yet all experience is an arch where thro'
> Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
> For ever and forever when I move.
> How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
> To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
> …
> And this gray spirit yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

How might we conceptualise literature in the twenty-first century so that its immense value to all humanity can be understood? Can we build on Darwinian literary theory to develop an approach to literature teaching in schools that is rather more grounded in the commonalities of everyday human experience? Birth, courtship, sexual relationship/s, death (the plot of *Hamlet*). Love, desire, hate, anger, envy, kinship, disgust – the stuff of life (and every soap opera). We should portray literature as one fundamentally valuable element in our attempt to understand ourselves and why we have behaved so badly for so long. Such a grounded approach does not diminish the aesthetic beauty of our texts – cave paintings were useful as well as pleasing to view. Adolescents are not interested in 'for all time'. The present tense is challenging enough; that 'for all time' stuff comes later – and for some, not at all.

The instinctual drive to capture experience and imbue it with aesthetic power and force, to humanise its meaningfulness, is what our species has evolved to achieve and what has helped us to continue to evolve. We should argue to our students that the purpose of engaging with literature is fundamentally to question how we humans behave – how we survive – and also to examine through the artistry of writers and their texts what makes our lives more meaningful. And as Polonius comically reminds us about the players:

> The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men. (*Hamlet*, II ii 401–407)

Literature shows us our follies and allows us to laugh at our absurdities, whilst we repeat them in our lives.

Birth, life and death in the time of COVID

Existentially – as individual animals – we must accept our necessary death. In this period of the pandemic, we have been daily reminded of our mortality. Never so united as in the fear of death – of the individual, of the loved one, but now also of the species – a species where all lives matter, equally. As if climate change were not enough, we now have a reminder of the most insidious of all killers, the invisible microbe. This has led to much discussion of how literature has recorded plagues, specifically with such texts as Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* or Camus' masterpiece *The Plague*. We are reminded of the ordinariness of such events by Mercutio's dying curse in *Romeo and Juliet*: 'A plague on both your houses'. There is, indeed, a plague on all our houses. But Mercutio, true to character, jokes at his own demise:

> Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man.

Humour, even in death, is one of Shakespeare's illustrations of humanity's resilience.

As we are reminded how absolutely we rely on science to cope with a pandemic, it does not change some rather longer-term questions about why we are here. Might these be formulated as questions and these questions thought of as addressed more valuably by science or literature?

Who am I? (literature)
What am I? (science and literature)
Why am I? (science and literature)
Who are we? (science and literature)
What does it mean to be 'I' and 'we'? (literature)

I am a literary animal: I still read literature almost every day and the literary is everywhere (environment). I spoke during the Garth Boomer address almost certainly to a whole herd of literary animals, but as a species, are we literary animals? If you include oral storytelling, myths and legends, folklore and rituals and personal narratives, then there is no doubt that we are all literary animals. Our students are literary animals – it is in their DNA and adapted minds. Each individual is personally a literary animal. That does not make them 'lovers' of literature but that they have that within them, like it or not, which makes them a literary animal. Science explains the biology of birth and death. Literature reveals the many meanings surrounding births and deaths affecting feeling human beings, and how we come to terms (or not) with their lasting impacts. Life and literature have shaped me. I am a part of literature and literature is a part of me.

Teaching literature to young people has changed me – and it has changed them. Writing about literature has changed me and changed my life.

Darwinian literary theory

In framing the place of a Darwinian perspective on literature teaching, this section explores three key areas: briefly introducing Darwinian literary theory; a consideration of the distractions of Postmodernism, and consideration of the relative importance for English teachers of critical literacy.

Darwin as a humanist

Darwin was an idealist as well as a scientist, so although he stated matter-of-factly that, 'Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin' (Darwin, 1981, Vol. 2, p. 405), he also stated that:

> As man advances in civilisation, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races (Darwin, 1981, Vol. 1, pp. 100–101)

and he called:

> The disinterested love for all living creatures … the most noble attribute of man (Darwin, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 105)

Literature is a specialised form of knowledge and may be considered an outcome of the 'adaptive mind', a complex and controversial concept. One element of its definition, from an evolutionary psychological perspective, is that our minds have highly developed 'domain specific' mechanisms for dealing with our environment. The argument here is that literature, its production and consumption, is a special kind of human 'domain' (Carroll, 2004).

This theoretical stance provides a very different justification for ensuring that students have an experience of literary reading. It proposes that students should develop an understanding of how literature provides a very special set of resources for comprehending human motivation and behaviour. Literature is too often narrowly conceptualised and justified in the curriculum (as in England) as a form of nationalistic heritage (especially in secondary schools). In contrast, Darwinian theory is a means to help students understand that literature is a universalist project, however it is usually inflected – often dominated – by notions of national identity and survival. Literature therefore should be studied by all students; its teaching should lead to understanding both the tribal nature of nationalism as well as much that is universal.

Darwin's impact on Biology, and to some extent other Sciences, was almost immediate, not because his extraordinary theory was accepted, but because it threatened and challenged so much received wisdom; it had to be answered. It has taken about 150 years for it to begin to challenge received wisdoms in the arts, humanities and social sciences (Carroll, 2004). Expressed simply, what Darwin proposed was that we are intelligent animals, highly evolved and continuing to evolve. Therefore we remain absolutely formed by the early stages of our species' evolution and the evidence of that formation is perpetually all around us.

Post – Postmodernism

One useful starting point in introducing the new school of Darwinian thinking is that it offers a rebuttal to the extreme pessimism of Postmodernism. What Postmodernists (unintentionally) did for the new Darwinians was to make them speak back to claims that anything 'natural' has no meaning, that all texts are exploitative lies, that humans are, therefore, the victims of vicious ideologies and are naïve enough to think texts do have meanings and can be enjoyed at many levels. The question kept emerging, 'Why waste time on reading literature if it offers so little of importance to human experience?'. Postmodernism offered many valuable insights into human life and this is not in dispute (with no space here for a lengthy explanation). However, it was a profoundly reductive conceptualisation of what matters to real people, whereas life and literature matter to 'ordinary' people very much indeed (see Sayer, 2011).

To my knowledge, Postmodernism had no effect on school teaching at all. Teachers of literature in school continued to believe texts were very important (Goodwyn, 2012, 2016) and helped young readers to value and enjoy them. As the postmodern vacuum needed to be filled, so a number of brave literary critics began a search for significance that led to Darwin and the conviction that literature should be at the heart of all human culture, answering our desperate search for meaning. This new focus is a fundamental shift in the way literature can be understood, by insisting it is part of the universal experience of being human, not merely part of the nation state or part of elite culture.

What about critical literacy?

A theory linked partially to Postmodernism, critical literacy, certainly did affect schools in some countries, chiefly Australia (Misson & Morgan, 2006), positing that students need to resist the seductions of texts because they are full of temptations like believing in romance and caring about 'good' and 'bad' characters. These texts were out to 'get you'. Critical literacy was important because it wanted to make young readers 'savvy', critical and self-aware, because some texts are designed to seduce you and some are infused with racism, patriarchy and related ideologies. However, this affective dimension is part of our species' intellectual property, and does not destroy our enjoyment of texts, instead demonstrating that we learn huge amounts about human behaviour from the literary representation of that behaviour. In the spirit of Postmodernism, critical literacy argued – correctly – that texts are deceptive and dangerous. Literary reading is a powerful and risky business – that, of course, is why it matters and is one reason why studying literature should be compulsory. It is also why English teachers are so important (Goodwyn, 2010) as they teach 'how' to be a literary reader and they connect students to this extraordinary body of knowledge and the pleasures of its discovery.

Summarising current Darwinian theory in relation to the arts (including literature)

The new paradigm

This new paradigm, gathering momentum over the last 25 years in a number of disciplines, most recently the arts, draws on sociobiology, evolutionary psychology, philosophy, political science and others. The best accounts are still by Joseph Carroll in his 2004 *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature and Literature,* and his 2011 *Reading Human Nature: Literary Darwinism in Theory and Practice*. A more recent collection, *Darwin's Bridge: Uniting the Humanities and Sciences* (2016), adds some important new thinking.

Our biology is very real. Literature is not 'real'; its value lies in its distance from, and relationship to, our lived experience which is grounded in 'reality' – as much as we can comprehend it – through our senses and apprehensions. Darwinian literary theory maintains that literature is a huge achievement of our species and a fundamentally valuable means of understanding our bewildering human experience; indeed, it is in many ways 'as good as it gets' for understanding 'ourselves'. Science tries to explain how the world works and art, and especially literature, examines how we work in that world.

In the popular imagination phrases like, 'the evolution of the species through natural selection' and 'the survival of the fittest' are well known. More recent thinking has put more emphasis on the essential importance of 'adaptation' and especially the idea of the adaptive mind; that is that we are evolving not just physically, but also psychologically. A simple example is self-regulation – the fact that we can recognise our instinctive impulses but then control them. Many people in the arts in the past reacted against any discussion of our genetic imprint because of concerns about biological determinism, arguing that artistic creativity is 'free', not programmed. However, we are irrefutably determined by our genes – making us all similar and part of a shared humanity – but, because of the adaptive mind reacting with the dynamic environment, each individual has 'uniqueness', including the artist. Our evolutionary drives make us agents of our own individual development and creativity.

Therefore, 'All human knowledge derives from a process of interaction between man as a physical entity, an active perceiving subject, and the realities of an equally physical external world, the object of man's perception' (Lorenz, 1978, p. 1). However, this is not a return to simple positivism. As Popper stated, 'All science and all philosophy are enlightened common sense' (Popper, 1979, p. 34), thereby arguing for humanity's fundamental ability to interpret the world and make sense of it, whilst recognising that the act of making 'common sense' is a construct. So, this is not a view that only science can produce truth – all human interpretive acts, such as art or literature, seek for truth.

Darwin was very clear that we are clever animals, not angels; our truth is grounded in our human capacity to make sense. There are genetic constraints on human behaviour and there are human universals, i.e., similarities between all human beings and their dispositions and their biological and psychological needs. There are more deep structural commonalities than there are individual or group (e.g. racial) differences. We have psychological dispositions performing regulatory functions. Some dispositions are 'hard wired', e.g., the regulation of vital bodily functions (you cannot stop your heart beating). Most psychological dispositions are 'open' – i.e., subject to regulation. For example, we are designed as sexual, reproductive beings, but may never have children. There may be 'psychic cost' in such regulation, e.g., the practice of celibacy as part of a religious order. Literature has much insight into sexual self-regulation.

Darwin and his modern interpreters did not see the 'survival of the fittest' as the key principle of evolution but as part of species development. What is clear about humans is that their mental model is one of inclusive fitness – the capacity to care for more than immediate kin and to sustain and develop relationships across social groups.

The art instinct

To return to art and literature, clearly art-making and imaginative play are part of normative human development, as is the acquisition of language. Human beings may well have the longest period of infant caring to allow for the development of the larger brain, which we understand to be a key evolutionary change in the development of human mental capacity.

Art and symbolic ornamentation seem to have been around for as long as humans have themselves been 'around'. The 'art instinct' (as it is increasingly called: see for example Dutton, 2011; Carroll, 2011) is comparatively well established, probably emerging with sensual apprehension (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste). In humans, sight and hearing are the most

highly developed senses because for us environment is predominant. Therefore, humans have developed ways of storing knowledge through the arts that are not ephemeral (i.e., dependent on one living subject) and the arts are themselves an evolving system of interpretation of the world and of storing and passing on 'knowledge' and human 'truth'. Literature is a late (in evolutionary terms) part of this evolving system, dependent in its contemporary form on writing systems, but ultimately deriving originally from human narrative and poetic instincts. One might locate the origins of literature in the development of human language, and then stories linked to 'telling' and retelling, leading to the use of artistic language, also involving rhythm and rhyme. Human nature and embodied experiences are the subject of literature, which in written form is a very new 'tool' in the cultural/symbolic toolbox.

Literature is a special body of knowledge in a figurative form, amongst many such forms. Therefore, there are also universals in all the arts, derived as they are from human sensory experience. As a specialised form of knowledge, ordinary parlance is not sufficient to describe literature's complexity, so it also has a specialist metalanguage and theories. Students of literature find this language useful as they become more sophisticated and teachers introduce them to it gradually and meaningfully (Goodwyn, 2010).

Literature and evolutionary schemata

Literature is a figurative structure that reveals our evolutionary schemata and drives (motives). Such figurations can be seen as on a continuum with realism at one extreme and symbolism at the other. All humans who have normative (another contestable term) development and capabilities appear able to handle complex symbolic systems and to use them (e.g., reading and writing). There is no contradiction here between this fundamental human capacity and the need for specialist knowledge and terminology to access the complexity of literature. What we have is 'ordinary parlance' – the way 'untrained' readers talk about literature and human nature. So, Romeo and Juliet can be talked about as 'real people' who live and then die tragically – but, depending on your literary theory, they can also be described in much more exact terms. Even as simple a word as 'character' signals that Romeo and Juliet are constructs.

Culture then may be conceptualised as a principally psychological tool that through its artefacts provides evidence of the adaptive and adapting mind. Culture is highly concerned with cognitive and affective order. Creating cultural artefacts such as novels helps 'make sense' for the artist and using artefacts such as novels helps readers 'make sense' of life. Literature's figurations give us access to aspects of human experience, and its themes tend to be dominated by biological imperatives: mating, family, kinship, shelter, death. Literature is especially concerned with describing the evolved psychological dispositions that regulate motives and behaviour and is extremely useful to our species and will continue to evolve. As our human experiences are both universal and very individual, so humans will always experience conflict when determining meaning in literature – an important factor for the classroom.

Literature's figurative systems vary enormously in complexity and ambition. This is part of the authorial intention but also partly determined by the reader's capability to comprehend, depending on their level of practice (at reading) and level of experience as a human being. This is where teachers make such a difference by choosing the right texts (Goodwyn, 2012). 'Reader response' theory (e.g. Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978) was a breakthrough in recognising that texts change for the reader as the reader changes, foregrounding the role of human experience in interpretation. Part of literature's unique value stems from the way it enables the individual access to articulated human experience and also access to the 'group', enabling humans to then share reflection on both the figuration and their own realities as human beings. It provides representations of cognitive order: we seek to 'make sense' of our environment and the behaviours and motives of others.

Humanity and literary representations

There is a profound relationship between human beings and literary representation, for example, character (organisms), setting (the environment) and plot (actions). Subjective orientation is dominated by the desire for coherence or systemic integrity in a theoretical or figurative structure, e.g., inner coherence and cognitive order (symbolism, introversion). Objective orientation concentrates on depicting the correspondence between the structure and reality, e.g., depicting the experiences of other human beings (realism, extraversion). All symbolic representations of human nature and cultural order are necessarily interpretations from the perspective of an individual mind and a distinctive and developing

identity – consider 'reader response' theory.

Literature is part of our adaptedness, a sign of our capacity for infinite regulation and 'good' behaviour (heroes) and failure to regulate and 'bad' behaviour (villains). Literature can be studied 'scientifically', but adolescence is unlikely to be the period in which to do so. However, literature as the study of human nature – how, and why we behave well and badly – is always relevant *now*. Equally, the length of time in which we have been so 'behaving' and reflecting on our human nature and trying to understand ourselves, brings in the history of our texts. Old and new texts and their contexts will always be valuable, and the nascent identity of the adolescent can have a dynamic relationship with these depictions of possible lives, past, present and future. Science fiction and fantasy are genres (mostly ignored in schools) that offer visions of the future of the species that remind us of Blake's 'What is now proved, was once only imagined'. The writer and context (environment) are always important, as are the author's intentions, but they are not 'the truth' of a text. The contemporary audience's reactions are important. Every new response has importance, especially if it is 'generative'. Many current aspects of literature teaching already 'chime' with a Darwinian approach.

We know some texts are much more complex than others. Texts can be sub-divided into genres and forms and a relativist hierarchy of value – some books are seen as 'better' than others, as are some interpretations. Our interpretations are subject to psychobiological influences but are not subjected by them. Literary texts, whether simple or complex, are dominated by our biological imperatives – food, shelter, environment, danger, reproduction, kinship, dominance, death. The individual and the complexities of identity are always central to meaning.

Literature's relationship to 'norms'

The term 'normative' is addressed here as a phenomenon of societies and groups, going back as far as the tribe and its rituals. Literature is much focused on 'normative ideas' and their oppressive power, but also on their structural reality. Literature explores all aspects of human nature – humans inhabit social environments and form groups, developing 'norms' as a form of collective regulation. Adolescents find literature helpful in describing and questioning such 'norms'. Darwinian theory helps us understand the concept of kin and the expanded group, and that conflict is a human universal, as is psychological regulation. Nationalism and having a 'national literature' may be associated with a primal drive, but 'nations' may be conceptualised in terms of nationalisms and diversities and as more or less 'open'. As literature is produced by unique individuals it does not 'belong' to any one group. Nationalism can be conceptualised as a tribal – and therefore important – concept, but one open to regulation: supporting the national cricket team does not make you a fundamental nationalist.

Equally, most humans like to work with complex symbolic systems and to work in groups and share knowledge (inclusive fitness). Almost all humans can work with, and produce, symbolic texts – something we ask of them in schools. Meanings made from texts are individual and connected to identity, and conflict about meaning is 'natural' – discussion is vital. It is also quite normative to treat characters like 'real people', and treating authors (however long dead) as real people is important. The author may be dead, but she really did live. The environment *in* the text and the environment *of* the text are important. The production of individual meaning is more important than an agreed meaning; it is normal to 'agree to disagree'.

One strong Darwinian argument for studying literature is that it helps in developing a theory of mind; it allows us to enter into the mindsets of 'others' and it insists on the importance of recognising the emotions of others and the consequences if we do not. Grasping what is 'normal' thinking and behaviour in other people – however alien, even revolting – allows us to reflect on our assumptions and prejudices. As an aside, it might be argued that 'stream of consciousness' is evidence of narrative technique adapting to the discoveries of psychology.

Conclusions: Implications for thinking about literature teaching in schools

A Darwinian rationale for studying literature in schools is that it is absolutely fundamental for developing adolescents, cognitively and emotionally. This does not belittle other subjects; indeed this theory also places much greater emphasis on the arts generally. Literature is a fundamentally important resource for children and adolescents moving towards adulthood and taking full membership in the human species and beginning to reproduce new humans. Put simply, literature has much to offer about choosing the right mate – and what happens when you do not. Most literature focuses on individuals, social groups, the family, the community and then larger communities, like a series

of Russian dolls – for example the neighbourhood, the place (own/village/city), the region, the nation, the continent, the planet, even the universe.

This is not a platitude as we return to the individual human's identity and the desire to 'belong', echoing our early tribal organisation. Inclusive fitness made it clear that the tribe was a safer and more powerful place to live than just the family. Darwin made it a principle that we might overcome human division once we understood our nature more profoundly. Learning from the horrors of the twentieth century, we may feel only that we can reduce it significantly but perhaps, given the horrors of the early twenty-first century, never remove it entirely.

The reductionists will be arguing that literature is not an instruction manual; it is not a set of self-help books. And therein lies one of its most enduring Darwinian traits. It refuses to provide messages of 'this is how to live'; instead, far more of it describes the unhappiness that we must all endure. What it does say is, 'stay alert', 'watch out', 'question those motives', 'pay attention to this textual tapestry: there is something in this pattern that reveals so much, what does it mean, damn it?'. And often it ties up all those loose ends and we feel the gratification of resolutions and 'so she was the good guy after all!'. Texts provide comforts and calm our anxieties. But in schools we mainly choose the unsettling, the challenging and often the tragic – that stuff of birth, life and death. We want students to be moved in every sense. They choose their lives; we choose some texts that engage them in lives.

At a simple level, for teachers of English this approach to literature substantiates its importance to all students, reinforces its place as the key subject, and demonstrates that literature has a powerful relationship to human identity, which includes the 'nation', but, much more importantly, reveals our universal human nature – what unites and divides all of us as humans. So, for example, Shakespeare really is 'not for an age but for all time' and he is also for all humanity. He does not 'belong' to England (although we understand why tribes love their treasure); he belongs to our species. In terms of such questionings, we may need some new, honest language to talk about literature, e.g., 'mating', 'kinship' as well as 'love' and 'family'.

The opening title posed a question, 'What does literature mean to the human species: will it help us evolve and survive?' The nature of the COVID crisis has reminded us that it is science that will help us literally to survive, and indeed thrive as the dominant and most destructive species on the planet. The crisis has also endlessly revealed that human behaviour may be influenced by science but will not be determined by it: we continue to behave badly. Literature has, and will continue to have, an enormous influence on our survival and the point of staying alive.

As Garth might have wished it, 'Ulysses' has the last word:

> Come, my friends,
> 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
> Push off, and sitting well in order smite
> The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
> To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
> Of all the western stars, until I die.

