



WestWords

Western Sydney's Literature Development
Organisation for Young People



Writing Place

Teachers' Notes

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This resource, written by the English Teachers' Association NSW has been commissioned by WestWords.



Introduction

This resource has been developed to illustrate how to teach the concepts of English¹ for students in years 7-10 and focuses on the representation of a place through texts produced in or about it. The place is Western Sydney, NSW's fastest and most ethnically diverse population growth area and Australia's third largest economy behind Sydney and Melbourne². As such it has significant political influence and attracts many assumptions by people living in other regions of Australia.

These teachers' notes are accompanied by student activities and are designed as support for the development of students' understanding of the core concepts required for our responding to and composing texts. These concepts underpin the outcomes and content statements of the curriculum and are either explicit or implicit in these statements. *Writing Place* incorporates these textual concepts to develop creative writing lessons for students.

This resource may could be used as

- A writing unit for Years 7 -10 with selections made appropriate to your own students. All sections of the resource address
 - Outcome 1
 - Outcome 4
 - Outcome 5 and
 - Outcome 7

Other outcomes are addressed in particular sections in the occasional activity.

- Supplementary writing activities for any unit featuring the concepts of
 - Representation
 - Characterisation
 - Point of view
 - Figuration: connotation, imagery, symbol.
- Supplementary activities on any unit dealing with cultural diversity or place.

1. *These concepts are drawn from the English Textual Concepts a resource developed by the NSW Department of Education together with the English Teachers' Association NSW. The resource is available at <http://englishtextualconcepts.nsw.edu.au/>.*

2. Montoya, Daniel (2012) *Western Sydney: An Economic Profile Briefing Paper No 6/2012* by Daniel Montoya. NSW Parliamentary Research Service. p.1

[https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/publications.nsf/0/1003F4B4BE8C5699CA257A5B00205266/\\$File/Western%20Sydney%20An%20Economic%20Profile%20Briefing%20Paper%2006%202012.pdf](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/publications.nsf/0/1003F4B4BE8C5699CA257A5B00205266/$File/Western%20Sydney%20An%20Economic%20Profile%20Briefing%20Paper%2006%202012.pdf)



WestWords

Western Sydney's Literature Development Organisation for Young People

Expanding minds and changing worlds through literature

WestWords engages children and young people in Western Sydney by encouraging an appreciation of story and storymaking in a variety of forms and by promoting the understanding of the importance of books in the lives of young people. WestWords is committed to providing an environment where the stories of the communities of western Sydney and the places they come from are celebrated.

A guiding philosophy of WestWords is a belief in the power of literacy (written, oral and visual), self expression and creativity to change lives and the experience of communities. We believe that engagement with reading and writing allows young people to develop their imagination, give voice to their stories and experiences and hone skills in written expression and illustration. We do this through workshops, residencies programs as well as providing resources and opportunities for young people as well as those who support them.

[For further information: westwords.com.au](http://westwords.com.au)

Multiple Text Study

Representation of place and people

This section explores the representation of place and people using extracts from many different texts rather than offering a single text study. The texts are in different forms, modes and media to illustrate the variety of ways that place can be represented.

The activities use Western Sydney as an example but can be adapted to your own area or used as they are with creative tasks and assessment on your own 'place'.

The activities on representation are broken into three parts - there are introductory activities for both stages 4 and 5, 'Knowing the terms' and 'Representing place and people in factual texts'; then activities relevant to Stage 4 using *The Incredible Here and Now* by Felicity Castagna and *The Sky So Heavy* by Claire Zorn; while the remaining activities in this section are relevant to Stage 5. The units can be used individually or together as a study of representation across a few texts, or to complement a single text study.

There is also some close reading which will act as comprehension. Some discussion is marked as extension for those students who want to engage with more complex ideas.

Concepts

Overview of learning

Through analysing representations of place in different forms, modes and media, students are led to understand the concept of representation.

Representation

Representation refers to the way we present objects, people, ideas and other aspects of the world. When we represent something we present it to people so that they can see and understand something in a particular way. We use images, words (spoken or written), and other elements in a variety of modes to represent objects, people or ideas. Representations are directed to specific audiences for specific purposes and this too serves to shape them. All representations are therefore biased in some way because they target an audience and serve a purpose; they are projections of a composer's feelings, attitudes and ideas, capturing a particular social consciousness. No representation can be absolutely 'true' for all people and contexts.

In this unit students will explore the different ways place (specifically Western Sydney) is represented in a variety of texts, how we see ourselves through place and how we see the people we meet there. Places have their own identity and their identity is affected by the people in them. Places both reflect and affect the identity of people, and representations of place may reinforce or challenge those assumptions about identity. Representation of place is therefore about constantly defining and redefining our world.

Stage 4

Students understand that representations are not natural reflections of the world.

They learn that

- Representation is the result of conscious or unconscious selection and arrangement according to codes and conventions.
- Representations may be intentionally objective or subjective.
- Mode and medium require different codes and conventions of representation to produce similar meanings.

Stage 5

Students understand that representation embeds attitudes, beliefs and values.

Students learn that

- Representation may be intentionally or unintentionally biased.
- Representation reinforces or challenges existing values and ways of thinking or may attempt to reshape them.
- Representation favours or privileges a position by omitting or silencing the views or perspectives of particular groups.

Representation uses the tools of rhetoric to have an effect. You might find it useful to locate images of rhetorical triangles to discuss with students how meaning is made.

Eg. <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Modules/FM34120/images/representation-process.jpg>

The concept of representation is a difficult one for students to master. It depends on a complex system of relationships between the author, reader and text, audience and purpose, building up on assumptions while creating new ways of seeing. The type of text is often significant in the way representation works or what kind of representation is composed. For example, advertising needs to convince an audience quickly so it usually reinforces the most conventional ways of understanding; a novel is often centred on more subtle and challenging ideas, having time to develop and being able to represent different views through different characters and in different places and times.

Academic Brian Moon defines representation as:

Textual constructions that arise from habitual ways of thinking about or acting in the world. Although they seem to refer to the 'real worlds' they actually refer to the cultural world which members of a society inhabit.

- Does the text reflect the world around us or construct a world?
- Representation is NOT about what is real but asks if the text can ever show 'reality' or a version of reality
- Are representations ever 'accurate'?

Stereotypes, are an overworked representation which present groups in narrow ways that follow a formula. These stereotypes often become dominant forms of representations and texts may challenge and question these through their characters.

Literary terms: A practical glossary, Chalkface press, second Edition 2002 Cottesloe W.A. pp.136-138

Questions to ask about representation in texts

Who or what is being represented?

- How does the context of the author, times and text affect the representation?

Why?

- What is the author's intent?
- How does the purpose of the text affect representation?

How?

- How does the genre and form affect the representation?
- Does the author convey a sense of subjectivity or objectivity? Why? How?
- Is the voice authoritative? How is this conveyed?
- Who is included/excluded?
- What language (written and/or visual/aural) is used to present the participants?
- How does this all position the audience?

Code and Convention

Every unit we teach also provides an opportunity to introduce the concept of code and convention. The term 'code and convention' refers to the system of rules - both implicit and explicit - that allows us to understand and compose texts that convey meaning and cultural values. These rules include grammar, genre, visual cues and other systems of communication across the different modes.

Stage 4

Students recognise that codes and conventions are social practices and are adapted in response to different purposes, effects, audiences, contexts and media.

Students learn that

- Social practices, technology and mode determine appropriate codes and conventions.
- Groups use codes and conventions differently and this may become a marker of identity.

There could be a discussion on how useful graphics are in maps and reports and how unwelcome they are in, for example, student essays.

