

# Goldsmiths Research Online

*Goldsmiths Research Online (GRO)  
is the institutional research repository for  
Goldsmiths, University of London*

## Citation

Gilbert, Francis. 2018. The Mindful English Teacher: A Toolkit for Learning and Well-Being. London: FGI Publishing. ISBN 978-1974255863 [Book]

## Persistent URL

<http://research.gold.ac.uk/21989/>

## Versions

The version presented here may differ from the published, performed or presented work. Please go to the persistent GRO record above for more information.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Goldsmiths, University of London via the following email address: [gro@gold.ac.uk](mailto:gro@gold.ac.uk).

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated. For more information, please contact the GRO team: [gro@gold.ac.uk](mailto:gro@gold.ac.uk)

# THE MINDFUL ENGLISH TEACHER

A TOOLKIT FOR LEARNING & WELL-BEING

DR FRANCIS GILBERT

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

All rights reserved. This book contains material protected under International and Federal Copyright Laws and Treaties. Any unauthorized reprint or use of the original material written by the named authors is prohibited: these sections of the book may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without express written permission from the author / publisher.

This edition published in 2017 by FGI Publishing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.

Copyright ©

FGI Publishing, London UK, sir@francisgilbert.co.uk

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publications Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-13: 978-1974255863

ISBN-10: 1974255867

### **Dedication**

To all the PGCE students I have educated, particularly the English cohorts 2015-17, who inspired me to write this book.

### **Acknowledgments**

Thanks to Goldsmiths' Department of Education for all their help, Sam Sullivan at Newington Design & my PGCE students.

### **Also by Francis Gilbert**

*I'm A Teacher, Get Me out of Here* (2004)

*Teacher on the Run* (2005)

*Yob Nation* (2006)

*Parent Power* (2007)

*Working the System* (2011)

*The Last Day of Term* (2012)

*How to get a great English Degree* (2013)

*Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde: The Study Guide Edition* (2014)

*Romeo and Juliet: The Study Guide Edition* (2014)

*Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: The Study Guide Edition* (2015)

*Lewis Carroll's Alice Novels: The Study Guide Edition* (2016)

*The Time Devil* (2017)

*Who Do You Love* (2017)

# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PART I: THE AUDIT .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PART II: THEORY AND PRACTICE .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>Aims, values and purposes of education.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Mindfulness .....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Being organised .....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Well-being.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Theories of learning .....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Meta-cognition and self-regulation .....</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Lesson planning .....</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Collaborative learning.....</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Creativity.....</i>	<i>90</i>
<i>Identity.....</i>	<i>99</i>
<i>Embodied learning .....</i>	<i>107</i>
<i>Analogy learning: using objects .....</i>	<i>119</i>
<i>Evidence-Based Teaching.....</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Assessment: summative and formative .....</i>	<i>131</i>
<i>Presentation skills with learning resources: explanations, devising</i> <i>worksheets and PowerPoints .....</i>	<i>140</i>
<i>Behaviour management .....</i>	<i>142</i>
<i>Teacher Research.....</i>	<i>155</i>
<i>Differentiation .....</i>	<i>157</i>
<i>Special Educational Needs (SEND).....</i>	<i>160</i>
<i>Multi-lingual learning .....</i>	<i>165</i>
<i>Safe-guarding .....</i>	<i>169</i>
<i>Spiritual, moral and citizenship issues .....</i>	<i>177</i>
<b>PART III: SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE .....</b>	<b>183</b>
<i>What is English?.....</i>	<i>183</i>
<i>Spoken English .....</i>	<i>199</i>
<i>Reading skills .....</i>	<i>210</i>
<i>Writing skills .....</i>	<i>250</i>
<i>History of the English Language &amp; Literature.....</i>	<i>267</i>
<i>Shakespeare.....</i>	<i>275</i>
<i>National Curriculum for English.....</i>	<i>292</i>
<i>Cultural Literacy.....</i>	<i>306</i>
<i>Pre-And Post-1900 Fiction .....</i>	<i>324</i>
<i>Pre-And Post-1900 Poetry.....</i>	<i>339</i>
<i>Young Adult literature .....</i>	<i>352</i>

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

<i>Poetic Techniques</i> .....	366
<i>Texts drawn from diverse cultures</i> .....	376
<i>Non-fiction</i> .....	380
<i>Multi-modal learning</i> .....	384
<i>Drama (basic techniques)</i> .....	387
<i>Teaching spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG)</i> .....	392
<i>Knowledge about language</i> .....	398
<i>Digital media skills: using ICT, video, images etc</i> .....	409
<i>Core teaching strategies</i> .....	412
<i>Analysing reading skills</i> .....	418
<i>Terms to teach secondary students</i> .....	421
CONCLUSION .....	429
<i>Top Tips</i> .....	429
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>431</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b> .....	<b>441</b>

## INTRODUCTION

*The Mindful English Teacher* aims to improve English teaching by developing mindful practices and core knowledge. It is very much a work in progress: I intend to improve it as I use it with my own PGCE English students.

The overarching idea of the book is that if English teachers (ET) learn to be mindful, they can become more effective and enjoy a better quality of life. ETs are very much in the firing line: many face lots of pressures from other teachers, Ofsted, parents, politicians and their own students. This book acknowledges this fact and takes the attitude that teachers achieve better results when they are happy. Having practised it myself for some time, I now believe adopting a few simple mindfulness techniques can improve well-being, although I make no claims about it being a magic cure for all ills. Conditions of service, pay and workload need to be factored in as well.

The book starts with an audit which asks ETs to reflect upon what they know and what they don't. If they wish, they can then find the relevant section and develop their knowledge. The chapters are deliberately very eclectic, containing a mixture of learning scripts, activities, puzzles, articles, resources, and top tips, all drawn from my decades of experience as an English teacher, teacher educator, journalist, academic, and creative writer. The book is more detailed at the beginning as I believe that when ETs grasp the fundamental principles of mindful English teaching, they are then free to adopt the ideas and practices as they see fit.

The book contains "Learning puzzles and activities" which make teachers to think about what they might do in very specific situations or discuss relevant questions. They are open-ended tasks with no right or wrong answers, but rather there to provoke discussion and thought.

It is not an academic book, but is informed by solid undergirding of theory and evidence. Please follow up the references if you are interested in pursuing this line of inquiry: there is an exhaustive bibliography at the back, and many references within the text itself.

### A NOTE ABOUT THE LEARNING SCRIPTS

In the book, there are many scripts where four different types of teachers talk about the major issues connected with English teaching. The four teachers are:

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

CREATIVE TEACHER who is interested in creative, mindful approaches to English teaching who best represents my point of view;

BEGINNER TEACHER who feels quite unconfident about being a teacher, but is willing to give innovative ideas a try;

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER who is an experienced teacher but has become very focused upon “teaching to the test”;

TRADITIONAL TEACHER who believes in ‘chalk and talk’: explaining key concepts at the front of the class, delivering lectures and ‘knowing your subject’ above anything else.

These approaches have their merits – and drawbacks. The reason why I’ve written these scripts is so that you can read them either by yourself or in groups and then discuss the major points arising from them, noting the lessons learnt.

### LEARNING PUZZLE

What do you want from a teaching guide? Why do you read them? What guides work best for you and why? How might you get the best out of this guide?

Francis Gilbert, August 2017.

## PART I: THE AUDIT

You may feel anxious after you have completed this audit for the first time; you may believe that you do not know much about some of topics mentioned here. If so, take a moment to concentrate upon your breathing and acknowledge your thoughts/feelings; often when we are anxious, we are bad at judging what we know and don't. Try and calm yourself and continue with the audit. The audit is here to do a few things: make you aware of what you know and you don't know, and provoke what is known as 'productive discomfort' or 'cognitive dissonance'; an awareness that there are things to learn. This is good! It's your response to these feelings that is important to deal with. We will talk about this later in the book.

Use the questions at the beginning of each section to prompt you as to what you think you know. After the audit, the book explores each of the topics you have been questioned about; you can go to this section to learn more about the topic. After each term or your own specified time, you should review your knowledge and see if you have improved.

### *LEARNING ACTIVITIES*

Please RAG the audit over time: red for Requires Improvement, Amber for OK, Green for Outstanding/good, making sure that you return to it regularly, checking your progress, for example, in Term 1, 2, 3 etc.

You can download a Word version of the audit for filling in here:

**<https://a2zofenglishteaching.wordpress.com/2017/08/01/english-subject-skills-audit/>**

After you have read through the audit, can you complete the survey monkey quiz which will give you a score?

**<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QR2VKWT>**

Please do the more detailed audit (Word-based audit) as well though. I have not included the charts to be filled in this book because of lack of space.

You should set some clear targets of things you need to learn more about after you have completed the audit, providing deadlines and activities that will help you learn more. Do a mindfulness meditation upon what you feel you need to learn more about if you want.



## THEORY AND PRACTICE

*Remember to RAG your knowledge at least three times during the year.*

### AIMS, VALUES AND PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

Why do we go to school? Have you thought carefully about what education should be aiming to do? Is it there to make people moral or knowledgeable? Or both? Why do we teach students in schools? Have you thought about this?

### MINDFULNESS

Do you know what mindfulness is?

Have you ever meditated, or done yoga?

What do you know about living in the present moment?

Have you thought about being kind to yourself, and having compassion for other people?

Have you ever observed your thoughts and feelings from a distance?

### BEING ORGANISED

How organised are you? Do you leave things to the last minute?

Do you over-organise things?

Do you get very anxious about organising your life and planning?

How easy do you find it to manage your time and meet deadlines?

### WELL-BEING

Do you look after yourself? Do you find it difficult to keep fit and healthy?

Do you suffer from stress at times? How resilient are you?

### LESSON PLANNING

Have you ever planned any lessons? What do you know about learning objectives, goals and intentions, starters, learning activities and plenaries?

### THEORIES OF LEARNING

How do you think people learn? By copying other people and learning by rote? Through discussion, collaboration and practice? Are you familiar

Francis Gilbert

with the main theorists about learning, e.g. John Dewey, B.F. Skinner, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, Benjamin Bloom?

## BEHAVIOURISM

Do you think learning involves 'being taught', i.e. listening to information and 'absorbing it' through lectures? Are you familiar with John Locke, Pavlov and B.F. Skinner's ideas about education? Do you know about positive and negative reinforcement? About learning through imitation? Have you heard of the phrases, 'passive learning' and 'tabula rasa'?

## CONSTRUCTIVISM

Are you aware that many educationalists argue that learners need to actively construct knowledge in their minds rather than being told what to do? Are you familiar with Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner's work?

## META-COGNITION AND SELF-REGULATION

Have you heard of these phrases? Are you aware that many experts believe learners need to reflect and monitor the processes that help them learn and to use these reflections to inform how they proceed with their learning? Are you aware that the most effective learners 'self-regulate'; they plan for themselves what they need to do to achieve a goal and carry out those plans, motivating themselves?

## CREATIVITY

How would you define creativity? Do you think it's important to nurture in education? What is creativity? Are you creative in your life? Do you create new things such as poems, stories, art, sculpture etc? Do you believe you are creative yourself?

## IDENTITY

How important do you think your identity is as a teacher? What role does your gender, age, ethnicity, social class play in shaping you as a teacher? How much do you know about this topic?

## **COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

What do you know about teaching students to work in groups or pairs? What is your attitude towards group work and collaborative learning? Do you know how to nurture effective learning in groups? Do you understand the importance of encouraging students to discuss things amongst themselves?

## **EMBODIED LEARNING**

What do you know about using the body to help people learn and the role the body plays in learning?

## **LEARNING USING OBJECTS: ARTEFACTUAL LEARNING**

What do you know about using objects to help people learn?

## **EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING**

What do you know about this movement in education that aims to get teachers using teaching methods that are 'proven' to work, such as teaching by analogy, visual organisers and getting students to hypothesize? Are the names EEF, John Hattie, Marzano, Geoff Petty familiar to you?

## **ASSESSMENT: SUMMATIVE AND FORMATIVE**

Do you know what summative and formative assessment is? Do you know anything about 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL)? Do you know any AfL strategies? Do you feel you know what makes effective AfL? Do you know about the importance of linking learning objectives to AfL?

## **PRESENTATION SKILLS: EXPLANATIONS, DEVSING WORKSHEETS AND POWERPOINTS**

Do you know how to devise effective worksheets, PowerPoints and other learning resources? What do you know about learning resource design?

## **BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

Do you feel confident about managing the behaviour of students within English classes? Do you understand the importance of developing positive management skills?

## **TEACHER RESEARCH**

Do you feel confident in writing academic assignments and referencing using, for example, Harvard style? Do you know about referencing tools such as Endnote or Zotero? Do you know how to read and take notes from academic articles and books? Do you understand what makes effective teacher research?

## **DIFFERENTIATION**

Do you know how to meet the needs of diverse learners within the classroom? Do you know what 'differentiation' is? Do you know about differentiating by outcome, resource, role and task?

## **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEND)**

Do you know anything about dyslexia, ADHD, autism, emotional-behavioural difficulties? Do you know anything about teaching students with SEND?

## **MULTI-LINGUAL LEARNING**

Do you know anything about teaching students with English as an Additional Language (EAL)? Are you aware of what is effective when teaching them and how their English skills might best be developed?

## **SAFE-GUARDING**

What do you know about E-safety? Child protection issues? Dealing with controversial issues within the curriculum?

## **SPIRITUAL, MORAL AND CITIZENSHIP ISSUES**

What do you know about the British Values agenda? What do you know about nurturing spiritual and moral values amongst your students? What do you know about the teaching of citizenship and democracy?

## SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE

### WHAT IS ENGLISH?

Do you feel confident that you know what English is as a subject? Do you know what the elements are that constitute English teaching in schools?

### SPOKEN ENGLISH

What do you know about the role speaking and listening plays in learning English? What do you know about nurturing effective spoken English skills in your students? What do you know about the teaching of debating, delivering speeches etc.?

### READING SKILLS

What do you know about how students learn to read? What do you know about the teaching of phonics and decoding in primary schools? What do you know about DARTS, (Directed Activities Related to Text)? What do you know about assessing students' reading? What do you know about strategies such as Reciprocal Reading?

### WRITING SKILLS

What do you know about developing students' writing skills? What do you know about the role free writing can play in developing students' writing? What do you know about how to scaffold writing for students? What do you know about the different types of writing: the planners and the spontaneous writers?

## HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE

What do you know about Old English, Middle English and early modern English? What do you know about Anglo-Saxon poetry, Chaucer and writers from Shakespeare's time? Have you learnt about the history of the language in your degree? What do you know about language change?

Francis Gilbert

## SHAKESPEARE

What Shakespeare plays have you read and you feel you know well? Do you feel you know how to teach Shakespeare effectively?

## NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Do you know anything about the previous and current requirements for the teaching of English in the National Curriculum? Do you know how the NC links to external exams?

## CULTURAL LITERACY

Are you familiar with key cultural texts & events such as the Bible, Greek and Roman myths, Aesop's fables, important historical dates, scientific discoveries, achievements in music, painting, art etc.?

## PRE-1900 FICTION

Are you familiar with the work of Charles Dickens, the Brontës and Robert Louis Stevenson? Do you feel confident teaching stories from this period?

## PRE-1900 POETRY

Are you familiar with the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake and Keats? Are you familiar with the Metaphysical poets such as John Donne and Andrew Marvell?

## YA LITERATURE

Have you read any recent Young Adult literature such as writing by Benjamin Zephaniah, Sarah Crossan, Patrick Ness and Malorie Blackman? Are you aware of the prize-winning books in this genre?

## POETIC TECHNIQUES

Do you know your alliteration from your onomatopoeia? Do you know how to get students to explore the effects of various poetic techniques? Do you know about the rhythm and rhyme of poetry?

## TEXTS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES AND TRADITIONS

Do you know about Spoken Word Performance poetry? Are you aware of poetry from other cultures such as Caribbean, African and Indian poetry? Are you aware of writers like Chinua Achebe, Anita Desai and Teju Cole?

## NON-FICTION

Do you feel you know how to teach the writing of newspaper articles? Adverts? Blogs? Are you aware of how to use pre-1900 non-fiction in the classroom such as autobiographies and old magazine articles?

## MULTI-MODAL LEARNING

Do you know how to use audio, video and images in the classroom? Do you know how to help students learn by using different modes for conveying meaning?

## DRAMA (BASIC TECHNIQUES)

Do you know about simulations, hot-seating, role play and teaching improvisation? Drama games useful for English teachers?

## TEACHING SPELLING, PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMAR (SPAG)

Do you know the basic spelling rules? Do you know how to teach the semi-colon and colon? Do you know how best to get students improving their vocabulary?

Do you know the rules of Standard English grammar? Do you know the history as to how SE developed? Do you know your split infinitive from your subordinate clause?

## KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LANGUAGE

Do you know about the importance of studying language in context? Do you know about issues concerning accent, dialect, geographical region and social class? Do you know anything about socio-linguistics?

Francis Gilbert

## DIGITAL MEDIA SKILLS: USING ICT, VIDEO, IMAGES ETC

Do you feel confident using audio and video recording for your own teaching or making teaching videos/podcasts etc? Do you know how to confidently use ICT yourself?



## PART II: THEORY AND PRACTICE

### AIMS, VALUES AND PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

#### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider why you want to be a teacher; what your values are and what motivates you to teach.

#### MINDFUL MEDITATION

Take a moment to shut or lower your eyes, concentrate upon your breathing for a few minutes so that you are calm and living in the present moment, then mindfully reflect upon why you want to teach English, considering any images, feelings or ideas that come to mind, watching them arise in your mind like clouds in the sky. Why do you want to be a teacher? What things have drawn you to the profession? The practice is not to overthink the topic, but just see what feelings and thoughts arise when you focus your attention positively and mindfully upon the topic. Return to concentrating upon your breathing if you find that you are getting lost in your thoughts and feelings.

#### UNCENSORED, FOCUSED WRITING

Having completed the mindful reflection, have a go at writing some uncensored thoughts about the topic, remembering that you are not going to be obliged to share these thoughts with anyone. This is a time to write down how you are feeling about the topic, any worries you might have, what you feel you need to learn more about, setting some targets if you want. If you are feeling blocked, have a go at doing some 'free writing', this is writing which can be about anything, the only rule is that you must keep writing, even if it is 'blah, blah, blah' etc.

#### REFLECTION

What have you learnt about your knowledge and skills from doing the mindful reflection and uncensored writing?

**Please note:** each section begins with a request for you to do the above exercises so that you 'activate prior knowledge' but in other chapters I have written these instructions in a shortened form.

### LEARNING PUZZLE 1

You are teaching a Year 7 class English for the first time. It is the beginning of the year. You want to start off your lesson by giving a motivational talk about why you think learning about English is important. What do you say? To trigger off some further thoughts, read Allan Ahlberg's 'Why Must We Go to School?' <https://www.clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poems/why-must-we-go-school> and Michael Rosen's 'Education' <http://michaelrosenblog.blogspot.co.uk/2015/04/guide-to-education.html>.

Write your speech and give the students an activity to get them thinking about why they are going to school.

### LEARNING PUZZLE 2

Consider what different people might say the aims and purposes of education are, jotting down some notes in the process. Do some research if necessary and consider these points of view:

- Politicians who are both right and left wing;
- Philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see below);
- Feminists and those who value equality between the genders;
- Social revolutionaries who wish to overturn the existing social order, on both the right and left of the spectrum;
- Wealthy and poor parents/carers;
- Anyone else you think it's important to consider.

### LEARNING PUZZLE 3

Why do you want to be an English teacher? What has motivated you? What are your values? What are your aims and goals? What would your dream class look like? What would your nightmare class look like?

### VIABLE SOLUTIONS

*Rank these suggestions and add any others you can think of.*

- You love English literature.
- You like working with young people.
- Your family have persuaded you.
- You were inspired by teachers or people.
- You want the teacher life-style: the holidays, the hours etc.
- The other choices seemed less attractive.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

### LEARNING PUZZLE 4

Devise some explanations that you might use repeatedly in your teaching to make your pupils see the purpose of their learning. Devise explanations for:

- Why you are reading a novel (e.g. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*) written before 1900;
- Why you are reading some Romantic poetry by Coleridge, Shelley, William Blake etc;
- Why you are reading non-fiction such as newspaper/internet articles and adverts;
- Why you are doing some creative writing, e.g. short stories, poetry, scripts;

Consider these possible answers:

- Learning about this will improve your chances of getting a job;
- Learning about this will bring you joy in your life and make you see the world differently;
- Learning about this will improve your reading/writing/spoken English skills;
- Learning about this will help you get a better mark in your upcoming exams.

Anything else?

### LEARNING PUZZLE 5

What makes a good English teacher in your view? What knowledge and skills do you need to be effective at teaching English? Think about how different people might answer this question: students, parents, politicians, headteachers, young teachers, traditional teachers, creative teachers, beginning teachers, exam-focused teachers.

### *SOME OF MY THOUGHTS*

This is the transcript of the **Radio 3 Essay I wrote and read** in May 2016. You can find the podcast **here**:

**<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07cgmcc>**

#### *ROUSSEAU'S EMILE AND MY LIFE*

I'm a young English teacher, it's my second year in an inner-city school in London, and I think I'm doing well with my tutor group, a class of 11-year-olds.

My only problem is Tom. He scribbles all over my work sheet and starts to chew on it, preparing to spit little wads of damp paper across the room. I have to do something. The memory of the rioting classes during my probation is the phantom that informs so much of my teaching now: the missiles flying across the room; the furniture being pushed out of it; the shouting, the swearing, and the fighting. No, no, if I let Tom continue to misbehave, there will be chaos.

I crouch down beside him and hiss in a low whisper: "Get on with your work!"

He is a thin, under-nourished boy; his mouth always set in an angry sneer.

"No," he says, "I won't." He scrunches up the remainder of the soggy worksheet, throwing it in my face.

I clench my fists but remain calm, ordering him to leave the room.

"I'm not going!" he snarls.

"You are," I say. The class stop writing their story and wait to see who will win.

I stride to the door, fling it open and point at the corridor. Reluctantly, kicking over his chair, Tom slopes out, shouting at me: "Yer mum! Yer mum! Yer mum!" It's the familiar cuss of the school.

OK, fast forward a few months. Tom has been disciplined but is still a problem. I feel it would be good for him to come on a trip to a rural studies centre with the rest of the class – and my Head of Year agrees – but we are worried. There's an argument with some of the other teachers about this: they say he should definitely stay in school because he could be a danger to himself and others. Finally, it's agreed that he can come along.

After a noisy, stressful journey on the train, the class spend the week in the countryside: trekking, making fires, bird-watching, camping, learning about animals, plants and geology, cooking their own meals and tidying up after themselves. All the children love it, but the change in Tom is astonishing. On the second night there, I watch him leap along the mountainside and realise that this is the first time I've ever seen him laugh. He takes a keen interest in bird watching, enjoys making food on the camp fire and foraging for berries. Even more amazingly, he begins to get on with his classmates.

Observing his transformation was a revelation.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Since that long-ago excursion, I've conducted many trips like that one, but I've never forgotten the visceral lesson it taught me: when put in the right environment, even so-called 'unteachable' students can be transformed into learners.

But I have to be honest with you, it's not a lesson I've fully absorbed until recently. I continued teaching for the next ten years and became obsessed with keeping discipline in my classes and drilling my pupils to pass exams: I was very contemptuous of "child-centred" approaches to education. Perhaps this explains why I hated Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile or On Education* when I first read it in the late 1990s. This strange philosophical novel, written in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, describes how the author would educate an imaginary student, Emile. Rousseau sets out his idealistic principles – and I didn't like the sound of them. I felt insulted to read that, according to Rousseau, no child should be punished and that the only rule for them should be to harm no one. Rousseau's contempt for traditional methods of schooling felt like a punch in the face to me: where he saw little point in trapping young children in classrooms and forcing them to read and write against their will: this was the whole point for me: his idealistic visions of Emile learning through the games devised for him by his tutor in natural settings felt fake and unconvincing. It just seemed totally impractical for a child to learn to count in the fields, to learn geometry from observing the sun, and that the only book young students should read was *Robinson Crusoe* because it would teach them how to live on a desert island. Furthermore, Rousseau's injunction that children should not be reasoned with, but should learn to think through a series of carefully staged experiences devised for them by a teacher, was not only wrong but also downright harmful for a child's development. And then the blatant sexism of the last section confirmed my disdain: here, Rousseau describes the ideal education of a fictional girl, Sophy. Because girls are naturally weaker than boys and will become mothers, they need a very different education, he says: they need to learn to serve men, tend to their needs and be submissive.

Total rot.

Or so I thought.

My opinions about Rousseau's educational philosophy gradually changed over time — although I continue to be exasperated by the chronic sexism of Emile.

But I began to see that Rousseau may have making some valid points in other regards when I observed my young son grow up in the mid-Noughties. I was now a Head of Department in a large comprehensive in outer London and moonlighting as a polemical author on educational topics. I published *I'm A Teacher, Get Me Out of Here* in 2004 and was regularly asked by the media to give my views on all sorts of educational topics. The right-wing press loved me because I tended to espouse views about the importance of discipline and authority.

And yet things were happening in my personal life which were making me change my views. My wife and I initially sent our son to a private "prep" school because we felt that we didn't want him to experience the indiscipline that I believed occurred in many state schools.

A few things happened to change my views. Because I found managing a department and being a parent too much, I went part-time and began picking up my six-year-old, Theo, from the prep school. Seeing his education close-up made me realise that he was unhappy because he was being very poorly taught: he was being lectured at, told to do tests in silence, do burdensome pointless homework and his natural instincts to be creative, verbal and active were being crushed. So we moved him out of the school and put him in our local inner-city primary school, which did not set homework, let the children play quite a bit, had no uniform, and focused upon educating the whole child. I picked him up from school every day, and watched him run around in the playground for hours with his new-found friends.

He absolutely flourished.

But why?

Well, I think Rousseau has some answers here. In Book II of *Emile*, Rousseau writes of the young learner:

Instead of being allowed to stagnate in the stale air of a room, let him be taken to the middle of a field. There let him run and frisk about. (78)

I had the very same instinct when it came to my son. He needed to be running about playing and not wasting his time doing lots of mock tests in silence; he needed to learn to be happy. And this is what his brilliant inner-city school did. What is more, because he was happy, he did much better in the formal tests he had; he wrote stories he wanted to write, he read what he wanted to read, he articulated his thoughts and feelings freely both in and out of school. The school took a "Rousseau" approach to education in the sense that at the heart of its philosophy was the belief

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

that children's natural instincts for learning should be carefully nurtured: teachers were expected to stimulate children's curiosity and help them pursue their interests by carefully staging their learning.

With a dawning sense of self-recrimination and guilt, I began to realise that many of my firmly held beliefs about education were built on very flimsy foundations. I returned to Rousseau's ideas and to those of his followers: Maria Montessori, John Dewey and Paulo Freire. These were thinkers who I used to scorn because of their insistence that we had to listen to children and help them actively learn concepts rather than insist upon adults telling them what to do.

This revaluation changed me as a person and a teacher. I stopped being so disciplinarian in my lessons, and attempted to foster more creative learning in my students. I wanted my child to play and enjoy his life, and I wanted my students to learn through playful activities. I valued putting joy at the heart of my pedagogy.

Up until then, I'd generally been praised by the powers-that-be in education – Ofsted, senior teachers and advisors – for my “firm but fair” approach in the classroom. But I began to encounter resistance when my teaching became more creative. For example, a few years ago, I used some of Rousseau's precepts to teach my Year 10 students, fourteen-year olds, poetry. It was a tricky class. I had a girl, Sally, who was noisy, rude and disruptive – rather like Tom had been — and a significant rump of disaffected boys who hated poetry. I decided to use clapping to get them into the idea that language is basically about rhythm. My class sat in a circle and said a few simple phrases to each other like “How are you?” and then clapped their rhythm. Using this natural method, they quickly began to see that there are stressed and unstressed beats in all the words we say. I asked them to compose their own conversation poems with clapping accompaniment, and then progressed to getting them clap to some easy poems which I knew they would like. Finally, I asked them to perform some more complex poems – the work of Wilfred Owen — to their own natural accompaniments: they clapped, they stamped their feet, popped and clicked using their mouths, and they sang.

It was a very beautiful September and, feeling courageous, I asked my pupils to find places around school where they could drum and practice their poems, ready for performance. I videoed them in their various nooks: they all sought out natural places in the school, sitting by bushes,

by trees and by the grassy bank of the school pond. Sally loved it; she laughed, joked around and drummed the poems enthusiastically.

Unfortunately, a senior manager learnt what I was doing, and I got reprimanded, hauled in front of the headteacher who expressed his stern disapproval: I wasn't teaching the relevant facts about poetry – never mind that I clearly had no respect for issues of health and safety.

"They don't seem to know their sonnets from their elbows," the headteacher said.

"But look – they can feel the poetry! They get the sense, they get the rhythm!" I said.

"Tell that to the examiner!" was the retort.

Rousseau's ideas informed what I was doing: my aim was to make learning playful using the resources of the human body. Above all, my purpose in educating my students was not primarily "cognitive"; I was not interested in the "facts" that they would learn about poetry, I simply wanted them to learn to love poetry – and to learn to work together. My purposes were aesthetic and moral.

The last two sections of *Emile* focus on how the teenager can be appropriately socialised, and how he can learn to love his fellow human beings in a reasoned fashion. Rousseau felt that it wasn't until children reached puberty that they were truly ready to work with others. The collaborative exercises which I devised aimed to develop my students' powers of reason and collaboration in careful stages: moving from individual activities to collaborative ones. Sally, in particular, benefitted from this approach.

If Rousseau were alive today, he would despair of the senior managers who stopped my students drumming. He would have called the headteacher an agent of "slavery" in that he represented a corrupt institution which stifled children's natural instincts. Rousseau wouldn't blame the headteacher – he would blame the social structures which had corrupted his thinking: the central government edicts, Ofsted, the obsession with exam results, the aim of using education to increase economic wealth. For Rousseau, we have been made "servile", cogs in a gigantic machine which grinds remorselessly on with no regard for our natural lives. Rousseau condemns the structures of society: "All our wisdom consists in servile prejudices. All our practices are only subjection, impediment and constraint. Civil man is born, lives and dies in slavery."



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

While I disagree with Rousseau on many things – his views on women, his belief that children can't be reasoned with until they are in their teens, his dismissal of every book except *Robinson Crusoe* – I think his central message is still important. Our life-styles have taken us further and further away from “natural ways of living”. Rousseau would pour scorn on our modern world; we've destroyed the Earth's resources to create artificial ways of living which make us miserable, cause environmental collapse, massive inequality, turmoil and war.

Yes, many of his ideas are totally impractical – but all the same I believe that we could easily adopt Rousseau's precepts tomorrow if we wished. Let's put a renewed emphasis upon appreciating the natural things of life: the air we breathe, the food we eat, the movement of our bodies and the way we communicate with ourselves and others; the way we live in the natural world. Let's set aside our obsession with screens, computers, property, work, money and material consumption. Let's look at each other and smile, listen to the birds singing, and take pleasure in the food we eat. Let's live our lives again – and teach our children to do the same. Even if we did this for just a few moments every day, I believe it would make a difference to our lives, and our children's lives.

As Rousseau says, man “turns everything upside down; he disfigures everything... he wants nothing as nature made it, not even man; for him, man must be trained like a school horse.” Perhaps it is time to stop treating our children like horses, take off their blinkers and open the stable doors?

### LEARNING PUZZLE 6

What do you think of some of the points I made here? What do you think of Rousseau's vision of education being primarily about developing a person's character, their morality and their way of doing things, rather than being about acquiring knowledge?

### TOP TIPS

#### FIGURE OUT YOUR CORE VALUES AND AIMS

Think very hard about what motivates you as a teacher and in life generally. It may be that your family is the most important thing to you. In which case, this value will shape your teaching life: you should figure out the best way of doing your job in this context. This happened to me when my son was young. I gave up a management role and went part-

time so I could pick him up from school. This made me a better teacher because I was living a more fulfilled life.

Watch these videos made by Acceptance & Commitment Therapists (ACT) to trigger some thoughts:

Passengers on the bus:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z29ptSuoWRc>

Demons on the Boat:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z29ptSuoWRc>

The Unwelcome Party guest:

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

#### YOUR VALUES WILL INFORM EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR TEACHING

If you value being compassionate and kind to your students, this value will inform every aspect of your teaching. If you value competition very highly, this will make your classrooms competitive places. Think long and hard about what your underlying values are and consider how they inform your teaching.

#### THINK BIG PICTURE

Considering your overall aims is very important throughout your career. Think about the big picture: what are you trying to help your students learn overall? What do you want from teaching? What are your personal aims? Career progression? Work-life balance? Teaching a subject you love? Being in the classroom?

#### CORE AIMS AS A TEACHER

Important aims should be to develop students' independent reading, writing and communication skills. How you do this will be a major part of this book.

#### BE WARY OF TEACHING TO THE TEST

It is easy to teach to the test and forget bigger learning aims which are to help student to become independent learners. This is not to say preparing exams is not important, it's just the evidence is that the teachers who get the best results ironically do not constantly drill their students to pass exams (Petty, 2014).

#### REFLECT

Look at the overall aims of the school/department you are working in, and syllabi you are teaching and see if you agree with them. Devise a visual organiser, poem, summary etc that helps you internalise them and critique them.

**REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING**

What have you learnt from this section of the book? Has it helped clarify your views on the aims and purposes of education?

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

**Watch**

For more on ACT, look at this video:

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

These videos are clear discussions of the topic:

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

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

**Useful books:**

Goodlad, J., & McMannon, T. (1997). *The Public purpose of education and schooling* (The Jossey-Bass education series). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

White, J. (2004). *Rethinking the school curriculum: Values, aims and purposes*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

**Compare and contrast:**

Nick Gibb, Conservative Education Minister who has been instrumental in many of the changes to the curriculum from 2010-2017, delivered this speech about the purposes of education:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-purpose-of-education>

This website devoted to Mindfulness Pedagogies takes a very different approach to Gibb:

<https://mindfulintheclassroom.wordpress.com/the-three-aims-of-mindfulness-pedagogy/>

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1762: 1979. *Emile or On Education*. Translated by Allan Bloom. London: Penguin.

## MINDFULNESS

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn about why being mindful can help you be a more effective teacher who pays attention to the world, taking a positive

attitude towards the thoughts, feelings, events and challenges you encounter.

## **MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION**

Take a moment to shut or lower your eyes, concentrate upon your breathing for a few minutes, then mindfully reflect upon mindfulness and meditation. Consider your feelings about meditating, whatever they are. Observe the images that float before you.

Then have a go at some uncensored writing, followed by a learning reflection.

## **THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS**

One of the major points of this book is to get teachers using mindfulness to improve their practice. Why am I advocating the use of this method? It's for many reasons:

- I've found mindfulness has made me happier and more effective as a teacher;
- I think mindfulness can help with the "nitty-gritty" of the job;
- I believe that mindfulness can bring a sense of purpose to teaching which is important.

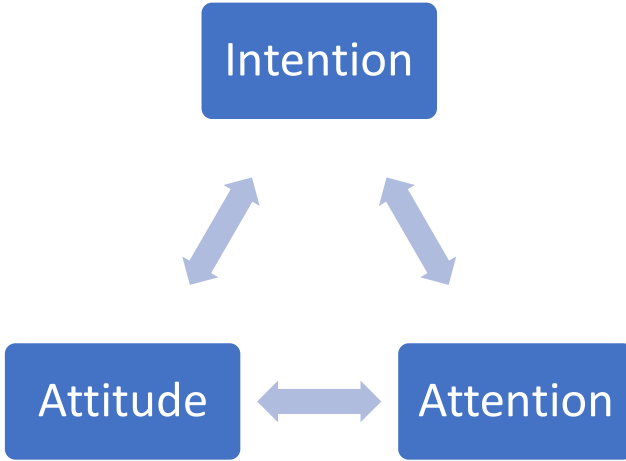
## **WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?**

To be mindful is to realize that we learn every second of every day. Learning is not just limited to the classroom or the text book.

Mindfulness can mean a great many things but one simple definition is:

"Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." Jon Kabat-Zinn ("Mindfulness | ACT Mindfully | Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Training with Russ Harris," 2013)

There are three components to mindfulness which are very helpful for teachers to consider. The first is "intention"; when you are mindful you set an intention to be aware of the present moment. The second is attitude; you aim to have a positive, grateful and compassionate attitude towards yourself and everyone else. The third is attention; you intend to pay close attention to the present moment.



You will see from the diagram that intentions come first.

### THE THREE-STEP MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

OK, let's have a go at brief mindfulness meditation: adopt a relaxed but not slumped position in your chair, bringing your back away from the chair and sitting up straight in a relaxed way. Now shut or lower your eyes, putting away all distracting things (definitely phones!) and just take a minute to see how you are feeling in your body and your mind. What feelings are in your legs, your arms, your chest, your throat, your head?

Now, take a few minutes and concentrate upon your breath, follow your breath as you breathe in, and follow it in your mind as you breathe out. If necessary, say:

I am breathing in (as you breathe in)

I am breathing out (as you breathe out)

Variations on this might be:

I am breathing in and calming myself

I am breathing out and smiling

Or:

Each in-breath is a new beginning

Each out-breath is a letting-go

Don't worry if you become distracted by thoughts, feelings, just accept them as they are, and then return to concentrating upon the breath. The whole point of the mindfulness practice is to learn to bring your attention back to your focus. This is why it is so helpful for developing your practice because once you get used to returning back to the focus of your breath, you will also learn to return to other things you have to focus upon such as dealing with the challenges of the job.

Once you have done this for two or three minutes, imagine that your breath is going through your whole body, that your in-breath is soothing and calming your throat, your chest, your arms, your legs and going right down to your feet. And then as you breathe out, imagine the breath soothing and calming your body like a warm bath as it rises through your feet, your legs, your abdomen, your chest, your throat and head.

Take a moment to notice the sensations in your body: how are you feeling in your stomach, in your legs, arms, feet, and the surface of the skin?

Now open your eyes. Now remember to do this practice as much as you can, learning to do it with your eyes open if necessary. Do it before you get into every chapter of the book, learning after you have concentrated upon your breath and body to mindfully reflect upon the topic in hand. This means not thinking about the topic, but rather seeing what images, thoughts, feelings the topic throws up at you as you pay attention to it. It's a tricky process which takes a bit of practice to do, but once you get the hang of it, you'll understand why it's so useful: it enables you to discover your underlying thoughts and feelings about a topic, rather than "thinking it logically through". This can be a liberating thing.

What I have just outlined is what is called a **"3 step mindfulness"** meditation (Williams and Penman, 2014) . To recap it involves these 3 things:

**BEING AWARE**

Becoming aware of your thoughts, feelings and sensations in your body (about 30 seconds)

**CONCENTRATING UPON YOUR BREATHING**

Concentrating upon your breathing in and breathing out, and if distracted by thoughts/feelings returning to concentrating upon the breath by saying in your head "breathing in, breathing out", or "In...Out".

#### BECOMING AWARE OF YOUR BODY

Expanding your awareness to become aware of the sensations in your body.

Mark Williams provides a guided example of it here:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOne1P0TKL8&t=3s>**

### TOP TIPS

#### CONSCIOUS BREATHING

Try to practise conscious breathing every day: become aware of your breathing whenever you can, counting from 1-5 if that helps, or saying a mantra such as 'slow down' 'be grateful' etc. Treat your body like a delicate musical instrument that needs to be practised upon constantly for you to 'play' it in a happy and meaningful way.

Mark Williams' breath and body meditation is a good start:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whY8iT0g15M>**

#### A PRACTICE NOT A RELIGION

Mindfulness is not a religion, although it has its roots in Buddhism. It is a practice, a way of being: anyone from any religion can do it. You could involve your own religion if you wish. If you prefer to call it 'conscious breathing and/or awareness' rather than mindfulness (which comes from Buddhism) that's fine because that's all it really is.

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6T02g5hnT4>**

#### EMBRACE BAD FEELINGS

Remember you are not trying to block out your 'bad thoughts and feelings': you are learning to acknowledge, accept and live with them mindfully, embracing them like a mother would with a baby, with lovingkindness. When you're feeling stressed possibly say to yourself, 'It's OK to feel stressed, it's OK to be worried about this or that; I'm going to live with these feelings and see them at a distance like stormy clouds in the sky; I'm going to be with my thoughts and feelings for a while and accept that I have them'.

Jon Kabat-Zinn explains this well here:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvLRhelPY90>**

#### STRESS AND RESILIENCE

Mindfulness is not about 'de-stressing' you, but learning to live with stress and build resilience.

Mindfulness is not about 'giving up' and 'opting out': it is about acknowledging your thoughts and feelings in any given moment and living mindfully with them. This often has the effect of making bad feelings go away and de-stressing you, but this is not the primary purpose of mindfulness.

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJ2qnmoMVdo>**

#### BE KIND TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Mindfulness is about being kind to yourself first of all. Do some meditations in which you say to yourself, 'May I be kind to myself, may I be happy, may I have ease of being'.

Mindfulness is about being kind to other people, even the people you don't like. In your meditations, take time to wish people you know and love well, but also wish people you struggle with well too; you may not feel kindly towards them, but take this time anyway. It can be transformative.

Mark Williams' Befriending Meditation is very good for this:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLt-E4YNVHU>**

#### MIX FORMAL AND INFORMAL PRACTICE

Mindfulness works best if you have a formal practice of mindful meditation every day, and then mix this up with taking regular breaks, returning to concentrating upon your breath. Try to meditate from 5 to 20 minutes every day, setting aside time so that you are not interrupted. I try to meditate 20 minutesx2 every day: once when I get up in the early morning, and then in the evening around 5 or 6 o'clock. If this is not possible, try and figure out something that works for you. I also try to return to conscious breathing when I can: I have noticed this has greatly improved my quality of life. I enjoy living in the moment much more, no matter what I am doing.

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67H3VJHAgpk>**

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Mindfulness | ACT Mindfully | Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Training with Russ Harris [WWW Document], 2013. URL <https://www.actmindfully.com.au/mindfulness> (accessed 3.20.17).

Williams, J.M.G., Penman, D., 2014. Mindfulness: a practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world. Piatkus, London.



<https://www.theguardian.com/education/teacher-blog/2013/jun/24/mindfulness-classroom-teaching-resource>  
<https://mindfulnessinschools.org/>  
<https://www.mindfulnessfoundation.org.uk/teachers/>  
[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can\\_mindfulness\\_make\\_us\\_better\\_teachers](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_mindfulness_make_us_better_teachers)

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about mindfulness here? What do you need to learn more about?

## **BEING ORGANISED**

### **KEY POINTS**

You are going to learn more about how to be organised, how to use checklists, how to avoid too much and too little 'organisation'.

### **MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION**

Take a moment to shut or lower your eyes, concentrate upon your breathing for a few minutes so that you are calm and living in the present moment, then mindfully reflect upon being organised, visualise yourself in different situations, considering how effective you are at being organised. Notice any feelings/thoughts that arise.

### **MINDFUL ORGANISATION**

To be an effective English teacher, you need to be 'mindfully organised': you need to take pleasure in organising your work and 'live in the moment' while organising your work. You need to be good at long-term, medium-term and short-term planning, but you also need to make sure that you become obsessive. It's a tricky balance.

#### *DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLE*

Write a brief plan for what you must do at work and home for the next 5 days: do not take more than 10 minutes to do this plan.

Review your plan; what did you learn from doing this exercise?

What details do you need to 'fill in'? What planning can be left until later on and what things do you feel you need to do now?

What other things do you need to do in your life to get organised?

## *TOP TIPS FOR BEING ORGANISED*

### **FLEXIBLE ROUTINES**

A way to get organised is to have routines when you know that you are going to do specific things. For example, I always planned out a week in advance on Thursdays and Fridays. I would do major photocopying a week ahead because I had planned a week ahead; just the act of writing down in my planner the topic I was doing helped jog my memory to get photocopying done. This freed up time for taking a break at the weekend and meant I was never in a mad rush to get photocopying done just before lessons. If this advanced planning meant staying after school for a bit on Thursdays and Fridays, I would do that, even if I was a bit tired. I also had a routine of cycling to work, going swimming a few times a week for short periods and getting into work early enough so that I could plan the day ahead as well. The routines I set were flexible enough so that I could change them if need be though: I could shift my planning to earlier in the week, or set aside specific time at the weekends to do work if need be.

### **CHECKLISTS**

Use checklists: at the beginning of each work day, write down a checklist of things you need to do (Fletcher-Wood, 2016).

### **TEACHER PLANNERS**

Use teacher planners to roughly structure the week ahead. I usually did this on Fridays; I would very briefly write out what I needed to teach for the whole of the next week.

### **BIG PICTURE TO SMALL PICTURE**

In general, move from the big picture to the small picture when trying to get organised. Think about broad categories for organising your resources, your lessons, your work, your life. Write down 4-5 plans which contain the 'learning outcomes' for what you are doing, e.g. an essay, a short story, presentations. Do these as visual organisers etc (Fautley and Savage, 2013).

Fill in smaller details later. As you become practised at lesson planning, you will find that it is best to sketch out your lesson plan in terms of learning objectives (or goals/intentions), learning activities, outcomes and assessment points (see later sections for this).

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

### DO WORK FIRST, CHECK EMAILS LATER

Checking your emails first thing in the morning if you have work to do can be very distracting, I've found it much more productive to do what I have to do – lesson planning, writing reports, marking etc – first and then check my emails.

### DO MINDFUL MARKING

One thing that really consumes English teachers time is marking. Be mindful of yourself and other people when marking. Remember the evidence is that students do not look at close marking and often resent it. It is far better for you and the student to 'meddle and mission' most work: check that it is done, offer a 'medal' one thing you learnt/liked, and a 'mission', something students need to do to improve. The most effective marking is peer assessment, where students mark each other's work (see **Assessment** section for this).

### LIVE IN THE MOMENT

Learn to live in the moment so that when you have done your checklists and planning, move on in your mind so that you are 'living in the moment' during the weekends and your time off: build in breaks so that you are not working all weekend etc. (Levitin, 2015). The best way to do this is to practice mindful breathing and meditation.

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about organising yourself?

### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

Levitin, D. (2015). *The organized mind : Thinking straight in the age of information overload*. Viking. New York.

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/oct/12/time-management-worklife-balance-teachers>

<https://topnotchteaching.com/classroom-management-organisation/10-tips-managing-time-as-a-teacher/>

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/teacher-checklists-definitive-guide-todd-finley>

See also references at the end of the book.

## WELL-BEING

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider why looking after yourself is vitally important if you are going to be an effective teacher.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon your well-being: how happy are you? Do you look after yourself? Consider the things that make you happy in your life, which make you smile and give you a sense of well-being.

#### *TEACHING, LOVING OURSELVES AND OTHER PEOPLE*

*Note: during the summer of 2010, I wrote this article for the TES when I was teaching at Coopers' Company and Coborn School. It has some important things to say about well-being.*

Love is in the air. The latest big idea to emerge in schools during these summery months is that teachers like me should be loving themselves and pupils more. The guru espousing this idea is Dr Andrew Curran, a practising paediatric neurologist in Liverpool. Since researching emotional literacy in schools, he's become convinced that the profession should be a great deal more loving towards their pupils if we want to solve the sorts of discipline problems that have plagued my teaching career for the last twenty years. Curran advised me that we should be freely using the word "love" to make our schools more welcoming, warmer places.

His words are particularly apposite because my school's motto is "Love as Bretheren", which basically means "love each other as brothers". This phrase is a very old one – although a comprehensive, our school has its roots in the dim, distant past – but in these days when you're supposed to take your mission statements seriously, we've all been lectured by our headteacher on its importance. I must confess there's something about it that makes me go, "Eek!". It makes my flesh crawl to think about loving the brutes who have made my life hell over the years. I don't want to love them, I want to exterminate them!

And indeed, these types of pupils certainly don't want my love. When I spoke to a particularly naughty pupil of mine about whether he wanted to be loved more in the classroom, he recoiled back in horror and said, "Ur, don't be so gay!" The pupils who said they wanted to be loved more

did so because they believed they would “get to do what they want” in lessons; chew gum, never get told off, play their music, and have no homework. Others worried that this sort of loving the pupils would lead to chronic favouritism, with the most “loved” pupils getting away with murder.

However, Curran doesn’t define teacherly love this way, but characterizes it with this injunction to all would-be pedagogues, using these capitalizations in his book, *The Little Book Of Big Stuff About The Brain*: “UNDERSTAND the human in front of you, Then you will improve their SELF-ESTEEM. If you do this you will improve their SELF-CONFIDENCE. And if you do that, they will feel emotionally ENGAGED with what you are doing. This can be described in one single four-letter word: love.”

For Curran, there is hard-edged neurological science to back up his stance. He explains that a learning experience causes patterns of nerve cells to fire in the brain but that these “patterns” are more deeply etched into the brain when dopamine is released; dopamine is released in massive quantities when we feel good about ourselves and creates feelings of well-being. Fear and stress release chemicals such as adrenaline, noradrenaline and steroids which do the opposite of dopamine, erasing key “learning patterns” in the brain. His observations have massive implications for schools which use the “fear of failure” to push students to learn: Curran suggests that this ultimately destroys learning. He postulates that the best learning happens in relaxed, “loving” contexts, with teachers making students feel good about themselves.

But is this love or just a description of good teaching? It really depends how you define love. The ancient Greeks believed in several different types of love, among which was *philia*, which might be the best way to describe a teacher’s love for their pupils: the philosopher Aristotle perceived it as “dispassionate virtuous love”. It is rather like St. Paul’s description in *Corinthians*: “Love is patient, love is kind”.

There can be no doubt our best teachers do exhibit *philia*: they are infinitely patient with even the most difficult children. However, it is a real challenge for many teachers to exhibit it when they are so stressed out themselves. Curran feels strongly that teachers won’t “love” their children properly until they feel loved by their colleagues. “Schools need to create a culture of love where every teacher feels valued and a deep sense of self-worth,” he told me. “That’s why I always start by training

teachers to love each other before telling them they should be loving their pupils more.” His point is a very strong one: too often teachers feel like they’re being told off by their superiors, the government and the media for failing their pupils. No wonder teachers frequently suffer from low self-esteem!

I’ve found a nice word from a parent can improve my confidence no end. Their kind words have made me realize how important parents are in making lessons work. At their best, they are a teacher’s invisible helpers, pulling the strings in so many schools. Indeed, it’s only when I’ve got parents on board that pupils have really flourished: after 85% of a child’s learning takes place outside the classroom. For me, the pedagogical approaches which emphasize the primary importance of families and guardians loving their children are the best. *Save The Children’s Families and Schools Together Programme* (FAST) does exactly this. Designed for children aged 5-9 years, FAST brings together teachers, families and community members and provides invaluable coaching and parenting strategies which have been proven to improve children’s behaviour, their achievements at school, and their general well-being. Parents learn about the importance of playing with their children, talking to them constructively, eating meals together, and asking for help when help is needed. Having run in the US for twenty years now, it is the only programme which has been proven to improve disadvantaged children’s results in the long-run. Without lecturing or patronising, FAST puts the onus back on the parent and makes them realise their absolutely pivotal role in a child’s development. A teacher’s “love” can never replace a parent’s.

#### MINDFUL REFLECTION

What points could you learn from this article?

### BREAKDOWN

I wrote about the stresses of teaching English in my memoir, *Teacher on the Run* (2006), read this section and discuss how and why I might have become so upset as to suffer from the nightmare described:

*I am standing in the classroom when suddenly I realise I am naked. I have nothing to cover my modesty except for the worksheets I have piled up on the desk beside me. Luckily, there are no kids around. I still have time. Snatching some Pritt-Stick from my bag, I desperately start plastering the worksheets with glue,*

## The Mindful English Teacher

*and pasting them onto my raw flesh.*

*By the time, my Year 9 arrive I am ready; I have clothed myself from head to toe in paper. Even my face is concealed in grammar exercises. I have left a narrow slits for my mouth, nose and eyes. I can see and I can speak, but otherwise I am entirely armoured with resources.*

*However, I haven't thought about the children. They enter the classroom brandishing Hoovers. Giggling hysterically, they switch on the machines and I find all my worksheets, which I had so assiduously stuck onto my body, being yanked off by the suction. I try to stop the worksheet clothes from coming off but it is useless. I tumble through the air with the paper and hurtle down the pipe of a vacuum cleaner.*

I woke up and found my wife sitting up beside me in the bed. She was tugging my arm. "What is it? What is it?"

My brain was still foggy from the dream. The darkness of the bedroom felt like inside walls of the vacuum cleaner's pipe. Dusty, claustrophobic, suffocating. My skin was slicked with sweat.

"You were screaming," Erica said. "You were screaming at the top of your voice. It was scary. It woke me up."

I told her my dream. She listened, "Don't you think it's time you just gave it up? I mean, there are other things you could do."

These words soothed me. Yes, I wasn't completely washed up. I could find something else. I could sign on at a temp agency in the city and find work. I could go back to university and get yet another qualification. I could do anything. Anything but teach!

As I was travelling to school that morning, I consoled myself with these thoughts. For many months now I had been jealously observing the cleaners working in the school and thinking that they had a much better job than me. They could just go quietly about their business and not be interrupted by anyone, they could meet their targets with ease -- and their targets were, unlike mine, specific, achievable, realistic, measurable and time-bound. Never mind not being paid very much, they had that something that no amount of wealth could buy: peace of mind and happiness. And they were happy. Brokers treated their cleaners very well: they were all local women, tough, mug-faced wives of builders and taxi drivers who loved nothing better than to scrub, smoke and then joke around in the caretakers' office. They did a fantastic job too: those kids really did their best to trash the rooms and yet every morning I would find the pre-fab spick and span. All I needed to do was to have a sex change, put on fifty pounds, take up smoking, wear some overalls and rubber gloves and happiness would be mine!

I had become quite friendly with my cleaner, Madge, because I had had to apologise to her so many times for the shocking state that the room got into: graffiti on the desks, litter on the floor, scribble on the walls, spray can glitter and confetti on the board, great chunks taken out of the door and so on. "You poor sod," she said once. "You have to teach these animals." She always looked at me with real feelings of pity.

Oh, what a state I had got into! To be pitied by the cleaner!

### *DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLE*

How best could you improve your well-being during the next few days, given your life now? Draw up a plan. Next, draw up a plan for the next six months.

### *TOP TIPS*

#### **FITNESS**

Get fit. High Intensity Training appears to be the quickest and most effective way of getting fit (Mosley and Bee, 2013). Learn to enjoy your exercise. If you are currently quite unfit, go slow and mindfully, being kind and patient with your body. Links:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q20pLhdoEoY>**

#### **MINDFUL CONSUMPTION**

Eat and drink as healthily and mindfully as you can. Learn to savour and enjoy your food, be grateful for your hunger because it will mean you will enjoy eating, be grateful when you are eating, take your time to eat your food slowly. If you can, avoid reading/watching TV etc. when you are eating and drinking, and learn to concentrate upon savouring every last bite of your food.

Thích Nhất Hạnh is good on this:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxE9g5iVf74>**

The Mindful Eating Meditation is good to do:

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CCr5w3ox\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CCr5w3ox_4)**

#### **PLAN BREAKS.**

Be kind to yourself and make sure that you take a complete break. Remember watching TV or chatting with friends while lovely often is quite exhausting too: it takes effort and cognitive work. You have to think while you are doing these things. Taking a complete break involves just sitting and doing nothing, lying down and concentrating upon your breathing or the sensations in your body. Learn to do nothing for short periods of time. Possibly have a day set aside where you do no work and avoid work-related 'screens'.

#### **PRACTISE MINDFULNESS**

Practise mindfulness regularly and learn to consciously breath when you are in stressful situations. Just counting your breaths in your head



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

when you are feeling stressed can make a world of difference (National Health Service, 2017).

### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

This Australian National Excellence in School Leadership Initiative has some good resources:

<http://www.nesli.org/wellbeingtoolkit.html>

Seligman is good on positive psychology for teachers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5792Opdz8E>

What do you think of the ideas in these documents/articles?

[https://www.learningcurve.org.uk/sites/ladder4learning.org.uk/files/GLink\\_0.pdf](https://www.learningcurve.org.uk/sites/ladder4learning.org.uk/files/GLink_0.pdf)

<https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-views/one-teacher%E2%80%99s-radical-proposal-reversing-slump-school-staff>

Curran, A. edited by Gilbert, I. (2008) *The Little Book Of Big Stuff About The Brain*, Crown House Publishing, UK.

Gilbert, F. (2006). *Teacher on the run: True tales of classroom chaos*. London: Short Books.

*Save The Children's Families and Schools Together Programme:*  
<http://www.familiesandschools.org/>

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about well-being and looking after yourself?

## THEORIES OF LEARNING

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn about the major theories regarding how people learn: behaviourism and constructivism.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon the times when you have felt you have learnt the most: what was going on at the time? Where did it happen? How did you feel? Who was involved? Visualise these moments of effective learning and meditate upon them.

## HOW DO WE LEARN?

Good teaching is all about getting people to learn. But how do we learn things? If you understand this, then you are half-way there to being a good teacher.

### *DEFINING LEARNING*

What exactly is learning?

The Oxford Dictionary defines learning as: “The acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught.”

How would you define learning? We’ve already discussed this at some length, but it’s worth re-visiting your notes and ideas before going forward at this point.

Write a poem or short definition for yourself.

### *LEARNING PUZZLES*

What are the conditions that help people to learn? Consider all the factors including social background, parents/carers, the physical environment where people learn, their emotional state, their previous knowledge, their levels of motivation.

What skills and knowledge do learners need? Watkins (Watkins, 2010, p. 1) writes: “Effective learners are likely to have a rich conception of learning, along with strengths in what researchers have identified as metacognition, self-monitoring and self-regulation.” What does he mean by this? Why might he say this?

## BEHAVIOURISM

### DEFINITION

The theory that human and animal behaviour can be explained in terms of conditioning, without appeal to thoughts or feelings, and that psychological disorders are best treated by altering behaviour patterns.

### DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLE

You have to teach Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPAG) to your Key Stage 3 classes, guiding students how to identify grammatical terms, improve their spelling and learning about things like semi-colons, colons. To what extent should you ‘drill’ your students to learn spelling lists, terminology and punctuation – if at all? Should you ask students to copy definitions and learn them off by heart? Should you ask students to learn

spelling lists by heart? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this behaviourist approach?

## WHAT ENGLISH TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BEHAVIOURISM

- Behaviourist approaches can be useful for English teachers. Getting students to learn spelling lists, terminology and punctuation off by heart can be helpful, but students need to use these spellings/terminology in different contexts.
- Positive reinforcement can be very effective at motivating learners; particularly praising students for effort.
- Giving students clear learning objectives helps them direct their learning.
- Problems happen when behaviourist techniques are the only ones used: the classroom becomes very teacher-centred and stops students coming up with their own ideas.
- Try to mix and match behaviourist approaches with constructivist ones (see below).

### FURTHER RESEARCH

This booklet is helpful:

**<https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/UCDTLT0017.pdf>**

Bates, B. (2016). *Learning theories simplified: And how to apply them to teaching*. London: Sage.

Fontana, D., & British Journal of Educational Psychology. (1985). *Behaviourism and learning theory in education*.

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about behaviourism?

## CONSTRUCTIVISM

### DEFINITION

Constructivist theories of learning view learners as actively constructing their own knowledge in their minds. Learning is a process of making meanings; it is viewed as much more than just a process of imitation (behaviourism). Learners need to link what they already know with the new knowledge they are acquiring, seeing the connections between their prior knowledge and their new knowledge. There are many different versions of constructivist educational theory, but they can be largely be

divided into two main camps: cognitive and social constructivists. Cognitive constructivists such as Jean Piaget see the individual as the most important element in learning; what Watkins calls learning as 'individual sense-making'. Social constructivists such as Lev Vygotsky & Benjamin Bloom believed that the main way we learn is through communicating with other people.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

McNally, D. (1977). Piaget, education and teaching. (2nd ed.). Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press.

Watkins, C., & Assistant Masters Mistresses Association. (2003). *Learning: A sense-maker's guide*. London: Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

### BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy is a way of labelling the different stages of learning. It is much contested, but every teacher should be aware of it. Bloom is a constructivist in that he believes we learn best when we actively create our own meaning out of the material we are presented with. He sees being creative as the most difficult and most effective thing you can do to learn a topic properly, but before you can be creative, you need to go through particular stages (outlined below). What do you think? Do you think you need to go through these stages before being creative? This is what makes his work controversial.

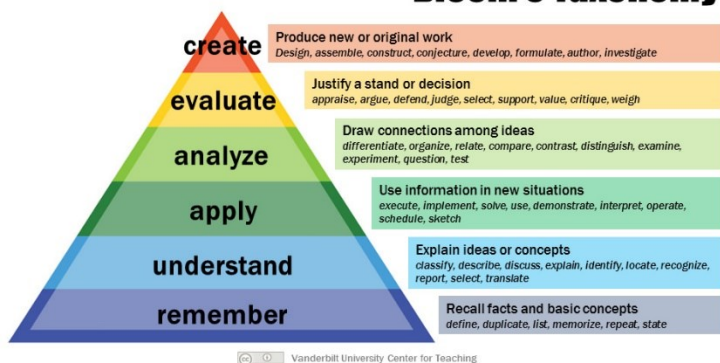
#### QUESTIONS

What is Bloom's taxonomy? Why is it useful for teachers to know about? What are its advantages and disadvantages?

#### DEFINITION

Benjamin Bloom (Anderson et al., 1994) developed a way of categorizing our thinking skills into a hierarchy like this:

## Bloom's Taxonomy



### KEY POINTS

#### A HIERARCHY OF SKILLS

The taxonomy can be useful for teachers and learners in that it provides a clear hierarchy of skills starting with simple skills to demonstrate at the bottom of the pyramid and proceeding to more difficult ones.

#### WHAT QUESTIONS

Start with simple 'what' questions for 'remember/understand', e.g. 'what is happening in this text?'

#### HOW QUESTIONS

Ask students to 'how' questions next for apply/analyse: 'how does the writer create interest/suspense/drama etc.?'

#### EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS

Ask students evaluative questions after that: 'how successful is the text?'

#### CREATIVE QUESTIONS

Ask creative questions to achieve the top of the pyramid, e.g. 'Write a diary entry based on a character's thoughts and feelings in the novel', 'Write a poem in response to this text' etc.

#### IS THE HIERARCHY VALID OR USEFUL?

Many educational theorists have questioned whether there is a hierarchy of cognition like this (Anderson et al., 1994).

#### AN EXAMPLE OF IT IN ACTION: DR JEKYLL

The following questions, followed by possible answers, are taken from my Study Guide Edition of *Dr Jekyll* (Gilbert and Stevenson, 2014, pp. 73–74). Look at them carefully and see how they “build” up the questions in terms of Bloom’s taxonomy, starting with “what” questions which require students to show understanding, then progress to analysis/evaluation questions. How successful do you think this approach is? How might you apply it in your own teaching? The questions are all about the first chapter of the book (pp. 63-73).

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

What type of person is Utterson? Why do “downgoing men” seek him out? Utterson is a lawyer, and a loyal friend who can be trusted by respectable men who are in trouble or facing a scandal.

Why do Enfield and Utterson go for a walk together every Sunday? They are related and enjoyed each other’s company even though they don’t talk much.

What was of interest about the door that Enfield tells the story about? What did it look like? The door is very scruffy and dirty and in a poor area. It was the door that a violent man opened.

What did Enfield witness regarding Hyde and the small girl? Hyde trampled on a small girl of eight at three in the morning.

Why and how did the crowd manage to get Hyde to write the girl’s family a cheque? What was odd about the cheque? The crowd told Hyde that they would make a “scandal” of the situation if he did not give the girl’s family some money. The cheque was odd because it was signed by a very respectable man – who we later learn is Dr Jekyll.

What is strange about Mr Hyde according to Enfield? Hyde appears deformed in some sort of way, but it is difficult express why he is so unpleasant in words.

#### ANALYTICAL QUESTIONS

Our first encounter with Hyde is an “eye-witness” account from Enfield. Why do you think Stevenson chose to introduce Hyde in this way? **Stevenson’s central aim at this section is to build up both a sense of mystery and horror regarding Hyde. The story is a very disturbing one because only a deeply unpleasant man would trample upon a girl of eight: this incident generates a real sense of horror regarding the character. The reader thinks if Hyde can trample upon a girl of eight, then what else can he do? Stevenson also makes Hyde deeply mysterious in a number of ways, which also contributes to the suspense. Lots of unanswered questions come into the reader’s mind: how and why is Hyde writing cheques signed by a respectable man? Why does he live in such a grotty place if he is wealthy? Why can no one describe him properly?**

What adjectives and imagery are used to describe Hyde? **Hyde is described as “cool” and “ugly”: both these adjectives have a disturbing effect upon the**

reader because of their context. Despite the fact that Hyde has just trampled on a small girl, he is “cool”: in other words, he is not emotional or remorseful in any fashion. His physical appearance also makes him seem very unpleasant: he is “ugly” and there is a “strong feeling of deformity” about him. It is interesting to note that no one can describe exactly what he looks like. Enfield talks of him being a “damned Juggernaut”: he seems to have superhuman powers and strength despite being so small.

#### EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS

How successful is this opening to the novel? Discuss the parts of the chapter that most have affect its first readers very deeply. **The chapter is great at provoking the reader’s curiosity in Hyde and his relationship with Dr Jekyll. Stevenson uses the figure of Utterson to create this curiosity: it is Utterson, Jekyll’s friend, who guesses that there is a connection between the two men. Utterson’s caring nature gives the story a sympathetic character, which is important.**

#### REVIEW

What do you know about Bloom’s taxonomy now? How useful do you think it will be to use in your own teaching? What practical applications can it have?

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

Anderson, L., & Bloom, B. (2014). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's [Taxonomy of educational objectives]* (Pearson new international ed.).

## FLOW AND FREE WRITING

A particularly interesting constructivist theory is that of ‘flow’ which points out that for the mind to make sense of the world and to learn effectively it needs to be receptive, open to new ideas and be calm and relaxed – but not too relaxed!

The next section explores it in some depth because it is very useful for teachers to consider. Theories of learning including flow are explored in the form of a learning scripts, where different types of teacher discuss the concept (see introduction for an explanation).

In summary:

- Flow is a free-flowing state of mind that helps you do any activity with joy and encourages you to take risks;
- It takes lots of practice to find flow in learned activities, e.g. riding a bicycle, playing a sport, writing a poem...

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: What is ‘flow’? Who came up with the idea?

CREATIVE TEACHER: In a section called 'Flow and Learning' in his book *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (1997), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced 'chicks-sent-me-high') stresses the importance of humans finding states of 'flow' which is achieved when they undertake 'painful, risky, difficult activities that stretch the person's capacity and involve an element of novelty and discovery' that cultivates an 'almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness' (p. 110).

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Hmmnn, sounds like the kind of thing that only really top achieving people can do! Not for the likes of me or my students!

BEGINNER TEACHER: I think you're wrong there, I think you can do risky activities with your writing, I think free writing can be both risky and create a state of flow.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, free writing is very good at achieving states of flow.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Can someone remind me what free writing is? Sounds a bit loopy to me.

BEGINNER TEACHER: It's just when you write whatever you want for a specified time: the only rule is that you have to keep writing. I've done it with my students and it's very effective at getting them over their fear of writing.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: They can write anything? That sounds like a terrible idea! They'll just swear.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: My headteacher won't like that.

BEGINNER TEACHER: You can set the rule that they should not swear or insult people if you like.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, I'll definitely do that.

CREATIVE TEACHER: And you say to your students just write for say 5 minutes, but they have to keep writing. Even if it is the same word. They don't have to write very fast if they don't want to.

BEGINNER TEACHER: It's really good at settling your class down. And it's great if you do the free writing with them.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Do we tell the students to read out their work at the end?

BEGINNER TEACHER: With free writing, it's best that the students feel it is private. Simon Wrigley and Jeni Smith (2012) stress the importance of both teachers writing with their students but also gives the student-



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

writer certain rights such as not forcing them to read aloud work or share it if they don't want to.

CREATIVE TEACHER: This encourages flow because it makes students more relaxed to say what they want.

BEGINNER TEACHER: So I ask my students to either read aloud their work if they want or to do some 'meta-cognitive' work which involves them discussing how they found the process of doing the free writing and what they learnt from doing it.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Meta-cognition is 'thinking about thinking', is that right?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Or 'learning to learn'. I've had enough training sessions on that!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, SLT like 'learning to learn'. I'll make sure I put that in my lesson plans!

CREATIVE TEACHER: But do you understand more about flow now Test Obsessed Teacher and Traditional Teacher?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: It sounds a bit scary just letting kids write what they want, but I can see that it has a point.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: But does it? I mean what do they do with all their scribblings?

BEGINNER TEACHER: I don't think it's helpful to call them scribblings, we need to think positively about what they are doing.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Free writing is a marvellous resource and, in my experience, produces some of the best writing that students do. For example, when doing free writing, I've had students write brilliant poems about people they like, express their feelings about their anxieties, write match reports, do great diary entries based on characters they are reading about. What I do is *always* give students a choice about what to do: either a very focused exercise which is nearly always focused upon the lesson topic (e.g. a diary entry written by a character etc.) or say write what you want. That choice is important.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, what if they don't produce anything great immediately?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Ah, now I think I have an answer for that one. You get them to rework their material and turn it into something that can go in the exercise book. That way you really get them re-drafting their work, thinking and working like real writers. The problem I have with my

lessons is that the students feel that they have to produce something marvellous immediately and can never make a mistake.

CREATIVE TEACHER: And yet you look at the notebooks of someone like William Blake or Yeats and you see they are full of crossings out.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: But we have a school full everything in the books has to be really neat.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: That's what the Learning Journals are for; putting the rough work in.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Like the old fashioned rough books. We had them when I first started teaching but someone they were got rid of.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I don't like the phrase rough book, I think learning journal is both more accurate and it encourages the students to value it more.

BEGINNER TEACHER: What do you do when the students say they hate writing or have a learning difficulty?

CREATIVE TEACHER: I initially let those students do maybe a drawing at first, then the next free writing session a drawing and some words, then move on to words over time. I identify those students before the lesson and talk to them about what I am doing so that I am not saying in front of all the students 'you do a drawing' which can be embarrassing for the student, and can lead to the other students saying 'why can't I do that?'

#### *TASK*

Now do some free writing of your own for 5 minutes, either writing about what you have learnt from reading the book so far or writing whatever you want.

#### *ACTIVITIES WHICH ENCOURAGE FLOW*

CREATIVE TEACHER: There are lots of activities which encourage flow in English lessons.

BEGINNER TEACHER: First of all, there are lots of **spoken activities** which encourage flow amongst certain (but not all) students such as:

- Rap a topic;
- Devising an informal debate on a topic of real interest to students;
- Devise a chatshow Q and A in a pair/group;
- Role-playing a topic, e.g. pretending to be a character and speaking out their thoughts and feelings;
- Playing with objects, e.g. being given models of characters and

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

devising a mini-miniature play in groups (more on this in the analogy section)

**BEGINNER TEACHER:** The job of the teacher is to ‘scaffold’ the speaking and listening activities so that the student might enter a state of flow when speaking and listening in a difficult situation such as a formal debate on an unfamiliar topic. This needs to be done in stages with the speaking and listening exercises becoming progressively more difficult over time.

**TEST OBSESSED TEACHER:** There are **reading and reading-related activities** which encourage flow such as:

- Students reading about a topic they are really interested in at an appropriate level;
- Watching a lively film version of a set text, e.g. Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo and Juliet*

**TRADITIONAL TEACHER:** But there are also **reading activities** which may not encourage flow such as:

- Reading texts which do not interest or engage;
- Reading marking criteria or exam papers.

**TRADITIONAL TEACHER:** The job of the teacher is to ‘scaffold’ the reading activities so that the student might enter a state of flow when reading difficult texts in a stressful, tricky situation such as an exam. This needs to be done in stages with reading becoming progressively more difficult over time.

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** There are **writing activities** which encourage flow too, such as:

- Devising visual organisers like brainstorm, mind-maps, spider-diagrams on topics.
- Doing free writing.
- Writing diary entries.
- Being told they don’t have to worry about spellings etc.
- Writing in a style they are comfortable with, e.g. text speak or imagining they are on social media etc.

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** But there are also writing activities which may not encourage flow such as:

- Answering exam questions;
- Writing difficult essays.

CREATIVE TEACHER: The job of the teacher is to ‘scaffold’ the writing activities so that the student might enter a state of flow when doing difficult writing tasks in a stressful, difficult situation such as an exam. This needs to be done in stages with writing tasks becoming progressively more difficult over time.

For more, look at any book which suggests joyful activities to do in English lessons, e.g. *The Full English* by Julie Blake or the EMC’s *English Allsorts*.

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY

Devise a visual organiser of all the learning activities that encourage flow and the ones that do not in your own life.

Now devise a visual organiser of all the learning activities that encourage flow and the ones that do not for your average student.

### RECAP

There are two major theories of learning:

- Behaviourist theories of learning
- Constructivist theories of learning

Behaviourists see learning as a form of imitation or copying, with the learner acquiring knowledge and skills by copying the teacher, and then having a go themselves. The teacher’s role at this point is to either positively or negatively “reinforce” the learner’s response: if the learner has got something right, the teacher should be positive and offer praise; if the learner has got it wrong, then the teacher should be “negative”, i.e. tell them they are wrong, possibly punish them in some way so that they do not do it again. Behaviourists see “learning as being taught” (Watkins, 2003)

Constructivists believe that learners “construct” their own meaning when they learn something new and that every learner have unique ways of constructing knowledge in their minds. They believe it is the job of the teacher to set clear goals for learning for the learner to interpret for themselves, as well as provide activities which will help the learner actively learn new things. They see learning as either a form of individual or social “sense making” (Watkins, 2003, pp. 9–11). We will discuss these theories more later on, but before we do, we will examine the role emotions play in learning because they are very important to consider.

**LEARNING PUZZLE**

**KEY QUESTION:** *To what extent do you think the emotions are important to consider when teaching?*

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** The next thing we're going to consider is how we all feel about English as a subject. In your Learning Journals, could you jot down what you like most about 'doing English'? Why? What is it about these activities that you enjoy? Jot down a few thoughts. What do you like the least?

*Everyone should do this and then share some of their ideas with other people.*

The reason why I want to discuss how we feel about English is because it has a significant impact on how we learn English. There's a wonderful Pixar cartoon called *Inside Out*, which tells the story of Riley, an eleven-year-old girl who moves from her happy childhood home to a new place in the city.

**BEGINNER TEACHER:** The film represents what is happening inside the Command Module of her mind with cartoon figures for the emotions: Joy, Sadness, Anger, Disgust and Fear. Joy is the most important figure in terms of Riley's learning. So, for example, when Riley does not want to eat some broccoli as a young child and her mother gets angry with her, she becomes more reluctant to eat the broccoli with Anger assuming control of her command module, but when her Dad turns the broccoli into an aeroplane, Joy takes over the command module of her mind, and she happily eats the broccoli. This is a very important lesson we should never forget as teachers; fostering joy amongst children helps them learn much more effectively.

**TEST OBSESSED TEACHER:** And very interestingly, it shows how Fear does not help her learn very effectively or well. Fear stops her thinking clearly, as does Anger and Disgust. When they take over her mind when she's having a bad time at school and home, she runs away from home. That makes me think about how I've been teaching really because a great deal of the time, I'm telling children to be fearful of the exams that they have coming up. Mmmnnn. Have to consider that one...

**TRADITIONAL TEACHER:** This is nonsense. We tell children to get on with the work, and punish those who don't. Simple. We shouldn't be considering feelings in the classroom.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: But I've noticed my pupils switch off a lot of the time when I give them dire warnings about failing their tests.

CREATIVE TEACHER: And you Traditional English Teacher often speak with real joy and passion about the books you like; that's why your pupils like you.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, maybe you're right. It's important to have passion for your subject.

BEGINNER TEACHER: It's really interesting for us as secondary school teachers though to consider how Riley really saves herself because she's the age of many of the children we'll be teaching. It's only when Sadness teams up with Joy, and she accepts that her childhood has gone that she's really able to learn what is the right thing to do. Is that important for English teachers to consider?

CREATIVE TEACHER: I think it is. I think as English teachers we should be frightened of discussing our feelings, and showing that we're sad when there's a sad bit in a book we've read for example. I have to admit at the end of *Of Mice and Men*, I always cry when I'm reading it out aloud to my classes because it is so sad.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: But back to the main thrust of your argument: are you saying that we, as English teachers, have a duty to make our students enjoy English?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, I am. And interestingly, it's there in the National Curriculum; you're actually ordered to make children enjoy reading.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Oh dear that makes me feel quite fearful!

BEGINNER TEACHER: That's interesting when we're ordered to do something, we often don't want to do it because we feel fearful we can't do it!

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, so we need to keep calm, and we ourselves need to find ways of relaxing and not being too stressed out. That's why I'm suggesting that we all have a go at being 'Mindful'. Like all the suggestions in this book, there's a lot of 'hard' evidence to suggest mindfulness significantly reduces stress if done properly.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Sounds like hippy nonsense to me! Isn't it some weird religious practice? I'm not sure that I am very keen on this idea.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Well, mindfulness does have its origins in Buddhism, which is obviously a religion, but it is not at all religious as it

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

stands. You can be any religion to do it. There's a great deal of medical evidence to suggest that it's effective with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), a UK government body, recommending it to people suffering from depression.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Hey, I'm not a depressive!

CREATIVE TEACHER: No, you really don't have to be to benefit from doing it. That's just one use for it. It has been shown to help people from all walks of life, including teachers. As a Creative Teacher, I'm particularly interested in it for two reasons: the calming effect it has upon students, and its creative possibilities. But after reading this book, you are free to adopt it or not with your classes. It is increasingly being used in schools. I've found it to be particularly helpful with difficult classes with my students reporting that it's help them focus and concentrate.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Hmmn, very interesting. I'm actually recalling the words of Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity". So you're saying that by getting children to shut their eyes for a bit, concentrate upon their breathing and calm down, you'll get them to behave better and do better work, heh?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Exactly.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: But I don't have to call that mindfulness, do I? Perhaps I could just say we're all going to be like Wordsworth; I'd be much happier with that.

CREATIVE TEACHER: That's a great idea. Why don't we call it, 'Doing a Wordsworth'?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: That sounds rude! No, I'll stick with mindfulness. Our Senior Leaders made us do some mindfulness exercises a while back; a lot of the staff didn't like it though because it felt selfish and self-obsessed. But now you've explained it in this way, I can see the point. Plus, I'll be pleasing the powers-that-be who are always keen to jump on the latest bandwagon.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I'm a bit nervous about it, but I'll give it a whirl.

### *LEARNING ACTIVITY*

Shut your eyes, concentrate upon your breath, observe the thoughts and feelings that are in your body right now. What sensations do the affects produce in your body?

## AFFECTIVE LEARNING

The philosopher Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) defined joy as a “man’s passage from a lesser to a greater perfection”. I believe his ideas about joy and the emotions are very helpful for teachers – I’ve written more extensively in another book – because they give teachers some very useful concepts that will help them teach more effectively and with more joy.

Spinoza grew up in a Jewish community which had fled persecution in the rest of Europe and sought refuge in the more liberal Holland. He studied religious texts intensively but was excommunicated from the Orthodox Jewish Church for his controversial views which rejected Judaic conceptions of God. He was an eclectic philosopher who wrote detailed tracts on various spiritual texts, politics and the philosopher Descartes. His best-known work, published after he died, was *Ethics*, which is a short but dense book which outlines his entire theory of life, the universe and everything. It begins with proving and defining the existence of God, who Spinoza believed is “Nature”, and ends with an explanation of how humans can live in a state of “blessedness” and achieve eternal life (of sorts).

Recently, his philosophy has enjoyed a renewed surge of interest with thinkers as diverse as Stuart Hampshire, Gilles Descartes, Roger Scruton and Antonio Negri writing books on him. It’s not necessary to go into detail here about his philosophy, except to home in on the ideas which are useful for us. In particular, Spinoza found a way of analysing the emotions which was both incisive and helpful. Spinoza called the emotions the “affects” which is possibly a better word to use for them because an affect is both an idea and a feeling. This is really what the emotions are: they ideas and feelings wrapped up together. So, for example, for Spinoza “Love is nothing but *joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause.*” (Spinoza, 1994a, pp. 78, P13 Schol.); in other words, joy focused upon an object, or the idea of an object, i.e. the joyful feelings a person or thing provokes in you. Love is both an idea and a feeling.

For Spinoza there are three basic affects: joy, sadness and desire. The affect of joy increases your powers of action, whereas sadness decreases your powers of action; desire, meanwhile, for Spinoza is when we are aware that we want something. The affects are constantly flowing through us, producing us; they elemental forces of nature, currents, eddies and waves if you like, that produce who we are, not the other way



round. You see this when you do mindfulness exercises which encourage you to focus upon the way the mind wanders from subject to subject, feeling to feeling, affect to affect, in often surprising and random ways. Spinoza, like the advocates of mindfulness, encourages us to avoid placing heavy moral judgements upon the affects that arise within us, but instead wants us to observe the affects and understand them. People who become effectively mindful become surfers who ride the sea of affects.

## SELF-ESTEEM OR SELF-COMPASSION

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Look here, Creative Teacher, I'm thoroughly confused, you've been going on about cartoon films, mindfulness and Spinoza. What a random collection of things to talk about! I can see a lot of madness but no method!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, and I'm worried that all this stuff about joy won't improve my pupils' exam results. The stuff that works like intervention classes, going endlessly over exam papers, giving detentions to the lazy, naughty ones does not involve a lot of joy.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Hang on a minute, you two, I'm not sure you've been listening too carefully. As a Beginning Teacher, I'm a bit more open-minded. I think while Creative Teacher (CT) may be very eclectic, CT has made some clear points. First, that we are all much more motivated to learn when we enjoy things. Second, that mindfulness can help us be aware that our emotions, or affects if you like, and, in particular, calm down children. Let's see what else CT has to say.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Thank you Beginner Teacher, because I want to move on to a very important issue: self-esteem or what I might term 'self-compassion'. Spinoza defined it as "a joy accompanied by the idea of an internal cause" (Benedict Spinoza, 1994, p. 86) or "a joy born of the fact that a man considers himself and power of acting". He regarded self-esteem as a very important affect for us to have if we are going to think clearly. I've seen this a great deal with the classes I've taught. Often children do not learn very much because they have very low self-esteem. For example, let's take Romeo, a thirteen-year-old boy I taught recently: he could actually read, but he hated reading, and felt fear whenever he looked at a book in school. So he mucked around, disrupting other children. He didn't believe in himself.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: OK, point taken. But aren't we better off giving him a detention for not working than being all 'softy-softy' and saying, 'There, there, it's all right, we're going to be very nice to you'.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Good point, TEST OBSESSED TEACHER.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I agree just being nice to him is not going to help, but teachers can provide a context in the classroom which builds self-esteem over time and in a natural way. Here are some suggestions:

- Creating a 'no blame' atmosphere so that children don't feel frightened to admit it if they don't understand;
- Modelling thinking processes out aloud, so, for example, talking through your own thoughts and feelings as you read a difficult text and saying things like 'Oh I'm a bit worried I don't understand this, but hang on a minute, I'll figure it out by reading the rest of the passage, try to relax'.
- Trying to find things initially that children enjoy reading and writing, and then guiding them in stages to the more difficult stuff;
- Doing activities like mindfulness meditations which make children realise that it's OK to feel worried, anxious, or angry.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Hmmn, I agree with the first few points, but I am not sure that we should be saying to the children that it's OK to feel angry etc. That seems like a recipe for disaster.

CREATIVE TEACHER: That's why I'm advocating mindfulness in this context; this is a controlled way of allowing children (and ourselves) to explore our emotions and understand them.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Let's go back to Romeo, the sort of child I dread teaching. How is this all going to help him?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Well, I think a first step might be to get him to acknowledge how he feels about reading, and get him to accept his feelings about reading, to say to himself, "It's OK to hate reading, it's OK to feel worried about reading, it's OK, I'm entitled to my feelings".

TEST OBSESSED and TRADITIONAL TEACHERS: No, no, no!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, that's madness! Getting a child to say that, I'd give them a detention. It would be very disruptive in the class!

CREATIVE TEACHER: I would disagree, I think that getting a pupil to feel less afraid of reading is a vital first step to improving their reading. Let's jump in our Transporter Machine heh and take a look at the different approaches, heh?

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

*Whizzing sound of everyone being transported to a busy classroom in an inner-city school. ROMEO is mucking around and not reading.*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: OK, Romeo, quite frankly your attitude towards reading is a disgrace! Shakespeare is a great writer and you need to understand the beauty of his poetry!

ROMEO: He's boring and I'm not doing the work!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: If you don't do the work, you'll get a detention, 1 hour after school.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, and extra intervention classes!

ROMEO tuts and sucks his tongue: What's your problem, why are you guys always picking on me? They're not reading over there!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: They are, well, at least a lot more than you!

ROMEO: They are not, they are just pretending to whenever you look over at them!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: We could put them in intervention as well.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Just get on with the reading or else, do you understand?

ROMEO: Only because I'll get a detention otherwise.

*ROMEO reluctantly starts reading but not with any enthusiasm.*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER to CREATIVE TEACHER: You see, Romeo got on with the reading with a bit of discipline!

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, but can I show you what I would do? I'd speak to him at the end of the lesson preferably.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: And let him get away with that?

CREATIVE TEACHER: I am not sure I would have immediately insisted he read Shakespeare like that. He clearly does not understand what is going on. Anyway, let me show you...

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: OK, go ahead.

*It's the end of the lesson now.*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Romeo, can I have a quiet word with you?

ROMEO: I'm not doing no detention! It's not fair.

CREATIVE TEACHER: You're not in trouble, I just want a chat. I was wondering how you feel you are getting on in English?

ROMEO: Fine, it's fine.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Because I can't help noticing you don't seem to be enjoying the reading.

ROMEO: That's because I hate reading...

Francis Gilbert

CREATIVE TEACHER: OK, you seem to be able to read reasonably well; you can read most of the words. You must have liked reading at some point to learn to read.

ROMEO: I like it at the beginning of primary school because we got to do cool stories and stuff. Biff and Chip, and Michael Rosen's poetry.

CREATIVE TEACHER: That's interesting. Maybe at the beginnings of lessons, I could get you to read some Michael Rosen poetry when you're supposed to be doing silent reading.

ROMEO: But I'll look like a baby.

CREATIVE TEACHER: He's written grown-up poetry you'd like too I think. I'll show you some.

