



## ACMI & VATE IDEAS LAB: TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE MIDDLE YEARS CONFERENCE

In collaboration with ACMI, the 2024 VATE Ideas Lab: Middle Years Conference aims to bring together educators from all stages of their English teaching career to converge at ACMI Federation Square and share ways to encourage meaningful and engaging learning experiences in the middle years. From ways to promote student learning outcomes in reading and writing, develop critical thinking skills, build capacity for investigating texts with interest, and engage with subject English in a creative and artistic way – the Ideas Lab: Middle Years Conference is a celebration of the teaching and learning of English in Years 7-10.

Can't make it in-person but don't want to miss out? A selection of workshops and the opening keynote will be live streamed to make it easier to attend this event.

**TIME:**

9:30am – 3:25pm

**DATE:**

Friday 26 July, 2024

**VENUE:**

ACMI,  
Federation Square,  
Melbourne

**MEMBER PRICES:**

Concession	\$215
Individual	\$235
Organisational	\$260

### 'Miss, what do you think of Andrew Tate?': Teachers' accounts of a resurgent masculinist supremacy in Australian schools

Dr Stephanie Westcott and  
Professor Steven Roberts,  
Monash University



Research has in recent years turned its attention to figures of the 'manosphere': a collection of anti-feminist and misogynist groups and individuals who operate online, creating swathes of dangerous and extremist content. The most prolific figure of the manosphere is Andrew Tate, who has generated a significant fanbase among boys and young men, and whose material debases and degrades women and encourages adherence to regressive notions of masculinity. Our ongoing research, examining the effect of Tate's influence on boys in Australian schools, initially drew on testimonies of 30 women working in schools across the country and found that Tate's influence is both profound and devastating.

In this keynote address, we will explore the key findings of this study, including women's experiences of widespread misogyny, sexism, and Tate fandom among their students, and offer considerations for schools in classrooms in responding to the ongoing effects of anti-feminist and misogynist content creators.

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

## BEINGS: EXCLUSIVE EXHIBITION VISIT

We're excited to offer our in-person participants the opportunity for a before-hours viewing of the new *Beings* exhibition at ACMI and a tour led by the ACMI Education Team included as part of the registration cost.

### Susan Bye, ACMI Educator

Kicking off the day's program, teachers will have exclusive access to ACMI's world premiere exhibition, *Beings*. Playful, inventive and optimistic, *Beings* is an exhibition of heterogeneous, colourful, generative artworks imagined and realised by the art and design collective Universal Everything. Fascinated with creating 'soulful technology', the Collective experiments with movement, form and colour to create a world of curious beings that connect with the human in unexpected ways. Posing questions about identity, empathy and character, the works in this exhibition offer English teachers an opportunity to engage students in imaginative writing and character creation and design, and highlight how a great idea is at the heart of creativity.



Future You, Universal Everything (at Digital Impact, Barcelona, Spain), photo by Eva Carasol

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

# Program overview

9:00 – 9:30am		Registration, tea and coffee			
9:30 – 10:15am		<b>Tour: Beings: Exclusive exhibition visit</b> Susan Bye, ACMI Educator			
10:15 – 11:15am		<b>Keynote address: 'Miss, what do you think of Andrew Tate?': Teachers' accounts of a resurgent masculinist supremacy in Australian schools (live stream)</b> Dr Stephanie Westcott and Professor Steven Roberts, Monash University			
11:15 – 11:45am		Morning tea			
11:45am – 12:40pm	<b>Session one</b> Workshop 1	<b>1A Generating engagement through genre and big ideas (live stream)</b> Anna Carrig, Northcote High School	<b>1B Spring clean your booklists: Contemporary alternatives for tired set texts (live stream)</b> Karys McEwen, Prahran High School	<b>1C First Nations art and culture at NGV Australia</b> Jenny Isaac, NGV Educator	<b>1D Year 10 English: Bridging the gap between the Victorian Curriculum and the VCE</b> Rowena Morris and Katharine Corrin, Kyabram P-12 College
12:50 – 1:45pm	<b>Session two</b> Workshop 2	<b>2A Interactive fiction with middle years students (live stream)</b> Garry Westmore, ACMI Educator	<b>2B Building writing skills through purpose: Experiments with audience, form, and genre (live stream)</b> Grace Elkins, Flore Education	<b>2C Conducting writing diagnostics in the English classroom</b> Hayley Harrison, Connect Literacy	<b>2B Empowering minds: Teaching critical thinking in the middle years</b> Natassia Francischelli, Yarra Valley Grammar School
1:45 – 2:30pm		Lunch and networking			
2:30 – 3:25pm	<b>Session three</b> Workshop 3	<b>3A 'But Miss - I saw it on TikTok!' The crucial role of the English teacher in readers' advisory (live stream)</b> Lauren Kyte, Salesian College Sunbury	<b>3B Writer's Hub (live stream)</b> Louise Leong and Nicole Lawrence, Mount Alexander College	<b>3C Tabletop roleplaying in the classroom</b> William Rotor, Virtual School Victoria	<b>3D What lies beneath the horror story? Using functional grammar to read and create the horror genre</b> Kate Cash, Anne Dalmau, and Claire Nailon, Kardinia International College, Roxburgh College, and Nazareth College