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The centre of English

'As *If* …': Textuality and the Question of the Centre of English

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Abstract: My thoughts on the question of 'Textuality as the Centre of English' were presented at a Roundtable session at the 2020 International Federation for the Teaching of English (IFTE) Conference. Through critical discourse analysis of media and curriculum texts, I highlight how the 'being' of the English subjects is always and already textual in nature. From here, I make a necessary gesture to attendant questions of syllabus requirements and specifications. With a review of the NSW curriculum underway, I suggest that the question of the place of poetry brings onto-ethical considerations to dialogue about HSC English text requirements. Understanding HSC English as being in 'an immunocompromised state' (in the Derridean sense), I propose that poetry is the 'first idea' in considerations of English as textuality. I conclude with a wish that poetry be given restored emphasis in the NSW curriculum.

Textuality: More than dinner party 'chat'

Back in my salad days, when I was green in judgement, I did not have cause to think that I would one day be fighting for my right to party and discuss Lacan. But here I am, a subject of English considering (once again) questions of the English subjects. So, let me get the blood warm, and 'kick it'!

As I began to gather my thoughts for 'Textuality as the Centre of English', a roundtable discussion at the 2020 IFTE Conference, I was struck by an opinion piece in *The Guardian* online. The piece, by Alan Finlayson (2020), Professor of Political and Social Theory at the University of East Anglia, was about Dominic Cummings, chief adviser to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and his flouting of COVID lockdown restrictions, a world-wide news event at the time. Finlayson was writing months before Cummings left his role at No. 10 Downing Street, an event which was not, in the reporting that followed, directly attributed to the breaking of lockdown restrictions (BBC, 2020).

Finlayson (2020) frames the rise to prominence of Cummings's political power and influence as a toxic consequence of the present dominance in public discourse of a reductive, positivistic veneration of data, which he elevates to the status of a proper noun – 'The Data'. In this discourse, The Data is understood and represented to exist, regally or God-like, above, beyond and free of any grounding in social, cultural and historico-political contexts. Effectively, The Data is, for true-believers such as Cummings and his political venerators, a metaphysic of pure presence, which is to say, a natural or 'pure' source of knowledge and meaning – one which is unsullied or uncorrupted by secondary and supplementary considerations with which it might have to negotiate (Derrida, 1978). The elevation and veneration of The Data in this way means that other things have to be reduced, marginalised or silenced; boundaries and barriers need to be in place for this supposed 'purity' of presence and being to be established.

Finlayson puts this process of barrier-building through reduction and subservience in terms that will be evocative for English teachers:

> [T]his is the key thing – not everyone can make sense of the message conveyed by advanced

> systems such as big data and AI. In Cummings' view, the greatest fault of those who 'chat about Lacan at dinner parties' is their interest in words, interpretation and critique, when they ought to be learning about numbers, probabilities and predictions. The heroes of his political philosophy are the 'super-forecasters' and the engineers able to divine meaning in The Data. (Finlayson, 2020, para. 6)

In his hostile dismissal of those who take an interest in 'words, interpretation and critique', Cummings is inadvertently showing that we are all, in our being in this world and all this entails, always and already implicated in textuality. We cannot dismiss, escape or rise above words, interpretation and critique. There is indeed, as Derrida (in)famously argued, *'nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text; *il n'y a pas de hors-texte.*]' (Derrida, 1997, p. 158). The non-finalisable question of context permeates the saying or meaning of anything.

Setting himself against such a notion, but at the same time remaining inescapably bound by it, what Cummings really wants is for words, interpretation and critique to be policed in a certain way – which is to make absolute and totalising the discourses and technologies of positivism, scientism and mathematics. It is also to camouflage or hide the violence – intellectual, psychological, ontological, linguistic – that this necessitates by dismissing as irrelevant the 'outside' discourses from which his positions and arguments do actually arise, and, in fact, propagate. Keeping with Cummings's dinner party scenario, the proof of this is in the pudding, so to speak.

The quotation that Finlayson uses to advance his argument, and which refers to those who 'chat about Lacan at dinner parties', is taken from a blog post by Cummings (2020). This post was consequently much commented upon in the media, as it outlined Cummings's vision for those whom the government should be employing as specialist advisers. Cummings made a call for 'super-talented weirdos' to apply to work with him at 10 Downing Street:

> If you want to figure out what characters around Putin might do, or how international criminal gangs might exploit holes in our border security, you don't want more Oxbridge English graduates who chat about Lacan at dinner parties with TV producers and spread fake news about fake news. (Cummings, 2020, section G)

In Cummings's worldview, one evidently can do supposedly 'weird' things, such as studying English at an elite university, and yet not be a fit and proper 'weirdo'. There's a hierarchy of 'weirdness' at play in his mind, or so it would seem, which is designed to keep the true and correct 'insiders' at the centre of governmental power, and to relegate others to the status of being 'pretenders', blocking them from entry, no matter their qualifications and the status these would have once afforded them.

In what could well be for some readers a puzzling reference to Lacan, which is, as Stefan Collini (2020) noted in *The Guardian*, another of Cummings's 'frequent irritable swipes' at what he calls 'French literary theory' (para. 15), Cummings advances a now-familiar trope of attacking so-called 'elites' – academic, cultural or otherwise. He does so in order to frame his point of view within the discourses of 'common sense' and 'populism'. In the age of Trump, 'fake news' has become a familiar refrain in public commentary by conservative politicians and those on the fringe (Carson & Farhall, 2019). In so doing, the force of Cummings's argument is wholly contingent upon the play of difference and deferral. In this case the reference is to another social, cultural and intellectual activity, psychoanalysis, and a 'thinker' from another place and time – mid to late twentieth-century France – which then circles back to the elitist–v–populist opposition that is presently shaping so much of political rhetoric throughout the Western world. But an inherent contradiction is evident here: Cummings takes aim at one elite – readers of 'French theory' – in order to elevate another – the 'super-talented weirdos' he believes he needs around him if the government and the nation are to prosper. (On these grounds, beginning my paper with an amalgam of references taken from Act 1, Scene 5 of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and a song by Beastie Boys[1] – Cummings's words inevitably having taken me back to my past as I was reading him – is unlikely to qualify me as a 'super-talented weirdo'. Instead, I am perhaps just a semi-literate, ill-educated non-entity.)

Relevant here also is Cummings's citing in his blog post of William Gibson's novels, *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook County*, as noted in *The Conversation* by Anna McFarlane (2020), British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Glasgow. McFarlane shows these two novels, and particular characters in each of them, to have apparently informed Cummings's HR imaginings, albeit in a mistaken and ill-informed way. In Cummings's (mis)reading of Gibson, such binary oppositions as truth/fiction, literary/non-literary, and human/non-human break down, and his veneration of

a particular author, who is writing and publishing in a particular literary genre, cannot escape interpretative and politico-institutional questions of literary merit, value, meaning and purpose. Despite his dismissal of 'French literary theory', Cummings's own text, his attention-grabbing blog post, inadvertently, and contrary to his own expressed values and intentions, confirms Derrida's argument in *Of Grammatology* that 'Differance is … the formation of form' (Derrida, 1997, p. 63) – which is to say, in the words of Derrida's translator, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1997), that, 'in a certain sense, it is impossible "not to deconstruct/ be deconstructed". All texts … are rehearsing their grammatological structure, self-deconstructing as they constitute themselves' (p. lxxviii). This is always already happening because '[l]anguage, in any form, is a kind of writing (Derrida calls this generalised sense "arche-writing"); it is never a pure manifestation of presence – and only because this is so can it function at all' (Attridge, n.d., para. 8). There is 'never a *being-present* outside of all plenitude' (Derrida, 1997, p. 62). And this is the plenitude of differences, and so an intrinsic relationship to the *other*. As Derek Attridge (n.d.) notes, this is an insight that will have to be resisted, 'often quite vehemently, in order to preserve the illusion of the purity and simplicity of presence' (para. 8). And, according to Finlayson (2020), who admittedly does not use these exact words, it is on the basis of the illusion of purity and simplicity of presence for The Data that Cummings pursued his HR vision for Downing Street. Moreover, it is this illusion, given its present politico-cultural currency, that gave Cummings the power and influence to escape being sacked or otherwise disciplined when he had apparently broken the law by ignoring social isolation restrictions in this time of COVID 19.

Moving towards an understanding of English that is other-*wise*

What does all of this have to do with English and English teaching? The path back to the IFTE conference and the question of textuality is the deconstructive manner in which my argument to this point has encompassed a plenitude of references, if only briefly and largely in passing – for example, references to the news and media commentary, semiotics, various discourses, literature, acts of reading and writing. In a sense, this plenitude of differences is analogous to the history of English as a subject, and indeed its present state of being – topics at the heart of the IFTE Roundtable discussion. Further to this, my unselfconscious exemplification of Cummings, a prominent political figure of this time, also serves to highlight the theme of politics. More specifically, this is to gesture towards the idea that English as a subject has always been inherently political, taking on a governmental function in different forms and for different purposes throughout its history. Cummings was certainly putting his reading of fiction to such ends, illustrating political and governmental purposes to be anterior to any possible understanding of English and its history. Governmentality is always already there in studied reading, including the reading of fiction, and from here politics will always begin to play out. Nick Peim (2003) describes a 'double aspect' to English being political, which is 'both to do with values, attitudes and practices *and* to do with institutions and the active engagement of groups of people in the conditions of their work' (p. 4). A double aspect of politics in general is clearly at work in the pronouncements made by Cummings.

If I could put in a nutshell my main point up to here, it would be this: on the basis that 'Differance is … the formation of form' (Derrida 1997, p. 63), then the being of the English subjects – encompassing the subject that is taught, how it is taught, and those who teach and learn it – is inherently and inevitably textual in nature, and this has profound politico-governmental implications. As I have sought to highlight in relation to the metaphysics of being, using the example of Cummings and his power and influence,

> We are all always and already … embedded in various networks – social, historical, linguistic, political, sexual networks (the list goes on nowadays to include electronic networks, worldwide webs) – various horizons or presuppositions, which is what Derrida means by the 'general text' or 'textuality' or … just 'text'. (Caputo, 1997, pp. 79–80)

And, so it follows, there is 'no outside-text'; which is to say, 'no reference without difference, that is without recourse to the differential systems – be they literary or mathematical – we have at our disposal.' (Caputo, 1997, p. 80). It is no accident, then, nor a quirk of individual psychology and habit, that Cummings's veneration in his blog post of '[w]eirdos and misfits with odd skills' (Cummings, 2020, para. 5) was framed for certain political ends within the meaning and significance he attributes to two favoured novels, and more particularly his 'reading' of the psychology and motivations of the key characters. For the way

we look at things, and so come to understand and attribute meaning and significance to them, can only be done through other frames of reference: 'other horizons, other socio-historico-linguistico-political presuppositions, other "differential" relationships or networks' (Caputo, 1997, p. 80). We see, for example, in Cummings's literary citations the trace of the supposed purpose of reading fiction to be a moral education, the normative shaping of certain forms of character. In this case, we might also note how Cummings reduces this to instrumentally serving the government, more particularly the economy and national security.

There can be no single and fixed meaning, understanding or interpretation of such things as an event, a matter, a character, a communication or a text. The casting of Ian McKellen at the age of 81 in a forthcoming production of *Hamlet* led one theatre critic to attempt to find a retrospective textual justification for this selection (Clapp, 2020). Notwithstanding that McKellen played the role back in 1971 when he was 31, this critic concludes with a wish (or perhaps, more accurately, a prayer):

> It is a risk but my hope is that this production tests the elasticity of the play and in doing so expands the sympathy of its audience. In a rigidly literal-minded age, when empathy is rapidly diminishing, we surely stand in need of such leaps of the imagination? (Clapp, 2020, para. 9)

Textuality, more particularly its plasticity and flexibility, its openness to difference and otherness – other ways of reading, understanding, interpreting and, in this case, casting – is being venerated here because it opens us, as readers and audiences, and so as a community, to possibility – more particularly, the possibility that things can always be *otherwise*.

On these terms, we seemingly must end up offering a big 'as if!'[2] to the idea of a centre for English. But that is certainly not to say that we can hope to close matters here and escape questions of English, for that would be to believe we can escape the history of the subject and leave it all behind, without a trace remaining – something which is impossible, being intellectually baseless, unproductive and undesirable (Peel et al., 2000).

The value we ascribe to each possible interpretation of anything, including the hierarchies we inevitably create in our attribution of significance to each interpretation, makes the process one that is political in nature. This means that our interpretations also necessarily have ethical underpinnings. And, in writing about McKellen, Susannah Clapp was affirming this, in stressing the need for a return to empathy in these troubling times, and in highlighting the capacity of (re)interpretation to help bring this about. This gives me ground to now consider how such a position is interpellated in questions of the being of English.

English as a moral technology

Looking ahead to this century, Peel et al., (2000) made a case for English as a moral technology. They took up the question of teachers' understandings of the nature of their subject, and their professional being and identity, in the UK, Australia and the USA, reaching the conclusion that English is, and historically has always been, implicated in the 'formation of a particular kind of person' (p. x).

The book originated in the contrasting responses of teachers to the five models of English described by the Cox Committee in its 1989 report. It is worthwhile recalling the Cox 'models', for in these we see how questions of politics and ethics are fundamental to any view of English. Each of the Cox 'models', as summarised below and adapted from Goodwyn (1992), serves particular and defining governmental ends in the normative shaping of a certain sort of person:

1. A 'personal growth' view: The study of literature has a role in developing an imaginative and aesthetic life.
2. A 'cross-curricular' view: Each school subject has its own language demands, and these must be taught and learned.
3. An 'adult-needs' view: Subject English prepares students for the language demands of adult life, including the workplace, in a fast-changing world.
4. A 'cultural heritage' view: The study of literature encourages an appreciation for those works that have been widely regarded as amongst the finest in the language.
5. A 'cultural analysis' view: Subject English develops a critical understanding of the world and the cultural environment in which one lives.

Whatever currency each of these 'models' might have retained is of less interest to me here than the highlighting of the fact that in pressing these different views of the subject into a synthesis, the Cox Committee was unable to establish an originary or pure English. If one view adds to or supplements another, functioning as either a substitution or an addition, then any one particular view cannot belong to English as something

proper to it. For it cannot be *proper* when it is in constant negotiation with that which it is not.

So it is that we might speak of the aporia, the impossible possibility, of subject English. The being of English has been, and evidently remains, composed from relations of difference, distance and delay. English has always constantly differed from itself, and is always and already becoming other than itself.

Having reached this point, we might well ask how such questions are to be best negotiated. Perhaps the answer lies in acknowledging that the trace of the Cox 'models' stays with us, and in thinking through how such views of English, which are expressed and represented in different ways, can be adapted for our times. I contend that an answer lies in seeing English not as an essence, a sublime ideal, but as a pragmatic problem of principled engagement with an 'assemblage' (Lucy, 1997, p. 249). From here it follows that pedagogical approaches to studying language and texts in English, and, indeed, the very question of which texts to study, can be approached 'not as part of a system of values, but *as* the problem of how to approach them' (Lucy, 1997, p. 249). An institutionally understood and recognised ethico-political commitment to 'openness' and relations of difference can bring the logic of supplementarity into play in classrooms. When the different views or models of English, and their defining pedagogies, are understood to be non-oppositional in structure, then the textuality of English is carried all the way down through its subjects. In turn, given the pragmatics that will be in play, this flows into questions of technicity: the technologies of curriculum and programming models that will enable the moral conditions of a lifeworld for English teachers that I have begun to outline here.

Attendant matters relate to questions of *inheritance* and *responsibility*, or what the notion of English as essentially being the study and practices of *textuality* affords students. I contend that this lies in ways of reading and responding to the world, in order to open possibilities for being in the world, thereby equipping students to resist certitude by being other-*wise*. As Lucy and Mickler (2006) write,

> Differences make up our world, because we live in a world of signs. We live in a world of contested meanings and values because we do not live in a world of pre-existing, unmediated things in themselves whose significance is divinely ordained. The world of signs does not collide with the world of things, but rather things are made to mean from within the world of signs (… think of a dragon). We have no choice but to interpret the world, in other words, except at times when the will to question is suppressed by a suffocating orthodoxy. (p. 26)

The will to question. Now that certainly is something to keep alive at this time when gross injustices are so evident for so many throughout the world, and we are facing climactic, environmental and economic catastrophe. A significant contribution can be made to this noble and necessary aim in English classrooms when students are enabled, through the texts, pedagogies, and practices of reception and composition that they experience, to begin to understand themselves as subjects constantly in the process of becoming someone, and something, else. In imagining and realising themselves as other-*wise*, students can begin to imagine and develop the self-belief needed to desire to contribute to the world being otherwise.

Our students can reach such a point when, to paraphrase Robert Scholes (1989, p. 155), they keep on reading, keep on reading the texts that they read in the texts of their lives, and keep on rewriting their lives in the light of those texts. No less a figure than Greta Thunberg has shown this to be possible for teenagers (Vaughan, 2019). But, as I move towards a conclusion, I should not rush to shut the door on the question of, 'What texts?' In developing my position on textuality in English for this discussion, I have become somewhat preoccupied with the question of the present place of poetry in the NSW curriculum.

Curriculum autoimmunity: The NSW situation

When it is accepted that textuality essentially is 'doing things with texts' (Green, 2006, p. 16), then it follows that textuality is not to be conflated with the texts being studied. More particularly, it is not to be conflated with a curriculum requirement such as a mandatory reading list, which ostensibly serves a particular normative end, for example the preservation of the 'heritage', nor even with a list of required textual forms to be studied. To advocate for textuality as the defining force in English, its teaching and its learning, is to hold to the logical position that the work being done with any and every text in an English classroom ultimately is more important than the text itself – its title, author and form.

On the surface of things, such a logic might well have been at work in NSW in 2017 when the curriculum

for English Stage 6, the HSC English curriculum, was revised by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA, 2017). Noteworthy changes included a reduction in the number of texts to be studied in both the Standard and Advanced courses, and a concomitant reduction in the number of textual forms that students are expected to have studied. In relation to the latter, it was decided that an HSC student no longer be required to study a novel or poetry, both previously having been mandatory forms. This constituted a radical break with the history of the subject in NSW. As Professor Jackie Manuel from the University of Sydney, a former Chief Examiner of HSC English (Standard and Advanced), Member of the NSW Board of Studies (now NESA) and the Chair of a number of English curriculum committees, wrote at the time,

> Since 1911, all senior students in NSW have been required to study the core literary categories of fiction, poetry and drama. Now, for the first time in our history, students can complete Year 12 without having read a novel or poetry. (Manuel, 2017, para. 17)

The optimist in me would like to believe that this historical change was informed by a deep, critical engagement with research, and in intellectual dialogue with the diverse (re)conceptualisations of the subject that have shaped and formed it over time (see, for example, contributions to Gannon et al., 2009), before arriving at a principled position that textuality is to be the centre of English. But, back in 2017, Manuel voiced why this is not to be believed: 'The syllabus and other documents pertaining to the reforms do not provide any evidence-based rationale for the removal of this requirement' (para. 18). Indeed, conversations with individuals who were involved in the consultation process at the time have suggested to me that the most pressing issue driving considerations of a need for change was a widespread belief that the curriculum was 'overcrowded' and consequently too demanding, too exhaustive and exhausting, for teachers and students to do it justice within the allocated hours of study. On these grounds, it appears likely that the decision to change the syllabus requirements was fundamentally economic in nature. It was a calculated decision that was made in the hope of solving the problem of resource allocation, including time and texts to be studied – which is to say, it was a bartering with history and tradition in determining an appropriate allocation of the time and effort to be made by teachers and their students, and the (re)direction of curriculum resources to this end within the limiting, technocratic boundaries of prescribed course hours and textual requirements.

There may well be something to this assertion, as such a 'problem', and the economics of the dilemmas it presents, was recognised in a recent review of the NSW curriculum (NESA, 2020). Upon the release of an interim report of this review in 2019, media reports quoted Professor Geoff Masters, who led the review, as saying that the 'crowded nature' of the NSW curriculum, K–12, 'is not conducive to teaching in-depth or helping students see the relevance of what they are learning' (Raper, 2019, para. 4). But, in the context of my advocacy for the position of textuality in English, I nevertheless feel compelled – despite the inescapable contradiction that this entails – to make an argument for the essential place of poetry in an English curriculum that has textuality as its defining core.

