



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

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‘Mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors.’

Diverse voices in English

This edition of Idiom aims to spark conversation about the place of ‘diverse voices’ in our secondary English curriculum. As English educators, we recognise the transformative power of texts and story-telling, as something which can function as ‘mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors’ ([Sims Bishop, R, 1990](#)), creating opportunities for young people to develop empathy and see representations of themselves and others.

Literature can provide access, a portal, to a diversity of experiences. Stories can confront and provoke, challenging our students to reflect, question and shape their own perspective, developing their critical thinking as well as their literacy skills. The opportunity to view the world through different eyes, a new lens, can help students develop empathy and an understanding of the diversity of experiences and perspectives. It can also validate and affirm the life experiences of students who recognise themselves in the text being studied and encourage them to find their voice and tell their stories and those of their family and community. In today’s world, where prejudice persists and stories of violence and injustice against others dominate the news, the challenge for English educators is to select and teach texts which embrace diversity, plurality and engage students in necessary conversations to support their ability to critically read and navigate a democratic society. The English classroom is a space where everyone deserves to be seen and heard.

We encourage you to join in this important discussion about the place of diverse voices in our English classrooms and curriculum. We invite submissions exploring this theme and your experiences, as a reader and educator, at both a classroom and faculty level, in selecting and teaching diverse texts. Your contribution could be an article, anecdote, unit of work, or text review. You may like to consider the following:

- What are the voices that our students encounter through the texts that they read, watch, listen to in the English classroom? Are certain voices privileged over others, whether we realise it or not?
- How do we encourage and facilitate a diversity of voices to ensure that marginalised and minority voices are also heard and explored by our students?
- How can we support ourselves to feel more confident and empowered in teaching a diverse text that explores an experience, lifestyle, or culture that is unfamiliar to us?
- How do we support our students as together we open up new worlds through the shared experience of reading and studying a diverse text?
- How do we help our students connect with texts in which they can see themselves, their families and experiences represented?
- What diverse texts have you introduced and how have you rewritten or introduced new units of work in order to include more diverse voices?

- What classroom activities, learning strategies, and assessment tasks have worked well? What hasn't and why?
- What has been the response of students, English teaching colleagues, parents, the wider school community to the introduction of diverse texts?

We look forward to hearing from you!

The date for submission of articles is **Wednesday 30 June 2021**. Please email submissions to idiom@vate.org.au. If you have any queries or wish to discuss your submission, please email Josephine Smith, Managing editor of Idiom: idiom@vate.org.au.