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### **1A Generating engagement through genre and big ideas (live stream)**

At Northcote High School throughout Year 9 and 10, students undertake semester long courses based on their interest. Northcote High School offers a range of genre-based units such as 'Crime and Detectives', 'Future Fictions' and 'It's a Tragedy' as well as big ideas such as 'Beyond the Dead White Men', 'World Changing Texts' and 'Race, Power and Justice'. This workshop will take teachers through the model, sharing some of the big ideas that guide unit planning, pedagogies and sample assessments. The workshop will also help to elicit blue sky thinking about what English can look like in the Middle Years, and how schools might seek to tap into the interests of their students whilst also equipping them with the fundamental skills and knowledge of the English subject area.

Anna Carrig, Northcote High School

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### **1B Spring clean your booklists: Contemporary alternatives for tired set texts (live stream)**

It is important for our young people to be exposed to diverse literature. Of course, it is great to read and teach some classics to students, but unfortunately there are schools using too many outdated books that are not relatable, relevant, or engaging to teenagers. Karys McEwen is here to suggest some contemporary alternatives that can be added to diversify your booklist. The recommended books contain appropriate themes, narrative styles, and topics that are linked with the current curriculum. If you're still teaching *Of Mice and Men*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Giver*, or *Holes*, this session is for you!

Karys McEwen, Prahran High School

### **1C First Nations art and culture at NGV Australia**

Explore the Gallery's extensive collection of historic and contemporary First Nations art. Join an NGV educator to view and respond to diverse works, including Wurrdha Marra at NGV Australia, our dedicated display of First Nations art and design. Through lively and informative discussions about works by emerging and senior artists and designers, participants will gain insights into a range of ideas that contribute to the rich diversity of First Nations culture and creativity. Participants will explore concepts such as connection to Country, and how artists and designers maintain and regenerate cultural traditions and create new forms of expression.

Jenny Isaac, NGV Educator

### **1D Year 10 English: Bridging the gap between the Victorian Curriculum and the VCE**

The year immediately preceding VCE is a difficult year for teachers and students alike. Teachers walk a tightrope of preparing students for the demands of a range of VCE pathways, while still working in alignment with the Victorian Curriculum. Ensuring students are both adequately prepared for, and can make informed and effective decisions about, their chosen VCE pathway is critical in this year of schooling. In this workshop we will discuss approaches to teaching and learning in the Year 10 English classroom. The focus will be on ensuring that students are adequately prepared to tackle their chosen VCE English pathway – be it Vocational Major, English, English Language or Literature, while still carefully scaffolding and aligning the requirements of the Victorian Curriculum. Participants will engage in a collaborative workshop which explores various approaches to planning and delivering this exciting but challenging year, and will leave with resources to support them on their journey to reinvigorate Year 10 English.

Rowena Morris and Katharine Corrin,  
Kyabram P-12 College

## 2A Interactive fiction with middle years students (live stream)

In this hands-on workshop, the ACMI team will take teachers through the art of narrative design as they create pieces of interactive linear-branching fiction, using the free and easily accessible program Twine. Interactive fiction is a fantastic way to engage students in designing narratives, and will resonate with students who enjoy literature and videogames alike. Teachers will have the opportunity to craft a playful and engaging narrative, and then try out each other's creations. For participants attending remotely, please log in to the following website: <https://twinery.org/>.