The biological term 'autoimmunity' is transposed and recontextualised by Derrida (2005) to examine social, cultural, historical and political instances in which a form of 'life', for example the life of religion and the life of democracy, has, in attempting to protect itself, compromised its own immune system. Understood in this way, English in NSW can be understood to be in an immunocompromised state, for 'autoimmunity implies the coexistence of both chance and threat' (Haddad, 2013, p. 62). Compromises that are compromising the 'life' of English in NSW, as this has been understood historically, are evident in the curriculum changes made by NESA in 2017 – not least because the current syllabus still holds that the rationale for English in Stage 6 is to develop in students, 'an understanding of literary expression' and to 'nurture an appreciation of aesthetic values' (NESA, 2017, p. 9). This is a deeply historical understanding of the subject. Since the mid-eighteenth century, in universities and then in schools, literature has generally been understood to be poems, plays and novels, and as serving such ends as recognising beauty in form and emotional effect (Miller, 2001). It is my position, for reasons that I have outlined above, that such a rationale for English is reductive, and therefore inadequate. My point here is not to defend this rationale for Stage 6 English in NSW, but to highlight that it is, in itself, now compromised and undone by the content and requirements of the syllabus for which it provides the basis.

On the one hand, a need – which seems to have been pragmatic rather than principled – to remove

mandatory requirements for textual forms is evident in students no longer having to study a novel or poetry. Yet, on the other hand, a commitment to mandatory textual forms is maintained with students in the Advanced course still being required to study a play by Shakespeare. This means that a student can end up studying two dramatic texts – a play by Shakespeare and another by a different playwright – in lieu of studying poetry. Beyond the now spectral presence of the novel, which since 2017 may or may not be present in teachers' HSC programming for a particular class, the practical elevation in status of drama as a literary form over poetry makes no sense within the history of the subject. It disavows any notion that the changes made in 2017 were historically informed, and thereby principled and intellectually coherent. The present continues to be open to the past in NSW – there is no absolute barrier between them – but it is a diluted understanding and version of the past.

A canonical understanding still remains significant and influential in NSW when a compulsory textual form and author remain in the syllabus, in this case Shakespearean drama. In a sense, this might be understood to be grounded in a wish to (re)centre English, both in (curriculum) historical and intellectual terms, in a narrow, highly symbolic version of cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1987). But this only serves to highlight that other forms have been effectively jettisoned for one reason or another, and space cannot be found for other 'canonical' authors to be made mandatory. In NSW, we are paying lip-service to respecting the past of English and its teaching, the presence of the past in the syllabus being partial, technocratically impelled, and contingent on politico-cultural-economic needs. Following the 2017 changes, English in NSW is not in a healthier state. Its immunocompromised state can be further established by other corrupting consequences of the changes.

To maintain Shakespearean drama as the one mandatory textual form, and, moreover, to do so in the Advanced course alone, creates an injustice. To equate Shakespeare with *advanced* study denies those students not studying the Advanced course mandated access to the affordances of the canon as viewed by its proponents, 'the enduring world of feeling, culture and wisdom.' (Peel, 2000, p. 61). Somehow, only *Advanced* students are necessarily entitled to such things. Students in the Standard course might get to study Shakespeare if the teacher feels it to be suitable for a particular class. Studying Shakespeare is a compromised ideal. Instantiated by the NSW syllabus is an apparent position that studying Shakespeare will almost certainly be too difficult for the average student. The apex of the 'canon', it would seem, the best that has been thought and written, as proponents would have it, is just for some in NSW – a right and a privilege afforded only to the deserving.

Beyond the questions of justice and equality to which this curriculum stipulation gives rise, it is also fundamentally ahistorical. It occludes a rich history of informed and enthusiastic advocacy for the place of Shakespeare in all secondary English classrooms, as has been promoted for decades by eminent English educators, particularly Ken Watson, and many passionate classroom teachers (see, for example, Watson, 2004). But here's the rub, given the emphasis on the plays as *performance* in the work of Watson and others. The teaching of Shakespeare in NSW is evidently 'steep'd in so far' in the supplementary considerations of the HSC, a high-stakes written examination, that 'Returning were as tedious as go o'er' (Shakespeare, 1987/1992, 3.4.135–137), if not downright 'bloody', being sure to open political and cultural wounds.

The canonical emphasis on Shakespearean drama in the current NSW syllabus echoes Harold Bloom's veneration of Shakespeare as 'my model and my mortal god' (Bloom, 2003, p. 2), and, as Bloom expresses it in the title to a work on Shakespeare, for his 'invention of the human' (Bloom, 1998). However, I will now seek to open things out by noting Bloom's reverence for poet Wallace Stevens. For Bloom, Stevens is a haunting eminence in American poetry, as he reminds readers of *The Western Canon*. Here Stevens is fittingly recognised, as Bloom would have it, through recalling Shakespeare's influence on Milton (Bloom, 1994, p. 171). Injecting the virus-like haunting of Stevens into the NSW context, we know that things can be otherwise: poetry should be returned to English as, 'The poem refreshes life so that we share, /For a moment, the first idea' (Stevens, 1954/2008, p. 382). This returns me to the declining status of poetry in NSW. I will now go on to conclude by making the case for poetry as the 'first idea', the antecedent, in considerations of English as textuality.

English as textuality: Why privilege poetry?

In what is now a much-quoted line on the internet, which perhaps gives a sense of its appeal as an idea, Derrida (1982) writes, 'The poet plays on the multiplicity of signifieds' (p. 248 n). I am certainly

willing to attest to the romantic appeal of this line, as its life on the internet seems to indicate. In seeking to advance the line of argument I have been making, it does indeed resonate with me – intellectually and practically, but also emotionally. It gives me heart. But, staying with the dominant discourse in which I am presently working – literary history, the place of 'canonicity' and various textual forms in questions of English – the 'romantic' resonance of the line is perhaps better understood to be Romantic. As Lucy (1997) writes, 'positive instability is a condition of the romantic conception of literature. Literature, for the romantics, is the name of what must always remain open to the unexpected' (p. 159). More particularly, it is apposite to note that the Romantic poets, as Lucy argues, 'wrote poetry *against* a canonical sense of poetic composition, which is simply how literature has proceeded from its inception' (Lucy, 1997, p. 159). In other words, poetry is the 'first idea' of literature when it is understood and accepted in these terms: 'The more literature appears to be unlike itself … the more it reveals its self-identity' (Lucy, 1997, p. 159). Perhaps the same should be said for subject English, given the ongoing debates about its identity being inextricably implicated in questions of non-identity, which gestures towards the 'first idea' of an English curriculum being *poetry*.

Grounded in questions of relation with non-relation, the play of meaning/s in and with a multiplicity of signifieds, the Romantic literary ideal presages a poststructuralist poetics. Indeed, in responding to the question of, 'What is poetry?', Derrida (1988/1995) wrote, 'The poetic, let us say it, would be that which you desire to learn, but from and of the other' (p. 291). In his exegesis of the essay by Derrida from which this quote is taken, Phillips (2011) finds noteworthy 'The slight incline between poetry, as the teacher, and the poetic, as that which you desire to learn from poetry', arguing that this inclination marks an 'interval where much may happen in the course of teaching' (p. 234). Miller (2000) takes up the question of pedagogy in poetry, saying that what is offered and best accepted from a poem is that it comes from a 'wholly other and speaks for it' (p. 171). Sawyer and McLean Davies (2021) describe the movement to expansiveness – opening and openness – in students' encounters with poetry as a defining form of literary knowing that has an established pedagogical history, having been 'variously explored over time through both the academic discipline and the school subject', and which can be understood as students expanding their 'understanding of "curricular entities", … of themselves and their world, of literary form(s), histories, and/or culture/s more broadly' (p. 114). As such, within the understanding of English as a moral technology, poetry is an exemplary force for the teaching of an ethico-political commitment to 'openness' and relations of difference, brought about by a spirit of excess and the logic of supplementarity. This brings a particular meaning to Shelley's invocation of poets as the '"unacknowledged legislators of the world"' (as cited in Rich, 2006, para. 1), when this statement is considered with regard to the present circumstances of English in NSW. It is only fitting to say that a poet herself, Adrienne Rich, is best able to express something of this meaning. Rich writes, 'when poetry lays its hand on our shoulder we are, to an almost physical degree, touched and moved. The imagination's roads open before us, giving the lie to that brute dictum, "There is no alternative"' (Rich, 2006, para.10).

In what was his final publication, written expressly in the shadow of his impending death, Australian poet, novelist, critic and journalist, Clive James, wrote of '[g]rowing up in poetical Australia' (James, 2020, p. 289). I hope that I do James no disrespect by paraphrasing him here, offering this as my concluding wish: in ten years' time, may my eight-year-old daughter go on to complete a poet(h)ical[3] HSC English in NSW.

Notes

1 The song title is '(You Gotta) Fight for your Right (to Party)'.

2 'If' was the theme of the 2020 IFTE Conference in which this Roundtable occurred.

3 In writing about Australian poet John Kinsella and his friendship with Derrida, Niall Lucy (2010) refers to 'the "poethical" episodes' of some of Derrida's work (p. 116).

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Teacher agency

Empowering English Teachers: Teacher Agency in Australia

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Abstract: This article presents an account of a panel on English teacher agency in Australia at the 2020 IFTE conference, held virtually as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The article introduces the way the panel chair set up the concerns of the panel, providing relevant background, theoretical framing, and introductions to the panellists and the key questions that panellists were invited to address. The three panellists then contribute written insights from their research and/or practice, and reflections on their participation and the discussions that ensued. Fundamentally, the article explores how teachers might navigate their work if what they hoped to teach is not what they are told to teach, and provides practical suggestions for claiming agency. This is a timely intervention, as teacher agency is increasingly being eroded through a variety of forces.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands where we live and work. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and recognise that this discussion of agency takes place in the context of a nation that does not yet recognise its First Peoples in its constitution.

Introduction: A virtual panel

At the 2020 International Federation of Teachers of English (IFTE) conference, we assembled as a panel of experienced teachers and academic experts to explore teacher agency in the English teaching profession in Australia. This article captures some of the central ideas, arguments and concerns expressed through our virtual discussion. The panel explored how teachers might navigate their work if 'what they hoped to teach is not what they are told to teach'. We also examined how English teachers and faculties need the confidence to conceptualise English and make their visions a reality for students, parents and communities in schools. We recognise that for this to happen, English teachers need to have the freedom to act purposefully and constructively to design teaching and learning. Sharing this account of the panel constitutes 'collective development and consideration' (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 624) related to agency in our broader disciplinary discourse, beyond merely considering the actions of individuals in classrooms.

There are myriad reasons why teacher agency is not evident in Australian schools. These reasons include: increasingly neoliberal political interference (Robinson, 2012); onerous educational bureaucratic expectations and demands (Anderson & Cawsey, 2008; Robinson, 2012); a curriculum aching under the weight of content (Hattie, 2018); an over-dependence on standardised testing to drive school and student improvement (Ravitch, 2010; Sahlberg, 2012); and media and political demands for teacher accountability.

The erosion of teacher autonomy is well advanced, linked to a weakening of confidence and trust in teachers' professional judgement and authority (Blömeke & Klein, 2013). The level of loss of confidence and trust in teachers' independent decision-making in NSW was

clearly evidenced with the release in February this year of controversial politician Mark Latham's New South Wales Legislative Council report. The report called for the establishment of an independent unit to inspect classroom practices and teacher quality (Legislative Council Portfolio Committee, 2020). The report also singled out 'direct instruction', with the teacher standing at the front of the classroom presenting information to students, as the preferred pedagogy (Baker, 2020).

While research has established that agency and autonomy are fluid in both meaning and application (Parker, 2015), we recognise that agency is more than allowing a teacher to control their schedule (Husband & Short, 1994). In English, it might also include the selection of texts, curriculum, pedagogy, and a freedom 'to make decisions related to their educational milieu' (Bogler & Somech, 2004, p. 278). This is agency as *doing*, not merely as having the capacity to do (although this is important as well), and as the dynamic and complex interplay of practices, structures, situations, motivations, memories and hopes performed iteratively by teachers; we draw on previous theorising of agency here (Biesta et al., 2015).

The pleasure and intellectual joy of teaching and learning do not emerge from attempts to subjugate teacher agency to external authority. In this article, panel members Karen Yager, Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan and Lucinda McKnight reflect on their panel presentations and the ensuing discussions which involved all panellists and the chair in suggesting ways that teachers can realise agency in their work. In shaping the panel, Matthew posed the following questions; we believe these questions may also be useful for teachers to discuss in their faculties, as they resist pressures to become 'IKEA teachers', mere flat-pack assemblers of pedagogy.

1. How do we navigate our work if what we hoped to teach is not what we are told to teach?
2. How can teachers achieve agency in this ever-changing political and educational landscape?
3. Do you see differences between the terms 'agency', 'autonomy' and 'authority', or do you recognise these terms as blurring?
4. Is there a greater need for autonomous/agentic action for English teachers as opposed to any other curriculum areas in a school?
5. Caldwell (2016) questions the 'authority' of the individual teacher if 'there is no flexibility about the predetermined outcomes'. How do you respond to this view as a leading voice for English teachers?
6. Dinham (2016) asked the question: 'Autonomy over what?' If he were here, how would you answer his question for English teachers?
7. How flexible do you believe English teachers' agency should be within a school?
8. What would need to be considered if schools were to provide greater levels of autonomy to English teachers? If those conditions were met, what benefits and challenges might be evidenced?

In what follows, Karen has addressed the questions as a classroom teacher, Kerry-Ann has answered the first and last questions and Lucinda has focused on the first question in her contribution.

Karen has particularly focused on the second question: How can teachers achieve agency in this ever-changing political and educational landscape?

What is evident from the literature is that pedagogical practice is more likely to be innovative and highly effective if teachers are afforded agency (Biesta, 2015; Calvert, 2016). According to Calvert (2016), 'teacher agency is the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues' (p. 52). Moreover, Calvert asserts that 'teachers are in it for the autonomy and the mastery. They want to master their craft and be free to innovate' (p. 53). Calvert draws upon Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory that identified the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Biesta (2015) claims that agency means teachers actively contributing to the shaping of their work and its conditions.

Bandura (1997) strongly linked agency to self-efficacy – the belief that one can make a difference. Teachers are driven to enrich the learning of their students and ensure that they have the opportunity to grow and flourish. This drive and determination enable us to cope with limitations, as well as with government, authorities and parental expectations and to continue to teach with conviction and passion. Our personal agency comes from within and is shaped by our life experiences, our confidence in our subject knowledge and our self-beliefs. Hadid (2017) proffers that teacher agency is enabled when: teachers find meaning in their work, they are motivated by a collective school vision, they experience relevant, meaningful and collaborative professional learning, and they develop relationships

in the school with their faculty, students, parents and the broader community that are marked by trust, respect and authentic connections.

Unfortunately, the research indicates that teachers are not always afforded the opportunity to feel valued, respected and enabled to achieve autonomy and mastery. The 2018 OECD Talis report concluded that only 45% of Australian teachers believe that they are valued. There are times when it is challenging to be agentic when trust in, and respect for, teachers are eroded by the media and public opinion (OECD, 2018). The irony is that the research has continued to affirm that the teacher has the greatest impact on student learning and performance (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2011; Hattie, 2003; Rowe, 2003). Darling-Hammond (2000) asserts that the effects of quality teaching on student outcomes are greater than those that arise from students' backgrounds. Darling-Hammond and Rothman's (2011) research into the link between teacher effectiveness and high student achievement in Finland, Ontario and Singapore arrives at the conclusion that teaching is one of the most important school-related factors in student achievement, and that improving teacher effectiveness can raise overall student achievement levels. With this affirmation of the significant role that teachers play in the education of students, it is obvious that governments and systems need to focus on supporting teachers to experience autonomy and to have greater agency.

Teachers bring their passions, subject knowledge and pedagogical style to the classroom and will always strive to do the best by their students despite any challenges. The effective and intentional pedagogical practice of teachers is at the heart of improvements in teaching and learning. This was certainly evident during the recent pandemic lockdown, when teachers had to pivot 180 degrees to make online learning work so that their students were not disadvantaged and continued to have access to an education. Furthermore, with the world changing exponentially in a new Industrial Revolution, teachers are faced with the challenge of how to continue to make a difference to their students' learning if their skill set does not include new technologies and they and their students do not have access to current technology. Agentic teachers who have the support and trust of their schools will learn to embrace new technologies just as they did with online learning – or at least to ask their students about such technologies (provided they and their students have access).

Buchanan et al., in a 2017 paper on the future of education, conclude that what must be valued is the uniquely human ability to conceptualise, synthesise and empathise. As English teachers and educators, we have always been about humanity, purpose and inclusivity. This can be achieved despite the challenges, by focusing on how to engage, extend and enrich the learning of our students. One way to ensure that this happens regardless of set texts or program restrictions is to ensure that students understand the key concepts of English and are enabled to synthesise and apply their learning and, through studying literature, to enhance their ability to empathise. As far back as the early 1900s, Dewey expounded on the importance of children needing to be active participants in the learning process that involved inquiry-learning, critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration. Regardless of the restrictions, we must continue to ensure that our students are active participants in the learning so that they too experience agency. Even when the assessment program does not allow for student choice, the teacher can utilise formative assessment effectively and give students choice.

The focus for me, despite the challenges, has been, and will always be, on ensuring that I know my students' stories and that I place them at the centre of the learning, reflecting what Mehta and Fine (2015) refer to as a respect for who students are and for their potential. I have high expectations for all of my students. I strive to develop a love and appreciation for literature and for deep learning. I teach the skills needed to read, analyse and communicate with confidence and courage and to be agile as they apply their learning.

Beyond the classroom, as teachers we can have an active and agentic role as change agents at a local level in our faculty and across the whole school, and by joining associations at a state and national level – by having a voice. The English Teachers Association has always been a peak body for me that has provided me with excellent opportunities to grow my pedagogical practice and contribute to local and national debates on curriculum.

Kerry-Ann: How do we navigate our work if what we hoped to teach is not what we are told to teach?

In considering this dilemma I might pose another question: how do we see ourselves? The interrelationship of personal and professional identities, pedagogies and philosophies, what we believe and value are central to

teacher agency. Buchanan (2015, p. 714) describes this agency as 'identities in motion' – a description I adopt to characterise teachers' work.

Identity is complex; it is in ongoing formation and it involves us negotiating ever-shifting and multiple positions and dynamic constructions of self. It is also deeply individual and influenced by many factors. Beijaard et al. (2000, p. 761), for example, single out 'teaching context, experience and biography' as being significant components. Mockler (2011) contends that it is found at a juncture of personal experience, professional environment and the external political context. Agency emerges through, and is shaped by, an interplay of these components of identity construction. Our self-actualisation informs our 'motion'.

How we respond to constraining policies, discourses and pressures is influenced by our sense of self. There is an important distinction between what is required to be taught and how we might do this in action. Teachers have deep subject matter and pedagogical expertise and exercise their decision-making constantly. We actively construct ourselves in unique ways even when affected by macro-level forces. The all-too-familiar pressures of contemporary education impinge upon us with increasing demands for standardisation, compliance, measurement and pragmatism. However, what we design for our classrooms, the ways we can re-make mandated content for student learning, are keys for both agency and contextual adaptation.

The actions we take feed back into our identities. Acts of interpretation and re-interpretation are at the heart of the balancing that animates the English classroom. Our energy, our imaginations, our artistry bring 'what is to be taught' to life. We need to resist the call of 'performativity' (Ball, 2013) and of adopting others' definitions of our work. How we see ourselves affects the work that we do and influences the quality of the relationships we establish with our students.

Instrumentalist notions can de-professionalise – thus, self-awareness, active engagement and continued development are necessary. A sense of humour provides some perspective and is essential to weather the endless onslaught of the next change or policy directive. English teachers have a rich repertoire of practices and try to negotiate some, even a small, degree of content flexibility and call upon their creativity to play with impositions. Finding the 'wriggle room' to tweak what you can teach, identifying a main purpose and focusing on customising for your learners by knowing your context are ways forward in challenging times. Thinking about what comes out of a learning and teaching exchange instead of attending to only a predetermined outcome might be a semantic quibble, but a shifting-around of the words can reframe. There are many pathways to any endpoint; that truism about different journeys and routes to a destination for different travellers reminds us there are no absolutes and that an 'A' or top mark is reached by varied approaches and multiple directions. Long after a result, what will our students remember?

Recent research conducted with 33 English teachers in New South Wales and England (see O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020) found that the teachers displayed what is termed 'adaptive agency' (Goodwyn, 2019). Being adaptive requires inventiveness, resilience and teacher expertise to maintain some form of agency despite external constraints. It evolves within the power matrix of external and internal regulation and reflects coping qualities used in adapting to difficult environments. Part of this is being able to describe your contextual adaptation, and these teachers identified various ways in which they achieved this agency. Adaptive agentic characteristics included an enduring 'love' for their subject, the primacy of students in their work, and the teachers' pursuit of new approaches for their classes. They clearly realised the many pressures and limitations they were experiencing, but most stated that collegiality, shared values and their passion for English sustained them to move beyond current prescriptive regulations.

