



TEACHER EXPERIENCES OF CRITICAL THINKING USING
SUPERNATURALLY THEMED NOVELS: IMPLICATIONS FOR
CONTEMPORARY MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

A Thesis submitted by

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For the award of

Doctor of Education

2017

Abstract

Through the collation of teacher experiences, this qualitative research focuses on the implications of critical thinking involving supernatural themes presented in school-based literature. With the imbedded supernatural themes in the religious belief systems of some cultural groups, our Indigenous population, and the Christian majority, the implications of the critical thinking emphasis endorsed by the Australian Curriculum and its application to thematic content in the middle school English classroom is investigated in this study.

A cache of purposefully selected novels approved for use in Australian secondary schools are examined to determine the type and frequency of commonly occurring supernatural themes. These are then investigated to determine what types of cultural conflict could occur, and the subsequent impact the treatment of such themes could have on the personal belief systems and sensitivities of some groups in our multicultural society.

Teacher perspectives are examined using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology, and this research utilises hermeneutic principles to analyse the data gathered. This investigation reveals both positive and negative impacts on pedagogical practice, and highlights the ethical conflicts eliciting critical thinking responses using such thematic novels as a stimulus has on teachers in the 21st century classroom.

Certification of Thesis

This thesis is entirely the work of *Donna-Marie Wardle* except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at USQ.

Professor Shirley O'Neill

Principal Supervisor

Associate Professor Lindy-Anne Abawi

Associate Supervisor

Acknowledgements

I have always considered education and learning more valuable than anything else. You get out of it what you put into it. I, therefore, wish to dedicate this thesis to my family. My daughters, Genevieve and Veronnica (and their spouses Brian and Sally), who have given me the desire to continue on through this long and difficult personal and professional journey; and my long suffering husband, David (a thesis widower), who provided me with the time, support and tenacity to complete the task I set in motion many years ago. I would also like to acknowledge my grandchildren, Ewan and Violet, who provided me with the appropriate distractions when needed, who often put life into perspective during this adventure, and who got to see that the pursuit of learning is a lifelong endeavour, through the actions of an aging educator. I would also like to express my deepest and most sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Shirley O’Neill, and Associate Professor Lindy Abawi for their tireless support and brilliant suggestions that resulted in this research being completed.

Through the laughter, tears, frustration, and jubilation, these women have contributed to the knowledge contained in the pages of this thesis more than they will ever know. I would like to thank Associate Professor Robyn Henderson, who offered a final proofread and her professional advice prior to the submission of this study for examination. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance given by the Australian Government under the Research Training Scheme (RTS) that made post-graduate work a possibility for me.

Thank you!

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Students entering the new millennium must come fully equipped with skills that enable them to think for themselves and be self-initiating, self-modifying, and self-directing.

(Costa, 2001, p. xv)

1.1 Problem Statement

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014) states that 28.1 percent of the estimated resident population were born overseas. This is an increase from 2013 recorded at 27.7 percent and ten years earlier in 2004, 23.8 percent, which substantiates a growing trend. In September 2015, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Julie Bishop, stated that the Syrian and Iraqi refugee intake will number 12,000 places and “will be in addition to the existing humanitarian programme of 13,750, which rises to 18,750 in 2018-2019” (Abbott, Bishop, Dutton, & Morrison, 2015). The dominant religious belief system in this region is Islam, which adds a further dynamic to Australia’s diverse multicultural identity. These new Australians, and subsequent generations born into these cultures, bring to the school context a hybrid of understandings from their familial background, community composition, and modern Australian interpretations.

This multi-faceted contemporary classroom demographic creates a melting pot of cultures and cultural sensitivities; however, it is currently unknown as to the effect these sensitivities have on teaching practices in Australian classrooms. Coupled with the explicit reference to critical thinking in the Australian Curriculum, both short term and long term effects of teaching critical thinking skills and eliciting responses requiring a deeper level of thinking (such as questioning, exploring the validity and reliability of sources, and implicit reasoning skills) involving this diverse multicultural student demographic remain largely unexplored.

Whilst the supernatural, as an explicit theme, has not traditionally been at the forefront of the English curriculum and classroom critical thinking practices, it has had a resurgence and boasts universal appeal amongst popular adolescent culture via contemporary novels and movie adaptations (Parker, 2011). This raises the engagement levels and awareness of young Australians regarding these thematically

charged novels and the supernatural, as a concept, has the potential to promote conflict between Australian school values and teachers' and students' cultural belief systems.

The lines delineating fantasy from reality appear to be blurring, and some claim that these supernatural novels are becoming a gateway to real life involvement in paranormal practices (Colson, 2000; Foster, 2001; Kennicott, 2003; Woodrum, 2010). With high interest and immersion/desensitisation of the supernatural theme, and Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) techniques providing realistic and graphic portrayals of supernatural feats in film and television interpretations, critical thinking has become an important tool for the contemporary adolescent.

In opposition to the portrayal of the supernatural being akin to fantasy, many religions (including the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity) portray it as a factual belief system, further blurring the lines between reality and fantasy for adolescents. With some aspects of the supernatural being associated with mythology regarding literacy teachings, and others as a substantiated belief system in religious education, the role of the English teacher is becoming more complicated and problematic in the 21st century.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of teachers who must translate the Australian Curriculum's critical thinking aspects of teaching literature and literacy through school based texts; the possible impact this could have on the belief systems, morals and ethics of teachers; and teacher concerns about the possible impact on students. The sensitivities of different cultural belief systems, combined with the majority Anglo-Australian and Christian values, could present moral and ethical conflicts for both teachers and students when critically examining texts which contain embedded supernatural themes. The subsequent benefits of this research, therefore, lie not only in teaching and learning, but also in assisting all stakeholders to develop an "open and tolerant attitude towards different cultures, religions and world views" (New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW DET), 2005, para. 1.3) and develop a deeper understanding and confidence within

the wider community regarding contemporary literacy views and the effect critical thinking may have on cultural belief systems and personal convictions.

Ivey and Broaddus (2001, p. 369) suggest that teachers must “find ways to link students’ out-of-school reading interests with content requirements rather than replace one with the other.” This is true of the study’s focus as supernatural themes are present in many contemporary forms of literature, including written and multimedia, in which adolescents currently engage. To maintain student engagement, interest, and motivation to read, teachers must become familiar with popular culture texts and read from a variety of genres in order to fully understand and authentically support young adults’ independence regarding reading, judgement, and assessment (Reeves, 2004; White & Kim, 2008; L. Williams, 2003). It is at this point that teachers must reflect critically on their own belief systems and those of their students in order to decisively interpret the text, and promote critical thinking without negating the values and beliefs of the teachers, students, or school ethos.

With some aspects of the supernatural being associated with mythology and others as a substantiated belief system in religious education, the role of the English teacher is becoming more complicated and problematic in the 21st century. Whilst there remains little doubt supernatural theme based literature engages the adolescent student (Blasingame, 2006; Frost, 1989; Vu, 2006), this research aims to assist teachers in understanding the possible impact eliciting critical thinking responses from students while analysing texts containing these themes could have on student and teacher belief systems, teaching and learning practices, and the impact their classroom pedagogy has on cultural and personal sensitivities.

1.3 Study Questions

The overarching question that drives the research is –

How does eliciting critical thinking responses in secondary school students using novels containing supernatural themes impact on teacher ethics, belief systems, classroom pedagogy, and teacher perspectives of the possible impact on students?

Throughout this thesis, research phases are colour coded for ease of identification. Phase one and two are methodologically similar, but involve separate caches of data; one being the thematic investigation of novels being used in English classrooms, and the other comprising of the teacher participants' contributions.

In order to answer this question and guide the research process, the following research questions are generated:

Research Phase 1 – Thematic investigation of novels (textual-based questions TQ)

1. What specific types of supernatural themes occur in school based literature?
2. Why is it important for teachers to have an understanding of cultural and religious sensitivities related to these supernatural themes?
3. How might eliciting critical thinking responses when utilising these texts create conflict between cultural belief systems and personal philosophies?

Research Phase 2 – The participants' voices (participant-based questions PQ)

1. How are teachers treating the critical thinking aspects of teaching literature?
2. What issues do teachers face when teaching critical thinking through Australian Curriculum texts containing supernatural themes?
3. What are the implications, therefore, of teaching critical thinking in contemporary classrooms?

1.4 Limitations and Delimitations

1.4.1 Critical thinking.

Critical thinking, within the limitations of this research, is initially delineated. Facione (1990) conducts research into defining critical thinking via a panel of 46 participants from Canada and the United States, who come from a variety of scholarly disciplines. The project is sanctioned by the American Philosophical Association and generates a consensus definition of critical thinking. Critical thinking is defined as “purposeful, self-regulatory judgment that results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based” (Facione, 1990, p. 2).

R. Paul (1993, p. 3) defines critical thinking as an intellectually disciplined process “of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing or evaluating information.” Ennis (2002a, p. 1) demarcates it as “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do.” He suggests a list of traits that ideal critical thinkers possess: being well informed, open-minded, and attentive to alternatives; judging both the credibility of sources and the quality of arguments (giving credence to reasoning, assumptions and evidence); clarifying information and understanding through questioning; being able to develop and defend a reasonable position and articulate plausible hypotheses; and, finally, to integrate all of these skills when determining exactly what to believe or do.

It is, at its core, the ability to make judgements based on credible information sources, and then to subsequently either alter or vindicate the individual’s subjective knowledge in light of the new information. The individual must first analyse the new information in terms of credibility, trustworthiness, reliability, and evidentiary data in order for them to deem it robust and worthy of being added to the individual’s conceptual knowledge base.

When combined into a singular definition, critical thinking, for the purposes of this research, is considered to be –

The active analysis and evaluation of all evidence related to an issue or problem using a variety of strategies, that guides belief and actions via an open-minded consideration of all information and viewpoints, with a view to reconstructing one’s own belief on the basis of this wider experience.

Additionally, at this point it is important to delineate the terms diversity and multiculturalism. Multiculturalism refers to a society which comprises of peoples from different races and cultures. Conversely, diversity refers to a rich complexity of people being from differing nationalities, cultures, abilities and disabilities, different learning needs, attitudes and backgrounds. As diversity encompasses multiculturalism, for the purposes of this study, the term diversity (and its derivatives) is considered to include the multicultural perspective.

1.4.2. Research Phase 1 – Thematic investigation of novels.

The novels chosen to contextualise the study are sourced from the publication *Suggested Texts for the English K-10 Syllabus* (Board of Studies New South Wales, 2013) which supports the Australian Curriculum. The texts selected from stage four (Year 7 and Year 8) and stage five (Year 9 and Year 10) are chosen on the basis of reader engagement, awards received, and those which are reflective of contemporary adolescent popular culture.

The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman is listed as a stage four novel and spent 61 weeks in the top ten New York Times Bestselling Novel list. Amongst its numerous awards, it won the Newbery Medal, American Library Association (ALA) Best Book for Young Adults Award and the IndieBound Award. It was listed on the Horn Book Fanfare Best Books of 2008, was the Cooperative Children's Book Center Choice of 2009 and was number nine in the Time Magazine Top Ten of 2008 Fiction List.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by J. K. Rowling, listed as a stage four novel, has been translated into 74 languages and sold more than 107 million copies worldwide. The awards won by this novel include, but are not limited to, the Carnegie Medal in 1998, British Book Awards in 1997 and Whitakers Platinum Book Award in 2001. It has been transformed into cinematic film and stage productions.

Dracula by Bram Stoker is listed as a stage four study piece and is considered by many to be a classic piece of literary art. First published in 1897, his novel has since been converted to film numerous times. Furthermore, the Bram Stoker Award is given to writers demonstrating superior achievement in their craft by the Horror Writers Association.

Sabriel by Garth Nix is listed as a stage five text and received the Aurealis Award for best young adult novel and the best fantasy novel in 1995. It was also an ALA notable book and was a short-list nominee for the 1996 Ditmar Award.

1.4.3. Research Phase 2 – The participants’ voices.

I developed a Blog site to gather teachers’ input regarding the practical edification of critical thinking, themes portrayed in the texts, and their personal reflections regarding critical thinking limitations in the English classroom. For this reason, English teachers are the target demographic in government, independent, and religious based schools for their qualitative data input.

The number of participants remains open, with neither a maximum nor minimum target. As the Blog contribution relies on a snowballing effect, numbers are not limited, nor are the number of contributions required to be made by each individual, at the outset of the research. At the conclusion of the Blog stage, all consenting participants are interviewed.

1.4.4. Generalisability.

Generalisability is used to reflect a larger population of interest, which is replicated in a small sample size (Blair & Zinkhan, 2006). For this reason, I invited all educational context settings to participate and share their qualitative observations via the Blog site. Cresswell (2006) argues the extent to which the population sampled represents the population as a whole (generalisability) must be ascertained in order to ensure that the results of the research accurately reflect the population at large. Because the communal conversation on the Blog site is voluntary, and therefore limited by interest, generalisability is a limitation of this research. The participant sample cannot be manipulated or controlled to ensure that a representative sample from government, independent, and religious school contexts are accurately reflected and therefore variables increase. Although their input has genuine value in terms of data collection, it cannot be used as an accurate reflection of teacher views and opinions regarding the entire teaching population.

1.4.5. Researcher limitations.

Another limitation of this research is that I, as an adolescent reader, also read supernaturally themed texts with the support and knowledge of my parents. My parents trusted that I had the maturity and wherewithal not to believe that the abilities, feats, and occurrences in the text were real or achievable in life, and I believe reading these literary works did no harm to my adolescent psyche. I was able

to handle the thematic base as I believe any young intelligent reader would, with the awareness that I explored on the page and in my mind, and not outwardly in life.

This could potentially limit my ability to examine the literature critically because I believe the majority of young adult readers possess similar abilities to separate fact from fiction (critical thinking abilities). This is monitored via the input of teachers' entries on the Blog site so that I maintain currency with both adolescent and teacher views regarding the themes being studied in opposition to assuming that all teenagers read with the same ability to think critically as I did at a comparable age.

1.5 Research Approach

The phenomenon being studied in this research is approached via a combination of psychological, interpretative, and idiographic components designed to drive meanings particular to the research target, and not necessarily designed for the extrapolating of generalisations. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology is employed as the participants are the central focus, and it is their subjective lived experiences being investigated. This methodology is suited to the small homogeneous research sample involved, with the focus being on the lived experiences of each participant rather than to make generalisations about teaching practices. Because of this, semi-structured interviews are conducted, with each of the participants maintaining an important role regarding what is covered. An Interpretivist approach is used in analysing and interpreting the constructed data using the philosophical base of hermeneutics and phenomenology (Boland, 1985).

The research is qualitative in nature as the focus is on teacher perspectives of critical thinking in the English classroom in contexts that may challenge their own values, ethics or beliefs, and to gain an insight into what teachers believe could cause possible conflicts for their students in light of eliciting those deeper level responses to textual analysis and its relationship to student backgrounds. Qualitative analysis is employed to interpret semi-structured interviews with teachers to identify thematic content.

Quantitative analysis techniques are used to record the types and frequency of supernatural themes in the chosen texts to provide a contextual background regarding

literary choices. Steinfirst (1986), Behr (1992), Stewig (1995) and Stephens (1996) demonstrate it is possible to analyse themes in children's literature and to classify these themes according to set schemata. Although these quantitative techniques are used, they are employed to further the qualitative approach inherent within the study.

IPA is, at the root level, "concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience," which is the basis of this qualitative research (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 32). The multiple theoretical perspectives also support the decision to employ IPA as the research approach in that small numbers of purposefully sampled participants are utilised to explore, in detail, their lived experiences with the phenomenon of critical thinking in the school context. As a qualitative study, this approach is best suited to the research, particularly given the cyclic nature of analysis to fully examine the emerging themes as they develop.

1.6 Significance

1.6.1. Significance of the context.

Studies performed by the Barna Research Group involving a total of 4,000 teenagers aged between 13 and 18 are collated by Vu (2006) and reveal that 86 percent of children watch supernatural-themed movies or television shows on a regular basis. The study also shows that 73 percent of America's youth engage in at least one type of psychic or witchcraft-related activity beyond media exposure or horoscope usage (Vu, 2006, para. 4). This evidence attributes to the significance of this study, investigating the correlation and conflict these supernatural themes have on belief systems, how these are reflected in the Australian Curriculum and the associated impact in 21st century classrooms.

According to Frost (1989) vampires in fictional works historically have a cyclic popularity, and Blasingame (2006) supports the 21st century increase in acceptance as being evident through the popularity of the *Twilight* series of books by Stephanie Meyer, movies and television shows which are typical in adolescent subculture. De Vos (1996) advocates that teenagers gravitate toward vampire fiction because of the correlation between the transformation of a dead body to a vampire, and the transformation of both a child to a teenager and a teenager to an adult. Through

reading this type of literature, connections can be made that assist the teenager in this life transition. In opposition to this view, Wolf (1997) notes that the primary goal of this type of fiction is not only to excite and entertain young readers, but to create realistic fear to engage the adolescent. Similarly, the increased interest in witchcraft and magic is evident by the attendance rate at Scotland's 'Witchfest' and subsequently at the annual Europe-wide gathering run by the Children of Artemis, recently recorded as the largest witchcraft and Wicca event in history (Boy Wizard Changing Teens into Witches, 2003).

1.6.2. Significance of beliefs.

It is claimed that the memories of an individual are built and altered through learning (Gazzaniga, Ivry, & Mangun, 2002; Handley, Capon, Beveridge, Dennis, & Evans, 2004). It is these memories that create the foundation for beliefs, and these beliefs act as filters through which incoming information is organised and utilised, either to alter or reinforce that existing belief. Conversely, it can be discarded in its entirety if the individual deems it to be contradictory or dangerous to the belief system status quo (Schreiber & Shinn, 2003).

Irrespective of the subject or context, prior belief determines the acquisition of new knowledge, and therefore an understanding of beliefs is necessary to determine how information can be modified when learning occurs (Kuhn, 2000, 2001). Jackson (2008, p. 229) asserts that "uncertainty is an ally of good thinking and knowledge is evidence-based construction." The significance of beliefs then becomes a challenge for teachers regarding critical thinking in classrooms, as the evidence-based construction is marred by the belief filter they employ, and the level of certainty each individual prescribes to their belief will hamper the ideal of uncertainty being an ally in this respect.

1.6.3. Significance of sensitivities.

With Australia being a diverse nation with a renewed focus on Indigenous perspectives, the significance of critical thinking practices and cultural sensitivities in the educational setting is considerable. Critical thinking plays an important part in the everyday life of individuals, academically, socially, and regarding everyday choices in life. The supernatural basis of some prescribed English texts for secondary

schools is reflective of adolescent culture as portrayed through multimedia, television, movies, and text based literature making it a contemporary vehicle through which to research cultural sensitivities.

Whilst some of the aspects associated with these multi-modal resources supporting literacy development can be seen as entertaining, others may find them confronting and challenging to personal perspectives. Facione (2006, p. 11) ascertains that “civic engagement, concern for the common good, and social responsibility” should accompany critical thinking and that this would assist in avoiding some of the exploitation and manipulation resulting from unethical misuse of information. This would also assist in acknowledging cultural and ethical sensitivities.

1.6.4. Significance of reflection on teaching and learning.

The importance of reflection and the critical analysis of teaching and learning are both imperative and integral to continuous educational advancement (Atherton, 2002; Cranton, 1996; Mezirow, 1991; Schön, 1991). Atherton (2002) suggests this may be best accomplished through the use of a third party observer to assist in directing reflection. With this study acting as a third party observer, the research and its findings have the potential to add a rich body of knowledge with the view of improving educational awareness of the impact of critical thinking on cultural sensitivities and personal belief systems regarding literary text selection as well as the treatment of associated themes.

1.7 Summary

Supernatural themes appear in many novels aimed at adolescents, however it is not known if the treatment of these themes using critical thinking practices could create any conflict between belief systems, school ethos and personal philosophies. There are a significant number of new Australians who come from different cultural and religious backgrounds, bringing with them alternative belief systems. Similarly, Indigenous perspectives and mainstream religious belief systems also contain ingrained values and traditions which may be challenged by critical thinking involving these themes.

Four novels supporting the Australian Curriculum are selected and analysed for thematic content. A Blog site is established for teacher input and discussion based on critical thinking and supernatural themes, and follow up semi-structured interviews with Blog site contributors are conducted to investigate the lived experiences of these educators regarding this phenomenon.

The following chapter reviews research and literature to establish what critical thinking is in terms of different approaches (philosophical, cognitive and educational). It also establishes the link between critical thinking and critical literacy within the Australian Curriculum to contextualise the research and foreshadows the subsequent methodology chapter.

Chapter three establishes the conceptual framework and research design, including the research questions that guided the study. Chapter four addresses specific methods utilised and provides a thematic investigation of the novels selected to further contextualise this study, giving the reader a comprehensive overview of the types of supernatural themes presented in literature, and how they link to belief systems and demographics within schools. The teachers' voices are prioritised in chapter five with a brief overview of specific methods employed during this phase of research, and the lived experiences of the teacher participants are explored. Chapter six categorises the data provided by the teachers' lived experiences and investigates each of the themes uncovered in detail. Chapter seven then uses the data analysed to answer the specific research questions raised in chapter three, and ultimately provide an answer for the overarching question pertaining to this study. The concluding chapter is a summary of the thesis, with itemised contributions to existing knowledge and recommendations for further research arising from this study.

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND CONTEXTUALISATION

Whenever we hear an opinion and believe it, we make an agreement, and it becomes part of our belief system.

(Miguel Ruiz, 2003 p. 17)

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlines the rationale supporting the need for this research and this chapter presents a mosaic of research done by others to establish critical thinking as a definitive entity, and then to contextualise this entity within the educational context. For this reason, the chapter is divided into two sections; a review of the literature, and contextualisation. The literature available for this topic is limited to critical thinking as a disposition, and skill of acquirement as there are no locatable studies involving critical thinking using texts containing supernatural themes, its influence on belief systems or on classroom pedagogy. The purpose, therefore, of this chapter, is to

- explore the various definitions of critical thinking proposed by researchers;
- investigate how critical thinking changes and becomes refined during human developmental stages;
- examine research relating to the teaching of critical thinking as a disposition;
- review assessment practices related to critical thinking; and
- consider the research of others involving critical thinking.

The combination of these subsections presents the reader with a broad, evidentiary-based background of knowledge to establish context regarding this study. The research then builds on the foundations of this literature review to probe teacher perceptions of critical thinking when combined with the classroom context of utilising literature containing supernatural themes, and the implications thereof.

2.2 What is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking requires an open and fair mind, flexibility in thought processing, genuine inquisitiveness, an inclination to pursue reason, a willingness to consider various diverse points of view, a respect for the opinions of others, and a desire to be

well informed (Bailin, 2002; Ennis, 1985; Fascione, 1990, 2006; Halpern, 1998; Raiskums, 2008; Scriven & Paul, 1987; Sternberg, 1986, 2003; Willingham, 2007). Evidence of the application of these traits can be traced back to ancient civilizations through the work of Socrates and the development of Socratic questioning.

Socratic questioning is a methodology based on investigation through probing evidence via questioning, and examining all available data to produce a well-balanced and informed view. The systematic thinking practices of Socrates influence a cache of well-known and respected philosophers that follow, including Plato, Aristotle, Francis Bacon, Thomas Aquinas, Sir Thomas More, and Sir Isaac Newton (Paul, Elder, & Bartell, 1997).

Theorists in a more contemporary domain who contribute to the base set by Socrates include John Dewey (1991), Edward Glaser (1941), Jean Piaget (1960), and Lev Vygotsky (1987). Dewey (1991) advocates a student-centred approach to learning over a subject-centred one, and that both education and life experience are interrelated. He ascertains that an individual's knowledge is the result of interaction between this life experience and information presented within the confines of a classroom. He further ascertains that students learn by engaging and doing via subject matter that is meaningful to the individual (Brookfield, Tennant, & Pogson, 2005).

Glaser (1941) encourages critical thinking and performs significant research in this domain. He also co-develops and introduces the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal which assists in breaking down the component parts of critical thinking (Scriven & Paul, 1987). Piaget's (1960) research is primarily in the child development field which incorporates intellectual development (including logical reasoning) and has a significant impact on the understanding of the importance and progression of critical thinking as a disposition during human developmental stages (Atherton, 2005; Brookfield et al., 2005; Ormrod, 2004). Whilst Piaget focuses on the characteristics of children at different developmental stages in their growth, Vygotsky (1987) prioritises the actual process of that same development. He highlights the impact social interaction, prior knowledge and experience, and cultural background has on knowledge acquisition and that learning occurs through shared

experiences (Dahms et al., 2008; Ormrod, 2004). Vygotsky's theory includes the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which suggests that knowledge is acquired when children exhibit the characteristics pertaining to readiness for acquiring that knowledge, and is best done via a scaffolded methodology. He also suggests that these cognitive processes develop, not only as a result of social interaction, but of cultural influence via conversations and "formal schooling [where] adults convey to children the ways in which their culture interprets and responds to the world" (Ormrod, 2004, p. 151). This view regarding cultural importance in the acquisition of both knowledge and the development of critical thinking is highlighted in this study where cultural background influences belief systems, and the social interactions within the classroom via eliciting critical thinking related debates impact on those cultural beliefs.

The basis of critical thinking can be divided into two distinct disciplines; that of the philosophical approach and the psychological approach (Lewis & Smith, 1993). There is also some suggestion that a third approach should be included, that of the educational approach (Sternberg, 1986). The socio-cultural perspective is included in the following section, given the link Dewey (1991) highlights between life experience and classroom learning. This perspective assists in contextualising critical thinking as a dispositional skill in contemporary diverse classrooms. Each approach to define critical thinking is outlined in this chapter, and then combined to create an amalgamated definition of critical thinking for the purposes of this research.

2.2.1. The philosophical approach.

Theorists who proffer this approach include Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the contemporary Richard Paul. It is centred around the characteristics of the individual in opposition to focusing on the actions or behaviours performed by the critical thinker (Lai, 2011; Lewis & Smith, 1993; Thayer-Bacon, 2000). These "perfections of thought" (R. W. Paul, 1992, p. 9) define an ideal type of thinker – the most ideal thinker functioning under the most ideal of circumstances (Sternberg, 1986). The philosophical approach prioritises the application of formal rules of logic to promote a standardised method of inquiry (Lewis & Smith, 1993; Sternberg, 1986), but these ideal circumstances and methodological approach do not always match real life

situations in which critical thinking is applied (Sternberg, 1986). The various definitions have been summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Critical Thinking Definitions According to the Philosophical Approach

Advocate	Year	Definition
McPeck	1981	Critical thinking is the engagement of reflective scepticism.
Ennis	1985, 2002a	Critical thinking is reasonable and reflective thinking aimed at deciding what to do or believe.
Scriven & Paul	1987	Critical thinking is a process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and/or evaluating information as a guide to belief and action, which involves clear, rational and open-minded thinking that is informed by evidence.
R. W. Paul	1992	Critical thinking is self-directed, disciplined, and appropriate to a given situation or thought domain.
Facione	1990 2006	Critical thinking is judgement that is purposeful in nature and self-regulating in practice, that explains something based on evidential, conceptual or criteriological considerations.
Raiskums	2008	Critical thinking is a willingness to remain open to the consideration of alternative perspectives and to either integrate those perspectives into one's own beliefs, or to replace them with the alternative perspective in the light of the new evidence presented.

Note: A summary of definitions used by various advocates of this approach. Adapted from *Critical thinking: A literature review: Research report*, by E. R. Lai, 2011, [Online].

The philosophical approach highlights the characteristics which result in quality critical thinking as

- open-mindedness;
- considering all alternatives;
- judging the credibility of sources;
- assessing the qualities of opposing arguments;
- accepting conclusions and assumptions based on evidence through developing plausible hypotheses;

- integrating all data presented in the formulation of those hypotheses; and
- asking appropriate questions to clarify understanding.

2.2.2. The cognitive psychological approach.

The cognitive psychological approach to defining critical thinking focuses on the way an individual could or should think, and the types of behaviours or actions they do in that process (Sternberg, 1986). This view could be considered reductionist in nature, as it reduces the skill of critical thinking into a series of steps or procedures (Lewis & Smith, 1993; Sternberg, 1986). Bailin (2002) disagrees with breaking critical thinking into observable traits which aligns with Facione's views (1990). Facione (1990) contends that a complex behaviour should not be broken down into a series of component skills, and similarly, Van Gelder (2005) argues that the process of critical thinking should be defined as more than simply a product of component parts. Bailin (2002) elaborates on his position by suggesting that, once familiar with the steps as identified by cognitive psychological supporters, an individual may proceed through these phases devoid of any critical thinking occurring. This perception would pose significant issues for teachers who are required to educate students regarding the skills associated with critical thinking, in that they could, therefore, simply go through the motions and tick off a series of steps in a procedure without actually generating their own critical thought processes. The definitions in this approach are summarised in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Critical Thinking Definitions According to Cognitive Psychological Approach

Advocate	Year	Definition
Sternberg	1986, 2003	Critical thinking is the strategies, series of mental processes, and representations an individual employs to make decisions, learn new concepts, or solve problems.
Halpern	1998	Critical thinking is the application of cognitive skills or strategies which improve an individual's ability to make informed decisions.
Brookfield	2003	Critical thinking is the series of steps in a process allowing individuals to become critically reflective when analysing and assessing beliefs and values.
Willingham	2007	Critical thinking is deducing and inferring conclusions based on evidence that is free from subjective passion or bias via a structured thought process.

Note: A summary of definitions used by various advocates of this approach. Adapted from *Critical thinking: A literature review: Research report*, by E. R. Lai, 2011, [Online].

2.2.3. The educational approach.

The educational approach to critical thinking includes a framework of broader thinking and learning. One such advocate is Benjamin Bloom (1956). It has its origins in practical classroom experience, in opposition to theoretical viewpoints (Sternberg, 1986). Bloom led a committee which developed this taxonomy in 1956, and they divided learning into cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudes), and psychomotor (skills) categories. The cognitive domain includes processes which align to those required for both critical thinking and critical literacy, which will be discussed and paralleled in the following chapter. The cognitive domain is sectioned into six processes, which Anderson et al. (2001) revised. These domains are itemised in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3

Bloom's Taxonomy Domains

Bloom (1956)	Anderson et al. (2001)
Knowledge	Remembering
Comprehension	Understanding
Application	Applying
Analysis	Analysing
Synthesis	Evaluating
Evaluation	Creating

Note: Adapted from *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*, by Anderson et al., 2001, New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon, and *Taxonomy of educational objectives*, by B. Bloom, 1956, New York, NY: David McKay Company, Inc. which outline processes for learning.

Bloom's Taxonomy is a reference used by many teachers which encompasses this approach to critical thinking and is tiered in nature, ranging from comprehensive skills at the lower end, to evaluative skills at the upper level (Kennedy, Fisher, & Ennis, 1991). Although this approach is widely used in contemporary educational domains, there is criticism regarding the lack of clarity provided to guide teachers with regard to classroom instruction and assessment techniques. Additionally, there have been concerns raised by researchers that it has not been vigorously tested (Ennis, 1985; Sternberg, 1986).

Sternberg (2003) criticises educational institutions for emphasising rote memorization and recall of simple facts rather than eliciting critical thinking responses from students that involves analysis, interpretation, and evaluation in accordance with a mixed educational/cognitive psychological approach. As a result of this reliance to recall and recognise rather than engage in metacognitive analysis, Sternberg (2003, p. 1) advocates that students may "act on their prejudices and their fears" in opposition to logical judgement.

2.2.4. The socio-cultural perspective.

The socio-cultural perspective recognises that learning and critical thinking are not segregated from the subjective internal processes of an individual; each individual brings with him or her a range of personal experiences and cultural heritage that influence how they access that learning and critical thinking. Knowledge is a result of interaction between life experiences and classroom learning (Dewey, 1991).

Vygotsky (1987) echoes this idea by ascertaining that cognitive processes are a result of cultural and social interaction. Although the philosophical, cognitive psychological, and educational approaches to critical thinking promote differing viewpoints in the acquisition of the skills required, Grosser (2006) argues that the treatment of critical thinking in these ways neglects the socio-cultural context, which she emphasises plays a significant and crucial role in the development of cognitive aptitudes.

Vygotsky (1987) is instrumental in highlighting the importance of the socio-cultural context in which learning occurs. He died of tuberculosis before fully developing his theories and ideas; however, the impact his work has regarding the “dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes” results in his ideas becoming increasingly influential around the world (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 192). He develops the idea, the genetic law of development, which emphasises the impact all social interaction has on an individual since birth. Rogoff (1990) explores this Vygotskian idea in a series of cross-cultural studies, and finds that children, even when not in conversation with adults and caregivers, internalise and synthesise these routine experiences to acquire crucial cultural knowledge. This unconscious acquisition of cultural knowledge and beliefs, whether latent or active in the individual, provides a frame of reference for the student when critical thinking elicitation are required during the course of their education. This illustrates the subconscious impact many activities (particularly where critical thinking is involved) have on individuals within the social construct of a classroom.

Furthermore, the influence culture has on teaching and learning is highlighted by the work of Tharp and Gallimore (1988), where they develop a culturally sensitive approach to educational instruction targeting students in Hawaii which is extremely

successful. When the same program is utilised for groups of indigenous Navajo students, it is much less successful due to the difference in socio-cultural context. The latent influence different socio-cultural perspectives, beliefs and ways of knowing has on learning in general is highlighted by this study. It would therefore transpire that to delve deeper and elicit critical thinking in students with such differing cultural backgrounds would present as even more problematic for students and teachers. Although this study is indicative of the danger in applying a one size fits all approach to classroom instruction, and the effect cultural background has on education, the danger of applying critical thinking in a one size fits all situation could result in an even greater divide.

2.2.5. Defining critical thinking.

Research performed by Innabi and Sheikh (2006) finds that teachers cannot communicate a definition of critical thinking and do not demonstrate a clear understanding of what critical thinking entails. Regardless of approach, all advocates agree on a series of abilities and dispositions required in defining critical thinking, and these are shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4

Areas of Advocate Agreement Regarding Critical Thinking

Area of Agreement	Aspect of agreement	Advocates
Abilities	Analyse arguments, allegations or evidence presented	Brookfield, 2003; Ennis, 1985, 2002b; Facione, 1990; Halpern, 1998; McPeck, 1981; R. W. Paul, 1992; Raiskums, 2008; Scriven & Paul, 1987
	Make interpretations using inductive or deductive reasoning	Ennis, 1985, 2002b; Facione, 1990; R. W. Paul, 1992; Willingham, 2007
	Evaluating or judging information	Ennis, 1985, 2002b; Facione, 1990; Halpern, 1998; Raiskums, 2008; Scriven & Paul, 1987; Sternberg, 1986, 2003
	Problem solving or making informed decisions	Ennis, 1985, 2002b; Facione, 1990; Halpern, 1998; Raiskums, 2008; Sternberg, 1986, 2003; Willingham, 2007
Dispositions	Being open and fair minded	Bailin, 2002; Ennis, 1985, 2002b; Fascione, 1990, 2006; Halpern, 1998; Raiskums, 2008; Scriven & Paul, 1987; Willingham, 2007
	Predisposition to pursue reason Inquisitiveness	Bailin, 2002; Brookfield, 2003; Ennis, 1985, 2002b; Sternberg, 1986, 2003 Bailin, 2002; Fascione, 1990, 2006; Scriven & Paul, 1987
	Cognitive and idealistic flexibility	Facione, 1990, 2006; Halpern, 1998; Willingham, 2007
	Wanting to be well informed	Ennis, 1985, 2002b; Facione, 1990, 2006; Sternberg, 1986, 2003

Note: A summary of abilities and dispositions required for critical thinking, and the researchers who agree with the principles irrespective of approach advocacy. Adapted from *Critical thinking: A literature review: Research report*, by E. R. Lai, 2011, [Online].

The Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2017a, para. 1) explains critical thinking as students learning to “generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives and solve problems.” This document also lists behaviours and dispositions required to perform critical thinking as “reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all learning areas at school and in their lives beyond school.” Whilst the research presented in this section requires dispositions, or attitudes, of students that are inherently characteristic of the individual, it also emphasises that processes and strategies are required to be taught and mastered in order for quality critical thinking to occur, and that learning is dependent on socio-cultural constructs.

When combined into a singular definition, critical thinking, for the purposes of this research, is considered to be –

The active analysis and evaluation of all evidence related to an issue or problem using a variety of strategies, that guides belief and actions via an open-minded consideration of all information and viewpoints, with a view to reconstructing one’s own belief on the basis of this wider experience.

How teaching these inherent dispositions and thinking strategies is addressed in contemporary classrooms is currently unknown, and is investigated during this research process.

2.3 Teaching Critical Thinking

Teaching students to think critically and reflectively should be a primary goal of education (McGuire, 2010; Paul & Elder, 2004; Sternberg, 2003). Clement (1979, p. 133) states, “we should be teaching students how to think. Instead, we are teaching them what to think.” Many critical thinking researchers agree that the skills required can be taught (Abramiet al., 2008; Halpern, 1998, Kennedy et al., 1991; Paul & Elder, 2004); however, there is continued debate regarding how to teach these skills, and the most effective strategies for doing so (McGuire, 2010).

A qualitative study is performed by Innabi and Sheikh (2006) in Jordan involving 47 secondary school teachers. They conclude that the teacher participants do not have adequate skills or informed practices through which to teach critical thinking, despite it being mandated in their curriculum. The Jordanian Ministry of Education develop a reform to enhance teacher understanding and practices, however pre-reform and post-reform data indicate that there is no significant improvement regarding teachers' understanding of critical thinking or how to teach the related skills. Additionally, they report 40 percent of teacher participants believe that critical thinking skills are only applicable where conflict arises due to differing viewpoints (Innabi & Sheikh, 2006). This study exemplifies the need for both pre-service and continuing teacher training in this field.

Wiggins and McTighe (2007) suggest that individuals are comfortable with the familiar and therefore resistance occurs when beliefs or practices require a change in the status quo. To modify a content driven curriculum to a concept developing curriculum, therefore requires considerable change to pedagogy, delivery, and overall educational paradigm. There is, however, little research available to support how teachers are making this shift in approach to teaching and learning practices, and even less has been performed in an Australian context.

Critical thinking activities should not just be inserted into instruction but that teachers should “scaffold instruction onto a critical thinking framework” (Steffen, 2011, p. 41). Steffen (2011) interviews 24 teachers in the U.S. and discovers that 16 of them have participated in critical thinking professional development. She notes that these teachers can identify how they scaffold their instruction accordingly, use graphic organisers to assist students in developing their thought processes, engage students in inductive reasoning activities, and infuse critical thinking instruction into their content delivery. This research highlights the importance teacher training has on their understanding of critical thinking, and also how to effectively teach and incorporate it into classroom practice.

2.3.1. Classroom instruction and critical thinking.

There is a variety of pedagogical practices used to teach scholastic subjects and skill acquirement, and these may be used interchangeably depending on the needs of the

students and the topic. These practices can also be applied to critical thinking instruction and are discussed in this section.

Swartz (2008) advocates that the most effective and engaging way to address critical thinking is through direct and explicit instruction, and then infuse those skills into lesson plans. Direct and explicit instruction involves a teacher led demonstration of how to perform a specific set of skills in a specific way in order to effectively engage in critical thinking. This gives students a scaffolded approach to practice the acquired skills and internalise them, resulting in transferability to a variety of other contexts. Beyer (2008) agrees with this as the most effective way to instil critical thinking skills in students.

When taught in classes, critical thinking skills tends to be domain specific in nature, with the critical thinking strategies used in math or science allegedly being different to those required in creative arts areas. Van Gelder (2005) argues that critical thinking skills should be taught as a separate, distinct and explicit part of the curriculum. These classes should be based on problems encountered in real life scenarios as a general approach, with the skills then being able to be transferred across faculty areas and subject matter (Ennis, 1989; Halpern, 2001; Van Gelder, 2005). The separate and explicit approach to teaching general critical thinking skills, and then applying them to subject matter, is considered the infusion approach (Lai, 2011).

In opposition to this theory of acquisition, Bailin, Case, Coombs, and Daniels (1999), Lipman (1988), Case (2005), and Pithers and Soden (2000) all maintain that critical thinking should be discrete, with students expected to procure the necessary skills as a natural consequence of engaging with the subject matter. Silva (2008) also agrees, noting that critical thinking and knowledge should be taught simultaneously and embedded covertly in the curriculum. This approach is referred to by Lai (2011) as immersion instruction.

Finally, there is a third teaching approach regarding critical thinking skills, the mixed approach (Lai, 2011). This combines facets of infusion (general) and immersion (subject specific) skill acquisition where teachers include explicit general instruction

with context specific subject matter. Facione (1990), Kennedy et al. (1991) and R. W. Paul (1992) advocate this as the most effective instructional technique.

Abrami et al. (2008) analysed 117 empirical studies regarding instructional impact on critical thinking skill development. When they analysed each instructional approach (infusion, immersion and mixed), they found that the mixed approach has the greatest improvement, with the immersion approach resulting in the least. These results suggest teaching stand alone and explicit critical thinking strategies, and then integrating those skills into regular curricular subject content to be the most desirable instructional approach. Abrami et al. (2008) also find that teachers who have received specific training in teaching critical thinking strategies, when compared to subject areas where critical thinking is simply included as an instructional objective, have higher rates of impact. Researchers suggest that critical thinking skills are not expected to develop in the absence of explicit instruction (Abrami et al., 2008; Case, 2005; Facione, 1990; Halpern, 1998; Lai, 2011; R. W. Paul, 1992) and therefore professional development in this area is of paramount importance. These studies highlight the importance of professional development opportunities specifically focusing on teaching critical thinking.

Additional to professional development, another variable with regard to critical thinking instruction involves the students themselves rather than solely the pedagogical approach to learning. C. E. Nelson (1994) recognises that student background experience and misconceptions hinder an individual's ability to procure new knowledge, even when adequate instruction has been given. He therefore suggests that teachers create collaborative opportunities which foster disagreement, or highlight misconceptions, to practice critical thinking skills. C. E. Nelson's (1994) research identifies three stages in the collaborative scaffolding process –

1. preparation, where students are provided with a common background theme to discuss;
2. groups should be given a set of questions or analytical framework to guide discussion in order to promote a deeper level of inquisition; and
3. group participants should be assigned roles to promote equal and active participation.

Bonk and Smith (1998) add to collaborative group discussion ideas by suggesting additional activities to enhance learning which include round-robin discussion techniques, interviews, think-pair-share, and jigsawing which all foster the socio-cultural perspective discussed previously.

The use of teacher thinking aloud strategies to allow students to observe the processes going on inside the teacher's head as they apply critical thinking strategies to problems and discussions are advocated by Facione (2000) and R. W. Paul (1992). This makes their reasoning processes visible to students, which allows imitation of those processes to be internalised by them when applying it independently.

Whichever strategies teachers employ in their classrooms, Halpern (1998, 2001) states that it is vital for teachers to, not only teach the skills, but ensure that students are encouraged to practice them, and apply them to a variety of contexts, in both academic and real life based scenarios. Perkins (1993, p. 9) writes that "knowledge and skill in themselves do not guarantee understanding" and teachers must assist students to make connections between what has been learnt and how it can be applied in their lives.

Research identifies that the most engaging, and highest quality critical thinking elicitations occur during student centred learning (Bonk & Smith, 1998; R. W. Paul, 1992). A topic of high common interest promotes participation and an emphasis on student learning rather than teacher teaching. B. T. Newton (1978, p. 287) uses Dewey's reflective thinking definition of "careful and persistent examination of an action, proposal, belief, analysis or use of knowledge in the light of the grounds to justify it" as a supporting statement for Newton's view that "knowledge and those skills through discussion of controversial social issues" leads to effective reflection, critical thinking, and improved rhetorical analysis.

These studies demonstrate that utilising topics that interest students provides the vehicle for maximum classroom productivity. No research could be located at the time of writing this thesis that investigated the impact controversial subject matters (including supernatural themes) present in high interest novels has on personal belief systems. This highlights a significant gap in knowledge which is addressed through this study.

2.3.1.1. Direct instruction studies.

The notion of critical thinking pedagogy has engaged a growing field of interested educators. Many endeavour to design instructional pedagogy that will encourage critical thinking skills in students. Direct instruction is one approach that provides researchers with specific strategies including argument mapping, Paul and Elder's (2007b) Thinker's Guide, and Socratic questioning (Bessick, 2008; Reed, 1998; Scanlan, 2006; Van Erp, 2008; Yang, 2008), and findings suggest that, although proven useful, further research is needed in this area.

A quantitative study of college students to examine the effect of direct instruction on students' critical thinking ability and academic achievement is conducted by Bessick (2008). To do this, she utilises Van Gelder's (2003, 2015) argument mapping technique, and Paul and Elder's (2007b) Thinker's Guide. Both instruments result in no significant improvement regarding critical thinking, but the control group and the group participating in the Thinker's Guide, show some academic improvement. Bessick (2008) concludes that further research is needed involving a larger sample size of participants to determine the extent to which instructional strategies impact on both critical thinking ability and academic achievement.

Reed (1998) studies how the integration of Paul and Elder's (2007b) Thinker's Guide impacts on the critical thinking abilities of college students in a history course. She ascertains that content knowledge is not adversely affected by the inclusion of additional direct instruction lessons, and critical thinking ability does improve in the student participants. Reed (1998) therefore concludes that deliberate instruction using critical thinking models can be of significant benefit to students, without negatively impacting on content knowledge.

The cross-curricular incorporation of Paul and Elder's (2007b) Thinker's Guide is explored by Scanlan (2006) and how it affects students in year 12. The assessment of this is via persuasive essays, and is assessed using a rubric for consistency. He concludes that the quality of argument presented in the essays, including the organising of ideas, use of supporting information, detail in analysis, and clarity of ideas presented, improves as a result of the direct instruction program.

The explicit teaching of Socratic questioning and how it improves critical thinking is studied by Yang (2008). The qualitative analysis regarding student discussions (reasoning, assumptions, and supporting evidence) reveals the group receiving explicit instruction demonstrates an improvement in peer interactions, the support they offer each other, their level of expertise regarding the content of the discussion, and how they confront alternative points of view. It also reveals an improvement in clarifying, justifying, and elaborating on their responses, or solutions to the problem being presented.

Socratic questioning is also highlighted in Van Erp's (2008) study. Explicit instruction is provided in combination with course content to three graduate course groups. The Socratic questioning is then assessed via developed rubrics which highlight critical thinking aspects, and are self-assessment by students. Van Erp (2008) concludes that the questioning methodology prompts students to be open-minded in considering all alternatives, and that the questions used during the course are designed to explicitly challenge student assumptions, promoting quality discussions. As a result of the research, Van Erp (2008) concludes that embedded critical thinking measures, throughout an entire course program, is beneficial in promoting critical and reflective thinking practices.

Although the results of employing these strategies regarding critical thinking have been studied, teacher perception regarding critical thinking instruction is also an area of importance.

2.3.2. Teacher perceptions, styles and strategies.

Choy and Cheah's (2009) study involves 30 participants who teach in higher learning institutions. They discover that most of the participants perceive their students to demonstrate critical thinking if they can extract facts and ideas from a stimulus involving a new perspective, and defend those ideas with rigorous arguments. They conclude that "the results of the analysis do not seem to show that these students had been able to acquire all the skills necessary for critical thinking, although their teachers perceive they are demonstrating this type of thinking" (p. 202). They also find that 28 of the 30 participants perceive students to be lacking in critical thinking skills, and that students are unaware of the skills and associated strategies because

they were not exposed to them during their early years of education. Fourteen of the respondents feel this is the rationale as to why their students demonstrate passive behaviour to learning in their classrooms. Furthermore, 13 of the participants feel that students assume teachers would provide all the information necessary to successfully complete an exam paper in their class notes.

Although Choy and Cheah (2009) conclude that teachers perceive their students to be thinking critically if they can explain concepts in their own words, Black (2005) acknowledges that students are required to deconstruct their own thinking, and analyse it with regard to accuracy, logic, relevance, fairness and clarity. This lack of understanding appears to be inhibiting teachers from adequately instructing students regarding critical thinking. They also find that many teachers perceive their students not to enjoy discussion based learning and that teachers are hesitant to persist in this instructional strategy because of the need to complete all the course material in the time available.

The study highlights the need for an overall improvement regarding the definition of critical thinking and instructional strategies to assist educators in teaching the related skills. Teachers perceive they are assisting students to think critically, when they are actually teaching comprehension skills. They also suggest “further studies need to be carried out on how teachers perceive meeting expected requirements and time constraints could be hindering them from effectively incorporating critical thinking into their lessons” (Choy & Cheah, 2009, p. 205).

Steffen’s (2011) research involves both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and includes 32 secondary school teachers (of which 24 are interviewed) and 185 students who complete a survey. These interviews and surveys are conducted to ascertain how teachers perceive their teaching of critical thinking skills, and how students perceive their learning of critical thinking skills. Only four of the 32 surveyed teachers express critical thinking to be looking at a topic from multiple perspectives in an unbiased way, and many students perceive it as using “techniques to help you figure something out” (Steffen, 2011, p. 107).

As a result of her research, Steffen (2011) concludes that there is considerable contradiction by teachers regarding whether or not they explicitly teach critical thinking skills. Although teachers claim they teach the skills, few can express any kind of evidence that they do. Steffen (2011, p. 131) also noted that “in 2004 many of the same faculty, around 50%, participated in pedagogical studies focusing on the infusion of critical thinking into content instruction” and yet it was not apparent what changed in practice. It was also not known the extent to which this background experience affected teacher perception of their critical thinking skill instruction. Steffen (2011) also found that 34.4 percent of the students surveyed thought their teachers made them think and encouraged critical thinking either “sometimes” or “frequently.” Her study highlights that, although teachers and students perceive their teaching and learning regarding critical thinking in a positive light, very few can offer any evidence of how this is done, or tangible proof of the strategies they employ to do so. Additionally, definitions of critical thinking by both parties are vague (including comments such as thinking deeply, or looking from multiple perspectives) despite over 50 percent of teachers acknowledging they had attended workshops and professional development sessions regarding critical thinking.

Research over time suggests that significant gains in critical thinking are both perceived (Astin, 1993; Choy & Cheah, 2009; Steffen, 2011; Terenzini, Theophilides, & Lorang, 1984; Tsui, 1999) and empirically experienced by college students (Keeley, 1992; Keeley, Browne, & Kreutzer, 1982; King, Wood, & Mines, 1990; Klassen, 1983; Mines, King, Hood, & Wood, 1990; Pascarella, 1989; Spaulding, & Kleiner, 1992). Despite this, many researchers and educators ascertain the level of critical thinking demonstrated by students is derisory (Keeley, 1992; Keeley et al., 1982; Logan, 1976; Norris, 1985; Tsui, 1998).

Although teachers perceive that they are teaching the skills required to think critically, few can explain how this is achieved or how this inclusion affects their teaching styles. Tsui (2002) therefore conducts research involving case studies using mixed methodology and comparative institutions, and suggests that using these multiple sources of data leads to rich contextual evidence regarding pedagogical styles associated with promoting enhanced critical thinking in students. Most of the data is observation and interview based, and involves four case study institutions and

28 class observations. Two schools selected have high growth in critical thinking results using standardised assessments, while two have low critical thinking growth results in the same standardised testing devices. Tsui (2002) examined all the factors involved with each school in order to make comparisons relating to context and instruction.

Results show that the high growth institutions (schools A and D) have a strong emphasis on writing and rewriting, which the lower two schools (schools B and C) did not. This rewriting did not entail simple correction and elaboration, but synthesis, analysis, and refining ideas. School C data suggest teachers cannot devote the time needed to facilitate such writing activities because of the time and effort required, and the result is students rushing and producing sub-standard work samples. Conversely, schools A and D stress writing skills across all curricular domains.

The high growth schools of A and D both utilise seminar style approaches to teaching rather than lecture formats, favouring discussion and interpersonal relationship building. Students at school D note they have come to value critical thinking more, engage more with their learning, and learnt how to express their own opinions more as a result. This contrasts with schools B and C where, although classes are small in number, a lecture approach is favoured where students are not actively involved and appear passive learners. This style is defended by staff who suggest some students are unwilling to participate in group discussions, and the content coverage is prioritised given the amount of material required to be covered over the course. The student perspective in the lower growth institution is that they also prefer the lecture style approach to instruction because it allows content coverage, and also requires less energy of the students (many of whom reportedly regularly engage in staying up all night).

In classrooms, it is estimated that teachers typically spend approximately 80 percent of their time in lecture style teaching methodology (Fischer & Grant, 1983) and those students are reported to be attentive to the content of those lessons approximately 50 percent of the time (Pollio, 1984) rendering this instructional approach inefficient. Additionally, Bransford (1979), Craik (1979), and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) agree that empirical evidence suggests students actively process information in

seminar style lessons, as opposed to merely recording it for future retrieval. With these findings regarding the inefficiency of lecture style teaching, questions could be posed as to why this style persists in contemporary universities; institutions that teachers are preparing their students to enter.

When applied to the vehicle through which this research is being conducted (supernaturally themed novels), the findings of Levine and Cureton (1998) reveal 54 percent of students feel uncomfortable when conveying unpopular or controversial views. This suggests that, although discussion based instruction is most effective, it can also be confronting and problematic for both teachers and students when controversial themes are presented as stimulus for that discussion. No studies can be located involving critical thinking, instruction style, or effect on belief systems when supernatural themes are involved as a lesson stimulus.

Regardless of pedagogical style, an issue confronting every classroom regarding the teaching and application of critical thinking is how to assess it.

2.4 Assessing Critical Thinking

Paul and Elder (2007a) suggest that assessment drives instruction, and therefore the assessment of critical thinking skills is important to formulate the most effective manner of instruction. The assessment of critical thinking processes is problematic, with researchers highlighting issues including reliability and validity of such assessment vehicles (Kennedy et al., 1991; Ku, 2009; Lai, 2011; Moss & Koziol, 1991; Norris, 1989; Silva, 2008). Moss and Koziol (1991) analyse writing tasks set for students in years five, eight, and eleven. A passage is given to students and they are required to either support or argue against the passage by utilising critical thinking processes. They find that, in addition to arguments being generally superficial, the strategies employed are not used in other set tasks, suggesting the results are closer attributed to a student's general academic performance in literally assessing the passages, than their critical thinking abilities. Assessing critical thinking through the use of more creative writing measures is also problematic due to the subjective nature of both the task and assessment of it (Lai, 2011; Silva, 2008).

Additionally, Norris (1989) argues that standardised testing, particularly those utilising multiple-choice formats, for general critical thinking skills lack credibility as such tests often reflect the test writer's beliefs and judgements, rather than the inferences, analysis, and informed decision making of the test user. Domain specificity in assessing critical thinking constructs is also necessary to extrapolate, not only the subject-specific knowledge, but how a student applies this knowledge in evaluating and arguing viewpoints (Norris, 1989). Some of the existing standardised testing measures for assessing critical thinking include the Cornell Critical Thinking Tests (CCTT), (Ennis & Millman, 2005); the Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test (EWCTET), (Ennis & Weir, 1985); and the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA), (Watson & Glaser, 1980). Whilst some of these assessment tools utilise multiple choice options, some use open-ended response formats.

It is suggested that these testing instruments are only intended for students in primary school and assess general critical thinking skills in opposition to subject specific skills (Kennedy et al., 1991). This is in keeping with the Australian Curriculum's general capability that critical thinking be included in all cross-curricular areas. Although the Australian Curriculum does not advocate the use of standardised assessments for critical thinking, it does not document how critical thinking skills should be assessed. It is therefore unknown how and if teachers are assessing critical thinking in schools. This study therefore provides an insight into teacher experiences regarding the assessment of critical thinking in Australian classrooms.

Paul and Elder (2007a, p. 3) state "many traditional standardized critical thinking assessments rely largely on formal or informal logic as their background theory for concepts and assumptions." They offer a narrow view of "what being a good thinker really is" (Steffen, 2011, p. 59). Gehrett (2000) highlights this in his study whereby he pre and post tests 12 students in a philosophy class, which requires advanced critical thinking skills. He uses the Cornell Critical Thinking Test and finds that scores increase substantially after being specifically taught critical thinking skills. The interesting point in his study is that he does not perform any test score analysis, but rather his results are due to qualitative observations.

Although critical thinking is assessed and taught in universities in the U.S., research regarding critical thinking assessment in secondary schools is rare (Steffen, 2011). Steffen suggests that “assessing the skills of critical thinking needs to be rethought in cases where the assessment is only one dimensional, just multiple choice or just open ended questions” (p. 59). Ku (2009) agrees and suggests that a combination of cognitive components and open ended questions should form critical thinking assessments. Ku (2009) further suggests that evidence indicates open-ended problems capture the dispositional aspects of critical thinking most appropriately, and should therefore be included alongside multiple choice options.

Any assessment of critical thinking should be authentic in nature, and therefore reflect real-world issues (Bonk & Smith, 1998; Halpern, 1998). Moss and Koziol (1991) state that any problems presented in the assessment should be ill conceived and poorly structured; embedded with inconsistencies and contradictions. This would prompt students to think more deeply than the words presented on the page, and responses would contain more than one plausible solution. It would allow students to consider multiple possibilities and viewpoints (Moss & Koziol, 1991). Kennedy et al. (1991) and Norris (1998) recommend that, if multiple choice assessment formats are to be persistently employed to assess critical thinking, they should also require students to provide a justification for the answer they have chosen. New assessment methods are imperative to accurately measure critical thinking and higher order skills according to Silva (2008). The assessment of critical thinking is not specified in the Australian Curriculum, and it is therefore not known how and if teachers are assessing this general capability. This study provides an understanding of how teacher participants manage this aspect in their own classrooms.

