

# VATE IDEAS LAB: TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE MIDDLE YEARS

VATE Ideas Lab is an exciting new series of original and practical online sessions focused on teaching English in the middle years. Take inspiration from sessions on how to provide a rich literary diet for students, develop a culture of creative writing, support student voice and tackle the teaching of problematic and sensitive content run by innovative middle years teachers. These highly practical and engaging strategies can be taken straight back for use in the Year 7 to 10 English classroom.

## TRUE ALCHEMY: WRITING AND THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Wednesday 4 August 2021, 4-5pm (online via Zoom)

**PRESENTERS:**

Dr Annelise Balsamo, VCAA English Curriculum Manager  
Ernest Price, Richmond High School

William H. Gass said: 'The true alchemists do not change lead into gold; they change the world into words.' And words – put together to create a text – represent a power second to none. The discussion around the place of writing in the English classroom is often centred around the pressures of conforming to NAPLAN testing and the lack of variety provided by the current VCE English study design. The release of the revised study design for VCE English and EAL, with the proposal to include two writing areas of study and the recommendations from the NAPLAN review, may change this discussion and the craft of writing may reinvigorate the 7-10 English classroom. And with words and language, and the skills to shape them into texts of all types, students, through the simple act of picking up a pen and writing, can begin to 'change the world' (in the words of Martin Luther). And what teacher doesn't want that for their students? This presentation will identify where the key knowledge and skills aligned with writing are in the 7-10 English curriculum, what they are, and how we might implement them in our classrooms.

## (RE)STRUCTURE: IDEAS TO GET YOUR STUDENTS THINKING LESS ABOUT STRUCTURE

Thursday 5 August, 4-5pm (online via Zoom)

**PRESENTER:**

Prue Bon, Mooroolbark College

Are your students often distracted by the structure of their writing? Do they seem more focused on constructing text than creating text? Tired of hearing students complain that they aren't 'creative enough'? Redefine the narrative of your classroom by reconsidering the notion that creative writing units need to be assessed through the submission of a 'story'. Inspire your students with a series of activities and ideas aimed at getting them to focus more on how they are writing, rather than what they are writing. You'll walk away from this session with a range of different options for assessment that don't require the construction of a short story and will enable you to support your students to become better creative writers.

Register at [www.vate.org.au](http://www.vate.org.au)

## RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS: TEACHING EMOTIONALLY AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TEXTS

Tuesday 24 August, 4-5pm (online via Zoom)

**PRESENTERS:**

Nirvana Watkins and Maria Litchfield,  
Camberwell Girls Grammar

In this workshop Nirvana and Maria will share the research and their own experiences when it comes to teaching and exploring culturally and emotionally sensitive themes in secondary school English classrooms. Participants can expect to unpack challenging questions about the role of literature in connecting students with hope and levity, as well as helping them overcome obstacles. We will consider the responsibilities that teachers and schools have in introducing culturally and emotionally sensitive content to students. The presenters will share strategies that may be implemented at both a classroom and whole school level to support students in various contexts.

## TEACHING CONSENT THROUGH LITERATURE

Thursday 26 August, 4-5pm (online via Zoom)

**PRESENTER:**

Bridie Connell, Parade College

When thinking about teaching consent, a myriad of texts may spring to mind suitable for senior years, but the list for the middle years seems short, uninspiring and challenging to navigate. Focusing on power dynamics in relationships and the importance of dialogue, this presentation will provide text suggestions that build a framework for meaningful classroom discussion.

## PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR ENRICHING EXPRESSION IN MIDDLE YEARS LITERATURE

Wednesday 1 September, 4-5pm (online via Zoom)

**PRESENTER:**

Lee McQueen, Eltham High School

How do we engage middle years students in Literature? Whether it be in their English class or through specific elective pathways, we want to offer a wide variety of students the opportunity to experience the subject and success in it. This workshop will present practical activities and assessments to support students who are passionate readers and writers, of varying abilities, to develop an appreciation of how language makes meaning, and refine their expression so that their convictions can be realised in considered, sophisticated analysis. With a focus on tasks and templates that can be adapted to different texts and text types, this workshop will provide teachers with ways to offer a differentiated Literature curriculum that establishes and extends students' writing skills, while still maintaining their personal voice.

## EXPLORING CULTURES OF WIDE READING IN THE MIDDLE YEARS

Thursday 2 September, 4-5pm (online via Zoom)

**PRESENTER:**

Alex Wharton, Carinya Christian School (NSW)

With a traditional academic 'dip' accompanying student entry in early secondary years, this session will consider how the role of wide reading through targeted literature circles and other literary strategies can transform learning in the middle years. Using evidenced based tools, this workshop will equip English teachers with renewed vigour and drive to create cultures of wide reading in their classrooms and schools. Practical in nature and helpful in application, this session will show how students in the middle years can be strengthened in their skill development and literary engagement to be set up for success in later years based on a rich diet of literary texts.

## STRATEGIES FOR WRITING

Thursday 14 October, 4-5pm (online via Zoom)

**PRESENTER:**

Marjan Mossammaparast, St Leonard's College

This session will focus on short, practical strategies for engaging Year 7-9 students in writing which can, thereafter, be scaffolded and developed into lengthier responses. A range of stimuli will be used to showcase how student interest and critical thinking can be stimulated and harnessed in the writing process. We will cover examples of creative/imaginative writing, analytical writing, and personal writing, and consider both prose responses and poetry.

## STUDENT VOICE AND AGENCY IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Tuesday 19 October, 4-5pm (online via Zoom)

**PRESENTER:**

Amy Long, Emmaus College

There is a lot of research which proves that student wellbeing has a direct and positive impact on student achievement. This workshop will explore practical strategies that put students at the forefront of the classroom, building their resilience, fostering their independence and increasing their sense of capacity. Student reflections will also be shared as part of a discussion about how these strategies impact upon their sense of engagement in the English classroom.

	Individual member	Organisational member	Concession member
Single session	\$60	\$65	\$55
Half program (4 sessions)	\$145	\$150	\$140
Full program (8 sessions)	\$195	\$200	\$190