Stage 5

Students learn that:

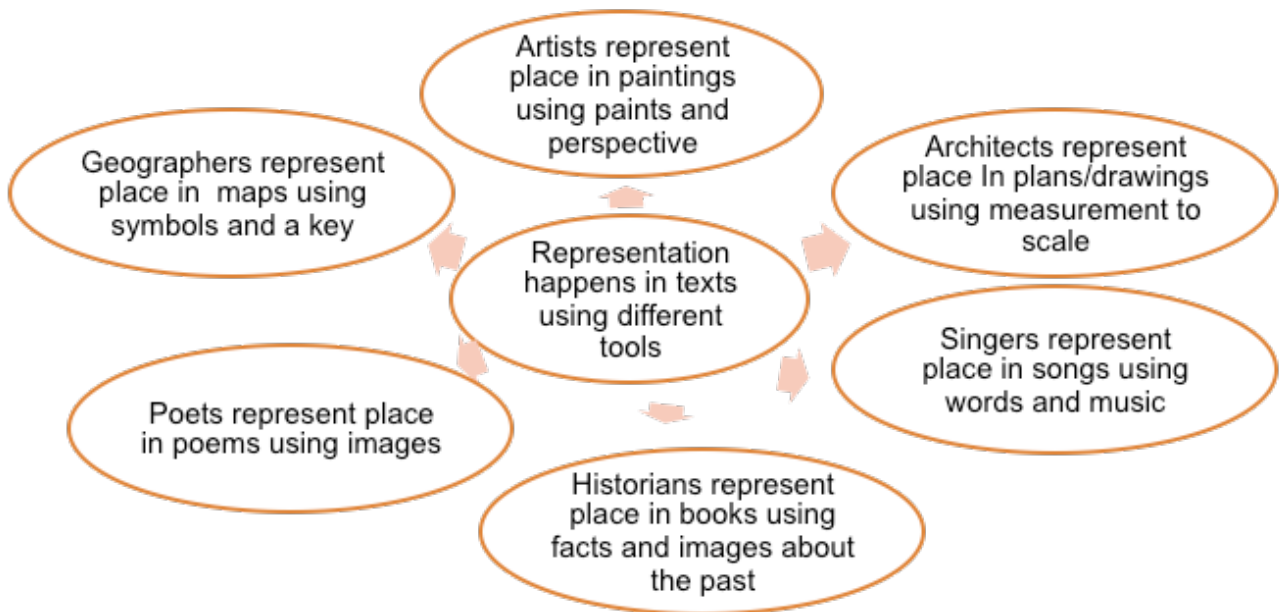
- Some codes and conventions are valued more than others and that this can depend on context.
- Understanding and using these conventions is potentially a source of power.

Knowing the terms

In this introductory section students draw on prior knowledge and values, exploring their own understanding of place and extending this by looking at the possibilities that the word 'place' can evoke in its different idiomatic uses.

They engage in the topic by working in small discussion groups and discussing to analyse particular representations.

It is important that students are introduced to the word 'representation' as they will be building knowledge of this over the unit. The rhetorical triangle may be one way to show representation. This can be followed by completing the representation wheel which makes them aware of different texts and forms. Possible answers:



Representing place and people in factual texts

Representing geographically

This section is designed to make students aware of the wide range of possibilities of representing place and how representations affect their understanding of place. Students begin with basic graphic representations through maps and then move to other factual representations through historical writing and public websites.

Representing historically

Representations of place in history are very different to geographical representations. They are more concerned with people and their relationship to place and each other. They follow a chronological order and often focus on places as sites of conflict and supremacy when one group takes over another.

The timeline exercise in 'Representing historically' is done effectively in pairs. Once students have completed this activity, you might also work on code and convention and point out how the sentence structures, particularly in the first paragraphs made up of short simple sentences and compound sentences, convey the sense of chronology as one idea follows another.

You may want to expand on the language activity in this section to teach subordinate clauses. Refer students to a website on different types of sentences if you need to, for example:

<http://www2.ivcc.edu/rambo/eng1001/sentences.htm>

Answer to language section:

Main sentence	They were later replaced by Vietnamese immigrants
Second sentence	Vietnamese immigrants have now given it [Cabramatta] a new character
Second sentence	Most people associate it [the new character] with the town centre

Reading websites

Students encounter websites every day and yet many do not engage with the webpage critically. Understanding that public websites are just another form of representation is an important element in their education as this is the face of so much bureaucracy they will encounter as they grow older. This section focuses on the way Western Sydney is promoted through visual and verbal language.

Images

This section of the unit ends with a rich task that allows students to engage personally to show their understanding. The visual literacy in this brief lesson will be built on in the student activity on producing their own photo essay. The photo essay is one way of bringing together the different forms of representation that have been explored in this section.

Students can do the photo essay as described or use Pechakucha to create a slide show

<http://www.pechakucha.org/>.

Representing place and people in literature

Stage 4-5 texts

The Incredible Here and Now – Felicity Castagna

Giramondo Publishing, Sydney, 2013

Felicity Castagna's book was shortlisted for the Children's Book Council Award. It is a well-written first person narration of a boy whose brother has died and who has to accept his changed world. It is sensitively narrated and deals with important issues of family, trust, cultural diversity, friendship and place.

In terms of place it challenges perceptions about Western Sydney as an isolated place and shows the vibrancy of community relationships that is part of the area. It is from an Anglo-Saxon perspective but the friendships are from many cultures showing this place as a true example of multi-culturalism.

There are many websites for more information about this text and even a complete unit:

- <http://incrediblestories.net>
- <http://www.felicitycastagna.net>
- http://www.giramondopublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/Reading_Notes_TIHAN.pdf

The series of activities on the novel highlight the ways people are linked to place and encourage students to look more closely at the language of the text. The activities begin with looking at chapter titles and structure as seen through the first sentences.

Explain to students that representation varies according to our own perspective and that authors try to position us to accept their own point of view. The chapter beginnings take the reader from the assumptions of people outside the area to the reality of those who live in the area. The author is challenging assumptions before she commences her story. She is saying that the one place holds different values for different people whose attitude is altered by their closeness or distance from a place.

Note: This text could be taught in year 8 or year 9.

The Sky So Heavy – Claire Zorn

University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2013

This post-apocalyptic book begins on the western outskirts of Sydney in the Blue Mountains. When a nuclear disaster separates Fin from his father, he sets off to find his mother in Sydney. The extracts in this section come from different parts of the novel and show a development of ideas. An interesting additional element to look at when studying this novel is the way the Western Sydney inhabitants are treated as they enter the controlled zone of the city.

The composing section may need some guidance. Students might research the impact of nuclear war on earth but this needs to be controlled as some sights have horrifying images. These sites may help:

- <http://www.nucleardarkness.org/warconsequences/>
- <http://www.uow.edu.au/~bmartin/pubs/82cab/>

Additional sections: If you have a copy of the text

- Chapter 27 p.161 will enhance Extract 3 - *A devastated and isolated place*
- The refugee poster on p.196 will enhance Extract 4 - *An orderless place*

Representing place: building up detail

Stage 5 texts

The Tribe – Michael Mohammed Ahmad

Giramondo Publishing, Sydney, 2014

Note: If you are going to use more than the extract make sure you check the suitability of the book for your class (language, violence).

This book begins with an assumption: that an Arab family living in Alexandria would be living in Egypt. The idea of a borderless state with many people living together is represented by the image of the terrace house which *has no sides. It's joined on left and right to our neighbours' houses.* From there the author uses descriptions that we associate with poverty: *a rusted gate and only Three steps and you're at the front door which is old, thin wood.*

The passage offers a model for creative writing for students in that it keeps adding details about place and people. It has a very personal tone, creating some intimacy with the audience. You can hear the narrator's voice as he shares his family background, makes a mild joke about Alexandria and people's assumptions about migrant families: *People sometimes think because we're Arabs, that I mean the city in Egypt.* He captures his childhood fears and a sense of conflict that reflects the tension of living between cultures; for example the Q'uran is used, for safety, for a sense of importance but also creates some tension (*a sore neck*).

Representing place from different points of view

Great Western Highway – Anthony Macris

University of Western Australia Publishing, Perth, 2012

This book deals with two protagonists, a male and a female, who live at different ends of Parramatta Road and meet in the middle; it therefore works well as a metaphor for movement between places and towards other people. It is also useful for understanding point of view through multiple narrators as the author moves from Penny to Nick as they approach each other from opposite directions.

The composing task requires students to write with a negative attitude when they describe the scene as 'an assault on the senses' and then write their own scene from two different points of view.

Representing place through sensuous language and images

Five Bells – Gail Jones

Vintage Australia, Sydney, 2012

Alluding to Kenneth Slessor's poem *Five Bells* this novel explores how memory of trauma affects our lives. It centres on Circular Quay where four separate individuals alight. There is a strong sense of the impact of place as they each react to the scene before them where a tragedy unfolds around a little girl. One of the characters is from Bankstown and we come to an understanding of the way places influence our lives as we read the reactions of Pei Xing to the two places: Circular Quay and Bankstown.

Overview of learning

This section looks at representation through sensuous imagery. The feelings of, or attitudes towards, a place are a critical part of its representation. Here, the sounds, sights and feel of two different parts of Sydney are highlighted through contrast.

Representing place through people

There are some opportunities for teaching grammar here including:

- kinds of processes and
- modality.

Support for teaching modals may be found at

http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/7-12assessments/naplan/teachstrategies/yr2015/index.php?id=ll_verb_s2_14

Extension:

You might want to refer students to the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis: language shapes the way we think but it also reflects the elements of a culture. It can also act at the very physical level that in a country with snow there may be many words for snow but a country without snow lacks these. You might want to go to:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Sc4SwamU7c> or
- start at 3:21 on language and thought: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0gkcY1SB-0>

You could ask the question: does language influence the way people think?