2.5 Contextualisation

The literature review focused on critical thinking as an entity and this section now addresses the context in which critical thinking, and the teaching of it occurs. To gain an understanding of the potential effect eliciting critical thinking in contemporary classrooms may have on teachers and students, the nature of critical thinking and human development is investigated, followed by the instrument through which it is addressed (the Australian Curriculum).

2.5.1. Critical thinking and human development.

Many researchers in the field of critical thinking agree that basic reasoning skills are lacking in most children and adults (Halpern, 1998; Kennedy et. al, 1991; Van Gelder, 2005). Halpern (1998) illustrates this by highlighting the percentage of the population that believe in paranormal activities, despite the lack of evidence to support claims in this area. This view is echoed by Van Gelder (2005) and Perkins, Allen, and Hafner (1983) and they note the innate pattern-seeking attribute of humans, and the inclination to adopt the first justification that makes intuitive sense as a rationale for this belief. R. W. Paul (1992) argues that this irrationality is a result of insufficient school instruction in this area, which favours lower-order learning by memorization without necessarily developing the conceptual understanding of the content through higher-order questioning. R. W. Paul (1992) further claims that students, in general, think that believing something equates to knowledge. Kennedy et al. (1991) and Lewis and Smith (1993) suggest that empirical research supports the development of critical thinking skills through instruction; however, it is also dependant on developmental stages to maximise the impact of this skill.

Piaget's (1960) view of child development suggests that children are not capable of abstract reasoning until developmentally ready; conversely Gelman and Markman (1986), Silva (2008), and Willingham's (2007) research concludes that children employ similar cognitive processes as adults. Research is reviewed by Kennedy et al. (1991) and they conclude that critical thinking skills do improve with age; but this should not prevent teaching those critical thinking skills to children. This is reflected by Bailin et al. (1999) who suggest that critical thinking attributes such as respecting the views of others, open-mindedness, understanding the difference between fact and opinion, and considering all alternatives before making a decision should be taught from an early age. This is further supported by the American Psychological Association (APA) Delphi report (Facione, 1990) that recommends these critical thinking skills should be integrated into a K–12 curriculum and not be confined to secondary school education. These views have been echoed by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (2016) which incorporates aspects of critical thinking from the foundation year through to Year 12.

The astuteness of younger children to engage in critical thinking is demonstrated by many researchers. Lutz and Keil (2002), Koenig and Harris (2005), and Jaswal and Neely (2006) all present findings from their studies that indicate children as young as four years of age can make informed judgements, including the awareness that different people possess different areas of expertise which the children attribute to improving their credibility. Additionally, Heyman and Legare (2005) discover that at between seven and ten years of age, children are aware that others distort the truth depending on their subjective individual motives. These observations cast doubt on Piaget's original notion of abstract thought and reasoning being limited to older children.

There is little research concerning the developmental progress of critical thinking skills and children's chronological age equivalent maturation. Kuhn (1999) engages in research in this area and subsequently develops a theoretical framework based on her findings. She sections her stages into metacognitive understanding, metastrategic knowing, and epistemological understanding. The stages and attributes are presented in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5

Developmental Stages of Critical Thinking

Stage	Age	Attributes
Metacognitive understanding		
Stage 1	3–5 years	Can identify true/false statements, but if an event truthfully has occurred, then the details of that event therefore must also be true
Stage 2	6 years	Awareness of different sources of information (and an increased credibility attributed to expertise) Can distinguish between theory and evidence (an event could possibly have happened, but is there evidence that it actually did)
Metastrategic knowing		
Stage 1	6–12 Years	Understands the value of cognitive strategies Strategies will assist in recalling and managing cognitive resource to solve problems
Stage 2	12 years– adult	Consistent and appropriate selection of a strategy from an accumulated bank of different cognitive strategies Can evaluate and subsequently modify a strategy according to its success
Epistemological understanding		
Stage 1 (absolutist)		Normal in childhood, common in adolescence, occasionally present in adults Understanding that there is an objective truth and therefore all disagreements can be resolved
Stage 2 (multiplist)		Normal in adolescence, common in adults Understanding that the truth can be objective and subjective, in that everyone is entitled to an opinion, and therefore “all opinions are equally right” (Kuhn, 1999, p. 22) Some people do not progress past this stage
Stage 3 (epistemological metaknowing)		Only some people advance to this stage Balance in subjective and objective perspectives Recognises a multitude of valid truths Using judgement and evaluation to establish most valid conclusions Understanding that some opinions are valued more than others depending on context, expertise, and empirical evidence presented

Note: Adapted from “A developmental model of critical thinking” by D. Kuhn, 1999, *Educational Researcher*, 28(2), from Kuhn’s theoretical framework involving levels of thought at different ages of maturation.

The American Psychological Association cautions against establishing developmental or hierarchical progression frameworks regarding the attainment of critical thinking skills, predominantly due to lack of research in this area (Facione, 1990). With so few studies available, findings are not generalisable and are limited to the sample of participants studied. The research that is available is predominantly at the university or college age level.

An example of this is a study that involves third year university students in Ireland and performed by O'Hare and McGuinness (2009). They conclude that the critical thinking skills of these students improved from that of the first year students. This leads them to hypothesise that the experiences gained at university have an "independent effect on the development of critical thinking" skills (Lai, 2011, p. 25). Gellin (2003) also studies college students in America, and concludes that it is the social interactive aspect, and extra-curricular activities, that prompt an improvement in critical thinking skills, as their results are better than those of the control group who do not engage in extra-curricular activities or diverse social interaction. No such studies have been located regarding the Australian perspective or the secondary school setting, highlighting a gap in this area of research.

Regardless of whether critical thinking improves as a result of developmental maturation, or social interaction, all researchers agree that critical thinking improves and develops over the course of an individual's lifetime. The experiences offered and engaged in over that lifetime add a richness to the cache of cognitive strategies available for problem solving, and the value of critical thinking being included as a general capability in the Australian Curriculum, therefore, is of paramount importance and should not be treated as a mere by-product of content understanding.

2.5.1.1. The development of beliefs in the adolescent.

In addition to the developmental stages involving critical thinking, the stages of development pertaining to beliefs is also investigated. Fowler (1981) conducts research into stages of faith development in order to delineate, not only ages at which different aspects of enlightenments occur, but of characteristics associated with those phases. These are summarised in Table 2.6 and contrasted with both Erikson (1959) and Levinson's (1980) stages of development to correlate age brackets.

Table 2.6

Stages of human development and associated faith stages

Age based stages of development	Fowler's faith stages (1981)
<i>Erikson's (1959) early year development</i>	<i>Undifferentiated faith</i>
Infancy – birth to 2 years	1. Intuitive-projected faith
Early childhood – 2 to 6 years	2. Mythic-literal faith
School years – 6 to 12 years	3. Synthetic-conventional faith
Adolescence – 13 to 20 years	
<i>Levinson's (1980) adult development</i>	<i>Adult faith stages</i>
First adult era – 22 to 40 years	1. Individuative-reflective faith
Middle adult era – 40 to 60 years	2. Conjunctive faith
Late adult era – beyond 60 years	3. Universalising faith

Note: Adapted from *Identity and the life cycle: Psychological Issues Monograph 1*, by E. H. Erikson, 1959, New York, NY: International Universities Press; *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*, by J. W. Fowler, 1981, San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row; and "Towards a conception of the adult life course", in N. J. Smelser (Ed.), *Themes of work and love in adulthood*, by D. J. Levinson, 1980, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Erikson (1959), Fowler (1981) and Levinson (1980) allege that it is during the synthetic-conventional faith stage, during adolescence, that individuals demonstrate a conservative and predictable view of faith and belief, based on their cultural and familial norms. This belief is only significantly examined as they encounter opposing and unpredictable ideas that promote re-evaluation. These encounters promote shifts in faith and belief structures that are carried through to the subsequent stage. This stage of human development is therefore shaped by personal experiences, critical reflection, and higher order evaluative techniques. This, combined with the volatility of adolescence, as will be discussed in the next subsection, has the potential to encourage, either consciously or unconsciously, criticism of an individual's status quo in relation to upbringing and cultural expectations, thereby undermining parents.

2.5.1.2. Adolescent mental health and wellbeing.

Wellbeing and mental health, whilst being distinctly different, are not mutually exclusive with overall wellbeing incorporating an individual's mental health. The definition of wellbeing, therefore, is not definitive and no consistent national definition is available, especially within the scholastic domain. Table 2.7 is a summary of some of the definitions put forward by researchers. From the comparable

definitions, it is notable that an individual's wellbeing is subjective in nature, and therefore not necessarily observable to the outside witness.

Table 2.7

Definitions Regarding Wellbeing

Author	Definition
Hettler, 1984	Becoming aware of, and making choices leading to a more fulfilling life and encompasses the whole person.
Weisner, 1998	Successfully, innovatively, and resiliently participating in cultural community activities via stable states of mind.
Stewart-Brown, 2000	Holistic subjective state combining confidence, enjoyment, openness, calm and caring feelings.
Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2002	A subjective representation of and individual's evaluation of their life including aspects of satisfaction and emotion.
Keyes and Haidt, 2002	The presence of positive levels of feelings and psychosocial functioning.
Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky, 2006	Positivity as a result of satisfactory feelings about personal, organisational, and collective needs of both individuals and communities.
Babington, 2006	Subjective judgements regarding life satisfaction rating which includes social, cultural, spiritual and emotional aspects.
World Health Organisation (WHO), 2007	Subjective realisation of one's personal ability to cope with the normal stresses of life, to be able to function productively, and make a contribution to the community.
NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2007	Capacity to take independent action in everyday life, possessing a sense of security to engage fully with life, and having a positive sense of self.

Note: A summary of wellbeing definitions presented by various authors.

From earliest theories and development regarding adolescents, this period in life is referred to as a period of storm and stress that is charged with turbulence and conflict (Gross, 2001; Hall, 1904). Hall's initial theory of adolescence, however, is based on speculation rather than empirical data. His views continue to be echoed by psychologists and academics with Stone and Church (1979) referring to it as a time of vulnerability characterised by emotional volatility and inflated rebelliousness, and Gessell (1956) advocates it is a time of negativism, introversion and rebellion. Lewin

(1976) suggests adolescence is typified by ideological extremism, while Anna Freud (1968) refers to it as a stage of psychological disequilibrium resulting in the alternating of extreme periods of enthusiasm and despair, and energy and lethargy. Kretschmer (1960) typifies adolescence with schizoid characteristics, and a period of negativity and ego experimentation.

Bandura (1964) questions these assumptions of adolescence as he believes the lack of empirical evidence behind these theories runs the risk of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. A more contemporary view is that adolescent behaviour is not innate but that it is heavily influenced by social and cultural factors (Atwater, 1990). Bandura's research into theories of adolescence concludes that most behaviour comes from observational learning where adolescents observe and imitate the behaviours of parents, peers, and other significant adults. This cultural-context theory is tested by Margaret Mead (1949) who conducts her research in Samoa in 1925. She establishes that adolescent behaviour is not universal, but rather culturally specific and ontologically based. Although challenged by Freeman (1983), Sprinthall (1988, p. 13) defends Mead's study stating, "cultural norms and expectations help to determine the nature of adolescence. ... [This] has been widely supported by studies in a variety of cultures, and Mead's work is still recognised as an important early statement of this idea."

During adolescence, the capacity for abstract thought processes develops (Elkind, 1981; Flavell, 2011; Piaget, 1960) where they can test hypotheses, synthesise data, and think reflectively (Manning, 2002). It is during adolescence that students begin to experience metacognition (Kellough & Kellough, 2008) and can now argue positions and challenge adult directives (Brighton, 2007; Stevenson, 2002). During this time, they have a heightened awareness of their own ethnicity (Scales, 2010) and endeavour to sustain peer approval (Kellough & Kellough, 2008). Wiles, Bondi, and Wiles (2006) suggest that this increased emphasis on peer groups coupled with family affiliations cause conflict because of the opposing alliances; however Kellough and Kellough (2008) state that the family remains a critical influence in their final decisions. These factors potentially cause inner turmoil for adolescents in, not only developing their own unique individuality, but the desire for peer

acceptance and familial/cultural loyalty. By eliciting critical thinking involving topics with cultural and/or belief system sensitivities, this inner conflict could be inadvertently escalated by confusing the student who may be required to choose between family background and peer alliances, due to wanting to have loyalty to family and tradition, but also wanting peer acceptance and agreement with their ideas.

George and Aronson (2003, para. 22) state “when students’ home culture and the school’s culture are very different, educators can easily misunderstand students’ behaviour and thus use instructional strategies and discipline that actually are at odds with the students’ cultural or community norms.” Additionally, research is conducted regarding the Agentic State (Hodgkinson, 1991; Milgram, 1963; Shiller, 2005) in which study participants carry out knowingly immoral actions which are against their personal belief systems, indicating a subliminal willingness to appease/carry out the wishes of a superior. With this research in mind, it is easy to see how an adolescent from a culturally different background could be placed in a conflicting position regarding their personal belief system and that of the status quo, and their predisposition to appease a teacher or superior. These conflicting positions could be impacted by the adolescent’s beliefs in the supernatural which form an aspect of religious and cultural belief systems.

2.5.1.3. Adolescent belief in the supernatural.

The belief in supernatural themes is then dependent on open versus closed mindedness (Riley, 2010) and the degree of open-mindedness affects the way adolescents view critical thinking with respect to beliefs and therefore the supernatural themes associated with it.

An example of this open-mindedness versus closed-mindedness is personified in the biblical Book of Daniel where Daniel reportedly refuses to worship a statue which allegedly eats entire meals offered by worshippers. He notes that the statue is made from brass and clay, and therefore unable to either eat or drink. In possibly one of the earliest examples of critical thinking recorded regarding the links to paranormal investigation, Daniel sets a trap to reveal the true nature of this reported miracle. He instructs servants to scatter ashes on the floor prior to sealing the temple, and when

opened in the morning, a myriad of footprints are visible in the ash where people had entered to take the food via secret doors. Centuries later, a weeping statue is reported in the East York church, Toronto. After learning that the church has an alleged debt of approximately \$271,000, Goldhar (1996) suspects it is a hoax in order to attract believers and entice them to spend money on souvenirs. This suspicion has no effect on the faithful who are reported by Di Manno (1996) as making comments of indifference regarding the authenticity of the weeping statue, with one woman conceding she does not care if the wall behind the statue houses plumbed pipes to create the illusion, and that you either believe in miracles or you do not. She reports that she is a staunch believer, regardless of what is unearthed during investigation. So whilst some remain open-minded and search all avenues for the truth, others remain closed-minded, even in the face of concrete evidence. The degree of open or closed mindedness within the context of this research is an unknown variable.

The supernatural encompasses a myriad of phenomena, most of which are investigated via a *Gallup Youth Survey* to determine teenage beliefs in this area. Marcovitz (2014, p. 10) notes that J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* movie franchise "were among the highest-grossing motion pictures of all time" and the subsequently filmed related movie *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* grossed nearly a billion dollars alone, with sequels therefore a lucrative option. Whilst classical portrayals of witches present them as deformed and evil, for example in *The Wizard of Oz* (Le Roy, 1939), the modern day portrayals are much more attractive and socially acceptable, for example *Sabrina: The Teenage Witch* (Hart et al., 1996-2003), *Charmed* (Burge, Kern, Spelling, & Vincent, 1998-2006), and *Practical Magic* (Di Novi, 1998) making them more appealing to teenagers. Additionally, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J. K. Rowling is released in 1998, and "in 2000, the Gallup Youth Survey asked 500 young people between the ages of 13 and 17 what they knew of the Harry Potter books" (Marcovitz, 2014, p. 20). In only two years since original publication, 63 percent say they are aware of the series, and 32 percent have read at least one book (Marcovitz, 2014). The engagement in the thematic content, and realistically presented feats via computer generation techniques make these genres lucrative for movie producers. It is not known if multimedia immersion by teenagers influences their belief patterns regarding the supernatural,

but the research shows a significant trend in increased adolescent interaction with supernatural phenomenon.

The results of the 1984 and 1994 longitudinal *Gallup Youth Survey* are presented graphically in Figure 2.1 Marcovitz (2014, pp. 13-14) notes that “the difference in the two studies indicates that over time the popularity of paranormal or supernatural phenomena fluctuate among teens.” He also states that the “interest in some of these ideas is undoubtedly affected by how they are portrayed in popular culture,” and cites the growth in witchcraft belief could be associated with the aforementioned movies and television series (Marcovitz, 2014, p. 14). Given the data presented, this idea can only be considered as a hypothesis, as no empirical evidence is offered correlating the dates and viewing population of these shows for cross referencing the Gallup survey data.

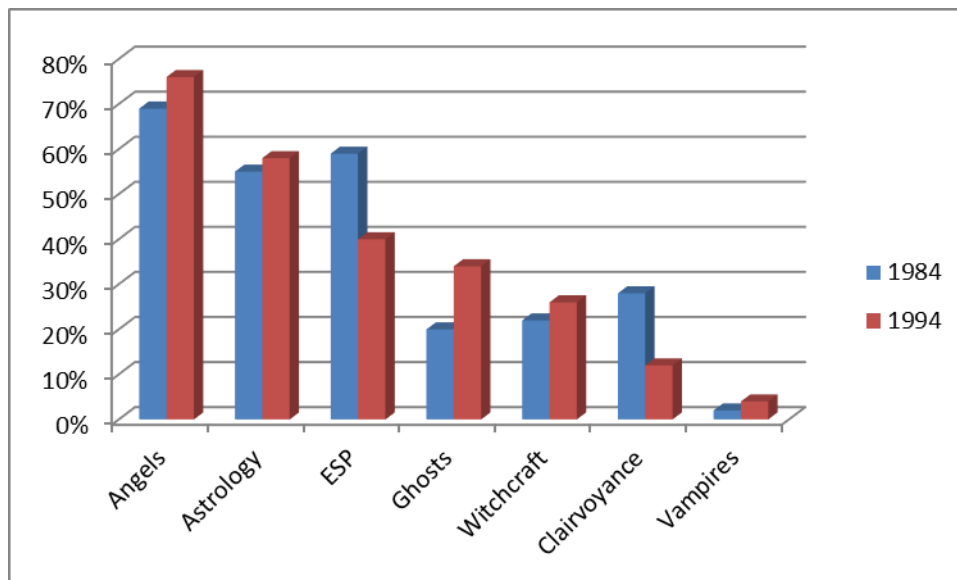


Figure 2.1. Teenage belief in the supernatural comparative chart 1984 to 1994

Note: Adapted from data presented in *Gallup youth survey: Major issues and trends. Teens & the supernatural and paranormal*, by H. Marcovitz, 2014, Broomall, PA: Mason Crest.

Of note are the categories which decreased in belief, namely Extrasensory Perception (ESP), and Clairvoyance phenomenon. It is these theories that expose the greatest investigation, and critical thinking during this time period. Uri Geller is investigated regarding his psychic abilities to bend spoons and results are published by James Randi in his book *The Truth About Uri Geller*. Geller subsequently attempts to sue the book publisher but is unsuccessful and the case settles in 1992 (Randi, 1982).

Similarly, the clairvoyant, Doris Stokes becomes very popular in the late 1970s, but following her death in 1987, Ian Wilson publishes a book entitled *The After Death Experience* in which he exposes her methods that allegedly include audience plants (Wilson, 1989). It is not known if these high profile public cases had any tangible effect regarding the decrease in belief over the ten year period or not, but cannot be ruled out as a variable. Similarly, the series *Highway to Heaven* which follows the adventures of an angel sent to Earth to guide people airs on television between 1984 and 1989, and subsequently, the television series *Touched by an Angel* airs from 1994, that may have had an unconscious impact on teenage beliefs resulting in the increase during this time period.

Bering (2006, p. 142) states “in the United States, as much as 95 percent of the population reportedly believes in life after death.” In Australia, the Sydney Morning Herald reports the findings of a survey done to celebrate the launch of a world premiere ‘Haunting: Australia’. It reveals that 88 percent believe that paranormal phenomenon exists, 70 percent claim to have had a personal experience involving the paranormal, and 20 percent report having a close encounter with a spiritual entity or ghost. When questioned if participants believe in ghosts, 50 percent reply yes, aliens receive a 42 percent affirmative answer, premonitions receive 41 percent, and 36 percent of the participants believe it is possible to communicate with the dead. This is tied with 36 percent of participants acknowledging they believe in angels (Angel, 2014). The details regarding the number of participants in the survey or if it is a random sample of the population is not available. Although this could compromise the survey’s validity, it does offer an Australian perspective regarding the topic that mirrors that of the United States survey.

The effect such beliefs has on the tumultuous adolescent psyche, however, is somewhat more transparent. Marcovitz (2014) highlights cases including American teenager, Rod Ferrell, who is convinced he is a vampire, participating in occult inspired ceremonies and eventually receiving the death penalty for the murder of his girlfriend’s parents; Kyle Hulbert, an 18 year old, also convinced of his vampire heritage who is also convicted of murder in 2001; four German teenagers, who are believed to be Satanists, committing suicide as an alleged form of offering; and the 2001 case in Germany where three teenagers reportedly commit suicide after

participating in reported devil worshipping. Although it is now believed that all of the teenagers listed have some form of mental illness in varying degrees, their engagement with occultist creatures and practices influence their decision making (Marcovitz, 2014).

The *Gallup Youth Survey* also reveals that although 76 percent of teenagers believe in the existence of Hell, where the evil are punished, the belief in Heaven is 91 percent (Marcovitz, 2014). Associated with this is the belief in the End Times or Armageddon. There is a series of books published by Christians that detail how to “survive the Tribulations and await the defeat of the Antichrist” (Marcovitz, 2014, p. 58). The series also contains a sub-series entitled ‘Left Behind: The Kids’ specifically aimed at younger readers and has reportedly sold in excess of 65 million copies since initial publication. Marcovitz (2014) reports that after the terrorist attacks of 2001, sales of books in the Left Behind series rose by 60 percent. In 2000, a *Gallup Youth Survey* of 500 teenagers reveals 81 percent agree with the declaration, “there will be a day when God judges whether you go to heaven or hell” and the 1994 Gallup poll reveals 34 percent believe the world will end due to “a supernatural force, such as God’s will” (Marcovitz, 2014, p. 62).

With these statistics in mind, it is understandable that students in a contemporary classroom may exhibit different passionate, religious, and sometimes cultural opinions regarding belief in the supernatural. With the curriculum prioritising concepts over content in order to prepare students for an ever changing world after school, the importance of critical thinking is undeniable. The curricular requirement regarding critical thinking could therefore become ethically or morally problematic for both teachers and students where supernaturally themed texts are concerned.

2.5.2. The critical thinking curriculum.

Technological advancements and superior global communication systems mean that students who are in schools today are being prepared for jobs which possibly do not currently exist. Curricular emphasis, therefore, should not be prioritising content, as this same content could be superfluous when they graduate. Rather they should be highlighting real life skills and knowledge that can be transferred from one domain to another (Fletcher, 2007). Wiggins and McTighe (2007, p. 63) highlight the

antiquated use of the textbook as no longer being the “de facto syllabus”, and Brady (2008, p. 66) supports this by claiming they are inadequate for “teaching higher order skills because they represent the final conclusions of other people’s thought processes.” Knowledge of importance is now in the acquisition of processing skills, rather than recalling facts or the opinions of others. Nosich (2001) suggests that thinking beyond the content through critical questioning, promotes knowledge that is meaningful.

Both Ennis (1993) and Halpern (1996) acknowledge that critical thinking skills should be a curricular priority to address the changing nature of education but despite these revelations occurring over 20 years ago, little has been done to address them until recently. Rotherham and Willingham (2009) and Schreck (2009) echo this in more contemporary times, with Schreck (2009, p. 77) stating “the call is out and getting louder for more emphasis” on creative and critical thinking. Costa (2001) suggests critical thinking should be woven into curriculum design, and Swartz (2008) cautions that a problem based curriculum does not mean teaching students how to solve problems. It is a guiding theory for the curriculum where solving authentic issues occurs through active learning.

It is documented by researchers that “four barriers often impede the integration of critical thinking in education: (1) lack of training, (2) lack of information, (3) preconceptions, and (4) time constraints” (Snyder & Snyder, 2008, p. 93). Some of these issues can be addressed through curricular development and emphasises the importance of listening to the voice of teachers when formulating these documents. It is the voice of teachers that is highlighted in this study.

The curriculum is the central focus of education, and all other aspects are constructed around this document (Costa, 2001). R. Paul (1995) notes that, for critical thinking to be an integral part of any curriculum, it needs to form part of the pedagogy, and be specifically articulated in the curriculum, establishing schools as having a culture of thinking; a view supported by Andrews (2009) and Ritchhert and Perkins (2008). The curriculum should address the needs of the community, institutions, and employment sector regarding desired attributes of school leavers. Fletcher (2007) suggests the need for redefining teaching by focusing on the how and why, rather

than content. He acknowledges the business sector does not teach these higher order skills, but they do demand it of their employees, and therefore, critical thinking should be prioritised in any school curriculum.

2.5.2.1 The Australian Curriculum.

The Board of Studies New South Wales (2012) lists the seven cross-curricular Australian Curriculum general capabilities in the NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum: English K–10 syllabus. These are literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), **critical and creative thinking**, personal and social capability, ethical understanding, and intercultural understanding. This reinforces the ideal that critical thinking is not confined solely to critical literacy, but to the broader arena of everyday life. It also legitimises the thematic investigation of the supernatural presented in novels via ethical understanding and intercultural understanding banners.

The cross-curricular nature of critical thinking as a general capability in the Australian Curriculum is contentious as some researchers, as discussed previously in this thesis, argue that the quality of critical thinking gained, and the ease of instruction, occur in domain specific applications (Bailin, 2002; McPeck, 1990; Willingham, 2007). McPeck (1990) adds that the more general the acquisition and application of critical thinking is, the less helpful it becomes to the individual.

Halpern (2001), Lipman (1988) and Van Gelder (2005) disagree, and suggest that fundamentally, critical thinking processes are consistent across educational domains; therefore general instruction has great potential. Ennis (1989), Facione (2000), and R. W. Paul (1992) indicate the need for both general and domain specific aspects of critical thinking to be addressed in the curriculum. This allows for deductive mathematical strategies, scientific statistics, and art subjectivity styles of approaches to critical thinking to be addressed in addition to the general principles of higher order thinking. In supporting this mixed view of specificity, transferability is an aspect that needs to be addressed, given that critical thinking skills may be apparent and applied in one context, but the same individual may fail to apply the same principles to another domain (Willingham, 2007).

Researchers who support the domain specific approach to learning critical thinking skills claim the transferring of these skills to another context is rare (Ennis, 1989; Pithers & Soden, 2000; Willingham, 2007). Other researchers suggest that, as long as students are taught how to transfer these skills, and given the opportunity to practice them in a variety of contexts, then transferability can occur, especially when scenarios are authentic and representative of real life (Kennedy et al., 1991; McPeck, 1990). Nickerson (1988) finds the empirical evidence regarding the success and failure of the transferability of critical thinking skills across contexts is mixed, however critical thinking that is taught and practiced throughout the educational faculty domains and also in real life scenarios (creating a fused approach) denotes the highest rate of success. Wiggins and McTighe (2007) claim that when teachers teach for understanding, rather than application in specific situations, then students can and will transfer this knowledge to other contexts. This is congruent to the approach taken by the Australian Curriculum.

The Australian Curriculum – English (ACARA, 2016, p. 11) states that the “Literacy strand aims to develop students’ ability to interpret and create texts with appropriateness, accuracy, confidence, fluency and efficacy for learning in and out of school, and for participating in Australian life more generally.” It then ascertains this strand “takes into account approaches to literacy learning that are based on the development of skills, social and psychological growth, and critical and cultural analysis.” It is under this banner that critical thinking becomes of paramount importance as it “plays an important part in developing the understanding, attitudes and capabilities of those who will take responsibility for Australia’s future” (ACARA, 2016, p. 4).

Critical and creative thinking co-exists with all other capabilities and is integrated in all strands of the Australian Curriculum. “Students develop capability in critical and creative thinking as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives and solve problems” (ACARA, 2017a, para. 1). It requires students to “think broadly and deeply using skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all learning areas at school and in their lives beyond school” (ACARA, 2017a, para. 1). In this respect, critical thinking is not restricted to the study of

literature, or English classes in general, but to overall life, and all societal aspects associated with it. Many educators ascertain that in future, less importance will be placed on specific content knowledge, and more placed on the ability to learn and make sense of new information (Gough, 1991). Both Presseisen (1986) and Adu-Febiri (2002) consider critical thinking, as a capability, can be learned.

The Australian Curriculum pairs the general capabilities of critical and creative thinking, stating that they are “strongly linked, bringing complimentary dimensions to thinking and learning” (ACARA, 2017a, para. 4). Many researchers advocate a need for this connection, citing that creativity is necessary for critical thinking (Bailin, 2002; Bonk & Smith, 1998; Ennis, 1985; Paul & Elder, 2006; Thayer-Bacon, 2000). Paul and Elder (2006, p. 35) state “critical thinking without creativity reduces to mere scepticism and negativity, and creativity without critical thought reduces to mere novelty.” For this reason, the pairing of critical and creative thinking in the Australian Curriculum is valid.

Ethical understanding is also a general capability in the Australian Curriculum and co-exists with critical and creative thinking synergistically as students “identify and investigate the nature of ethical concepts, values, character traits and principles, and understand how reasoning can assist ethical judgement” (ACARA, 2017b, para. 1). The document further states that “ethical understanding involves students building a strong personal and socially oriented ethical outlook that helps them to manage context, conflict and uncertainty, and to develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behaviour have on others” (ACARA, 2017b, para. 1) which subsequently has an impact on personal belief systems.

Intercultural understanding involves students learning to “value their own cultures, languages and beliefs, and those of others” (ACARA, 2017c, para. 1). Students learn to “view critically their own cultural perspectives and practices and those of others through their interactions with people, texts and contexts across the curriculum” (ACARA, 2017c, para. 3) and “to consider their own beliefs and attitudes in a new light, and so gain insight into themselves and others” (para. 4). Many cultures, ancient and modern, have a background in supernatural belief and superstition. These belief systems are questioned for understanding, probed for evidentiary support,

analysed for the credibility and reliability of the sources utilised in that belief system, and challenged as to their validity as a legitimate belief when compared to others under the capability of critical thinking. Although it assists in intercultural understanding, it also has the potential to promote students' questioning of their own cultural belief system.

Secondary schools in Australia have a variety of prescribed texts dependant on the State; however, each state has a Shakespearean drama listed as a compulsory area of study in their English curriculum. On examination, some drama and fiction pieces which have been transposed to film have an elevated viewer rating due to adult and supernatural themes. These include the following which are rated 'R' and therefore not appropriate to view in the school setting, but remain a recommended English text; *Othello* (Barron, 1995), *Julius Caesar* (Bauer, Kagan, & Paolo, 2002), *King Richard III* (Bayly & Paré, 1995), *The Merchant of Venice* (Brokaw, Cowan, Piette, Navidi, & Martino, 2004), *The Twelfth Night* (Evans & Parfitt, 1996), and *Hamlet* (Barron, 1996). In addition to Shakespearean works, some other approved texts which have an elevated viewer rating include *Wuthering Heights* (Bosanquet, Selway, & Thompson, 1992, M 15+), *The Crucible* (Miller & Picker, 1996, M 15+), *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Coppola, Fuchs, & Mulvehill, 1992, R), and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (Coppola, Hart, & Veitch, 1994, R). Whilst it is the written text being studied in the school context and not the theatrical version, ratings are given regarding themes and content. As these ratings are agreed upon by a census committee, it can be assumed that they reflect, or are indicative of, society's views in general. It could, therefore, be argued about the appropriateness of studying these texts, however it should be noted that these themes are also prevalent in popular teenage culture, with both the *Harry Potter* (Heyman, Columbus, Radcliffe, Barron, & Rowling, 2001-2011) and *Twilight* (Godfrey, Morgan, Mooradian, Rosenfelt, & Meyer, 2008-2012) series maintaining their place in the top seller's list for prolonged periods of time.

Stallworth (2006) maintains that for adolescents to become mature, confident, and lifelong readers, young adult literature must be integrated intentionally and purposefully into the curriculum. As the reoccurring supernatural themes span both scholastic applications and current teenage trends, it remains a credible topic linked

to the Literature strand requiring further investigation. The themes presented in these literary works, when combined with the general capability of critical thinking (and subsequently with ethical behaviour and intercultural understanding), have the potential to legitimately create conflict regarding belief systems.

2.5.2.2 Content requirements.

ACARA (2012, p. 24) produced a general summary entitled *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum*, in which it makes some assumptions including “the Australian Curriculum is written so that it should not take up more than 80 percent of the total teaching time available in schools” for Year 7 and Year 8, and then decline in percentage in Year 9 and Year 10. It emphasises the prominence of content over concept development. In addition to the claim of the Australian Curriculum taking up no more than 80 percent of teaching time, it also assumes –

- “The Australian Curriculum content for any learning area should be ‘teachable’ within all indicative time allocation that ACARA sets for its curriculum writers, to avoid overcrowding and to allow for the inclusion of other content”;
- “The Australian Curriculum for each learning area describes core content that should be taught when that curriculum is offered”; and
- “The teaching and learning programs offered by schools are based on the Australian Curriculum, in conjunction with state or territory curriculum, and other learning opportunities and activities determined by the school.”

This indicates that ACARA expects their defined *core* content to absorb no more than 80 percent of teaching time to allow for schools to include other content they feel demographically appropriate, and that this total time dedicated to content is not representative of an overcrowded curriculum. ACARA (2012, p. 24) also notes that “decisions relating to the organisation and delivery of the Australian Curriculum, including such matters as time allocations, rest with education authorities and schools. School and curriculum authorities can specify more teaching time.”

The Australian Curriculum – English content is divided into content descriptors and categorised into three code systems:

- ACELA (Australian Curriculum, English, Language)

- ACELT (Australian Curriculum, English, Literature)
- ACELY (Australian Curriculum, English, Literacy)

An element code is then added after the strand code and appears in numerical form. An example of this coding system is demonstrated in Figure 2.2.

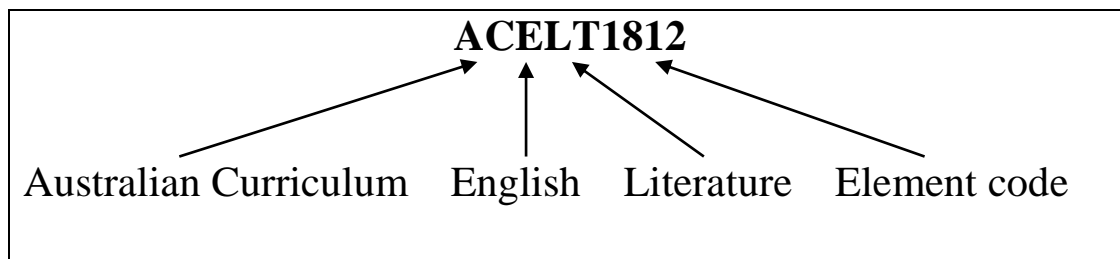


Figure 2.2. Australian Curriculum content descriptor coding system

Note: Sourced from *NSW Syllabus for the Australian curriculum: English K-10 syllabus. Volume 2 (English years 7-10)* (p. 11), by Board of Studies, New South Wales, 2012, p. 11, Sydney, NSW: Author.

The particular content descriptor in Figure 2.2 reads, “identify and analyse implicit or explicit values, beliefs and assumptions in texts and how these are influenced by purposes and likely audiences (ACELY1752)” (ACARA, 2016, p. 119). On the same page appears, “use comprehension strategies to compare and contrast information within and between texts, identifying and analysing embedded perspectives, and evaluating supporting evidence (ACELY1754).” These two descriptors demonstrate how texts are treated in relation to content and critical thinking capabilities. They also provide an insight into how teachers are required to unpack novels, with respect to values, beliefs, assumptions, perspectives, and potentially offensive or uncomfortable material.

The Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2015, p. 27) supporting document containing an English Scope and Sequence: Year 6 to Year 10, under Language for Interaction for Year 10 reads, “understand that people’s evaluations of texts are influenced by their value systems, the context and the purpose and mode of communication (ACELA1565).” Under Responding to Literature (ACARA, 2015, p. 34) for Year 9 it reads, “explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts (ACELT1635),” and for Year 10 reads, “evaluate the social, moral, and ethical positions represented in texts (ACELT1812).” Each of these content requirements

calls for critical thinking into personal belief systems and requires making value judgements on the same with reference to the text and supporting evidence to support and/or rebuke the author's stance.

As discussed previously regarding critical thinking, drawing upon personal experience and knowledge is also a requirement to respond to texts. The Year 10 requirements under Respond to Literature also states, "reflect on, extend, endorse, or refute others' interpretations of and responses to literature (ACELT1640)" (ACARA, 2015, p. 33). To adequately comply with these descriptors, students must not only question and examine their own values, beliefs and ethical judgements in relation to the textual content, but also to respond to the interpretations of their peers in like ways. The content requirements in this respect, has the potential to not only promote lengthy discussions, but also open both the student and their peers up to criticism and self-questioning of their belief systems, and therefore that of their societal culture.

2.6 Summary

This chapter considers the research and literature available regarding the teaching, assessing, and defining of critical thinking. Available research involving teacher perceptions of their teaching of critical thinking is also discussed, however no research is available regarding the eliciting and/or teaching of critical thinking utilising supernatural, potentially offensive or uncomfortable themes. Tsui (1998) suggests that educators lack sufficient knowledge regarding both critical thinking as a disposition, and also how to teach the associated skills required. This theme reverberates throughout the review of the literature, with researchers arguing the benefits of implicit versus explicit instruction, teaching style, how best to assess critical thinking skills, and how these skills should be incorporated into the curriculum, together with definitive definitions of critical thinking.

Most of the literature reviewed supports the findings that students who are taught critical thinking skills increase their results on standardised critical thinking assessments, and improve their overall academic performance. These tests, however, are predominantly multiple choice or short answer, and allow little scope to effectively ascertain the logic skills and processes employed by the student.

Tsui (2002, p. 742) suggests “valued research knowledge comes largely from the accumulation of contested and confirmed findings culled from skilfully conducted studies that are diverse in methodology.” It is difficult to add to a cache of research regarding the impact of critical thinking when utilising material containing supernatural themes, and the subsequent impact on belief systems, when no research in this area can be located. This supports the need for research in this domain, particularly with the diverse student base becoming increasingly more diverse, bringing with it a variety of belief systems to be analysed, questioned and deconstructed through critical thinking practices. Additionally, the research literature is predominantly based on the American perspective, which also supports the need for the Australian perspective to be presented.

The following chapter outlines the methodology employed in this research, including conceptual framework, research design, and the phenomenological approach.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

No two persons can learn something and experience it in the same way.

(Shannon L. Alder, 2015)

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter generated the background and contextualised the research within contemporary parallel research and literature. This chapter outlines the research methodology, research design, and conceptual framework that provide the structure for this study.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

The concept that is central to this study is critical thinking. The relationship between critical thinking, teachers, students, classroom pedagogy, and society is interdependent as it impacts on every aspect of an individual's lived experiences. For example, the belief systems held within a specific societal domain will influence the critical thinking practices of the individual, and the results of critical thinking engagement will influence the beliefs one holds. Regarding this research, this reciprocal relationship is confined to the contextual arena of supernatural themes found in novels used in English classrooms. It is within this context that critical thinking, and its associated impacts, is investigated. The contribution to knowledge therefore lies in the effect eliciting critical thinking responses in schools has on belief systems and societal values in our culturally diverse communities. The conceptual framework can best be represented diagrammatically in Figure 3.1.

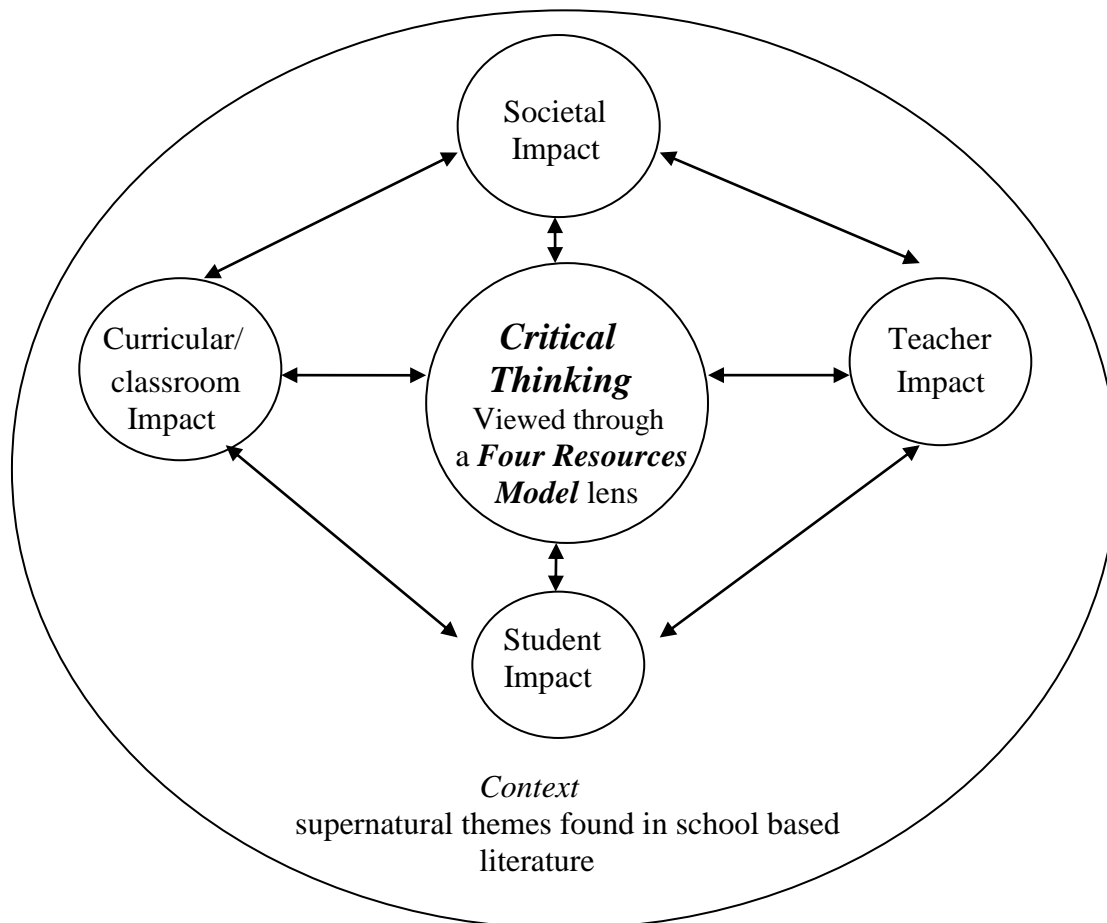


Figure 3.1. Conceptual framework

A visual representation of how the central concept of critical thinking links with aspects of lived experiences within the teaching domain.

3.2.1. Critical literacy v critical thinking.

In the context of the English classroom, critical thinking cannot be addressed in isolation from critical literacy as they work together synergistically and are dependent on each other. For example, Kurkland (2000) ascertains that if we consider something to be unreasonable (critical thinking), the reader will scrutinise the text more meticulously to assess this understanding (critical reading). The opposite is also true as the reader can only engage in thinking critically about a text once they have understood it via critical reading. Kurkland (2000, para. 2) writes “critical reading refers to a careful, active, reflective, analytic reading. Critical thinking involves reflecting on the validity of what you have read in light of our prior knowledge and understanding of the world.”

Critical literacy is centred on the idea that reading and writing are not neutral or autonomous, but a conscious manifestation of an individual's own historical experience (Anderson & Irvine, 1993; Searle, 1993). As such, texts do not demonstrate fixed and singular meanings but have multiple and contradictory meanings that are influenced by the reader, author biases and other texts (Bull & Anstey, 2005; Janks, 2010). It is therefore left to the reader to establish the validity of the author's beliefs, and how the reader can be manipulated into accepting those biases and beliefs through interacting with the text (Alford, 2001; Beck, 2005). Through the exploration of multiple viewpoints, establishing alternative perspectives (particularly concerning different cultural backgrounds) and discussing those alternate versions of reality, the reader establishes an awareness that truth is multi-faceted and dependent on perspective; that no single interpretation constitutes the entire truth of the story (Alford, 2001; Ciardiello, 2004; Clark & Whitney, 2009; Iyer, 2007; Robinson, 2011).

Studies involving university students for whom English is an additional language are conducted by researchers (Huang, 2011a, 2011b; Ko & Wang, 2013; Kumagai & Iwasaki, 2011) using critical literacy frameworks including Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model, Critical Discourse Analysis (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000), and Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluy's (2002) Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy. They find that critical literacy frameworks assist students to expand and liberate their points of view rather than maintaining their conservative attitudes. Similarly, Wolfe (2010) and Lie (2010) also conduct research using critical literacy approaches for Latino and Malaysian students respectively. Rush (2004) investigates studies regarding teaching strategies aimed at encouraging critical literacy in students and assesses their effectiveness via improvement levels in the Four Resources Model. Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2015, p. 90) state, "Luke and Freebody's 'Four Resources Model' is one of the foundations of critical literacy, helping students interrogate the author's intentions and what they want readers to believe." For these reasons, the critical literacy framework, namely the Luke and Freebody's (1997, 1999) Four Resources Model, is considered an appropriate lens through which to view critical thinking in the English classroom.

This model deconstructs the dispositions and skills required when reading a text to promote critical thinking. Specific skills are required to **break the code** in a text and subsequently read the novels being utilised in this study correctly; **understand and compose** meaningful texts by engaging the social purpose and tone of the novels; **critically analyse** texts utilises the ability to detect ideologies and bias; and to **use texts functionally** draws on prior knowledge and cultural experience to fully understand the text and the themes presented within it. Allan Luke (2000) suggests that these skills are not based on “individual differences, but can be viewed as cultural, community-specific and gendered ideologies” (p. 9). It therefore influences what themes are prioritised during novel studies, and how teachers treat those themes presented in novels within their classroom. In the terms of critical thinking, the Four Resources Model encourages the reader to “focus on ‘what a text is trying to do to me’ [and] opens up discussions of the intention, force and effects of texts upon particular audiences” (Luke, 2000, p. 10). Critical literacy occurs in the classroom treatment of the novels, and the meaning that is constructed from this can be used to support or question an individual’s beliefs through thinking critically about those meanings in everyday life situations. Although the Four Resources Model is not intended to be a pedagogical one (Luke & Freebody, 1999), its grounding is in socio-cultural understanding and this supports the diverse context in which this study takes place. Consequently, the Four Resources Model is interpreted as being an appropriate lens through which to view this study. A simplified adaptation of this model is depicted in Figure 3.2.

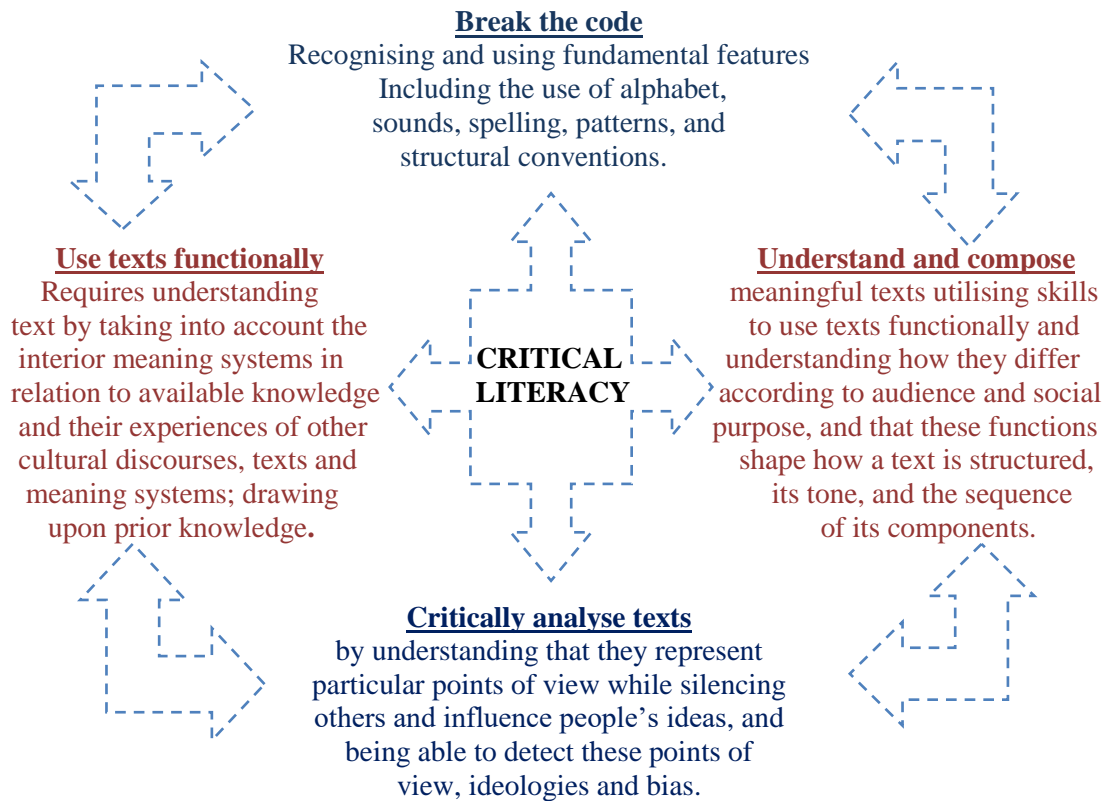


Figure 3.2. Four Resources Model

Note: Adapted from The social practices of reading, in S. Muspratt, A. Luke & P. Freebody (Eds.), *Constructing critical literacies*, by A. Luke & P. Freebody, 1997, Creskill, NJ; and “A map of possible practices: Further notes on the four resources model”, by A. Luke & P. Freebody, 1999, *Practically Primary*, 4(2); and Critical literacy in Australia, by A. Luke, 2000, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 43(5).

The correlation between the Four Resources Model and the philosophical, cognitive, educational and sociocultural approaches to critical thinking discussed in the previous chapter can be made graphically and are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Four Resources Model and Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking	Critical Literacy	Critical Thinking
Abilities	Four Resources Model	Dispositions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving or making informed decisions 	<p>Break the code <i>Recognising and using fundamental features including sounds, spelling patterns and structural conventions</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquisitiveness • Cognitive flexibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse arguments, allegations or evidence presented • Make interpretations using inductive or deductive reasoning • Evaluate or judge information 	<p>Understand & compose <i>Use skills to understand how texts differ according to purpose and audience, and how these affect structure, tone and sequence</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being open and fair minded • Inquisitiveness • Cognitive flexibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse arguments, allegations or evidence presented • Make interpretations using inductive or deductive reasoning • Evaluate or judge information • Problem solving or making informed decisions 	<p>Critically analyse texts <i>Detect bias, views, ideology and influence</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being open and fair minded • Predisposition to pursue reason • Inquisitiveness • Cognitive and idealistic flexibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse arguments, allegations or evidence presented • Make interpretations using inductive or deductive reasoning • Evaluate or judge information • Problem solving or making informed decisions 	<p>Use texts functionally <i>Drawing upon prior knowledge, experience and cultural discourses</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being open and fair minded • Predisposition to pursue reason • Inquisitiveness • Cognitive and idealistic flexibility • Wanting to be well informed

Comparative table depicting correlations and links between the Four Resources Model and critical thinking abilities and dispositions.

In a further validation regarding the use of the Four Resources Model as an appropriate lens through which to view this research, definitive links can be made between it and the Bloom's Taxonomy aspects tabulated in the previous chapter. These links have been made in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Four Resources Model and Bloom's Taxonomy

Blooms 1956	Anderson et al., 2001	Luke & Freebody 1997, 1999
Knowledge	Remembering	Break the code <i>Recognising and using fundamental features including sounds, spelling patterns and structural conventions</i>
Comprehension Application	Understanding Applying	Understand & compose <i>Use skills to understand how texts differ according to purpose and audience, and how these affect structure, tone and sequence</i>
Analysis Synthesis Evaluation	Analysing Evaluating Creating	Critically analyse texts <i>Detect bias, views, ideology and influence</i> Use texts functionally <i>Drawing upon prior knowledge, experience and cultural discourses</i>

Comparative table depicting correlations between the Four Resources Model and Bloom's Taxonomy aspects.

Having established Luke and Freebody's Four Resources Model as a legitimate lens through which to view critical thinking in terms of the context for this study, it is now appropriate to establish how the Four Resources Model fits into the context of the broader scope of the study.

Critical thinking, in terms of the Australian Curriculum, takes the concept of critical literacy further to incorporate this level of analysis not only to literature, but to all life events. It encourages students to think deeply and analytically about everything they encounter throughout life in terms of identifying what influence it is placing on us, both practically and ideologically; which voices are prioritised and which are

silenced; and how our personal background influences our interpretation of the information we are given. In teaching students the skill of critical thinking, enquiring minds can be extended in a supportive environment to validate sources for themselves, free from personal or societal bias, and to independently weigh up the evidence presented.

A flowchart has been developed in order to help the reader appreciate the context in which this study is based, and to investigate the interrelationship between critical thinking and the impacts represented in Figure 3.1. This flowchart (Figure 3.3) breaks down the way in which the conceptual framework was explored.

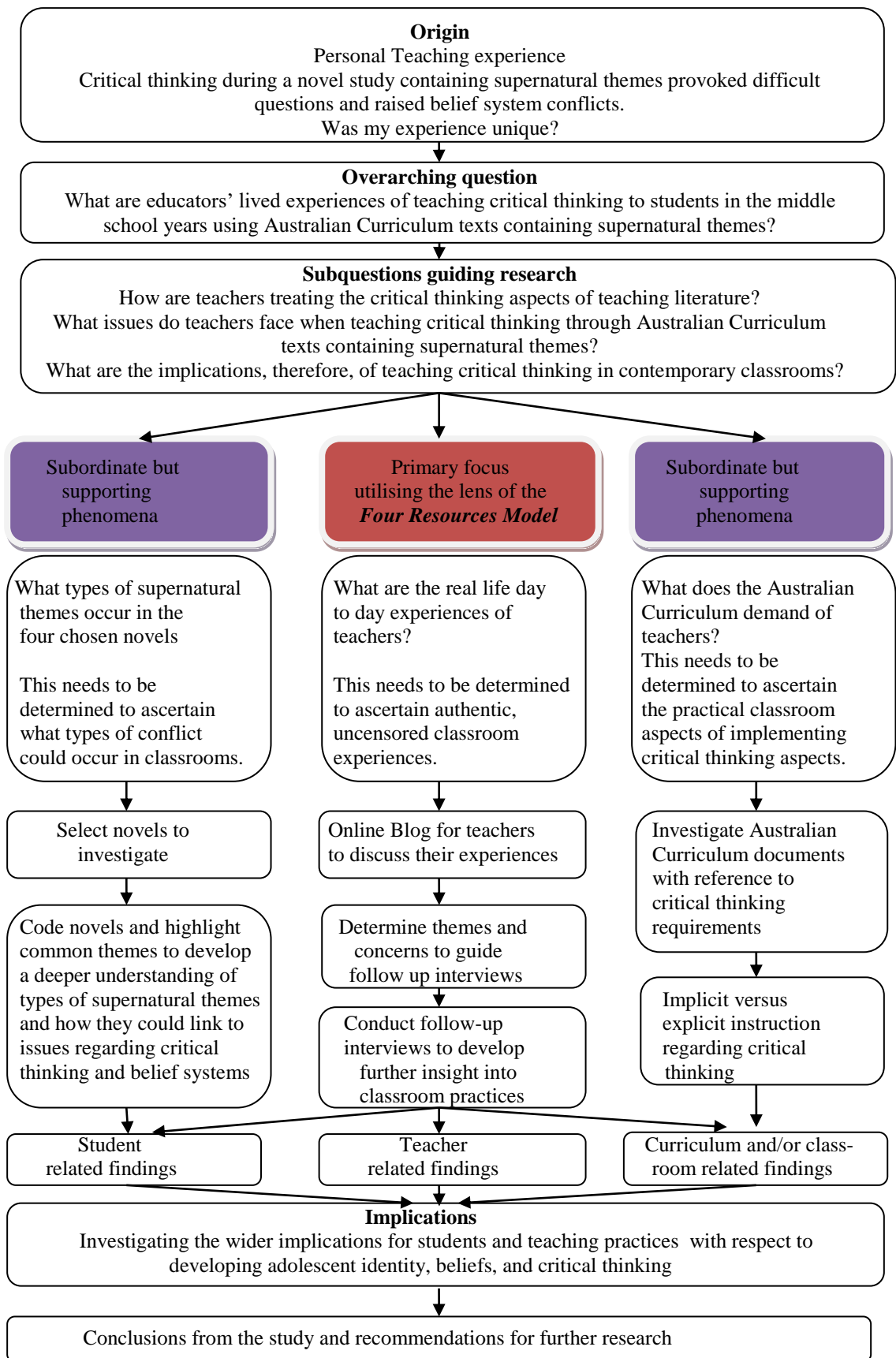


Figure 3.3. Research overview

A summary of how the primary focus and supporting phenomena link to answer the research questions and provide data to derive conclusions.

3.3 Research Design

The overall goal of this qualitative research study is to derive a better understanding of the lived experiences of teachers regarding critical thinking in contexts that might challenge personal values and beliefs for them or their student cohort, specifically with respect to supernatural themes. The research examines, through comparison and critical analysis, the relationship between eliciting critical thinking responses in the English classroom, curricular demands, cultural sensitivities and belief systems, particularly when there could be value and ethical conflicts when utilising novels containing supernatural themes. A qualitative research design is therefore appropriate because this method investigates questions about the nature of phenomena within the social context (Cresswell, 2006).