Agency also involves more than doing; it's about 'being'; it comprises the ways we find ourselves coping in an environment and how we frame a vision to guide us beyond it. Biesta et al. (2016) argue that 'agency is rooted in past experience, oriented to the future and located in the contingencies of the present' (p. 20). How do we engage within our contexts and what capacity do we display for reflexivity, creativity and projection? While there are structural limitations to agency, many of them external, intentionally thinking about possibilities for action and choice can shift some responsibility back. Maintaining a broader world view, understanding our ontological and epistemological positions, will enhance the potentialities of our current position. I encourage my undergraduate preservice teachers to 'look up' and to 'look beyond' when thinking about future students as I want them to see a fuller picture and the possibilities ahead. Without vision, it becomes difficult to rise above the merely perfunctory.

My final thoughts go to an important question: What would need to be considered if schools were to provide greater levels of autonomy to English teachers? Trust and respect for teachers' professionalism are priorities, as are creating communities shaped by care and the valuing of engagement and innovation. Biesta (2015, p. 2) asks 'whether what is being measured actually represents what we value about education, that is whether it corresponds to our conception of good education'. Conversations about 'what matters' in education and within a local school context are necessary and productive in facilitating increased ownership, inclusion and agency.

School culture and its interaction with teacher identities will constrain or enable teacher agency. The complexities and mediation of teacher action and identity occur in various contexts located within broader political, educational and social frames. Imagine the rich possibilities for teachers and students and subject English if space was opened to value far more than metrics and standards.

What might we learn from sharing our conversations and reflections about our agency and pedagogies in challenging times? I think the powerful concept is 'balance'. I would extend this to characterise it as 'a fine balance'. The word 'fine' immediately evokes 'refinement', with its connotations of improvement; it is also a 'subtle point of distinction', and there are notions of choice and delicacy and subtlety embedded here. 'Balance' challenges us physically, and we negotiate competing demands, endlessly weighing up and 'proportioning' to reach its meaning of a 'harmonious arrangement or adjustment'. Danielewicz (2001) suggests identity 'arises from the perpetual dialectic between internal states and external conditions' (p. 197). Being agentic is about navigating these circumstances, uniquely, to create our own fine balance.

Lucinda: How do we navigate our work if what we hoped to teach is not what we are told to teach?

Working with preservice English teachers, I encounter many examples of workplaces and practices that are not as my students expect them to be in terms of teacher agency. In recent years, I have heard stories of preservice teachers receiving digital files, CD-ROMs or vast manilla folders with every lesson they are to teach mapped out, right down to every question they are to ask. 'How will I learn,' they ask, 'when I can't teach the way I want to?' There are schools where Vice Principals or Visible Learning Coordinators walk the corridors after the start of lessons and interrupt a teacher if they cannot see learning outcomes on the board. Ironically, this is after John Hattie has distanced himself from learning outcomes (Knudsen, 2017), having seen how reductive practices around them have become (McKnight & Whitburn, 2018). These intruders ask the teacher, 'Why aren't the learning outcomes on the board?', and if there is not a satisfactory explanation, the outcomes must be stated and written up immediately. This extraordinary conscription of not only lesson planning and sequencing, but also teachers' bodies and movements as they enter classrooms and begin lessons is a physical manifestation of the de-professionalising of teachers. These teachers, in their classrooms with glass walls and doors, experience a panoptical pressure, always potentially under the gaze of senior management.

I hear of teachers writing cloze essays with gaps for students to fill, and current preservice teachers having to monitor this activity. I hear that the teachers who do this get the best 'results', so other teachers feel pressure to do the same. I hear of lockstep teaching – what panel chair Matthew calls 'IKEA teaching', with classrooms timetabled at the same time teaching exactly the same thing at the same moment. Creativity in teaching and personalised teaching are banned. Uniformity is dressed up as 'quality'. Teachers also feel vulnerable to hearing, 'My child's friend in Ms X's class received a handout that my child did not get'. So pressure from parents and communities comes to bear as well. These environments lend themselves to other stories, for example TEEL (topic, evidence, elaboration and link) paragraphs being compulsory for all students and staff, including those in administration. Formulas for scaffolding become ends in themselves (McKnight, 2020).

Technology has a role to play too. The arrival of *Education Perfect*'s software means that lessons can readily involve students logging on and completing decontextualised grammar exercises for fifty minutes. This is packaged as state-of-the-art digital learning around the all-important 'basics', but is yet another form of 'teacher-proofing' and of removing agency from teachers. It is also anti-intellectual, when so much research shows that decontextualised grammar teaching is not effective (Locke, 2015). Sometimes the digital resources my preservice teachers have to use are very limited, but have taken someone so long to make, and have become so embedded in practice, that they are

taken for granted and recycled uncritically, year after year. The advent of automated marking threatens to cement all of the above even more firmly into practice. IT allows for ever more surveillance of teachers, too, in the forms of common-sense yet potentially lethal programs such as 'continuous reporting'.

So how can teachers achieve agency in these times when it seems to be rapidly disappearing, or indeed, emerging in new forms such as those enacted by the patrolling Visible Learning police? For me, specifically, this is about preservice and early career teachers, as these are the groups with which I have the most contact; these groups also face precarious employment, short-term contracts and competition for jobs – all factors that further reduce agency. This is what I advise:

1. Comply and subvert. Enter schools to learn, first off, and not to change the world. Work out what you need to do to fit in, and where there may be cracks or opportunities to ask questions about practice.
2. Find your people. Find allies on staff, or even just 'the nice people', as one of our Deakin graduates calls them.
3. For new initiatives you would like to introduce, prepare lots of resources around them. Teachers are more open to change if well supported and able to get a concrete sense of how they can use and adapt materials.
4. Find ballast for these initiatives, for example in powerful documents such as examiners' reports or in the media parents are reading. Position these initiatives to solve problems in the school.
5. Share your work wisely, modelling generosity and creativity where they will not be shut down.
6. Find external mentors who can put the inevitably narrow world of your school into perspective. These may be from your cohort at university, or teacher friends you meet at conferences. Maintain relationships with method lecturers, if possible. Keep up conversations started in your degree.
7. Become part of the broad and inspirational online educational community. Twitter is a great place to start. You can follow me @lucindamcknigh8, and some great hashtags are #subjectenglishissues, #ozengchat and #teamenglishoz. Share diverse practice and ideas.
8. Keep reading: theory, textbooks, curriculum documents in other states, educational blogs, newspapers/feeds, fiction and everything you can get your hands on. Maintain what Vice Principal and English teacher Greg Houghton calls 'a rich sense of an inner life' as a sustaining force.
9. Join your state English teachers' association and ask to go to events where you will meet people and share diverse practice. Develop mechanisms in your school for sharing conference notes so that all are exposed to new thinking. Participate whenever there is a call for input to the advocacy work of these organisations so that your voice is heard in larger conversations. Become involved in committees at these organisations if you can; they can be very energising.
10. Every time you hear the word 'deliver', challenge it. Teachers are designers, not deliverers, unless we subscribe to what Paulo Freire (1970/1993) critiques as a banking model of education, which is about the transfer of information, not acts of cognition. And never say 'I'm just a teacher'. Talk teachers up, as experts, as superheroes. The pandemic has done some useful work revealing this to be true to beleaguered parents and carers schooling at home – the COVID glow-up! Through this we can assert teacher authority, and as panel chair Matthew describes, the capacity to speak, and to argue for agency.

Lastly, what would need to be considered, if teachers were free to work collaboratively to design learning experiences and to adapt them for their own classrooms and teaching styles? The issue that invariably arises here is that of 'responsibility', based on a strange purported dichotomy between agentive, authoritative, autonomous professionalism and 'responsibility'. Teachers are responsible to themselves, their students, parents and carers, their co-teachers at any level, their level coordinators, their Heads of English, their senior management, their staffs, their school councils or government departments and their discipline, for a start. Those designing teacher-proof materials are responsible to their corporate employers. Who would we rather have designing learning experiences for our own children?

Conclusion: An educational revolution

We do believe that an educational revolution needs to take place in English classrooms around Australia. This revolution cannot be directed by politicians or educational bureaucracies; it needs to occur in classrooms, led by English teachers, supported by

systems and academic research. English teachers' expertise, inventiveness and professionalism need to be accessed and utilised. Teachers need to be provided with the professional autonomy to empower their pedagogic capacity, creativity and enthusiasm to make learning and teaching both challenging and engaging.

Researchers often point to Finland as a guiding point for attaining improved student results. And there is much we can learn from Finland, as they allow schools and teachers to have autonomy over content, assessment and pedagogy, and the ability to develop curriculum and shape learning environments (Silander & Välijärvi, 2013). Yet merely looking to Finland achieves nothing if Australia cannot trust teachers to act as highly qualified professionals in their field.

Some researchers, such as Darling-Hammond (1990) have argued for some time that teachers no longer craft and design learning programs, choosing their materials and teaching strategies with the students in their class in mind. However, a lack of classroom autonomy is reductionist in nature and effect; it shapes the teacher as a deliverer of content, where even the pedagogical processes have been methodically mapped out (McKnight, 2018). English teachers have already, in many instances, been driven by requirements for standardised testing and standardised teaching into becoming IKEA assemblers.

In feedback from those attending our panel session, it was agreed that the issues discussed are of paramount importance for English teachers today. We encourage readers to follow up references in this article and to prioritise asking questions about teacher agency and about how changes to our profession, such as the introduction of the national curriculum, 'evidence-based' practice and the expanding role of technology have affected teachers' own sense of their capacity to achieve change in their worlds. We need to ensure that we remain true to versions of professionalism that we ourselves have crafted, or that the English teaching profession has discursively created, rather than versions that have been forced upon us by those with other agendas. One of the most fundamental ways we can do this is by finding strategies that allow us to teach what we want to teach, even if this is not what we are told to teach.

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Teachers' Visions

Subject English for Future Students: The Visions of English Teachers in NSW and England

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Abstract: This paper draws from an international case study of secondary English teachers in New South Wales, Australia and England, in which thirty-three in-depth interviews were conducted. The research investigated the impact of educational reform on teachers' professionalism, their pedagogies and their beliefs about the subject of English. It reports on participants' responses to the question: 'What visions do you have about subject English for future students?'

As English teachers experience increased pressures from a global reform agenda, their professional autonomy and pedagogical creativity are constrained. The prevailing focus on standardisation, measurement and narrow curriculum prescription challenges the rich ways in which the subject may be constructed. Within this context, however, the teachers' visions for what the study of English might achieve were clear and strong. They desired that learners find pleasure in reading, be curious and agentic, spend time engaging critically with the world, and be able to connect empathically with others. In challenging times, they recognised a need to enhance students' individuality, responsiveness, and enjoyment. As they expressed confident views and identified key features that they hoped future students might experience, the teachers revealed what they personally value about subject English.

Introduction and research context

In our current times, where politicised accountability and narrow standards influence the educational landscape, it is worth considering what future students might learn. As English teachers experience increased pressures from a global reform agenda, their professional autonomy and pedagogical creativity are increasingly constrained. The prevailing focus on standardisation, measurement and narrow curriculum prescription challenges the rich ways in which our subject may be constructed. However, secondary school English has an acknowledged history of contestation, renewal, and innovation (see, for example, Goodwyn et al., 2013; Peel et al., 2000). This has prompted an exploration of the hopes and visions of current English teachers about some of the possibilities that might be imagined for future students.

This paper draws from an international case study of secondary English teachers in the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia and in England, in which a total of 33 in-depth interviews were conducted (O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020). The research project investigated the impact of educational reform on teachers' professionalism, their pedagogies, and their beliefs about the subject of English. Both researchers have worked in the field of English education all their careers, and this joint investigation took place during a period of overseas research study for the lead author. Here we report on participants' responses to the final interview question: 'What visions do you have about subject English for future students?' This question offered the teachers an opportunity for personal reflection and imaginative projection which revealed their values and priorities for the future study of English.

This research is framed within, and reported against, the following contextual factors,

which are provided here as an overview to assist consideration of the data. In both locations, there are significant factors intensifying teachers' work: increased regulation, external accountability measures and ongoing curriculum change. In NSW, NAPLAN (the national Literacy and Numeracy testing regime at various stages of schooling), a 'basic skills' agenda with strong competition across school systems for government funding, and formal accreditation and regulatory Professional Standards for all teachers in all systems (AITSL, 2011) form key elements of teachers' workplaces. The introduction of a new HSC syllabus (NESA, 2017) for its first Higher School Certificate examination in 2019 has added to NSW senior secondary English teachers' workload pressures. In England, teachers are subject to rigid inspections by the regulatory body, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (Marshall et al., 2019), performance-related pay (Goodwyn, 2019a) and recently introduced external examinations with prescriptive text selections for English in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GSCE) (Belas & Hopkins, 2019). Equally of concern are rates of teacher attrition and narrow, content-driven National Curriculum revisions. Overall, England in particular has seen the subject of English profoundly narrowed and teacher agency highly constrained.

What is English?

Around this investigation is the recurrent question: 'What is English?' To imagine future studies for English students, we must inevitably draw upon its practitioners' conceptualisations of the subject and what is important to them. The literature on subject English provides a wide field of descriptive characterisations. Medway (2005) acknowledges that 'in comparison with other curricular subjects English is always going to be strange and elusive' (p. 28). In John Dixon's (1967) seminal work *Growth through English*, it is 'the quicksilver subject', mysterious, mercurial and dynamic. Eaglestone (2009) views English as 'a very diffuse subject' (p. 147), suggesting that it 'is not a straightforward thing, but an *idea*' (p. 7). More recently, Day (2018) suggests that 'English very often deals with the ineffable and the unknowable' (p. 127).

Any singular characterisation is inherently difficult because '[a]s a continually evolving subject, English is called upon to adapt and respond to a complex system of social, ideological and governmental forces that influence its identity, content and methods' (Wells & Moon, 2021, p. 74). Marshall (2000) advises that we can understand the contested nature of English by seeing its development as 'a series of competing traditions' (p. 18). English is a 'complex signifier' (Green & Beavis, 1996, p. 7), with Pope (2002) stating that 'it is perhaps best to see English language/s, literature/s, culture/s as one *and* many' (p. 26). In Green's (2006) examination of versions of the subject from the past and present, he argues that in the future we should 'contemplate a plurality of projects for English' (p. 11).

Debates about the purposes of, theoretical and educational approaches to, and role of specific content inclusions in, English mark it as inherently complex and open to interpretation. For Patterson (2008, p. 311), 'the goal of facilitating the development of a particular type of individual has resided at the heart of English teaching, irrespective of the tradition informing the practice'. Nearly two decades ago, Kress (2002) pondered whether English would have a role in a 'curriculum for the future'. He questioned what shape the subject would take 'in the era of globalisation, of political, social and cultural fragmentation, of the new information and communication technologies' (p. 17).

The 100th anniversary of the *Newbolt Report* [DCBE, 1921] in 2021 has generated considerable attention to the history of the subject in relation to its future. Newbolt offered a vision of English full of belief in the vital significance of subject English and vernacular literature especially, as do the research participants. The Report resonated across the English-speaking world (for an international account see Aldridge & Green, 2019). Its lasting significance was in dislodging the Latin and Greek Classics from their dominant position as the key knowledge of 'the educated' in many countries and replacing them with the vernacular language and literature. Since 1921 a variety of versions or models of English have emerged that might be summarised as Adult Skills/Needs, Cultural Heritage/s, Cultural Analysis/Studies, Critical Literacy, along with Personal Growth – arguably the dominant influence on English teachers since the Dartmouth seminar in 1966 (Goodwyn, 2018). The participants in the research reflected on the versions of English they experience in contemporary Australia and England. They share much of Newbolt's optimism for the future of the subject, and they demonstrate their student-centred philosophy, following the Personal Growth model, in thinking about the benefits to future students.

The research design

Approach to the study

This case study was conducted in NSW and England to investigate how teachers in the contested field of English 'find a balance between external expectations, contemporary pressures, professional aspirations, and personal values' (O'Sullivan, 2016, p. 65). Its purpose was to create new understandings about the impact of educational reform on teachers' professionalism, pedagogies, and beliefs about their subject. It was developed within a global educational context that prioritises standardisation, commodification and measurement, and intensifies pressure on teachers internationally to be compliant, productive and accountable to external testing regimes.

The English teacher participants

The lead author conducted and audio recorded 33 semi-structured, in-depth face-to-face interviews in a range of schools in both countries. Six focus concepts were explored: professional identity; subject perceptions and pedagogies; contextual influences and teachers' work; educational change and English; professional priorities and career factors; and teacher self-efficacy and future views of subject and self. This article addresses the final area of investigation to examine responses to the question 'What visions do you have about subject English for future students?'

The study had formal ethical approval from the respective university research committees and received permission from each school to conduct on-site research with volunteer English teacher participants. The sample was self-selecting. In NSW the teachers were a 'convenience sample' drawn from professional connections and direct requests to independent secondary school principals. In England, participants came from links to the professional networks, principally the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE). Although there are limitations in this approach to sample selection, and the number of participants is pragmatic and based on timing and availability, it provided easy access to several schools in both contexts and allowed multiple interviews to be conducted within one subject/department group at one site. Although this limited sample is not representative of a broader workforce, it covered a range of experience levels (from first year teaching to twenty-five years' experience) and differing perspectives, and the data provides the views of teachers who may not otherwise be heard.

All participants had a degree with an English major, and one teacher in each country held a doctoral degree. In NSW, research was conducted in four large independent K–12 schools across metropolitan Sydney (approximately 40% of secondary students in NSW attend private/independent schools). The largest school population was over 3,000 students, and the smallest 900. The sample included 12 female and six male teachers of varied ages who had a range of responsibilities – for example, there were three Heads of English, one Deputy Principal, and some classified as early career. They had teaching experience across state, independent and religious school systems. The schools averaged 69% of students in the top quarter of the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) measure, where the average for Australia is 25% (ACARA, n.d.). It is therefore observed that these school contexts create conditions where economic and social advantage and cultural capital would be influential (Teese, 2007).

In England, interviews were conducted with 15 teachers (ten female and five male) teachers from five schools. They also had a range of age, experience and responsibilities, and included three Head teachers, a Teaching and Development leader, and two recent appointments. There was more variation in the sample schools, with government and grammar systems represented, including large urban and rural comprehensive high schools, an urban grammar school, and a state secondary college. One community college did not offer the final years of Key Stage 5. The largest school population was 1,670 students, and the smallest 700.

We recognise that in this small sample there are unique contextual influences informing the teachers' responses. Any school system, its ethos and purpose, and its source of funding (through government subsidy, parental fees, or institutional affiliation) will make a difference and be a key part of the structural reality of the teachers' contexts. This research provided an opportunity for a small group of practitioners from specific sites to have their professional voices heard about aspects of their English teaching that really matter to them.

Grounded theory and data analysis

A grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was adopted to develop an understanding of the teachers' perceptions of their practices and subject theories, and to privilege their voices in the emerging

data. The transcribed discourses were analysed critically (Gee, 2011) using an inductive, iterative process to draw out content-level themes, investigate repeated ideas and concepts, and identify and assign codes and categories. Patterns of key words were examined and the texts were interrogated for the participants' situated meanings and their identity constructions. Within the overall case study there were 33 unique cases, each conveying an individual's subjective experience and specific language choices. Comparisons and connections across the participants' language-in-use were also examined. Both researchers agreed upon the main patterns and themes to ensure consistency and inter-coder reliability.

The findings reported below concentrate on the key thematic patterns from the final area of the research interview, which addressed the future of English as a subject and the teachers' visions of this for future students. Indicative quotations are provided to support these responses. The following word cloud (Figure 1) provides an overview of the most frequent lexical choices in response to the question 'What visions do you have about subject English for future students?'

Figure 1. Lexical choice word cloud

What are the visions?

The participants displayed clear and optimistic visions about English for future students. Their speculations revealed rich and personal constructions of both English and their professional identities. Each made a firm, hopeful statement about what mattered to them and the ways in which the subject could continue to be of value, although they also recognised some of the challenges ahead. As they looked beyond their immediate contexts, there was an inevitable reflection of present tensions.

The key findings are reported under two main themes: 'English for future students', and 'The future for English as a subject'. Patterns are identified within these themes. In 'English for future students', these are about making personal connections, empowering self-development, and preparing for life beyond school. In 'The future for English as a subject' they are about the capacity of English to create readers and writers and its possible future content and purposes.

1. English for future students: Making personal connections

> *What I would love would be to have English where we reinspire, we re-engage. Where we make links throughout the world … the reason I went into in the first place.* (ET, England)

Participants hoped future students would make personal connections and experience positive emotions through being opened to broader world views in their English studies. A continuum of time was evident: while a thread of continuity was evoked with the past through use of the prefix 're', as in 're-inspire' and 're-engage', and there was an acknowledgement of the present in aims such as 'to enjoy it a bit more' (ET, England), the visions were also dynamic and expansive. There was some re-imagining for the future. There was also a pattern of repetition associated with a globalised perspective, seen in the lexical choices of 'world', 'diversity' and 'multi-culturalism' – for example, '*to appreciate different perspectives on the world*' (ET, NSW), and to include '*multi-culturalism … a bit of variety, a bit of diversity*' (ET, England).