Representing place through narrative

Concept: Narrative

This section looks at how narrative can represent a place. Places are seen through the eyes of people who come there and reflect the people who live there. The stories of people who live there form a patchwork fabric of a bigger narrative that becomes the place. That is why Western Sydney University uses the stories of people in Western Sydney to represent what the university values.

The series of advertisements called *Stories of Unlimited* (http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/unlimited/stories_of_unlimited) takes three individuals from Western Sydney and shows their stories but perhaps the most moving story is that of Deng Thiak Adut. By exploring the advertisement students can see how a narrative about a person becomes a narrative about a place.

Activity

Read students a simple story, perhaps a picture book. Map with them its narrative arc to remind them of terms relating to narrative structure: exposition; complication; rising action; climax; denouement; resolution; coda.

Or, if they are confident about narrative structure, students can go directly to the following sites (and these are only examples) to view different ways of representing a narrative arc.

- <https://jstorytelling.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/hart-arc.jpg>
- <http://research.northumbria.ac.uk/support/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Narrative-arc-1.png>
- <https://fcmalby.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/story-arc.jpg>

There are many different ways of understanding the structure of story. Discuss with the class

- what the internet representations of the narrative arc have in common,
- how they differ, and
- which ones they find the most helpful for understanding narrative structure.

Explain to students that a typical narrative arc can have many moments of crisis, many complications in different order. The exposition is usually more than just a revelation of character and place, it prepares for the complication that triggers the story.

View the video about Deng Thiak Adut <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buA3tsGnp2s> and have students graph the narrative arc of his story.

Have students complete the *Film Analysis Table* in the student sheet and, in pairs, answer the questions below it.

When these answers have been shared in class discussion, lead a concluding discussion answering the question: How does narrative assist in representation of place?

Extension:

This advertisement went viral and hit international newspapers. Here is an example with reader comments underneath.

- <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/western-sydney-universitys-powerful-refugee-student-recruitment-advert-takes-the-internet-by-storm-10489512.html> .

Further viewer comments on Facebook, this one monitored by Western Sydney University.

- <https://www.facebook.com/westernsydneyu/videos/10153117762772544/>

Students might be interested in the segment discussing this advertisement on *The Gruen Transfer* where advertisers make some interesting observations about the representation and its effects.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYOJVR0G2Uo> Gruen: 32.19 – 39.38
Note: there is a drug reference just at the end of this footage that you may want to cut.

Single Text Study

The lesson plans provided in this section of the resource allow students to study the concepts specified within the context of the close study of a single text. The units refer to the concepts of representation and code and convention that appear at the beginning of the teacher notes and the concepts of:

- Point of view
- Narrative
- Character
- Theme
- Context

Thai-riffic! – Oliver Phommavanh

Placement in the curriculum: Stage 4

This text and associated activities are suitable for any unit dealing with narrative or the novel or humour. All extracts from the text have been provided.

Summary

Albert Lengviriyakul ('Lengy') is a Thai teenage boy who is at odds with his cultural background. His long Thai name has made him feel rejected at school as his friends call him 'bow thai', which he finds highly offensive. As any teenager, he considers his parents to be embarrassing but this feeling is exacerbated by their strange cultural prejudices and behaviour which reflect poorly on his own developing sense of identity as an Australian-Thai individual. To make things worse, they run a Thai restaurant called 'Thai-riffic' and would go to extreme lengths to advertise their business in order to survive in Australia, including using what he considers humiliating pictures of himself on their leaflets and inviting his teachers to call in regularly. During his first year of high school, Albert meets Mr Winfree, an unconventional English and History teacher who helps him to find a more balanced view of his cultural identity in a friendly act by assigning him the more Australian nickname, 'Lengy'. His classmates, especially the Indian-Australian Rajiv, encourage him to form a stronger bond to his Thai heritage. He eventually realises he is able to fully participate and make his voice heard in his school community as he develops a richer sense of purpose both in his role within the family and as a valued multicultural member of his high school.

About the writer

Oliver Phommavanh is a Thai-Australian writer for young people. He has worked as a primary school teacher and is also a stand-up comedian appearing on national television and radio as well as a number of well-known comedy venues. *Thai-riffic!* was his first book (2010) and was very well received.

Since then he has written several novels *Con-nerd* (2011) *Punchlines* and *Thai-no-mite* (2012), and *Ethan* (2015) in the *Stuff Happens* series. Website: <http://www.oliverwriter.com>.

Concepts

Point of view

Character

Narrative

Thai-riffic! also invites a study of codes and conventions which are not explored in this resource. The novel makes use of multiple types of texts: graphics, cartoon strips, reviews, menus and sticky notes through which a teacher can draw attention to the concept that:

- codes and conventions are social practices and are adapted in response to different purposes, effects, audiences, contexts and media.

English Textual Concepts, Stage 4

Introductory activity

The purpose of this activity is to introduce the idea of tone and its importance to whether words can have a humorous or serious effect. It is only at Stage 4 that the syllabus uses 'tone' to refer to written texts. To this point it has only referred to the tone of voice in speech. The activity leads them from this aspect of tone to consider tone as written into a text as an indicator of attitude and of the nature of the story.

Give students a copy of the first paragraph before showing them the rest of the extract.

The ambiguity of tone in this extract is not an issue when reading the novel. Although the words of the first paragraph could suggest a downhearted tone, the reader is assured that this is a comedy by the cartoon illustrations accompanying chapter titles.

Understanding the text

This section introduces students to the main theme of the novel: acceptance of cultural diversity in others and in oneself.

It is worth asking students

- why the values implied in the novel are important for 21st century Australia, and
- how novels of this kind shape an Australia of the future.

Who's telling the story?

Point of view

This and following sections are laying the groundwork for narrative writing. They move students from analysis of the model text, *Thai-riffic!*, to writing their own narrative. Students are expected to focus on narrative point of view and characterisation in their stories which will require a simple plot line to enable them to work with these more sophisticated elements of narrative.

Aside from providing an opportunity for a grammar lesson revising person and tense, this activity allows for a revision of narrative point of view.

Point of view is critical as it can privilege certain views over others and its exploration can lead us to an appreciation of the constructed nature of texts. Point of view can also invite certain attitudes and feelings in response to the text.

Elements of the Stage 4 statement on the concept of 'point of view' addressed are:

- Students understand that choice of point of view shapes the meanings, the values and the effect of the text.
- Students learn that:
 - a narrator can tell a story, comment on a story or break out from the story to address the responder, directly.
 - point of view is a device for persuading.

English Textual Concepts, Stage 4

The text exemplifies this concept by the use of the subjective first person point of view which closely aligns the reader with Albert and his perceived problems. His fragmented identity leads him to bear a grudge against his parents who represent and, by their speech and actions, proclaim their culture and his.

Predicting the direction of the story

Narrative

Narrative is the most common way we organise human experience and explore people's actions and motivations. The activities in this section address the following aspects of the Stage 4 Statement on narrative.

Students understand that narrative shapes and is shaped by one's view of the world.

Students learn that

- The conventions of narrative are combined to engage the responder emotionally and intellectually with events and characters depicted in the story and with ideas and values implied by the story.
- Close consideration and analysis of stories can bring to light subtleties in the text.

English Textual Concepts, Stage 4

The two selections taken from *Thai-riffic!* are used to lay down possibilities so students can make predictions about the story based on their understanding of narrative and genre.

The prediction activity becomes an opportunity to:

- Support students in identifying points of tension for the protagonist (such as his crisis of cultural identity) which could indicate thematic concerns.
- Revisit narrative structure.

This point is clearly an early complication in the story and reinforces the protagonist's earlier concerns about cultural identity.

You may also point out that students are able to make predictions because they know much more about narrative and genre than they may be aware of, for example:

- The development of complications,
- The need for a climax, a turning point,
- Coherence of style so that what begins comically is likely to have a happy ending,
- Stories about teenagers are usually about coming-of-age where the young person learns to accept the nature of the real world.

Developing characters

Character and Characterisation

These activities are designed to engage students in the analysis and construction of character. Students learn that even though a character is a construction of cues, these cues need to create the impression of a person with whom we can identify so that we become interested in their situation.

They address the following elements of English textual concepts

Students learn that character constructs

- combine with constructs of events and settings to create narrative
- use resources such as description, dialogue, monologue
- may draw on such devices as stereotype and generic convention to reflect values.

English Textual Concepts, Stage 4

Understanding humour

Humour is a very difficult genre to teach and explain but it is very good way of representing difficult topics. It is one of the most engaging aspects of this novel and Oliver Phommavanh introduces it early in the written text. Of course if you have a copy of the novel it is evident the cover, the way the content is organised and the style of illustrations.

This section introduces students to aspects of humour that may be transferred to other texts or used for creative fun.

You may want to start with this stand up comic segment with the author to engage the students (from 4:00 but not past 5:17 as it becomes sexual).

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVlaPHE9Z34>

You might want to refer students to some websites on types of humour.