By utilising the conceptual framework and the research overview flowchart, the research design is then specifically formulated into a series of phases. Each phase, although an independent section, is interdependent on the other, working in a spiral of knowledge, to provide a complete and robust investigation into the phenomena, mirroring the interdependence demonstrated by the Four Resources Model, critical thinking, and critical literacy. These phases not only guide the research process, but also provide a structure for this thesis. This phase breakdown is represented diagrammatically in Figure 3.4.

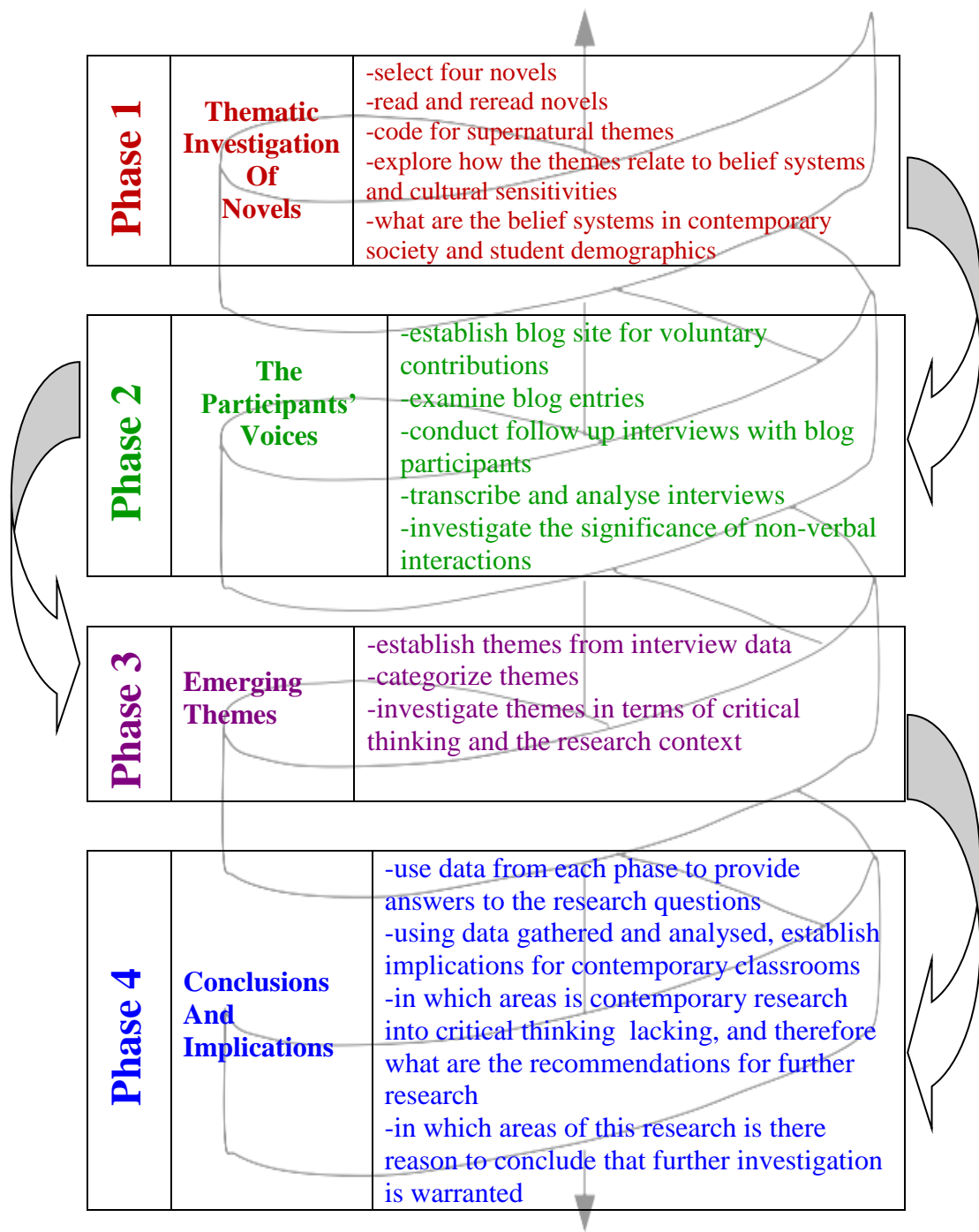


Figure 3.4. Research phases

The different aspects of the research that lead to conclusions and contribution to knowledge.

Research designs are acknowledged to have value when the researcher seeks a response to ‘how’ or ‘what’ questions (Merriam, 1998; Yin 2003). In this study, the overarching question that drove the research is –

How does the need to elicit critical thinking responses in secondary school students using novels containing supernatural themes impact on teacher and student belief systems and classroom pedagogy?

The research phases are colour coded to provide a visual delineation between the text based investigation regarding the thematic content of novels, and the lived experiences of the participating teachers. In order to answer this question and guide the research process, the following research questions are generated:

Phase 1 – Thematic investigation of novels (textually based questions TQ)

1. What specific types of supernatural themes occur in school based literature?
2. Why is it important for teachers to have an understanding of cultural and religious sensitivities to these supernatural themes?
3. How might eliciting critical thinking responses when utilising these texts create conflict between cultural belief systems, and personal philosophies?

Phase 2 – The participants’ voices (participant based questions PQ)

1. How are teachers treating the critical thinking aspects of teaching literature?
2. What issues do teachers face when teaching critical thinking through Australian Curriculum texts containing supernatural themes?
3. What are the implications, therefore, of teaching critical thinking in contemporary classrooms?

Using the TQ and PQs generated above, a table is developed to assist in the data collection and analysis relating to each question (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Data Collection Overview

Overarching question						
How does eliciting critical thinking responses in secondary school students using novels containing supernatural themes impact on teacher and student belief systems and classroom pedagogy?						
Data Collection	Selected novels	Curriculum and Education Policy Documents	Religious based reference text	Teacher Blogs	Follow-up Teacher interviews	Researcher's ongoing reflective journal
Data Analysis	Coding to identify thematic type and frequency Discourse analysis using Hycner's Principles and hermeneutics	Discourse analysis using Hycner's Principles and hermeneutics Concept mapping	Analysis of religious ref.to supernatural themes Concept mapping Comparison charts	Discourse analysis using Hycner's Principles	Discourse analysis using Hycner's Principles and hermeneutics Coding to identify themes	Thematic analysis
Research Questions						
TQ1.	✓					✓
TQ2.	✓	✓	✓			✓
TQ3.	✓	✓	✓			✓
PQ1.				✓	✓	✓
PQ2.				✓	✓	✓
PQ3.		✓	✓		✓	✓

Visual representation regarding how data collection and analysis relate to the research questions.

Hycner's Principles is a tool for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, and will be itemised within the following subsection and then expanded on further in chapter four when **Phase 1** analysis commenced and again in chapter five for **Phase 2** analysis.

3.4 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is chosen as the research approach as it is the "detailed examination of human lived experience" and it "enables that experience to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined

category systems” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 32). The phenomenon being studied in this research involves the everyday experiences of educators teaching critical thinking through the use of Australian Curriculum texts, with particular focus on supernatural themes. This approach acknowledges that experiences may be disconnected in time but interconnected by a common meaning, detailing the particulars of each case (Smith et al., 2009). IPA involves subjective experiences and how particular people make sense of those experiences.

Small homogeneous research samples are involved in this form of methodology in order that convergent and divergent themes can be examined in detail for each participant. The focus is on the lived experience of participants rather than to make generalisations about universal teaching practices. This is supported by Smith et al. (2009, p. 3) as they state, “IPA studies usually have a small number of participants and the aim is to reveal something of the experience of each of those individuals.” Smith et al. (2009) further suggest that flexible semi-structured interviews should form the basis of the data, with the participant maintaining an important role in what is covered. “Transcripts of interviews are analysed case by case through systematic, qualitative analysis. This is then turned into a narrative account where the researcher’s analytic interpretation is presented in detail and is supported with verbatim extracts from participants” (Smith et al., 2009, p.4). This type of data collection and analysis suits the exploration of the research intention, which is to examine lived experience of educators regarding critical thinking in schools.

Smith et al. (2009) list the theoretical foundations of IPA as Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Idiography. Phenomenology, in its essence, is intended to uncover life experiences within our world. Husserl (1927) suggests that phenomenology is not only the examination of human experiences, but also an accurate reflection of our own experiences. He proposes that through reflection, we consciously examine the experiences of others, which sheds light on our own subjective experiences thereby highlighting events and activities that we ordinarily take for granted. In this way, we disengage from the activity and view it from another’s perspective, which then allows us to be more reflective and phenomenologically aware. As an educator, and one who therefore carries a cache of personal teaching experiences within my own frame of reference, I can

constructively reflect on the experiences of others in an effort to phenomenologically examine my own lived experiences, adding an extra lens to the research.

Heidegger adds to the phenomenological perspective by placing emphasis on the “person-in-context” (as cited in Smith et al., 2009, p. 17) and intersubjectivity. Smith et al. (2009, p. 17) define Heidegger’s intersubjectivity as “the shared, overlapping and relational nature of our engagement in the world” and relates to “our ability to communicate with, and make sense of, each other.” This perspectival addition to phenomenology is important regarding this research, as teachers, although performing the same act (teaching) and using the same document basis (Australian Curriculum) for the same demographic (middle school students), are doing so in a variety of different contexts (school types). This allows for the examination of shared, overlapping experiences of individual participants in order to make sense of the studied phenomena (critical thinking in relation to texts containing supernatural themes in contemporary classrooms).

The second theoretical perspective in IPA is Hermeneutics, which is “the theory of interpretation” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 21). Originally utilised to more accurately interpret biblical texts, the methods for interpreting meaning in hermeneutics adds a significant dimension to IPA. Schleiermacher (1978) divides the systematic interpretation of a text into grammatical (exact and objective textual meaning) and psychological (individuality of the author) domains allowing for a holistic treatment of interpretation. He suggests, in essence, that both the writer and text combine to inform the interpretive process. Schleiermacher (1978) proposes that there be a “systematic and detailed analysis of the text itself” and that interpretation further “depends on sharing some ground with the person being interpreted” essentially mirroring the intersubjectivity of phenomenology (as cited in Smith et al., 2009, p. 23). In relation to the semi-structured interviews in this research, this ideal applies to both the analysis of the transcribed text, and the verbal and gestural manner in which the answers are communicated by the participant.

Heidegger (1962) suggests that interpretation is dependent upon fore-conception, which highlights the reader as a participant in that their prior assumptions, experiences, and preconceptions influence the way in which they interpret any new

stimulus. This applies to both the researcher (possible preconceptions regarding personal teaching experiences) and the participant (assumptions regarding student belief systems and conceptual understanding). This view is echoed by Gadamer (1976) who suggests that the researcher's preconceptions may only become apparent once the interpretation process is underway. It is for this reason that self-reflection is important and that an internal "dialogue between what we bring to the text, and what the text brings to us" should be open, honest and continual (Smith et al., 2009, p. 27). As part of this reflective process, and in order to identify and isolate any undiscovered preconceived personal notions, a research journal is maintained throughout the study.

The hermeneutic circle is Gadamer's (1976) cyclic approach to textual interpretation and links the dynamic association concerning the part and the whole at a number of different levels. "To understand any given part, you look to the whole; to understand the whole, you look to the parts" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). Although the approach to qualitative methodology is primarily linear, the process of analysis is fluid and cyclic in nature, which allows for multiple perspectives and analyses of the text. Due to its inherent circularity, interpretation of the text can be entered at a number of levels and can best be depicted diagrammatically in Figure 3.5.

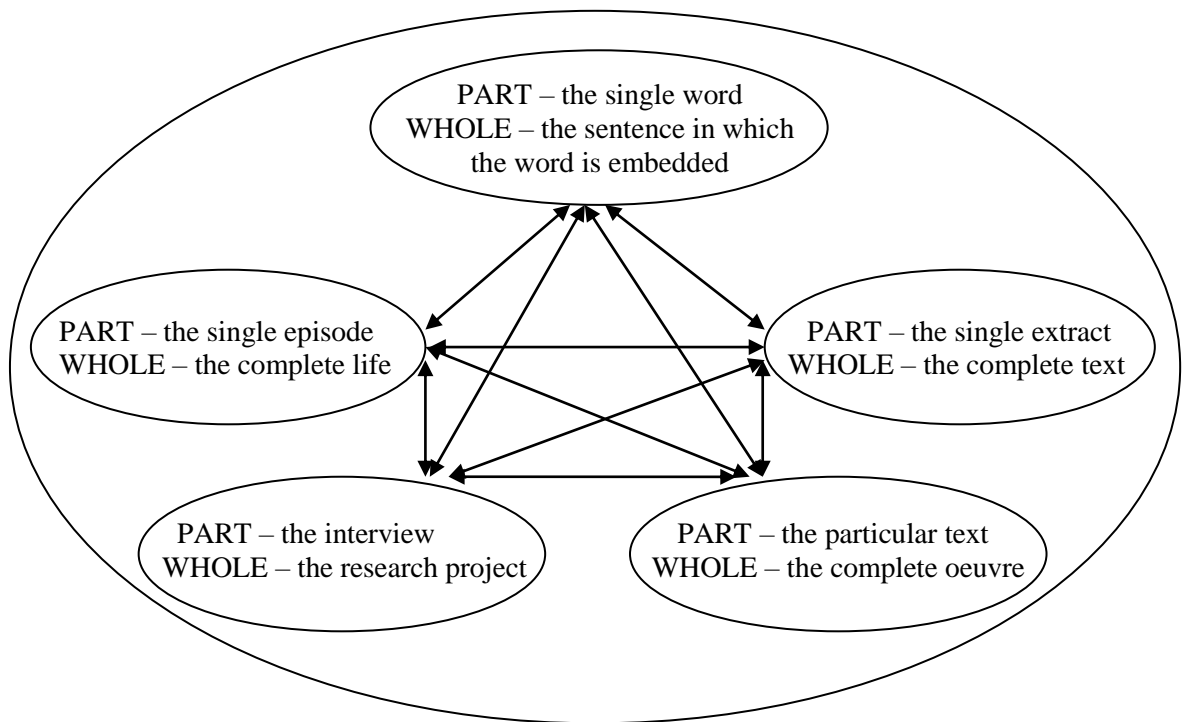


Figure 3.5. The hermeneutic circle

Note: Adapted from *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, method and research*, by J. A. Smith, P. Flowers, & M. Larkin, 2009, London, UK: Sage, to show the cyclic and interdependent nature of aspects of textual interpretation.

The hermeneutic circle mirrors the interdependency between each section of the Four Resources Model previously depicted in Figure 3.2. This relationship can be depicted diagrammatically as shown in Figure 3.6.

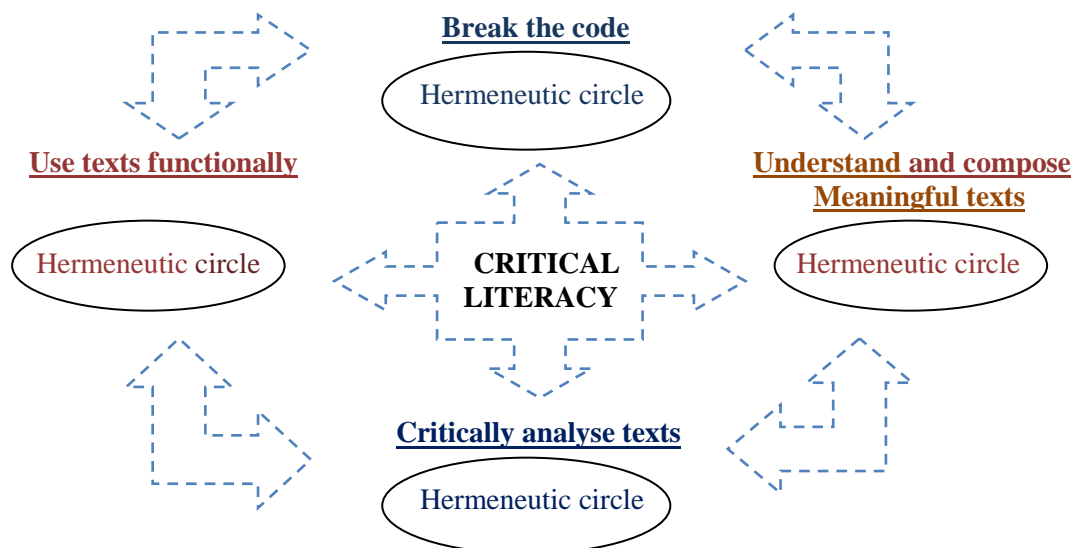


Figure 3.6. The hermeneutic circle within the Four Resources Model

Note: Adapted from The social practices of reading, in S. Muspratt, A. Luke & P. Freebody (Eds.), *Constructing critical literacies*, by A. Luke & P. Freebody, 1997, Creskill, NJ; and “A map of possible practices: Further notes on the four resources model”, by A. Luke & P. Freebody, 1999, *Practically Primary*, 4(2); and Critical literacy in Australia, by A. Luke, 2000, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 43(5), depicting how the hermeneutic circle is embedded in the Four Resources Model for critical literacy.

The third theoretical perspective in IPA is Idiography, which concerns itself with the particular, in opposition to the whole. It emphasises analysing a particular part in both detail and depth, and then also analysing how the event is experienced from the perspective of particular people in particular contexts. This approach therefore, “utilizes small, purposively-selected and carefully-situated samples” where unique perspectives and involvement with a phenomenon can be examined (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29). Idiography does not avoid generalisations, but rather proposes an alternate way of forming those generalisations (Harré, 1979). This approach suits the research as participants are all educators in school based contexts. Their unique perspectives regarding critical thinking is the focus of the research.

IPA is, at the root level, “concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience”, which is the basis of this research (Smith et al., 2009, p. 32). The multiple theoretical perspectives also support the decision to employ IPA as the research approach in that small numbers of purposefully sampled participants are utilised to explore, in detail, their lived experiences with the phenomenon of critical thinking in the school context. As a qualitative study, this approach is best suited to the research, particularly given the cyclic nature of analysis to fully examine the

emerging themes as they develop. The research approach of IPA is graphically organised in Figure 3.7 to demonstrate the links and summarise the justification visually as it applies to this research.

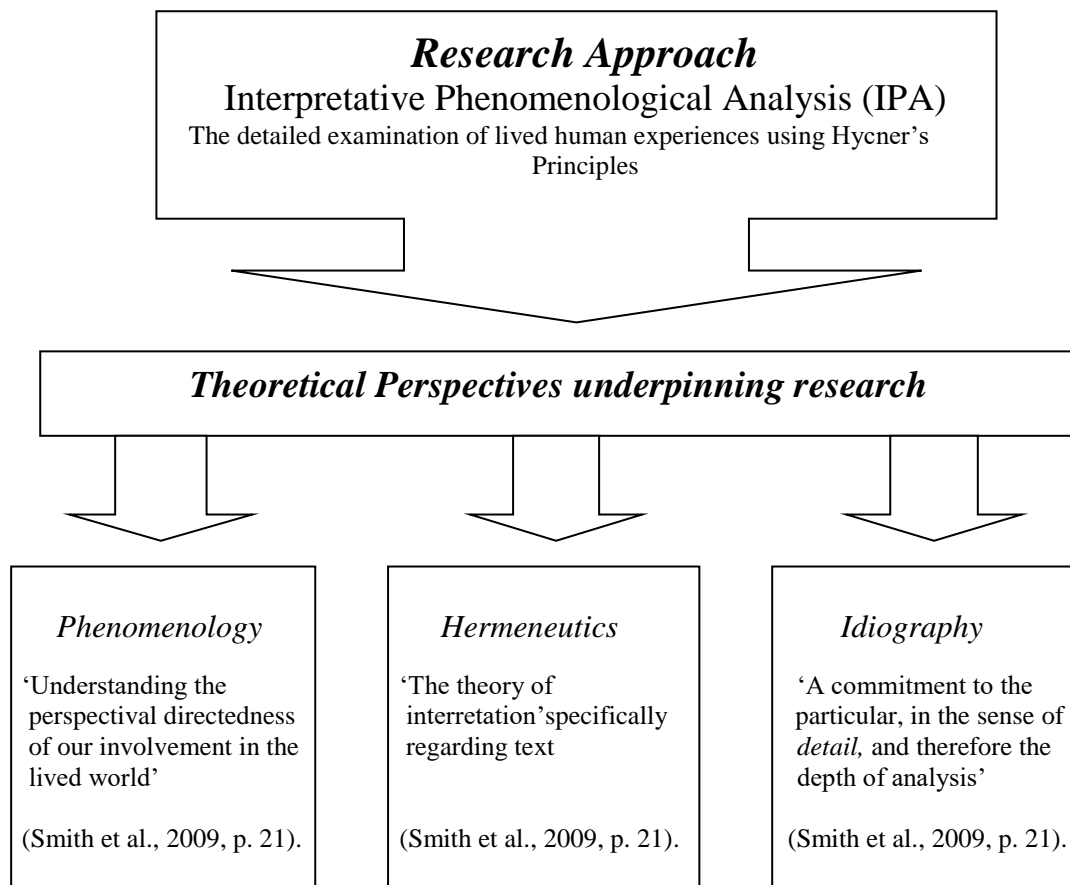


Figure 3.7. Research approach – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). A diagrammatic representation of the theoretical perspectives that underpin the research approach and how they link together supportively.

3.4.1. Hycner's Principles for Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Data.

Hycner's Principles are used as a tool for data analysis within the IPA approach. It consists of 15 steps in a sequential order and includes –

1. Transcribing – substituting oral communication for written text;
2. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction;
3. Listening to the interview for a sense of the whole;
4. Delineating units of general meaning (crystallisation and condensation);
5. Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question;

6. Training independent judges to verify units of relevant meaning;
7. Eliminating redundancies;
8. Clustering units of relevant meaning (grouping according to commonality);
9. Determining themes to form clusters of meaning;
10. Writing a summary for each individual interview;
11. Returning to the participant with the summary;
12. Modifying themes and summary according to feedback or second interview;
13. Identifying general and unique themes;
14. Contextualising themes; and
15. Creating a composite summary.

Relevant principles for each context will be expanded on in chapters four and five.

3.5 Establishing Trustworthiness

The primary concerns involving any qualitative study approach are perceptions of credibility involving reliability (consistency across time, individuals, and situational contexts), validity (if a study measures what it is intended to), and generalisations (Corbin & Holt, 2006; Nisbett & Watt, 1984; Sturman, 1994). To counter this concern, Glaser and Strauss (1967) propose that credibility is not found in the statistical justification but in the expounding influence and practical use of the study.

There are a range of procedures and viewpoints that propose to increase quality and trustworthiness regarding qualitative data analysis and a postmodern perspective (Cresswell & Miller, 2000; Dick, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Seale, 2002), however the key strategies used in this research are from Lincoln and Guba's (1999) structure for establishing trustworthiness in naturalistic enquiry. They ascertain credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as the key elements in establishing trustworthiness.

3.5.1. Credibility.

Lincoln and Guba (1999) suggest five major techniques to establish credibility in qualitative research.

Activities increasing the probability that credible findings will be produced. Three activities are included in this technique –

a. *Prolonged engagement*, where sufficient time is invested to learn about the culture. Lincoln and Guba (1999, p. 407) suggest “it is not possible to understand any phenomenon without reference to the context in which it is embedded.” It allows the investigator the ability to “detect and take account of distortions that might otherwise creep into the data” (p. 408). This is achieved in two ways regarding this research. Firstly, I am a teacher qualified to teach both primary and secondary students, who has been immersed in the classroom context in secondary schools for four years and therefore have an understanding of the contextual issues in this educational setting and can demonstrate genuine empathy with the teachers’ perspectives; and secondly, I established the Blog site a year prior to conducting the follow up interviews which allows for sufficient immersion into the participants’ lived experiences. This period of time allows for the building of trust between the investigator and the participants with respect to confidence, and maintaining anonymity.

b. *Persistent observation*, adds to the salience of information gained, in that it identifies “those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail” (Lincoln & Guba, 1999, p. 410). The “prolonged engagement provides scope” and the “persistent observation provides depth” (p. 410). Regarding the research, this involves a degree of scepticism concerning the Blog contributions that then results in more probing questioning, particularly in the face to face interview stage, where comments made can be investigated in depth by the investigator in a manner where the response can be immediate and further probing can occur.

c. *Triangulation*, refers to cross referencing data. According to Denzin (1978), four types of triangulation occur. These include the use of different and multiple sources, methods, investigators, and theories. Diesing (1972, p. 148) states that “contextual validation is to evaluate a source of evidence by collecting other kinds of evidence about the source ... to locate the characteristic pattern of distortion in a source.” Regarding the contextualisation of this research, sources include four novels used in NSW secondary English classes, religious texts from different denominations, historical records pertaining to supernatural events through history,

Australian Curriculum documents and Australian census documents to establish the cultural makeup of contemporary Australian society. The sources utilised for phase two include participants from various school backgrounds including government, independent and religious based schools. Texts and research documents are then utilised to further investigate claims and experiences highlighted by the participants.

Peer debriefing involves the engagement of a disinterested peer, one who is neither senior nor junior to the researcher, in order to keep the investigator honest via exploration of their biases and clarification of interpretations. It also assists the researcher in clarifying their methodological design and allows the researcher the opportunity to clear their “mind of emotions and feelings that may be clouding good judgment or preventing emergence of sensible next steps” (Lincoln & Guba, 1999, p. 413).

I have the assistance of a neighbour with whom I had taught in the primary school setting for six years. She continues to teach primary school students and I currently teach at a secondary school. Additionally, this peer is not a study participant. By offering her own immersion experiences into the teaching culture from a different perspective, she prompts the researcher to probe deeper in certain areas and asks for clarification, which assists in being able to explain methodological aspects and findings in a simpler, yet more succinct manner.

Negative case analysis involves a “process of revising hypotheses with hindsight” (Lincoln & Guba, 1999, p. 414). This is primarily done via the use of a researcher’s journal. As patterns and themes arise, the general questions asked are ‘why?’ and ‘how many participants feel this way?’ It is often by looking back with hindsight that latent correlations, initially overlooked, are made, or conversely dismissed until the thematic revelations become robust.

Referential adequacy involves the documentation of raw data that can be re-examined at a later date. Blog entries are kept both on the internet provider’s server and in hard copy by the researcher. Follow up interviews are recorded in their entirety, allowing an auditor full and uncensored access to the original interviews, including vocal intonation, pitch and hesitations.

Member checks involve data, interpretations, and conclusions from the raw data being available to the stakeholders to establish credibility. I transcribe each interview and present these transcripts to the original participant, and, additionally, provide them with a summary of their interview. This allows the participant to offer an immediate response and clarify their original statements, or volunteer extra information to build a more concise understanding of the participants' lived experience in relation to the research. It also "puts the respondent on record as having said certain things and having agreed to the correctness" of the data presented (Lincoln & Guba, 1999, p. 418).

3.5.2. Transferability.

Cook and Campbell (1979, p. 37) refer to this as "the approximate validity with which we infer that the presumed causal relationship can be generalized to and across alternate measures of the cause and effect and across different types of persons, settings, and times." Transferability is concerned with the findings of a study being true for any group of individuals or contexts. It is not the intention of this research to discover blanket findings for all teachers regarding critical thinking, but to highlight the lived experiences of the individual study participants in an effort to provide a "thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach conclusions about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1999, p. 420).

3.5.3. Dependability and confirmability.

These two key elements in establishing trustworthiness have been grouped together as they are achieved via the same technique – an audit. Guba (1981) ascertains that triangulation and maintaining a reflective journal are two techniques to establish confirmability, and use of these has already been established in this section, however an audit is additionally employed in an effort to fully address the aspects of dependability and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1999, p. 422) state, "a single audit, properly managed, can be used to determine dependability and confirmability simultaneously." The audit trail is presented in Table 3.4 and is modified from Lincoln and Guba's appendix example (1999, p. 435). The evidence in the audit trail is made available to the researcher's supervisory team in order that they can cross reference data and question the researcher to ensure dependability and confirmability has been adequately addressed.

Table 3.4

Audit Trail

Audit Trail		
Classification	File Types	Evidence
Raw Data	Electronically recorded materials	Original Blog entries Original recorded interviews
	Field notes	Description of behaviours during interviews Verbatim interview transcripts Research journal Curriculum documents
	Unobtrusive measures	Novels Religious reference material Public documents
Data reduction and analysis	Summaries	Summarised interviews Participant input from summaries
	Themes	Emergent themes from interviews presented in table form and categorised into related groupings
	Quantitative summaries	Supernatural theme type and prevalence emerging from novels and presented in table form
	Concepts and hunches	Research journal entries
Data reconstruction and synthesis	Themes	Themes from interviews investigated through document analysis cross referencing seen in chapter form Contextual themes investigated via document analysis and presented in chapter form Documented in chapter form
	Findings	Documented in literature review
	Connections to existing literature	Cross referencing to Curriculum documents and religious reference texts in individual chapters
Process notes	Methodological notes	Development of process and strategies via supervisor meetings and emails including methodology feedback notes from supervisors Peer debriefing interaction notes via research journal entries
Intentions and disposition	Confirmation proposal	Written confirmation of candidature document Chapter one of thesis
	Goals	Meetings with supervisor notes
	Research question development	Emails from supervisors including feedback Research journal with self-reflection notes and refining questions to be answered

A summary of data and evidence that contributes to dependability and confirmability, and ultimately robust findings.

3.6 Summary

This chapter details the aspects of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as an overarching paradigm, introduced Hycner's Principles for analysis, specifies the conceptual framework and research approach, and addresses the issue of trustworthiness in qualitative research. It also explains how the structure of the study is divided into a series of phases to assist in compartmentalising the procedural steps guiding the research. The following chapter focuses on **Phase 1** of the research and provides a contextual background in which critical thinking occurs. It includes methodological aspects specific to this phase regarding data sources, collection, and analysis. Chapter four then subsequently explores the supernatural themes uncovered during this research phase and discusses them in detail in order to fully understand the context in which the critical thinking has taken place.

CHAPTER 4 - THEMATIC INVESTIGATION OF NOVELS

People want to forget the impossible. It makes their world safer.

(Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*, p. 289)

Phase 1	Thematic Investigation Of Novels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-select four novels-read and reread novels-code for supernatural themes-explore how the themes relate to belief systems and cultural sensitivities-what are the belief systems in contemporary society and student demographics
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4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter sectioned the research design into phases. This chapter is the beginning of the research process and details the methods used, data sources, data collection, and analysis employed in the investigation of the novels phase. It then unpacks a cache of four selected novels approved for use in secondary school English classes, identifying, investigating, and communicating the thematic findings. This chapter also categorises the contemporary classroom student demographic to better understand the complex nature of student backgrounds and how this may impact teaching practices regarding critical thinking. By contextualising the themes presented in the novels, and then linking these to critical thinking practices and belief systems, a greater understanding of the possible conflicts for both teachers and students can be considered.

The initial phase is necessary to determine the context in which the critical thinking is taking place. The parameters of this research are confined to English classes, and through the use of school based literature containing supernatural themes. In order to investigate what types of conflict could occur due to the eliciting of critical thinking during these classes, it is necessary to determine the type and extent of supernatural themes presented in the chosen literature.

The textually based questions (TQ) that guided this initial phase are –

- What specific types of supernatural themes occur in school based literature?
- Why is it important for teachers to have an understanding of cultural and religious sensitivities related to these supernatural themes?
- How might eliciting critical thinking responses when utilising these texts create conflict between cultural belief systems, and personal philosophies?

4.2 Methods

4.2.1. Research sample and data sources.

Lunenberg and Irby (2008) explain how phenomenological studies that evaluate and analyse literature do not require the inclusion of human subjects in the research which can be done effectively through document analysis. This supports the textual analysis of the school based literature utilised in this research, with the phenomenon being supernatural themes in the selected texts. Mertler and Charles (2008) find interpretive accounts of document analysis to be the strongest method of reporting the findings in phenomenological studies. The analysis of the school based novels, although studied via document analysis alone, can then be linked to the teaching of critical thinking as they provide a rich body of knowledge through which to contextualise the critical thinking aspect of teaching practice.

The four novels for contextual investigation are selected from the lists offered in the Board of Studies NSW publication Suggested Texts for the English K-10 Syllabus (2013) and include those recommended for stage four and five students (from 12 to 15 years of age). The texts are selected according to the literary awards received to assist in validating the quality of the text, and by consumer sales to indicate the overall popularity, and therefore engagement factor of the text amongst the targeted student demographic. Reviews of the texts are then read to determine the possibility of supernatural themes being present, in order that they be purposefully sampled to scrutinise for thematic type and prevalence. This creates a background contextual lens through which to problematise the teaching of critical thinking. By utilising purposeful sampling, deeper themes can be teased out for analysis and cross referenced with religious and historical belief systems from around the world to

provide contextualisation for the critical thinking components of the study. Solomon (1986, p. 55) states the importance of literature lies in its ability to “submerge the student in a context (and perhaps a culture) quite different from his or her own”, which supports the choice of literature selected for this study. It is also important for students to read literature in which they see reflections of themselves. Novels remain a significant part of popular culture and are a powerful vehicle through which images and/or perceptions of the world are constructed and perpetuated.

The chosen four narratives provide a sample of different writing styles, author ethnicity, and contemporary appeal. The first novel selected is a classical piece of literature, written in the Victorian era by an Irish born author and presented in a diary entry style entitled *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker (2009). The enduring popularity of this novel resulted in the creation of a Bram Stoker literary award. In contrast, the second novel chosen is the multi-award winning contemporary popular culture piece written specifically for adolescents, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* by J. K. Rowling (2001). An award winning novel by an Australian author that is listed for stage five (students aged 14 and 15) is selected, *Sabriel* by Garth Nix (2014), and finally, the Carnegie Medal winner of 2010 by English author Neil Gaiman (2009), *The Graveyard Book* is included for its light-hearted look at the supernatural and appeal to teenagers.

Other data sources emerge as the supernatural themes develop, allowing the researcher the flexibility to examine them in greater depth in a cyclic manner. The religious texts pertinent to belief systems around the world are constantly cross referenced when supernatural themes emerge as well, including the authorised King James version of the Holy Bible (KJB, 1987) as a general reference tool for Christianity, the Qur’an (n.d.) for Islamic teachings, and the Tanakh (1985) to support Judaism. Other religious texts are sourced as and when required. These texts give the researcher a greater insight into the correlation between different religious beliefs and the supernatural themes presented in the novels being examined. This in turn creates an additional lens through which to further understand the conflict that could arise from eliciting critical thinking regarding these elements in the contemporary classroom and the subsequent impact on students, teachers and teaching practices.

4.2.2. Data collection.

Each selected novel is read, re-read, coded and thematically analysed. During the re-read, supernatural themes are highlighted in different colours; green for supernatural beings, yellow for magic, and pink for references to any mythology surrounding the supernatural. Upon the second re-read, it is noted that these categories are too broad and are then further dissected into a series of subcategories, as listed in Appendix A: Supernatural occurrences in novels. These tables are then analysed more rigorously in the data analysis phase.

The supernatural themes in the literature are then investigated to ascertain what types of conflict, or personal belief system questioning could arise due to critical thinking teaching practices. The emerging themes are then researched and analysed with respect to their historical and contemporary belief system influences in order to develop a deeper understanding of the impact each could pose for teachers in the everyday classroom.

Data collection regarding the contextualisation phase is conducted over a two year period and data analysis results are tabulated and stored on the researcher's portable external hard drive. Data sources are kept in both electronic and hard copy versions to assist in timely retrieval during the data analysis phase.

4.2.3. Data analysis.

The purpose of analysing the novels is to create a contextual understanding, and inform conversations in the subsequent research phase (**Phase 2**) regarding the teacher participants' lived experiences. In essence, this initial research phase creates a conceptual verification regarding the possible impact and conflict critical thinking elicitation could present between cultural belief systems and personal philosophies. Without an understanding of the breadth and depth of the thematic content in the novels, and how these themes relate to religious or belief systems, any concerns raised by teachers will be marginalised.

Steinfirst (1986) suggests that, although a variety of analytical methods have been traditionally used in research involving literature, there has been a general lack of consensus regarding how research into literature should be conducted. This study

does not include a complete textual analysis of the plot, characters, or metaphoric examination, but rather thematic content. These themes are colour coded and subsequently collated in tabular form in a quantitative manner. The number of occurrences per subcategory are listed for each book and then summarised to calculate the average number per book. Qualitative analysis is employed in the exploration of the themes arising in prevalence over the novels to provide both historical and belief system links to the themes.

Hycner's Guidelines for Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Data are utilised during both textual and participant data analysis phases, and modified according to appropriateness. Some of the steps previously outlined in 3.4.1 are omitted or re-ordered for **Phase 1** analysis, and are listed below.

2. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction – reading and re-reading novels in an open way prior to coding;
4. Delineating units of general meaning (crystallisation and condensation).
Using the literal words in the texts, emerging themes are determined using Saldana's highlighting technique. Saldana's (2009) highlighting technique utilises different colours to establish broad themes which, in this research included supernatural beings (green), supernatural magic (yellow), and supernatural mythology (pink);
5. Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question. The document analysis question in this respect is, what specific types of supernatural themes occur in school based literature? This requires reading and re-reading the novels and coding them according to insights gained during each of the three readings.

Initial read – general read to establish supernatural ideas unique to each book and transferrable across all four novels.

Re-read 1 – Highlight any supernatural beings in green, instances of magic in yellow and mythological reference to the supernatural in pink.

Re-read 2 – Due to the extent and various types of phenomena in each group, subgroups are then created that are transferrable across all four texts.

These include – *Supernatural beings* highlighted in green are further divided into subsets entitled ghost, vampire, witch/wizard, werewolf, Devil/Satan, God, soul, undead, angel of death/crossing spirit, and biblical/mythical figure other than God; *Magic* highlighted yellow is then further dissected into the subcategories of spells, apparitions, potions, change in appearance/disappearance, seeing the future, reading thoughts, magic/miraculous power, medium power (e.g. crucifix or stones), physical abilities, commanding people/objects, and immortality or abnormal long life; and mythology highlighted pink is divided into subsections of habitat, superstition (e.g. crossing one's self), significant days, hearsay, death/afterlife, and Heaven/Hell. This further thematic breakdown assists in answering the research question;

7. Eliminating redundancies – note the number of times the same datum appears in the units of relevant meaning to indicate significance, and eliminate those units which are clearly redundant with average occurrences per book less than five (see Appendix A: Supernatural occurrences in novels). Repetition of units of relevant meaning may “indicate just how important that particular issue was to the participant” (Hycner, 1999, p. 150). When coding the subgroups within supernatural beings, highlighting is initially used when the exact word match occurred, e.g. ‘vampire’, or ‘werewolf’ and also then to incorporate a distinctive description or phrase which identifies the character as such a being. For example Gaiman (2009, p. 9) writes of Mrs Owens that, “with one insubstantial hand she stoked the child’s sparse blond hair” thereby demonstrating a physical characteristic of a ghost, and therefore highlighted as such in the text. Any reference that is just to Mrs Owens is not highlighted unless such a characteristic or ghostly ability is associated with it. In contrast, the character of Silas, whom the readers presume from a variety of hints is a vampire, does not have his name highlighted when it appears as merely a name, or title, and not the explicit word vampire or characteristics alluding to the fact that he is. For example “‘I’ve absolutely no idea,’ said Silas, who consumed only one food, and it was not bananas” (Gaiman, 2009, p. 22) is highlighted due to the reference to eating one food, that being implied as blood; however on the same page where it states, “I have been a great many things in my time” is not as it could be referring to any number of things or

professions. It does not specifically allude to immortality, or extraordinary long life, or any specific characteristic of a 'vampire'. In doing this reduction, redundancies are eliminated during this phase;

8. Clustering units of relevant meaning (grouping according to commonality). This is done by grouping themes under the initial banners of supernatural beings, magic, and mythology. In their tabulated form, commonalities are easily detectable;
9. Determining themes from clusters of meaning. The clustering of units of relevant meaning expresses both prevalence and type of supernatural entity. This is done by tabulating occurrences highlighted previously in order that both type and number of occurrences are easily identifiable at a glance (see Appendix A: Supernatural occurrences in novels). These are then examined to determine central themes;
10. Writing a summary for each individual interview. This stage is modified to be a summary for each novel in the form of a numerical table indicating thematic types and occurrences;
15. Order modification. The composite summary is changed in order, as the composite summary is a table comparing the data from step 10 across the cache of novels (see Table 4.1 Summary of thematic categories and occurrences in novels). This is then utilised for the following step;
13. Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews is done via a table comparison created during the previous step. From this table, general and unique themes are easily identified for further investigation; and
14. Contextualising themes, involving placing the exposed supernatural themes back into the overall context and research questions. The themes identified in the selected novels are then researched more substantially and in a targeted fashion to assist in answering the questions of why is it important for teachers to have an understanding of cultural and religious sensitivities to these supernatural themes, and how might eliciting critical thinking responses when utilising these texts create conflict between cultural belief systems, and personal philosophies?

This contextual understanding then assists in developing prompts for the phase two discussions within the Blog entries and also a background to assist in teasing out

information from participants in the semi-structured interviews. The results of the contextualisation also shed light on the difficulties expressed by teachers in the interview phase of the research and allows the reader to more fully understand the lived experiences of teachers in contemporary classrooms.

4.3 The Novels

4.3.1. Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.

This novel is the first instalment in a series of books penned by author J. K Rowling which chronicles the adventures of a young wizard named Harry Potter. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Harry is a young impoverished orphan who lives under the stairs in his Aunt and Uncle's house. As he grows older, strange unexplainable things begin to happen for which Harry is punished. Then at the age of eleven, he is magically summoned to attend a prestigious school of wizardry named Hogwarts and his guide throughout this transition, Hagrid, assists him by endowing him with the riches left to him by his parents whose notoriety in the wizard world escalates Harry to the realms of wizard stardom. During his adventures at Hogwarts, Harry is involved in a multitude of magical endeavours including flying, potion and spell classes, encountering supernatural beasts, and the reader is introduced to his arch nemesis, the evil wizard Voldemort. Ultimately it is Harry's spirit, his pure intentions and desire to do good, that defeats Voldemort.

Some ascertain that the Harry Potter books promote good morality with characters learning to work together, facing up to fears, standing up for what they believe in, and realising that people from different backgrounds can become friends and work together (W. Walker, 1999); and that the books promote bravery, self-reliance, love, tolerance, and a sense of family (Foster, 2001). Connie Neal (2008) suggests that Voldemort is a representation of Satan and that the struggle between good and evil is what assists young readers to make moral decisions. Julie Foster (2001) considers this ongoing good versus evil battle to be comparable to those in the Bible, while Colson (2000) suggests that the fantasy appeal of the Harry Potter novels should be compared with God's wonder, and that the stories should be used as a catalyst for other discussions about faith.

Foster (2001) and Kennicott (2003) raise concerns that young readers could become engrossed in the magical world of spell casting presented in the novel and could result in dabbling in the occult and witchcraft. It could be considered from these opposing viewpoints that applying critical thinking skills and processes regarding this novel could be problematic. Whilst one view is paralleling the teachings in the Bible, the other involves themes considered evil in the Bible. The participants partaking in these practices are traditionally hunted down and subsequently put to death via religious inquisitions. With witchcraft considered to be a legitimate form of medicinally based vocations in some countries, this could present as a problematic theme to investigate in the contemporary ethnically diverse classroom.

Whilst these opposing viewpoints could be argued successfully, it remains that some of the detail penned in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is dark and macabre. For example, Rowling (2001, p. 187) writes “out of the shadows, a hooded figure came crawling across the ground like some stalking beast...The cloaked figure reached the unicorn, it lowered its head over the wound in the animal's side, and began to drink its blood.” Further along in the passage she states, “the hooded figure raised its head and looked right at Harry – unicorn blood was dribbling down its front.” Whilst the hooded figure could be presented as a metaphoric parallel to Satan, it is regarded by some that through the text, impressionable children are being familiarised with human sacrifice, people being possessed by spirit beings, and the sucking of blood from dead animals (Foster, 2001).

Nel (2001) argues that some critics accuse the books of being ‘anti-Christian’ and Blake (2002, p. 97) makes reference to the fundamental good versus evil theme, “if we identify with Harry we are supporting a hero who lies, cheats, and breaks school rules as and when he feels like it” which reinforces the anti-Christian sentiments. Blake argues that the anti-Christian criticism of the Harry Potter book is not founded as “the faith just isn't there.” (p. 98). This is supported by Rowling (2001, p. 63) who quotes a sign in the window at the wand shop “Ollivanders: Makers of Fine Wands since 382 BC” and yet nowhere else in the novel is there a reference to Christ or BC.

Although Hogwarts celebrates the festivities of Christmas and Halloween, the meaning of either is not explicitly stated or implied, and neither did Satanic rituals or

Pagan sacraments play a part in the stories. The Reverend Peter Fleetwood, who is a Vatican representative, acknowledges that the Harry Potter books are consistent with Christian morals and when questioned about the occultist themes in the novels he replies, “I don’t think there’s anyone in this room who grew up without fairies, magic and angels in their imaginary world. They aren’t bad. They aren’t serving as a banner for an anti-Christian ideology” (Fleetwood, 2003).

The Harry Potter series of novels are clearly controversial and their appropriateness for children open to debate by numerous groups. With both Christian and non-Christian groups maintaining this novel could support their personal belief systems, it could be appreciated how teachers may feel uncomfortable applying critical thinking to this text.

4.3.2. The Graveyard Book.

The Graveyard Book revolves around a young orphan whose birth name remains a mystery. When he is a toddler, a mysterious man (Jack) enters his house and murders his parents and older sibling, at which time he wanders into a nearby graveyard where he encounters the spirits of Mr and Mrs Owens, and also the fragile new spirits of his parents who urge Mrs Owens to look after their child. He is named Bod (short for Nobody) Owens and is embraced by the inhabitants of the graveyard. His mentors include a vampire named Silas, and a werewolf named Miss Lupescu who guide him through a variety of encounters with both the living and the dead as he progressively grows toward puberty. The book culminates with the evil Jack (and his entourage of other evil men, also named Jack) finding Bod. The inhabitants of the graveyard assist Bod in dispatching the intruders. This frees Bod from the inherent danger the graveyard folk had been protecting him from, allowing him to re-join the land of the living.

Although the supernatural themes and beings in the book appear to have somewhat anti-Christian backgrounds, the characters themselves are devoutly religious. The character Miss Lupescu eventually confirms to Bod what he has suspected and in doing so states, “those that men call Werewolves or Lycanthropes call themselves the Hounds of God, as they claim their transformation is a gift from their creator, and

they repay the gift with their tenacity, for they will pursue an evil-doer to the very gates of Hell” (Gaiman, 2009, p. 88).

Other references to Christianity include the meeting with Liza Hempstock where she describes the witch accusation against her by female villagers who feel she has captured the eye of their husbands, and the subsequent trial she is put through to prove her innocence. This conversation also gives rise to the notion that suicides are also buried in unhallowed earth and denied access to the afterlife. This was a popular belief in the medieval period and, as an unrepentable sin (Augustine, 1958) according to popular practice and the law, tradition went further to include the desecration of the suicidal corpse, confiscation of the individual’s property, and the denial of a Christian burial. This belief prevailed well into the late seventeenth century (Locke, 1690). Current mainstream Christian teachings allude that souls from suicides are not bound by punishment, but receive an equivalent to counselling or a place of healing in the afterlife, eventually entering the ideal of Heaven. They suggest that any negative consequences from their earthly actions are placed upon themselves by themselves and not as a natural order of afterlife events (Borgia, 1962; Heath, 2006; M. Newton 1996, 2003; J. Roberts 1994).

With differing opinions within the Christian community, critical thinking skills applied to this theme have the potential for not only causing personal questioning of belief teachings within different religious groups, but also within the same religion. This also aligns with the mental health and wellbeing of students being possibly affected as students are encouraged to question their own thoughts, weighing up the validity of sources and questioning the reliability of information presented by their faith, beliefs, and/or parents through critical thinking.

4.3.3. Dracula.

An English lawyer named Jonathan Harker travels to Transylvania to complete a real estate contract with Count Dracula in his castle. While a guest at the nobleman’s castle, he encounters a range of inexplicable events and people; eventually realising he has become their prisoner. He ultimately escapes and is followed back to England by the Count, where a series of mysterious deaths and illnesses ensue. Professor Van Helsing is summoned to assist in solving the mystery, and concludes it is due to

vampires. He leads Jonathan and his friends on a quest to vanquish the evil, and to free the spirit of the beautiful Lucy, who has been relegated to the realm of the undead by Count Dracula. The troupe eventually confronts and defeats the vampire, ultimately restoring all undead creatures, and illnesses caused in his name, to their natural state.

With this novel being first published in 1897, the correlation between the thematic events and metaphors used can be contextually analysed within the published time period. It is the year Freud begins his research into psychoanalysis and hence oedipal highlights can be conjectured. It can also be argued that class struggles within the novel and the juxtaposition of these echo the Marxist teachings of the age.

Additionally, within the era of Enlightenment, there are distinct correlations between religion, which forms the basis of Victorian life, law, and science as the new emerging truth. D. Rogers (2000) proposes this in his introduction section in the 2009 edition of *Dracula & Dracula's Guest* by Bram Stoker. He suggests the character highlights this duplicity as Lucy's fiancée is called Lord Godalming. This, he surmises, can be read as Lord God Almighty with affections being pure. The character of Quincey Morris is the American representing the New World with virility and rugged manliness. The self-proclaimed leader of the group, Professor Van Helsing, supplies the scientific and rational approach to the problem of Dracula and is reportedly a medical doctor, a learned para-legalist and also a doctor of philosophy and literature.

Additionally, the novel is published prior to the suffragette movement (Levin, 1996) when strict social standards are imposed on women and male superiority is enforced. This extends to female sexuality themes which abound in *Dracula*, with his wanton mistresses seducing Harker and turning the virginal Lucy into a sexual being. The theory of the era is that only male sexual drive is necessary for reproduction; female pleasure serves no purpose and therefore should not exist (Bohn, 2007; Wyman & Dionisopoulos, 1999, 2000). As female sexual desire should be non-existent, the presence of it in the Victorian era can only be defined as evil, and Dracula's mistresses therefore "represent all the qualities of how a woman should not be; voluptuous and sexually aggressive" (Pektas, 2005, p. 1).

Blanchard (2009, para. 1) suggests “the relationship between science and superstition – or less pejoratively, faith – is not one of binary opposites.” He writes, “Bram Stoker portrays the extremes of each in a similar light, and offers science, not as a discipline diametrically opposed to faith-based belief, but as the evolutionary successor to it.” Scientifically, the Darwinian theory of evolution is gaining momentum, and attracting significant objections, when Stoker is writing his novel. Blinderman (1980) notes that Stoker is aware of the controversy surrounding this concept and that it could encourage vice. He includes this duality so that “the basic categories that separate rational human beings from the irrational instincts of beasts” are distorted (Frost, 2003, p. 8). Stoker presents *Dracula*, which “embraces Darwinism [as a truth]” and Van Helsing as a character who uses science and parapsychology as tools to “promote human values in the face of Darwinian theory” (Frost, 2003, p. 8).

To support this duality of faith/superstition and science, Penzoldt (1965, p. 50) states, “science not only furnishes us with extraordinary situations, but also gives us an excellent excuse for believing anything, however incredible... [and] provides new possibilities in the stead of the traditional superstitions it has dispelled” (Blanchard, 2009, para. 8). A. Smith (2004, p. 35) goes further to suggest that Van Helsing “seems like a modern version of the Count.” Blanchard (2009, para. 10) states, “[t]o this day, the relationship between modern science and superstition is balanced in an uneasy tension.” He subsequently writes, “Bram Stoker depicts the extremes of each – both the blind faith associated with religious and non-religious superstitions and the dogmatic acceptance of scientism – as either negative or simply unproductive.”

4.3.4. Sabriel.

Sabriel is the daughter of the Abhorsen (a necromancer, who has the power to walk in and out of death’s alternate plane of existence, and therefore take people in or out of it as the occasion requires), and is consequently raised and tutored as his heir in this field. The Abhorsen is captured by an evil necromancer and held in the dominion between life and death, from whence Sabriel intends to rescue him. During her quest, she is stalked by the undead, assisted by a wizard in the form of a cat, and befriends a boy who has been entombed in a ship’s figurehead (who ultimately reveals himself to

be of royalty). She uses a series of spells and magic to defeat the evil necromancer, and his army of undead soldiers, but fails to return her father to the land of the living.

As much of this novel is set in the realm of death and a land of magic, there is little escaping the undead creatures, phases (or gates) to the afterlife, and talking and interacting with the dead. Each religion practised in the world has a differing viewpoint regarding death and versions of their perceived afterlife. These precede biblical times with the Egyptians holding death and the afterlife in great reverence. They believe when the body dies, parts of its soul and personality go to the Kingdom of the dead and statues are used as substitutes for the deceased in their tombs. The river also acts as a catalyst to their afterlife, with the Nile playing an important role in their lives (R. Taylor, 2000). The ancient Greeks also refer to a messenger of the gods, Hermes, who leads the soul between life and death on the banks of the River Styx (Retief & Cilliers, 2006). The King James version of the Holy Bible (KJB, 1987) also makes reference to a “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God” (KJB, Revelation 22:1). These beliefs correlate to the rivers Sabriel crossed in the afterlife during the course of the novel. In contrast, Blackmore (1996) and Kurtz (2001) suggest that after decades of parapsychological research they conclude that there is no empirical evidence for an afterlife at all.

4.4 Themes Emerging from Novels

The references to supernatural themes over the four novels total 6,062, which is an average of 1,515.5 occurrences per novel. The themes identified in the four novels investigated are divided into three groups, namely supernatural beings, magic, and mythology. The subcategories and occurrences per novel of these are listed in Table 4.1. The book entitled *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* is abbreviated to ‘Harry Potter and the P.S’ for ease of tabulation.

Table 4.1

Summary of Thematic Categories and Occurrences in Novels

Thematic category	Thematic sub-category						Average per book
		Dracula	The Graveyard Book	Sabriel	Harry Potter and the P. S	Total over 4 novels	
SUPERNATURAL BEINGS – reference by specific word or by description	Biblical/mythical figure other than god	23	105	221	167	516	129
	Witch/wizard	6	56	289	92	443	110.75
	Undead/walking dead	38	99	228	2	367	91.75
	Angel of death/crossing spirit	4	17	253	0	274	68.5
	Ghosts	6	163	79	23	271	67.75
	God	202	9	0	0	211	52.75
	Soul/spirit	47	53	74	1	175	43.75
	Vampires	72	66	8	4	150	37.5
	Werewolf	2	42	0	7	51	12.75
	Devil/Satan	29	3	0	5	37	9.25
	TOTAL SUPERNATURAL BEING REFERENCES		429	613	1152	301	2495
MAGIC – supernatural abilities or powers	Magic/miraculous power (e.g. no shadow or reflection)	14	94	192	104	404	101
	Medium power (e.g. crucifix, stones)	11	0	296	84	391	97.75
	Physical abilities	5	66	204	11	286	71.5
	Commanding people/objects	27	73	160	22	282	70.5
	Potions	26	0	0	24	50	66.5
	Change in appearance/disappearing	47	121	69	29	266	66.5
	Spells	18	18	128	50	214	53.5
	Immortality/abnormal long life/return from dead	18	60	91	6	175	43.75
	Apparitions	13	45	22	9	89	22.25
	Reading thoughts	4	13	5	1	23	5.75
Seeing the future	0	1	5	0	6	1.5	
TOTAL MAGIC REFERENCES		183	491	1172	340	2186	
MYTHOLOGY – ref to belief systems/history	Habitat	2	400	173	6	581	145.25
	Superstition (e.g. cross self etc.)	90	126	115	30	361	90.25
	Death/afterlife	6	116	233	3	358	89.5
	Significant days (e.g. Halloween)	1	27	0	11	39	9.75
	Hearsay (e.g. they say that...)	4	11	4	2	21	5.25
	Heaven/Hell	15	3	0	3	21	5.25
TOTAL MYTHOLOGY REFERENCES		118	683	525	55	1381	
TOTAL SUPERNATURAL REFERENCES		730	1787	2849	696	6062	

This table highlights the quantitative data from the novels to establish emerging themes and prevalence within the selected texts.

4.4.1. Supernatural beings.

Analysis of the categories begins with Supernatural Beings where 2,495 total occurrences are found over the four novel cache. The supernatural beings in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009) are predominantly God and vampires. The references to God are reflective of the era in which the novel is written, and are also associated with religious mediums such as a crucifix, entering a church being problematic for vampires, and also of the superstition of crossing one's self at the mention of the creature as personal protection. Linking with the religious connotations, specific mention is also made as to the existence of the Devil in the text. Biblical or mythical creatures other than God include Thor and Wodin (Icelandic Gods), Judas, Blessed Virgin, Demons, Saint Joseph, Sainte Mary, angels, Methuselah who is an Old Testament Hebrew patriarch allegedly dying at the age of 969, Enoch who is another Hebrew reportedly dying at the age of 365, and His Son who refers to Jesus. It is clear from these references that the link between events and beings in this novel and belief systems based on Christianity is indisputable.

