



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

## Idiom Vol 56, No 3 – Focus on Writing Call for contributions

The VATE Curriculum Committee is exploring the issue of **writing** in the next edition of Idiom (Vol 56, No 3) and is inviting **your contribution**.

In his collection of essays *In Writing: Essays on Literature*, Adam Phillips, who is both a practising psychoanalyst and a professor in the English Department at York University, has this to say about writing:

‘It is often amazing to people who like writing that most people are not at all interested in it. A lot of people, of course, find it useful, but it doesn’t give them the pleasure people who “love reading” can feel; nor the sense that people who study or teach literature can have that reading and writing are somehow essential to the lives they want to live. Whatever the appeal of writing is – and it must be considerable given its staying power – it is not clear how it is best served, other than that is, than by writing itself. Nor indeed what is being served in the valuing of it.’

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jun/05/in-writing-by-adam-phillips-psychoanalyst-as-unreliable-narrator>

Some of the propositions and questions Phillips raises can be applied to the writing culture in our schools. Do students (and for that matter, teachers) get ‘pleasure’ from writing? Or simply find it ‘useful’? And to what ends? As educators, do we have a clear sense of ‘how it is best served’?

And of course, we could ask more specific questions about how writing is conceptualised and valued in the curriculum. In what ways, if at all, have we moved on from Donald Graves’ 1978 comment: ‘The problem with writing is not poor spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting. The problem is no writing.’

The VATE Curriculum Committee invites you to consider the following questions about writing:

- What are the components of a productive writing program? Is there a space for drafting, conferencing, editing, teaching grammar / syntax / spelling in context, modeling, self-reflection and self-assessment, etc?
- Descriptive, narrative, expository, argumentative – are these ‘categories’ of writing useful ways of thinking about writing?

- How might a writing program and reading program complement one another?
- How have remote and online learning impacted on the way we teach writing?
- How do we encourage reluctant writers?
- How can we encourage all our students to think of themselves as authors as Graves argued?
- What impact does NAPLAN have on student writing?
- Is there writing beyond the TEEL essay?
- What are the issues in teaching and assessing 'creative writing'?
- What writing do our students engage in in out-of-school contexts? What are those contexts? Should we find a space for these contexts in the school curriculum?
- What do we know about writing in the digital age?
- As teachers, do we see value in thinking of ourselves as 'teacher writers'?

These questions about writing in the curriculum are not exhaustive. We would like to hear from VATE members about your strategies, programs and contexts for encouraging and nurturing writing.

Please email your contributions to [idiom@vate.org.au](mailto:idiom@vate.org.au) by **Monday 19 October 2020**.

Please get in touch if you wish to discuss the focus and length of your possible contribution: [idiom@vate.org.au](mailto:idiom@vate.org.au)

We look forward to hearing from you!