Garry Westmore, ACMI Educator

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## 2B Building writing skills through purpose: Experiments with audience, form, and genre (live stream)

Building writing skills through purpose provides a powerful framework for using less-conventional genres and text types within your writing instruction. Stemming from the ideas of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, text-type / purpose / genre based instruction is very familiar to many. There is power and potential in expanding the different forms, genres and types of texts we explore and teach in the classroom. This workshop will provide a toolkit to build new skills in young writers through a creative approach to teaching different writing forms.

Grace Elkins, Flore Education

## 2C Conducting writing diagnostics in the English classroom

How well do you know the specific writing skills, gaps and areas for improvement in your students? One of the most time efficient, insightful and purposeful activities that I have started running in all my classes is a 'writing diagnostic'. No complicated set up or meaningless rubrics in sight ... this is a simple process of highlighting key grammatical, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, structural and handwriting issues to inform teaching practice at an individual student and whole class level. During the workshop we will explore a number of different authentic student writing samples, undertake the process of interpreting the greatest areas of need and build a teaching focus moving forward. You will take the diagnostic and template away with you as well as the confidence to run and interpret your own class' writing in your very next lesson!

Hayley Harrison, Connect Literacy

## 2D Empowering minds: Teaching critical thinking in the middle years

Critical literacy practices are essential for students in the 21st century as they navigate a complex and rapidly changing world. Through encouraging active participation, collaboration, and problem-solving students are supported into English in the senior years as well as beyond the classroom. This workshop will explore the importance of critical thinking skills in the English classroom and suggest practical strategies for their development within the context of the curriculum. This will include fostering skills such as analysing, questioning, and evaluating in common units of work, with concrete examples and activities to facilitate implementation.

Natassia Francischelli, Yarra Valley Grammar School

### **3A 'But Miss - I saw it on TikTok!' The crucial role of the English teacher in readers' advisory (live stream)**

As English teachers, we want our students to read confidently, independently, and broadly. But how confident are you in recommending 'just right' texts to your class? This workshop will explore the imperative role of the English teacher in the Readers Advisory process: How do you ascertain student need and interest? How do you model text selection strategies? And – importantly – how do you know which texts to recommend? Technology, social media, and the New Adult phenomenon have all shaped your students' recent reading experiences. This workshop will strengthen your understanding of the current YA landscape: books to read, books to avoid, and books to promote.

Lauren Kyte, Salesian College Sunbury

### **3B Writer's Hub (live stream)**

This workshop will explore a Creative Writing program run for secondary students. Students were exposed to the full process from mentor texts and initial conception, through to key skills in characterisation, plot development, and setting, and culminating in pitching and publication. We make links to the Victorian Curriculum 2.0, the Creating Texts VCE assessment and High Impact Teaching Strategies. This program was run at Mount Alexander College in a semester-long elective to mixed classes with students from Years 7 through to 10.

Louise Leong and Nicole Lawrence,  
Mount Alexander College

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### **3C Tabletop roleplaying in the classroom**

In a renaissance of tabletop roleplaying after the Covid-19 pandemic, shared storytelling games have become a major hobby and outlet for millions of people worldwide. Many Australian schools now have DnD clubs – but in middle years English, there are opportunities in the classroom to foster student creativity, storytelling, and critical thinking through this interactive medium in ways we haven't begun to explore.

William Rotor, Virtual School Victoria

### **3D What lies beneath the horror story? Using functional grammar to read and create the horror genre**

'The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is of the unknown' (H.P. Lovecraft). In this workshop we will explore how the tools of functional grammar can be used when teaching to read and create horror stories. We will use these tools to identify the patterns of language in horror classics such as *The Lottery* and *The Veldt* and consider the language choices authors make to create a sense of the other, build disturbing worlds and connect with specific audiences. We will explore how students can then use this analysis to craft and create their own horror narratives for their own audiences.

Kate Cash, Anne Dalmau, and Claire Nailon,  
Kardinia International College, Roxburgh College,  
and Nazareth College