This is in contrast to *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009) which prioritises ghosts as the central supernatural beings. Biblical or mythical creatures feature second highest in occurrences and include creatures like ghouls, night-gaunts, the Indigo man who is an ancient tattooed Celtic being from the oldest tomb deep in the earth, angels, goblins, a Kandar which is "a bandage-wrapped Assyrian mummy with powerful eagle-wings" (Gaiman, 2009, p. 222), an Ifrit which can "only be seen in mirrors, and no longer in reality" (p. 223), and the Sleer which is an enormous snake with three heads and necks. Gaiman (2009, p. 264) describes this supernatural being as having faces that are "dead, as if someone had constructed dolls from parts of the corpses of humans and animals" and whose skulls are placed under a stone in the tomb to forever guard its treasure until the 'master' returns. The only vampire in the book is a fundamental character being the guardian of the central character (the human, Bod), and there is one witch whom Bod befriends. The werewolf references are predominantly referred to as 'Hound of God' which gives further credence to the religious undertones within the novel.

The significant supernatural beings in *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014) are the crossing spirit, or necromancer, to which profession the central character Sabriel belongs, the witch who assists in guiding the main character through her journey, and the undead consisting of corpses who are prevented from crossing to the afterlife by a powerful necromancer called a Mordicant. Although they can move about at their leisure, feasting on human flesh, when the Mordicant beckons, the undead obey. Mythical creatures other than God include will-o'-the-wisp, Clayr, Wallmaker, Thralk who is an entity that inhabits and animates bodies, gore crows which are crows infused with spirits of the dead, free magic monsters which include a “cross between a hog and a segmented worm” (Nix, 2014, p. 156), mordaut who are technically alive but infused with parasitical spirits, haunts, and ghlims. Some of the creatures are semantically identified as supernatural beings but no specific description or rationale for their existence is given in the text, making them difficult to research in relation to current belief systems. In the individual book chapter breakdown of occurrences in Appendix A: Supernatural occurrences in novels, it is noted that the supernatural beings of the witch, the undead, the angel of death or crossing spirit, and mythical creatures other than God are the most consistent in this novel. Given that the central character is a crossing being who can travel between the world of the living and that of the path to the afterlife, this emphasis is not unexpected.

The supernatural beings in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 2001) are primarily mythical creatures other than God and witches or wizards. The mythical creatures in the novel include a giant named Hagrid, a sorting hat which decides the scholastic house group the wearer is placed in, goblins who run the bank, dragons, a phoenix, a unicorn, a troll, a three headed dog, and a centaur. There are no references to God and the only references to the Devil or Satan is in relation to a plant called Devil's Snare. Although there are many references to evil, there are no biblical or specific religious belief system links noted.

4.4.2. Magic.

The Magic category has references totalling 2,186. The references regarding changing appearance or disappearing in *Dracula* are predominantly linked to the central character, with alterations including taking the form of a bat or “great gaunt grey wolf” (Stoker, 2009, p. 145). There are numerous references to Dracula altering

his constitution to form mist in order to infiltrate sealed rooms and then returning to humanoid form. These include “a thin streak of white mist, that crept with almost imperceptible slowness across the grass towards the house” (Stoker, 2009, p. 241) and then “grew thicker and thicker, and I could see now how it came in, for I could see it like smoke – or with the white energy of boiling water – pouring in, not through the window, but through the joinings of the door” (p. 242).

Commanding people or objects is also linked to the central character and Stoker (2009, p. 224) writes, “he can, within his range; direct the elements: the storm, the fog, the thunder; he can command all the meaner things: the rat and the owl and the bat – the moth, and the fox, and the wolf.” Potions also have significant references and are primarily linked to the mixtures used to protect the women including garlic, flowers, and sacramental water. The Professor Van Helsing character makes significant correlations regarding immortality, faith and critical thinking skills on pages 185 and 186 (Stoker, 2009) where he states, “Methuselah lived nine hundred years, and ‘Old Parr’ one hundred and sixty-nine”; “other spiders die small and soon, that one great spider lived for centuries in the tower of the old Spanish church”; and that “science has vouched for the fact- that there have been toads shut up in rocks for thousands of years, shut in one so small hole that only hold him since the youth of the world,” but that we cannot comprehend “that there are men and women who cannot die.” The character continues on to describe the resurrection and closes on page 187 by stating:

... to believe in things that you cannot. Let me illustrate. I heard once of an American who so defined faith: “that which enables us to believe things we know to be untrue.” For one, I follow that man. He meant that we shall have an open mind.

The Graveyard Book (Gaiman, 2009) commonly cites references to changing appearance or disappearing. The ghosts in the novel can appear and disappear at will, an ability they teach Bod as he grows. This is described in his lessons with Mr Pennyworth as “Slipping and Fading boy, the way of the dead. Slip through shadows. Fade from awareness” and then “becoming a shadow of the night and nothing more” (Gaiman, 2009, p. 96). Silas (Bod’s vampiric guardian) can also disappear and alter

his physical state, and Gaiman (2009, p. 127) writes that “a familiar shadow swirled beneath the street lamps. Bod hesitated, and a flutter of night-black velvet resolved itself into a man-shape” before “Silas reached down, and enfolded the living child inside his cloak, and Bod felt the ground fall away beneath him.” Bod’s subsequent teacher, Miss Lupescu also demonstrates the ability to change at various times throughout the book from human form into a werewolf or ‘Hound of God’ as she prefers to be known, including the description:

... she lowered her face into the shadows, flexed her fingers. When she raised her head again, it was a wolf’s head. She put her front paws down on the rock, and, laboriously, pushed herself up into a standing position: a grey wolf bigger than a bear. (Gaiman, 2009, p. 231)

Magic or miraculous power also has significant references and includes Liza, the witch whom Bod befriends, when she uses what is semantically assumed to be magic to change Bod’s ability to fade. He is having difficulty with this in his lessons, but Liza uses her magic to assist him with this and states, “I may be dead, but I’m a dead witch, remember. And we don’t forget” (Gaiman, 2009, p. 121). Bod also learns the power of Dreamwalking, where he can enter another person’s dream to influence their actions when they are awake. Silas, being a vampire, has some miraculous powers and Gaiman (2009, p. 272) writes, “the surface of the table-top was almost mirrored, and, had anyone cared to look, they might have observed that the tall man had no reflection.”

Sabriel (Nix, 2014) has the most substantial number of references to magic that include medium power, physical abilities, commanding people or objects and spells. The tools of the necromancer’s trade include a sword and a series of bells, each of which possesses different powers to wield over spirits to assist them in their transition to the afterlife. Throughout the book, Charter Stones are also heavily referenced and are specific stones containing medium power to allow Charter Mages and Necromancers to cross over different thresholds, additionally Charter Marks are powerful symbols that protect Charter Mages and Necromancers. Physical abilities include possessing incredible strength in that iron-bound planks can burst “as easily as it might snap toothpicks” (Nix, 2014, p. 79). It also includes the main character’s

ability to step between worlds and different planes of existence, including the doorway to the afterlife. Commanding people or objects is primarily done via the use of Sabriel's bells; however, she also demonstrates the ability to command wind and water through whistling. "With this whistling, the blue and silver paint [*of the paperwing aircraft*] seemed to come alive" and the "wind came with the speed of a slamming door, howling up behind them" (Nix, 2014, pp. 124-129). These abilities also have backgrounds in Christianity and events documented in Christian texts (see Annex A). The supporting character of Mogget is a witch under a powerful necromancer's spell which is only fully revealed at the end of the book. Spells are performed by both Sabriel and the evil necromancers in the novel, primarily through the use of Charter Marks and telekinesis.

Given that the central characters of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 2001) are witches and wizards, it is presumed that the magic category has the highest references in this novel. Magic is a central theme, highlighted by the fact that the setting is Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and numerous references to magic and non-magic folk. There are also references to the entrance to Diagon Alley magically appearing, self-propelling vehicles, and ink that changes colour as you write, all in chapter five. Chapter six reveals a magical platform numbered nine and three quarters that has an invisible entrance, and the following chapter describes a magical school hall "lit by thousands of candles which were floating in mid-air" with a "velvety black ceiling dotted with stars" that is reportedly "bewitched to look like the sky outside" (Rowling, 2001, p. 87). Chapter seven (p. 92) also records the magical meal where "the dishes in front of [*Harry*] were now piled with food" and upon finishing the meal "the food faded from the plates leaving them sparkling clean as before. A moment later the puddings appeared" (p. 93).

Medium power is primarily via the use of magic wands to incant spells, and broomsticks to manifest the power of flying. A cloak that is given to Harry imparts the power of invisibility, while a mirror possesses the power to reveal to the viewer their innermost dream. The central object of the book, the Philosopher's Stone, is a medium itself with Rowling (2001, p. 161) writing it is "a legendary substance with astonishing powers. The stone will transform any metal into pure gold. It also produces the Elixir of Life, which will make the drinker immortal." The reference to

spells occurs primarily in chapters five where Harry is filling his school requirements list with all manner of things magic, and sixteen where Harry, Ron and Hermione enter the trapdoor to secure the Philosopher's Stone only to confront a series of magic spells which they need to counter via their own incantations.

4.4.3. Mythology.

Mythology surrounding the supernatural has the lowest number of references with a combined total of 1,381. Although fewer in number, this section, in some ways, provides a greater insight into correlations between supernatural and religious or cultural belief systems given that it includes theological references to Heaven, Hell, death and the afterlife.

Superstition is a common theme throughout the four novels. With *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009) first being published in 1897, the influence of the church, religious conventions, and consistent reference to God is plausible. The act of crossing oneself in a protective manner as a "charm or guard against the evil eye" (Stoker, 2009, p. 29), and utilising a "Sacred Wafer in the name of the Father, the Son" and the Holy Spirit are superstitions common to the era (Stoker, 2009, p. 274). The superstition of spitting on money for luck is referenced in chapter four. Stoker also refers to the "general superstition about midnight" (p. 33) as being of significance, denoting the witching hour when all manner of supernatural things commonly occur. This is particularly true in reference to "St George's Day. Do you not know that tonight when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway?" (p. 28). Superstition, the power of mediums and hearsay are linked with the notions surrounding warding off and killing vampires. The crucifix is believed to ward off a vampire while sacramental water will burn the flesh, both items believing to possess some form of supernatural medium power. Van Helsing speaks to Dr Seward stating, "I shall cut off her head and fill her mouth with garlic, and I shall drive a stake through her body" (Stoker, 2009, p. 194). Another superstition that reportedly saves many souls in the book is the idea that the vampire "may not enter anywhere at the first, unless there be someone of the household who bid him to come; though afterwards he can come as he please" (p. 226). Of note in both *Dracula* and *Sabriel*, there are consistent and specific references to both the undead creatures and Dracula

being unable to cross water, with both utilising coffins filled with earth as a vessel with which to accomplish this feat.

The Graveyard Book refers to the superstition of unconsecrated ground where Gaiman (2009, p. 94) writes:

[T]hey blessed the churches and the ground they set aside to bury people in to make it holy. But they left land unconsecrated beside the sacred ground, potter's fields to bury the criminals and the suicides or those who were not of the faith.

This includes those accused, tried and put to death for witchcraft, which is where Bod's witch friend, Liza Hempstock, is buried without a headstone. Liza's character adds, "there's rules for those in graveyards, but not for those as was buried in unhallowed ground" (Gaiman, 2009, p. 116). Another superstition of note in *The Graveyard Book* is that of the village Mayor giving everyone in the Old Town a flower on a specific day (Danse Macabre) which also has a significant link to the superstition of midnight. Gaiman (2009, p. 253) makes reference to the superstition that when "something leaves the world, something else comes into it."

Gaiman's novel also refers to the Honour Guard, of which Silas the vampire, and Miss Lupescu the werewolf are members. The character of Silas explains this as guarding "the borderlands. We protect the borders of things" (Gaiman, 2009, p. 284) and refers to the superstition of guardians who keep the dead and the living from interacting, in the same way that Garth Nix's *Sabriel* (2014) prevents the dead from crossing back into the land of the living and vice versa.

Sabriel (Nix, 2014) explores the superstition around the Book of the Dead which supposedly contains spells for keeping the dead at bay. Nix also endorses the superstition of the dead (or undead) not being able to cross water, mirroring that which is written in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009). In chapter eight, Sabriel rests on an island, believing the Mordicant cannot cross the water, until she sees the undead slaves filling boxes with grave dirt to form a raised path across the river.

The references to superstition in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 2001) are based around Halloween and the Elixir of Life which is suspected to give the consumer immortality. The Elixir of Life has links to contemporary belief systems and is investigated in Annex A. The only other mention of superstition is with regard to omens, either good or bad, for example Rowling (2001) writes, "leaving Neville lying motionless on the floor didn't feel like a very good omen" (p. 199).

Significant days are referenced in a minor way, with *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009) only referencing St George's Day, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 2001) devoting chapter ten to Halloween, and then only a passing reference to Christmas, and *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014) referencing no days of any specific significance. *The Graveyard Book's* notation of significant days are limited to chapter five entitled Danse Macabre (Gaiman, 2009). The inhabitants of the graveyard refer to this as the Macabray. Although the exact date is not alluded to, it is a day when, at midnight, the spirits of the dead rise up, and it continues to be celebrated in certain contemporary societies which are investigated and documented in Annex A. Gaiman (2009) writes, "the Macabray, the dance of the living and the dead, the dance with Death" (p. 149).

The sub-category of death and the afterlife is significant in both *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009) and *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014), with each focusing on death and the transition to the afterlife in different ways. Each book notates a different entity which facilitates this transition. *Dracula* makes reference to the Angel of Death, and *Sabriel's* character is a Necromancer who has the power to send spirits across the rivers to the afterlife and also guards those rivers to prevent the souls from returning as the undead. *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009) refers to the lady on the grey. When Bod asks if he may ride her horse Gaiman (2009, p. 150) writes "'one day,' she told him, and her cobweb skirts shimmered. 'One day. Everybody does.'" Nix (2014) gives graphic descriptions of the rivers and gates that one must pass through before reaching eternal rest in his text and alludes to it as being a half-life, where one is not fully alive or dead, but may be brought back or continue on depending on circumstance.

Heaven and Hell are primarily mentioned in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009), which is in keeping with the religious connotations of the text and era in which it was published. Gaiman (2009) only references Hell in *The Graveyard Book*, in that Miss Lupescu, who is a self-confessed Hound of God, states that she “will pursue an evil doer to the very gates of Hell” (p. 88). *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* mentions Heaven only in everyday connotations, for example Professor McGonagall states “how in the name of Heaven did Harry survive?” (Rowling, 2001, p. 15). *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009) contains references to Hell, where the characters intend to send Dracula from whence he came.

4.5 Linking Identified Themes with Belief Systems

The supernatural themes identified in this chapter are necessarily based on pure fantasy, but have their grounding in different religious and cultural belief systems. It is for this reason that belief systems are included in this research. To fully understand the conflicts that could arise from eliciting critical thinking when studying these novels via the critical literacy approach, the reader must have a significant understanding of how these themes link with contemporary cultures and belief systems within our diverse classrooms.

The supernatural has been integrated in societal beliefs for centuries, and continues to have contemporary influence. Mastin (2009) reports Wicca as becoming an accepted belief system, and ultimately a recognised religion in the United States in 1997; witchcraft being recognised as a certified occupation for income tax purposes in Romania in 2011; India sanctioning a Witch Prohibition Act in 1999; and multiple punishments (including beheading) as recently as 2012 for sorcery in Saudi Arabia. The albino people of Tanzania continue to be hunted because witchdoctors claim the potions made from their body parts elicit great power (Charlton, 2016; Cross, 2016; Wojciechowska & Klosowicz, 2016). In April of 2013, a witch doctor from Chhattisgarh (India) was sentenced to death after ritualistically beheading an 11 year old boy. Each of these documented incidents confirms contemporary links to the supernatural in societies around the world.

An investigation regarding the history, traditional beliefs, and contemporary cultures involving the thematic sub-categories, together with their portrayal in the selected novels is located in Annex A. The rationale for including these data is to provide a greater insight for the reader and to develop an understanding as to the extent that these themes are interwoven into the cultural belief systems of teachers, students, and societies within the diverse Australian context, as depicted in the conceptual framework in the previous chapter. The themes presented have been summarised in tabular form (Table 4.2) to indicate countries and religions that have been documented within Annex A to have significant links with the novels' supernatural themes.

Table 4.2

Thematic Evidence Documented by Country and Religion

	Thematic sub-category in novels	Country where evidence of belief is documented in Annex	Religion where evidence of belief is documented in Annex
Supernatural beings	Biblical/mythical figure other than god	Asian empire, Australia, Greece, Nordic cultures, Scandinavia, England, Denmark, Norway, America, Celtic cultures, Newfoundland, Ireland, Poland	Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Latter Day Saints, Hinduism, Lutherans,
	Witch/wizard	Egypt, Greece, Italy, Scotland, Ireland, New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Brazil, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Australia, America, India, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Zambia, Tanzania	Christianity Hindu, Islam Judaism
	Undead/walking dead	Haiti, America, France, Africa	Christianity
	Angel of death/crossing spirit	Celtic cultures, Wales, England, Ireland, Scotland, Poland, Scandinavia, Greece, Spain, Latin America,	Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism
	Ghosts/soul/spirit	Egypt, Greece, Italy, China, India, Scotland, Australia, England	Christianity Judaism, Islam
	One God	Italy	Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism
	Vampires	Greece, India, Persia, Italy, Nordic cultures, Africa, America, Philippines, Malaysia, Bali, Indonesia, China, Russia, Austria, Germany, Poland, Britain, Bulgaria	Judaism
	Werewolf	Greece, Italy, Germany, Celtic cultures, Scandinavia, Hungary, Balkans, France, Saudi Arabia, Britain, Poland, Russia, America	Christianity
	Spells, Potions, Magic	Egypt, Greece, France, Arabia, Iceland,	Christianity, Judaism,
	Supernatural abilities	Changing appearance	Britain, Greece, Ireland, Norse cultures, Armenia, Mayan culture, India, Philippines, Japan, China, Korea, Africa,
Medium power		Greece, Egypt, Sumerian cultures, Mexico, Africa, Israel, Tanzania, America, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia	Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism,
Commanding people/objects			
Immortality		China, Greece	Hinduism,
Mythology	Habitat	Transylvania, Moldavia, Bukovina,	
	Superstition	Africa, Italy, Tanzania,	Christianity, Judaism
	Death/afterlife	Egypt, America, Australia	Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism
	Significant days Heaven/Hell	Celtic cultures, England, Italy Egypt, America	Christianity Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam

A summary of the themes uncovered in the novels, and countries and religions where these themes have documented evidence of belief.

4.6 Belief Systems in Student Demographics

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2011) reports that in 2011 there are 9,435 schools in Australia. This figure comprises of government schools totalling 6,705 (71 percent), Catholic schools being 1,710 (18 percent) and Independent schools which total 1,020 (11 percent). Although the government schools account for 71 percent of all Australian schools, this is not to say that the students and teachers do not possess definitive and passionate belief systems aligned to religious perspectives.

Any school's student intake will be from multiculturally demographic areas depending on their individual contexts. For example, Auburn in Sydney has a 40.9 percent Islamic demographic, Cabramatta is one third Vietnamese, and Bondi contains primarily Australian born residents (ABS, 2011). Although this could skew the predominant student and teacher belief system ratios, the curriculum within which education exists is predetermined. Additionally, Evans (2000) notes that even in highly educated modern communities, a number of individuals endorse supernatural beliefs ranging from God, to ghosts, to astrology.

Table 4.2 itemises religions, where evidence of the belief in the supernatural themes uncovered in the novels is documented in Annex A. These different religious belief backgrounds form the basis of student demographics in contemporary Australian classrooms. After investigating the supernatural themes presented in the selected novels, and their specific links with cultural and belief systems documented within Annex A, it is considered appropriate to now establish the link these supernatural themes have with the religious belief systems presented in Table 4.2.

4.6.1. Christianity: Links with the supernatural.

Christianity has definitive links with supernatural events that are documented within biblical texts. The notion of a singular God is not widely embraced in ancient times, and this belief does not become a widespread phenomenon until after the alleged death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus, as this is seen as “evidence of Christ's divinity” (Moynahan, 2002, p. 18). As at his first ascension day, the only recorded teachings are that of the Old Testament of Judaism. Where Judaism has Moses returning from Mt Sinai with commandments etched in stone, and Islam has Mohammad personally writing the majority of his formal faith framework in the Qur'an, Christianity has no defined written dogma, liturgy, priesthood or formalised

hierarchy. In fact, their faith at this point lacks a name and is simply referred to as *the way* (Moynahan, 2002). By 70 AD Christianity is gaining in strength, however written documentation in the form of the Bible is still yet to be penned.

The Old Testament records supernatural events, with one such being the parting of the Red Sea by Moses.

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and Jehovah caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left (KJB, 1987, Exodus 14:21-22).

The hailing of a strong east wind can be considered congruent to the control both the characters Sabriel (Nix, 2014) and Dracula (Stoker, 2009) demonstrate over this element in the novels investigated. This account is echoed by Moses in Exodus 15:8 where it states, “the floods stood upright as a heap; the deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea” and in Psalms 78:13, “he clave the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as a heap” (KJB, 1987). Each account refers to the phenomena occurring after Moses holds his hand out over the water. In response, Buttrick (1952) explains the account by referring to that area as being a flat marshy area which is often covered by shallow water, and sometimes becomes dry due to the action of the wind. Jackson (n.d.) suggests other scholars refer to the Red Sea as Yam Sup and therefore correlates to the Sea of Reeds. If these suppositions are correct, then the parting of the Red Sea account could have taken place in a marshy area that had been temporarily, and instantaneously with Moses’ actions, rendered dry due to a brief wind.

The basis for this argument though, is the hypothesis that the Hebrew term ‘sup’ is congruent to the Egyptian term which means ‘reed’. There is also the possibility that the word ‘sup’ may correspond to the Hebrew word ‘sop’ which implies the end or conclusion of the earth, and therefore could indicate a series of interconnected bodies of water that would extend southward from Palestine and Arabia (Myers, 1987).

1 Kings 9:26, however, refers to the Gulf of Aqabah being a ‘sup’ which is where

Solomon harbours his naval fleet, indicating a body of water with considerable depth. Regardless of the exact location where the recorded supernatural event takes place, the Bible refers to the entire Egyptian army drowning when the waters come back together, denoting the depth of the water being sufficient for this purpose and therefore unlikely to have been parted by a temporary wind event.

As the parting of the Red Sea most likely occurs in the mid-15th century B.C (Jackson, n.d.), Jackson surmises the only natural event at this time is the eruption of a volcano about 500 miles north of Egypt on the island of Santorini which occurs in 1450 B.C. Conservative Bible scholars maintain that for the event to occur, only God has the power to not only part the water, but also dry the bottom of the sea sufficiently for the Israelites to not only walk but also drive wagons across. The path also would need to be wide enough for more than two million people to cross in one event. To do this, they argue, is wholly due to the power of the Almighty God (Wood, 1986).

Professor John Davis (1971) agrees that it is highly doubtful that a wind could part the water in effectively two directions simultaneously and that if the said wind is ferocious enough to part the water, then the crossing for the Israelites would be miraculous in itself facing such fierce winds. Pfeiffer, Voss, and Rea (1975) cite H. A. Han as noting a strong wind blows from north to south in the northern area of the Gulf of Suez for approximately nine months out of every year. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that an east wind could occur thereby making the parting of the Red Sea “truly an act of God” (Pfeiffer et al., 1975, p. 1447). These conflicting points of view demonstrate the extent to which critical thinking involving both supernatural themes and Christian beliefs could present personal conflict in the classroom setting.

Moses is also charged with turning the river Nile to blood via an outstretched hand holding a staff. The staff appears to be the medium or amulet through which God works this supernatural feat, not dissimilar to the wands used in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (Rowling, 2001) or the charter stones in *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014). This is substantiated in Exodus 7:17 which states, “this is what the Lord says; By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood.” Exodus 7:19-21 records the

account of this event when Moses, under instruction from God, strikes the Nile turning it to blood so that the Egyptians cannot drink from it and the fish and birdlife perish. Further references to this event are located in Exodus 4:9, 7:21, and 17:5, and Psalms 78:44 and 105:29 (KJB, 1987; Tanakh, 1985).

The New Testament also has a variety of supernatural occurrences linked with Jesus. For example, exorcism is a supernatural theme referred to in the King James Bible (1987) in the book of Acts (16:18, 19:12 and 19:15), Mark (1:25, 5:8, and 5:13) and Luke (9:42, 10:17, 11:20) and arguably not unlike the vanquishing of the evil spirits from the body of Lucy in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009). The Gospels of Matthew 12:22-32, Luke 11:14-23 and Mark 3:20-30 record the exorcism of a blind and mute man, allowing him to once again see and talk (Allison, 2005; Bruner, 2004; KJB, 1987), and then Jesus exorcises the demons from the daughter of a Canaanite woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon in Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-28 (KJB, 1987). Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:31-37 record the account of Jesus attending a synagogue and teaching people in the region of Capernaum. A man, who is allegedly possessed by an evil spirit, disrupts these teachings and, when Jesus orders the spirit to come out of him, the man shakes violently and shrieks as the demon leaves his body (Allison, 2005; Bruner, 2004; KJB, 1987). Identical verses appear in both Mark 9:38 and Luke 9:49 which state, “And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us” (KJB, 1987).

The miraculous healing powers of Jesus are referred to frequently throughout the Bible but are best illustrated in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke (Allison, 2005; Bruner, 2004; KJB, 1987). Recorded within these Gospels are the accounts of the healing of a bleeding woman by merely touching the garment worn by Jesus. She believes the garment to have a divine medium power which, according to the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke has an immediate healing effect. The curing of a blind man of Bethsaida reports that Jesus did little more than lay his hands over the eyes of the man and suggests that the man sees men walking like trees, although the Gospel of Mark suggests that Jesus does need to perform the action and incantation twice for it to be effective.

The miraculous healing of the centurion's servant is told in both Matthew (8:5-13) and Luke (7:1-10), although Matthew states that the servant is paralysed and Luke that he is very sick and about to die. In each version, Jesus needs only to utter a phrase and the servant is found to be healed, even though no hand has been laid upon the man, and he is not even sighted by Jesus. The Gospels of Matthew, Luke and Mark also recount stories of healing lepers, restoring hearing and speech to a deaf mute in Decapolis, curing dropsy (which is an abnormal swelling in the body), healing a hunched woman, and the Gennesaret healing which occurs after Jesus has allegedly walked on water (KJB, 1987). It is written that anyone who touches Jesus' cloak following this event is cured of all ailments (Bruner, 2004). With these claims being made in the Bible, to be able to fly on a broomstick or vanquish an evil spirit through the use of herbs does not seem unbelievable for an individual with such a theological disposition. To question such abilities, as has occurred in the novels studied, could also cause an individual to question the plausibility of these miraculous healings in the Bible, resulting in significant internal conflict.

The gift of immortality or raising the dead, similar to depictions in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009), is also reported in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, with three separate incidents being recorded. The first is the son of a widow in Nain where Jesus arrives during the burial ceremony and revives the deceased boy. The second is the daughter of Jairus, who is the ruler of the Galilee synagogue. The Gospel of Matthew reports the 12 year old as already deceased; however Mark and Luke's accounts state she is dying. Jesus embarks on the journey but receives word that the girl has died while he is enroute, and when he arrives, resurrects the girl. The third resurrection is of Lazarus of Bethany, where Jesus allegedly brings the man back to life four days after his burial. This resurrection only occurs in the Gospel of John (KJB, 1987, 11:1-44) and, although Jesus is informed of Lazarus' imminent death, he is reported to tell his followers that he wants Lazarus to die before he heals him in order to offer ultimate divine glory. Two days after the news of Lazarus' passing, Jesus begins his journey to Bethany and arrives four days after the burial has taken place but succeeds in raising Lazarus from the dead (Collins, 2007; France, 2007).

According to the Bible, Jesus also has control over nature which is illustrated in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark in the feeding of 4,000 people with seven loaves of

bread and fish. The Gospels of Mark and Matthew also tell the story of a hungry Jesus seeing a fig tree in the distance, however upon reaching it realises there is no fruit on the tree. He subsequently curses the tree causing it to wither and become barren. The Gospel of John records a wedding feast in Cana where the host runs out of wine for the guests. Jesus orders the servants to fill the jugs with water which he then turns into fine wine. The Gospels of Mark, Luke and Matthew also relate that one evening Jesus and his disciples are in a small boat crossing the Sea of Galilee when a violent storm rises, causing waves to crash into the boat and almost overturn it. Jesus is sleeping when one of his disciples wakes him, concerned about their impending doom. Jesus reportedly rebukes the wind, ordering the weather to be quiet and still, and the wind immediately dies down and the water becomes completely calm (KJB, 1987); not dissimilar to the control both *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009) and *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014) have over the wind.

The Gospels of John, Matthew and Mark all relate the following supernatural feat of walking on water (KJB, 1987). The Gospel of Mark states that when the disciples are in the midst of the sea, they can see Jesus standing alone on the water's edge. The winds become strong and the disciples are struggling to row the boat, and it is then that Jesus reportedly walks on the water to come up beside the boat. He writes that the disciples think the apparition is a ghost, but then Jesus speaks to them and calms the sea and winds. The Gospel of Matthew supports this version, but stipulates the disciples see Jesus on the fourth watch of the night and also that Peter, at Jesus' bidding, leaves the boat to walk out to him. It is when Peter becomes afraid of the rough waves and wind, thereby displaying doubt, that he begins to sink. According to Matthew, Jesus then allegedly holds his hand, urging him to have faith, and it is only then that the winds and waves cease. The Gospel of John does not tell of Peter leaving the boat to walk on water, and the only additional information added to this Gospel is that the boat is 25 to 30 furlongs from the shore, which equates to five to six kilometres.

Young (1999) alludes to either Jesus being above the laws of nature, or that Jesus projects himself whilst effectively remaining on the shore. To substantiate this alleged event, Ehrman (2008) writes that it is impossible to either prove or disprove such supernatural events utilising a historical method of enquiry, because to prove

them necessitates belief in a supernatural world not agreeable to historical analysis. To disprove the event requires historical evidence that is rare, if in existence at all. Regardless of this, some scholars pose that the event legitimately takes place, but is not miraculous. Schweitzer (2012) suggests that Jesus actually walks on the shore, but the disciples are confused because of the ferocious winds, waves and darkness; V. Taylor (1957) advocates Jesus simply wades through surf; Johnson (1966) hypothesises that Jesus walks along a sand bar; and Branscomb (1937) denotes the event as entirely legend. Additionally, there is the possibility of the event being allegorical rather than literal. Rudolf Bultmann (2007) suggests that there have been many sea-walking events and references throughout the world in many different cultures that date back to Roman and Greek folklore. In opposition to this view, Young (1999) considers the text as a work of fiction and uses literary-critical methods of exploring it as a piece of narrative art.

The ultimate act regarding the supernatural theme of immortality occurs via the story of the resurrection of Jesus which is referred to in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. Each account alleges that two women (Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus) come to anoint the body to find the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. Mark adds the woman Salome to create a trio, and Luke records the third woman as Joanna. Mark writes that the women find a young man in white inside the tomb who explains to them that Jesus had risen, but Luke reports that the women find the tomb empty and subsequently two men appear beside them to advise them of Jesus' resurrection (KJB, 1987).

The Gospel of John states that the women leave the empty tomb and it isn't until Mary returns home that she is visited by two angels and Jesus advising her to tell the disciples of his rising. Conversely, Matthew records that the two women go to the tomb, at which time there is an accompanying earthquake as an angel comes down from Heaven and moves the stone. The angel then allegedly tells them to advise the disciples that Jesus had risen and will meet them in Galilee. The Gospel of Matthew then continues on to report the disciples meeting up with Jesus in the flesh in Galilee. Luke writes that on the day of his resurrection, Jesus appears to two of his followers on the road to Emmaus. He breaks bread with them before vanishing, and when they

retell this story to the disciples, Jesus suddenly reappears. He invites them to touch his body and eats a meal with them (KJB, 1987).

The Gospel of John also recalls Jesus appearing to the disciples on the day of his resurrection, and then again a week later to Thomas as he has not believed that Jesus has risen from the dead. He reportedly instructs Thomas to touch his wounds in order for him to fully believe. On each occasion when someone sees Jesus after the resurrection, they do not initially recognise him (KJB, 1987). Sanders (1995) surmises that although Jesus can appear and disappear at will in a similar vein to *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009), he is not a ghost or apparition, which is in agreement with reports that disciples can touch him and that he eats meals with them. Acts (KJB, 1987) records an interlude between Jesus and Saul of Tarsus, who is the persecutor of the early disciples, on the road to Damascus. Saul is allegedly blind for three days following the vision and later becomes known as Paul the Apostle. The book of Acts in the Bible states that Jesus continues to appear to the apostles for a further forty days, each time providing them with proof that he is alive. On the fortieth day, Jesus reportedly ascends to heaven (KJB, 1987). The differences noted in the chronicles from the reported witnesses at the tomb site indicate a lack of consensus within the Christian writings, so if other non-secular or scientific explanations for the alleged, and subsequent apparition events are explored via critical thinking, it is understandable how this could cause conflict within the personal belief systems of individuals.

It is ten days after this ascension that the apostles are in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost when a spontaneous rush of wind arrives marking the arrival of the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit is allegedly the “divine force which had conceived Christ, which has descended on him at his baptism in the form of the dove, and which had directed his life. It was accompanied now by tongues of fire” (Moynahan, 2002. p. 20). The book of Acts records that, as each of the apostles are filled with the Holy Spirit, they begin to speak with other tongues in the languages of ‘every nation under heaven’ (KJB, 1987, Acts 2:4). Moynahan (2002, p. 20) states, “the trinity was to become a core of Christian doctrine, though the term appears nowhere in the New Testament.” Jesus commands the disciples to baptise “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”; (KJB, 1987, Matthew 28:19) and gives rise to the

notion that “God was three yet one” (Moynahan, 2002, p. 119). Moynahan (2002) states that the word trinity, in respect to the notion of God being three entities, does not appear until about 180 AD in the writings of Theophilus of Antioch. “The expression ‘three persons, one essence’ is first coined by Tertullian more than a century after that” (Moynahan, 2002, p. 119).

These biblical events give credence to the Christian belief not only in spirits or ghosts, but that they have the ability to enter bodies and alter one’s abilities. This is not dissimilar to the abilities of the ghosts in *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009), or disembodied entities in *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014), giving legitimacy to the exploration of this theme whilst utilising critical thinking during a novel study. Christian based belief systems are not isolated in their links with supernatural events and entities, and these links are explored in the following subsections.

4.6.2. Indigenous beliefs: Links with the supernatural.

The 2015 Aboriginal Students in NSW Public Schools annual Report states a total of 51,613 Indigenous students are enrolled in NSW schools, which equates to 6.8 percent of the total scholastic population (NSW Government, 2015, p. 13). Each Australian State education body endorses and acknowledges incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives into classroom practices, including their history and culture.

Indigenous Australians have traditions, beliefs and folklore that are passed down verbally rather than in written form and therefore it is difficult to compile empirical data from a historical perspective (C. Morris, 1995). Michael Organ (1993) compiled a report for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies regarding the Illawarra and South Coast Aboriginal population from 1770 to 1900, in which he reproduces original material from James Manning’s *Notes on the Aborigines of New Holland* from 1882. The notes themselves are originally from 1844 by James Manning and are penned from interviews with various Indigenous Australians in that era. Although Mr Manning swears the people interviewed are not influenced by European views in any way, there appears to be no other third party evidence regarding these interviews to substantiate this claim.

Manning writes that the Indigenous Australians in this area believe in a supreme being who is the orchestrator of existence, and that being's name is 'Boyma'. Boyma reportedly lives in the north-east, is of supernatural appearance, and sits on a throne of crystal. The throne is surrounded by rainbow emissions called 'curanguerang' and bilaterally bordered by pillars of carved crystal called 'yamoon' (Organ, 1993). This description has a remarkable similarity to the description in Revelation 4:3 (KJB, 1987) which describes the seat of God. Given Mr Manning's affiliation with the Anglican Church, his writings could be perceived to be tarnished with bias and influence. Mudrooroo (1995) however, confirms more recently that an Aboriginal deity exists which mirrors that of Christianity, namely Biami and whose achievements mirror those occurring in the biblical chapter of Genesis.

In his writings, Manning also notes that an equivalent son of God is sent to earth whose name is 'Grogoragally' and that he is sent to watch over man, mentor him, and bring the dead to life in order to front his Father for judgement, and subsequent entry to heaven (Ballima) or hell (Oorooma) (Organ, 1993). He follows this information by recording the Indigenous belief in 'Moodgeegally', who is reported to be the first man created by Boyma. Moodgeegally then allegedly leaves his blissful abode to ascend a staircase circumnavigating a tall mountain (Dallambangel) leading to heaven. It is here that Boyma purportedly gives him a set of laws by which man is to conduct his life, including the sacred rite of 'corrobboree' which he is to communicate to all other tribes. This has a striking resemblance to Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai in the biblical book of Exodus (KJB, 1987). Manning also records that only men are admitted into Ballima due to the reasoning that Boyma and Grogoragally have no wives or mothers, and therefore the female sex is not permitted to enter Ballima regardless of being good or evil (Organ, 1993).

According to Manning, the religious mysteries entrusted to Moodgeegally by Boyma are not divulged to boys until puberty, when they participate in the ceremony of 'Irangung' which equates to an adult baptism. It is during this ceremony that the participant is required to have their front tooth removed. Manning also records that the same ceremony is performed in Queensland, along the Darling River, but the ceremony is referred to as the 'Boree' (Organ, 1993). No corroborating research or

documents could be found regarding this claim, and Manning's literature is limited to the individuals interviewed in the Illawarra and South Coast area.

In his diary, Collins (1910) writes an account regarding the religious beliefs of the Indigenous Australians alleging that no country has yet been discovered where any suggestions of religion cannot be found, however from every observation of these people, and every inquiry made amongst them, they appear to be an exception to this judgment. Although it is now known that the spiritual beliefs of Indigenous Australians permeate their lifestyles and laws, there is minimal broad understanding of these beliefs by non-Indigenous Australians, and also how they impact lifestyles and behaviours of contemporary Indigenous Australians (Tripcony, 1996).

Tripcony (1996) suggests the concept known as 'The Dreaming' encompasses their spirituality and belief systems, and Edwards (1994, p. 68) states, "the dreaming does not assume the creation of the world from nothing; however, landscape is conceived of as having been formed from and through the activities of Spirit Beings." Sutton (1988, p. 14) writes, "the realm of Spiritual existence is not divorced from the material world, but embedded in it." Aborigines consider the animate beings of The Dreaming to actually be Ancestral Beings who are eternally present despite their death. Tripcony (1996) reports that it is these Ancestral Beings who initiate religious ceremonies, taboos and laws, in opposition to Manning's recorded Boyma rhetoric. In addition to Ancestral Beings, there also exists Creation Beings (assisting in the creation of the landscape) and Totemic Beings (overlapping the other beings because they create an abundance of species that defines a person's origin. For example, kangaroo totem people may feel their ancestors have been reincarnated as kangaroos in order that their flesh will feed their bloodlines). It is further suggested by Tripcony (1996) that The Dreaming is not a historical notion but rather exists eternally, both in the past and present, as do the Ancestral Beings. She also stipulates that the term 'The Dreaming' is an English term in opposition to an Aboriginal one; it is not a product of dreams as the English definition suggests.

Unlike much biblical creationist prose, many Aboriginal myths have scientific data that correlate their accounts. Dixon (1972) explains that the Aboriginal myth explaining the creation of Lakes Eacham, Barrine and Euramo on the Atherton

Tablelands in far north Queensland is substantiated by geological research authenticating a volcanic explosion did occur more than 10,000 years ago. Dixon (1972) reports that silt formed in the bottom of the craters contains pollen fossils confirming the Aboriginal story. Pannell (2006, p. 11) states this is an “unparalleled human record of events dating back to the Pleistocene era.” Other such scientifically proven myths including accounts regarding Port Phillip, the Great Barrier Reef, and Lake Eyre are subsequently recorded by Dixon (1972).

A revered member of the tribe is referred to as the Medicine Man, because of their vast knowledge of plants, roots, and ability to combine them to formulate cures. Every time a cure is successful, the Medicine Man’s power and notoriety increases (Draniciar, 2009). He often chants over his brews and/or makes signs or perform rituals simultaneously, not reportedly to amplify the concoction, but to make the patient believe in his power, thus promoting suggestibility and invoking the power of belief (Draniciar, 2009). Draniciar (2009) reports that this power also makes him a sought after individual regarding conquest over enemies, creating a form of sorcery which becomes part of the Indigenous belief system. Many of their cures and curses remain unexplained through modern science, but have been witnessed and described by many competent observers (Draniciar, 2009).

One such supernatural ability possessed by the Medicine Man is that of pointing the bone. Idriess (1980) describes the bone as a human shin bone shard, pointy at the end, with human hair attached by spinifex resin as an embellishment. The carved bone needs to be ‘sung’ to allow the appropriate power to become imparted on the object which is reported to be a dark and sometimes dangerous procedure. The act of boning is done secretly with the Medicine Man chanting a ceremony, pointing the bone in the direction of the victim, and drawing blood or life force from the victim, along the hair and into the cylindrical cavity of the bone. At this time the life force is captured and can be cursed with either disease or accident. Idriess (1980) reports that the victim must know they have been boned, either specifically or through rumour, which starts the process of autosuggestion. If the victim is not a party to this belief system then the consequences of being boned will not have full effect, if any. Contemporary belief in this supernatural force appears to be maintained as, on April

21st, 2004, an Indigenous woman named Moopor pointed the bone and cursed the then Prime Minister, John Howard (Bieske, 2004; Dunn 2004).

The supernatural powers possessed by the Medicine Man, Witchdoctor, or Kadaicha as he is referred to by some tribes, also includes healing with psychic surgery techniques, interacting with spirits, x-ray vision, conducting telepathy over very long distances, transporting himself via dreams into the mind of others, fire-walking and hypnotism (Elkin, 1937, 1977; Rose, 1951, 1952, 1956).

Rawlinson (2012) records an interview with Edmond Dirdi from the small community of Oenpelli in Arnhem Land. He is a 36 year old who holds seats on local councils and is a well-respected Witchdoctor; having started his apprenticeship at age eight. Rawlinson's guide, Gary Djorlom, reports that he had seen many healings by Witchdoctors and that the contemporary belief in the Indigenous community is that they believe in him and trust him. Dirdi carries healing stones with him wherever he goes and 'sings' with them prior to the treatment of a patient. Dirdi claims in his interview with Rawlinson that he "only heals people with sicknesses that are caused by supernatural forces, including curses from bad witchdoctors who use 'black magic'" (Rawlinson, 2012, para 19). He claims that he can feel the patient's pain from 10 to 20 metres away, but he is reluctant to discuss black magic due to the forces that surround it.

It is evident from these records that the Indigenous perspective regarding belief systems is not just historical, but contemporary in practice. Its links to the supernatural themes presented in the novel used in this research are undeniable, including spells, incantations, curses, potions, and evil spirits. These Australian perspectives are not unique in combining the supernatural aspects uncovered in the novels with belief systems. Many other religions practiced around the world have their foundation based on supernatural events and actions that have both historical and contemporary aspects.

4.6.3. Religions around the world: Links with the supernatural.

4.6.3.1 Islam.

Islam, along with Christianity and Judaism, is an Abrahamic religion, believing in the line of prophets from Musa (or Moses) to Isa (or Jesus) (Qur'an, n.d., Sûrah 2:136). Muhammad is allegedly the last in this line and received the word of God in the early seventh century CE to create the Qur'an and establish what is referred to contemporarily as Islam (Jones, Palffy, & Jayaprakash, 2013; Meredith & Hickman, 2005). Islam is practiced by approximately 25 percent of the world's population, and is therefore the largest of all religions, with 50 countries supporting a Muslim majority population (Jones et al., 2013).

There are many similarities between the Qur'an, Christian and Jewish texts, but with subtle differences. For example, Adam and Eve are forgiven in the Qur'an rather than being cast out as in Christian and Jewish bibles, because they repent and beg for mercy. Jesus is treated as a prophet in the Qur'an in opposition to a divine figure, with Mary elevated in importance (Jones et al., 2013). As such, the Islamic belief in supernatural events parallels both Christian and Jewish texts, which include divine healing (Qur'an, n.d., Sûrah 26:80), warnings about the future (Qur'an, n.d., Sûrah 48:27), being resurrected from the dead (Qur'an, n.d., Sûrah 2:148), and curses and angels (Qur'an, n.d., Sûrah 2:161).

There has been some debate about the scientific and historical investigation regarding events portrayed in the Bible that are not scrutinised in the Qur'an. Ward (2004, p. 154) supposes that "the Qur'an was originally recited by one person, and thus does not have the complexities of different authorship and of different accounts of the same events from different viewpoints" giving it some form of robust reliability. Ward (2004, p. 154) also notes the Christian bible makes "central historical claims about life, death and resurrection of a person who lived long ago" which the Qur'an does not, portraying Jesus as a prophet and not the human embodiment referred to as the Son of God. This coupled with the idea that "Islam, unlike Christianity and Judaism, has not had to come to terms with the European Enlightenment, and with the criticism of religion that involved" (Ward, 2004, p. 204)

means that the Qur'an can be seen by believers as the ultimate truth. This 'truth' has reportedly prevailed over the historically perceived incompatible and questionable truths of other faiths.

4.6.3.2 Judaism.

Judaism is one of the oldest surviving religions that dates back approximately 4,000 years, with a current number of followers estimated at more than 13 million (Jones et al., 2013; Meredith & Hickman, 2005). In the 6th Century BCE Israelites are forced into exile by the Egyptians, and it is then that the Hebrew (Jewish) bible, or the Tanakh, is written, documenting the history of the Israelite people and their religious belief system (Jones et al., 2013; Meredith & Hickman, 2005). This Tanakh is divided into three distinct parts, the Torah (books given to Moses – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), Nevi'im or the Prophets (19 books) and Kethuvim or the writings (11 books) which together equate to the Old Testament of the Christian Bible (Torah, Rich Trans., 2011). A separate set of writings is the Talmud, a collection of rabbinical thoughts that contains Jewish law (Meredith & Hickman, 2005).

Judaism experiences a number of times through history when their collective faith is questioned. In the biblical book of Job, a man asks how God could allow atrocities and misfortunes to happen, to which God responds that “there is no answer: his rule over the world is beyond human understanding” (Jones et al., 2013, p. 177). Then, in contemporary Europe, the Jewish faith is again questioned in response to the Holocaust where an estimated six million Jews are killed. “Jewish theology struggled to provide answers, and a number of Jews lost faith, believing god had abandoned his people” (Jones et al., 2013, p. 198), but some Jewish people see it as merely an extension of the centuries of persecution they have already endured and therefore a test of faith, while others view it as punishment for “abandoning God and his laws, which God had responded to with his own temporary absence” (Jones et al., 2013, p. 198).

Ancient Judaism “has been the most influential religion in the world” and “Christianity, Islam and other more recent religious movements all acknowledge their debt to the Hebrew prophets” (Ward, 2004, p. 121). The inclusion of

supernatural beliefs in Judaism parallels Christianity, given their Abrahamic origins. The Tanakh tells stories of the angel of death passing over the Jewish houses while slaying the eldest son of Egyptian families (KJB, 1987; Tanakh, 1985, Exodus 12:21-23), Lot's wife turning to salt (KJB, 1987; Tanakh, 1985, Genesis 19:24-26), Aaron's rod turning into a serpent and consuming the rods belonging to the Egyptian sorcerers (KJB, 1987; Tanakh, 1985, Exodus 7:10-12), and Miriam who is made leprous and then subsequently healed (KJB, 1987; Tanakh, 1985, Numbers, 12:10-15).

Rabbi Geoffrey Dennis (n.d.) pens an article on MyJewishLearning website that lists narratives in Jewish texts pertaining to exorcism, including the story of David temporarily exorcising an evil spirit from Saul (I Samuel 16:14-23), the book of Tobit explicitly describes an exorcism, and numerous references to Jesus having performed exorcisms in Mark 5, 6, 13; Luke 8; and Matthew 12 (KJB, 1987; Tanakh, 1985). Trachtenberg (1939) states the Jewish exorcism includes invoking holy names and summoning angels, reciting Bible verses, and cycling magical numbers. He alleges the most powerful of protective names is *Shaddai*, or the Almighty, which is spelt out in various ways during the exorcism. Spells are also used in the physical surroundings where the exorcism takes place, and other times when demons are required to be expelled. Trachtenberg (1939, p. 158) explains the exorcism rite in detail, including physical requirements, actions, and the exact biblical verses to be recited. This could be paralleled with the use of sacramental verses, holy water, wafers, and the crucifix used to vanquish Dracula in Stoker's (2009) novel.

4.6.3.3 Wiccan.

Wicca is a relatively new religious belief system based on pagan principles, thus its history can be dated back to medieval times when, viewed as a threat to Christianity, suspected witches are stalked and victimised. Marcovitz (2014, p. 43) attributes the resurgence of witchcraft as a belief system in contemporary society to Gerald Gardner, author of *Witchcraft Today* in 1954, which ignites the Wicca movement via "folklore, magic, and occult rituals, but underneath it all is a deep appreciation for life and the spiritual strength Wiccans believe they can draw from the Earth." According to the American Religious Identification Survey, in 2001 there are

approximately 134,000 American citizens proclaiming to be Wiccans. When compared with 8,000 people in 1990, “the study concluded that Wicca may be the fastest growing religious movement in the United States” (Marcovitz, 2014, p. 42).

It is believed the Wiccan culture in Australia can be dated back to the late 1960s (Ezzy, 2009) and since then has mirrored the United States in progression. The Australian Bureau of Statistics census in 1991 shows 1,367 people identifying as Wiccan, which increases to 1,849 in the 1996 census, and then 8,755 in the 2001 census (Ezzy, 2009; Hughes & Bond, 2003). This number plateaus in the 2006 and 2011 censuses with 8,207 and 8,413 followers respectively (Pagandash, 2012).

Wiccans regard themselves as a legitimate religion and, in 1997, “the U.S. Army recognized Wicca as a religion and gave instructions to army chaplains in how to lead services for Wiccan soldiers” (Marcovitz, 2014, p. 40). In 1999, a newspaper in Texas reportedly published a feature article depicting soldiers engaging in a Wiccan ceremony at Fort Hood, with shirtless bodies leaping over a campfire as robed female priestesses watched on (Marcovitz, 2014). Its engagement with supernatural themes is undeniable, with members casting spells, blending potions, and looking to magic as a tool to address everyday issues in their lives (Marcovitz, 2014).

Eastern belief systems also involve aspects of the supernatural as part of their dogma including spirits, reincarnation or returning from the dead, astrology and incantations.

4.6.3.4 Buddhism.

Siddhartha Gautama, born in 563 BCE, embarks on a path of enlightenment, turning his back on his lifestyle and family, dons the robes of a beggar and becomes a wandering holy man (Jones et al., 2013; Meredith & Hickman, 2005). During a night of sustained meditation, he believes he reaches the point of all knowing with regard to suffering, ageing and death, or nirvana. It is at this point that he becomes referred to as Buddha (Jones et al., 2013; Meredith & Hickman, 2005). It is estimated that there are currently over 500 million Buddhists in the world (Meredith & Hickman, 2005).

The teachings of Buddha are based on his observations and what he refers to as the universal truths; everything is constantly changing, this impermanence leads to suffering or existential frustration, and because of this constant change no essence is fixed. This leads to the theory of interconnectedness and dependence on other elements; for example, a tree is not merely a tree in isolation as it depends on sunlight, soil conditions, and water, thereby all elements are connected. It is this ideal that prompts monks to survive off the charitable gifts of food for sustenance, not to cultivate hardships for themselves to endure, but as a practical example of interconnectedness (Jones et al., 2013; Meredith & Hickman, 2005).

Both Buddhism and Hinduism support the notion of Karma, meaning that all actions have consequences, but Buddhist teachings add that there is always an element of choice in our actions rather than predetermined courses (Jones et al., 2013).

Buddhism also differs from other religions in that Buddha's word is not to be strictly followed, but rather tested and subsequently understood in one's own personal experiences – seeking through understanding rather than simply believing his words, and bases belief on personal convictions rather than trusting external authority (Jones et al., 2013).

Buddhism, like other Indian belief systems, trusts in reincarnation, the idea that the spiritual being can return to an earthly manifestation and take different forms in a cyclic nature until ultimate enlightenment is attained. It also advocates the idea of karmic actions in that, positive energy one puts out into the world will attract positive energy in return. Buddhist Spirit houses are used in modern day Thailand, where they are erected by a holy man and then the owners pay daily homage, bringing gifts and offerings to please ancestral spirits and earth spirits (Cranfill, 2016).

4.6.3.5 Hinduism.

Hinduism dates back to circa 2000 BCE, making it one of the world's oldest belief systems, and has approximately 750 million followers worldwide (Meredith & Hickman, 2005). Hinduism comprises thousands of gods and goddesses that are all aspects of the ultimate reality, or Brahman (Ward, 2004). The three primary gods are Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the protector) and Shiva (the destroyer), and can be

considered the Hindu equivalent of the holy trinity in Catholicism (Jones et al., 2013; Meredith & Hickman, 2005). Hinduism does not subscribe to any one dogma or philosophical concept, and is therefore viewed more as a way of life than a religion in the strictest sense.

The god Shiva is depicted with many arms and often dances in a circle of fire, denoting the cyclic nature of life and death. Offerings are made to different gods and goddesses depending on what knowledge or intervention is being sought (Jones et al., 2013). In conjunction with the many gods and goddesses, other supernatural aspects are acknowledged, for example, “Hindus believe that our sexual energy and life force (kundalini) resides like a coiled serpent or sleeping goddess at the base of the spine” and can only be released through yoga or tantric meditation (Jones et al., 2013, p. 100). Hinduism also advocates “practices such as astrology and magical incantations” especially where wealth and fertility were concerned (Ward, 2004, p. 137).

Like Buddhism, Hinduism also subscribes to the ideal of karma and reincarnation. Hindus believe that if a person produces good karmic energy throughout their life, they will be reincarnated as an equal or better being, if they put bad karma out into the world, then they will be reincarnated as a lower caste or animal with the ultimate aim being to be released from this continual cycle of suffering; birth, life and death (Jones et al., 2013; Ward, 2004).

4.7 Summary

The supernatural themes presented in the novels vary in both type and numerical occurrence. These investigated themes have either biblical or cultural links, with evidential backing to suggest some supernatural influences continue to have a significant effect on societal laws, conventions, and beliefs of some cultures. Given the imbedded supernatural influence evident in contemporary religious dogma and beliefs, the possible impact that critical thinking regarding these themes could have on personal beliefs is significant. This chapter indicates ways in which applying critical thinking to these supernaturally themed novels could create conflict between cultural belief systems and personal philosophies by providing a background context

to establish links between thematic content and belief systems. This chapter answers the textually based questions by specifying and categorising the supernatural themes occurring in the novels examined. By investigating how these themes link to cultural and religious beliefs, it is evident that these themes are imbedded in those beliefs, and subsequently demonstrates why teachers need to have an understanding of these sensitivities. Teacher perspectives and perceived student centred issues regarding this is investigated in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5 - THE PARTICIPANTS' VOICES

Cynicism, like gullibility, is a symptom of underdeveloped critical faculties.

(Jamie Whyte, 2004)

Phase 2	The Participants' Voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-establish blog site for voluntary contributions-examine blog entries-conduct follow up interviews with blog participants-transcribe and analyse interviews-investigate the significance of non-verbal interactions
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5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter defines and investigates the context in which the critical thinking is being elicited. This chapter focuses on the voices of the participants and is the second phase of the research process. It details the methods used, data sources, data collection, and data analysis. It continues on to identify commonalities in the everyday lived experiences of educators when teaching critical thinking to students.

The first step in this phase is to establish a Blog site and subsequently invite teachers to participate in discussions about the research topic. These Blog contributions are used as a stimulus to be further investigated via semi-structured interviews.

Participants are then invited to partake in the follow-up semi-structured interviews in order that a deeper understanding of their lived experiences can be gained. All data are then analysed to determine emerging themes. This initial step is vital as it begins to form an overall view of what the real life day to day experiences of teachers are involving critical thinking and the implications of teaching it in the English classroom.

5.2 Methods

5.2.1. Research sample and data sources.

A purposeful sample is targeted for participation in the Blog site discussions because in a phenomenological study, participation should involve individuals who have

experience relating to the nature of the study being conducted (Groenewald, 2004). Advertisements in teaching newspaper subscriptions, word of mouth and a snowball effect are employed to entice secondary English teachers to take part in the discussions. Informed consent is sought for these via the site disclaimers which act as a filter to exclude those not wishing to have their entries included in the data collection. As administrator for the Blog site, I have the control to screen and approve all entries prior to posting for public viewing. This ensures any information which may identify either the participant or their school can be suitably censored, as can any individual and/or company endorsements or advertising material from dissociated third parties.

As the targeted data source is teachers, the sample type can be controlled but not the sample number size. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that, due to the idiographic focus in IPA, the size of the sample is of less importance than each detailed and unique lived experience, including participants' perspectives that are being studied, rather than linking quantities to create generalisations across a larger sample size. They recommend that participant sample size for a PhD study utilising an IPA approach typically numbers between four and ten participants. The participants for this research number eight, with each participant actively and equally contributing to Blog online discussions. Every Blog contributor consented to participating in follow up semi-structured interviews, making the research sample remain at eight for the entire study.

5.2.2. Data collection.

The initial phase of data collection involves online Blog site entries over a two year period. The aim of data collection from the Blog entries is to ascertain initial emergent themes to provide a basis for formulating semi-structured interview questions. This way, the initial thoughts of educators can be probed in detail to further understand participants' lived experiences, rather than formulating interview questions at the outset of the research that did little or nothing to reflect their personal experiences. Although the entries and participants are small in number, the quality of information is significant. After teachers begin contributing to the online discussions, general themes begin to develop and significant personal accounts

emerge, forming the basis for follow-up investigations. These conversations are in written format on the site and collected and stored electronically via the site server.