Students were placed at the centre of the various projections, which is not surprising. One NSW English teacher wanted '*to be able to design the teaching and learning based on who the students are, what their interests are and really build something that's dynamic and personal and shapes them as people and learners based on their own interests*'. Making personal meaning for students and ensuring that studies were customised for specific groups were prioritised as important. Further to this, a teacher in England added, '*I would hope it [English] would be a safe place*'. Teachers desired that their students feel comfortable being themselves in an English classroom, and embarking on self-discovery, exploring their interests, and experiencing the wider world. In this data grouping, English was privileged for its affective and personal dimensions, and for its

capacity to allow students to make their own local and broader connections with the subject.

2. English for future students: Empowering self-development

> *I hope they have empathy … have self-reflection … be the best listeners …* ET, NSW.

An important consideration for English teachers is what they hope will be the 'outcomes' of learning for students in their classes. The teachers spoke with confidence and clarity about their aspirations. Their strong responses revealed likely contrasts with the expectations frequently stated at political, institutional, curricular and community levels: here, student agency was paramount in the teachers' desires for their students' self-empowerment and personal development.

The teachers privileged a capacity for reflection, empathy, resilience, learning through mistakes and working with others. They wanted their students to become independent and thoughtful, to have care for others and to be persistent. Echoed again is a sense of something '*bigger*' and more intangible than the formal elements found in a syllabus document.

A lexical pattern of affective words characterised these hopes. The teachers were clear about their valuing of interpersonal relationships and personal development, sometimes considered 'soft' skills. Examples included, '*I hope they'd be truly collaborative … that they really reflect on themselves and the human condition … resilience … this sense of I can do. I will have a go*' (ET, NSW), and '*That they come to class, and it feels like they can achieve well … and they can make mistakes … they feel guided … that's what I would like English to be*' (ET, England).

An English teacher in NSW stated, '*I want them to be sort of challenged in their thinking; I don't want the kids to be passive consumers in my class*'. Priorities were about giving students power to learn, act, and improve. A Head Teacher in England believed it was important '*to express yourself on paper or verbally*', while in NSW, one teacher said, '*I would like to see more personal choice for the students*'.

This agency includes developing a capacity for self-improvement – the ability '*to turn up in Year 7 understanding that they already know everything they need to know, skills-wise. They just need to get better at it, and learn how to use it*' (HT, England). Purposeful activity was valued, and the development and ongoing refinement of a range of capabilities, skills and personal qualities. Again, the future scope for subject English was portrayed as potentially life-enhancing and able to bring about change at an individual level.

3. English for future students: for life beyond school

> *For English to be a pleasure and life enriching.* (HT, England)

This simple declarative statement makes it clear that the influence of English should continue beyond school. Teachers believed their subject could equip students with something more than classroom study – that its importance was enduring. The pattern of past/present/future continuities was evident again in their projections, and signalled the capacity of studies in English to prepare students for a life beyond school.

A teacher in England described it in this way:

> Something that encourages them to love reading, that encourages them to be curious, that equips them with ideas and with experiences and with empathy that acts as a sort of guide as they go through life, and when they encounter things.

The use of 'guide' and 'equips' with a direct reference to the passage into the future reinforces the strong sense that there is much that students can gain. A powerful legacy is ascribed for the subject through the accumulation of developmental aspects and the underlying impression of English's role in character formation.

English was cast as more than something ephemeral and transient; it was something that could endure and sustain students beyond their schooling. There was also '*… just the joy, the joy of it*'. Teachers shared their wishes for students '*to understand the potential value [of the subject]*' and experience its continuing worth. Another teacher in England captured this desire by saying, '*you just hope that they read and you hope that they write … value that as much as I do and people in the past have done*'. Those ongoing connections with time are acknowledged again.

The teachers' aspirations for their students focussed on a construction of English that revealed qualities for making personal connections, empowering their self-development and equipping students for life beyond school. There was also a second data grouping of visions that addressed more specific elements of classroom study, and of some aspects of subject English itself that could be considered into the future.

4. English for creating readers and writers

I hope … just fostering a greater love for literature. (ET, NSW)

The dataset featuring English as a subject was characterised by the identification of key elements of current study and also viewed through a bigger conception for the future. Patterns of dimension and increase were evident, with descriptors such as 'greater' and 'more' repeated to echo a desire for future expansion, while also indicating a contrast with the present. Current curricula were implied to be narrow and limiting of students' choice and engagement. This is evident in the wishes of a teacher from NSW who responded, '*I'd like to see more choice for students … I'd like to see a lot more reading, a lot more writing*'. Her comparisons between the present and future are reinforced by the insistent use of 'a lot more'.

It was evident from an examination of specific themes identified by the teachers that they shared an aim of creating self-reliant readers and writers. Their responses were characterised by references to 'texts', 'literature', 'written language' and 'reading' that linked to their views about the skills and textual applications of English. The following selection of quotes captures their aspirations:

I think … readers and writers who are confident, who feel as though they can find enjoyment in it, and not just see it as a skill. (HT, England)

I'd like them to be confident in how they're expressing themselves and how they're using written language. (ET, NSW)

I think to create a space where more authentic reading experiences can be had by students. (ET, England)

These hopes for future achievements merge the previously identified patterns of life experience, student agency and the greater importance of English with some specific elements of study. These are generative, and embedded with anticipated future benefits for students. This teacher's vision conveys an awareness of the potentiality that can come from reading with lifelong consequences:

I would hope that we were able to inspire children to become readers … Almost regardless of what they're reading because, you know, there's no knowing where that will take them. (ET, England)

He sees a teacher's role as being to 'inspire' reading because reading opens up new possibilities for the future. The nature of the material is not as important to him as actually being a reader. This was like one NSW teacher's view that an appreciation of reading could come in many forms. She said, '*I would love them to see its value … not just in terms of literature but in terms of seeing its value in other contexts*'. Another teacher in NSW suggested a contrast between her present experiences and her future wishes for '*greater dialogue and more autonomy over picking texts and pieces of literature*'. More independence of choice was an underlying thread in the data, with teachers in both countries desirous of greater professional decision-making and individualised curriculum customisation when teaching their future students.

5. Subject English into the future

I hope that future students will get a broader experience of English than the current ones, where it is about their own experiences of English. (ET, England)

This final grouping brings together firm ideas about change embedded in a pattern of continuities for English. Again, the teachers move beyond the tensions of the present into an imagined future. A measurement of increase and the nomination of familiar subject components are evident. There is a clear reflection of what the teachers value now and what they desire to see continue or change in the future. Personal connections, a breadth of experiences and space for exploration for students were typically prioritised. However, the teachers also addressed a variety of issues and aspects related to policy, the nature of subject content and the framing of curriculum.

Examples of a desire for future changes in policy emphases and decisions reflected both local and contextual influences and individual teacher concerns. A Head Teacher in NSW wanted '*the whole idea of assessment re-defined*', while in England one teacher wanted '*much more development of curriculum*'. Policy constraints on text selection for senior students in England influenced responses such as, '*I would love it [English] to go back to being a bit more multicultural*' and '*I would like to see a curriculum that reflects students' actual lives*'. Differing opinions about prescribed textual inclusions appeared, with a Head Teacher in England indicating, '*I would like to retain an importance on the book*'. A NSW English teacher stated, '*I would still imagine a curriculum that is full of classics and is full of teachers that understand the classics and value them*'.

The expression of expansive views about the future study of English continued, with hopes that it would be '*far more interdisciplinary*' and '*build in some creativity*'.

Both of these opinions suggest a current absence of the aspects that the two teachers perceived as important. Interestingly, one early career teacher in NSW felt that the present construction of English was too open and nebulous, stating, '*I want students to start seeing English as less of this subjective mess that they can't understand and think more of it in terms of a skill-set learning*'. She desired a clearer focus to guide her work, and wanted English to be skills-based for students, a view that did not appear to be shared by other, more experienced teachers.

The obvious repetition in a NSW Head Teacher's hope for '*smaller groups where there's time embedded for individual time as well as collective time*' echoed a general agreement that '*there's hardly any thinking time*'. The participant teachers have confident priorities for the allocation of the time they have in their English classrooms. All would change parts of their present content and approaches by enhancing some aspects and devoting more time to them, or by reconsidering what was given significance and exploring different inclusions and other practices.

Reflections about the teachers' visions

> *Something that encourages them to love reading, that encourages them to be curious, that equips them with experiences and with empathy that acts as a sort of guide as they go through life and when they encounter things.* (ET, England)

As their visions for future students reflect what they value, what they view as important in their subject content and in their practice, it is clear 'what matters' to these English teachers. They show a recognition of the continuities of English teaching over time, and indicate how these may be enhanced beyond the present. Strong features include an awareness of change and its necessity, and an acknowledgement of development and expansion as important for students' learning experiences. These are accompanied by a projection of confident professional identity constructions.

All teachers had a 'vision' for the future and shared it enthusiastically. They looked forward and connected emotionally with their views; the predominance of words associated with affect demonstrated the importance of this for them. One teacher in England reported that he would be leaving teaching at the end of the year and was frank throughout the interview about his work challenges. However, he stressed that he wanted students to experience 'joy', a word he repeated five times before finally ending the interview with '*make sure I get the word "joy" in*'. This was a pertinent expression, given the ongoing pressures on the profession. The roles of emotion, pleasure and the affective appeal of English formed a strong pattern in the responses. Teachers perceived their subject in personal terms as offering much more to students than material learning, and valued it as something that endures beyond the classroom.

Embedded in all this is that the teachers ascribed to English a transformative power, able to bring about life changes. There was an interesting animation through the imbuing of values and affective influences into our school subject. Additionally, the teachers were aware of the need for change in English, and perceived dynamic development as essential. This was evident in their suggestions of expanding the range of texts for study, exploring a wider range of perspectives in the classroom, freeing up some of the constraints of prescription and assessment, and in their desire to customise their practice more for specific students. Many felt that current curricular requirements were restrictive and limited the possibilities for openness and student engagement.

However, it was also clear that teachers did not wish to ignore the traditions of the subject, as there was an obvious sense of continuity, though this was frequently evoked along with a movement towards 're'-making opportunities for the future. The notable use of words with the 're' prefix highlighted this connection, but these were offered along with a shift in focus to new ways, and through forward-looking regeneration. What was, and is, valued about English should be crafted into a fluid connection with the future. It was unquestioned that there are aspects of English that do need to change, but the teachers' visions affirmed that there were also important features that should endure.

Students were firmly at the centre of the teachers' projections, and they were imagined in terms of their agency, capacity-building and holistic development. Recurrent threads imagined future students as active, curious, autonomous, creative and engaged, with choice and time to learn in English, and the ability to explore projects and texts that would enhance their critical thinking and their empathy. A high priority was placed on students' pleasure and enjoyment. Many teachers also valued experiencing an awareness of the wider world and building a perspective beyond the subject and classroom in their aspirations for future students.

This group of English teachers displayed strong, confident identity formation. A fusion of their personal and professional identities became clear as they spoke with passion about what they valued. The close alignment of what each teacher valued personally about English, and their aspirations for the subject in professional terms, was a notable characteristic that has been previously identified (O'Sullivan, 2007). It seems that the opportunity to look to the future allowed a brief freeing-up from the present and a chance to speak about what really mattered to them.

We saw rich and personalised constructions and reconstructions of English in the responses. The framing of English for the future was much less about teaching something specific and far more about offering students a rich, enduring experience of their world. An element of intangibility permeated some replies, a sense of something just beyond where we are now, which was enhanced by the emotional and speculative language used. The importance of having a vision was acknowledged, as the teachers could reflect beyond their immediate contexts and project positive futures even while managing their stated difficulties in the present. This final interview question offered them an opportunity to look ahead and to contemplate possibilities without local limitations.

However, the future is not all rosy. There are clear tensions in the findings where obvious contrasts are exposed in terms of the teachers' agency and autonomy and what they would wish for future students. Three key areas to note are: a narrowing of curricula, evidenced particularly in text choices; a perceived misalignment of students' needs and capabilities for twenty-first century learning with current limiting curricula, assessment and pedagogies; and a desire for greater openness and inclusion while facing institutionally based marginalisation and cultural narrowness. As one teacher in England reflected, '*I just hope we can get the balance where actually coming out with results and grades is balanced with the stuff that you remember*'.

A fundamental question remains: 'What is English?'. It appears to hold strong personal meanings for these teachers and is constructed here in emancipatory ways. Their views reflect the scholarship in the field about the ways in which the subject can be shaped and interpreted in varying contexts: teacher expertise and agency are central factors, along with the ability to decide, choose and craft a version of English that supports individual practitioners' values and beliefs. Importantly, and equally, these teachers also affirm the priority of student agency.

These perspectives raise questions about how the subject of English can encompass diversity and eclecticism to include both intangible and tangible elements – how it can find '*where the place is, where the room is, for doing your own thing*' (HT, England). To discover the freedom of possibilities with the broadest scope for future students of English requires our deep consideration.

As Luke (2004) suggested many years ago, it remains an ambitious project:

> What is needed is a renewed sense of the purposes and consequences, powers and practices of English, of the intellectual, ideological, and moral force of all forms of representation and, equally, a strong sense of 'English' as a language, as a mode of information, as a multifaceted and ambivalent cultural force across the practices and technologies of economic and cultural globalization (p. 94).

Concluding thoughts

An obvious provocation is 'What does subject English "need" for the future?' Our teachers have gazed optimistically into the future and offered their insights and wishes for students yet to come. They have drawn on their strong beliefs about the enduring value of English, and asserted their passion for the engaging experiences that can be achieved in classrooms. In what ways might their visions become a reality?

Goodwyn (2019b) states some essential requirements for our action:

> We need to wrest back more control of the school curriculum and develop assessments that fit with the deep capabilities of the subject, more difficult to 'measure' but far more important for society. We need to ensure our school students get the message about the deep value of English and so we will need to articulate this message very strongly, and not just demonstrate our values but describe them. (p. 51)

Acknowledging the obvious thread of continuity evident in the views of these English teachers from two different countries reminds us of the many influences that have shaped our subject and ourselves over time. Even though they were in different contexts, they affirmed some abiding and strong principles of English teacher identity. Gibbons (2017) advises that '… an appreciation of the history of English should empower English teachers of the future to know that their collective agency is the most powerful shaper of the subject' (p. 165).

These English teachers celebrated their professional

and personal commitment to their subject and shared clear, thoughtful visions for their future students. They shaped their responses in ways that privileged their classrooms *'as a refuge'* (ET, England) and a space where students could be *'valued and always see light'* (ET, NSW). Against the realities of over-regulation, the intensification of their work, and their limited opportunities for curricular decision-making, they looked forward to a re-animation of the powerful exchanges of learning that they value for their students in English classrooms. Hearing the hope in these practitioners' voices reminds us of the importance of continued advocacy for personal expression, inclusivity, and professional trust and innovation in subject English.

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If

Karoline Hlawatsch
Australian International School, Singapore

Context
This is the winning poem from the IFTE conference poetry competition, which entailed writing a poem based on the concept of 'If'.

You ask me if
you can stay back and finish your poem.
If you can add to it
if you can edit it
if I can read it
if I can check it
if you can record it
if you can present it
if … if …
And
if your eyes were
not gleaming like galactic globes.
And
if your cheeks were not glowing
like the sun.
And if your enthusiasm didn't
hit me like a comet.
I would have cried a constellation of tears.
Instead,
I said, 'Sure … if
you like—
continue, create, craft—
and I will be here orbiting around you'.

(AATE/IFTE – 8 July 2020)

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& READing VIEWing

with Deb McPherson and Jane Sherlock

If only … we had all these texts in our classrooms

Abstract: This IFTE edition of *Reading and Viewing* reflects the authors' presentation at the AATE/IFTE 2020 conference as part of the panel 'Inspiring Teenagers' Reading Lives'. Many of the texts mentioned in this column are newer texts that will find their way into students' lives; others are familiar texts that have already resonated in many classrooms. Australian texts and texts from other parts of the world are well represented. There are multimodal texts, novels, plays, poetry and non-fiction. The presentation for the AATE/IFTE 2020 Conference focused on the vital importance of encouraging students to see themselves as readers and on the benefits that reading can bring. Texts referred to are often grouped together to promote a diversity of representations and to support student choice and wide reading.

A special thank you to Helen Sykes and Ernie Tucker. Over many years they reviewed and suggested countless texts to Australian English teachers and members of AATE and ETA NSW. We are very grateful to walk in their footsteps.

Background

Adolescents need time and encouragement to read and write in the secondary school classroom. They benefit from reading widely and having some choice over what they read. They benefit, (as we all do), from reading for pleasure and from models of writing that speak to their interests and enthusiasms. Reading begets writing.

Manuel and Carter (2015) point out the research findings of the report by the Centre for Youth Literature (2009) which affirm that reading for pleasure matters because it:

- supports broader literacy development and learning
- enables young people to develop their own, better-informed perspective on life
- is a safe, inexpensive, pleasurable way to spend time
- allows young readers to understand and empathise with the lives of those in different situations, times and cultures and
- improves educational outcomes and employment prospects.

Reading and viewing *in the classroom* enriches students' imagination, creativity, worldview, literacy and empathy and needs to be reclaimed. Teachers who model reading support students to see themselves as readers. Teachers and students benefit when they both expand their knowledge of Young Adult Literature and Children's Literature.

Students also benefit when the books, plays, poems and multimodal texts in the book room and on their screens reflect not only their own experiences in their country and the world, but also the experiences of others. No student in Australia should grow up without finding texts in their classroom that reflect their own lives. Text choices in the classroom should reflect the diversity in our world and the lives of our students. As Katherine Rundell (2009) points out:

> … fiction, in giving you a front row seat to another person's heart allows, you to be … [anything] – but every child does urgently need to find themselves *somewhere* (p. 58)

Engaging students' interest through the Australian National Cross Curriculum Priorities (CCPs)

Figure 1. Cross curriculum priorities from the Australian Curriculum website

Exploring texts through the lens of the CCPs helps to broaden student experiences of significant aspects of living in contemporary Australia. English, as a secondary subject, is in a privileged position to

use an across-the-curriculum perspective. There are many novels, plays, poems and multimodal texts that can be explored to see *how* they represent these CCPs and to help develop critical literacy, empathy and understanding.

Texts for *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Histories and Cultures*

Figure 2. Texts for *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Histories and Cultures*

First Nations students will 'see themselves, their identities and their culture reflected' (ACARA, n.d.[a]) in the texts set out in the table below. All students can share in respect for, and recognition of, the world's oldest continuous living culture.

Many of these texts could float between Years 7/8 and Years 11/12 dependent on the specific needs and interests of your students. For example, the brief verse novel, *Sister Heart,* by Sally Morgan, which explores the stolen children through the eyes of a child, or the joy and celebration of *Bran Nue Dae,* are texts that could be used in many classrooms. Ali Cobby Eckermann's collection, *Inside My Mother,* has almost 100 poems; (for NSW teachers – while six are set for the NSW HSC, many more are available for students to explore in Years 9–10). The picture book, *Maralinga, the Anangu Story,* is a collaboration between the Oak Valley and Yalata Communities and author Christobel Mattingley. Together, they have used a range of print and visual media, to tell *the Anangu story* of the atomic bomb tests at Maralinga and their deadly consequences.

Texts for *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Histories and Cultures*	**Years**
Bran Nue Dae directed by Rachel Perkins (2009)	9/10
Catching Teller Crow Ambelin Kwaymullina Ezekiel Kwaymullina (2018), Allen & Unwin, 197pp.	9/10
Cleverman created by Ryan Griffin directed by Wayne Blair and Leah Purcell (2016), MA	11/12
Fire Front: First Nations Poetry and Power Today edited by Alison Whittaker (2020), University of Queensland Press, 178 pp.	9/10
Inside My Mother Ali Cobby Eckermann (2015), Giramondo, 91pp.	11/12
Maralinga, the Anangu Story Oak Valley and Yalata Communities with Christobel Mattingley (2009), Allen & Unwin, 72pp.	7/8
Rabbit Proof Fence directed by Phil Noyce (2002) PG	7/8
Rainbow's End Jane Harrison (2013), Currency Press *e-book*	9/10/11/12
Sister Heart Sally Morgan (2015), Fremantle Press, 251pp.	7/8
Sweet Country directed by Warwick Thornton (2018)MA	11/12
The Drover's Wife Leah Purcell (2017), Currency Press, 80pp.	11/12
The Final Quarter directed by Ian Darling (2019)	9/10
The Rabbits John Marsden and Shaun Tan (2010), Hachette Australia, 48pp.	9/10
The Secret River Andrew Bovell, Kate Grenville (2013), Currency Press, 128pp.	9/10/11/12
The Yield Tara June Winch (2020), Penguin Random House, 312pp	9/10/11/12
Ubby's Underdogs: The Legend of the Phoenix Dragon Brenton E Mckenna (2011), Magabala Books, 160pp.	7/8
Uluru Statement From The Heart Delegates at the Referendum Convention at Uluru. (26 May 2017)	7/8/9/10/ 11/12
Young Dark Emu Bruce Pascoe (2019), Magabala Books, 80pp.	7/8

Table 1. Texts for *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Histories and Cultures*

Texts for *Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia*

There are many new texts that will help Australian students to get to know the geographic and cultural neighbourhood in which they live. The diversity of Asian societies and traditions, their past and present achievements and links and connections with Australia and Australians are strengthened when the literary work of Asian Australians, who often think and create in two or more languages and cultures, are explored.