ROMEO: OK. But don't make me look like I'm stupid or a baby.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Fair enough. The thing is both of us need to work together to get you more enthusiastic about reading that way you'll get much better at it, and enjoy it more.

ROMEO: But it's completely pants in school! I hate it. It is so boring. Exam paper after exam paper!

CREATIVE TEACHER: What do you like doing outside school?

ROMEO: Football, sports, basketball.

CREATIVE TEACHER: What if I got you some reading connected with sports, would you read that?

ROMEO: If it was interesting.

CREATIVE TEACHER: You would have to make an effort to read it, but you'd enjoy it if you tried hard at it and showed tenacity. You know a lot of students really look up to you; they respect you, and if you showed them you were reading, they would try harder too.

ROMEO: Do you think?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, I do. I think we both need to put our heads together and think of ways of getting you to try harder with you reading, and enjoy it more...

*Sound of Transporter takes the teachers away from the classroom.*

BET: Hey, that really worked! I get it, you were trying to find out what he enjoyed.

CREATIVE TEACHER: What do I need to do next though?

BET: You need to use material he likes in the lesson.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, easier said than done!

BET: There is loads of great writing on sports.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, but what if it is not in the Department's Scheme of Work! What if there is no proper assessment on it?

CREATIVE TEACHER: I would like to point out that the secondary English curriculum is actually quite light on content. You could easily work on your curriculum so that it contained work that the children liked.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Ah, but they have to read Shakespeare at some point, and 19<sup>th</sup> century literature! You can't put it off forever.

CREATIVE TEACHER: But it needs to be worked up to in careful stages. It's no good chucking writing in front of the students that most of them don't understand and don't like. The material they read needs to be within what Lev Vygotsky called the students' Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD, it needs to be just hard enough that they will learn new things from it, but not too hard or boring so that they are put off.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Spare me the theory! These children need decent literature to read. I'm of the 'throw them in the deep end' approach and see if they swim.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Ah, I don't know, I'm not sure that works with the Romeo's of this world. Creative Teacher is beginning to change my mind. I could go back to my department and consider how we might make the curriculum more engaging. At the moment, we're more or less doing exam paper after exam paper, and we're spoon feeding the students so much they're not learning to read independently...

CREATIVE TEACHER: I'm glad of that Test Obsessed Teacher. I quite like this diagram which, for me, is vital for all teachers to absorb, but particularly English teachers who are encouraging students to read more independently.

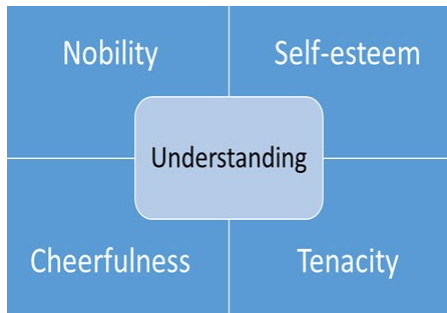


**FIGURE 1 SELF-ESTEEM CHART**

BET: Yes, I can see how this chart is relevant to Romeo. In many English lessons, he's at the bottom of the chart, saying to himself that he won't do it, but this is because he really believes he can't do it. The teacher needs to shift his perspective so that he actually wants to do it, but that's not the end of the story, because he then needs to figure out how to do it *for himself*.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, and I can see now that he needs to change his own internal dialogue and start saying to himself that he can do it. I think this is what Spinoza may have meant by self-esteem.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, Spinoza felt that to learn effectively we need four affects in place:



**FIGURE 2 UNDERSTANDING AND THE JOYFUL AFFECTS**

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, I am beginning to see now that just banging on about the exam in lessons will not increase Romeo's powers of action. We need to nurture within him a sense of cheerfulness, tenacity and self-esteem. Personally, I can see that "nobility of spirit" is very important here: if he had a friend who encouraged him then he might develop these other affects as well.

BET: But he also needs to value himself for himself. He needs to feel that he is a worthwhile person even if he does not do well at his school. This ironically is a prerequisite for him to do well at school: he needs this "baseline" affect in order to feel able to tackle the work.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, and I can see that meditation might help with that. Just a few minutes a day of taking deep breaths and shutting his eyes and feeling that he is worthwhile in himself might help him with his English work.

CREATIVE TEACHER: This is excellent. I never thought you would see my point of view TRADITIONAL TEACHER, but I think you are now.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I suppose I feel it ties in with the literature I have read; it is quite Romantic, Wordsworthian if you like, and that makes it appeal to me.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, we as teachers need to feel that these ideas connect with other ideas we enjoy thinking about.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: We need to make connections between what we already know and what we are learning here in order for it to make sense.

### **Learning Activity**

What do you think of the points made in this discussion? What would you do with a student like Romeo?

Write about what you have learnt in your Learning Journal.

## **BEING CALM**

CREATIVE TEACHER: Let's put some of the ideas that were discussed previously into action now. Let's see how they work with Romeo in particular.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Let me try. I've always found dealing with awkward students like Romeo very annoying so I think I should have a go first.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I think maybe you should do some meditation first so that you are not feeling all agitated when dealing with Romeo.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: You're right, just thinking about dealing with these kids makes me feel like I've got to be ready to put them in detention; I feel tense already.

BEGINNER TEACHER: OK Traditional teacher, why don't you take a deep breath and shut your eyes? You're in the staffroom just before you have to teach this difficult class with Romeo.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And you're dreading it; you have visions of them not listening, fighting each other, laughing inappropriately.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I can feel my blood pressure rising!

CREATIVE TEACHER: OK, TRADITIONAL TEACHER let's all take a deep breath. You have five minutes before the lessons begins.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I should be getting the PowerPoint and worksheets ready so that they can fill them in!!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: No, you've done that, you're just worrying.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Take a deep breath and shut your eyes.

Francis Gilbert

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I'll look stupid and stressed out in front of everyone.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Maybe get another teacher to do with you? I mean, I will.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Me too!

CREATIVE TEACHER: And me!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: But there's still some of my old cynical teacher friends who are going to laugh at me.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Try not to worry about them. You could go to the toilet and do it there if you're really worried.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: It might be a bit smelly!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: OK, no more delaying. Deep breath. Shut your eyes.

*Everyone does this.*

BEGINNER TEACHER: Nice deep breath right into the abdomen and then slowly exhale. Do this five times. You can count if you like in your head. One on the in-breath, and say 'and' on the out-breath. Up to five. And then imagine you are breathing right throughout your whole body, breathing into the stressed-out parts of the body.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And if we had a little more time we might move on to observing our thoughts and feelings, telling ourselves that it is OK to feel worried about teaching the class, it is OK to feel worried about dealing with Romeo. It is OK. This is what is known as 'radical acceptance'. Accepting and acknowledging your feelings.

BEGINNER TEACHER: It's actually 'meta-cognition' which has been shown to be one of the most effective learning tools: thinking about thinking.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, it is OK to feel worried about teaching the class and Romeo. It is OK to feel anxious about dealing with him. Deep breath in.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Breath into the feeling. Think about where in the body the stress is happening.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: It's actually in my stomach, which is a bit fluttery.

BEGINNER TEACHER: And my shoulders which feel tense.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And a bit in my back, my lower back too.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Breath into the stressed parts of the body. Taking deep breaths. Telling yourself that it is OK.



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

*Everyone does the meditation.*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER opens his eyes: You know, I actually feel quite a bit better now. I still feel nervous about teaching the class but it is like I have got my nerves in perspective. It is like I have accepted that I might be feeling this way about teaching the class.

BEGINNER TEACHER: OK, time to face Romeo!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I'm going to tell the class to do what I just did at the beginning of the class. They always enter the class really high from lunchtime.

*TRADITIONAL TEACHER is now in front of the class.*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: OK Year 9, I would like you to shut your eyes, and take a few deep breaths in and out with your eyes shut. That's it, breath in, nice deep breath in, deep breath out. And I want you to imagine that you are very calm. You are in a calm, lovely sandy island, and you are reading the book which are going to read on this lovely, sandy island. You are on a lovely holiday, and you are enjoying yourselves. Nice deep breath in, nice deep breaths out...

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Hey, this is working!

BEGINNER TEACHER: He could do a guided meditation to help them remember what they have read with their eyes shut.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And then they could write a summary of what they know about the book in their Learning Journals.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Or do some free writing.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: And someone like Romeo could draw a picture of what he knows of the story because he hates writing...Normally, I would never allow this but I think giving him the choice might make him feel calmer and happier about doing the reading.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, exactly, giving students a choice really helps...

*After the lesson*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I felt that the meditation did actually really help calm the students down. There were some who were being a bit silly but I was feeling calm and so I did not get upset by that, I just saw that 80% of the class was doing it, and that they liked it.

BEGINNER TEACHER: And they are used to it to a degree because many of them have had a go at some mindfulness exercises. It's becoming quite common in schools.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: That's a relief! I was wondering what my SLT might say if they saw me doing it.

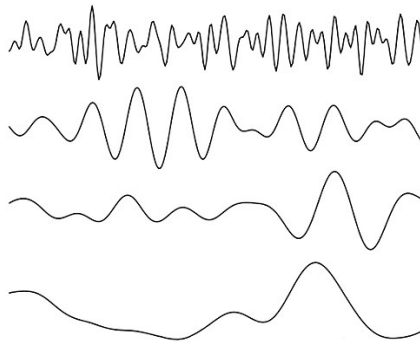
TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Obviously, you can't do it the whole lesson, but it does seem to be a good starter with classes that are finding it difficult to focus. And I felt the visualization helped them get a good idea of what was happening in the story because I think a lot of them had forgotten what was going on. I last saw them a few days ago.

CREATIVE TEACHER: We are back to Wordsworth again, aren't we?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, Wordsworth realised that you can't really write very well if you're really agitated.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Other experts say the same thing about creativity in general. Dr Danny Penman in his book on *Creativity and Mindfulness* says: "you need a calm, open and disciplined mind that can gather and integrate new ideas and information" (2015: 43).

BEGINNER TEACHER: And I've done some further research and found out that scientists have found that creativity best happens when the brain experiences alpha & theta waves, which occur when you're relaxed, as opposed to gamma waves, which happen when you're really excited and possibly stressed, because it's more receptive to new ideas (Scientific American, 1997).



**FIGURE 3 BRAINWAVES FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: BETA = ALERT/WORKING, ALPHA = RELAXED, REFLECTING, THETA=DROWSY/DRIFTING INTO SLEEP, DELTA = SLEEPING, DREAMING**

**LEARNING ACTIVITY**

What have you learnt from reading this scripted encounter? Write or draw the key points in your Learning Journals.

## NOTICING IDEAS

CREATIVE TEACHER: There are other uses for meditation other than just getting students to calm down and develop their self-esteem.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I'm not sure I like the word 'meditation'. It makes it sound like a religious exercise. Can we call it 'Calm Learning'?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, good idea. This is what it is, isn't it within the context of English lessons: we are trying to get our students to feel calm enough so that they can learn things properly. Our purpose is not to attain nirvana; we are all about 'learning'.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, I like the phrase 'Calm Learning': I think Ofsted will like that.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Ofsted don't make me feel calm!

BEGINNER TEACHER: Don't change the subject. Let's get CREATIVE TEACHER to tell us about the other uses for 'Calm Learning'.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Well, 'Calm Learning' as we now calling 'meditation' is very good at getting students to notice things. So can we shut our eyes, take a few deep breaths, get settled, and then pay particular attention to the sounds around us?

*Everyone does this.*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Now, having done this, could you write about what you have heard in your Learning Journals, and the thoughts and feelings that they have provoked.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: That was amazing! I really noticed things I've never noticed before. The sounds of drilling in the distance, the crying of a bird, the whirring of a radiator.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I think I could write a good descriptive passage using sounds now.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Could we now do it again, but this time, having listened for a few minutes to the sounds, could you start listening to your thoughts in the same way?

BEGINNER TEACHER: So yes, deep breath in, deep breath out, and start feel ready for Calm Learning. And now, listen to the sounds around you...Then start to observe your thoughts coming in and out.

*Everyone does this.*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: That was quite wild. It's weird to see how random our minds are when you observe them. I was thinking about my cat, then a TV programme I watched, and then the shopping I had to do, and then my class.

Francis Gilbert

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I did quite a lot of worrying.

CREATIVE TEACHER: In your Learning Journals, could you now do some free writing, possibly based upon what you observed in your minds? Penman says that this 'listening to your thoughts' exercise is particularly good for developing creativity because "you need to notice the new ideas created by your mind and to realise their significance" (43).

#### *LEARNING ACTIVITY*

What have you learnt from reading this scripted encounter? Write or draw the key points in your Learning Journals.

#### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

Schunk, D., & Zimmerman, B. (2008). *Motivation and self-regulated learning: Theory, research, and applications*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Vail, P. (1994). *Emotion: The on/off switch for learning*. Rosemont, NJ: Modern Learning Press.

#### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about theories of learning?

## META-COGNITION AND SELF-REGULATION

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn more about what we mean by meta-cognition and self-regulation, taking time to consider why it is useful to learn about learning.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon your own thoughts and feelings; how do you feel about observing your own thoughts and feelings as you meditate?

#### *DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE: LEARNING ACTIVITY*

*Put these statements in rank order with the ones you agree most with at the top.*

- Being independent is a state of mind which involves feeling confident that you can do things by yourself;
- Being independent is difficult when you're worried about things unconnected with your work such as money-worries or problems with relationships;
- Being independent means developing your own routine and sticking to it;
- Being independent means that you can read most texts and understand them immediately;
- Being independent means you work hard on understanding concepts that you find difficult;
- Being independent means you can ask for help when you need it.

For more, log onto:

**<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/school-themes/developing-independent-learning/>**

#### *LEARNING SCRIPT*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: OK, we've already talked about meta-cognition and how important it is but I have yet to understand how I might use it in my teaching.

TEST-OBSSESSED TEACHER: It seems really difficult to me!

CREATIVE TEACHER: On the simplest levels it is about getting your students to return again and again to two clear questions:

- What have I learnt about learning from doing this exercise/topic etc?
- What have I become aware of about my thinking and learning processes/strategies?

BEGINNER TEACHER: So metacognition is about awareness of your thinking processes?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, and it is about returning again and again to these questions within your lessons.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: But this seems just so basic to me! You ask this question to most students and they'll say basic things like 'I've learnt that I learn better when I try hard' or 'I've learnt that I learn better if I look things up in the dictionary'. That's it.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, the Traditional Teacher has a point. Won't the students just be repeating the same point again and again?

CREATIVE TEACHER: You're saying this because you haven't consistently got your students to be meta-cognitive. You'll be surprised by the richness of their responses if you really listen to them. You will also need to draw them out by getting them to develop their meta-cognitive awareness. Students begin to get what Watkins calls a 'rich conception' of learning when they think about their thinking.

BEGINNER TEACHER: What do you mean?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Well, with my students I find that many of them realise how they are rather different and diverse so, for example, after we've done some reading and I ask the question what have they learnt about their reading strategies, some students will say they read better when they take deep breaths and re-read a passage they don't understand, while others will say that they need to say aloud a difficult phrase a few times in their heads etc., while others say that they need to make comparisons between a character in the set text with someone they know to really get into the book etc.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: So really all it is about stopping your students regularly and asking them what learning skills they feel they've acquired from doing an exercise?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And this makes a big difference, does it?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Awareness is all! The mindfulness exercises are very meta-cognitive because they are about getting you to be aware of

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

not only what you are thinking (the content in your mind) but also how you are thinking. That's why I've encouraged you to think about using mindfulness with yourselves and your students.

**BEGINNER TEACHER:** Metacognition is particularly important to develop in students in order to improve their writing. Myhill and Watson (2011) argue it is this 'metacognitive' approach to writing which teachers need to instil in their students: 'writing is a process and teaching should support writers in thinking about and reflecting on their composing processes and the design choices they make in creating texts' (p. 69). They argue that relatively inexperienced writers are not aware of the processes that lead to more sophisticated writing.

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** And so you can see, it's worthwhile if more proficient writers explore their own processes in depth so that they can then share their ideas about their processes with less practiced writers (Smith, Wrigley; Cremin, Myhill p. 130).

### **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Devise a series of questions that foster meta-cognition amongst your students such as 'What are your feelings about this subject? How might you motivate yourself to learn more about this subject? What have you learnt about the things that help you learn?'

### **TOP TIPS**

#### **REWARD EFFORT**

Rewarding students with praise, certificates, letters home etc. when they have tried hard is more effective than telling them they have done 'good work'.

#### **FOCUS UPON LEARNING NOT PERFORMANCE**

Talking about what the students will learn rather than saying they have to do this or that to get a good grade actually leads to students doing better in their exams anyway.

#### **ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE**

Get students to figure out what they already know about a subject by giving them things like audits, brainstorming, poems about what they know etc to do at the beginning of lessons.

## LEARNING TO LEARN

Getting students to reflect upon what they have learnt and what they have learnt about their learning can be very effective, but do remember to give them a chance to learn something before doing this.

### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

Find out more about the role that the emotions play in learning. **This article on Inside Out** is useful:

**<http://www.underthetaskonline.com/the-psychology-of-inside-out-a-beautiful-lesson-in-emotional-intelligence/>**

**This article** covers the main theorists regarding the role emotions play in learning: **<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct94/vol52/num02/How-Emotions-Affect-Learning.aspx>**

Find out more about mindfulness. This **article on the Telegraph** website is a helpful, lively summary and provides a list of the key texts to read at the end as well: **<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-health/11161367/Mindfulness-does-it-really-live-up-to-the-hype.html>**

This website is a good place to start to learn more about theories of learning:

**<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/learning-theory-research/learning-overview/>**

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about theories of learning and how they inform and shape teaching and learning?

## LESSON PLANNING

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn more about how to plan lessons which are engaging and effective.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon what you know about planning lessons. What lessons have you observed or participated in which have felt well planned and organised? What makes an interesting lesson?

### *THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBJECT & PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE*

The key questions to ask when planning are:



**What** do you want the students to learn? (Content)

**Why** do they need to learn these things? (Purpose)

**How** will they learn about these things and how will you teach them?  
(Pedagogy)

You will be told lots of different ways to plan lessons, but at the root of all planning is answering these questions.

### *LEARNING OBJECTIVES, GOALS, INTENTIONS AND SUCCESS CRITERIA*

**Learning objectives** are brief statements that describe what students will be expected to learn by the end of school year, course, unit, lesson, project, or class period.

Sometimes learning objectives are written as **learning goals** or **learning intentions**. There are subtle differences. John Hattie (2010) argues that learning intentions and success criteria are an excellent way of making it clear to students that there is a particular thing students need to learn and that the teacher is clear about how the student will know they've "got it" – their **success criteria**. Fleming and Stevens point out the problems with planning lessons that have learning objectives which are too narrow (pp. 105–123) and take an approach which can be robotic.

The key thing is that teachers need to get learners to "internalise" the learning objective (LO)/goal/intention. I think learning intentions work best because students can take ownership of them.

### *A POSSIBLE MODEL FROM THE TIME DEVIL*

In my book, *The Time Devil* (Gilbert, 2017, pp. 14–17), a dramatic 'teaching' script for Key Stage 3 students, I explained in the following way to them how learning intentions can work. Please remember, I am addressing 11-14-year-olds in the script, and not teachers.

#### *LEARNING INTENTIONS: AN EXPLANATION FOR KEY STAGE 3 STUDENTS*

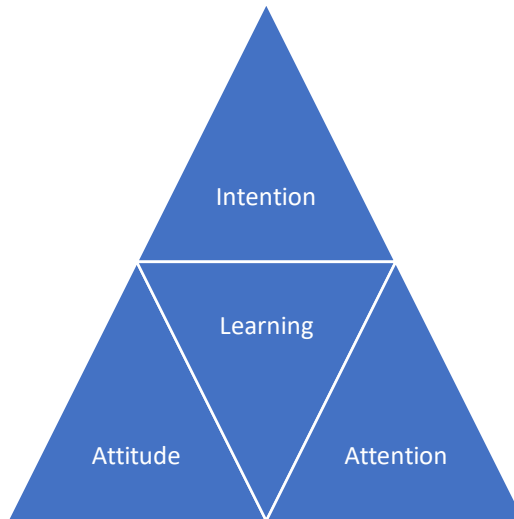
Let's show you how it works. For every lesson, you are in, you could make these learning intentions:

*I intend to have a positive attitude towards my learning.*

*I intend to pay attention to what the teacher says and doing the things that help me learn.*

We are getting you to think hard about your "learning intentions" while reading this script; we like the word "intentions" rather than "goals" or "objectives" because we want you to think hard about what you intend to learn before you complete each lesson.

The two vital elements linked to your intention to learn are your attitudes towards your learning and the quality of your attention when you learn.



The above diagram shows that to learn you need to have the “intention” to learn, and the right attitudes and attention so that you can learn effectively.

The Learning Intention you could have for every lesson

On the most basic level, every lesson you learn will have this fundamental learning intention, which could be written as: “I intend to learn more about myself and the world I live in by having a positive attitude about what I am learning and paying close attention to the things I am supposed to learn about.” So, if you’re ever stuck about what learning intention to set, use this one!

The overall intentions of this script are to help you improve your reading skills, to learn how to read more difficult texts by yourself, to learn how to appreciate and enjoy museums and cultural artefacts, to learn how to collaborate well.

### LEARNING CHARM

In order for you to personalize your learning, we’d like you to find a special object or charm that could symbolize your learning and help keep your focus upon your learning. Choose an object which you have with you and try to figure out through discussion why this object symbolises your learning. For example, you could have your home key, get it out, look at it, feel it, and explain why it embodies your learning intention talking about why the object suggests the right attitudes and attention; “This key symbolises my learning intention because I want to unlock the door to reading in a better and more enjoyable way; this key is my learning charm because it symbolises the happiness of going home and if I am to learn well I should have a happy attitude. This key is also very focused upon opening my front door, and I want to have that kind of focus when I pay attention in lessons.”

Task: find a learning charm that symbolises your learning intentions for this unit

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

of work, and symbolises the right kind of attitudes and attention that you want to have. Write a poem about the learning charm and why it symbolises positivity and attention for you.

### **HOW?**

The next step is to consider you might gain a positive attitude and develop focused attention in lessons. To be positive, you may want to adopt a “Growth Mindset” and believe that you can do things if put in the effort. You might want to sit next to someone who helps you learn best etc.

To pay attention to the things that help you learn, you might want to consider trying to make connections between the things you like and your learning, so that you are motivated to learn. You might consider taking regular breaks so that you maintain your concentration.

### **WHAT?**

Then you need to think of things that will show you have achieved your learning intentions.

E.g. if you are positive in your approach, you will probably have read what you are required to read and a bit extra, and if you are paying attention, you may well achieve good results in your assessment at the end of the unit. Now set some overall Learning Intentions for yourself using this script to help you.

<b>Learning intention</b>	<b>How? (Process)</b>	<b>What? (Product)</b>	<b>Learning Charm?</b>
I intend to improve my confidence in reading aloud.	By reading aloud with a positive attitude and reading passages every lesson, and every lesson.	Dramatic reading of the script at the end of the unit.	E.g. the buttons on my blazer because they are shiny and always happy.
I intend to improve my ability to summarize what I have read.	To give regular spoken summaries of what I have read in my group, and to write regular summaries in my learning journal.	Spoken summaries; written summaries	E.g. my right hand because it is good at squeezing some objects into smaller sizes.
I intend to improve my ability to skim and scan texts.	To learn the skills of skimming and scanning.	To show I can pick out key quotes and read texts quickly by summarizing them.	E.g. my legs because they can run fast past lots of things very quickly.
I intend to improve my ability	To learn how to be positive in	To accomplish all the group tasks:	E.g. my pencil case

## Francis Gilbert

to collaborate in a group.	my group, smile at people, celebrate my and other people's successes.	complete the group reading of the script by the end of the unit.	because it holds lots of different things like a group should hold lots of different opinions.
I intend to improve my ability to ask questions which help my understanding of what I have read.	To regularly ask questions which help people understand.	To have a list of good questions in my learning journal which help me understand the script.	
I intend to improve my concentration when I am reading.	To regularly pay attention to my reading taking a positive attitude towards it.	Completion of the script, and reading of other texts related to the script.	

### *REVIEW OF THE TIME DEVIL MODEL*

What do you think of this possible model? How might you adapt it to use in your own teaching? What do you think of this approach to learning intentions? What do you think of the concept of the learning charm? How and why might this be effective?

You may well decide to use the LO approach instead, but whatever you do, the key point is clear: you need to give the students a clear focus as to **what** they are going to learn and get them to consider **why** they are learning these things. This then enables them and you to see whether they have learnt these things or not (success criteria). This means that assessing the students' learning becomes much easier and more focused.

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF PLANNING

Once you have understood the idea of learning objectives/goals/intentions, it is then worth considering in more depth, **how** you might teach this content. Think first of all about the way you might structure lessons over a period of time. There are many different ways of doing this. These are:

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

### TEXT-BASED PLANNING

For this approach, you focus your planning around a specific text/texts such as a novel, play or selection of poems that everyone reads. All your planning is shaped around how and when you might teach elements of the text.

### DISCRETE LESSONS

This is where you might teach different subject areas in different lessons. This is the 'old-fashioned' way of teaching English where during the week, you would have reading, writing, grammar, spelling, public speaking lessons, all on different days of the week. Each lesson would be different. Some teachers will use a form of this by having, say, a library lesson once a week, a literature/language lesson etc.

### THEMED LESSONS

This is where you teach a specific topic over a period of weeks. This has become popular with the new GCSEs where topics such as Dystopia, Power and Conflict, Love and Relationships are taught over a half-term etc.

### PROJECTS

This is where students must do something like produce a newspaper, play or anthology over a span of lessons. This used to be very popular with students being given specific individual projects to work on over time. Handing out a resource to students such as a reading list and asking students to write a number of reviews, poems, stories in response to the individual reading can be very successful if managed carefully.

### SKILLS-BASED

This is where you focus upon the skills students need to acquire such as analysing texts, improving their creativity, improving their reading and writing skills.

### *LEARNING PUZZLE*

What are the advantages and disadvantages of these particular approaches?

### *LONG-TERM PLANNING*

English teachers need to devise brief yearly plans which map out what is going to be covered.

Have a look this long-term plan from Chailey School:

**<http://www.chaileyschool.org/media/2360/english-y10-and-y11-2016-17-long-term-plan.pdf>**

What can you learn from this approach? How might you improve upon it?

At the most basic level, English teachers need to cover these topics in a year:

- Poetry
- Prose (usually short stories/novel)
- Drama (usually a modern play)
- Non-fiction (usually journalism)
- Knowledge about language (usually grammar, spelling, punctuation, features of speech & writing)

The skills that need to be covered are:

- Speaking and listening skills: discussing, arguing, debating, analysing etc.
- Reading skills: reading different genres of texts.
- Writing skills: writing for different audiences and purposes.

#### REVERSE ENGINEERING

It has become very popular for teachers to work out what learners need to pass the exam, and then “reverse” engineer so that every year is doing something that will help them pass the exam. Learning objectives, texts, skills are all drawn up with eye on the exam criteria. Now that the National Curriculum has become so content free, this has become an increasingly common way for teachers to plan.

Have a look at the resources on the AQA website:

**<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-language-8700/planning-resources>**

Now compare the resources on the AQA website with those on the BBC News Report website:

**[http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport/teacher\\_resources](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport/teacher_resources)**

What do you think might motivate learners more? By focusing upon the GCSE exam or upon a ‘real-life’ topic like journalism?

#### MINDFUL REFLECTION

Mindfully think about what you have learnt about planning so far. Mindfully reflect upon the effect that teaching to the test has upon the teacher and the learner: what thoughts and feelings do it produce in the teacher and students? Now mindfully reflect upon doing things like the

news report which are not for an exam, but as part of a ‘fun’ project. What thoughts and feelings does this produce? What do teachers and students learn about learning in both activities?

#### LEARNING PUZZLE

Devise some long-term plans for Years 7-13, sketching out the key texts/skills to be covered very quickly. Have a go at putting the information into different visual organisers: a table, spider-diagram, bullet-points.

What have you learnt from doing this kind of planning? What is the most helpful in representing the information?

#### MEDIUM-TERM PLANNING

This is where you get more detailed and plot out over a few weeks how you might teach a particular text.

Have a look at the lesson ideas on this BBC Schools’ Radio website:

**<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio/teachersnotes>**

The lessons are aimed at primary school children, but are really fun! How might you adapt some of the resources so that they can be used in secondary school? Look at the booklet on *Macbeth*:

**[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/pdfs/macbeth\\_notes.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/pdfs/macbeth_notes.pdf)**

**[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/pdfs/oliver\\_twist\\_notes.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/pdfs/oliver_twist_notes.pdf)**

**[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/pdfs/achristmascarol\\_notes.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/pdfs/achristmascarol_notes.pdf)**

Read it through and consider how you might use these medium-term plans (which are excellent) in the secondary classroom. What extensions and extra activities might you use to develop the medium-term plans for use at Key Stage 3?

My experience is that I have seen *Macbeth*, *Oliver Twist* and *A Christmas Carol* taught a great deal at Key Stages 3 and 4, but not in the creative ways that are suggested for primary school teachers. This is a shame because many students could benefit from the more joyful approach taken at primary. The key question is: how can you adapt the creative ideas used at primary to the secondary classroom? Is this a good idea? If so, why?

Have a look at the BBC resources for secondary now:  
**[http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/websites/11\\_16/site/english.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/websites/11_16/site/english.shtml)**

How are they similar and different to the primary resources? What can you learn as a teacher from them?

### *SCHEMES OF WORK*

A scheme of work (SoW) outlines in a brief form the learning objectives, outcomes and activities that need to be covered in a particular topic.

Some SoWs are very brief, and others are very detailed.

How detailed do you think they need to be?

### LEARNING PUZZLE

Go onto the TES website and search for some SoW that are of interest to you. If you are not certain what to look for, look up a SoW on a topic you are very confident about, and then one you are not very confident about. Look mindfully at the SoW, considering how it makes you feel and think. What can you learn from them?

### *SHORT-TERM PLANNING: INDIVIDUAL LESSONS*

Have a look at this lesson plan on *Macbeth* from the British Council:

**<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/macbeth>**

What do you think of it as a lesson plan?

Return to the key points at the beginning of this section. Is it clear what the students are supposed to learn? Is it clear about why they are learning this stuff? Is it clear how they might be taught?

Now look at some other individual lesson plans on the web. Draw up a list of criteria that makes a successful lesson plan.

If your school/college has given you a lesson plan template to fill in, look at it now and critique it. How useful is it for helping you plan? How might you improve upon it?

Have a go at planning an individual lesson plan on a topic you feel very confident about, and one that you don't feel confident about.

## 1984: IMPROVING LESSON PLANS

Look at these two lesson plans based on teaching George Orwell's 1984 and critique them. If you want improve them, or write your own lesson plans based on the novel:

### **Lesson One.**

Learning objective: *to understand the difference between utopia and dystopia.*

Questions to ask students:

What's your perfect world? (use personal experience). Draw and label on A3. Feedback and extract common features of utopia.



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Then draw its opposite. Feedback.

Dystopia in 1984: Chapter 1, line beginning ‘the ministry of love was the really frightening one... that he was now about to do’

Bubbles of focus: physical oppression, mental oppression, environmental oppression, feelings. 2/3 examples of each.

Summarise why this is a dystopian picture.

*(above and below need blending together – will probably make two lessons)*

Learning objective: To complete a dystopian or utopian creative writing piece.

Make a list of 5 aspects of society which most define modern society – what is the purpose and what the consequences of each one?

For each one, in pairs, discuss how it might have evolved in forty years’ time – will it have a new purpose and new consequences?

Look at two or three examples from books or film whereby contemporary aspects of society have been manipulated for a picture of a future society. Discuss how and why these changes have been implemented.

Students write three-line films based on topics: environmental/robot/cloning/religion/dictatorship/protagonists

e.g. chemical spillage poisons ocean. Only Bruce Willis and beautiful blonde survive, in gas masks...

Look at three examples of dystopian/utopian settings (Phillip K. Dick) and analyse for language and narrative structure. Make notes on either.

Plan your own creative writing

Write it. (Peer assess; how likely? How depressive? How hopeful?)

Homework for lesson 3 – read up to page 51, write a narrative summary, or, write down key points from spark notes online summary)

### **Lesson 2.**

Learning Objective: *to look at the opening of a novel.*

Starter: what makes an arresting opening? Brain storm techniques used in arresting openings. Which do they think are the top 5 and why?

Ask the pupils to think of the best openings to films, books, TV dramas etc...quick discussion

Effective openings from other texts: Moby Dick, Cather in the Rye etc... Why are these effective?

Look at “the clock was striking thirteen” – quick discussion. Why is this and effective opening? Play podcast by teachers modelling how to do this) Write answer with ref to the quotation (p.e.a).

(Extension Task: Ask the pupils to write their own opening line to a science

fiction book, using everyday objects (iron, stairs, kettle, chair, bed, trousers etc).

Plenary: Peer assessment and oral feedback.

### *COMMENTARY*

You may have found much to criticise here. For example, the Learning Objectives aren't really LOs at all, but more activities. Does this matter? Some of the points are difficult to decipher: they are more notes to the teacher. Does this matter? Consider carefully what you might improve in terms of planning. Is this a successful way of presenting the material? Perhaps the plan could have been written as a chart, visual organiser, or more of a narrative? This said, there's much to commend here: the ideas are creative and experienced teachers could use these bare bones ideas to create some engaging lessons.

## TOP TIPS

### BE CREATIVE WITH YOUR PLANNING

Have a go at writing out your plans as poems, as visual organisers, as collages, experimenting with what motivates you the most to do effective planning?

### ADVANCE ORGANISERS

Show your students that you have thought carefully about how the lessons are going to unfold over the year, the months, the weeks, the days. Give them 'advance organisers' in which you write down in a few words or phrases what they have to do in the coming year, months, weeks etc. E.g. for Year 9 you could say during this year we are going to study: poetry, stories, speech, newspapers, plays, grammar. Then get the students to fill in the gaps. This gives the students a sense of where they are going. Return regularly to the advance organisers. You can find more on this here: <http://study.com/academy/lesson/advanced-organizers-in-the-classroom-teaching-strategies-advantages.html>

### PLAN LITTLE AND OFTEN

Reviewing your planning and checking with it regularly can really help you. Start early with your planning, sketching out ideas in your planner, and then return back to your plans to see if you need to change them.

### USE AND ADAPT EXISTING PLANS

Make sure that you use and adapt where appropriate resources your school has provided for you. As a first step, avoid changing things radically

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

even if you disagree with the approach. Observe mindfully how the planning already in place goes; this will save you time and possibly conflict with colleagues.

### **BE FLEXIBLE**

There is not 'set' way of doing lesson planning, despite what some people might tell you. It is an acquired skill which develops over time. Some teachers start with lesson objectives, others start with learning outcomes, some teachers start with what the pupils know and build upon that without having any set agenda. You will need to consider what method is appropriate for the situation you are in. Mindfully reflect upon it and then move forward.

### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

Jon Davind, Caroline Daly. (2014). *Learning to Teach English in the Secondary School: A companion to school experience* (Fourth ed., Learning to teach subjects in the secondary school series. 0). Routledge.

Fleming, M., & Stevens, D. (2010). *English teaching in the secondary school linking theory and practice* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

What do you think of the advice offer on these websites:

<http://www.learningspy.co.uk/training/planning-a-perfect-lesson/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/jun/25/lesson-planning-work-life-balance-saving-time>

<https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/the-5-minute-lesson-plan/>

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/9-ways-plan-transformational-lessons-todd-finley>

<https://www.tes.com/articles/secondary-lesson-plans-collection>

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about lesson planning?

# COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

## KEY POINTS

You will learn that ultimately all learning is collaborative; learn more about how to nurture collaboration in classrooms and learn about giving students roles in groups.

## MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon times when you have learnt a lot from collaborating with people. Think about situations when you have been particularly happy when collaborating and the people that you feel you best collaborate with.

### *DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLES*

You are teaching a GCSE English class but you find you are exhausting yourself by constantly explaining things at the front of the class. You have lots of useful PowerPoints which need a great deal of teacher explanation. You know that the way to get students learning more is to get them working more collaboratively together, but you're frightened that if you let them they will be noisy, go off-topic and not learn very much. You are studying reading and writing non-fiction: newspaper articles. What do you do?

### *POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS*

Start small to begin get the students to "think, pair, share", possibly keeping them working in pairs, and building up to them working in groups after they have got the hang of talking things through in pairs. Monitor the pairs carefully, praising students who are discussing things well, and getting them to show the rest of the class how they do it, giving rewards to students who do well such as certificates.

Get every pair to have a teacher and a learner; the teacher should explain what to do in the topic and should be encouraged to ask questions to draw out what the learner knows. The learner and teacher should regularly swap roles so that everyone in the class learns how to be a teacher. There is much evidence to show that it is when students become teachers that they really learn the most (Brown and Palincsar, 1987).

## OTHER STRATEGIES FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

The following exercises are taken from my Study Guide Edition of *Frankenstein* (Gilbert and Shelley, 2015, p. 190). Even you are not familiar with the novel, you will get a good idea of the types of exercises that can help students better understand a topic. What do you think of them? How might you adapt them for other texts and topics? How and why do they develop collaborative learning?

Work in a group and devise a **chatshow** based on the novel. Make sure that you have an interviewer (chat-show host) who questions the main characters in the novel about their thoughts and feelings regarding what has happened to them. The aim is that students need to show that they understand the storyline and characters by talking in role about the events in the novel.

You could put both Victor and the Creature on **trial** for their crimes. Set things up so that you have a prosecuting lawyer who is accusing them of their different crimes. Have a defence lawyer who argues that there is evidence that both of these defendants should be treated leniently. Call witnesses for the prosecution and defence who are characters from the novel or the author. You can be deliberately “loose” with your approach and have “dead” characters appear. You could have Justine/William/Krempe/Victor/the Creature (depending upon who is being accused) called for the prosecution, and possibly Elizabeth/Clerval/De Lacey etc in defence, again depending upon whether Victor or the Creature is on trial. Use the trial to explore different views on the novel. Then possibly write it up as a script or review what you have learnt from doing it.

Put the main characters in **therapy**. Have them visit a therapist to discuss their problems with him/her. You could do this so that they go into therapy at various stages during the novel, i.e. Victor/the Creature talking about things at the different phases of the novel; after the making of the Creature, living next to the De Laceys, the murder of William etc. Write a review of what you have learnt from doing this afterwards.

Work in a group and devise a **radio drama** of the major parts of the novel. Different groups could work on different sections of the book; e.g. the creation of the Creature, life in the woods near the De Laceys, the murder of William, the issues surrounding the making of the female companion, the murder of Clerval and Elizabeth. Make the drama short and punchy. This exercise will help you get to know the text in much more depth: the editing of the novel will help you summarise key points.

## GROUP ROLES

One way to really get students to work together in a group is to allocate roles which they are accountable for. I devised the following group roles to help students read in a group. You will notice that the questions are repetitive, but ordered differently: I have not repeated the questions after the first explanation of being a teacher. You can download a full set of cards here:

<https://www.scribd.com/document/353138706/Creative-Reading-Roles>

I repeated the questions this because I wanted the students to realise that much effective collaborative learning happens when everyone repeatedly returns to the same important points and questions, interrogating them in detail. What do you think of these roles? How might you set them up in the classroom? How might you monitor students? The following passage is taken from *The Time Devil* (Gilbert, Francis, 2017) and addresses Key Stage 3 students.

### GROUP ROLES FOR EFFECTIVE READING

#### EXPLANATION

When you are working in a group you will take on specific roles, which are outlined below. You will be expected to ask the questions that go with each role each time you do Reciprocal Teaching, plus any other questions you think are useful to ask. You will notice that every role actually has the same questions but different ordered. This is deliberate because ultimately you need to learn to ask all of these questions and perform all of these tasks by yourself in order to be a good reader. The first two questions are in bold because these are the central questions/tasks to do in this role.

#### TEACHER

##### JOBS

**To predict: “What are we going to learn next? What happens next in this text?”**

**To instruct: “Now it’s time for all of us to do this...can you read this?”**

To summarize: “This passage is about...In a few words, this text means this...Let’s sum up this text in a minute...”

To clarify: “If we look at this section again, we can see it might mean this...let’s look at this bit again and work out its meaning....Let’s re-read this passage...”

To motivate: “You tried really hard when you looked at this part of the text...Well done, that’s a great effort...”

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

□ To question: “What questions can we ask to help us better understand the passage? Can you tell me more?”

□ To assess: “How much do we understand and what don’t we get? How well are we working as a group?”

□ To learn about learning: “What are we learning about the way we learn here? What targets can we set to improve our learning? How are we feeling about our learning?”

### *MOTIVATOR*

#### **JOBS**

□ To motivate: “You tried really hard when you looked at this part of the text...Well done, that’s a great effort...”

□ To clarify: “If we look at this section again, we can see it might mean this...let’s look at this bit again and work out its meaning....Let’s re-read this passage...”

### *SUMMARIZER*

#### **JOBS**

□ To summarize: “This passage is about...In a few words, this text means this...Let’s sum up this text in a minute...”

□ To assess: “How much do we understand and what don’t we get? How well are we working as a group?”

### *QUESTIONER*

#### **JOBS**

□ To question: “What questions can we ask to help us better understand the passage? Can you tell me more?”

□ To learn about learning: “What are we learning about the way we learn here? What targets can we set to improve our learning? How are we feeling about our learning?”

### *ASSESSOR*

#### **JOBS**

□ To assess: “How much do we understand and what don’t we get? How well are we working as a group?”

□ To learn about learning: “What are we learning about the way we learn here? What targets can we set to improve our learning? How are we feeling about our learning?”

### *LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF*

#### **JOBS**

□ To learn about learning: “What are we learning about the way we learn here? What targets can we set to improve our learning? How are we feeling about our learning?”

□ To motivate: “You tried really hard when you looked at this part of the text...Well done, that’s a great effort...”

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY

Devise a collaborative learning activity for a series of lessons you are working on, using group roles. Devise the learning resources and write your lesson plans.

## TOP TIPS

### *INEFFECTIVE GROUP WORK*

#### GROUP WORK IS INEFFECTIVE WHEN:

- The teacher isn’t committed to the idea of group work and doesn’t understand the theory behind it;
- The group members don’t have specific roles and responsibilities that they know they must carry out;
- Group work is not monitored effectively, and the teacher doesn’t discipline people off-task;
- There’s no culture of group work in the class and the class don’t understand the principles.

When the teacher has a predominantly “behaviouralist” model of teaching, seeing it about predominantly as “imitation” and “repetition” with positive and negative reinforcements. Don’t get me wrong though: I think this behaviouralist approach is more appropriate in certain situations, definitely when children have to learn vocabulary/passages/concepts that they have no hope of working out in a group; teacher authority needs to be imposed when appropriate. The teacher should be trusted to judge when this is best the case. I find that “mixing and matching” a “teacher-led” approach with a “child-centred” one gives lessons variety and pace.

#### GROUP WORK CAN BE VERY EFFECTIVE WHEN:

- The teacher is committed to the idea; really believes in it, shares their reasons WHY it is effective regularly with the class;
- The group members have specific “talking” and “discussion” roles, see the National Oracy project points for this.
- The group work is very carefully monitored and assessed, with the teacher using AfL techniques to develop oracy and cognitive development;



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

- The teacher has a firm belief that “soft skills” are worth developing: leadership, initiative, problem-solving, negotiation, constructive dialogue; autonomy; independent learning;
- It becomes an integral part of teaching and learning; that students are used to doing it as part of their lessons;
- Groups are carefully and thoughtfully chosen by the teacher;
- Groups are encouraged to reflect upon their learning;

As a backbone of the groups I deploy, I appoint specific roles: this could be a group leader, a lead questioner, a lead explainer or coach, and a lead monitor; every role has a list of duties and responsibilities, which they must carry out; they operate like a “production team” and are accountable to the leader, who is then accountable to me. Great effort is expended in “bigging up” the roles; they are important and relevant notes must be taken in books. Everyone can adopt someone else’s role if relevant; they are merely a “lead” person in that area.

It works when teachers have a “child-centred” model of education, seeing it about more than “imitation” and “repetition”, but recognises that knowledge is actively “constructed” by a child in his/her own head, after discussion and dialogue; when the teacher is committed to a Vygotskian model whereby there’s an acknowledgement that children can learn from each other, and that “coaching” is a very effective way of improving rates of learning both for the coach and the person being coached.

### USE POST-IT NOTES

Using different coloured post-it notes is very good for collaborative learning because they are easy to move around and colour-coded. So, for example, you can get students to write what they know about a subject and put the post-it notes on the main board, then students can find someone who might help them with a topic that they find difficult after you tell them to partner up with an ‘expert’ in the field. Or you can use the post-it note colours to organise groups yourself: one table is yellow, another orange etc. Then you can easily ‘rainbow’ or jigsaw by simply saying, ‘I want every table now to have different colours (rainbowing)’ or ‘I want blues and greens to partner up, then oranges and reds...’

You can get students to plan group essays by writing key words/sentences for different sections of the essay on post-it notes and then putting them together to form a group or class essay.

### COLLECTIVE READING AND WRITING

You get books read quickly by getting students to devise presentations/readings/explanations/podcasts etc on specific chapters of a book, and then feeding back to each other. You can do the same for writing collective stories, essays, articles etc.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Brindley, S., & Open University. PGCE Course E883 Team. (1994). *Teaching English*. London: Routledge in association with the Open University.

Yandell, J. (2013). *The social construction of meaning: Reading literature in urban English classrooms*. Routledge. London

The Collaborative Learning Project has a wealth of resources for developing various collaborative learning strategies:  
**<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/firsttime.html>**

The Educational Endowment Foundation has a good summary of the research which indicates that collaborative learning helps students from disadvantaged backgrounds:

**<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit/collaborative-learning/>**

**<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/our-work/projects/dialogic-teaching>**

**[https://www.stem.org.uk/system/files/community-resources/2016/03/sec\\_pedagogy\\_grpwrk.pdf](https://www.stem.org.uk/system/files/community-resources/2016/03/sec_pedagogy_grpwrk.pdf)**

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about collaborative learning?

## CREATIVITY

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider what being a creative English teacher involves, and what creative strategies you might employ in the classroom.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon being creative: when do you feel creative? Visualise yourself doing creative activities. How are you feeling?

### THE DARK ALLEYWAY: AN ARTICLE ON CREATIVITY

I published the following article on creativity and mindfulness in NAWE's Writing Magazine (November, 2016). It covers some of the points already discussed in the book, but seeing the points about mindfulness might help you understand better why I am advocating it as an approach.

#### CREATIVE WRITING IN SCHOOLS: THE DARK ALLEYWAY...

To my mind, Creative Writing (CW) currently languishes like a frightened animal in one of the curriculum's darker alleyways, shivering and rather worried about its prospects.

Having been an English teacher for twenty-five years in various comprehensives and now a Lecturer in PGCE English at Goldsmiths, which involves visiting many schools, I have both taught Creative Writing to ages 11-18 years and trained beginning teachers to do so as well. This has made me aware of that authentic Creative Writing is an 'endangered species' in schools. The axing of the Creative Writing A Level was a big body-blow; this excellent A Level, set up by NAWE and AQA, was just beginning to generate genuine interest in the subject amidst not only English teachers but also Senior Leaders, who saw the value of it for students who wanted something beyond the more analytical English A Levels – English Literature, English Language, English Literature/Language. The shutting-down of the A Level (with the last assessments in 2017) means that Creative Writing has lost much of its visibility within schools.

This said, the CW component of the new English GCSE has pushed story-writing to the forefront of many English teachers' minds, who are currently scratching their heads to work out what the specifications are requiring students to do in the exam, which will be first assessed in the summer of 2017. As we all know, the quality of CW is notoriously difficult

to measure, particularly in exam conditions. To enervate English teachers further is the fact that English GCSE is, along with Maths, the most significant qualification not only for students, but also for schools because it is “double-weighted” for league table purposes; a set of poor GCSE English results can affect a school’s overall ranking drastically. Perhaps not surprisingly, this has led, in my view, to panic in some quarters, with English students (and less experienced teachers) seeking the magic CW ‘recipe’ to boost their grades; this has led to a growing cohort of pupils following various dubious ‘formulas’ in order to write the “top grade” story.

The lessons I’ve observed where I’ve seen teachers attempting to provide students with prescriptive plans are not successful. I saw one lesson where a teacher told his students to include 5 nouns, 7 ‘wow’ adjectives and 3 ‘great’ adverbs in their story, as well as a variety of sentence structures. The writing produced was lacklustre and would not have achieved high marks in the GCSE.

#### EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

There is, though, some light in the dark alleyway. Simon Wrigley and Jeni Smith (2012) run the National Writing Project (NWP) in England and have been very successful at encouraging teachers to be writers outside the confines of school, and bring their understanding of their writing processes into the classroom. Wrigley and Smith’s research indicates that when teachers write with their students and have a better understanding of how creative writers shape and work on their material, they are much more effective at teaching CW.

But the NWP, though growing in popularity, remains a relatively small movement. Indeed, there has never been a more important for professional writers to promote their creative approaches in the secondary English classroom. NAWE has led the way in both researching and disseminating outstanding practice. Its report in the ecology of writers in schools, *Classwork* (NAWE, 2010) offered wonderful advice, stressing in its conclusions the importance of students being taught to re-draft their work properly, for schools and professional writers to plan carefully what they might do together, and for both writers and teachers to be consistently well trained about relevant teaching and learning strategies. Above all, it urged for schools, English departments and writers to come together to develop what might be termed ‘creative cultures’ which embed innovative approaches to English.

### MY EXPERIENCES

I have been a creative writer since my teens, and now have published many books, including one novel, *The Last Day of Term* (2011). Until quite recently, I had always kept my identities of being an English teacher and creative writer quite separate, but being a member of NAWE, participating in the NWP workshops and doing a PhD in Creative Writing at Goldsmiths has changed me. I now see the importance of bringing creative writing systematically into secondary schools with teachers leading by example and showing how they write themselves; my own research shows that this generates reciprocity with students wanting to share their own work more willingly in the classroom context (Gilbert, 2012).

At last year's NAWE conference and in a previous issue of *Writing in Education* (Autumn 2015), I outlined some creative strategies for teaching 'classic literature', suggesting ideas such as predictions, role play and visual organisers in order to help students think imaginatively about challenging literature. My presentation at this year's conference and this article has a different emphasis because it explores the vital importance of generating the right emotional atmosphere for effective creative writing and the tactics that might be employed to do this.

### WHAT ACTUALLY IS CREATIVITY AND WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS THAT BEST NURTURE IT?

Much research (Wrigley/Smith, 2012; NAWE, 2010) indicates that anyone teaching creative approaches needs to grapple with the thorny question of what creativity actually might mean to them. In his book *Creativity in Education and Learning*, Cropley produces this helpful table which outlines some of the possible differences between intelligence and creativity (p. 26, 2004).

<b>Psychological Domain</b>	<b>Intelligence</b>	<b>Creativity</b>
Function	Acquiring factual knowledge; perfecting the already known (producing orthodoxy)	Developing new ways; changing the known (producing novelty)
Abilities	Recalling; problem-solving	Imagining; problem finding
Skills	Convergent thinking; memorizing	Divergent thinking; critical thinking
Thinking processes	Recalling the known; recognizing the familiar; reapplying set techniques	Inventing; linking separate domains; branching out.
Desirable properties of thinking	Logic; accuracy; thinking	Novelty; surprisingness; variability.

I have found Cropley's chart very useful for orienting my teaching because it enables me to speak about what creative writing both is and is *not*. Its primary purpose is not to produce factual knowledge or 'problem-solve'; this is useful to bear in mind because many English teachers believe they are 'doing CW' by asking students to write things like diary entries based upon characters they are reading about; teachers then mark these entries to assess how well their students have understood the story. Cropley's taxonomy tells us in this situation they are marking the diary entries to gauge students' understanding and intelligence, not their creativity.

However, if they were to mark it for creativity, they would be examining how the diary entry contains 'divergent thinking' and 'novelty'. This means that a piece that might get high marks for understanding could attain low marks for creativity because there might be very little evidence in the diary entry of 'new thinking'. Conversely, a diary entry that might score highly for creativity, may well score poorly for revealing understanding of the text.

It is an obvious point, but very important to consider; if teachers want to promote creativity they need to stress the importance of saying something new or different. And yet, my own experiences and much research, even by official organisations such as Ofsted (Ofsted, 2012), indicates that most English lessons focus upon developing students' convergent thinking and reapplying set techniques, rather than inventing new domains of knowledge. While teachers may feel more secure in helping students problem-solve rather than problem-find, there is a cost for society, as Cropley says: "*Creativity in children is necessary for society.* Finally, creativity offers classroom approaches that are interesting and thus seems to be a more efficient way of fostering learning and personal growth of the young. *Creativity helps children learn and develop.*" (p. 28)

#### MINDFULNESS AND CREATIVITY

An exciting development in a number of schools recently is the promotion of a therapeutic technique called 'mindfulness'; this is a simple meditation process whereby students are encouraged to shut their eyes and concentrate upon the flow of their breath for a few minutes at various times during the week, usually in their tutor periods (MiSP, 2016). It is primarily being used to help students deal with anxiety and stress. In August 2016, the Big Lottery Fund provided £54m for some properly tested pilots to be rolled out in various boroughs across the country (Big Lottery Fund, 2016) because there is a growing body of evidence that the strategy significantly helps with mental well-being (Thornley, 2016).

Having been sceptical of such claims, it wasn't until I began to meditate myself that I began to understand that mindfulness strategies can really aid creativity. Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" which "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity" (Wordsworth, 1800, p. xxxiii) is relevant here: I found that I was writing much more fruitfully having meditated before I wrote. I felt freer and less conflicted about writing. So I trialled mindfulness as a teaching strategy for creative writing and found the results were surprising; I worked with a number of Year 8 classes in a deprived inner-city school, asking them to meditate at the beginning of each class and do some 'free writing'; they could write what they wanted for a few minutes, the only rule was that they had to keep writing. The results were very positive after some initial grumblings. Behaviour in those classes significantly improved at the beginnings of lessons because

most students enjoyed the routine of the meditation, and they began to see writing as a liberating thing. At the end of the project, many pupils said that they hadn't realised writing could be a place where they could release their feelings, or create things they liked such as raps, rhyming poems, violent descriptions, ditties etc.

Now I ask all my classes (post-graduate students too) to begin our session with a few minutes' meditation and free writing. Even highly educated post-graduates have appreciated this space to think and write laterally. As Dr Danny Penman in his book on *Creativity and Mindfulness* says: "you need a calm, open and disciplined mind that can gather and integrate new ideas and information" (2015, p. 43).

Although there are no doubt therapeutic benefits for participants doing this form of mindfulness, I do not run the meditation sessions primarily for therapeutic purposes (as is the case in most schools) but because I want to generate the optimal conditions for creative work. CW is best nurtured in calm, relaxed environments; it is usually "emotion recollected in tranquility".

Furthermore, there is a very strong 'meta-cognitive' element to mindfulness; the practice is largely about observing one's thoughts and feelings from a cognitive distance. This is tremendously useful for the creative writer because this is largely what we do: we shape and mould thoughts and feelings into artful language. Mindfulness gives the creative writer the cognitive tools to think about their emotional processes.

#### THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE CREATIVE WRITING CLASS

As I have argued and as Wrigley/Smith illustrate in their research, it is very important to establish the right atmosphere for creative writing. The National Writing Project has a superb manifesto (and poster) called *The Rights of the Writer*. These are:

1. The right not to share
2. The right to change things and cross things out
3. The right to write anywhere
4. The right to a trusted audience
5. The right to get lost in your writing and not know where you're going
6. The right to throw things away
7. The right to take time to think
8. The right to borrow from other writers
9. The right to experiment and break rules
10. The right to work electronically, draw or use a pen and paper



(Wrigley, 2014)

At the heart of this manifesto is the vitally important concept that creative writing does not flourish in fear-filled, 'exam-obsessed' contexts and that many young writers need to develop their self-esteem in order to do their best work. They need a space where they can say to their peers whether they are unsure about something or concerned that they may have made a mistake. This means creating a 'no blame' atmosphere so that children don't feel frightened to admit it if they don't understand.

CW teachers can play a big role in creating these sorts of atmospheres. For example, CW teachers could strategically share some of their uncertainties and doubts. One thing I've found works very well is when I've articulated my thinking processes. I've regularly shared my thoughts and feelings as I've written a poem or story in the class with my students, saying things like 'Oh hang on a minute, I am not sure what might happen next, maybe I'll try this piece of dialogue etc...But is this not right? Maybe I should try this...' This has made students realise that there is no secret recipe for Creative Writing, but only an ongoing process of creating, reading through work, sharing it with other people if appropriate, assessing feedback and re-drafting it.

#### USING OBJECTS TO STIMULATE CREATIVE WRITING

Once the CW teacher has established the right context – a 'no-blame' atmosphere if you like, through using strategies like mindfulness and outlining the rights of the writer – he/she is in a stronger position to ask students to share their personal thoughts and feelings; this nearly always produces a higher quality of writing. A great way of stimulating original ideas is to encourage students to bring in objects which have been important to them in their lives. You could ask students to do things like tell their life stories in ten objects, or to write about places they like by bringing in objects which evoke that place.

As an initial step, encouraging meditation and free writing on the object works well to unlock people's thoughts. Paradoxically, free writing often produces some of the best writing because students are much less inhibited and feel freer to explore bizarre ideas, situations and memories.

After the free writing, the CW teacher could stimulate discussion about these objects by encouraging students to share their ideas/memories about these objects in pairs or small groups. Then students could be

asked to make notes about the objects, using the 5Ws to stimulate their note-making:

- What precisely is the object? What is important about it for you? What qualities does it have that you like?
- Where did you first see it and why? Describe the setting vividly.
- Who is the object important to and why? Who gave it to you and why?
- When did you first come across it and why? Describe the series of events that led to you finding it etc.
- Why is it still important to you?

Encouraging students to hold their objects and further meditate upon their textures, smells, tastes, and visual nuances really helps them discover new things about them. They could then possibly creative visualise actually being the object and write a 'personification' poem/passage in which they write the object's narrative. This really boosts lateral thinking.

As many CW teachers know there are many other things that can be done with objects, but I have offered these suggestions as a way to show that mindfulness/free writing can aid personal writing. The crucial thing about using students' own objects is that they have ownership of the subject of their writing. Students can bring in their own cultures into the classroom by using objects, and learn other people's worlds as well.

#### CONCLUSIONS

In a section called 'Flow and Learning' in his book *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (1997), Mihaly Csikseztmihaliyi stresses the importance of humans finding states of 'flow' which is achieved when they undertake 'painful, risky, difficult activities that stretch the person's capacity and involve an element of novelty and discovery' that cultivates an 'almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness' (p. 110). I would like to argue that some of the strategies I have written about here assist with the promotion of 'flow'; techniques like mindfulness, free writing and the use of objects to help students feel less anxious about CW, and to stimulate new ways of thinking and feeling about themselves and their lives. The overall learning objective here (to use teacher-parlance) is to foster lateral thinking and Csikseztmihaliyi's conception of 'flow': to allow students an affective space where they can both concentrate intensely

upon their writing but also feel relaxed and calm. If we are to reinvigorate the status of CW in schools, we can do no better than to return to Wordsworth's guiding precept of poetry being "emotion recollected in tranquility".

## TOP TIPS

### BEING CREATIVE IS A STATE OF MIND

To be creative, students need to learn to relax and observe surprising thoughts that arise in their minds.

### CREATIVITY IS NURTURED BY VARIETY

Giving students a variety of strategies to develop their creativity helps: free writing, visual organisers, mindfulness, going for observational walks etc, reading all can stimulate creativity.

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What did you learn from the article? What do you agree or disagree with?

What have you learnt about creativity?

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Gilbert, Francis. (2016). Aesthetic Learning, Creative Writing and English Teaching. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, 23(3), 257-268.

McCallum, A. (2012). *Creativity and learning in secondary English teaching for a creative classroom*. London: Routledge.

Owen, N., Munden, P., (2010). *Class Writing: A NAWE Research Report into the Writers-in-Schools Ecology*, UK: NAWE.

Stevens, D., & McGuinn, N. (2004). *The art of teaching secondary English : Innovative and creative approaches*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Do some of your research, looking at websites, TED talks by people like Ken Robinson, books, exhibitions, music etc. where artists, scholars, scientists talk about what creativity is for them. Build up your own portfolio of creative influences.

Francis Gilbert

## IDENTITY

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider the different identities that teachers and learners have, examining the identity of the aesthetic learner in particular.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon the different identities that teachers have, including yourself. Dwell upon the ways in which gender, social class, age, status within a school, ethnicity, wealth affects your own and other people's perceptions of teachers and their effectiveness as teachers.

### *LEARNING PUZZLE*

What type of teacher do you see yourself as? Are you a strict teacher? Do you think it's important to come across as an expert in your subject? Do you want to be known as a kind and compassionate teacher? Do you want to be a relaxed, carefree teacher? Do you want to be a trendy or old fashioned teacher? Do you want to be a parental figure? Do you want to be an efficient teacher? Do you want to be known as someone who is a learner? Do you want to be a friendly teacher with colleagues, or to be more distant?

Try to take some inspiration from figures you admire.

### TASKS

Devise a diagram of all the identities you might want to be as a teacher, filling in the diagram so that you note when and where you might adopt these identities. For example, with a difficult class, you might want to adopt the identity of a good classroom manager, but with an easier group, you might want to be known as a relaxed, creative teacher. With your colleagues, you might want to adopt the identity of an organised, efficient teacher.

Consider how these factors influence what you teach, how you teach and how you are perceived: your age, your gender, your social class, your own education, your accent/dialect, the way you dress, your body, your ethnicity, your sexuality, your status within a school.

Write a poem about all the different identities you might have as a teacher.

**BEING AN 'AESTHETIC LEARNER'**

I've found that 're-configuring' my identity as a writer has helped my writing considerably. To call oneself an 'aesthetic learner' as opposed to a 'writer' affords two major conceptual shifts: It situates one's professional identity within an educational context; it enables one to claim leverage over other art forms and experiences which may, on the surface, lie outside the province of writing.

To deal with the first of these points, I've found that labelling myself as a learner has taken much of the fear out of writing. Bazerman (2009) talks about 'the burden of the poet': most writers suffer from the expectations generated from the traditions that they work in.

It's my contention that the 'aesthetic learner' has the humility to embrace and profit from this situation. For example, when I was teaching William Blake's poetry to my Sixth Form classes, I encouraged my students to learn from the poetic forms, ideas and imagery of Blake, asking them to write their own poetry in response to his. In order to model this, I wrote my own poems in the spirit of an 'aesthetic learner', penning my own versions of 'London' (Blake, 1995, p. 73). I talked to my students about how I wanted to achieve certain emotional and imagistic effects with my poem which shared some similarities with Blake's, saying I wanted to describe how segregated the communities were in the capital. I wrote:

I wander through the privatised streets  
Near where the private waters of the Thames flow  
And see in every face I meet the suspicion  
That I might mug them with a nasty blow.

I am not going to pretend this is 'great poetry'; I wrote it on the spot in front of my A Level class, talking about how I was using Blake's structures and ideas, but how I wanted to 'update' the poem, using words like 'privatised' instead of 'chartered'. I presented myself as an 'aesthetic learner' not as a 'creative writer', which was important because it released me from the 'burden of the poet' having to write something both new and technically accomplished. However, we discussed the 'aesthetic qualities' of the poem, the connotations of some of the words I used such as 'private', 'suspicion' and 'blow', and compared them with the words Blake used. The students then wrote about the similarities and differences between my verse and Blake's, with some students being very critical of the poetic qualities of what I had written; having presented myself as a 'learner', this was perfectly acceptable. They then wrote their

own versions of 'London', and clearly enjoyed the experience, with their versions being read aloud towards the end of the lesson. Finally, I asked them to write a comparison between their versions of the poem with Blake's. This generated a great deal of interesting commentary, which was, in my estimation, far superior to the analysis they had been doing before. For example, one student had written a poem about how she walks amongst the 'council flats' 'chicken takeaways' 'fortified homes' and 'luxury penthouses' in London, seeing the wealthy in their expensive cars, and homeless people, prostitutes and drug-addicts on the streets. She was able to point out in her essay how the landscape of London had changed but the overall 'structure' (her word) of the city was similar to Blake's London in the way people are excluded and exploited. Other students talked about the way they used concrete nouns to evoke a sense of place in the way Blake did, with the majority of them revealing that the poem had an emotional meaning for them because they were able to compare it with their own writing.

The identity of being an 'aesthetic learner' helped me do this because it did two crucial things: it showed my students that I knew what I was talking about, using the philosophical term 'aesthetic', but it also cast me as a 'learner', someone who had the confidence to admit that they were wrong when appropriate and learn from their mistakes.

## GENDER AND IDENTITY

*Read this article I wrote for the Times in 2017, and consider the issues it raises about identity, well-being and equality.*

### *WHERE HAVE ALL THE MALE TEACHERS GONE?*

The shocking story of Kato Harris, a teacher falsely accused of rape, has focused many teachers' minds on the precariousness of their positions in schools. I've taught for over two decades in various schools, and I'm now a Teacher Educator in a university. My experiences though don't tally with Kato Harris's in that I've seen too many teachers get away with abusive behaviour for too long. In my first job, a colleague of mine, who worked with me for a few years, was arrested for abusing children we taught together; none of us suspected anything, but it turned out that during school trips he had sexually assaulted boys in our class. In my next job, the creepy senior manager who flirted with the girls was

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

eventually barred from the profession for having an affair with a student, and a horrible sixth form tutor who mesmerised the boys in his form with his tales of sexual exploits was arrested for possessing thousands of images of child porn. Then in other posts, I came across the charismatic music teacher who liked to snog sixth form girls on school trips in full view of everyone, and the now retired head of sixth form who had, for years, slept with his female pupils. What happened to these two? Neither of them were “caught” despite the best efforts of various concerned professionals to pursue prosecutions. None of the victims would come forward because they didn’t want the stress -- and also because they were still hypnotised by these characters. It’s difficult to convey the power that a striking teacher can have over teenagers, who, for all their big bodies, are actually vulnerable children. They need to be protected in a way that they haven’t been in the past.

This said, teachers need to be protected too. It’s a fine balance. In my early career, I had a child make a complaint about me when I held him by the arms; I believe it was dealt with by the school appropriately, and I learnt my lesson: avoid touching students. This can be a problem; particularly if two students are fighting, but, by and large, if you provide a calm, disciplined environment in your classroom, you don’t need to touch any students. I’ve seen inexperienced colleagues more recently come unstuck with this: one teacher was accused by a naughty pupil of groping when all the teacher had done was touch her on the arm. The complaint was solved because there was CCTV footage of where the alleged event took place, and it clearly showed that the teacher did no such thing. The teacher in question was a woman – which goes to show that it’s not only men who are victims of false allegations.

One Friday morning in my fourth year of teaching, I received a letter from a parent which stated that her daughter, one of my Sixth Form students, had made a serious allegation about me. Terrified that it was a false allegation – the girl liked to smile at me in class -- I informed my superiors: my Head of Department, the Deputy Head and the Headteacher. They were all men and assumed it was a serious allegation: I was not to talk to the girl and the headteacher met with her mother. It turned out that the “serious allegation” was minor; it was a disagreement over a grade I had given her. My relief at the end of the day was immense.

Men may be more vulnerable to allegations and malicious gossip because they are in such a minority and stand out. Almost 3 out of 4 teachers are female with 85% of full-time (FT) primary school and 62% of FT secondary teachers being female. As the Department for Education points out, every year the percentage of female teachers grows. It's up by 1% since 2010 which amounts to roughly 5000 male teachers leaving the profession in this time. That's roughly equivalent of 250 large primary schools!

Things were different, particularly in secondary schools. In 1993, the year in which I had to deal with that "serious allegation", men outnumbered women as school teachers. The same trend is even more pronounced in primary schools: a quarter of the sector now have no male teachers.

So what is going on? Is it the threat of facing serious allegations that is putting men off going into the profession and making them leave? Or are there other factors at play?

For Neil, a primary school teacher in the north of England, it's a lot to do with money. He told me: "Pay is definitely an issue. I have a young male colleague who is personable, intelligent and an excellent teacher, but he's leaving the profession because he can make so much more money as an estate agent – and have a much more stress-free life."

All the other teachers I interviewed agreed on this fundamental point: teachers, for the skills and work required, are underpaid. Ed, a secondary school teacher in north London, told me: "If teachers were paid like bankers, you'd see lots more men in the profession."

None of the teachers I spoke to felt that the threat of false allegations was decisive in stopping men going into teaching, although it was a factor. A young English teacher A., told me that early on in his career at a girls' school, he noticed the girls in his class stuffing crumpled up paper into their tops. "They wanted me to look at their chests and then tell everyone I was a pervert. Luckily, I ignored them and the problem went away!" Another English teacher, John, told me that it is a worry because his friend was suspended on the basis of no evidence because a girl accused him of groping her. "He was cleared after an internal investigation but it was shocking because he was guilty until proven innocent," John said.

That said, these sorts of incidents are comparatively rare. As I tell my beginning teachers, if you're careful, and you make sure you're not



alone with a student and follow standard child protection procedures, you shouldn't get into trouble.

Nevertheless, male teachers are a bit nervous. Neil told me: "There's definitely something a bit embarrassing about being a male primary school teacher. When you're looking after little children, you feel very proud in one sense, but, on the other hand, you feel quite awkward, too. Being a primary school teacher challenges you as a male. When you meet people socially, at dinner parties say, you tell people what you do and there's always an uncertain reaction. I always nearly end up talking to the women, the mums, and the men rarely talk to me. And then at school, you're often the only man apart from the caretaker, and it's difficult joining in the all-female talk in the staffroom, which can be quite shocking at times, quite sexist in a way that men are not allowed to be. So, in my career, I have had a lot of objectifying remarks made about me like I've got a nice bum, a good body, etc, and it's a bit embarrassing."

Neil's case highlights a central problem with men and teaching, what I would like to call the "Focker" issue. You'll understand if you've seen the comedies *Meet the Parents* and *Meet the Fockers*. Greg Focker, played by Ben Stiller, is a male nurse, and, for all his pratfalls in the films, he is presented, as good at his job in a female profession, caring but unambitious. A great deal of the comedy in the films is generated by the tension generated when he must deal with the father of his fiancée, Jack Byrnes, played brilliantly by De Niro; Jack is everything Greg is not; hyper-masculine, obsessed by status, and imposing, as he sees it, order. (Eventually we discover that Greg's real first name is "Gaylord", another play on the supposedly masculine stereotype.) There are quite a few male teachers who are like Greg in that they don't necessarily want to be headteachers, but just want to give teaching a go because they care. These sorts of men are put off going into the profession, I think, because, as the *Meet the Parents* films amusingly illustrate, our society is intolerant of them in both overt and covert ways.

The three types of men who dominate teaching are of a different kind: I would categorise them as "supermen", "serjeant majors" and "systems guys". I've encountered many supermen in my career: men who are imposing or magnetically charismatic: the towering Head of Year who sang opera, was forever making witty quips, and charmed all his classes with tales from history; the brilliant cricketer who also delivered amazing lessons without preparing anything because he was so articulate and

funny; the passionate maths teacher who was so enthusiastic about equations that even the most recalcitrant child was hypnotised into loving numbers.

Serjeant majors still prowl the corridors of many schools, making sure that everyone behaves: they love barking their orders at all and sundry. I've quite a few of them crash and burn, particularly ones who are inflexible. I wasn't surprised when Michael Gove's much-touted Troops to Teachers programme only attracted 102 recruits; one ex-soldier told me that no self-respecting officer would ever go into teaching because the money was "piss poor" and the working conditions "worse than the trenches".

Finally, there's an emerging breed of "corporate" teacher, the "systems guys", who are forever hunched over their computers, processing data, crunching the numbers, re-arranging timetables, doing this or that teaching "intervention" which will solve all educational problems.

Colin, a young English teacher, cheerfully confesses to being a systems guy, and feels this is what drew him to the profession. He enjoys learning about and implementing the "evidence-based" teaching strategies that have been "proven" to work in various bits of research. He told me: "Yes, I do worry about the lack of men in the profession but that said, it's difficult to generalise because I have really benefitted in working with a female teacher who has showed me to be more intuitive and positive with my students which has meant I've become much better at dealing with bad behaviour."

Most of the male teachers I spoke to were very reluctant to generalise about their situation but nevertheless felt uneasy about being men in an increasingly "feminised" profession.

This reflects a deeper crisis of masculinity in our culture; many men feel trapped by narrow conceptions of who and what they are meant to be. Men now account for three quarters of all suicides in the UK, with 80% of teenage suicides being boys. Perhaps it's no coincidence that boys lag significantly behind girls in terms of attainment at school and account for 70% of children with Special Educational Needs.

Can we solve men's mental and educational problems by having more male teachers? The evidence suggests not. Many of the myths about male/female teachers are false: men are not, on the whole, better at teaching boys; single sex schools do not get better results than mixed sexed ones, and it is the wealth of a pupil's background which has three

times more effect on attainment at 16 than gender. Let's also bear in mind that research shows that the vast majority of students do not regard the lack of male teachers as a problem.

The stark truth is that men are vanishing from the teaching profession because it is comparatively poorly paid, it's stressful and they have plenty of other options -- in a way that many women feel they do not. Even though, on average, men have worse educational qualifications than women, they still hog the top jobs in politics, the arts, the media, law, medicine, science and finance. The typical male graduate can expect to earn 20% more than his female counterpart, despite having feebler credentials.

I can't help but speculate that if opportunities were more equal overall, you'd see more men in teaching. Everyone wins when society is more equal: boys would achieve more highly and there would be more male teachers.

## TOP TIPS

### WHO ARE YOU?

It's worth thinking about your identity as a teacher. What shapes who you are in the classroom? Your gender, age, ethnicity, social class, educational background? What comes through the most? Why?

### FIND A PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

I think it helps to find a professional identity which is both yourself and not yourself: you are not a phoney, but you are aware you are performing the role of a teacher. If you are feeling unconfident, it's worth trying 'fake it until you make it' with a smile on your face.

### BE MINDFUL OF YOUR IDENTITIES

Take time to mindfully reflect upon yourself and your 'being in the world', meditating upon who you are, being kind and compassionate to yourself in the process.

### FURTHER RESEARCH: GENDER ISSUES

Bower, H., & Parsons, A. (2016). *Teacher Identity and Reform: Intersections Within School Culture*. *The Urban Review*, 48(5), 743-765.

Buchanan, Rebecca. (2015). *Teacher Identity and Agency in an Era of Accountability*. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 21(6), 700-719.

Erickson, L., & Pinnegar, S. (2016). Consequences of personal teaching metaphors for teacher identity and practice. *Teachers and Teaching*, 1-17.

Richardson, R. (2002). *In praise of teachers : Identity, equality and education : Six topical lectures*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

These websites examine the representation of women in literature. This Yale Teacher's website offers some lesson plans as well:

<http://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/curriculum/units/1982/5/82.05.06.x.html>

This academic webpage offers some interesting insights into the way in which women were objectified in English literature:

<http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/study/literature/brightonline/issue-number-two/the-fetishization-and-objectification-of-the-female-body-in-victorian-culture>

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about how identity affects teachers and teaching in this section?

## EMBODIED LEARNING

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider how learning is an embodied experience and explore how we might 'read the body' in English lessons.

### THE BODY SCAN

A great thing to do is to have a go doing a "body scan" (Penman, D., Williams, M., 2014). You can find many different versions of this on the internet if you search for "mindfulness body scan" but I like Mark Williams' one the best. At the time of writing, I could find it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgbVrSk0n4U>

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon the role people's bodies play in lessons. Think about how you use your body as a teacher, how you stand, how you breath, how you smile, how you move, how you sit, your body language with pupils and teachers.

## LEARNING SCRIPT: READING FACES

### *WARM-UP*

CREATIVE TEACHER: So we are going to play a quick game.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Uh-oh! I'm a teacher, I don't play games.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Don't moan, games are fun and useful at helping students learn if they don't dominate.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I agree. I know what this game is, because the Creative Teacher has asked me to introduce it. It's simple. It's a sort of static form of statues, but with faces.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Heh?

CREATIVE TEACHER: It's also a relaxation exercise. I want you to roll your shoulders in a relaxed way, nothing uncomfortable, and when Beginner Teacher explains more fully, can you make the following frozen faces?

BEGINNER TEACHER: Be someone who is very surprised that a surprise party has been sprung on them. Their face just as they enter the door.

*Everyone does this.*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: A person is angry that someone has stolen their parking space in the supermarket car park.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: A teacher who is disgusted at a child picking his nose.

CREATIVE TEACHER: A person who is happy when he/she sees a friend they really like.

*Everyone does these faces.*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Can we all do some free writing in our Learning Journals based on one or more of these expressions. You could write a story about a surprised person, a poem about an angry person etc.

### *PASSING EXAMS AND READING FACES*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Right, we're going to start with some exercises that you could do with all your classes, getting them thinking about how we read faces, and how you might use this skill to help your students' English skills.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I've never thought of that as reading but now I think about it, it is a kind of reading skill.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Will it help students pass their exams? I feel it might be wasting time on things that are not on the syllabus.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Oh shut up about exams! I think there is a more important point here; students need to be reading English books in lessons, not faces! It's ridiculous!

CREATIVE TEACHER: But the thing is reading marks on a page only can happen if students can read their own world. Research has shown that babies learn to read faces very quickly; our brains are tuned to read faces more than any other part of the body. We interpret faces and build stories out of people's expressions. A baby's understanding of his/her mother's smile is possibly his first venture into interpretation and shaping a narrative in his brain; the smile leads him to think that his mother is happy because he is there. His reading of her face helps him gain a positive sense of himself.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: We are not teaching babies! We are teaching older children! Stuff and nonsense!

BEGINNER TEACHER: Traditional Teacher, you are being too peremptory, and rushing to judgement. Let's have a go at the exercise and see whether we think it will help students' English skills.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I think you will see how the following exercise will really help develop students' English skills at GCSE, but it can be adapted for any age range.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Oh phew! We get to do some GCSE work! Absolutely vital if I am going to keep my Senior Managers happy!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Do stop being such a goody-goody!

#### *THE DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS OF THE FACE*

*The Creative Teacher places some objects on students' tables; these can be any objects, but as you read the exercise, you'll realise how you can adapt this exercise to any text/topic.*

CREATIVE TEACHER: OK, we are going to play a game. You are going to pick an object or two from the pile in front of you, and while you are doing so, you are going to invent a character who are going to become for a few minutes.

BEGINNER TEACHER: You are first going to pick an object which will make this character smile. In your Learning Journals, I want you to jot down some notes as to why this character might smile at seeing this object; think about the character's relationship to the object.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: What are the reasons for the object making the character smile? Does it remind them of someone?

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: What kind of smile are they giving the object? A truly happy smile, a sarcastic smile, a half-smile, a naughty smile etc.? Do not reveal to anyone else the truth about the smile. If you want, do some creative visualisation/meditation to help you.

*Everyone picks an object or two and jot down some notes.*

BEGINNER: Have you all done that? Good, now we are going to go around the group and you are going to make that smile at the object. If you want, you can make some gestures, handle the object etc. Then we are going to guess the reasons why you are smiling at the object, guess your attitude towards the object.

*Everyone tries to guess the Creative Teacher's smile which is a naughty smile at a banana.*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: You've got a banana, and you've got a naughty, impish smile, which indicates I think you're going to eat that banana and then leave the skin on the floor where some poor teacher is going to slip on it in the classroom.

BEGINNER TEACHER: That's because you hate that teacher, who has told you that you're rubbish at reading, and a disgrace!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: You did badly in your exam, and you want to get your revenge!

CREATIVE TEACHER: Great, you've got it! Now, why don't we write a poem/short story, or even information report from the poor teacher about this incident, and the insolent smile? Do you see how this sort of exercise stimulates great creative writing immediately?

*Everyone else shows their smiles and does the exercises.*

### WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS TEACHING APPROACH?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Right, now for the meta-cognitive part. What have we learnt about our learning processes from doing this?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: That faces have a peculiar and powerful effect on you. As Lady Macbeth says to Macbeth:

*Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men  
May read strange matters.*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Oh brilliant, yes, we could use so many quotes/extracts from exam texts with this approach! Or we could ask students to make the face of a character from a text and for everyone to guess who it is.

BEGINNER TEACHER: There are, arguably, six main expressions: Joy, Surprise, Disgust, Anger, Fear and Sadness (Calistra, 2015) so we could do this exercise for all of them.

CREATIVE TEACHER: But it gets better, you can do things like getting students to pick the object, and then decide which expression they will adopt from the list (Joy, Surprise, Disgust, Anger, Fear and Sadness) and then cover their face with their hands etc, and ask everyone else to guess what expression they have in response to the object.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I would add a few more expressions that I see students do a lot: Confusion, Cheekiness, Contempt.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I definitely see quite a bit of Disgust, there are many, many ways of showing Disgust and I've seen many of them.

#### *USING LITERATURE AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS*

Literature and writing generally is full of descriptions, explanations, advice etc. about facial expressions. Why? Why is this an important area to consider as an English teacher?

#### *LEARNING PUZZLES*

Take some photographs of your expressions using the basic six as a guide: Joy, Surprise, Disgust, Anger, Fear and Sadness. How might you use these photographs in English lessons?

Find writing about the different expressions in various texts. How might you use them in English lessons? Below is example of how to do this.

#### *SMILES IN LITERATURE*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: The great thing about the internet is that you can quickly find juicy extracts to assist with this approach. I did some Googling and Searching and Finding, entering phrases like Charles Dickens descriptions of smiling, and found within one minute this **amazing:**

*It was when I stood before her, avoiding her eyes, that I took note of the surrounding objects in detail, and saw that her watch had stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and that a clock in the room had stopped at twenty minutes to nine.*

*"Look at me," said Miss Havisham. "You are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?"*

*I regret to state that I was not afraid of telling the enormous lie comprehended in the answer "No."*

*"Do you know what I touch here?" she said, laying her hands, one upon the*



## The Mindful English Teacher

other, on her left side.

"Yes, ma'am." (It made me think of the young man.)

"What do I touch?"

"Your heart."

"Broken!"

She uttered the word with an eager look, and with strong emphasis, and with a weird smile that had a kind of boast in it. Afterwards, she kept her hands there for a little while, and slowly took them away as if they were heavy.

"I am tired," said Miss Havisham. "I want diversion, and I have done with men and women. Play."

BEGINNER TEACHER: You could also give them that extract and get them to guess the situation even if they haven't read the book?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I think you need to say that this extract is about a young boy Pip who goes to visit a very strange old lady living in a very decrepit house.

CREATIVE TEACHER: You could get them to act out the lines in pairs/groups, and have a go at Miss Havisham's smile with a bit of practice.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And give a prize to the smile which is the most convincing.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: And there is so much to analyse in the extract. Who smiles at having a broken heart? Why boast about it?

BEGINNER TEACHER: You could also get the students to do a creative response by writing a poem or story about a person who smiles at a tragedy or a terrible thing.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And importantly, if you've done some preliminary exercises without the book to start with, you've got them interested in the different ways that we smile.

CREATIVE TEACHER: There is so much else you can do with smiling. You could get students to examine it and this article which suggests that smiling even if you are unhappy can make you happy:  
**<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/smile-it-could-make-you-happier/>**

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Wow! That would be great for their GCSE English paper, where they have to understand non-fiction and answer comprehension questions on it!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Will you shut up about exams! Students need to learn a love of literature, and I can think of some marvellous uses of smiling in literature. What about Stevenson's description of Mr Hyde:

## Francis Gilbert

*Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice;*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, you could get students to draw Hyde and his smile, and label it using the language in the passage, which I have found many students find quite difficult. They can't cope with words like 'nameable malformation' and 'timidity'.

CREATIVE TEACHER: If they are interested in the idea of smiling and have had a concrete example of it, they will be more motivated to investigate the nature of the passage.

BEGINNER TEACHER: So you could do the above exercise on smiling and ask student to make a 'displeasing smile' and think of reasons why it is 'displeasing' to other people. Then read the passage, and get them to work out why Hyde's smile might be so displeasing.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I just Googled Shakespeare and smiling, and found tonnes of great quotes that you could use to help students' reading skills: <http://www.inspirationalstories.com/quotes/t/william-shakespeare-on-smiling/>. And there is Ted Hughes's great poem in **Crow** called 'A Grin'.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, even with a quote like;  
The robbed that smiles, steals something from the thief.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Could be the stimulus for a poem or story.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: The internet makes it so much easier to track down texts that might stimulate students to get interested in reading faces, and reading literature.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I'm convinced! Thanks Creative Teacher, I thought you were waffling on, but I can see now that by starting with something concrete like a real facial expression, and then moving on to reading a text will really help students learn about reading in its largest sense.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, reading is about so much more than decoding the meaning of words, it is about constructing a clear picture in your head of the text you are reading, and really feeling it inside you, absorbing it into your heart and gut.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, it is about so much more than taking exams! This approach encourages students to really think about reading

the world around them, and notice lots of things like people's expressions.

**OTHER STRATEGIES USING THE FACE**

Students read lines from a text, and then make the expression to go with the lines, and people guess why they are making that expression. It could be because he/she as a reader loves reading the text (i.e. reader response): this is great Assessment for Learning because you can quickly get students' responses from looking at their expressions.

**LEARNING ACTIVITY**

What have you learnt about using faces to improve the effectiveness of students' reading in English? Jot down some thoughts in your Learning Journals.

**READING THE HANDS**

CREATIVE TEACHER: Having considered facial expressions, the other very useful body part to use in English lessons are the hands.

BEGINNER TEACHER: You could use objects again with hands. Get students to role-play handling objects (e.g. their phone) and get students to guess the mood of the person, or the story behind them handling that object in that way.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Hey, BEGINNER, you're really thinking like a Creative English teacher! But I'm catching the bug too. Yes, you could get students to do something with their hands: make a fist, tap, clap, grip, mime any action, and the other have to guess the situation.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Then everyone writes a poem/story about the hand movements, also describing the hands. Brilliant! That way the students are very specific in their descriptions. Back to *Great Expectations* again and Dickens' description of Mrs Havisham:

*She was dressed in rich materials — satins, and lace, and silks — all of white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. Some bright jewels sparkled on her neck and on her hands, and some other jewels lay sparkling on the table. Dresses, less splendid than the dress she wore, and half-packed trunks were scattered about. She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on — the other was on the table near her hand — her veil was half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her bosom lay with those trinkets and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a prayer-book, all confusedly heaped about the looking-glass.*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Students could act out what Mrs Havisham does with her hands.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Or here's another description from Dickens, from *A Christmas Carol*:

*The cold became intense. In the main street at the corner of the court, some labourers were repairing the gas-pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round which a party of ragged men and boys were gathered: warming their hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture.*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: The students could explore this metaphor about Scrooge at the beginning of the book:

*Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind- stone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!*

CREATIVE TEACHER: The internet makes it easy to track down these quotes through Search and Find, and then students can use their real hands to enact out the movements, and then consider the connotations of these descriptions, or write their own creative responses.