- <http://www.wikihow.com/Sample/Funny-Story-Ideas>
- <http://www.dailywritingtips.com/20-types-and-forms-of-humor/>
- <https://blog.udemy.com/types-of-humor/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humor_styles
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200606/whats-your-humor-style>

Punning

Most of these puns are based on close-sounding words rather than homophones and none are sophisticated enough to play on double meaning.

Exaggeration

This section explores the idea of names as identifiers and how important these are to individuals. While there is some comic exaggeration in the paragraph from the novel, it is further developed in Yasmin Lewis' poem where the accumulation of names is a form of exaggeration as is her delivery of the poem on Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KBKLqMH5h4>)

Imagery

Food imagery runs through the novel and is an important source of comedy. It also plays a more serious role in

- demonstrating how close Albert is to his parents despite his fears and complaints
- contributing to the integrity of the text in the way imagery reflects the concerns of the novel.

Presenting

This final section draws together the comic elements of the novel, encouraging students to enjoy its humour through performance.

Chinese Straight – Maxine Beneba Clarke

Podcast: Episode 2, *SBS True Stories* podcast, 2015 - 11 mins and 30 secs in duration

Placement in the curriculum: Stage 5

This text and associated activities are suitable for any unit dealing with characterisation. It addresses such themes as exploring Identity, Australian Identity, The Outsider, People and Places, Prejudice, Multiculturalism or Voice.

Chinese Straight would also be usefully considered in a unit of work that:

- analysed aural or digital texts, or
- explored the genre of life or personal writing.

The free audio file this podcast can be streamed from the SBS website:

- <http://www.sbs.com.au/programs/true-stories>

It is also available for free download from iTunes:

- <https://itunes.apple.com/au/podcast/sbs-true-stories/id1032607542>

Free listening of all episodes is also available at the *Soundcloud* website:

- <https://soundcloud.com/sbs-true-stories>

In *Chinese Straight* Maxine Beneba Clarke recounts how as one of the few black students at her high school she sought to transform her appearance so that she would feel more accepted in her school community. Maxine seeks to transform her afro frizz into the Chinese straight hair of her dreams and this results in a disastrous experiment with hair straightening at a Granville salon prior to a pool party fraught with social hierarchies. This podcast explores the complex relationships of body image, identity, peer pressure and racism.

These activities focus on students composing their own true story podcast and/ or short story in response to Maxine Beneba Clarke's *Chinese Straight*.

In this sequence of activities students will listen to and analyse *Chinese Straight*, a podcast written and read by Maxine Beneba Clarke. Students will use it as a model for their own composing of a true story to be published as either the script for or a recorded podcast.

About the writer

Australian writer and slam poetry champion Maxine Beneba Clarke is of Afro-Caribbean heritage and grew up and went to school in Western Sydney.
<http://slamup.blogspot.com.au/p/about-author.html>

Concept

Character

Teaching the text

It is recommended that students listen to the podcast and then receive the glossary of terms used in the story for reference during a second listening.

Guided discussion questions will allow them to explore the form and meaning of this podcast such as the title, text description, graphic art and sound design. Students will explore language features such as allusion, idiomatic phrases and the motto.

You may want to do more on portmanteau words with your class as a short language digression.

Portmanteau Words

- a large trunk or suitcase, typically made of stiff leather and opening into two equal parts.
- a word blending the sounds and combining the meanings of two others, for example brunch (from 'breakfast' and 'lunch').

Identify the two words or phrases that create the following portmanteaus and provide a definition of the new term.

- chillax
- edutainment
- Cocacolonisation
- frenemy
- flavourite
- screenager
- cronut
- shopaholic
- bootylicious
- Chinglish
- staycation
- tween
- labradoodle

Ask students to investigate and share some of their favourite portmanteaus with the class e.g.

- interrobang: combination of question mark and exclamation point.
- intertwingle: intertwine and intermingle.

Characterisation

The following activities are designed to teach these aspects of the concept of character.

Students understand that characters can represent types of people, ideas and values.

Students learn that

- Characters may be a medium through which ideas and societal attitudes and values are conveyed
- representation and interpretation of character depends on personal and cultural values.

English Textual concepts. Stage 5

The purpose of these activities is to assist students in understanding that characters in texts may be read in different ways. Students are probably comfortable by now with reading character as a representation of a person, one who is moved to respond to situations and people in ways that are consistent with certain personality traits. The character then becomes a point of comparison with the responder herself/himself.

Another way of reading character is to see it as a function of the narrative, through roles the character assumes, as in the Hero's Journey (hero, helper, villain etc) http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero's_journey.htm and yet another is to read the character as a representation of cultural attitudes and values.

These activities may best be done in small groups as students can, when listening to the podcast, each focus on different elements of the task.

Remind students that characters are constructions by the author to

- create empathy and to engage the listener
- develop an idea or message.

Students share their findings with the rest of the class

- as revision for developing a character study and
- to consider the extent to which characters are flat or rounded
- to what extent each character is a medium through which to express ideas and values.

The critical response to the story and the language activities in this section will prepare students for the various writing tasks in which they experiment with different forms of characterisation.

True Story Podcast

Many schools have a wide reading program that ranges across novels, non-fiction and biography, graphic novels, journals and newspapers and poetry. Podcasts are a terrific way to introduce wide listening to the English classroom. Once students have access to the internet via a computer or smart device podcasts have the distinct advantage of being free content.

Of course not all podcast content is appropriate for school audiences. Nevertheless most podcasts, particularly those produced by public radio and not for profit groups (which covers most true story podcasts available) will provide listeners with content and language warnings. Many true story podcasts, such as *The Moth*, include stories by school-aged students that are appropriate for classroom settings. *The Moth* website has an archive of over 500 stories for live streaming.

The list below provides some examples of true story podcasts series and teachers are advised always to listen to a podcast before they play it for a class group. There are hundreds of storytelling podcasts and teachers will no doubt have their preferred choices.

Encourage students when looking for podcasts as part of their wide listening to examine podcast descriptions for warnings about strong language or content that may be inappropriate or triggering. Some true story podcasts deal with highly explicit adult content so it is recommended that students are not given free rein to locate their own podcasts.

- Storycorps <https://storycorps.org>
- Snap Judgment <http://snapjudgment.org/>
- Spark London: connecting people through stories <http://stories.co.uk/>
- KCRW's UnFictional <http://www.kcrw.com/news-culture/shows/unfictional>
- Porchlight Storytelling Series <http://porchlightsf.com/>
- Stanford Storytelling Project <http://storytelling.stanford.edu/>
- The Lapse: True Stories Gussied Up <http://www.thelapse.org/>
- The Moth <http://themoth.org/>
- True Story Time on SoundCloud <https://soundcloud.com/truestorytime>
- Outlook <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02s5rx7/episodes/downloads>
- The Listening Project <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nrshh>
- Risk!: true tales, bold told- "where people tell true stories they never thought they'd dare to share in public" <http://risk-show.com/>

Composing a podcast.

Developing a podcast involves various kinds of composition – writing, speaking and representing – as well as the technical aspects of recording and uploading.

Depending on time and resources available teachers might request that students complete one of the following options:

- write only the written version of their podcast true story
- write the transcript and read their true story to the class or year group, without recording (teachers could showcase the best true stories from a class or year group competition)
- write a transcript and then produce a digital recording of the true story (with or without rich audio such as instrumental score or sound effects).

The activities in this section take students through the process of developing a podcast. You might like to consider group work for this task in which

- all students write a true story and complete the supplementary writing activities
- one or two stories are chosen by each group for performance and recording
- the rest of the group take on production roles to support recording and uploading.

Kenny's Coming Home – Ned Manning

The Australian Script Centre (trading as australianplays.org), 1992

Placement in the curriculum: Stage 5

This text and associated activities are suitable for any unit dealing with characterisation. It could be particularly useful in pointing out differences in how characterisation is approached dramatically and through prose fiction. It also can be useful in teaching how realistic representations are constructed and disrupted.

This play was produced for the Q Theatre, Penrith (1992) and recorded for ABC Radio Drama. It is available for purchase as a downloadable PDF from [Australianplays.org](http://australianplays.org) (<http://australianplays.org/script/ASC-73>).

This play script is suitable for Stage 5 students and is about 'Dad's' campaign for pre-selection for, what was then, a safe Labor seat in Western Sydney. The drama centres on family conflicts that follow when it becomes clear that he is prepared to compromise traditional Labor values and his marriage to get it.

Further information and resources, including costume designs and reviews of the original production can be found here: <http://www.westwords.com.au/projects/writing-place/>

The activities below are designed so that the play may be taught through performance.

Concepts

Representation Character

Representation

Stage 5

Students understand that representation embeds attitudes, beliefs and values.