Trash has been widely used in Year 6 and 7 classrooms while the illustrated *Wicked Warriors and Evil Emperors* is full of surprises with its information about the ancient and fascinating culture of China. The *Natural Disaster Zone* series has wide appeal for students. *Angel,* set in the Philippines during the typhoon Haiyan, was

written by ABC reporter Zoe Daniel who was one of the first journalists to report from the devastated area. Students in Years 10 and 11 will be engaged by Vivian Pham's *The Coconut Children*. Pham explores growing up Vietnamese Australian in Cabramatta in the 1990s, and she balances love and trauma with wit and skill. Senior students will also appreciate *Contemporary Asian Australian Poets* (2013), a striking collection of poetry. The three introductions by Adam Aitken, Kim Cheng Boey and Michelle Cahill provide erudite commentary on the complexity and enrichment of inhabiting, and moving between, different cultures and countries.

Figure 3. Texts for *Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia*

Texts for *Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia*	**Years**
Angel: Through My Eyes – Natural Disaster Zones Zoe Daniels (2018), Allen & Unwin, 178pp.	7/8
Between Us Clare Atkins (2018), Black Inc, 269pp.	9/10
Chenxi and the Foreigner Sally Rippen (2002), text publishing, 208pp.	9/10
Hotaka: Through My Eyes – Natural Disaster Zones John Heffernan (2017), Allen & Unwin, 204pp.	7/8
Life of Pi directed by Ang Lee (2012) PG	9/10
Lion directed by Garth Davis (2017) PG	7/8/9/10
Mao's Last Dancer directed by Bruce Beresford (2009) PG	7/8
Om Shanti Babe Helen Limon (2012), Frances Lincoln, 192pp.	7/8
Pavanna: A Graphic Novel Deborah Ellis (2018), Allen & Unwin, 80pp.	7/8
Princess Mononoke written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki (1998) M	9/10
Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes Eleanor Coerr (1977), Puffin, 80pp.	7/8
Shaozhen: Through My Eyes – Natural Disaster Zones Wai Chim (2017), Allen & Unwin, 197pp.	7/8
Sold Patricia McCormick (2006), Allen & Unwin, 288pp.	7/8
The Coconut Children Vivian Pham (2020), Vintage, 282pp.	9/10/11/12
The Spare Room Kathryn Lomer (2004), UQP, 180pp.	9/10
The Surprising Power of a Good Dumpling Wai Chin (2019), Allen & Unwin, 392pp.	9/10
Trash Andy Mulligan (2010), David Fickling, 211pp.	7/8
Wicked Warriors and Evil Emperors: The True Story of the Fight for Ancient China Alison Lloyd and Terry Denton (2010), Penguin ebooks, 216pp.	7/8

Table 2. Texts for *Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia*

Texts for *Sustainability*

Figure 4. Texts for *Sustainability*

The capacity of earth to sustain all life has never been more important as climate change heightens our appreciation of just how fragile our tenure on this planet could be. As the Australian Curriculum points out, if we are not to compromise the 'ability of future generations to meet their needs', then we need to develop 'the knowledge, skills, values and world views necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living.' (https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/sustainability/)

Winton's *Blueback* can provide a writing prompt for Years 7–12 and is a wonderful fable of the sea. *Avatar* still works as a powerful exploration of colonial exploitation and *The Road to Winter* trilogy will engage students in Years 9, 10 or 11 with its focus on contagion

Texts for *Sustainability*	Years
Avatar directed by James Cameron (2009) M	9/10
After the Lights Go Out Lili Wilkinson (2018), Allen & Unwin, 327pp.	9/10
Blueback Tim Winton (1997), Pan Macmillian, 151pp.	7/8
Children of Men directed by Alfonso Cuarón (2006) MA	11/12
Diary of a Young Naturalist Dara McAnulty (2020), text publishing, 240pp.	9/10
Fox Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks (2004), Allen & Unwin, 40pp.	7/8
How to Bee Bren MacDibble (2017), Allen & Unwin, 224pp.	7/8
Liquidator Andy Mulligan (2015), David Fickling Books/Scholastic Australia, 392pp.	7/8
No-one is too Small to Make a Difference Greta Thunberg (2019), Penguin, 112pp.	7/8/9/10
Station Eleven Emily St. John Mandel (2014), Picador, 333pp.	11/12
Tales from the Inner City Shaun Tan (2018), Allen & Unwin, 211pp. (illustrated short stories)	9/10
The Dog Runner Bren MacDibble (2018), Allen & Unwin, 235 pp	7/8
The Dream of the Thylacine Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks (2011), Allen & Unwin, 32pp.	7/8
The Explorer Katherine Rundell (2017), Bloomsbury, 394pp.	7/8
The River and the Book Alison Croggon (2015), Walker Books, 144pp.	7/8
The Road to Winter Trilogy: The Road to Winter (2016) 230pp. *Wilder Country* (2017) 256pp. *Land of Fences* (2019) 246 pp., Mark Smith, text publishing	9/10/11/12
The Wall John Lanchester (2019), Faber and Faber, 288pp.	9/10/11/12
WALL•E directed by Andrew Stanton (2008) G	7/8

Table 3. Texts for *Sustainability*

and survival and the refuge to be found in the Australian landscape. Shaun Tan's *Tales from the Inner City,* an astonishing collection of stories and images about human relationships with animals, both real and imagined, could be used in many classrooms. Students will not forget these tales of crocodiles living in high rise apartments, of young people fishing for moonfish from the rooftops of apartments or bears indicting humans, for murder and genocide, under the bear legal code.

Multimodal Texts

The Australian National Curriculum defines Multimodal texts as texts that 'combine language with other means of communication such as visual images, soundtrack or spoken words, as in film or computer presentation media.' (ACARA, n.d.[b]). The NSW *K-10 English Syllabus* (2012) Glossary defines *multimodal* as:

> comprising more than one mode. A multimodal text uses a combination of two or more communication modes, for example: print, image and spoken text as in film or computer presentations. (NESA, 2012, p. 120)

The more recent NSW English Syllabuses for Years 11/12 continue this definition. Picture books, graphic novels, websites, films, apps, TED talks, PechaKucha presentations, digital essays, games and advertisements are among the crowd of multimodal texts available for students to enjoy, explore and interrogate in the classroom. They are also the texts that speak directly to the students about the complex visual, auditory and printed world in which they live.

Multimodal Texts for Years 7 & 8

Multimodal Texts for Years 7 & 8	Type
A Monster Calls Patrick Ness (2011), Walker Books, 215pp.	Illustrated novel
Ancient Mariner Big Read S.T. Coleridge Curated by Dr Sarah Chapman (2020), University of Plymouth https://www.ancientmarinerbigread.com	Website/readers' theatre
Australia to Z Armin Greder (2016), Allen & Unwin, 29pp.	Picture book
Coraline Neil Gaiman and Craig Russell (2002), Harper Collins, 192pp.	Graphic novel
Fox Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks (2004), Allen & Unwin, 40pp.	Picture book
Hansel and Gretel Anthony Browne (2008), Walker Books, 32pp.	Picture book
Hugo directed by Martin Scorsese (2011) PG	Film
Inanimate Alice http://www.inanimatealice.com Kate Pullinger and Chris Joseph (from 2005 – ongoing)	Interactive digital novel
Lion directed by Garth Davis (2017) PG	Film
Mao's Last Dancer (2009) directed by Bruce Beresford PG	Film
Maralinga, the Anangu Story Oak Valley and Yalata Communities with Christobel Mattingley (2009), Allen & Unwin, 72pp.	Picture book

More than a Kick Tayla Harris with Jennifer Castles, Allen & Unwin, 192pp.	Illustrated non-fiction
Moxie Jennifer Mathieu (2017), Hodder, 344pp.	Illustrated novel
Piggybook Anthony Browne (1986), Dragonfly Books, 32pp.	Picture book
Rabbit Proof Fence directed by Phil Noyce. (2002) PG	Film
Ride Like A Girl directed by Rachel Griffiths (2020) PG	Film
Rules of Summer Shaun Tan (2013), Hachette, 48pp.	App/ picture book
Sea Prayer https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/01/sea-prayer-a-360-story-inspired-by-refugee-alan-kurdi-khaled-hosseini	Animated story
Sea Prayer Khalid Hosseini illustrated by Dan Williams (2017), Bloomsbury, 44pp.	Illustrated poem
Spirited Away directed by Hayao Miyazaki (2001) PG	Film
The Mysteries of Harris Burdick Chris Van Allsburg (1984), Houghton Mifflin, 32pp.	Illustrated puzzles
The Assassination of Brangwain Spurge MT Anderson and Eugene Yelchin (2018), Walker Book, 544pp.	Graphic novel
The Chronicles of Harris Burdick Chris Van Allsburg (2011), Houghton Mifflin, 195pp.	Illustrated stories
The Dam David Almond and Levi Pinfold (2018), Candlewick Studio, 31pp.	Picture book
The Dream of the Thylacine Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks (2011), Allen & Unwin, 32pp.	Picture book
The Graveyard Book Vol 1 Neil Gaiman illustated by P Craig Russell (2014), Bloomsbury, 192pp.	Graphic novel
The Graveyard Book Vol 2 Neil Gaiman illustated by P Craig Russell (2015), Bloomsbury, 176pp.	Graphic novel
The Highwayman Alfred Noyes and Charles Keeping (1987), OUP, 32pp.	Illustrated poem
The Hunt for the Wilderpeople directed by Taika Waititi (2016) PG	Film
The Lost Thing Shaun Tan (2000), Hachette, 32pp.	Picture book
The Lost Thing Shaun Tan (2010), short film PG	Film
The Ocean Was Our Sky Patrick Ness, illustrated by Rovina Cai (2019), Walker Books, 160pp.	Illustrated novel
The Tunnel Anthony Browne (1989), Walker Books, 32pp.	Picture book
Ubby's Underdogs: The Legend of the Phoenix Dragon Brenton E Mckenna (2011), Magabala Books, 160pp.	Graphic novel
Voices in the Park Anthony Browne (2001), DK Pub Inc, 32pp.	Picture book
Wadjda directed by Haifaa Al-Mansour (2012) PG	Film
WALL•E directed by Andrew Stanton (2008) G	Film
Wicked Warriors and Evil Emperors: The True Story of the Fight for Ancient China Alison Lloyd and Terry Denton (2010), Puffin, 206 pp.	Illustrated non-fiction
Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book? Lauren Child (2012), Hachette, 32pp.	Picture book
Young Dark Emu Bruce Pascoe (2019), Magabala Books, 80 pp.	Picture book non-fiction

Table 4. Multimodal texts for Years 7–8

Figure 5. *Multimodal texts for Years 7 & 8*

The Dream of the Thylacine: A classic text for the classroom

Figure 6. *The Dream of the Thylacine*

The Dream of the Thylacine taps into Year 7 & 8 student interest about animal extinction and species sustainability. Teachers could introduce the text to students by using *The Guardian* article below which lists the animals under threat of extinction: https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/14/a-billion-animals-the-australian-species-most-at-risk-from-the-bushfire-cri

We could ask the question, 'If the brush-tailed rock wallaby dies out, or there are no more quokkas … does it really matter? Who cares?'

In contrast, *The Dam* by David Almond and Levi Pinfold is a new text for the classroom. Writer and illustrator have collaborated in a poignant record of a true story of the Northumberland landscape, and the power of music. Mike and Kathryn tell the story of the building of a new dam and what is lost from the environment and of how the music they play captures and celebrates that loss.

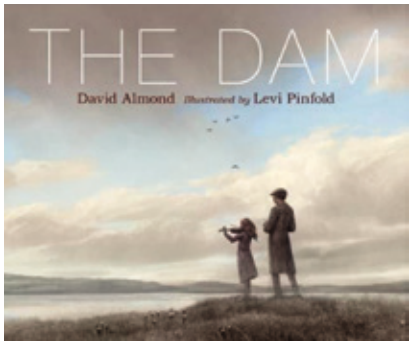

Figure 7. *The Dam*

An author study: Shaun Tan classic and contemporary in the classroom

Shaun Tan is one of the first and best creators of contemporary Australian picture books. *The Rabbits* (1998) is still a strident post-colonial voice exploring invasion and its impact. The minimal text and striking visuals ensure its relevance and resonance with students of many ages. It could be the starting point for a close study which then moves to student choice of other Tan picture books. The focus could be on the multimodality or the actual ideas and issues that Tan explores. Tan has an excellent website which features his books and a range of quirky, interesting short film interviews with him.

Figure 8. *Shaun Tan collection*

Non-fiction and the appeal of the real

Young Dark Emu (2019) is an impressive picture book for younger students styled in black, brown and orange and is a newer version of *Dark Emu*, Bruce Pascoe's ground-breaking best seller. *Dark Emu* confronted and dispelled many myths about pre-colonial indigenous life. One way to combat racism and build a strong reconciliation is through knowledge. Both texts, drawn from the diaries and records of white settlers and explorers, and the wisdom of Indigenous elders provide information about First Nations' agriculture, aquaculture, homes and food storage with concluding sections on Sacred Places and sustainable futures. *Young Dark Emu* would be an invaluable text for study from Years 5–8 as a foundation for the study of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures*. It would enrich an understanding of the work of many Indigenous authors, poets, dramatists, artists and filmmakers.

Figure 9. *Author Bruce Pascoe and 'Young Dark Emu'*

Multimodal Texts for Years 9 & 10

Figure 10. *Multimodal texts for Years 9 & 10*

Multimodal texts for Years 9 & 10	Type
Against All Odds Craig Challen and Richard Harris (2019), Penguin, 336pp.	Illustrated non-fiction
Animal Farm George Orwell, illustrated by Odyr (2019), Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 176pp.	Graphic novel
Azaria: A True History Maree Coote (2020), Walker Books, 44pp.	Picture book
Boy written and directed by Taika Waititi (2010) M	Film

Bran Nue Dae directed by Rachel Perkins (2009) PG	Film
Cicada Shaun Tan (2018), Lothian Children's Books, 32pp.	Picture book
Florence Ken Wong (2018) iTunes	App/game/ graphic novel
Give Nothing to Racism directed by Taika Waititi (2017) NZ Human Rights Commission https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9n_UPyVR5s	Video
Missing SBS https://www.sbs.com.au/missing/	Interactive website
Missing: The Abduction of Wendy Pfeiffer Kylie Bolton Long Read/Digital Essay https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/feature/missing-abduction-wendy-pfeiffer	Digital essay
Namatjira Project directed by Sera Davis, Umbrella Entertainment, (2017) M	Film
Pavanna: A Graphic Novel Deborah Ellis (2018), Allen & Unwin, 80pp	Graphic novel
Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/#/?part=tunnel-creek (2012), A New York Times journalism project	Digital essay
Tales from the Inner City Shaun Tan (2018), Allen & Unwin, 211pp.	Illustrated short stories
The Arrival Shaun Tan (2006), Lothian Books, 128 pp.	Picture book
The Australian Dream directed by Daniel Gordon (2019) MA	Film
The Boat; K'gari (Fraser Island); Exit Australia; Cronulla Riots SBS interactives can be found at http://www.sbs.com.au/features	Interactives
The Final Quarter directed by Ian Darling (2019) PG	Film
The Illuminae Files 1–3: *Illuminae* (2015) 608pp, *Gemina* (2019) 672pp., *Obsidio* (2018) 624pp. Amie Kaufman and Jay Kristoff, Allen & Unwin	Graphic novels
The Invention of Hugo Cabret Brian Selznick (2007), Scholastic Press, 533pp.	Illustrated novel
The Island Armin Greder (2002), Allen & Unwin, 32pp.	Picture book
The Great Cave Rescue James Massola (2018), Allen & Unwin, 240pp.	Illustrated non-fiction
The Rabbits Shaun Tan and John Marsden (1998), Hachette, 32pp.	Picture book
The Red Tree Shaun Tan (2010), Hachette, 32pp.	Picture book
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner Big Read curated by Sarah Chapman, Phillip Hoare and Angela Cockayne; Commissioned by the Arts Institute, University of Plymouth (2020) https://www.ancientmarinerbigread.com	Website
The Sapphires directed by Wayne Blair (2012) PG	Film
The True Story of the Three Little Pigs Jon Scieszka (2004), Penguin, 32pp.	Picture book
The Truth is a Cave in the Black Mountains Neil Gaiman (2014), Headline Publishing, 80pp.	Illustrated story
Welcome to Country: A Travel Guide to Indigenous Australia Marcia Langton (2018), Hardie Grant, 234pp.	Illustrated non-fiction
Welcome to Country: An Introduction to our First Peoples for Young Australians Marcia Langton (2019), Hardie Grant, 220pp.	Illustrated non-fiction
What They Took With Them – a List Jenifer Toksvig (2016) at www.withrefugees.org and http://www.acompletelossforwords.com and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xS-Q2sgNjI8 duration: 5 minutes 24 seconds	Readers' theatre poetry video
Your Name directed by Matoto Shinkai (2016) PG	Film

Table 5. Multimodal texts for Years 9–10

Stand out poetry

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner Big Read (2020) https://www.ancientmarinerbigread.com took three years to make and is an audio and visual immersive interpretation of Coleridge's epic 1798 poem. It was originally designed to be enjoyed on the internet over 40 enticing days. It can now be seen and heard in one piece where voices, art and sound effects combine to deliver a mesmerising interpretation of the poem, which could be enjoyed by students from Years 7–12.

First Nations speak out

The play *Namatjira,* by Scott Rankin, (set for the NSW HSC), would work well in Years 9–10 with Ian Darling's *The Final Quarter* and *Namatjira*. The DVD, which uses clips from the Belvoir production and archival footage with Albert Namatjira, provides excellent background and experience of the theatre production. Adam Goodes' story is inspiring and powerful, and this documentary is important for students to watch and discuss the way racism was used against a great Australian.

Figure 11. *Indigenous texts*

True crime

In *Missing* (https://www.sbs.com.au/missing/) students will encounter the absorbing story of the abduction and attempted murder of eight-year-old Wendy Jane Pfeiffer and her amazing survival. This true story is told in six chapters on the interactive website and in a long read digital essay, by Kylie Bolton (https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/feature/missing-abduction-wendy-pfeiffer) . Both are wonderful models for students to emulate in their own multimodal compositions.

Figure 12. *Missing*

Against the elements: The Thai rescue

Against All Odds and *The Great Cave Rescue* provide different perspectives on an unforgettable experience, the dramatic rescue of a young Thai soccer team from flooded caves. Both texts are compelling stories and show a struggle against overwhelming adversity. *Against All Odds* is written in the first person and captures the personal stories of Craig Challen and Richard Harris, the two Australian divers who were central to the rescue of the Thai soccer players. James Massola is a fine journalist and his account provides interesting and informative back stories.

Figure 13. *The Thai rescue*

Women and sport

Tayla Harris grew up sports mad and became a boxer and an AFLW player. When a famous action photograph of Tayla, taken by Michael Willson, resulted in vicious trolling, she fought back against the cyberbullies. *More than a Kick* shows that defiance and provides excellent advice on social media and how to use it safely. The first-person narrative, colourful format, large print and numerous photographs makes this text easy to read and view.

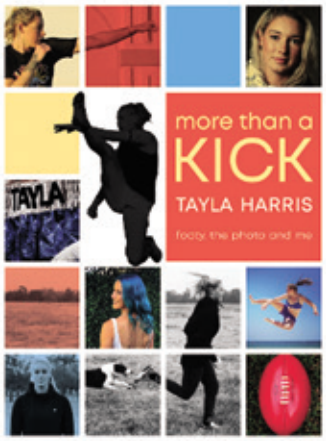

Figure 14. *More Than a Kick*

A guide to Indigenous Australia

Figure 15. *Welcome to County Travel Guide (2018)* and *Welcome to Country: An Introduction to our First peoples for Young Australians (2019)*

Welcome to Country: A Travel Guide to Indigenous Australia and *Welcome to Country: An Introduction to our First peoples for Young Australians*, are both curated guides by Professor Marcia Langton to Indigenous Australia. Readers will find information about languages and customs, history, native title, art and dance, storytelling, and cultural awareness and etiquette for visitors. Both texts will be welcome as invaluable support for the many First Nations texts explored in the classroom.