#### TASK

What have you learnt from this discussion? How could you use hands to improve students' English skills?

## READING THE BODY

#### WARM UP

CREATIVE TEACHER: So we can also expand and develop some of the ideas we have come across when examining facial expressions.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Can we play the statues game again, but standing up this time.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: OK, move your arms, necks etc, and I say stop and freeze into a...mountain!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Again, move your arms, necks, and be a dragon!

CREATIVE TEACHER: Someone worshipping the sun.

BEGINNER TEACHER: A bird flying high in the sky, over the roof tops of a city.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

*Everyone does these movements.*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Now let's do some free writing in our Learning Journals based on these games.

### *BODY POSTURE*

CREATIVE TEACHER: OK, we are going to consider the body and how you might use the body in English. As with facial expressions, the body is vitally important in much English work.

TEST TEACHER: I can see that students could do some work on reading other people's body language.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, I want you all to show me someone who is bored.

*Everyone does this.*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: OK, now have a go at describing in real physical detail how that person looked bored, making sure you only describe their body, i.e. how they are slumped, how their legs are splayed out under the desk.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: We could play a game where we all write a series of moods on pieces of paper, shuffle them up, hand them out, and people have to enact out that mood in a bodily fashion, and we have to guess the mood.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Then we could write about the body posture that most interested us.

BEGINNER TEACHER: This way we get our students starting to read the body! It's simple, but it's very important. I'm beginning to see now how reading the world and reading the word are really connected.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Can we have a free discussion as to why and how the body is vitally important to consider and make some notes in our Learning Journals?

*Everyone discusses this.*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Let's look at some descriptions of the body in literature.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I think it is fascinating how women's bodies are described very differently to men's in literature.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, gender plays a vital role in descriptions of the body.

CREATIVE TEACHER: And other factors too such as: age, ethnicity, race, social class.

BEGINNER TEACHER: It is also important to consider things like whether writers actually describe people's bodies or not. Often, particularly with writers like Jane Austen, they do not, whereas some writers like Dickens spend a great deal of time describing what people physically looked like.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: The classic description of a body to look at is Mary Shelley's description of the Monster in Chapter 5 of *Frankenstein*:

*His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (5.2)*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: You could ask students to draw a picture of this body, and then analyse how Shelley creates a sense of horror in this description. A typical GCSE question!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Oh will you stop banging on about exams! It is a great description, not something to be turned into exam fodder! We could get the students devising their own monsters, and describing after reading this description.

BEGINNER TEACHER: You could get them comparing and contrasting the representations in films with Shelley's description; they would learn about the differences between films and literature that way.

CREATIVE TEACHER: And the different effects that artists want to create through the way they represent bodies. Shelley creates horror in her description by contrasting the beautiful hair of the monster with the hideous face. Most film makers don't do this. We have to ask ourselves why?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: You could explore contextual factors. Shelley was writing her book in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the films were made over hundred years later. People had different ideas of what was frightening by then.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I can also see how using frozen tableau or pictures in lessons might be a really good way of bringing a text alive. You could have students doing a frozen picture of Frankenstein's reaction to the Monster for example. Then get people to describe the body postures of those involved, and possibly do some creative writing or analysis.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: The possibilities are endless!

BEGINNER TEACHER: We have only scratched the surface, but I can see that thinking about how you might bring the issue of bodies into lessons might be very worthwhile.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Stolz, Steven A. (2015). Embodied Learning. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47(5), 474-487.

Bresler, L. (2004). *Knowing bodies, moving minds: Towards embodied teaching and learning* (Landscapes ; v. 3). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

Wagner, Anne E., & Shahjahan, Riyad A. (2015). *Centering Embodied Learning in Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy*. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20(3), 244-254.

Watson, C. (2014). *Effective professional learning communities? The possibilities for teachers as agents of change in schools*. *British Educational Research Journal*, 40(1), 18-29.

### *NON-FICTION TEXTS.*

You could examine representation of body type in a series of articles about social class and obesity:

A Daily Mail article about obesity:  
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2277382/Middle-class-children-MORE-likely-obese-poorer-backgrounds.html>

Compare with a contrasting Daily Telegraph article:  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9819607/Minister-poor-families-are-likely-to-be-obese.html>

And an opinion piece in the Observer:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/29/kis-junk-food-dont-blame-parents>

Possible tasks: compare and contrast the use of language in the articles; students to investigate the issue themselves and write their own opinion pieces (writing for a viewpoint is a GCSE task).

There are lots of suggestions for writing about body posture here:

<https://writersinthestorm.wordpress.com/2011/12/02/body-language-an-artistic-writing-tool/>

Consider all the ways in which “reading the body” might be used in English lessons.

## TOP TIPS

### EMPLOY THE HANDS

Get students using their hands as mnemonics, as puppets, feeling things, making things, cutting up things. This makes learning fun and helps students learn.

### MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Think about how students can use their bodies to understand texts, to act things out, to understand things like metaphor, as a stimulus & inspiration for creative writing. <http://inspireportal.com/yoga-asanas-for-writers-and-artists-to-ease-pain-and-wake-up-inspiration/>

### READING THE BODY

Get students thinking about the body is depicted in literature.

## REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about how the body might be explored within the English classroom?

# ANALOGY LEARNING: USING OBJECTS

## KEY POINTS

You are going to learn about how you might use objects to help students create analogies that will help them learn. You will learn why this is a very powerful tool for learning.

## DEFINITION

An analogy is an extended comparison, a comparison between one thing and another, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification. As Helen Apthorp (McREL, 2010, p. 14) puts it: “Creating analogies is the process of identifying relationships between pairs of concepts—in other words, identifying relationships between relationships.”

## MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon how objects can be compared to other things, considering any images, feelings or ideas that come to mind, watching them arise in your mind. Think about how certain objects can represent things such as cutlery and crockery laid out over a table could represent a town or



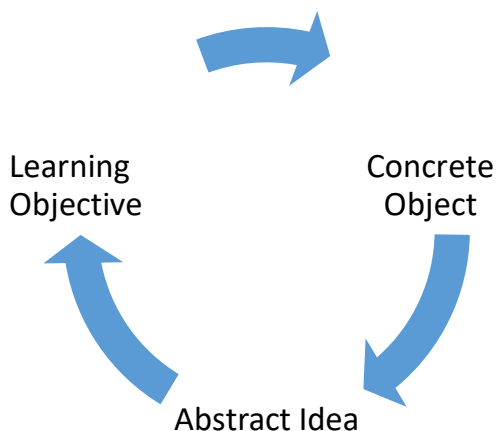
## *The Mindful English Teacher*

battlefield; different fruit could represent different parts of the body, an apple the head, a tomato the heart etc.

### LEARNING SCRIPT: OBJECTS AND ANALOGIES

**BEGINNER TEACHER:** All of us learn better when we have a very concrete idea of what we are learning from the outset. We find abstract ideas difficult to grasp immediately, particularly if we are not used to deal with abstract ideas.

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** Children, in particular, need to have very concrete representations of what they are learning as a starting off point and then move to abstract points. So we could use this formula when planning our teaching:



**TEST OBSESSED TEACHER:** Yes, my senior managers pointed out to me a very important researcher Robert Marzano who pointed out that the most effective teaching strategy is to teach by analogy; to teach using comparisons and contrasts, or teaching similarities and differences.

**TRADITIONAL TEACHER:** An analogy is an extended comparison. So we could make an analogy between this book and a difficult journey up a mountain with lots of tricky ridges and crevices to climb.

**BEGINNER TEACHER:** Or a river which we have to navigate in our boat of teaching strategies.

CREATIVE TEACHER: We all learn between if we are encouraged to make our own analogies, and to test to see if they are feasible or not. So we're going to encourage you to find some objects which are concrete, real and use them to make your own analogies.

### TASK

Collect 10 'analogy' objects that are easily transportable which for you are significant and important. These objects should include:

A favourite book (make it a small one)

A good luck charm, e.g. a lucky coin

A model of a classic 'protagonist' who has been important for you, e.g. Shrek etc.

A model of a classic 'antagonist', e.g. Darth Vader, a Dalek.

An object which makes you feel compassion, e.g. a model of a puppy etc.

An object which helps build your self-esteem, e.g. a photograph of your mother, baby, someone or something you're proud of.

An object which makes you feel cheerful, e.g. a fart cushion.

An object which encourages tenacity, to keep going on, e.g. a model of a sports person who really tries hard.

An object which encourages you to co-operate with other people, e.g. a model of a team player or a person who worked well with people, e.g. Mandela.

An object which reveals your childhood self, e.g. a teddy bear.

An object which suggests a place which is important to you, e.g. a pebble from a favourite beach etc.

### WHY HAVE YOU BEEN ASKED TO DO THIS?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: You will use these objects in your teaching to teach key concepts. It's important that they are objects which are important to you because that way you'll have more personal investment in them, show stronger feelings when talking about them.

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Share and discuss your objects with other people.

Devise some writing based on your symbols/inspirations, try and vary them: e.g. write poems, mini-sagas, adverts, newspaper article.

Now consider how you might teach these topics using objects:

- The story of a Shakespeare play or a difficult text.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

- The structure of various poems.
- Characters in stories such as antagonists.
- Co-operation in a group.
- Writing descriptions of people and places.
- An argumentative essay about the importance of self-esteem, compassion, tenacity.
- Understanding difficult texts.

## TOP TIPS

### STORYTELLING

Get students to tell stories using objects or photographs of objects. Think of creative ways of doing this: students can sequence objects to create new narratives and understand structure, they can shut their eyes and touch the objects, describing what they feel etc., they can personify them etc.

### TEACHING BY ANALOGY

Teach difficult subjects by making analogies between objects and the topic you are teaching.

### A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN OBJECTS

As Neil Macgregor's work has shown you can use objects to teach non-fiction subjects such as history, geography, cultural history.

### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

The Critical Connections website is very useful in suggesting ways objects might be used in the classroom:

**<https://goldsmithsmdst.wordpress.com/>**

Page 14 of this analytical report outlines the power of teaching by analogy:

**<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED543521.pdf> p. 14**

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about teaching students using analogies and objects?

# EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING

## KEY POINTS

You are going to learn what “evidence-based teaching” is and why it can be helpful for teachers to utilise.

## MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon the evidence you have that certain teaching strategies work, considering any images, feelings or ideas that come to mind, watching them arise in your mind. What do you feel counts as evidence that a teaching strategy is working? Quiet children looking like they work hard? Good exam results or “value-added” scores?

## A SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS WITH VIDEO LINKS

*I wrote this article for Local Schools Network in August 2014. I now feel less ‘evangelical’ about Evidence-based teaching, but still feel all teachers should be aware of its findings. The article offers a good summary of the main points involved, together with some links to relevant videos. What do you think?*

Why do 95% of teachers not know about what really works in the classroom? Why are the media and politicians even more clueless? According to Mike Bell, who runs the Evidence-Based Teachers’ Network (EBTN: <http://www.ebtn.org.uk/>), very few people are aware of the teaching techniques that are proven to work across all the age ranges and subjects. Bell feels this is because we don’t live in a culture which values assessing the evidence. We prefer to argue and disagree rather than come to a consensual point of view based on the best evidence before us.

I have to confess that until recently I was not aware of the full range of work that has been done which shows that there are some really effective, simple teaching techniques that consistently work. Sure, I was aware of John Hattie’s seminal research studies but I have to confess that I’d found his book *Visible Learning* (<http://visiblelearningplus.com/>) rather heavy weather: it is full of off-putting charts and statistics and isn’t written in readily accessible language.

Fortunately, I was lucky enough to attend an EBTN training day recently and came away feeling much more enlightened. The training day was persuasive because unlike many CPD days I have attended Bell produces

hard evidence that the teaching strategies he advocates have worked. Furthermore, he is an excellent communicator, in my view the best in this particular field: his approach is a bit less technical than his mentor and colleague, Geoff Petty (<http://geoffpetty.com/>), who has written many books on the evidence-based teaching.

In this short video clip of my interview with him, he explains what the effective teaching techniques are:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LJGTf8EABw>**

As he says in the interview, there are many strategies and policies which we know from years of evidence are ineffective. These include:

- Charter schools/academies/free schools
- Reducing class sizes
- Non-specialist information technology
- Untrained teaching assistants
- Staff development with no feedback

In his interview with me, Bell went through the things that do make a difference to students' outcomes. All of the strategies which he advocates and which are 'proven' to work are ones which play to the brain's strengths. As Bell says, scientists are finding more and more about the human brain and are realising that brains learn by making comparisons, by spotting the similarities and differences in things; this is why teaching by analogy is so important. This is what good teachers do anyway but it is useful to know why making analogies help students learn:

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v\\_WZE0BtjYU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_WZE0BtjYU)**

Teachers are notorious for being overburdened by marking, but Bell says that they needn't be. Indeed he says that teachers shouldn't waste their time by marking too much:

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6bTwd1f\\_fm](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6bTwd1f_fm)**

It is more effective often to get students to mark their own work:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKdRh4WhAhw>**

What teachers really need is to have time to reflect upon their own practice. In this clip, Bell talks about why they need this space during school time:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYqz2J7CXyQ>**

Indeed when teachers are encouraged to research a particular area of their teaching, they usually improve their practice:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fy7F7CfD1kc>**

Bell points out that there is a great deal of evidence that setting by ability often doesn't work:

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jMuL\\_OWA6g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jMuL_OWA6g)**

What students need to do is to have the space to talk through problems in mixed-ability groups so that less able students communicate with more able students and improve their knowledge of a topic:

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wcq\\_M\\_ky-bY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wcq_M_ky-bY)**

When teachers nurture discussion, they really manage to raise levels of achievement. This is why a "no hands-up" rule often works very well because it forces students to discuss key issues in groups.

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJIBMM\\_ox28](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJIBMM_ox28)**

Students also need to adopt positive attitudes towards learning and to adopt a "Growth Mindset" where they believe that can achieve if they try. Rewarding students for effort not for their innate ability is vital in this regard:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqbXN4MXxjo>**

While some of these methods might seem suspiciously trendy to some more traditional teachers – no hands-up, co-operative learning, Growth Mindset – some methods are quite old-fashioned. Bell advocates "rote-learning" where appropriate:

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_H-gbB-nj8o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_H-gbB-nj8o)**

He also says that teachers must be giving students the big picture of a topic consistently, as well as the fine detail. This is something many teachers neglect to do.

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oGoX6k4CTA>**

In the interview, Bell discussed the major researchers in this area, who are: Michael Shayer and Philip Adey ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive\\_acceleration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_acceleration)), John Hattie (<http://visiblelearningplus.com/>), Robert Marzano (<http://www.marzanoresearch.com/>). Here he talks about the concept of cognitive acceleration, which enabled less able students to understand complex topics:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuqEwkXRcRs>**

In this clip, he talks at greater length about the methods and approaches of the evidence-based approach:

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obeUIEE\\_iTO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obeUIEE_iTO)**

Bell's own video, *The Case for Evidence-Based Teaching*, is a good summary of all the main points he makes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4eiIPA8ZcM#t=755>

Let's hope that teachers are given more support and training in these vital areas. Instead of wasting billions on initiatives that we know don't work, we need to nurture a system which really helps teachers use strategies which are proven to raise standards.

## LEARNING THROUGH MAKING COMPARISON AND CONTRASTS

CREATIVE TEACHER: What I want to discuss now is how we all learn very effectively through making comparisons and contrasts. Indeed, many theorists, including Robert Marzano and his team of researchers, believe that when teachers help their students most when they identify similarities and differences (pp. 13-29, Robert Marzano, Debra J. Pickering, Jane E. Pollock, 2001).

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Oh I know about this, my Senior Leadership Team are keen on this book because it shows how to increase test scores. Marzano et al. show that there are a few ways of identifying similarities and differences, which are:

- **Comparing** is the process of identifying similarities and differences between or among things or ideas.
- **Classifying** is the process of grouping things that are alike into categories on the basis of their characteristics.
- **Creating metaphors** is the process of identifying a general or basic pattern in a specific topic and then finding another topic that appears to be quite different but that has the same general pattern.
- **Creating analogies** is the process of identifying relationships between pairs of concepts— in other words, identifying relationships between relationships. (p. 17)

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Hmmn, very interesting, but these are very general points, how do they refer to English teaching in particular?

BEGINNER TEACHER: I think they are especially relevant to English teaching because we are dealing with language which is a comparative system. I remember doing my English degree and learning about the linguistic theorist Saussure who compared language to a "game of chess in which each move has meaning and is made possible by the rules of the game, all of which are implied in each move. In language, similarly,

utterances can function as bearers of ideas or as names of things only if the entire system of language is implied in each utterance” (Anon., 2012).

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I can remember studying Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* for my degree in which he compares what he believes are the two basic types of representation of reality in Western literature which he believes are Homer’s *Odyssey* and the Old Testament. Basically, he says that Homer gives us entertainment to help us forget reality, while the Old Testament tries to make us fit into reality. His whole approach is comparison and contrast.

CREATIVE TEACHER: So we’re all agreed that identifying similarities and differences is a productive way of helping our students learn, heh? Let’s look at some different approaches to this.

### VERBAL COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

CREATIVE TEACHER: English teachers are always making verbal comparisons to help their students understand topics.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I often use metaphors to get students more motivated. I say to them that they need to “buy in” to the subject, or to “muck in”.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I like to compare different texts to things. Poems for me are like beautiful flowers that need to be watered with people’s attention; plays are like needy children who need a caring audience; novels are like lovers who need to be met in private and caressed...

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Oh God, that sounds a bit creepy!

BEGINNER TEACHER: But I find that I need to use analogies which are a little bit shocking or surprising to wake up my students.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I tell my students that Shakespeare’s plays are like stars in the sky, remote and beautiful, who need to be observed through the telescope of time.

BEGINNER TEACHER: You see that wouldn’t help me, that would put me off!

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, I have found that it using comparisons that children are familiar with that helps them. So, for example, I might compare a Shakespeare play to a film that the children are familiar with; so for me, *Macbeth* is rather like some gangster films, while a poem like Andrew Marvell’s *To His Coy Mistress* is like a series of ‘chat-up’ lines.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, you’re right, I’m always using comparisons like that.



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

CREATIVE TEACHER: And it's worth thinking in depth about so you get the comparison right when explaining a topic.

BEGINNER TEACHER: And getting the students to make valid comparisons as well to things that they understand and know.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Let's also not forget that all of the literature we read contains huge amounts of comparison and contrast; that's what imagery is all about. I have particularly enjoyed teaching George Orwell's *Animal Farm* which, of course, is an extended comparison, an allegory, which compares a farmyard to Soviet Russia, with specific animals such as the pig representing specific historical characters like Leon Trotsky. It is one very long verbal comparison.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Good point. I suppose we also need to remember that we have to think very carefully about what we want to achieve with our comparisons because we could end up confusing our students with inappropriate comparisons, so back to your *Macbeth* example, we don't want the students saying that *Macbeth* is a gangster in an essay; he's a Thane and then the King of Scotland.

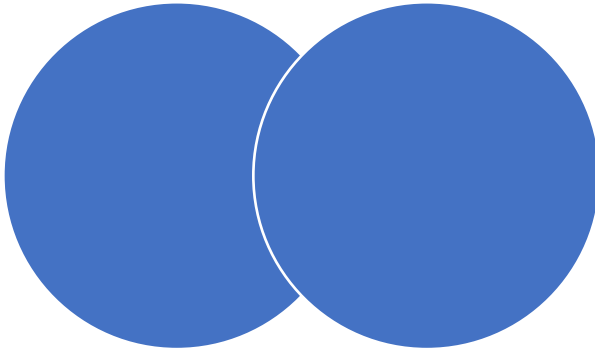
CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, good point. We need to make it clear that are comparisons are there to get our students thinking and understanding a text.

### TASK

Choose three set texts or topics you have to teach (e.g. a Shakespeare play, a poem and a novel/story) and devise a series of verbal comparisons for them to help your students understand them better.

### *VISUAL COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: My 'meat and drink' as a teacher is devising worksheets which get students to make comparisons. The classic example of this is when students read two texts and then have to do a Venn diagram or a chart comparing similarities and differences like these:



**FIGURE 4 VENN DIAGRAM**  
**ALLEGORY: ANIMAL FARM**

TOPIC	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
STORYLINE		
CHARACTERS		
SETTING		
THEMES		
IMAGERY		

**TRADITIONAL TEACHER:** I suppose the problem with these visual organisers is that they can become quite boring if over-used.

**TEST OBSESSED TEACHER:** But my Senior Leadership Team love them because the students stick them in their books and you can easily differentiate them, adding extra bits of information for students who are struggling.

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** And let's not forget that there are lots of different ways of representing information. As Marzano points out, we can have visual organisers that help students classify information into hierarchies, cycles, pyramids, brainstorm, flow-charts etc. The trick is to match the right visual organizer to the topic.

**BEGINNER TEACHER:** And let's not forget meta-cognition! Rather than the teacher always doing the chart or visual organizer for the student,

maybe they could decide the best way to represent the similarities and differences. Marzano says this is more effective than effectively organizing the information for the student.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: But then you get lots of students screaming out that they don't know how to do it!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, I don't like the sound of that.

CREATIVE TEACHER: But maybe students need those moments when they get stuck; all the major learning theorists, such as Lev Vygotsky, Piaget, Marzano etc. say that learning happens the most when students find the work difficult.

#### TASK

Return to the analogies you wrote out in the verbal analogies section and devise some visual organisers for them, thinking of learning tasks that students could do to help them understand a particular topic.

### TOP TIPS

#### UNDERSTAND THE THEORY

You will use evidence-based techniques much more effectively if you understand the 'constructivist' learning theories that undergird them.

#### USE EBT STRATEGIES CRITICALLY

Don't automatically assume EBT strategies will work immediately. You will need to use them critically, reviewing their success for yourself.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Petty, G. (2014). *Evidence-based teaching: A practical approach* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Look at these websites and consider the differing views offered about what counts as valid and reliable evidence for effective teaching:

This opening chapter (Pring, R., Thomas, G., 2004) is worth reading first:

<http://www.mheducation.co.uk/openup/chapters/0335213340.pdf>

<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED543521.pdf>

<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Rosenshine.pdf>

<http://chriswatkins.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Watkins-00-Learning-about-Learning-Resources-for-Supporting-Effective-Learning.pdf>

<https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/What-makes-great-teaching-FINAL-4.11.14.pdf>

## **ASSESSMENT: SUMMATIVE AND FORMATIVE**

### **KEY POINTS**

You are going to consider the impact of various assessment teaching strategies upon students.

### **MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION**

Reflect upon assessing learners' work in English, considering any images, feelings or ideas that come to mind, watching them arise in your mind. Think about how you were assessed as a student, pupil and child, considering what motivated to improve and progress and what did not.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT SHEETS**

A good way to develop students' knowledge is to create self-assessment sheets. Look at this one I did to get my students improving their ability to compare these two poems. It worked well, make students aware of the criteria they needed to improve.

**Assignment: Compare and contrast ‘The Passionate Shepherd To His Love’ with ‘The Nymph’s Reply’**

<b>Goals: write targets in the boxes</b>	<b>I don’t understand how to do this</b>	<b>I understand but not in much detail</b>	<b>I feel very confident on this area</b>
To devise a good plan for the essay		I have a very rough plan	
To re-read the poems		Yes, I’ve re-read them but I still don’t understand them	
To write an interesting introduction	Not sure		
To use PEE paragraphs			Yes, I get this!
To write a good “main body” of the essay	Not sure		
To write an effective conclusion	Not sure		
To discuss how the poets engage our interest		I think I need to understand the poems better	
To discuss the way the poets present people		I get this, the shepherd is nice in one poem, and made out to be bad in the other	
To discuss the poets’ themes			Yes, the idea is that things that seem nice can actually turn bad
To discuss the poets’ use of language: dialogue, description, imagery		Found lots of imagery, but how can I discuss it?	
To research anything else that’s important		I want to work on developing my understanding of the poems.	

What can you learn from this approach? What do the responses tell the teacher?

## **DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLES**

Look the following case studies below, considering how the various students are assessed. What assessment strategies in your view work and why? Look at Case Studies 1 and 2, both individual pupils tracked from Years 7-9, 11 yrs to 14 yrs: which of the students have benefitted from good feedback, and which one has not? Why is this, do you think? What lessons can teachers learn from these examples? The 'levelling' of students is not mandatory anymore, but many schools still use the old KS3 levels. Why do you think?

### *ASSESSMENT AT KEY STAGE 3 CASE STUDIES*

#### **CASE STUDY 1: A**

#### **Response to autobiographical writing**

#### ***YEAR 7: MONSTER MUNCH***

When I eat monster munch it reminds me of when I went to the sobell centre. We got on a 254 or a 253 bus I preferred the 253 because the lovely old seats. The bus drivers always raced down the road. We always saw the Jews at Clapton coming out of the Synagogue. They always wore there funny fury hat, even when it was in the summer, they looked silly. When we were at the sobell centre we went in the adventure play ground going thought the spongy objects and sliding down the slide.

Some times Albert my brother, and me went on the trampolines. We were doing flips and bounces on the trampoline. It felt like I was flying in the air.

While we were having fun, my mum was sitting there watching us play. When she was bored she did a cross word while drinking a hot tea from the machine.

If I was thirsty I had a ribena or a hot chocolate I liked it how the machine put the cup down then poured the chocolate into the cup then the boiling water.

This was back in the time when my brother was nice to me. He was nice to me then because he would play with me. Now he's older he spends his time attacking me. We wrestle

He comes into my room and starts hitting me. When he does that, I hurt him and he gets really angry and starts pummelling my neck.

It hurts a great deal.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

But the great George does not give up he got an axe and cut the guts out of he's body and so the legend lives. ☺

### **TEACHER ASSESSMENT 1**

#### **Level 4a**

This descriptive piece of autobiographical writing indicates some facility with sentence structure and an ability to use the comma appropriately. The writing is vivid at times with noun phrases such as 'spongy objects' and 'boiling water' bringing alive the moment. Towards the end of the piece, the writing becomes rather violent. Overall, your piece is achieving a top level 4, to achieve a Level 5 you must make sure you use capital letters for real names, and more sophisticated, descriptive vocabulary throughout.

### **STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

I liked my piece of writing when I wrote it but now I don't after reading the teacher's comments which I don't really understand.

My target is not to read teacher comments any more.

### ***YEAR 8: A WORD OF ADVICE FOR PARENTS***

As you know theyre growing fast  
So youve got to stop living in the past.  
Now its time to change your strict stance  
Give the kids a little chance.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT**

My poem is about how parents are stuck thinking youre a little kid and treat you like a baby, stopping you from doing things like go to parties.

### **TEACHER ASSESSMENT**

You have been clever in the way you have used rhymes in this poem, but you were asked to write a longer piece overall, and I can't believe it took the whole lesson to write this. The poem is not that clearly written, i.e. who is 'they're'? You need to learn to use the apostrophe in 'they're' (they are), it's (it is) and 'you've' (you have). Level 4c.

Target: try hard and be less distracted.

### ***YEAR 9: RESPONSE TO SHAKESPEARE, MUCH ADO***

#### Essay

Much ado is a play by shakespeare that is quite boring but I thought the film was all rite. It is about old fashioned people falling in love but then falling out because there is a nasty guy who mucks things up for them and there is also a funny policeman. I thought the scene where Benedick was tricked by the others into believing that Beatrice loved him was quite

funny, but not as funny as friends, although both friends use dramatic irony which is when the audience knows something the characters do not.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT**

Wot I wrote is OK.

**TEACHER RESPONSE**

This is not a satisfactory response to the task. You were asked to write at least 500 words. Your answer shows some understanding of the play, but no detailed analysis, and contains SPAG errors. We have now disbanded levels, but if this piece was levelled it would achieve a 4c, which is not the expected level of progress for you at Year 9; you should be achieving a 5a at least. You will need to stay behind to complete a better essay.

**CASE STUDY 2: B**

**Sweet memory trigger**

This is my memory of a sweet that I used to like and I still do now.

It started in the summer holiday. It had only been a few weeks since we had broken up and it would be 4 weeks until I would be a yr.6. We had only just come back from a visit to Hillding High St. We had gone to a newsagent's shop which was owned by one of my Gran's friends. We came home with sweets in our pockets (Me, my sister and my 2 cousins (both younger than me and my sister, a boy and a girl) and we began eating them the second we got out of the shop. When we got home we still had a fair few left and decided to eat them outside in the sunshine.

My little sister loved liquorice strings and had eaten all of hers. She started nagging me for some of mine. I laughed and called her a greedy-guts. She didn't take it as a joke and started tugging at my liquorice (sic). I held on to it; I wasn't giving up. I got so annoyed with her I snapped "You want them so bad, you can have them!" and I let go. They weren't very springy but they pinged back and hit my sister on the face. She (sic) howled and stormed away. I got told off later but I didn't really care because it was worth the look on my sisters (sic) face when the sweets hit her.

**PEER ASSESSMENT**

What Went Well: I like the story which was funny! Ha, ha!  
EBI: More adjectives.



**TEACHER ASSESSMENT**

**LEVEL 5A**

You have used capital letters and most punctuation correctly in this piece. Your writing contains a dramatic event with the incident of hitting your sister's face with the liquorice. You might have described the liquorice in more vivid detail, using a greater variety of sentence structures to do so. Although your writing contains some errors, I am levelling it at a low level 5. To gain a higher level, use more sophisticated vocabulary and learn how to use the apostrophe for possession.

**STUDENT RESPONSE**

I agree that I need to pay more attention to my punctuation. I will now revise this using the online website you showed us in class.

My target is to get a Level 6 by using more complex sentences and sophisticated vocabulary.

**YEAR 8**

**WRITTEN IN RESPONSE TO A POETRY UNIT**

***AUTUMN FALLS***

Coldness is  
Starting to creep into  
Shorter days.  
The deep green leaves are withering and  
Turning to a crisp burnt orange.  
Crunch, crunch is the noise you hear  
Constantly beneath your feet.  
Big chocolate brown conkers shine  
Beneath the golden leaves,  
Bright red berries adorn the prickly ivy.  
Oh how I wish for the warmth  
Of a summer's day!

**PEER ASSESSMENT**

WWW: I liked the way you made me feel the cold of the autumn, and how the conkers are like chocolate.

EBI: Use more metaphors and similes.

**TEACHER ASSESSMENT**

Your poem meets all the criteria for a sensitive and evocative poem, being full of sensual language and lively descriptions.

Target: consider the form of your poem more deeply. Maybe make it in the shape of a leaf etc?

**YEAR 9: ESSAY ON SHAKESPEARE**

**Much Ado about Nothing- Is it as much about Hate as it is as Love?  
(the beginning of an essay)**

Like many of Shakespeare's plays, *Much Ado about Nothing* follows the relationships between a group of characters, with the story becoming more complex as it goes on before coming to a close and everything coming to an ultimate resolution. While *Much Ado* is about the romance between the lead characters, there is a distinct level of deception and arguments between the characters which may lead some critics to argue that the play is more about hate than it is about love. This essay will explore the extent to which the play is focused upon love and hate, coming to an ultimate conclusion at the end.

The play opens with a light and happy atmosphere as the soldiers return to Messina. Everyone appears to be happy and carefree, and romantic. Love is shown between the characters, particularly as Claudio falls in love with Hero.

"In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on."- Claudio says in reference to Hero.

It is clear that Claudio's feelings for Hero are very much pure and innocent, and the way Claudio speaks of her shows naivety and hopeless romanticism, showing he is probably not prepared for any trials that come with a relationship. However, he does love Hero and this section is very much about love. He speaks of Hero as the "sweetest". His language is very clichéd and not particularly spectacular, and he doesn't use such elaborate and intelligent language in reference to her as Benedick does in reference to Beatrice. This shows that Claudio is by no means a poet and is not especially clever, and this may be why he later on believes the lies about Hero.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT**

WWW: I was pleased to write 1000 words. I am aiming for a good mark for this essay. I know Levels have been disbanded, but I would like to attain a 7a if possible. My essay meets the criteria of containing sophisticated and original analysis of the play, and an excellent knowledge of the characters.

EBI: I could learn to refer to other Shakespeare plays in my answer, comparing *Much Ado* with *Romeo and Juliet*.

**TEACHER RESPONSE**

This is a superb response to Shakespeare's play, you have clearly shown that you have an analytical grasp of the narrative, characterisation and themes. I like the way you have shown how Shakespeare reveals the personalities of his characters through their use of language. If this piece was levelled, it would attain a 7a.

Target: I agree you should read more Shakespeare plays now.

### **LEARNING ACTIVITY: MODERATION**

Find some students work which you don't know the grades for and 'moderate' it, working out its standard using either the criteria issued by your school/institution or an exam board. Work out what might be the best strategies for helping students improve the work.

### **MINDFUL REFLECTION**

Look back again over these pieces, and mindfully reflect upon what you have learnt about assessment from them.

### **TOP TIPS**

#### **WHOLE CLASS FEEDBACK**

Learn to become adept at judging the mood, behaviour, attitude and 'learning power' of your classes from observing them as a 'body'. Use randomisers/lolly sticks etc. to make sure everyone feedbacks to you, not just the usual suspects. Fletcher-Wood has written a useful blog here:

**<https://improvingteaching.co.uk/2014/05/17/why-do-i-rely-on-lollipop-sticks/>**

#### **USE QUIZZES**

Quizzes can be a great way of checking students' basic knowledge of various subjects. Getting students to peer assess their quizzes saves marking time and helps them as well as they can learn from their mistakes.

#### **VISIBLE LEARNING**

Use strategies such as traffic lights, thumbs up/down/half-way, whiteboards, post-it notes etc to get students to show you quickly what they know and don't know. For more, read John Hattie's book of the same name, or start by logging on here:

**<https://visible-learning.org/2013/10/john-hattie-article-about-feedback-in-schools/>**

#### **TRUE/FALSE**

Ask students some true or false questions to find out their knowledge quickly.

#### PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

Be strict and regular about peer assessment, getting students to regularly mark each other's work and their own. Make sure that the learning intentions and criteria are very clear though. Remember often it is the process of getting them to reflect that really helps them improve: they need time to think through what they know and don't know, and where they have made mistakes.

#### DIALOGUE IS GREAT AFL

Having relaxed chats with students about what they know and don't know often is very revealing. You can get students to tell you the story of a book or the content of an article, or explain what difficult lines mean. You'll learn a lot about their knowledge from this.

#### WWW AND EBI

Many schools get students to do 'What Went Well' and 'Even Better If' in response to their own and other students' work. This is fine, but I prefer What I Learnt (What I learnt) and What I Would Like To Learn More About (WIWLTMA) as it encourages students to reflect upon their learning as opposed to their performance.

#### REGULAR REVIEWS

Get your students to do regular reviews of what they feel they have learnt either orally or in a written form, using questionnaires if necessary.

#### MINDFULLY REFLECTING IS GREAT AFL

Mindfully thinking through from a distance about what your class has learnt is great AfL. Take the time to consider what your students might be feeling about their subject.

#### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

Find out more about successful Assessment for Learning Strategies. This booklet is a good starting point, making many of the points I've made and many others:

**[http://ceea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/assessment/assessment\\_for\\_learning/afl\\_practical\\_guide.pdf](http://ceea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/assessment/assessment_for_learning/afl_practical_guide.pdf)**

So is this website:

**<https://cambridge-community.org.uk/professional-development/gswaf/index.html>**

Dylan Wiliam is the guru of AfL and has written a great deal about it. You can start here:

<http://www.dylanwiliamcenter.com/practical-ideas-for-classroom-formative-assessment/>

<https://www.rdc.udel.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/InsideBlackBox.pdf>

The Assessment chapters in Petty (2014) are very good.

Also look at:

Fautley, M., & Savage, J. (2008). *Assessment for learning and teaching in secondary schools* (Achieving QTS). Exeter: Learning Matters.

Black, P. (2003). *Assessment for learning putting it into practice*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about assessment?

## PRESENTATION SKILLS WITH LEARNING RESOURCES: EXPLANATIONS, DEVISING WORKSHEETS AND POWERPOINTS

### KEY POINTS

In this section, you will learn about how to explain things clearly to students, devise worksheets which are effective and PowerPoints which help students learn.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon learning resources which you have found effective, considering any images, feelings or ideas that come to mind, watching them arise in your mind. Think about the worksheets, the PowerPoints, the explanations which have helped you learn a topic.

### DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLES

#### YEAR 7

You have to devise a new learning resource or adapt an existing learning resource for Year 7 which helps them learn more about using colons and semi-colons. What learning resources would you come up with? If you want, do some research on the internet and look for resources that you

might find helpful. Put them in rank order and draw up a lesson plan for how to use them.

#### YEAR 9

You have to devise a learning resource which will help students write a persuasive speech aimed at a specific audience. You are not allowed to use PowerPoint, but could use any other kind of learning resource such as a video, worksheet, flash cards etc. Do some research and find a resource which will help Year 9 write good persuasive speeches.

#### *MINDFUL REFLECTIONS*

What did you learn from doing these two exercises? What resources might work best and why? What were the best resources you found and why?

#### *TOP TIPS*

##### AVOID INFORMATION OVERLOAD

PowerPoints work best when the teacher explains the information but does not overload the slide with text, uses relevant pictures and diagrams, avoiding too many colours and animated text.

For more: <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/making-better-powerpoint-presentations/>

##### MAKE STIMULATING RESOURCES

Worksheets work best which encourage meaningful collaboration between students and stimulate their interest; don't overload them with text, and invite students to do the work in small chunks, but also challenge them to learn independently. Make sure that the worksheet is nicely designed if you can.

##### INVITE CRITIQUES

If the learning resource is not satisfactory but there are elements of it you want to use, ask the students to critique it, and consider what they are learning about their learning by analysing the quality of the learning resource. This kind of meta-cognitive exercise is very helpful in improving learning. The learners could then devise a better learning resource and in the process learn about the topic in question more effectively.

## BACK TO BASICS

Above all, go back to the principles of lesson planning when devising a learning resource: **what** do you want the learners to learn? **Why** are they learning this information? **How** will help them learn?

## FURTHER READING

Read and consider the points made here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/15/oftsed-schools-scrappy-worksheets-homework-students-insections-framework>

What do you think of the points made about effective hand-outs here? Are they practical or points you would consider?

[https://www.pcc.edu/resources/tlc/cascade/documents/PCCHandouts\\_handout.pdf](https://www.pcc.edu/resources/tlc/cascade/documents/PCCHandouts_handout.pdf)

<https://www.lanec.edu/sites/default/files/fpd/hthandouts.pdf>

This blog is helpful and contains a useful video too:

<https://tlatnd.wordpress.com/2015/10/27/7-elements-of-visually-appealing-handouts/>

## REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about presenting learning resources here?

## BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider how you might mindfully manage your own thoughts and feelings, and other people's behaviour, exploring why it is good to start with managing your own emotions.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon classroom behaviour. Visualise if you want these ideas: the perfect classroom, behaviour you expect to see in your students, what you would like to feel in the classroom situation, how you might deal with inappropriate behaviour.

### DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLES

Consider what you might do in these situations:

### CASE STUDY 1

A teacher is struggling to teach *Dr Jekyll*. The students are noisy when the teacher reads the text around the class, and won't read the text themselves.

Very few students try hard at the essay task set which is "How does Stevenson build suspense in 'The Last Night'?" The teacher feels the class are stupid, and has resorted to giving them model essays to copy out into their books, which they are to put into their own words. They don't like doing this and are disruptive.

### CASE STUDY 2

Students are studying Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. They were noisy while they watched the film, which the teacher had to stop, and won't read the play around the class. The teacher has resorted to handing out fill-in-the-blanks sheets found on the internet on the play. The students do this, but reluctantly with some students saying the lessons are very boring. Three students are extremely disruptive regularly running in and out of the lesson, and hitting other students.

### CASE STUDY 3

Students are reading 'A Christmas Carol' in class. They are very disruptive while reading the text in class, and most students don't listen to the teacher reading the text. They enjoyed the film however. The worst behaviour happens when the teacher asks them to get on with comprehension questions on the text, which they are to answer in their books.

### CASE STUDY 4

A teacher has taken on a new Year 7. There are rivalries in the class and some very anxious students who are finding the transition from primary to secondary very difficult. The teacher is doing a class reader 'Holes' which some of the students have already read. These students are particularly disruptive during times when the text is read in class. The students, who are used to working in groups from primary school, are not good at settling and listening to the teacher when working in rows.

### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

There is a common theme running through all of these examples: the students are either bored or demotivated. A key point you have to



consider is how to make the work accessible, motivating and challenging for the students. This is not easy and takes a great deal of thought. In order to do this, you need to be calm yourself and not be too stressed, otherwise you will not be able to find creative solutions to the problems. What follows are some general guidelines, but remember nothing can replace mindfully thinking every unique situation through, and bringing true mindfulness to a situation. This means, finding calm through conscious breathing, and letting the issue play out in your mind and body, letting it settle there. You should also discuss the situation with colleagues but not in a negative way by saying things like ‘the class are a nightmare’ rather say things like ‘I feel very anxious in the class because I feel things are out of my control...’

### **CONSCIOUS, MINDFUL BREATHING AND SMILING**

Get into the habit of regularly returning to being aware of your breathing and the moment you are living in, taking a few seconds whenever you can to return to your breathing, this will help you learn to control your own mood and reactions. It’s the one thing you can really control...

Learn to naturally do deep breathing: breathe from the stomach. Take a deep breath slowly for five/six times. Concentrate upon it. Think about what you are feeling. Do it as you are walking to class, as you are addressing a class...

Learn to say to yourself: *breathing in I am calming, breathing out I am smiling*. Smile sincerely and gratefully at your students; they have given you a wonderful and beautiful job and they are beautiful, complex beings, the most complex beings created. This means that they can’t be induced to behave by treating them like they are robots or machines.

Plant the seeds of calm and compassion in yourself and ‘water’ yourself with regular conscious breathing. Once you are calm, you will be in a better place to find a solution to the problems confronting you.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF ROUTINES**

Getting your students into the habit of expecting to carry out mindful, productive routines will really help you create a calm, creative class. Avoid pointless routines such as long bouts of copying: sometimes copying if done mindfully can be very helpful such as copying out a favourite poem and mindfully thinking about it, but just copying for the sake of copying is not very useful generally. Religious schools often are

quite well-behaved places because they make their students do mindful routines such as saying prayers at the beginning of lessons. You don't have to be religious to do this sort of thing, you could get students to recite a short 'gratitude' poem such as:

*I am grateful to be learning; I am grateful to have a teacher who wants me to do well. I am grateful to have friends who want to help me learn.*

Here are some possible other routines you might use:

**Welcoming students to classes:** get into a routine by saying a short poem or prayer. Maybe have a seating plan on the board etc.

**Routines when you start a class:** e.g. a short mindfulness meditation and/or silent reading, meaningful word searches, spelling lists to learn, doing the register. However, all of these things can be counter-productive if they become drawn out and induce conflict, in which case re-think them. For example, I have experienced myself, taking the register can be calming and helpful, but with some classes it is a difficult experience. In which case, take it during the lesson when people have settled and are quiet.

**Beware of technology!** I have noticed that some teachers let students go off-task because they are so busy trying to get their inter-active whiteboards working to show their PowerPoints etc. Don't rely on technology to get the lesson started; always have a ready-made, meaningful learning task such as reading, writing a story etc to hand so that students can get on immediately.

Teach strategies and content: always remind students of what they are learning and why they are learning it, e.g. developing/improving independent reading, writing and S&L skills.

**Repetition and practice:** get students used to reading/writing/Speaking & Listening in every lesson for sustained periods.

**Extension projects:** some of the most disruptive students can be the cleverest. They can be a real problem because they know how to press your buttons. They are probably bored and disengaged with the work. The way around this to win them over and give them extension projects which they want to do and can get on with if they finish the work early. So encourage them to bring reading material into lessons which motivate them, get them to write reviews, stories, poems, to explain things to the

class, to be a teacher, assessor, summarizer, learning to learn chief etc (see collaborative learning section for more on group roles).

**Finishing:** get students to reflect upon what they have learnt, and learnt about their learning. E.g. ask questions such as what have you learnt? How motivated are you? What might motivate you to learn more?

## FEAR AND LOATHING WITH YEAR 9

Look at this extract I wrote in *Teacher on the Run* (2006). Why were things going so wrong for me, do you think? What could have I done to improve the situation? Wicksteed was the school I had come from, and was a better run place than Brokers where I was working.

Over the last five months, my real enemy number one had become the thirteen-year-old Azizur Ahmed, one of the few Bengali pupils in the school. He was admittedly the bad boy of the school; he'd been suspended for smoking, for fighting, been arrested for joy riding and his brother was about to go to prison for attempted murder. I'd never come across someone who was so full of hatred; the children I had taught in Tower Hamlets were pussy-cats compared with him -- they essentially had good will. Azizur hated teachers and hated school and had me down as someone he could be especially belligerent to.

On this bleak, raw February morning things began badly because the first thing I saw when I returned after my extra-strength instant coffee in the staffroom was Azizur pushing over Rory Atkinson. Azizur, who was normally very friendly with Rory, said, "What did you do that for? Why are you picking on me?" I could tell from his manner that this was no joke.

Rory bleated that he hadn't done anything. Rory seemed quite frightened.

I strode over, incensed by this unprovoked attack and told Azizur that he should leave the classroom immediately. He'd only been in my lesson five minutes. Azizur then turned on me and said, "Why are you picking on me? I ain't done nuffink. His arse got in the way of a chair. What's wrong with your eyes?"

I repeated that I wanted him to leave the classroom. This was a cue for Rory to pipe up and say that Azizur hadn't really done anything; he'd just tripped over. "Don't pick on him sir, he ain't done nuffink," Rory said.

I saw a little conspiratorial smirk spread over Rory's lips as I turned to face Azizur. "Yeah, just listen to him. You ain't right," Azizur said, laughing loudly.

Azizur was standing up, his hands bunched up into fists. His posture and absolute refusal to listen to my demands scared me. At Wicksteed, I would have filled out a slip and told Azizur to go and see a senior teacher in the dining room. If he had refused to go I would have gone and fetched the senior teacher myself. But there was no such system at Brokers. In fact, sending children out of the class was very much frowned upon.

I decided to let this one ride, told Azizur and Rory to get on with their work and prayed that they wouldn't do anything more. This was an error. If you make a demand like one I had made, you have to carry it out or otherwise your authority

is eroded.

Azizur started laughing.

“Ain’t you going to send me out, then?” he jeered.

This took me by surprise. I thought about this for a minute.

“All right then, perhaps you’d better go out,” I said.

Azizur laughed again. “You can’t send me out. I didn’t do anything. Like Rory said, it was an accident,” he sneered.

This was torture. I felt like a mountain climber scaling a sheer cliff face without any grappling hooks. I just couldn’t find any purchase with Azizur or any of these kids. They just never, ever conceded an inch.

“You’d better go,” I said.

This caused an explosion of indignation.

“But that’s so unfair. I ain’t done nuffink!”

I made the mistake of trying to square up to Azizur, of trying to dominate him with my superior physical bulk. I stood over him and tapped the back of his chair. I felt like yanking him out of it.

“Get out now! Just get out of here!” I shouted.

Azizur snarled, “Oh you stupid tosser!” and lurched out of his seat, kicking the table in the process. He narrowly avoided barging into me. He pushed his way out of the classroom, upsetting a few kids’ elbows on the way. Once outside the classroom though, he caused more problems by yanking the door open and slamming it shut. Next, he pressed his face against the glass and hammered against the hardboard walls of the pre-fab.

Somehow I lurched to the end of the lesson but my ship was bobbing about in violent seas and had sprung several serious leaks.

#### COMMENTARY

Looking back I can see that although the situation I was in was difficult, it wasn’t impossible to deal with either. If I had learnt to be more mindful back then, I would not have demonised Azizur (not his real name) nor ‘catastrophized’ the situation, but would have sought to form a reasonable relationship with him. In particular, I would have tried to find solutions other than sending the naughty students out of the class, but would have quietly discussed things with my colleagues. My desire to be back at Wicksteed impaired my ability to think about what I could have sensibly done in that situation, above all, I should have looked at ways of ‘deescalating’ situations (see chart below).

#### *THE TEACHING PERFORMANCE*

Teaching is a performance, a drama, a series of stage sets, the classroom, the corridors, the playground, find a mask which is you and *not* you. Find a confident, positive persona.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Work on your body language, speaking from the stomach (voice projection), taking deep breaths, acknowledge teaching is nerve-racking at times. It is a performance!!

Find a professional persona that is both you and not you, so that when you're criticised you don't feel you are being criticised. This is your teacher persona.

Mindfully meditating upon what sort of personas you might want to adopt can really help; take a few moments to meditate upon yourself in the classroom, seeing yourself from different perspectives such as a pupil, another teacher, an outside observer such as a parent.

### **LANGUAGE IS POWER**

Look at the following chart and consider whether you think the language used in the first column (Change the language?) needs to be 'de-escalated' in the way suggested.

<b>Change the teacher language</b>	<b>De-escalate</b>
If you don't do this, I'll give you a detention...	Let's see if you can meet this challenge, it's exciting!
If you don't behave I'll send you out of the lesson.	That is not going to help you learn, is it? The work set is this...
Will you stop being so silly?	
Why are you being so rude?	I feel upset when you speak to me like that...
You'll fail your exams if you don't work!	I'm concerned you won't achieve to your best potential
You don't have a clue, do you?	If you are finding the work difficult, can you ask your neighbour to explain, then me...

**PLEASE AVOID LABELLING CHILDREN, OTHER PEOPLE, AND YOURSELF!**

<b>Damaging labels</b>	<b>Constructive thinking</b>
The kid is mean This child is evil	There are things she/he does that make him/her challenging to teach because...
She/he has got it in for me	I feel anxious around him/her I worry about his/her intentions
The class is a complete nightmare	I feel anxious about this class because...
She's so thick	She finds some things difficult
She's really brainy	She finds much of the work easy because...

Look at this chart, and consider how and why it is useful to use appropriate, mindful language when talking about your students.

**THEORY AND BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

Understanding theories about learning can help you with dealing your own classroom management.

***BEHAVIOURIST APPROACHES***

The behaviourist teacher expects their students to imitate certain behaviours; this kind of teacher is the ultimate authority and provides learning objectives which must be met by all students. The behaviourist teacher gives out rewards such as merits, ticks, good marks etc in order to reinforce behaviour that is favoured, but also reinforces negatively when the learner does not imitate the desired behaviours. Things like detentions, warnings, letters home to parents etc often act as negative reinforcements. It must be noted though that most behaviourist psychologists emphasize the importance of positive reinforcement above the negative.

The benefits of this approach are that it is quite simple and clear, and perhaps for that reason behaviourist approaches are very popular in schools. The TES columnist Tom Bennett offers many behaviourist strategies in his advice on classroom management:

**[https://www.tes.com/articles/behaviour-management-strategies-videos#.WXhk\\_ojytPY](https://www.tes.com/articles/behaviour-management-strategies-videos#.WXhk_ojytPY)**

The disadvantages are that it is very rudimentary: children are not rats or pigeons and need more sophisticated approaches than positive and negative reinforcement to behave. Teachers need to build relationships with their pupils ultimately.

This said, I believe things like giving rewards appropriately, praising students' effort by doing things like calling home, giving certificates, merits can be very effective at "winning over" difficult students.

#### *LEARNING ACTIVITY*

Draw up a list of behaviourist strategies that might help you improve your students' behaviour.

#### *COGNITIVE CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES*

This approach, pioneered by the likes Jean Piaget, advocate the importance of getting students to monitor and self-regulate their behaviour. Institutions such as Montessori schools take this line: they manipulate the environment and learning resources so that students learn to think about what they want to learn and how they want to learn it, setting their own targets and deadlines.

The Educational Endowment Foundation rate this approach, if done properly, very highly. For more information check here:

**<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit/meta-cognition-and-self-regulation/>**

Key points are:

- Students need to self-regulate; to learn how to learn; to learn about how to regulate their own behaviour.
- Learning to behave well comes from "within" the mind of the learner; it is not externally imposed (Claxton et al.)
- Students need to go specific stages in their learning in order to learn properly, most significantly moving from the concrete to the abstract, if they don't, they will become confused and misbehave. (Piaget, Montessori, Shayer and Adey, *Let's Think in English*)
- Learners should draw up their own "learning rules".
- Teachers need to provide students with meaningful, learning activities which nurture students' own self-regulation and meta-cognition.

- Behaviour can't be bracketed off from learning and a student's dispositions towards learning. It is better to talk about "behaviour for learning".

Think about what this means in reality: students should audit their knowledge, and then seek to 'plug the gaps' drawing up a plan of action. This can work very well with project-based approaches. Students need to set their own learning intentions or internalise the learning intentions set by the teacher, and then motivate themselves to learn more. Here's a possible example of this approach for SPAG:

What I know	What I need to know more about	What I need to do to learn more about this
I can spell simple words and ones with regular spellings	I am regularly getting words like "necessary" "receive" "apparently" etc. wrong	I need to look at this website: <a href="https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/spelling/common-misspellings">https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/spelling/common-misspellings</a> Get students to test me; draw up spelling lists; use these spelling regularly in my writing, re-read my work. When? By the end of term.
I can use full stops, and mostly punctuate sentences correctly,	I don't know how to use semi-colons, colons, commas properly.	I need to explore various websites and take relevant tests: <a href="https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Semicolons.html">https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Semicolons.html</a>

I have to admit the above example is hardly the most fascinating project in the world! The Year 9 class I encountered with Azizur in it responded best to a creative writing project which meant they interviewed primary school children about their favourite stories, and then wrote a story for them, returning to the primary school to read it to them. Azizur and Rory behaved during this project, and learnt a lot more than they normally did. Why was this, do you think?



#### LEARNING ACTIVITY

Draw up a chart like the one above in which you model to students how to self-regulate their learning upon a topic such as grammar terms, Shakespeare, reading poetry etc.

#### *SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES*

This approach was pioneered by Lev Vygotsky, Paulo Freire and A.S. Neill. These educators advocated that students must be made aware that learning is a social, democratic process; we learn, above all, by talking to and collaborating with each other. We need to learn to become part of a meaningful, creative community of learners.

Students' behaviour improves when they become aware of the social implications of their misbehaviour; the classroom must be a safe space for learning to express themselves.

To fully explore this approach, ideally rules for behaviour should be drawn up by the whole class. An extreme form of this would be a democratic approach should be taken, with the body politic (the class) decides what should happen to people who misbehave. Above all, social empathy should be nurtured; this is seen by social constructivists as a key feature of education generally.

I model how to do this approach in my learning script *The Time Devil* (2017), writing down some rules that group members should follow:

#### GOLDEN RULES

- Everyone is a teacher: this means you need to be ready to explain points to other people, show other students "best practice", ask good questions which draw people out and get them enjoying their learning. It does not mean that you threaten them with detentions; you are aiming to be kind, caring teacher who uses positive encouragement rather than threats. Only the "real" teacher can impose sanctions. You all must teach each other in the way a kind, caring teacher would.
- Be kind to yourself and other people: wish yourself well and other people.
- Be mindful of yourself and others. Find joy in working together with other people: it is a very special thing to read with other people.
- Smile and keep smiling! Fake it until you make it! Be happy!

## Francis Gilbert

- Always help each other: smile at each other, congratulate each other when you've tried.
- Avoid criticizing each other: do not say "You're stupid" "You're dumb" "Stop mucking around" etc. Instead set a good example and patiently get on with your work and guiding people BY EXAMPLE rather than CRITICISM.
- Be polite: say hello and goodbye with real care and attention.
- Be disciplined about working together; make sure you keep focus at all times and don't talk about things which are nothing to do with the lesson.
- Swap roles! Make sure that everyone has a go at reading different roles.
- Learn to talk freely in the different "teaching script" roles; learn to talk like a Teacher, Assessor, Motivator, Learning to Learn Chief, Questioner, Summarizer. Powerful learners are all of these roles 'rolled' into one!

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

What do you think of this approach? Do you think it will help students improve their behaviour?

## TOP TIPS

### NO EASY ANSWERS

The main thing to remember that when dealing with challenging behaviour is that there are no easy answers.

### COLLABORATE WITH COLLEAGUES

Avoid moaning about behaviour to your colleagues, but instead do something pro-active like set up a behaviour for learning committee; work in a pair/group as you like. Use each other as "therapists/coaches" during your teaching practice!

### RESEARCH

Do some more research, look online at Bayley, Bennett, Cowley etc (thousands of 'experts' out there!)

### DEVISE YOUR OWN GUIDE

Draw up a list of strategies that you will use to nurture good behaviour in your classroom.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

### PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Practise with each other, talking confidently, establishing rules.

### LEARN TO USE CONSCIOUS BREATHING

When encountering stressful situations, return to concentrating upon your breath.

### MINDFULLY REFLECT

Write up your findings regarding this session and your committee in your Learning Journal.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Relevant books:

Bryson, J. (1998). *Effective classroom management* (Effective teaching skills). London: Hodder & Stoughton Educational.

Canter, L. (2010). *Lee Canter's assertive discipline: Positive behavior management for today's classroom* (4th ed., new & rev.. ed.). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Coultas, V. (2007). *Constructive talk in challenging classrooms: Strategies for behaviour management and talk-based tasks*. London: Routledge.

Rogers, B. (2007). *Behaviour management : A whole-school approach* (2nd ed.). London: Paul Chapman.

DfE advice here:

**[https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/sites/default/files/behaviour\\_management\\_factsheet.pdf](https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/sites/default/files/behaviour_management_factsheet.pdf)**

There's a wealth of resources out there on the internet, providing all sorts of differing advice. Have a look at it now and try to see what educational theory undergirds the advice. Remember to look critically at the advice and think about what might work for you:

**<https://www.theguardian.com/society/joepublic/2010/feb/09/pupil-behaviour-management-tips>**

**<http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/nqt-special-strategies-for-managing-behaviour/>**

**<http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/nqt-special-strategies-for-managing-behaviour/>**

**<https://www.tes.com/articles/tes-classroom-behaviour#.WXh--fkrKUK>**

My personal favourite is Chris Watkins' advice, which is always clear, but informed by research evidence:

<http://chriswatkins.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Watkins-11-Managing-crm-bhvr.pdf>

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about behaviour management?

## TEACHER RESEARCH

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider why it might be helpful to be a ‘teacher-researcher’.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon being a researcher as you teach: imagine being a detective, picking up clues about how to do your job as you observe the world around you.

#### VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Whether they know it or not, all teachers are researchers in that they have to examine the world around them and consider how they might teach a topic. Teachers are, by nature, reflective, and need to think about what works in the classroom and what does not.

The key question is: what things should a teacher research? What evidence should teachers accept as being valid and reliable, and what evidence should they reject as invalid?

There are two major research approaches: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative researchers are interested in the particular, in personal testimonies, in ‘rich data’ which offers a complex picture of the material. So, for example, a qualitative researcher would be much more interested in the personal feedback of teachers and pupils about what they felt helped them learn pre-1900 poetry than examining test scores. They would pay attention to the nuance of student and teachers’ feelings and the particular things they enjoyed. A quantitative researcher would be much more interested in the statistical evidence, and would ‘crunch the numbers’ to see what teaching strategies helped the pupils gain better test scores. A mixed-methods researcher would look at both approaches and come to a judgement based upon both sets of data. Both types of researcher are looking for data which is ‘valid’ (created in circumstances which are not subject to cheating etc) and ‘reliable’ (there is a consistency of response). So this means that if the teacher had told the students all

the answers, then the students' answers as data would not be valid because they would not be produced by the student themselves. If the teacher had marked the students' work according to who they liked the best as a student and not according to the merits of the work, then the marks produced would not be reliable.

You can find out more about this here:

**<https://chfasoa.uni.edu/reliabilityandvalidity.htm>**

#### *DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLES*

You have to teach pre-1900 poetry to a Year 9 class. You do some research and find there are too many resources to help you; you don't know what resource to use? Should you use PowerPoints, videos, handouts, text books? Should you adopt the school's Scheme of Work even though it seems very boring, or should you write your own one – an option open to you?

#### TOP TIPS

##### BECOME A DETECTIVE

Learn to observe what is happening in schools through the lens of the theoretical, psychological, literature-based and historical knowledge you have. Make comparisons in your mind between books, films, theories you know about and what is happening in your current school. Work out what is really going on.

##### WRITE A DIARY

Writing a diary can really help you in many ways: deal with stress, but also assist with your research.

#### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

A good place to start is the BERA (British Educational Research Association) blog here:

**<https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/teachers-researchers-and-teacher-researchers>**

Kincheloe, J. (1991). *Teachers as researchers : Qualitative inquiry as a path to empowerment* (The Falmer Press teachers' library). London: Falmer.

#### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt from this section of the book? Do you think you will pursue more research as a teacher? If so, why? If not, why?

# DIFFERENTIATION

## KEY POINTS

You are going to learn what differentiation is, and some strategies for implementing it within your classroom.

## MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon the different needs, backgrounds and characters of the students you teach.

## DEFINITION

The action or process of differentiating or distinguishing between two or more things or people. In teaching, it involves the teacher being aware of the different needs of students and the different ways they might learn.

### *DIFFERENTIATING BY TASK*

The most obvious way to differentiate is to get the students of different abilities to do different tasks, which match their abilities. A common method is for teachers to outline with an activity these verbs:

- Must
- Should
- Could

This might mean, say when teaching Shakespeare, every student must read the first scene of *Romeo and Juliet* and write a summary of it, most students should do this and complete a diary entry, some students could do these activities and start reading the next scene. Some schools favour the “bronze, silver, gold” approach with bronze being the activity the weaker students might do, and gold being the one for the most able students.

What are the benefits of this approach? What are its drawbacks? Devise a lesson where you deploy this kind of differentiation by task.

## DIFFERENTIATION BY OUTCOME

This is an approach where an open-ended task is set that stretches the most able but also engages the least able. Typical questions and activities might be:

- What is this text about?

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

- How does the writer generate suspense?
- Write a story/poem/script about x.
- Plan and deliver a persuasive speech about x for x audience.

What are the benefits of this approach? What are its drawbacks? Devise a lesson where you deploy this kind of differentiation.

### DIFFERENTIATION BY RESOURCE

When differentiating by resource, the teacher may give different texts for students so that each text engages and stretches them. Or it may be that everyone studies the same text which has different forms: an easier version and a harder one, or an essay plan which gives a great deal of help and a plan which is much less guided.

What are the benefits of this approach? What are its drawbacks? Devise a lesson where you deploy this kind of differentiation.

### DIFFERENTIATION BY ROLE

This is when students are given different roles either within groups or within the class. See the section on collaborative learning for this approach.

What are the benefits of this approach? What are its drawbacks? Devise a lesson where you deploy this kind of differentiation.

### COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND DIFFERENTIATION

Getting students to collaborate can be a very effective way of differentiating lessons because students are able to help each other. There are a few ways this can be done. You could:

- Group students by ability.
- Group students in mixed ability groups.
- Make sure the students are regularly 'mixed up' by doing things like jigsawing, envoys, rainbowing etc. For more on this approach to mixing up groups, please follow this link, looking at page 15 for specific guidance:  
[https://www.stem.org.uk/system/files/community-resources/2016/03/sec\\_pedagogy\\_grpwrk.pdf](https://www.stem.org.uk/system/files/community-resources/2016/03/sec_pedagogy_grpwrk.pdf)

What are the benefits of this approach? What are its drawbacks? Devise a lesson where you deploy this kind of differentiation.

## MULTI-SENSORY LEARNING

As we have looked at, using objects, engaging the five senses, using video, pictures, photographs, sounds, textures, smells, tastes can all help students learn more.

Often used in primary schools, some of its ideas can be adapted successfully in secondary schools. As a starting point, look at this website:

**<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childrens-school/instructional-strategies/multisensory-instruction-what-you-need-to-know>**

## PLANNING

The main point is that you need to plan your lessons carefully if you are going to differentiate, considering how you might differentiate your material.

### DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLES

You have a Year 8 class which has many children with diverse needs ranging from those who have challenged sight and hearing, to students who have emotional and behavioural difficulties as well as gifted and talented students. You are studying *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare. How might you differentiate your material to meet the pupils' needs? Sketch out a few ideas and a brief medium-term plan for the lessons.

## TOP TIPS

### RESOURCES

Differentiation need not be about making lots of resources, rather it is about creating an atmosphere in the classroom whereby everyone feels they can express what they know and don't know, and feel empowered to help each other and themselves.

### COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Getting students to help each other is often the best form of differentiation because other students are immediately responsive to the needs of the people around them.

### LEARNING IS NOT JUST ABOUT WRITING

Students can learn a great deal without having to write huge amounts in their books. Think about using video, audio, pictures etc with students who struggle to write.



### **FURTHER RESEARCH**

Hart, S. (1996). *Differentiation and the secondary curriculum: Debates and dilemmas*. London: Routledge.

Kerry, T. (1999). *Learning objectives, task-setting and differentiation* (Effective teaching skills). London: Hodder & Stoughton Educational.

Tomlinson, C. (2005). *The differentiated classroom : Responding to the needs of all learners* (Special ed., Merrill Education/ASCD college textbook series). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Education / Prentice Hall in association with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Have a look at the various resources and approaches offered on these websites:

<http://www.bbcactive.com/BBCActiveIdeasandResources/Methods ofDifferentiationintheClassroom.aspx>

<http://teachertools.londongt.org/?page=differentiationClassRoom>

<https://www.edutopia.org/discussion/18-teacher-tested-strategies-differentiated-instruction>

<http://geoffpetty.com/training-materials/differentiation/>

### **REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING**

What have you learnt about differentiation?

## **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEND)**

### **KEY POINTS**

You are going to consider the issues involved with learners who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This section deliberately avoids exhaustive explanations and definitions, inviting you to find them out for yourself, this is because this is a good activity for you to do, but also because the SEND landscape frequently changes and it's worth doing some research into the most up-to-date aspects of SEND.

### **MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION**

Reflect upon children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, reflect upon your own SEND, and those of people you know.

### **DEFINITION**

Watch this video by the charity Mencap who aim to help people with learner disabilities:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5I877T7RZs>

What do you think of Mencap's definition?

#### DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLES

Do some research either online or in the library and find out about the issues connected with:

Dyslexia, ADHD, autism, emotional-behavioural difficulties.

What legal obligations do teachers have in teaching children with SEND?

If you can, watch some videos which show what might be happening in a compassionate and sympathetic light.

*I have avoided giving precise definitions of the above conditions because they often change and it is usually best to check the most up-to-date research concerning SEND as experts and practitioners are arriving at new findings all the time (see links below).*

### CURRICULUM EXTENSION CHALLENGES

One way of getting Gifted and Talented students to learn more is to set curriculum extension challenges. What do you think of these ones?

#### YEAR 7

Term 1: Oral Story Telling – Research into your family history. Perform your story to the class

Term 2: Read the Carnegie Award Short List and vote on-line!

Term 3: Review your first year in secondary school. Subvert the norm!!

#### YEAR 8

Term 1: Read a 'Classic' and write a modern version of the blurb.

Term 2: Write your own children's story

Term 3: 'The Apprentice': Pitch your idea for a film, aimed at your own age group and a particular genre. Make a 10 second trailer.

#### YEAR 9

Term 1: Create and organise a book club which produces an extended reading list and recommendations. Produce an on-line 'Reading Map'.

Term 2: Explore the connections between rap and poetry. Produce and perform your own.

Term 3: Read a Shakespeare play and attend a performance of it. Write an analysis of the performance.

#### YEAR 10

Term 1: Read a selection of Shakespearean tragedies: what conventions typify the genre?

Term 2: Submit a piece of creative writing for an outside publication.

Term 3: Develop a research project on a poet laureate and/or the history of the

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

title.

### **YEAR 11**

Term 1: Read another Arthur Miller play and compare and contrast to *Death of a Salesman*.

Term 2: Research and analyse artworks that complement the ‘Town and Country Poetry Collection’.

Term 3: Find a critical interpretation of a text you have enjoyed. Write an acknowledgement or rebuff of the viewpoint expressed.

### **YEAR 12 LIT & LANG**

Term 1: Lit: Research a philosopher or artist and an author from the same period of time. Compare and Contrast.

Lang: Research family dialects and socio-cultural stimuli.

Term 2: Lit: Attend enrichment classes re. Chaucer, Milton

Lang: Blog serial stories (anonymous – link into language and identity)

Term 3: Lit: Investigate origins and conventions of revenge tragedy genre.

Lang: Tape Record conversations/monologues of different people and contexts. Analyse impact of gender, age, class and context on language.

### **YEAR 13 LIT & LANG**

Term 1: Lit: Investigate ‘protest poetry’ / poetry movements. Write your own ‘protest poem.’

Lang: Research language across BBC radio stations re: context, audience and purpose.

Term 2: Lit: Read Booker Prize short-list nominees and decide which you would award the prize too.

Lang: Create your own language and deliver a speech.

Term 3: Lit: Attend enrichment classes re. Chaucer, Milton

Lang: Create a play-script using language to create different identities.

## **FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **SEND**

Wearmouth, J. (2016). *Special educational needs and disability: The basics* (Second ed., Basics (Routledge (Firm)).

This article is aimed at Teacher Educators but contains an excellent summary of SEND provision/policies over the decades:

Nash, & Norwich. (2010). *The initial training of teachers to teach children with special educational needs: A national survey of English Post Graduate Certificate of Education programmes. Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(7), 1471-1480.

### **NHS – Caring and special educational needs**

[www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/guide/kinds/Pages/SpecialEducationa](http://www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/guide/kinds/Pages/SpecialEducationa)

Ineeds.aspx

**Direct Gov – General Parent Advice about SEN from the Government**

[www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/overview](http://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/overview)

**Downs Syndrome Association**

[www.downs-syndrome.org.uk](http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk)

**Dyspraxia Foundation**

[www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk)

**MIND – National Association for Mental Health**

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

**DYSLEXIA**

**British Dyslexia Association**

[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

**Dyslexia Action**

[www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/)

**The Dyslexia Association**

[www.dyslexia.uk.net/](http://www.dyslexia.uk.net/)

**AUTISM**

**Autism, Asperger's and Other Social/Communication Conditions**

**The National Autistic Society**

[www.autism.org.uk/](http://www.autism.org.uk/)

**Autism Speaks**

[www.autismspeaks.org/](http://www.autismspeaks.org/)

**Ambitious about Autism**

[www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/page/index.cfm](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/page/index.cfm)

**Asperger Syndrome**

[www.asperger-syndrome.me.uk/](http://www.asperger-syndrome.me.uk/)

**Asperger's Syndrome Foundation**

[www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk/what\\_as.htm](http://www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk/what_as.htm)

**Action for Asperger's**

[www.actionforaspergers.org/](http://www.actionforaspergers.org/)

**SPEECH AND LANGUAGE**

**I can – helping to develop speech, language and communication skills**

[www.ican.org.uk/](http://www.ican.org.uk/)

**Talking point**

[www.talkingpoint.org.uk/](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/)

**Helping your child's speech**

[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/helping-your-childs-speech.aspx#close](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/helping-your-childs-speech.aspx#close)

**ADD/ADHD**

**Living with ADHA**

[www.livingwithadhd.co.uk/](http://www.livingwithadhd.co.uk/)

**ADHD information services**

[www.addiss.co.uk/](http://www.addiss.co.uk/)

**ADHD and you**

[www.adhdandyou.co.uk/](http://www.adhdandyou.co.uk/)

**VISUAL IMPAIRMENT**

**Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)**

[www.rnib.org.uk/](http://www.rnib.org.uk/)

**Action for blind people**

[www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk/?gclid=CL2diuO74rwCFQXlwgodEmQAUg](http://www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk/?gclid=CL2diuO74rwCFQXlwgodEmQAUg)

**National Blind Child's Society**

[www.blindchildreuk.org/](http://www.blindchildreuk.org/)

**LOOK UK – National federation of families with visual impaired children**

[www.look-uk.org/](http://www.look-uk.org/)

**HEARING IMPAIRMENT**

**Royal National Institute of the Deaf (RNID)**

[www.rnid.org.uk/](http://www.rnid.org.uk/)

**Action on hearing loss**

[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/)

**National Deaf Children's Society**

[www.ndcs.org.uk/](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/)

## TOP TIPS

**COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

As with differentiation, if you manage to set up classrooms where students are regularly helping each other, you will find that this can address many SEND needs if monitored and planned for carefully.

Francis Gilbert

#### USE A VARIETY OF LEARNING APPROACHES

Use multi-modal approaches: films, objects, visuals, audio, drama to stimulate students with SEND.

#### SEEK ADVICE AND HELP

Don't struggle alone, work with colleagues to figure out solutions for students with multiple learning needs.

#### BECOME A RESEARCHER

Take developmental view: research the SEND situations you encounter, trying to understand why they are socially situated.

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt from your research about SEND and the issues involved?

## MULTI-LINGUAL LEARNING

#### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn more about multi-lingual learning and EAL.

#### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon the ways in which learners who know different languages might learn. Recall or imagine being in a country where you can't speak the language. How did you feel?

### *THINKING THE ISSUES THROUGH*

What experiences did you have when you learnt a foreign language? How do you feel about speaking in another language now?

How might you make a person who does not speak or know English fluently feel welcome in the class?

Why might language learners find English classes very challenging? What can be done to help them?

### *SOME POSSIBLE STRATEGIES*

- Encourage the language learner to write in his/her own language, doing things like 'free writing' in their own language. Get a fluent English speaker to translate if possible.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

- Make sure you can pronounce their name properly, and ask them about their own culture, possibly asking them to give presentations about it.
- Use comics, pictures and photographs to illustrate key points and themes. A good website to start with is there: **<http://www.educomics.org/>**
- Get students to do DARTS related activities such as filling in the gaps, prediction exercises, text highlighting: **<https://eal.britishcouncil.org/teachers/great-ideas-darts>**

### *WHOLE SCHOOL STRATEGIES*

Cameron and Besser (2004, p. 10) in a report for the DfE about Key Stage 2 made these recommendations. Although it is an old report and about primary school children, I think its recommendations are useful for secondary English teachers. What do you think?

- Schools need to ensure that EAL learners have extensive opportunities to encounter and work with a range of genres of written English.
- EAL learners might be helped with handling formulaic phrases through a focus, across the curriculum, on phrases as whole units rather than only on words.
- Higher achieving EAL learners could benefit from exposure to, and direct teaching about, more advanced tenses that show the relative times of events, and more advanced subordinators to create more varied sentences.
- EAL learners, even those attaining level 5, could benefit from noticing different ways in which well-written stories are brought to an end, and from trying out various story ending techniques.
- Level 3 story writing is characterised by lack of development of narrative components, and both EAL and EMT writers could be helped to increase the amount of development of story setting, characters, and plot, by thinking about the imagined readers of their stories, what they might want to know and how this could be made interesting for them to read.
- Explicit attention to certain features of language such as modal verbs, Adverbials and prepositional phrases seems especially important for lower achieving EAL writers, who seem less likely to

## Francis Gilbert

discover the grammatical patterns by themselves than higher achieving EAL learners.

- Pupils' individual vocabularies offer a rich resource for classroom activities, since many of the less common words used by individual pupils may not be known or used by others.
- Figurative language allows some children opportunities to create vivid images in their stories. Some level 4 and 5 EAL writing makes interesting use of figurative language that could be used as a resource for teaching all pupils.

You can read the full report here:

**<https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Research%20and%20Information/Documents/RR586.pdf>**

What do you think of these points? How might you apply them in your own teaching?

### DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE: LEARNING PUZZLES

You are teaching a class where the students speak many different languages at home. You wish to get them to use their home languages to learn more, what do you do?

## TOP TIPS

### UTILISE FLUENT LANGUAGES

Encourage where appropriate students to speak and write in the language they are fluent in.

### LITERATE STUDENTS WILL LEARN QUICKLY

Students who are literate in their own language will often quickly learn how to read and write in English, it's just a question of scaffolding their learning so that they can initially do things like write in their own language and then translate it.

### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

Arvon have produced a good resource pack:

**<http://www.arvon.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Mother-Tongues-Resource-Pack.pdf>**

National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC)

**<http://www.naldic.org.uk/>**

A Multilingual Digital Storytelling Project



<http://goldsmithsmdst.wordpress.com/>

The British Council website has a wealth of resources for EAL learners:

<https://eal.britishcouncil.org/>

You will find some academic recommendations and a great many references here:

<http://www.nrdc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/EAL-Review.pdf>

There are a number of important books to read in this area as well:

Baker, C. (1996) *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

Cummins, J. 2001. *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society*. Los Angeles: California Association for Bilingual Education.

Cummins, J. (2006). Identity texts: The Imaginative Construction of Self through Multiliteracies Pedagogy. In O. Garcia, T. Skutnabb-Kangas and M.E Torres-Guzman (eds) *Imagining Multilingual Schools: Languages in Education and Globalization*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 51 – 68.

Datta, M. (2000) *Bilinguality and Literacy*, Continuum.

Heath, S.B. (1983) *Ways with Words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms*, Cambridge University Press.

Kenner, C. (2000) *Home Pages: Literacy links for bilingual children*, Trentham Books

Leung, C. and Creese, A. 2010. *English as an Additional Language: Approaches to teaching linguistic minority students*. London: SAGE.

Miller, J., Austin Windle, J., & Yazdanpanah, L. (2014). *Planning lessons for refugee-background students: Challenges and strategies*. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 9(1), 38-48.

Obied, V. (2007) 'Why did I do nothing?' *Poetry and the experience of bilingual pupils in a mainstream inner-city secondary school*, *English and Education: Poetry Matters*, Vol. 41, pp 37-52.

Opie, I. and P. (1959) *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, Oxford University Press..

Sneddon, R. 2009. *Bilingual Books- Biliterate Children*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

Wrigley, T. 2000. *The power to learn: stories of success in the education of Asian and other bilingual pupils*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about multi-lingual learning from this section?

## SAFE-GUARDING

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider what safeguarding means by considering the fictional case of Jim Smith.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect what safeguarding children might mean in the contemporary context. How does a teacher protect their students from the dangers of modern living, e.g. violence, the different types of abuse, bullying, pornography, alcohol, drugs etc?

### WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

- What are your experiences of controversial issues:
- As an English student at school/university;
- As a pupil in your whole school experience;
- As a teacher and observer in schools.
- What are sensitive and controversial issues in the school context? Have they changed over time? E.g. “British values” agenda etc.
- What do you know about E-safety? Child protection issues? Dealing with controversial issues within the curriculum?

### *PUTTING JIM/JANE SMITH ON TRIAL*

You are going to read a fake trial in which a made-up teacher, Jim/Jane Smith is accused of certain actions. Read the material through and consider your response to it.

### PROFILE

Name: James (Jim) or Jane Smith (depending on who plays this role, please adapt accordingly)

Age: 25

Years in teaching: 1 year (PGCE in English attained from Jones University)

Post: English mainstream teacher at Strict Academy, teaching 11-18 year olds.

Marital status: unmarried.

Education: attended Hard Knocks Comprehensive, studied at Jones University, attained a 2:1 degree. Plays guitar in a rock band called ‘Bloody Hell’; a minor criminal conviction for possession of marijuana.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

### **LAW UNDER WHICH SACKED:**

2.2.2. of school disciplinary professionals

(b) Refusal to carry out a reasonable and lawful and safe instruction within the normal duties of the post.

(c) Gross negligence caused by unreasonably failing to attend to or to carry out the normal duties of the post.

### **FAILURE TO MEET THE FOLLOWING TEACHING STANDARDS:**

1 Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils

5 Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils

7 Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment

8 Fulfil wider professional responsibilities

### **REASON FOR SACKING FOR GROSS PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT:**

Over the course of Mr Smith's first year in teaching, he consistently and regularly flouted the rules of Strict Academy by:

Discussing topics of a sexual nature in his classes, including masturbation, adultery, pornography etc.

- Being abusive about other students, parents and teachers on social media.
- Accessing pornography using a school computer.
- By asking Sixth Form students to call him by his first name
- Allowing students to observe inappropriate pornographic websites on school site.
- By showing 18 rated films to his GCSE class
- By informing his class about his political allegiances to far-left organisations
- By expressing sympathy for terrorism.
- By upsetting students by getting them to write suicide notes.

### ***MR SMITH'S RESPONSE (IN BRIEF):***

I did not access pornography on the school site, but it is true that when I had the school browser open at home, I did view a legal pornographic site late at night. I apologise for this. It was not a school computer, but

my own. I assume the school were alerted because I had its VLE open at the same time.

I have complained about some senior leaders, parents and students on Facebook, but this has been privately discussed between my friends, and is not publicly available. I don't know how it was leaked out.

In regards to my teaching, topics of a sexual nature were discussed because they were relevant to the texts I was teaching in class, *An Inspector Calls*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and William Blake's *London*.

I asked my Sixth Form to call me by my first name for a couple of lessons as an educational experiment to observe the effect of calling people by different names. It was part of a project.

I was not aware students were accessing pornography during a lesson I was taking. I did not encourage them to do this.

I showed a short extract from *The Godfather* to accompany my teaching of *An Inspector Calls*.

When teaching *Death of a Salesman*, I offered a "counter-view" to provoke a discussion about capitalism in which I expressed the opinion that the 1% of the population owned most of the wealth, and it was time for the people to seize their property and wealth, and share it out.

When teaching Poetry From Other Cultures, I contextualised Middle-Eastern poetry in translation from that area, by showing how colonial powers had, in part, caused terrorism by assisting with the displacing of Palestinian people, fighting two Iraq wars, propping up corrupt regimes like those in Saudi Arabia.

I asked my students to write Willy Loman's suicide note at the end of *Death of a Salesman*, an appropriate task since he does commit suicide in the text.

**ROLES FOR TRIAL:**

Jim Smith himself.

Two or three NATIONAL COLLEGE FOR TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP members who oversee that things are being done properly (monitoring work during preparation)

A union representative (supporting Jim Smith)

A lawyer for Jim Smith.

A lawyer for Strict Academy.

*A series of witnesses who give evidence before the tribunal:*

Supportive colleagues

The Senior Leadership of the school who want to get rid of Jim Smith.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Local police officer who was asked to investigate by the school.

Students both for and against.

Journalists reporting for the local press.

Parents both for and against.

Ofsted inspectors who observed his lessons.

Educational experts (either for or against, or both)

A jury (who is everyone)

### **PREPARATION**

If you are working in a class, you will need to prepare for the trial. NATIONAL COLLEGE FOR TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP members liaise between prosecution and defence to make sure things are done properly, and appropriate information shared.

Call witnesses, gather statements.

You can find more about misconduct here:

**<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teacher-misconduct-regulating-the-teaching-profession>**

### **THE TRIAL ITSELF**

Either you carry out the trial in group, or you mindfully reflect upon the different roles in the trial, and consider what the different people might say. What will their perspectives be?

### **THERAPY SESSIONS**

After the trauma of this trial, which has caused a huge fuss in the local and then national press, everyone goes into therapy. What might they say to each other?

### **MINDFUL REFLECTION**

What have you learnt from either imagining the trial in your own head, or acting it out? What issues connected with safeguarding does it raise?

### ***SAFEGUARDING: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE***

*A few years ago, while working at a large comprehensive where I felt safe, I wrote the following article for the Telegraph after the shocking murder of a teacher:*

#### **A KILLER IN THE CLASSROOM**

29 APRIL 2014  
THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

## IS IT POSSIBLE THAT VIOLENT AND UNRULY CHILDREN POSE A BIGGER PROBLEM THAN SCHOOLS DARE ADMIT?

Having taught for more than 20 years in various comprehensives, I can honestly say that there has been no more shocking news about the profession in the past couple of decades than the death of Anne Maguire, a teacher for more than 40 years at Corpus Christi Catholic College in Leeds.

It brings back memories of the murder of Philip Lawrence, a courageous London headteacher who intervened in a fight in 1995, only to be stabbed to death. This killing is possibly even more shocking because it appears to have happened within a school, while Mr Lawrence died outside the school gates.

At this stage, it is impossible to know exactly what happened yesterday, but inevitably this case is going to raise a number of questions about the safety of our teachers and pupils. The most obvious is that there may well be calls for tighter security. In many inner-city schools in the US, there are metal detectors; should these be introduced into our schools, particularly ones that admit students who, possibly, are violent?

This, in turn, may lead to calls for pupils to be “profiled” and their records checked to see if they have a history of violent behaviour. But do we really want to go down this route, which would be a significant step towards turning our schools into prisons?

I am lucky to love the school in which I work. The behaviour of those I teach is exceptionally good. But I have taught in schools where some students have been very badly behaved. I have had missiles thrown at me, found ripped cans embedded in my chair, broken up fights between pupils, suffered verbal threats and, at times, feared for my safety.

When these incidents occurred, I largely suffered in silence because there was a culture in these schools that the teacher was to blame. In one school, I had managers say to me that I wasn’t making my lessons interesting enough and that this was why the behaviour was so bad.

This haunted me to the point where I would wake up sweating at night. I wanted to be a teacher, but I just felt I couldn’t operate properly. Like many teachers in these sorts of schools, I did my level best to get out: I played the game, pretended everything was hunky-dory to the senior management, got a good reference as a result, and departed. But, of course, this culture of secrecy and “covering up” wasn’t doing the teachers or the students any favours.

It is easy to understand why the school did this: they didn't want it getting out that there was such chronic indiscipline. They wanted to present an entirely false image to the public that it was a great school. I should add that this wasn't an inner-city school, but a large mixed comprehensive in a London suburb; I had done my time in an inner-city comprehensive, but actually found the behaviour was better there, even though the students were from much more deprived backgrounds.

There is nothing to indicate so far that what happened yesterday in Leeds was anything other than a terrible one-off incident in an otherwise peaceable school. But the incidence of violence in schools is undeniable and teachers have to be prepared to encounter it.

Last week, a survey of 31 police forces found that almost 1,000 pupils have been caught in the past three years with weapons including guns, a meat cleaver, axes and a cut-throat razor. Among them were 80 primary school children, the youngest of whom was an eight-year-old discovered to be carrying a knife to school in Scotland. Altogether, 249 knives were found over the three-year period.