Students learn that

- Representation may be intentionally or unintentionally biased
- Representation reinforces or challenges existing values and ways of thinking or may attempt to reshape them
- Representation favours or privileges a position by omitting or silencing the views or perspectives of particular groups.

Stage 4

Students understand that representations are not natural reflections of the world.

They learn that

- Representation is the result of conscious or unconscious selection and arrangement according to codes and conventions
- Representation positions a responder
- Representations may be intentionally ambiguous

Character

Stage 5

Students understand that characters can represent types of people, ideas and values.

Students learn that

- Characters may be a medium through which ideas and societal attitudes and values are conveyed
- representation and interpretation of character depends on personal and cultural values.

Stage 4

Students understand that characters are constructs that function differently in different types of texts and media.

They learn that these character constructs

- may draw on such devices as stereotype and generic convention to reflect values.

English Textual concepts, Stages 4 and 5

It is important that students work in groups to perform the play. It may be best that they form groups of 4 (one for each character) or 5 (to include a director).

Keys to conflict

Students should begin by reading the extract in their groups and identify any points of potential conflict between the characters.

Characterisation

Knowing your Character

They then use the jigsaw method to break into groups of individual characters and re-read the play to clarify their understanding of the character using Uta Hagen's *The Six Steps* <http://www.roadsidetheater.com/hagen6.htm>.

They record these ideas in a relationships graphic such as the one on the student page (made from Microsoft Word - Smart Art) and return to their home group to share their findings.

Language as character

The analysis of Dad's speeches is suitable for individual work or homework.

Students should examine the language of their own character and how language features contribute to the character's construction.

Students return to their original groups and Once they have shared their interpretations of each character, they discuss and note:

- what attitudes and values are implied by the information in the relationships graphic.
- how these may be represented through the behaviour, tone and gestures of each character.
- how power relationships between the characters are suggested in their behaviour towards each other.

Predicting conflict

They use these understandings about objectives and obstacles and reflect on their original thoughts about the keys to the conflict and the extent to which these have been refined or reversed by their work on the characters.

At the end of the group session, students share their ideas with the class in teacher led discussion. At this time, students can be drawn to articulate that characters

- are constructs,
 - can represent types of people,
 - may be made up of stereotypic elements,
 - may be a vehicle for conveying ideas and values, and
- they could consider to what extent characterisation in this play uses caricature.

Representation

How real is realism?

Explain to the students that realism is a style which uses the stage conventions of the theatre to convey a sense of real life. Students need to understand that there is a great deal of artifice in the representation of the real.

The following activity can be done in groups. Below are some suggestions for responses

Features of a play	Realistic elements	Artificiality
Setting	Interior of a typical middle class home in western Sydney.	Furniture is chosen and arranged for its style, sight lines and ease of movement of actors
Plot	Actions are those of recognisable people engaged in everyday activities.	A tightly structured narrative to with complications, climax and resolution.
Characterisation	Members of a family whose actions are psychologically driven	Motives and feelings extraneous to the concerns of the plot are omitted.
Thematic concerns	The issues are those that can confront any of us and are recognisable in our own lives.	Contrasts and parallels are developed for artistic effect.
Dialogue	The language of everyday people is spoken.	Sentences are carefully crafted and do not have the breaks or confusions of actual conversation. The script is learned and repeated at each performance.
Acting style	Characters and actions appear natural and unaffected.	Voice projection and tone are carefully modulated to ensure actors can be heard and their speech is engaging and actors' movements are such that details and expressions may be easily seen at a distance.

Discussion on representation could focus on representations:

- being the result of conscious or unconscious choices and are not natural reflections of the world
- embedding attitudes, beliefs and values, what these are in this play and how we know this.

These ideas are reinforced in the next section.

Representing an idea or a feeling

The zucchini song presents us with a problem in that it shatters the realism of the play. It is clearly intended to be an element of the comedy and the meaning of the play rather than simply bizarre behaviour. The playwright, Ned Manning comments:

Kenny's Coming Home can be best described as a play with music. That in itself moves it away from Realism. Characters bursting into song was an intentional device to enhance the theatricality of the piece. Realism in the play can best described as heightened Realism.

Email from Ned Manning

So the staging of *Kenny's Coming Home* needs to prepare the audience for the shift to music and accept the song as an appropriate expression of Dad's inner nature. Discuss with students how a director might do this. They might consider elements of:

- exaggerated costuming and makeup,
- the use of kitsch and cliché in the setting,
- lighting.

Students should also be reminded that theatre has a rich history of non-realistic drama which highlights an emotional truth rather than a factual one and that music is one of these conventions as are soliloquies. So the zucchini song could be a:

- metaphor for a deeper commitment to Labor roots than his current attitudes suggest.
- homage to the life of the family backyard with its barbie and veggie patch.
- yearning for the simpler, old fashioned life of a nurturer rather than a political player?

Performance

Students should perform one of their prepared scenes – either the official scripted version or the representation of the idea or feeling.

We drove to Auburn – Fiona Wright

In *Knuckled*, Giramondo Publishing, Sydney, 2011

Placement in the curriculum: Stage 5

This poem in free verse would be useful in any unit exploring characterisation, voice or representation of diversity. *We drove to Auburn* would also be usefully considered in a unit of work in which students analysed poetry, in particular contemporary Australian poetry. The poem gives students exposure to the form of the dramatic monologue and a consideration of the significance of lineation in free verse. Above all the poem would be ideally placed in a unit where students focused on the writing of their own poetry. The activities demonstrate how the works of other writers can be used as a scaffold and model approaches to using digital platforms to draft and edit student writing.

About *Knuckled*

The first collection of poetry by award-winning young Sydney poet, poetry activist and editor Fiona Wright, whose work satirises the pretensions and aspirations of young Australian city-dwellers. Many poems are set in Asian countries, reflecting the increasing interest of young readers many of whom have travelled extensively there, as well as in Western Sydney, a region of mixed population of increasing interest and importance to Australian writing.

Trove summary:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/80057234?selectedversion=NBD46872542>

...[I] wanted to make a collection that had a strong voice and a sense of humour, and I was really intent on mapping as well. Most of the poems are very firmly about place and about the way places can carry stories for us, as sites of experience and memory and emotion.

Interview with Fiona Wright, Lorne Johnson, The Ultraviolet Range blog, 2 November 2014
<http://lornejohnson.blogspot.com.au/2014/11/crux-1-fiona-wright.html>

Fiona Wright has observed that the poems in *West*, the section of *Knuckled* in which *We Drove to Auburn* appears are about "...the social setting, the way people live their lives in next to-and against each other-...even in the one city"

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/poetica/knuckled/4489006>

About *We Drove to Auburn*

We Drove to Auburn is a poem about place and a journey. In it Fiona Wright evokes Western Sydney through the almost complete absence of its inhabitants. Instead the suburb is revealed through the perspective of a woman visiting Auburn for the first time.

The poem is a dramatic monologue from the perspective of an outsider. The voice of the poem is contemporary and its style is conversational and its vocabulary choices often vernacular.

In the poem a woman from Kirribilli reports on her 'Food Safari' to Auburn in order to buy food and ingredients for an upcoming Moroccan themed dinner party she intends to host. The purpose of the trip might be described as a form of food tourism. In one sense the poem satirically portrays reductive notions of multiculturalism. Here multiculturalism may be safely consumed as a commodified, exoticised and ultimately sanitised culinary experience.

The reader learns from the plural personal pronoun of the title (*We*) that the persona does not travel alone. Her companion or companions are not identified. The audience of the persona's speech is only implied, but she clearly knows them well and they are aware of or potential guests at the planned Moroccan themed dinner party.

An online search by the persona of this dramatic monologue does not reveal the location of shops selling the Moroccan ingredients she seeks. She decides that 'Turkish would do'. Morocco and Turkey have quite distinct cuisines.

The poem observes how people are divided and defined by location and urban barriers such as the harbour and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Auburn is a suburb in Western Sydney 19 kilometres from the Sydney CBD and is proudly one of the most multicultural communities in Australia. Kirribilli, on Sydney's lower North Shore, is one of the city's most established and affluent suburbs.

In Fiona Wright's poem the speaker's refrain that Auburn is *...a long way from Kirribilli* emphasises the geographical, cultural, religious and economic differences between Auburn and Kirribilli. The privileged perspective of Auburn offered

by the persona is emphasised by the frequent and somewhat egotistical use of the individual personal pronoun 'I'. The repeated use of the pronouns 'we' and 'them' further develops the sense of division between the two communities of Auburn and Kirribilli.

Despite her apparent affluence the persona is still concerned that the savings she has made on her shopping items have been swallowed by the cost of her petrol. Her dietary intolerance of the 'tree nuts' present in the Middle Eastern dessert she has ordered is perhaps caricatured as a middle class affectation or faddishness.