The aim of collecting data from the semi-structured interviews is to “understand the participant’s perspective and take their claims and concerns seriously” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 57). To facilitate this, although a series of five open-ended questions is formulated to assist in teasing out information from the participants, the same questions are not necessarily asked of each participant and are utilised as more of a “loose agenda” to guide the process (p. 58). The emphasis in the semi-structured interviews is to allow the participant to contribute freely, and therefore questioning is kept to a minimum to focus on the participants’ voice, ideas and train of thought.

The times and locations for the interviews are selected by the participants to ensure minimal inconvenience for them. I determine it is of paramount importance that the participant be comfortable in their surroundings to relax them and elicit quality information. Semi-structured interviews are recorded using my personal mobile phone. This ensures confidentiality as the phone remains in my possession and is protected via a Personal Identification Number (PIN) known only to myself. The use of a mobile phone to record the interview aids in making the participant feel comfortable as it is non-obtrusive (not needing to be close to the source or having a separate microphone) and is an item commonly placed on tables in clear view, so commands no additional attention during the interview process.

Face-to-face interviews are conducted to allow for the observation of non-verbal gestures and contextualisation which are notated after the interview process to enhance my reflection process. O’Connell and Kowal (1995) suggest that transcription of information that is not to be analysed is not necessary, and therefore only significant non-verbal expressions are transcribed, including laughter, significant pauses and hesitations. Due to the cyclic nature of Phenomenological research, all data are not collected at the outset of the research project, but constantly sourced as new themes emerge from that continuing data collection. Semi-structured interviews are then transcribed for analysis and stored electronically on my external portable hard drive which is housed in a locked cabinet at my personal residence.

Data sources are kept in both electronic and hard copy versions to assist in timely retrieval during the data analysis phase.

5.2.3. Data analysis.

Hermeneutics is of primary importance in data analysis and is concerned with the meaning of a text. Radnitzky (1970, p. 20) states, “the basic question in hermeneutics is: what is the meaning of this text?” Gadamer (1976) makes reference to a hermeneutic circle, which is the dialectic between the understanding of the text as a whole and the interpretation of its parts, and that understanding “is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole” (p. 117). This was previously represented diagrammatically in Figure 3.5 (The hermeneutic circle).

In this section, the ‘texts’ are the transcriptions of interviews and these transcriptions are followed by a line by line analysis in accordance with suggestions by Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006). This allows me to focus on what is actually said, including the use of language (repetition, pauses and metaphors), and highlight distinct phrases or emotional responses in order to fully hear the participant’s voice and perspective. Emergent patterns and themes are then identified within each interview and then subsequently across the cache of interviews. Eatough and Smith (2008) recommend that both commonality and nuances be highlighted at this time. Larkin et al. (2006) and A. Smith (2004) suggest contextualisation at this point is warranted, in that the coded data should shed light on what it might mean for participants to have these concerns in order to develop a more interpretative account of the interview.

J. A. Smith (2007) also advocates that keeping a research journal of reflections regarding personal perceptions, conceptions and processes at this time is helpful, and therefore a research journal is maintained throughout the project. Burgess (1999, p. 258) notes that research diaries include a “series of jottings that are maintained over the course of the study” and these assist in recording my hunches and insights. These jottings are included in the semi-structured interview transcripts under the column entitled exploratory comments rather than in a separate journal document for this data source. This allows easy, contextualised notation that can be readily located and identified “as a means of generating further data to complement observational and interview material” (Burgess, 1999, p. 261).

Exploratory comments are also journalised to gain emotive and descriptive insights into the responses, to examine language use (including repetition and tone), to allow for personal reflection, and to identify any undiscovered preconceived personal notions. The semi-structured interview transcripts and exploratory comments are then analysed to make connections, discover patterns, and check for interrelationships which result in emerging themes presenting themselves (see Appendix B: Interview transcripts with emerging themes and exploratory comments). The textual representation of the interview is deconstructed into sentences, words, utterances, reflections and then back to the whole, which represents the hermeneutic circle approach. Emerging themes are then clustered into like groups and the frequency of both occurring and absent themes are noted for comment and analysis for each interview (see Appendix C: Clustering units of relevant meaning from interviews).

At this point, the semi-structured interview transcripts, exploratory comments, and summary of emergent themes are used to create a summary of each interview. These summaries are then taken back to the participants for comment and additions for clarification and verification in accordance with Hycner's tenth step in his Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Data recommendations, which are outlined specifically in the following subsection and included in this thesis as Appendix E: Summary of interviews including participant feedback. Upon ratification from participants, themes are then tabulated and cross referenced with the remaining cache of interviews to interpret the broader contextual view regarding the research (see Appendix D: Table identifying recurrent themes in interviews; and Appendix G: Average references to identified themes in interviews).

5.2.3.1. Blogs and interviews.

Blog entries over the two year data collection period are collated and examined to determine common themes which relate to the overarching research question. These are then utilised to formulate a series of questions to guide semi-structured follow up interviews with consenting participants. Subprompts are also generated to tease out information if the participant appears hesitant, unable to answer the posed question, or disinclined to maintain a flow of information. The participants are encouraged to

talk about their experiences in general; however, the questions and subprompts are generated to assist teachers in forming their ideas if they cannot elicit general flowing conversation. These questions and subprompts include:

What role does critical thinking play in your approach to teaching literature?

Subprompt – I notice in your Blog entry that ...Can you tell me more about that? And can you tell me how you use novels in the classroom?

How comfortable are you using literature with supernatural themes in classrooms?

Subprompt – Can you explain why you feel this way?

How do you maintain integrity (personal beliefs and objectivity) while eliciting quality thinking in students?

Subprompt – Have you ever encountered a conversation regarding supernatural themes where opposing belief systems were uncovered – and if so, how did you manage it?

What role do you believe critical thinking skills play in the everyday lives of students?

Subprompt – How do you think critical thinking skills could benefit students in their lives after graduating from school?

Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss?

Hycner's Principles for the Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Data are utilised to expose themes emerging throughout the data analysis. Hycner's phases are modified in the following way-

1. Transcription – convert recorded interviews to written text;
2. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction – listen to the original recording in combination with reading the transcripts to ensure only the participant's words are captured and not transcribed as what the researcher thinks is said, or assumed from the tone in which the comment is delivered. Each comment is heard as words, phrases, sentences, and then as a whole to ensure no bias of presumption on the researcher's part;
3. Listening to the interview for a sense of the whole – listen to interviews for para-linguistic levels of communication (tone, pauses, emphasis etc.);
4. Delineating units of general meaning – ascertain words or phrases that express unique meaning that is not necessarily related to the research

question. This condensation is what assists the determination of emerging themes and is done via highlighting the transcript as shown in Appendix B: Interview transcripts with emerging themes and exploratory comments, using the participant's literal words;

5. Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question – omitted for this research as the question relates to the lived experiences of teachers. In this respect, all units of general meaning are significant to the overall research question and therefore relevant;
6. Training independent judges to verify the units of relevant meaning – omitted from the analysis protocol as Hycner (1999, p. 149) states, “there are rarely significant differences in the findings”, and “since there is no illusion of pure objectivity in this kind of research and since each person does bring in his/her own different perspective, even when trained in these procedures, there are bound to be some minor differences.” For this reason, my supervisor and associate supervisor are utilised as judges regarding the verification of units of relevant meaning in this study;
7. Eliminate redundancies – repetition of units of relevant meaning may “indicate just how important that particular issue was to the participant” (Hycner, 1999, p. 150). It should also be noted, however, that nonverbal cues may alter the literal meaning at times, and this is where research journals/exploratory comments are of importance. The prevalence of units of relevant meaning are recorded in Appendix C: Clustering units of relevant meaning from interviews;
8. Clustering units of relevant meaning – recorded also in Appendix C: Clustering units of relevant meaning from interviews;
9. Determining themes from clusters of meaning – central themes can be easily viewed in Appendix C: Clustering units of relevant meaning from interviews, and Appendix H: Participants' interview comments listed by category and theme;
10. Writing a summary for each individual interview – recorded in Appendix E: Summary of interviews including participant feedback;
11. Returning to the participant with the summary and themes: Conducting a second interview – modified to presenting the participants with the summaries, including emerging themes, and allowing them the opportunity to

- add and/or expand information with a view to clarifying or contextualising. Regarding this research, this phase is not a second interview, but an informal discussion with the participants offering feedback on the summaries (see Appendix E: Summary of interviews including participant feedback);
12. Modifying themes and summary – omitted as there is no new information gained from follow up discussions. Statements of clarification provided no new themes, but give a richer insight into those already identified;
 13. Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews – prevalence of themes can be viewed in Appendix D: Table identifying recurrent themes in interviews and Appendix G: Average references to identified themes in interviews;
 14. Contextualising of themes – place themes back into the overall context and research questions. During this phase, themes are contextualised into three categories of student, teacher, and curriculum based areas of concern and can be located in Appendix G: Average references to identified themes in interviews, and Table 6.2 Student related, teacher related and curriculum and/or classroom related ranked and categorised themes; and
 15. Composite summary – located in Appendix F: Composite summary of interviews.

5.3 Exploring the Interviews

5.3.1. The raw voices.

The original transcripts are analysed and phrases uttered by individuals that are related to themes are highlighted and then clustered together. The raw comments made by participants are listed categorically under each participant's name in Appendix H: Participants' interview comments list by theme. Participants consist of two secondary English teachers from the religious independent school sector (Josey and Daisy), two primary teachers in the public education system (Jimmy and Rach), and four secondary school teachers from the public education sector. These four participants consist of Susan who teaches English and history, Sandy who teaches English and is a year advisor, Sri who teaches English and Indonesian, and Faith who teaches English.

5.3.2. Interview summaries and reflections.

Each of the eight research participants were presented with a summary of their interview and given the opportunity to clarify, revise or supplement their dialogue in order to ensure the participants' voices were accurately reflected. These summaries and reflections are detailed in the subsequent subsections.

5.3.2.1. Susan's lived experience summarised.

Susan articulates that her classroom practice is primarily content and assessment driven. She establishes that the content is what was being assessed more so than the thinking processes and this aspect therefore has most time devoted to it. She makes comments including, "*critical thinking is a by-product of content*", "*content is what is assessed*", and "*if you don't have the content then you can't pass the assessment*". Comments relating to the need to "*cover the content that is in the assessment*" are significantly prevalent. The participant also notes that students, primarily, prefer to regurgitate information rather than think independently and critically about concepts, and includes the comments, "*students want to regurgitate information*", "*just tell me what I need to know to pass*", and "*is this in the test?*" She states: "*students in reality don't want to use their own brains! They don't want to think about it.*" In essence, she encounters an overwhelmingly "*tell me what I need to say/do to pass*" attitude in her classrooms. When she says this it is accompanied by a hands up surrender gesture, indicating there is nothing she can do about it (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

Critical thinking then becomes an off shoot of the content and is limited to critical thinking regarding the text being studied (synthesis and analysis) in opposition to critical thinking thematically or in everyday life contexts. Because of the emphasis on content, and the amount of content required to get through prior to examinations, limited time is a factor regarding the pursuit of critical thinking and/or student interest. This prompts comments including, "*you don't have time to focus explicitly on critical thinking*", there is "*no time to balance content and concepts equally*", and simply "*there's just not time*". During these statements, Susan again gestures with her hands in a surrender pose, indicating there is nothing else she can do (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

Susan engages in the Four Resources Model of textual analysis, including “*context, the bias, the usefulness, the reliability*” and agrees this “*is showing that level of analysis, but*” she does not “*think it qualifies as critical thinking because it’s ticking off steps in a process, and not finding a process that works for you. Finding your own way to think about things critically*”, and that “*we’re teaching a process in order to pass an assessment, instead of ‘here is a task, figure it out for yourself’*” and see where that takes the student. This discussion is accompanied by head tilting gestures, indicating a non-threatened interest in the content of the conversation (Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

The participant avoids any controversial or potentially offensive material or discussions, and when they do occur, she steers the conversation in an alternate route. This is not because she, personally, is averse to exploring these themes, but because she is aware of contrasting beliefs in the student demographic and unsure how conversations taken out of context in a supported classroom, and subsequently repeated, would be received by others outside the classroom. This is supported by her comments that she is “*mindful of different perspectives*”, “*controversial themes [supernatural] potentially offend*” others, and “*encouraging critical thinking could potentially offend*” others. This includes possible parental reprisals and having her professionalism compromised. At this point, Susan clenches her hands together, indicating frustration (Borg, 2013; Pease, 2007).

The participant is also mindful that airing personal beliefs in a group classroom setting, and subsequently eliciting critical thinking pertaining to that idea, could open that student up to peer ridicule, affecting their personal sense of wellbeing. Susan notes that she cannot have individual conversations with “*one student knowing that there are 28 others in the classroom that may not share the same beliefs, or understanding, or perhaps open that child up to ridicule*”, and she “*doesn’t want students to draw levels of criticism on themselves*”. Susan notes she could control conversations in the “*classroom but not when taken into the community*”. These comments are combined with open hand gestures with the palm up, indicating honest sincerity (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

Although she acknowledges the importance of critical thinking as a skill for life with comments including, “*critical thinking helps students to think for themselves*” and “*be more street savvy*”, she considers teaching these skills to be fundamentally flawed in practice as the curriculum is too crowded with requirements for content and assessment. This is supported by statements including that students are “*overloaded with content they don’t enjoy*”, and to “*filter [that content] through in the whole year. Filter it through as a supporting text instead of a stand-alone unit.*” That way the students “*would still get the content and you can concentrate on critical thinking*” more. These comments are combined with gestures of a hands up surrender pose.

Susan claims that providing the support required to elicit quality critical thinking in a class of 30, who are all at different level of conceptualisation, maturity, and life experience is difficult, time limitations make devotion to the concept problematic, and parental reprisals leave teachers open to possible professional misconduct issues. The predominant gestures during the interview indicated an open, honest and sincere attitude coupled with the surrender pose indicating there is nothing she can do.

When reflecting on and discussing this summary, the participant added that, although she would like to delve more into critical thinking, the expectation of teachers is that, if the students do not pass then you are failing as an educator. Passing examinations is the community’s yardstick for quality teaching. She also adds that by involving topics that stimulated student interest, for example the supernatural, additional issues arose which encouraged students to think independently and question adults, as well as taking time away from exam preparation. The participant found this frustrating as students then turned off academically rather than lit up wanting to learn.

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

- There appears to be some internal teacher conflict in that she is happy students are thinking critically but not knowing how to respond when beliefs are brought up.
- Is there too much emphasis being placed on teachers to be accountable with what is being taught and assessment results rather than skills for life?
- Is it true that students are lacking maturity to deal with difficult topics in regard to critical thinking – or is it a ruse to avoid it for fear of repercussions or conflict?
- I wonder if parents are coming to teachers or to the school executive? Is it teacher 'fear' or school 'policy' to avoid dealing with complaints?

5.3.2.2. *Jimmy's lived experience summarised.*

Jimmy feels time constraints are a large inhibitor to having deep discussions and his comments include, “*there's just not time in the day to have deep discussions*”, “*you're trying to fit everything in*”, and “*there's too much else to do.*” He also explicitly notes that he thinks “*critical thinking is more for older levels.*” With content being his primary focus, and also being accountable for covering this content, he states, “*parents see critical thinking as teaching outside the curriculum.*” The participant justifies this by stating, “*parents have to take responsibility*” for encouraging critical thinking, although he acknowledges it is incorporated in the How2Learn approach to education. His body language at this point is open, and hand gestures primarily with open palms facing up, indicating openness and sincerity (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

Due to accountability issues and his diverse parent body, he avoids anything controversial or potentially offensive, stating, “*you have to be very careful about what you say*”, and “*you need to be able to have evidence to defend critical thinking conversations.*” He also notes that he “*won't cover critical thinking if it is something he can't definitively defend*”, and he “*redirects [conversations] if [he] can't offer proof.*” He repeatedly refers to parental ramifications and having a vocal parent cohort which leads him to avoid any topics which may contain supernatural themes

and critical thinking conversations. He illustrates this by making numerous comments, including, “*parents are always vocal about everything*”, he teaches in a “*multicultural school with very opinionated parents*”, and the parental backlash means “*critical thinking is not worth the ramifications.*” During these conversations, his arms are often folded, indicating anxiety and discomfort regarding the topic (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

As his students are younger, he feels critical thinking will remove some of the childhood fantasies such as Santa, but acknowledges his “*students have discussed zombies being real*”, and “*students take for granted that dogs can talk*” to each other. The participant feels that eliciting critical thinking about issues in everyday life could undermine parent responsibilities and that he prefers to “*guide student thinking rather than encourage independent thinking.*” The participant remains very guarded and careful about what he says due to parental backlash, and demonstrates a closed body language when these comments are made.

When reflecting on and discussing this summary, the participant reiterates that he second guesses everything he says and does to alleviate potential parental backlash. He also states that while he wants students to understand zombies are not real, he does not want to destroy the Santa fantasy for them. This is accompanied by open palms up hand gestures, supporting his open honesty. He finds this line in the sand very difficult to establish at times and therefore reiterates that he avoids these topics all together, stating, “*I don’t go there, I don’t need to go there.*” The participant relates that if you do not indulge these conversations then you do not have to face the jury about them, while demonstrating a hands up in surrender pose.

Researcher’s Reflective Journal Notation

- Is this a legitimate anecdote or is he deflecting and redirecting like he reportedly does in class?
- Is it defending the evidence, or does he prefer to tell students what to think rather than have them express themselves?
- Jimmy notes that he redirects conversations if he can’t offer proof. The four resources model, however, involves the reader as a meaning maker, using their own knowledge and sources of information to create their own meaning, rather than having a teacher present the ‘correct’ evidence.

5.3.2.3. *Sandy's lived experiences summarised.*

Sandy states, “*teachers are pushed for time*” and therefore you “*have to prioritise your time and energy.*” She comments that she does not “*have time for debates*” or “*going too in depth with thematic content or critical thinking.*” On one occasion, she elicits a conversation regarding life after death and the existence of ghosts which becomes quite heated. She states, “*I couldn't believe some of the conversation... it was great that students were justifying comments with differing forms of evidence... but then there was the added complication of the validity of the sources*”, and “*I guess that is the crux of critical thinking isn't it. Being able to justify your own opinions... or change it in the light of new evidence.*” She notes that the time required for such discussions is significant and she gets “*so far behind in the program*” that she has “*to amalgamate to catch up.*” These comments are combined with hands up surrender pose gestures, indicating the participant feels there is nothing she can do (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

She accepts that she elicits more critical thinking in the lower achieving percentile of students, allowing them to investigate aspects that interest them in more depth, as she feels it is beneficial to them, whereas the higher percentile need to “*concentrate on technical aspects of texts*” in preparation for assessments. Sandy acknowledges that “*textual analysis is critical thinking*” but does not see it as being of benefit in real life situations. She is wary of being seen as “*putting ideas into students' heads*” and therefore steers away from any potentially offensive material, including supernatural themes.

The participant states, “*I don't want students to question their own, or family beliefs because of critical thinking*” being elicited in her classroom. Although she encourages students to respect the opinions of others, she cannot control what is said outside the classroom. She also acknowledges that she does not “*know what's going on inside the students' heads*” or if they have “*internalised something that really messes them up later in life*” as a result of critical thinking discussions. The participant remains unsure if critical thinking regarding everyday contexts and

student interest topics “*aren’t doing more harm than good*”, and that she does not “*want it on [her] conscience that [she’s] messed a student up psychologically.*”

Sandy also raises the notion of performance based pay initiatives floated as an idea by the government for teachers, and that this is a prime example of how important assessment results are in the public view. “*Tangible results that can be measured via an objective pencil paper test*” are in preference to opinions and critical thinking. Sandy states she wants students to “*learn something, not just regurgitate something they don’t understand.*” She notes that she had encountered significant student attitudes relating to “*is this on the test*”, “*just tell me what I need to know to pass*”, and “*tell me the right response*” mantras which support the importance placed on content and assessment.

Sandy comments about additional programs her school is considering to offer students, like driver training, at which time she states, “*what are we supposed to cut from the massive curriculum to fit that in – and then we get accused of failing students*” in the other subject. This is an emotive topic for her and her hand consistently reaches for her neck, indicating the participant is baring her soul, making her feel exposed (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011). She raises a further point, questioning if critical thinking can be assessed accurately, and if indeed it should be assessed at all, as well as how it should be taught. Sandy acknowledges that “*sport is based on participation*” but then “*some students might not be actively participating vocally, but internally they are taking a lot more away from the conversation.*” This conversation contains repeated shrugging gestures which indicate a submissive apology (Pease, 2007).

Although she acknowledges that critical thinking is a hugely important skill for real life, she feels it is different for each student, both by ability and background. With many teenagers seeing “*unreliable sources as credible*” she thinks there is a lot of “*responsibility [placed] on teachers for parenting duties and massive behaviour management loads.*” Sandy is always wary of “*where the line is*”, of “*student opinion and what you offer in reply*” to conversations. The participant notes there are “*new teaching reforms all the time*” and teachers are not prepared for how to teach critical thinking in general terms, or the potential ramifications resulting from students

thinking and reacting for themselves. She acknowledges “*some practical guidance would be nice*” as there is “*so much more to teaching now*” and that critical thinking was “*great in theory but really difficult to maintain in practice.*” The majority of gestures during Sandy’s interview are open palms indicating an open, honest and sincere dialogue (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

When reflecting on and discussing this summary, Sandy shares an anecdote about a past student. She states,

Everyone’s different. If you go down the teaching critical thinking road in everyday terms, especially if those terms may infringe on belief systems, or supernatural, or anything that really elicits a very personal response, then you really don’t know how they are synthesising it all internally. ... We had a student that committed suicide last year, and everyone thought she was fine – popular, academic, world at her feet – but something obviously had been triggered psychologically. I just don’t want to be the teacher who pushes that invisible button and gets a student questioning life, the universe and all that. Teaching is a big enough responsibility as it is, let alone placing that kind of pressure on us. As it is, we are second guessing everything we say to students. I think the issue we had with our student really highlighted some of the invisible ramifications of getting teenagers to think deeply about things – some of them just can’t switch off that thought train and no-one else knows that. It just isn’t clear to the rest of the world. Although I said, and still believe, it is an important skill, I just don’t know if we should be encouraging critical thinking too much – especially without formal [psychological] training.

Researcher’s Reflective Journal Notation

- Is it our perception that students are getting more immature or is it a reality?
- The anecdote is very powerful, and I really started thinking about the potential effect on the student for the first time, until then, I had (like the teacher participants) focused on the teaching aspect of critical thinking.

5.3.2.4. *Josey's lived experience summarised.*

Josey had not previously thought explicitly about critical thinking until an inservice about the Australian Curriculum, which stimulated her consciousness about promoting deeper level thinking regarding texts. Texts studied in her school are vetted and parental approval is sought, therefore any controversial themes are avoided. She states, “*students are free to read popular culture at home*”, and that she did not “*think the classroom is the place for anything too controversial.*”

Compulsory texts containing supernatural themes like Hamlet and Macbeth are treated as metaphorical in nature, for example, “*Hamlet didn't really see a ghost but rather it was his conscious talking to him.*” Similarly, “*Macbeth was a social commentary of beliefs at the time.*” Any content questions arising, for example witches and the inquisition, are referred on to the history department and avoided by the participant.

Additionally, Josey directs “*students with biblical questions to the pastoral team*”, or “*refer [the student] to someone more equipped to deal with probing questions*” in order to not be “*saying the wrong thing.*” This is rationalised by the participant as being because she does not “*believe [she has] the skills to support a student's own understanding and line of enquiry without some sort of bias, be it [hers] or the school's view.*” She thinks that if she leads them “*in that enquiry, then it is not their journey*” and their own critical thinking. These comments are coupled with a hands up surrender type of gesture, which indicates there is nothing the participant can do about that (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

The participant avoids difficult conversations by redirecting students to other staff members, and considers the school to be implementing the Australian Curriculum well because the students' results demonstrate this. This is highlighted by her comment, “*students are not passing, but excelling in regard to their assessments when you compare them across the state, so I think we're ok. The results are there*”, and is accompanied by a finger pointing onto the participant's thigh, which Joskolka (2011) and Pease (2007) claim is metaphorically beating the listener into submission.

Although she acknowledges critical thinking is important in everyday life, she does not want to say the wrong thing to students. Instead of encouraging critical thinking

along religious lines, she states, “*Christians believe because they believe*” and therefore “*they don’t need any evidentiary proof or validation.*” She also ascertains that she does not “*believe we’re meant to get teenagers to think deeply about everything*” and that she “*encourages critical thinking within the parameters of an educator.*” Josey also alleges that eliciting critical thinking practices regarding faith based events is taking away parents’ right to instil the belief systems they wish in their children, thereby undermining parents. She notes that “*miracles and supernatural events in the Bible [are different as] it’s faith based, not fantasy*” at which point her hands are clasped together indicating frustration and a restrained negative attitude (Borg, 2013; Pease, 2007). Josey also states, “*who am I to encourage students to question things.*”

As her school is religious based, she states, “*our entire school has the same philosophy*” so she does not “*need to worry about saying anything ‘radical’.*” She further claims, “*I’m glad I don’t have to deal with culturally conflicting ideas*” as “*students with differing cultural religious beliefs wouldn’t be attending our school.*” Critical thinking involving conflicting belief systems therefore “*wouldn’t present itself in [her] setting.*”

When reflecting on and discussing this summary, the participant emphasises that the school does “*do textual analysis, which is a form of critical thinking.*” She also reiterates that she perceives there are no “*issues of conflicting beliefs because other religions simply don’t attend our school.*” She relates that if anyone were to have belief questions, the school Pastoral team has the skills to deal with the situation adequately and that teachers in general are not equipped to answer such questions. The participant alleges that, because their students rank amongst the top bands in the state, the school is adequately performing their roles in addressing all aspects of the Australian Curriculum.

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

- The word 'controversial' was repeated, even though it wasn't a word used by the interviewer. Was controversial content discussed at the inservice?
- Are other staff members more equipped to deal with difficult questions, or is she just uncomfortable? If she is uncomfortable, then why, as they reportedly have the same belief system?

5.3.2.5. Sri's lived experience summarised.

Sri articulates that time is an influencing factor related to adequately addressing critical thinking with comments including, “*there's really no time for anything like that*”, referring to critical thinking and supernatural themes. She relates that critical thinking in her classroom is confined to “*breaking the textual code rather than thinking*” which includes predicting, analysing and evaluating text to justify the reader's stance. She states that she does not “*think being able to think critically about a text, to validate evaluations by quoting other sources, or synthesizing the validity of sources as playing a huge role at all, unless [students] go to university or further education.*” Critical thinking in relation to supernatural themes rarely comes up in her classroom and she feels it is not up to her to encourage students to question their beliefs in such areas.

The participant states, “*society, on the whole now is a lot more sensitive*” and “*people are very conscious of offending others.*” She further notes that “*it can make engaging and teaching these students really hard. What engaged them, is exactly what others are sensitive about... someone is going to get upset about something.*” These statements are combined with open palm gestures, indicating open and honest comments (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

During one of her classes, the topic does present itself where conflicting beliefs are raised and she finds herself questioning her own beliefs as a result, accompanied by non-verbal gestures of touching the neck which indicate the participant is feeling exposed and is baring her soul (Borg, 20013; Jaskolka, 2011). Some of her students are Indonesian and were discussing a folkloric creature called Kuntilanak, which they “*very much believe in.*” They comment that “*their grandparents had told them*

stories of Kuntilanak taking babies, and drinking blood.” The participant states “*those boys were genuinely in fear of this creature... and that both surprised and worried me.*” When she shares the conversation with her peers, they ridicule the boys for their belief which places Sri in the conflicting position of defending “*students because we were both from the same cultural heritage, even though I didn’t necessarily believe the same thing.*” She feels it is hypocritical as “*some [teachers] believe in God and that’s accepted, but not Kuntilanak. It’s a bit of a double standard.*” She notes that “*all religions have some sort of supernatural basis*” but this conversation makes her “*really uncomfortable with the situation and [she] just changed the subject of the conversation. Big deflection.*” These comments are accompanied with gestures of interlaced fingers which indicates frustration and a restrained negative attitude (Borg, 2013; Pease, 2007) and then shrugging which is indicative of a submissive apology (Pease, 2007).

This exchange also demonstrates conflicting viewpoints within the same religious belief system. Sri explains “*neither are wrong because its subjective opinion*” but “*it was quite confronting.*” She further states, “*if I am confused as a teacher, I can only imagine how confused some of the students were.*” Ultimately, Sri does not “*believe we accomplished anything by having the discussion...no one really learnt anything apart from some people believed they were real and others didn’t.*” She concludes this conversation by stating “*there’s really no time for anything like that*” which is accompanied by sincere and open palm gestures (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

The participant is very aware of placing herself and her Principal in a difficult position if the conversation sparks parental backlash. She is concerned that she may cross a parental boundary in eliciting responses during the conversation. When given a choice, in her experience the students opt for novels which are fantastical in nature, often with supernatural themes which she embraces due to the engagement factor.

She considers critical thinking in everyday life as important because “*students really need to think about what has happened to others, and evaluate all that data and then apply it to how to stop it from happening to them. Not just taking what they’re told for granted.*” She also comments that “*after school, there aren’t teachers there to run*

to and they need to evaluate what they're being told by people for themselves." The participant comments that critical thinking skills are primarily formed early in life and *"are developed before the students even come to secondary school"* and she is unsure if they could, or should be learnt from teachers. Throughout the interview, the participant consistently refers to societal sensitivities, and being very conscious of offending others.

When reflecting on and discussing this summary, Sri reiterates that, *"in [her] experience, you just don't know who is going to take offense at what"*, and that *"some students make comments just to get a reaction"* from others. Parental backlash is also reiterated, as is the notion of being *"so pressed for time to cover everything you need to, that inevitably one student is going to start up a conversation just to soak up time. Especially if he thinks it means he gets out of poetry or something."*

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

- Has Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) removed students' ability to visualise internally when reading the text?
- Where do adolescents see the line between reality folklore, and fiction/fantasy?

5.3.2.6. Rach's lived experience summarised.

Rach acknowledges that critical thinking is *"not something [she] focus[es] on explicitly"* in her everyday classroom as she is content driven. She uses literature with supernatural themes that include witches, but are fairytale in origin, with classic good versus bad witch scenarios, so *"it's not the theme that is the focus... it's the moral of the story, how a character problem solves, how they deal with their complication."* The participant considers these themes to have a lesser effect on children's psychological processes and development than real life fears. She states, *"I'd rather have a child of mine scared of a witch that I can explain as made up, than of someone jumping out from behind a wall and pummelling you to death"*, and that she assumes *"real life issues are more scary for children than literature."* These comments are paired with open palm gestures indicating an open and honest demeanour (Borg, 2013, Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007). In this respect, she considers

critical thinking is elicited as it teaches students *“just because something looks good, doesn’t necessarily mean they are.”* In general, she alleges there is *“too much reality and not enough fantasy in the world”*, which is accompanied by a shrug as a submissive apology (Pease, 2007).

The participant not only relates that critical thinking is important for students, but that difficult conversations should not be avoided. Rach notes that these conversations *“might go towards preventing some of the radicalisations that seem to be happening in the high schools.”* It could assist students *“to be able to evaluate situations realistically”* as there are *“real dangers out there for kids, both physical emotional and also manipulative ... it’s like grooming kids from a young age to mould them to what you want.”* She reiterates that she considers supernatural themes are not as difficult for students to synthesise as true real life violence, and that literature allows students to practice these critical thinking skills in safety, rather than in real life. Rach states that she thinks students are ready to deal with critical thinking at different times, *“some kids are ready and others just aren’t”*; as is her experience with the age students stop believing in Santa. Her approach to these situations (for example, questioning the existence of Santa) is to *“take it up with your parents”* – so although she states that difficult questions should not be avoided, the participant refers them back to parents to deal with when not in a hypothetical scenario.

When reflecting on and discussing this summary, Rach acknowledges it appears as if she has *“double standards in saying it should be done, but then avoiding it myself.”* She rationalises this by stating that she teaches younger students and does not *“want to undermine what parents want their children to believe.”* She states that she believes older students can deal with cross cultural and sensitive issues better. Rach states, *“I think the onus is on the parents of young children to establish and maintain familial belief systems, be they religious or otherwise”* and that *“we, as a society, are all equally responsible in helping kids think critically about issues, cause and effect, long term repercussions.”* She restates the importance of not ignoring difficult conversations so that teenagers do not get the wrong information from questionable sources.

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

- I wonder what the different impacts of critical thinking are psychologically – real life vs fiction?
- I wonder what the age is best to target critical thinking skills, or do they develop differently over time and with practise and experience – therefore no specific time being optimal?

5.3.2.7. *Faith's lived experience summarised.*

Faith feels there is not enough time to adequately address critical thinking due to content and assessment requirements, and also behaviour management. Using hands up gestures indicating there is nothing else she can do (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007), she comments, *“tell me how I'm supposed to fit everything in and prepare students for exams.”* She further states that critical thinking *“turns into a debate, or an indepth discussion that, while great and informative, takes up a lot of time that they need to have to prepare for exams.”* The participant emphasises that *“it's the exam results that are recorded”* and the results reflect content, not participation. She states, *“like it or not, it's the exam results that are recorded, not the level of engagement or participation in class.”* Faith purports that the boundaries set to achieve those results do not allow for students' academic freedom and inquisition. She specifies that the *“pressure for them to achieve is immense...by the school, parents and the community”* and therefore the content forming the exam is a priority. This statement is paired with an open palm gesture indicating honesty and sincerity (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

The participant indicates she would enjoy setting assessments based on engagement and supernatural themes, but that type of content is not being assessed, nor are the processes used to think critically about such content. She views critical thinking as *“vitally important, but [there's] no time to do it”* in schools. Faith agrees that *“not everything at school is learnt out of a textbook”* but it is difficult to address in the classroom. The participant appears frustrated, and places her hand on her neck during each 'I' statement, indicating that her emotions are running high, and that the participant is baring her soul, making her feel exposed (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011). Her statements include, *“how am I going to validate their learning. How am I going*

to assess it, how am I going to report on it...how am I going to prove that I'm not just unprepared, or having an 'easy' lesson" in order to evidence having adequately addressed this area of the curriculum.

The participant explains that differentiation and having such a wide academic and maturity level gap in one class is problematic. She also questions the validity of some of the content as "*the curriculum is just so overcrowded*" and suggests "*we need to cater for the majority, and also look at the long term goals of the students.*" She further suggests, "*If they don't need it, then axe it, and give teachers time to teach the relevant and important stuff properly rather than gloss over it.*" Faith questions the "*intrinsic value of Shakespearean study when the reality is that a high percentage of the students won't only not go to university, but will struggle to find employment*" in general. This is accompanied by a hands up surrender gesture signally a feeling of defeat (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

Faith considers supernaturally themed novels and media are "*what the students are reading anyway*", or watching "*on the screen, so either way, I think we can safely assume that it is engaging.*" She maintains it should be utilised more to enhance classroom engagement. She concludes her interview by stating critical thinking in schools is

... like learning how to cook. You need it to sustain life, but why learn to do it for yourself when there are takeaway shops who are willing to do it all for you. I guess schools are a bit like takeaway shops. They've been spoon feeding for so long that people have forgotten how to do it for themselves, and now there's no time for catch-up.

When reflecting on and discussing this summary, Faith is passionate in her response. She reiterates that "*if it's being specifically addressed in the exam, then we cover it – the content, examination techniques, breaking down what the question is actually asking you in order to gain maximum marks in that question.*" The participant exemplifies the inability to transfer these critical thinking strategies into real life by stating she has not met a student who "*encounters a religious cult and thinks, hmmm I'd better read the propaganda, cross reference it with credible sources etc etc. They just get conned.*" She further states, "*although we use critical thinking strategies*

associated with textual sources regarding synthesis and analysis, we don't assist students in generalising these strategies into everyday scenarios."

Faith adds that *"there physically isn't enough time."* She lists a variety of whole school activities including a week for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC), harmony day, sports carnivals – athletics, swimming, cross country, as well as students' extracurricular competitions as taking away from valuable learning time. She also notes non-attending student issues and general behaviour management as being problematic. Faith states, *"when [non-attenders] are there you have to try and catch them up."* She concludes by stating,

in my experience, the time and effort that goes into managing some individuals' behaviour, and individual programming...not to mention if you end up with an entire difficult class...the time for basic instruction is limited, let alone extending it to be all encompassing. Teaching is a tough gig and the system, parents and the community are quick to point fingers at us.

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

- Interesting point – Not everything is learnt out of text books; so I wonder why assessments are set only from text books?

5.3.2.8. Daisy's lived experience summarised.

Daisy is *"feeling a little overwhelmed"* and challenged but notes, *"we had a few staff development sessions based on it and that really helped."* She acknowledges, *"I won't lie – it was really challenging, but I understand now that it's not about ticking boxes."* Daisy notes that critical thinking practices in the classroom takes up a lot of time, but that her particular Principal has been very supportive and gives teachers the freedom to experiment with the curriculum. The whole school moved to a more discussion oriented pedagogy, covering less but in more depth. She states, *"I think it's more a change in the delivery of the content, rather than the content itself"* which is accompanied by open and honest hand movements (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007).

The participant further acknowledges that critical thinking “*does take up time*” and that it is

hardest with seniors, as the HSC is state set and we have to make sure we have covered the assessed content sufficiently for HSC purposes, but covered critical thinking, not only to satisfy the curriculum requirements, but to prepare the students for life after school.

Her alternative in-class assessments reportedly include observation. The choices of texts studied in her school are “*vett ed by the parent body prior to purchase*” and therefore any controversial themes, such as supernatural ones, are limited.

Daisy reports that she is “*a little uncomfortable*” when supernatural events performed by Jesus in the Bible are related to medieval witches by students, and the conversation has “*some members of my faculty concerned ... that we might be encouraging students to think radically, or question the church’s stance.*” The participant also states that she then considers the ramifications of the lesson and wider implications which confuses her. Daisy regards some topics as better to be avoided for fear of being “*overheard and misconstrued by someone else*” and she does not “*want to be the one confusing students and begin them questioning their own internal thought processes and beliefs.*”

Although she states that she is uncomfortable with these conversations and that some are best avoided in case students begin to question their own faith, she then states, “*a belief system is something that is all encompassing*” and “*one or two conversations are not going to change that.*” She notes that “*it just comes down to having a strong faith.*” This comment is accompanied by a gesture of crossing her arms. This indicates discomfort, anxiety or distress regarding the discussion topic (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007). These comments appear quite contradictory. The participant concludes by reiterating that senior years are content and assessment driven in preparation for HSC, but that critical thinking should be encouraged in younger students as this is where the “*foundations are built.*” She also states, “*all literature has its place, I’m not sure it is always in the classroom.*”

When reflecting on and discussing this summary, Daisy states, “*it’s not really so contradictory*” in that “*topics like vampires or magic... should be avoided as they really don’t have any place in the classroom.*” She argues that “*if a student has faith, then they believe that Jesus was performing miracles, not magic.*” Although she agrees that the interview transcript appears contradictory, she reiterates that she “*did feel really uncomfortable*” and that after the interview she went “*away and had quite a deep think about it.*” Daisy concludes that she still believes “*those critical thinking conversations do need to be had.*” She qualifies this statement by stating, “*perhaps it should be more of a family based conversation though, so that teachers aren’t confusing students*” by offering information that “*parents would explain differently.*” She states, “*I personally wouldn’t want to cause conflict between how parents parent, and how students revere teachers as vessels of ultimate knowledge.*” Daisy adds, “*family should always come first in these types of belief based conversations.*” The participant notes “*that critical thinking skills should be taught more in the lower secondary classes so that they can then use these skills moving toward their HSC*”, in opposition to “*trying to teach the skills in conjunction with all the content getting ready for their exams.*”

Researcher’s Reflective Journal Notation

- I was left wondering if she was trying to convince herself. I also felt that the participant’s answers were guarded, lacking emotive and descriptive insights.
- I wonder if she was concerned she might say something that may reflect poorly on her school? She started out confident when reporting what the school had done, but then appeared uncomfortable when delving into her own opinions and what is physically happening in her classroom.

5.3.2.9. The amalgamation of participants’ lived experiences.

As a composite participant summary, all participants discuss their classroom pedagogy as being primarily content and assessment driven. This is particularly true of senior students who require substantial content coverage in order to adequately complete their HSC. They relate that it is those assessment results that students, teachers, parents and the wider community consider a measure of satisfactory student education in opposition to skills for life. For this reason, critical thinking in their

classroom experience is limited to synthesising and analysing the text, including the use of credible and valid secondary sources to support the students' evaluation of a text and/or content rather than application to wider real life scenarios. This approach, however, prioritises some aspects of the Four Resources Model over others, negating the thorough incorporation of personal lived experiences while using the text functionally.

All participants also note that to adequately cover critical thinking aspects, a significant portion of time must be allowed for discussion, debate and reflection, and that time is a resource lacking in their school experience. Coupled with extra-curricular interruptions, pressure to complete all set content, behaviour management, and a crowded curriculum, minimal time is available for in-depth discussions or following student lines of enquiry.

Although most teachers agree that text and media containing supernatural themes is highly engaging for students and forms a significant part of their popular culture, when placed in the classroom setting it becomes problematic. This is particularly true when addressing critical thinking as teachers note it not only causes the potential for peer ridicule of students, opens the teacher up to parental backlash, and results in collegial scrutiny, but also causes the teacher to question their own beliefs and sensitivities. Some teachers note the increased sensitivities in society in general as being problematic and results in teachers not knowing where the line in the sand has been drawn regarding teaching and/or parental responsibilities.

Another concern regarding the elicited teaching and application of critical thinking in classrooms is that teachers are apprehensive about the internalisation of content by students, particularly with reference to supernatural themes, but also regarding belief systems. Some teachers are mindful that they cannot read what is going on inside a student's head, and do not want to be responsible if a student is adversely psychologically affected as a result of eliciting critical thinking and getting them to think deeply about topics, particularly those related to beliefs and causing them to question parents, religion, or systems.

All teachers experience difficulties when applying the theory of critical thinking into practice in the classroom, with regards to some or all of the following – managing time, programming, assessing, perceiving parental validation, and amalgamating with existing content. Teachers also present ideas that critical thinking strategies for everyday life should be explicitly taught early, either at school or by parents, with many participants agreeing that it should primarily be a parental responsibility that they do not want to cross or undermine, particularly when there is a perception of increased sensitivities. Most teachers agree that the strategies should be taught early and then teach students how to apply those strategies to a variety of contexts, both academically and socially, at an older age or stage of increased maturity.

All participants avoid any potentially controversial or offensive material, including supernaturally themed texts, due to conflicting personal beliefs or whole school ethos.

Concerns raised regarding conflicts in beliefs are:

- parental reprisal concerns;
- differences between students' family and personal beliefs resulting in increased time being spent on the topic; and
- concern for student psychological wellbeing.

The primary concerns relating to the teaching of critical thinking are:

- a crowded curriculum with content being a primary focus in preparation for exams (as society views exam results as a measure of educational value rather than skills for life);
- not enough time to explore varied perspectives in depth; and
- general programming and assessment difficulties.

All teachers who are interviewed agree that critical thinking skills in everyday situations are invaluable for life after school.

5.3.2.10. *The researcher's voice.*

The voice of the researcher at this point is also of significance. With my own previously documented background in secondary school teaching, and prolonged

engagement as discussed in the credibility section, I have a deep understanding of the school setting, requirements of the curriculum, and teacher and community expectations regarding education. As noted in chapter three, the origin of this study is based on my own personal teaching experience in that eliciting critical thinking responses during a novel study containing supernatural themes provoked difficult questions and raised belief system conflicts. I want to discover if my experience is unique, or if other teachers have encountered similar occurrences. To that effect, my role is both based on empathy and scepticism to establish a broader picture of the interviewed teachers lived experiences.

The researcher's voice has been included in participant summaries via text boxes, and is taken from notations in Appendix B: Interview transcripts with emerging themes and exploratory comments. These are predominantly questions that are raised after being prompted by the participants' comments. The part of the researcher becomes more of a question generator, or devil's advocate role. I do not see my part in this research as adding to the data, but rather using my observational skills regarding the participants, and my background knowledge of teaching, to generate questions that prompt deeper investigation into areas I have not previously considered. This in turn gives me an additional lens through which to investigate the themes raised by the participants to fully understand the phenomenon being researched.

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

Three teacher comments drew my attention even though they were deemed to be redundant themes using Hycner's principles.

- *'I've learnt that it pays to concentrate more on teaching the words and reading than interpreting and questioning what the text as a whole is all about.'* Jimmy.
- *'How about, let's just get the kids literate enough to fill out their welfare forms, because, like it or not, that's a pretty high demographic in our area, 'Like it or not though, it's an attitude that is very much an undertone of teaching.'* Sandy.
- *'I'm trying to teach the basics of reading more so than critical thinking.'* Rach.

Is this an unstated view of others, that classroom literacy is confined to the Code Breaker and Text User components of the Four Resource Model, with few including the Text Analyst role and even less the Meaning Maker role? Are we prioritising these simpler skills over higher order thinking?

5.4 The Significance of Non-Verbal Interactions

Albert Mehrabian (1967, 1971, 2009) conducts research that results in his development of the 55-38-7 model of communication. He concludes that 55percent of the meaning in any message is communicated through visual body language via gestures, posture and facial expressions. He determines that 38 percent is derived through the non-verbal speech elements including tone, pitch and pace, with the remaining 7 percent of the message meaning coming from the actual spoken words or content. This theory forms the basis of contemporary communicative messaging research and reporting by many body language experts (Argyle, 1978; Axtell, 1991; Birdwhistell, 1971; Borg, 2013; Hall, 1959; Pease, 2007; Vrij, 2001; Weitz, 1974).

The body language observed during these interviews include:

- Palms open and facing upwards indicated the participant is being open, honest and receptive to the message of others (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011;

Pease, 2007); The participant wants to hear what the other is saying and is “keen to establish a trusting relationship with them” (Jaskolka, 2011, p. 58);

- Palms open with hands held up indicates a gesture of surrender, and there is nothing else I can do attitude (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007);
- Smiling often indicates smooth running communication with positive feelings and outcomes (Pease, 2007);
- Crossed or folded arms indicate discomfort, anxiety or distress, they put a barrier between the participant and something (discussion topic) they do not like (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007);
- Hands clenched together indicate frustration and a restrained negative attitude (Borg, 2013; Pease, 2007);
- Hands together with fingertips touching indicate the participant is “confident they have the right answer” and “can sometimes be read as smugness or arrogance” (Pease, 2007, p. 133);
- Head nodding indicates agreement with the point of view (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007);
- Head tilting indicates that the participant is interested and not threatened by the content of the conversation (Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007);
- Shrugging indicates submissive apology (Pease, 2007);
- Sitting upright indicates alertness and confidence (Jaskolka, 2011);
- Pointing the finger indicates a metaphoric club that beats the listener into submission. This gesture means business (Jaskolka, 2011; Pease, 2007); and
- Placing the hand to the neck or fiddling with necklace indicates that emotions are running high and that the participant is baring their soul which makes them feel exposed (Borg, 2013; Jaskolka, 2011).

These gestures and body language annotations are recorded in the exploratory comments in Appendix B: Interview transcripts with emerging themes and exploratory comments. These insights allow an extra dimension in interpreting the whole meaning of the participants’ viewpoints.

All participants enter into the interviews with open and relaxed body language, and predominantly use gestures of smiling, nodding, head tilting and hand movements

with open palms in an upward direction. This indicates an overall positive, open, honest exchange with parties being mutually interested.

The open palmed hands up motion in a surrender pose is also observed. This surrender pose is noted on 34 occasions, with 17 accompanying statements involving avoidance of supernatural themed topics, 10 involving a lack of time or too much content to get through, and seven other occasions with mixed conversation topics. This body language indicates that the participant 'gave up' or that there is nothing else they can do. It supports the notion that some things are out of the participants' control, and that, even if they would like to change it, they feel constrained. This also supports their verbal utterances of supernatural themes being engaging, but treating them critically is problematic in practice.

Finger pointing is observed on eight occasions, and one open palm pointing gesture when participants are passionate and emphatic about what they are saying. These include comments about having to get through the content to pass the assessments, students not caring about content, when the participant feels their professionalism is in question, and when the participant is reiterating that if they could use engaging thematic content (including supernatural themes) without reprisal then they would do it. It is also used when a participant is pointing out the double standard in belief systems (Christianity versus traditional beliefs) and when emphasising that what engages students is exactly what others are sensitive about, creating a double edged sword for teachers.

Touching the neck area is observed on six occasions, when teachers are relating personal comments and beliefs. The touching of fingertips is observed on only three instances, twice when participants are discussing staff training and once when 'passing the buck' is mentioned so that the participant is not placed in a position of saying the wrong thing. This supports the idea of coping strategies as this form of body language indicates confidence in having the correct answer according to Pease (2007).

The anxious and defensive action of crossing the arms, which also indicates a dislike for the topic, is noted on five occasions. Four of these are when faith or belief

systems are discussed, with the remaining instance when the participant is concerned he will be labelled a racist. Although this alone is not indicative of the participants' latent struggle between personal beliefs, school ethos, and teaching practices, it does highlight the discomfort these particular participants demonstrated with regard to the subject matter. It is also of note that both of the participants who demonstrate this action while making faith based comments are the only participants who teach in the private school sector. At this point, in my reflection journal, I question if this discomfort is due to the difference in personal belief systems within the same religion, or if their religious ethos is in opposition to required teaching practices and curriculum demands. As the sample number of participants is minimal, these actions and comments alone cannot be used to formulate a hypothesis or be regarded as indicative of a larger number of teachers, but is an anomaly of note in this particular research project.

The action of clenching the hands, indicating frustration and a negative attitude, is also predominantly seen in the participants from the private school sector. Six out of the 11 observed occurrences are related to comments involving the church and supernatural themes including miracles. The other instances include comments regarding putting ideas into students' heads, the maturity level required for critical thinking pertaining to supernatural themes, and when a participant states that he/she does not believe students should think deeply about everything. The latter comment also follows a discussion regarding miracles in the Bible.

Although body language should not be analysed in isolation, or be considered a definitive end product, it does allow the reader to more fully understand the context of the interviews and gives the transcripts a deeper level of communicative intent.

5.5 Summary

This chapter prioritises the voices of the participants. It details the aspects of methodology utilised in this phase of the research including data sources, data collection, and data analysis. Qualitative data are established through hermeneutics; analysing teacher opinions, body language and recounts of classroom practices associated with the teaching of critical thinking. There appear to be some

misconceptions regarding the definition of critical thinking among the participants, with some participants reportedly viewing text analysis as critical thinking. The themes that emerge as a result of this phase are examined in the following chapter, and are illustrated by the participants' own words.

CHAPTER 6 - EMERGING THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS

Shall we educate ourselves in what is known, and then casting away all we have acquired, turn to ignorance for aid to guide us among the unknown.

(Michael Faraday, n.d.)

Phase 3	Emerging Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-establish themes from interview data-categorise themes-investigate themes in terms of critical thinking and the research context
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6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the framework that supports and guides the research phase involving summarising the interview data is explicitly explained. This includes the methodology employed and how the data are treated and categorised. This chapter presents the raw data gathered in terms of the participants' voices, and categorising and investigating the recurrent themes exposed. It unpacks the themes revealed, and explores the relationship between the contextual background discoveries and teacher concerns in their everyday lived classroom experience involving critical thinking in the English classroom.

6.2 The Themes – Raw Data

As noted in the previous chapter, the interviews are examined and comments clustered into units of relevant meaning (see Appendix C: Clustering units of relevant meaning from interviews). These units then expose themes that are common and recurrent in each interview (see Appendix H: Participants' interview comments listed by category and theme).

6.2.1. Categorising the themes and their prevalence.

The common and recurrent themes are then categorised into three subgroups: student related, teacher related, and curriculum and/or classroom related. These sub-

groupings aid in the treatment of the themes in this chapter, where each will be discussed and investigated in more detail. The overriding lens through which all of these sub-groups are investigated is a critical thinking one.

In addition to the categorised sub-groups, the appendices are integrated into a chart which identifies the individual number of statements associated with each identified theme (Appendix G: Average references to identified themes in interviews). The number of comments for the theme by each participant is then added and divided by the contributors to establish the average number of references to each theme across the interviews. These averages are then used to rank the themes numerically in the order of perceived importance. Thus, the theme which contains the most comments is deemed to be of highest importance to the teacher participants, and that which receives the least average comments is deemed to be of least importance to the teacher participants in their lived experience. This is summarised in Table 6.1.

The rank and average of each theme is then combined with the subgroups to create a new table of ranked categorised themes in Table 6.2. This allows for quick and efficacious identification of both which category (student, teacher, curriculum and/or classroom related) and which specific themes in ranked order are of most concern to the teachers interviewed.

Table 6.1*Thematic References in Interviews*

Summary of thematic reference averages in interviews

Theme	Total	Average	Rank
Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable (supernatural themes and beliefs)	120 /6	20	1
Practical application in classrooms is difficult	128 /7	18.29	2
Content is the focus	94 /8	11.75	3
Education is assessment driven	59 /6	9.83	4
Personal beliefs do affect classroom teaching practices	49 /5	9.8	5
Critical thinking skills are important	69 /8	8.63	6
Lack of time to address critical thinking skills	45 /6	7.5	7
Teaching critical thinking in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs	51 /7	7.29	8
Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting critical thinking	42 /6	7	9
Student engagement is important	32 /6	5.3	10
Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices	34 /7	4.86	11
Teaching critical thinking opens teachers up to parental complaints	29 /6	4.83	12
Students see supernatural as real	15 /5	3	13

Summary of the themes identified and ranked in accordance to prevalence.

Table 6.2

Themes Categorised and Ranked

Student Related Category	Rank	Teacher Related Category	Rank	Curriculum and/or classroom Related Category	Rank
Critical thinking skills are important	6	Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable (supernatural themes and beliefs)	1	Practical application in classrooms is difficult	2
Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting critical thinking	9	Personal beliefs do affect classroom teaching practices	5	Content is the focus	3
Student engagement is important	10	Teaching critical thinking in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs	8	Education is assessment driven	4
Students see supernatural as real	13	Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices	11	Lack of time to address critical thinking skills	7
		Teaching critical thinking opens teachers up to parental complaints	12		

Interview themes placed in categories including student related, teacher related, and curriculum and/or classroom related. These categories highlight which contain the highest ranked themes.

Using the data in Tables 6.1 and 6.2, I then calculated the average number of comments for each category subgroup by using the following equation:

$$\frac{\text{(total comments per theme in category/ number of themes in category)}}{\text{(total number of participants referencing theme in category/ number of themes in category)}} = \text{Average Category Comments}$$

Figure 6.1. Equation for determining average comments per thematic category.

This algorithm calculates the average comments for curriculum and/or classroom related themes, teacher related themes, and student related themes.

The calculated average for each category subgroup is curriculum and/or classroom related at 12.07, teacher related at 9.13, and student related at 6.32. When examining each table and subsequent comment averages, it is noted that the participating teachers place most emphasis on the themes involving curriculum and/or classroom related issues and least importance on student related themes.

6.2.2. Curriculum and/or classroom related themes.

This thematic category receives the highest aggregate ranking with themes ranked two, three, four, and seven appearing in the curriculum and/or classroom related category.

The *practical application in classrooms is difficult* theme has average comments of 18.29, only 1.71 comments under the highest ranked theme.

These practical applications include the difficulty in having individual conversations and providing personalised student centred lines of inquiry when 30 students are all at different levels socially, emotionally, and academically. Accountability and lack of flexibility regarding programming and delivery are common comments throughout the interviews. Teachers raise concerns about the practical teaching aspect of critical thinking skills which Faith verbalises as, “*how am I going to validate their learning?*” She continues on to state, “*How am I going to assess it, how am I going to report on it... how am I going to prove that I’m not just unprepared, or having an*

'easy' lesson?" Faith also notes, "if I can't empirically measure it, then it didn't happen. Can I tick it off the list to show that I've covered the criteria?"

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

- If students are our core business, why are student based comments ranked so much lower than teacher centred or curriculum and/or classroom based ones?
- Are we, as teachers, too focused on our own teaching and classrooms rather than the students' learning?
- Every participant referenced critical thinking skills as being important, and referenced popular culture novels in their interviews as being engaging, but student engagement was ranked tenth, with approximately a quarter of the number of comments as the theme of teachers 'avoid anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable.' Is teachers' overall mindfulness of offending or personal discomfort preventing them from using engaging stimulus and investigating that content deeply and critically?

These practical issues are also referenced by Sandy who questions if critical thinking should be assessed at all. She notes that sport is based on participation, but then just because some students might not be actively participating in critical thinking discussions does not mean they are not taking a "lot more away from the conversation." Sandy also notes that some practical guidance would be welcomed, in opposition to the theoretical references in the curriculum and hypothetical ideals by educational staff members that have not experienced the classroom in recent times. This echoes information unearthed in the literature review claiming less than 50 percent of teachers receive professional development opportunities in this area, and despite this, teacher definitions of critical thinking remain vague (Steffen, 2011).

The third ranking theme within this category is **content is the focus**. Every teacher interviewed acknowledges this as an area of concern and references that it is the content being assessed rather than thought processes. They imply that critical thinking is implicit rather than an explicit component and is limited to the content (i.e. textual analysis). Susan states, "you need to cover the content that is in the assessment" and "you need to be able to prove you've covered the content."