In 2011-12, 550 pupils were expelled from English state schools for assaulting an adult – usually a teacher or classroom assistant – and 16,970 suspensions were handed out.

The figures were down slightly on the previous two years, but academics claim that levels of indiscipline in schools may have been “seriously underestimated” for many years. A study earlier this month from East Anglia University warned that bad behaviour was being deliberately depressed because of the pressure to satisfy inspectors and keep expulsion rates down. The research said figures from Ofsted showing that behaviour was good or outstanding in 92 per cent of schools were “misleading” and “may seriously underestimate the extent to which a poor classroom climate limits pupil achievement”.

In my experience, the crucial point in getting children to behave well is that teachers need to be open with each other about what is going on in their lessons and they must feel they can get help. It is for this reason that I don't think the solution to poor discipline is to call in the “heavy brigade”: security guards, metal detectors and CCTV. This just alienates the majority of children, who are largely well behaved.

So what really goes wrong? Why do some students sometimes completely “lose it”? I have found that you can divide badly behaved students into three categories: the yobs, the crooks and the psychos.

The “yobs” are the commonest. These are pupils who love the whole performance of being badly behaved: who claim status among their peers by humiliating the teacher. They often act in groups, but there will always be a leader, usually someone who is both charismatic and alienated for some reason or other: either they aren’t good at the work or they are bullies.

Over the years, I’ve found it is best to charm the “leader”: to build a relationship with him or her, and get them on your side, make them feel that they can succeed and that you value them. This isn’t a hard and fast rule, but with work and careful strategic thinking, you can get them working.

The crooks generally are not that “visible” in the sense that you may not immediately notice that they are behaving badly: they are criminals and want to get away with their crimes. They know the worst thing they can do is show the world what they are doing. But they may well be doing bad stuff: stealing things, dealing drugs, cheating at their work, threatening people in secret, perhaps threatening you without you knowing it. The anonymous note or comment on the internet can really intimidate.

Finally, the rarest of these is the “psychotic”. This is the trickiest and most terrifying person to deal with because they don’t listen to reason and they are often very unpredictable in their behaviour. In my estimation, I’ve only encountered a couple of them in my career, but dealing with them was, quite frankly, terrifying because I felt that I just didn’t know what they were going to do.

I can remember one incident where I asked John, aged 15, to leave the room because he was smashing another student on the shoulder. He turned to me in fury and refused to go. I was young then, and didn’t know what to do. I shouted at him and he started yelling at me that he was going to kill me. But then, mercifully, he stormed out of the classroom, kicking an empty chair over as he left. After quite a bit of paperwork, he was excluded from school, and then dropped out. But I can still remember the stony rage in his eyes.

But this, one has to remember, was a “one-off” and possibly my interpretation of his psychology was wrong – though I was later to learn that this child was known by the authorities to have a history of violence. If there had been a more open culture in that school – it was the one that



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

specialised in covering up its failings – then perhaps the child could have been dealt with in a more constructive way.

I think it's no coincidence that this incident happened in a class that I was preparing for a high- stakes GCSE English exam. The pressures on children and teachers to get good results in exams can exacerbate poor behaviour and create a very tense atmosphere in classes.

If we are really going to solve the problem of poor behaviour in our schools, we need to think very carefully about a whole host of issues and give teachers the freedom to speak honestly about the bad behaviour they're enduring in their classes without them feeling they are to blame.

In the meantime, the only appropriate act today is to mourn Anne Maguire, a fine and much-loved teacher whom generations of pupils will remember as a powerful force for good.

### MINDFUL REFLECTION

What issues does this article raise and are they still valid today with respect to safeguarding teachers?

## *TOP TIPS*

### PORN SITES

Be very careful about how you use computers and your activities online: abusive social media posts, looking at pornography on a school computer or even having a school intranet on while you are looking at porn, can all lead to being sacked.

### CHILD PROTECTION

Report any worries you might have about a child or member of staff immediately to the designated child protection officer in the school or headteacher. Never promise to keep any information confidential.

### DON'T BE ALONE WITH CHILDREN

Never be alone with a child you teach in an enclosed space; this is when false allegations can happen.

### WISE UP

Learn about e-safety and follow your school's procedures to the letter: <http://www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals/staff-e-safety-inset-presentation>

### JOIN A UNION

You should join a union to get legal and insurance coverage; they also can give you invaluable help in a variety of situations.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

The NUT have the best resources in this regard:

**<https://www.teachers.org.uk/help-and-advice/self-help/s/safeguarding>**

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about safe-guarding from this section?

## SPIRITUAL, MORAL AND CITIZENSHIP ISSUES

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider how English can be an excellent subject from which to explore spiritual, moral and citizenship issues.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon spiritual, moral and citizenship issues and their place in schools. What does it mean to be moral? What does it mean to be spiritual? What does a citizen look and feel like?

### *POEMS BY LONDON STUDENTS*

Read the following poems by various London students, taken from the anthology *My Life, My Stories* (2017) and consider the spiritual, moral and citizenship issues they raise:

#### TRAINS TO HEAVEN BY BENEDICT WILLIAMS

Your ride will stop at several points during the journey:

- Birth
- First word
- First day at school
- SATs
- First time abroad (you'll enjoy Italy, one of your highlights)
- Secondary School

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

- First girlfriend (do NOT choose the window seat – you don't want to stop here)
- GCSEs (expect delays)
- A Levels
- First job
- University (expect fees)
- First job
- Marriage
- Earning £100,000 (we will be pausing to enjoy the views at this stop)
- Retiring (the train will start to slow down)
- Wife's funeral (refunds not available, you must continue the journey alone)
- HEAVEN.

(Your train has arrived. Please enjoy the ride, it is a long journey but it is worth it)

### MY HOME, ALEPPO, SYRIA BY NEDAE EL-AZIZI AMAZDOUY

#### *ONE OF MY EARLIEST MEMORIES*

Stripped of humanity, childhood and life: I sat on the hill of distorted rubble gazing into the boundless horizon of destruction. I looked down at my skeletal fingers which were rattling uncontrollably. The cuts and bruises engraved into them. The smell lingered of death and anguish. The air swept everybody's hope and dreams away. It was a time to face reality, hope wasn't reality. My home in front of me didn't tower over me anymore; it had crumbled down like a jigsaw puzzle being pulled apart. Piece by piece until eventually all was left was the space that it filled, the memories its only remains. My neighbours' house was torn in half. I could see into my friends' bedroom. Her mirror still hung on the wall with all of her drawings; her bed still was still made. Then the other side of the room was completely gone.

My favourite dress had been ripped apart and was smeared in blood. A thick layer of dust concealed my entire fragile, little body. My hair sat loosely on my back in two braids. My blood shot eyes showed no feeling,

## Francis Gilbert

I was numb. Unable to have any control over my life, I was numb. I'd heard stories about how Aleppo was before. How it had been swarmed with ambition and life. How the trees blossomed during the spring as the flowers started to grow. All of this was but just a story. My life had women screaming in despair holding out their deceased child. Fathers bowing down surrendering to God's power as they had nothing left to provide their family with.

At the age of 5, this was the norm. I had been born into this war so I was oblivious to the life I had the right to have but didn't have. All of the humanitarian rights meant nothing to me. After I had lost my parents, I had been scavenging for food, alongside thousands of other children. All food seemed to have stopped. Nobody knew what tomorrow would bring.

I was the child that sat on the hill of distorted rubble, with no family, with no home. Nothing more. Nothing less.

### ONE RUPEE BY ALINA MALIK

I can still remember the energy. The wild, polluted air reaching my lungs as I scampered cautiously across the congested high road on Sector 17, Ibn-e-Sina Road. In my peripheral vision, I could see an exhausted child, no older than 10, innocently approaching me - begging for one rupee. Just one rupee. But of course I was too young at the time, and I could barely even pick my own nose- let alone treat him.

4 years. It's been 4 years and I'm back to where I started. Islamabad is so different. It's beautiful- a region-wide symbol of progress, innovation and architectural marvel. I was quite impressed at this point until a typical incident happened and broke my heart, as usual. Earlier someone approached me. A boy who navigated the streets of Islamabad by lying, stomach-down, on an old skateboard, and dragging his body along with his arms. He didn't have any legs. He rolled over to me, looked up into my eyes and patiently waited - begging for one rupee. Just one rupee. Then I realised nothing has changed. It may look different, but nothing has really changed. Despite its visible flaws, Pakistani people have worked hard to try and break the stereotype of a repressed nation. If it was possible to modernise the exterior of the country to make it aesthetically pleasing, why is it permissible for such large numbers of common people to suffer endlessly and not be supported? This time I had something to give.

### BELONGING BY AMAAN CHOUDHRY

I belong to my room  
I belong to my home  
I belong to London  
I belong to Dubai  
I belong to the Chaudhry Family  
I belong to the world  
I belong to the universe  
I belong to the cricket pitch  
I belong to the Karate Dojo  
I belong to Forest Hill School  
I belong to Beckenham  
I belong to Sydenham  
I belong to Lewisham  
I belong to my family

## DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Make some notes and/or visual organisers on the ways in which you might, as an English teacher, explore spiritual, moral and citizenship issues. I found in my teaching that they came up a great deal with my lessons exploring things like love, sex and relationships, issues connected with abuse, bullying, celebrity culture etc. coming up again and again as topics for discussion in the class. I found that my willingness to discuss these issues meant that students were more engaged and actually got better results, even though we went “off topic” at times. For example, when discussing Carol Ann Duffy’s poem *Dream of a Lost Friend*, I found myself explaining how people became infected with HIV and the different modes of transmission. Many students, even though they had covered it in their Personal Social Health Education lessons, were unaware of the basic facts. I felt it was my duty to tell them again. We talked about it, and they came to like the poem, which previously they had struggled with.

What do you think? What are controversial and sensitive issues in the context of the English classroom?

What issues connected with sex arise within the context of the English curriculum? Think about Romeo complaining about Rosaline, “nor ope her lap for saint-seducing gold”; the representation of Curley’s wife in *Of Mice and Men*; love poetry like Marvell’s *To His Coy Mistress* etc?

When does the issue of death arise within the context of the English curriculum? Consider Shakespeare's tragedies; suicide in *Macbeth*, *Death of a Salesman* and *An Inspector Calls*. English departments have got into trouble about this such as the school that encouraged students to write suicide notes imagining they were Lady Macbeth. Is it fair to condemn schools for doing this?

Consider the other difficult but important issues you might cover within the English classroom such as racism, sexism, ageism, environmental catastrophe, religious fundamentalism etc. What is appropriate to explore and what is not? How might you harness the energy and debate that these topics stoke up to help your students become better learners?

Having thought about these issues, find out more about what is now expected of teachers regarding the teaching of spiritual, moral and citizenship issues. At the time of writing, the British Values agenda is very much being pushed upon schools. Do some research into this agenda, considering the pros and cons of it.

## TOP TIPS

### FIGURE OUT WHERE YOU STAND

Think carefully about your own beliefs and your own morality; does it match what your school is advocating. If not, why not?

### SHARE APPROPRIATE THOUGHTS

Obviously if you are an atheist, it probably is not a good idea to constantly say so in a religious school. Think about what is appropriate to share and not share with your students; many pupils are interested in what teachers believe in so it's worth thinking through what is appropriate to share and what is not.

### BE MINDFUL

Above all, be sensitive and mindful about other people's beliefs, treating them with compassion and respect.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Relevant sections of:

Brooks, V., Abbott, I., & Huddleston, P. (2012). *Preparing to teach in secondary schools: A student teacher's guide to professional issues in secondary education* (3rd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

The Citizenship Foundation website has a wealth of resources to help teachers:

**<http://www.doingsmsc.org.uk/>**

More general guidance can be found here:

**<https://www.gov.uk/education/spiritual-moral-social-and-cultural-development>**

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about spiritual, moral and citizenship issues in this section

## PART III: SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE

### WHAT IS ENGLISH?

#### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider what constitute English as a subject for study in school, looking at the history of its evolution in educational settings.

#### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon what English as a subject means to you, considering any images. Meditate upon the English teachers you have had, the subjects you were taught, what made you feel happy, what made you feel anxious, the rewards and problems of the subject.

#### A HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

##### *THE GREAT TRADITION*

You could argue that it was a group of lecturers at Cambridge University during the 1920s that gave the study of English Literature its academic footing (Young, pp. 25-26). Until then, the study of literature had very much been the province of informed gentleman, journalists and writers. Many authors from the Romantic and Victorian era, including Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and possibly most significantly, Matthew Arnold, wrote criticism and cultural commentaries on the role of literature in society, much of which is still very pertinent today. However, there was no drive to make the study of literature a scientific discipline; indeed much of their writing was a reaction against the scientific method.

But the Cambridge lecturers, led by I.A. Richards were determined to show that literature could be studied scientifically. Richards pioneered a method called “practical criticism” which involved analysing poetry in great depth by taking the poem out of its context and looking very carefully at the linguistic devices it deployed. You were probably taught a version of practical criticism at school, when you may have looked exhaustively at a poet’s use of alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme and rhythm in a piece of coursework or exam. You may well find that you use this approach when you teach literary analysis. A word of warning: while it is a valid approach, it can result in some very dry teaching, and is not necessarily what examiners are looking for, even if many English teachers think this is the case.



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Richards and his colleagues, who included critics from America as well, believed very strongly that some literary texts were far better than others in their use of literary devices. This fundamental belief in a hierarchy of texts led to the establishment of a “literary canon” in the academic realm with certain writers such as Chaucer and Shakespeare being accorded much higher status than most others. Richards’ follower, F.R. Leavis (1895-1978) took things even further in his book *The Great Tradition* by singling out certain novelists – like Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad – as being “great”, while more popular forms of fiction were dismissed as being worthless (Young, pp. 25-26). His central argument was that certain texts are so good that they transcend their time because they contain timeless characters and truths. Although Leavis did choose some women to be part of the canon like Austen and Eliot, most of his choices were dead white men (Pope, p. 137).

From the 1980s, many academics have questioned the whole concept of the literary canon, doubting whether one can create a hierarchy of texts in this way, asking whether there are “timeless truths” embedded in texts like messages in a bottle (Eagleton, 1996a).

What do you think? Because of their questions, new texts emerged as worthy of study: popular fiction, genre fiction, experimental writing, writing by women, writing by people from a variety of diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, different ways of reading texts emerged. However, in schools it is the more ‘traditional’ approach to studying literature which is encouraged; this is a shame because there are some exciting new ways of examining literature and some wonderful new writing, which is often not explored within schools.

However, I’ve found that if you break down these approaches into certain key areas, then you find that there are common points between all of them. Let’s look at the different areas that different approaches to literature take:

**Contexts of writing.** You’ll find that many of the lessons you teach will aim to contextualize a literary text, that is, to place a text in the time when it was written; your lessons will possibly explore the life of the author and how that influenced the writing of the text; they may look at the society that the text emerged from and how the values of that society shaped and influenced the language of the text; you could look at the ways in which other texts influenced the writing of the text. The main point is that what is being explored is the background to the writing of the text; the

different contexts it emerged from. In my experience, this is the most common form of exploring contexts in school. It can be fascinating to do this because you will give your pupils a real over-view of how and why the text was written. With a bit of research on the internet you could find some brilliant lectures where the experts discuss literary texts; often they will give you a brilliant insight into how writers came to create seminal texts. You could then adapt or show clips of these lectures to your students.

Remember exploring contexts of writing is a very broad area and critics who take different approaches can use their particular approach or interest to inform how they present the contexts in which a text was written. For example, a Marxist critic may well examine how the social structure of the period shaped and influenced the writing of a text, while a psycho-analytical critic may look at the sexual morals of the time and consider how attitudes towards sexuality informed the text (Pope, pp. 164-66).

**Contexts of reading.** This is an approach which is not so common as examining the contexts of writing of a text and possibly more contentious, but, for me, makes profound sense. This approach considers the different ways in which a reader reads a text and examines the way in which a reader's social class, gender, age, ethnicity, geographical and historical location influences the reading of a text. As its starting point, it asserts that a text only has meaning in the mind of a reader; that readers construct the meaning of a text in their head and that depending upon their background or context, they'll read a text differently from another person. For example, with a Shakespeare play like *Othello*, someone who is black may well have different perspectives on the racist language in the play than someone who is white. Similarly, a woman may view the abuse that Desdemona suffers from in the play quite differently from a man. Furthermore, a person who is from a society that denies the rights of women may well make different observations than someone who comes from a society where women are more equal.

A large body of theory has developed around this approach with the two leading lights being Stanley Fish (Pope, p. 274), who helped developed what is now known as the "Reader-Response" theory, and Stuart Hall (Eagleton, 1996b), a theorist who shaped what is known as "Reception Theory" which is widely used on Media Studies courses, but is equally applicable to English Literature students.

Other approaches that examine the “contexts of reading” of a text are structuralists’ who look very carefully at how language creates effects in readers’ minds (Pope, p. 175). They are far less concerned about the wider contexts of reading and much more interested in how and why language creates certain connections and contrasts in a reader’s mind. This was probably an approach you were taught at school.

Unfortunately, when it’s taught in a moribund fashion, it can kill a text because you end up “feature-spotting”, looking in dry fashion for the various linguistic techniques in a text such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, personification, the use of rhyme and rhythm and so forth, with your mind desperately trying to find a suitable effect to go with the technique. This said, if done well, it’s a very illuminating and inspiring approach. At your university, you’ll find experts in many of these fields, and you’ll find that you are inspired by their fantastic close reading of various poems, plays and novels.

Many theorists can be slotted within these two categories: critics who examine the “contexts of writing” (the circumstances of the writing of the text) and those who address the “contexts of reading” (how readers interpret the text) texts.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Read *Living Literature* (2000) pp. 42-80. This is an A Level text book which contains one of the best and clearest explanation of these tricky theoretical issues I’ve found. You can buy it very cheaply on Amazon second hand.

### *LEARNING ACTIVITY*

Consider how these approaches to studying literature might inform your teaching, thinking carefully about what texts/topics you would cover in order to explore contexts of reading and writing.

Sketch out some lesson plans where you get your students to learn about contexts of writing and reading.

### *SOCIAL CLASS AND MARX*

Many critics from different fields examine the role of social class in shaping a text. The most notable critics who analyze texts from this perspective are usually heavily influenced by Marxism (Pope, pp. 155-63).

Karl Marx was a nineteenth century philosopher who theorised that the most decisive factor in society was social class. He divided society up

into the working classes (the proletariat), the middle-class (the bourgeoisie), and the upper classes (the aristocracy, or the ruling class).

His contention was that society was set up so that the bourgeoisie and the upper classes enjoyed most of the profits of the work done by the proletariat. He suggested to overcome this situation, the working classes should join together and overcome the ruling elite by force, and then establish their own communist state where all the profits of labour were divided equally between all people (Singer, p. 33).

A Marxist critic examines literary texts from this perspective, looking at the ways in which social class is represented in a text. There are two key approaches. The Marxist critic who actively searches for other overtly Marxist texts, or the critic who looks at texts which may not be Marxist in outlook but examine the role of social class (Pope, 155-63). Critics who take slightly different approaches such as cultural materialists also do this (Pope, p. 160).

### *POST-STRUCTURALISM*

There are a whole host of other literary theorists who could come under the umbrella of being post-structuralist critics or thinkers. The term “post-structuralism” means “after structuralism” and has been a label applied to theorists who have either rejected or developed the concepts of structuralism. Structuralism started as a social science and was used by anthropologists like Levi-Strauss to categorize and analyse social groups by looking at the ways in which they deployed “binary opposites” in their language and culture. Structuralists theorized that language and culture developed using opposites; that many words are defined by what they are NOT. So, light wouldn’t exist as a concept without darkness, its opposite. Likewise, “good” wouldn’t be a moral quality without the notion of “evil”.

A key figure in the development of these ideas was the French thinker, Roland Barthes (1915-1980), who wrote an essay, *Death of the Author* (Belsey, p. 18), which is studied on most English degree courses because it is so influential. Barthes put the case that the intention of an author can never be fully known, that language is slippery and full of different shades of meaning, connoting different things to different people, depending upon their context.

Other thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida took things even further, arguing that subjectivity and the notion of the individual author is an illusion, a social construct, and that there are only

“discourses” – ways of talking and writing – which permeate texts. Unlike Leavis and other more traditional critics, who developed the cult of the author, Derrida and Foucault examined the underlying contextual meanings of texts, looking at the ways in which they promoted certain ideas and examining why those ideas were there. They often wrote in a complex way because they were trying to escape from the constraints of ordinary language, trying to invent a new way of thinking about texts and ourselves. (Belsey, p. 42, p.56)

Many feminist critics have deployed a post-structuralist outlook because they’ve seen it as a way of deconstructing the underlying gender assumptions that underpin much of our language and literature. Feminist critics such as Catherine Belsey and Gayatri Spivak have looked at the ways in which our language endorses male power.

#### *LEARNING ACTIVITY*

Consider when you might want your students to explore Marxist ideas and concepts. Don’t just limit yourself to A Level lessons, consider how Marxist ideas might be investigated at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Sketch out some lesson plans where you get your students to learn about Marxism.

#### *USEFUL READING ON LITERARY THEORY*

Castle, G. (2013) *The Literary Theory Handbook* (Blackwell Literature Handbooks) Wiley-Blackwell.

I found this guide very readable; Castle takes you through all the basic literary theories in an insightful and engaging fashion. The book is expensive so make sure you get it out from the library.

Eagleton, T. (1996) *Literary Theory – An Introduction* Wiley-Blackwell.

This book has become a seminal text – far more than a study guide -- with Eagleton not only offering advice on how to read and apply literary theory but also providing some of his own provocative, witty insights into various approaches. He is always readable but can quite intellectually challenging and personally I would read Castle or Pope before tackling his book, which is essential but difficult at times.

He’s a good speaker and can be found here delivering a brilliant lecture on the death of criticism: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-20dZxUAfu0&feature=related>

Pope, R. (2012) *Studying English and English Literature*. Routledge.

If you buy one expensive book on your course which may not be on your reading list, buy this one! It really is a cornucopia of information and help. Pope is an eminent literary critic and a sensible voice of authority; this book is very detailed and useful, providing in-depth guidance on how to analyze literary and non-literary texts, as well as clear explanations of a host of literary theories and approaches. The book also provides very useful web links as well.

## DISCUSSING THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH

CREATIVE TEACHER: Using the timeline below, I'd like you to read the following historical events either in a group, and then find three objects which are analogous to three of the most important historical events in the development of English as a subject.

BEGINNER TEACHER: You need to be creative and think laterally about this so if, for example, you feel that language is absolutely vital for the development of English, and you have an object such as a person or cartoon you might match this object with language, and explain to the group why the object is analogous.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: You'd say something like language emerges because humans represent objects and concepts in sound system, using their mouths and bodies to this, and this object is analogy for the human body for my purposes.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: If you can't find a direct analogy use your imagination. So you might use a Dalek to represent the exam system etc.

CREATIVE TEACHER: But you'd need to explain why.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Then, if you are working in groups, get some Monopoly money, keep one or two people at your station, and buy with your limited resources the other important analogy objects in the room.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And people can buy from you.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: But of course, you must prepare a 'pitch', a sales pitch, as to why your objects are so crucial to the development of English as a subject.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Don't hand your objects over but keep a tally of how much money you make. You can set the prices depending upon how money people have.

BEGINNER TEACHER: At the end of the exercise, people can see how much money they have made.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

### *TIMELINE*

70,000-60,000 BC: Human-like creatures probably begin to use language;

7,000 BC: The first writing cultures are established in what is now Iraq. Writing is the privilege of a religious elite.

1440: Gutenberg invents the first printing press.

1623: Shakespeare's plays are published as a book.

1835: English Education Act officially requires Indians to study in English and to study works of English literature.

1830s-1850s: English established as a language in the colonies, with English authors like Shakespeare being top of the canon.

1851: Matthew Arnold, one of the first HMIs for schools, campaigns successfully for the place of English within the curriculum, particularly the study of literature, of the new state education system. Arnold believes exams stifled creativity; these views are ignored.

1870: The Elementary Education Act makes provision for the education of every child from ages 3-13. Welsh children must only be taught in English.

1880: Education is made compulsory for every child until aged 10.

1919: F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, E.M.W Tillyard and I.A. Richards teach the first English literature course at Cambridge.

1921: The Newbolt Report argues English should be taught to help develop students' moral characters.

1944: The Butler Education Act makes education free for all children, raises leaving age to 15, establishes 3 part-system: grammar schools, secondary moderns and technical schools.

1964: Schools Council is established, with progressive teachers arguing learning is a collaborative endeavour between teacher and student.

1965: Anthony Crosland asks Local Authorities (Circular 10/65) to convert existing grammar and secondary modern schools into comprehensives.

1975: Bullock Report (DES, 1975) is published, values the language of the home, replaces notions of correctness with appropriateness, and promoted the importance of language (as opposed to literature).

1976: The Schools Council is abolished after a report is published, known as the 'Yellow Book'. The YB was commissioned by James Callaghan, the PM, who at a famous speech at Ruskin College, Oxford, stated: "Education policy should be guided by economic imperatives;

students should be prepared for the ‘world of work’; existing classroom practice should be subject to critical scrutiny, central influence over educational change asserted”.

1976-present day: ‘Discourses of derision’ about English teachers established in media who are blamed for illiteracy in the country.

1985: Norman Tebbit tells Today programme that if students are not taught “good English” they will turn to crime. (Marshall 1997: 11)

1986: GCSEs replace O Levels, which were only taken by 15% of the population.

1988: The first National Curriculum established. The English NC, written by Brian Cox, implements many of the findings of Bullock, with students being taught Knowledge About Language (KAL).

1992: Ofsted set up and first school league tables published. Teacher strikes about Key Stage tests; teacher views ignored.

1993: The National Curriculum revised. A prescribed list of authors, including Shakespeare and pre-1914 literature is introduced; KAL is replaced by more formal grammar lessons.

2007: The National Curriculum revised. More emphasis on text genres and downgrading of literature, particularly pre-1914 literature.

2013: The National Curriculum revised. Return to grammar teaching, much more emphasis on pre-1914 literature.

2015: New English GCSE begins with English graded 1-9; coursework is virtually abolished with huge focus upon unseen poetry written before 1900.

Please note: timeline adapted from Green et al. (2011)

#### LEARNING PUZZLE 1

Make sure that you do the activity suggested in the scripted section called *Discussing the History of English Literature*.

What has been missed out from the timeline?

Why might this timeline be useful for English teachers to be aware of?

What three things would you like to see happening in the future?

#### YOUR LIFE STORY IN 5 BOOKS

#### LEARNING PUZZLE 2

Tell your life-story in five books, listing the books that are most influential in your life and why.



**A HISTORY OF ENGLISH TEACHING IN 15 BOOKS**

**LEARNING SCRIPT**

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** Read though the books listed below. Which ones do you think are the most important in the development of English as a subject?

**TEST OBSESSED TEACHER:** This time find an object to represent 6-10 of what you think are the most significant books, label it with that book's title, and have a go at establishing a 'value continuum' of the objects on your table with the most important books at one end of the table, and the least important at another end.

**BEGINNER TEACHER:** Be prepared to justify your choices.

**15 IMPORTANT BOOKS**

The manuscript of **Beowulf**, the longest poem in Old English, thought to be written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but almost certainly based upon spoken word stories which had been in circulation for centuries. Do you think we value the written word too much today and have forgotten the importance of spoken stories?

The manuscript of **The Canterbury Tales** by Geoffrey Chaucer (1345-1400). This was a very popular book in medieval times because it was written in Middle English, a mixture of Old English, French and early modern English, which was accessible to many people; many other texts, including all religious ones, were written in Latin, and not easy for everyone to understand.

**Shakespeare's First Folio:** this was the first edition of Shakespeare's plays published in 1623 after his death. How important, in your view, is Shakespeare's influence upon the English curriculum today?

**The King James Bible**, which was the first ever full English translation of the Bible, remains the most widely published text in the world. Before its publication, most people had to rely upon priests to interpret the Bible from the Latin for them; the KJV or Authorised Version (AV) as it is sometimes known allowed people to receive the "Word of God" directly and interpret it directly. It has been hugely influential upon many literature texts: why, do you think?

**Samuel Johnson's Dictionary** published in 1755, one of the most famous dictionaries in history. Johnson was commissioned by a group of bookseller to "regulate" and bring firm rules to the English language, which he saw as a "mess". After eight years work on the dictionary, with six helpers, he concluded that the language was impossible to "fix" because it was always changing. However, the dictionary was very important in standardizing the spellings and meanings of words.

**Lowth's Grammar** was published in 1762. This book was very popular with the growing middle-classes who were keen to speak and write "correctly". As with many grammar books, Lowth based his rules on Latin, and so, for example, argued that the infinitive should not be split because they are not in Latin. This means that phrases like "To boldly go" (from *Star Trek*) are incorrect in Lowth's view. Many modern linguists such as David Crystal and Steven Pinker argue that this "prescriptivist" (setting rules) approach to English is actually misguided because all native speakers naturally speak correctly, even when speaking dialects. What do you think?

William Blake's ***Songs of Innocence and Experience***. Blake self-published this edition of poems, after being instructed by his dead brother how to do so in a dream. The collection heralds the beginning of the Romantic era which rejected the rules and regulations set by the "Augustans", the era of Samuel Johnson and Lowth in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, calling for freedom of expression in all its forms: political, sexual and grammatical. In what ways are the arguments between the Augustans, who advocated the importance of "being correct and precise" and the Romantics, who desired free expression, still raging?

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, many people were very confused about how to punctuate, and a number of books were published outlining the key rules, including **Madam Leinstin's The Good Child's Book of Stops** (c. 1825), which was a punctuation rule book for children. Has anything changed since this time?

The **novels of the Brontë sisters** are still some of the most popular books of today, with Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Ann's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) being the

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

most read. In a certain sense, the Brontë sisters illustrate the power of group work because they all worked together to create imaginary worlds as children, which they wrote about in tiny notebooks, and then used those worlds to inform their novels. They faced huge problems in getting published because they were women. What do you think English teachers can learn from the Brontës?

**Hard Times** by Charles Dickens. For me, this remains one of the most important books about teaching ever published. In this novel, Dickens shows the horror of uncreative, “fact-based” teaching which dulls the minds of its pupils, leaving them fearful and insipid at the end of the process. He immortalized this dry pedagogy in the figure of Thomas Gradgrind who relentlessly pursues his agenda of teaching “facts”.

Lewis Carroll’s ***Alice in Wonderland***. This novel remains one of the most accessible and baffling of children’s book; arguably it invented the genre of the children’s book. What do you think of it?

Jamila Gavin ***Coram Boy*** (2000), winner of the Whitbread Children’s Book Award. Arguably, this historical novel ushered in a golden age of children’s literature, which not afraid of exploring controversial issues such as child slavery, racism and social inequalities, all wrapped up in an action-packed plot.

Michael Rosen’s ***Centrally Heated Knickers*** (and other poems). Former Children’s Laureate and now Professor of Children’s Literature at Goldsmiths, Rosen, along with writers like Roald Dahl, J.K. Rowling and Malorie Blackman, has been instrumental in making children’s books massive popular. Read his **poem about exams**; what do you think?

Andrea Levy’s ***Small Island*** (2004) is an important “post-colonial” book, exploring the lives of West Indian immigrants during and after the Second World War, exposing the racism that lies at the heart of English society. Now a staple of A Level and English degrees, it is one of the most popular modern texts. Alongside Salman Rushdie, John Agard, Grace Nichols and **Imtiaz Dharker**, Levy explores the difficulties of living in a divided world. What are your views about exploring difficult issues such as racism in the English classroom?

LEARNING SCRIPT: WHAT IS ENGLISH?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: So we've been asked to discuss the issue of what English is...Seems a bit of a waste of time to me because the answer is very simple: English should be the study of great literature, of the like that **F.R. Leavis** outlined in his marvellous book, *The Great Tradition*, where he showed there are certain texts which have timeless qualities, which transcend their era. Wonderful drama like Shakespeare's plays, Dickens's novels, Wordsworth's poetry and so on. We need to teach great literature to our children so that they are aware of the beauty of our finest minds.

BEGINNER TEACHER: But what if the children don't like reading these difficult works? As a Beginning Teacher I'm very worried about them being bored and getting out of hand if I make them read a lot of this stuff.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Ah, that's the teacher's problem, not the literature's. They need to make the children aware of what is good for them. You're a Beginning Teacher, once you're experienced like me you won't have a problem.

BEGINNER TEACHER: But I heard you only take top sets and A Level...

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Quite right, the privilege of being experienced.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I'm a Test Obsessed Teacher teaching in an inner-city school which is under pressure to get better results. I teach a lot of so-called "great literature" at the moment because it is set for the English exams for GCSE and A Level, but I have to say that many of the children find it off-putting, and I'm not sure it really helps them read and write, if I am quite honest.

CREATIVE TEACHER: And, as a Creative English Teacher, I have sympathy with what the Test-Obsessed Teacher is saying. There is an argument that this great literature is imposed upon children as a form of social control. The colonialist T.B. McCauley in the early 1830s realised that he could help make India more accepting of English rule by insisting that the thousands of applicants who joined the civil service took exams in English and learnt English literature. He and his colleagues found that this led to a much more docile population overall because the Indians absorbed the works of Shakespeare and Dickens out of context, and felt inferior and submissive. McCauley's ideas were so successful that it was decided to use similar English exams in England, and we still see McCauley's influence today with government ministers insisting that children are drilled to appreciate literature which means nothing to them.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: That's exactly the kind of socialist clap trap I expect to hear from you Creative Teacher! Utter nonsense!

CREATIVE TEACHER: There's quite a bit of scholarship to back up my claims.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Marxist academics saying that studying great literature is a form of oppression.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I think it is unless the children understand that literature in its proper context.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I have to say that the exam boards do say that the literature needs to be understood in its context; we need to teach it by explaining the world it comes from.

CREATIVE TEACHER: And the worlds that children bring to a text. Children need to be aware that there are two types of contexts: contexts of writing, the background to the writing of a book, and contexts of reading, the overall thoughts and feelings that a reader brings to a book. The teacher's job is to lead the child in careful stages to appreciating and understanding these difficult texts.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: They need to know about the eternal themes, the imperishable characters, the wonderful techniques of writers like Shakespeare, not a whole load of stuff about context. They're children, they need to be told what is what by someone who knows what he is talking about!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, but I'm finding that a child who has a Somalian background and is obsessed by football isn't really that interested in the posh men and women in things like Sherlock Holmes' stories.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I think we've allowed the Traditional Teacher to dominate too much at the moment. Can the rest of us say what we think English is please? Beginner Teacher, what do you think?

BEGINNER TEACHER: I'm a bit confused, it seems to be lots of things. There's English Language, which seems to include things like studying non-fiction, newspaper articles, blog posts and the media, and there's the grammar side of things, studying the way language works, and then there's English Literature, which, I know from my English degree, is the three different genres of Poetry, Prose and Drama.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Thanks BEGINNER, I'd almost forgotten that; I've been teaching five years and basically, I really only teach to the test, whatever test our senior manager says is coming up. Mainly, we're

drilling children to pass their GCSEs, starting in Year 7. So we get the children to study a lot of mark schemes and do lots of practice papers.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Don't you find that depressing?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: It is a bit, but it's the reality of English teaching now, isn't it?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: For once, I'd agree with CREATIVE. It is depressing. We need to inspire young people with the wonders of literature!

CREATIVE TEACHER: Heh, I'd agree with that, but I think it's a question of what literature. BEGINNER, what really inspired you when you were young?

BEGINNER TEACHER: Well, the books that really turned me onto literature were Harry Potter to begin with, but then after that, I loved reading literature set in India, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, and best of all, Arunduti Roi's *The God of Small Things*. I just found them such wonderful books that took me into another world, and I loved exploring Indian culture. I had a very inspiring English teacher who suggested that I read them outside class.

CREATIVE TEACHER: That's brilliant!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, I'd put Rushdie in the pantheon, not sure about Arunduti Roi though...

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: God, literature isn't a league table as well, is it? I'm getting sick of league tables!

CREATIVE: TEST, what for you is English?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Well, as I've said I think it's basically in today's reality, getting children to pass exams.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, but in your heart of hearts.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: In my heart of hearts, I love Spoken Word Poetry, doing raps, that kind of thing. I play in a band and I write my own poetry, but that has nothing to do with my teaching. Maybe occasionally, I'll use it in the classroom, but most of the time I'll be insisting upon exam based work.

CREATIVE: You see, I think that's a shame because I think as a Creative Teacher, you should use your passions as a way of engaging children, and lead them in careful stages to the exam work. I really feel strongly that children should not be doing lots of tests in Years 7-9, but should be inspired to read independently, to learn to love literature, writing, talking about books. They should feel the joy in learning. I think this can be done!

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Oh yeah, meanwhile in the real world, we're constantly being asked by our senior leadership teams to get children to do lots of assessments.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I think even in this difficult atmosphere, it's still possible to inspire them, and I think if you're educated properly to be a Creative English Teacher, you'll find your exam results will get much better than if you drilled children to pass tests because they'll enjoy the subject. And if you're like the Traditional English Teacher, you'll find that you can teach "great literature" to all sorts of different classes, not just top sets and A Level. And if you're a Beginner Teacher, you'll have a good framework from which to approach teaching for the rest of your career.

This is what this book is about...

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I'm a bit suspicious of you CREATIVE, but if you agree to include great literature in your course, I'll play along – for now!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Hey, bring it on, show me! Maybe I'll rediscover my passion for the subject?

BEGINNER TEACHER: Sounds very interesting.

### LEARNING PUZZLE

Conduct a free discussion about the issues raised in the script you've just read. What do you think of the diverse types of English teacher? Is this an accurate representation of the different types of English teacher you find? What do you think English is as a subject?

What have you learnt from your discussion?

Write about it in your Learning Journal.

## TOP TIPS

### THE CANON

Become familiar with the literary canon but question it as well.

### ACQUAINT YOURSELF WITH LITERARY THEORY

It is worth having a working knowledge of literary theory; you will certainly be a more effective teacher if you understand the key approaches as advocated by post-structuralists, feminists, Marxists, Leavisites etc.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Adams, A. (2007). *Teaching secondary English with ICT* (Learning and teaching with information and communications technology). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Fleming, M., & Stevens, D. (2010). *English teaching in the secondary school linking theory and practice* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Matthewman, S. (2011). *Teaching secondary English as if the planet matters* (Teaching school subjects as if the planet matters). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

In terms of online resources, British Library website is the best place to start:

<https://www.bl.uk/learning/online-resources>

<http://www.bl.uk/englishtimeline>

<https://www.bl.uk/highlights/articles/literature>

<http://www.bl.uk/english>

David Crystal is a wonder, and offers some good tips here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/sep/20/top10s.english.language>

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about the subject English from this section of the book?

## SPOKEN ENGLISH

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn about how and why Spoken English is a vital topic to teach.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon the issue of Spoken English. How do you feel about the way you speak? What do you learn when you speak with other people? How well do you listen to other people?

### INTRODUCTION

CREATIVE: What is your attitude towards the way you speak English?

BEGINNER TEACHER: What do you think of your accent (the way you pronounce words) and your dialect (the lexis, grammar you use) in formal and informal situations?



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: The National Curriculum says we must make sure students speak ‘correct English’. What is correct English?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Technically there is no such thing as correct English, only Standard English and non-Standard English?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Standardisation of the way people speak began to happen in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and continues to this day.

BEGINNER TEACHER: The trouble is that English is always changing. What was non-standard quickly becomes standard.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: So, until recently a word like ‘relatable’ was not Standard English, but now it is more or less accepted as Standard English with so many people using it.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Some dialects such as ‘youth’ dialects and dialects used by marginalised groups such as poor people are never accepted as standard.

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

What do you feel children should be taught about Standard English?

Research different people’s points of view, looking at the National Curriculum and linguistics like David Crystal and Steven Pinker.

### *SHAKESPEARE AND SPOKEN ENGLISH*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Let’s imagine that you have to teach Shakespeare at Key Stage 3. A good way to start is with some Spoken English learning activities; it may well be that you don’t actually mention the dreaded Shakespeare at all to begin with. We’re going to have a discussion about boys and girls to begin with, because when you look very carefully at a Shakespeare play like *Romeo and Juliet*, you realise that the play is, in part, about gender.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I must be honest, I don’t know the play that well at the moment, does that mean I can’t do this training session?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I think you’ll be OK because we are not looking in depth at some of the issues in the play. When you come to do the Shakespeare session, you will need to have read it though.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I agree that *Romeo and Juliet* is about gender. I have a selection of toys and objects here. Can each of you say which ones are typically associated with boys and girls, and can we discuss why this is the case?

*A selection of toys/objects for girls and boys is handed out, e.g. pink fake jewellery for girls, more action figures for boys etc, deodorant for men, perfume for girls.*

CREATIVE TEACHER: What's going on here? Why are boys and girls being given these toys from a very early age?

*Free discussion here.*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Right, I want to do a creative exercise based on these objects. I want us to come up with a collective story using these objects, and devise a story about a boy and a girl who fall in love which involves these objects. We can devise any story, but it must include these ingredients: the boy and girl come from families who hate each other, they live in violent societies, and they die at the end of the story, killing themselves because they are not allowed to love each other.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Can we use the objects to sequence the objects so that they are used for the narrative?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: And then tell the story of this girl and boy to the class using these objects.

*Everyone has a go at doing this.*

#### **ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION**

BEGINNER TEACHER: Right, what have we learnt from doing this exercise?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I think it's important to analyse how we have structured our story, and then we can compare our structural devices with Shakespeare's when we come to look at *Romeo and Juliet*.

BEGINNER TEACHER: And I would like to look at our representation of gender in the play.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And I would like us to explore what sorts of characters we have created from the story...

CREATIVE TEACHER: And I would like to suggest further creative exercises based on this simple set-up.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Me first! Firstly, structural devices. We are told in an old National Literacy Strategy that every story has:

- An opening
- Complications (problems)
- Crisis (the problems get worse)
- Climax (a major confrontation)
- Resolution (there is a clear sense of an ending)

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

BEGINNER TEACHER: Does our story have these elements? I think it does; the opening is boy meets girl, the complications are that they realise their love is forbidden and they meet in secret, the crisis is that the children's families find out, and the climax is that the boy/girl are killed by the angry families, and the ending is that the families are sent to jail.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Very good Beginner Teacher, how did you manage to work this out?

BEGINNER TEACHER: I suppose I have a sense of the architecture of the story in my head, and the objects really helped me get a real sense of the key turning points.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, structure is all about the turning points or reversals in a story.

BEGINNER TEACHER: This is something I do a lot of in media, so I am used to analysing the structure of stories.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Shall we evaluate the structure of our story? How effective is it? Is it a bit predictable? Could we make it more interesting?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, I think it is a bit predictable. I think the characters are really 'stereotypes'; the tough teenage boy, and the rather weak girl who likes pink and Disney, and the families are just angry all the time. I think we could improve the characters. Maybe make the characters more unusual?

BEGINNER TEACHER: Maybe we could reverse the stereotypes and make the girl really tough, and the boy a bit weak, and everyone thinks he is not interested in girls? And the families, maybe it is not the Dads who are the angry, violent ones but the women?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Too many angry women! I think we could be subtler than that. Maybe the families do not really show that they hate each other, maybe we could make more of a mystery of it; maybe they just don't talk at the beginning of the play??

CREATIVE TEACHER: I think it is time to do some more creative work on this. What about having a go at using the objects and our story to create 6-10 'tableaux' which represent key scenes in the story, and we can bear in mind that we want to show key turning points, and avoid stereotypical characters, and then the rest of the class can ask us what we are thinking and feeling in our frozen poses. We could have a narrator for the tableaux. So on our feet, and let's figure out some frozen pictures...

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I think maybe we should jot down some notes in our Learning Journals at this point, I know we are supposed to be doing Spoken English, but it is worth doing some writing to co-ordinate our thoughts. They can be rough...

*Everyone writes their evaluations in their Learning Journals, and then show their tableaux.*

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CREATIVE TEACHER: In order to develop your students' ability to speak for different audiences, could you have a go at recasting your story for different audiences. You could do this in different ways. You could have a series of characters talking about their views on the events, like in a documentary.

BEGINNER TEACHER: So you could have a headmaster being interviewed on TV about the deaths; you could have the parents who may be working class talking in the pub/café/market about what happened; you could have friends talking in the canteen about it, or more formally to the police, you could have TV commentator offers his/her views; you could have funeral speeches about the events. You could think of your own possible talks; you could have the police reporting on the events in a speech to the school.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Think about the different registers these characters would speak in: remember all speech is on a continuum from the very informal on one side, and the very formal on the other.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: The very informal might be the talk in the market, or in a playground, while the very formal might be the headteacher's interview for television.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Then consider how and why these tasks might improve students' spoken English, looking at the National Curriculum for guidance on possible approaches and tasks. Write some notes/ideas in your Learning Journals.

*Everyone should have a go at the above task.*

## INVESTIGATING SPOKEN IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM

At Key Stage 3, particularly in Year 9, you have a chance to explore some interesting issues regarding Spoken English. One of the most fruitful can be to get students to explore a topic of interest to you. I devised the following resources to get my students to do an investigation into the way

Oprah Winfrey, the famous chat show host, interacts with her interviewees. It was a very successful series of lessons. Look at my materials and consider how you might adapt them to devise your own Spoken English investigation. Why have I provided so much scaffolding and modelling of how to do things at this stage?

All the materials are in Times Roman in 10 point.

### **STUDENT RESOURCE**

Question: An investigation into the spoken language features of Oprah Winfrey's chat show interviews, answering this question: How does Winfrey's speech build a relationship with her audience and interviewees in different contexts?

*Please note: at the time of writing, the links here are correct, but it maybe that you have to search the internet again to find the relevant interview.*

Speech 1: Oprah interview J.K. Rowling (2010):  
**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTotbiUjLxw>**

Speech 2: Oprah interviews Tom Cruise (2005):  
**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQgXEKl3NV4>**  
Transcript here: **<http://www.onthedia.org/story/he-didnt-jump-couch/transcript/>**

Speech 3: Oprah interviews Michael Jackson (1993):  
**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbItFJJPPmA>**

### **YOUR NOTE TAKING**

- Cherry pick 5-10 short Oprah quotes (what she says not the guest!) for each show: the Michael Jackson, Tom Cruise, the Rowling interview. Write them down in a Word document
- Analyse the quotes by making notes about them, analysing them according to the guidelines below. Remember to contextualise the quotes: when and where did they happen, what are their underlying meanings, how do they show Oprah making a rapport with her audience or interviewee?
- Email your notes to a partner, and get them to check you are analysing them for their spoken language features and you are answering the question.
- For homework: turn your notes into a graphic organiser so you are ready to write the essay in class.

**SUGGESTED PLANS**

**Introduction:** explain *who* Oprah is; her background; why she has become important; how her use of language is vital in building a rapport with her audiences and interviewees.

SECTION 1: Analyse how Oprah “contextualises” her meeting with Michael Jackson; this is the oldest interview in the series, and it turned out to be a very important interview (<http://www.oprah.com/entertainment/Oprah-Reflects-on-Her-Interview-with-Michael-Jackson>). Oprah writes: “The unprecedented live event, which took place before any allegations were made about sexual abuse, drew a worldwide audience of 90 million people. "It was the most exciting interview I had ever done," Oprah says. "It certainly was going to be the most watched interview I had ever done." Discuss her introduction and first questions; how she makes a connection with Jackson at key moments in the interview; how she uses spoken language to draw out interesting points about this interviewee;

SECTION 2: Compare how Oprah is similar and different with Tom Cruise; the circumstances are different; Cruise is under much less pressure than Jackson, who was facing child abuse allegations; is she more relaxed? the specific spoken language features she uses;

SECTION 3: Compare how Oprah is similar and different with J.K. Rowling; the specific spoken language features she uses to form a bond with Rowling and her audience; think about issues connected with gender and occupation; do you think she treats Rowling differently? It is a more serious interview than Cruise’s; she seems more at ease with a woman and an author possibly??

**Conclusion:** sum up what you have found in your essay.

**KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE ESSAY;**

Consider the way she “contextualises” her interviews;

The purposes of her language; the language she uses to *inform* her audience about a guest; the language she uses to persuade her audience that the guest is a very interesting person to interview; the language she uses to analyse a situation;

The language she uses to **ask questions**; think about the way she uses “adjacency pairs”; when, where and why she uses fillers, hedges, hesitations; her use of phatic talk;

The **pragmatics** of her language (the underlining meanings of her language); look very carefully at what she actually means; Oprah very cleverly asks PERSONAL questions and gets personal information by hinting at topics;

The **structure** of her spoken language; her sentence structures and the structure of her questions and the shows generally.

**For spoken language features, please refer to the sheet I handed out on this THROUGHOUT the essay.**

**Write PEE paragraphs, referring to key terminology throughout.**

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

**Here are some examples of my notes. Think hard about how you might take good notes after watching the clips. What makes good notes?**

### **NOTES ON CHATSHOW HOSTS**

- Chat show hosts tend to be likeable; a vital ingredient. We often watch the chatshow for the host, who is a celebrity themselves. They engage with audience and the viewers, it is as though they know us.
- Often funny: often they are over dramatic; very exaggerated;
- They seem very confident
- IF the guest is not famous, they will be doing something very unusual.
- Really interact with the audience.
- They are often good at finding things out; and often a big revelation happens on an important show.
- They ask questions about someone's career, their lifestyle, what they like and dislike.
- Often they are very up-to-date with the latest trends.
- Can be opinionated??

### **NOTES ON MICHAEL JACKSON**

- A montage of clips tells us about Jackson's achievements briefly; then Oprah says in a very serious voice "Good evening", announcing a formal interview with the most important guest she has had on the show. This is an example of "phatic talk"; this is an opener to lead into the interview. We have a sense of Oprah addressing us directly.
- "Elusive superstar" = "elusive" means someone who can't easily be found, a mysterious person.
- After a series of clips of the younger Jackson and some information about his early career as a child star, Oprah stops the narration and says, "Ladies and gentleman, Michael Jackson"; we have a sense that we are there together with her when she uses this phrase...
- "Not even for your first interview, live around the world..." = ANALYSE THIS??
- "That's great, if you're not nervous, I won't be nervous..." = ANALYSE THIS??
- "I just wanted the world to know...that we haven't discussed what's going to be in this interview..."
- P.R. = public relations, which means Jackson will want to show himself in a very positive light and have positive public relations, ie. Get the public to think he is great. PR = how you relate to the public.

### **NOTES ON J.K. ROWLING INTERVIEW**

- J.K Rowling interview: the interview is set in the Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh, Scotland. The mis-en-scene is a fancy drawing room with a table and an expensive china set. The other reason why the interview

## Francis Gilbert

is set in this hotel is because this is where Rowling finished the last Harry Potter book; she is superstitious about where she writes.

- Bereavement = how you feel when someone dies, i.e. very sad/missing that person. Rowling confesses that finishing the Potter books was like a “bereavement”; this is a very emotional part of the interview at 5.15
- Often the topics are very relatable to the audience; they discuss things we all relate to;
- Usually find very famous people to come on the show, who may be advertising a film or new show etc.
- They ask the questions that everyone wants to ask: the nosy questions...
- They are role models as well as hosts.
- They talk about the latest trends.

### **KEY TERMINOLOGY TO USE IN YOUR ESSAY**

*Can you find evidence and produce analysis for these points?*

**Contextual factors** connected with the speech.

**Register:** formal/informal (talk about the continuum)

**Audience.** To what extent is the language adapted to the audience?

**Purpose:** how well is the language adapted to its purpose, which is primarily to inform?

**Pragmatic features:** the underlying messages that are being conveyed. What messages are being conveyed? What is her sociolect?

**Grammatical features:** how successfully does Oprah use personal pronouns, adjectives, nouns, verbs? How successful is his use of word-order (syntax)?

How effectively are **Grice’s Maxims** used? Does she say too much or too little? How relevant is Oprah to the main topic? How good is her manner? Is the talk quite quality?

### **COMMENTARY AND MINDFUL PLANNING**

I wrote these detailed plans because I wanted my students to understand the different stages and content that were needed in order to do a good language investigation. I modelled how to take notes, explaining how and why I took the notes I did, and I explained the processes that were involved in formulating my plan. I chose Oprah because as a successful black woman, she is a rare example of someone succeeding in a very male, ‘white’ world.

Either use the Oprah Winfrey materials to produce a series of lesson plans based on this material, or work out how you might develop your own lesson plans/resources on a Spoken English topic which interests you.



## TOP TIPS

### PLANNING

Aim to have a Spoken English component in every lesson so that students learn to improve their talk.

### TALKING TO THINK

You should encourage your students to use talk to think about issues, get them to question each other in detail and develop dialogic approaches towards teaching. For more log onto:

**<https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/dialogic/whatis.html>**

### AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

Get students talking to different audiences and for different purposes, encouraging them to learn to speak formally and informally in different situations.

### SET UP INVESTIGATIONS

Getting students to investigate an aspect of Spoken English such as I did with Oprah is a good idea, it really develops their knowledge.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

### Books

**How children develop as speakers:** there are several useful texts which emerged from the National Oracy Project (eg. K. Norman (ed) (1992) *Thinking Voices*); see relevant chapter in Fleming & Stevens; and oracy articles in Brindley, the chapter by Johnson is particularly helpful.

A very readable book is N. Mercer (2000) *Words & Minds* – highly recommended.

Reid et al (1989) *Small Group Learning in the Classroom* is a good introduction to applying language development theory to practical classroom strategies.

Pinker, S. (2003). *The blank slate : The modern denial of human nature*. London: Penguin. Pinker's book has an excellent section on prescriptive grammar.

### Links

The National Literacy Strategy archives are useful. This report is helpful:

**<https://www.essex.gov.uk/Business-Partners/Partners/Schools/One-to-one->**

**tuition/Documents/Teaching\_for\_progression\_Speaking\_and\_Listening.pdf**

The National Literacy Trust has produced a report for ITT and CDP providers on the English curriculum which includes an exploration of spoken English issues:

**[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0001/9202/Curriculum\\_Review\\_and\\_Planning\\_Tool.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0001/9202/Curriculum_Review_and_Planning_Tool.pdf)**

Robin Alexander's address to the DfE is worth reading where he emphasizes the importance of teachers developing their students' oracy:

**<http://www.robinalexander.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/DfE-oracy-120220-Alexander-FINAL.pdf>**

A review of successful strategies can be found here:

**[http://www.esu.org/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0026/13796/Oracy-State-of-speaking-report-v2.pdf](http://www.esu.org/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/13796/Oracy-State-of-speaking-report-v2.pdf)**

There is a good section on the University of Cambridge website which explores the importance of oracy here:

**<http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/why-teach-oracy>**

The BBC Bitesize website offers some good tips for students:

**[http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks3/english/speaking\\_listening/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks3/english/speaking_listening/)**

See also the chapter on Collaborative Learning which has much to say about oracy.

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about Spoken English?

## READING SKILLS

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn about how to identify and teach the different reading skills students need in secondary school, including Reciprocal Reading.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon what reading skills you have and how you might teach them to your students. Think about how you go about reading texts, what motivates you to read, how you read difficult texts, how you skim and scan texts.

### A SHORT HISTORY OF READING AND WRITING

You could argue that the human brain “reads” the world. When you were first born, you saw nothing, your eyes weren’t focused in any way, but you knew instinctively when you were hungry. As you developed, your brain learnt that certain sounds represented certain people such as your mother. Your eyes learnt to “read” or “decode” the world around you; your brain actively constructed and gave meaning to what you saw. Some thinkers like Derrida argue that the whole world is a “text” that we read (Glendenning, 2011).

Then, when you were old enough, you started to read books, which enabled you to make links between signs on a page, sounds in people’s mouths and specific things in the world around you. Such an experience is relatively new in terms of human evolution. Historians believe that reading and writing developed ten thousand years ago in the Middle East and even then it was only a tiny educated elite who were able to read. It was perceived as a religious activity that put people in touch with the word of God in several different religions and cultures.

The advent of printing increased the number of people who read immensely and changed the face of the world as a consequence. You could argue that religious reformations, revolutions, and massive social change was the direct result of the printing revolution. The “common” people had access to information which was normally only read by a tiny elite.

Similarly, some thinkers suggest that the internet is leading to similar upheavals throughout the world because it has hugely widened people’s access to information once again.

And yet, the elites do remain! Even in a democratic country like the UK, only a fraction of the population own most of the wealth and, by and large, all the top professions are stuffed full of people from the most prosperous backgrounds. In other countries, it's even worse with a mere handful of people owning and controlling everything, while the rest of the population lives in abject poverty.

The truth is that while being able to read and write used to be a way out of poverty and ignorance, so much more is expected now. It is assumed that everyone will be literate. The question now is HOW literate they are: the extent of their reading, the quality of their writing. This is why things like studying English Literature at university have developed, they afford people the chance to extend their literacy skills way beyond the common man. They give their students what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu calls "cultural capital" (Webb, J., Schirato, T., Danather, G., 2002); the symbolic tools of the elite. In other words, courses like English Literature give students access to powerful symbolic codes which enable them to ultimately gain power and prestige in society. The universities, in his view, are more about securing the power of the elite classes than really educating...

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY

Find out more about the history of reading and why it has become such an important cultural activity.

## INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

### *Characters:*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: To a certain extent teaching reading is simple for secondary English teachers. You read texts with your students: you hand out books, maybe explain a bit about them, and then get stuck in with reading them. Most secondary students should know how to read, and if they don't they can get extra help from a Teaching Assistant or Special Needs teacher.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Hmmmm, not so sure it's quite as simple as that. During my own schooling, and during my observations, I've seen lots of students bored stiff during reading lessons, switched off and going through the motions. Most of them do the work, but they're not enjoying what they are reading. They don't like even great books like *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* because often they don't fully understand it, and because it's

taught in such a boring way, with students just reading around the class, or listening to the teacher read.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And I've noticed that approach does not get great exam results. I used to do a lot of reading around the class, and reading to my students but I actually realise now it was a bit of a waste of time because even if the students were looking like they were silently listening, they weren't really. And it was very difficult to assess how well they were reading.

CREATIVE TEACHER: That's why I am suggesting that we work with all our classes, from Year 7 to A Level, to get students understanding how we read the world around us, and how reading is really an amazing skill, and a joyful thing to do. The first thing students need to understand is how we read the world, then they can transfer these learning skills to their own reading of texts. This is called 'meta-cognition' (see **Meta-cognition and self-regulation**) where we get students thinking about their own learning processes. An educational thinker called Paulo Freire pioneered this approach in Brazil in the 1960s and 70s, and showed how some of the poorest people in Brazil could learn to read within weeks taking this approach (Freire, 1995 & 1987). We're going to illustrate this strategy with some exercises in a moment.

#### *FREE DISCUSSION*

What do you think of some of the points made in the discussion so far? Discuss in your groups and jot down some notes in your Learning Journals.

#### READING, MINDFULNESS AND COGNITION

CREATIVE TEACHER: Right we're going to do a special meditation. You are going to choose from a variety of foods in front of you, one small edible object, and do a mindfulness meditation upon it, then we're going to discuss why this will help improve your reading of the world, and of texts.

*On the table before everyone should be a presentation of these various foods: raisins, chocolates, satsumas, olives, little cubes of cheese etc.*

BEGINNER TEACHER: OK, take a food stuff you like the look of, but just one tiny bit of it. Now, shut your eyes, and feel the texture of it, take your time, then smell it. What feelings does it create in your mind? What predictions do you have about how it might taste?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Then, taste it. But do this very slowly and mindfully, put it slowly in your mouth, letting your tongue caress the food, feeling its textures, put it in your mouth and without biting on it, feel the texture of it in your mouth, the tastes, letting its unique qualities invade your mouth and throat.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Then ever so slowly, take a bit of it, and see how the tastes and sensations of the food stuff change in your mouth, shutting your eyes if you like and really savouring the flavour, taking your time and considering what feelings the food creates in your mind and your body, noticing all the sensations and thoughts the food creates in your mind.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Then finally, swallow the food and savour the aftermath of eating this tiny bit of food. Once you've done that I'd like you to do some writing about how that felt, describing all the sensations that you felt.

*Everyone does this.*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: That was lovely, but I am not sure what it has got to do with reading.

BEGINNER TEACHER: You were 'reading the food'; you were thinking about how you felt as you ate the food. It was truly meta-cognitive because you were aware and conscious of your emotions and thoughts as you ate the food.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, and I can see how that process made me write in a really interesting way about a very ordinary experience; I have loved writing about my piece of chocolate, the deep, velvety textures, the slow release of sugar and cocoa into my mouth, making me think of sitting with my grandmother, drinking hot chocolate. It was really very moving.

CREATIVE TEACHER: What we are developing here is not only our meta-cognition, but also our aesthetic responses. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) argues that literature requires students to respond in an emotional way to what they are reading, and that teachers of reading are most effective when they encourage students to say what they are thinking and feeling when they read a text.

BEGINNER TEACHER: She sort of argues that readers need to respond to literature in the same way as we did with the Food Meditation. She encouraged the use of things like Reading Journals, which are like our Learning Journals.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Hmmn, interesting, a famous quote of hers is:

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

There is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are only the potential millions of individual readers or the potential millions of individual literary works. A novel or a poem or a play remains merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols (Rosenblatt, 1938: 1995 , p. 24)

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: So I get it! We make students see through the Food Meditation that our responses to food are very different, that we have our unique way of responding to the same thing, and then show them how to do this with literature.

CREATIVE TEACHER: They could read a few words and then meditate upon them for a minute or two, thinking about the feelings and sensations the words create in their bodies, their minds, the thoughts and images that they create.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: We could follow up the Food Meditation with giving them some poems about food, and seeing how they respond to them.

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

How might you use the Food Meditation in English lessons? Try the exercise yourself, and think about possibly sharing some of your poems/responses with your pupils. Find some food poems/literature about chocolate, raisins and olives that might be good to read after the Food Meditation.

This TED talk/meditation is not bad:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSpmGTzZwsU>**

This video is a bit annoying for adults, but can work well with children:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guXTS1Yff-0>**

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: There are lots of poems about food on the internet, many of them not very good in my view, but it's worth looking. Here's are some links to poems about chocolate:

**<https://allpoetry.com/poems/about/Chocolate>**

**<http://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/chocolate>**

CREATIVE TEACHER: How might you use such poems in the classroom?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Maybe encourage students to critique them, compare them with their own poems/responses.

PERSONAL READING HISTORIES

CREATIVE TEACHER: Right, I am going to ask us to write our own Personal Reading Histories and really investigate the processes that led us to becoming successful readers, people who enjoy reading.

BEGINNER TEACHER: You should write about when and how you first learned to read and your earliest memories of reading books, but crucially when you do so, think carefully about the people in your family or outside your family who encouraged you. What kind of atmosphere did they create when reading to you?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Think about the kind of texts you enjoyed during your childhood and why. In what way were they connected to the world you inhabited? Try and describe some joyful reading experiences.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And if you did not enjoy some aspects of reading, explore this as well. Did reading ever become a traumatic experience? If so, why?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Think about how you learnt to read the world, and then the word. For example, maybe there was a hobby or a TV programme etc. that you really liked, and that spurred you on to reading about it. Discuss more generally, how you learnt to read the world in an emotional way and how that affected your reading. For example, if there was something you did not like, such as a food, sport, person or subject at school, how did you respond to reading about that topic? Or did you avoid reading about that topic?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes. Maybe you were bullied. Did that make you read books/poems etc. about the topic?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Maybe you were ill, did you read about that illness?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Discuss your thoughts and feelings about reading at school: reading for exams, reading in lessons, teachers who encouraged you to read, and teachers who put you off.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Discuss your reading practices as a student and adult, and possibly as a parent, and, if you are a teacher, your own reading while being a teacher.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Try to think about the reading strategies you have developed over the years. For example, I am learning about trees and flowers at the moment; I find that I am using skimming and scanning of various texts, and repeated reading of the same passages, as well as looking at pictures to really help me remember the various trees and flowers. I am motivated in a way I was never before because I see the



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

connection of trees to us human beings; they are living things. The philosophy of Spinoza made me see this. So my interest in trees and flowers has come through a roundabout route of exploration of a philosophy that all things are connected.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: That's very interesting; you are a very deep person Traditional Teacher! I would never read philosophy in my spare time, but I do like reading about the human body because I am interested in sport, and I've been injured a few times, so I have found out a great deal about the back and muscles through my reading. Again, I have used skimming and scanning, and repeated examination of various texts to learn more about it. Sometimes I have to read the same passage several times to get it.

BEGINNER TEACHER: But crucially you have confidence that you will get there in the end, don't you Test Obsessed Teacher? That's the reading skill you have acquired over time: the knowledge that if you set your mind to it and you're motivated enough, you'll find out what you need to know. I've done the same with teaching myself how to do Pilates, an exercise technique. I've read a few books, and it has been difficult at times, but I am getting there now. Visual diagrams have really helped me.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Great, I think sharing these sorts of strategies with your students is very important. It's very important that you are modelling reading strategies to students, talking about how you read as much as what you read.

### *LEARNING ACTIVITY: PERSONAL READING HISTORY*

This task is designed to encourage you to reflect upon your own formation as a reader. It puts you through the very process we often demand of our pupils – generating a piece of non-fiction writing, which at the same time requires a personal and reflective voice. In producing the Reading History, think about the writing process and what supported/hindered you most in your work.

- earliest memories of reading/books;
- what family practices supported you in your early endeavours;
- what kind of texts you developed a taste for;
- what social and cultural influences were at work in your life at different stages;
- the influence of school on your reading habits (primary and secondary);

## Francis Gilbert

- adolescence;
- examination practices and their possible effects;
- adulthood, university etc;
- your own experiences as a parent;
- your own experiences as a teacher to date.

### *A POSSIBLE EXAMPLE*

I wrote this about why I fell in love with reading poetry. What do you think? How might you write your own personal reading history?

#### EARLY EXPERIENCES

When did I fall in love with poetry?

It was my teacher at Brunswick Primary school in the early 1970s who made all the difference. I could have only been five or six, it is 1973 or 74, and I am sitting with Miss (or is it Mrs?, we only ever called her miss) Gorman in her classroom. I feel safe here, sitting with the other children, safe in a way I don't feel safe in other contexts: at home, in the playground, out in the street. I've always been frightened of previous teachers, who have shouted and threatened enough to make me feel that school is to be feared. But this all changes with Miss G. In the afternoons, we sit on the blue carpet, with the grey light from the high windows falling upon us, surrounded by bookshelves, and Miss G. sits in the story corner and she reads magical stories to us: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Stig of the Dump*, *The Iron Man*. And during the day, she asks us to write poems and draw pictures to accompany them; I write a poem about the sea, the sea I have felt and smelt when visiting my grandparents, roaming along massive sandy beaches, feeling the wind against my face, laughing with their Labradors, Champ, Sindy, Goldie, the great surge of the waves spilling before my feet. I never thought you should articulate such experiences in words. I didn't think it was allowed in school, or even in your mind. But no, I remember Miss Gorman telling me, "Poems are where you can put all the magical things in your life." And so I do, drawing curly waves around my poem. Another time, she says, "Write whatever you want! Just write a poem!" And so I write "Ching-Ling-Thing" as a poem, a nonsense poem with lots of "ing" words strung together. It makes me laugh, and the other children on my table. And Miss Gorman loves it. I feel the warmth of her smile, and that smile

suffuses all the other poems I will write for the rest of my life. I become aware that not everybody shares Miss G.'s views though, because my great-aunt Florrie comes to visit us, and she asks me to show her something I've done at school, and so I show her "Ching-Ling-Thing", proud as a puppy of its tail, but Florrie wrinkles her mouth and says, "That's just nonsense!" But it not enough to put me off poetry though.

#### BIG SCHOOLS

We move house, move schools, move cities, exchanging Cambridge for the suburbs of London, and I go to Mediocre Primary school, and have a succession of lack lustre and sometimes scary teachers who rarely mention poetry. Writing becomes a frightening experience: being told off for not making mistakes, for not getting it right, for sounding childish, for failing to pass the test. Mr Ballinger shouts a lot and I learn to cope with him by queuing to get my work corrected and always dodging to the back of the queue so that he rarely marks my work because when he does he covers it in red pen, snarling that I am not good enough. A year later, Miss Field is a bit nicer, but her throat is hoarse from all the cigarettes she smokes outside the classroom every twenty minutes, her white skin cracked and wrinkled, looking sadly at us as we work our way through the text book, completing grammar exercises about collective nouns and murders of crows. In the final year of primary school, we have Miss Morgan who looks like an alien from Star Trek, a shrivelled brain with a white wig on, and she gives us spelling test after spelling test. When my mother notices that I get bad marks in the spelling tests, she shouts at me, urging me to "learn the spellings"; I had never considered this before, but spurred on by an urge to please my mother, I learn the spellings and do much better in the tests. It is not poetry, but it is success. The only time poetry is mentioned is when a supply teacher comes in to fill in for Miss Morgan for a couple of days. He is called Mr H., and he is black. In the playground, the kids do "Lenny Henry" impressions of him: "Okay maaann!" they say, whispering racist epithets under their breath.

I don't understand, because Mr H. is inspirational to me: he reads us William Blake's "Introduction" to the *Songs of Innocence*, the piper piping down the valleys wild, explaining how some people are free to make music, to roam about how they wish, and this is what poetry celebrates. Something chimes in me, and I don't forget this moment; I can see him still now over thirty-five years later, enthusing about Blake's images.

### READING SETTINGS

BEGINNER TEACHER: Getting students to read the settings that they encounter in their lives and to consider how they read them will really help develop their English skills.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: How? They're not reading books, are they?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, we should be getting them to read descriptions of settings in books, in articles etc, not messing around with reading settings in real life. Where will it end?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Again, we are back to meta-cognition. If students learn how they learnt to read settings in real life settings, then they can learn how to interpret and appreciate settings in books much more easily.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: OK, hit me with some examples.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Photographs are very good for getting students to think about settings...

### USING PHOTOGRAPHS AND PICTURES

CREATIVE TEACHER: You could find on the internet, examples of whatever setting you want, or take your own photographs, but let's suppose we are going to examine bedrooms. We could show the class these bedrooms:

[http://farm1.static.flickr.com/56/139743306\\_9947c21ec3.jpg](http://farm1.static.flickr.com/56/139743306_9947c21ec3.jpg)

<http://img.friv5games.com/2016/09/03/messy-boys039-bedroom-l-b49d1883bf026cf2.jpg>

And get them to "read the setting", talking about how the setting gives us an idea of the personalities involved.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Then you could students to write their own descriptions of that particular setting, or read related material.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I found these articles on teenage bedrooms really useful to study with my GCSE classes:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/jul/16/teenagers-bedrooms>

BEGINNER TEACHER: The artist George Shaw is famous for painting places without people, but suggest the people that are not there. His work is very poetic and haunting. You could use his paintings:

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/may/15/my-back-to-nature-george-shaw-national-gallery-tile-hill> (warning: there is a drawing of a naked man on this webpage, but it is not pornographic, and could be used for 'reading the body')

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: But the possibilities are endless, I can see that. So you could look at the settings you are studying in class, and either prepare students to analyse that setting by providing some pictures/photographs beforehand, or read the extract and then look at different representations in photographs/pictures.

### *USING OBJECTS TO EVOKE SETTINGS*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Another way, to get students to think about settings is to use objects.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I've used sleep-masks, and got students to handle objects, and guess what they are, then guess the context of the object. That has worked very well.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Then they could do some creative writing based on the object.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: You could provide a series of objects and get students to predict or guess what settings they might suggest.

### *HOMES*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Home is a very powerful emotional setting to study in English.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, there are so many stories where it is the dream of finding a home is at the heart of the story, like *King Lear*, *Oliver Twist*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Death of a Salesman*, *An Inspector Calls*. All these stories contain characters who are desperate for their different reasons to find a home, a place of security and love.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: *Lassie Come Home*?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: From the sublime to the ridiculous!

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, in *Of Mice and Men*, Lennie and George only have a dream of a perfect home, their little piece of land where Lennie can tend the rabbits.

CREATIVE TEACHER: So getting students to 'read the home' is particularly useful. Again, you can use pictures/photographs/objects as we have already discussed, but you also get them to consider abstract concepts and nouns.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Such as love, comfort, security.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And they could mindmap the connotations of these words, what they mean for them personally.

BEGINNER: And answer the question: what is the perfect home in your view?

SUGGESTIONS

CREATIVE TEACHER: We have already looked at bedrooms (see above), but there other rooms to consider.

BEGINNER TEACHER: This website here contains some useful quotes from various children's books about magical and interesting rooms:

**<http://jkrbooks.typepad.com/blog/2008/11/favorite-fictional-rooms.html>**

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: This website has useful quotes for descriptions of houses from children's literature:

**<http://www.pbs.org/parents/booklights/archives/2009/10/five-favorite-fictional-houses-from-childrens-literature.html>**

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: And this from classic literature:

**<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/jul/18/stuart-evers-top-10-homes-literature>**

*SCHOOL*

CREATIVE TEACHER: I've based whole projects on the topic of school, which is a fascinating setting to study.

BEGINNER TEACHER: There's tonnes of material out there on the internet.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: You could get students to 'read the classrooms' and environment in their own school, analysing what the physical environment says about the occupants within it.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, a very good idea, but you might have to be careful you don't offend anybody!

SUGGESTIONS

The Poetry Archive has a great many fantastic poems about school, which will prompt much thought-provoking work on school as a setting:  
**<http://www.poetryarchive.org/collection/back-school-poems>**

*NATURE*

THE WEATHER

CREATIVE TEACHER: Getting students to 'read' nature is a very good way of stimulating interest and enthusiasm in reading.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Get them to read 'the weather'; look at the clouds, the sky, feel the wind, observe the rain, the sun, and consider what it tells them about the world around them. They could think about how the weather affects people's moods, their attitudes, their lives.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And there so many fantastic descriptions of the weather in literature.

BEGINNER TEACHER: This article on Alexander Harris's book about the weather in literature is a very good starting point for teachers, and possibly A Level students:

**<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/sep/11/making-weather-english-writing-art-alexandra-harris>**

FLOWERS, TREES, PLANTS

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Getting students to observe flowers, plants and trees is a great way of developing their powers of observation.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: You could bring leaves of trees into a lesson and get them to describe them, explore their textures, their shapes, their colours, their smells.

BEGINNER TEACHER: This website has a selection of quotes about roses which might make a good starting point:

**<http://theherbgardener.blogspot.co.uk/2009/05/roses-in-literature.html>**

CREATIVE TEACHER: Or just getting students to read nature books and learn how information is presented.

BEGINNER TEACHER: They could then devise their own information leaflets 'Trees for Teenagers' etc.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Or write from a viewpoint: 'Why you should be interested in trees!'

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: There is a very strong Romantic tradition of studying nature for its own sake. The Romantics felt that nature was inspirational for artists, and that we all need to live in natural surroundings if we are going to have fulfilled lives. This could be studied in depth at various stages in the curriculum.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, they could take walks in parks, in natural surroundings, take notes and write literature (poems/stories) about their encounters.

CREATIVE TEACHER: You can look at the resources some of my PGCE students created here:

**<https://www.scribd.com/document/352662671/Creative-Writing-and-Nature>**

STORYTELLING AND READING.

CREATIVE TEACHER: What are your favourite stories?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I like to read and watch thrillers when I'm relaxing.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I like to relax by reading romantic stories, and I watch the news a lot as well.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I like listening to family stories; I never get sick of them. I like to listen to the same ones again and again, told in a slightly different way.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Let's all do a visual organiser on the role stories play in our lives; use any method you think suits the material, e.g. spider-diagram, chart, concept map etc.

*Everyone does this in their Learning Journals.*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Now the reason why we are doing this is because research in educational theory shows evidence that storytelling has a significant impact on how students learn. One of the biggest impacts is its ability to connect the subject matter to a personal experience of the learner, allowing for a more powerful exploration of the content being studied.

BEGINNER TEACHER: What does that mean in clear language?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: It's back to learn by examining similarities and differences as Marzano points out is the most effective way of nurturing learning. If students can relate a new story or text to a story they already know, then they'll feel a more powerful connection to it, and learn more about its component parts.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, and it's also because our culture, our human culture is just a huge collective story; we tell ourselves stories to convince ourselves of the 'reality' we live in. Take money, for example, money is just a story we tell ourselves that the paper in our pockets, the numbers in our bank accounts, are 'worth' things. Yuval Noah Harari talks about this in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Human Beings* (2014).

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: An interesting point. So what does that mean in the classroom? Do we encourage students to tell stories to each other?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, one way is the storytelling circle which works like this:

*In your group think of some titles for myths, legends, fables, folk tales and fairy stories.*

A has to tell B (e.g. Snow White) a story in 3 minutes.

Bs retell story they've just heard to new partner.



## The Mindful English Teacher

A retells story they've just heard but in the first person.

B retells the story in the first person but leaves out some words and substitutes mime.

A retells the story from the point of view of a character in the story.

B retells the story from the point of view of an inanimate object in the story.

A retells the story in a different setting.

B retells the story as a futuristic version of the original.

**TEST OBSESSED TEACHER:** What's the use of that?

**BEGINNER TEACHER:** It gets students fluent in telling stories, and thinking laterally about them, thinking creatively, using language in different ways to develop different ways of telling stories.

### TASK

How might storytelling be deployed in the classroom?

*Make some notes in your Learning Journals. Do some further research; this is a huge area in education, and is worth investigating in depth.*

### THINKING ABOUT OPENINGS TO STORIES

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** What is your favourite opening of a story? Why?

**TRADITIONAL TEACHER:** How effective are these two different openings:

### THE MONKEY'S PAW BY W.W. JACOBS

#### I.

*Without, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Laburnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly. Father and son were at chess, the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire.*

*"Hark at the wind," said Mr. White, who, having seen a fatal mistake after it was too late, was amiably desirous of preventing his son from seeing it.*

*"I'm listening," said the latter, grimly surveying the board as he stretched out his hand. "Check."*

*"I should hardly think that he'd come to-night," said his father, with his hand poised over the board.*

*"Mate," replied the son.*

*"That's the worst of living so far out," bawled Mr. White, with sudden and*

Francis Gilbert

*unlooked-for violence; "of all the beastly, slushy, out-of-the-way places to live in, this is the worst. Pathway's a bog, and the road's a torrent. I don't know what people are thinking about. I suppose because only two houses in the road are let, they think it doesn't matter."*

*"Never mind, dear," said his wife, soothingly; "perhaps you'll win the next one."*

For the full story, go to:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12122/12122-h/12122-h.htm>

BLISS BY KATHERINE MANSFIELD

*ALTHOUGH Bertha Young was thirty she still had moments like this when she wanted to run instead of walk, to take dancing steps on and off the pavement, to bowl a hoop, to throw something up in the air and catch it again, or to stand still and laugh at—nothing—at nothing, simply.*

*What can you do if you are thirty and, turning the corner of your own street, you are overcome, suddenly by a feeling of bliss—absolute bliss!—as though you'd suddenly swallowed a bright piece of that late afternoon sun and it burned in your bosom, sending out a little shower of sparks into every particle, into every finger and toe? . . .*

*Oh, is there no way you can express it without being "drunk and disorderly" ? How idiotic civilisation is! Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?*

*"No, that about the fiddle is not quite what I mean," she thought, running up the steps and feeling in her bag for the key—she'd forgotten it, as usual—and rattling the letter-box. "It's not what I mean, because—Thank you, Mary"—she went into the hall. "Is nurse back?"*

*"Yes, M'm."*

*"And has the fruit come?"*

*"Yes, M'm. Everything's come."*

*"Bring the fruit up to the dining-room, will you? I'll arrange it before I go upstairs."*

*It was dusky in the dining-room and quite chilly. But all the same Bertha threw off her coat; she could not bear the tight clasp of it another moment, and the cold air fell on her arms.*

For the full story, go to:

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/mansfield/bliss/story.html>

BEGINNER TEACHER: Jot down our responses to the stories first of all. What do we feel about the stories? What interests you and why? What might put you off? How is the writing trying to draw you into the story?

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

**TEST OBSESSED TEACHER:** How do these openings compare with stories you know? What genre are these stories written in, do you think? Why do you think this? What might happen next?

**TRADITIONAL TEACHER:** Note down some of your favourite story openings, listing the ingredients that make them interesting, and compare/contrast with these openings.

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** Using these stories as a starting point and your own favourite story openings, draw up a list of ingredients of effective openings to stories.

### **TASK**

How effective is the opening of *Lamb to the Slaughter*?

Write the opening of a short story with one of these titles:

- Don't Panic!
- Walking Home
- Down the Alley
- The most frightening thing ...

After writing one of these openings: discuss the 3 stories and which:

Gets the story started quickly; tells you what the people look like; describes the setting in some detail; uses a lot of dialogue; tells you what people are thinking, not just what they are doing; gets straight into the action...

### **PLANNING FOR READING A PROSE TEXT – ADAPTED FROM DYMOKE (2009)**

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** Sue Dymoke (2009) offers some very useful tips in order to help teachers plan for reading English texts. Here are some of her major points, slightly adapted:

Which are the sections I will want to linger on?

Are there any sections which seem essential to explore as a whole group?

How long are each of these sections?

What reading skills will they need?

Are there moments in the story which are better suited to individual reflection?

What else is there about the text which is less obvious but which is intriguing or thought-provoking?

## Francis Gilbert

Is there a chance for students to raise their own questions and respond in creative ways?

What do you want students to experience and learn in the course of their engagement with the prose text?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: As Dymoke herself also points out, it is very important that you consider the overall learning goals or objectives for teaching the text; personally, I think this should be the starting point.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, but you have to look at the text first, and listen to what it is telling you! You can't just "plug on" on learning goals if they don't fit.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I think both Traditional Teacher and Test Obsessed Teacher is right, I think it is worth really 'listening' to the texts, but also you do need to think about the learning goals and outcomes. For me, a very important learning goal should be to get students to learn to improve their decoding and comprehension skills: many students struggle to understand much of what is read in school. For me, understanding is everything!

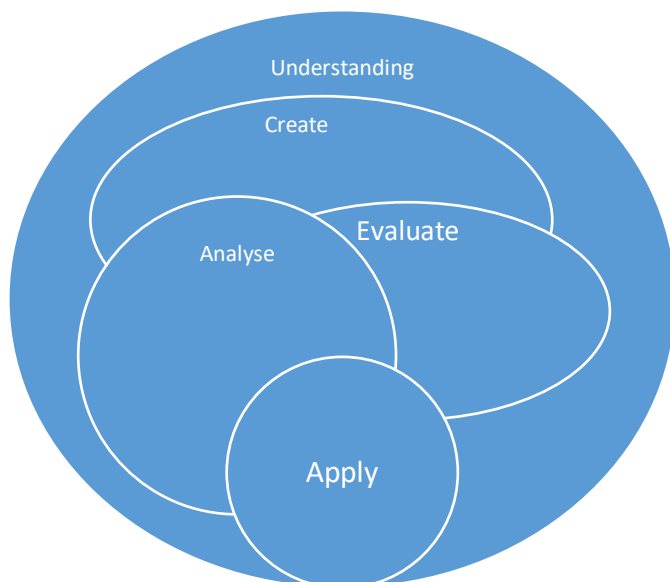
TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: They also need to analyse the text. But they can't do that until they have understood it. In this sense, Bloom's taxonomy (see Theories of Learning) is useful for planning.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, I agree Bloom is useful, remember important vocabulary, and understanding it comes first, then students can apply this knowledge in their answers, and begin to analyse it. I don't agree though that 'create/evaluate' are above analyse. I notice many students evaluating texts before they even understand it! They say it's rubbish!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, but they can't evaluate it properly unless they've gone through all those steps; their evaluations will be very poor and ill-informed unless they understand the text.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I have a problem with Bloom in that I think analysing/applying/evaluating/creating are all part of the subset of understanding in the largest sense of the word. So I would reframe Bloom in this way

## *The Mindful English Teacher*



TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, I like this Venn Diagram because it shows that when you analyse/create/apply/evaluate you develop your understanding in the largest sense of the word.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: So, shall we say that we, as English teachers, need to constantly to talk about what students are understanding, to check their understanding, to give them a chance to explore how their creative writing has helped them develop their understanding of a text.

### TASK

BEGINNER TEACHER: Pick a text you are going to teach, and have a go at answering the Dymoke's questions.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: But also provide lots of opportunities for ways of assessing students' understanding and developing their understanding.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And make sure you think about meta-cognitive points: students need to reflect upon what they have learnt about developing their reading skills. How have they understood difficult passages, for example?

CREATIVE TEACHER: So make some notes on all of these topics. Don't worry about ordering them in a clear Scheme of Work yet, but instead, jot down all your thoughts, based on the discussions we and you have been having.

### ENDINGS OF STORIES

CREATIVE TEACHER: What makes an effective ending to a story?

BEGINNER TEACHER: What is your favourite ending to a story?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Different types of story have different endings. It depends a great deal on the genre, or type of story, so, for example, a romance and comedy will end very differently to a tragedy. The genre of the story often dictates the ending.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, excellent point, students need to learn that by reading quite a bit of literature, and reflecting upon the different types of stories they know.

CREATIVE TEACHER: It's interesting, while stories do have to have predictable endings in that we know James Bond will always win and 'get the girl' in true sexist fashion, we also want to see something which is *slightly* different from the previous film.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, endings need to 'counter convention' to a certain extent if they are going to be effective.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And, within the parameters of the genre, surprise you. Horror stories are particularly good at surprising you with something unexpected. You know something nasty is going to happen but you don't quite know what.

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Find some examples of endings which are genuinely surprising.

Creative writing exercise: write the ending of a story before you write the beginning.

Consider some activities which you might do with a class text after you have finished reading it. Pick a class reader you are going to teach.

### WHO IS THE STORYTELLER?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Harold Rosen's *Essays on Narrative* contains a fascinating quote:

The further up the school system we go the less likely is it that spontaneous, pupil-made narrative will be able to insert itself comfortably and naturally into the flow of talk. For in most classrooms the chief and privileged story-teller (stories of any kind) is the teacher.

BEGINNER TEACHER: What do we think of this quote? It's really got me thinking how teachers do dominate the storytelling in classes. What about the children's stories? Do they get marginalised or devalued?

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: It's quite right that the English teacher is the main storyteller because he or she knows the most about English. Simple. Obvious.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I'm not sure about that. We need to draw out the stories that children have within them. We're not going to do that if we simply tell them lots of stories.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, we need to guide children to understand and learn about the role of stories in their lives.