Multimodal Texts for Years 11 & 12

Figure 16. *Some Multimodal Texts for Years 11 & 12*

Multimodal Texts for Years 11 & 12	Type
Into the Wild directed by Sean Penn (2007) M	Film
Joe Quinn's Poltergeist David Almond, illustrated by Dave McKean (2019), Walker Books, 80pp.	Graphic novel
JoJo Rabbit directed by Taika Waititi (2019) M	Film
Kafka's Wound a digital essay by Will Self https://thespace.lrb.co.uk	Digital essay
Persepolis I and II by Marjane Satrapi (2003), Vintage, 352pp.	(Graphic novel)
Searching directed by Aneesh Chaganty (2018) M	Film
Sweet Country directed by Warwick Thornton (2018) MA	Film
The Complete Maus Art Spiegelman (2003), Penguin Books, 296pp.	Graphic novel
The Death of Stalin directed by Armando Iannucci (2018) MA	Film
The Graphic Canon edited by Russ Kick volumes 1–3 (2012–13) Seven Stories Press	Illustrated literature
The Great Gatsby Nicki Greenberg: a graphic adaptation based on the novel by F Scott Fitzgerald (2009), Allen & Unwin, 316pp.	Graphic novel
The Handmaid's Tale Margaret Atwood, Art and adaptation Renee Nault (2019), Vintage Publishing, 240pp.	Graphic novel
They Shall Not Grow Old directed by Peter Jackson (2018) MA	Film
TS Eliot https://tseliot.com (website)	Website
Years and Years directed by Simon Cellar Jones (2019) TV series M	Television series

Table 6. Multimodal Texts for Years 11 & 12

Fresh films to explore

Director Taika Waititi supports the New Zealand Human Rights Commission's campaign against racism with his classic Kiwi comedy and powerful short, satirical advertisement, *Give Nothing to Racism*. The endearing and wildly funny *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* could be used anywhere from Year 7 to Year 12, while Waititi's audacious satire on Hitler in *Jojo Rabbit* is more suited to Years 11 & 12.

Figure 17. *Taika Waititi films*

Contemporary possibilities

Searching by Aneesh Chaganty (2018) follows a panicked father's online moves as he tries to track down his missing teenage daughter. Its entire story is told on a computer screen via FaceTime chats, YouTube clips, Google searches, Excel spreadsheets, texts, Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr, notifications, reminders, calendars, Google Maps, GPS apps, Venmo, Reddit, webcams, and browsers. *Searching* is an excellent choice for students to explore the power and influence of social media and other technology, while enjoying a heart-stopping story.

Wide reading in Graphic Novels Years 7–12

Graphic novels are wonderfully versatile texts to use in the classroom. Gareth Hinds's rendition of *Beowulf* reinvigorates this classic poem for Year 8 and 9 students. Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* provides astute insight for older students to life in Iran during the Shah's overthrow through her black and white drawings. Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

Figure 18. *Searching*

Figure 19. *Wide reading in graphic novels*

is an enticing introduction for Year 7 & 8 students to film, and the use of image to advance the narrative.

Many teachers have used David Almond books, and *Joe Quinn's Poltergeist* – his latest collaboration with Dave McKean – is pacey and compelling. It is concerned with loss, families and a powerful poltergeist. The quirky illustrations are darkly clever and will be appreciated by students in Years 10 or 11.

Wide reading in Graphic Novels Years 7–12
Animal Farm George Orwell illustrated by Odyr (2019), Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 176pp.
Azaria: A True History Maree Coote (2020), Walker Books, 44pp.
Beowulf Gareth Hinds (2007), Candlewick, 128pp.
Coraline Neil Gaiman and Craig Russell (2002), Harper Collins, 192pp.
Joe Quinn's Poltergeist David Almond illustrated by Dave McKean (2019), Walker Books, 80pp
Louis Undercover Fanny Britt and Isabelle Arsenault (2019), Walker Books, 160pp.
Macbeth Gareth Hinds (2015), Candlewick, 152pp.
Maralinga, the Anangu Story Oak Valley and Yalata Communities with Christobel Mattingley (2009), Allen & Unwin, 72pp.
Pavanna: A Graphic Novel Deborah Ellis (2018), Allen & Unwin, 80pp.
Persepolis I and II by Marjane Satrapi (2003), Vintage, 352pp.
Poe Gareth Hinds (2017), Candlewick, 120pp.
Romeo and Juliet Gareth Hinds (2013), Candlewick, 144pp.
Tales from the Inner-City Shaun Tan (2018), Allen &Unwin, 211pp.
The Complete Maus Art Spiegelman (2003), Penguin Books, 296pp.
The Graveyard Book Vols 1 & 2 Neil Gaiman, illustrated by P Craig Russell (2014)
The Great Gatsby Nicki Greenberg: a graphic adaptation based on the novel by F Scott Fitzgerald (2009), Allen & Unwin, 316pp.
The Handmaid's Tale Margaret Atwood, Art and adaptation Renee Nault (2019), Vintage Publishing, 240pp.
The Illuminae Files 1–3: *Illuminae* (2015) 608pp, *Gemina* (2019) 672pp., *Obsidio* (2018) 624pp. Amie Kaufman and Jay Kristoff, Allen & Unwin
The Invention of Hugo Cabret Brian Selznick (2007), Scholastic Press, 533pp.
The Ocean Was Our Sky Patrick Ness, illustrated by Rovina Cai (2019), Walker Books, 160pp.
The Truth is a Cave in the Black Mountains Neil Gaiman (2014), Headline Publishing, 80pp.
Ubby's Underdogs: The Legend of the Phoenix Dragon Brenton E Mckenna (2011), Magabala Books, 160pp.

Table 7. Wide Reading in Graphic Novels

Fiction for Years 7 & 8

Figure 20. *Fiction for Years 7–8*

Fiction for Years 7 & 8
A Monster Calls Patrick Ness (2011), Walker Books, 215pp.
Across the Risen Sea Bren MacDibble (2020), Allen & Unwin, 288pp.
Angel: Through My Eyes – Natural Disaster Zones Zoe Daniels (2018), Allen & Unwin, 178pp.
Blueback Tim Winton (1997), Pan Macmillian, 151pp.
Chaos Walking Trilogy: The Knife of Never Letting Go (2008) 512pp. *The Ask and the Answer* (2009) 528pp. *Monsters of Men* (2010) 602pp. Patrick Ness, Walker Books
Creating Micro Stories Erika Boas and Emma Jenkins (2019), AATE, 162pp.
Faery Tales Carol Ann Duffy (2014), Faber and Faber, 368pp.
Hatchet Gary Paulsen (1987), Pan, 160pp.
Holes Louis Sachar (2001), Laurel Leaf Library, 256pp.
How to Bee Bren MacDibble (2017), Allen & Unwin, 224pp.
Liquidator Andy Mulligan (2015), David Fickling Books/ Scholastic Australia, 392pp.
Lockie Leonard Scumbuster Tim Winton (1995,2007) Pan Macmillan 162pp.
Lyla: Through My Eyes – Natural Disaster Zones Fleur Beale (2018), Allen & Unwin, 199pp.
Moxie Jennifer Mathieu (2017), Hodder, 344pp.
Om Shanti Babe Helen Limon (2012), Frances Lincoln, 192pp.
Parvana Deborah Ellis (2002), Allen & Unwin, 180pp (also in graphic novel form)
Rooftoppers Katherine Rundell (2013), Bloomsbury, 288pp.
Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes Eleanor Coerr (1977), Puffin, 80pp.
Sister Heart Sally Morgan (2015), Fremantle Press, 251pp.
Snow Gina Inverarity (2020), Wakefield Press, 200pp.
Sold Patricia McCormick (2006), Allen & Unwin, 288pp.
The Book of Dust Volume 1: La Belle Sauvage Philip Pullman (2017), Random House,592pp.
The Book of Dust Volume 2: The Secret Commonwealth Philip Pullman (2019), Random House, 656pp.
The Dog Runner Bren MacDibble (2018), Allen & Unwin, 235 pp.
The Explorer Katherine Rundell (2017), Bloomsbury, 394pp.
The Girl Savage Katherine Rundell (2011), Faber and Faber, 240pp.
The Good Thieves Katherine Rundell (2019), Bloomsbury Children's Books 320pp.
The River and the Book Alison Croggon (2015), Walker Books, 144pp.
The Wolf Wilder Katherine Rundell (2015), Simon & Schuster, 231pp.
Trash Andy Mulligan (2010), David Fickling, 211pp.
When Friendship Followed Me Home Paul Griffin (2016), text publishing, 247pp.
Where the World Ends Geraldine McCaughrean (2017), Osborne, 317pp.

Table 8. Fiction for Years 7–8

Close study of a classic: *A Monster Calls*

Figure 21. *A Monster Calls*

A Monster Calls is the beautifully written story of a son trying to make sense of his mother's cancer. A monster, the clever weaving of tales and Jim Kay's stunning graphics combine to produce a novel of great force and power. This novel has now been presented as an audiobook, film and a stage play. The combination of poignant written text and visuals provides numerous prompts for students as writers.

Author study Bren MacDibble

Figure 22. *Author study Bren MacDibble, Sustainability study*

Bren MacDibble is a New Zealander, and her novels have a strong environmental emphasis. Her narrators are often kids against the world. In *How to Bee* young Peony battles sexism, violence and greed while strong

characters also delight in *The Dog Runner* and *Across the Risen Sea*. Her texts often acknowledge the history and achievements of First Nations people. Her texts would make a powerful author study or environmental focus for students in Years 7 and 8.

Using short stories

Creating Micro-Stories is an anthology of 47 stories from established authors, teachers and students, as well as a valuable teacher resource. Micro stories are sudden, quick or flash fiction, and they are a wonderful way to get students engaged with writing. Students can read the stories and be inspired by writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Libby Gleeson, Will Kostakis, Oliver Phommavanh. They can also be impressed by the many stories by teachers and students published in this collection. Teachers can make use of the multiple strategies and ideas to be found in chapters on: character; point of view and perspective; playing with punctuation; mystery; suspense and crime fiction; fantasy and speculative fiction; historical fiction; and humour and satire. This text could be used in classrooms from Years 7 to 12.

Figure 23. *Creating Micro Stories*

Fiction for Years 9 & 10

Figure 24. *Fiction for Years 9 & 10*

Fiction for Years 9 & 10
After the Lights Go Out Lilli Wilkinson (2018), Allen & Unwin, 327pp.
Again Again E. Lockhart (2020), Allen & Unwin, 285pp.
All I Ever Wanted Vikki Wakefield (2011), text publishing, 208pp.
Ballad for a Mad Girl Vikki Wakefield (2017), text publishing, 309pp.
Between Us Claire Atkins (2018), Black Inc., 304pp.
Bro Helen Chebatte (2016), Hardie Grant, 232pp.
Burn Patrick Ness (2020), Walker Books, 383pp.
By the River Steven Herrick (2005), Allen & Unwin, 240pp.
Catching Teller Crow Ambelin Kwaymullina Ezekiel Kwaymullina (2018), Allen & Unwin, 197pp.
Chenxi and the Foreigner Sally Rippen (2002), text publishing, 208pp.
Deep Water Sarah Epstein (2020), Allen & Unwin, 240pp.
Feed M. T. Anderson (2003), Walker Books, 320pp. (set in NSW HSC)
Fly on the Wall E. Lockhart, (2006), Allen & Unwin ,182pp.
Genuine Fraud E Lockhart, (2017), Allen & Unwin, 262pp.
How it Feels to Float Helena Fox (2019), Pan Macmillan, 384pp.
In the Dark Spaces Cally Black (2017), Hardie Grant, 219pp
Inbetween Days Vikki Wakefield (2015), text publishing, 352pp.
Into That Forest Louis Nowra (2012), Allen & Unwin, 184pp
It Sounded Better in My Head Nina Kenwood (2019), text publishing, 304pp.
Jasper Jones Craig Silvey (2010), Allen & Unwin, 408pp.
Making Friends with Alice Dyson Poppy Nwosu (2019), Wakefield Press, 262pp.
Mallee Boys Charlie Archbold (2017), Wakefield Press, 284pp.

MARTians Blythe Woolston. (2015), Walker Books, 223pp.
Moonrise Sarah Crossan (2017), Bloomsbury, 383pp. (also Years 11–12)
One Sarah Crossan (2015), Bloomsbury, 429pp.
One Would Think the Deep Claire Zorn (2016), UQP, 320pp.
Prince of Afghanistan Louis Nowra (2016), Allen & Unwin, 184pp.
Release Patrick Ness (2017), Walker Books, 288pp
Small Spaces Sarah Epstein (2018), Walker Books, 378 pp.
The Aurora Cycle: Aurora Rising Book 1 Amie Kaufman, Jay Kristoff (2019), Allen & Unwin, 480pp.
The Aurora Cycle: Aurora Burning Book 2 Amie Kaufman, Jay Kristoff (2020), Allen & Unwin, 512pp.
The Coconut Children Vivian Pham (2020), Vintage, 282pp.
The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks E. Lockhart (2015), Allen & Unwin 345pp.
The Drover's Wives Ryan O'Neill (2018), Brio, 254pp.
The Flywheel Erin Gough (2016), Hardie Grant, 306 pp.
The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf (The Tribe 1) Ambelin Kwaymullina (2012), Walker Books, 400pp.
The *Rest of Us Just Live Here* Patrick Ness (2015), Walker Books, 352pp.
The Road to Winter Trilogy: The Road to Winter (2016) 230pp. *Wilder Country* (2017) 256pp. *Land of Fences* (2019) 246 pp. Mark Smith, text publishing
The Stars at Oktober Bend Glenda Millard (2016), Old Barn Book Ltd, 288pp.
The Story of Tom Brennan J C Burke (2005), Random House Australia, 288pp.
The Surprising Power of a Good Dumpling Wai Chin (2019), Allen & Unwin, 392pp.
This is How We Change the Ending Vikki Wakefield (2019), text publishing, 320pp.
Toffee Sarah Crossan (2019), Bloomsbury, 400pp.
We Come Apart Sarah Crossman and Brian Conahan (2017), Bloomsbury, 326pp.
We Were Liars E. Lockhart (2014), Allen & Unwin, 240pp.

Table 9. Fiction for Years 9 & 10

Author study: Sarah Crossan

Verse novels are an effective way to encourage adolescents to read. The amount of white space, the pace and the fact that 400 pages can be read in two hours are persuasive arguments for engagement. Sarah Crossan explores conjoined twins, and their lives together in *One*. *Moonrise* involves a brother on death row while an adolescent girl befriends an elderly woman with dementia in *Toffee*. Crossan joins with Brian Conaghan to give us a modern *Romeo and Juliet* narrative in London with disengaged adolescents in *We Come Apart*.

Figure 25. *Sarah Crossan author study*

Author study Vikki Wakefield

Australian author Vikki Wakefield creates three wonderful seventeen-year-old characters in her contemporary fiction. Mim, in *All I Ever Wanted,* is resilient and she needs to be as she tries to solve multiple problems before her birthday. Jacklin, in *Inbetween Days,* is well and truly stuck as she navigates that perilous time between adolescence and adulthood while *Ballad of a Mad Girl* looks at mystery and madness around risk-taker Grace. *This is How We Change the Ending* puts us in a dysfunctional house with a violent controlling dad as 16-year-old Nate, the male protagonist, uses his stories and his humanity as he tries to find his way out of danger and deprivation. Wakefield delivers powerful and realistically gritty stories of often disadvantaged adolescents in transit to adulthood and *This is How We Change the Ending* won the 2020 CBC award for best book for older readers.

Figure 26. *Vikki Wakefield author study*

Wild futures

Figure 27. *Wild futures study*

When the world faces turmoil and calamity, readers often turn to dystopian texts to imagine what futures lie ahead. *Feed* and *MARTians* are two satires which examine consumerism with different protagonists and outcomes. Cally Black's *In the Dark Spaces* takes us into space to examine first contact. A terrified teenage stowaway becomes the translator to an alien and endangered species who fight back. Black makes a convincing link between the colonialism of the past and the invasions of the future. Mark Smith's *The Road to Winter* is an all too convincing look at a future Australia through the eyes of the small number of survivors when contagion and fear have decimated society, while Lilli Wilkinson's *After the Lights Go Out* considers doomsday preppers and what happens to a community when catastrophe comes calling. These are five books guaranteed to get the classroom talking.

Continue Wide Reading in Years 11 & 12

The senior years in high school are a time for extending the wide reading programs of Years 7–10, so don't stop this vital pleasure in the classroom.

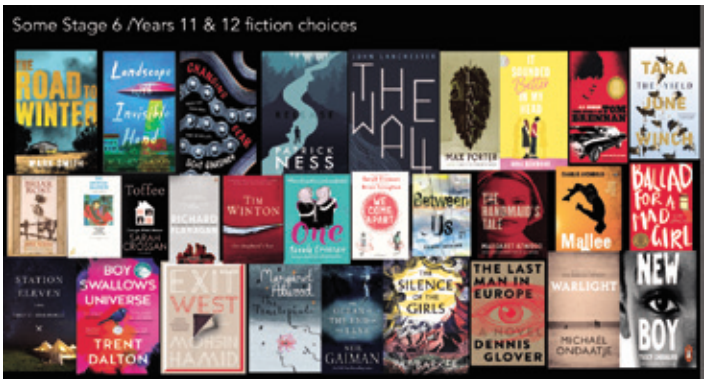

Figure 28. *Fiction for Years 11 & 12*

Fiction for Years 11 & 12
Between Us Claire Atkins (2018), Black Inc., 304pp. (also Years 9–10)
Boy Swallows Universe Trent Dalton (2018), 4th Estate, 471pp.
Briar Rose Jane Yolan (1992), St Martin's Press, 272pp. (also Years 9–10)
Bro Helen Chebatte (2016), Hardie Grant, 232pp. (also Years 9–10)
Changing Gear Scot Gardner (2018), Allen & Unwin, 277pp.
Exit West Mohsin Hamid (2017), Hamish Hamilton, 229pp.
It Sounded Better in My Head Nina Kenwood (2019), text publishing, 292pp.
Land of Fences Mark Smith (2019), text publishing, 246 pp.
Landscape with Invisible Hand MT Anderson (2017), Candlewick,160pp.
Moonrise Sarah Crossan (2017), Bloomsbury, 383pp. (also Years 9–10)
New Boy Tracy Chevalier (2017), Hogarth Press, 188pp.
Release Patrick Ness (2017), Walker Books, pp. 287.
Station Eleven Emily St. John Mandel (2014), Picador ,333pp.
The Coconut Children Vivian Pham (2020), Vintage, 282pp.
The Handmaid's Tale Margaret Atwood (1985), Vintage Publishing, 336pp.
The Last Man in Europe Dennis Glover (2017), Black Inc, 292pp
The Narrow Road to the Deep North Richard Flanagan (2013), Penguin Books, 480pp.
The Ocean at the End of the Lane Neil Gaiman (2014), Headline, 219pp.
The Penelopiad Margaret Atwood (2005), text publishing, 224pp.
The Road to Winter Mark Smith (2016), text publishing 230pp.
The Shepherd's Hut Tim Winton (2018), Hamish Hamilton, 267pp.
The Silence of the Girls Pat Baker (2018), Hamish Hamilton, 293pp.
The Story of Tom Brennan J C Burke (2005), Random House Australia, 288pp. (also Years 9–10)
The Wall John Lanchester (2019), Faber & Faber, 288pp.
The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts M H Kingston (1975), Penguin, 209pp.
Warlight Michael Ondaatje (2018), Penguin Random House, 290pp.
We Come Apart Sarah Crossan and Brian Conahan (2017), Bloomsbury, 326pp. (also Years 9–10)

Table 10. Fiction for Years 11 & 12

Exploring Texts through 'Rites of Passage'

Figure 29. *Rites of passage*

Figure 30. *Poetry choices for the classroom*

'Rites of passage' texts provide an opportunity for students to consider the experiences of people their own age. *Mallee Boys* by Charlie Archbold shows us how young men in rural areas have to grow up quickly in challenging situations. *Catching Teller Crow* uses different voices and provides a powerful First Nations connection. *The Coconut Children* by Vivian Pham set in Sydney's Cabramatta captures the tensions of growing up as a Vietnamese Australian facing both trauma and romance.