Crucially it is others, and not herself, who are embarrassed by her decision to wear 'off-the-shoulder' clothing to a predominantly Muslim area of Sydney, although her sensitivity here may be ascribed to misdirected sense of political correctness.

The outsider status of the persona is finally emphasised in the striking incongruity revealed in the poem's final image: *There was a Torture Rehabilitation Centre/ right next door to the delicatessen*. It is here that the poem suggests that the persona will not allow investigating multicultural Western Sydney to become anything more than a tokenistic and aesthetic experience.

About the poet

Poetica

Fiona Wright reads and discusses twelve poems from *Knuckled* in *Poetica*. She reflects on her process as a poet and growing up in Western Sydney. Fiona compares her experiences of visiting Sri Lanka with those of her grandfather, who was posted to the island as an Australian serviceman in World War II.

We Drove to Auburn is among the poems read and discussed in this radio feature.

- <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/poetica/knuckled/4489006>

Lyrikline- listen to the poet!

Lyrikline is an international poetry website that publishes contemporary poems both in their original language and as translations into other languages. Featured poets read their own work via free online audio files. Poems are organised thematically and by form. You can access the *Lyrikline* website to read the full text of ten of her poems and listen to a reading by Fiona Wright

- <http://www.lyrikline.org/en/poems/kinglake-8000#.Vi8-S9HouW8>

View the full text and hear Fiona Wright read 'My sister says', a poem that explores the Western Sydney suburb of Bankstown.

- <http://www.lyrikline.org/en/poems/my-sister-doesnt-7999#.Vjk7YT4apo>

The Red Room Company

You can read a range of poems commissioned from Fiona Wright by The Red Room Company for both public poetry projects and its education program on her Profile page.

Mona Street (included in *Knuckled*) was composed in 2010 as part of workshops at Bankstown Girls High School (the school is located on Mona Street), *It's Apples* was composed for a program delivered at Wanniassa School in the ACT. *Vocab List* was composed for students at Liverpool Girls' High School in 2012.

- <http://redroomcompany.org/poet/fiona-wright/>

You can also view video on this Profile page of Fiona Wright reading *Persimmon Poem* and *To the Children of Poets* at the *Poems to Share* event for the Sydney Writers Festival.

The Disappearing: The Red Room Company

The Disappearing is a public poetry project produced by The Red Room Company that uses a free app for Apple and Android to geo-locate poems to place. Version 2.0 of *The Disappearing* will focus on Western Sydney and regional NSW.

- <http://redroomcompany.org/projects/disappearing/>
- <http://www.thethepoetry.com/2012/07/the-disappearing-fiona-wright/>

Fiona Wright and Miles Merrill argue the power of poetry: *Verse and Voice: A Poetry and Spoken Word Festival* (2014) An edited transcript of a debate between Fiona Wright and Miles Merrill in which they consider the power of written and spoken poetry is available on the website of the NSW Writers' Centre

- <http://www.nswwc.org.au/2015/02/fiona-wright-miles-merrill-argue-the-power-of-poetry/>

Concepts

Figuration: Connotation, imagery, symbol
Code and convention
Theme

Teaching the text

In this sequence of activities students will read, listen to and analyse Fiona Wright's poem *We drove to Auburn*. Following a close study of this poem and its context they will use this dramatic monologue as a scaffold for their own writing of poetry that explores place from the perspective of an outsider.

Before reading the poem students will first predict its subject matter by speculating on the connotations of the title of the collection. Guided discussion questions will allow them to explore the form and meaning of the poem. Students will consider the poetic form of the dramatic monologue and the importance of line break in free verse. They will draft their poems using PowerPoint software.

At the conclusion of the sequence of lessons students will reflect on their predictions and reconsider the title chosen by Fiona Wright for her debut collection. PowerPoint software can also be used as a vehicle for reflecting on the drafting process and their final product.

The study of this poem is supported by rich online resources relating to the setting of the poem and its composer.

Figuration

Connotation

The concept addressed through this activity is Figuration/ Figurative language which includes connotation, imagery and symbol. The focus is particularly on connotation.

At Stage 5, students understand that attention to figurative language can give rise to subtle and complex meanings. Students learn

- that the effect of figurative language varies according to personal experience, social and cultural context.

Before beginning the unit you may want to begin with a word association game around the word 'knuckled', the title of the collection of Fiona Wright's poetry, to predict the poem's nature and what it might be about. Give the students two minutes to write down associations with the term in silence and then share them with the class.

Uses of the term 'knuckled'

Mix and match activity

NB: when this activity was tested with teenaged boys the term 'moose knuckle' was offered which is apparently a synonym for the slang expression 'camel toe'. You have been warned!

Lead students to understand that

- words may have multiple uses,
- each of these have associated ideas and feelings,
- these ideas and feelings vary according to a person's experiences and their social and cultural context,
- taking account of connotations can enrich reading by adding layers to meanings.

Understanding the poem

Before reading the poem, let students know that

- Auburn is an area in Western Sydney.
- Kirribilli is the suburb on Sydney Harbour, next to the Harbour Bridge and opposite the Opera House.
- Ask them to jot down some impressions they have each of these places and the people who live in them.

These will be referred to later in the section on Assumptions.
The close study questions are grouped as a 3-level guide into:

1. the content of the poem.
2. inferences to be drawn from the content.
3. cultural knowledge required to understand the subtext of the poem.

This classification offers one way of differentiating work allocated to groups in an unstreamed classroom. If these questions are answered as group activities, the answers to the questions need to be presented to the class as a whole with opportunity for asking questions, commenting or adding information.

Recognising and challenging assumptions

This section asks students to:

- articulate the assumptions in the poem about both suburbs
- compare them to their own assumptions
- consider these against the statistics from the last census and
- question the validity of the assumptions
- question the usefulness of the assumptions in helping us understand communities.

Dramatic monologue

This section focuses on the dramatic monologue, the development of a persona and the role of the reader as opposed to the listener of the monologue if there is one. You can easily make clear the distinction between the poet and the persona if you read students Fiona Wright's own words about Western Sydney.

Fiona Wright on Western Sydney

The places are all important to me. I grew up in Menai and spent a lot of time in Bankstown and later I moved to the inner west. I'm not interested in just cataloguing things as they are, but I do have a special interest in what makes these places important in my life and seeing how they have changed, either physically or through perspective...

*'Interview with Fiona Wright', Lorne Johnson, The Ultraviolet Range blog, 2 November 2014
<http://lornejohnson.blogspot.com.au/2014/11/crux-1-fiona-wright.html>*

You don't realise that it is special or beautiful or different until you are confronted with a different way of living that another person takes for granted as the way the world works.

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/poetica/knuckled/4489006>

If students require further contextualisation of the poem, and the idea of the 'food tour' or if you are looking for a different perspective on what the persona of the poem sees, these web sites offer different views:

- *Not Quite Nigella: Meet My Suburb*, Auburn Food Tour
A very different food tour to the poem - amazing photographs and a tour of RT Turkish Delight, the largest manufacturer in Australia.
<http://www.notquitenigella.com/2010/09/15/meet-my-suburb-auburn/>
- The Western Sydney Food Blog, The Flavours of Auburn Food Tour, written by Alice, 15 June, 2014.
<http://westernsydneyfoodblog.com/39-the-flavours-of-auburn-food-tour>

Theme

The first activity revises the difference between theme and subject matter. Once students have completed it, teacher-led discussion could suggest ways in which themes can be identified by the language they use eg.

- first person plural referring to people inclusively and in general – everyone
- the use of abstract nouns indicating big ideas.

The unifying power of theme activity aims to show students that theme emerges from the details of the poem, not simply through its content but how style, image and tone combine to convey a message.

Once students have completed the diagram, discussion could reinforce ideas of how theme:

- emerges from the elements of a text working together
- draws a text together
- provides insight into the values of the composer.

Free verse

In their work on line breaks students revisit some of the ideas they have learned at earlier stages

Stage 4

Students recognise that codes and conventions are social practices and are adapted in response to different purposes, effects, audiences, contexts and media.

Students learn that

- groups use codes and conventions differently and this may become a marker of identity.

This builds on Stage 3 learning

Students understand that codes and conventions of each mode provide the foundation for innovation.

They learn that

- choices of language and design have subtle differences and effects
- opportunities for innovation occur at all levels eg word, sentence, paragraph and whole text levels.

Line breaks

Have students read the introduction to this section on line breaks. You may want to explore these ideas further through this article <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/article/248630>.

Students can experiment with the effects of different line breaks through the activity on Fiona Wright's poem 'Mona Street' which has been reproduced without line breaks.

Ask students to

- work in groups and read the poem aloud, discuss the questions in their groups and then discuss their ideas with the class as a whole.
- re-edit the de-lineated version of the poem, inserting line breaks with a backslash (/) where they believe they are appropriate. It is a good idea to do this with a coloured pen or using a word processor. There are no right or wrong ways to re-edit this poem. It is their choices and reasons for them that are valued here.
- share with the class two examples of where they have used line break and to explain the effect of their choice.