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

What implications does the Harold Rosen quote have for English teachers? Who should be the storyteller in English classrooms? How might children's storytelling skills be nurtured? What skills will children learn if they consider the role of stories in their own lives (their family stories, the stories they like, the stories of their cultures etc.)?

## READING STRATEGIES IN THE CLASSROOM

CREATIVE TEACHER: Now we are going to consider the role that various classic teaching strategies play in the English classroom, thinking about how effective they are, and discussing how they might be implemented.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Often certain strategies like silent reading or whole class reading are used, but never really questioned as techniques.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: We are going to look at this.

### *SILENT READING*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: I have to be honest, now that my Senior Leadership team are not listening, I use silent reading to give me some light relief; I ask students to read silently just to get some peace and quiet. I'm not sure that I monitor it that carefully. I probably should. Oh dear, does that make me a bad teacher?

BEGINNER TEACHER: My school has a policy of Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) but I am not sure that it is light relief for the teacher at all; often I find that I am policing the task and spending far too much of the time trying to get children to be quiet.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: And there is also the question of what the children are reading; often I find if you ask them to read what they want, they pick magazines and books like Goosebumps, or something they read in primary school. And it's all very bitty; they read for a few minutes at the beginning of the lesson, or for half an hour a week, and the good readers obviously have a book which they are reading, but the weaker

ones, the ones we are trying to help, are simply wasting their time, their eyes glazing over books.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: We have Accelerated Reader in our school which means students read books from a set list (a very long list) from the library and take quizzes on the book, and we can check how well they have been reading the books. The problem is that after Year 7 students tend to lose interest.

CREATIVE TEACHER: And is this really the sort of message we want to send about reading that it is a competition, and that books have levels and point scores? I have found that silent reading works best when it is both sustained and carefully thought through. The best projects I have done are Wide Reading Project where students have read over a number of lessons books of interest to them, and then completed tasks on them such as writing diaries, writing reviews, and keeping a reading learning journal where they have written their thoughts and feelings about what they are reading.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, that I could see would work much better than “bitty” lessons using Accelerated Reader. Students could start with the books/magazines they like and then, with your guidance and group discussion, they could discuss how they might challenge themselves to read more complicated matters.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, I could see that working; students start with what they are interested in, like a football magazine, and then maybe progress to an autobiography of a footballer, or a more complex book about football, choosing books that genuinely interest them.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And you could tailor the tasks to the sorts of things that they might encounter in an exam, such as writing from a viewpoint. And very importantly get them learning about the sorts of reading strategies they have, and what they need to improve.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Students can assess their reading at the beginning of the project in their journals, and then at the end. They could set clear learning goals for themselves, e.g. to learn how to read more complex vocabulary and understand it, to develop their knowledge of non-fiction texts, to learn more about the different types of writing about say football etc.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, it would be important to get them to think about the learning involved rather turning it into yet another “tick box”



thing where they are rewarded simply for the number of books they have read, rather than the skills they have learnt and developed.

#### TASKS

How might you set up a successful Wide Reading Project? What are the advantages of doing this as opposed to having silent reading once a week for half an hour? How might you encourage reading for pleasure with such a project? Remember that children who read for pleasure are more likely to do well generally (The Literacy Trust, 2014, p. 5)

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

There are some very interesting case studies in this Ofsted report about successful strategies for improving reading, including Wide Reading projects:

[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0003/3745/Improving\\_literacy\\_in\\_secondary\\_schools.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0003/3745/Improving_literacy_in_secondary_schools.pdf)

<http://dropeverythingandread.com/>

<http://www.renlearn.co.uk/accelerated-reader/>

#### READING AROUND THE CLASS

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I have to be honest, I really don't like reading around the class, because so many of the students I have are such poor readers, I only do it very sparingly.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: But isn't that worrying? I use it quite a bit, reading worksheets, extracts and so on, but I agree it can be quite turgid, with students really getting embarrassed about reading out aloud.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I find that I rely on a few good readers and then the others don't really get a chance to read aloud that much. However, I have found recently that if I ask students to prepare a reading in pairs or a group, and then ask for an expressive reading, if I make expressive reading a Learning Objective, then that works!

CREATIVE TEACHER: That's a great idea. Reading around the class needs to be thought carefully about. Many students don't like it unless you set it up properly. It only serves to underline the fact that they don't like reading.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I get the good readers to model what good reading looks like, and then we discuss how all the students might achieve that standard. I also get students reading poetry together in unison, this

can work very well, guiding the students who are uncertain of words, and makes the whole thing fun.

CREATIVE TEACHER: That's a great idea. I must try it more often!

#### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

How might reading around the class be successfully deployed in English lessons? How might you get students reading lines in unison? What would the point be of this?

Think about how you might use technology in this regard. You could get students to do recordings of chapters/sections of a book, or video readings, and use them. You could set this up as a proper lesson with clear learning goals.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

The Literacy Trust's guide is useful for lots of things, including thoughts about reading in class:

[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0002/3685/Literacy\\_Guide\\_for\\_Secondary\\_Schools\\_2014-15\\_v7\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0002/3685/Literacy_Guide_for_Secondary_Schools_2014-15_v7_FINAL.pdf)

#### READING TO THE CLASS

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I think reading aloud to a class is very important. You, the teacher, need to model expressive reading yourself.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, but it can be a bit nerve-wracking. You have to have practised the passage a bit before you read it. I'm not naturally a great reader.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I use well-read audio books, or good YouTube readings. That way you can monitor more easily if people are following.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I think videoing or taping yourself reading is a good way of showing that YOU are doing the reading and not just some professional actor. I agree with TRADITIONAL, it is important, at certain points, to show the class that you are doing it.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: The worst lessons though are those when you take over the reading, and you feel that you have lots to get through and you read in a great rush. I've had that happen to me.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, you need to plan what you are going to read and how you are doing to do it.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Variety is the key: a bit of whole class reading, a bit of you reading, paired reading, group reading etc.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

CREATIVE TEACHER: I also think reading a text to the class which they can't see themselves, like a really good short story you know they will like, is a good thing to do, a bit like the old Jackanory programmes.

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

How might you make reading to the class a successful experience?

### FURTHER RESEARCH

CREATIVE TEACHER: You can find some of my readings on YouTube of classic texts. This one is of Dr Jekyll:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMhePVqxdS8>**

Personally, I think I read the text too quickly. What do you think?

Here's an example of the fabulous *Jackanory*:  
**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j93z765K11Q>**

### COLLABORATIVE READING: A DISCUSSION

CREATIVE TEACHER: Personally, I think if you get collaborative reading going properly in lessons, this is the most successful way of improving reading standards in lessons, in all subjects.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, research shows that strategies like Reciprocal Reading are some of the most effective teaching strategies going.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Oh dear! It would be chaos to have students reading groups, far too noisy. How could you monitor anything?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, I'm worried you won't cover what needs to be covered in a lesson.

CREATIVE TEACHER: The evidence is that it takes setting up properly, you need to establish it in Year 7 properly, but if you get it right, it is really successful. Students learn the value of encouraging each other to read, and motivate each other. They feel much more comfortable reading to each other in a group than reading out aloud to a class.

BEGINNER TEACHER: And you can cover a great deal of content if they can read independently; this surely must be a key goal for all English lessons. Many students report that while they learn to read collaboratively in primary school, during secondary school they stop reading with each other.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: OK, can you show me it in action, then?

CREATIVE TEACHER: As a matter of fact, I can. What follows is an extract of a longer script I wrote for a Year 8 class in an inner city London school,

Deptford Green, and contains the basics of what Reciprocal Teaching involves.

### *THE POWER OF RECIPROCAL READING*

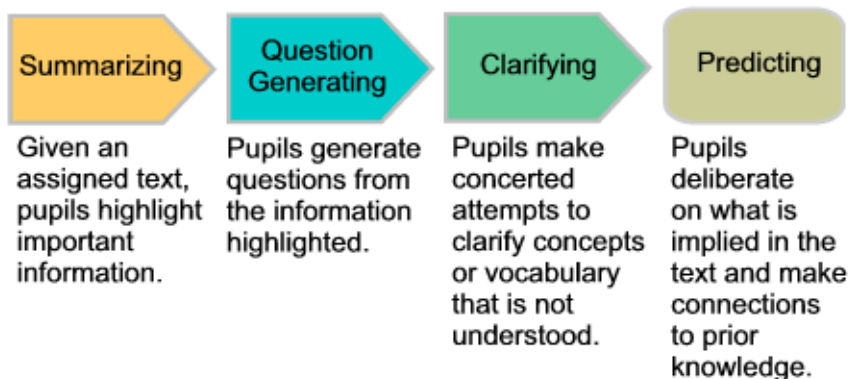
Respected research has shown for some time that certain teaching approaches are particularly effective at improving students' reading skills; one such strategy is called Reciprocal Teaching (Oczkus, 2010: Palincsar and Brown, 1984) which gets learners reading in groups. I've written about the success of this strategy in two previous issues of NATE Magazine (June 2015/June 2016) and shown how to do it in several NATE workshops. As I've worked with more and more classes and teachers, I've realised that while many English teachers are keen to adopt the strategy and are persuaded of its value, they don't feel confident with teaching it without an "expert" there to guide them. The central problem is that to get Reciprocal Teaching "off the ground" it needs to be "modelled" by the teacher to small groups so that students can then start "doing it for themselves". Based as it is on the theory of Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky and Cole, 1978), the modelling is a vital stage; there needs to be an expert modelling the approach before students can confidently begin reading in groups without chaos being unleashed! In my experience, either the English teacher doesn't feel that confident at modelling the strategy themselves or they have big classes and feel that they can't work intensively with small groups over a series of lessons.

To get around this problem, I have begun writing some creative "teaching scripts" which do the modelling for the students. What follows is an extract of one such script, showing how Reciprocal Teaching might be done with the poem "Ozymandias"; I have imagined that a mixed ability Year 9 or 10 class might be reading the poem in the script. The script is not the "perfect" way to do the strategy; it is a "model" in the Vygotskian sense (Vygotsky and Cole, 1978), a possible approach which is open-ended and subject to criticism.

If you are interested, maybe you could photocopy the script and get a suitable class reading it in groups: it is aimed at groups of six reading it, but you could ask students to read the script individually, pairs or any configuration you deem fit, doubling up roles etc. The students should read the script, and then do the vital work of reflecting upon what they have learnt about improving their reading skills once they have read the script; what strategies are being shown in the script which they use

already when reading texts? What strategies do they not use and why? Is this a problem?

## Reciprocal Teaching Strategy



A version of the Reciprocal Teaching/Reading Process

To recap quickly: Reciprocal Teaching involves students reading texts in groups, with every student at some point becoming a “teacher” who models and leads discussions which focus upon what the text is about, helps everyone clarify what the text means, predicts what might happen next or “fills in any gaps”, and gets everyone reflecting upon what they have learnt from the exercise, including what they have learnt about their learning. You can find explanations of the roles (and download a set of cards) more fully here:

<https://www.scribd.com/document/353138706/Creative-Reading-Roles>

The following script is meant to be read by GCSE students as an introduction to Reciprocal Teaching, and is followed by a “model” of how RT might be done with the poem *Ozymandias*.

### LEARNING SCRIPT FOR RECIPROCAL READING

TEACHER: I don’t like reading.

QUESTIONER: Hey, aren’t you supposed to be a teacher? Aren’t all teachers supposed to like reading?

MOTIVATOR: Good point, Questioner, as the Motivator in the group, I must say that telling your students that you don’t like reading is a bit demotivating!

ASSESSOR: And as the Assessor, I would have to grade that teaching strategy as unsatisfactory. I don’t think any school inspector would be happy to hear a

## Francis Gilbert

Teacher say that!

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: As Learning to Learn Chief, I think we need to give the Teacher a break: my job, which is overseeing Learning to Learn is about helping people improve their learning by thinking about their learning and what works for them and what doesn't. My first question is: what do we exactly mean by a Teacher and what is expected of them?

SUMMARIZER: As Summarizer, I would have to sum up the meaning of being a Teacher as someone who helps other people learn.

TEACHER: And it's true, I have a problem. I mean I am actually a school student who has been asked to be a Teacher in a group. And I don't feel comfortable with the role at all! First of all, I don't really read that much!

QUESTIONER: Why are you not comfortable being a Teacher? I don't get it.

MOTIVATOR: Come on, Teacher, everyone likes you in the group so you don't need to be frightened.

ASSESSOR: And having seen you outside lessons, I have seen you read the sports' news on your news on your phone, and doing all that Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter stuff all the time. You're always reading!

SUMMARIZER: So, to sum up, are we saying that our Teacher is a much better reader & teacher than they think?

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: And perhaps we think reading means reading in school when reading is a lot more than that.

TEACHER: Hey thanks guys, you're cheering me up! I didn't enjoy the thought of being a TEACHER, but I can see now that I have helped you learn a bit because we've all thought harder about what teaching and reading is.

QUESTIONER: What is the point of making students teachers anyway? I mean, we have got a real teacher over there, aren't they supposed to teach us?

MOTIVATOR: But I reckon I learn more when another student teaches me something: I kind of listen more carefully. I'm less scared somehow and this makes me relax and listen more carefully.

ASSESSOR: And when you become the Teacher you quickly realise what you know and don't know because you must explain it in your own words.

SUMMARIZER: So perhaps the teacher is the person who learns the most in the classroom because they are always trying to explain things.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: This is interesting. It's at this point, I would like to give us all a new term to learn. This term is called 'reciprocity' as a noun, and 'reciprocal' as an adjective.

TEACHER: Can you all write the heading 'Reciprocity' in your learning journals. What do you think it means?

QUESTIONER: Aren't you supposed to tell us? Isn't that why you're a TEACHER?

MOTIVATOR: Hey, it's better if we look up words for ourselves and learn to learn things for ourselves.

ASSESSOR: So let's look it up in the dictionary – or on our phones. Here look, Google says: noun: reciprocity: the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit, especially privileges granted by one country or organization to

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

another.

QUESTIONER: What does that mean?

SUMMARIZER: Let's try and put it into our own words. Hmmnnn.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: It kind of means "you get what you give".

ASSESSOR: That's a good summary, L2L Chief!

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: I like my new name, L2L Chief!

TEACHER: Come on, back to the main point, reciprocity when you give something, you expect to get something of equal value back.

QUESTIONER: So, if I help you with your reading, I expect you to help me when I find some passage difficult to understand.

MOTIVATOR: Or if I am really positive about your abilities, then I expect you to be nice about me.

ASSESSOR: Kind of. It's more than people being nice to each other though, it is about people valuing each other, really valuing what they must say.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: OK, let's all write down in our learning journals our definitions in our own words about what reciprocity means.

*(Everyone should do this)*

TEACHER: And I think we're ready now to introduce the next idea: Reciprocal Reading.

QUESTIONER: Is this when everyone helps each other with their reading?

MOTIVATOR: Hey, Questioner, well done! You've got it in one. It's about really trying with your reading, and then expecting the other people in the group to try as well.

ASSESSOR: It's also about us all assessing our reading skills and figuring out how we might improve our reading together. The reciprocity comes in because we assess ourselves and assess each other, valuing each other's contributions.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: And to add to that, let's see what dear old Google says:

Reciprocal teaching is a reading technique which is thought to promote students' reading comprehension. A reciprocal approach provides students with four specific reading strategies that are actively and consciously used to support comprehension: Summarising, Clarifying, Questioning, Predicting and Evaluating.

QUESTIONER: what does that all mean?

TEACHER: We're going to find that out now!

MOTIVATOR: We're all going to read an exciting, brilliant poem. And we're going to use Reciprocal Reading to read it together and question what it is about.

ASSESSOR: I'm going to check our understanding of the poem as we read it; the main thing to remember first when reading is to deal with two central points: what does the poem mean, and how well are we understanding it?

**The key questions for Reciprocal Reading**

SUMMARIZER: OK, let's outline the first and second parts of the RR cycle:

**First part of the reciprocal reading cycle**

What is this text about? What is happening in it? How might I best summarise my overall understanding of the passage: do I have an unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or outstanding understanding of the passage? (**Summarising**)

**Second part of the reciprocal reading cycle**

Are there any difficult bits we don't understand? Is anything not very clear? If so, can other people in the group help us understand the text better? (**Clarifying**)

QUESTIONER: OK, let's outline the third part of the RR cycle:

**Third part of the reciprocal reading cycle**

Does anyone have any questions to ask about the text? Do you have any questions about how you might improve your understanding of the text? E.g. Do (Questioning)

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: OK, let's outline the fourth part of the RR cycle:

**Fourth part of the reciprocal reading cycle**

Is there anything that is NOT said in the text that we think might be important to consider? In the case of many texts (but usually not poems) we ask: What does everyone think might happen next? (**Predicting/hypothesizing**)

ASSESSOR: OK, let's outline the fifth part of the RR cycle:

**Fifth part of the reciprocal reading cycle**

How well are we reading? What could we do to improve our reading? (**Assessing/Evaluating/learning to learn**)

TEACHER: Then the cycle begins again with the next scene. At that point, the goal is that the role of the Teacher passes on to another person so that everyone has a go at being the Teacher. The idea is that you do the cycle a few times and then it becomes "natural" and you naturally ask the right questions that come to mind. You "internalise" how to read well by summarising your understanding of the passage, by clarifying difficult bits, by asking good questions that make you think more deeply about the text, and by predicting what might happen next.

QUESTIONER: I am confused. What am I supposed to be doing? Can someone help me?

MOTIVATOR: Don't worry, we'll have a go with the first scene and then you'll begin to get the idea.

ASSESSOR: It generally takes a few lessons before people get the hang of Reciprocal Reading – sometimes called Reciprocal Teaching. It always starts with people being confused because it can seem complicated at first, but after you've done it for a few goes it becomes quite natural.

MOTIVATOR: It's like learning to walk or drive; it seems difficult at first but then it becomes natural. And when you get used to it you really start to enjoy it and reading much more. It's really fun reading in groups and you learn a lot from it!

SUMMARIZER: But to sum up, it really is about people learning to read together and discuss what they are reading.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: That's a good summary, Summarizer. OK, let's all write down in our learning journals, what we think Reciprocal Reading



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

means.

TEACHER: OK, off we go, we're going to read *Ozymandias*, a GCSE set text on my courses! Come on, let's have some fun! Can I ask all of us to read the poem silently to ourselves first, and then before we do any discussion work, we are going to read this poem 3 times out aloud; Motivator, Assessor, and Questioner, can you read it aloud to us?

QUESTIONER: What's the point of reading it aloud without trying to work it out immediately?

SUMMARIZER: We need to get familiar with the words first and get an overall sense of it.

ASSESSOR: Can I also ask us to underline difficult phrases/words, and sum up what we think the poem might be about and how much we understand BEFORE we read the script about the poem?

MOTIVATOR: Yes, and let's not get depressed if we find it difficult! Difficult texts are fun! We have a chance to work out their meanings by ourselves!

### **OZYMANDIAS BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, 1792 – 1822**

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'"

Using Reciprocal Teaching to read difficult texts

TEACHER: OK, what we're going to do now is to use Reciprocal Teaching to read this difficult poem – well, I think it looks tricky!

QUESTIONER: As the Questioner, I would have to ask: What do you think makes it such a difficult poem for so many GCSE students, do you think?

MOTIVATOR: As the group Motivator, I would guess it was partly linked to many GCSE pupils' motivation to read it; I reckon they often look at the title and some of the words like "antique" "trunkless" "visage" etc. and think there is no way they can understand the poem, and they lose their motivation and give up.

ASSESSOR: That's very interesting. As the Assessor, I would have to agree with you. I have been assessing many GCSE students and I have observed how they often just give up if something looks too difficult, saying to themselves, "I can't do it!"

## Francis Gilbert

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: OK guys, points taken, but how are *we* going to understand this poem though?

SUMMARIZER: Do you think we should look up the difficult words FIRST of all?

TEACHER: We could do that. That's one strategy, which we could do because we're not in a test, but what do you do if you've got no dictionary/Google?

MOTIVATOR: Not give up! We need to tell ourselves: 'This is interesting work, we can solve it!'

QUESTIONER: How will that help us understand better?

ASSESSOR: It might give us the confidence to work out what we know! We need to honestly assess our true knowledge because I bet with a bit of LA hard thinking, we can work out bits of the poem.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: Yes, let's look at the poem again and highlight what we DO know.

SUMMARIZER: And make some notes around the poem.

TEACHER: OK, let's take it line by line, and work it out together.

MOTIVATOR: Togetherness, man! This is about being resilient learners! Growth mindsets, not Fixed Mindsets!

TEACHER: OK, team, let's go for it!

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: Right, the title — what does it mean?

### *Ozymandias*

QUESTIONER: Not a clue. Does that mean we give up, I mean if we can't get the title, how on earth are we going to do it? I can't even say it!

SUMMARIZER: Break it down OZ –Y-MAN-DI-AS.

MOTIVATOR: Well done, break it down. That's what we do.

TEACHER: OK, I think we ignore the title for now and go onto the first line:

I met a traveller from an antique land

QUESTIONER: What does antique mean? Who is this 'I'?

SUMMARIZER: Antique means 'very old'.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: So the line means 'I met a man who travels a lot who came from a very old land'.

MOTIVATOR: Great work!

TEACHER: Next couple of lines:

Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert. . . .

QUESTIONER: What does 'vast' mean?

SUMMARIZER: Very big.

ASSESSOR: Trunkless?

MOTIVATOR: Not sure, it makes me think of an elephant, but 'less' means 'without something', so it means without an 'elephant trunk'. Doesn't make

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

sense!

TEACHER: Let's read on: 'Legs of stone' so we might guess that...

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: That the legs don't have a body! So the 'trunk' means 'without a body'!

MOTIVATOR: Well done! You've got it!

QUESTIONER: So, can someone put this in simple language for me?

SUMMARIZER: There are two very big legs of stone standing upright in the desert, a very sandy place, which don't have a body...

MOTIVATOR: Great work! Well done!

TEACHER: OK, guys, we're getting this! Onto the next lines:

Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk a shattered visage lies,

QUESTIONER: Here we go again, what does 'visage' mean? I need a dictionary!

MOTIVATOR: But hang on, let's look at the other lines, this thing, this 'visage', is 'half-sunk' and is near the legs of stone.

ASSESSOR: Great work Motivator, this is giving us a clue.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: So, the sand has covered this thing.

TEACHER: Let's read on and see if we can work out what it might mean from the context:

whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

QUESTIONER: What has a 'frown'?

ASSESSOR: A face?

SUMMARIZER: Yes, 'visage' means 'face'! Woah! We did it! High five!

TEACHER: Hang on, there are other things too. Learning to Learn Chief, can you work out more?

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: The face has a 'wrinkled lip'; in other words, it's looking rather nasty like this! (Makes a wrinkled lip)

MOTIVATOR: Oh yes, I see, the face has a 'sneer'. What do you think of my sneer? (Makes a sneer)

QUESTIONER: What is a 'sneer'?

MOTIVATOR: When you look really snidey, or in a nasty way, at someone. You can kind of work out the meaning from the sound of the word, which has a sneeeeeering quality to it!

QUESTIONER: The face has a 'sneer of cold command' so this is a face which was commanding someone? And why 'cold'?

ASSESSOR: Maybe the face was very unfeeling, emotionally cold?

MOTIVATOR: Great point! Let's read on:

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive,

## Francis Gilbert

TEACHER: So what is happening here?

QUESTIONER: What is a sculptor?

SUMMARIZER: A person who makes statues.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: So, the person who made this face ‘well those passions read’. This is difficult. Any guesses?

ASSESSOR: Maybe the sculptor was really good at reading ‘passions’.

QUESTIONER: What are they?

MOTIVATOR: Feelings?

ASSESSOR: Yes, that sounds about right.

TEACHER: So, the sculptor was good at understanding the feelings of the person whose face lies all broken in the desert. What survives are the feelings in the face: the sneer, the wrinkled lip.

MOTIVATOR: Great work. Let’s read on:

stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;

QUESTIONER: What is ‘stamped on these lifeless things’?

MOTIVATOR: These feelings were ‘stamped’? Did someone tread on the lifeless things? What are the ‘lifeless things’?

ASSESSOR: Guess! Are the ‘lifeless things’, the stones on which the sculptor carved his face?

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: That makes sense. The feelings are ‘stamped’ or printed, or drawn, or carved on these dead stones.

TEACHER: What have we got so far? And how much do we understand?

MOTIVATOR: This is important; summarising our ideas so far so that we remember what is going on and checking in on the level of our understanding.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: OK, we’ve got a guy who met someone who travels a lot who has seen a stone face in the desert which has a nasty face, and this tells the traveller that the person who made the face was good at understanding the feelings of the person he sculpted.

ASSESSOR: That’s great work! Well done. And if I were to assess our level of understanding I would say that we are understanding most of the meaning of the poem, which we are working out because we are reading the lines slowly, not getting demotivated if we don’t understand something immediately, and we are re-reading, and asking questions about what we don’t understand.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: We are also working out what we don’t understand; this is important because sometimes it’s difficult to work out what you know and what you don’t know. When you know what you don’t know, you can kind of focus upon it, and then work out what it means by re-reading and asking questions about it, and make good guesses at its meaning, like we did with ‘visage’.

TEACHER: Great points L2L Chief! OK, onto the next line:

And on the pedestal, these words appear:

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

QUESTIONER: What's 'pedestal'?

MOTIVATOR: Guess; is it a platform or sign or something because there are words on it?

ASSESSOR: Sounds close.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: We don't need to know exactly what it means to get the overall meaning though, because what is important is the next two lines:

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;

Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!

QUESTIONER: Who is speaking here?

MOTIVATOR: The traveller?

SUMMARIZER: It couldn't be the traveller, because he's a traveller, not a king.

ASSESSOR: The speaker of the poem?

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: He's not a king either.

MOTIVATOR: What about the actual person who is the statue? What if it was a statue of a real king who lived once?

ASSESSOR: Very good, that makes sense!

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: In other words, the guy that the statue was made of was a real king, and he wanted on his statue the words that said he was 'King of kings!'

QUESTIONER: He thought he was the very best king of all?

MOTIVATOR: I'm getting this now, and he said to 'ye Mighty' to look on 'his works' and 'Despair'?

QUESTIONER: What does that mean?

ASSESSOR: He is speaking to 'mighty' people?

MOTIVATOR: Yes.

SUMMARIZER: Who were important people, because they were 'mighty' or strong?

QUESTIONER: What does 'ye' mean?

ASSESSOR: Guess: an old-fashioned word for 'you'?

QUESTIONER: What are his 'works'? Drugs?

MOTIVATOR: No, not drugs I think, but all the great things he did as a king, maybe a huge palace or something.

QUESTIONER: Or this statue?

TEACHER: OK, I think we've got this, the king said to everyone he was the greatest king of all, and he told everyone to look at all the great things he's done: 'my Works' and 'despair'.

QUESTIONER: But why 'despair'?

ASSESSOR: Maybe he wants people to look at his great works and feel really bad that they will never be as great or as important as him?

SUMMARIZER: Yes, a bit like a really important celebrity who says to everyone: just look at my huge mansion just so that we will all feel bad that we can never be as rich and as important as him or her?

ASSESSOR: Yes, that's it. The king had a statue made of himself, a very big

## Francis Gilbert

one, which was to show off!

MOTIVATOR: Great work guys!

TEACHER: I think we can read the last lines now:

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

QUESTIONER: What does he mean ‘nothing beside remains’?

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: There’s nothing else, there are no great works, no great palaces, nothing.

ASSESSOR: And the statue is a ‘colossal wreck’.

SUMMARIZER: Colossal means very big.

MOTIVATOR: And it’s a complete wreck, a total mess.

TEACHER: And the sands or the desert ‘stretch far away’.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: And there is nothing around the sands, the desert is ‘boundless and bare’.

QUESTIONER: What does that mean?

SUMMARIZER: ‘Boundless’ means without any boundaries I think, and bare means naked.

MOTIVATOR: There is nothing around. Absolutely nothing.

ASSESSOR: And the sands are also ‘lone’ and ‘level’.

QUESTIONER: What does that mean?

SUMMARIZER: Maybe ‘lone’ means ‘lonely’?

MOTIVATOR: Yes, that makes sense. The statue which is all broken up is in a ‘lonely’ place.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: And it’s ‘level’ or ‘flat’. So there are not even the outlines of the palaces and great things in the sand. There is nothing there.

QUESTIONER: So this big, show-off king thought that everyone would look at his great works and feel bad that they weren’t as important as him, but actually, there’s nothing left of his work?

MOTIVATOR: I reckon that’s it. I reckon we’ve cracked it! This poem is about a traveller who saw this broken statue and this sign which said this bloke Ozymandias was a great king, and everyone should despair that they could never be as great as him, but actually, there is nothing there.

TEACHER: Very interesting.

QUESTIONER: What do think the message is for this poem? How great big show-offs die and are forgotten?

MOTIVATOR: That time kills you off in the end, and nothing is left of you, no matter how important you think you are?

ASSESSOR: Yes, very good Lead MOTIVATOR. Now, could I ask what we learnt about reading difficult texts in doing that exercise?

MOTIVATOR: That if you work together, and really think about what you do know, and make some guesses, then you can more or less work it out. We never

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

did know what ‘pedestal’ meant, and I wasn’t sure what ‘sneer’ meant, but I basically got most of the poem from the other words.

QUESTIONER: And that asking questions helps?

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: Breaking the poem down into small bits, and working it out that way.

ASSESSOR: But also, assessing what we know about the poem so far: what we know and what we don’t know.

MOTIVATOR: And not being frightened if we don’t know something, but seeing it a great challenge! Being motivated to work it out like a really interesting puzzle.

QUESTIONER: But what if you guys are not here to help me?

TEACHER: Well this is the great thing, we can remember how we did it as a group, and then carry these different roles in our heads when we read a poem by ourselves, so we are a Teacher to ourselves, explaining things clearly and not panicking.

MOTIVATOR: And we have a Motivator in our heads going, ‘Yeah, we can do this!’;

QUESTIONER: And we have a Questioner in our brains, asking questions that help us focus upon what is important.

ASSESSOR: And we have an assessor in our head checking what we know and don’t know.

SUMMARIZER: And we have a Summarizer in our heads summarizing things in clear English.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: And we have a Learning to Learn Chief in our heads, working out how we know and don’t know, figuring out strategies to help us learn better, doing things like noting things down and working out difficult words.

TEACHER: Very good guys. Together we are like a gigantic brain. A community of learners which we can carry in our heads forever and forever.

SUMMARIZER: OK, before we get too carried away, can you now write a summary of the poem in your Learning Journals, or if you prefer what you learnt about reading difficult poems from our Reciprocal Teaching?

*(Everyone does this.)*

TEACHER: The next step would be to then perhaps do some analysis of how the writer achieved his effects, but you can’t do that until you’ve understood the poem properly.

QUESTIONER: Why not? I’m used to just analysing the alliteration and onomatopoeia, and never really worry that much about understanding poetry. I used the DAFOREST acronym. I always do well in my tests because it looks like I am really clever, knowing all this terminology.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: But you won’t be able to write very well at the very top level about those things if you don’t understand what the lines mean.

QUESTIONER: That’s true. I never get the top grades, but I do generally pass, but the real teacher always writes, “Discuss the effects of the techniques you have spotted” or says I am “feature-spotting”. Whatever that means.

## Francis Gilbert

TEACHER: That means you are just finding certain techniques and not relating those techniques to what the poem means.

QUESTIONER: That's because I don't usually know that well what the poem means!

TEACHER: Exactly, so that's why you need to work out what it means first, and then find the techniques!

QUESTIONER: OK, I think I get it!

ASSESSOR: I have to say, analysing poetry can kill the enjoyment. Maybe it would be better to write our own poems about show-offs?

MOTIVATOR: Yes, let's write a poem called 'The Ruined Mansion' about a huge mansion of a celebrity who has died and how it has all these signs that big him up, but now the wind and the rain has got into his king-size bedroom, his sports car has rusted to bits and his bathroom has the ceiling fallen in.

ASSESSOR: Yes, and you could show your understanding of *Ozymandias* by writing a modern update of it, where you met someone from Hollywood who told you about this house.

SUMMARIZER: Yes, I could write a poem about Michael Jackson's 'Neverland' and how it was all abandoned and shut up, and how this famous guy is now dead.

MOTIVATOR: But not forgotten.

SUMMARIZER: Oh yeah, but he will be in a hundred years' time, probably.

TEACHER: OK, everyone, can you either write an analysis of *Ozymandias*, discussing the effects of the poetry, or write your own poem possibly called 'The Show-Off'.

MOTIVATOR: Well done guys! We did it! We understood a difficult poem!

### **LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS**


Now have a go at annotating this script so that you highlight the reading strategies that were used to get the group understanding the poem. Then answer this question: what reading strategies could you use to help you improve your reading?

Re-read the poem in a group WITHOUT this script, and have a similar discussion to the one above which uses Reciprocal Teaching to help you understand the poem even better, exploring this time the language techniques in the poem. You could use the **DAFOREST** acronym to help you annotate the language features of the poem.

### **LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS**

Have a think about how you might use this script in the classroom; the key thing to bear in mind is that it is only a model; not the perfect way. Students and you should reflect critically upon it and use it as a way of getting groups to discuss poetry and texts meaningfully.



Predict	Read	Clarify	Ask Questions and Discuss	Sum up
 <p>I predict ..... (title/ subheading/ chapter) will be about .....</p> <p>Would anyone like to add to my prediction or ask any questions?</p>	 <p>Let's read to check the prediction/s and find out more.</p>	 <p>Is there anything you need to clarify, such as tricky words, phrases or ideas?</p>	 <p>What did we learn?</p> <p>What else are you wondering about?</p>	 <p>..... (Title/sub heading/ chapter) was about .....</p> <p>Would anyone like to add to my summary?</p>

Another iteration of RT.

## TOP TIPS

### READ WIDELY YOURSELF

Fall in love with English literature, read it outside the classroom, observe your own reading processes and what motivates you to read.

### SHARE YOUR READING WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Share what you are reading with your students, even if it is literature you know they won't be familiar with. Show them that you are reading for pleasure.

### CELEBRATE READING FOR PLEASURE

Hold regular readings where students read out material they like: make these special occasions by holding reading parties. Set up book groups and encourage students to meet in their own time to read together and discuss their reading. Read stories, poems and articles to the students for no other reason than for enjoyment.

### FOLLOW SCHOOL POLICIES OR DEVELOP YOUR OWN

Most schools have some pretty sensible policies about reading, but often they are not taken that seriously. Encourage your students to do so and other teachers. Strategies like Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) are very successful if embraced enthusiastically.

### COLLABORATE WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS

The evidence shows that if a reading strategy like Reciprocal Reading is adopted by another department, then students are much more likely to

learn from it. Encourage other departments to get serious about encouraging students to read.

#### READ MINDFULLY AND SHARE THE PROCESSES

Become a mindful, joyful reader yourself, modelling how you read, talking to students about how you re-read passages, get disheartened but then return back to a text, make connections with other texts, ask questions of a text, and discuss it with other people.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

The National Literacy Trust writes reports about how to teach reading in secondary schools. They are a good place to start and follow up their references:

**[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0003/3924/Literacy\\_Guide\\_for\\_Secondary\\_Schools\\_2016-17\\_Taster\\_section.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0003/3924/Literacy_Guide_for_Secondary_Schools_2016-17_Taster_section.pdf)**

This journalistic article is useful:

**<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/may/08/ten-ways-improve-student-literacy>**

The Teachers as Readers concept is outlined here:

**[https://ukla.org/downloads/teachers\\_as\\_readers.pdf](https://ukla.org/downloads/teachers_as_readers.pdf)**

This BERA blog is informative:

**<https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/teaching-reading-what-are-our-long-term-goals>**

The booklet on teaching reading in the National Archives is still useful, even though the videos have disappeared. Download the zip file and find the developing reading booklet:

**<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110812234120/http://nsonline.org.uk/node/97131>**

#### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about the teaching of reading from this section?

What have you learnt from this section of the book?

## WRITING SKILLS

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider why you want to be a teacher, what your values are and what motivates you to teach.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon the issue of writing skills. How do you feel about writing yourself? Visualise yourself writing in different situations; what motivates you to write. How did you learn to write?

### WHY WRITE?

When you think about it, putting lots of marks on bits of paper or onto a screen is a bit weird; there's something rather surreal about writing and reading. However, there is something magical as well in the sense that knowledge can be conveyed so succinctly and preserved supposedly forever by these marks. Nevertheless, it's not hard to see the futility in it all. Why aren't we all going out and enjoying ourselves instead? There's no doubt at times you'll feel like this on this course because you'll have worked so closely with the written word, both reading and writing it. This said, it's worth considering the power of the written word. I'd like to dwell upon two aspects of the written word: its role in communicating in a private, personal sphere, and its role in communicating in a public realm:

**As a tool for personal, private reflection; for communicating with the self; for expressing one's innermost thoughts and desires.** The written word gives you access to your inner-most thoughts in a way that no other form of communication can. Seeing those words emerge on the page in front of you as you write your diary expressing your emotions, your thoughts, your ideas about the world is, when you think about it, quite remarkable. It is your mind made manifest. This is possibly why people become so attached to their diaries and journals. They are an extension of the self. As an English teacher, you'll be getting your students to examine and analyse this type of writing which either is this form of autobiographical writing, or represents it. For example, in a Shakespeare play, soliloquies give us access to his characters' innermost thoughts and desires, while the novel itself arose because writers like Defoe and Richardson fictionalized personal letters or diaries. The primary purpose of the writing is to represent the inner workings of

individual minds; to reflect upon the world from the standpoint of the individual person.

**As a tool for informing, persuading and analysing; as a very public tool for communication.** When I spoke about writers such as Shakespeare using the written word to express private emotions and ideas, I was conscious that his language operates also in the public realm as well. It is very much language designed for public performance. It is, at once, private and public. Because literature's role is often, though not always, about communicating publicly to an audience or readership. This, for me, is what makes literature so unique; it operates simultaneously in the private and public realms. It expresses many private thoughts, but is aired publicly. It is in many cases very consciously there to be scrutinised by the public; it often has an informative and persuasive role. It aims to change people's minds about certain issues or concepts. This said, it is often not "analytical"; it doesn't seek to analyse an issue in the way that a philosophical essay or piece of literary criticism might.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/artimages/why/why1/whydowewrite.html>

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/artimages/why/ways1/waysofwriting.html>

#### TEACHERS AS WRITERS

*A version of this article appeared in the TES in 2012 and has been updated. It reiterates some of the points made before, but they are worth making again.*

All teachers are writers – but many don't think they are. Let's just consider for a moment how much your average teacher actually writes in their career: thousands of reports, countless comments on and about pupils' work, numerous forms of communication – letters, emails, behaviour slips – and God knows how many worksheets, PowerPoints and instructions. When you add it all up it must amount to writing *War and Peace* several times over! Given this, why is it that so many teachers have such low opinions of themselves as writers?

Cremin and Baker's research (2010 & 2017) suggests that teachers feel extremely ambivalent about their identities as writers. They report that their research "highlights that their (teacher's) identities as teacher-

writers and writer-teachers constantly shift and are emotional, relational and conflictual.” (2010, p. 27).

My own experiences both as a teacher and a writer certainly endorse Cremin and Baker’s points. Having taught for two decades in various London comprehensives, I’ve never perceived the writing I’ve done in school as personally expressive of who I am; my educational scribbles have never had much of ‘me’ in them. Indeed, I’ve had to find other outlets to satisfy my own personal craving to express myself; having taken some time out of teaching, I’ve written heartfelt fiction and non-fiction about my teaching, more personal than anything I’ve been permitted to do within the context of school. Having enjoyed a degree of success with my books, which include the bestselling *I’m A Teacher, Get Me Out Of Here* (2004), I’ve had a lot of teachers write to me over the years, showing me their private thoughts and reflections about teaching. It’s made me realise that there are two types of writing that many teachers do: the functional and the personal. Every teacher has to write functionally every day – usually boring, compulsory paperwork – but most want to write personally, to reflect upon the extraordinary roller-coaster ride they’ve gone through both in and out of the classroom.

Very few ‘official’ programmes satisfy this craving to write more expressively – I’ve rarely attended a CPD course that has encouraged anything as dangerous and subversive as allowing teachers to write about their emotions. But there are a few knocking around – and some are very well established. In the United States, a group of Californian teachers set up a writing group for teachers in 1982 that became the US National Writing Project (NWP), which has been a properly funded project for three decades now. For years, US teachers from all disciplines and backgrounds have joined summer camps situated in universities in order to improve their writing skills. Findings from these projects indicate that these teachers have not only become better and more confident writers, but also better teachers too. Richard Sterling, the Director of the NWP, USA 1994-2008, said in an interview (Andrews 2008: 39): “When teachers start writing extensively, they discover things about themselves as learners that are almost an epiphany...it engages them intellectually in their profession again.”

Inspired by the American NWP and the research of James Britton who exhorted teachers to view themselves as writers, National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) members Jeni Smith and Simon Wrigley

set up an English version of the NWP in 1992. It has always been successful, but recently, boosted by the support of the London Association of Teachers in English (LATE) it's really taken off in London; teacher-writing groups are popping up in boroughs throughout the capital. Smith and Wrigley have a 'do-it-yourself' attitude, encouraging any teacher to team up with fellow professionals and set up a group. It's a very easy thing to do; a group of teachers come together and write. Having attended a number of the NWP's teacher-as-writers workshops now, I can testify that they are great to take part in. The format for the workshops is fairly simple: teachers write what they want to write, usually prompted by some good activities, such as writing about 'found' or specially provided objects; or reflecting upon a particular theme or topic; or going on a 'scavenger hunt' where you examine the world around you in close detail.

One of the aims of the NWP is to get all teachers – not just English teachers – thinking of themselves as writers. Jeni Smith told me: "Teachers-as-writers is open to anybody. I do a lot of work with primary school teachers: they're multi-talented people who teach right across the curriculum." She adds: "When people begin to write, they usually can't avoid writing the personal. If you say 'free write' – a frequent exercise we employ – and you find the free writing is you remembering your grandmother's living room, or your thinking of your father's hands, and it just comes unbidden."

Research, mostly conducted in the United States, has shown that this kind of writing can be very therapeutic. Many researchers testify in *The Writing Cure* that a wide spectrum of people in challenging circumstances – from cancer patients to troubled inner-city school children – have all benefitted from writing about their problems. Perhaps it's not surprising then that many 'self-help' programmes use personal writing as a crucial activity if one is going to feel happier.

However, both Smith and Wrigley are at pains to point out that encouraging teachers to write expressively is much more than therapy; it's about giving the profession a fresh voice, 're-professionalising' pedagogues, and empowering to find their own authentic voice. Wrigley explains: "There are issues here of authority and authenticity that are tied up; they have a common root in the word 'author'. We've found that teachers often talk about standards as if these are uncontested givens and yet they don't have strategies for valuing authenticity as much as

they do for chasing standards. Yet, they are aware of this discord, and they are looking for solutions. We think we have some answers, and also many more questions about what writing is. I think this what the writing groups explore in their own ways. Many teachers are responsible for a process which they are not fully familiar with and they defer on lots of grounds to other people. That's dangerous."

Wrigley's argument suggests that if teachers don't fully engage with the writing process, they'll struggle to be effective teachers because they haven't quite found their 'authentic' voice. Being unconfident writers means that they have not fully seen what Wrigley terms the 'affordances' – or numerous possibilities – of writing. Once again, this isn't just referring to English teachers, it concerns all teachers who want to have real agency in the classroom.

Smith comments: "Writing has a potency which is not to do with writing stories and poems. I think I really started finding my voice as a writer not through writing poetry, but through keeping a journal in order to pin down what was happening in my classroom because it was a very unusual school and it seemed chaotic, and I started to write in order to pin down what was happening. And, in fact, if I look at my writing now, most of my writing is of that kind."

This for me is the key message of the project. It's a lesson that any teacher can learn whether they attend the writing workshops or not: writing reflectively about your teaching and life helps you grow both as a teacher and a person. Lots of research, entirely separate from the NWP's work, has shown that it's a particularly good activity for teachers. Andrew Pollard in *Reflective Teaching* (2005, p. 52) writes: "A very personal diary can provide a vivid and flexible accounts of ideas and feelings. It can offer a safe place to express the emotional side of teaching, as well as more systematic attempts to analyse and reflect. When a diary is 'unofficial' it may be a place to speculate, propose, theorize and generally enter into a conversation with oneself."

Research suggests that just engaging in the act of writing in this way and sharing selected bits of it with pupils can help motivate as well. The feminist researcher Ann Oakley noticed this in the 1970s when she was gathering data from interviews; she saw that if she told something of her own story, her interviewees were much more willing to open up to her. This process – dubbed 'reciprocity' by Oakley – appears to be at work when teachers write with their pupils in the classroom and share what

they have written. It's something I've noticed in my own research; when I've read out real-life stories about myself being bullied at school, I've found that I've got very rich responses back, and that pupils have been very appreciative that I've made myself vulnerable in this way.

This key point about reciprocity could be applied to all manner of different lessons – indeed, it is something that many teachers do as a matter of course. It could be a teacher sharing a reflective account of a lesson that had gone badly in order to begin to address behavioural problems; it could be a science teacher sharing their write-up of an experiment with the pupils, or a history teacher reading out their own essay on a topic. Any teacher who has done this knows that undergoing the same writing process as the pupils in whatever discipline enables you to talk much more coherently and honestly about the processes by which you arrived at a finished composition. I know when I've shown drafts of my work to pupils it's really helped them see how my mind has worked to get to an end product. This is really what forms the heart of a good education; showing pupils the processes by which different drafts are achieved.

For the poet Ted Hughes writing was a 'road back to myself', enabling him to learn vital lessons about who he was. For some thinkers, such as the Brazilian educational philosopher, Paulo Freire, author of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, real education only begins when a teacher reflects deeply upon the processes that have shaped him or her by critically reflecting upon the ways in which he or she is experiencing the world and thereby finding intellectual liberation. Freire, like many others, believed that writing reflectively could be liberating in this way.

If there's so much evidence that writing can be this effective, perhaps it's time that all teachers took themselves seriously as writers?

#### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

The London Association for Teachers of English (LATE): <http://www.late.org.uk/>

The National Association for Teachers of English (NATE): <http://www.nate.org.uk/>

The National Writing Project (the NWP in the UK): <http://nwp.org.uk/>

The US National Writing Project: <http://www.nwp.org/>

Arvon's Teachers as Writers is very information:

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



**SOME TIPS TO GET STARTED AS A TEACHER WRITER**

1. Team up with some colleagues who also want to write; find a nice venue like a café, and write about what you see around you; what's happened to you that week. The NWP has an excellent page full of ideas here: **<http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/922>**
2. Write a diary about your times in and out of the classroom.
3. Think small at first: write random words that come into your head for 5 minutes a day.
4. Learn to free write: write anything, absolutely anything that comes into your head for 5 minutes without stopping, even it is just 'blah, blah, blah!' You'll be surprised what starts to come out if you do this for a few times.
5. Sign up with the National Writing Project; just log onto their websites.
6. Start telling people you're a writer, then you might be forced to write when they ask to read something you've written!
7. Keep track of your feelings, by jotting down a list of the different emotions you've felt during the day.
8. Write short stories or sketches about interesting pupils and teachers you've come across during your career.
9. Turn some really tedious part of your curriculum into a wild story, poem, or article, personifying the most dreary elements of the subject as mad-cap characters.

**SOME TIPS ON GETTING PUBLISHED**

- The opportunities for teachers to publish their work and enjoy a relatively large readership are very good now.
- Start a blog on a free platform like Wordpress ([www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)) and get all your friends to read it, putting comments on it. Spread the word about it on relevant forums like the TES chatrooms.
- Use e-publishing software or just programmes like Word to make an e-book; Amazon e-books can be published very simply now and you may be able to make some money out of them if you want. (**<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Publish-Amazon-Kindle-Publishing-ebook/dp/B004LX069M>**)

- If you want to publish through a mainstream publishing house, you should look carefully at the Writers and Artists' Yearbook: <http://www.writersandartists.co.uk/>
- The local press are always keen to take stories from teachers, particularly if there are photographs to go with them. Listings of local press can be found here: <http://www.mediauk.com/newspapers>
- National press like the TES and newspapers are always interested in publishing new voices from the teaching profession if they can comment on the latest news, or a topical issue. Look carefully at the relevant website and email the relevant editor with your ideas. Most newspapers have procedures for doing this now.
- The media pick up stories from popular educational blogs which are generally easier to publish on. I help run a popular blog, [www.localschoolsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.localschoolsnetwork.org.uk), which is always interested in teachers posting articles or comments.

#### *THE BENEFITS OF TEACHERS WRITING*

- Research shows that teachers who write with their pupils on relevant occasions appear to encourage better responses.
- Teachers who write diaries about their teaching have a better understanding of what is really going on in their classrooms.
- Teachers who write with their pupils have a better understanding of the processes of writing and, as a result, are able to teach them more effectively.
- Writing a personal journal can have significant health benefits: it can over time lower stress and increase overall well-being (see The Writing Cure)
- Teachers who view themselves as writers are more confident in their identities.

#### *FAMOUS TEACHER-WRITERS*

**Children's authors.** J.K. Rowling taught in Portugal while planning the early Harry Potter books. Michael Morpurgo and Philip Pullman were both experienced teachers before writing full-time.

**Poets/lyricists.** DH Lawrence, Robert Frost and Sting all were reputedly good teachers before devoting their lives to literature, poetry, lyrics and song.

**Novelists.** Both William Golding and Stephen King were school teachers both becoming fabulously successful with their tales of brutality and horror. Wonder where they got their ideas from?

## ESSAY WRITING

Teaching essay writing is difficult. There are several reasons for this, including that essay writing is often 'high stakes': it could be coursework or completed for formal assessments.

There are three simple pieces of advice if you want your students to get good marks with your essay writing:

### LITTLE AND OFTEN

Give your students plenty of practice, practice, practice. Get them writing rough drafts and re-draft their work. If it is a piece of coursework, give them plenty of time. However, this said, don't be afraid to get your students writing bits of their essays early on and radically re-writing it later on if necessary. Make it clear to your students that we often think very effectively by writing in an uncensored focused way about a topic.

Encourage your students to read, read, read. The wider your students' reading of other essays, both published and unpublished ones, the better they'll get. They will gain a feel for the different types of essay.

Encourage your students to discuss, discuss, discuss. The more they talk about the issues that they are writing about, the better they'll get at formulating a decent argument. Get them to discuss their essay with their peers and make time to discuss their thoughts with you individually; if necessary, make an appointment to see them, listen to their ideas. Discuss your students' essays with your colleagues.

Encourage your students to form book group or small discussion groups to discuss work outside class. Encourage them to talk about the key themes and ideas outside the classroom, in the playground, over lunch, in the library etc.

**Bearing these major points in mind, let's look at a few other things as well.**

### ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENTS TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THE QUESTION

Make the students feel that the question set is their question. Get them to tease over the phrases of the question in their minds and think

about what they can bring to the question. Many good essays “problematize” a question; that is, they unpick the assumptions behind a question and use that to analyse the selected texts. They use the question as a way of entering a dialogue or conversation with a text. The Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin proposed in his seminal book, *The Dialogic Imagination* that a reader constructs the meanings of a text by dialoguing with it in their mind. The best essay questions help students with this dialogue; they give the learner a focus, a beam of light to shine upon the words in a text.

#### STAGES IN WRITING ESSAYS

I’m going to propose that you use the acronym BOL to help students write their essays. That is:

Brainstorm

Order

Link

The brainstorming phase is the **FIRST THING** you should encourage your students to do. If they’ve got coursework, get them to start **BRAINSTORMING** as soon as they can; this means getting all their thoughts, quotations, points together in a notebook or on the computer in one document. Encourage them to rule nothing out at this stage. This is the place where you should give your students the freedom to think the unthinkable. Get your students to switch off the internal critic who tells them that their ideas are rubbish, and get them to go for it! This is just as important in an exam as it is when they are doing coursework and have weeks to think about a question. It’s very important to give them intellectual room; this relaxes students and gives them the chance to really explore areas of interest. As a general rule, get them to follow their interests and passions; it is far better to encourage them to write a bad passionate essay than a lifeless so-called “good” one. Examiners want to be gripped and engaged, they don’t want tepid, second-hand ideas.

Once they have got their notes together, encourage your students to read them carefully and order them. That is, arrange them in meaningful fashion. While they are doing this, they should be making links or connections between their points so that their essay reads smoothly. It is strongly recommended at this stage that they discuss their essay with someone, either you or a peer. A good technique is to get them to present their essay to another student, explaining in clear English what their argument is in response to the question. Equally, they could present to

the whole class. There's a great deal of evidence to suggest that if students talk through their notes before writing it, then things become clearer in their minds and their attainment is much higher. The different types of essays

### *DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE ESSAYS*

There are two major intellectual processes that usually go on in most essays: **deductive** and **inductive** reasoning.

**Deductive reasoning** starts with making general points, formulating a generalized argument and then looking at the particular. For example, if you were writing an essay on *Othello*, you might make a statement such as "Jealousy can be very destructive" and then examine the ways in which Othello's jealousy leads to him killing his wife, Desdemona, because he suspects her of having an affair with another man. If you were taking an inductive approach, you'd be taking the opposite approach; you'd look at the evidence in the play, and then show that Othello's jealousy is destructive. Induction starts with the particular and then generalizes having examined it. **Inductive reasoning** moves from the particular to the general.

Your students' essays will shift between the two approaches, but it is important to understand that they are quite different ways of reasoning because they both have strengths and weaknesses. The deductive approach can risk not finding sufficient evidence to back up its central argument, while the inductive approach can get lost in the "particulars" of a text and then never formulate any generalized points. English students regularly fall into both traps: some students make too many generalized arguments without any evidence to back them up, while others are so bogged down in analysing a text that they never quite offer an overview.

**Introductions.** Hmmnn. Personally, I have some big concerns about some students' introductions. Too often they read more like unproven conclusions; bold statements about the question which never are substantiated. Other introductions are very clunky and expose the student's thought processes too explicitly by listing everything they are going to do in an essay. This isn't really that necessary. There are no set ways of writing an introduction, but if I were to make a recommendation it would be to leave getting your students to write their final introductions to last when drafting. It's often beneficial in the first rough drafts to get stuck in right away and start with a quotation or a statement

that they substantiate with evidence. Get your students to begin in “media res” – in the middle of things.

**The main body of an essay.** This is the meat of the essay and will need to be carefully structured. Again, with the English essay, despite what you might hear, there are no set ways of structuring them, but there are some well-worn approaches which are worth considering.

### *THE DIALECTICAL ESSAY.*

This is an essay which deals with thesis (argument) and antithesis (counter-argument), which leads to synthesis (a point which synthesizes the essence of the argument and the counter-argument).

Let’s imagine for a moment that the essay title is: “Examine the representation of jealousy in *Othello*.”

To write this type of essay, it is useful to plan in this way:

Arguments for: Othello is represented primarily as a jealous husband (FIND EVIDENCE FOR THIS POINT).

Arguments against: Othello’s jealousy is secondary compared to his obsession with loss of status (FIND EVIDENCE FOR THIS POINT).

Synthesis: Othello’s jealousy is fuelled by his insecurity over his position in Venetian society; Shakespeare paints a picture of a society which fundamentally views Othello as the “Other”.

The “dialectical” essay is excellent at dealing with different viewpoints. Problems can occur when students veer away from the question which can happen if they are not vigilant.

### *THE EVIDENCE-BASED ESSAY: USING THE 5WS + H.*

This is primarily an “inductive” essay in that most of the points are shaped around textual evidence. Typically, this kind of essay will move from point to point by examining quotation from the primary texts. This kind of essay will use the 5Ws + H to help analyse the textual evidence:

**What?** What is happening in the quotation?

**Who?** Who is speaking? Who is writing the text? Who is the text aimed at?

**Where?** Where is the text set? Where was the text written? Where is the text going?

**When?** When was the text written? When does this moment happen in the text?

**Why?** For all the above questions, you need to ask the question: why is this important to consider? Why are we reading this text?

**How?** How is the text creating its effects?

This kind of essay is often structured around the concept of “PEEing”! You may well have been taught this to death at school:

Point: Othello’s jealousy is represented as deeply destructive.

Evidence: Killing of Desdemona, his suicide.

Explanation/Analysis: Analyse relevant quotation from these two scenes using 5Ws + H.

This approach is entirely valid but it can be very “programmatic” and many essays written in this style can come across as written by robots! I’m all for “PEEing” (Point, Evidence, Explanation) when it’s appropriate, but if you do it too much, the essay can become stilted. Increasingly, English essays are marked for their style and finesse as well as for their ability to produce valid evidence and analysis; PEEing too much can lead to very dry essays. This said, it is entirely valid technique when used APPROPRIATELY.

#### *THE THEMED ESSAY.*

This kind of essay groups the key points to be addressed in a question around key themes. So, for example, with the *Othello* essay, a themed approach might look at the different types and stages of jealousy represented in the play.

Theme 1: Othello’s jealousy.

Theme 2: Iago’s jealousy of Othello.

Theme 3: The destructive effects of Othello and Iago’s jealousy.

#### *THE CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ESSAY.*

This is a style of essay that you might encourage at A Level which focuses upon either one or more than one critical approach to a text.

For example, the *Othello* question could be approached by examining different theoretical approaches towards the representation of jealousy. I have suggested possible approaches briefly here, but if you are interested in following up on any of them, look up the page numbers provided here from Pope (2012) and they will give you a more in-depth guide to deploying these critical approaches.

##### *Critical perspective 1*

A feminist interpretation of the representation of jealousy, looking at the ways in which patriarchal discourses permeate the language of Othello and Iago, objectifying women as possessions and sexual objects. (Pope, p. 163-74)

*Critical perspective 2*

A Marxist interpretation of the representation of jealousy. Both men are the victims of a rigid class structure in which their positions are insecure, their jealousy is a manifestation of this insecurity. (Pope, p. 155-63)

*Critical perspective 3*

A psycho-analytical interpretation. Both Othello and Iago are repressed homosexuals whose jealousy is a manifestation of their latent desire for each other. (Pope, p. 147-50)

*Critical perspective 4*

A post-colonial interpretation. Othello's jealousy is linked to his troubled identity as both an imperialist commander and a black man. (Pope, p. 183-97)

Do you see how all four of these interpretations could lead to richly suggestive and interesting essays? The advantage of this approach is that it does yield "high level" deductive and inductive reasoning. The disadvantage can be that there is too much for one essay. It may be that just taking a close look at one approach might be more productive than covering all the approaches mentioned in the chart.

### CONCLUSIONS

What is the point of a conclusion? The object of a conclusion is to "sum up" or crystallize the main points of your essay. You should be encouraging your students to make three or four points in a conclusion to a 1,500 word essay that sums up the key points of their essay. Perhaps more if your essay is longer. This doesn't mean you get students to repeat points they have already made, it means that they bring together or synthesize their key points into a finding. This is not the same thing as making a new point; the evidence for their conclusions should have been discussed in your essay. Crucially, they should check that they haven't written their conclusion in their introduction, where often you get students making summative comments about what they've found when analysing the relevant texts.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

Reading University has produced a very helpful, detailed booklet, which can be downloaded as PDF, about using the correct style in essays:

**<http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/engage-in-teaching-and-learning/files/2012/10/Style-Guide-for-English-Literature-students.pdf>**



### LEARNING ACTIVITY

Devise a series of lesson plans for your students to get them writing essays upon a topic you have to teach, using some of the guidelines outlined here.

## CREATIVE WRITING

### QUESTIONS

What do we mean by creative writing? What creative writing have you enjoyed doing? What do you learn from writing creatively?

### DEFINITION

**Creative writing** is different, it takes a sideways look at the world, recasting life into stories, poems, life-writing, songs, doodles, visual organisers, scripts.

### KEY POINTS

#### TITLES

Use an enticing title to get students writing creatively, e.g. 'Betrayal', 'Jealousy'.

#### OBJECTS

Use objects to trigger ideas: students take out some objects in their pockets or bags, and then sequence them in a particular order, telling a story about the objects which connects them.

#### FIRST LINES

Use a first line which students continue: 'I opened the door and she was sitting there waiting for me...'

#### PICTURES

Use pictures or photographs to get students writing: students have to describe the picture and then imagine a story set in that particular place or connected with the picture.

#### GENRE-BENDING

Ask students to structure a story in a particular genre, e.g. horror, Western, sci-fi.

### *UNUSUAL THINGS*

Write about an unusual happening in a very familiar place, e.g. a murder, aliens land, someone goes missing, two opposites fall in love.

### *NOTEBOOKS*

Ask students to start a notebook in which they take notes about the world around them and then use those notes to shape a story or poem.

### LEARN MORE

<http://thinkwritten.com/365-creative-writing-prompts/>

<http://www.writersdigest.com/prompts>

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/jul/06/how-to-teach-creative-writing>

## TOP TIPS

### BECOME A TEACHER WRITER

Model how to write with your students by writing alongside them. See it as a reciprocal process.

### THINKING WRITING

Show how writing can really aid thinking, and that it does not always have to a formal process. For more log onto:

<http://www.thinkingwriting.qmul.ac.uk/>

### LITTLE AND OFTEN

Plan for regular writing, free writing, uncensored, focused writing, formal writing in most of your lessons.

### DESIGNERS AND IMPROVISERS

Remember that the research shows that there are generally two types of writers: those who need to plan carefully, and those who prefer to write their way into a piece. For example, Charles Dickens planned his work meticulously, but a very successful novelist like Nick Hornby simply starts writing and follows his instincts. Some writers are a bit of both: Rose Tremain plans and researches to a degree, but then prefers not to plan too much as she feels it stops her being creative and spontaneous.

Hayes and Flowers research was seminal in seeing this:

Hayes, John R., & Flower, Linda S. (1986). *Writing Research and the Writer*. *American Psychologist*, 41(10), 1106-13.

#### USE OTHER WRITERS AS MODELS

Find out more about how the writers you are studying wrote – their writing processes – and other favourite writers. For more log onto:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/mar/26/authors-secrets-writing>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/04/what-writers-really-do-when-they-write>

#### PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

Don't get overwhelmed with marking. Tick and target where appropriate and get students to regularly peer and self-assess using the relevant criteria.

#### AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

Get your students writing for specific audiences and purposes. One of the most successful projects I ever did was to get students writing for primary school children: they interviewed them about the stories they liked, then did some research, and wrote their own story for a specific primary school child, reading it to them at a later date.

#### EXPRESSIVE WRITING

Don't forget though to get your pupils writing expressively for themselves, writing poems, autobiographical extracts, stories about their own lives or topics that interest them. This is very motivating for them and they tend to love it.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

#### Books

Thompson, I. (2012). *Stimulating reluctant writers: A Vygotskian approach to teaching writing in secondary schools*. *English in Education*, 46(1), 85-100.

Cremin, T., & Goouch, Kathy ; Lambirth, Andrew. (2005). *Creativity and writing: Developing voice and verve in the classroom*.

Read the chapter on writing in Green, A. (2011). *Becoming a reflective English teacher*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Open University Press.

#### Links

The National Literacy Trust has a good collation of the latest guidance here:

[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0003/3936/Secondary\\_Annual\\_Literacy\\_Review\\_2016-17\\_4\\_Writing\\_skills\\_Advice.pdf](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0003/3936/Secondary_Annual_Literacy_Review_2016-17_4_Writing_skills_Advice.pdf)

The old National Literacy Strategy recommendations are worth looking at:

[http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/2403/7/se\\_iw\\_handbook0067109\\_Redacted.pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/2403/7/se_iw_handbook0067109_Redacted.pdf)

The booklet on teaching writing in the National Archives is still useful, even though the videos have disappeared. Download the zip file and find the developing writing booklet:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110812234120/http://nsonline.org.uk/node/97131>

Learn more about teachers as writers here:

<http://www.teachersaswriters.org/general/writing-for-pleasure/REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING>

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about writing? How you can further develop your knowledge?

## HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn about the history of the English language and literature and the implications this topic has for teaching English.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon the history of the English language. Think about how it has changed over the centuries. Sail over the centuries, watching different figures you know about read and write literature, speak English etc. How has the history of the language affected English teaching?

### OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

**In a nutshell:** From approximately 600 AD- 1100 A.D., there was a rich and fascinating poetic tradition in Britain, some of which was written down, but most of which was spoken. Some fragments from this era survive in written form; they were written in Old English, an Anglo-Saxon dialect, which has some similarities with modern English. Some English courses devote themselves extensively to this time, requiring students to

translate Old English in depth. The most famous poem is *Beowulf*, which tells the story of how the monster Grendel and his monstrous mother terrorize people in their villages and mead halls. Beowulf fights and defeats them both, but is fatally wounded in his last fight. Other poems such as *The Wanderer* talk about the difficult sea-faring life of the people, some recount bloody battles while more religious poems celebrate Christ. The poetry used strong rhythmical lines and is characterized by alliteration.

**Next step:** Listen to some modern poets, including Seamus Heaney, read modern translations of the poems: [http://poemsoutloud.net/columns/archive/the\\_word\\_exchange/](http://poemsoutloud.net/columns/archive/the_word_exchange/)

Read Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf* (2002, Faber and Faber). This is the best translation you'll find of this seminal poem.

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY

Devise a series of lessons which teach students about Old English, including *Beowulf*. Do some research to find lessons which you might adapt.

### MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE

**In a nutshell:** After 1066, when William the Conqueror invaded from France, and took over the monarchy in England, literature changes with new French and Latin influences entering into the language of the educated. Geoffrey Chaucer is regarded by many as the originator of English Literature because he wrote *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400), a collection of tales told by various pilgrims travelling from Southwark, London to Canterbury Cathedral on a religious pilgrimage. Chaucer's *Prologue* used to be a staple of all English degrees and often A Level courses; here he describes in a comic fashion the pilgrims, painting a picture of a highly religious, hierarchical society, where everyone knows their place. His famous tales include the very chivalrous *The Knight's Tale*, the very rude *The Miller's Tale*, the sinister *The Pardoner's Tale* and the energetic *The Wife of Bath's Tale* which is recounted by the Wife of Bath, who is one of the few forceful female characters in the poem.

In the north of England, an anonymous poet wrote *Gawain and the Green Knight* at about the same time as *The Canterbury Tales*. This poem has more in common with Anglo-Saxon poetry with his use of alliteration and tells the story of Gawain who, to win a bet, chops off the head of a knight who is green in colour and then finds, to his alarm, that the knight

picks up his head and commands that Gawain must have his head chopped off a year later.

**Next step:** The University of Glasgow has a useful introduction to the works of Chaucer here:

<http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/chaucer/works.html>

The BBC has made some lively modern versions of The Canterbury Tales which can be found here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/canterburytales/>

Project Gutenberg has published all of Chaucer online, including audio versions: <http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/c#a144>

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

Devise a series of lessons which teach students about Middle English, including *The Canterbury Tales*. Do some research to find lessons which you might adapt.

## EARLY MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE

**In a nutshell:** The English Reformation, set in train by Henry VIII, when he broke from the Catholic church in 1536, approximately heralds the beginning of the era of ‘early modern English’: when it was written, and spoken. William Tyndale and others undertook the task of translating the Bible into English (it had only been available in Latin before this) and this arguably led to a great “flourishing” of English Literature, culminating in the golden era of Elizabethan literature which saw the likes of Sir Philip Sidney, Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare publishing poems and plays. Shakespeare wrote most of his works between 1590-1611 when he was living in London and working as an actor. He wrote in early modern English, which is similar to modern English but has a number of significant differences.

Shakespeare wrote numerous plays which were performed in various theatres throughout London. They can be broken down into these “genres”: tragedies, comedies, history plays, and the “problem” plays. As an English Literature student, you should know:

**Tragedies:** *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*

**Comedies:** *A Midsummer’s Night Dream*, *12<sup>th</sup> Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*.

**History plays:** *Henry IV parts 1 & 2*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*

**Problem plays:** *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*

**Next step:** Read the above plays that you don't know about! Watch them! Look at the movie versions. This website is a good starting point for Shakespeare: <http://www.bardweb.net/>

You must look at this website to learn more about Shakespeare's language: <http://www.shakespeareswords.com/>

## THE ENLIGHTENMENT

**In a nutshell:** The Elizabethan period (from 1559-1603) could be termed a "late English Renaissance" because, rather like what happened in Italy over a century before, it marks a huge cultural "re-birth" in the country with the emergence of a national literature, painting and music. From approximately 1650, the scientific philosophy of Francis Bacon and the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton begin to influence literature as well, as you can see in writers like John Milton (1608-1674), who attempted to "justify the ways of God to man" by referencing scientific ideas in his epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, which is a "re-write" of the story of the Garden of Eden. Later on, Alexander Pope (1688-1744) would show reverence for both religious and scientific ideas in his witty poetry. Behind much writing of this time is that God is the perfect scientist, shaping and moulding the universe in terms of a perfect order, working much like a watch-maker in knitting together the "clockwork" of nature.

Roughly from 1650 to 1790s, much literature (poems, plays and the first novels) trumpeted the values of the Enlightenment: espousing the triumph of rationality, reason, scientific thinking, and the notion that there was an objective body of 'essential' knowledge that could be learnt. The movement was, in part, used to justify the colonialism because it was developed by colonial powers who claimed that their knowledge was superior to the colonial peoples they were taking over.

**Questions to ask of texts in this period:** In what way does the set text promote enlightenment values? Does the narrative/text champion rationality, "common sense", and suggest there is "essential" knowledge to be learned?

**Next step:** Read *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, Books 1 &2, 9&10. I found this website useful; it contains the poem and many links to explanations, videos and books: <http://www.paradiselost.org/>

## THE ROMANTICS

**In a nutshell:** Reacting against the ideas of the Enlightenment, Romantic poets like William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel

Coleridge and John Keats wrote poetry which championed the rights of the individual and celebrated the wildness of nature as opposed to its order. They argued that the human imagination, creativity and original thought was more important than scientific methods. They herald the beginnings of what we might recognize as “modernity” in that they expressed feelings of anger and alienation at the emergence of the industrial society. The Romantics valued the imagination and subjectivity above rationality and ‘objectivity’; nature was viewed not as the ultimate machine (the Enlightenment view) but as an embodiment of the imagination and the sublime, a concept which suggested awe and wonder.

**Questions to ask of texts in this period:** In what ways does your text promote Romantic values? Is there a heavy emphasis upon the individual’s imagination being more important than the ruling classes’ views? Is nature worshipped in the text?

**Next step:** Read Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads*, the seminal text in establishing the Romantic movement. There’s an excellent introduction to it here on Radio 4’s *In Our Time*: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01cwszf>

Read William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience*: <http://www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/work.xq?workid=soingsie>

Read John Keats’ poetry: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/john-keats>

## THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

**In a nutshell:** Changes to printing technology and improving literacy meant that substantial numbers of wealthy people could read and enjoyed reading stories. Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) made a successful career as a journalist and wrote what were the forerunners of the modern novel, most famously *Robinson Crusoe* about a man marooned on a desert island, and *Moll Flanders* which recounts the story of a woman who uses sex as a method of survival and social climbing. Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady* (1748) are generally regarded to be the first proper English novels because they explore in depth the emotions of the central characters, using the “epistolary” or letter format. This writing was genuinely “new” – which is what novel or “nouvelle” means in French.



The form was very commercially successful but not regarded by many people as “serious”. Most novelists wrote for money not kudos. It was one of the few forms that women could write and, as a result, it’s perhaps no coincidence that there are many more famous female novelists than there are poets, musicians, and artists. Jane Austen wrote comic novels about romance and class conflict, most notably *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Emma* (1815). Mary Shelley wrote the first science fiction novel, *Frankenstein* (1818). The Bronte sisters invented a new version of the novel which combines elements of the Gothic, romance, social comedy and a Romantic sensibility. Elizabeth Gaskell wrote hard-hitting socially minded novels such as *Mary Barton* (1848), and the first literary biography about Charlotte Bronte, *The Life of Charlotte Bronte* (1857).

The other important novelists of the Victorian period were Charles Dickens (1812-1870), George Eliot (1819-1880) and Thomas Hardy (1840-1828), all of whom were socially minded and used the novel as a way of describing the problems modern industrial society was facing. From the 1840s until the early 1900s, many writers began espousing views of the Victorian era; there was an emphasis on the form of the novel, which saw its great period of popularity. Writers such as Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Hardy wrote novels which described whole societies. Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) is very Victorian in its sensibility; there is a sense of narrative coherence, its endorsement of patriarchal values and a representation of a social panorama. In many ways, Andrea Levy’s modern novel *Small Island* (2004) embraces many aspects of the Victorian novel in the way it attempts to offer a social realist perspective and embrace a social panorama; there is a neatness about the narrative which is typically always “wrapped” up with a neatly structured, “closed” ending.

**Questions to ask of texts in this period:** Does your text try encompass the whole of society? Does it have an omniscient third person narrator who appears to know everything? Is there a coherent, “neatly tied up” narrative?

**Next step:** Read Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Dickens’ *Great Expectations* and Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*.

## LITERARY MOVEMENTS: MODERNISM

**In a nutshell:** After the First World War, many writers and artists experimented with the ‘form’ of the novel, dispensing with things like

traditional narratives or ‘coherent’ characters. Their great theme was the alienation of modern man from his society. T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and Kafka’s *The Trial* were all part of this. Some writers straddle the periods of modernism and post-modernism such as Jean Rhys who wrote several modernist novels during the 1920s and 30s, and then published *Wide Sargasso Sea* in the 1960s, a text which shares both modernist and post-modernist tropes.

**Questions to ask of texts in this period:** Does your text experiment with form quite self-consciously? Does the text appear fragmented and deliberately incomplete? Are there many allusions to other texts? Does a deep-rooted sense of alienation permeate the text?

**Next step:** Read T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*.

## LITERARY MOVEMENT: POST-MODERNISM

**In a nutshell:** From the 1960s-present day, post-modernists work in many different art forms from novels to architecture. They believe in “quoting” from the past in a playful fashion; the Canary Wharf tower is typically “post-modern” with its references to tower blocks and the Egyptian pyramids. Many post-modern texts are self-consciously “inter-textual”; they reference other texts, enter conversations with them. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is post-modern in the way it engages with a dialogue with *Jane Eyre*.

**Questions to ask about texts of this period:** When was your text written? Does it play with form and reference many other “periods” of art?

**Next step:** Read Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Angela Carter’s *Nights at the Circus* and Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*.

## HISTORICAL CONCEPT: COLONIALISM

**In a nutshell:** Many texts written in English between 1750-1960 embrace colonial values in that they endorse either explicitly or indirectly the colonial project; these texts (such as James Bond/Agatha Christie/much ‘nationalist’ poetry) typically offer the view that white European people are far superior than their colonial subjects.

**Questions to ask of texts of this period:** What kind of colonial discourses are embedded within the text? Are there racist views in the text, or views of other cultures which are very stereotypical?

**Next step:** Read the *Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse*, Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*.

## HISTORICAL CONCEPT: POST-COLONIALISM

**In a nutshell:** Post-colonial texts, such as *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *The Kite Runner*, much Caribbean poetry, and *Small Island*, critique the colonial project, promoting more egalitarian views of colonized subjects.

**Questions to ask of these texts:** Does the text explore the social injustices of the colonial project? Does the text examine, investigate, represent the subaltern in a meaningful and complex fashion? Does the text give a chance for oppressed minorities to speak?

**Next step:** Read the *Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse*.

Watch Yale Courses excellent series of Yale lectures on YouTube on Post-Colonial Criticism delivered by Professor Paul Fry by searching for Post-colonial Paul Fry on YouTube.

## TOP TIPS

### BIG PICTURE THINKING

Gain a big picture in your head as to how these literary movements emerged. Consider how you might explain these concepts clearly and how you might teach them.

### DESCRIPTION, NOT PRESCRIPTION?

Although English teachers are asked to 'prescribe' to their students about how they should speak and write, the history of the English language shows that language is always changing and that prescriptions change over time. As an English teacher, you are a descriptivist in that you will show students how language has changed because of changing times, social conditions etc. You will also have to be a prescriptivist at times as well, correcting spellings, grammar etc.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter has mainly focused upon the history of literature, but absolutely crucial as well is the history of the language. The following books are very good on this:

Bill Bryson, *Mother Tongue: The Story of the English Language* (1990)

K. Perera article, 'Standard English: The Debate' in Brindley (ed.), *Teaching English*;

Jean Aitchison (1991), *Language Change: Progress or Decay*;

ILEA publication (1990) *Language & Power*.

Also look at A Level Language textbooks for concise introductions. Also see: Fuller, Joiner, Meaden (1990) *The Language File*, BBC Longman.

This website is also very helpful:

<http://www.thehistoryofenglish.com/>

## SHAKESPEARE

### KEY POINTS

You will learn more about how to teach Shakespeare, developing your knowledge about how to teach his language and drama.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon Shakespeare and his works: watch yourself learning about Shakespeare, enjoying his work on the page and stage.

### INTRODUCING SHAKESPEARE

So you need to get your students both enthused by and knowledgeable about Shakespeare? How do you do it? Here's a good introductory lesson to get things kicked off:

#### THE BASIC IDEA

A good introduction to Shakespeare is to get students to consider:

#### *WHY STUDY SHAKESPEARE? WHAT IS THE POINT?*

This is a question you could return to again and again because it really gets students thinking about the significance of Shakespeare: considering about why he appeals to audiences still; why his stories, characters and situations are relevant to us today.

#### APPLYING IT

The obvious starter here is to get students to do a spider-diagram in their books on all they know about Shakespeare "off the top of their heads" using the 5Ws to trigger their thoughts:

What did Shakespeare do? What plays did he write?

When did he live?

Who were his audience?

Where did he live? Where are his plays set?

Why did he write? Why do we still study him?

Show some dramatic photographs from his plays based around themes that your students will be interested in such as:

Love.

Sex.

Murder.

Betrayal.

Get your students to guess what is going on by discussing the photos in groups and then reporting back. Then tell them the answers, and ask them to do a piece of writing on how their ideas were similar and different to Shakespeare's.

Get your students to ask the key question: what ideas are being explored here? You should "contextualize" the photographs.

*Here are some good images I found:*

For murder -- Macbeth after he has murdered Duncan with Lady Macbeth:

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/shakespeare/plays/macbeth/1976-photo-gallery.aspx>

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/shakespeare/plays/macbeth/2004-photo-gallery.aspx>

For higher level work, get students to read lines to go with the images, work out what they mean and ask them to do their own performed versions of your favourite scene; stick to two characters if you want students to work in pairs, or find scenes with more characters if you want them to work in groups.

For example, I think Macbeth and Lady's Macbeth's conversation, Act 2, Sc 2 of *Macbeth*, after Duncan's murder (which accompanies the photographs above) is brilliant for students to read through in pairs. You can find the complete scene here at Bartleby:

<http://www.bartleby.com/70/4122.html>

The Ian McKellan/Judi Dench version of Macbeth Act 2, Scene 2 can be found on YouTube here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUOoDUUIA34>

WHAT'S THE POINT?

What you're doing is getting students to see that Shakespeare was primarily a playwright who wrote about themes that were popular in his day, and still are popular now. He was a commercial playwright who made a great deal of money from his plays. If he was living now, he'd be working in Hollywood or in TV writing scripts like *The Wire*, *Breaking Bad*

or soap operas like *Eastenders*. His plays have survived because we enjoy his dramatic presentation of these key themes: love, sex, murder, betrayal etc.

Although this is a relatively simple lesson, it is actually quite intellectually charged because you are getting your students to see how texts are shaped around ideas and how Shakespeare took certain concepts or topics and put them into a dramatic form which was appealing to audiences of his day – and still are appealing.

#### *PUTTING PEN TO PAPER*

For a good piece of written work, after you have explored some images, you could get your students to do some sustained pieces of writing:

**Writing to inform, describe, explain.** Less able students could do an explanatory piece of writing, describing in detail what they see in the photograph, imagining they are describing the scene to someone who is visually challenged.

**Writing to imagine, explore and entertain.** Imaginative students could write a story or play of their own based on the photographs they have looked at, e.g. entitled, 'The Murder' 'The Love Affair'.

**Writing to argue, persuade and advise.** Intellectual students could write an argumentative piece either for or against this title: "Shakespeare is no longer relevant to students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century" or they could write a letter to a bored student in a Shakespeare class telling them why Shakespeare is great.

**Writing to analyse, review and comment.** Students could analyse the language that goes with the photograph you have studied, discussing the ways in which Shakespeare's language creates drama.

#### VARIATIONS ON A THEME

If you're feeling artistic, instead getting students to look at photographs of the play, get them to draw their own pictures/storyboards after reading your favourite scene from Shakespeare. You could show them famous artists who have drawn famous paintings from Shakespeare. You can see a comprehensive list of paintings inspired by the plays here: [http://shakespeare.emory.edu/illustrated\\_index.cfm](http://shakespeare.emory.edu/illustrated_index.cfm)

Put Shakespeare on trial for crimes against school children. Divide the class up into prosecution and defence, giving everyone a role. Here are suggestions for cast members: prosecution and defence lawyers, a judge, jury members (could be the whole class), Shakespeare himself, a teacher

defending him (possibly you!), pupils as witnesses for prosecution and defence, a famous actor who has acted in one of his plays like Claire Danes who was Juliet etc. Give them a lesson to prepare their speeches and then hold the trial.

### *WHIZZING IT*

Get students to do their own abstract photographs of the key themes in Shakespeare such as love, betrayal, hate, war etc by getting them to choose a theme and then take their own close-up photograph of an inanimate object that might represent that idea such as a clenched fist representing hatred. They could then think about how poetry represents such visual images in words and get them to write a poem based around the image.

### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

How to work with images of Shakespeare's plays:  
[http://www.rsc.org.uk/downloads/rsc\\_how\\_to\\_work\\_with\\_images\\_2011.pdf](http://www.rsc.org.uk/downloads/rsc_how_to_work_with_images_2011.pdf)

The goriest deaths in Shakespeare:  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/04/goriest-shakespeare-deaths\\_n\\_917348.html#s321491&title=Cordelia\\_in\\_King](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/04/goriest-shakespeare-deaths_n_917348.html#s321491&title=Cordelia_in_King)

If you're interested in Macbeth, the Universal Teacher's resources are excellent:

<http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/shakespeare/macbeth.htm#8>

## USING SHAKESPEARE TO TEACH READING SKILLS

CREATIVE TEACHER: As with anything you do connected with English teaching, it is always worth revisiting your own thoughts and feelings about how you were taught reading at this age range. What did you enjoy?

BEGINNER TEACHER: What did you struggle with? Did you find that attitudes towards reading changed when you moved from primary to secondary school?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: How do you feel about reading now? What do you read for enjoyment? What do you think your strengths as a reader are? What are your weaknesses?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: And how would you like to be talked about as a teacher of reading? What do you want your students to think of you? What are your 'reading values'?

CREATIVE: As a warm-up, we could go around the group and say the first words that come into our heads when we say: 'reading' 'book' 'literature' 'reading test'.

*READING THE WORLD RE-VISITED*

BEGINNER TEACHER: I have found that often not much consideration is given in many lessons throughout school as to how things should be read.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: The evidence suggests that many children are often being 'read to' rather than actually doing much reading themselves.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, a lot of reading in school goes on in small gobbets.

CREATIVE: I personally think that children need to understand what reading is and need to be reminded of it constantly throughout their school career. This is why I am very keen to get children to think about reading the world as well as the word. We've already talked about this at length, but we are going to re-visit it here in the context of *Romeo and Juliet*, which is the text we are going to read together in a few moments.

BEGINNER TEACHER: But first if a student is coming to a text cold it is often worthwhile 'warming them up' by creating a context for the text with a few objects.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: So for this scene that we are going to read, I have brought along: a CD of party music (let's put it on now!), a few small cakes (yum, yum), a knife (a plastic one if you please), and some party masks.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: And we ask our students when presented with these objects, what world do these objects, in part, conjure in their minds? Because this is what reading is; it is picking out objects, whether they are 'real' objects or words on the page, and building a picture of a world in your mind, based on the other evidence within a text and in the outside world.

BEGINNER TEACHER: And we ask students after they've had a go at reading these objects, to consider the crucial meta-cognitive question, what have they learnt about learning here?

CREATIVE: Yes, exactly, they need to see over time that everything in the world, words, objects, everything, have both denotations and connotations; a denotation is what something literally is, what it denotes, like a knife is an object which cuts things, and connotations, what an object suggests, its associations. So a knife possibly connotes violence,



death, cooking etc. Students need to learn to read the world and their own thinking and learning processes.

### ***DIFFERENT STRATEGIES FOR READING SHAKESPEARE***

CREATIVE: So let's remind ourselves of the different approaches to reading in English classes.

BEGINNER TEACHER: You can read a text around the class, asking different readers to read to you. The advantages of this is that the teacher gets to hear everyone read, and can quite easily assess their reading.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: The disadvantages are that many students hate it and it puts them off reading, and often you don't get an accurate assessment of the students' reading because they are nervous.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: You can ask them to read silently, which gives you a bit of a break, but it's difficult to tell whether they are actually read the material, unless you test them regularly. This is what schemes like Accelerated Reader do, which many schools follow, whereby students read a text silently, then take a computerised test on it, and you can judge whether they have read it or not.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: The advantages of that is that it produces lots of data, giving you students' levels etc. But, even though I am obsessed with students taking exams, I have to admit, it does give students a false sense of what reading is; the new National Curriculum says that students should read for pleasure, and many students report that AR is not pleasurable at all, but very nerve-wracking and that the tests are often rather narrow and unfair, not giving any chance for personal interpretation.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, I agree. The other approach is to encourage collaborative reading, which is what I am very interested in. Some teachers don't like it because it can be noisy, and if the material is not interesting for the group, students can go off task. That said, if you get it right, it can be very successful. One particular approach, which we've looked at already, Reciprocal Teaching (RT) has consistently been shown to be one of the most effective teaching strategies there is.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: So let's have a go at RT with the following text, which is modern translation of Romeo and Juliet, Act 1, Scene 5, the famous scene where they meet.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Now you could have read more of the play before you introduce this scene, or you could explain the context yourself, or you could show a bit of the film before the scene, or you could get the

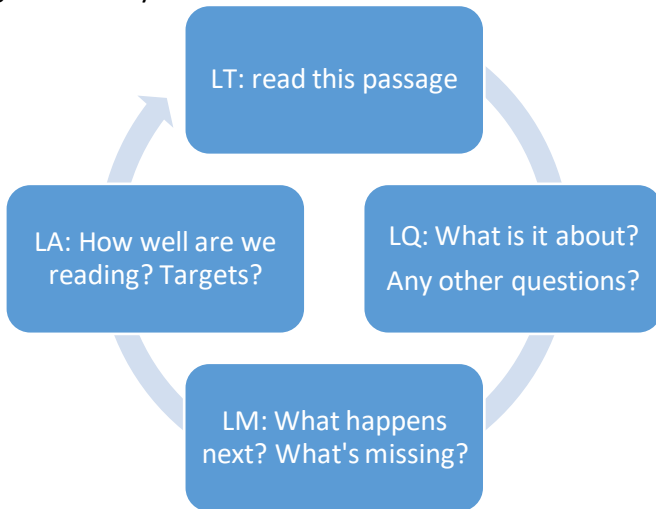
students to guess what has happened before the scene after they've had a go at reading it...Read the scene and make your own judgement.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: To recap, Reciprocal Teaching (sometimes known as Reciprocal Reading, see Reading chapter) is a reading strategy which follows a particular cycle. A Lead Teacher (LT) within the group is appointed, he/she instructs the group to read a passage silently.