Exploring Texts through 'Rites of Passage'
Bro Helen Chebatte (2016), Hardie Grant, 232pp. (also Years 9 & 10)
Catching Teller Crow Ambelin Kwaymullina Ezekiel Kwaymullina (2018), Allen & Unwin, 197pp.
Changing Gear Scot Gardner (2018), Allen & Unwin, 277pp.
Diary of a Young Naturalist Dara McAnulty (2020), text publishing, 240pp.
It Sounded Better in My Head Nina Kenwood (2019), text publishing, 292pp.
Jasper Jones Craig Silvey (2010), Allen & Unwin, 408pp.
Mallee Boys Charlie Archbold (2017), Wakefield Press, 284pp
Release Patrick Ness (2017), Walker Books, 287pp.
The Coconut Children Vivian Pham (2020), Vintage, 282pp
The Road to Winter Mark Smith (2016), text publishing, 230pp.
The Surprising Power of a Good Dumpling Wai Chin (2019), Allen & Unwin, 392pp
The Story of Tom Brennan J C Burke (2005), Random House Australia, 288pp.
The Wall John Lanchester (2019) Faber & Faber, 288pp.
This is How We Change the Ending Vikki Wakefield (2019), text publishing, 320pp.

Table 11. Rites of passage

Poetry

Fire Front (2020) is a powerful and compelling anthology of First Nations poems. The poems, and the commentary that accompanies them, burn through difficult territory and bring pain, promise and change. The poems reward re-reading and reading aloud. And, as Ali Cobby Eckermann asks, 'When you have read these poems, also act.' These poems connect so powerfully to the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017) and remind us all of the justice and importance of its call for 'constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country.'

England: Poems from a School is a collection of poems by students, often migrants or refugees, aged from eleven to nineteen, from an English school in Oxford. The students' passion frequently comes from loss, and the memory of that loss, as they write about the pain of leaving home and making a new life in a different land. They have won every award going for poetry and their poems sing out to the reader.

In *Love is as Strong as Death,* Paul Kelly has chosen the poems he loves. He has included 'Uluru the statement from the heart'. It's a prose piece but he says it has 'the heart, hurt and urgency of great poetry' (p. 5). This collection could be used as a model for students to create their own poetry anthologies.

Contemporary Asian Australian Poets (2017) is a landmark collection of poetry by Asian Australian poets. (Six of the poems are on the NSW HSC list but there are many other poems for students to choose). It makes sense to buy this text as the three introductions will enrich student exploration and understanding and add a layer of insight into the lives of Australian poets with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Poetry	Type	Years
A Book of Luminous Things: An International Anthology of Poetry Czeslaw Milosz ed. (1996), Mariner Books, 320pp.	Anthology	9/10/ 11/12
A Poem for Every Day of the Year Allie Esiri ed. (2017), Pan Macmillan, 544pp.	Anthology	9/10/ 11/12
A Poem for Every Night of the Year Allie Esiri ed. (2016), Pan Macmillan, 544pp.	Anthology	9/10/ 11/12
Antipodes: Poetic Responses Margaret Bradstock ed. (2011), Phoenix Education, 163pp.	Anthology	7/8/ 9/10/ 11/12
Beowulf Gareth Hinds (2007), Candlewick Press, 128 pp.	Graphic novel	7/8
Brand New Ancients Kate Tempest (2013), MacMillan Digital Audio 79 minutes	Audio	9/10/ 11/12
Brand New Ancients Kate Tempest (2013), Picador, 47pp.	Epic poem	9/10/ 11/12
Contemporary Asian Australian Poets Adam Aitken, Kim Cheng Boey, and Michelle Cahill eds. (2017), Puncher & Wattmann, 255 pp.	Anthology	9/10/ 11/12
England: Poems from a School Kate Clanchy ed. (2017), Pan Macmilan, 80pp.	Student Anthology	7/8/ 9/10/ 11/12
Fire Front: First Nations Poetry and Power Today Alison Whittaker ed. (2020), UQP, 178 pp.	Anthology	9/10/ 11/12
First Blood Natalie D-Napoleon (2019), Ginninderra Press, 76pp.	Anthology	11/12
Inside My Mother Ali Cobby Eckermann (2015), Giramondo, 91pp.	Anthology	9/10/ 11/12
Let Them Eat Chaos Kate Tempest (2016), Picador, 72pp.	Epic poem	9/10/ 11/12
Love is as Strong as Death Paul Kelly (2019), Penguin, 352pp.	Anthology	11/12
Poems That Make Grown Men Cry: 100 Men on the Words that Move Them Anthony and Ben Holden eds. (2014), Simon & Schuster, 336pp.	Anthology	9/10
Poems That Make Grown Women Cry Anthony and Ben Holden eds. (2016), Simon & Schuster, 352pp.	Anthology	9/10/ 11/12
Ruby Moonlight Ali Cobby Eckermann (2011), Magabala Books, 74pp.	Epic poem	9/10/ 11/12
Someone Give this Heart a Pen Sophia Thakur (2020), Walker Books, 112pp.	Anthology	9/10/ 11/12
The Future Ancients Luka Lesson (2013), lukalesson.com.au 115pp.	Anthology	9/10/ 11/12
The Hollow of the Hand PJ Harvey and Seamus Murphy (2015), Bloomsbury, 232pp.	Multimodal	9/10/ 11/12
The Odyssey Homer translated by Emily Wilson (2018), Norton & Company, 582pp.	Epic poem	9/10/ 11/12
The Taste of River Water Cate Kennedy (2011), Scribe Publications, 96pp.	Anthology	9/10/ 11/12
What They Took With Them – A List Jenifer Toksvig (2016), at www.withrefugees.org and http://www.acompletelossforwords.com and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xS-Q2sgNjl8 duration: 5 minutes 24 seconds	Multimodal Readers' Theatre	7/8/ 9/10/ 11/12

Table 12. Poetry texts

Drama

While there has been a steep increase in excellent plays for senior students, there is still much ground to be made up for students in the earlier years. *A Ghost in My Suitcase,* adapted by Vanessa Bates from the novel by Gabrielle Wang, provides a welcome Australian play about Asian myths and culture for younger students as twelve-year-old Celeste travels to China to take back her mother's ashes and meet her ghost hunting grandmother.

Figure 31. *Plays for Years 9 and 10*

The *RSC School Shakespeare* collection, published by OUP, of plays which are often studied in the classroom, provides glossy, coloured images from contemporary productions and excellent explanations as well as a clear, and easy to follow, annotated text. *The Drover's Wife* by Leah Purcell reimagines the Lawson classic short story in a gripping and confronting play for older students.

Plays	Years
A Ghost in my Suitcase adapted by Vanessa Bates from the novel by Gabrielle Wang (2019), Currency Press, 56pp.	7/8
Behind the Beautiful Forevers David Hare (2014), Faber & Faber, 144pp.	9/10
Black is the New White Nakkiah Lui (2019), Allen & Unwin, 208 pp	11/12
Blackrock Nick Enright (1996), Currency Press, 72pp.	11/12
Cyberbile Alana Valentine (2013), Currency Press, 47pp.	7/8
Hoods Angela Betzien (2007), Currency Press, 64pp.	9/10
Inheritance Hannie Rayson (2003), Currency Press, 128pp.	11/12
Jasper Jones adapted by Kate Mulvany from the novel by Craig Silvey (2016), Currency Press, 79pp.	9/10
Kindertransport Diane Samuels (2008), Nick Hern Books, 120pp	11/12
Letters to Lindy Alana Valentine (2017), Currency Press, 48pp.	9/10
Patient 12 Kevin Summers (2014), Currency Press, 36pp.	9/10
Rupert David Williamson (2013), Currency Press, 96pp.	11/12
Seventeen by Matthew Whittet (2015), Currency Press, 54pp.	11/12
Single Asian Female Michelle Law (2018), Currency Press, 64pp.	9/10
Skate Debra Oswald (2004), Currency Press, 96pp.	9/10
Stories in the Dark Debra Oswald (2008), Currency Press, 72pp.	7/8
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time adapted by Simon Stephens from the novel by Mark Haddon (2013), Methuen, 150 pp.	9/10
The Drover's Wife Leah Purcell (2017), Currency Press, 80pp.	11/12
The Secret River Kate Grenville and Andrew Bovell (2013), Currency Press, 89pp.	9/10/ 11/12
The Shoehorn Sonata John Misto (1996), Currency Press, 80pp.	11/12
Things I Know To Be True Andrew Bovell (2017), Currency Press, 68pp.	11/12
Wasted Kate Tempest (2013), Methuen Drama, 57pp.	9/10/ 11/12

Table 13. Plays

Figure 32. *Plays for Years 11 & 12*

Exploring Other Lives and Experiences in Non-Fiction

Figure 33. *Non-fiction*

In *Diary of a Young Naturalist* (2020), the reader can discover a keen naturalist and a fine writer. Dara McAnulty is a 15-year-old autistic teenager, growing up in Ireland among a family of five, of whom four have autism. Dara's meticulous observations and his diary charts his year and the inspiration he finds in nature and provides riveting examples of how autism entwines his life.

Greta Thunberg has lit up the world with her school strike and is a voice for the youth of today. *No-one is Too Small to Make a Difference* (2019) provides the words behind some of her famous speeches, and students can link the words they read in the classroom to the vision they see of her on their screens.

The *Growing up …* series offers us the diversity and the experience of others. There is tough reading ahead about appalling ignorance and prejudice in the past and in contemporary times as well as celebration and joy. Teachers should be aware there is some strong and graphic language, especially in the *Growing Up Queer* and *Meet Me at the Intersection* texts. What these texts do is allow students to see that their lives and experiences are not singular but are lives which are shared and valued by others.

Exploring Other Lives and Experiences in Non-Fiction	**Years**
Against All Odds Craig Challen and Richard Harris (2019), Penguin, 336pp.	9/10/ 11/12
Diary of a Young Naturalist Dara McAnulty (2020), text publishing, 240pp.	9/10/ 11/12
Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia Anita Heiss ed. (2018), Black Inc, 331pp.	9/10/ 11/12
Growing Up African in Australia Maxine Beneba Clarke ed. (2019), Black Inc, 285pp.	9/10/ 11/12
Growing Up Asian in Australia Alice Pung ed. (2008), Black Inc, 288 pp.	9/10/ 11/12
Growing Up Muslim in Australia Demet Divaroren and Amra Pajalic eds (2014), Allen & Unwin, 228 pp	9/10/ 11/12
Growing up Queer in Australia Benjamin Law ed. (2019), Black Inc, 340pp.	9/10/ 11/12
Headstrong Daughters Nadia Jamal (2018), Allen & Unwin, 207pp.	9/10/ 11/12
Meet Me at the Intersection Rebecca Lim & Ambelin Kwaymullina eds (2018), Freemantle Press, 284pp. (Note the anthology contains non-fiction, fiction and poetry)	9/10/ 11/12
No-one is Too Small to Make a Difference Greta Thunberg (2019), Penguin Books, 112pp.	7/8/ 9/10/ 11/12
Talking to My Country Stan Grant (2016), Harper Collins, 230pp	9/10/ 11/12
The Great Cave Rescue James Massola (2018), Allen & Unwin, 221pp.	9/10/ 11/12
The Happiest Refugee Anh Do (2010), Allen & Unwin, 232 pp.	9/10/ 11/12
Young Dark Emu Bruce Pascoe (2019), Magabala Books, 80pp.	7/8

Table 14. Exploring Other Lives and Experiences in Non-Fiction

Conclusion

If only … governments and educational systems truly valued literature in all its variety there would be no need for lists like these. All teachers and students would have the opportunity and the time to read, view and discuss diverse texts in the classroom and to be inspired to create their own worlds, characters and texts. What a future they could build.

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AATE Life Membership

Life membership is the highest honour that AATE can bestow and this award recognises a sustained and outstanding contribution of service to the association and the wider English teaching profession. Recipients join a distinguished group of educators who have had a significant impact on English education in Australia.

RECIPIENT FOR 2021

AATE is pleased to recognise Raymond Misson as the recipient of life membership for 2021. The award was conferred at the AATE/ALEA Conference, delivered online in July 2021.

RAYMOND MISSON CITATION

Initial teacher education and teacher professional development

Following work in English departments at the University of Melbourne and the University of Sydney, Ray's contribution to initial English teacher education began in earnest in 1974 at the State College of Victoria (later the Melbourne Teachers College and Melbourne College of Advanced Education [MCAE]). The incorporation of MCAE into the University of Melbourne saw Ray take an important role leading the development and implementation of English teacher preparation programs, and eventually head the Department of Language, Literacy and Arts Education.

During this time, Ray served actively on VATE Council, an important time in the organisation's history.

Ray's contribution to teacher education has extended beyond the initial teacher education space. As well as being an invited speaker at state conferences in every state and territory, and with a long history of presenting practical sessions across multiple professional development contexts, Ray was invited by ETAWA in 2002 to deliver the Garth Boomer address, 'The origins of literacies: How the fittest will survive', where he explored the complex relationship between English literacy and education for a globalised world.

Professor Catherine Beavis (AATE Life member) says of Ray's 'profound influence' on English teaching in Australia that it has had a deep impact on the way teachers at all levels have thought about texts, literature, popular culture and reading. His impact is the product of a 'highly scholarly, ethical,

enquiring mind, mixed with deep respect for teachers.'

Susanne Gannon (editor *English in Australia* 2011–2015) concurs, speaking of Ray's 'sense of humour and pleasure', and the way 'complex ideas are unpacked clearly and pragmatically without condescending or underestimating the readers, and without sacrificing elegance or style.' She reminds us that one of Ray's many publications, *A brief introduction to literary theory*, resonated beyond Victoria. Susanne says she first encountered the text while teaching in a North Queensland high school when she was in a mid-career doldrums. Ray's work, along with the work of Annette Patterson, Bronwyn Mellor, Pam Gilbert, transformed and energised her teaching of texts and textuality.

Contribution to curriculum development

Ray's contribution to the profession has extended into the curriculum space and is most evident in the development of the VCE in Victoria in the late '80s and early '90s. Ray was the chair of the Text Selection Committee and argued for the need to include a wider range of texts to be studied in the revised English course, even if that meant a list of sixty texts. And popular texts were to be included on that list. Raymond Briggs' graphic novel *When the wind blows* was one such text. A media controversy ensued with charges of 'dumbing down the curriculum'. A 'comic book' given equal status with a Shakespeare play! Ray withstood pressure from both the conservative commentators and members of the academy, including powerful figures from his own university. As Ray was quoted in *The Age* over the issue 'Fights over English are not just fights about whether we should have films as texts in English classes, or whether to call "run" an intransitive verb or a material process; they are fights over how the world is to be seen, and what matters in it.'

Ray chaired the Secondary English Committee, a role which included responsibility for the 'heritage' courses that were phased out with the introduction of VCE. He then went on to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board that was developing the Study Designs and served as Chief Examiner for VCE English well into the '90s.

At the national level, Ray was involved in early meetings regarding a future National Curriculum for English, including service to reference groups.

Research into English

Ray's impact on research and theory regarding critical literacy and English teaching has been influential across the globe. A sign of the reach of his work is that *Critical literacy and the aesthetic: Transforming the English classroom*, co–authored with Wendy Morgan, was published by the American English teaching association, NCTE, and continues to be a source of reference for leading academics internationally.

In the editors' choice edition of *English in Australia* celebrating AATE's 50th anniversary, Ray's article, 'Understanding about water in liquid modernity: Critical imperatives for English teaching' was selected as the most significant contribution published under that editorship.

In writing about her choice of Ray's article for re-publication, Susanne foregrounds the underlying subtext of all of Ray's work: an ethical preoccupation with what sorts of subjects – human subjects – are produced by the work English teachers do. How do our students learn to think, feel, be, and act in the world with imagination, creativity, passion and empathy?

VATE, too, recognised the importance of Ray's theoretical work when it commissioned him to write *A brief introduction to literary theory* in 1994. In previous work with Ray, VATE saw the ways in which his theorising went along with many suggestions regarding texts and strategies for putting that theory into practice. The complementary nature of the theoretical and the practical was evident, too, in the structure of *Critical literacy and the aesthetic*. The texts chosen for examination reflected his ongoing belief that all texts could be subject to similar analysis, *Hamlet* as well as *The cat in the hat*.

When Ray was asked to reflect on *A brief introduction to literary theory* with a view to re–publication in 1997, about what he might have done differently, he said: 'I would be much more conscious of relating the theory to the work in cultural studies on the one hand and to work in critical literacy on the other … I would have more strongly emphasised the non-literary dimensions and political use that might be made of those ideas.'

Both Catherine and Susanne affirm the pioneering work Ray has done in taking his initial interest in literary theory into issues concerning the construction of subjectivity, the centrality to identity construction of class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, the fact that such matters should be the business of a contemporary English classroom, and in developing strategies for ensuring that they can be.

Catherine reminds us that Ray's thinking has always had a political edge. He championed the teaching of film and media, popular culture and everyday texts

when such ideas were in their infancy – to predictable outrage. Who can forget the outrage of that champion of cultural literacy, Kevin Donnelly, when Ray argued that a tissue box was worthy of study as a text in an English classroom? He advocated for new definitions of text and textual diversity with a tact that ensured that the pleasures students took in engaging with such texts could be complemented by developing a critical perspective on them.

Continued commitment through mentoring and peer-support

Despite attempting to step back from formal work some time ago, Ray continues to contribute to the development of others in the English teaching space. He is a mentor to several younger early career academics and has always been willing to review and advise those seeking guidance in this space. He continues to guest lecture in this area.

It is in recognition of these services to the Association and to the profession that AATE proudly awards life membership to Raymond Misson.

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IFTE 2003
MELBOURNE
Literacy for a Democratic Society

Strand Report

Keynote Speakers: Brian Cambourne, Linda Christensen, Nic Frances

Strand Convenor: Lorraine Wilson

Planning Committee Members: Debra Edwards, Marie Emmitt, Robin Perkins, Jo Ryan.

Pre-Conference Strand Description

In recent years educators have witnessed some disturbing developments across major democratic nations. These include government centralising of curriculum; the narrowing of the language curriculum where literacy is for the passive transmission of the status quo; government imposed testing; attacks on, and withdrawal of resources from, public schooling; the de-skilling of teachers.

While large corporations increase profits with the sale of mandated curriculum packages and compulsory test booklets, the government standardisation of curriculum and compulsory testing fail many of our students, particularly those from other than the mainstream cultural and social groups.

A democratic, just society is only possible when its members are informed, articulate and able to use literacy as a tool for critical enquiry. How then are such citizens developed? What is the role of public schools in developing such students? What are the literacy, English, communication needs of students at risk in post compulsory contexts, adult learning and community education, and how are these best met? Who best makes curriculum decisions which will facilitate the development of socially aware, articulate, enquiring students? How is the language of fast capitalism reconstructing notions of schooling , curriculum and assessment? What is the promise and what are the dangers of the interface between industry, enterprise and education? What place do 'workplace literacies' have in English curricula designed to develop socially aware, articulate, enquiring students? What is the relationship between literacy, poverty and disadvantage? What are the parameters for developing national language and literacy policies? Who should develop them and what are the resourcing and accountability implications of their implementation?

Post-Conference Report

It is recommended that:

1 IFTE actively promote the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations on November 20, 1959.

2 Education for an effective participatory democracy means:
- the development of a shared vision for education – a vision built upon: the valuing of all peoples; understanding of the interdependent nature of the relationships between the world's peoples and with their environments, and a wish for justice for all.
- equitable distribution of resources that does not further disadvantage already disadvantaged children
- teachers who explicitly communicate their beliefs and ideals and how these inform their teaching
- the support and strengthening of relationships between families and schools
- the involvement of community stakeholders in a shared development of curriculum, assessment and professional development that promotes social justice and democracy and is relevant to the needs of those involved
- resisting globalisation by any one dominant language.

3 Effective literacy education for participatory democracy means:

- valuing the languages and cultures of students and including these in classroom literacy programs
- teaching multiple literacies.
- teaching critical literacy, so developing an awareness of the relationship between language and power
- the use of accessible, inclusive language
- the practice and promotion of democratic ideals and social justice in classroom communities.
- local school communities being trusted to develop, in their own ways, teaching programs in their schools designed to work toward the shared vision for education.

4 Ensuring a range of literacies suited to the development of a democratic society means:

- careful monitoring to ensure that the literacies of marginalised groups are not excluded.
- support for teaching and professional development programs which give priority to: the languages and cultures of marginalised groups; new literacies such as those of new technologies, and to critical literacy.

5 Diverse groups and cultures can be valued by:

- providing access to the language of power by teachers actively working together with families and community members to provide social justice education in local communities.
- engaging with the language or languages the student brings to school.
- choosing texts that:
  – provide authentic portrayal of diversity
  – acknowledge variations within cultural groups
  – deepen cultural knowledge
  – provide historical context
  – move beyond a portrayal of victimisation
  – explore common ground
  – promote social responsibility

6 Rights and responsibilities of governments, schools, teacher education institutions, teachers and communities in planning for education for democracy means:

- the clear detailed delineation and description of these rights and responsibilities
- a free, democratic, well resourced, just and creative education for all.
- working towards a shared vision of a democratic society
- the promotion of dialogue between all stakeholders.

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