This activity also works well when students can later compare their own de-lineated version with the published and lineated version of an unseen poem. There is always one student whose choices of lineation are almost entirely the same as the poet's- and accusations of cheating or psychic powers start to fly. Teachers will need to produce their own de-lineated versions of such unseen poems.

The poem is reproduced with lineation at <http://redroomcompany.org/poem/fiona-wright/mona-st/>.

Writing poetry

We drove to... poem, after Fiona Wright

Students synthesise the work they have been doing on connotation, dramatic monologue and the form of the poem by writing a free verse modelled on 'We drove to Auburn'. Several scaffolds for the activity have been provided.

- An analysis/ planning template
- Sentence starters
- A strategy for drafting poems using PowerPoint slides.

This approach uses PowerPoint to create a digital record of the drafting process. The student cuts and pastes and edits successive drafts of the poem in new PowerPoint slides.

Feedback from you or from other students

If this is done in pairs or small groups, can use the Notes section of PowerPoint to offer constructive criticism of each draft. Alternatively you can use the Comments bar in the Review function from the Tool Bar for adding this form of feedback.

Students can also write a short reflection (perhaps in dot point) about their process and final product in the final slides

Thanks to poet Lachlan Brown for first introducing this approach to drafting poetry. It works particularly well with short poems such as haiku or senryu.

An alternative approach to this activity could be based on the 52 Suburbs blog <http://www.52suburbs.com.au/2009/11/suburb-no-9-auburn.html>

Urban Sprawl - Lachlan Brown

in Lachlan Brown, *Limited Cities*, Giramondo. 2012.

Placement in the curriculum: Stage 5

This text and associated activities are suitable for any unit dealing with images and representation. It addresses such themes as journey, change, changing perspectives and identity.

'Urban Sprawl' would also be usefully considered in a unit of work that analysed perspective or point of view or explored the forms of poetry.

A short summary

This poem is composed in two parts. *Macquarie Fields, Spring's edge 2004* and *Macquarie Fields, Autumn's edge 2005*. In referencing the seasons like this, spring signifying positivity and autumn representing a movement towards negativity, Lachlan Brown immediately foregrounds the notion of change. As we read the poem, we realise the enthusiasm that Brown's persona has with the place of Macquarie Fields and the vistas of the suburbs that are easily visible to him on the train line as he passes them on his daily commute.

About the poet

Lachlan Brown is of Chinese-Australian heritage. He grew up in Macquarie Fields in Southwest Sydney. He completed his PhD at the University of Sydney. He was the recipient of the Martin Travelling Bequest in 2008 and the University of Sydney Henry Lawson Poetry Prize, Hermes Best Poem Award and the Macquarie Fields Poetry Prize. He was shortlisted for the Blake Poetry Prize and was commended in the 2014 Newcastle Poetry Prize. In 2013, Lachlan Brown received an Emerging Writers' Grant. His poems have appeared in a number of journals including: Southerly, Heat, Hermes, Philament, Cordite, Mascara and Etchings. *Limited Cities*, published by Giramondo, in 2012, is his first volume of poetry and was considered for the Dame Mary Gilmore Award, receiving a highly commended. He has worked with a number of schools through programs run by The Red Room Company. Lachlan Brown is a lecturer in English Literature and Creative Writing at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga.

The Context of the Poem:

The Suburb and the Macquarie Fields Riots

Urban Sprawl by Lachlan Brown captures two time contexts: spring time, 2004, in the year before the Macquarie Fields riots; and autumn, 2005 that followed immediately after the Macquarie Fields riots.

Macquarie Fields is a suburb in the South West Sydney area situated half way between Liverpool and Campbelltown. It is 42 kilometres south-west of the centre of Sydney, in the local government area of the City of Campbelltown, within the Macarthur Region.

A large housing commission estate was built on the eastern side of Macquarie Fields in the 1970's despite the fact that this type of estate was failing overseas. This meant that there was a rapidly changing demographic and an increasing socioeconomic divide becoming apparent. In 2002 a new gated housing estate called Macquarie Links, complete with its own international golf course and club, was opened on the other side of the train tracks, adding to an identity crisis of the suburb.

The Macquarie Fields riots of 2005 (as they became known in the media and in Parliament) were a series of altercations between police and a section of community in the Government housing estate. These altercations were triggered by a high-speed police pursuit that ended with the 20-year-old driver crashing the stolen vehicle into a tree and the death of his two teenage passengers. The accusations that claimed police impropriety led to intense clashes with police. The riots and the way they were handled by the police became part of a parliamentary inquiry that was held nine months later so Macquarie Fields and this event featured frequently in the news in 2005.

For more information go to:

- [http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/hanstrans.nsf/V3ByKey/LA20050301/\\$File/531la121.pdf](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/hanstrans.nsf/V3ByKey/LA20050301/$File/531la121.pdf)
- <http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Behind-the-urban-curtains/2005/03/03/1109700606439.html>
- <http://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/HistoryofMacquarieLinks>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtinfBIV51I>
- <http://macquarielinks.miclub.com.au/guests/about/faq.mhtml>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macquarie_Fields,_New_South_Wales

Concepts

Figuration: Connotation, Imagery, Symbol

Becoming familiar with the poem

The aim of these lessons is to facilitate an understanding of the poem and the way in which the poet uses language to represent his connection to his hometown suburb of Macquarie Fields both before and after the riots. This will be achieved through a series of lessons that help students interpret this particular free-verse poem. Necessary time is devoted to lessons that help students recognise the poetic representation of place and the strategies Brown uses that highlight his recognition that it is language that both expresses our connection to place and helps shape that connection. Brown shows the significant power of a place to profoundly move an individual. Brown positions the reader to consider the damage that negative public and media perception can have on an individual who has a strong connection to a place and how it can create unsettling tensions within the community.

At the end of this unit, students will be composing a visual representation of the poem. Through participation in this task students should be better able to think critically about the poem and interpret its meaning as well as appreciate the tools that the poet has used to create this meaning.

Lesson 1: (Designed for 60 – 70 min lessons)

Immersion in the text:

Firstly, all students will be given their own copy of the poem to annotate (preferably copied onto A3 sized paper).

Jigsaw

Each member who chooses to physically move out of the paired group is exempt from sharing the ideas from the previous discussion with the new group. They will become scribes, instead. (This is designed to increase student active participation. Often those who struggle to participate choose to stay in their chairs).

The class teacher will then connect two sitters with two travellers (those students who remain behind in their seats being the sitters; the ones moving away from the group to another being the travellers).

The partner who remained in their chair from the previous paired group activity above is responsible for being the spokesperson for their new group, passing ideas and annotations from their previous paired discussion onto their new group. This will mean that each group will have two spokespersons and two scribes.

(Another way to facilitate smooth movement is to have a series of numbers that are laminated and hand these out at the start of the paired activities. Here you would hand students a card labelled with the number 1 OR 2. Then make sure that each group of four ends up with two students with the number 1 and two students with the number 2).

Padlet <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuzciL8qCYM>

- Students need to brainstorm these questions on A3 paper. Check every student has a different coloured pen and needs to contribute at least one idea to the mindmap in this different colour. (Having a set of ten 4 click Bic pens on hand is helpful here to assist the smooth running of this group work).

Imagery

Stage 5

Students understand that attention to imagery can give rise to subtle and complex meanings.

Students learn that

- The emphasis on imagery in a text varies according to its audience and purpose
- Understanding the effect of imagery and symbol varies according to personal experience, social and cultural context
- Attention to patterns of imagery invite readings that are more cohesive.

Stage 4

Students understand that imagery is aesthetically pleasing and persuasive

Students learn that

- Words invite associations (connotations) in responders which bring related ideas and feelings to a text
- Imagery and symbol communicate through associations which may be personal, social or cultural.

The activities relating to imagery begin with students appreciating how striking Brown's imagery is and how, though not conventionally beautiful, it makes everyday sights appealing. A similar effect is produced in Kenneth Slessor's *William Street* articulated in the last line of each stanza *You find this ugly, I find it lovely* (<http://allpoetry.com/poem/8521607-William-Street-by-Kenneth-Slessor>) a poem that could work well as a companion piece to *Macquarie Fields, Spring's edge 2004*. You might also use *Animal Metaphors* by Amy Lyn as an additional example of the way images may be interpreted differently by different people: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dvp3QorKXxs> .

These poems allow you to make explicit the idea that the effect of imagery and symbol varies according to personal experience, social and cultural context.

The jumble of images in Brown's poems also raises the question of integrity of meaning. Often a particular strain of imagery through a text contributes to its textual integrity but here the effect is one of fragmentation and confusion. Paradoxically, it is this that gives the poem unity, with the persona finding 'an easy groove' and 'promise' in the variety of the commonplace.