BEGINNER TEACHER: A Lead Questioner (LQ) then leads questions about the passage and asks everyone questions about the passage, largely ones which help them understand the passage such as 'What is the passage about? What is happening?'

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Then a Lead Motivator (the LM praises all good efforts) encourages people to consider what has happened before and after the passage, or what has been left out.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Finally, a Lead Assessor (LA) asks everyone to assess how well they think they are reading, and what they need to do to improve their reading. Then the cycle begins again, with people swapping roles if they want.



CREATIVE: Right let's appoint roles. Beginner Teacher can you be the Lead Teacher (LT), Traditional Teacher can you be the Lead Questioner (LQ), Test Obsessed Teacher the Lead Motivator (LM), and I'll be the Lead Assessor (LA).

BEGINNER TEACHER: OK, as LT, I'd like us to read the first page of the passage silently to ourselves, then we'll ask questions about it, and

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

following that, we will read the passage again, but this time read it aloud, and act it out as best we can.

TEST: Very good LT, that way we read the passage twice, and it's really good to get students to understand that re-reading is a vitally important skill. Many of my students think that they can simply read a passage and understand it.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: CREATIVE, can I ask why we are not reading Shakespeare's original? That's what I'd do.

CREATIVE: I've found that many students struggle with the language and are put off; as Lev Vygotsky points out if a task is outside a student's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that means that it is too difficult and students fall off a cliff; it's like students trying to climb a mountain which is too high for their fitness level.

TEST: Yes, but if you judge that their fitness level is such that they can read Shakespeare's original, then fine, go ahead give them the Shakespeare. But I myself find that I struggle with Shakespeare's language, and I greatly appreciate modern translations personally.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Let's get on shall we? Let's read this passage silently.

### ACT 1, SCENE V. A HALL IN CAPULET'S HOUSE.

*Musicians waiting. Enter Servingmen with napkins*

PETER and other SERVINGMEN are carrying nibbles and trays of drinks. Drunk party-goers are dropping food and napkins everywhere in the background. Behind the scenes, the servants are furiously trying to keep the drinks and food flowing.

First SERVANT Where's Potpan! Why hasn't he cleared away all of the rubbish left out there and cleared the dirty dishes?

Second SERVANT When there are only a few good men left in this world, and they've got dirty hands themselves, you know everything's going to hell...

First SERVANT Get rid of all the chairs! Get the furniture out of the way! Hey you, make sure there are some sweets left for me, and make sure that the bouncers let in my two girlfriends, Susan Grindstone and Nell. Anthony, Potpan!

Second SERVANT Yes, of course!

First SERVANT You, mate (addressing POTPAN) are needed, are wanted, are being asked for, and sought out in the main hall over there!

Second SERVANT I can't be in two places at once! Just relax, will you? You'll die an early death if you get so stressed!

*Enter CAPULET, with JULIET and others of his house, meeting the Guests and Maskers*

PETER and the SERVINGMEN leave. Enter CAPULET, looking very proud, with his cousin, TYBALT. Behind the men are JULIET and her mother, LADY

## Francis Gilbert

CAPULET. Then behind them are ROMEO, BENVOLIO and MERCUTIO and other party-goers.

CAPULET Hello, party-people! Are you having a good time, or what? Now, let me see, any lady that doesn't have disgusting feet, all covered in corns, I'll dance with her! Now then, which of you gorgeous ladies will turn down the chance to shake her hips with me now? In fact, anyone who refuses to dance with me, I bet she's got nasty, ugly, warty corns on her feet! Are you getting my message now, heh? Welcome, everyone! Once there was a time when I could really chat up a pretty woman, and would really make her excited, but I've lost the knack now. I've lost my magic touch. It's gone, gone, gone! Yes, yes, get dancing, that's it! Welcome! Musicians make the dance-floor rock! Come on, girls, step up to the dance floor!

*Music plays, and they dance*

*The music plays, everyone joins the dance floor.*

Hey, you, servants, you bloody idiots, tidy up the bloody tables, and turn down the heat, it's boiling in here! (Turning to SECOND CAPULET) Watch out there, old cock, don't fall over! It looks like you're having too good a time there! No, no, sit down, my old cousin Capulet, I reckon our disco dancing days are long gone. I mean, how long is it since you and I wore masks to a party?

SECOND CAPULET Bloody hell, thirty years I reckon!

CAPULET God no, it's not that long ago, no way! We danced at Lucentio's wedding, which was 25 years ago.

SECOND CAPULET It's longer than that! Lucentio's son is thirty!

CAPULET Are you sure? His son was living at home two years ago.

BEGINNER TEACHER: OK, we've read a page, can we now do the Reciprocal Teaching cycle on it just so that we get in the flow of things.

*The group does the Reciprocal Teaching (see **The Power of Reciprocal Reading**). Free discussion.*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Now when I've worked with classes, I've found that if they are struggling to focus, you can pin them down with various reading activities. What do you think of these?

### ACTIVITIES

*Fill-in-the-blanks (answers below): The servants are very ---- because it is clear, as we see later on from Capulet's behavior, that they have orders to make this a very -----feast or party. We know from previous scenes that this is the feast in which Capulet wants Paris to --- over Juliet. Capulet is very keen for everyone to get into the ----- atmosphere and to start dancing; he uses jokey blackmail to do this by saying that the ladies have ---- on their feet if they don't dance. Capulet then talks to an ----- Capulet about when it was when they last had a similar party; there is some dispute about this.*

*Flow chart: Devise a chart of the main events in this section.*

*Questions: Why are the servants so stressed at the beginning of the scene? How*

## The Mindful English Teacher

*does Capulet persuade the ladies to dance with him? What mood does he present to guests? How does he treat his servants? How does Shakespeare create both tension and comedy in this scene?*

*Analysis: This opening to the famous scene when Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time is very “frenetic”; it is full of action and movement. It is also comedic and dramatic: it is funny to see all the rushing around on stage. We see the marked contrast between the social classes here as well with the rich people being treated very nicely by Capulet and the servants being shouted out and abused.*

*Compare & contrast my translation with Shakespeare’s original.*

*Creative response: Write a story about a party in which the host pretends to be very jolly but is actually very stressed that things must go well.*

*Fill-in-the-blanks answers: stressed, successful, win, party, corns, elderly.*

*Act it out: Role play the servants taking Capulet to a tribunal for being a bullying boss.*

*Thematic questions: Do you think there exists such a thing as falling in love at first sight? What do you think love is? Can young people properly fall in love?*

BEGINNER TEACHER: These are great! They are just what I need as a Beginner Teacher, I can really see how they would help develop students’ understanding. You’ve used CLOZE (fill-in-the-blanks) exercises and comprehension questions to check understanding, and then progressed to asking more analytical, evaluative and creative questions.

TEST: Yes, very useful. I can see how these questions are differentiated so that learners of all abilities can access the material.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I like have a few different questions so that the more able can skip the easier stuff and pick the questions they want to do; very good. Well done Creative Teacher!

CREATIVE: Can you reflect upon what you have learnt about the teaching of reading so far? Make some notes in your Learning Journals?

### RECIPROCAL TEACHING 2

BEGINNER TEACHER: OK, onward with the Reciprocal Teaching. Shall we read to the end of the scene now that we’ve got the general idea. First, silent reading, then some RT, then a performed reading, and a discussion after that?

TEST: Yes, good idea...

In another part of the party, ROMEO is looking at JULIET in the distance.

ROMEO [To a Servingman] Who’s that girl over there, dancing with the posh bloke?

SERVANT I don’t know, sir.

ROMEO Oh, she is teaching the lamps to burn more brightly! It seems like she

## Francis Gilbert

hangs on the cheek of the night like a beautiful jewel hanging from a black man's ear; she's too beautiful for this world; she's too expensive for anyone on this earth to buy; she's like a pure white dove dancing among a bunch of ugly old crows; that's what she's like moving there amongst all of her friends... When this song is finished, I'll watch where she stands, and then I'll sneak up behind her and touch her hand, and feel some of her magic. God, did my heart love until now? I swear on my life, I never saw true beauty until this night...

CREATIVE TEACHER: A word explanation here, I wrote the following activities for this speech because it is such an important speech and I felt students needed to reflect upon it.

### ACTIVITIES

*Fill-in-the-blanks (answers below):* Romeo compares Juliet to a very strongly burning "----" (fiery stick), a --- in a black man's ear, and a dove, a --- bird.

*Flow chart:* Devise a chart of the main events in this section.

*Questions:* What objects and bird does Romeo compare Juliet to when he first sees her? Why do you think he makes these comparisons?

*Analysis:* This speech is contrast to the speeches about Rosaline which were more complex and less emotional. Here Juliet is compared to light and "whiteness": this would have a particular significance for Shakespeare's audience as light has religious connotations: God is often compared with light. We also see here how Romeo has fallen in love at first sight: this again was a religious concept. The inner light of Juliet, the "God" in her, speaks to Romeo directly without words, without them meeting. It is a union of minds without any language passing between them. The staging of the scene is important here; the theatre director needs to think very carefully about the positioning of the actors and consider whether Juliet should look at Romeo too. Romeo uses rhyming couplets to emphasize the power of his feelings.

*Creative response:* Write a poem about love at first sight.

*Compare & contrast my translation with Shakespeare's words.*

*Analytical response:* Write a detailed analysis of Romeo's rhyming poem about first seeing Juliet.

*Fill-in-the blanks answers:* torch, jewel, white.

*Act it out:* Have someone read Romeo's speech. Other readers can echo important words in the speech, while others could mime actions in response to the imagery.

**Thematic questions: Do you think there are types of people who are always being insulted or who feel insulted even this wasn't what was intended? What are these people like?**

*In another corner of the party, TYBALT sees ROMEO.*

TYBALT I recognise that voice, it's a Montague! (To his SERVING BOY) Get me my knife, boy! How can he dare turn up here in a clown mask and laugh and sneer at our party? I'll have to kill him if we are going to maintain the honour of

## The Mindful English Teacher

our family.

CAPULET How's it going, Tybalt? Why are you stomping around looking so grumpy?

TYBALT Uncle, that's a Montague, our enemy! He's an evil person, who's come here to get his revenge on us, to laugh at us.

CAPULET Isn't that young Romeo?

TYBALT Exactly, it's that horrible Romeo!

CAPULET Cousin, cool down, leave him alone. He's a good gentleman, and to tell you the truth, I've heard that he's a well-behaved and nice boy. I wouldn't for all the money in the bank, have him insulted here in my house. Therefore, you need to be patient, just ignore him; lighten up a bit, it's not good to walk around looking so out of place at a party like this.

TYBALT I can't help being angry when we've got a villain like him as a guest. I'm not going to put up with him.

CAPULET You are going to put up with him, you rascal! You need to listen to me! Who's in charge here, you or I? You'll not put up with him? For God's sake, you think you can have a fight here at my party? You're going to turn my party into a riot? You think you're the hard man?

TYBALT Uncle, look, it's a shame...

CAPULET Get out of my sight! Get away from me! You are a very cheeky boy; you think you can be like that with me? You think you can insult me? (Suddenly he sees GUESTS approaching.) Yes, well said my good friends! (To TYBALT) You are an awful idiot, get away from me! You keep your mouth shut or – (To the SERVANTS) We need better proper lights, this is shameful! (To TYBALT) I'll shut you up if you don't watch out! (To the GUESTS) Come on, look cheerful, get dancing!

*The music plays again and everyone dances.*

TYBALT I'm forced to be patient right now, but my blood is truly boiling, in fact, my hands are trembling with rage! I'll withdraw, but Romeo's gate-crashing won't be forgotten, I'll appear to be sweet and nice now, but this insult will turn into a lethal poison at some point.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Again, this is such an important moment, I devised some activities for students to reflect upon it. What do you think of them?

### ACTIVITIES

*Fill-in-the-blanks (answers below): Tybalt is ----- by Romeo's presence at the party because he is a ----- and is wearing an "antic face" or ----- mask. He believes that Romeo has come to the party to mock the Capulets. He says he will --- Romeo. When he tells Capulet about this, Capulet becomes very ---- with him for threatening to cause a --- at the party and tells him that Romeo is a ----- and ---- gentleman. Tybalt backs down but vows to get his ----- at a later date.*

*Flow chart: Devise a chart of the main events in this section.*

*Questions: Why is Tybalt so insulted by Romeo's appearance at the party? Why does Capulet get so cross with Tybalt? What does Tybalt promise to Capulet, but*

## Francis Gilbert

*promise secretly to himself after he has talked to Capulet?*

*Analysis: Tybalt's hatred towards Romeo is in marked contrast to the loving speech Romeo has given when he has seen Juliet. We see our first glimpse of Capulet's volcanic temper here: he is very annoyed by Tybalt refusing to listen to his order not to attack Romeo and calls Tybalt a number of names, including "princox". Tybalt backs down in a comic fashion: the "tough teenager" is defeated by the older man.*

*Creative response: Write a story called 'The gate-crashers'.*

*Analytical response: How does Shakespeare create both comedy and suspense in his presentation of the confrontation between Tybalt and Capulet?*

*Compare & contrast my translation with Shakespeare's original.*

*Answers to fill-in-the-blanks: insulted, Montague, comedy, kill, angry, riot, well-behaved, respected, revenge*

*Act it out: Role-play Tybalt talking to his Capulet mates about Romeo's appearance at the party.*

**Thematic questions: What do lovers talk about, do you think? Do you think lovers talk differently from other people?**

*Now our attention switches to ROMEO who has approached JULIET and is holding her hand, unseen by anyone else at the party.*

ROMEO [To JULIET] If I spoil your hand by holding it with my unworthy one, my polite naughtiness is this: my lips, which are standing here like two blushing pilgrims, are here to smooth away the nasty touch of my hand with a tender kiss.

JULIET Oh my good pilgrim, you're being far too hard on your hand; by holding my hand it is showing really good manners. After all, pilgrims touch the hands of the saints they worship, and holding one palm against another palm is like a kiss.

ROMEO Don't saints and pilgrims have lips too?

JULIET Yes, my pilgrim, lips that they say their prayers with.

ROMEO Oh, then, my dear saint, let lips do what hands do. They pray for saints to kiss them; can you grant this to me, in case my faith turns to despair?

JULIET Saints do not move, even though they have granted what the pilgrims want.

ROMEO Then don't move while I pray to you. (He kisses her.) Now your lips have wiped off the sin from my lips.

JULIET Does that mean that my lips now are covered in your sins?

ROMEO Sin from your lips? Oh, you're encouraging more crimes with your sweet voice! Give me my sin back.

They kiss again.

JULIET You kiss like lovers in romantic books!

NURSE Madam, your mother wants to speak with you.

JULIET moves away.



## The Mindful English Teacher

### ACTIVITIES

*Fill-in-the-blanks (answers below): Romeo and Juliet --- hands and --- with each other, using ----- imagery. Romeo asks Juliet for --- to do what their hands are doing.*

*Flow chart: Devise a chart of the main events in this section.*

*Questions: How does Romeo persuade Juliet to kiss him in this section? What imagery does he use?*

*Analysis: This exchange immediately shows that Romeo and Juliet are on the same wavelength: they “riff off” the other person’s images, talking in rhymes, and play together with the idea of the two of them being like “pilgrims” who are worshipping saints by touching palms and lips. Their talk is an example of what Capulet calls “chopped logic”: these are words that sound beautiful and nice but actually don’t fully make sense. This is because their love isn’t entirely logical: they appear to have some sort of telepathic connection with each other which happens immediately. Thus we can see Shakespeare presenting us with lovers who were “meant to be”; destined to love each other.*

*Compare & contrast my translation with Shakespeare’s original.*

*Creative response: Write a poem called “First Love”, or a scene in which two lovers meet for the first time.*

*Analytical response: How does Shakespeare suggest the genuine love between Romeo and Juliet in this first meeting?*

*Fill-in-the-blanks answers: touch, flirt, religious, lips.*

*Act it out: Act out Romeo and Juliet’s lines in pairs, thinking about what the actors might be doing on stage.*

*Thematic questions: What shocks have you received in your life? Why have these things been shocking?*

ROMEO Who is her mother?

NURSE Well my lad, her mother is a proper lady, very clever and good. I brought up that young girl of hers. And I can tell you, any man who marries her will be rich!

ROMEO Is she a Capulet? Oh dear, my life now depends upon my enemy...

BENVOLIO We’ve got to get out of here, we’ve had the best of this party...

ROMEO Yes, staying here is going to cause problems.

CAPULET No! No! Lads! Don’t go! We’ve got more booze and some nibbles coming! (A SERVANT speaks to him) Is that really the case? Why, then, I thank you all my good men! Good night! More light here! Come on then, let’s go to bed. Oh my God, it’s getting late! I’m going to bed.

Everyone leaves except JULIET and the NURSE.

JULIET Come here, Nurse. Who is that guy over there?

NURSE The son and heir of old Tiberio.

JULIET Who’s that going through the door?

NURSE Hmmm, that, I think, is young Petruchio.

JULIET Who’s that man walking over there, that refused to dance?

NURSE I don’t know.

JULIET Go and ask his name...(the NURSE leaves) If he’s married, my

## Francis Gilbert

wedding will be in my grave.

NURSE His name is Romeo, and he's a Montague. He's the only son of your great enemy.

JULIET The one person I love is from the one family that I hate! God, if only I'd known! And now it's too late! My love is like a terrible birth; I'm in love with the enemy I hate most in the world.

NURSE What is it? What is it?

JULIET Just a song I learnt from someone I danced with tonight...

One calls within 'Juliet.'

Someone calls out: Juliet! Juliet! Juliet!

NURSE Come on, we need to go, everyone's left the party...

They leave.

### ACTIVITIES

*Fill-in-the-blanks (answers below): Romeo and Juliet both learn that they are from the families of their ----. Romeo responds by saying that his --- now depends upon his enemy, while Juliet feels that her marriage bed is her ----. They both have terrible "presentiments" (premonitions/visions of the future) that their lives are at risk because of their ---. Romeo has to leave because Benvolio believes that they might be ---- by the Capulets.*

*Flow chart: Devise a chart of the main events in this section.*

*Questions: What do Romeo and Juliet learn about each other at the end of the scene? What are their reactions? Why does Romeo have to leave?*

*Analysis: Shakespeare shows the power of the two lovers' love by their reaction to the news that they are from opposing families: both of them feel their lives are at risk. Romeo's reaction is a little more uncertain than Juliet's: he feels his life depends upon his enemy while Juliet feels her wedding bed is her grave. Thus we can see that although they've only met very briefly, they feel incredibly strongly about each other. Shakespeare creates a great deal of tension because Romeo has to leave and so the two lovers can't linger with each other.*

*Compare & contrast my translation with Shakespeare's original.*

*Creative response: Write a poem or story called 'Forbidden Love'.*

*Analytical response: How does Shakespeare create suspense in Act 1, Scene 5? Consider the following in your answer: the different characters we encounter, the changes in mood and atmosphere, the way he makes the storyline engaging, the dramatic action and the language he uses.*

*Fill-in-the-blanks answers: enemies, life, grave, love, challenged.*

*Act it out: Hotseat Romeo and Juliet, asking them what they are thinking and feeling now.*

### RECIPROCAL TEACHING 3

BEGINNER TEACHER: OK, can we do some Reciprocal Teaching on the passages we have read. Let's remember we are reading these passages both as students and teachers.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, we need not only to understand the modern translation, but also understand some of the underlying teaching strategies that have led to the development of this script.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, I can see that this script means that students can really read Shakespeare in groups. But, quite frankly, I don't have time to translate everything we read in class which is hard! It's just not a practical option. What should I do?

CREATIVE TEACHER: I have been thinking about that. And I think all you have to do is 'model' some modern translation, and then divide the class up with whatever text you are doing, and get them to write their own edited, short versions of particular sections.

BEGINNER TEACHER: That's a brilliant idea! So, say, with a Charles Dickens novel, you devise mixed ability groups, and then, having modelled a section yourself, like what we've read, you divvy up the chapters so that everyone has a manageable chunk to do a translation on.

TEST OBSESSED: That way you get a modern translation very quickly, and you can make it into a book! The class's own book.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, exactly. And the evidence is that students can handle difficult texts in small chunks when working together properly, but may struggle with huge quantities of text.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Yes, and you could give them a summary of the text if they don't quite understand where their chapter fits in with the book, particularly if they are translating a chapter at the end of the book.

BEGINNER TEACHER: And if they have seen the film, they will know basically what has happened.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Then everyone can do RT on the book they have written.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: A bit time consuming, don't you think?

CREATIVE TEACHER: It's not actually, with a class of thirty, working in pairs, you can get *Christmas Carol* done within a couple of weeks, and it is very valuable learning; they really develop their reading skills with it!

### *FINAL THOUGHTS*

BEGINNER TEACHER: Wow CREATIVE! I can see how all of these exercises could really get the students looking at the text in detail.

TEST OBSESSED: We have not read the original at this point, but I could see how you could now get the students to read the original, and make some comparisons and contrasts, as you suggest in one of the activities.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: It's very good, and you've worked very hard on it, but I think it is too much. And to be honest, I'd actually like something which was a bit less 'paper-based'; these exercises mean that you'll have the students forever scribbling in their books.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I think you're wrong. I think you, as the teacher, could say, could you discuss these questions, and write these ones down.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Or pick the questions that interest them the most?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Crucially, you could integrate these questions into the RT cycle, and ask the teachers to get the group to consider the questions to the first questions in order to check understanding. I find the key thing is to check understanding first. If the students don't know what is going on, then they can't really do the harder more analytical stuff...

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, my great sin as a teacher is basically telling the students what is happening, and then rushing onto the analytical questions and because the students don't really understand the text for themselves, they end up copying me, and no one learns that much...

BEGINNER TEACHER: Thanks for being honest TEST. I've observed a lot of lessons as a student, and I've sort of seen this happening but I've been too frightened to see anything.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I wouldn't criticise any teachers to their face or in school; they won't like that, but perhaps by example show other people how reading should be taught.

## TOP TIPS

### ZOOM OUT

Learn to zoom out with Shakespeare. Get students interested in the overall story of the plays by telling the stories yourself, possibly using objects, by showing cartoon versions, by showing the best films.

### ZOOM IN

To zoom in with Shakespeare, try these strategies: students modernising it by translating the language, editing it so that only the really important lines in a scene are highlighted, doing Reciprocal Teaching with it, analysing the dramatic effects of the language by acting it or watching a performance carefully.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

### USE OTHER RESOURCES

It is worth doing research online for your chosen play and finding some useful resources. For example, the Globe, the Royal Shakespeare Company, NATE, Teachit all have great resources on Shakespeare's plays.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

#### **Books**

Coles, J. (2009) 'Testing Shakespeare to the limit: Teaching *Macbeth* in a Year 9 classroom' in *English in Education*, 43, 1.

Gibson, R. (1998). *Teaching Shakespeare* (Cambridge school Shakespeare). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shoemaker, B. (2013). To Read or Not to Read: Five Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare. *English Journal*, 102(4), 111-114.

#### **Links**

These websites are useful starting points too:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/teacher-blog/2013/apr/15/shakespeare-teaching-resources>

The RSC's toolkit is very helpful:

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/shop/item/18110-rsc-shakespeare-toolkit-for-secondary-school-teachers/>

Read/watch a production of *The Tempest* and *Romeo and Juliet* (KS3 – 2009 texts) and other Shakespeare plays.

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about the teaching of Shakespeare of the book?

## NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

### KEY POINTS

You will learn more about the context that the National Curriculum for English emerged from.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon the National Curriculum, thinking about when it has made an impact upon you and the people you know.

## EXPLANATION OF THIS SECTION

This section contains a series of articles, originally written for **Local Schools Network**, which are interviews with Michael Rosen, Professor of Children’s Literature at Goldsmiths, and Dr Simon Gibbons, the author of two important books about the history of *English teaching: English and Its Teachers: A History of Policy, Pedagogy and Practice (2017)* and *The London Association for the Teaching of English 1947 - 67: A history (2016)*. The videos need to be watched in order to fully understand the points I make.

This section is not your ‘traditional’ history of the National Curriculum: you can read Gibbons’ book to get this, and read the latest iteration of the English National Curriculum online. It is rather to offer a polemical view of the National Curriculum (NC), and challenges you to think mindfully about what the NC means within your own context.

## HAROLD ROSEN’S 5 RADICAL COMMITMENTS TO EDUCATION

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZLMVd1LLQ8>

### PREFACE

Simon Gibbons’ article in the **November 2015 issue of English in Education**, the academic journal for the **National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE)**, asks an important, punning question in its title: “W(h)ither the Radicals?”. It is a salutary piece which explores whether it is possible for English teachers now to be radical in both their pedagogy and their approach to content of the subject. Gibbons says in his abstract for the article: “History shows us that some of the most radical reformers of subject English harnessed their political ideals in their pursuit of a progressive pedagogy; is it possible now to adopt such an approach?”

This challenge motivated me to ask Simon to talk about the figures who have been radical English teachers in the past and see if there are any lessons we can learn from these people. One luminary, who is discussed in the article, was **Harold Rosen (1919-2008)**, the father of the poet **Michael Rosen**, who became an English teacher after WW2, and then a teacher trainer who played an innovative role in helping develop language teaching. I asked Michael, who is **Professor of Children’s Literature at Goldsmiths** where I now work, whether he would talk to

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Simon about Harold and see what points might emerge from the discussion. Having listened to the interview and now edited it (see above), I felt there were many things that we could learn from Harold Rosen, but, for the purposes of this blog, I boiled them down to five commitments that Harold made to education. I should add this is my interpretation and not necessarily what Simon or Michael think; you can watch the video for their views.

### *COMMITMENT TO LITERATURE*

As Michael points out in the video interview, Harold was, above all, profoundly committed to teaching literature; he believed in its power to transform young people's lives if taught well. As Michael says, Harold was both passionate about what might be termed "canonical literature", and literature which could be called "relevant" to students. Both of these points need to be explained fully so that they are not parodied or misrepresented. One of the first texts Harold taught was Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* at a deprived comprehensive in Walworth, south London, in the 1950s. He saw the role of the English teacher to bring the text alive; to get his students to fall in love with the story's plot, its language and its drama. Harold was also committed to teaching modern literature, bringing neglected writers such as the working-class novelists Sid Chaplin and Bill Naughton to the fore in his classrooms. Furthermore, he was one of the first teachers to advocate teaching writers from "other cultures". Above all, Harold saw the English teacher's role as opening up the possibilities of new ways of seeing, feeling and thinking in his/her pupils through the teaching of literature.

### *COMMITMENT TO COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION*

Harold was a passionate advocate for comprehensive education, believing it was the only fair way of educating all children. He fought tirelessly against the iniquities of the grammar school system which was enshrined in England and Wales with 1944 Education Act, often known as the "Butler Act" because it was the Conservative Education Secretary, **Rab Butler**, who oversaw the passing of the legislation that systematically set up the grammar school/secondary modern system. Harold was at the vanguard of the opposition to grammar schools in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and one of the most eloquent voices espousing comprehensive education.

### *COMMITMENT TO VALID AND RELIABLE ASSESSMENT*

One of Harold's criticisms of the grammar school system was that the 11+ exam was not a reliable or valid form of assessment. He was one of the first researchers to examine just how problematic multiple choice tests can be in terms of assessment – an important point to bear in mind in the light of the current government's belief that the **PISA tests** are valid tests of children's literacy and numeracy etc. Harold saw the dangers of high-stakes testing and the ways in which it produced a huge "backwash" that meant teachers were constantly teaching to the test rather than being empowered to teach what children really needed to know. Harold played a significant role in setting up different modes of assessment such as CSE coursework, which ultimately led to GCSE coursework in the late 1980s.

### *COMMITMENT TO THE LEARNER*

Michael is really good on this in the interview. He recounts an anecdote frequently told by Harold about a teacher who said to him that he had covered the relevant work the students needed to know and it was their problem if they didn't get it. Michael was young at the time and didn't see the problem with this approach. This was how he was taught: teachers ploughed through curriculum and paid little attention to what students actually knew until they took their exams. Harold was a very early exponent of what now is known as "**assessment for learning**" (AfL) in that he believed that it was part of a teacher's job to check and see what students were learning during lessons. Harold perceived that what really mattered was what the learners knew rather than what the teacher was covering. Harold was "learning-centric". I think this is still a radical idea, despite all the lip service that is paid to AfL. It means that teachers have to listen to learners and build upon what they know. As Michael says, the word to "teach" is not a helpful word in English because it indicates that everything has to be done by the teacher rather than the learner. The French verb 'apprendre' which means both to teach and to learn is a better word because it suggests what really should be happening in the classroom.

### *COMMITMENT TO LANGUAGE*

After leaving America as a young child, Harold grew up in London's east end and was imbued with its different languages and registers, from



Yiddish, Cockney dialect and revolutionary communist discourse. He and his wife Connie took part in the Battle of Cable Street which destroyed the fascist movement in Britain. He was adept at switching between different languages, language varieties and registers. He realised that all human beings are the possessors and makers of language; that we are **all** proficient language users. He totally rejected the idea that many of us are speaking “incorrectly”; that we are speaking in a kind of linguistic “deficit”. He was committed to educating his students – and the world – about the richness and variety of language and rejected hierarchies where Standard English and Received Pronunciation were placed at the top, and working-class dialects shoved to the bottom. He was a committed Marxist who saw prescriptivist attitudes to language, which advocated “correctness”, as deeply oppressive. These views remain radical. The new National Curriculum English orders insist that English teachers must teach Standard English to the detriment of other language varieties, which are not mentioned in the current orders.

## 5 WAYS LATE AND NATE IMPROVED ENGLISH TEACHING

### *PREFACE*

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipMi6toQak0>

Simon Gibbons’ book, **The London Association for the Teaching of English (LATE) 1947-67**, explores the establishment of LATE and its influence upon English teaching in the 50s and 60s. In the video, he talks with Michael Rosen about LATE. I have taken the step of suggesting that LATE and then later its “bigger sister” NATE, which was partly set up because of the success of LATE and other similar regional organisations, improved English teaching in five key points. I should add this is my interpretation and not necessarily what Simon or Michael think; you can watch the video for their views.

### *LATE (THEN NATE) BROUGHT ENGLISH TEACHERS TOGETHER*

As Simon points out in the interview, LATE was established because many English teachers in London felt the need to discuss not only what they should be teaching in English lessons but also how it should be taught. As Simon says, the 1944 Education Act presented many challenges for the teaching profession; most teachers were not properly trained and had scant resources to teach with. But as Michael suggests in

the interview, what might be termed “standards” rise when teachers talk to each other about what they might teach and how they might teach it; this is what LATE was established for. It was a genuinely grassroots collective movement.

### *IMPROVED PEDAGOGY AND LEARNING*

A strong case can be made that LATE and then later on NATE, improved the standards of teaching and learning in the classrooms of its members because these teachers were actively engaging with new (and more traditional) pedagogies. As Simon informs us in the interview and in his book, LATE members carried out what might be termed now “action research” projects which examined the ways in which teachers could help children to improve their ability to write stories (called imaginative composition), their cognitive talk, their reading skills, their drama skills and so forth. The ideas about oracy which the academic/teacher **Jimmy Britton** and other LATE members advocated remain radical to this day.

### *IMPROVED THE LIVES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS*

It was uplifting to hear Simon talk about the ways in which LATE took a very broad view of what might be termed Continuing Professional Development (CPD), in that the organisation encouraged English teachers to go to the theatre/opera/museums etc. and to read literary texts that they knew their students wouldn’t probably read. LATE created a vibrant literary culture of its own amongst its members with various book groups and discussion forums. There was the realisation that English teachers become better teachers if a) they are happy and fulfilled b) culturally/politically informed.

### *POWERFUL FORCE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE*

LATE and then later NATE became powerful lobbying voices within the profession, influencing the ways in which schools, local authorities and politicians thought about education. Their collective voices had genuine power – and still do have in some quarters. LATE remains a very popular organisation for English teachers in London to be part of; I know this personally because I’ve attended a number of their excellent conferences/workshops. They have strong links with the British Film Institute (BFI) and other educational organisations. Similarly, NATE continues to promote good English teaching with its publications, its conferences and CPD sessions etc. Post-1988 both LATE and NATE, like all

professional teaching associations, have been largely ignored by the ruling political elite in Whitehall, but this doesn't mean they don't have power. Most engaged English teachers are much happier to take advice from LATE/NATE than the Education Secretary; they may be obliged to "obey" the edicts of central government, but this doesn't mean they agree with them. NATE/LATE's power remains in the cogency of their arguments, their detailed research and deep knowledge, which has been built up over decades now.

***CREATED AN INCLUSIVE, PROGRESSIVE VOICE FOR THE PROFESSION***

Both NATE/LATE were, and are, inclusive; English teachers with lots of different views come together under their umbrella. Teachers at private schools, comprehensives, grammars, FE colleges etc. all mingle at their conferences and workshop. The spirit is genuinely inclusive. I'd say the overall pedagogical spirit is progressive but this doesn't mean that a wide spectrum of English teachers – from prescriptive grammarians to revolutionary Marxists – don't attend their conferences. The atmosphere is always all-encompassing and everyone's opinion is listened to. I know this because I've sat in on many LATE/NATE sessions myself, and led a few.

**4 WAYS THE 1988 EDUCATION ACT HARMED TEACHING  
AND LEARNING**

***PREFACE***

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xijPH-gWZ4>

For many teachers of a certain age, 1988 is a watershed moment because it was then that Kenneth Baker's Education Act was passed, making it statutory for all teachers to follow the National Curriculum. In the video, Michael Rosen and Simon discuss the details of this act and its repercussions. In response to their comments, I've made another "listicle" suggesting 4 ways that 1988 harmed teaching and learning; I should add these are not necessarily Michael and Simon's views, but my interpretation of what they said and some of my ideas thrown in for good measure.

### *TEACHERS WERE ROBBED OF THEIR AUTONOMY*

**Paulo Freire**, the Brazilian educational philosopher, argued that educational prescriptions necessarily diminish teachers and students' power. His argument is relatively simple: when you are ordered to do something, unless you rebel against the order, you often do not think about why you're doing it or what the consequences of doing it might be. You become an "instrument" rather than an active agent. By denying the right for teachers to choose what might be suitable for their pupils to learn, the government robbed the profession of its autonomy and thereby stopped teachers thinking about why they were teaching the prescribed content. Teachers became "delivery mechanisms" to fill up students with knowledge. Rather than seeing knowledge as something which is constructed with the learner whilst in dialogue with the teacher, knowledge became inert, a dead body to be carted from lesson to lesson and plonked on students' desks to dissect and poke around in. The act of prescribing the curriculum robbed teachers of a vital freedom which changed the mood and method of far too many lessons for the worse. Disenfranchised teachers went through the motions because they had no serious "stake" in what was taught.

### *TEACHERS' VOICES WERE MARGINALISED*

As SG/MR point out, the marginalisation of teachers became progressively worse as successive National Curricula (NCs) were introduced over the succeeding decades. With the first NC in 1988, Brian Cox, who wrote the first English orders, consulted with teachers widely and modified his views in the light of what he heard. As Simon says though, he was over-ruled by the minister when the curriculum he produced was not politically palatable, particularly regarding the teaching of grammar. His Knowledge About Language (KAL) prescriptions remain the most enlightened set of instructions we have about the teaching of grammar in any NC. However, as Michael points out, experts like his father, Harold Rosen, were not prepared for the tenor and approach that Whitehall took; in previous years, there had been some sort of uneasy consensus between government and the profession about what was taught and examined. This changed from 1988 when consultation with the profession became a paper exercise. From 88 onwards, it was the will of the relevant minister which prevailed. This has

meant that the profession has been continuously tossed around in the political winds of the succeeding decades.

***THE NC EDICTS WERE CONFUSING AND OFTEN NONSENSICAL***

Michael is particularly funny on this point when talking about the inclusion of “E Brill” as a prescribed author on one of the NC orders. No such author exists! Since 1988, the NC has constantly been “picked at” like a scab by successive politicians; the 1988 orders were quickly replaced in the early 1990s by another version which was less enlightened but not so heavy on detail, and then re-written again in the Noughties, and then re-written by the Coalition government and made statutory in 2014. This meant that teachers were constantly changing their lesson plans, their schemes of work, their textbooks and pedagogical approaches in an arbitrary fashion. Since 1988, there has been an air of pedagogical, epistemological and ontological confusion which has left many teachers, students and parents scratching their heads about what is really going on.

***THE NC DIDN'T CHANGE SOCIETY FOR THE BETTER***

This is the central problem. For all the billions spent, the years devoted to implementing NC orders, have standards really risen? On one level they clearly have in that students have got better at passing exams. And yet on another level, have they? Has the NC brought up a generation of compliant robots who blindly follow the edicts of the neo-liberal society we live in? What’s happened to radical spirit of the 1960s and 70s? Why do we live in a society where inequality is growing, where private companies run roughshod over people’s lives, where we are faced with environmental catastrophe, where there is such intolerance, where unions are demonised and our rulers are from a wealthy, out-of-touch elite? Did the NC play its part in turning us into drones?

**5 WAYS WE CAN MAKE ENGLISH TEACHING BETTER**

***PREFACE***

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfjAlpFHWKw>

To finish this “quartet” of discussions between Simon and Michael Rosen, I asked them to consider “where next?”. All three of us wanted to end on a positive note and offer some constructive points to build upon.

*TRUMPET THE GREAT WORK THAT IS HAPPENING*

I thought Michael was particularly eloquent about this point, discussing the magnificent work that his teenage daughter is doing on the Romantics at her comprehensive. It's clear that there are some fantastic English teachers working in schools today. Projects like the **BBC School Report**, **Poetry By Heart**, the **Jack Petchey Speakout Challenge**, and the raft of initiatives that organisations like NATE/LATE support, highlight the fact that there is some great work going on in schools.

*RETURN THE FOCUS TO LEARNING*

I think both Simon and Michael are advocating an approach where there is a renewed focus upon learning to think, discuss, read and write both independently and creatively. This is where the focus needs to be in English lessons, but the worry is that the backwash from the exam system means that English teachers are constantly talking about performance, not learning. I've found **Chris Watkins' research** particularly useful in showing that the irony is that when teachers obsess about grades, tests, mark schemes and performance, they actually achieve lower grades in the very tests they are promoting. One of Harold Rosen's key ideas is vital to remember here: English teachers need to nurture a love of learning amongst their students, not a fear that they will score badly in exams.

*GET TEACHERS TALKING TO EACH OTHER*

This has been a repeated theme in this quartet of discussions: once teachers talk to each other about learning and teaching (not paperwork/exam results etc.), then more enlightened approaches emerge. The trouble is, as Simon points out, that teachers are deluged with other stuff to do. Room needs to be carved out in a genuine, meaningful way for teachers to discuss **what** they are teaching and **how** they are teaching it. This means creating a "no blame" atmosphere where teachers can honestly give their thoughts, and where the focus can be about improving practice rather than worrying about Ofsted, exam results, parental complaints, SLT "learning walks" etc.

*GET SCHOOL CO-OPERATING WITH EACH OTHER, NOT COMPETING*

As Michael points out, the London Challenge which **Tim Brighouse** oversaw was all about getting schools to co-operate. As a result of this collegiate method, standards across many schools in deprived areas in

London rose dramatically. This sort of tactic needs to be nurtured more often. It's difficult in the current climate though with increasing competition between schools. However, there is nothing to stop English teachers collaborating across schools through aegis of LATE and NATE.

### **EMPOWER THE SUBJECT ASSOCIATIONS, LATE AND NATE**

It is fitting in to make this final point because I think it's important! The subject associations are lone voices of sanity in an insane world where politicians who have never taught a day in their life dictate to the thousands of teachers what millions of children should learn. **NATE** and **LATE** are made up of English teachers and other experts in the field; these subject associations know what they are talking about. They need to be given more of a voice, more resources to expand what they do, and more power to influence policy. It's only then that you'll see genuine "standards" rising.

#### **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

Write a poem about the National Curriculum.

Write a story in which the National Curriculum is personified as a rock star or other character always changing his/her identity.

Do a visual organiser which shows the main aspects of the current iteration of the NC.

## **KEY STAGE 3 ENGLISH: THE LOST DOMAIN?**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This section is a learning script which explores Key Stage 3 English, which is often forgotten in secondary schools.

#### **WARM-UP**

**CREATIVE TEACHER:** Let's do a mindfulness meditation where we meditate for a little while to get us warmed up for this topic.

**BEGINNER TEACHER:** So close or lower your eyes, and take a position in your chair which suggests dignity and respect for yourself, and just spend a couple of minutes focusing upon your breath.

**TRADITIONAL TEACHER:** And don't worry if you are distracted by lots of different thoughts, just acknowledge that you have had those thoughts and feelings, congratulate yourself for noticing them, and return to concentrating upon the breath.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: After you have done that for a few minutes, try to focus your mind upon yourself as an eleven-year-old to fourteen-year-old, try to bring to mind anything you can remember happened then in your family, at school and in the world generally.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Spend a minute thinking about your attitudes towards reading and writing, and your own speech then.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Right, open your eyes and do some free writing in your Learning Journals, focusing if you like on your memories or thoughts about yourself from 11 to 14 years of age.

#### DISCUSSION

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: As a traditional English teacher, I would say that Key Stage 3 English is a fairly simple affair. In the first year, Year 7, you have to revise all the things that the student have forgotten from primary school; how to spell, punctuate, their grammar and terminology; story-writing; reading out aloud; giving speeches. In Year 8 and 9, you can start reading some decent literature, and I always base my lessons around texts: I love teaching *Moonfleet*, *Our Day Out*, sections of *Macbeth* and relatively simple poems.

BEGINNER TEACHER: I must be honest Traditional Teacher, but I was taught by a teacher like you, and I have real concerns about your approach. This teacher ploughed through some grammar books in Year 7, giving us lots of spelling tests, drilling us about similes and metaphors, and obsessively correcting our punctuation, and never actually checked to see what we knew already. We'd covered all of that in primary school!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, the evidence is that there is a big dip in attainment in English in Years 7 and 8 because many English teachers repeat what children have done in primary school!

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, a very important thing to do at Key Stage 3 and all lessons is find out what your students already know. And giving them some basic tests is not enough; you need to draw it out of them, jog their memories, ask to see their previous English books from primary school.

#### TASK

What do you already know about Key Stage 3 English? What memories do you have of being taught at Key Stage 3? What skills and knowledge do you think should be taught at this age?



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Imagine you are teaching Key Stage 3 English, how would you like to be thought of as a teacher? What would you like your colleagues and students to say about you?

### **WHAT IS KEY STAGE 3 ENGLISH? WHAT ARE ITS AIMS AND PURPOSES?**

#### **WARM-UP**

*The Teacher Educator puts some objects on a table.*

CREATIVE TEACHER: Right, we are going to use some objects as analogies to trigger some creative thoughts about what Key Stage 3 English should be like.

BEGINNER TEACHER: An array of objects on the table should be put by the teacher on a table and then one or two objects should be chosen by each member, with each person writing in their Learning Journal why their object represents an aspect of a core value.

#### **DISCUSSION**

CREATIVE TEACHER: I think before we get into the nitty-gritty, we should really think about what the aims and purposes of teaching English at Key Stage 3 are. What are your thoughts?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: To give them the basics regarding spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG), to get them read widely and introduce them to some great literature.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: As an exam-obsessed teacher, I think it should be all about preparing them for GCSE English. We should “reverse engineer” the curriculum, thinking about what they need for GCSE and teaching that.

CREATIVE TEACHER: But the problem with that is that, it means you end up teaching to the test from the “get go”. The new National Curriculum says that students need to do things like “enjoy reading”; how can they enjoy reading if they are always doing mock tests?

BEGINNER TEACHER: I do think we should put enjoyment at the heart of the curriculum. I did not enjoy English during this phase of my school; it was very boring, lots of tests, grammatical terms, and reading things I did not like.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, maybe you’re right. Maybe they will get better results if we really fire them up to love literature, reading, writing and discussion at Key Stage 3.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I agree with that, we need to be passionate and enthusiastic about English, make it an enjoyable experience, as well as teaching the basics.

BEGINNER TEACHER: But how do we do that? I'm worried!!

CREATIVE TEACHER: Don't worry, we're going to discuss all of this in future sessions.

### *LEARNING ACTIVITIES*

What do you think of the discussion? What do you think the aims and purposes of Key Stage 3 English should be? Look at the new National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 English and see if you agree with its approach; maybe do some Reciprocal Teaching in groups on it if you feel ready to do so.

## TOP TIPS

### READ IT!

Make sure that you are familiar with the current form of the National Curriculum.

### CONSIDER HOW TO ADAPT IT

Even if you disagree with much of the NC, think about how you might adapt it to make your teaching engaging and meaningful.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Although this book is an old one, many of the points it makes are even more valid today:

Griffith, R. (2000). *National Curriculum: National disaster?* Education and citizenship. London: Routledge.

Look at the National Curriculum online and compare with NATE's alternative NC. What can you learn from comparing the two?

Websites: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study>

NATE's alternative National Curriculum is worth examining as well: <https://www.nate.org.uk/file/2016/04/The-National-Curriculum-for-English-from-2015.pdf>

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about the National Curriculum in this section of the book?

## CULTURAL LITERACY

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider key cultural texts, learn if necessary a bit more about them, and think how and why you might teach them within the English classroom.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon cultural literacy: watch yourself acquiring the knowledge you feel you have needed to feel part of British culture and to be an informed person living happily in the world.

### INTRODUCTION

This section explores some key texts which are central to understanding Western culture. The idea is that you should consider weaving them into your teaching or teaching them as discrete topics so that your pupils become familiar with them: this will improve their English generally. Some schools and approaches advocate a huge focus upon culturally important texts. You will be invited to critique them later on.

### AESOP'S FABLES

#### QUESTIONS

What are Aesop's Fables? Why might they be important for English teachers? When might you use them in the classroom?

#### KEY POINTS

#### THE ROOTS OF MANY STORIES

Aesop wrote several fables which have entered the collective consciousness of the world. Tales such as *The Hare and the Tortoise*, *The Fox and the Grapes*, *The Wind and the Sun* not only are very familiar children's stories but have also helped shape countless narratives.

#### FABLES

Many stories have a 'fable' like quality and can be related to Aesop's work.

#### ALL AGES

Aesop's work is suitable for all ages and can be re-visited again and again.

## MESSAGES

Aesop's the *Sun and the Wind* is a good story to tell to help promote collaborative learning; kindness beats aggression.

## MINDFUL REFLECTIONS UPON AESOP'S FABLES

How and why might you use some of the fables within the English classroom? Devise a series of lessons which teach students English skills by using Aesop's Fables as a starting point. Look at these websites to develop your knowledge:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio/subjects/english/aesops\\_fables](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio/subjects/english/aesops_fables)

<http://www.taleswithmorals.com/>

<http://read.gov/aesop/001.html>

## THE BIBLE

Why do you need to know about the Bible to be a good English teacher? Surely, it's a religious text? Well, yes, it is, but it is also possibly the most influential literary text ever written. Until comparatively recently, the Bible influenced every English writer because it was the main text most people listened to and read since most English writers had Christian upbringings.

The Bible is divided into two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament forms the Torah for the Jewish religion, but also the first part of the Christian Bible. It is a collection of stories, the first of which was possibly written down in 3500 BC and drawn together by religious scholars over the ages. For the purposes of the English Literature student, the most important edition of the Bible is the *King James Version* or *Authorized King James' Version* (**AKJV**) or (**KJB**) published in 1611. This English translation of the Bible is widely considered to be the most beautiful and is certainly the most influential; phrases it uses are often quoted in much succeeding literature. You can find it online here: <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/1611-Bible/>

A more comprehensible version is the New International Version (**NIV**), which lacks the poetry of the AKJV but is easier to understand.

### *GENESIS: THE CREATION OF EARTH*

**In a nutshell:** God makes the universe, earth, animals and humans in seven days.

**Key quote, Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1 (AKJV):** "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and

empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

### ***GENESIS: THE STORY OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN***

**In a nutshell:** God creates Adam, the first man, and then Eve, from Adam’s rib, as a mate for Adam. He allows Adam and Eve to roam freely in Eden -- the paradise he has created -- but forbids them to eat from the tree of knowledge. Eve is persuaded by the serpent (the devil or Satan) to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge by saying that she will become as knowledgeable as God. Eve eats the apple and then persuades Adam to eat it too so that they are equal. God sees that they are covering up their nakedness and that they are ashamed. He knows that they’ve eaten from the tree. He punishes them by ordering that men will have to work very hard to have enough to eat, women will always suffer in childbirth and humans will die. He makes the serpent crawl on its belly.

**Key quote: Genesis, chapter 3, verse 16:** “To the woman God said, ‘I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labour you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.’”

**Influences:** This is one of the most influential stories ever written and is constantly referenced in poetry, plays and novels. St Augustine interpreted this story as meaning that everyone born after Adam and Eve is born into sin because their sin has been passed on to all their descendants. He called this “original sin”: this is a very important idea in Christianity and many Christians still believe in it as a concept. However, non-conformist Christian writers like William Blake (1757-1827) rejected the idea as being deeply oppressive. Look for references to “forbidden fruit”, paradise, original sin.

### ***NOAH AND THE FLOOD***

**In a nutshell:** God is angry with mankind and kills them all with a flood, except for Noah who he tells to make a boat and put his family and all the animals on it.

**Key quote: Genesis, chapter 7, verse 6 (AKJV):** “Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground,<sup>9</sup> male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah.”

**Influences:** The idea of “Armageddon”, of escaping from danger, of preserving life is central to countless texts.

### *THE TOWER OF BABEL*

**In a nutshell:** The people of earth speak one language and build a huge tower, the tower of Babel, which reaches to the heavens to show how powerful they are. God, annoyed that they are trying to be like him, destroys the tower and makes everyone speak a different language so that they don’t understand each other.

**Key quote: Genesis, chapter 11, verse 6 (AKJV):** The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

### *ABRAHAM & ISAAC*

**In a nutshell:** God gives Abraham a covenant (a holy promise) and tells him that the Jewish people will become slaves of another people, but then will be rescued by God. Abraham is told to sacrifice his son, Isaac, to prove his obedience to God; Abraham gets his son ready to kill him, but suddenly a heifer or goat appears and God tells him that he can sacrifice that instead; Abraham’s son is saved because Abraham had proved his worth.

**Influences:** The idea of doing your duty even though it harms you and your family is a central theme of many texts.

### *JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS*

**In a nutshell:** Joseph was a favourite son of Jacob and was given a lovely, multi-coloured coat by Jacob. Joseph has strange dreams about the corn and the stars bowing down to him. When he tells his brothers about these, they are jealous, and are jealous of his coat. The brothers plot to kill him but are persuaded by the eldest brother Reuben to throw him into a pit. Then some merchants come by and the brothers take Joseph’s coat and sell him to the merchants. He was taken to Egypt, fell out with the merchant and was imprisoned. But news came to the Pharaoh of Joseph and his strange dreams. Joseph tells his dreams to the Pharaoh which warn of famine and tells him to store grain so that the country is prepared. Joseph becomes a Governor because the Pharaoh is so pleased with him. Meanwhile, his brothers are starving in Canaan.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Joseph realizes they have changed and rescues them, bringing them to live with him in Egypt.

**Influences:** Apart from spawning a musical, this story has been re-interpreted many times. The central motif of the abject slave becoming very powerful, ascending from the bottom of the social ladder to the top is common in many stories.

### *SODOM AND GOMORRAH*

**In a nutshell:** people were behaving very badly in Sodom and Gomorrah, having sex with people they supposedly shouldn't have sex with, possibly having homosexual sex so God destroyed the city and killed all the inhabitants with fire and brimstone.

**Influences:** These names are still synonymous with concepts of sexual depravity.

### *MOSES IN "EXODUS" THE NEXT BOOK IN THE BIBLE AFTER GENESIS*

**In a nutshell:** Moses hears God speaking from a burning bush saying that he will rescue the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. Moses leads the Jewish people out of Egypt, known as the Exodus (listen to the Bob Marley song) to the promised land, Israel – which is the name of God, who is also known as Elohim and Yahweh. Called by God to Mount Sinai, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments, vital rules that must be obeyed.

**Key quote: Exodus 20:1-17 (AKJV)** "And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: <sup>5</sup>thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

**Influences:** much literature explores the consequences of rules and regulations.

### *SAMSON AND DELILAH*

**In a nutshell:** For forty years, the Israelis suffered at the hands of the Philistines, a terrible enemy who lived near the sea. However, a mighty

warrior Samson was born who not only could kill lions, but also Philistines. Samson fell in love with a beautiful woman called Delilah who was secretly working for the Philistines; she discovers the secret to his strength is his long hair. When he was asleep, she signaled to the Philistines to cut off his hair; Samson was captured and blinded, and taken to Gaza where he was thrown in prison. The Philistines celebrated their triumph in their temple and brought out the blinded prisoner to highlight their victory; he was put between the pillars of a doorway so that everyone could see him. The crowd jeered at how weak he was. Asking the Lord for help, Samson pushed the pillars on either side of him over making the temple collapse, killing everyone inside, including himself.

**Influences:** A tremendously influential story. Delilah is the original “femme fatale”; the woman who leads a great man to his doom. The story of the injured, weakened warrior who has one last victory has influenced numerous stories from King Arthur to James Bond.

#### *DAVID AND GOLIATH*

**In a nutshell:** Weedy but clever David defeats Goliath in a fight by being clever and using a sling-shot to hit him with stones. David becomes King and marries Bathsheba after making her pregnant and causing her husband’s death by sending him to fight in a battle.

**Influences:** Hardly a day goes by when this story isn’t referenced in one or another. It is an archetypal story in that it shows how brains beat brawn.

#### *KING SOLOMON’S WISDOM*

**In a nutshell:** The son of David, King Solomon was asked by God in a dream what he most wanted and he replied “wisdom”. One day, two mothers came to him claiming that a baby was theirs and asking Solomon to decide who was the real mother. Solomon got out his sword and said he would cut the baby in two and give them half each. One of the women said this was a good idea, while the other broke down in tears and said that she would rather the other woman had the baby than see the child killed. Solomon then knew she was the mother. After this story, people realized he had the wisdom of God.

**Influences:** The idea of the wise ruler or the wise man appears in many stories such as Prospero in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* to Thomas Cromwell in Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall*.



**THE NEW TESTAMENT -- THE GOSPELS**

**In a nutshell:** These four books were written by Mark, Luke, Matthew and John. They are all about the life of Jesus and contain similar stories about him, but sometimes vary in their details.

**Key ideas:** The **Annunciation.** An angel announces to Mary that God will impregnate her and give her a baby who is the son of God. Mary stays a virgin. The **Nativity:** Jesus is born in a manger because King Herod is looking to kill him, because it has been prophesized that he will be king of Jews. Jesus is the son of a carpenter, Joseph and Mary. He is born in Bethlehem. He is visited as a baby by three shepherds, three wise men and three kings. Little is written about his growing up in the Gospels. When he is a young man, John the Baptist begins talking about the coming of the Lord and baptising people to get them ready. He sees Jesus and calls him a “Lamb”, the son of God. Jesus goes into the desert and wrestles with the Devil for forty days and nights. He wins and comes back and starts preaching to people about the coming Kingdom of Heaven. He feeds 5000 people with a loaf of bread; he walks on water; he calms the water while on a fishing boat in a storm; he raises Lazarus from the dead. He has twelve disciples, or followers, including Judas and Peter. He communicates his message in “parables”: interesting stories with a message. Famous ones are:

**The Prodigal Son:** there’s a good son and a bad son. The bad son spends all the money his Dad has given him on wine, gambling, and women. Comes back and must sleep in his father’s pig pen to survive. Too ashamed to show his face. His brother finds him and is disgusted. His father sees him and is delighted, announcing there is to be a party about his return and that they should “kill the fatted calf” (the most expensive animal) for the meal.

**The house built on sand.** There are two houses: one built on firm land. One built on sand. The one on sand is built quickly and looks great. But falls in a storm. The other one stays up.

**The Good Samaritan.** A traveller gets beaten up by bandits but is not helped by his fellow men, and instead is rescued from death by a foreigner, a Samaritan.

Jesus gives a “Sermon on the Mount” when he gives a series of famous sayings called the Beatitudes, which are very important and often quoted:

**The Beatitudes. Matthew Chapters 5-7 (AKJV):** “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.”

**Jesus is “transfigured”. Matthew 17 (AKJV):** “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, <sup>2</sup> and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. <sup>3</sup> And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.”

Jesus goes into Jerusalem, the holy city, to announce he is the son of God on a donkey (a very lowly animal). He knows he is going to die. He holds a “Last Supper” where bread is broken and wine drunk. He says the bread is his flesh and the wine is his blood. He tells Peter that he will betray him three times before the cock crows.

**Betrayal:** He is betrayed in the garden of Gethsemane by Judas who kisses him to show the Romans who want to arrest him that he is Jesus. His disciples are asked if they know him. Peter denies knowing him three times before the cock crows.

He is put on trial by Pontius Pilate who washes his hands to indicate he doesn’t know what to do with him. The Jewish Pharisees, annoyed by the way Jesus has criticized them, ask for him to be crucify instead one of their men. He is crucified and dies on the Cross. A few days after he is put in his tomb, he is discovered preaching by his disciples. This is the resurrection.

**The Ascension: Acts Chapter 1, verses 9-11 (AKJV)** Later, Jesus ascends back to heaven: “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of

Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

There is a promise that there will be a “second coming” when Jesus will return to earth to separate the saved and the damned on Judgement Day.

### *THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT*

In Acts, we learn about the story of Paul (formerly Saul) who was a tax collector but on the road to Damascus was converted into believing in Jesus and God. This the story:

**Acts 9:1-20 Authorized (AKJV):** “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”

He goes on to establish the Christian church but is imprisoned by the Romans for his religious beliefs. In prison, Paul writes a number of letters giving advice to Christians who are setting up the church; Paul invents much the structure of the church.

**Book 1 of Corinthians 13, (NIV):** This is the most famous lines he wrote: “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. <sup>12</sup>For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

The King James Bible(**AKJV**) is much more poetic but more difficult to understand: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. <sup>12</sup> For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.”

### *REVELATIONS*

**In a nutshell:** this is the last book in the New Testament and by far the strangest. Many people have read “occult” signs in it. It tells of the end of the earth and the second coming of Christ, Judgment Day.

**Revelation Chapter 6, vs 1-2, (NIV):** “I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come and see!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.”

The Lamb is Jesus Christ who opens the book from the four horsemen who come out: a white horse who symbolises Conquest, a red horse who symbolises War, a black horse who symbolises Famine, and a pale horse who symbolises Death.

**Revelation Chapter 6, verses 7-8 (NIV):** “When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come and see!" I looked and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hell was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine, and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.”

### *BABYLON AND THE WHORE OF BABYLON*

A woman, who is a prostitute or harlot, is to blame for the “fallen” state of mankind. **Chapter 17, verse 5 (AKJV):** “And upon her forehead was a name written a mystery: Babylon The Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the Earth.... And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”

**Next step:** The Brick Testament is a lot of fun; it’s a sort of Lego version of the Bible. Although it’s devised for kids, it’s a great way of learning the stories. <http://thebrickbible.com/>

If I am honest, I have to say that I have found the *DK Children's Illustrated Bible* (1994) by Selina Hastings the most useful to dip in and out because it presents the stories so attractively and provides some useful contextual points as well.

<http://www.dk.co.uk/nf/Book/BookDisplay/0,,9781409364511,00.html>

#### MINDFUL REFLECTIONS UPON THE BIBLE

How and why might you use some of the Bible within the English classroom? Devise a series of lessons which use the Bible to develop English skills. Use these websites to help you: bear in mind, often resources have a Christian focus.

<https://www.bibleandenglish.com/teacher-resources-2/>

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/mvecela/learning-and-teaching-english-through-the-bible/>

### GREEK MYTHS; THE ILIAD AND THE ODYSSEY

**Background:** Written down in the seventh and eighth century BC, these two long poems remain amongst the most influential stories ever told.

**In a nutshell:** The Iliad is the story of the ten-year Trojan war and destruction of Troy (Ilium), a great city in the Mediterranean. It tells the story of the battles between the Ancient Greeks (the Achaeans) and the Trojans. Incensed by the theft of his brother's wife, Helen, King Agamemnon sails to Troy with his Greek army to get her back and lays siege to the city of Troy for ten years. Helen has been taken by Paris, the son of King Priam, the Trojan king. Paris was given her as a gift because he judged Aphrodite as the most beautiful of all the goddesses in a beauty contest. The problem was that he had to take her from King Menelaus, Agamemnon's brother, thus triggering a war. Anyway, after many squabbles amongst the Greeks, including a terrible one between Agamemnon and the greatest warrior Achilles, the Greeks win the war by tricking the Trojans to accept the gift of a huge wooden horse. The horse is filled with soldiers who destroy the city when the horse is taken into the centre of Troy. After the war ends, the man who came up with the cunning "wooden horse" plan, Odysseus (sometimes called Ulysses), has great difficulty getting home, getting lost for seven years. His story is called *The Odyssey*; he encounters and defeats the Cyclops (a one-eyed giant), Scylla and Charybdis (two neighbouring sea monsters who smash ships at sea), the Sirens (who sing so sweetly that they lure sailors to their

death); he has an affair with the witch-goddess Circe and the beautiful Calypso. Eventually, he gets home only to find that his wife, Penelope and property have been taken over by bands of “suitors” who are all trying to marry Penelope and claim all his belongings. After disguising himself as an old beggar, he defeats the suitors in a bow and arrow contest and they and their serving girls are all killed by him.

There are numerous Greek myths about the Gods and Goddesses, and their interactions with mankind. Overall, they are “capricious”: often treating mankind unfairly or with little thought for their well-being. Zeus, the patriarch of the Gods, thinks nothing for example of turning into a swan and raping the beautiful Leda; a story which W.B. Yeats, a modernist Irish poet, writes about in ‘Leda and the Swan’.

The Greek drama of Oedipus tells the story of man who unawares kills his father and marries his mother. This story influenced the psychoanalyst Freud when he devised his concept of the “Oedipus Complex”: for complicated reasons, Freud believed all men secretly wanted to kill their fathers and marry their mothers. Both the Greek drama and Freud’s ideas are very influential.

**Influence:** Absolutely huge. You’ll find references to many of these stories in most literature written before 1950 because so many people were educated by reading these books. James Joyce’s *Ulysses* for example is a very experimental novel which uses the template of *The Odyssey* as a way of exploring the ‘stream of consciousness’ thoughts of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Daedalus during one day in Dublin.

**Next step:** Listen to this BBC programme on ‘In Our Time’ on *The Odyssey*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p004y297>

Read classicist and journalist Charlotte Higgins on *The Iliad*: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/jan/30/iliad-war-charlotte-higgins>

Read Lupton & Morden’s children versions of the tales, *The Adventures of Achilles* and *The Adventures of Odysseus* (2010). Fantastic re-telling; they’re for children, but adults will learn from them and love them too.

Read Robert Eagles’ translations of *The Iliad* (1992, Penguin Classics) and *The Odyssey* (2006, Penguin Classics); they are the most readable and useful.

#### MINDFUL REFLECTIONS UPON THE BIBLE

How and why might you use Greek myths and myths generally within the English classroom? Devise a series of lessons which use myths to develop students' English skills. The Classical Tales website is the best place to start:

<http://classictales.educ.cam.ac.uk/>

### SHAKESPEARE AS CULTURAL CAPITAL

#### THE BASIC IDEA

Some people think that you're not educated if you don't know certain bits of Shakespeare. Whether you like it or not, Shakespeare has become part of the "cultural capital" that every student is expected to have. These exercises offer a quick and easy way of covering a lot of ground very quickly. A "Bluffer's Guide to Shakespeare" if you like!

#### APPLYING IT

The best way to do this is to take the most famous lines from Shakespeare and see if pupils can match the play, the meaning and line. You can obviously choose your favourite lines – I've chosen mine below. You'll find some good suggestions here:

<http://www.rhymezone.com/shakespeare/toplines/>

Here's a worksheet I prepared earlier, followed by answers. Photocopy the worksheet and, if you like, the answers too, so pupils can mark their own work. The quotations are separated from their explanations and the play itself. The students must read through the worksheet and try and match the play with the quote, and the meaning and context. In the process they should learn about the important lines from Shakespeare. If you have children of low ability, cut down the number of lines to no more than three or four quotes. Then work out how you might do this with other aspects of Shakespeare's work.

#### WORKSHEET: EVERYTHING IS IN A MUDDLE – UNMUDDLE IT!

*All these quotes, titles of plays, and explanations are mixed up: match the quote (in italics) with the play and the meaning and context (with bold title)*

- Line from Shakespeare play: *Let me not to the marriage of true minds*
- *Admit impediments*
- Line from Shakespeare play: *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?*

Francis Gilbert

- Explanation: The world just goes on and on with each day following another like a snail creeping along the road until everything comes to an end and then we realise we're fools because our past lives have simply been a way of dying and turning into dust. You're dead, snuffed out like a candle that has only burned for a short time! The truth is that life is like an actor who struts around the stage and then is heard no more. Or it's like the story told by an idiot which is full of noises and anger but means absolutely nothing.
- Title of play: Hamlet: III, i
- Line from Shakespeare play: *O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo*
- *If music be the food of love, play on;*
- Line from Shakespeare play: *We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;*
- **Explanation:** Our army is very small, there are only a few of us, but the small amount of soldiers that are here are happy because we're like brothers to each other.
- Title of play: As You Like It: II, vii  
**Explanation:** The most important thing to remember is to do what is right for you.
- **Lines from Shakespeare play:** *Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing*
- Explanation: To exist on earth, or not to exist; to kill myself or not to kill myself; that's the question that's really troubling me.
- Explanation: O my God Romeo, Romeo! Why are you called Romeo?
- Lines from Shakespeare play: *All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:*



## The Mindful English Teacher

*They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.*

- **Title of poem:** Sonnets: XVIII
- **Title of play:** King Henry V: IV, iii
- Line from Shakespeare play: *Let me not to the marriage of true minds*
- *Admit impediments*
- **Title of play:** Hamlet: I, iii
- Title of play: **Romeo and Juliet: II, ii**
- Explanation: The whole of the world is like a stage at the theatre and every man and woman are simply actors on this stage who leave and arrive on the stage; and every person over time acts out many parts, which you could say has seven phases.
- Title of play: Twelfth Night: I, i
- Line from Shakespeare play: *This above all: to thine ownself be true,*  
Title of play: Sonnets: CXVI
- Explanation: There are no problems that couples can't overcome if they are true to each other.
- Title of play: Macbeth: V, v
- Explanation: If music is the thing that encourages people to feel loving towards each other, if it is the thing that feeds love and makes it grow, then please could the band carry on playing.
- Explanation: Shall I compare your beauty to a summer's day?
- Line from Shakespeare play: *To be, or not to be: that is the question:*

### ANSWERS

- *To be, or not to be: that is the question:* ➔ Hamlet: III, i
- To exist on earth, or not to exist; to kill myself or not to kill myself; that's the question that's really gnawing at me.
- *All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.* ➔ As You Like It: II, vii

The whole of the world is like a stage at the theatre and every man and woman are simply actors on this stage who leave and arrive on the stage; and every person over time acts out many parts, which you could say has seven phases.

- *Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo* ➔ **Romeo and Juliet: II, ii**
- my God Romeo, Romeo! Why are you called Romeo?
- *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day* ➔ Sonnets: XVIII
- Shall I compare your beauty to a summer's day?
- *We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;* ➔ King Henry V: IV, iii
- Our army is very small, there are only a few of us, but the small amount of soldiers that are here are happy because we're like brothers to each other.
- *If music be the food of love, play on;* ➔ Twelfth Night: I, i
- If music is the thing that encourages people to feel loving towards each other, if it is the thing that feeds love and makes it grow, then please could the band carry on playing.
- *This above all: to thine ownself be true,* ➔ Hamlet: I, iii  
The most important thing to remember is to do what is right for you.
- *Let me not to the marriage of true minds*
- *Admit impediments* ➔ Sonnets: CXVI
- There are no problems that couples can't overcome if they are true to each other.
- *Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.* ➔ Macbeth: V, v  
The world just goes on and on with each day following another like a snail creeping along the road until everything comes to an end and then we realise we're fools because our

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

past lives have simply been a way of dying and turning into dust. You're dead, snuffed out like a candle that has only burned for a short time! The truth is that life is like an actor who struts around the stage and then is heard no more. Or it's like the story told by an idiot which is full of noises and anger but means absolutely nothing.

### WHAT'S THE POINT?

This exercise enables students to learn about the most famous lines in Shakespeare by thinking about their meanings and contexts. You can, if you like, leave out my "meaning and context" section and get them to work out the meanings for themselves, or you could ask them to write their own meanings for the lines; what they mean to them. The "mix and match" exercise is good for classes which are easily distracted, and possibly not good at writing; they can read the worksheet and draw arrows which connect the quotes, play name and place, and explanations.

#### Independent research skills

This is an ideal opportunity for students to use the internet to explore one or more of the quotes in depth, finding out more about it, looking synopses of the relevant play on the internet, reading the play itself either online, or watching it on YouTube (most Shakespeare plays are there). They could gather all their notes/thoughts/links in a Word document which they email to you, and then do a presentation to the class about what they have found out from their research.

#### PUTTING PEN TO PAPER

**Writing to inform, describe and explain:** Students could write an informative leaflet aimed at teenagers about the most famous lines from Shakespeare, explaining why they are famous.

**Writing to entertain, imagine and explore:** Students could write a story based on one of the quotes from Shakespeare, using it as inspiration for their story. Some films are based on the lines already, eg *Band of Brothers*, *To Be Or Not To Be*, *Murder Most Foul*.

**Writing to analyse, review and comment:** More gifted students could research one of the quotes in depth and write an essay about why the quote has become so famous.

**Writing to argue, persuade and advise:** Write a persuasive speech on any topic which uses at least two or three of these quotes.

### WHIZZING IT

Students could do a slideshow illustrating the quotes with clips from YouTube or Google images. Getting students to pick the most fitting Google images in pairs is a good place to start; simply ask your students to type in the main topic of the speech or the key words into the Google search engine and then see what comes up in terms of images. This exercise gets students deploying their summarizing skills – boiling down quotes to key words – and also asks them to choose the right image for them; the discussion that results from this should help them see ultimately that good writing is all about choosing the right image.

## TOP TIPS

### GO ON TRIPS, BRING IN SPEAKERS

One of the best ways of promoting cultural literacy is to go on trips to museums and galleries. Use the teaching resources that these cultural institutions provide if they are relevant. Get parents and other relevant people to come to talk about their cultural interests, then ask students to do writing based on the points they make.

### READING THE WORLD, READING THE WORD

Encourage students to understand the world they live in by understanding its history, its cultural background, the people who have lived and died there. Get them thinking about how they might change the world for the better.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

### Books/articles

Dantas, M., & Manyak, P. (2010). Home-school connections in a multicultural society : Learning from and with culturally and linguistically diverse families (Language, culture, and teaching). New York: Routledge.

Gregory, E., & Williams, Ann. (2000). *City literacies: Learning to read across generations and cultures* (Vol. 220, Literacies). London: Routledge.

Kelly, C., Gregory, E., & Williams, A. (2001). *Home to School and School to Home: Syncretised Literacies in Linguistic Minority Communities*. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 14(1), 9-25.

Rowell, J., & Pahl, K. (2015). *The Routledge handbook of literacy studies* (Routledge handbooks in applied linguistics).

### Links

Check out the websites of your own local cultural institutions. Make links with arts and other relevant organisations.

The Houses of Parliament have some good teaching resources:

**<http://www.parliament.uk/education/teaching-resources-lesson-plans/>**

The National Maritime Museum has some interesting resources:

**<http://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/teacher-resources>**

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about cultural literacy?

## PRE-AND POST-1900 FICTION

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn more about creative approaches to teaching pre-1900 fiction, developing your knowledge about using visual organisers.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon post and pre-1900 fiction: watch yourself reading and writing about the likes of the Brontës, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and fiction after that such as John Steinbeck, Roald Dahl, Margaret Atwood etc.

### USING “CLASSIC” LITERARY FICTION TO STIMULATE CREATIVE WRITING

The following article was first published in NAWE’S *Writing in Education* (November 2015). It contains many ideas about how to teach pre and post-1900 prose, with the focus being upon pre-1900 prose, which is often the most challenging area for teachers. The focus is to get students writing creatively in response to the texts; this will motivate them and improve their English skills generally as well.

#### *1 INTRODUCTION: MY EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING THE “CLASSICS”*

The new English and English GCSE, which commenced in September 2015 with the first exams in 2017, has firmly put the teaching of literary fiction back on the map. All the English syllabi of the exam boards, at the behest of government edicts, demand that students read a wide range of novels and short stories, both modern and pre-20<sup>th</sup> century. To the uninitiated this may seem like this has always been the case, but the

reality is that there is a new focus upon literature which is “classic”, with a particular emphasis on fiction which makes significant cognitive demands upon the reader.

Having taught English for twenty-five years in various comprehensives, I have come to realise how difficult it is to enthuse students about much “classic” literature, fiction which is often difficult to understand and seemingly remote from their lives. I know this from painful personal experience. For many years, as a Head of English in a large comprehensive, I insisted that students read Thomas Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd* (FFMC) (Hardy, 1874) as their set text for GCSE. Most schools opted for John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937) which was then on the syllabus, but I am an avid admirer of Thomas Hardy and believed that students would have a more nurturing experience if they studied Hardy’s bucolic narrative: they’d learn more sophisticated vocabulary, they’d engage with more complex themes and characters, and they’d also get better results because their essays would be more original.

All of these things turned out to be true, but it was a tough journey: very few students could read the text unaided and many of them found the story uninspiring unless taught in a particularly creative fashion. When I stepped down as Head of Department in order to do a PhD in Creative Writing at Goldsmiths, my successor immediately reverted back to studying *Of Mice and Men*; I continued to be a part-time teacher at the same school and so saw how different things were when Steinbeck’s text was studied. It was a much, much easier text to teach and most students clearly liked it much more than FFMC. And yet I couldn’t help feeling that the students were being robbed of an important educational experience. However, the specifications changed again and, a few years later, I was required to teach another nineteenth century text: R.L. Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Stevenson, 1886). This is much shorter than FFMC but teaching it well requires the same skill set as teaching FFMC. Above all, teachers need to make such literature engaging, relevant and accessible: the best way to do this is to get students to respond creatively to the narrative, characters, themes and language of these texts. I’ve found that a creative approach not only increases their knowledge of the texts themselves (thus enabling them to get better marks in critical essays) but it also fosters creative writing which is both unusual and appealing. This article aims, like the

presentation I am giving at the NAWE 2015 conference, to show both writers in education and teachers how to nurture effective creative writing using what might be termed “classic” literature whether it is contemporary or written some time ago. My article will explore how teachers can deploy creative approaches to enable students to enjoy and appreciate such literature.

## 2 WHAT IS “CLASSIC LITERATURE”?

The National Curriculum takes a view of literature which is very much in tune with the ideas outlined by the post-war critic F.R. Leavis in *The Great Tradition* (1948); Leavis proposes that there are certain literary works of outstanding quality which contain aspects that “transcend” their era: timeless themes, characters and storylines. Literary theorists since Leavis have questioned this stance with some arguing that it is impossible to detach a text from its social, cultural and historical contexts (Eagleton, 2008). In recent years, the growing popularity of literary prizes such as the Man Booker Prize and literary festivals has promoted the idea of contemporary “classic” fiction; writers such as Hilary Mantel, Margaret Atwood, Zadie Smith and Anne Enright have written wonderful stories which are widely regarded as being superior in terms of literary quality to much else that is published. However, having taught their work in school, I know that many teenagers can find it difficult to understand. It is not the purpose of this article to explore the “literary quality” debate in depth, but it is worth developing an understanding of what the term “classic” literature means to both students and teachers before reading it. To do this, teachers should encourage students to reflect upon texts – film, literature, drama, music, even computer games– which they consider to be “classics” so that they have working understanding of the concept: many students simply do not appreciate what we mean by a classic text unless they have reflected upon the issue. If students brainstorm texts that they believe are of outstanding quality, they can then explore the aspects of those texts which make them “classic” in their view. So for example, a number of my students have said that there are certain rap songs which they regard as “classics”. They have then examined what has made these texts “classic”: the originality of the music, the cleverness of the lyrics, the personality of the rapper, the fact that it is an older text. They were then able to understand that some critics perceive certain literary figures in a similar fashion. Thus, both

teacher and student can draw up a list of qualities which constitute a classic text which may include these elements:

- Originality
- Literary quality
- Influence
- Sophistication
- Age

### ***3 PREPARING THE GROUND: GETTING STUDENTS THINKING AND FEELING LIKE WRITERS***

A body of research has shown that students respond much more positively towards texts if they feel they are relevant to them (Smidt, 2014). If students feel they are writers, then they begin to read and respond to texts like writers (Dymoke, 2015; Owen & Munden, 2010). It's worth asking your students whether they consider themselves to be writers before you embark upon reading classic literature with them. If they do not, then I would advise taking the time to foster creative responses to accessible fiction before reading classic literature which can be off-putting if students are "dropped" straight into it. Above all, teachers should then encourage students to think like writers when reading the classics. At the back of their minds, they should have these questions: what techniques do these writers employ which I can use in my own writing? What settings, themes, characters and storylines could I use or adapt for my own writing? Crucially, teachers should ask their students what they believe it means to "think like a writer"; what do writers do in observing the world that makes them different from the rest of us? Inspiring students to keep a notebook or journal in which they jot down the smells, the sights, the tastes, textures, the people, the thoughts and the situations of their life would be a good start.

### ***4 GIVE STUDENTS THE "BIG PICTURE"***

A great deal of educational research shows that students need to be given the "big picture" of a topic or text before they embark upon looking at the fine detail of it (Marzano R. J, Pickering D. J, Pollock J. E., 2001). With classic literature, this is particularly important with the vast majority of secondary school students. They need to know the background and possibly some of the story before they look at it in detail. Some educators complain that teachers risk ruining the suspense and surprise of a text if



they reveal the story before students start reading it -- but I am not suggesting that this is always what needs to be done. However, with difficult texts, one does need to give most students a good sense of the context of the story and some clear pointers about it. Many students are simply totally unaware of the “world” that a text has come from and often fail to construct in their minds any notion of the world a text is attempting to conjure. This is what strong readers do without being aware of it; they look at the cover of a book, they consider from the title and blurb what a book might be about and form possible scenarios in their minds. Strong readers also think about the effect writing has in its time when it was published. Weaker readers, not feeling confident that they “know” anything, give up because they have no firm view about what a text might be about. This is what providing students with the big picture involves: it means giving students a “construct” of the story which they then prove or disprove as they read it.

There are some very creative ways of giving students a mental construct of a book without telling the story. Here are some possible tasks:

#### 4.1 PREDICT THE WHOLE STORY.

Students look at the cover of a book and write what they think might happen in the story in one or two sentences or a paragraph. Or you could hand out some photographs from a filmed version or pictures and ask them to put them in order, then predict the story.

#### 4.2 ADVANCE ORGANISER LEADING TO A POEM

Give students six important but understandable words that are really important in a story and ask them to guess why these words might be important. These six words are what Marzano et al term an “advance organiser” because they give students a picture of a topic “in advance” (p. 111). Students then write a poem which either uses these six words. For example, with *Far From The Maddening Crowd* these words might be: “love, jealousy, farming, marriage, betrayal, death”. I’ve had some great poems from this exercise!

#### 4.3 WORD ASSOCIATION GAMES

The teacher goes around the class asking students for the first word that comes into their heads when they hear the title of the book. Students then write a poem using at least 50% of the words mentioned.

#### 4.4 CLASS POEM.

Having looked at the blurb/cover/possibly beginning of a book, students write one line about the story and the teacher combines all the one lines into a poem about the story on the board, or they work in groups and produce a poem about the story using their one lines.

#### 5 WORKING WITH THE TEXT: CLOSE READING AND CREATIVE RESPONSE

Having encouraged students to have a strong mental construction of what might happen in a text, it may well be time to encourage students to look closely at selected passages of it. In my experience, this is often best done by selecting the most engaging section of a text in its opening chapters rather than starting at page one and reading the first chapter. It may be the case that the opening of a classic text is very effective already; for example, the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 1813) with its famous generalisation about marriage and comedic representation of the Bennett family is immediately appealing. However, other classics can take a while to “lift off”. For example, most of Thomas Hardy’s novels begin with long sections of description which can be off-putting. In *Far From The Madding Crowd*, the descriptions of Gabriel Oak can be skipped and teachers can focus upon the time when Oak spots Bathsheba Everdene in her carriage needing money to travel past the toll-gate; this is a funny and attractive opening. After reading this page, encourage a discussion about the passages which address the 5 Ws:

**What** is happening?

**Who** is being described?

**When** is the scene taking place?

**Where** is the scene set?

**Why** has the author written this scene? (Plus “why” for all the above questions as well)

Once teachers have established basic understanding of the passage, there are a number of creative responses they could encourage. Here are some:

#### 5.1 CREATIVE SUMMARIES AND NOTES

One of the most effective ways of improving student’s understanding of a topic is to get them to summarise it (Marzano et al, 2001: p. 29). There are creative ways of doing this. Marzano et al. recommend that as a first step, having been given a passage to summarise, students delete unnecessary information in order to find the essential ideas/events which

lie behind the text (p. 31); this may or may not be appropriate for your text, but it's worth considering. You could provide a "summary frame" (p. 41) for their creative summary which might be really simple like:

Beginning

Middle

End

Students then write and/or discuss what has happened in the beginning, middle and end of the supplied text. Students could then use this summary to write a "mini-saga" summary; the story in 50-100 words.

Ask students to write a poem which summarises what has happened never fails in my experience. They could write:

An acrostic

A haiku

A list poem

A rap

A rhyming poem

Free verse.

For more ideas about nurturing poetic responses, the Poetry Toolkit is worth consulting (The Poetry Trust, 2010).

## 5.2 DIARIES/JOURNALS/PERSONAL LETTERS

This is the typical creative response exercise which many school teachers routinely employ. Students are asked to imagine they are a character in the story and to write from that character's point of view. It works particularly well with characters that students empathise with already and can be effective at nurturing empathy for characters as well. Requiring students to use vocabulary from the original text enables them to understand better how writers use language. I found the diary approach was particularly productive with Thomas Hardy because all of his novels are written in the third person; I have found students empathised with Gabriel Oak, Tess (Hardy, 1891) and Michael Henchard (Hardy, 1886) when they wrote from these characters' perspectives.

## 5.3 PREDICTION

We have already seen how students benefit from predicting the whole story of a classic, but prediction exercises work well as you read through a text. Ask students to write a dramatized scene about what might happen next after finishing a dramatic section, making them focus upon a technique they might benefit from learning about. For example, ask them to write some dialogue between two characters who are likely to

appear in the next chapter, or a description of a place which is likely to appear.

#### 5.4 CREATIVE WRITING BASED ON A RELEVANT THEME OR TECHNIQUE

This is one of my favourite creative approaches because unlike the ones listed above, it involves students writing an entirely new text. For example, the opening of *Dr Jekyll* is, in part, about Jekyll's friends being worried that he is being blackmailed. I asked my students to write a story called "Blackmail" – that was it. They had to plan it out and invent the characters, dialogue and description. Many students loved the freedom of the exercise and yet found that the original had given them some useful ideas.

### 6 USING FILM STRATEGICALLY AND APPROPRIATELY

There are many films of the notable classic texts and they can be invaluable resources for creative responses. A word of caution though: think very carefully about when, why and how you are going to use a film resource. For example, just showing a film version of a classic can be counter-productive because students think this is what the text is, not realising that the storyline may have been changed and that it's a completely different storytelling form.

#### 6.1 THE FILM SCRIPT OR STORYBOARD LEADING TO A FILM

Ask students to either write a film script of a particularly important scene or devise a storyboard (Dummies, 2015) of it before they watch a filmed version of it. This exercise develops students' understanding of the different forms: writing and the visual/audio medium of film. They could then make a film if you have the resources. I've found in recent years setting the film-making exercise as homework has worked very well because they've shot the film on their phones. Students' film-making skills are much better than they were.

#### 6.2 DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Show a photograph or a clip of a short scene which is based in a setting which the text has described and then ask students to use this visual representation to write a description of it. Students can then compare their description with the writer's, and possibly re-write theirs accordingly.

### 6.3 EDITING DIALOGUE

Show a scene from a film and compare with the original text; ask students to consider the ways in which the dialogue for the film has been changed. Then get them to edit the same scene or another one.

### 6.4 OTHER LINKS FOR FILM IDEAS

The [readwritethink website](#) has many links and ideas for using film as well (Striegel, 2015).

## 7 CREATIVE READING TECHNIQUES

As has been mentioned before, encouraging students to think and feel like creative writers is particularly useful. Asking students to research how other writers have been influenced by these classic writers is productive. For example, the popular writer [David Nicholls has written on a number of occasions](#) about how he was so powerfully influenced by Thomas Hardy (Nicholls, 2015).

### 7.1 THE POWER OF COLLABORATIVE, CREATIVE READING

A great deal of research has shown that students can benefit significantly from reading in groups. To do this successfully, they need to:

- Read relevant passages
- Stop and discuss what these passages are about
- Clarify misunderstandings
- Predict what might happen next
- Evaluate how they are reading

This technique is known as Reciprocal Teaching (Petty, 2014, p. 154). I have made a video about this technique which explains it in depth (Gilbert, 2015a) but the basics of it are very simple: it requires students to read to each other and ask questions about what is happening in the text and what might happen next. An even more creative version of this technique is to get students to ask each other the key question already mentioned:

What can I learn from this text in order to improve my own writing?