Evidence in the literature review, however, suggests that critical thinking skills do not develop in the absence of explicit instruction (Beyer, 2008; Swartz, 2008; Van Gelder, 2005); therefore, even if, as the teachers interviewed suggest, critical thinking is an implicit aspect of textual analysis, explicit instruction would need to occur at some point prior to being applied to the curricular content.

Sandy recognises that she programmes more critical thinking activities for her lower achieving students and allows them to explore less content but in a variety of different ways and with more critical thinking aspects. She states that her more capable students concentrate on the more technical aspects of the content rather than critical thinking skills using the content as a vessel through which to explore these skills. Daisy also notes that critical thinking in broader terms is “*hardest with seniors as the HSC is set and you need to ensure assessed content is covered.*” In terms of the HSC, both Sri and Faith question the relevance of the content they are required to cover as they state that in-depth literary analysis skills are of little use to students after school unless they go to university. Faith suggests that basic literacy and critical thinking should be emphasised over Shakespearean analysis, and the majority of students catered for in opposition to the relatively small number of students who will go on to tertiary studies.

In association with education being content focused, assessment is a natural progression from that content and is the fourth ranked theme of ***education being assessment driven***. Susan specifically notes that she starts from the assessment tasks and works backwards to formulate her programming. She states that “*assessment and content is the backbone of any unit*” and that the content is gearing up for the assessment. She also raises the point that students are used to content driven assessment and so explicitly teaching critical thinking skills is confusing for them. With the Australian Curriculum being a new innovation in education, it could be considered that this transitional period would be a perfect catalyst to reform both student and teacher thinking with respect to what they have been used to.

Sandy adds that the government has been hinting at performance based pay initiatives which would mean “*you are back to teaching to the test*” and that it is the “*tangible results that can be measured via an objective pencil paper test*” that

counted. Participants agreed that school, parents and the community view examination results as a direct reflection of the standard of education they receive at school. Additionally, the publication of results via an overall school percentage on the MySchool website emphasises the importance of assessment results, reinforcing the public perception of their significance.

Faith identifies that the pressure on students, teachers and schools to achieve is immense. She also states that *“It’s all about results...if I can’t empirically measure it, then it didn’t happen”* and that she has *“no supporting evidence to prove critical thinking results.”* Josey notes that students at her school are *“excelling in assessments, so we’re OK...the results are there.”* This demonstrates the significance of assessment results in both public and private education sectors, and in many a teacher’s perception.

Both Susan and Sandy make comments that reflect their frustration at students’ attitudes to learning in that, they have experienced students to show little to no interest in learning content, but rather regurgitate content they do not understand in order to pass the assessment. Sandy states that her students comment, *“just tell me what I need to know to pass”* and *“is this in the test.”* This is further testament to the weight students themselves place on assessment over learning life skills.

The weight the teachers, students, and community perceivably place on assessment results reinforces the teacher view that education is assessment driven, however only Faith notes the difficulties in assessing and reporting on critical thinking skills and achievement. Whereas other teachers comment on critical literacy being akin to critical thinking, only one teacher from the eight participants applied content and assessment criteria to the general capability of critical thinking. This substantiates their perception that critical thinking is an innate and covert individual set of skills similar to Bailin et al. (1999), Lipman (1988), Case (2005), and Pithers and Soden (2000).

Ranked seventh overall is the theme of having a *lack of time to address critical thinking skills*. Six participants repeatedly refer to not having enough time to deal with the content adequately, let alone delve deeply into critical thinking practices.

Sandy, Faith and Susan refer to having to deal with behaviour management issues as taking up a considerable amount of classroom time.

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

The Four Resources Model is a lens through which to address critical thinking in terms of literacy study. By applying this tool when studying a text, critical thinking will allegedly be elicited. Critical thinking, in terms of deep theme investigation regarding everyday life, however, would require extra time dedication in terms of teaching students to be more 'street savvy' (Susan), sorting everyday 'fact from crap' (Sandy), and being able to evaluate real life 'situations realistically' (Rach).

Participants who attempted critical thinking discussions find the debates and interactions take up so much time that they get too far behind in their programmed lessons, and that ultimately the content treatment suffers. Sandy notes that *"even lunch times are taken up with study groups, sport team training...even the hospitality students run a café during lunch. So both teachers and students are pushed for time."* Faith acknowledges that it is not just extra-curricular interests that take up teaching time but *"swimming carnivals, athletics, sport, dance recitals, a plethora of different interest group activities, not to mention NAIDOC and education weeks."* Additionally she notes that *"HSC exams start early, so the students really only have three terms in year 12."*

Sandy and Susan both recognise that teachers have to prioritise their time and energy, given that each contemporary classroom is multistaged with each student requiring different attention and content delivery. Sandy admits that she is teaching *"three to four different lessons every period"* because of her ability levels and so *"there's just no time for going too in depth with thematic content or critical thinking."* Additionally, some teachers voice the difficulty in catching students up when they have been absent whilst simultaneously teaching their current lesson to the class.

6.2.3. Teacher related themes.

Six out of the eight teachers interviewed identified that each *avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable* which involves supernatural themes and beliefs. Although not all of the teachers explicitly discuss this, the number of comments involving this is significant. This theme ranks the most dominant as 120 comment references are made.

Thirty percent of the teacher comments involving this avoidance centre around parental ramifications or school backlash. Every teacher who makes comment on this theme is very mindful of student belief diversity, and would rather avoid anything potentially offensive than deal with the resulting implications. Common comments echo those stated by Susan who relates not wanting “*additional ramifications because I have encouraged critical thinking*” involving something with a supernatural basis, not wanting to say the wrong thing, having one’s professionalism questioned, and parents making complaints. Other comments that reinforce this avoidance involve having supported classroom conversations, but if repeated outside the classroom could be taken out of context and be deemed offensive. The interviewed teachers are very mindful also of crossing a line. This metaphorical line is viewed as undefined by the participants, and therefore they would rather avoid anything which has the potential to go close to that line rather than deal with the consequences of going over it.

Sri notes that overall sensitivities in society make teaching much more difficult in that “*someone is going to get upset about something.*” She also alludes to topics that engage students the most are the ones that others are most sensitive about. Half the teachers who comment on this theme report that eliciting critical thinking in students involving anything potentially offensive or controversial is intense and confronting for the teacher as they are always conscious of saying the “*wrong thing*”, backlash, and having to justify themselves.

Josey teaches upper secondary classes which include Shakespearean dramas in preparation for the Higher School Certificate. She reports that she deals with the supernatural aspects of this compulsory genre as being metaphorical in nature and a

“*social commentary of beliefs at the time.*” If she encounters any student inquiry regarding “*probing*” questions, she refers them to either the History faculty or Pastoral team depending on the nature of the question, thereby avoiding any critical thinking involving the thematic content of the text. She feels that by doing this, she avoids being seen as going against the school ethos or saying the “*wrong thing*”.

Regardless of the rationale for teachers avoiding potentially offensive or uncomfortable conversations involving critical thinking, supernatural themes and beliefs, it remains the primary issue, ranking first in the participant interviews as being of concern.

Coupled with this theme, is that of ***teaching critical thinking in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs***. Although this ranks eighth, it is closely linked topically with avoiding potentially offensive or uncomfortable conversations as this is one of the boundaries teachers are mindful of. Seven out of the eight teachers comment on this during their semi-structured interviews. Sandy comments that she, as a teacher, does not enter a conversation regarding beliefs as her opinion may be construed as being correct, and that she does not want students to question their own family beliefs because she has encouraged critical thinking. Josey notes that she encourages critical thinking within the parameters of an educator but that this can undermine parenting and “*take away parent rights to parent as they see fit.*”

A common theme is not knowing what thought processes are going on inside students’ heads as a result of eliciting critical thinking responses and that those thoughts, therefore, could possibly be causing the student to question their parents, their faith, or their cultural traditions. In an effort not to undermine parents, teachers therefore avoid any potentially conflicting topics entirely in their classes, electing instead to address critical thinking only within the parameters of textual analysis and critical literacy. This approach omits aspects of the using texts functionally area of the Four Resources Model for critical literacy, placing the primary focus on breaking the code, understanding and composing meaningful texts, and to some extent critically analysing text components. Although all aspects of the Four Resources Model are engaged, the lower order aspects command the most attention.

The opinion that teaching *critical thinking opens teachers up to parental complaints* ranks twelfth with a total of 29 comments regarding this theme being made. It is also linked to avoiding anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable as one of the rationales for the avoidance is to prevent parental backlash. This appears to be most prevalent in the teachers (Susan, Jimmy, Sandy and Sri) who had occasion to elicit critical thinking within their classroom before concluding it is best avoided. Sri relates her lesson where Indonesian students are discussing a cultural folkloric character called Kuntilanak. She states that she is “*relieved that no parents had contacted school*” and that she is aware that she does not “*want to put [her] Principal under pressure to answer religious based questions.*” Jimmy comments specifically on seven occasions about parental backlash, ramifications, parents seeing this is teaching outside the curriculum, and parents in his experience being “*very vocal*”.

The last two themes in the teacher based category are that *personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices*, and juxtaposed to this that *personal beliefs do affect classroom teaching practices*. The higher percentage of comments are related to personal beliefs affecting classroom teaching practices which is double that of teachers believing they do not affect classroom teaching practices. This is significant given that only five out of the eight participants make comments about personal beliefs affecting teaching practice in comparison to seven from the eight commenting that personal beliefs do not affect teaching. This means that seven teachers make **explicit** comments relating to their personal beliefs not affecting their teaching, including you “*don't have personal belief in the classroom*” (Sandy), “*our entire school has the same philosophy*” (Josey), and “*I'm not passionate about any belief system*” (Sandy). These types of comments are contradicted by **implicit** comments made in general conversation alluding to their beliefs actually affecting their classroom practices, for example, “*I'm uncomfortable discussing the humanitarian side of the inquisition*” (Josey), “*Teachers have decided what students are capable of*” (Sandy), “*I don't believe adults believe in it [supernatural]*” (Rach), and “*I have a strong personal faith.... Belief is all encompassing*” (Daisy).

Josey and Daisy both teach in the private education sector and comment that their personal beliefs do not affect their classroom teaching practices. They relate that,

because their whole school abides by the same ethos, and both teachers and parents are members of the same Christian belief system, there is no need for their personal beliefs to be in conflict with teaching or school codes. Josey notes that “*students with differing cultural religious beliefs wouldn’t be attending our school*” and therefore conflicting ideals “*wouldn’t present themselves in my setting.*” Interestingly, both participants make five comments each regarding personal beliefs not affecting classroom teaching practices; however, when not questioned directly about this, Josey makes nine comments and Daisy thirteen alluding to their personal beliefs actually affecting their teaching practices. This includes comments from Josey, “*I don’t believe I have the skills to support student understanding without bias (mine or the schools)*”, “*I don’t believe we’re meant to get teenagers to think deeply about everything*”, and “*I don’t believe supernaturally themed literature has a place in classrooms.*” Josey also comments that she has a personal lack of comfort, but not professional, regarding biblical versus fictional supernatural events.

Daisy comments that she is uncomfortable when correlations are made between medieval witches and Jesus, and with supernatural events portrayed in the Bible. She further states that it is “*against the school ethos to question the validity of the Bible*”, and that she is personally “*a little confused*” when discussing this. These comments demonstrate that although the participants perceive that personal beliefs do not affect their classroom teaching practices because their religious belief system and that of the school and students are the same, their personal beliefs about things not necessarily related to religion did affect their teaching practices.

It is ironic that an overarching rationale for not eliciting critical thinking involving belief systems or supernatural themes is that teachers do not want to confuse students, however many teachers make statements alluding to their own personal confusion as an adult and as an educator.

Participants who believe their personal beliefs do not affect their classroom teaching practices make comments like, “*I encourage students to respect other opinions*”, “*I’m not passionate about any belief system*”, “*I associate belief systems with religion*” and subsequently, therefore as I am not religious, my personal beliefs do not affect my classroom practices. Faith notes that she is “*pretty liberal and open*

minded” and therefore she questions students about their ideas and makes sure they can justify their stance rather than adding her own opinions as a teacher into the conversation. Daisy comments that if people have strong faith then “*conversations are not going to change their beliefs.*” She alleges she can see another’s point of view without changing her own belief, therefore she feels her beliefs do not affect her classroom practices. Susan reports that she believes she is professional enough for her own beliefs not to weigh in on what she is teaching and that she often does not “*know how to respond*” so that is causal of not letting her beliefs affect her teaching – if she does not respond then she has not had an effect, either positive or negative on the conversation.

These comments highlight the latent influence personal beliefs has on classroom practices, as the participants do not *believe* their personal philosophies have an impact in the classroom, but in practice, the opposite is observed.

6.2.4. Student related themes.

One of the student related themes that is raised consistently amongst the interviewed teachers is that of *student wellbeing and mental health possibly being affected by eliciting critical thinking* in everyday contexts. These comments include the possibility of the child being opened up to ridicule by others who might not share their beliefs, and that the teachers do not want students to draw that level of criticism upon themselves. Sandy makes specific reference to students internalising conversations involving critical thinking, and that others are not aware of the internal dialogue that is occurring for that student. She states, “*you don’t know if they’ve internalised something that really messes them up later in life*” and that she does not want it on her conscience that she has “*messed a student up psychologically.*” She also adds the question “*how do you know you aren’t doing more harm than good when getting students to do critical thinking*” activities?

When presenting this participant with the summary of their interview, Sandy adds some anecdotal comments in her feedback that are insightful regarding her stance about critical thinking and student mental health. She notes that every student sees things differently and anything that elicits a personal response can be synthesised internally on a very different scale. She recalls an incident involving a high achieving

and capable student who commits suicide, which she surmises is triggered by something psychologically. The participant is passionate about not wanting to be the teacher who “*pushes that invisible button and gets a student questioning life, the universe, and all that.*” Sandy relates that teachers in general already second guess everything they say and that this particular incident “*really highlighted some of the invisible ramifications of getting teenagers to think deeply about things – some of them just can’t switch off that thought train and no-one else knows that.*” She concludes her feedback comments by noting that without formal psychological training, she believes elements of critical thinking should be confined to textual analysis and critical literacy.

Half of the interviewed teachers mirror these types of comments, recognising that by encouraging students to talk openly and critically about topics could open them up to criticism from students who do not share their belief systems. The participants added that this confuses students and can bring ramifications upon them if critical thinking conversations are taken out of context or overheard in part by others. They reiterate that eliciting critical thinking cannot only confuse students, but encourage them to question their own familial beliefs. Daisy teaches in the private school system, and questions that encouraging students to think critically about the world around them could result in them thinking “*radically or questioning the church.*”

Regarding student cultural belief systems, Sri notes that it is not only the students’ peers who question and ridicule their opinions, but when she recounts a lesson in the staff room, the other teachers comment on the students’ opinions. This also makes her feel uncomfortable given that the same level of criticism is not targeted at mainstream religious beliefs, and that she feels she has to speak up for the students concerned. If adults react in this insensitive manner, it could be assumed that the students’ peers may also react similarly. In an era of cyber bullying and anonymous social media trolling, the effect on student wellbeing and mental health regarding such negative comments cannot be ignored.

Every teacher interviewed makes comments regarding ***critical thinking skills are important***, with three teachers specifically referencing manipulation in everyday life encounters. Sandy states her stance on critical thinking is “*separating fact from crap*”

which is not limited to textual analysis in the classroom setting, but to elements of everyday life. This mirrors the rationale for its cross-curricular inclusion as a general capability in the Australian Curriculum. Rach notes in her interview feedback response that teachers should not “*just ignore the difficult stuff*” or students will “*find out the wrong information from the wrong sources*” and sometimes the ramifications of this can be life altering.

These skills are therefore very important for students to build for life beyond their scholastic years. The view amongst teachers is that, although they acknowledge the importance of critical thinking in everyday contexts, they very seldom apply this in their classrooms. Excuses relate to having no time for these detailed discussions, that it is potentially offensive to others, or that they assume these skillsets are formed early in life and therefore not needed to be explicitly taught in secondary school. Because of this, the practical implementation of critical thinking appears to be overwhelmingly limited to textual analysis and the hope that the critical thinking skills during this can be independently transferred into social settings and life after school.

Faith contextualises the everyday importance of critical thinking skills in relation to politics. She states, “*I don’t just vote Liberal because my parents did.*” She then adds, “*I have to weigh up their policies, promises, and look at their track record before making a judgement. And if I vote Liberal this time, maybe I won’t next time in light of evidence given.*” She offers this example of why students need to learn critical thinking, not just regarding textually based stimulus, but so that these skills can be transferred across to everyday contexts. These practical implications will be discussed in more detail in subsequent thematic breakdowns.

Six out of the eight participants make reference to ***student engagement is important*** in the classroom. Sri notes that when given a choice of study texts, “*Harry Potter was the overwhelming winner*” but acknowledges she would not utilise it again by choice. She also acknowledges that sensitivities make engaging the students really hard and that “*what engaged them is exactly what others are sensitive about.*” Susan states, “*I would love to involve topics and concepts the students are interested in – like the supernatural – but it opens up too many cans of worms.*” She is frustrated

that students turn off “*academically because they just aren’t interested in the topic or concept – like poetry!*” This participant adds that if you could engage the students with a text like ‘The Graveyard Book’ by Neil Gaiman, “*you could then be pulling in some of his poetry as well.*” She adds “*you’ve read the book, you like the author, let’s compare it to something else. You’re still getting the same content and information, but you’re using the text that they’ve enjoyed as the hook.*” The sequencing of her faculty’s English units contains a stand-alone poetry unit, to which she responds, “*you can’t trick them into doing poetry. If you pull it in here and there, they’ll tolerate it, to the point where they may even start to enjoy it...because they’re not overloaded with something they’re not enjoying.*” After her impassioned speech, the participant is questioned as to what she would do if the topic that lit her students up academically was supernaturally themed, to which she pauses significantly before responding, “*that’s where it would get really hairy...I think engagement though, should trump awkwardness.*” She further states that it would be a hypothetical situation in her experience as her faculty has the curriculum set and there is no scope for collapsing units or exploring controversial themes, even if they are engaging.

This issue continued throughout the interview participants, as although they acknowledged the importance of student engagement, they were all hesitant to include topics or texts which contained supernatural themes.

Teachers who observe *students see supernatural as real* are predominantly Christians (involving biblical events), cultural ethnicities (involving folklore), and younger students (involving Santa). The only supernatural creature the interviewed teachers observe students as considering within the realms of possibility across all age groups encountered are zombies.

Sri encounters a situation where some of her Indonesian students are discussing Kuntilanak in class which she explains is a witch/ghost creature from her cultural folklore. She reports that the students involved display a genuine fear of this entity, but are judged by other students and teachers for their belief. This confuses Sri as each of the other contributors to the conversations do not feel there is a double standard in believing in God or biblical stories.

Both Josey and Daisy teach in the private school sector and view miraculous events in the Bible as reality. Josey comments that “*miracles and supernatural events in the Bible are different as it’s faith based, not fantasy.*” She also relates that “*as a Christian, you just believe in the theory of creation, because that is what you believe. There doesn’t need to be any evidentiary proof, or studies, or validation by a third party. We believe it because we do.*” This ideal, in relation to critical thinking, will be investigated more thoroughly in the next chapter.

The comments involving Santa and critical thinking are confined to the younger students. It is apparent that the age at which students stop believing in Santa differs greatly with some parents and cultural groups denying his existence from infancy. Jimmy teaches in a school with a highly diverse demographic and relates an exercise he did with his class involving inventing ways in which Santa could get to all the houses of the world in one night. This creates a divide in the class with some students upset at the thought of Santa not being real and some of his Christian students airing “*the real meaning of Christmas which kicked things off again.*” Interestingly though, Jimmy states that all of his students believe in Batman, and that his students take it for granted that dogs can talk.

6.3 The Themes – Discussion on Raw Data

6.3.1. Curriculum/classroom related themes.

The teachers interviewed cite barriers they encounter in the pursuit of critical thinking within the classroom. Snyder and Snyder (2008, p. 93) support this by stating, “four barriers often impede the integration of critical thinking in education: (1) lack of training, (2) lack of information, (3) preconceptions, and (4) time constraints.” The category of curriculum and/or classroom related themes is subdivided into four sections entitled content requirements, assessment requirements, practical application of curriculum and/or classroom requirements, and time management in schools. The Australian Curriculum provides contextualisation for the participants’ concerns, as content being the focus and education being assessment driven are ranked third and fourth respectively in Table 6.2 (student related, teacher related and curriculum and/or classroom related ranked and categorised themes). The

practical application of critical thinking in classrooms is also linked to the lack of time available to teachers, and these are ranked second and seventh respectively.

6.3.1.1. Content requirements.

The interview participants raise some concerns regarding the content of the Australian Curriculum. These are echoed by The NSW English Teachers' Association (2012, p. 4) that states the curriculum contains a "limited range of higher order thinking in favour of content detail." Every teacher interviewed makes comments regarding content being the focus of teaching, and that this focus is at the expense of other aspects of critical literacy and critical thinking. The NSW English Teachers' Association (2012, p. 26) supports this concern by stating that the "curriculum is so content focussed that it does not allow for the flexibility needed to address the diversity of students." This is of paramount importance when considering the statements of teacher participants, for example Susan notes it is "*difficult to provide freedom when 30 students are at different levels*", Sandy comments that she is "*teaching three to four different lessons each period*", and Faith shares comments including she has to "*do three lessons in each class*", "*differentiation makes it difficult*", "*every year we are having to alter the way we teach*", "*having such a wide gap in one class is really difficult*", and "*if we could minimise the content teachers would have a chance.*"

Another concern raised by the teacher participants is that of an overcrowded curriculum, which the NSW English Teachers' Association (2012, p. 24) supports with comments including, "Australian Curriculum: English is indeed overcrowded despite the fact that it has less content than the NSW syllabus." Interviewed teachers illustrate this by making comments that include, "*it takes long enough to teach the content*"; "*some units have so much content to get through*"; "*need to spend more time on content*"; you have to "*prioritise content over concept*" (Susan), there is "*no time for going too in depth with thematic content or critical thinking*", and it is a "*massive curriculum*" (Sandy). The analysis of the comments by participating teacher interviews indicates that the lived experiences of these particular teachers reveal an agreed lack of time due to an overcrowded curriculum resulting in superficial content covering in opposition to deeper level critical thinking.

Although Paul and Elder (2000) suggest that teachers focus far too much on the coverage of course content over engaged thinking. The interviewed teachers firmly ascertain the rationale for this is because the content is what is assessed and reported on in the public domain. To prioritise concept over content would require a shift in the attitude of not only educators, but policy makers, curriculum writers, and society as a whole. Although critical thinking is mandated in the Australian Curriculum, the focus remains on the content requirements, and the general capabilities are secondary to that prerequisite.

As noted in chapter two, Tsui's (2002) comparative case study finds schools are reluctant to embrace critical thinking in classrooms due to the time allocation required for class discussions. She also notes from her interview comments that you have to get through the material. You need to know the stuff that is taught on the syllabus which mirrors the comments made by the teacher participants in this study, that the content is the focus, and what needs to be covered in order to adequately prepare students for assessment. It is also noted, in her interviews of the teachers, that while student questions could be of benefit on occasion, "a lot of times they confuse the direction of the course or the lesson of the day" (Tsui, 2002, p. 751) and "if you spend too much time asking people questions then you can't get through the material" (p. 752). These concerns parallel those of the teachers interviewed in this research, providing congruent concerns in both Australian and American teacher perspectives.

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

Given these were American case studies that echoed my research, are the curriculums of other countries also emphasising content over critical thinking practices when it comes to practically applying the curriculum, or is it unique to Australia and America – or westernised countries – or universal?

6.3.1.2. Assessment requirements.

One assessment issue faced by the teachers interviewed in this study is that of preparedness for the senior Higher School Certificate (HSC). Under the school based assessment protocols, sample evidence of learning is assessed against the Australian

Curriculum standards, and this is conducted within schools. NAPLAN is an external assessment protocol, which is formulated and graded by personnel outside of the individual schools as is the HSC, thereby negating the consistent teacher judgement variable within school based assessment. As teachers, particularly in Year 10, aspire to prepare their students for the HSC requirements, this external assessment tool means that there is more pressure on teachers to cover the content in an effort to address every possibility that could occur in the blind HSC paper. Although this alleviates some of the assessment pressure for teachers of HSC students, it increases pressure related to content delivery.

The pressure to prepare for assessment, either internally or externally based, is evident in the responses from the interviewed teachers which include we *“need to get the best assessment results possible”*, *“we need to go over exam criteria”*, we need to *“push for tangible results that can be measured objectively”* (Sandy); *“our students are excelling in assessment results so we’re OK”*, and *“the results are there”* (Josey); *“it’s all about the results”*, it is the *“exam results that are recorded not engagement or participation”* (Faith); and *“it’s how they will be assessed in the HSC so they need to be prepared”*, and *“critical thinking is hardest with seniors as the HSC is set and we need to ensure assessed content is covered”* (Daisy).

Education being assessment driven is ranked fourth by teacher participants, only slightly below content being the focus. These two areas of concern are linked in that *“if you don’t cover the content then you can’t pass the assessment”* (Susan). Susan also notes that teaching is centred on assessment, and that assessment and content are the backbone of any teaching. Paul and Elder (2007a) agree that assessment drives instruction. There is also an agreement amongst teacher participants that the wider community viewed HSC (and NAPLAN) results as a reflection of teaching quality which adds to the pressure to perform, with Faith noting, *“the pressure for them to achieve is immense.”*

Additional to the assessment requirements regarding the content of the curriculum, there is the issue of assessing critical thinking which forms one aspect of the curriculum. Interviewed teachers demonstrate an awareness of this issue, but admit to having no idea of how to address it. This echoes studies cited in chapter two which

ascertain that assessing critical thinking is problematic at best (Kennedy et al., 1991; Ku, 2009; Lai, 2011; Moss & Koziol, 1991; Norris, 1989; Silva, 2008) and that new methods are needed to establish adequate assessment protocols regarding critical thinking (Silva, 2008).

6.3.1.3. *Practical application of curriculum and/or classroom requirements.*

The consistent themes uncovered in the interviews include educational apathy, differentiation, behaviour issues, accountability, programming and validation of learning, and time factors. Although time factors are a practical application issue within the classroom, it also has wider ramifications regarding whole school timing, and therefore is discussed in the successive subsection.

A reoccurring theme from some teacher participants that is connected to both content and assessment is one of students' educational apathy. Sandy and Susan are most open about this and reveal their experiences in the interviews.

Susan notes that, in her experience, students can "*barely concentrate enough to get through an assessment*" let alone an entire unit. Susan and Sandy both record comments ascertaining to students wanting to be spoonfed content in order that they simply regurgitate it for the exam. Sandy notes comments that include, "*just tell me what I need to know to pass,*" "*is this in the test,*" and that students are "*looking for 'tell me the right response'.*"

In Susan's original interview transcript, it is apparent that she also frequently encounters educational apathy in her lower socio-economic demographic school. She is reticent to criticise students when she reports, "*students in reality are not the type of people who can sit there and ... well ... students in reality don't want to use their own brains*", "*they don't want to think about it – they just want to regurgitate it.*" She appears frustrated when she reinforces Sandy's comments regarding spoonfeeding the information which she delivers in small learnable chunks, only to have students comment, "*well I didn't learn it!*" Her frustration is evident when she comments, "*I haven't asked you to do anything else – you haven't had to think for yourself*" and yet students continue not to complete tasks. Due to the content required

to get through in her faculty, and the limited abilities and attitude in her classes, some tasks and revision are required to be done for homework, but she maintains that her students, in general, “*come back and it’s not done. They haven’t thought about it, you don’t have time to do it all in the classroom.*” Jimmy also notes that, particularly in the last term, students have “*already checked out!*”

Susan also relates some of the apathetic issues to engagement and wanting to learn. When discussing student centred learning, she states it “*depends on the students wanting to learn and, in a lot of my instances, they don’t.*” Some of this she attributes to the school’s set scope and sequence. She notes, “*there are some units and areas that you have to cover that it doesn’t matter how you dress it up, they just don’t want to do it.*” One such area she notes is poetry where “*Year 8 boys drag their heels ... they don’t want a bar of it! – It doesn’t matter how you package it ... you say the word poetry and they switch off ... they don’t even want to comprehend They just don’t want to.*” Regarding poetry, “*they’re disengaged. And you can’t trick them into doing poetry. If you pull it in here and there, they’ll tolerate it*”, partly “*because they’re not overloaded with something they’re not enjoying.*” She suggests repackaging or cutting the topics “*the students don’t care about and incorporate them in part*” through the whole year and “*filter it through as a supporting text instead of a stand-alone unit.*” Susan comments that if you are doing a novel study like *The Graveyard Book* that students enjoyed, you could get around it by saying “*you’ve read the book, you like the author, let’s compare it to something else*” and you could then pull in some of Neil Gaiman’s poetry to explore, “*so you’re still getting the same content and information, but you’re using the text that they’ve enjoyed as the hook*” rather than a stand-alone poetry unit. She appears frustrated that this is not possible in her lived experience.

Faith supports the idea of eliminating or compacting curricular content and states, “*if we could minimise content teachers would have a chance*” and that if students “*don’t need it then axe it and give us time to teach the relevant stuff.*” Faith comments that “*unless you are going on to do a literary degree, why do we need to subject these students to doing an in depth analysis*” of Shakespearean work and that “*surely we have to look at the overall intrinsic value of Shakespearean study when the reality is that a high percentage of the students*” will not continue on to university level and

most of them will “*struggle to find employment on the whole. It’s outdated and ludicrous.*”

Susan also notes the same frustration when discussing topics of low interest in her history class, like having to push students through a Federation unit in order to get to World War One,

The kids are so keen to do World War One, which, you try and get them to that point, because that’s when they really switch on an Really light up and student centred learning actually exists, when you can set them an assignment with a very broad scope, and you can just let them follow it to where they want to. And that’s when you see that level of enthusiasm coming from a whole classroom, the kids thinking deeply and critically, and asking questions, and evaluating what they know and what they are learning and how that fits into their lives ... but the opportunities for that to happen are few and far between because, the content and the curriculum has already been dictated. It’s already set!

Sandy, who also teaches in a lower socioeconomic school, mirrors some of Susan’s comments that, while some students demonstrate a stake in their own learning, others are “*totally disengaged no matter what you do, and really have no interest in school apart from the social aspect*” so “*you do have to prioritise your time and energy.*” She also notes an attitude of “*just tell me what I need to know to pass, because I’m never going to need to analyse poetry, or synthesize Shakespeare ... or understand the political connotations of the Sneetches.*” In addition to the apathetic culture she experiences, she also notes that serial non-attenders make classroom application difficult because,

[W]hen they do turn up, you have to try and catch them up, even though they really don’t care, and then you are also trying to extend your top group, as well as not losing the kids in the middle – it’s like you’re teaching three to four different lessons every period.

Sandy's concern about teaching different levels within the same class period is not unique in the data collected during this research, with three from the eight participants explicitly commenting on this. Susan notes that with a *"full class of 30 students, all at different levels and different learning styles trying to learn the content, it's very difficult"*, it is *"difficult to provide freedom when 30 students are at different levels"*, and that critical thinking, especially with lower achieving students, requires *"a lot of support from the teacher."* Faith notes that she is conducting *"three lessons in each class"* due to ability spacing, and that *"having such a wide gap in one class is really difficult."* In addition to *"differentiation makes it difficult,"* Faith also notes that *"in theory critical thinking is a lot of discussion, in practice it takes up a lot of time and only higher achievers contribute"* willingly. The concerns expressed by the teachers are substantiated by Tomlinson and Eidson (2003) who agree that differentiation for an increasing diversity of students in the same classroom is seen as one of the greatest challenges facing teachers in contemporary classrooms. Faith's comments regarding experienced teachers struggling with the demands of the 21st century classroom in a 'sink or swim' culture, is indicative of the pressures placed on teachers in attempting to fulfil all the requirements to ensure that every student receives a tailored educational experience devoid of discrimination in an inclusive setting.

Some teachers note that classroom behaviour issues hamper quality teaching. Faith notes that *"some days it seems like behaviour management takes up most of the lesson. You can't just remove students who are causing issues because 'everyone is entitled to an education'"*, and then she continues on to state, *"I wonder what the parents of the other students would think if they found out how little education their child gets at times because of disengaged or unsettled students."* Sandy also notes concern about teachers having to perform *"parenting duties and the massive load behaviour management is now taking up"* in the contemporary classroom. She also notes that she does not think policy makers who make the decisions about education have *"been in an everyday classroom for a very long time."* Sandy comments that if she has *"a day that I'm not being sworn at, or have instructions ignored ... or have to spend entire periods being railroaded with behaviour issues... I would be happy."*

Disruptive behaviours not only impact on the quality of teaching, but also on time management issues. The following is a table sourced from Sullivan, Johnson, Owens, and Conway's (2014) research. Sullivan et al. (2014) survey 1,380 Australian teachers and their results appear in Table 6.3. The data in this table confirm that the teacher participants' concerns raised in this research are not unique. It clearly demonstrates one facet of classroom life that impacts significantly on the practical aspects of teaching, time management, and the right for other engaged students to have their learning uninterrupted.

Table 6.3

Teacher Response Percentages Regarding Unproductive Student Behaviour

Unproductive Behaviours	Not at all	1 or 2 days per week	Almost every day	Several times daily
Disengaged Behaviours				
Being late for class	10	24	43	24
Avoiding doing schoolwork	4	21	32	43
Disengaging from classroom activities	5	21	33	41
Low-Level Disruptive Behaviours				
Disrupting the flow of a lesson	14	21	32	33
Talking out of turn	4	18	29	50
Making distracting noises intentionally	26	23	26	24
Interfering with property	29	32	24	15
Moving around the room unnecessarily	20	27	26	27
Using a mobile phone inappropriately	56	19	11	13
Using a laptop or iPad inappropriately	69	20	8	6
Making impertinent remarks	27	33	21	19
Mucking around, being rowdy	18	34	28	21
Aggressive & Anti-social Behaviours				
Spreading rumours	38	41	18	3
Excluding peers	33	44	19	4
Verbally abusing other students	43	30	18	9
Verbally abusing teachers	74	18	6	2
Sexually harassing other students	72	21	6	1
Sexually harassing teachers	94	5	1	0
Physically aggressive towards other students	46	35	14	6
Physically aggressive towards teachers	93	6	1	0
Extremely violent to students or teachers	94	5	1	0
Physically destructive	78	18	3	0
Displaying uncharacteristically erratic behaviours	46	36	12	6

Note: Percentages displayed have been rounded

Teacher identified types of disruptive classroom behaviour that detracts from teaching time and student engagement. Sourced from 'Punish them or engage them? Teachers' views of unproductive student behaviours in the classroom', by Sullivan et al., 2014, *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(6), p. 49.

The voices of the teacher participants in this research are supported by case study research performed by Achinstein (2002) who finds that “most teachers expressed frustration at the challenges of integrating bilingual and mainstreamed special education students within their classroom” (p. 432). She also notes, “teachers identified growing problems with student disruptions in classrooms, including students swearing at teachers, defying teachers’ orders to go to the office, breaking school property, and getting out of their seats and disrupting the class.” (p. 432). The research aligns with the teacher participant concerns in this research in that behaviour management takes up considerable learning time, leaving little to no time available for engaging in deeper level discussions or eliciting quality critical thinking.

The teacher participants in this research make specific note regarding the lack of formal training offered with regard to incorporating critical thinking in their classrooms, either pedagogically, regarding reporting and assessing, or programming. There is a general lack of consensus regarding the most effective strategies to teach critical thinking and how it is obtained (Adu-Febiri, 2002; McGuire, 2010; R. Paul, 1995; Presseisen, 1986), despite research that acknowledges critical thinking can enhance general academic achievement (Bass & Perkins, 1984; Bransford, Burns, Delclos, & Vye, 1986; Freseman, 1990; Kagan, 1988; Nickerson, 1984). Additional to this lack of knowledge regarding teaching strategies, teachers interviewed also demonstrate a lack of understanding or misconceptions about critical thinking, often equating critical thinking to textual analysis. They allude to being able to ask students inferential questions regarding the text as eliciting critical thinking responses, and if students can extract and defend information from the text with rigorous arguments, then critical thinking is adequately demonstrated. This is congruent to the results from Choy and Cheah’s (2009) study discussed previously in chapter two. R. Paul (1995b, p. 119) states that there is a real danger that exists when “departments of education incorporate a non-substantive concept of critical thinking into statewide curriculum” which is arguably what the teachers in this study discover.

Although it is acknowledged that training and professional development opportunities are required in this area, it appears the teacher participants in this research project have not been offered that training. Research by Steffen (2011) supports this and notes that 33 percent of the participants she interviewed never attended any type of professional development related to critical thinking, and 45 percent attended workshops organised only by their school. These statements, together with the teacher comments in this research, allude to a universal lack of teacher education regarding both the acquisition of critical thinking skills, and also how to teach them, despite being mandated in the Australian Curriculum. It substantiates the claim of teachers that they feel unsupported in the practical implementation of critical thinking in classrooms.

Interviewed teachers raise concerns involving accountability, programming, and validation of learning regarding critical thinking. This involves educating parents about the Australian Curriculum requirements as Jimmy states, “*parents see critical thinking as teaching outside the curriculum.*” He also states that, as a teacher, “*you’re always accountable,*” and that you need to make sure “*all the boxes are ticked before you go off track.*”

Sandy raises questions about the classroom application of critical thinking that are echoed by other teachers; “*How to teach it; how to fit it into everyday programs and timings; how do I assess it?*” She notes that some practical guidance in physically demonstrating to teachers how to work it into programs and assess it would be appreciated as all the advice they are given is theory based. Faith’s questions regarding critical thinking echo this as she states, “*how can I validate their learning; how am I going to assess it; how am I going to report on it?*” She also notes that “*if I can’t empirically measure it, then it didn’t happen.*” This includes having some supporting evidence of learning by individual students, as she comments, “*if you can’t prove it then it didn’t happen.*”

Daisy relates that her school focuses on staff development in this area, which she feels helps, but she remains a “*little confused*” and still has “*consternation about how to apply, plan and assess critical thinking.*” She also notes that her colleagues in

other schools are struggling with the practical application of critical thinking in classrooms.

The accountability and validation issues regarding programming and assessment around general capabilities remain unresolved by participant teachers, even after some training is offered; however, it is not known the type or extent of training offered in Daisy's staff development session. Participant teachers maintaining critical thinking in classroom applications is 'great in theory but really difficult to maintain in practice' mainly due to the lack of direction given to teachers in the field of programming, assessment and reporting. As teachers' classroom programs are considered to be legal documents, it is therefore understandable that teachers have concerns with how to include critical thinking into their written programs, and the associated assessment and reporting of the same.

6.3.1.4. Time management in schools.

Six out of the eight teacher participants make explicit reference to a lack of time to address critical thinking skills in class. Comments range from curricular concerns with timing, to fit in all the required content, to whole school activities that take away from classroom teaching time. Research echoes this concern with findings that, due to the time-consuming methodology and "risky" (Tsui, 2002, p. 754) results, many faculties are hesitant to actively engage students in critical thinking exercises (Hass & Keeley, 1998; Tsui, 2002).

To discuss this issue contextually, an understanding of the curricular time requirements for English is of benefit to the reader. The BOS NSW (2012) and NSW DET (2006) state in their policy standards that the minimum requirement for the English subject hours in NSW government schools is 500 per year, for Year 7 to Year 10, which are the targeted year levels in this research. Given that the school year spans 40 weeks, this equates to 12.5 hours of instruction per week, or 2.5 hours per day. During this time, ACARA (2012) states the content portion of the English curriculum should take up no more than 80 percent of the time allocation. This correlates to 120 minutes (two hours) of content and 30 minutes (half hour) on activities other than content related.

Given that two hours per day are allocated for the delivery of English content alone, issues then arise when extra days are removed from that allocation in either part or whole, for example public holidays. The content is still required to be covered and the time available for this has now decreased. Faith raises other instances where whole school activities take away from available teaching time as well, including swimming, athletics, and cross country sporting carnivals, which take whole days away from the school setting. Representative sport and dance recitals also break into Faith's teaching time, and she also notes universal NSW DET activities like NAIDOC and education weeks traditionally take extra time away from the classroom.

Sandy acknowledges that, in her experience, *“even lunch times are taken up with study groups, sport team training ... even the hospitality students run a café during lunch. So both teachers and student are just pushed for time from the get go.”* When consideration is given to additional events selected by individual schools to participate in, like Refugee week, Multicultural festivals, choral and music recitals, school musicals, Rock Eisteddfod, work experience programs, excursions, and supporting charity events, the two hour daily content portion is significantly impacted, and the extra concept development time of 30 minutes per day becomes potentially non-existent.

Notwithstanding these whole day disruptions or deviations to faculty scope and sequence planning to accommodate theme specific lessons, teachers report having *“entire periods being railroaded with behaviour issues”* (Sandy). Faith also agrees that *“behaviour management takes up most of the lesson”* on some days, which further minimises time available for content delivery or concept development. Sandy adds the issue of *“serial non-attenders”* where significant amounts of time need to be dedicated to catching them up with the class. Jimmy notes that towards the end of the year, students have *“already checked out”*, which, combined with exam blocks being removed from the teaching schedule, also significantly impacts on curricular delivery time.

It is not until all of the additional extra-curricular demands are noted, that teacher comments are brought into context. Although these events are not specifically noted

in the Australian Curriculum, they are expectations of both the NSW DET and the community. In supporting this view of limited time available in classrooms, Choy and Cheah (2009) suggest that further studies are needed that investigate the time constraints placed on teachers in the contemporary school setting.

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

After contemplating the teacher comments, I reflect on my own experience in the school setting, and acknowledge that the pathways options also significantly impact students' access to the curriculum, with TAFE schedules being set and schools having to accommodate them, and students having to attend mandated on the job experience schedules during school hours.

6.3.2. Teacher related themes.

Teacher related concerns contain the theme of teachers avoiding anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable, particularly concerning critical thinking and supernatural themes, which rates the highest area of teacher apprehension. It receives an average of 20 comments per teacher interviewed and is linked with parental complaints as a consequence. Teacher beliefs raise some issues in that, although teachers verbalise that their beliefs do not affect their classroom practices, other comments during the interviews contradict this on a more obscured level of consciousness. Classrooms do not exist in a vacuum, but rather “what occurs inside the classroom is greatly influenced by the social, political, and economic forces outside of the classroom” and therefore the beliefs, assumptions, and choices made by teachers have an impact both within and outside the school (Foster, 2012, p. 5).

6.3.2.1 Potentially offensive or uncomfortable material.

The stage statement that encompasses Year 9 and Year 10 states, “these texts explore themes of human experience and cultural significance, interpersonal relationships, and ethical and global dilemmas within real-world and fictional settings and represent a variety of perspectives” (ACARA, 2016, p. 102). The texts which support the Australian Curriculum, therefore, have a bearing on cultural sensitivities, values, and ethical constructs of both students and teachers. As has been previously discussed in this thesis, aspects of the supernatural hold different meanings for

individuals depending on culture and belief system, and the subjective experiences of each individual. When addressing these themes under the general capability of critical thinking, individuals are required to evaluate evidence in terms of the reliability and credibility of the source, and make informed decisions regarding that phenomenon.

C. E. Nelson (1994) and Bonk and Smith (1998) note that discussion based strategies that involve high interest topics are most effective for eliciting critical thinking. Levine and Cureton (1998), however, state that 54 percent of students feel uncomfortable airing unpopular or controversial view. This means that although discussion style lessons are most effective in addressing critical thinking, they are also the most confronting for students. When this is coupled with potentially offensive or uncomfortable material, this becomes problematic for the adolescent student. This type of investigation into potentially sensitive cultural and belief experiences has the potential to become offensive or make individuals uncomfortable, particularly when opposing, and feasibly passionate, points of view are aired.

What could be considered potentially offensive or uncomfortable is dependent on individual perspective and subjective experience. Faith notes that the likelihood of the novels their school uses containing supernatural themes is slim, in that she teaches in a private school where textual choice selections are vetted for suitability. She does, however, highlight a correlation made by a student “*between medieval witches and Jesus*” as both could be deemed conjurers. Faith reports that this caused her some discomfort as it is “*against the school ethos to question the validity of both the Bible and teachings from it.*” She reflects before she comments that she is now unsure if she is personally uncomfortable with the interpretation voiced concerning the text content, or that the conversation might be “*overheard and misconstrued by someone else.*” Faith comments that faculty members are concerned that thinking deeply and critically about such topics might encourage “*students to think radically, or question the church’s stance.*”

Ironically, this is exactly what critical thinking is encouraging students to do in real life scenarios, to examine any form of knowledge or belief in the light of all evidence

associated with it; to gather pertinent information, recognise unstated assumptions and values, to discriminate and interpret data and relationships, to test generalisations, and then to reconstruct one's own beliefs on the basis of this wider experience to render accurate judgements about concepts (Glaser, 1941) and actively analyse, synthesise and evaluate information as a guide to belief and action that is rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence (Scriven & Paul, 1987). This highlights the sensitivities involved, and also the mindfulness of teachers concerning the eliciting of critical thinking involving such genres.

Josey also teaches at a religious based school and reports that she refers students to either the history department or the pastoral team in order to avoid conversations she feels uncomfortable with, even though she states that *“our entire school supports the same philosophy about religion, so I don't really need to worry about saying anything that may be perceived as 'radical'.”* This demonstrates that even though she feels her school is a *‘homogenous grouping’*, she still avoids topics she feels are either potentially offensive or uncomfortable.

Six out of the eight teachers interviewed agree it is easier to avoid supernatural themes completely rather than potentially offending students, staff, parents, or the community, and incur either personal or school based backlash, or confuse students regarding their cultural or belief systems. As belief systems are internalised, neither the depth nor breadth of beliefs and experiences is clear, causing teachers to be cautious and mindful of reactions (both externally and internally). Jimmy notes, *“you don't know who is going to be offended by what”*, and Sri adds that she believes *“society is a lot more sensitive now”* so she is therefore *“very conscious of offending others.”* She also notes that *“what engages students is what others are sensitive about”*, and that *“someone is going to get upset about something”* so it is better not to place yourself in that position at all and avoid anything of a potentially sensitive nature. Josey mirrors the avoidance of content by stating she does not believe the *“classroom is the place for anything too controversial”* and that *“students are free to read popular culture [novels] at home.”*

Although the teachers interviewed demonstrate a propensity to avoiding difficult and challenging topics including supernatural themes, B. T. Newton (1978, p. 287)

suggests that quality critical thinking arises through “discussion of controversial social issues.” In this respect, the teachers are avoiding a powerful learning tool through which they can elicit quality critical thinking in preparation for a changing and challenging future beyond school. Walbert (2014) notes that many of the topics discussed via the history curriculum are, by nature, unpleasant and controversial. These include aspects of war, comprising of the Holocaust, world revolutions and slavery issues. He further acknowledges that teachers, and students, typically demonstrate strong opinions about these issues and therefore the topics are excellent opportunities for facilitating critical thinking discussions.

Teachers participating in this study raise concerns about offending students, parents, peers, or the community. Cawelti (2015, para. 1) discusses a “strange phenomenon sweeping through America’s universities: “protecting” students from being offended.” He suggests faculties are “feeling pressure to not offend their students, lest they get called on the carpet for causing classroom traumas” (Cawelti, 2015, para. 2). In his article, Cawelti (2015, para. 4) notes the reality of post-traumatic stress, and the uncontrolled response of some students to words or images that may cause reactions “varying from clinical depression to suicide” which will be discussed further in the student related theme section. He also poses his own personal philosophy regarding offensive material in that he argues “nothing contains the quality of offensiveness. That occurs as a reaction from you to the material” and therefore is dependent on cultural sensitivities, or generational desensitivation (Cawelti, 2015, para. 20). In the participants’ desire to protect their students, they therefore may be ignoring what the students actually need in order to develop satisfactory critical thinking skills for life beyond school.

Sandy recounts one occasion when she embraces critical thinking in discussion form regarding the movie ‘The Lovely Bones’. She recalls being impressed “*that students were justifying comments with differing forms of evidence*” even though the validity of the sources were questionable. Sandy states, “*the students were really engaged*” and it was a “*very valuable, albeit off track, discussion. And I think everyone involved took something away from it... but at the time I remember thinking I wasn’t going there again in a hurry... it got really intense there – and really confronting.*” Although Sandy acknowledges the value of the lesson and the significance of the

discussion, she alludes to avoiding it in future, partially due to the confronting nature of critically analysing the topic and partly because of the time taken and then having to “*amalgamate some content to catch up*” regarding the program. The number of comments made by teacher participants related to avoidance issues raises this theme to number one in significance.

During the course of this research, I could find no studies, or scholarly articles regarding the teaching of critical thinking through the use of literature containing supernatural themes. Use of literature in this domain is limited to studies involving the engagement factor of such thematic content, which will be investigated in student related themes. Teacher comfort in applying critical thinking to these themes is an area lacking in empirical data and would be noteworthy of further research given the emphatic comments made by the teachers interviewed in this study, whereby they agreed that some topics that “*might be confronting and challenging*” regarding the application of critical thinking are best avoided (Daisy).

6.3.2.2 Critical thinking undermining parent responsibilities and beliefs, and potentially promotes parental complaints.

Seven out of the eight interviewed teachers make comments regarding this theme and it is closely related to the avoidance practices by teachers that were discussed previously. Teachers note that they often avoid anything controversial in the classroom in order to circumvent parental and community backlash. Parental complaint is an area consistently referred to by teacher participants and involves comments including, “*you need to be able to justify everything to prevent parental reprisal*” (Susan); not wanting to “*deal with parent complaints about the topic*”, “*being aware of parental ramifications*”, and “*parental backlash*” (Jimmy); being “*relieved that no parents had contacted the school*” (Sri); and needing to consider “*the ramifications of lessons and the wider implications*” (Daisy).

Dealing with difficult parents is an area commonly referenced by the teacher participants. In support of this, Feyl, Chaykin and Williams (1988) perform research regarding teachers’ preparation for dealing with parents and find that 86.6 percent of teachers, and 92.2 percent of principals list this as an area they would like more training in. It also reveals that only four percent of teachers report having any

training regarding dealing with parents during their undergraduate degree. This is reflective of the teacher participants in this research, in stating they would welcome further training, but little or none has been offered to them.

The Guardian newspaper publishes an educational column penned by the Secret Teacher. In an article on the 30th of May, 2015, this author shares some of the complaints he or she has encountered from parents, and the legitimacy of them. The Secret Teacher writes that one parent made an official complaint regarding the weather during an excursion. He/she states, *“I said I had no control over this, but was rather fiercely told it ‘was not good enough’”* and the same parent later complained about the weather being *“too hot at lunch time”* (Secret Teacher, 2015, para. 3). The author then shares that he/she has received *“30-plus complaints ... from parents over the year so far”* and that they include *“a child not understanding a joke in a play, the school rulers not being transparent”,* and *“a child being too tired after school”* (Secret Teacher, 2015, para. 4). This demonstrates the blurred lines between parental and teacher responsibilities. Although including comments from an unnamed source is problematic in the research context, my personal experience as a practising teacher has been similar, and the teacher participant Jimmy shares that *“parents are always vocal about everything.”*

There is pre-interview conversation with one of the teacher participants who requires consistent reassurance that his/her name and any identifying information will be concealed during the study as they are very concerned about Departmental backlash if they speak freely and openly. Susan states in her interview that *“it’s hard, because I don’t want to say the wrong thing and someone in their office on their high horse, you know...”* before eventually considering her words and stating, *“in theory it’s fantastic, but in practice it just can’t happen.”* In an effort to tease out her issues, I state, *“you’re expected to regurgitate the Departmental party line...”* to which Susan breaks me off in mid-sentence before I could pose the question stating emphatically *“yep, yep.”* She adds that *“you feel like you can’t say the wrong thing. You feel like, if you do then your professionalism is compromised.”*

This concern validates the Secret Teacher’s desire to remain nameless in light of possible Departmental backlash and the associated freedom of speech issues for a

practising teacher. In this respect, it is deemed that the Secret Teacher has some valid rhetoric to support the teacher concerns in this research involving parental complaints about not only content and teaching practices, but of ancillary issues that also contribute to teachers feeling they have limited time in their day to address fundamental issues around the curriculum and pedagogy as previously discussed.

Researcher's Reflective Journal Notation

After contemplating the teacher comments, and reflecting on my own experience in the school setting, I wonder why parents feel validated in making complaints about all manner of issues, whereas teachers feel they can only voice their opinions under the veil of anonymity for fear of alleged parental, school, or departmental reprisals? Also, is this fear legitimate or perceived?

The teachers' views regarding parental backlash and having their professionalism questioned is vindicated by Valerie Strauss who writes an article in the Washington Post newspaper in response to the Republican Party of Texas' (2012) platform on educational reform. In the platform, it suggests the Party is opposed to critical and higher order thinking in schools as they believe it challenges a "student's 'fixed beliefs' and undermines 'parental authority'" (Strauss, 2012, para. 2). Although this is an American example, the community value system is comparable to Australia, and it demonstrates the extent to which some people deem critical thinking to be in opposition to parental authority and responsibilities. This is also supported by a research paper by Gervais and Norenzayan (2012) that claims encouraging an individual to think analytically and critically will reduce their disposition to believe in God, therefore undermining some familial belief systems.

The New South Wales Education Reform Act 1990 (NSW Government, 1990, p. 3) states in Part 2, 4(a), "the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents" and then with regard to the position of the State in education, Part 2, 4 (c), "it is the duty of the State to ensure that every child receives an education of the highest quality." This, therefore, places parental beliefs above educational pedagogy; however, the Australian Curriculum requires the inclusion of critical thinking as a general cross-curricular capability, placing the teacher in a difficult

position when required to defend his or her teaching practices. When placed in the multidimensional classroom context, as investigated in chapter four, accommodating the diversity of belief systems without perceivably undermining the beliefs and values instilled in students by their families and cultural communities, becomes problematic for teachers, as is voiced by the participants in this research.

With a view to improving student learning outcomes, teacher practice, and promote a collective ideal regarding educational reform, there has been a renewed interest in fostering collaborative communities involving schools, teachers, and the wider community (Barth, 1990; L. T. Johnson, 1991; Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Louis & Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1994). Achinstein (2002, p. 421) suggests that, whilst harmonious is admirable in theory, it inevitably results in running “headlong into enormous conflicts over professional beliefs and practices. In their optimism about caring and supportive communities, advocates often underplay the role of diversity, dissent, and disagreement in community life, leaving practitioners ill-prepared and conceptions of collaboration underexplored.” This supports the idea that teachers should be given adequate training regarding conflict management with parents, rather than avoiding these issues as described by the teachers participating in this research.

6.3.2.3 Personal beliefs and their effect on teaching practices.

The teachers who participate in this research claim that their personal beliefs do not affect their classroom teaching, however latent comments by those teachers suggest otherwise. There is, to an extent, “a hidden curriculum that emanates from the cultural beliefs of those who work in the schools and those who set policy for them. No teacher explicitly teaches it, no school or community outwardly espouses it, but it is there” (George & Aronson, 2003, p. 2). George and Aronson (2003, p. 3) further state, “educators bring their own cultural beliefs to their schools. It is through the lens of these beliefs that they assess students’ abilities, judge their potential for achievement, and help decide their futures by opening doors or closing them.” This is echoed by Apple (1990) who claims educators’ minds are saturated with the existing cultural values which they both consciously and unconsciously pass on to their students. Furthermore, researchers allege these personal beliefs are resistant to change, even in the light of supporting evidence to the contrary (Breen, 1991; Davis

& Andrzejewski, 2009; Freeman, 1990; Lynch, 1989; Woods, 1990) and Mansour (2009) adds to this knowledge by stating, “while knowledge often changes, beliefs are static” (p. 27).

The extent to which teacher beliefs influence their teaching practices is unknown, however researchers agree that beliefs and feelings are thought to be revealed during their lessons and to influence their decision-making (Kynigos & Argyris, 2004; Riley, 2010; Standen, 2002). Davis and Andrzejewski (2009) suggest that even when teachers’ beliefs are in conflict with social and physical realities, they continue to influence their classroom practice. They suggest that teachers’ beliefs are a subjective reality and influence not only their decision-making, but their student interactions. This is demonstrated by the teacher participants, particularly when the line of questioning is not centred around overtly explicit beliefs. In general conversation, these subjective realities are uncovered.

As belief in the supernatural is not a topic openly discussed by individuals within the school setting, many teachers would not have reflected on their personal viewpoint prior to investigating it as a literary theme in English classes. If teacher belief systems are in opposition to those of students, or the particular school ethos, then according to Koneya and Barbour (1976) it would be difficult to disguise this divergent belief. It is interesting to note that Josey, who teaches in a private school, makes comments including, “*Christians believe because you believe*”, we “*don’t need evidentiary proof or validation*”, and we “*believe because we do.*” Daisy, who also teaches in a private school states you “*can see from another’s point of view but not change your own belief*”, and “*conversations are not going to change beliefs.*” Faith, who conversely teaches in the public school system, makes comments including, “*I’m really open to anything*” regarding beliefs, and that “*I am pretty liberal and open minded.*”

The subconscious mindfulness of belief systems and their influence on teaching practices is evident in the teacher participant responses. Whilst seven out of the eight participants make explicit statements alleging their personal beliefs do not affect classroom teaching practices, when questioned in context, or circumventing the explicit questions, five of the teachers make a higher number of contributory

comments that allude to their personal beliefs actually affecting their classroom teaching practices. This demonstrates the latent perspective, or as referred to previously, hidden curriculum, teachers bring to their classrooms.