Visual representation

In this task students will participate in the composition of a visual representation in response to the poem, 'Urban Sprawl' by Lachlan Brown showing an understanding of the way in which Lachlan Brown communicates his connection to Macquarie Fields as a significant place and the inner turmoil he experiences at the widespread media representations of the Macquarie Fields riots.

Verbal Instructions to Students:

Explain to the students that they will be creating their own original piece of artwork based on their own personal response to the poem.

- Emphasise that they are to create their visual representation in such a way that the visual representation captures what they believe is the tone, poet's thoughts and their own emotional response to the poem.
- Suggest that they do this through a key motif or extended metaphor that seems to dominate the poem.
- Suggest that students can use mixed media or they can use a computer program like Adobe Photoshop to complete this visual representation. Establish the boundaries of this visual representation. For example, you might consider whether you wish to limit it being a 2D product or limit its size.
- Explain to the students that they will need to write an accompanying Reflection Statement that will be the medium through which they explain in writing the reasons behind their design choices in the composition of their visual representation.
- Students need to consider how the meaning, feelings and imagery of the poem will translate into a visual that uses colour, composition lighting and motifs

Class Discussion

(Lots of this information may have already come out of previous discussions from the earlier tasks but by asking these questions below, more explicitly, you will help students organise their information and be more prepared for the visual representation task).

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think this poem is about? How do you think you can communicate this through your own choice as an artist in your visual representation?
2. How does the poet feel about Macquarie Fields? Does this shift and change throughout the poem? How do you know? How will you communicate this in your visual representation?
3. Is there an image or motif that seems to dominate the poem? What is it? What visual motif or extended visual metaphor will you use and why?
4. What other images seem to dominate the poem? What images do you feel you must include?
5. What colours do you see or imagine in your reading of the poem?
6. What colours might you use in order to communicate a similar tone thought and feeling?
7. How do you think you might use lighting in your visual representation to communicate a similar tone, thought and feeling to that of Lachlan Brown's poem?
8. What does the whole picture in your imagination look like now after participating in this discussion?

Gallery Walk and Peer Marking

Assemble all the completed visual representations around the classroom. Give students criteria sheets that the students have contributed to making earlier. Give the students time to walk around the classroom gallery and view the completed artwork.

Students will then be expected to fill in a brief peer marking criteria on each finished product. as they view each piece. All students need to note down any intriguing or interesting choices that other students may have used in their compositions.

Criteria Sheet

Have students determine collaboratively as a class, what their criteria for marking the visual representation should be.

From image to collaborative class poem

This blended individual and group activity can be completed digitally (eg with Edmodo.com or on padlet.com) if resources allow.

Give each image a number for identification. Every student is to take two of the collected images each. Chart, on the board, the name of each student and the numbers of the images they have taken. There should be enough images so that each student's selection is different from the others.

Record student names and image numbers and put this in a shared space for all the students to access in case they forget.

Students are to make these images positive or appealing, as Brown has done in the first part of the poem.

Students can then edit these lines in teams and submit them onto the main wall of Edmodo or on strips of butchers' or A3 paper.

As a class, move these lines around together or otherwise do this in teams to create a collaborative poem. Choices and sequences can be discussed and amended to create a more polished product.

Teacher resource or structuring an essay

This section of the resource could be used simply as teacher reference on the imagery of the poem or as the basis for an activity for students on structuring an essay.

Activity

Students are often so focussed on the what they want to say in an essay that they do not always appreciate the importance of its structural elements, how the arrangement of facts can be even more critical to the effectiveness of an argument than the points made.

Below are six paragraphs that could come from the body of an essay. Each paragraph makes some statement about Brown's use of imagery.

Students could

- Choose 1, 2 or 3 paragraphs to form the body of an essay
- Frame a question that these paragraphs would answer and
- Write the introduction and conclusion.

Students may need to

- adapt some of the topic and concluding sentences
- select some of the facts
- rearrange some of the ideas for their essay to flow.

1. His choice of visual imagery in the first part of the poem communicates the joy the persona feels in the everyday images that, to the outsider, could connote disgust and affirm negative portrayals of Southwest Sydney: 'corrugated iron' and 'creek flushed with prams & plastic & spectating blackberries that sprawl on banks.' Brown subverts these potentially negative perceptions. He draws the readers into this lyrical piece and positions them to experience these images through the eyes of the persona. The persona demands the scenic features of a lower socio-economic area: 'Give me corrugated iron & grinning billboards & a day as brilliant as a fire escape'. The repeated use of the ampersand draws our attention to the use of polysyndeton. This elongates the sentences and creatively captures the experience of the layering of images as happens when one is walking to the station or viewing the 'the cameos glide past' from the perspective of a train commuter. The interesting, almost jarring conglomeration of images and sounds effectively captures the unedited nature of this train journey. These images suggest that part of belonging to a place is to be open to the diversity of sensual experience offered and renewing this openness on a daily basis. As a result, one recognises the metaphorical 'promise of empty pages and not just the train breaking with a sigh.'
2. The use of the train as a motif in this poem foregrounds the notion that belonging to place is a constant personal and sensual journey that can reconfigure one's identity if the commuter is open to it. The switch to second person in the latter part of Spring's edge invites the reader to recognise the musical qualities of the train trip. This adds a significant 'soundtrack' to this persona's experience of travelling through these places in South West Sydney, an experience that is also tactile, 'There's that feeling, on the edge of your skin, as the train slides in smooth archeology, gently brushing lines overhead.'
3. Brown invites the reader to be a participant in the persona's experience by breaking the barrier between the speaker and the readers and invites the reader to consider themselves as musicians, 'a bass player', 'laying down an easy groove that squeezes around headphones ...' There is an obvious invitation to the reader, especially fellow citizens of Macquarie Fields, to immerse themselves in the places they experience and, in doing so, recognise the inherent beauty of a place. In suggesting a response to place like this, he suggests that the audience could then be complicit in the composition of more lyrical pieces that can 'track footprints through carriage minds'. Brown draws attention to the power of free verse poetry to both capture and communicate the experiential streams of consciousness that would seem out of place in another form. Brown, through the personified power given to 'concrete sparkle', reminds us of the living potential we have to change the perspectives of a place if we are willing to recognise and harness a 'morning flecked with toothpaste and cool breathing'.
4. In referencing the seasons in the labeling of the parts, Brown offers hope for healing. He offers the reader the sense that this persona's altered connection to Macquarie Fields, following the tragedy of the Macquarie Fields' riots (see context), is not a permanent state. In the second part, 'Autumn's edge 2005', Brown focuses his attention on the hyped media attention the riots received – 'It's on the news ... jostling Oscar-

winners and royalty for the top spot.' His cynical tone makes apparent his disdain for the media's role in heightening the drama of this tragedy for ratings. The consequence being that it only elevated simmering tensions between the growing affluent classes and the housing commission. He reminds the reader that others' perceptions of a place, particularly the media's, can deeply impact the connection individuals feel to that place. This is very evident in the second part of the poem where there is marked difference in the type of imagery referenced to the first. The joyful images like 'grinning billboards' and 'green lawns winking' are replaced with more simple, defeatist images, 'green electrical boxes sprayed with tags', 'fence palings spiralling into an officer's shield.' In doing this, he draws attention to the fragility of any individual's connection to place and the close association between connection to place and identity. Again, Brown foregrounds the importance of one's experience of place. He reminds us that here, yet again, the free-verse form offers a space for healing.

5. The persona's frustration continues to be apparent through the accusative questioning of the reader, 'Don't tell me you're not a fan of fireworks, or fence palings spiralling into an officer's shield?' Here, Brown suggests that the reader of the poem and viewers of media representations, by being passive consumers of the inflated news articles and images, are complicit in the breakdown of the persona's perception of Macquarie Fields as a place of sanctity. The image of the fence palings and the reference to the iconic image of 'someone (lighting) a mattress and two million TVs (flickering) like post office gossip' draw attention to the notion that suburbs can be self-destructive.
6. Despite capturing the experience in a present tense narrative free-verse form Brown projects his concern for the future of Macquarie Fields and those living within it. He is deeply concerned for the readers and composers within it, even himself, if they and he cannot shape an identity that is not dependent upon and separate to this event. He positions us to see beyond the 'Us and Them' mentality that became pervasive in this context and suggests that they can be dangerous if we perpetuate the discourse. His ironic juxtaposition of the two class extremes in Macquarie Fields in 'hooded kids throw rocks 'the size of golf balls' as members of the gated community 'putt to save par on the other side of the tracks' shows the ongoing problems with identity that one is doomed to face in a suburb that is rapidly changing and is under the scrutiny of a public eye. This is particularly evident in the persona's bewilderment, 'I'm somewhere in between I think, like a fallacy.'

Bibliography

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