## 8 VISUALISING THE TEXT

I have found students really appreciate visualising classic literature and find that it significantly helps them with their understanding as well as being a creative way of engaging with the text. There are a number of ways to represent a text visually. These include showing a chronological

Francis Gilbert

process; a cycle; a hierarchy; a relationship; a matrix; a pyramid. They are illustrated here:



Figure 1 Chronological process

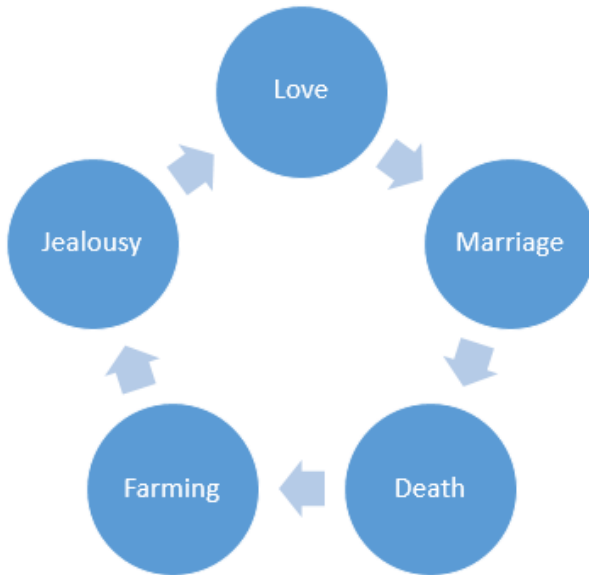


Figure 2 A cycle illustrating key themes in *Far from The Madding Crowd*

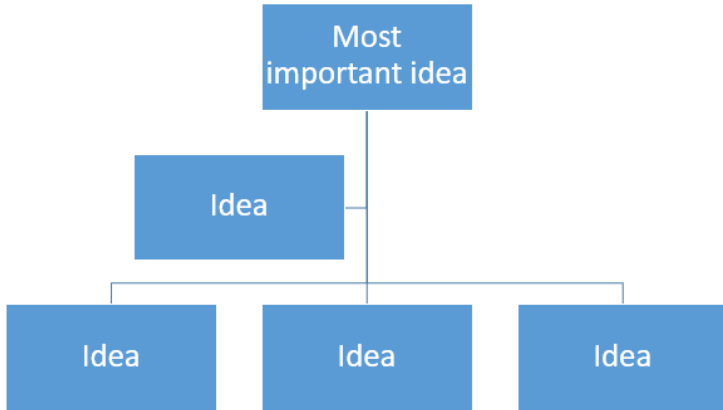


Figure 3 A Hierarchy of ideas

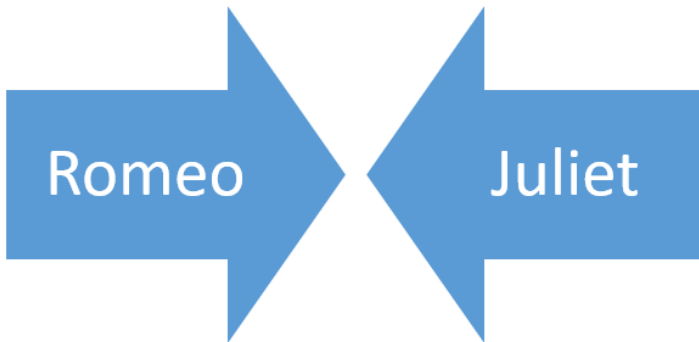


Figure 4 A relationship: good for showing who likes/dislikes who.

Francis Gilbert

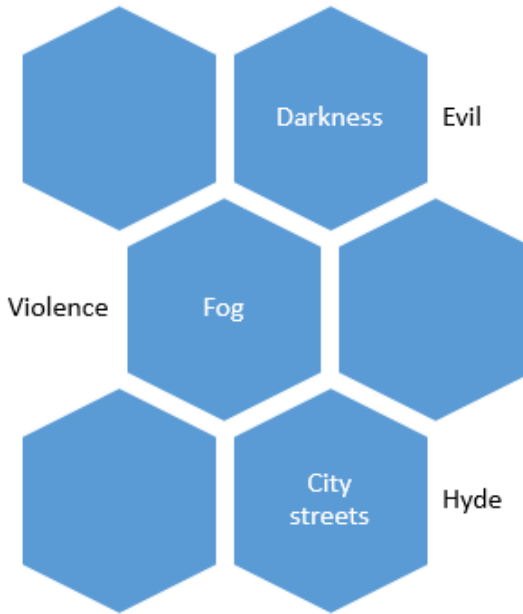


Figure 5 A Matrix is good at showing patterns in a text, here some key ideas connected with Mr Hyde

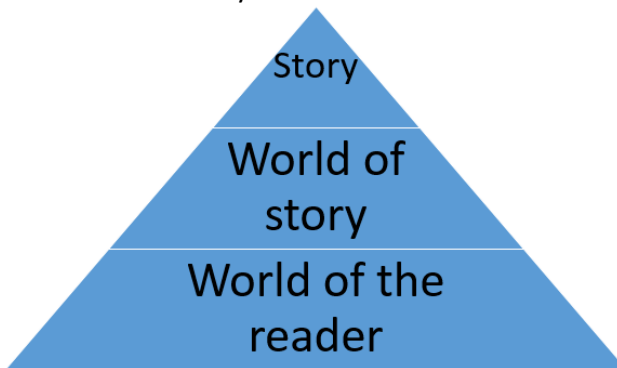


Figure 6 A pyramid illustrating the worlds of a story; this diagram shows how stories are built upon the worlds of a text.

You will need to consider what you want students to learn when guiding them towards a particular visual representation. It does take some



thought. For more, look at Marzano et al's chapter on Non-linguistic representations (Marzano R. J, Pickering D. J, Pollock J. E., 2001, p. 72).

### **9 USING ROLE-PLAY**

Encouraging dramatic responses amongst students can be particularly fruitful. This involves asking students to respond to a text with a relevant role-play. There are a number of approaches which could involve:

**Hot seating:** a student takes on the role of a character and has to answer questions in role about what they are thinking and feeling regarding what is happening to them

**Group improvisations:** put students into groups and ask them to devise an improvised drama based on a scene/story they have read, giving students a character each to play. Students can then write up their improvisation as a script either individually or as a group.

**Finger puppets:** students devise a finger puppet play based on what they have read (Blake, 2006).

**The pitch:** students pretend to be film-makers and pitch the story as a potential film to a relevant TV/movie company.

**Dramatic group readings:** a section of the text is acted out with the relevant characters. A narrator is selected to read the descriptions while the other people in the group read the characters.

### **10 AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND CLASSIC LITERATURE**

Suzanne Nalbantian in her book *Aesthetic Autobiography* (Nalbantian, 1997) shows how writers such as Proust, Joyce, Woolf and Anais Nin all took events from their lives and "aestheticized" them: "amalgamated" characters, combined events together, "telescoped" time, relocated "real" settings. Her book is instructive because it displays how writers transform their lives in their fiction. She also shows how these writers were very powerfully influenced by what they read, much of which is now considered "classic" literature. Inspired by her book, I encouraged my students to write their own "aesthetic autobiographies" (Gilbert, 2015b): to take events from their own lives and re-shape them into fiction and poetry. It worked particularly well when I used "classic literature" as a springboard. For example, I would read a passage from *Jane Eyre* (Brontë, 1847) where the young Jane is being bullied and ask students to write their own account of being bullied, fictionalising details for dramatic effect and using any writing techniques they had acquired from reading *Jane Eyre*.

The whole realm of “aesthetics” is useful to consider when reading classic literature because much of demands students look beyond the literary sphere. Students can be inspired by:

Seeing painting and art related to the work

Hearing music which influenced the writer or which was inspired by the work/writer

Seeing drama, dance or any other art form which is connected to the work.

To respond creatively to a text, students have to have their minds opened to new ways of thinking, feeling and creating. This can be done by:

Encouraging students to draw/paint pictures; make sculpture

Inspiring some students to respond musically

Asking some students to devise their own dance pieces.

Students can then return to their creative writing after they've experienced another art form and reflect whether working in another art form has inspired them to write a new story, poem or script.

### *CONCLUSIONS*

Having used these creative approaches with my students when teaching classic literature for a number of years, I am convinced they are effective for a number of reasons. First of all, they allow students to “take ownership” of these older texts and make them feel like they have a “stake” in them; by comparing their own creative responses with the classics, students see where another writer has executed a scene differently and/or similarly. Secondly, students begin to connect different imaginative worlds: the worlds they create in their own writing and the worlds that the classic writer creates. The philosopher Gilles Deleuze argued that this is the primary “affect” of fiction: it creates virtual worlds that are as “real” as the “actual” world. What Deleuze calls “intensities” – essentially “exciting events” – happen when writers explore the worlds that another author has conjured in their minds (Colebrook, 2002, p. 120). In my experience, students begin to feel these intensities when they recognise the links between their writing and a classic writer’s work; they perceive that their stories have powerful connections with the classic text they are studying. They make comments such as: “I wrote that description in the same way Thomas Hardy does!”. The author of the classic text becomes alive to them because they are entering into a

dialogue with the text, using it as a way to create worlds which excite them.

### **LEARNING ACTIVITY**

Devise a series of lessons which teach a pre and post-1900 text in a creative fashion. Do some research online, looking at some of the resources the exam boards such as AQA, OCR, WJEC, Edexcel etc. offer. Critique their approaches, and arrive at your own approach.

### **TOP TIPS**

#### **ZOOMING OUT AND IN**

As has been mentioned before, encourage students to zoom out and into texts by learning how to gain the big picture of a text through storytelling, watching films, studying summaries etc, and then teach them how to read a text in detail by zooming into the passages of real interest. Shape your lesson planning around this.

#### **MAKE CONNECTIONS**

Get the students to make connections with the texts they are reading and their own lives by doing things like modernising them, and then doing some comparisons/contrasts between what they have written and the original texts.

#### **FURTHER RESEARCH**

##### **Books/articles**

Dymoke, S. (2009). *Teaching English texts 11-18*. London: Continuum.

##### **Links**

AQA's booklet on teaching pre-1900 prose at Key Stage 3 is possibly not that inspiring, but very useful:

**<http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/AQA-8702-19C-KS3.PDF>**

*Teachit* have a host of resources behind a paywall. They are generally worth paying for: see if your department can join, if they haven't already.

The English and Media Centre have produced many resources for pre-1900 prose:

**<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/>**

### **REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING**

What have you learnt about pre-1900 prose?

## PRE-AND POST-1900 POETRY

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn about how to approach pre-and post-1900 poetry in a creative fashion, with a focus upon pre-1900 poetry because this is an area that many English teachers find difficult.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon pre- and post-1900 poetry: watch yourself reading and writing about poetry by people like William Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Tennyson etc, and more modern poets such as Simon Armitage, Sylvia Plath and Carol Ann Duffy.

### INTRODUCTION

CREATIVE TEACHER: OK, we are going to look at creative ways of teaching poetry at Key Stage 3.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Poetry really scares me! I just don't feel I know what it is or how to analyse it.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: As Wordsworth said, '**we murder to dissect**' and I think personally that far too much analysis of poetry goes on in schools and not enough appreciation.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Yes, but we are preparing our students for the GCSE exam. You have to start at Year 7 otherwise they don't have a clue.

CREATIVE TEACHER: I would argue that Year 7 should be a place for doing lots of fun stuff with poetry: getting students writing **limericks, haikus, acrostics, rapping**, playing with words, understanding that poetry is fun.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, if I could convey that message then maybe half the battle would be won!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: OK, let's live a little and I will ask every one of us to write either a limerick, haiku, a rap or acrostic about what we know and feel about the teaching of poetry.

TEST OBSESSED: Off we go!

*Everyone does this in their Learning Journals and reports back.*

BEGINNER TEACHER: What have we learn about poetry from this exercise? What have we learnt about the teaching of poetry?

## FROM CREATIVE TO CRITICAL: WRITING POETRY AND WRITING ABOUT POETRY

CREATIVE TEACHER: OK, we're going to look at some resources I devised for my students which were aimed at helping them think positively about poetry and positively about writing critically about poetry. This unit is aimed at Year 9; the poems are relatively difficult and are pre-1900.

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Oh wonderful! Exactly the kind of thing that students get in their GCSE exam!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: Will you shut up about exams! The students need to understand that they are studying great poetry, which is wonderful to study in itself!

BEGINNER TEACHER: Can you two stop arguing? I think you're both wrong. I don't think students should be told constantly that they are going to do something because it's in an exam, nor do I think they should be constantly informed that it's 'great poetry'. Both are off-putting; we need to lay out some clear reasons for studying the poetry.

CREATIVE TEACHER: Well, here are my learning goals:

### **Learning goals or intentions**

You are going to develop your skills at writing poetry and writing about poetry; you will learn that once you have become a poet, you will find it much easier to respond to unseen poetry in a critical and original way.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: OK, fair enough, we need to show at the beginning of lessons what students are going to learn.

TEST: What about the key terms that they are going to learn? I would suggest these:

### **KEY TERMINOLOGY**

- Creative response: this is a response which makes you use your imagination and your feelings; it usually requires you to write either a story, poem or play.
- Critical response: this is a response which make you use your intellect to analyse how and why a poem works.
- Lexis: the words in a text

- Imagery: the poetic devices in a poem; similes, metaphors, personification, onomatopoeia, alliteration, the visual images etc.
- Structural devices: the way a poem is “structured” or laid out, its use of verses or stanzas (NOT PARAGRAPHS!), its use of storylines, the way a poem is structured around a theme or idea, its use of rhyme and rhythm, the length of its lines and verses.
- Themes: the main ideas in a text.
- The EFFECTS of a text or language: this is what the words/poem makes you THINK, FEEL and SEE in your mind.
- Connectives: “glue” words and phrases that link points and sentences. There are connectives which making comparisons and links: similarly, in comparison, as a result, as a consequence etc. And connectives which illustrate contrasts: whereas, differently, in contradiction to, conversely etc.

BEGINNER TEACHER: Thanks TEST, these are very useful. I think it’s good for students to get an idea of what they are going to learn from the get-go. However, to jazz things up a bit, I might get students to find an object which they associate with each term. So a piece of fruit might be analogous to a “creative response” because it’s something colourful, juicy, growing off the tree of the poem.

CREATIVE TEACHER: And maybe a magnifying glass might be suggest the critical response as you are putting the poem under the microscope?

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Or a key, because you are trying to turn the lock to the poem?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: I don’t think a key is right because I think it suggests there is a ‘right’ answer. I would prefer a knife; you are cutting through the fruit of the poem and looking at it in depth.

CREATIVE TEACHER: This is a great discussion because we are thinking meta-cognitively here about our learning processes. Robert Marzano says that this sort of exercise where we explore similarities and differences is the most effective teaching technique there is, although this is contested. Thanks Beginner Teacher for suggesting the exercise!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Can we all find objects which might suggest the key terms, and discuss how accurate our analogies are?

**TEACHERS' DISCUSSION**

CREATIVE TEACHER: OK, I laid out for my students exactly what they would be doing. I would use Reciprocal Teaching to get them to read these passages in groups.

BEGINNER TEACHER: OK, let's do that now!

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Go team, go! I want to be Lead Motivator!

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: And I'm the Lead Assessor, assessing you TEST as annoying!

BEGINNER TEACHER: Can we have a 'no blame' atmosphere here please?

CREATIVE TEACHER: Yes, let's read through the whole sheet and have some reflections at the end about what we think of it?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: There's a lot to read here. We will resume our teacher discussion at the very end with the very last section 'Teacher's Thoughts'.

**OVERALL PLAN FOR STUDENTS**

In a short while, you are going to read a poem you have never seen before (called an 'unseen poem') which explores a few different ideas, feelings and situations. Before you read the unseen poem though, you will do some exercises that will help you write your own poem. This poem (the one you will write) will use some of the themes in the unseen poem. Then you will read the unseen poem. After that, you will compare your poem with the unseen poem.

Why are you doing things this way, you may ask? Well, you are going to learn that when you write poetry of your own, you often read other people's poetry in a much more engaged way and, as a result, write more interesting critical essays on unseen poetry. This is what you need to do in your GCSE exams: write critical essays comparing unseen poems.

***TASK 1: WRITING A WORD ASSOCIATION POEM***

Using either a leader in a group (there should be about six in a group) or the teacher of the whole class, I want you to say the first word, words or images that comes into your head when you see and hear the word:

**ANGER**

Go around the class and listen to the first words that come into people's heads. Once you've gone around the class and listened to what people say, take a minute or so to jot down at least 5-10 words that really struck you as being significant or interesting words and images. Use "Anger" as your title. So, for example, you may write down words or phrases like: red, fury, shouting, red face, violence, murder, losing control. If the game has triggered any new thoughts/images, write those down as well.

## Francis Gilbert

We're going to have another go. Do the same word association game around your class/group for this idea:

Hiding your feelings

### ***TASK 2: WRITING YOUR OWN POEM***

Now, using your notes from the word association game, have a go at writing a poem which explores these ideas: anger and hiding your feelings. You will not be judged on the quality of the poem but you do need to try as hard as you can to write a poem you are happy with. The poem does NOT have to rhyme and it doesn't need to be a long poem. You could, for example, write an acrostic, e.g. write lines that begin with these letters:

A

N

G

E

R

Or write a haiku, (5,7,5 syllables in each line).

Or write a list poem, which simply lists all the ideas and their accompanying images, e.g.:

Anger is a red face

Anger is a gritting your teeth

Anger is when the teacher shouts at me

Anger is watching my football team lose

I'm sure you can do better than that though!

Do think about the structure of your poem and why you have structured it in that way; do think about the images you use and why you have used them.

Once you have written your poem, show it to someone in your group and get them write a response which analyses the EFFECT of the language upon them. Remember all language creates EFFECTS upon a reader: it makes the reader think, feel and "see" things in their mind. What does your poem make your partner think, feel and see in their mind's eye? Get them to write a response, taking your poem as seriously as a poem you might find in an exam.

Then congratulate yourselves! You've written a poem. Someone has written some literary criticism on it. You've made it! You're a poet!



**TASK 3: READING AND RESPONDING TO AN UNSEEN POEM**

Now read the following poem, trying to work out what you think it is about.

***THE POISON TREE BY WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827) (FROM CONFLICT SECTION OF OCR ANTHOLOGY)***

I was angry with my friend;  
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.  
I was angry with my foe:  
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I waterd it in fears,  
Night & morning with my tears:  
And I sunned it with smiles,  
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night.  
Till it bore an apple bright.  
And my foe beheld it shine,  
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,  
When the night had veild the pole;  
In the morning glad I see;  
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

You can watch my YouTube video which contained a controversial reading/singing of the poem here:  
**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VtHjz6dREY>**

Once you have read the poem a few times, fill in the following chart which helps you compare your poem (on a similar theme) to Blake's, thinking in particular about the EFFECT of the poetic devices used. I have written some comments based on the short "anger poem" I wrote above to give you some clues.

## Francis Gilbert

	<b>My poem</b>	<b>Unseen poem</b>
Language	I employed modern lexis to write my poem, repeating the abstract noun “anger” for effect, which possibly gave my poem the quality of a magic spell. My lexis was simple, based on things that really happen in my real life.	The vocabulary used by Blake is obviously more old-fashioned; he uses the word “wrath” to mean anger, but repeats this word and “angry” in a similar way to my poem. The repetition really makes you think about the whole concept of anger in the same way my poem did.
Imagery	My imagery was visual when I described anger as being the “gritting of teeth”, “a teacher shouting at me”, and “watching my team lose”. Furthermore, my whole poem very metaphorical because I was comparing directly “anger” to these things.	Blake uses the imagery of the “poison tree” to describe his anger at his enemy. The fruit that the tree produces looks very nice, but is in fact poisonous and appears to kill off the enemy who steals the fruit, who is deceived into thinking it is good to eat. The imagery here is much more complicated than the imagery I used because the poet develops the image of the poison tree over several verses.
Themes	My poem is about the different situations that I encounter anger; when I feel powerless but aggressive.	Blake’s poem is about the difference between telling someone about your anger and not telling them about your anger. It’s really about hiding your feelings from someone and the consequences of that, which can lead to something terrible.
Structural devices	My poem is structured around the repetition of “Anger is..” and it has clear line endings, and then moves onto a new expression about anger.	Blake’s poem is structured in four verses and has the structure of a short story: we learn about how the poet stops being angry with his friend because he tells him about it, but with his enemy, his anger grows into a poisoned tree and fruit which leads to his enemy’s death. It has the quality of a fable.

**TASK 3: WRITING A COMPARATIVE ESSAY**

You are now going to write a comparative essay using the chart to structure it like a “proper” essay. The more practice you get at comparing texts, the better you will get at it. There are two main ways of structuring a comparative essay and I suggest you have a go at trying both methods at some point on your GCSE course. The first method is this:

EXPLAIN POEM 1

EXPLAIN POEM 2 while comparing it with POEM 1.

CONCLUSION: Sum up your thoughts.

**IN MORE DEPTH**

EXPLAIN POEM 1: In this part of the essay, you should explain in as much detail as you can what you think your poem is about; what you were trying to do with your poem, its overall purposes; why you used the language you did; the effects you were hoping to achieve with the imagery you used; the way it explored the themes of anger and “hiding your feelings”; and why you structured your poem in the way you did. Please do NOT say: “I don’t know what I was trying to do or why I structured it in the way I did!” If this is true (it may well be), discuss instead the EFFECTS you achieved; what did your use of language, your imagery, your structural devices make you (and other people) think and feel after re-reading it carefully? If necessary, quote people in your class by getting them to tell you what they thought, felt and saw when they read your poem. I know you can’t do this in your exam, but what we are doing here is getting you into the “mode” of writing about poetry. Once you get the “knack” of writing well about language, you’ll find it much, much easier to write about unseen poetry. A great deal of research shows that if people write about their own poetry first of all, they better understand how to write about other people’s poetry.

EXPLAIN 2 BY REFERRING BACK TO POEM 1: In this section you now start comparing POEM 2, in this case ‘The Poison Tree’ with your own poem, discussing all the things in the chart: its use of language, its imagery, themes and structural devices. Use connectives to “glue” your essay together, e.g.

“Similarly, William Blake repeats words associated with anger at the beginning of ‘The Poison Tree’ but, in contrast to my poem, he uses more old fashioned or archaic lexis, repeating the word ‘wrath’ to talk about anger. This makes the poem feel like it could come from the Bible or an older text. This is totally different from my poem, which is really expressive of my age and time; I think only a teenager living in the 21st century could have written my poem. Blake’s poem uses an extended metaphor to describe the narrator’s anger: the poisoned tree is a metaphor for the narrator’s hidden anger against his enemy. I didn’t use any extended metaphors in my poem but instead used a series of short metaphors to describe my anger. Blake’s poem is quite different from mine but it does share the idea with mine that anger can be very destructive; in my poem we see a teacher shouting at me, me gritting my teeth, my football team losing which are all nasty, destructive images. In Blake’s poem the enemy appears to die after eating the fruit from the Poison Tree...”

**CONCLUSION:** Sum up the main points of your essay in a few sentences. E.g.

“In conclusion, I have shown that there are significant similarities between my poem and Blake’s; we both explore the key theme of anger by using visual metaphors to describe anger. I used the visual imagery of “gritting teeth”, “teachers shouting” while Blake used the visual imagery of the “Poison Tree” to describe how anger can grow poisonous if people do not express their feelings of anger to on another.”

### **MINDFUL REFLECTION**

What do you think of the above examples? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What ideas and approaches are in the essay that you might use yourself? What approaches will you not use? More generally, what are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, i.e. explaining Poem 1 and then comparing Poem 2 with Poem 1? Have a discussion about it.

The other way of structuring a comparative essay is to go straight into comparing the poems. Compare immediately topics such as these:

- What the poems are about
- The language and imagery of the poems
- The themes of the poems
- The structural devices
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?

### **TASK 4: READING AN UNSEEN POEM AND WRITING YOUR OWN**

*Now read the following poem, and write your own poem based on a similar theme or idea, deploying some of the imagery, themes structural devices etc. used in the poem. In order to write your poem, you will need to work out what the poem means; it’s quite difficult so take your time annotating it and looking up difficult vocabulary.*

### **ENVY BY MARY LAMB (1764-1847) (FROM CONFLICT SECTION OF OCR ANTHOLOGY)**

This rose-tree is not made to bear  
The violet blue, nor lily fair,  
Nor the sweet mignonet:  
And if this tree were discontent,  
Or wished to change its natural bent,  
It all in vain would fret.  
And should it fret, you would suppose  
It ne’er had seen its own red rose,  
Nor after gentle shower

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Had ever smelled its rose's scent,  
Or it could ne'er be discontent  
With its own pretty flower.

Like such a blind and senseless tree  
As I've imagined this to be,  
All envious persons are:  
With care and culture all may find  
Some pretty flower in their own mind,  
Some talent that is rare.

Although the language and syntax (word order) are complex, the idea or theme of the poem is quite simple; basically the poem is about how envious people do not love themselves; they see no worth in themselves and so are envious of the good things they think other people have. Have a go at writing a poem about this topic, which relates to your life. Write a poem, for example, about the things that make people envious: how they think some people are better looking than them; how they are envious that people have nicer things like expensive mobile phones etc; how they are envious that people are better at sports than them etc. Spider-diagram or note down your ideas, do a word association game if you like, then write a poem.

Then have a go at comparing your poem with Mary Lamb's, looking at all the areas we examined with the Blake poem. Fill in a chart similar to the one given with the Blake poem. Then write a comparative essay, comparing your poem with Mary Lamb's.

### ***TASK 5: COMPARING TWO UNSEEN POEMS***

Now have a go at comparing the following unseen poems but this time, after reading them, *imagine* what sort of poems you might have written on these topics; what language you might have used, what imagery, what structural devices etc. This approach will make your essay genuinely original and might help you understand the poems better. If you are still finding comparing poems difficult, do ask your teacher to go over this area with you; Teachit has some excellent resources specifically on comparing poems: see Trevor Millum's 23427 Teachit resource. I would also suggest looking up difficult words too because the vocabulary is tricky, but your teacher will ultimately decide upon this. I have written a possible response after the poems to give you some clues.

#### **BRIGHT STAR BY JOHN KEATS (1795–1821) FROM LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS SECTION OF OCR ANTHOLOGY**

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—  
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night  
And watching, with eternal lids apart,  
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,  
The moving waters at their priestlike task

Francis Gilbert

Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,  
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask  
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—  
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,  
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,  
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,  
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,  
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,  
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

**NOW BY ROBERT BROWNING (1812–1889) FROM LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS SECTION OF OCR ANTHOLOGY**

Out of your whole life give but one moment!  
All of your life that has gone before,  
All to come after it, – so you ignore,  
So you make perfect the present, – condense,  
In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,  
Thought and feeling and soul and sense –  
Merged in a moment which gives me at last  
You around me for once, you beneath me, above me –  
Me – sure that despite of time future, time past, –  
This tick of our life-time's one moment you love me!  
How long such suspension may linger? Ah, Sweet –  
The moment eternal – just that and no more –  
When ecstasy's utmost we clutch at the core  
While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips meet!

***SOME THOUGHTS ON ANALYSING AND COMPARING DIFFICULT POEMS.***

While the lexis, imagery and syntax of the poems are complex, the topic is relatively simple: they are both poems spoken by lovers who are totally and utterly in love with their partner. Surprisingly for poem written before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they are very passionate and sensual poems. The language, the imagery, the rhythm, the line endings all serve one purpose to express the lovers' passion for their loved ones.

**A POSSIBLE RESPONSE:**

*If I was writing a poem about someone I love, I might well use passionate imagery in the same that Browning and Keats have done. Keats wishes that he was as “stedfast” as a star when lying on his lover’s “breast”; the word “stedfast” is old fashioned now, meaning “faithful” or “loyal”. Personally, I would use a word like “loyal” to convey this concept; it is much more accessible to a modern reader. Keats wants to convey the idea that he wants to shine like a bright star forever over his lover’s beautiful body. The imagery is passionate here because we have a powerful sense that Keats wishes to stay forever in an embrace with his lover, listening to her “tender-taken breath” or else die if he can’t have*

## The Mindful English Teacher

*that. This is an extreme form of love. I'm not sure I would write such a passionate poem, having not experienced feelings like this!*

*Browning meanwhile uses very passionate imagery as well. In the last line of the poem, he describes how he and his lover feel their "cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips meet". This is very vivid visual imagery, similar to Keats' image of the "tender-taken breath". In both poems we have a deep sense of the physical contact of the lovers: in Browning's poem, they are kissing, while in Keats' poem you can imagine him with his cheek pressed against his lover's breast. Personally, I would not use not such sexual imagery if I wrote a love poem. Furthermore, the idea of lovers' cheeks "burning" has become a bit of cliché now.*

What do you think of this response? Discuss its strengths and weaknesses, then have a go at your own.

### CONCLUSION

Remember, you do not have to always discuss what sort of poem you might have written with the unseen poetry part of the GCSE – certainly don't write at length about the poem you would have written in the exam – but do "drop in" the odd comment *if you want to*; this will definitely spice up your essays and may give you ideas about what to write. Overall, this unit of work should have given a chance to be a poet and improved your critical and creative skills as well.

Good luck!

### TEACHERS' THOUGHTS

CREATIVE TEACHER: So that's my worksheet for students. What do you think?

BEGINNER TEACHER: It's very detailed...

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: Maybe a tiny bit boring for you CREATIVE TEACHER?

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: OK TEST, if you are so marvellous how would you make it better? What things would you do to "jazz it" up?

BEGINNER TEACHER: Yes, let's think about that, and jot down our notes in our Learning Journals, but also think about its strengths; it is very structured and helpful. I like the way CREATIVE TEACHER has modelled how to write about the poems.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER: And I think CREATIVE TEACHER meets the Learning Goals; if students did the tasks they would certainly develop their creative and critical skills. I actually didn't find it boring at all...

TEST OBSESSED TEACHER: That's because you love pre-1900 poetry! I liked CREATIVE's video of The Poison Tree, but I think he's a terrible singer and musician, but I can see how sharing that might trigger some

interesting responses. So I don't mean to hurt your feelings Creative Teacher!

CREATIVE TEACHER: No offence taken. The YouTube poems were very much put there for people to criticise; they are a DIY response to William Blake...OK, let's now research and find some more interesting modern poems and have a go at devising a similar worksheet but using more accessible poems?

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

Have a go at devising your own poetry worksheets using more interesting poems. Remember if they are written after 1914, they will most likely be in copyright so consider the issues involved here...

### TOP TIPS

#### FEEL THE RHYTHM

Encourage students to see poetry as poetry by getting them to feel and understand the rhyme, the rhythm, the texture of the words. Get them to perform it and consider it as art, not as words to be decoded.

#### MODEL AND SCAFFOLD

With things like writing essays about poetry, model and scaffold for the students how it might be done, but also encourage personal responses.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Dymoke, S. (2003). *Drafting and assessing poetry: A guide for teachers*. London: P.C.P.

Naylor, A., & Wood, A. (2012). *Teaching poetry: Reading and responding to poetry in the secondary classroom*. London: Routledge.

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

<https://ypn.poetrysociety.org.uk/>

AQA have a number of resources:

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/as-and-a-level/english-literature-a-7711-7712/teaching-resources>

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about the teaching of poetry?



## YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider how you might teach skimming and scanning skills using Young Adult literature as source material.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon Young Adult Literature: observe yourself reading YA literature by people like J.K Rowling, Benjamin Zephaniah, Malorie Blackman. What do you feel and think?

### LEARNING PUZZLE

You are going to read a section from my book *The Time Devil* (2017), which aims to be Young Adult (YA) Literature. You are going to learn about learning more about skimming and scanning, and also reflect upon what constitutes effective Young Adult literature. Read this section from *The Time Devil* and think about whether it appeals to its target audience or not. Be critical if you want.

This is Scene 3: six Deptford Green students have been tricked into using a dodgy app on their phones, the TimeBook app, and as a consequence have all been kidnapped by a Time Devil, a big black bird, who has flung them into different time zones, all derived from various exhibits in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. Charlie finds himself on Prince Frederick's Barge. Read what I have written for the students in the book and consider what you have learnt. I first of all set some learning intentions to get the students thinking about the skimming and scanning skills they will learn. Remember the target audience is Key Stage 3 students. Everything in Times Roman is aimed at these students.

**LEARNING INTENTIONS: SKIMMING AND SCANNING**

<b>Learning intentions</b>	<b>Learning Charm</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>What?</b>
I intend to learn more about how to skim and scan texts so that I can guess in an informed way about what a text might be about, and how its structure and form shape its meaning and content. (Skimming)		By reading the lesson carefully, by following the instructions, by discussing with people in my group.	Discussion; notes; answering the set tasks.
I intend to learn more about how to guess in an informed way about what a text might be about, and how its structure and form shape its meaning and content. (Skimming)		Through doing the different activities set, and reviewing what I have learnt.	Discussion; note-taking; answering the set tasks.
I intend to learn more about finding information quickly by scanning through texts to look for what I need to know.		Through doing the different activities set, and reviewing what I have learnt.	Discussion; note-taking; answering set tasks.
I intend to learn about how to skim and scan in a critical way: questioning whether I am getting the information I need and questioning whether the information I am getting is useful.		Through doing the different activities set, and reviewing what I have learnt.	Discussion; note-taking; answering set tasks.

Please read through your learning intentions from last lesson and see if there is anything else you need to learn more about. Have a discussion about what you feel you need to improve with your reading and how you might improve your reading this lesson, e.g. by re-reading, by looking up difficult words, by having more of a positive attitude, to read with more expression, to think more deeply

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

about what you are reading, to challenge yourself by reading more challenging material in your own time and bring that reading to the lesson to read when you finish the work or at the starts of lessons etc.

*Are there any other things you intend to learn about? Please discuss and/or note them down...*

### **DEFINITIONS**

Skim-reading is when you flick over a text quickly, trying to work out what it is about quickly.

Scanning is when you read a text with a particular purpose in mind, i.e. you want to find a particular piece of information.

### **WHEN AND WHY?**

When might you want to skim and scan texts?

Why is it such a useful skill?

Which texts would you want to skim and scan, and when/why:

- The webpages of a news website for the latest news
- A revision guide.
- A series of instructions about how to use some machinery/technology.
- Recipes for dishes you want to cook.
- A long novel.
- A play.
- A collection of poems in a poetry book.
- Social media site about your friends' activities/views.
- Twitter stream.

Have a Reciprocal Teaching discussion in your group about these points before you read on, with the Teacher making sure that everyone has clear learning intentions for this lesson, and that everyone knows what we mean by skimming and scanning.

Skimming and scanning are vital skills in the modern world. We are bombarded with information all the time: we need to be able to process information quickly, summing it up in a reasonable way in our minds without having to read it in depth.

### **KEY POINTS**

Use titles of poems, chapters, books to guide you as to what they are about.

Use chapter headings as the main topics for your notes.

Use the index of a book to find quickly what information you want.

Use CNTRL + F on the computer to find key words.

### **STRATEGIES**

#### **USING YOUR FINGERS, EYES AND BODY**

All of the following strategies about encouraging you to read with your whole body. With books, it is very useful to use your fingers and hands to flick through

pages, and run your fingers along lines of text; this helps you focus. There are hundreds of millions of neurons (cells that connect to the brain) in the hand which may mean that using your hands during your reading may help you process the information better. Whatever the scientific evidence, there is no doubt that using your fingers during reading helps you keep focus; this is common sense. So these exercises are simple ones that can be easily done which are also fun. Have a go at them, and see if they work for you. If they don't, do not worry, try and find your own methods for skimming and scanning. If they do, try and adapt them so that you use them when you next skim and scan texts.

***WARM-UPS: READING THE WORLD WITH YOUR SENSES***

- Skim your eyes all around the room you are in and try to remember as many objects as possible. Now, without looking, write down a list of all you saw in a minute or so.
- Get some small objects (at least 8-10) in your group and shut your eyes and say to the group what you can remember.
- With your eyes shut, get someone to mix up the objects or add new ones, skim your hands over the objects, touching them, then say what they are.
- With your eyes shut, scan the objects to find the one which is your favourite objects. Then least favourite. Then put the objects in rank order of what you like/dislike. Open your eyes.
- Do the above task with your eyes open if it is too difficult with your eyes shut.
- Shut your eyes, and skim the room with your ears, and note down as many sounds as you can hear in 30 seconds.
- Shut your eyes, and scan the room with your ears, finding your favourite and least favourite sound.
- Shut your eyes, and with a partner who has their eyes open, get them to give you 4-5 very small, quick tastes of food: skim the food. Guess what they are.
- Do the same as above and judge what is your favourite and least favourite food.
- Shut your eyes if you like, and skim the room you are in for all the different smells in it. Write them down or tell them to your group.
- Shut your eyes if you like, scan the room for your favourite or least favourite smells.

**REVIEW**

What did you learn from doing this exercise? What did you learn about skimming and scanning with the senses? Does it make a difference which order

you do things? Do you think it is best to skim first then scan? What did you learn about reading from doing these exercises?

### **TEXT BASED EXERCISES FOR SKIMMING AND SCANNING**

#### ***SKIM WORD FOOTBALL***

Passing: with your finger randomly pick a word on a page and “pass” to your partner, who picks a word related to the other word in some way, and says the word, nothing more. The pass happens because both players have said the words and agree silently that the words are related. They do not have to say why the words are related. Players should “pass” words in a book for a bit before trying to score a goal so that they get to know the text quickly.

The goal happens when a person the connection between the words, e.g. Word 1: scream, Word 2: horror P2 says both words suggest something frightening is going on in the text. You score a goal for each point you make.

You win a match by scoring 5 goals and then summarizing what you think the text is about using some of the words that have been skimmed.

#### ***SCAN WORD FOOTBALL***

The same as “skim” football except the Teacher says what words score the goal, e.g. horror words, funny words.

#### ***SKIMMING AND SCANNING SHOOT ‘EM UP***

- Take aim at a word and shoot it dead by showing that you know what it means.
- 1 point for a simple word or phrase
- 2 point for a more complicated word or phrase
- 3 points for a very complicated word or phrase

#### ***SKIMMING AND SCANNING TENNIS***

The same as skimming and scanning football except that you serve by flipping over to a new page; a rally is won by scoring a goal (see previous slide) and the scoring is tennis scoring, e.g. 15 Love etc.

Why? The structure of the tennis game makes the game “finite”.

#### ***PARACHUTING INTO ENEMY TERRITORY***

Your mission is to parachute straight into the middle of enemy territory and get to know the “lie of the land” there by becoming like a local: reading the text for a while so that it is like you have read the whole book. Take a difficult book get your plane to sail over the pages as you flick through them and then choose your landing spot, and then parachute in, staying a while in enemy territory by reading it carefully and acting as though you know what is going on and you can speak the language.

### ***SAS OPERATION: TAKE THE MOST IMPORTANT WORDS HOSTAGE***

A variation on parachuting, except that when you parachute in, you aim to take the most important phrases hostages as quickly as possible, storming pages like the SAS might break into an enemy stronghold, with your copter waiting to lift out the words very quickly for interrogation after you have gone into the page.

### ***BOMB DISPOSAL FOR SKIMMING AND SCANNING***

You are a bomb disposal expert who has to diffuse the “bombs” of difficult words. Look carefully through your text like a bomb disposal expert scanning the ground and then when you find a difficult phrase have a go at “diffusing” it by working out quickly what you think it might mean based on the words around it. If you work out the meaning of the phrase, you have diffused the bomb and get a medal!

### ***TREASURE HUNT FOR SCANNING***

Use your finger and make the sound of a metal detector as you move quickly along the text you want to scan: when you believe you have found the information you want (your treasure) make a bleeping sound.

### ***SKY DIVING***

Like a skydiver float with your finger above the pages of a book, looking quickly at each page from a distance without diving into it. Sky dive a whole book in a few minutes. Sky dive lots of books within minutes.

### ***ARMED ROBBERY OF TITLES AND CHAPTER HEADINGS***

Arming yourself with the overall purpose of a book beforehand, raid all the titles/chapter headings and work out what it is about using only them. E.g. with a Poetry Anthology, look at the authors/titles of poems, any relevant dates, topics, and work out what the whole anthology is about within minutes, judging what might be the best poems to study in depth.

### ***PLUCKING LOW HANGING FRUIT: FIRST AND LAST WORDS***

Pluck the low-hanging fruit of the first words and sentences of paragraphs, reading only them, and reading the chapter of a book by only doing this; see if you can work out the meaning of the chapter/section using these low-hanging fruits.

- Do the same for last words of paragraphs.
- Do both: pluck the low-hanging fruit of first and last words of the section you are reading.

### ***TEXTS FOR SKIMMING AND SCANNING***

Could you choose the texts for skimming and scanning; these could be ones in other subjects, or ones which your TEACHER feels you need practise with skimming and scanning.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

You could skim and scan this text if you like.

- Skim this text and work out its overall structure, what it is about, its audience and its purpose. 5-10 minutes.
- Scan this text and find out what the key learning intentions are in the text, making a spider diagram of them in your books. 5-10 minutes.

### **REVIEW**

How helpful did you find these strategies? What did you learn from taking these approaches?

## **LEARNING SCRIPT**

TEACHER: What strategies help you read?

QUESTIONER: Why is it important to learn about reading strategies? Why can't we just get on and read?

ASSESSOR: As was said in the sections on mindful learning and mindful reading, I would say it is more than strategies that help you read, it's actually your attitude that is important as well. If you are feeling confident and interested in your reading, then you're much more likely to read well.

MOTIVATOR: Yes, we have to be motivated to read. What things are people here motivated to read?

*Free discussion where people discuss what they enjoy reading.*

SUMMARIZER: So, could everyone write in their Learning Journals what things motivate them to read.

LEARNING TO LEARN CHIEF: And we can we also thinking about different types of reading. There's skimming, scanning, reading quickly, reading slowly, reading with a set of questions in mind, reading to analyze a passage, reading for yourself, reading with other people. It wasn't until quite recently that people actually were required to read by themselves.

MOTIVATOR: When stories were first published hundreds of years ago, people used to read to each other and there was very little reading by yourself partly because books were expensive and people couldn't afford their own copies but also because reading together is really fun, and people enjoyed reading aloud together.

TEACHER: Well anyway, can you discuss:

## Francis Gilbert

1. When/why you read quickly, skimming over information. Think about how you read websites/social media here. How do you feel about this type of reading?
2. When/why you read slowly and re-reading. Think about topics you are really interested in. Why might you read slowly, or re-read passages. How do you feel about this type of reading?
3. When/why you might read just to get the meaning of a passage. How do you feel about this type of reading?
4. When/why you might read to analyse a passage. How do you feel about this type of reading?

### *SCENE 3 CHARLIE: PRINCE FREDERICK'S BARGE, APRIL 1736*

CHARLIE: [aside] After the Time Devil whirled me around in space and time, I was sucked into a great wind, and then suddenly I found myself sitting on a long golden boat in the middle of a museum. A museum attendant was running towards me.

MUSEUM WORKER 1 (FAVOR): Hey, sonny, you are not allowed to climb on the exhibits. That is proper gold leaf, you'll ruin it if you clamber all over Prince Frederick's barge.

CHARLIE: [aside] I looked down and found my phone back in my hand. The TimeBook app was glowing, with the message 'Press me' flashing red. Another museum attendant was running towards me.

MUSEUM WORKER 2 (TAI): Hey, young man, you must get off there right now!

CHARLIE: [aside] I pressed the TimeBook app and saw the surroundings of the museum shiver and dissolve. The boat was bobbing up and down on a big river, the Thames, and I was sitting on some cushions with some other people: very strange looking people dressed in wigs and with powdered faces. The sun was shining and several other boats were sailing beside us with people playing music in them.

PRINCE FREDERICK (PADRAIG): Who on earth are you?

CHARLIE: Who are you?

PRINCE FREDERICK (PADRAIG): Father, can you have this creature thrown overboard immediately! He's appeared here from nowhere and has the presumption to ask me who I am!

KING GEORGE II (NICOLA): Don't you know who Prince Frederick is, my son?

CHARLIE: No, I don't!

KING GEORGE II (NICOLA): Oh, isn't that funny! I have always said he's a bit of a nobody!



*The Mindful English Teacher*

PRINCE FREDERICK (PADRAIG): Father, why are you always trying to humiliate me? I am somebody you know, I am your son, and the Prince of Wales.

KING GEORGE II (NICOLA): You're nobody until you're king, my son, and I fear the way you're going, you won't last longer than me. You need to go easy on that wine.

CHARLIE: But I don't know who you are either!

PRINCE FREDERICK (PADRAIG) laughs now: That's even funnier, Father! I'll drink that!

CHARLIE: [aside] I watched as Frederick glugged down a lot of wine straight from the bottle.

KING GEORGE II (NICOLA): You don't know who the king is, my son? Have you gone mad?

CHARLIE: I'm sorry but I was put here by...[aside] Just at that moment, the TIME DEVIL emerged from the sky and settled on Frederick's shoulder. Frederick was so drunk that he scarcely noticed.

QUEEN CAROLINE: WIFE OF GEORGE (MISKI): Oh George! There's a huge bird on Frederick's shoulder.

PRINCE FREDERICK (PADRAIG): Don't be ridiculous! Why are you and Father always picking on me? Bird on my shoulder, what nonsense!

CHARLIE: [aside] But there was! And just at that moment, it spoke to me. The other characters froze, becoming statues as time stood still for a moment.

TIME DEVIL (FAVOR): Charlie, are you enjoying this scene?

CHARLIE: I'm not sure I am. First, I am being chased by museum attendants, and now I'm here! It doesn't make sense.

TIME DEVIL (FAVOR): You're on Prince Frederick's barge in 1736, watching him having a row with his Mother and Father, Queen Caroline and King George II. They didn't get on.

CHARLIE: But why? Why did you put me here, Time Devil?

TIME DEVIL: Well, you could enjoy the lovely music beside you. There's the great composer Handel himself in one of the boats over there, and they're playing the Water Music. Sublime.

CHARLIE: I'm not a great classical music fan to be honest.

TIME DEVIL: Look down beside you.

CHARLIE: Hey, it's a gun!

Francis Gilbert

TIME DEVIL: Better known as a blunderbuss. On the odd occasion, when the fancy takes him, Prince Frederick enjoys taking pot shots at the birds and sometimes people with his big blunderbuss as he drinks more and more.

CHARLIE: OK, I am not liking the sound of that gun going off.

TIME DEVIL: Oh, do buck up! I have something important to tell you! On this barge, you have a unique chance to change history forever.

CHARLIE: What do you mean?

TIME DEVIL: You're from a Dutch family, aren't you?

CHARLIE: Yes. How did you know that?

TIME DEVIL: That doesn't matter. The main thing is that if you killed this drunken idiot in his ridiculous golden barge with that blunderbuss, you'll change history forever. It's called the Butterfly Effect. This is when a relatively small event (although I have to say killing the Prince of Wales is not exactly a small event!) can lead to really big consequences. Basically, if you killed Frederick now, England would not become the great superpower, and instead the Dutch would rule the world, and you know how much more sensible the Dutch are than the English, don't you?

CHARLIE: I suppose the Dutch are much better footballers, and better at speaking languages.

TIME DEVIL: And they don't go across the globe plundering other people's countries, murdering all their enemies and generally messing things up.

CHARLIE: Actually, I do know a little bit about the Dutch, and I do know that they weren't very nice to people who were their enemies; they committed some terrible atrocities: they killed 10,000 ethnic Chinese in 1740, and as recently as 1947, within living memory, they killed hundreds of innocent people in Indonesia.

TIME DEVIL: You are far too well educated for my liking! That said, you have to admit that the Dutch Empire, on balance, destroyed the lives of far fewer people. Some people estimated that nearly 29 million Indians died in the 19<sup>th</sup> century because of British rule alone; and that's just in one of their colonies. Some say the British invented concentration camps during the Boer War, and tortured and massacred countless people in their pursuit of power, land, and money. The Dutch pale in comparison.

CHARLIE: When you put it like that, it does make you think. Do you mean I could save millions of people dying if I killed this one person?

*The Mindful English Teacher*

TIME DEVIL: Yes, the choice is yours. Spare the life of Prince Frederick and consign the Dutch to the dustbin of history, a mere footnote in the annals of the world, and leave the English to dominate everything for hundreds of years... Peace, love and harmony will take over the earth if you do something about it now!

CHARLIE: [aside] And suddenly time unfroze, and I was sitting next to Prince Frederick with the blunderbuss in my hands. A strange madness gripped me. I could change everything by shooting this drunken idiot whining about his mummy and daddy.

PRINCE FREDERICK (PADRAIG): Mother, Father, this boy is pointing the blunderbuss at me!

KING GEORGE II (NICOLA): I order you to drop that weapon.

QUEEN CAROLINE (MISKI): Don't shoot the poor silly baby!

PRINCE FREDERICK (PADRAIG): Mother, I am not a baby, I am twenty-nine!

CHARLIE: [aside] And then I thought, hey, this isn't really a real situation, it felt more like a computer game to me, and I needed to score points in it. So I packed some gunpowder into the barrel of the blunderbuss, rested its heavy metal on my shoulder, took careful aim as he wobbled drunkenly before me and I shot him, blowing a hole in his powdered, pampered body! And then I looked about the sky for the computer screen to register that I had got extra points for killing the Prince, but I realised to my horror that this was not a computer game. I looked at the Time Devil.

TIME DEVIL: Yes, the TimeBook App does that! It can make things feel like a computer game when they are not!

CHARLIE: You mean I have actually killed a real person? God, how can I live with myself?

TIME DEVIL: Yes, look at his stomach, you've shot his guts out. Lovely!

CHARLIE: Are you a complete psycho?

QUEEN CAROLINE: You've killed my poor silly poopsie Frederick! Soldiers, kill this horrible specimen!

KING GEORGE II: I say, you were a bit harsh on the boy, weren't you? I know he's irritating but killing him is a bit thick, isn't it?

CHARLIE: I saw suddenly some red-coated men stand up in another boat, and aim their muskets at me.

SOLDIER I (NICOLA): You heard our queen. Take aim!

SOLDIER II (FAVOR): Fire!

## Francis Gilbert

SOLDIER III (PADRAIG): Kill the traitor!

CHARLIE: [aside] Suddenly there was a huge bang and bullets were whistling past my ears, the smell of gunpowder in my nostrils. I looked in horror at the Time Devil, who grinned a nasty crow-like grin at me.

TIME DEVIL: Don't worry, the deluxe version of the TimeBook app comes bundled with a special all-in-one virus, disease and violent death protection plan; I was good enough to buy you and your friends that so most of attempts at killing you should fail.

SOLDIER II: Take aim and fire again!

SOLDIER I: Aim cross bows at him as well.

CHARLIE: Are you sure it comes with that protection plan?

TIME DEVIL: It is true I couldn't afford the Deluxe Extra plan which is 100% protective. The Deluxe plan is only 85% protective. Some very good attempts at your life could, well, theoretically succeed...

CHARLIE: What? That soldier there looks like he's very keen and rather good at his job!

SOLDIER III: That nearly got him in the eye!

CHARLIE: TIME DEVIL, I want the Deluxe Extra Protection Plan now! They are going to kill me. That nearly hit me! I'm terrified. This is so real. Oh dear, what have I done? [aside] Suddenly everything went black and I was falling through space...

### *LEARNING ACTIVITIES*

Carry out Reciprocal Reading based on the scene you have read: explaining what has happened to each other, summing up how well you understood the passage, clarifying any problems you had with it, predicting what might happen next, or filling in the gaps in terms of feeling that there are things that are left out here; asking questions to help each other with summarizing, clarifying, predicting.

### **SKIMMING A TEXT**

Skim **all** the reading you have done so far. Write down in 2 sentences a summary of the script based on your skimming.

### **SCANNING A TEXT**

Now **scan** the text for a particular **purpose** which is to find out what Reciprocal Reading is; you need to scan through the text and find out more about Reciprocal Reading and also reinforce what you have already learnt. Do a Spider Diagram which highlights in your own words and symbols/drawings what Reciprocal Reading is.

### **LEARNING TO LEARN MOMENT**

What have you learnt about skimming and scanning a text here? How might skimming and scanning help you with your reading in all subjects and outside school? When do you do it naturally?

In your Learning Journal, devise a Spider Diagram of what has happened in the scene.

In your Learning Journal, write a prediction of what is going to happen next.

In your Learning Journal, note down what strategies are helping you improve your reading and why: re-reading passages you have skipped over or not concentrated upon, or found difficult; getting help and encouragement from other people in the group; thinking about things that interest you and relating them to the script; researching an aspect of the script in more detail.

### **REVIEW**

What did you learn from doing this exercise? What did you learn about skimming and scanning with the senses? Does it make a difference which order you do things? Do you think it is best to skim first then scan? What did you learn about reading from doing these exercises?

### **LEARNING ACTIVITY**

Plan out a series of lessons which get students developing their skimming and scanning skills using as a way for them to become familiar with a range of YA texts, so that they can work out what they want to read in detail, and what they don't. Many teachers would say this is not appropriate to do with fiction, but more with non-fiction. My experience is that students need to become familiar and confident with reading fiction quickly and then returning to read it in detail: this improves their motivation, gives them an idea of what is going on, and enables them to become familiar with a range of fiction. What do you think?

### **TOP TIPS**

#### **READ YA LITERATURE**

A good place to start is the Carnegie Shortlist: <http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/>. Share your enthusiasm with your students.

#### **ENCOURAGE RECIPROCAL READING (RR) AND SKIMMING/SCANNING (SS)**

As I've tried to show developing your students' RR and SS skills helps to improve their reading overall.

#### **MAKE CONNECTIONS**

Look at organisations like First Story who connect writers with schools or your local arts organisation. See below for links.

### PLAN TOGETHER

Get together with colleagues and plan lessons with them on new texts.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Bean, T., Dunkerly-Bean, J., & Harper, H. (2014). *Teaching young adult literature: Developing students as world citizens*.

Dymoke, S. (2009). *Teaching English texts 11-18*. London: Continuum.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2014/jul/31/ya-books-reads-young-adult-teen-new-adult-books>

<http://time.com/100-best-young-adult-books/>

<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/15/living/young-adult-fiction-evolution/index.html>

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/>

<https://www.firststory.org.uk/>

*Highly recommended books:*

Kevin Brooks' work is very popular, particularly with boys, while Sita Brahmachari has a large teenage female following.

Laurie Halse Anderson (2010) *Chains*

Celia Rees (2010) *The Fool's Girl*

Marcus Sedgwick (2010) *Revolver*

Randa Abdel-Fattah (2006) *Does my head look big in this?*

Anne Cassidy (2004) *Looking for JJ*

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about Young Adult literature and skimming/scanning from this section? Did you think the play would appeal to Key Stage 3 students? Now, look at other YA literature. Do you think it's good to encourage students to skim and scan fiction, or should it only be non-fiction?

## POETIC TECHNIQUES

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn more about what poetic techniques are and how to teach them.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon poetic techniques: watch yourself learning about imagery, metaphors, similes, alliteration etc. How do you feel?

### LANGUAGE DEVICES

#### *ANALYSING LANGUAGE*

The following exercises are devised by me but based on my reading of an extremely useful book: *Reading Poetry: An Introduction* by Furniss and Bath.

#### *FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE – THE ACID TEST*

Figurative language is a general term for a group of linguistic devices called figures of speech (p. 146, Furniss).

A word, phrase or statement is figurative when it cannot be taken literally in the context in which it is being used, for example: “love is blind”, “look before you leap” = could be literal and figurative.

#### **Figurative or not?**

The light at the end of the tunnel...

The glass half full.

Well, it all depends upon the context. If you are really in a tunnel and you can see a light in front of you, then it's not figurative at all but literal, but if you are struggling with a problem and you begin to see how to solve it, you may say a phrase like there's light at the end of the tunnel, making your language figurative. The same applies with “the glass half full”; you could literally be looking at a glass half full of water, or talking about your situation in life and figuratively describing it that way.

#### *METONYMY AND SYNECDOCHE*

Metonymy means ‘change of name’; it is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to name something which is associated with it – as in ‘the pen is mightier than the sword’. Not literally true. ‘Pen’ means ‘writing or writers’.

## Francis Gilbert

E.g. 'The White House denied rumours' = the WH represents the government

A figure which is related to metonymy is 'synecdoche'. Synecdoche works mainly through two associative principles: 'part of the whole' and 'container for contained'. E.g. 'All hands on deck' does not literally mean chopped off hands to be on deck, it means the sailors etc...

"Metaphor creates the relation between its objects, while metonymy presuppose that relation."  
Hugh Bredin, "Metonymy." *Poetics Today*, 1984.

### Examples:

"The suits on Wall Street walked off with most of our savings."

Wall Street = metonymy because it stands in for stockbrokers and bankers.

"Lend me your ears..."

Ears = synecdoche because one small object (ears) stands in for a bigger whole (your body).

"He loves the bottle".

Bottle = metonymy because the bottle represents alcohol.

"He is loyal to the crown".

Crown = synecdoche because one small object represents the whole of the monarchy.

## *METAPHOR*

Metaphor is quite simply when one thing is compared to another without any "like" or "as" in between: "the sun has got his hat on"; "the boxer was a bear"; "his anger was volcanic". It works on the assumption that there are similarities between things. Used in all kinds of language.

All discourses have their own characteristic metaphors.

## *ANALYSIS OF METAPHOR*

Tenor = what is being talked about.

Vehicle = the metaphorical way it's being talked about.

Ground = the similarities between tenor and vehicle/connotations of the metaphor.



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

E.g. “An Englishman’s home is his castle”.

Tenor (what is being talked about) = “an Englishman’s home”.

Vehicle (metaphorical term) = “his castle”.

Ground = the similarities between the tenor and vehicle (e.g. Englishman is lord and master, safe in his home).

### **Work out these ones:**

The classroom was a bearpit.

The cesspit of humanity.

### **Answers**

The classroom was a bear pit.

Tenor = classroom.

Vehicle = bear pit.

Ground = the classroom is being personified as a wild animal, connoting ill-discipline, poor behaviour etc.

The cesspit of humanity

Tenor = humanity

Vehicle = cesspit

Ground = suggesting that people, humans, are like a sewer, dirty, corrupt etc.

### **DEAD METAPHOR AND POETIC METAPHOR**

Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry* (1821): “Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar”. This is very similar to the Russian Formalists’ concept of “defamiliarization”.

Defamiliarization is an artistic technique, used in poetry and novels, to force the reader to see an ordinary situation in an entirely different way. For example, Kafka “defamiliarized” the way we see officials and bureaucracy in novels like *The Trial* by telling the story of a man, K, who is arrested but never told why he is arrested, and instead spends most of his time being passed from one official to another. Science fiction often defamiliarizes ordinary situations by setting them in a different context. Some critics have argued that Orwell’s *1984* is really about the privations of post-war Europe rather than the science fiction novel it purports to be.

*Look at these lines and say whether you can work out:*

- The tenor
- The vehicle
- The ground

Whether the image is “dead” or “poetic”:

“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”

“You are the light in my life!”

## Answers

You could argue that both images are “dead” because although Shakespeare’s famous opening line to his sonnet “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day” was once original, it is now so commonly said that it has lost its power. It once was poetic but is no longer. The other phrase, “You are the light of my life!” is a cliché and too familiar to be treated as poetic.

## RHYTHM

### Definitions

Prosody = the study of rhythm in poetry, sometimes called metrical analysis.

Rhythm is the BEAT of language: it is the most important element of language when combined with meaning. You could say that rhythm is the heart-beat of language.

To “get” the rhythm of a poem you should:

1. Read the poem out aloud.
2. Then clap out the rhythm.
3. Then think about the effects of the rhythm: what does it make you think, feel and see? What is the difference between rhythm and rhyme?

Rhythm = the beat of the poem, where the hard and soft stresses go.

Rhyme = is where there are similar sounds, usually vowel sounds, that chime together, eg blue shoe poo you

The most important thing with rhythm and rhyme is to discuss the **effects** they create: what mood does the rhythm create? What ideas/themes/images/emotions does it emphasize or highlight?

There are two major types of rhythm: rising rhythm and falling rhythm.

**Rising rhythm** is created by two major types of “stress patterns” or metrical feet: iambs and anapaests. An iamb is a metrical foot which consists of a soft beat followed by a hard one: di-DUM. It is the most

## The Mindful English Teacher

common kind of rhythm found in poetry and speech. If we go back to the opening line of Shakespeare's famous sonnet we can see how the line is iambic, when read aloud you can hear how the stresses fall where I have marked the syllables in bold:

Shall I **compare** thee **to** a **summer's** **day**?

The other type of rising rhythm is the anapaest which consists of two soft stresses followed by a hard stress: di-di-DUM. One of William Blake's most rhythmically joyous poems is called *Laughing Song* from *Songs of Innocence*. This poem really works when you read it aloud and clap the rhythm: it is genuinely like a song; you can just imagine a drum beat making the poem come alive. The poem is largely "anapaestic"; that is, it is full of fast-paced metrical feet called anapaests which create a fantastically energetic tone; the rhythm is always "rising". Let's look at the first verse, the heavy beats are in bold:

When the **green** woods **laugh** with the **voice** of **joy** (anapaest, iamb, anapaest, iamb)

And the **dimpling** **stream** runs **laughing** **by**, (anapaest, iamb, iamb, iamb)

When the **air** does **laugh** with our **merry** **wit**, (anapaest, iamb, anapaest, iamb)

And the **green** hill **laughs** with the **noise** of **it**. (anapaest, iamb, anapaest, iamb)

**Falling rhythm.** The other type of rhythm is the falling rhythm which creates often the sensation of "falling" because the hard stress comes first and is followed by a soft stress. A trochee consists of a hard beat followed by a soft one: DUM-di. William Blake's *The Lamb* is a classic example of this:

**Little Lamb** who **made** thee  
**Dost** thou **know** who **made** thee  
**Gave** thee **life** & **bid** thee feed,  
**By** the **stream** & **o'er** the mead;  
**Gave** thee **clothing** of **delight**,  
**Softest** **clothing** **wooly** **bright**;  
**Gave** thee **such** a **tender** **voice**,  
**Making** **all** the **vales** **rejoice**:  
**Little Lamb** who **made** thee  
**Dost** thou **know** who **made** thee

The other type of "falling" rhythm is the dactyl which consists of a hard beat followed by two soft ones: DUM-di-di. It is not a common metre but

Francis Gilbert

you can see a “falling” dactylic rhythm emerging in some poems. William Blake’s *Holy Thursday* from the *Songs of Innocence* shows a dactylic rhythm in places but it also exemplifies some of the problems which can happen with metrical analysis. Let’s look at the first verse:

**Twas** on a **Holy Thursday** their **innocent faces clean**  
The **children walking two & two** in **red & blue & green**  
**Grey** headed **beadles walkd** before with **wands** as **white** as **snow**  
**Till** into the **high** dome of **Pauls** they like **Thames** waters **flow**

If you look at the first line, you can see that it begins with a dactyl (**Twas** on a) followed by a trochee (**Holy**) but then a strange thing happens in the line, there is, if you read it carefully, a distinct pause or what is known as a “caesura” – a break in the line – and the rhythm becomes a rising one after this: there’s an iamb followed by an anapaest and an iamb:

their **innocent faces clean**” (iamb, anapaest, iamb)

This line shows the problems with metrical analysis; if you’re not careful you can really get tied up into knots! But this said, you can use it to analyse poetry in an interesting way because if you look back at that opening line of Blake’s you can see that the poet has a falling rhythm on his announcement of the day of “Holy Thursday”, but a rising rhythm when describing the children; you could argue there’s a mournful rhythm on his proclamation of the day, but a positive one when describing the children, which exactly chimes with the message of the poem which appears to argue that it is the human spirit and not human rituals which create meaning in life.

Use these descriptions to help you describe the effect of the rhythm:

**Fast:** speedy; fast-paced; quick; lively; energetic; enthusiastic; passionate; fiery;

**Slow;** sluggish; heavy; slow-paced; emphatic; leaden; lethargic; tired; lugubrious; gloomy.

**Next step:** read Furniss and Bath, *Reading Poetry*, chapter 12.

This crib sheet from the University of Texas is useful:  
<http://uwc.utexas.edu/handouts/poetry-analysis/>

## ALLITERATION

### QUESTIONS

What is alliteration? Why do speakers, writers and artists use it so often? What are its effects?

Explore the effects it creates in these quotes:

'Heorot trembled, wonderfully built to withstand the blows, the struggling great bodies beating at its beautiful walls. . .' (Study.com, 2017)

Peter Piper picked a peck of picked pepper (Tongue twister)

Bin bagged (Sun headline after Americans kill Osama Bin Laden). You can find the full headline here:

<http://www.classicheadlines.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BinBagged-232x300.jpg>

### DEFINITION

*Noun.* The occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words: "the alliteration of 'beautiful billowing birds on the beach'".

### KEY POINTS

#### FEATURE SPOTTING

It's very difficult to avoid **feature-spotting** with alliteration; students can easily spot it when they know about it, but can they explain its effects?

#### IS ALLITERATION A NATURAL PART OF ENGLISH?

Centuries ago, when Old and Middle English was spoken and written, alliteration was much more common in poetry; it was the 'glue' that tied poems together. You can see this in the quote from Beowulf where many words alliterate.

#### REPEATED SOUNDS

Different letter sounds have different effects. The repeated 's' sound can create a sinister hissing effect whereas strong consonants such as 'b' can create comedy. We see this in the headline 'Bin Bagged'.

### CONTEXT

Students need to look very carefully at the context in which the alliteration is used and relate it to the meaning of the text. For example, the repeated 'b' sounds in the Beowulf lines create a sense of bravado, of courage, by suggesting the violence with which Heorot withstands.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

This is a great website where you can alliterate any word and get the same part of speech. Very good for developing students' knowledge of grammar: <https://alliteration.me/>

Old English is a great place to examine alliteration as a starting point. The British Library's resources on Beowulf and Old English are fantastic: <http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/beowulf>

## ACRONYMS TO HELP WITH LANGUAGE DEVICES

### QUESTIONS

What acronyms help you remember things? What are the advantages and disadvantages for using acronyms?

### DEFINITION

*Noun.* An abbreviation formed from the initial letters of other words and pronounced as a word (e.g. *ASCII*, *NASA* )

### KEY POINTS

### MNEMONICS

Many English teachers use acronyms as mnemonics to help students remember important terminology. Popular mnemonics for important terminology include: DAFOREST, PEE, FREE 5 TIGERS

### DAFOREST

An acronym which is Direct Address Facts Opinion Repetition Rhetorical Question Emotive Language Statistics (Rule of) Three

I have seen DAFOREST used a great deal in classrooms. It is very helpful for assisting students to remember important points for analysing the language in a text, but it can lead to some very disjointed writing and feature-spotting.

Learn more: <https://prezi.com/xev-05rjfoaj/deforest-revision-techniques/>

**PEE**

Point Evidence Explanation

Most English teachers at the time of writing encourage their students to write PEE paragraphs, to make a Point, to provide Evidence to back up the point, and then to Explain why their evidence endorses their point.

**FREE 5 TIGERS**

Another well-known acronym is:

**FREE 5 TIGERS**

Each letter represents a type of analysis:

Figure it out -- use your intuition, always THINK!

Rhyme – look for the way a poem rhymes and why it rhymes that way.

Evidence -- everything has to be backed up with evidence/quotation.

Explanation – explain what is happening in a quote.

5 Ws – e.g. What is happening? Where is it happening? Who is it happening to? When did it happen? Why is it being written about?

Themes – Discuss the ideas and concept that are explored in a text.

Imagery – Look at all the poetic devices in a text: the metaphors, similes, personification, onomatopoeia, alliteration.

Genre – Look at the type of text, and the conventions of that genre; how does the text both conform and subvert the genre?

Evaluation – How effective is the text and why?

Rhythm – Analyze the rhythmic effects in the language.

Structure – Analyze the structure of the text and think about how its form and structure shape meanings in a text.

**TAKE OWNERSHIP**

Teachers should encourage students to come up with their own acronyms as they will probably better remember them because they are ‘invested’ in their own idea.

**MOVE ON**

Don’t make acronyms and repetition your only way of helping students remember important terminology. Students need to read widely and arrive at organic readings of texts which embrace their meaning and effects together.

*Think of your own acronym to help you with your learning.*

## FEATURE SPOTTING

### QUESTIONS

What is feature spotting? Why is it flagged up as a problem in numerous examiners' reports and amongst English teachers generally?

### DEFINITION

Feature spotting is when students only 'spot' the language feature and do not comment upon its effect in any meaningful way; in other words they have not engaged with the meaning of the text.

## TOP TIPS

### FEATURE SPOTTING

Feature-spotting can be a problem when teachers 'over-teach' terminology; when they 'drill' the terminology rather than encouraging students to read for meaning.

### TEACHING TO THE TEST

It is easy to encourage feature-spotting when teaching to the test; telling students to cram their answers with terminology. The way around this is to encourage reading for meaning.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Kelly, Lauren Leigh. (2013). Hip-Hop Literature: The Politics, Poetics, and Power of Hip-Hop in the English Classroom. *English Journal*, 102(5), 51-56.

Wilson, Anthony. (2007). Finding a Voice? Do Literary Forms Work Creatively in Teaching Poetry Writing? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 37(3), 441-457.

Look at this examiner's response to a script, p. 5 of this PDF, in which an examiner points out the problems of feature spotting: <http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/AQA-77011-CEX.PDF>

The BBC Bitesize website has a page which covers the basic terminology:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/z3kw2hv>

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about the teaching of poetic techniques?



## TEXTS DRAWN FROM DIVERSE CULTURES

### KEY POINTS

You will learn more about how to devise learning resources for texts drawn from diverse cultures.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon texts from diverse cultures: watch yourself reading and listening to poems, stories, music from diverse cultures, in foreign countries. How do you feel? What do you think?

#### *THE TALL WOMAN AND HER SHORT HUSBAND*

##### LEARNING ACTIVITY

Look at this worksheet & model answer based on the short story *The Tall Woman and Her Short Husband* by Feng Ji-Cai, which can be found in OCR's Opening Worlds Anthology which can be bought very cheaply on Amazon/Abebooks if necessary.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this worksheet? How might it be improved? Have a go at improving it after you have read the story.

#### *WORKSHEET FOR YEAR 10 STUDENTS*

##### *DISCUSSION*

Would you choose a wife/partner who is much taller than you? Would you choose a husband/partner who is much smaller than you? Give your reasons why.

##### *INTERNET RESEARCH*

- Find out what the Cultural Revolution in China was and how it affected the lives of the Chinese.
- How does the Cultural Revolution affect Mr Short and Mrs Tall? Provide evidence from the story.

##### *THE STORY ITSELF*

What did you feel for the couple at the end of the story?

What did you feel towards their neighbours and the tailor's wife?

How is language used to create excitement and suspense in the story?

##### *LANGUAGE*

What do these words mean and why are they important?

## Francis Gilbert

- Indefatigable
- Incongruous
- Physiological Deficiency
- Conjectures
- Irrefutable answer

### **THE WRITER'S TECHNIQUES**

Find some imagery that describes the couple at the beginning and end of the story. How and why do the writer's descriptions of the couple change?

Find examples of alliteration and similes used to create humour in the first part of the story. Don't forget to PEA (Point, Evidence, Analysis).

### **CONTEXTS**

What sort of society do the "odd couple" live in? Is it more or less tolerant than our own? What is your evidence for this?

### **HOMEWORK**

Answer this question: how do the social conditions of China affect the lives of Mr Short and Mrs Tall?

### **MODEL ANSWER FOR MOCK EXAM QUESTION**

#### **QUESTION**

*How does the author build suspense and horror in the following passage?*

*After supper the tailor's wife assembled all the residents in the yard, lit up as brilliantly as a sports ground at night. Their shadows, magnified ten-fold, were thrown on the wall of the building. These shadows stayed stock still, not even the children daring to play about. The tailor's wife led a group also wearing red armbands, in those days the most awe-inspiring, to guard the gate and keep outsiders out. Presently, a crowd from the institute, wearing armbands and shouting slogans, marched in the tall woman and her short husband. He had a placard around his neck, she had none. The two of them were marched in front of the platform, and stood there side by side with lowered heads.*

*The tailor's wife darted forward. 'This wretch is too short for the revolutionary masses at the back to see,' she cried. 'I'll soon fix that.'*

From page 46 of *Opening Worlds*.

#### **MODEL ANSWER**

The author of the story, Feng Ji-Cai, has written this passage in such a way that a sense of suspense and horror is created. The author has previously vividly described the characters. He used powerful similes to describe Mrs Tall and Mr Short's appearances. Mrs Tall's face compared to an 'unvarnished ping-pong bat'.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

The reader is given the impression that she is extremely unattractive as she appears to be 'scrawny' and her 'features' seem as if they have been 'carved in shallow relief'.

Furthermore, Mr Short's appearance was described by using similes and metaphors. His 'features' are compared to 'pudgy little meatballs', indicating that he overweighs with 'excess fat'.

The author builds up a comic image of the couple, who do not match physically. They 'marked contrast' is shown the descriptions of Mr Short's eyes were like 'little lightbulbs', showing the reader that he is alert and possibly intelligent. On the other hand, his wife's eyes are 'glazed marbles' which indicate that she is a cold, enclosed character.

This image of the couple makes the reader feel sympathetic towards them as they are so different to each other. Despite this, they are 'inseparable' which is extremely moving.

The assembly of the residents in the yard had 'shadows' that were 'magnified' on the 'wall of the building'. This makes them appear very powerful. Further suspense is created when the author explains how their 'shadows' were 'stock-still' and the children did not dare 'play about'. This indicates that there is tension building up. The yard is represented as a 'prison' as the residents 'guard the gate' to keep 'outsiders out'. This emphasizes the horror of the couple's experience.

The tailor's wife appears to be a 'powerful person' as she was 'promoted' to be the chairman of the 'Public Security Committee'. The author allows the reader to receive an insight into the horrific situation by using powerful words to describe her actions. Words such as 'darted' and 'dashed' indicates that she is behaving in an intimidating manner. This supported as she names Mr Short 'a wretch'. This allows the reader to feel the intensity of suffering that the couple are feeling.

Furthermore, additional horror for the couple is created as they are 'shouted' at and 'accusations' are made. These are powerful words which show how 'the pressure built up' for them. Feng Ji-Cai has added to the suspense by using a short sentence 'the pressure built up'. This is to the point and gives impact when followed by a long, descriptive sentence. The agony is emphasized by these sentence structures because the long sentence is crammed with assertive words. Such words are 'questions' and 'denunciations' that were fired as Mrs Tall. She is under much stress by this and has 'hysterical screams' from the residents. The word 'hysterical' is extremely dramatic and shows the tone of the crowd. 'Angry shouts' also indicates that they are behaving aggressively towards her.

In addition to the horror, the author personifies the way in which Mrs Tall is being addressed by using 'threatening growls'. An image is created of an aggressive monster that dangerous.

### **MINDFUL REFLECTION**

How might you use this approach to develop resources on texts from diverse cultures?

## Francis Gilbert

Using these resources, devise some lesson plans for the teaching of this text or another text of your choice which is from a 'diverse culture'.

### TOP TIPS

#### READING THE WORLD, READING THE WORD

Encourage students to understand their own cultural backgrounds and make links with their lives and the texts they are reading.

#### PRESENTATIONS AND CELEBRATIONS

Often getting students to present on a particular culture and maybe doing something like having a small party where food from that culture is served can make studying the text much more enjoyable and deepens understanding.

#### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Getting members of the community or students from diverse backgrounds to talk about their cultures can work very well.

#### MULTI-MODAL APPROACHES

Using video, audio, music, food etc. to contextualise a story can be very fruitful.

### FURTHER RESEARCH

Johnstone, Patrick. (2011). English and the Survival of Multiculturalism: Teaching "Writing from Different Cultures and Traditions". *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, 18(2), 125-133.

Yandell, J., & Brady, M. (2016). English and the politics of knowledge. *English in Education*, 50(1), 44-59.

Poetry (drawn from different historical times): some useful websites are <http://www.poetrylibrary.org.uk>; <http://www.poetrysoc.com>; and <http://www.poetryzone.ndirect.co.uk> and see Poetry Shuffle (Teachit KS3 Interactive Pack).

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about teaching texts from diverse cultures?

## NON-FICTION

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider how you might teach non-fiction, learning about the key issues connected with audience, purpose and language.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon non-fiction: watch yourself reading the news, writing emails, biographies, leaflets, adverts, advice. What do you feel and think?

#### *LETTER WRITING AND NON-FICTION*

Letter writing or email writing is a good way to stimulate some thoughtful non-fiction writing as long as you provide your students with a clear audience and purpose. It often works if you write a letter to them first. Look at this example of a letter I wrote to my Year 8 students at the beginning of the academic year and consider how you might adapt this idea.

#### **STUDENT RESOURCE: MY LETTER TO YEAR 8S**

Put in date/school address here

Dear Year 8,

Welcome to Year 8! It's going to be quite an adventure. Firstly, I want to say: well done for getting here! You're the product of FOUR BILLION years of evolution, you're the evolutionary product of a very long line of ancestors going right back to bacterial cells swarming in volcanic currents – or something like that. But you're no longer an amoeba, you're a top-notch human, and you're in possession of the most advanced computer in the universe: your brain!

You're going to write me a letter – similar to the one I've written to you, telling me about yourself. I want you to tell me about:

- Your family
- Your life story
- Your hobbies
- Your friends
- The things you hate
- The things you love
- How you've got on at Coopers so far
- Your favourite teachers and why you liked them
- The problems you've had at school
- Your attitude to work
- Your routine during term time: what you do at home, what you do at

## Francis Gilbert

school, your lunchtimes, your break times, your behaviour in lessons etc...

- Your true passions and interests
- Anything else you think is important
- The technology you own
- The computer games you play
- The clothes you like to wear
- The music you like to listen to

You don't have to share anything that you're not comfortable with! Just tell me what you feel comfortable saying!

I suppose it's only fair, if you're going to tell me about yourself, I tell you a bit about me. I grew up quite near here in Wanstead in the 1970s and 1980s: I went to a state primary and then went to a private school, Forest School, for my secondary education. Things were very different then – and kind of similar. There were no mobile phones, no internet, and TV only had four channels. There were only a couple of McDonalds in London. There was also a very big recession with millions of people unemployed.

The Year 8 course is quite tough. You'll be introduced to some GCSE texts this year, looking at GCSE level poetry, plays, articles and novels, as well as completing an exam at the end of the year which is based on a GCSE question. It's very important to work hard and try your best.

You'll be expected to sit next to anyone who I ask you to sit next to. The headteacher has specifically asked teachers to sit girl-boy, and to change the seating arrangements every six weeks. It's important that you learn to work with whoever you're sitting next to. Doing English is NOT about sitting with your friends; you need to learn the skill – the very vital skill – of getting on with people you might not socialise with.

Now, before you write anything I want you to annotate my letter, writing questions and comments at the side about ANYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF. Any gaps in the letter, anything else you want to know. Anything you LIKE. Anything you think is a good point. Anything you disagree with.

Now I want you to write me a letter. The way we're going to do this is by a set method. You are going to do some FREE WRITING for FIVE MINUTES non-stop. You are going to write everything you can think of without worrying about spelling, punctuation, grammar etc, then you're going to share your thoughts with your group. In your free writing ask questions, write blah, blah, blah, until you think of something. The main thing is YOU KEEP WRITING!! Then you discuss your points with your groups. THEN, you write your actual letter to me in your books and finish for homework.

Please cover your book with sticky backed plastic as well, and put the media people you're interested in on the back of it.

Yours sincerely,  
Mr Gilbert

**COMMENTARY & LEARNING ACTIVITY**

This letter did work well, but I look back and I think I could have written a better one, particularly when I talk about the course being ‘tough’ and saying they will be doing GCSE work; I think I could have probably been more motivational. Have a go at writing your own letter to your students, using some of the ideas in this letter if you like.

**ANALYSING NON-FICTION: LEARNING ACTIVITY**

A good way to get students analysing non-fiction is to ask them to discuss it in groups, using ‘stock’ questions, which they internalise and learn to use naturally after repeated use. What follows is a chart which I used with my GCSE classes. How might you use it with your classes? Devise some lesson plans based on a topic you are teaching using the chart, considering ways you might improve it.

**USING THE 5WS + H “TOOL KIT”**

	Questions to ask in your group	Finding good quotes
WHO? Group member 1 discusses	WHO is the writing is speaking to? WHO is the audience or audiences? How do you know this from the language? WHO is writing/speaking? What is the EFFECT of the language upon the AUDIENCE? What does the language make the audience THINK, FEEL or even SEE?	Pick any QUOTE and work out WHO the language is addressing and WHY you know this. Consider the EFFECT of the language on the audience?
WHAT? Group member 2 discusses	WHAT is going on? What is literally and metaphorically going on? What is the passage about? WHAT is going on underneath surface?	Find a quote which might mean one thing but also has deeper meanings.
WHERE? Group member 3 discusses	Where is the text written/spoken? In a book? As part of a speech or debate? Where was it written? How has this affected its language? How has the language been adapted to suit the PLACE where it is written/said?	Look for quotes which give clues about WHERE the language was written/spoken.
WHEN? Group member 3 discusses	When was the text was written/said? How has the HISTORICAL PERIOD when it was written/said affected the language? What do we need to know about the SITUATION (when/where/who) in order to understand and appreciate the	Look at the ways in which the language has been adapted.

## Francis Gilbert

	language? This is all about context: the historical situation/background.	
WHY? Group member 4 discusses	Why does this text exist? What are its PURPOSES? To argue, persuade, or advise? To analyse, review or comment? To inform, describe or explain? To entertain, explore or imagine?	For every purpose (e.g. persuade) find a quote and EXPLAIN why the language shows this purpose.
HOW? Group leader discusses	How does the writing interest us? Entertain us? Persuade us? Advise us? Inform us? How does it maintain our interest? With spoken texts think about HOW the speaker speaks the text: tone of voice, facial expressions, body language.	Look for quotes that really INTEREST or GRAB you, and think about HOW the language manages to do this...

## TOP TIPS

### TRIPLETS

Use the writing triplets to shape your lesson plans for non-fiction:

- Inform, describe, explain
- Analyse, review, comment
- Persuade, argue, advise
- Entertain, imagine, explore

### AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

Get your students understanding how specific non-fiction texts are written/devised for specific audiences and purposes. Then get them writing their own work for specific audiences and purposes. Set writing tasks such as writing articles for old people, bankers, teachers, nurses, teenagers, primary school children etc.

### USE 'REAL' RESOURCES

BBC News Report, First News, CND (all listed below) provide the best resources for teaching non-fiction. Use them, get involved with the campaigns and competitions.

### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

Look back at my section on YA literature as it contains some useful strategies for teaching skimming/scanning which are invaluable when



teaching non-fiction: see **Text based exercises for skimming and scanning**.

Shenton, A., & Dixon, P. (2003). Sequential or selective access? Young people's strategies for finding information in non-fiction books. *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, 9(1), 57-69.

The First News website has a wealth of resources for teaching non-fiction:

**[https://schools.firstnews.co.uk/free\\_resources/](https://schools.firstnews.co.uk/free_resources/)**

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament have many great resources for teaching non-fiction:

**<http://www.cnduk.org/information/peace-education/teaching-resources>**

BBC News report is a brilliant: **<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport>**

**[http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport/teacher\\_resources](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport/teacher_resources)**

Michael Rosen and I discuss writing analytically here:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYFB1pkNTTk>**

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about the teaching of non-fiction from this section of the book?

## **MULTI-MODAL LEARNING**

### **KEY POINTS**

You are going to consider why you want to be a teacher, what your values are and what motivates you to teach.

### **MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION**

Reflect upon multi-modal learning: watch yourself learning as you watch TV, videos, listen to the radio etc. What do you feel and think?

#### **WHAT IS MULTI-MODAL LEARNING?**

Multi-modal learning involves using different modes for conveying meaning – speech, audio resources, computers, video, pictures, objects etc – to help students learn.

#### **WHY IS IT USEFUL FOR TEACHERS TO CONSIDER IN THEIR PLANNING?**

Many teachers find it very helpful to use things like audio, video and object-based resources to aid their teaching, or make it the focus of their teaching.

## READING AND MULTI-MODAL LEARNING

Look at this resource for getting students to develop their reading, and consider the ways in which different modes for conveying meaning have been used to motivate students to explore their reading.

### READING PROJECT: MY READING JOURNEY

*Overall plan: you are going to reflect upon your reading so far and read some new books, responding to them in creative ways.*

*The aim: to get more motivated to read and to learn more about what reading strategies help you read.*

Write a history of your own reading *or* get a selection of books you have read in your life and video/audio record yourself talking about why they mean so much to you. You could use a partner to help stimulate the discussion. Consider: the first words you read, the first books, who helped you read, the books you read at primary school.

Your favourite books. Write a section about your favourite books and why they are your favourite *or* video/audio record yourself talking about them. Read out extracts or quote and explain why you like these quotes,

Reading journal. Start making notes of your thoughts and feelings of the books you are reading for the project: this could be in the form of a video/audio diary, on a blog or on paper.

Read at least 3 books for the project. They can be short books if you want *or* books that have films about them. In which, make sure you compare the film and book: what do you like the best and why? What different techniques do the two texts have?

Write *or* video/audio record reviews of these books, *or* do something interesting like:

- Interview a favourite character.
- Devise mind maps of the books.
- Imagine your book is a film. Who would star in it and why?
- Write diaries *or* FaceBook/social media updates for your characters.
- Re-write the book in text form *or* as Tweets.
- Modernise the book as you see fit: make a video documentary!
- Re-write the book with your friends in it.
- Write *or* discuss on video/audio the structure and themes of the book.
- Devise a PowerPoint about your books.

Reflecting upon your learning. Write/record an evaluation of your project, considering what things motivated you to read and what approaches helped you think deeply about your reading. For example, did you find that videoing yourself talking about your reading helped you think about the book *or* did writing about the book help more? Give reasons for your answers.

## COMMENTARY

Do you see how the learner has been encouraged to choose the mode that might best suit them to convey what they think and feel about the books? They have also been encouraged to reflect upon the things they have learnt from doing such a project.

### *LEARNING ACTIVITY*

Devise your own learning resources/lesson plans which encourage students to use multi-modal approaches to help them read or write.

## TOP TIPS

### DIFFERENTIATE USING MANY MODES

One of the best ways of getting students with SEND/EAL is to use video, audio, pictures, images etc.

### USE VIDEO CAREFULLY

It's great to use video in the class, but not as a bolt-on extra. Get students critiquing the videos they watch, making notes, using it as a stimulus for writing.