Comments that support the notion of personal beliefs not affecting classroom teaching practices include, “*I don’t have a personal belief in the classroom*”, and “*I don’t push any of my beliefs onto students by voicing my own opinions*” (Sandy); “*our entire school has the same philosophy*” (Josey); “*I don’t interfere either way*” (Sri); and “*I question students about their ideas not my own beliefs*” (Faith).

Conversely, comments that insinuate teachers’ beliefs do, in fact, affect their classroom teaching practices including having a “*personal lack of comfort*” regarding biblical versus fictional supernatural events, “*I don’t believe I have the skills to support student understanding without bias ..., either mine or the school’s*”, and “*I don’t believe supernaturally themed literature has a place in the classroom*” (Josey), which supports belief systems having an influence on decision making, both how the text is approached, and also the text choice itself. Daisy notes that she is a “*little uncomfortable*” involving correlations that are made in class between the supernatural and biblical events, it is “*against the school ethos to question the validity of the Bible*”, and that she “*didn’t want to confuse students*” so consciously avoids some topics, again demonstrating the effect personal beliefs have on teacher decision making in the classroom.

The teacher participant named Sri is from a cultural minority and her insight into culturally challenging beliefs in the classroom is interesting. She reports an incident in class which challenges not only her belief system, but that of her colleagues. She teaches Indonesian language and has two children of that ethnic origin in her class, when the subject of Kuntilanak arises, which she interprets for the class as a form of witch ghost. Her prior experience and background which forms her belief in this is based on her daughter being afraid of ghosts. Sri is told by a church official that “*Islam does not condone belief in ghosts.*” If this is true or not, now instilled in Sri’s personal belief system is that ghosts do not exist. She relays this information to her daughter whose fear then immediately dissipates. Now, having the belief that ghosts do not exist within her religion, she is faced with two students who demonstrate a

genuine fear of Kuntilanak and share their preconceived belief in an entity who steals babies in order to drink their blood. This challenges Sri's personal belief, especially given that members of the same belief system have alternate viewpoints on the same topic. Sri states on multiple occasions, "*I'm quite confused myself*", which supports the notion that the beliefs a teacher brings to the classroom can also be challenged.

Additionally, when Sri recounts the lesson to colleagues over lunch, she is faced with bias from other teachers regarding the naivety of students their age to believe in such a thing. Sri is now faced with, not only the contradictory beliefs within her own religion, but of defending the belief to colleagues, some of whom believe in God as an accepted entity, but not Kuntilanak from a different cultural demographic. She notes it is a "*double standard*" especially as "*all religions have some sort of supernatural basis.*" It is, therefore, not only personal beliefs that affect classroom practices, and classroom conversations that affect personal beliefs, but also conflicting personal beliefs that affect collegial interactions. Personal beliefs therefore, not only impact on classroom teaching practices, but also on interpersonal relationships in the school environment.

In addition to both classroom practices and collegial interaction, personal belief systems play a significant part in individual teacher/student interpersonal relationships outside the classroom. The role of a teacher is not confined to being the classroom instructor, but also incorporates that of student mentor, confidant, advisor, and support person. Sandy recounts a topic often referred to her in her capacity as year advisor. She states, "*I can't tell you how many conversations I have had with girls about the old... can't get pregnant the first time crap*" which highlights the diversity of non-educational roles teachers play in schools and the level of personal subjects discussed. It also highlights another way in which teachers feel the lines between parenting and teaching blur, impacting on parental rights and responsibilities. Riley's (2010) research reveals that, while the teacher participants he interviews disagree with the imparting of religious or belief based rhetoric in the classroom, "many indicate that having private conversations with students were a different matter from responsibilities in the classroom" (p. 166). Riley (2010) quotes one participant as saying if a student "were to come to you outside of class and ask your opinion ... [then] I ... can speak openly and freely. But if I'm teaching ... and I

start talking about ... things not related to the topic, then ... I might offend some people” (p. 167), which is congruent to the findings in this research. This also alludes to the participant recognising that aspects of religion or beliefs are potentially offensive to others. Personal interactions between teacher participants and individual students are not raised in the interviews conducted during this research; however, these conversations would shed further light on the impact teacher beliefs has on students.

6.3.3. Student related themes.

Student related themes rank lowest on the overall list with aspects of critical thinking skills being important, student wellbeing and mental health being possibly affected by critical thinking, the importance of student engagement, and students seeing supernatural as real ranking 6th, 9th, 10th, and 13th positions respectively. Although this research is focused on teacher perspectives, teacher perception regarding student impact is also noteworthy.

6.3.3.1. The importance of critical thinking skills.

All teachers interviewed agree that critical thinking skills in real life contexts are important with five participants noting that with critical thinking skills, students are less likely to succumb to manipulation, either through advertising or personal interactions. Susan states the “*value of critical thinking skills is priceless*”, and Sandy notes that, in her experience, teenagers see unreliable sources as credible. Rach adds that by being exposed to, and encouraged to consider the viewpoints of others, there could be less radicalisation and manipulation of adolescents by minority religious sects and terrorist cells. She states, “*exposing children to a variety of cultural beliefs make a better society*’ and that students ‘*need to be able to decipher what is true and what isn’t.*” Rach also states, “*there are real dangers out there, physical, emotional and manipulative*” that students need to be prepared for.

The primary goal of education should be to teach students to think reflectively and critically (Sternberg, 2003). Sternberg (2003) also suggests that although students may be knowledgeable, they have not necessarily been taught how to think analytically. They could, therefore be highly vulnerable to the erroneous reasoning presented in both media and political campaigns. Educators must promote problem

solving abilities and critical thinking skills, and encourage students to “apply these steps not just in school problems, but in problems [they encounter] in everyday life” (Sternberg, 2003, p. 3). In order to prepare students with the necessary skills of adaptation to cope with the complexities of contemporary life, teachers should encourage critical thinking and examining all possible variations and alternatives to situations so that students could apply their own reasoning and reach conclusions based on their own disciplines, rather than adhering to the conclusions of others (Paul, 1995). Elder (2000, p. 1) agrees, and further states, “training students for job performance in narrowly defined skill areas no longer serves students well” and it is critical thinking, problem solving, and being mentally flexible that will be of most value in contemporary society.

Academically, critical thinking enables effective analysis, evaluation, explanations, and synthesis of texts and information, which decreases the risk of adopting false beliefs that have no credible or reliable source origins. Within the confines of this research, this has been viewed through the Four Resources Model for critical literacy (Luke & Freebody, 1997, 1999). This includes the identification of bias and prejudice, and distinguishing fact from propaganda, misinformation, and distortion (Lau & Chan, 2004). These critical thinking life skills assist in problemsolving, reflection, and making conclusive decisions by weighing up all available data free from bias and innuendo (Duchscher, 1999), which is identified as being important by the teacher participants.

When students are educated regarding critical thinking and information gathering, they are less likely to succumb to propaganda of any sort, which is echoed by the participants Jimmy, Rach and Daisy. The importance of critical thinking in this real life domain is, therefore, significant. Research also demonstrates that students who have had explicit instruction regarding critical thinking strategies have an increased internal Locus of Control (LOC) and consequently a significant increase in psychological wellbeing (Burke & Williams, 2012; Loghmani, 2010; D. P. Newton, 2012; Parisoz, 2010; Rashidi, 2005; Rezaei Kargar, Ajilchi, Kalantar Choreishi, & Zohoori Zangene, 2012). Internal LOC refers to individuals who feel they are in control of their own thoughts and behaviours, in opposition to external LOC which indicates individuals feel events and behaviours are outside their personal control.

Critical thinking, therefore, increases one's ownership of thought and behaviour processes, resulting in more confident students, who have an increased sense of psychological wellbeing which will be discussed in the following subsection.

Interestingly, although teachers agree that critical thinking skills are important, they also allude to these skills as being developmental in nature. Some researchers consider the abstract thought processes required for critical thinking are limited to older students (Elkind, 1981; Flavell, 2011; Piaget, 1960) while some disagree, stating they are present in children as young as four (Heyman & Legare, 2005; Koenig & Harris, 2005; Jaswal & Neely, 2006; Lutz & Keil, 2002). With researchers unable to agree, it is understandable how teachers of young students deem them not to be ready until students are older; the teachers of adolescents consider these skills should have been taught at an early age and therefore not a requirement for them to explicitly teach. Despite a universal agreement that these skills are important, researchers concur that basic reasoning skills are lacking in students (Halpern, 1998; Kennedy et al., 1991; Van Gelder, 2005).

6.3.3.2. Student wellbeing and mental health being affected by critical thinking.

Susan and Sandy make the most comments about the psychological aspect of eliciting critical thinking in adolescents. Susan suggests that she is “*mindful of other students*”, and encouraging students to think critically about life choices and beliefs could “*open that child up to ridicule*” by others who do not share those beliefs and she does not want students to draw that level of criticism upon themselves. Sandy demonstrates a personal awareness of teen suicide and antecedents thereof by specifically recounting an anecdote involving a student who committed suicide. She comments explicitly that “*internally students are taking a lot away from critical thinking conversations*”, and that “*you don't know if they've internalised something that really messes them up later in life.*” She also questions if critical thinking is not going to do more harm than good with respect to not being able to see what is going on inside a student's head. These are legitimate concerns from teachers when considering some of the precursors noted by Bordini (2007).

Bordini (2007) suggests that among the causes of adolescent suicide are impaired peer relationships, humiliation and frustration, short term events that can be considered shameful and perceived failure at school. When considering critical thinking, and the questioning that occurs in eliciting these deeper levels of thought processes, it is not unexpected that this is raised by interview participants. Sri notes that she is aware of how confused some students are when discussing personal beliefs, and Daisy states that she does not “*want students to start questioning their own internal thought processes and beliefs.*”

As discussed in chapter two, with the theory of innate emotional volatility, inner turmoil and psychological disequilibrium, coupled with Mead’s (1949) theory of cultural context and imitation, it could be accepted that the adolescent student is a psychological product of familial and societal beliefs and peer acceptance pressure, packaged in an internally tumultuous being. It is therefore understandable why some of the teacher participants raise concerns regarding the psychological impact critical thinking could have on students. If a student has been culturally predisposed to explicit belief systems, either religious based or ethnically sensitive, and they are encouraged to question those beliefs in any way by locating credible sources, assess the reliability of the belief, or provide evidence to support the claim, then it could be assumed that inner turmoil is occurring on a psychological level, even if it is not apparent to the outside world.

6.3.3.3. *The importance of student engagement.*

Faith suggests that novels containing supernatural themes could be “*safely assumed*” to be engaging, given the prevalence in popular culture and sales records. She also notes how engaged “*inventive and studious [students are] analysing how zombies could be real and how to kill them*” during everyday conversations. She comments that students “*do more critical thinking about that than anything we study.*” The teachers interviewed acknowledge the increase in engagement when discussion based teaching is employed, but are hesitant to follow this pedagogical choice through due to time constraints. Sri shares an instance where she gave her student the choice of text and “*Harry Potter was overwhelmingly the winner.*” She reports the rise in engagement and notes that students often revert to the movie dramatisation of the novel rather than the text on the page.

Contemporary studies “usually measure engagement on a single, unidimensional scale” (Wang & Holcombe, 2010, p. 634) and “most research examines engagement as an outcome” (p. 635). These studies predominantly view engagement within the social construct, investigating connections between perceptions, learning environment, and academic achievement (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Lewis, Huebner, Malone, & Valois, 2011; Marks, 2000; Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007; Wang & Holcombe, 2010; Yonezawa, Jones, & Joselowsky, 2009). Recent research focuses on the importance setting has on engagement and includes factors relating to teacher expectations (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003), the relationships between adults and adolescents (Gambone, Klem, & Connell, 2002), peer relationships between students (Ream & Rumberger, 2008), and resource allocation pertaining to student engagement (Tseng & Seidman, 2007).

Whilst there have been multiple studies specifically concerning both behavioural and emotional engagement (Ainley, Foreman, & Sheret, 1991; Ainley & Sheret, 1992; Finn, 1993; Finn & Rock, 1997; Gerber, 1996; Lindsay, 1984; Marsh, 1992; McNeal, 1995), the research specifically concerning cognitive engagement appears limited (Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1987; Newmann, 1992; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993; Zimmerman, 1990). Cognitive engagement involves a student having a psychological investment in their own learning, and involves concentration, focus, and mental flexibility (Fredericks & McColskey, 2012; Willms, 2003). Promoting cognitive engagement is suggested via the use of group learning strategies and topics of student interest (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), 2013; Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Fullan, Hill, & Crévola, 2006; Seal, 2009). Also of note at this point is the comment by the teacher participant Sri, “*what engages students is what others are sensitive about*” which places the teacher in a difficult position. AITSL (2013, n.p.) states, “governments across Australia recognise the importance of engagement, but few explicitly provide strategies and guidance for boosting engagement in the classroom.” Most policies involve the behavioural and social/emotional aspects of student engagement (AITSL, 2013) which leaves a significant gap in cognitive engagement research.

The High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) surveyed 81,499 students from different schools and includes students of different sexes, socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicity and geographical area. It reveals that 50 percent of responding students feel bored every day, and a further 17 percent feel bored in every class. When questioned about the reasons, 75 percent state the material is not interesting, and 39 percent feel the material is not relevant to them (Yazzie-Mintz, 2006).

Yazzie-Mintz (2006) states, “with so much emphasis on the achievement gap, the HSSSE 2006 data suggest that there is another gap for schools to pay attention to: *the engagement gap*” (p. 8). This engagement gap manifests in a variety of non-productive behaviours, and impacts, not only the learning of the disengaged student, but the learning of their peers, and influences teacher practices. The types of non-productive behaviours are listed in Table 6.3 and demonstrate that teachers encounter “low-level disruptive behaviours and disengaged behaviours on an ‘almost daily/daily’ basis” (Sullivan et al., 2014, p. 49). This is echoed by the teacher participants in this study.

The conundrum presented by this research, and that of Yazzie-Mintz (2006), is that everyone agrees that student engagement is important, and that the material that engages students can be perceived as potentially offensive to some individuals – how then could material that cognitively engages students be presented in a sensitive and inclusive manner, when the Australian Curriculum requires content to be analysed critically to determine credible and valid arguments to support different viewpoints without bias? Critical thinking then also requires an individual to redefine their stance in the face of credible evidence, which places personal belief systems under scrutiny.

Researcher’s Reflective Journal Notation

Engagement is not listed explicitly and in the NSW BOS English syllabus that supports the Australian Curriculum, the only reference to engagement involves ‘engaging personally with texts’ (NSW BOS, 2012, p. 25). Rather than engaging with texts, should the emphasis therefore not be on engaging in learning, or engaging with concepts?

6.3.3.4. Adolescent belief in the supernatural.

This sub-category has the least number of comments by teacher participants. Comments include conversations regarding zombies, where Jimmy notes, “*students discussed zombies being real*” but there are a “*few different perspectives*” regarding this possibility, and Faith also relays student comments stating her students are “*quite inventive and studious analysing how zombies could be real and how to kill them.*” Josey comments that “*miracles and supernatural events in the Bible are different as it’s faith based, not fantasy*”, which adds a dimension of teacher beliefs to this sub-category. As mentioned previously, Sri has the most illustrative comment regarding her conversation with some Indonesian students who are “*genuinely scared of Kuntilanak*” which “*surprised and worried*” her. She is also concerned at the double standard of Christian staff believing in the supernatural events depicted in the Bible, but judging these students from a different culture regarding their belief involving the supernatural.

Teenage belief in the supernatural was discussed in detail in chapter two. Regardless of the antecedents and origin, it is clear that paranormal and supernatural phenomenon do impact on teenage beliefs at a conscious, unconscious, moral, spiritual, ethical, or religious level. Given the multi-dimensional way in which the adolescent acts on these beliefs, and that the internal psychological thought processes involving those belief systems are subjective and unique to each individual, it could be argued that the use of such themes has the potential to cause both passionate and opposing viewpoints resulting in uncomfortable conflicts in the classroom environment. The statistics and discussion presented in this thesis support the engagement teenagers have with this theme, however the value of utilising material containing these themes, especially when eliciting critical thinking responses, would need to be carefully weighed up by the teacher. Engagement versus potential conflict has distinct advantages and disadvantages depending on the community demographic, student capabilities, and teacher skill level.

6.4 Summary

This chapter lists the findings in relation to the participant interviews and categorises them thematically. The themes that are presented and ranked according to frequency are then discussed to provide a rich insight into teacher concerns involving critical thinking in contemporary classrooms. The investigation of the critical thinking phenomenon, as experienced by classroom teachers, provides a lens through which to illuminate areas of conflict. The following chapter will then bring all the data investigated together, in order to fully answer the research questions posed at the outset of this study, and present implications and recommendations based on teachers' lived experience involving critical thinking in the contemporary classroom context.

CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Reason is one thing and faith is another and reason can as little be made a substitute for faith, as faith can be made a substitute for reason.

(John Henry Newman, n.d.)

Phase 4	Conclusions And Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -use data from each phase to provide answers to the research questions -using data gathered and analysed, establish implications for contemporary classrooms -in which areas is contemporary research into critical thinking lacking, and therefore what are the recommendations for further research -in which areas of this research is there reason to conclude that further investigation is warranted
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7.1 Introduction

After examining and comparing all the data and documentation presented in this thesis, succinct statements are formulated and are presented in this chapter to answer the research questions posed at the outset of this research. The specific text and participant based questions then form the basis to answer the overarching question in a complete response to the issue investigated. This response highlights implications pertinent to the English teacher’s classroom in the contemporary educational setting.

7.2 Answering the TQs

The textually based questions are raised to investigate the context in which the research is taking place. The rationale for inclusion is to create a mosaic of background detail encompassing student, teacher, and community background, and the associated ethical issues when utilising classroom material that, although potentially engaging, can also be potentially confronting and in opposition to teacher and student belief systems.

7.2.1. What specific types of supernatural themes occur in school based literature?

The themes presented in the four novels investigated during this research include supernatural beings (consisting of Biblical or mythical creatures other than God, witch/wizard, the undead/walking dead, Angel of Death/crossing spirit, ghosts, God, soul/spirit, vampire, werewolf, and Devil/Satan), magic (consisting of magic/miraculous power, objects with medium power, physical abilities, commanding people or objects, potions, changing appearance/disappearing, spells, immortality/abnormally long life or returning from the dead, apparitions, reading thoughts, and seeing the future), and mythology (consisting of mythological habitat, superstitions, death/the afterlife, significant days, hearsay, and Heaven and Hell).

The witch or wizards in the novels are predominantly on the side of good, with only *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014) presenting one wizard as the main character's arch nemesis in an enactment of a good versus evil plot scenario. All of the undead or walking dead are presented as evil, and predominantly controlled by a higher force, intent on either covertly or overtly doing harm to the other characters in the story. The Angel of Death, or crossing spirit, is referred to in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009) as a term rather than a character in the story, predominantly in biblical references which reflects the religiously dominant era in which the novel is written. *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009) presents the crossing spirit, or Lady on the Grey, as a calm motherly guiding presence in opposition to *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014) where this is the main character's occupation. *Sabriel*, a necromancer, is portrayed more like a warrior who, not only commands righteous souls to cross through the series of gates to the afterlife, but also prevents other, more evil spirits and creatures, from returning to the realm of the living.

Ghosts, in each novel, are not depicted as malevolent, but as either guiding spirits, much in the personification of a living person, or as situational or comic relief, as in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 2001). Soul or spirit references are often referred to as having just left the body, or the embodiment of a person's intrinsic being (either good or bad, depending on the nature of the individual through life). God is only noted in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009) when associated with religious

maxims and biblical references. *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009) only references God by name when Miss Lupescu states she is a ‘hound of God’ but that others refer to her as a werewolf.

Werewolves are predominantly in *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009), and exist as one of the main characters battling evil. Likewise, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (Rowling, 2001), the werewolf character is also on the side of good. The only evil reference is in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009) as a subservient to the vampire, but is only mentioned twice. Vampires, in contrast, are predominantly portrayed as evil, and preying on others. Only in *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009) is the vampire character depicted on the side of good, and is both guardian and mentor to the main character from infancy to puberty.

The magic theme is dependent on character attributes. For example, in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009), where the main character is evil, the miraculous traits unattainable by mere humans are all connected with malicious and immoral actions, whereas the medium power of objects and potions wielded by humans are depicted as good in nature and utilised to fight off the evil Dracula. This is potentially in response to the novel being presented as a real life event (in diarised format), in opposition to *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014) and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (Rowling, 2001) where people, events, and settings are predominantly fictional and fantastical in nature. The novels portray magic as being equally distributed between good and evil to invest readers in supporting the main character. Each magical attribute has the same potential to be either good or bad in these novels, depending on the nature of the character wielding the power.

The medium power of objects is present in each of the novels, and is depicted by an everyday artefact that one *believes* has power. The use of the crucifix against a vampire has no credible scientific reason for emitting immense power; it has this power because either the Church or the individual believes it does. Similarly, a magic wand is not depicted as wielding power on its own, but rather as directed by its user. In the novel *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014), Charter Stones are depicted as everyday boulders that are impregnated with the energy of the Charter, and therefore capable of great power and/or acting as a portal to the afterlife. Only a Charter Mage has the ability to

differentiate a Charter Stone from an ordinary stone, and it is only the Charter Mage who can harness that reported power.

The mythology theme is less predominant in the novels, with *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009) and *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014) having the most thematic entries regarding this. Both novels have settings conducive to dealing with the afterlife, and the superstitions connected with it. Superstitions in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009) are limited to the Catholic ritual of crossing one's self in response to danger or unearthly presences, and mythology surrounding appropriate ways of banishing or killing vampires.

7.2.2. Why is it important for teachers to have an understanding of cultural and religious sensitivities related to these supernatural themes?

Although it is easily dismissible for these supernatural themes to be regarded as purely fictional in principle, the underlying belief dates back to the beginnings of time and have deeply religious and spiritual connotations. As has been discussed in detail previously, every belief system in the world has connections to supernatural themes. Evidence is also presented in this thesis that demonstrates some contemporary cultures continuing to have deeply rooted beliefs in witchcraft, spirits/ghosts, and miraculous events. Maintaining a mindfulness of the cross-cultural links to these subjects is imperative if critical thinking is to be elicited involving any of the presented themes.

Although it is identified in the 2011 Australian Census that 61 percent of the Australian population is reported to be Christian (regardless of specific denomination), and minor religions of Buddhism at 2.4 percent and Islam at 2.2 percent (ABS, 2011), it is also noted that immigration statistics have increased post 2011 Census (ABS, 2014). The ABS (2014) reports a trend of Australian residents that were born overseas as rising 23.8 percent in 2004, 27.7 percent in 2013, and 28.1 percent in 2014, with an increased Syrian and Iraqi refugee intake in 2015 (Abbott et al., 2015). The composition of contemporary Australian classrooms is reflective of this trend, and cultural sensitivities are influencing teacher decision making more than in past generations.

It is also revealed through this research, that the teacher participants perceive parents as becoming increasingly confident in raising concerns and making complaints to schools. The perceived fear regarding backlash and other ramifications of their actions plays a significant part in both the conscious and unconscious decisions teachers make in their classrooms. Being mindful of cultural sensitivities when utilising potentially confronting or uncomfortable material is conducive to facilitating positive relationships between home and school settings.

7.2.3. How might eliciting critical thinking responses when utilising these texts create conflict between cultural belief systems, and personal philosophies?

Critical thinking involves clear, rational and open-minded thinking that is informed by evidence (Scriven & Paul, 1987). It involves the consideration of alternative perspectives and to either integrate those perspectives into one's own beliefs, or to replace them with the alternative perspective in the light of the new evidence presented (Raiskums, 2008). This depth of analysis involving personal beliefs and philosophies can be potentially confronting for both students and teachers, particularly where it raises questions about deeply held familial or community belief systems.

Links between cultural and religious beliefs and the supernatural are made consistently throughout this research. By thinking deeply and critically about the supernatural themes presented in the novels, an individual therefore also forms correlations to their own cultural belief system and probes for evidence to therefore affirm or dispute their understanding. These correlations can be made at either a conscious or unconscious level, and are subjective in nature.

The child has been predisposed to familial belief systems via cultural influence from infancy, and this is his/her primary grounding for moral, ethical, and religious beliefs. The goal of critical thinking is to question one's understanding regarding information, for example the supernatural themes presented in the novels, and strive for evidentiary affirmation. The evidence and opinions elicited through critical

thinking practices in high school, therefore, bring previously unconsidered notions to the teenager's attention, and has the potential for them to question not only their beliefs, but also question the credibility of other information imparted by their parents.

It has also been noted in this thesis that adolescents, while striving for peer acceptance, will ultimately revert back to parental beliefs as a default base if unconvinced of presented evidence. This places teenagers in the difficult position of potentially agreeing with peers for acceptance, agreeing with parents through loyalty and religious pre-teen background predisposition, and formulating their own beliefs in the light of current experience and evidence offered. These potential internal conflicts occur at a time of hormonal turbulence and emotional vulnerability coupled with a period of introversion and ideological extremism (Gessell, 1956; Gross, 2001; Hall, 1904; Kretschmer, 1960; Stone & Church, 1979). The effect this level of inquiry has on student mental health and wellbeing is uncertain, but the potential is significant.

7.3. Answering the PQs

The participant based questions are raised to investigate the lived experience of teachers regarding critical thinking in school classrooms. They are designed to form an understanding of how teachers interact with curriculum content, students, and teaching practices while accessing the Australian Curriculum general capability of critical thinking.

7.3.1. How are teachers treating the critical thinking aspects of teaching literature?

The teacher participants all acknowledge that they either pay no specific attention to critical thinking in English classrooms, treating it more as an osmotically achieved by-product of content, or encompassing only the textual aspect of critical literacy rather than thematically based (utilising Luke and Freebody's Four Resources Model). In doing this, they reportedly examine the context, bias, and the reliability of the information presented, which teachers allege conforms to the curricular requirements of critical thinking, but follows a distinct process rather than encouraging students to investigate alternative processes that work for them as

individual learners. All teachers relate critical thinking to the content being taught rather than concepts via the justification that it is the content that is assessed in externally formulated assessments. The importance of covering all possible content that *could* be assessed is therefore prioritised. The type of critical thinking engaged in by teachers therefore involves comparing texts in order to justify opinions, rather than independently investigating the thematic content of the literary work.

The other aspect regarding the treatment of critical thinking that emerges involves discussion based lessons. Although the importance of discussion based lessons in relation to the development of critical thinking is referenced throughout this research, nearly all teachers avoid this avenue. The only teacher who engages these techniques is at a progressive private school where the Principal supports alternative delivery methods and has organised a professional development session about the Australian Curriculum and its components. She admits that it is the overall school philosophy that has to change and requires covering less, but in more depth. This approach does, reportedly, require a very understanding and patient Principal, and alteration to assessment protocols to include more observational assessment and anecdotal evidence, which is not possible for externally set examinations like the HSC. This is a recent innovation at the school, however, and it is not yet known how this depth over content and discussion based approach translates into achievement levels and HSC results.

Other teacher participants feel overwhelmed and unsupported in addressing the general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum, and voice their desire for practical workshops based around programming, implementation, recording, reporting, and assessment of these general capabilities like critical thinking. The instances where the other teacher participants engage in discussion based techniques, although reportedly engaging and valuable, place them behind in their faculty program and make it difficult to catch up.

7.3.2. What issues do teachers face when teaching critical thinking through Australian Curriculum texts containing supernatural themes?

The issues faced by teachers are twofold in nature. The teacher interview comments raise issues concerning the skill building relating to critical thinking in general (how do I plan for, teach, assess, and report on it), and then the issues faced with the thematic use (avoiding potentially controversial and/or offensive content, and being mindful of different perspectives and belief systems).

The primary issues that teachers feel are of concern in teaching critical thinking as a skill include:

- Practical application in the classroom is difficult and ranks second in hierarchical order. Concerns include educational apathy and lack of engagement by students (just tell me what I need to know to pass attitude), student behaviour issues monopolising classrooms, differentiated learning (with levels ranging from students with additional needs to students requiring extension making class debates and discussions problematic), and a lack of teacher training regarding critical thinking and how to teach it;
- Content being the focus of teaching, which ranks third;
- Education being assessment driven, which ranks fourth; and
- Lack of time to address critical thinking, which ranks seventh in the teacher interview themes.

The issues raised by teacher participants relating to the use of texts containing supernatural themes include:

- Avoiding anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable, which ranks first in all the themes uncovered in the interviews;
- Believing teaching critical thinking can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs, which ranks eighth;
- Feeling that student wellbeing and mental health can possibly be affected by eliciting critical thinking responses; ranking ninth; and
- Teaching critical thinking opens teachers up to parental complaints, which ranks twelfth.

The issues raised regarding the practical implementation of critical thinking in classrooms include teachers' experience with students demonstrating educational apathy, in that, they just want to be told what to regurgitate in order to pass the assessment; lack of academic engagement; an overloaded curriculum; having such a wide gap in ability levels to differentiate for; and behaviour management issues. Accountability and validation issues also arise within this theme, with teachers questioning how they are supposed to program for, assess and report on, and provide evidence of learning pertaining to the critical thinking general capability in the Australian Curriculum.

The issue of content is raised by all teachers, and is heavily linked with education being assessment driven and time management issues in schools. Teachers feel the content is forced to be the focus rather than the concepts, which is the original aim of the Australian Curriculum, as it is the content that is assessed via externally formulated assessments including NAPLAN and the HSC. This includes what teachers feel is either lacking in appeal to student interest (like whole units of poetry) or is antiquated (critical analysis of Shakespearean drama, which one teacher suggests is only of value to students who are intending to continue on to university to study literature or the arts). Additionally, it is the assessment results that form parental and community perceptions regarding the quality of education provided by individual schools. The results are made public via the My School website, which not only publishes school achievement results in external assessments, but allows schools to be compared with, and ranked against, other schools. Although this offers some degree of transparency for community members, it also places a great deal of stress on the teachers to cover content which *may* be assessed, in order to obtain the best results possible for their schools.

A lack of time to address critical thinking is noted by most teachers, and valid concerns are uncovered regarding the hours of study in English mandated by the education department, the percentage of that time suggested as being required for content coverage by the Australian Curriculum, and the real-life time constraints experienced by teachers from outside influences including whole day sporting events, excursions, and extra-curricular interests, to whole school mandated activities including NAIDOC, Education, and Refugee weeks. All of these time factors are

outside individual teachers' control, but it is the responsibility of the teachers to ensure students are adequately prepared for both exams and life after school.

The issues raised by teacher participants regarding the use of texts containing supernatural themes to elicit critical thinking responses and teach the associated skills are also of note. Avoiding anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable elicits the most comments from teacher participants, with an average of 20 comments per teacher over their interview. The teachers who teach in the private sector report being both personally and professionally uncomfortable with supernatural themes, especially when correlations are made by students to people and/or events in the Bible. Both teachers in these schools feel supported that, in general, these texts do not form part of their bank of novels to study, with the exception of Shakespearean works which are compulsory for senior English classes (and is where the supernatural correlations are made by students). On these occasions, both teachers avoid the conversations.

Other teachers report being mindful of cultural differences and the diversity of beliefs in their student demographic. They feel that classroom conversations are supported, but what is taken outside the classroom can possibly be misconstrued or taken out of context, thereby being offensive to others. Also, some teachers note that beliefs are internal and subjective; therefore, the effect of anything deemed controversial may not be apparent to the outside observer. It is consequently deemed more appropriate to avoid anything which can be considered potentially offensive, challenging, uncomfortable or possibly confrontational. Cawelti (2015) cites a tendency for educators to protect students from being offended, especially if it might result in a claim of trauma being made against the teacher or the school. By this rationale, it can be deemed that teachers are not just preventing the potential for students to feel uncomfortable and parental objection, but also to protect their own professionalism, and the school's reputation.

The possibility of eliciting critical thinking undermining parents' responsibilities and beliefs is also a concern raised by teachers. This is closely linked with critical thinking opening teachers up to parental complaints. Six teachers interviewed make reference to parental sensitivities and complaints being common in their experience.

There are also significant comments raised about teachers not knowing where the line in the sand is between teacher and parent responsibilities, particularly where belief systems are concerned. Teachers acknowledge it is the parents' right to instil whatever belief systems they see fit in their children; however also acknowledge that it makes thinking deeply and critically, questioning and investigating new evidence, difficult to probe without testing those same beliefs. The teacher participant Sri, makes insightful comments that highlight the findings in this area, in that society, as a whole, is a lot more sensitive now and this makes aspects of teaching, particularly critical thinking, problematic for teachers.

Feeling that a student's wellbeing and mental health are possibly affected by eliciting critical thinking responses is a lesser ranked theme in terms of numbers, but provides the most depth into teacher attitudes about and towards their students. The subjective ideal of wellbeing is influenced by a number of external factors. The adolescent psyche is exposed through the research in this study as a time of internalisation, emotional volatility, ideological extremism, and dependence on cultural context and imitation. Whilst the external factors promote internal responses, those internal responses are not only subjective in nature, but also not necessarily discernible to the external observer. At a time when students are seeking the acceptance of their peers, it can be considered irresponsible of teachers to place students in a potential position of ridicule, or criticism, because of their belief system. The anecdotal recount by Sandy, about a seemingly popular and studious pupil who committed suicide, prompts her to reconsider the potential impact getting a student to reflect on alternatives in light of new evidence, or questioning their cultural or personal beliefs has on the developing and tumultuous adolescent's psychological wellbeing and mental health.

7.3.3. What are the implications of teaching critical thinking in contemporary classrooms?

The implications, or consequences, of teaching critical thinking in classrooms have both negative and positive connotations.

One negative consequence is that teacher participants perceived that it takes up valuable teaching time, which according to the participants is in short supply and

high demand, placing teachers under additional stress. Teacher participants also note it is their perception that in classroom based discussions, the more capable students monopolise the discussion time, with less capable students either disengaging or contributing minimally to the conversation. In terms of teacher preparation, a shift in thinking (and teacher professional development opportunities) would be required to address reported concerns of programming, assessment and reporting regarding critical thinking, which would also consume a significant portion of school funding allotted to staff development training.

Teachers also note that they feel personally uncomfortable at times regarding the questions that arise, and the depth of the conversation entered into when they do attempt discussion based learning utilising critical thinking principles. Some participants feel confronted, and report that conversations, at times, become over-heated and emotional. This emotional evocation leads to another implication regarding the potential effect this deeper level enquiry has on adolescent psychological wellbeing, mental health, and the development of the sense of self involving personal belief systems and their understanding of truth. These implications have the possibility of far reaching and long lasting subjective effects. The potential for the emotionally immature, volatile, and internalising teenager to engage in activities of self-harm, although remote, is also a distinct possibility that cannot be ignored. In the age bracket of 15 to 19 year olds, in 2014 there were 92 male deaths and 38 female deaths as a result of suicide in Australia (12.1 per 100,000 people, and 5.3 per 100,000 people respectively) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), and from 2008 to 2009 there were 26,935 individuals hospitalised in this age bracket due to self-harm (which equates to 117.9 per 100,000 people) of which 62 percent were female (McKenna & Harrison, 2012). This deep centred questioning of personal beliefs, values, and ethical stance is not limited to the students, but also to the teachers.

While no positive implications emerge from the participants' lived experiences, a number of benefits are documented in other research. Positive implications, that have been researched and backed by empirical evidence, include an increased level of cognitive engagement by students (AITSL, 2013; Fredericks et al., 2004; Fullan et al., 2006; Seal, 2009), and subsequent improved academic achievement (Bass &

Perkins, 1984; Bransford et al., 1986; Freseman, 1990; Kagan, 1988; Nickerson, 1984). It can be hypothesised that an increased level of engagement can significantly reduce behavioural issues connected with disengagement, and also, to a degree, absenteeism. Students voice their desire for group centred, and discussion related learning through research surveys, however the rate at which schools are embracing these ideas appears to be slow to non-existent (Yazzie-Mintz, 2006). It is also hypothesised that students learn better from other students than teachers, supporting not only the value of group learning and discussion, but also the benefit for students for whom the curriculum is differentiated (Bowman-Perrott, Davis, Vannest, Williams, Greenwood, & Parker, 2013; Damon, 1984; Fantuzzo, Riggio, Connelly, & Dimeff, 1989; Griffin & Griffin, 1998; Loe & Feldman, 2006).

Some student responses in the HSSSE (Yazzie-Mintz, 2006, p. 10) include, “school is ... boring. Harder work or more work is not the answer though. More interesting work would be nice”, “there should be more interestive [*sic*] activities + discussion [*sic*] to keep the students [*sic*] attention”, and multiple responses that echo the notation of “why do you ask these questions when we know that your [*sic*] not going to change high school?” which attests to the students’ exasperation that desired and requested change will not be forthcoming.

Although schools and education authorities acknowledge the benefits of this pedagogical methodology, and the importance of including these models in teaching practices, the teacher participants highlight how difficult it is for teachers to put these theories into practice given the demands of schools, time management, and curricular requirements. Although the teacher participants validate the views of the students surveyed by Yazzie-Muntz (2006), they receive minimal practical support regarding how to make these desired changes in the classroom, and their trepidation regarding parental backlash if they do.

Another positive implication is that teaching critical thinking skills prepares students for life outside school; one that is full of manipulation, media hyperbole, and unscrupulous individuals. Critical thinking skills give students the internal resources to not only cope with these individuals, but use their own facilities to search for credible evidence, bias, supporting documentation, and reliable sources to make

informed choices throughout their lives. It will also assist the generations coming through the scholastic institution to be more understanding and tolerant of other cultural belief systems, traditions, and lifestyles through engaging in deeper level conversations regarding their heritage, and controlled and supported debating to legitimately consider the alternative points of view of others.

7.4 Answering the Overarching Research Question

How does eliciting critical thinking responses in secondary school students using novels containing supernatural themes impact on values, belief systems and classroom pedagogy?

This study focuses on the teacher's perspective and challenges involving critical thinking in their personal classrooms, and therefore only the reported impact on the participants' values and belief systems could be investigated. Through the eyes of the teacher, however, it is possible to gain a better insight into how critical thinking, particularly through the use of supernaturally themed material, *could* potentially impact upon students, both positively and negatively, in terms of values and belief systems.

Half the participants agree that, when students present questions, comments, discussions, or rationales, that it does cause them to consider their own belief system regarding the concept. All of the teachers then avoid the topic, or refer the students to another member of staff to answer their questions. One teacher, when directly confronted with a double standard regarding belief systems (Christianity versus traditional Indonesian belief), had cause to question her own beliefs. This is the direct result of eliciting critical thinking responses in her classroom, and she questions if it impacted on her in that way, then how did it impact on her students? Similarly, the teachers from the private sector note their discomfort when miracles in the Bible are questioned, as do their colleagues. It is unclear from the interviews though, if that discomfort results in internal faith questioning, as the mantra of note is *you believe because you do*, which negates a degree of critical thinking on the part of the teacher. While some teachers are steadfast in their belief system, others question

it in the face of student inquisition. This impact is limited to the teachers in this research and cannot be transferred to be indicative of a wider population.

The impact on thought processes and confusion for teachers, therefore, lies not only in the questions and/or comments being posed by students, but also in the teachers questioning themselves as to why they personally react the way they do. The implication for teachers regarding their belief systems, therefore, appears to be that they avoid many topics of conversation that either they or the students may be passionate about, and could form the basis of quality critical thinking debates. They are therefore actively avoiding the very inspirational vessel that could springboard their students into quality critical thinking that, not only improves educational outcomes, but also teaches students how to approach and deal with real life scenarios, rather than hypotheticals or text based analysis. These findings have significant implications for Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), education systems, schools, principals, teachers, teacher education, and classroom pedagogy.

The formation of the Australian Curriculum acknowledges that schools cannot adequately teach students all the content knowledge required for life in the 21st century, and therefore (by prioritising concept over content) students will learn how to learn, so that, as functioning adults in society, they can access relevant information independently and apply critical thinking skills to that information in an effort to personally judge it as valid, reliable, unbiased, and worthy of pursuit.

This requires a whole school approach and open-mindedness to shift the existing boundaries of pedagogical philosophies. Ironically, this open-minded approach is also in accordance to critical thinking attributes. It is a general capability of, not only the student curriculum, but also teaching approach. By shifting the educational paradigm, issues of training, support, resilience, and perseverance are addressed, again in keeping with critical thinking attributes for teachers.

Only one teacher notes that her school demonstrates a pedagogical shift in correlation with the Australian Curriculum and that her school implements a change in the way content is being delivered to incorporate a more discussion oriented

approach to learning. This is a recent venture, and the results of this change in delivery are yet to be quantified. Although this is a pedagogical adjustment, it does not address the impact this has on the treatment of supernatural themes as the teacher states that no such content would be utilised in her particular school.

Other teachers maintain that they are addressing critical thinking through the use of critical literacy, and that it is limited to textual analysis. The teachers rationalise this by stating the textual analysis and synthesis is what is assessed in the HSC. They also, however, avoid any thematic content that could be construed as potentially controversial, and so the impact that the treatment of supernatural themes has on their classroom critical thinking pedagogy remains unknown.

In summary, the overarching question is only partially answered in this study as supernatural themes are avoided by all teachers. Because of this, the impact it has on teacher beliefs and classroom pedagogy remains an unknown. The study does however, raise more questions than it answers, particularly with regard to the potential impact eliciting critical thinking has on student mental health and wellbeing issues. These issues will be discussed in the recommendations for further research in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 8 - RESEARCH SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

But once you have a belief system everything that comes in either gets ignored if it doesn't fit the belief system or get distorted enough so that it can fit into the belief system. You gotta be continually revising your map of the world.

(Robert Anton Wilson, n.d.)

This study offers an insight into the everyday classroom of the English teacher through the eyes of the teacher's lived experiences. The elicitations the teacher participants make with respect to the effect of critical thinking on students is perceived, and deeper analysis is not within the parameters of this study. The research does, however, raise some important questions, the answers of which could have significant impacts on both student engagement, and mental health and wellbeing issues.

8.1 Research Summary

Teacher participants feel the quality of their teaching, and engagement with critical thinking in their classrooms, is compromised through a lack of useable classroom time due to behaviour issues or extra-curricular activities, an overloaded curriculum, and/or lack of quality professional development opportunities offered by educational agencies. Teacher participants also avoid many opportunities in which to engage students in quality critical thinking exercises due to personal or perceived student sensitivity regarding explicit content or topical theme presented, and subsequent parental backlash and/or ramifications thereof.

As educators, despite students being our core business, the predominant themes raised by participants involve the need to avoid anything that could possibly offend anyone, and the practical aspects of teaching (delivery, pedagogy, curricular content, assessment and time management). Of these, their current focus on educational content, and of an assessment driven approach, ranks highly in their concerns. This raises comments borne out of frustration in that teachers feel manacled to covering

immense quantities of content in order to cater for every possibility that may arise in externally written assessment papers. This emphasises the weight that current systems and governments place on assessment regimes in opposition to the preparation of students for a world beyond school. This perceived need for improved academic results from departmental and community based entities is evident via their publication in a digital website (MySchool). This site allows for easy access and comparison of compulsory assessments across the state. This cyclic content and assessment continuum places a great deal of stress on frustrated teachers, who feel their professionalism is under review if their students do not perform on this stage.

The implications of critical thinking for teachers and classroom pedagogy are multi-dimensional. Firstly, the implication of teaching critical thinking involves curricular demands in that it takes up a considerable amount of time which, due to other priorities, appears to be in short supply in schools. In doing so, it encourages teachers to collapse content and ‘push’ students through the syllabus to attain the end goal of assessment results. With this in mind, either the curriculum needs to be decluttered (which is out of the teachers and schools’ control), or faculties need to work on unit programming to ensure all the content requirements are satisfied but to emphasise depth of knowledge and understanding over superficial blanket coverage. By delving deeper, students can not only find processes of inquiry that work for their individual learning style, but also engage in some extraneous content via osmosis, in opposition to the reverse being true.

Secondly, the implications for the classroom, in pedagogical terms, are also of significance. By utilising a whole school approach, teachers can engage students in topics that interest them, and therefore potentially avoid many of the behaviour issues expressed by participants. This requires a shift in thinking to a student centred inquiry methodology with a refocus on planning and methods of assessment by teaching staff. This, however, does become problematic with respect to independent assessments like NAPLAN and the HSC, as assessments are pencil paper based, and do not allow for student expression through multi-media or presentation avenues of assessment that are available in the classroom.

The other benefit to the general classroom is that students would learn active listening skills, be able to express their beliefs and opinions in an explicit but non-threatening manner, reduce ignorance about other cultures, and empower students to understand that their opinion is important, and their voice has a right to be heard, free of judgement and ridicule. By engaging in discussions around these potentially sensitive topics, like supernatural themes, students would learn these expressive techniques in a supported and familiar environment. Teachers, likewise, would benefit from this as they are afforded a unique insight into their students' thought processes, which, in turn, can inform their teaching practices and decision making to gain maximum results from their teaching and programming.

Student wellbeing and engagement ranks in the lower percentiles of comments. Although the number of representations by participants is less, the quality and insight teacher participants raise involving student wellbeing and mental health is of significance. Teacher participants are wary of eliciting any thought processes by students which may cause them to internally question their cultural or belief system upbringing, and subsequently cause psychological disequilibrium in a tumultuous developmental time in human growth.

It is evident from the findings, that eliciting critical thinking in adolescents, particularly when utilising literary works containing supernatural themes, could cause conflicting ideologies to transpire. The effect this level of higher order questioning regarding fictionalised themes and either explicit or latent belief systems has on the developing adolescent mind is unknown and deserves further research.

The research findings can then be placed back into the conceptual framework as depicted diagrammatically in Figure 8.1.

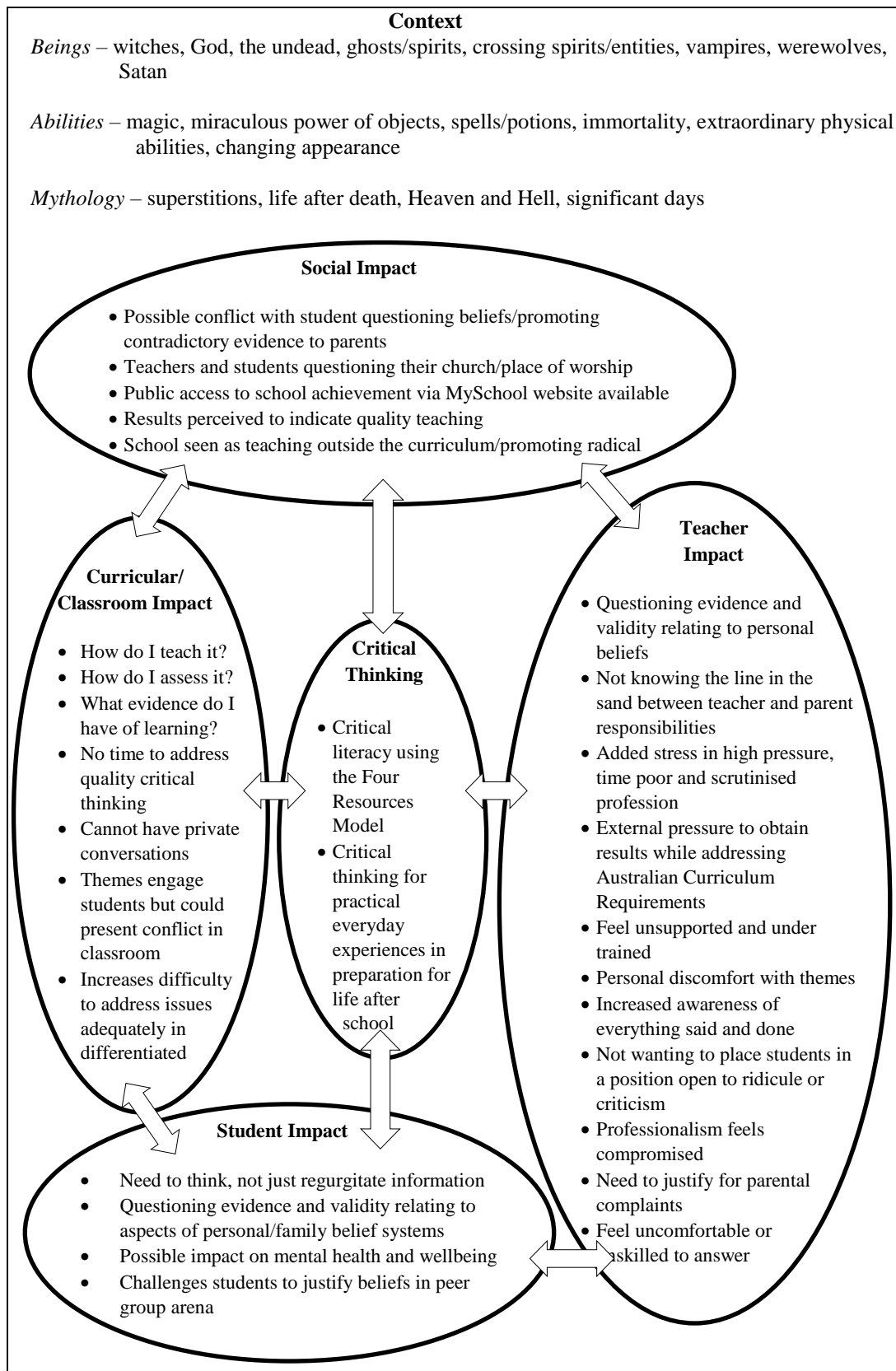


Figure 8.1. Research findings placed within conceptual framework

A diagrammatic representation of the research findings when considering the conceptual framework presented in chapter three.

8.2 Contributions to Knowledge

The focus of the study is to investigate the correlation between critical thinking, (utilising school based literature containing supernatural themes) and the effect this has on teachers' belief systems, and pedagogical practices in contemporary classrooms. These have significant links to both theoretical and practical knowledge regarding literacy teaching, learning practices and theories of adolescent development. The subsequent benefits, therefore, lie not only in teaching and learning, but also in assisting all stakeholders to develop an "open and tolerant attitude towards different cultures, religions and world views" (NSW DET, 2005, para. 1.3) and develop a deeper understanding and confidence by the wider community regarding contemporary literacy views and the effect critical thinking may have on cultural belief systems and personal convictions.

With Australia being a diverse nation and a renewed focus on Indigenous perspectives becoming more prominent, the significance of cultural sensitivities in the educational setting is considerable. In addition to the thematic content of some prescribed English texts for secondary schools, the contextual theme of the supernatural underpinning this study is becoming an integral part of adolescent culture through multimedia, television, movies, and text based literature making it a contemporary vehicle through which to research critical thinking and cultural sensitivities.

In addition to this, the importance of reflection and the critical analysis of teaching and learning are both imperative and integral to continuous educational advancement (Atherton, 2002; Cranton, 1996; Mezirow, 1991; Schön, 1991). This study engages teachers in conversations prompting reflection into, not only their own belief sensitivities and teaching practices, but recognising potentially wider areas for conflicting views. Teacher comments make reference to them not engaging in active thought regarding this topic prior to becoming involved in the study. It is only through engagement in the research process that they have recognised the avoidance tactics they employ when sensitive themes, such as the supernatural and belief systems, arise. Additionally, teachers note some areas of collegial conflict regarding

belief systems, and these conversations should be a catalyst for personal and professional reflection rather than dismissing them as rhetoric best to be avoided.

This study adds an additional lens to research and knowledge involving the effect critical thinking practices has on both teachers' and students' belief systems, by highlighting conflicting issues in literary thematic content and its imbedded nature in belief systems and religious experience. It also provides an insight into concerns and difficulties faced by everyday teachers in implementing a dynamic and changing Australian Curriculum while addressing the critical thinking skills needed by students as learners, and as young adults in preparation for post scholastic life. It increases the reader's understanding of these multidimensional curricular demands on teachers and provides evidence based data to assist in further development of critical thinking applications regarding curriculum development theory.

This research provides a deeper understanding of the issues associated with teaching critical thinking skills incorporating supernatural themes in a diverse setting, and prompts an increased awareness of the perceived possible impact on mental health and wellbeing during adolescent psychological development. It highlights the contentious issue of sensitive themes and how they are addressed within the critical thinking general capability. Due to the challenging nature of the themes and their belief basis in a diverse society, teachers appear less rigorous in their treatment as they would otherwise be due to the perceived ramifications. This is combined with teachers not being fully equipped to deal with these issues due to lack of training and support, and also the need to develop a greater understanding into what diversity and multiculturalism means in the contemporary classroom. The contribution to knowledge, in this respect, also encompasses policy and continuum development to address these issues.

The way in which these themes are unpacked and treated in English classrooms also provides a contribution to existing knowledge with respect to the Four Resources Model of teaching critical literacy (Luke & Freebody, 1997, 1999). In senior years, particularly in preparation for the HSC, the ability to critically analyse texts is prioritised in opposition to using texts functionally in relation to their backgrounds and prior knowledge to interpret those points of view, ideologies and bias uncovered

in the critical analysis. The teacher participants note that they avoid this aspect due to the potential for conflict, parental ramifications, and to circumvent placing a student in a position of ridicule. The Four Resource Model is a reputable framework to assist teachers. Currently it appears to be underutilised because of the hesitancy of teachers to delve deeper into thematic content and apply that to everyday contexts. The model allows teachers to create a visible form of thinking that scaffolds critical thought processes for students, and these processes then become an integral skillset for students to draw upon in their lives after school. Although no further contributions have been made with respect to the model itself, this research demonstrates the importance of engaging with it for critical thinking purposes and how it can be utilised in different ways.

With some aspects of the supernatural being associated with mythology, and others as a substantiated belief system in religious education, the role of the English teacher is becoming more complicated and problematic in the 21st century. Whilst there remains little doubt regarding the engagement that supernaturally based literature promotes for the adolescent student, this study assists teachers to reflect on and assess their own belief system, how it affects their teaching and learning practices, and the impact their classroom pedagogy has on cultural and personal sensitivities regarding the supernatural themes common in approved literary texts and in popular culture. Due to the ethical and moral conflicts raised by teachers, it appears that any critical treatment involving beliefs, cultural sensitivities or potentially controversial themes are dismissed by teachers and effectively put in the 'too hard' basket. Some teachers admit to referring students to other members of staff to avoid their own personal ethical or moral concerns.

The contribution to existing knowledge is also reflective of that highlighted in the literature review in chapter two. Snyder and Snyder (2008) cite lack of training, lack of information, preconceptions, and time constraints as significant factors for educators when teaching critical thinking. These themes are echoed throughout this research, with the teacher participants placing most emphasis on time constraints out of the four identified barriers in Snyder and Snyder's (2008) research. Researchers also highlight the need for more teacher professional development (Choy & Cheah, 2009; Innabi & Sheikh 2006; Steffen, 2011; Tsui, 1998, 2002) and teachers

prioritising content over concept development (Costa, 2001; Fletcher, 2007; Tsui, 2002). This means teachers are effectively going through the motions of addressing critical thinking without actually engaging in this general capability. This is echoed by the teacher participants in this study, with participants citing their experience of a perceived Australian content and assessment driven curriculum. Teachers in this study also voice their concern regarding the assessment of critical thinking. Although the Australian Curriculum does not specify how critical thinking should be assessed, assessment measures used in the United States are predominantly standardised and multiple choice, with researchers suggesting they are of little value (Kennedy et al., 1991; Ku, 2009; Moss & Koziol, 1991; Norris, 1989; Paul & Elder, 2007a; Silva, 2008), however no research has been located to indicate that more valid assessment methods are being developed.

Although this research confirms some findings already noted in the literature review involving the American perspective, it provides a correlation to the Australian perspective not previously highlighted. This research also raises questions which contribute to existing knowledge, challenge classroom practices, and promote the need for further investigation in these areas. These further investigations are discussed in the following section.