### PODCASTS

Getting students to make podcasts about their ideas, their work, doing reading of set texts for each other and discussing them is a very powerful way of helping them learn, and it's less threatening than videoing.

### *REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING*

What have you learnt about multi-modal learning?

### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

In the National Archives, you can download a zip file which contains many different explanations about how to teach, including useful booklets on using ICT, video, audio in the classroom:

**<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110812234120/http://nsonline.org.uk/node/97131>**

Pahl, K. Rowsell, J. , 2010. *Artifactual Literacies: Every Object Tells a Story*. London: Teachers College Press.

Pahl, Kate H; & Rowsell, Jennifer., 2011. Artifactual Critical Literacy: A New Perspective for Literacy Education.. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 2(2). **<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/6s0491j5#>**

## DRAMA (BASIC TECHNIQUES)

### KEY POINTS

You are going to consider how you might use various dramatic techniques within the English classroom.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon using drama: watch yourself acting dramatically, doing things like role play and improvisation, telling stories. What do you feel and think? How might you teach drama within English lessons? Why might you use drama strategies?

### ACTING OUT SHAKESPEARE WITHOUT CHAOS

#### THE BASIC IDEA

*Getting students to act out Shakespeare without classroom chaos.*

Every English teacher knows by now that Shakespeare is supposed to be acted out, but the difficulty is how to do this without having total chaos in the classroom. Many English teachers don't have access to drama studios, thus making quite a few drama exercises almost impossible to do. These series of suggestions are there to guide you if a) you don't want lots of children rushing around your classroom shouting at the top of their voices b) if you want to get children thinking dramatically about Shakespeare.

#### APPLYING IT

**Acting it on the page.** Get them to draw the stage set in their books and storyboard key scenes. This gets them thinking about how Shakespeare will look on stage and storyboarding in particular gets them thinking about stagecraft; they don't have to be great artists, they can draw stick men and annotate them, saying what their facial expressions might be, how they would speak the words and how they might move.

**Hotseating.** Hotseating doesn't require any rushing around and is usually relatively easy to manage. I like to get students to do "hotseating" in groups before picking people to perform in front of the class. The basic idea is that a selected student becomes a character in a play and then is questioned about what they've done, what they're thinking and feeling by other members of the group or class. Simple but effective.

**Shakespeare as a radio play.** Get your students to think about recording a scene using sound effects (SFX) and music, get them to add in SFX and music to their script

**Freeze frames at a table.** Lots of drama teachers ask their students to do “freeze frames” of a key moment in a play, but English teachers often need to ask their students to do this at a table. This can take some creative thinking, particularly if everyone is supposed to be running around in the scene. Get students to think about how and why they might get the characters sitting at a table in the scene.

**Shakespeare as a puppet show or finger puppet show.** This works well, get your students to make little paper masks for their characters that can fit over their fingers and act out Shakespeare as a puppet show. You can also get students to “walk their fingers” across the table in the way in which a particular character might walk.

**Highlighting stage directions in his lines.** Shakespeare wrote very few “actual” stage directions. Instead, he wrote most of them in his lines, indicating who should be doing what. Get students to annotate all the stage directions in a scene and then draw, using arrows, a map of who should be doing what in a particular scene based on the stage directions in the lines. They could then write detailed stage directions in the style of someone like Arthur Miller or Tennessee Williams.

**Analysing movement in a Shakespeare film.** Choose a scene from a relevant Shakespeare film and get students to make notes on how the actors are behaving and why they are doing this.

**Costumes.** Getting students to think about what characters will wear and why really helps them understand their individual psychologies.

#### WHAT'S THE POINT?

Anything that gets students thinking about how Shakespeare might be acted out is going to help students understand his stagecraft. Some of the best essays focus upon the ways in which Shakespeare creates drama on stage.

Keeping the talk focused upon how dramatic techniques rather than his language may help your students understand his plays better.

#### TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Discussing dramatic techniques in an essay is often a sure-fire way to get a good mark.

Getting students to understand Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony really can help see how he creates suspense. Shakespeare uses dramatic

irony ALL the time: the audience is invariably aware of a great deal more than most characters on stage. Get your students to think about how and why Shakespeare is using dramatic irony. He often uses it for comic effect in his comedies; for example, when Malvolio wears his ridiculous yellow “cross-garters” for Olivia and declares his love for her, we know that he’s been tricked into thinking that she loves him – and that knowledge creates much of the humour. The dramatic irony draws attention to and heightens Malvolio’s self-importance and pomposity. However, in Macbeth, we know that Macbeth is seeing the ghost of Banquo whereas many other characters have no idea about what he’s seeing; the dramatic irony emphasizes Macbeth’s guilt and sense of isolation.

#### VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Getting students to take photos of themselves in various poses to match key lines in the play can motivate them to think about how particular lines might be delivered. They could then do a photo-montage of a scene, or using a programme like Comic Book Life, they could do a comic strip version of the scene.

Mix up photos of various scenes from Shakespeare and get students to re-order them. You can find images from Shakespeare productions here: [http://shakespeare.berkeley.edu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=12&Itemid=134](http://shakespeare.berkeley.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12&Itemid=134)

#### PUTTING PEN TO PAPER

Writing to inform, describe and explain: Get students to write an informative leaflet about how Shakespeare’s plays used to be staged and how they are staged now.

Writing to entertain, explore and image: Write the diary of an actor taking part in a Shakespeare play.

Writing to analyse, review and comment: Write an analysis of a scene, paying close attention to how it might be staged, and how it has been staged in the past, referring to relevant films and productions.

Writing to persuade, argue and advise: Write a speech with the title: Shakespeare makes no sense unless he is acted out.

#### WHIZZING IT

YouTube is excellent for students to have a look at different versions of Shakespeare’s play. Students could prepare presentations on YouTube clips they like: show a relevant clip and talk to the class about the ways in which the scene has been staged.

Digital Theatre (<http://www.digitaltheatre.com/>) offers excellent filmed versions of famous stage productions; it charges schools but it's well worth considering. It also contains more tips on how to teach Shakespeare in an active way in the classroom.

## TOP TIPS

### UNDERSTAND THE THEORY AND EVIDENCE

The theory and evidence suggests that drama is an excellent way of helping students develop their English skills because it combines collaborative learning, discussion work, role play, planning and performance.

### USE ROLE PLAY AND IMPROVISATION

Getting groups to do role plays where they are specific characters, e.g. a bully, a bullied student, a teacher, a parent, and then planning and acting out a story is a brilliant way of getting them to consider story structure, creative writing, characterisation etc. You then follow up by asking everyone to write their own script/story based on their role play.

### EVALUATION

Get students to evaluate what they learnt from doing the drama exercise and consider all the skills/knowledge they acquired. This meta-cognitive element is vital if they are going to really learn deeply.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

### **Books/articles:**

Anderson, A. (2012) *MasterClass in Drama Education: Transforming Teaching and Learning*. Continuum.

Bunyon et al, (2000) *Cracking Drama*, NATE.

Bunyan, P. and Moore, R. (Eds.) *The Critical Scripts Series*. Methuen.

Cremin, T., Gooch, K., Blakemore, L., Goff, E., & Macdonald, R. (2006) Connecting drama and writing: seizing the moment to write, *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, Vol. 11, No. 3.

Davis, D, (2014) *Imagining the Real: Towards a new theory of drama in education*. London: IoE Press/Trentham Books.

English & Media Centre (2006) *The Drama Book*.

Fleming, M. (2004) Planning for Drama, *The Sec English Magazine*, Vol. 7, No. 4.

Heathcote D. (1980) *Drama as Context*, NATE.

Hulson, M. (2006) *Schemes for Classroom Drama*, Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

Kempe, A. (2002) Who teaches EN1? Exploring the role of the Drama department, *The English & Media Magazine*, No 46, 10-14.

Moore, R. & Bunyan, P. (2005) *NATE Drama Packs: Drama within English*.

Neelands, J. (1998) *Beginning Drama 11-14*, David Fulton.

Neelands, J. (2004) Remember we are human! Literacy for a pro-human society, *English Drama Media*, Issue no. 2.

O'Neill, C. & Lambert, A. (1982) *Drama Structures*, Hutchinson.

Pitfield, M. (2006) Making a crisis out of a drama: the relationship between English and Drama within the English curriculum for ages 11-14, *Changing English*, Vol.13, No. 1.

Pitfield, M. 2011 Reconstructing the relationship between drama and English: Student-teachers perspectives at the end of an initial teacher education year, *English in Education*, Vol.45, No.1, pp. 52-71.(Special Issue Life Made Conscious: the Drama of English)

Pitfield, M. 2012 Transforming subject knowledge: drama student-teachers and the pursuit of pedagogical content knowledge, *Research in Drama Education*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 425-442.

Pitfield, M. 2013 The impact of curriculum hierarchies on the development of professional self in teaching: student-teachers of drama negotiating issues of subject status at the interface between drama and English, *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* (published online).

Winston, J. (2004) Integrating Drama and English: literacy and oracy in action, *English Drama Media*, Issue no. 1.

Websites:

<http://dramaresource.com/drama-games/>

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/slavicabuca/teaching-large-classes-drama-techniques-classroom>

<http://www.dramatoolkit.co.uk/drama-games/a-to-z>

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about drama from this section of the book?



# TEACHING SPELLING, PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMAR (SPAG)

## KEY POINTS

You are going to learn more about how to teach spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG) and the issues connected with content.

## MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon spelling, punctuation and grammar: watch yourself as you do things like spelling tests, learning about grammar, using Standard English. How do you feel about your speech, accent, dialect, and grammatical knowledge?

## SPELLING RULES FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

### *'I' BEFORE 'E'*

The “i before e except after c rule”, e.g. believe and receive. There are quite a few exceptions to this rule, watch out!

### *DOUBLE THE CONSONANT*

Double the consonant for short vowel sound, one consonant for long vowel sound, e.g. dinner has two ‘ns’ to shorten the ‘i’ sound, while diner has one ‘n’ to create the longer ‘i’ sound in the word.

<https://howtospell.co.uk/doubling-up-rule>

### *'Y' TO 'IES'*

To make words plural ending in a consonant + y add ‘ies’, e.g. city becomes ‘cities’ whereas if there is a vowel + y add ‘s’, e.g. key becomes keys. <https://howtospell.co.uk/y-to-ies-or-s-plural-rule>.

### *ADDING 'ES'*

Add -es to words ending in -s, -ss, -z -ch -sh -x, e.g. bus becomes buses. <https://howtospell.co.uk/adding-es-plural-rule>

### *SILENT 'E'*

Remove the ‘e’ rule, silent ‘e’ is usually removed from the ends of words when adding suffixes other than ‘s’, e.g. write becomes writing, excite becomes excitable.

Francis Gilbert

## Y' TO 'I'

If a word ends in a consonant + 'y', the Y becomes an 'i'  
happy + ness = - happiness, happily, happier, happiest

## KEY POINTS

### EXCEPTIONS

There are exceptions to every rule! We have only scratched the surface in the examples here.

### TESTS

Spelling tests promote awareness of spelling issues, but don't necessarily improve students' spelling. They can however assist with improving standards of behaviour and attitudes towards English.

### STANDARDIZATION

Standardization of spelling only was introduced in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with the first dictionaries being devised. Before then, people were much freer to spell as they pleased, look at Shakespeare, Milton and William Blake's spelling, which would be marked as 'incorrect' today!

### INVESTIGATION

Getting students to examine the rules and then assess and review their own spelling errors is very productive. Get students to set their own spelling goals. Often it is basic rules that spoil their work.

Learn more: <https://howtospell.co.uk/top-ten-spelling-rules>

<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/i-before-e-except-after-c-9-helpful-spelling-rules/>

There is a helpful downloadable worksheet here:  
<http://www.literacytools.ie/files/pdfs/Making%20Plurals.pdf>

### COMMON ERRORS

The most common errors you'll encounter are the incorrect use of homophones: words that sound the same but are spelt differently. The worst mistakes I've seen are: "there, their, and they're". For more on this please log onto:

[https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/index.php?category\\_id=2&sub\\_category\\_id=1&article\\_id=48](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/index.php?category_id=2&sub_category_id=1&article_id=48)

## PHONICS

If you are not sure how children learn to read using the phonics or whole book methods, it is worth doing some research.

- What are digraphs? List some examples.
- What are fricatives? List some examples.
- What are syllables?
- What are homophones? List some examples.
- What are synonyms? List some examples.

Do some research and devise a visual organiser of the main points you have discovered.

## GRAMMAR. WHAT IS IT?

A surprising number of English teachers are shaky on certain areas connected with spelling, punctuation and grammar. This may be because they've always got by without really knowing how language works; they have spent their time reading literature and writing essays, rather than doing grammatical analysis. I got a good English degree without knowing about the apostrophe rule for "its" and "it's"!

Grammar is a very tricky area. First, it's difficult to define what it is, although the term is used very widely in connection with English. Second, if you're an English graduate and you're not that confident about talking about "grammar" you can find yourself being mocked by the outside world! In this section, I've defined grammar as being the "meta-language" or "terminology" we use to talk about the mechanics of language.

### GRAMMAR – WORD CLASSES

**Nouns.** There are two major types of nouns: concrete nouns and abstract nouns. Concrete nouns are tangible objects/things/people/places that can be touched, felt, and seen: door, chair, person, London. Abstract nouns are concepts or ideas such as faith, hope, charity. Concrete nouns bring the world into being. In a piece of writing, they are used to create a sense of a world; through the deployment of nouns we learn about the people, the places and the things are central to the story or poem. It is extremely useful to look at the different nouns being used in a passage to get a sense as to how a writer is creating a sense of a world.

**Pronouns.** Pronouns take the place of a noun and are extremely important in texts because they tell you about the "person" a text is

written in; whether it is “first person” and written using “I” or “We” as the narrator or “third person”, whether it is told from the perspective or “he/she or they”. This has a profound effect upon the tone, attitude, and approach of a text.

**Verbs.** These are “doing” words. The grammar of verbs can be complicated, but if we were being simple, you could argue that there are two main types of verbs: dynamic and stative. Dynamic verbs create a sense of action, such as “to say”, “jumped”, “kicked”. They create a sense of movement, of action in a text. Stative verbs are much less dynamic such as the verb “to be” and “to have”: they are not dynamic and usually state what “is” the case, e.g. “The man is here”, “I have the money”.

**Adjectives.** Adjectives describe nouns. They bring colour and emotion to a text, e.g. the **beautiful** sky, the **angry** person.

**Adverbs.** Adverbs are used to modify a verb, adjective or another adverb, e.g. Mo writes *beautifully*; Jim cries *profusely*. Like adjectives they often can help create the mood or atmosphere of a text and are worth looking at from this point of view.

**Next step.** For more on word classes please log onto: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/> This website is specifically geared towards university undergraduates and covers all the basics and then some more.

BBC Skillswise is also very useful:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/english>

TERMINOLOGY CHART & KEY QUESTIONS

Terminology	Key questions for analysis
Nouns	What abstract and concrete nouns are used and why?
Verbs	What dynamic verbs are used and what is their effect?
Adjectives	What descriptive and emotive adjectives are used and why?
Adverbs	What is the effect of the use of the adverbs?
Semantic fields	What fields of meaning are REALLY important in a text?
Discourses	What discourses are employed? Does the text use and explore patriarchal/feminist/sexist/racist/ageist discourses?
Alliteration	What is the EFFECT of the alliteration? What words/images/ideas does it emphasize?
Onomatopoeia	What is the EFFECT of the onomatopoeia? What words/images/ideas does it emphasize?
Assonance	What is the EFFECT of the assonance? What words/images/ideas does it emphasize?
Syndetic and asyndetic lists	How and why does the text use lists?
Figurative language: metaphors and similes	What striking comparisons are made in the text? What do they make you think/feel/see?
Figurative language: personification	How and why do the writers personify specific objects?
Syntax: word order	What words go at the beginning and end of sentences and why?
Register: tone	How informal/formal is the text and what is its tone?
Phonology: sounds	What sounds does the text create and why? Look at the use of alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, rhyme, etc.

KEY POINTS

TESTS

Give students informal and formal tests on their grammar, spelling, punctuation, but don't kid yourself that the rules etc. have sunk in. They need to use all of these things in context to really learn how to apply them.

### USE GAMES AND APPS

There are a whole host of games and apps which have been shown to develop students' knowledge of SPAG exponentially. Use them! Some are listed below.

### THE USUAL SUSPECTS

There are a number of very common mistakes which happen again and again: check online to find out what the current ones are. The TES website is usually good for this. It's worth going over these with your students, testing them and making sure they correct their own work (see below).

### CONTEXT

This is vitally important. Students need to use language in context. The most effective ways that students learn SPAG issues is by reviewing their own work and correcting it, ideally without your help.

### YOUR MARKING

Make your marking of their work formative in that you don't correct their work, just circle it or do what your school policy says etc., then ask the students to make the corrections, re-writing phrases, sentences, and then getting them checked by a peer or you to see if they've got it right. This is crucial if they are going to improve.

### PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

Encourage peer and self-assessment of students' work, using checklists etc, getting them to look up difficult spellings.

### BE MINDFUL

Encourage a mindful and compassionate approach to these issues. Often SEND and dyslexic students really struggle, they need to be supported and guided; you will need with them to mindfully reflect what are the best strategies.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

### Books

Ross, A., & Hunt, P. (2006). *Language knowledge for secondary teachers*. London: David Fulton.

Great Britain. Dept. for Education Skills. Standards Effectiveness Unit. (2003). *Key Stage 3 National Strategy: Grammar for reading: Course tutors' notes*. London]: Department for Education and Skills.

### Links

Start with exploring these games:

<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/grammar-practice>  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks2/english/spelling\\_grammar/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks2/english/spelling_grammar/)  
<https://www.spellingcity.com/spelling-games-vocabulary-games.html>

Take the time to work out what games will be best for your students. Play them yourself, test them out, mindfully reflect!

The following summary of the key findings of a big research project into the teaching of grammar is seminal:

[http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/collegeofsocialsciencesandinternationalstudies/education/research/centres/writing/grammarforwriting/Research\\_Summary\\_for\\_Teachers.pdf](http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/collegeofsocialsciencesandinternationalstudies/education/research/centres/writing/grammarforwriting/Research_Summary_for_Teachers.pdf)

These videos of Debra Myhill talking about her research:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3xErhJXJf8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqUULL4FLs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXr09X86K20>

## KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LANGUAGE

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn more about language and the terminology used to explore it.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon what you know about language. Who are you brilliant at talking to? It might be your mother/carer, who you know exactly how to speak to create a certain effect.

### *THE FUNNY WORDS PROJECT*

I devised a small Scheme of Work on humour, calling it 'Funny Words', which aimed to develop students' knowledge about language. Outlined below are the learning objectives and outcomes for the project. It was a successful project which did not take much planning, but the students improved their English skills considerably during it. What do you think of it? The student resource is in Times Roman 10 point. I set up a blog for students to post their work, which you can still access.

#### FUNNY WORDS PROJECT

##### **Learning objectives**

*to learn about the grammar of humour and of language; to learn about how social class and humour are connected; to learn about how humour is a*

*persuasive technique (satire); to learn about the structure of jokes;*

Learning Outcomes

**Writing to analyse, review and comment:** 600-1000 words on analysing the spoken language of a comedian, either of your choice OR Eddie Izzard (who we will look at in class). GCSE preparation.

**Writing to entertain and imagine:** an anthology selection of funny anecdotes written by you, typed up in an attractive fashion. (500 words)

**Writing to inform, explain and describe:** 'My funny family' -- an autobiographical account aimed at a Parents' magazine in which you describe the types of humour YOU and your family have liked in your life, EXPLAINING why they like this humour, and INFORMING the audience of the things they find funniest. (600 words)

**Writing to argue, persuade and advise:** 'Laughter is a serious business'. Write a speech in the style of a stand-up comic routine in which you try to persuade teachers that there should be much more laughter in school and life generally. You should include a joke LINKED to your message, in your speech. (500 words)

Post your pieces on:

<http://languageofhumour.wordpress.com/>

**Learning Activity**

Have a look at the blog and consider how you might use a similar idea to teach an aspect of language that interests you such as: violent language, taboo language, informal language etc.

## ADVANCED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LANGUAGE

There follows a quiz which I used with my Sixth Form students to get them to develop their knowledge about language. It is helpful for English teachers to be familiar with these terms and ideas, even if they are not teaching A Level: many of the concepts are transferrable.

### KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LANGUAGE QUIZ: QUESTIONS

1. What do we mean by the active and passive voices of verbs? Analyse these sentences in this regard. 'I kicked the boy'. And 'The boy was kicked by me'. What is the difference in tone and approach?
2. What do we mean by the affix, suffix, and prefix of a word?
3. What does 'amelioration' mean in the terminology of language change and give an example of it. What is pejoration? Give an example of it. What do we mean by narrowing?
4. What do we mean by cohesion, coherence, anaphoric, cataphoric references and deixis in a text? Explain all these phrases with reference to one another. Analyse this passage in this regard: TEACHER: 'As I said previously, you need to make sure that you revise



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

all your key terminology. In the next lesson, we will be doing exam questions...by the way did anyone watch 'Eastenders' last night?'

5. VERBS. What do we mean by a verb, an auxiliary verb, and dynamic and stative verbs? What is a modal verb? What is a phrasal verb? What is the difference between a transitive and intransitive verb?

Analyse this sentence in this regard: 'I have done my best, but I am banging my head against a brick wall if no one listens. I will be listened to! You should all listen to me! I am talking now! You must listen to me! You should all be locked in a cage and electrocuted.'

6. What do we mean by co-ordination and subordination within a text? Analyse these sentences in this regard: 'He was a marvellous speaker and produced a great speech, which expostulated upon the wonders of the vacuum cleaner, which manages to clean up a carpet without causing any noise...'

7. Pronouns. What do we mean by first person, second person and third person pronouns? What are demonstrative pronouns. Analyse the use of pronouns in this passage: 'I really hate him, but you seem like to like him. You know, we really hate him, don't you? He thinks he is marvellous because he has powerful friends. They say he deserves a break, but this is nonsense. Those people don't know what they are talking about. I know better than that.'

8. What is diachronic variation? What is synchronic variation?

9. What do we mean by a morpheme, a phoneme, and a digraph? What is phonemic transcription?

10. What is phonics?

10. What is ellipsis?

11. What is etymology?

12. **Child Language Acquisition in a minute.** What is a holophrase? What is telegraphic speech? What is an LAD? What is overextension? What is overgeneralisation?

13. What do we mean by subject, verb, object? Analyse this sentence in this regard. The wretched man groaned, put his hand to his leaky chest and then fell on the floor.'

14. What do we mean by tags?

Knowledge about Language quiz: Answers

## Francis Gilbert

1. I kicked the boy -- active (VERY DIRECT)  
The boy was kicked by me -- **passive** (LESS DIRECT AND MORE FORMAL)

**Active voice** describes a direct action and states the verb subject and object, whereas in the passive voice the subject can be removed, creating a more anonymous and less dynamic, but often more sophisticated tone.

2. An **affix** is a **morpheme** that you add to a word to alter its meaning, a **prefix** is added to the beginning of the word, and a **suffix** to the end of a word.

3. **Amelioration** is when a word improves in meaning over time due to a **semantic shift**, and **pejoration** is the opposite i.e. a word becomes less desirable in meaning, for example, 'silly' which in Middle English as 'sely' used to mean happy. **Narrowing** is when a word becomes more specific in meaning, e.g. within the topic of Language and Technology, the word "file" has narrowed its meaning to refer exclusively to a document you are working on the computer.

4. **Cohesion** -- how clauses and sentences are linked together using conjunctives, **demonstrative** pronouns and/or punctuation to increase its fluency, which in turns contributes to the coherence of a text (how easily it is understood). An **anaphoric reference** is a demonstrative pronoun that refers to an event that has taken place BEFORE the time of the text, whereas a **cataphoric reference** refers to a future event that has not yet happened. **Deixis**, unlike cataphoric and anaphoric references refers to something that is going on at the same time as the text, but that which is outside of the context. Therefore, it is often accompanied by paralinguistic features such as pointing and **prosodic features** such as an increase in pitch and volume. 'As I said previously' and 'last night' are anaphoric references, and 'in the next lesson' is a cataphoric reference.

5. A **verb** is an action word that describes that something that has been done, that is being done or that will be done. An **auxiliary verb** is one which carries a grammatical function only. For example, 'have' in 'I have done' and 'do' in 'Do you know?' They are used mainly when forming **interrogatives** and when using the perfect tense. A **dynamic verb** is one which describes an action, usually a lively one such as 'dive' or 'jump', whereas a stative verb is one that is more necessary than anything else, and describes something mundane such as 'to be' or 'to have'. A modal verb is one that indicates degrees of certainty and other attitudes towards an action e.g. 'will' 'would'. A phrasal verb is one which consists of a main verb and a preposition e.g. 'go under' and 'lift up'.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

6. **Co-ordination** is the linking of clauses together using conjunctions such as 'and' 'but' and 'or'. Subordination is the linking of clauses together in such a way that it gives one clause more importance than the other, i.e. one can be used independently, and the other doesn't make sense on its own. In this instance, conjunctions such as 'which' and 'who' are used.

7. **Pronouns** are words that replace nouns to avoid repetition and keep sentences compact. First person pronouns are 'I', 'me' and 'my', second person pronouns are 'you', and 'yours' and third person pronouns are 'he' 'she' and 'his' etc. First person plural is 'us/ours' and third person plural is 'them/they'. **Demonstrative pronouns** are 'this' 'that' 'them' and 'those'.

8. **Diachronic variation** is the change in language over a period of time, whereas **synchronic variation** is variation, overlap or ambiguity in language at any one specific time.

9. A **morpheme** is a unit of meaning, i.e. the stem of a word, a **phoneme** is an individual unit of sound, e.g. a consonant, a vowel or a diagraph. A diagraph is a combination of two vowel sounds together that make an entirely new sound e.g. 'ou' 'ow'. A phonemic transcription is one which uses the IPA to make an almost exact written version of something that has been said.

10. **Phonics** is the idea that children can learn language by learning individual phonemes and how they are written, and by then putting them together to form their own words. This is in opposition to the whole book strategy.

11. An **ellipsis** is the omission of one or two words in a sentence.

12. **Etymology** is the study of the history and roots of words.

12. A **holophrase** is a one-word utterance. **Telegraphic speech** is a stage in CLA where a child can compose phrases of three or more morphemes. An LAD is a Language acquisition Device, a mechanism which Chomsky claims we are all born with and that helps us to understand the basic principles of grammar. **Overextension** is when a child overextends the semantic meaning of a word to more than one word, e.g. 'daisy' for all flowers. **Over-generalisation** is the over-use of a grammatical rule in cases where there are exceptions. For example, applying the past participle rule to the verb 'to fall', resulting in 'I fell'.

13. The **subject** of a sentence is the person who carries out the action, the verb is the action, and the object is the person/thing to which the action is done. 'The wretched man' is the subject, 'groaned' and 'fell' are the verbs, and 'his leaky chest' and 'the floor' are the objects.

## Francis Gilbert

'Wretched' and 'leaky' are adjectives, 'his' is a pronoun, 'to' and 'on' are prepositions, and 'the' is a definite article.

14. Tags are utterances added onto the end of sentences, often used by children to gain reassurance during acquisition e.g. 'it's raining, isn't it?'

## ACCENT

### QUESTIONS

What is accent? What kind of accent do you have? How are issues such as gender, age, ethnicity, social class revealed through people's accent?

Explain how and why accent is represented in this quote:

"And 'a can play the peanner, so 'tis said. Can play so clever that 'a can make a psalm tune sound as well as the merriest loose song a man can wish for."

"D'ye tell o't! A happy time for us, and I feel quite a new man! And how do she pay?" (Hardy, 2016, p. 65)

### DEFINITION

A distinctive way of pronouncing a language, especially one associated with a particular country, area, or social class.

### KEY POINTS

#### *PRONUNCIATION AND LEXIS*

Accent is the way people pronounce their words and is not to be confused with **dialect** which is the distinctive words and syntax that people use within local areas.

#### *LISTENING*

Students love listening to recording of different accents and discussing what they reveal about the speaker.

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/regional-voices/>

#### *ACCENTS*

Written language really struggles to represent accent, very few writers have succeeded in representing it faithfully without creating unintentional or intentional comedy. Thomas Hardy who grew up in rural Dorset was one of the few writers who succeeded in revealing the accent of his local speakers without representing them as stupid figures of fun.

### **SOCIAL CLASS AND REGIONAL IDENTITY**

Tom Leonard's *this is the news* is a great starting point for discussing accent and power. At the time of writing, the poem is quoted on this blog with an informative commentary about it: <https://s2mskirkwood.wordpress.com/2012/11/02/six-oclock-news-by-tom-leonard/>

*IPA*

Linguists represent accent using the International Phonetic Alphabet: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Phonetic\\_Alphabet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Phonetic_Alphabet)

## **COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE**

### **QUESTIONS**

What is colloquial language? Explore the effects it creates here:

**Gotcha! Our lads sink gunboat and hole cruiser**

Headline of the Sun in 1982 after a British missile sunk the General Belgrano ship.

You can find the front page here: <http://www.classicheadlines.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/gotcha.jpg>

It's raining cats and dogs.

The work wasn't up to scratch...

Are you getting the hang of it?

## **DIALECT**

### **QUESTIONS**

What is dialect? Explore the effects it creates here:

"We thought we heard a hand pawing about the door for the bobbin, but weren't sure 'twere not a dead leaf blowed across," said another. "Come in, shepherd; sure ye be welcome, though we don't know yer name." Far from the Madding Crowd (Hardy, 2016, p. 73)

The following are 'Geordie' dialect words, a dialect spoken in the Newcastle area of England:

## Francis Gilbert

bonny ('pretty'), burn ('stream'), canny ('quite, really, very'), cushat ('wood pigeon'), fogs ('first'), hadaway ('get away' or 'you must be joking!'), haway ('come on!').

For more information log onto the British Library website:

**<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/case-studies/geordie/lexis/>**

## GETTING STUDENTS TO LEARN ABOUT SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

### THE BASIC IDEA

One of the best ways to get students to engage with Shakespeare's language is to "translate" it into the modern idiom, put it into language which they find understandable.

### APPLYING IT

In order to get this right you need to do a few things before asking students to translate. First, students need a good idea of the overall plot of the play; this could be conveyed to them by giving them a decent plot summary, many of which can be found for free on the internet. Second, students need to understand the personalities of the characters and the settings of the play. Once again, this could be done by giving them a series of character profiles and an outline of the setting, or alternatively you could show a filmed version of the play if there is one.

Once they've secured the basics of plot, characterization and settings, you're ready to give them a section of the text to translate. Start small first of all, choose a speech and explain the situation of the speech to them if they're not clear about what is going on: when, why and where it happens in the play and so forth. You will also need to provide explanations of the really difficult phrases – any good educational edition of Shakespeare will do this. Then ask them to work in pairs: they should read the speech through carefully, annotating it, picking out phrases that can be translated, and phrases that they don't understand. David Crystal's *Shakespeare's Words* contains an excellent section where it points out the commonly used words in Shakespeare, arguing that Shakespeare should be treated as a foreign language with students needing to know the words here:  
<http://www.shakespeareswords.com/FEW>.

### WHAT'S THE POINT?

Shakespeare wrote his plays five hundred years ago in what is technically termed “Early Modern English”: many of the words he used may sound familiar but actually had different meanings back then. For example, a common verb like “owe” actually meant “own, possess, have” in his day (for more on Shakespeare’s ‘false friends’ read Crystal: <http://www.davidcrystal.com/?id=4247&fromsearch=true>). He actually needs to be translated to be fully understood. The task is intellectually demanding because it requires pupils not only to translate but also consider the different contexts. The linguist and author David Crystal has written very eloquently about the need for Shakespeare to be translated: many articles about Shakespeare can found on his website ([www.davidcrystal.com](http://www.davidcrystal.com))

### TRICKS OF THE TRADE

The secret to a good translation is to make it sound natural: an extremely difficult thing to do. After a rough draft of the modern translation, you should ask students to consider updating the setting, the characters and the plot and “re-translating” their rough translation into this modern setting. This may mean that they stray quite a bit from the text. Allow them this latitude if they’ve done a good literal translation where they’ve looked closely at the original.

If you know your class definitely won’t cope with translating whole chunks of Shakespeare, then get them to update the plot, characters and setting into the modern day, asking them to write a modern version of either the whole play or a particular section that seems to grab them. For example, when I did ‘As You Like It’ with a difficult Year 9 class, I gave some students the task of re-telling the story of the warring, jealous brothers Orlando and Oliver, while others focused upon Rosalind pretending to be a man.

You can differentiate the work easily by giving Gifted and Talented students more difficult passages or scenes, and less able students simpler sections of the text. For students who are struggling, printing out a No Fear Shakespeare version of the text can help: <http://nfs.sparknotes.com/> These are modern versions of the play but they are very literal and clunky; they will need to be “re-translated” again. My Study Guide Edition of *Romeo and Juliet* contains a modern translation as well.

After they've annotated the text, ask them to write a rough draft of their translation and get it ready to perform to the class. You and the class can critique it.

#### VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Get students to work in groups on performing a version of their script, bringing in costumes and learning the lines they have written. This really brings the play alive.

Set up a debate about whether modernizing Shakespeare is a good or bad thing entitled: *Modernising Shakespeare: sacrilege or savior?* My article about how I was attacked in *The Daily Telegraph* for modernizing Shakespeare could be a good place to start with sparking off a debate: <http://www.localschoolsnetwork.org.uk/2011/04/toby-young-savages-the-creative-teaching-techniques-that-enable-teachers-like-me-to-get-great-results/>

#### PUTTING PEN TO PAPER

The great advantage of translating Shakespeare is that it does get students to write often significant amounts based on Shakespeare. If they are struggling, you may need to scaffold by showing them your own attempts or writing along with them in the class. Don't be afraid to voice your worries, fears and difficulties over it. When I wrote, **Starcrossed**, my teenage version of Romeo and Juliet I found it helpful to get my students' feedback.

Writing to analyse, review and comment: Get your students to write an analytical essay after they've done their translation about how and why they translated Shakespeare in the way they did, evaluating its success. The title could be 'Translating Shakespeare'.

Writing to inform, explain and describe: Get students to write an informative leaflet about how to translate Shakespeare, offering their own texts.

Writing to persuade, argue and advise: They could write up their debate in the form of a persuasive speech entitled, *Modernising Shakespeare: sacrilege or savior?*

#### WHIZZING IT

Get your students to write "teenage versions" of Shakespeare and publish them as e-Books. There's a demand for this material.



If your students are artistically minded, get them to do a comic version of a scene. This website has more information about comic book versions of Shakespeare: <http://www.shakespearecomics.com/>

Get your students to film their scene. I've done this and it's worked well with students who are studying media as well.

## TOP TIPS

### UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT

Get your students to understand the context in which language arises from: local region, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, social class, profession, situation all deeply affect how and what is spoken and written.

### LANGUAGE IS CONSTANTLY CHANGING

Language never stays the same. It is always being used in different ways; new expressions, new words (neologisms), new grammatical structures are constantly forming.

### CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

Celebrate the diversity of the ways in which people speak. Be mindful of the ways in which some people are made to feel ashamed of their speech, writing etc. Why is this?

### INVESTIGATE

As has been said previously, get your students to investigate language like a detective, finding things of interest to them.

### *FURTHER RESEARCH*

The BBC Voices website is a rich treasure trove for finding good materials to teach with:

**<http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/>**

This article examines how accent and dialect impacts upon reading and writing skills:

**[http://www.snell.me.uk/wp-content/uploads/Paper-for-CJE-Snell-Andrews\\_Final-accepted-version.pdf](http://www.snell.me.uk/wp-content/uploads/Paper-for-CJE-Snell-Andrews_Final-accepted-version.pdf)**

There are a number of important books/articles in this area as well:

Barrs, M. (1990) *Words not Numbers: Assessment in English*, Short Run Press.

Carter, R., & Language in the National Curriculum Project. (1991). *Knowledge about language and the curriculum: The LINC reader*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Bousted, M. (2001) Editorial: 'O Brave new World' in *English in Education*, 35, 3.

Coles, J. (1999) 'Literacy: the Junk-Food Version?' in *Education & Social Justice*.

D'Arcy, P. (2002) 'A Comparison between Two Kinds of Responses, Interpretive or Skills-based' in *English in Education*, 36, 2.

Hilton, M. (2001) 'Writing Process and Progress: where do we go from here?' in *English in Education*, 35, 1

Kress, G et al. 2005 *English in Urban Classrooms*.

Locke, T. (2010). *Beyond the grammar wars a resource for teachers and students on developing language knowledge in the English/literacy classroom*. London: Routledge.

Marshall, R. (2001) 'Editorial: Revolting Literacy' in *English in Education*, 36, 2.

### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about the teaching of knowledge about language?

## DIGITAL MEDIA SKILLS: USING ICT, VIDEO, IMAGES ETC

### KEY POINTS

You are going to learn more about using ICT, video and images both as an aid to teaching but also how you use them in your life.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon what computers, videos, and pictures mean in your life.

### TOP TIPS

#### BE MINDFUL ABOUT ICT

Use ICT mindfully and in an organised way. Put your resources into relevant folders, using cloud resources such as Google docs, Dropbox etc.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

I categorise my work carefully, putting resources into folders by Year 7 and/or subject if necessary.

### **BREAKS**

Don't become consumed by the computer: take plenty of breaks and try if you can to have a screen-free day in terms of looking at your 'work'. Working on the computer is quite stressful and also bizarrely addictive.

### **MINDFUL RESEARCH**

Encourage your students to use the resources on the internet in a mindful fashion, teaching them how to search for good material using the relevant search engine. Model how to do it with them.

### **MINDFUL RECORDING**

Use video/audio mindfully: record yourself explaining important concepts/texts and use these recordings in the classroom. It can be an excellent of freeing yourself from talking too much in class and students like it if you have made the effort, even if the results are not professional.

### **PERMISSIONS**

Get relevant permissions for filming/photographing your students in writing. You can get into serious trouble without the relevant school/parental permissions.

### **VIDEO AND LEARNING**

Do video your own students though and get students to view their performances etc. and evaluate them according to the relevant criteria.

### **VISUALS**

Use pictures/photographs mindfully in the classroom, they can be a great stimulus for all sorts of writing, reading and discussion.

### **BACK-UP**

Always have a back-up plan in case the technology fails. Always have a story to write, a book to read etc as a failsafe if the video/computers are not working, which can happen a lot. Also back-up any important files onto a memory stick etc.

### **VARY COMPUTER LESSONS**

Break up "computer" lessons with plenty of discussion and reflection time, getting students to report back on their progress. Don't let computer lessons drift with students simply sitting for long periods of time in front of computers without communicating. The great advantages of the "real-life" classroom is that students can inter-act in real-time. In

other words, plan your computer lessons as carefully as you would a “normal” lesson.

#### BE MINDFUL OF YOUR OWN USE

Be very careful about your own internet use on school computers and in school generally. Never type in dodgy phrases or search for inappropriate things. Make sure that you are restrained on social media, particularly about staff, students or parents. The libel/defamation laws apply to you, and you have a duty of care to be respectful towards all students, staff and carers.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

Kupiainen, R. (2013). *Media and digital literacies in secondary school*. New York: P. Lang.

Anderson, J., & Macleroy, V. (2016). *Multilingual digital storytelling engaging creatively and critically with literacy* (Routledge research in education). London: Routledge.

Obviously, advice quickly goes out of date in this field so it’s worth doing your own research. At the time of writing, these links proved useful.

There are some useful resources to use in the classroom here:

**<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/teachers-and-professionals/teaching-resources>**

These guides are helpful:

**<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2012/jul/26/social-media-teacher-guide>**

The BFI have good resources for teachers:

**<http://www.bfi.org.uk/education-research/teaching-film-tv-media-studies>**

Film Education are good too:

**<http://www.filmeducation.org/resources/>**

The Media Magazine is lively and very helpful:

**<https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/media-magazine>**

#### REVIEWING YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt about ICT, using video and images from this section of the book?

## CORE TEACHING STRATEGIES

### KEY POINTS

You are going to reflect upon what you have learnt overall from reading this book, drawing out the core lessons.

### MINDFUL MEDITATION, FREE WRITING & REFLECTION

Reflect upon what you have learnt from reading this book, considering any images, feelings or ideas that come to mind.

### COMMENTARY

To finish off I have outlined some of the core teaching strategies that I think will help you become a mindful and effective English teacher. In the Kindle version, you will be able to click on the links which will then send you to the relevant website.

### STARTING LESSONS

#### *TEACHING STRATEGY: MINDFULNESS AND CREATIVE VISUALISATION MEDITATIONS*

##### HOW TO TEACH IT

Use either the mindfulness meditations suggested in this book or look at ones led by Mark Williams, Danny Penman or Thích Nhất Hạnh, and have a go at adapting them for your classroom. Consider your purpose in using the meditation carefully, and ask for further training if necessary.

##### WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE

The book has outlined some of the reasons why these sorts of meditations work, but in brief they are: they bring moments of calm and relaxation to learning which assist with the learning process, they aid meta-cognition and they develop creativity.

#### *TEACHING STRATEGY: ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE*

##### HOW TO TEACH IT

Ask students to draw **concept maps** of what they know about a topic; to ask a few questions/quiz them; to discuss in pairs/groups what they know; a word association game.

*WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE*

This is a classic constructivist technique; by recalling information that they already know, this helps them embed the new learning later on. You can find many ideas and the theory **here**.

*TEACHING STRATEGY SET CHALLENGING LEARNING GOALS*

HOW TO TEACH IT

In clear language, you need to set out what you want children to learn with the topic and factor in review time so that students can see if they learnt what they intended to learn. Learning goals work best when students make their own challenging goals related to the lesson. In English, you should have reading, writing, spoken language and grammar/vocabulary goals. Typical goals in English might be:

**Reading:** to improve my reading skills by working out the meaning of difficult words/passages by myself or dialoguing with partners, i.e. not being spoon-fed the answer.

**Writing:** to improve my ability to provide a wider range of points in my writing (or more evidence/analysis)

**Spoken language:** to improve my ability to provide evidence for my points/develop a point.

**Grammar and vocabulary:** to improve my ability to use a wider vocabulary or more complex words. To vary my sentences more.

Students need to consider HOW they will attain their learning goals, e.g. by learning vocabulary, by reading more etc.

*WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE*

This is pure constructivism; people learn best when they have an idea what they need to know to learn a topic.

You can find out more **here**.

*TEACHING STRATEGY: ADVANCE ORGANISERS*

HOW TO TEACH IT

Students or teachers write SIX words which summarise the topic which they are going to study, making guesses if necessary. The teacher then corrects their predictions.

*WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE*

Again, more constructivism; students have the big picture in their minds. You can find much more on this topic **here**.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

### **TEACHING STRATEGY EXPERIMENTAL ENQUIRY**

#### **HOW TO TEACH IT**

Get students to ask a question of what they might find out in the lesson and test it out to see if it occurs.

#### **WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE**

Again more constructivism; students construct an idea in their heads about what they might learn and prove/disprove that. Teacher corrects misunderstandings by the end of the lesson. You can find out more **here**.

### **MAIN PART OF THE LESSON**

#### **TEACHING STRATEGY COGNITIVE CHALLENGE OR DISSONANCE**

#### **HOW TO TEACH IT**

This strategy is sometimes known as ‘desirable difficulties’. You need to choose a topic/text which is going to “push” students of all levels. This is difficult and takes thought; the topic needs to be difficult enough so that students learn something but not too difficult. High expectations of students is essential.

#### **WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE**

This is what learning is! You only learn when you learn new stuff! If students are reading texts which are undemanding either in terms of language or topic, they won’t learn anything. It’s very easy to give students “busy” work, which is undemanding. There is a good article on this **here**.

#### **TEACHING STRATEGY SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES: TEACHING BY ANALOGY.**

#### **HOW TO TEACH IT**

This is all about getting students to make comparisons and contrasts between and within texts, seeing the similarities and differences between them. Marzano found this to be the most effective teaching technique. In English, you can do this in many ways. You can ask students to fill in charts which illustrate, say, the similarities and differences between characters in a book, between the beginnings and ends of a text, etc. Or you can get them to compare different texts.

#### **WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE**

This is how the mind and learning works: you learn something when you notice it is different from another thing. As the French philosopher

Gilles Deleuze argued, the world is fundamentally built on “repetition and difference”. You can find more on Marzano’s approach to the topic **here**.

#### *TEACHING STRATEGY GOALS AND FEEDBACK (AFL)*

##### HOW TO TEACH IT

If students have a goal to work towards (to improve their reading/writing etc) and get feedback on whether they have achieved that goal, it is very effective. Peer feedback using the medal and the mission approach is very effective.

##### WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE

John Hattie and William/Black have conducted a great deal of research on this area. The **information on Hattie’s website is very useful**.

#### *TEACHING STRATEGY SUMMARISING AND NOTE-TAKING*

##### HOW TO TEACH IT

This is very important with English; asking students to summarise a key concept, a chapter of a book, a poem in their own words is crucial. You can get them to do this in the form of a graphic organiser, or notes, or continuous writing. Getting students to remove inessential information is particularly effective, see **here**.

##### WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE

This approach really helps promote comprehension skills in students. There’s a really good summary of how to do this **here**.

#### *TEACHING STRATEGY RECIPROCAL TEACHING (OR READING)*

##### HOW TO TEACH IT

This is where you get students to read texts in groups, with one person being a teacher who guides the group for one round of reading before the teaching role moves on to another member of the group. Students have to discuss what the passage is about, predict what might happen next and then evaluate their reading. There is a good summary **here**.

##### WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE

This is a classic social constructivist technique of the sort Vygotsky advocated; it is all about students realising that reading is fundamentally a dialogic process, which involves a conversation with the text and the world in order to understand it.



**TEACHING STRATEGY READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES**

**HOW TO TEACH IT**

This is like Reciprocal Teaching; it asks students to monitor their reading and see whether they understand something, making sure that they correct themselves if they don't understand. **The Reading Rockets website** is particularly good at summarising these strategies; although it is aimed at primary school children, ALL the techniques are relevant at secondary level.

**WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE**

This approach works because it is all about meta-cognition and social constructivism; students learn to reflect upon their own reading processes and to share their thoughts with their partners, problem-solving together. For more, see the **EEF website**.

**TEACHING STRATEGY COLLABORATIVE LEARNING**

**HOW TO TEACH IT**

Getting students to discuss issues is very important; they need to be trained to think by talking things through by asking high order questions, every person should have a role in a group. You can find out more **here** on the EEF website.

**WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE**

Again, a socially constructivist idea which is all about realising that learning happens in a social environment and is given meaning by social validation. The **Collaborative Learning** project is quite old but it has some really wonderful activities which are still valid, the worksheets are marvellous. Please **check it out!**

**TEACHING STRATEGY: ORAL LANGUAGE INTERVENTION, DIALOGIC TEACHING**

**HOW TO TEACH IT**

This method is sometimes called Dialogic Teaching, and it is all about giving children critical thinking skills; children are taught to ask high order questions. It is particularly appropriate for a number of English topics, particularly when you are looking at the themes in a text; you could use circle time to interrogate a particular theme, or a literary technique. For

**WHY IT WORKS: THE THEORY & EVIDENCE**

This is all about dialogic teaching; getting students to think in more interesting and challenging ways by talking. Robin Alexander is particular

good on this. Read a seminal paper **here**. The Oracy Assessment toolkit is very useful **too**. For more links, look at **EEF's web page** on the topic.

*TEACHING STRATEGY PEER TUTORING*

HOW TO TEACH IT

Getting one student to teach another, or explain a topic to another is very effective; this can be done within a small group setting or to the whole class. A word of warning; it needs to be closely monitored by the teacher so that misunderstandings are corrected, and it needs to be focused. So, for example, read a passage from a book then ask one partner to explain the passage to their partner, then report back etc.

WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE

Social constructivism in action; students learn more by explain a topic. You will find this as a teacher; as you explain something, you learn more about it. For more, see the **EEF's website**.

*TEACHING STRATEGY META-COGNITION AND SELF-REGULATION*

HOW TO TEACH IT

This is when you get students talking about what they have learnt, reflecting upon the processes that have helped them learn, getting them thinking about what motivates them to learn, and thinking about how they 'learn to learn'.

WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE

Thinking about thinking is very effective; it helps solidify concepts in students' minds. You can find all the links on the **EEF website** for this.

*ENDS OF LESSONS*

*TEACHING STRATEGY: INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECTS OR MEANINGFUL HOMEWORK*

HOW TO TEACH IT

Setting meaningful, purposeful homework which nurtures independent learning can really improve students' learning. But it has to be meaningful and motivational! Shorter, quality homework is better than longer, boring homework. Never set it as a punishment.

WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE

This is all about encouraging independent learning.

**TEACHING STRATEGY: META-COGNITION**

**HOW TO TEACH IT**

Using the plenary to get students to reflect upon what they have learnt.

**WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE**

Cognitive constructivism in action; getting students to think about thinking.

**TEACHING STRATEGY: GOALS AND FEEDBACK**

**HOW TO TEACH IT**

Use the end of the lesson for students to reflect upon whether they have met their goal and set new goals.

**WHY IT WORKS: THEORY & EVIDENCE**

Encourages long-term thinking, embeds a very good and effective learning habit.

## **ANALYSING READING SKILLS**

Some years ago, I devised the following reading checklists for my students. Look at it and consider whether you think students should reflect upon their reading skills in this way. Bear in mind, the checklist is addressed to students, not teachers and is in a different Times Roman font because of this.

### **ANALYSING YOUR READING SKILLS CHECKLIST FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**READING STRATEGIES SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECK-LIST**

Consider whether you **never**, **rarely**, **sometimes**, or **often** do these things before reading a book

**PRE-READING STRATEGIES**

- I think about **why** I am reading a text;
- I think about the cover, title and topic.
- I read the back cover, the print on the inside of the jacket and introductions.
- I ask questions about the text and try to predict what will happen in it.
- I skim the pictures, charts, and graphs.
- I read headings and words in bold- faced type.
- I think about what I know about the topic.
- I research the topic/author.
- I skim for difficult vocabulary, look it up and learn it before reading.
- I am usually familiar with the “genre” (type) of text and can work out what might be written from that.

## Francis Gilbert

### *WHILE READING STRATEGIES*

- I stop and check to see if I understand what I'm reading;
- I discover the meaning of unfamiliar words by chunking and/or reading them aloud.
- I discover the meaning of unfamiliar words by reading ahead and rereading.
- I guess the meanings of words and then check from the overall meaning of the passage to see if I'm right.
- I discover the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues.
- I discover the meaning of unfamiliar words by asking somebody.
- I reread the text in order to understand confusing parts.
- I skim a difficult passage and return to it once I've got the overall meaning of the page/section.
- I decide to make a real effort to work out what difficult passages might mean.
- I spot key words that I know and use these words as guides to help me understand difficult passages.
- I skim a passage or page, spot difficult vocabulary, look up the meanings and write them down, and **then** read the passage.
- I can spot description and dialogue in a text and this gives me a clue about what might happen.
- I can spot the subject of long, complex sentences and this helps me work out the meaning.
- I look at the beginnings of paragraphs carefully and gain a sense of what the paragraph might be about.
- I use pictures, graphs, and charts to help me understand confusing parts.
- I predict what will happen and adjust my predictions as I read.
- I make an effort to think about how the text is similar and different to other texts I've read.
- I build a mental picture of what is happening in my mind.
- I make an effort to feel strongly about a situation, characters or topic in a text.
- I can identify with characters and situations in a text.
- I think about how a text relates to my own life and situations I know.
- I read the text aloud to help me understand it better.
- I enjoy reading difficult passages because they are challenging.
- I enjoy unusual language and unusual situations in a text.
- I feel motivated to read texts and I'm always dipping into texts I'm not familiar with in the library/on the internet.
- I think about how a book is appealing to its audience.
- I think about what a book is trying to do: its purposes.

### *POST-READING STRATEGIES*

- I draw a flow chart or diagram to help me under a text better.
- I do a spider diagram to work out all I know about a text.
- I do further research into a text by looking up more about it in the library/internet.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

- I listen to the audio version of the text.
- I think about why I like or disliked the reading text.
- I re-read my favourite parts of a text.
- I re-read to find more detailed information.
- I make a mental picture of characters, places and ideas.
- I predict what might happen to a character if the story continued.
- I decide whether the text met my purpose for reading.
- I discuss the book with other students, trying to work out what it is about.
- I discuss the ideas in a book with other students.
- I discuss what might happen next with other students.
- I get help with a text from other students.
- I set myself clear, achievable goals as to how much I am going to read next and when I will do this by.
- Now set yourself some reading targets.

### ***YOUR READING JOURNAL***

Using this checklist to give you ideas, begin your reading journal for the book you are reading by discussing it in detail. Discuss your thoughts and feelings as you read your book section by section: what you felt when you first picked it (curiosity, anxiety, joy etc), what you felt as you read the first, second and third parts. What really helped you to understand it better? What passages/ideas did you find difficult to understand and why? Think about whether you've found it difficult to gain a picture of what's happening in your head, or you have found it difficult to "feel" for the characters and situations, and why this might be the case.

### **MINDFUL REVIEW OF THE CHECKLIST**

What is the checklist trying to do with students? Think about how it tries to use cognitive constructivist ideas to inform its thinking in that it is trying to get students to work independently and learn for themselves. How might a checklist achieve success? What other factors have to accompany it? Consider how you might use in your classroom, drawing up some learning intentions to accompany it and/or lesson plans.

## TERMS TO TEACH SECONDARY STUDENTS

What follows is a list of key terms and phrases you should teach your students. The best way to teach them is to get the students discussing their responses in open discussions or by writing freely initially using the terms, and then move to get them to use them in more formal contexts such as formal essays. Try to be imaginative in the way you teach the phrases, modelling using them repeatedly in your own speech.

### ANALYSING STORIES

#### NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Narrative structure is about two things: the content of a story and the form used to tell the story. Two common ways to describe these two parts of narrative structure are story and plot.

E.g. *Cinderella*

- Opening: Cinders lives with her stepmother and ugly sisters
- Complication: There's a ball but Cinders can't go.
- Crisis: The Fairy Godmother enables Cinders to go.
- Climax: The Prince falls in love with Cinders but she leaves at midnight.
- Resolution: The Prince finds that the slipper fits Cinders' feet
- Effect

A well-structured story creates suspense, excitement, engagement.

Nearly all stories have a beginning, middle and an end, or an opening, complications, crisis, climax and resolution.

#### OPENING

The beginning of a story.

Opening: In 'Of Mice and Men' we are introduced to Lennie and George.

The opening often sets the scene; introduces the characters and setting

Complication = A problem or problems occur in a story.

Complication: Lennie crushes Curley's hand.

Complications happen quite early on in a story. They create suspense.

#### CRISIS

The problems get worse.

Crisis: Lennie kills Curley's wife.

The story becomes more involved.

#### CLIMAX

The most exciting part of a story when the conflict is the most intense.

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Climax: George shoots Lennie.

This should be a moment of high drama with the conflict of a story at its most extreme.

### **RESOLUTION**

The way a story is “wrapped up” or ended.

Resolution: George and Slim talk about Lennie.

The resolution can either “tie up” the story neatly or end on a note of uncertainty.

### **DRAMATIC IRONY (DI)**

This is when the audience knows something a character does not.

We, the audience, are told that that Romeo and Juliet will fall in love and die at the beginning of the play but no character knows this.

DI can create real comedy (Look behind you! In pantomime) or suspense: we know there’s a killer in the house but the other characters do not.

### **SUSPENSE**

A state or feeling of excited or anxious uncertainty about what may happen.

Fairy tales create suspense because we worry that the protagonist (main character) will be hurt or won’t get what they want or deserve.

All effective stories create suspense, often because we identify with particular situations or characters. You need to talk at length about this.

### **DRAMATIC MOMENT**

An important moment in a story.

Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time.

What is a dramatic moment is a personal choice.

### **DESCRIPTION**

Writing which describes a setting, character or situation.

Steinbeck begins his chapters in ‘Of Mice and Men’ with description of the setting and characters.

It builds a picture in your head of what a place/person is like.

### **DIALOGUE**

Writing which is a conversation between people.

“Hello,” said John.

“I’m fine,” said Jane.

## Francis Gilbert

Very important for dramatizing scenes, making them come alive. Plays are mostly dialogue.

### SUSPENSEFUL STORIES

Stories which set out to create suspense.

Horror or thriller stories.

Certain genres deliberately set out to create suspense.

### COMIC STORIES

Funny stories such as 'Friends' or 'Alice in Wonderland'

Think hard about how and why the story creates comedy.

### TRAGIC STORIES

Sad stories which usually involve the main character dying at the end, e.g. *Romeo and Juliet*. Tragedy has gone out of fashion recently because modern audiences don't like to see the heroes die, but Shakespeare's audiences loved the concept.

### GENRE

The type of story; the ingredients that make up a type of story, e.g. Horror, Western, Science Fiction.

The type of story affects the STRUCTURE of a story because certain things happen in certain genres, e.g. there's usually a monster of some sort in the horror genre.

### SETTINGS

The place or places where a story is set:

Haunted house, the bunkhouse (in 'Of Mice and Men') Juliet's balcony;

The setting is very important in creating a sense of "context" for a story, situating it in a particular place and time. It also helps evoke particular moods, e.g. a foggy moor creates a sinister mood.

### MOOD

Mood is the feeling a piece of literature arouses in the reader: happy, sad, peaceful, etc.

The mood of *Romeo and Juliet* in Acts 1-2 is largely happy and joyful, but very sad from Acts 3-5.

This is a personal thing and needs a reader to provide evidence for their points.



## TONE

in written composition, is an attitude of a writer toward a subject or an audience. Tone is generally conveyed through the choice of words or the viewpoint of a writer on a particular subject.

The tone in 'Of Mice and Men' is largely serious; the writer doesn't make fun of his characters but takes them seriously, treating characters like Lennie/Candy with respect rather than making of them.

Tone may be formal, informal, intimate, solemn, sombre, playful, serious, ironic, condescending, or many other possible attitudes.

## CHARACTERS

The people in a story.

Discuss what we feel and think about various characters.

## CHARACTERISATIONS

The concept of creating characters for a narrative. It is a literary element and may be employed in dramatic works of art or everyday conversation. Characters may be presented by means of description, through their actions, speech, or thoughts.

Juliet is a believable, engaging characterisation because she is both naïve, clever and passionate.

**The BBC Bitesize website** is good on this issue.

## PROTAGONIST

The main character in a story, usually the "goodie"

The protagonists in 'Romeo and Juliet' are Romeo and Juliet

The protagonists are usually set up in opposition to the antagonists; much suspense is generated when they come into conflict.

## ANTAGONIST

The "baddie"; the persons or people who oppose the protagonist.

The antagonists 'Romeo and Juliet' are the feuding families, Tybalt, and fate?

We usually feel strong feelings of hatred/disgust for the antagonists.

## SYMPATHETIC PORTRAYAL

This is when we feel "on the side" of a particular character

We feel a great deal of sympathy for Lennie and George because they are victims trying their best to escape from their situation.

We often cry or feel very moved by certain sympathetic portrayals.

## Francis Gilbert

### UNSYMPATHETIC PORTRAYAL

This is when we feel we don't like a character.

Curley is a very unsympathetic portrayal; we really don't like anything about him.

Sometimes an author clearly intends for us not to like a character, but sometimes not. For example, I don't feel much sympathy for Romeo but I know Shakespeare wants me to.

### THEMES

The main ideas in a text.

'Romeo and Juliet' is about love, hatred, fate. 'Of Mice and Men' is about prejudice, social injustice, and euthanasia.

The themes of a text affect its structure: 'Of Mice and Men' reveals social injustice because George and Lennie are treated badly because they are poor.

### CONTEXT

This is a few things: the world a story creates in your mind and the worlds that it comes from.

There are two major contexts:

- Contexts of writing: the world a text comes from.
- Contexts of reading: the world it creates in the reader's mind

'Romeo and Juliet' makes more sense when you understand the world Shakespeare lived in: it was written 500 years old and written for a stage where there was no scenery etc.

Baz Luhrmann brings a different context to 'Romeo and Juliet' by setting it in a modern city.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL

Literally "of the mind"; related to the mental and emotional state of a person.

Many pieces of writing are psychological in that they show how people might react in certain situations.

'Of Mice and Men' is a very psychological novel because we see how people respond differently, e.g. George is cautious and caring, Curley is angry and mean, his wife dreams of a better life and feels trapped.

### REALISM

Whether a text is realistic or not; whether it seems "real" either as a situation or it seems "psychologically realistic".

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

‘Of Mice and Men’ is a “realistic” text because it depicts a situation which actually happened. ‘Romeo and Juliet’ is not “realistic” in the sense that it is quite implausible as a story, but it has psychological realism because we can see it is representing people’s minds in a realistic way, just not their situations.

This is a tricky concept and needs some “real” thought!

### **IMAGERY**

#### **IMAGERY**

Word pictures which can include:

- Comparisons
- Metaphors
- Similes
- Personification

Imagery makes you think, feel, see things in your mind.

#### **VISUAL IMAGERY**

Word pictures = Any visual description. Makes you see things in your mind.

#### **IMAGE**

A word picture. Any visual description.

#### **METAPHOR**

A direct comparison. E.g. ‘Juliet is the sun’. Makes you think, feel, see things in your mind.

#### **SIMILE**

An indirect comparison. E.g. ‘Juliet is like the sun’ (not what Romeo says). Makes you think, feel, see things in your mind.

#### **PERSONIFICATION**

Comparing an object to a person. E.g. The sun smiled. Makes you think of an object in human terms; makes the world come alive.

#### **ANALOGIES**

a comparison between one thing and another, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification. E.g. the analogy between the heart and the pump. Really helps you understand something difficult.

#### **POETIC DEVICES/TECHNIQUES**

Any poetic technique, often rhythm/rhyme, the use of verses/stanzas. Anything that makes a piece of writing seem like poetry. Often a writer

draws attention to the language by using poetic devices. This PDF is useful.

#### ALLEGORY

A story, poem, or picture which can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one. E.g. Animal Farm. Makes you think again about an issue; makes you think in a different way about an issue.

#### FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figurative language is language that uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation.

Often using metaphors/similes, e.g. "your future looks sunny".

#### READER RESPONSE CUES

What follow are phrases for your students to adapt and use when writing/talking about their reading. The key phrase is in *italics*.

*This passage is about...because...*

OR: *In this extract, we learn more about....because*

OR: *We delve deeper into the story/characters here because we see them....*

This is a very important thing for students to do: **summarise** the passage briefly in their own words.

E.g. Act 1, Scene 4 of 'Romeo and Juliet': "In this scene, we see Romeo interact with his friends Benvolio and Mercutio. We are introduced to Mercutio here; we see him behaving in a typically outrageous fashion when he talks about Queen Mab..."

*This extract/passage/poem/ quote is fascinating because...*

Find as many synonyms for fascinating as you can as a teacher; e.g. engaging, entrancing; magical, wondrous etc. You need to get students positive about literature.

Students should use sentences like this a great deal in their critical essays. They should explain why something is fascinating by using relevant connectives like "because" "as a result" "as a consequence", although these phrases should not be over-used.

*The writer captivates us with his/her use of imagery because...*

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

Learn about imagery = the poetic devices in a text; they make us **think**, **feel** and **see** things in our minds.

Comparisons = metaphors, similes, personification.

*The story is structured so that we are constantly kept guessing as to what will happen...*

Students should learn about structure: structure is the key things that happen, but they need to think about what the structure of a story makes the audience think, feel and see.

Most texts have a clear opening, complication, crisis, climax, resolution; moments of high drama/moments when the tension is reduced, calmer moments...

*The figurative language deployed compels me to think about certain key issues...*

Figurative language = the language which makes comparisons e.g. metaphor, similes, personification, symbols.

*This passage uses some emotive adjectives which make me feel ... because....*

Adjective = describes a noun (a person, place or thing) e.g. the **angry** man.

Get students to discuss how they feel when they read a particular passage and why; the key thing is to discuss their emotional response in a detailed way, providing evidence to back up their points.

*The writer uses certain concrete nouns which evoke a particular world or milieu...*

Concrete nouns = things you can touch/feel/see.

Get students to discuss the images created in their heads when they read certain nouns. Concrete nouns create specific settings/characters because they are representations of things.

*The **tone or mood** of this passage is funny/sad/ironic because...*

Mood/Tone = the way the word choices make us feel; get students to explore their feelings and why they feel a certain way when they read specific words etc, get them to pick out words/phrases which create a particular tone.

Francis Gilbert

*This is a thought-provoking image/word/phrase etc because...*

Get students to discuss the ways in which particular words/images make them think; explore your thoughts and why they think in a certain way when they read a passage.

Pick out words/phrases which make you think.

After they have got the idea, they should begin to improve their sentences by speaking and writing about their reading in more creative ways. See sections on Reciprocal Reading for this.

## CONCLUSION

### TOP TIPS

#### BE MINDFUL

Treat yourself with compassion; be kind to yourself. If you are feeling stressed, congratulate yourself for becoming aware that you are stressed, then take a break, and do a mindful meditation, breathing in so that you are calming, breathing out so that you are smiling. The practice is not to get rid of your stress but become mindful of it, treat it with compassion, say to yourself that it's OK to be stressed. Watch your stress from afar, be with your feelings for a bit, accept them, then return to your breathing, counting 1-5 to keep focus.

#### BE GRATEFUL

This is not about accepting your current situation, it is more about finding out what you like about it carefully and mindfully, and then seeking to change the things you don't like. There's nothing facile about it: you are not ignoring the 'bad things', but rather focusing upon what you enjoy about your job and life. Take a few moments to feel grateful you are alive, that you have a job that has meaning and purpose. Mindfully consider the other things to be grateful for. Thích Nhất Hạnh's book *Work* (Hạnh, 2008) is good on this.

#### COLLABORATE

The key to being a successful teacher is to collaborate with colleagues and students in a productive way. Avoid moaning too much with them, but try and talk in a positive way about your work. We are all dependent upon each other. As the Inspector says at the end of *An Inspector Calls*, if we don't learn that lesson now, we will learn it in 'fire and blood'. We are

reliant on upon each other for shelter, love, work, and dependent upon the earth for the air we breathe, the earth for food, and the sky for the water we drink. Everything is inter-connected, ultimately everything is 'one'.

#### CONNECT

Make connections between topics you teach and the situations you encounter in the world. 'Only connect' as E. M. Forster says. (Forster, 2012). Learn that everything is inter-connected. We are not beings, but 'interbeings' as Thích Nhất Hạnh says (Thich Nhat Hanh, Helen Tworokov, 1995): reliant on each other in all sorts of ways, some obvious, some not.

#### PRODUCTIVE DISCOMFORT

Learn to live with discomfort and feelings of anxiety when you want to get things done: don't expect to be relaxed much of the time, but rather acknowledge your feelings of discomfort, learn to let them 'be', embrace them in mindful awareness (Leahy, 2012).

#### IMPERFECT SUCCESS

Get things done and acknowledge that you've done them; put in the required effort and 'close the deal down'. For example, do your marking efficiently, don't waste time on fruitless tasks. What you've done may not be perfect, but you've tried (Leahy, 2012).

#### EVERYTHING CHANGES

Accepting that everything is constantly changing is an important part of enjoying your work as a teacher: your pupils will grow up fast, what you teach is always changing, schools change quickly. Learn to accept this.

#### REST WELL

I recommend getting a yoga mat for work so that you can lie on it for a few minutes if you are feeling tired, shut your eyes, concentrate upon your breathing and let your body sink into the ground, feeling the tensions slip away. Also learn to sleep mindfully, doing breathing exercises if you wake in the night and not beating yourself up for not sleeping well.

#### MAGIC BAG

Have a 'magic bag' (either literal or metaphorical) of certain well-worn teaching strategies which you can use regularly (or when you're stuck for ideas) such as: getting students to write stories, poems, autobiographical pieces; drama exercises which get students to role-play and improvise

situations; core learning objectives that you return to again and again; AfL strategies such as peer and self-assessment which you use regularly; getting students to compare/contrast; getting students to discuss things purposefully in pairs/groups; getting students to ask and answer certain questions; getting students to summarise and take notes; getting students to be calm and be mindful (see **Core teaching strategies**).

#### CELEBRATE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Take time to regularly celebrate literature and language you love by sharing your passion for it with your students. Hold reading parties where students read out work they love; set up book groups and fairs or mini-literary festivals; read to your students just for the sheer joy of it; encourage all your students to be poets, journalists and playwrights.

#### MINDFULLY REFLECT

Finally, take time to mindfully reflect upon what has happened in the classroom and in your life generally. In the evenings, I like to do a breathing meditation for a few minutes and then replay in images what has happened that day with my eyes shut: I am not thinking about what has happened, but rather watching the day unfold like a video before me. It may be that you prefer just to observe the thoughts and feelings that have arisen. Try and find moments in the day when you can do this practice, taking time to reflect upon your thoughts and feelings about what has happened to you in an accepting and non-judgemental way.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aitchison, J., 1991. *Language Change: Progress or Decay*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Alexander, R., 10-14 July 2005 . *Culture, Dialogue and Learning: keynote speech at Education, Culture and Cognition: intervening for growth, International Association for Cognitive Education and Psychology (IACEP) 10th International Conference, University of Durham, UK*. Durham, Robin Alexander.
- Anderson, L.W., Sosniak, L.A., Bloom, B.S., , 2014. *National Society for the Study of Education, 1994. Bloom's taxonomy: a forty-year retrospective*. Chicago: NSE : Distributed by the University of Chicago Press,.



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

- Anderson, A., 2012. *MasterClass in Drama Education: Transforming Teaching and Learning*. London: Continuum.
- Andrew Green, Debra Myhill, 2011. *Becoming a Reflective English Teacher*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Atkinson, D., Brown, T., England, J., 2006. *Regulatory discourses in education: a Lacanian perspective*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Bachelard, G., 1994. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston, Beacon Press.
- Bain, E. & B. R., 1996. *The Grammar Book*. Sheffield: NATE..
- Baker, J. & M. F., 2000. *Living Literature – Exploring Advanced Level Literature*. UK: Hodder and Stoughton..
- Bakhtin, M. M., 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination -- Four Essays*. s.l.:University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M., 1994. *The Bakhtin Reader – Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barrs, M. a. C. V., 2001. *The Reader in the Writer*. s.l.:s.n.
- Bate, J., Thornton, D., Allen, B., 2012. *Shakespeare's Britain*. London: The British Museum Press.
- Bazerman, C., 2009.. *Handbook of Research on Writing: History, Society, School, Individual, Text*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.
- Belsey, C., 2002. *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- BERA, 2014. *The Role of Research in Teacher Education: Interim Report of the BERA-RSA Inquiry*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BERA-RSA-Interim-Report.pdf?noredirect=1> [Accessed 3rd August 2017].
- Berkley Graduate Division, 2017. *Overview of Learning Theories*. [Online] Available at: <http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/learning-theory-research/learning-overview/> [Accessed August 2017].
- Blake, J., 2008. *The Full English*. Sheffield: NATE: Teachit.
- Blake, W., 1979. *Blake's Poetry and Designs*. New York: Norton.
- Blake, W., 1995. *William Blake's Selected Works*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Bloom, H., 1997. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. USA: OUP.

- British Library, 2017. *Online Resources*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.bl.uk/learning/online-resources> [Accessed 3rd August 2017].
- Britton, J., 1992. *Language and Learning: the importance of speech in children's development*. 2nd ed. London: Penguin.
- Brown, A. P. A., 1987. Reciprocal teaching of comprehension strategies: A natural history of one program for enhancing learning. *Intelligence and Exceptionality: New Directions for Theory, Assessment, and Instructional Practices*. , p. 81–132..
- Bruner, J. S., 1990. *Acts of Meaning*. Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press.
- Bryson, B., 1990. *Mother Tongue: The Story of the English Language*. London: Penguin.
- Cameron, D., 1995. *Verbal Hygiene*. London: Routledge. .
- Cameron, D., 2007. *The Teacher's Guide to Grammar*.. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Castle, G., 2013. *The Literary Theory Handbook (Blackwell Literature Handbooks)*. UK. : Wiley-Blackwell .
- Cladingbowl, M., 2014. *Why I want to try inspecting without grading teaching in each individual lesson*. [Online] Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141124154759/http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/why-i-want-try-inspecting-without-grading-teaching-each-individual-lesson> [Accessed 18th January 2015].
- Claxton, G., Chambers, M., Powell, G., Lucas, B., 2011. *The Learning Powered School*. 1st ed. Bristol: TLO Limited.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K., 2007. *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.
- Cox, B., 1991. *Cox on Cox : an English Curriculum for the 1990s*.. London: Hodder and Stoughton .
- Cremin, T. and Baker, S., 2010. 'Exploring teacher-writer identities in the classroom: Conceptualising the struggle':. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, December, 3(9), pp. 8-25.
- Cremin, T., n.d. Revisiting reading for pleasure : diversity, delight and desire. In: a. A. L. K. Goouch, ed. *Understanding Phonics and the Teaching of Reading*. Berkshire: McGraw Hill., pp. 166-190.

*The Mindful English Teacher*

- Cremin, Teresa, & Oliver, Lucy., 2017. Teachers as Writers: A Systematic Review.. *Research Papers in Education*, 32(3), pp. 269-295.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., 2002. *The Psychology of Happiness: The Classic Work on How to Achieve Happiness*. New York: Rider.
- Curran, A., 2008. *The Little Book Of Big Stuff About The Brain*. Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing.
- Daniels, H., 2005. *An Introduction to Vygotsky*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Davison, J. e. a., 2009. *Learning to Teach in the Secondary School*. Oxon: Routledge.. Oxon: Routledge.
- Drabble, E., 2013. *How to teach...mindfulness*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/teacher-blog/2013/jun/24/mindfulness-classroom-teaching-resource> [Accessed 3rd August 2017].
- Dymoke, S., 2009. *Teaching English Texts: 11-18*.. London: Continuum.
- Eagleton, T. (., 1996a. *Literary Theory – An Introduction*. UK. Wiley-Blackwell.. UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Eagleton, T. (., 1996b. Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Reception Theory. *Literary Theory*., p. 47 – 78..
- English and Media Centre, 2008. *English Allsorts*. London: s.n.
- FAST, 2017. *Families and Schools Together*. [Online] Available at: [Save The Children’s Families and Schools Together Programme:](#) [Accessed August 2017].
- Fautley, M. S. J., 2013. *Lesson planning for effective learning*. New York.: Mc Graw Hil : Open University Press.
- Fleming, M. Stevens, D., 2009. *English Teaching in the Secondary School: Third Edition*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge .
- Fletcher-Wood, H., 2016 . *Ticked off*.. Carmarthen.: Crown House Publishing.
- Forster, E., 2012. *Howards End*. New ed. London: Penguin.
- Francis, B., 2000. *Boys, Girls and Achievement – addressing the classroom issues*. London: Routledge.
- Freire, P., 1995. *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin.
- Freire, P. a. M. M., 1987. *Reading the Word and the World*. London : Routledge and Kegan Paul..
- Frosh, S., Pattman, R., 2003. The Trouble With Boys. *The Psychologist*, Volume 16, pp. 84-87.

- Furniss, T. & B. M., 2007. *Reading poetry : an introduction*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman..
- Gardner, H., 1983. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gaskins, I., 1998. There's more to teaching at-risk and delayed readers than good reading instruction.. *Reading and Teaching*, p. 534–547.
- George, R., 2007. *Girls in a goldfish bowl: moral regulation, ritual and the use of power amongst inner city girls*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Gibbons, S., 2017. *English teaching: English and Its Teachers: A History of Policy, Pedagogy and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Gibson, R., 1998. *Teaching Shakespeare CUP*.. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilbert, F. Shelley, M., 2015. *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: The Study Guide Edition: Complete text & integrated study guide*:. 1st ed. London: FGI Publishing.
- Gilbert, F., R. Stevenson, 2014. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde: The Study Guide Edition: Complete text & integrated study guide*:. 1st ed. London: FGI Publishing.
- Gilbert, F., 2004. *I'm A Teacher, Get Me Out Of Here*. 1st ed. London: Short Books.
- Gilbert, F., 2005. *Teacher On The Run*. 1st ed. London: Short Books.
- Gilbert, F., 2007. *Parent Power*. 1st ed. London: Piatkus.
- Gilbert, F., 2009. *Working The System: How To Get The Very Best State Education For Your Child*. 1st ed. London: Short Books.
- Gilbert, F., 2016. *Teacher Francis Gilbert on Rousseau*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07cgmcc> [Accessed November 2016].
- Gilbert, F., 2017. *The Time Devil: Teaching and Drama Script*. 1st ed. London: FGI Publishing.
- Glendinning, S., 2011. *Derrida – A Very Short Introduction*.. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Goldsmiths Department of Education, 2017. *Critical Connections*. [Online] Available at: <https://goldsmithsmdst.wordpress.com/> [Accessed 3rd August 2017].
- Graham, G., 2005. *Philosophy of Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics*.. London: Routledge.

*The Mindful English Teacher*

- Griffiths, P., 1992. *English at the Core: Dialogue and Power in English Teaching*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Hạnh, T. N., 2008. *Work: How to Find Joy and Meaning in Each Hour of the Day*. US: Parallax Press.
- Hattie, J., 2010. *Learning intentions and success criteria*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.stem.org.uk/resources/elibrary/resource/273227/john-hattie-learning-intentions-and-success-criteria> [Accessed 27 July 2017].
- Hickman, L., Neubert, S., Reich, K., 2009. *John Dewey between pragmatism and constructivism*. s.l.:Fordham University Press.
- Holland, J. B. M. a. S. S., 1995. *Debates and issues in feminist research and pedagogy : a reader*,. Clevedon : Multilingual Matters in association with the Open University..
- Holt, J., 1995. *Why Children Fail*. Revised ed. New York, US: Perseus Books Group.
- hooks, b., 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. London: Routledge.
- hooks, b., 2003. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. London: Routledge.
- Irish, T., 2008. *Teaching Shakespeare: A History of Teaching Shakespeare in England*. [Online] Available at: <https://cdn2.rsc.org.uk/sitefinity/education-pdfs/articles-and-reports/rsc-education-history-of-teaching-shakespeare.pdf?sfvrsn=2> [Accessed 3rd August 2017].
- Kabat-Zinn, 2013. *ACT Mindfully*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.actmindfully.com.au/mindfulness> [Accessed 3rd August 2017].
- Leahy, R., 2012. *The Worry Cure: Stop worrying and start living*. London: Piatkus.
- Lepore, S. J. a. S. J. M., 2002. *The writing cure : how expressive writing promotes health and emotional well-being*,. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association..
- Levitin, D., 2015. *The organised mind: thinking straight in the age of information overload*.. New York: Viking.

- Marzano R. J, Pickering D. J, Pollock J. E., , 2001 . *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research Based Strategies for Increasing Student*. s.l.:s.n.
- Mason, L., 2004. Explicit Self-Regulated Strategy Development Versus Reciprocal Questioning: Effects on Expository Reading Comprehension Among Struggling Readers.. *Educational Psychology*, Volume 96, p. 283–296.
- McREL, 2010. *Classroom Instruction That Works*. [Online] Available at: [https://www.mcrel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/McREL-research-report\\_Nov2010\\_Classroom-Instruction-that-Works\\_Second-Edition.pdf](https://www.mcrel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/McREL-research-report_Nov2010_Classroom-Instruction-that-Works_Second-Edition.pdf)
- Meek, M., 1988. *How Texts Teach What Children Learn*. s.l.:Thimble Press.
- Mindfulness in Schools Project, 2017. *Mindfulness in Schools Project*. [Online] Available at: [Mindfulness in Schools Project](#) [Accessed 3rd August 2017].
- Moore, R. & B. P., 2005 . *NATE Drama Packs: Drama within English*.. Sheffield: NATE.
- Mosley, M. B. P., 2013 . *Fast exercise: the smart route to health & fitness*.. London.: Short Books.
- NHS, 2017. *10 stress busters - Stress, anxiety and depression* -. [Online] Available at: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/reduce-stress.aspx> [Accessed 31 July 2017].
- Oakley, A., 2005. 'Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms?'. In: *The Ann Oakley Reader*. London: Polity Press.
- Owen, N., Munden, P., 2010. *Class Writing: A NAWÉ Research Report into the Writers-in-Schools Ecology*, UK: NAWÉ.
- Paechter, C., 2006. Masculine feminiities/feminine masculinities: power, identities and gender. *Gender and Education*, 18(3), pp. 253-263.
- Pahl, K. Rowsell, J. , 2010. *Artifactual Literacies: Every Object Tells a Story*. London: Teachers College Press.
- Pahl, Kate H; & Rowsell, Jennifer., 2011. Artifactual Critical Literacy: A New Perspective for Literacy Education.. *Berkeley Review of Education*, 2(2).

## *The Mindful English Teacher*

- Palincsar, A. B. A., 1984. Reciprocal Teaching of Comprehension-Fostering and Comprehension-Monitoring Activities.. *Cognitive Instruction*, Volume 1, p. 117–175.
- Pateman, T., 1991. *Key Concepts: A Guide To Aesthetics, Criticism and the Arts in Education*. Brighton: Falmer Press.
- Pedagogue, M., 2017. *The Mindfulness Pedagogy*. [Online] Available at: <https://mindfulintheclassroom.wordpress.com/about/> [Accessed 3rd August 2017].
- Penman, D., Williams, M., 2014. *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide*. London: Piatkus.
- Pennebaker, P., 2002. Writing, Social Processes and Psychotherapy: From Past to Future. In: *The Writing Cure: How Expressive Writing Promotes Health and Emotional Well-Being*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, pp. 279-293.
- Petty, G., 2014. *Evidence-Based Teaching*. 2nd ed. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Pollard, A. a. A. J., 2008. *Reflective teaching: evidence-informed professional practice*. 3rd ed. London : Continuum..
- Pope, R., 2012. *Studying English and English Literature*. London: Routledge.
- Pring, R., Thomas, G., 2004. *Evidence-based Practice in Education*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Professor Lynne Cameron, Dr Sharon Besser, 2004. *Writing in English as an Additional Language at Key Stage 2*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Research%20and%20Information/Documents/RR586.pdf> [Accessed August 2017].
- Rosenblatt, L. M., 1938/1995. *Literature as exploration*. 5th ed. New York: Modern.
- Rosenblatt, L. M., 1978. *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Rosen, H., 1998. *Speaking from Memory: a Guide to Autobiographical Acts and Practices*. 1st ed. London: Trentham Books.
- Rousseau, J.-J., 1762: 1979. *Emile or On Education*.. 2nd ed. London: Penguin.

- Sahlberg, P., 2012. *What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?*. s.l.:Teachers College Press.
- Singer, P., 1980. *Marx – A Very Short Introduction..* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Spinoza, B., 1994a. *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Words*. New York: Princeton University Press.
- Stevens, D. a. M. N., 2004 . *The Art of Teaching Secondary English: Innovative and Creative Approaches*. London: Routledge.
- Stredder, J., 2009. *The North Face of Shakespeare: activities for teaching the plays..* Cambridge, UK : Cambridge University Press.
- Street, B., 2011. Literacy Inequalities and Social Justice in theory and practice: The power to name and define. *International Journal of Educational Development*,, Volume 31, p. 580–586.
- The National Strategies: Archive, 2004. *Pedagogy and practice: Teaching and learning in secondary schools*. [Online] Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110812234120/http://nsonline.org.uk/node/97131> [Accessed 4 August 2017].
- Thich Nhat Hanh, Helen Tworikov, 1995. *Interbeing with Thich Nhat Hanh: An Interview*. [Online] Available at: <https://tricycle.org/magazine/interbeing-thich-nhat-hanh-interview/> [Accessed 9 August 2017].
- Thomas, G., 2004. *Evidence-Based Practice in Education, Introduction: evidence and practice*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.mheducation.co.uk/openup/chapters/0335213340.pdf> [Accessed 3rd August 2017].
- Watkins, C., 2003. *Learning: A Sense Maker's Guide*, London: Association of Teachers and Lecturers.
- Watkins, C., 2010. Learning, performance and improvement.. *Research Matters: The International Network for School Improvement*, Volume 34.
- Webb, J., Schirato, T., Danather, G., 2002. *Understanding Bourdieu*. London: Sage Publications.



## *The Mindful English Teacher*

- William D., Black P., 1990. *INSIDE THE BLACK BOX: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment*. London: GL Assessment Limited.
- Wyse, D., R. Andrews, and J. Hoffman (eds.) , 2010. *The Routledge International Handbook of English, Language, and Literacy Teaching*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Yandell, J., 2013. *The Social Construction of Meaning: Reading literature in urban English classrooms*. London: Routledge.
- Young, T., 2008. *Studying English Literature – A Practical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zakrzewski, V., 2013. *Can mindfulness make us better teachers?*. [Online] Available at: [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can\\_mindfulness\\_make\\_us\\_better\\_teachers](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_mindfulness_make_us_better_teachers) [Accessed 3rd August 2017].

### **Useful periodicals**

*Teaching English*: The Magazine of the National Association for the Teaching of English.

*English in Education*: journal of National Association for the Teaching of English.

*Changing English*: Institute of Education

*The Secondary English Magazine*: short up-to-date articles and practical ideas for the classroom.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Francis Gilbert is a Lecturer in Education at Goldsmiths, University of London, teaching on the PGCE Secondary English programme and the MA in Children's Literature with Professor Michael Rosen. Previously, he worked for a quarter of a century in various English state schools teaching English and Media Studies to 11-18-year olds. He has also moonlighted as a journalist, novelist and social commentator both in the UK and international media. He is the author of *Teacher on the Run*, *Yob Nation*, *Parent Power*, *Working the System -- How To Get The Very Best State Education for Your Child*, and a novel about school, *The Last Day Of Term*. His first book, *I'm A Teacher, Get Me Out Of Here* was a big hit, becoming a bestseller and being serialised on Radio 4. In his role as an English teacher, he has taught many classic texts over the years and has developed a great many resources to assist readers with understanding, appreciating and responding to them both analytically and creatively. This led him to set up his own small publishing company FGI Publishing ([fgipublishing.com](http://fgipublishing.com)) which has published his study guides as well as a number of books by other authors, including Roger Titcombe's *Learning Matters* and Tim Cadman's *The Changes*.

He has appeared numerous times on radio and TV, including Newsnight, the Today Programme, Woman's Hour and the Russell Brand Show. In June 2015, he was awarded a PhD in Creative Writing and Education by the University of London. He has practised mindfulness for some time now and has found this has helped him in his personal life and with his work.