8.3 Recommendations for Further Research

During the course of this research, it is noted that there are gaps in existing knowledge that are outside the parameters of this study, and these are listed below for contemplation. The data analysed during this study highlight the need for such research to be conducted, especially with respect to the Australian perspective. As it is noted in the content of this thesis, the Australian Curriculum has evolved rapidly from version 2.0 in 2012 to version 8.3 in 2017 and can therefore be considered a fluid document that evolves in congruence to contemporary research and teacher feedback. With this in mind, it is pertinent that current educational research be updated with respect to the Australian perspective to ensure this country has the most up to date, realistically workable, and research based educational document to support teaching and learning in the 21st century. Four highly significant and

complex findings related to this topic emerged, each of which deserves further investigation:

1. **COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT.** The teacher participants in this study note ‘educational apathy’ as a barrier to teaching and learning, with comments alluding to students not wanting to learn, and just wanting to be given the answers in order that they may regurgitate the information in the assessment. It appears that there is a paucity in the literature specifically focused on the investigation of behavioural and emotional engagement (Ainley et al., 1991; Ainley & Sheret, 1992; Finn, 1993; Finn & Rock, 1997; Gerber, 1996; Lindsay, 1984; Marsh, 1992; McNeal, 1995); and the research specifically concerning cognitive engagement appears to be similarly limited and dated (Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1987; Newmann, 1992; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993; Zimmerman, 1990). It has been hypothesised in this thesis, that cognitive engagement could have a positive effect on both behavioural and emotional engagement, but limited information appears locatable about how to achieve this in a practical way, apart from the suggestion of using group learning strategies and topics of student interest (AITSL, 2013, Fredericks et al., 2004; Fullan et al., 2006; Seal, 2009). Further research in this field would be of benefit to teachers, especially when high interest topics appear to be, from the data gathered in this research, the topics around which most sensitivities lie;
2. **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.** Teachers comment that the changes required to adequately address all facets of the Australian Curriculum are difficult to do in a practical ‘on the job’ basis. They note that theoretically, everything appears to work well but they feel they have little practical support with actually implementing this initiative, particularly with the school demands and interruptions placed upon them. The two teachers interviewed who attended a school based workshop report that they feel more comfortable and less overwhelmed following the sessions, but continue to want available support from colleagues and outside professionals to assist them during this transitional stage. Further research into teacher understanding of diversity and multiculturalism in education would be of benefit to ascertain the need for training in this area as teachers report they avoid anything that could be perceived as potentially confronting for both teacher and student. Training

involving the Four Resources Model (Luke & Freebody, 1997, 1999) of teaching critical literacy would also be of benefit in order to fully engage all aspects within this model. This would provide a clearer understanding of its use as a tool to push students to think more deeply. The Four Resource Model is a scaffolding process for teachers that is not utilised as much as it could be, especially in supporting critical thinking and to teach metacognitive processes to students. The Four Resource Model makes thinking visible to students in order that they can engage in critical thinking processes in other aspects of their lives. All teachers comment that they would be appreciative of further training, and therefore further research into the types of professional development that are of most benefit would be helpful;

3. **STUDENT PERSPECTIVES.** Whilst the evidence gathered during the course of this research is insightful into the everyday concerns of teachers, the students' perspective relating to the effects of critical thinking using supernaturally themed stimulus and the impact on values, belief systems, and self-image development would be of benefit. Although this study highlights the teacher perspective, teachers would benefit from having a deeper understanding of the students' subjective perspective in opposition to what they visually observe, or their perception of how students interact internally when critical thinking skills are applied to sensitive or belief system based stimulus; and
4. **MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.** Teacher participants raise the concern that eliciting critical thinking responses could have a negative effect on teenagers' mental health and wellbeing. They note that encouraging students to voice their opinions and comment on the points of view of others has the potential to open that student up to ridicule; particularly if their beliefs are different from the status quo. Critical thinking involving belief systems, religion or values could cause internal conflict for individuals struggling with finding their own identity and beliefs separate from their family or cultural background. Research suggests adolescence is a time of introverted thought, hormonal turbulence, emotional vulnerability and ideological extremism (Gessell, 1956; Gross, 2001; Hall, 1904; Kretschmer, 1960; Stone & Church, 1979), and the effect this level of inquiry has on student mental health and wellbeing is uncertain from the available research, but has the potential to be

significant. Further research into the possible effects of critical thinking on adolescent psychological development, particularly where sensitive themes are involved, would be of benefit to teachers, psychologists, school counsellors, and the educational profession.

In conclusion, as the reoccurring supernatural themes span both scholastic applications and current teenage multimedia trends, it remains a credible topic linked to the Literature strand of the Australian Curriculum that warrants further investigation. The links that supernatural themes have to existing cultures and belief systems is undeniable, and with our ever-changing diverse population, sensitivity to these beliefs will become increasingly more important. An understanding, therefore, of the belief system, cultural background, and subsequent effect critical thinking could have on those beliefs is therefore important for teachers in contemporary classrooms.

Everything a teacher says and does, and conversely does not say and does not do in classrooms, has the capacity to impact on student potential in both positive and negative ways. As responsible educators, it is our duty to ensure we are fully informed of both benefits and possible implications regarding classroom teaching practices, and to regularly participate in personal and professional reflection. These reflective practices monitor the effect teaching and personal interaction potentially has on students and on personal values and belief systems, in order to recognise the impact they subsequently have on teaching practices.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Supernatural occurrences in novels

		DRACULA by Bram Stoker																										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
SUPERNATURAL BEINGS – reference by specific word or by description	Ghosts	1		1			3										1											
	Vampires	1	4	3	3			1	4	1	2		3	2	1	4	2		7	3		11	2	4	2		2	10
	Witches/wizard	1		2											1				1		1							
	Werewolf	1		1																								
	Devil/satan	1		2	2				1			4	1				5		4		1	1			1		6	
	God	1		3	4	1	4	7	7	2	6	7	6	8	8	4	6	4	4	2	5	15	24	18	12	12	12	20
	Soul/spirit								1								2				19	2	1	4	3	9	2	4
	Undead/walking dead														1	16	11						1		2			7
	Angel of death/ crossing spirit						1	1					1										1					
	Biblical/myth figure other than god			2	1			1	4						4		1				4		2		2			
MAGIC – supernatural abilities or powers	Spells									2	1						2					1		2		1	2	7
	Apparitions	1	1					1								3	3			2	1				1			
	Potions									2			1		2	5			3	2		1	5		1			4
	Change appear /disappear		1	3	3			2		1		4	1				3		6	3		10	1		1	1	3	4
	Seeing future																											
	Read thoughts	1																							1	1	1	
	Magic/mirac power (eg. no shadow or reflection)		1	1				3	1	1	1		1						2				1			2		
	Medium power (eg. crucifix,	1		1				1						2			2		1			2		1				

THE GRAVEYARD BOOK by Neil Gaiman									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
SUPERNATURAL BEINGS – reference by specific word or by description	Ghosts	45	29	8	19	18	15	22	7
	Vampires	8	5	5	11	5	9	16	7
	Witches/wizards				43	1	5	3	4
	Werewolf			33				9	
	Devil/satan			2	1				
	God			6		1		2	
	Soul/spirit	11	5	2	6	9	1	16	3
	Undead/walking dead	1	2	85				11	
	Angel of death/ crossing spirit	4				8		2	3
	Biblical/myth figure other than god		9	25	15		2	52	2
MAGIC – supernatural abilities or powers	Spells			2	10		1	5	
	Apparitions	14	9		2	2	6	10	2
	Potions								
	Change in appearance/ disappearance	7	11	16	24	9	22	24	8
	Seeing future							1	
	Read thoughts		4			1	2	6	
	Magic/mirac power (eg. no shadow or reflection)	6	18	8	11	4	17	25	5
	Medium power (eg. crucifix, stones etc)								
	Physical abilities	2	5	11	13		6	27	2
	Commanding people/objects	4	3	5	5	6	20	29	1
MYTHOLOGY – ref to belief systems/history	Immortality/ab long life/return from dead	6	11	6	3	3	8	21	2
	Habitat	39	58	81	53	20	27	99	23
	Superstition (eg. cross self etc)	8	7	7	22	33	5	40	4
	Significant days (eg. st day)					27			
	Heresay (eg. they say that..)		1	3	2	2	1	1	1
	Death/ afterlife	22	11	7	17	21	17	16	5
Heaven/Hell			3						

		SABRIEL by Garth Nix																													
		+1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29 +	
SUPERNATURAL BEINGS – reference by specific word or by description	Ghosts	8	1		1		5	12	16	5	13	6		2			1	2		2	2				1					2	
	Vampires																	6	1		1										
	Witch/wizard	20	3	4	3	2	1	1	29	19	24	20	6	26	20	21	10	6	18	5	6	6	6	4		6		11	10	2	
	Werewolf																														
	Devil/satan																														
	God																														
	Soul/spirit	7			2	2	13	1	3			2		17	1		1	3	1	1	1	3	8	1	2	2				3	
	Undead/ walking dead	5	8	6	9	4	10	3	1	7	5	7	2	13	6	2	7	31	9	9	17	12	15	12	2	9	2	1	10	4	
	Angel of death /crossing spirit	35	9	8	4	6	6	2	9	6	8	9	3	9	20	6	6	8	15	2	5	4	31	15	2	4		9	5	7	
	Biblical/myth figure other than god			2	3	2	22	17	1	5	2		3	2	1		2	18	5	1	2	3	19	23	22	12	3	7	14	30	
MAGIC – supernatural abilities or powers	Spells	10	4	4	4	7	6	3	5	1	2	6	2	4	4	2	1	3	5	1	6	19	11	5	3	1	2	6		1	
	Apparitions	3			3		4				1		1						3		1		1		1			1	1	2	
	Potions																														
	Change appearance/dis appear	1	2			2	3	1	3	2	1	2	12	2		1	2	5	3			4	2	1	2			1	4	13	
	Seeing future																	1							1		2	1			
	Read thoughts						1						1		1					1								1			
	Magic/mirac power (eg. no reflection)	17	13	9	7	5	9	4	5	2	3	7	6	6	5	6	1	5	3	1	4	8	5	8	11	4	15	7	10		
	Medium power (eg. crucifix, stones)	9	13	7	6	22	25	7	6	2	3	16	5	10	2	5	7	19	15	2	8	12	30	16	3	5	4	8	9	20	
	Physical abilities		1	1	5		2	2	21	17	12	10	3	10	20	13	8	12	14	6	9	6	6	4		1	4	5	4	8	
	Commanding people/objects	4	2	4		3	7	1	3	1	3	26	2	6	2	1	2	7	6		1	6	14	6	15	12	4	7	7	8	
Immortality/ab	15			4	3	6	1	2	2	1	3		8	3			1	8	4	3	1	10	6	1	3			1	5		

		HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE by J. K. Rowling																	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
SUPERNATURAL BEINGS – reference by specific word or by description	Ghosts							14	4		1		1				3		
	Vampires					3			1										
	Witch/wizard	3			19	17	15	8	5	5	1		7	3	1		7	3	
	Werewolf													1		5	1		
	Devil/satan																4	1	
	God																		
	Soul/spirit					1													
	Undead/walking dead								1								1		
	Angel of death/crossing spirit																		
	Biblical/mythical figure other than god	2			14	32	3	1	4	1	30	4		1	22	33	12	8	
MAGIC – supernatural abilities or powers	Spells					8	5	2		7	2	6	1	2	1	3	9	4	
	Apparitions	2				2	2						4						
	Potions					6		1	11	1			2			1	1	1	
	Change appear/ disappear	2	1		2	5	4	3	2			1	3		1		2	3	
	Seeing future																		
	Read thoughts													1					
	Magic/mirac power (eg. no shadow or reflection)	1	4	3	15	17	11	13	7	4	2	6	2	3	2	2	8	4	
	Medium power (eg. crucifix, stones)	2			2	27	6	1	3	6	3	3	5	8	7	4	5	2	
	Physical abilities	1	1		1	1	1		1	4								1	
	Commanding people/objects	1			2	3	1	1	2		2	1	1					4	4
Immortality/ab long life/return from dead								1						3	1			1	
Habitat	Habitat				1	2	1		2										
	Superstition (eg. cross self etc)				1	1	3	3	3			1	3	3		2	2	8	
	Significant days (eg. st day)	1			1		1				4	2				1		1	
	Heresay (eg. they say that..)																	2	
	Death/afterlife								1				1					1	
	Heaven/Hell	1														1		1	

Summary of total occurrences							
		Dracula	The Graveyard Book	Sabriel	Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Total over 4 novels	Average per book
SUPERNATURAL BEINGS – reference by specific word or by description	Ghosts	6	163	79	23	271	67.75
	Vampires	72	66	8	4	150	37.5
	Witch/wizard	6	56	289	92	443	110.75
	Werewolf	2	42	0	7	51	12.75
	Devil/satan	29	3	0	5	37	9.25
	God	202	9	0	0	211	52.75
	Soul/spirit	47	53	74	1	175	43.75
	Undead/walking dead	38	99	228	2	367	91.75
	Angel of death/crossing spirit	4	17	253	0	274	68.5
Biblical/myth figure other than god	23	105	221	167	516	129	
MAGIC – supernatural abilities or powers	Spells	18	18	128	50	214	53.5
	Apparitions	13	45	22	9	89	22.25
	Potions	26	0	0	24	50	66.5
	Change appear/disappear	47	121	69	29	266	66.5
	Seeing future	0	1	5	0	6	1.5
	Read thoughts	4	13	5	1	23	5.75
	Magic/mirac power (eg. no shadow or reflection)	14	94	192	104	404	101
	Medium power (eg. crucifix, stones)	11	0	296	84	391	97.75
	Physical abilities	5	66	204	11	286	71.5
	Commanding people/objects	27	73	160	22	282	70.5
Immortality/ab long life/return from dead	18	60	91	6	175	43.75	
MYTHOLOGY – ref to belief systems/history	Habitat	2	400	173	6	581	145.25
	Superstition (eg. cross self etc)	90	126	115	30	361	90.25
	Significant days (eg. st day)	1	27	0	11	39	9.75
	Heresay (eg. they say that..)	4	11	4	2	21	5.25
	Death/afterlife	6	116	233	3	358	89.5
	Heaven/Hell	15	3	0	3	21	5.25

APPENDIX B: Interview transcripts with emerging themes and exploratory comments

Notes from researcher's reflective are written in dark orange

Red text indicates word emphasis

Participant 1 – 'Susan'			
Unit of meaning	Line no.	Original Transcript	Exploratory comments
	1	I: What role does critical thinking play in your approach to teaching literature?	Participant relaxed in open seated body position
CT secondary to content Don't have time to focus explicitly on CT	2	R: Critical thinking comes secondary to the content of the literature in terms of [pause] the content that you	Emphasis on 'explicitly'
	3	need to get through, you don't have time to focus explicitly on critical thinking with regards to the ideas	
	4	presented in the text. You're looking more at how the text is being constructed and linking that to other texts	
	5	and formulating ideas off of that.	
	6	I: So you're saying that you pay more attention to the actual unpacking of the text than the associated	Looks to ceiling, almost exasperated
	7	treatment of it – would that be correct?	
You don't have time in class More than enough content Takes long enough to teach content	8	R: Yep. Especially in regard to historical texts and sources and things like that. You don't [pause] have time	Open palm gestures
	9	in the classroom to focus on the critical thinking with regard to it, because it's more than enough content for	
	10	the students to get through the unpacking of the text, so the assessing of the reliability, the bias, the context.	
CT is a by- product Touch on CT but not in depth	11	[pause] It takes long enough in the classroom to teach the context of a source's creation as opposed to	
	12	thinking critically about it. That is sort of a by-product of going through the context, content, reliability,	
	13	usefulness. It seems like in covering each of those, you are touching on critical thinking but you don't get to go in depth on that, explicitly.	Speech quickens with open palm hand gestures
	14		Sideways hand swipe on 'avoid the subject completely'
	15	I: Ok, so how comfortable are you with using literature that contains supernatural themes in the classroom?	
Controversial theme (supernatural) potentially offends	16	R: For the most part, it's something, if I think there is a controversial theme or idea that runs through it,	
	17	especially with regard to supernatural themes, if I think there is something that is going to offend – or not even	
Avoid controversial/ potentially offensive content (supernatural themes)	18	offend, but provoke a conversation that I think might make other students uncomfortable, then I will just avoid the subject completely, or the content or that source.	Searching for a response. I wonder if she has a response but is trying to articulate it politically
	19		
	20	I: So how do you maintain your integrity, by that I mean your personal beliefs and your objectivity, while eliciting quality critical thinking in students?	
	21		
	22	R: [Pause]	Slow and deliberate

<p>Personal beliefs don't weigh in on what teaching Steers things away from topics that provoke thought (CT & beliefs) Avoid the conversation altogether (CT & beliefs) Steer conversation in alternative route Mindful of different perspectives</p>	<p>23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33</p>	<p>I: Like, do you ever have any conflicts of your own beliefs and what you're asking your students to analyse and think about critically?</p> <p>R: Not necessarily, because I think as a teacher and as an adult, I understand that my personal beliefs and understandings don't weigh in on what I'm teaching necessarily. I can understand that from my own perspective, other students may have a different idea and in being conscious of my thoughts involving my beliefs, and investigating them through critical thinking processes, I am able to steer things away from subjects that would provoke those types of thoughts – just to avoid the conversation all together, because I know that these things are going to be provoking those questions and those lines of enquiry, then it's easier to steer the conversation in an alternate route, rather than try and navigate it as the class is discussing being mindful of different perspectives and backgrounds.</p> <p>I: So, having said that you generally avoid the thematic content regarding supernatural themes, have you ever encountered or come across a conversation regarding supernatural themes where there were opposing belief systems involved in the conversation, and if so, how did you manage it?</p>	<p>speech Emphasis on provoking thoughts. Is she happy to handle them when they come up but not to provoke anything?</p> <p>Appears almost relieved it hasn't come up. Nodding on 'would'</p>
<p>Demographic of classroom means supernatural themes hasn't been an issue yet Mindful of supernatural thematic content Not know how to respond (CT & beliefs) Can't have individual conversations Others might not share beliefs Open that child up to ridicule Steer conversation back to topic rather than explore Mindful of other students Safer track to steer away</p>	<p>34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54</p>	<p>R: Broader supernatural themes, no. So like witches, vampires, that type of thing hasn't really been a problem I have had to discuss in terms of people's perspectives because the students in my class haven't been the ones to have a connection with that. So, it's not so much the way that I have handled it, but the demographic of the classroom has meant that it hasn't been an issue up until now – but I can recognise that it would be a problem, so I think it is just something that you are mindful of, but isn't something that, as yet, has been presented as a problem with the classes that I have had. But with that being said, some of the ideas presented in the Bible, like the story of Noah, and the parting of the ocean, and all that kind of stuff there have been some instances through teaching history that Bible stories have been linked somehow through the sources, or through discussion, or just the idea of even Easter and the resurrection and all of these types of things are just being thrown out there as linking ideas to the discussions that we are having or the sources that we are looking at and [pause] when it does happen, it's kind of like, you know, a student will drop a bomb on you where they will say something like that, or bring those ideas to the table and not knowing how to respond to that – because they are thinking critically in terms of bringing their own knowledge and background and relating that to what you are doing and trying to have that conversation in the classroom, but you can't have it with that one student knowing that there are 28 others in the classroom that may not share the same beliefs, or understanding, or perhaps open that child up to ridicule of this is something you are believing and you are trying to argue the fact, or create something around it that I tend to just steer the conversation back to what we are doing rather than let them explore that like the idea that they are wanting to bring to the table. The idea that they want to discuss and bringing critical thinking ideas into the conversation, but just being mindful of the other students in the class, I find that it is a safer track to steer away from and just bring it back to what we are</p>	<p>Cross reference English and history classes <u>Hands up surrender gesture</u> Internal teacher conflict? – happy that they are thinking critically but not knowing how to respond when beliefs are brought up – uncomfortable when discussing possibility of students being ridiculed <u>Open palm gesture</u> <u>Hands up surrender gesture</u></p>

from	55	doing instead of letting them branch of in the direction that they want to explore.	<u>Open palm gesture</u>
	56		
CT is implicit	57	I: You mentioned before that the classes, especially with unpacking the literature, was very content driven.	Confident speech
	58	With, in mind, how the Australian Curriculum has now leant towards a more concept driven curriculum rather than a content driven one, how do you see critical thinking fitting in, in that respect?	when discussing content and curriculum
	59		
Prioritise content over concept	60	R: Critical thinking is one of the concepts we look at implicitly . If you can touch on those skills as you progress through the content, then great, trying to gear some of the lessons to make sure that there is that element to it, but when you are prioritising content over concept , it seems like the concepts are learnt secondary to the content – because the content is the part that is getting assessed on. Whereas the concepts, it's a skill for life and I can definitely see why it is important to include those in the classroom and teaching students how to unpack and evaluate information for themselves, and to be able to use the skills – and I've had this conversation with a few students when they say 'Why are we learning about this?' trying to link the concepts we are learning rather than the content . That I understand that you may not need this content again, but the way we are doing it and just the processes we are going through – those are the skills that you will be using later on. I think that is where the critical thinking is an important element to it, but in terms of the school setting, because it is assessment based – I would love to give you all the skills to have you go off and be successful adults in life, and that's what I want to do, but I need to balance that against – if you don't have the content then you can't pass the assessment – therefore in the scheme of things you aren't achieving as high as you can. There's no time to balance each of those equally .	Exasperated trying to get students to see importance of process and not just assessment. Speech quickens and volume increases. Again emphasises no time. 'don't' & 'can't' pointing finger on table
Content is assessed	61		
Concepts are skills for life	62		
CT as concept is important	63		
Link concepts to skills and processes rather than content	64		
CT important element	65		
Content is assessed	66		
If don't have content then can't pass assessment	67		
No time to balance content and concepts equally	68		
	69		
	70		
	71		
	72		
	73	I: So you are saying that what you experience personally is more of an emphasis on what is going to be assessed than skills for life?	<u>Hands up surrender gesture</u>
	74		
Assessment and content is back bone of unit	75		
Concepts come off content and assessment	76	R: Yes. Yes. The assessment and the content is the backbone of the unit . That is what everything is then planned around and things coming off of that are the concepts and things, so as long as you get that main structure of content and prepping them for the assessment in place, whatever else and however you can plan those lessons to incorporate those concepts, like trying to incorporate them – but sometimes it's just – there are some units that there is so much content for them to get through , that to really get that deep understanding of it and get that deep knowledge, you need to spend more time on the content than having them practice concepts to help them become life long learners. It seems like that is just a byproduct of learning the content .	Verbal and non-verbal emphasis on 'so much content'
Some units have so much content to get through	77		
Need to spend more time on content	78		
CT is a byproduct of content	79		
	80		
	81		
	82	I: Ok, so having discussed that, what role do you believe critical thinking plays in the everyday lives of students, both while they are at school and after graduation?	Guarded. Almost like she thinks it is important and guilty
Value of CT skills is	83	R: [pause]	

priceless	84		
CT helps to be more street savvy	85	I: Like, do you feel there is – what value do you place on it?	or frustrated it isn't being done adequately.
CT helps think for themselves	86		Head tilt x 2
School tells what to think	87	R: I... the value of critical thinking in life after school is priceless. It is what is going to dictate the choices that a student makes throughout their life. The understanding of why they are doing something and being able to evaluate it for themselves, and you know, use evidence to support what they are talking about. It just helps them to be more street savvy, to not be brought in by advertisement and scams and that type of thing. To help them think for themselves, whereas in school it is more that we are telling them what to think. This is what you need to think in order to pass the assessment. These are the answers, not that you need to regurgitate and not that I agree with teaching to an assessment, but you do need to make sure that those things are covered and not just touched on superficially, but you really need to drive the content matter for the students to understand it. So, while I would like critical thinking to play a more central part in the classroom, I think that until there is a way that there is drawn more into focus without taking anything away from the content...[sigh]and I don't know how you would get to do that... maybe some sort of...drawing critical thinking more into the assessment task rather than regurgitating information, I want to hear your ideas for yourself – using your information. And I guess that is bringing it up to analysing things for yourself. Analysis being one of the things you do, I feel like ...people say that analysis is critical thinking, which it is, but I think there's a whole lot more to it than just... like breaking a historical source...okay you've got a political cartoon or something, can you tell me the context, the bias, the usefulness, the reliability...all those things. I feel that picking apart a political cartoon is um.....is showing that level of analysis, but I don't think it qualifies as critical thinking because it's ticking off steps in a process, and not finding a process that works for you. Finding your own way to think about things critically. It's just ... it's a process...we're teaching a process in order to pass an assessment, instead of 'here is a task, figure it out for yourself.'	Very passionate speech regarding trying to get students thinking for themselves instead of spoon fed and regurgitating info and frustrated as to how to maintain content for assessment purposes.
School tells what you need to pass assessment	88		
Regurgitate content to pass	89		
Drive the content	90		
CT needs to play more central part in classroom without taking away from content	91		
Need to draw CT into assessment rather than regurgitating	92		
Analysis is CT but more to it	93		
Analysis is ticking off steps in a process, not CT	94		
Teaching a process in order to pass assessment	95		
	96		
	97		
	98		
	99		
	100		
	101		
	102		
	103		
	104		
	105		
	106	I: So what I'm hearing you say is teaching, in your experience, is really centred around the assessment and working backwards?	
	107		
Teaching is centred around assessment	108	R: Yes. Yes. Definitely. That is pretty much how I start all my lesson planning, because I know the end goal that students need to get to at the beginning and having a look at all the content and concepts and develop lessons out from that. I look at the end goal – this is what the student need to achieve, how am I going to get them to that point.	Is there too much emphasis being placed on teachers to be accountable with what is being taught and assessment results rather than skills for life?
I know the end goal	109		
	110		
	111		
	112	I: So when you are looking at that set assessment, how do you see the student centred curriculum and student centred learning fitting in with that?	Very firm opinion and idea of end goal with open palm sideways chopping motion
Difficult to provide freedom when 30 students at different levels	113		<u>Hands up surrender gesture</u>
	114		
	115	R: In practice, I don't see student centred learning as being very effective in the classroom, because when	<u>Hands up surrender gesture</u> Differentiation in

<p>Purely content based gearing for an assessment</p>	<p>116 117 118 119 120 121 122</p>	<p>you've got a full class of 30 students, all at <i>different</i> levels and different learning styles trying to learn the content, it's very difficult to give them the freedom to focus on their own education in their own way when you need to cover everything as a class and keeping pace with everyone. It seems like student centred learning and exploring things that interest you, or in your own way, short of Bloom's Taxonomy and things like that where you do get to learn the same content but in ways that interest you, short of doing something like that in the classroom, if its purely content based gearing for an assessment, I don't think student centred learning is something that takes place as often as it should.</p>	<p>classrooms appears a little overwhelming and participant highlights this frustration in speech and hand gestures</p>
<p>Student centred to provoke CT great on paper but difficult to translate into reality Students used to content driven assessment so difficult to change CT needs a lot of support from the teacher</p>	<p>123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133</p>	<p>I: Yeah, I was just wondering about that student centred learning, given that that's where, I guess, a lot of your critical thinking would come in. Something that, if they are asking and exploring, and something that's an interest base that they will think more deeply about.</p> <p>R: Yeah, on paper it sounds <i>fantastic</i>, but it's one of those things that is difficult to translate into reality when a lot of student centred learning and inquiry and things like that – unless you can send them away on activities and then support them as the teacher... a lot of students, because this isn't something that has been brought through from primary school and that they've always engaged in, everyone's done the content driven assessment and so it's really difficult to take them away from that and have them thinking more unaided for themselves and following their own lines of inquiry because it's not a skill that they've had to use that often throughout, you know, their time as students, and so they need a lot of support from a teacher – and with this many students in a class you just can't give that level of support when everything is so individualised.</p>	<p><i>Hands up surrender gesture</i> and vocal emphasis Hand and voice emphasis on last 2 lines <u>Open palm gestures</u></p>
<p>Supernatural themes and belief systems such a hairy question1 Hesitate to do for potential conflict (supernatural themes) Can control classroom but not when taken into the community Classroom conversations are supported If repeated outside could offend someone</p>	<p>134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148</p>	<p>I: So, to going back to a hypothetical situation, with that student centred learning, if your school was conducive to doing that approach and working forward rather than backward from assessment, and there was an interest in supernatural themes, how do you think you would blend that with belief systems in the classroom? I know that you haven't encountered that, but as a hypothetical situation, how do you think you would handle that?</p> <p>R: It is <i>such a hairy question</i> and topic in terms of, even if everyone was keen on ... even if you had a group of students, if that was what they wanted to explore and student centred... ticking all the boxes of critical thinking, I just, it's still something I would hesitate in doing because of the potential of... conflict is not the word I'm looking for, but... just [pause], there's so much potential for it to just be awkward and difficult and, not even, like... you can control what goes on in your classroom but you can't control what those students then take out to their friends and their families and the wider community. So you might be having a conversation that is completely supported, and understood, and relevant in your class, but as soon as you take that information and ideas out into the playground, to your friendship groups, out into other areas, what is not to say that the information I've facilitated in my students has then been gone ahead and repeated, isn't going to</p>	<p><u>Open palm gestures</u> Sat back and put hand up defensively on 'such a hairy question' Very careful about word choice Appears very conscious of offending others Clasped hands together 'I don't know across the board'</p>

<p>Don't want additional ramifications because I have encouraged CT & supernatural</p> <p>Encouraging CT could potentially offend</p> <p>Don't want students to draw levels of criticism on self</p> <p>Lack of maturity to do CT regarding beliefs and supernatural</p> <p>Senior classes have maturity but are content driven</p> <p>Year 9 not mature enough and discussing with parents could undermine family, culture and beliefs (CT, supernatural & beliefs)</p> <p>I wouldn't want to cross that line (CT & beliefs)</p> <p>I'd rather avoid it (CT & belief/supernatural)</p>	<p>149</p> <p>150</p> <p>151</p> <p>152</p> <p>153</p> <p>154</p> <p>155</p> <p>156</p> <p>157</p> <p>158</p> <p>159</p> <p>160</p> <p>161</p> <p>162</p> <p>163</p> <p>164</p> <p>165</p> <p>166</p> <p>167</p> <p>168</p> <p>169</p> <p>170</p>	<p>go out and offend someone else. When the school demographic is so broad, even if I've done everything right by my class, I don't want there to be any additional ramifications where I have encouraged them to follow their own inquiry and to, you know, partake in critical thinking in such a way as towell, potentially offend. I guess.. other groups when they've reached their own conclusions, if they're not of the understanding that other people in society don't have the same conclusions. I wouldn't want them to draw those same arguments, and the same levels criticism, and you know, being critical about someone's beliefs as they are free to have. If it's not their belief system, then they can be critical about it, but again... I don't know if across the board if students have that level of maturity in general. Senior classes, perhaps, but then senior classes are so content driven that you wouldn't have time for any of this anyway – so speaking hypothetically, seniors are probably the only group that could handle it, but there's no way you could do that with a year 9 class and focus on a text with supernatural themes and push that forward. Because what's to say that that child isn't quite liberal in their understanding and discussions and then go home to their parents, who are, you know, devout in whatever religion they follow, and have what I've been teaching in my classroom as undermined their family, culture and beliefs. I wouldn't want to cross that line inadvertently – and I'd rather just avoid it.</p> <p>I:Fair enough. Do you have anything else you would like to add or discuss?</p> <p>R: [laughs] No not really...It's hard, because I don't want to say the wrong thing and someone in their office on their high horse, you know... in theory it's fantastic, but in practice it just can't happen. Students in reality are not the type of people who can sit there and Wellstudents in reality don't want to use their own brains! They barely focus enough on the content to get through the assessment. They don't want to think about it – they just want to regurgitate it! Did you hand it to me on a revision sheet? – well I didn't learn it! We've spent a whole term going through this and driving the content. I haven't asked you to do anything else – you haven't had to think for yourself ...you know.... You set some homework tasks with the idea that they can go away, you know, and do their own, you know, thing at home, but they come back and it's not done. They haven't thought about it, you don't have time to do it all in the classroom because they just sit there with blanks looks on their face and 3 people up the front are contributing. I can't teach a class of three kids when 27 others are staring out the window – like – there's just no time for it.</p>	<p><u>Hands up surrender gesture</u></p> <p>Is this true? Are students lacking maturity to deal with difficult topics in regard to critical thinking, or is it a ruse to avoid it for fear of repercussions or conflict?</p> <p><u>Hands up surrender gesture</u> and vocal emphasis x 2</p> <p>Quickened passionate speech overall and strong vocal emphasis on red words with open palm gestures throughout</p> <p>Very conscious of saying the wrong thing and not the departmental line.</p> <p>Very defensive regarding being a good teacher but having to tick boxes</p> <p><u>Open palm gestures x 3</u></p> <p>Points on table with 'I am being'</p> <p>Very conscious of repercussions</p>
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producing work	171		
You don't have time to do it all in the classroom	172	I: And then, too, like you were saying about, you're expected to regurgitate the Departmental party line	Very quick and emphatic tone. Visibly frustrated that students don't want to think for themselves – just do what they have to to pass <u>Open palm gestures x 2</u> Finger point at table on 'just don't care!' Frustrated that students don't want to learn or think for themselves Passionate about repackaging content and being persuasive about it
There's just not time for it (CT)	173		
	174	R: yep, yep [<i>nodding</i>]	
	175	I:which makes it difficult in situations like doing an interview....	
You can't say the wrong thing	176	R: You feel like you can't say the wrong thing. You feel like, if you do then your professionalism is compromised. That it's your job to be the best teacher you possibly can, and I <i>am</i> being the best teacher I possibly can. I just can't tick every single department box because there is <i>physically</i> not enough time. And even if... there's not enough time.... Even if you get the resources, which some of the schools I have worked at haven't had the resources...even if you have the time...its...its...you need the whole trifecta. You need the time, the resources, you need the students' interest, because if the students aren't interested, it doesn't matter how prepared you are and the lessons you have to tick off, in some schools it would work fantastically – but not geared to everything.	
Your professionalism is compromised	177		
Physically not enough time	178		
There's not enough time	179		
Haven't had the resources	180		
Need time, resources and students' attention	181		
	182	I: And, I guess it comes back to that student centred learning doesn't it, trying to get the engagement through there, but in doing so as well, to use student centred learning you can't plan.	Frustrated that students don't want to learn or think for themselves Passionate about repackaging content and being persuasive about it
	183		
	184		
CT depend on students wanting to learn	185		
Often don't want to learn	186	R: Absolutely [<i>nods</i>]. And student centred learning depends on the students wanting to learn and, in a lot of my instances, they don't... and...there are some units and areas that you have to cover that it doesn't matter how you dress it up, they just don't want to do it. Year 8 boys <i>drag</i> their heels when it comes to poetry. They don't want a bar of it! – it doesn't matter how you package itit's just... you say the word poetry and they switch off. It's not even that they switch off, they backtrack. They don't even want to comprehend what they, they, they just don't want to. And it's the same with some subjects in history. You can't make Federation sound interesting – maybe for a couple of lessons, but in general, they just don't care! But they still need to cover the content to pass the assessment – so if it was truly a student centred curriculum, we would cut the topics that the student's don't care about and incorporate them in part into the bigger picture of what you're doing. Don't have a whole unit on poetry when the kids don't care – filter it through in the whole year. Filter it through as a supporting text instead of a stand-alone unit. That way you've got their attention with the broad, this is what we're doing, and then pulling in the parts that they don't want to do. They're still getting the skills and you can concentrate on the critical thinking and like skills. They're still student centred – like year 9 - you push them through Federation, like you have to get through this, because then we get to do World War One and the kids are so keen to do World War One, which, you try and get them to that point, because that's when they really switch on and you can start pulling in... you know... that's when they really light up and student centred learning actually exists, when you can set them an assignment with a very broad scope, and you can	
Down's matter how you dress it up, still disengaged	187		
They just don't want to	188		
Need to cover the content to pass assessment	189		
Should cut topics and incorporate in part to maintain engagement	190		
Filter content rather than stand-alone unit then would still get content and can concentrate on CT	191		
You have to get through the content	192		
If could set assignment with very broad scope, can	193		
	194		Nodding Finger point on table 'same content and information' Participant is visibly frustrated about student
	195		
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<p>encourage CT Opportunities for this limited as curriculum and programming already dictated</p>	<p>202 203 204 205 206</p>	<p>just let them follow it to where they want to. And it's great when you see that level of enthusiasm coming from a whole classroom, and kids thinking deeply and critically, and asking questions, and evaluating what they know and what they are learning and how that fits into their lives.... but the opportunities for that to happen are few and far between because, the content and the curriculum has already been dictated. It's already set!</p>	<p>disengagement Eye rolling on last line</p>
	<p>207 208 209 210</p>	<p>I: So when you said about, it's like pulling teeth to get the boys to do poetry, and that sort of thing, if you could incorporate it, do you think by cutting, well you're not really cutting the content, but amalgamating it ...</p>	<p>Initially searching for words <u>Open palm gestures</u> with shrug Finger point on table 'then I'd do it'</p>
<p>Pull unengaging elements through as can't trick students</p>	<p>211 212 213 214 215</p>	<p>R: distributing it evenly throughout the year</p> <p>I: If you did that throughout the whole year, do you think that there would be more time to explore some more of the critical thinking stuff?</p>	<p>'without parental reprisal' I wonder if parents are coming to teachers or executive? Is it an individual</p>
<p>They're overloaded with content they don't enjoy</p>	<p>216 217 218 219 220</p>	<p>R: I think there may be, because the time that you bunch the content that they don't want to learn into one unit, so a unit of poetry, that's 7 to 8 weeks that they skate through doing the bare minimum, but you will get to a novel study that the kids really enjoy – that the student's love – and if you tried pulling elements of poetry through there, like if you were doing the Graveyard Book, or something like that that the students really enjoy, you could then be pulling in some of his poetry as well. You've read the book, you <i>like</i> the author, let's compare it to something else. Then you can explore how the poems are being constructed. So you're still getting the same content and information, but you're using the text that they've enjoyed as the hook, instead of</p>	<p>school 'policy' to avoid dealing with complaints?</p>
<p>Repackage content to be engaging and they will want to do the CT on it</p>	<p>221 222 223 224 225 226 227</p>	<p>– here is something that...when I stand in front of the class and say, next unit is poetry off we go, right from the very get go, they're disengaged. And you <i>can't</i> trick them into doing poetry. If you pull it in here and there, they'll tolerate it, to the point where they may even start to enjoy it, or engage with it, or give something more of an opportunity because they're not overloaded with something they're not enjoying ...and I'm not... again<i>enjoying [laughs]</i> students should enjoy school. I enjoyed school, and I think if students enjoy school they'll want to go, but with that being said, sometimes you just need to get it done, and I think if you create more opportunities for enjoyment but still having a high level of expectation, then that's ticking more boxes. I'm not saying write poetry off because kids don't enjoy it, I'm saying maybe there's a better way to repackage it so students will enjoy it, and then maybe they'll engage with it more and want to do the critical thinking on it, instead of just 'tell me what I need to know so I can tell you back later' attitude.</p>	
<p>Including supernatural themes in engaging content would get really hairy Hypothetically engagement should trump awkwardness Need to cover the content that is in the assessment</p>	<p>228 229 230 231</p>	<p>I: So, when you said if the student studied a topic they like, they light up and engage with it, then you could repackage the content areas they don't like into it so that all aspects are covered in a more holistic way, what if that topic they were engaged in included supernatural themes? You said that you generally avoid these</p>	

<p>Need to be able to prove you've covered the content Need to be able to justify to prevent parental reprisal On paper great, but in practice all but impossible</p>	<p>because they had the potential to offend, or be taken out of the classroom context – but what if that was what lit them up academically? Especially given the popularity of novels containing these themes.</p> <p>R: <i>[pause]</i> That's where it would get really hairy.... I think engagement though, should trump awkwardness. Although that's easy to say, because I know it would never happen in my faculty. This is all hypothetical, because they would never collapse content areas...again.... Teachers need to cover the content that is in the assessment adequately, and you need to be able to prove that you've done that. So when I am questioned about why little Johnny didn't pass this, and he said he can't remember doing it in class, I can get out my program and say there it is... a 7 week unit, and all the content we did on it. I guess its butt covering, but that's teaching isn't it? Look, if Harry Potter, or the Graveyard Book, or even something about the zombie apocalypse got them hooked, and I could justify its use without parental reprisal, then I'd do it. Anything to get the kids learning. But again... on paper, great, in practice all but impossible.</p>	
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APPENDIX C: Clustering units of relevant meaning from interviews

Some statements are assigned to different themes as they transcend both categories, for example ‘Need to spend more time on content’ indicates both that classroom culture is content focussed, and also that there is a lack of time in classrooms. The statement is therefore duplicated in both thematic categories.

Clustering units of relevant meaning	Line no.	Emergent themes
<i>Participant 1 – ‘Susan’</i>		
Don’t have time to focus explicitly on CT	3	Lack of time
You don’t have time in class	8	
Takes long enough to teach content	11	
No time to balance content and concepts equally	69	
Some units have so much content to get through	75-76	
Need to spend more time on content	77	
You don’t have time to do it all in the classroom	162-163	
There’s just not time for it (CT)	164	
Physically not enough time	170	
There’s not enough time	170	
Need time, resources and students’ attention	172	
CT secondary to content	2	Content is the focus
More than enough content	9	
CT is a by- product	12	
Touch on CT but not in depth	13	
CT is implicit	57	
Prioritise content over concept	59	

Content is assessed	60	
Content is assessed	66	
If don't have content then can't pass assessment	67-68	
Assessment and content is back bone of unit	72	
Concepts come off content and assessment	73	
Some units have so much content to get through	75-76	
Need to spend more time on content	77	
CT is a byproduct of content	78	
School tells what you need to pass assessment	87-88	
Regurgitate content to pass	88	
Drive the content	90	
CT needs to play more central part in classroom without taking away from content	90-92	
Purely content based gearing for an assessment	114-115	
Students used to content driven assessment so difficult to change	123-124	
Senior classes have maturity but are content driven	147	
Spent the term driving the content	160	
Need to cover the content to pass assessment	183	
You have to get through the content	189	
Opportunities for this limited as curriculum and programming already dictated	195-196	
They're overloaded with content they don't enjoy	211-212	
Including supernatural themes in engaging content would get really hairy	223	
Need to cover the content that is in the assessment	225	
Need to be able to prove you've covered the content	226	
Controversial theme (supernatural) potentially offends	15-16	Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable (supernatural themes and beliefs)
Avoid controversial/ potentially offensive content (supernatural themes)	17	
Steers things away from topics that provoke thought (CT & beliefs)	27	
Avoid the conversation altogether (CT & beliefs)	28	
Steer conversation in alternative route	29	

Mindful of different perspectives	30	
Demographic of classroom means supernatural themes hasn't been an issue yet	36-37	
Mindful of supernatural thematic content	38	
Not know how to respond (CT & beliefs)	45	
Steer conversation back to topic rather than explore	48-50	
Mindful of other students	51	
Safer track to steer away from	52	
Supernatural themes and belief systems such a hairy question	132	
Hesitate to do for potential conflict (supernatural themes)	134	
Can control classroom but not when taken into the community	136-137	
Classroom conversations are supported	137	
If repeated outside could offend someone	140	
Don't want additional ramifications because I have encouraged CT & supernatural	141	
Encouraging CT could potentially offend	143	
Lack of maturity to do CT regarding beliefs and supernatural	146-147	
Year 9 not mature enough and discussing with parents could undermine family, culture and beliefs (CT, supernatural & beliefs)	149-152	
I wouldn't want to cross that line (CT & beliefs)	152-153	
I'd rather avoid it (CT & belief/supernatural)	153	
Don't want to say the wrong thing	155	
You can't say the wrong thing	168	
Your professionalism is compromised	168	
Need to be able to justify to prevent parental reprisal	229-230	
Others might not share beliefs	47	Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting CT
Open that child up to ridicule	48	
Mindful of other students	51	
Can control classroom but not when taken into the community	136-137	
Classroom conversations are supported	137	

If repeated outside could offend someone	140	
Don't want additional ramifications because I have encouraged CT & supernatural	141	
Encouraging CT could potentially offend	143	
Don't want students to draw levels of criticism on self	144-145	
Year 9 not mature enough and discussing with parents could undermine family, culture and beliefs (CT, supernatural & beliefs)	149-152	
Content is assessed	60	Education is assessment driven
Content is assessed	66	
If don't have content then can't pass assessment	67-68	
Assessment and content is back bone of unit	72	
Concepts come off content and assessment	73	
School tells what you need to pass assessment	87-88	
Regurgitate content to pass	88	
Need to draw CT into assessment rather than regurgitating	92-93	
Teaching a process in order to pass assessment	100	
Teaching is centred around assessment	102-104	
I know the end goal	104	
Purely content based gearing for an assessment	114-115	
Students used to content driven assessment so difficult to change	123-124	
Student barely focus enough to get through assessment	157-158	
Students want to regurgitate info	158	
Need to cover the content to pass assessment	183	
Opportunities for this limited as curriculum and programming already dictated	195-196	
Need to cover the content that is in the assessment	225	
Concepts are skills for life	60	Critical thinking skills are important
CT as concept is important	61	

CT important element	65	
Value of CT skills is priceless	83	
CT helps to be more street savvy	85	
CT helps think for themselves	86	
Can't have individual conversations	47	Practical application in classrooms is difficult
Link concepts to skills and processes rather than content	63	
School tells what to think	87	
Analysis is CT but more to it	95	
Analysis is ticking off steps in a process, not CT	98	
Difficult to provide freedom when 30 students at different levels	110-111	
Student centred to provoke CT great on paper but difficult to translate into reality	120	
CT needs a lot of support from the teacher	126	
Theory is great but practically can't happen (CT)	156	
Haven't had the resources	171	
Should cut topics and incorporate in part to maintain engagement	184	
Filter content rather than stand-alone unit then would still get content and can concentrate on CT	186-188	
You have to get through the content	189	
If could set assignment with very broad scope, can encourage CT	192-194	
Opportunities for this limited as curriculum and programming already dictated	195-196	
Need to be able to justify to prevent parental reprisal	229-230	
On paper great, but in practice all but impossible	230	
Personal beliefs don't weigh in on what teaching	24-25	Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices
Not know how to respond (CT & beliefs)	45	
Student barely focus enough to get through assessment	157-158	Student engagement is

Students want to regurgitate info	158	important
Students haven't had to think for themselves but still not producing work	160	
Need time, resources and students' attention	172	
CT depend on students wanting to learn	177	
Often don't want to learn	178	
Down's matter how you dress it up, still disengaged	178-179	
They just don't want to	181	
Should cut topics and incorporate in part to maintain engagement	184	
If could set assignment with very broad scope, can encourage CT	192-194	
Pull unengaging elements through as can't trick students	209-210	
They're overloaded with content they don't enjoy	211-212	
Repackage content to be engaging and they will want to do the CT on it	213-216	
Including supernatural themes in engaging content would get really hairy	223	
Hypothetically engagement should trump awkwardness	223-224	
Not know how to respond (CT & beliefs)	45	Teaching CT in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs
Can control classroom but not when taken into the community	136-137	
Year 9 not mature enough and discussing with parents could undermine family, culture and beliefs (CT, supernatural & beliefs)	149-152	
I wouldn't want to cross that line (CT & beliefs)	152-153	
Need to be able to justify to prevent parental reprisal	229-230	
Don't want additional ramifications because I have encouraged CT & supernatural	141	Teaching CT opens teachers up to parental complaints
I wouldn't want to cross that line (CT & beliefs)	152-153	
Need to be able to justify to prevent parental reprisal	229-230	
<i>Participant 2 – 'Jimmy'</i>		

Teachers can't do everything	50	Lack of time
Parents have to take responsibility	50	
Just not time in the day to have deep discussions	65-66	
You're trying to fit everything in	66	
Too much else to do	78	
CT more for older levels	94	
Not much time to go further in depth	97	
How2Learn incorporates CT so CT is covered	1	Content is the focus
Not a lot of CT to be done	2	
Needs to be able to have evidence to defend CT conversations	56	
Guides student thinking rather than encourage independent thinking	60	
Didn't encourage CT with older students	65	
Concentrate on teaching the words in the text	86	
Try to cover CT in How2Learn approach	93	
CT more for older levels	94	
Parent see CT as teaching outside the curriculum	95-96	
Don't have much flexibility in teaching schedules	98	
You're always accountable	98	
All the boxes are ticked before you go off track	99	
Wouldn't go into it (CT) with parent body demographic	4	Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable
I don't go there, I don't need to go there (CT)	5	
Multicultural school with very opinionated parents	7	
Have to be very careful about what you say	8	
Adhering to parent request can see teacher labelled	14	
CT about Santa not being real and students got upset	22-23	
Easier to avoid the whole thing (CT)	25	

Parental backlash (CT&beliefs)	26	
Not fair on kids to miss due to CT and belief issues	26	
Redirects when CT uncomfortable	32	
Not worth the ramifications (CT)	32	
Parental backlash if encouraging CT	34	
Avoid or deflect CT conversations	35	
Parental ramifications	48	
Won't cover CT if something can't definitively defend	54	
Needs to be able to have evidence to defend CT conversations	56	
Redirects if can't offer proof	59	
Parents always vocal about everything	72	
Avoided the conversation and redirected it to outside the classroom	77	
Not interested in discussing it (CT & supernatural) in class	77	
Don't want to deal with parent complaints about topic	78-79	
Don't go there (literature with supernatural themes)	81	
Don't use any literature with witches	84	
Witches are too controversial	85	
I would be very careful about when I encouraged open enquiry and CT	94-95	
Parent base isn't conducive to CT	95	
Parent see CT as teaching outside the curriculum	95-96	
Don't know who is going to be offended by what	100	
Parents get upset and make complaints	101	
CT about Santa not being real and students got upset	22-23	Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting CT
Not fair on kids to miss due to CT and belief issues	26	
Education is learning how to function appropriately in society	16	Critical thinking skills are important
CT important to teach	40	

Need to be able to evaluate for themselves	41	
Manipulated by advertising into spending on mother's credit card	47	
Students discussed zombies being real but few different perspectives	74-75	
CT is important in the long term	96	
CT about Santa not being real and students got upset	22-23	Practical application in classrooms is difficult
Parental ramifications	48	
Parents have to take responsibility	50	
Parents always vocal about everything	72	
I would be very careful about when I encouraged open enquiry and CT	94-95	
Parent base isn't conducive to CT	95	
Parent see CT as teaching outside the curriculum	95-96	
Don't have much flexibility in teaching schedules	98	
You're always accountable	98	
All the boxes are ticked before you go off track	99	
Don't know who is going to be offended by what	100	
Parents get upset and make complaints	101	
Believe what they believe	2-3	Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices
Students have already checked out	68	Student engagement is important
Students discussed zombies being real but few different perspectives	74-75	
Students take it for granted that dogs can talk	89	
Talking dogs are just fantasy	90	
CT about Santa not being real and students got upset	22-23	Students see supernatural as

<p>Students discussed zombies being real but few different perspectives Students take it for granted that dogs can talk Talking dogs are just fantasy</p> <p>Have to be very careful about what you say Adhering to parent request can see teacher labelled Teachers can't do everything Parents have to take responsibility Guides student thinking rather than encourage independent thinking Parent see CT as teaching outside the curriculum</p> <p>Have to be very careful about what you say Parental backlash (CT&beliefs) Parental ramifications Parents always vocal about everything Don't want to deal with parent complaints about topic Parent see CT as teaching outside the curriculum Parents get upset and make complaints</p>	<p>74-75 89 90</p> <p>8 14 50 50 60 95-96</p> <p>8 26 48 72 78-79 95-96 101</p>	<p>real</p> <p>Teaching CT in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs</p> <p>Teaching CT opens teachers up to parental complaints</p>
<p><i>Participant 3 – ‘Sandy’</i></p> <p>Isn't much time to go over CT regarding texts Don't have time for debates No time left in schools Teachers and students are pushed for time Have to prioritise your time and energy No time for going too indepth with thematic content or CT Engaged and quality CT but so far behind in the program</p>	<p>6 23 42 44 59 62 80</p>	<p>Lack of time</p>

Had to amalgamate to catch up	81	
How to fit it into everyday programs and timings (CT)?	139	
There's just no time	143	
I do this (CT) more with lower achieving students	7	Content is the focus
Give lower achieving scope to investigate once hooked	8-9	
Other student concentrate on technical aspects of text	9	
Students are learning something that is beneficial to them	12	
Want to learn something, not just regurgitate something they don't understand	15	
Don't have time for debates	23	
More technical lines than exploring critically	26	
Lot of spoon feeding going on	28	
Mature students get quality CT	28	
Textual analysis is CT but not attached to life skills	31	
Massive curriculum	48-49	
Get kids literate enough to fill out welfare forms is an undertone of teaching	53	
Push the kids that need it	56	
Just tell me what I need to know to pass	63	
Got so off track and hostile when CT in class	68	
Engaged and quality CT but so far behind in the program	80	
Had to amalgamate to catch up	81	
Very valuable, but off track (CT)	82	
How to teach it (CT)?	138	
Physically show us how to work it into program and assess it	146	
Cover your own back	46	Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable
Got so off track and hostile when CT in class	68	
Intense and confronting CT conversation	84	

Always wary of putting ideas into students heads	85	Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting CT
Not prepared for ramifications because student starts thinking for themselves	86	
Always second guessing where the line in the sand is	87-88	
Wary of student opinion and what you offer in reply	88	
Lot more comfortable with Hatchet than Harry Potter (supernatural themes) not so much cultural as lifestyle based	89-90	
Try to stay out of it (beliefs)	94	
Don't enter conversation (on beliefs) as teacher's opinion might be seen as correct	112-113	
Just try to steer away from it (CT)	129	
Do it (CT) with a safe topic	160	
Don't want students to question own, or family beliefs because of CT	133	
Always wary of putting ideas into students heads	85	
Not prepared for ramifications because student starts thinking for themselves	86	
Always second guessing where the line in the sand is	87-88	
Wary of student opinion and what you offer in reply	88	
Encourage students to respect other opinions	95	
Internally students are taking a lot away from CT conversations	126	
You don't know if they've internalised something that really messes them up later in life (CT)	127	
How do you know you aren't doing more harm than good when getting students to do CT	128-129	
Don't want it on my conscience that I've messed a student up psychologically	131-132	
Don't want students to question own, or family beliefs because of CT	133	
Don't know what's going on inside the students heads	143-144	
Need to get best assessment results possible	14	Education is assessment driven
Want to learn something, not just regurgitate something they don't understand	15	
Need to go over exam criteria	25	
Performance based initiative mean back to teaching the test	45-46	

Push for tangible results that can be measured objectively	47		
Just tell me what I need to know to pass	63		
Is this in the test (CT & beliefs)	114		
Looking for tell me the right response	114		
Good CT means throwing assessment out the window	115-116		
Can only assess a tangible objective outcome, not a process	116		
I don't really know if you can assess CT	120		
Should CT be assessed at all	124		
How do I assess it (CT)?	139		
Physically show us how to work it into program and assess it	146		
CT is separating fact from crap	2	Critical thinking skills are important	
Evaluate info in the light of emerging facts	4		
CT very important for real life	5-6		
Textual analysis is CT but not attached to life skills	31		
Commonsense has lapsed	39		
Students justifying comments with different forms of evidence (CT)	74		
Students questioned validity and reliability of sources (CT)	77		
Students could justify own opinions or change in light of new evidence (CT)	78		
Teenagers see unreliable sources as credible (CT)	79		
Very valuable, but off track (CT)	82		
CT hugely important	135		
So many applications for sorting fact from crap	136		
Teachers have decided what students are capable of	17-18		Practical application in classrooms is difficult
CT different for different students	23		
Don't have time for debates	23		
More capable students would dominate debate (CT)	24		

Mature students get quality CT	28	
New teaching reforms all the time	35-36	
Go around in circles with pedagogy	38	
CT needs to be streamed through curriculum but given no indication of how and when to do this	41-42	
Responsibility on teachers for parenting duties and massive behaviour management load	51	
Have to prioritise your time and energy	59	
Teaching 3 to 4 different lessons each period	61-62	
How to teach it (CT)?	138	
How to fit it into everyday programs and timings (CT)?	139	
How do I assess it (CT)?	139	
Physically show us how to work it into program and assess it	146	
Some practical guidance would be nice	148	
There's so much more to teaching now	153	
Great in theory but really difficult to maintain in practice	156	
Teacher as mediator	73	Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices
Don't have personal belief in classroom	94	
Try to stay out of it (beliefs)	94	
Encourage students to respect other opinions	95	
I'm not passionate about any belief system	97	
Listen to others rather than impart own ideas	99	
Don't push any of my beliefs onto students by voicing own opinions	101-102	
Different beliefs don't really come up – monochrome class	104-105	
Associate belief systems with religion	111	
Don't enter conversation (on beliefs) as teacher's opinion might be seen as correct	112-113	
Teachers have decided what students are capable of	17-18	Personal beliefs do affect classroom teaching practices

<p>Give lower achieving scope to investigate once hooked Engaged and quality CT but so far behind in the program Need engagement</p> <p>Responsibility on teachers for parenting duties and massive behaviour management load Always wary of putting ideas into students heads Wary of student opinion and what you offer in reply Try to stay out of it (beliefs) Don't enter conversation (on beliefs) as teacher's opinion might be seen as correct Don't want students to question own, or family beliefs because of CT Don't know what's going on inside the students heads</p> <p>Cover your own back Not prepared for ramifications because student starts thinking for themselves Always second guessing where the line in the sand is Wary of student opinion and what you offer in reply</p>	<p>8-9 80 154</p> <p>51 85 88 94 112-113 133 143-144</p> <p>46 86 87-88 88</p>	<p>Student engagement is important</p> <p>Teaching CT in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs</p> <p>Teaching CT opens teachers up to parental complaints</p>
<p><i>Participant 4 – 'Josey'</i></p> <p>Hadn't previously thought about CT Previously cover CT in a round about fashion Until inservice session hadn't really thought about CT at all More conscious about asking deeper level thinking now Weave the threads of new curriculum though existing programming Ask more questions now Try to elicit what students thought author was trying to convey</p>	<p>2 2 4-5 5 7 8 9-10 72-73</p>	<p>Content is the focus</p>

CT in terms of textual examination rather than everyday questions		
Don't really do much in the way of supernatural themes	13	Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable
Approved texts used	14	
Choice of literature mirrors school ethos	15	
Text have approval of parent body, so we are pretty safe there	16	
Not much controversial content to worry about	17	
Don't want to jump on the popular culture train	18	
Students free to read popular culture at home	18-19	
Don't think classroom is place for anything too controversial	19	
Supernatural references are metaphorical in nature	21	
Hamlet didn't really see ghost but conscience talking to him	21-22	
Macbeth was social commentary of beliefs at the time	28-29	
Wasn't witches church was seeking (in inquisition)	33	
Uncomfortable discussing humanitarian side of inquisition	35-36	
Leave those conversations to the history department	37	
Don't have an issue with supernatural themes in our text choice	40	
Personal lack of comfort, not professional (regarding biblical vs fictional supernatural)	44	
Teaching supernatural events as truths does not fit into school ethos	45	
Would direct students with biblical questions to pastoral team	46-47	
Any beliefs or questions about Bible aren't directed at me	47-48	
Voicing own opinions may undermine family unit	57-58	
Refer anything construed as imparting personal belief onto pastoral team	61-62	
Refer to someone more equipped to deal with probing questions	66	
Don't want to be saying the wrong thing	68-69	
Uncomfortable and don't want to say the wrong thing regarding CT in everyday life	79-80	
Word can be twisted easily	80-81	
Don't believe I have the skills to support student understanding without bias (mine or schools)	81-82	
If I lead a student's enquiry, it's not their journey and their CT	82-83	

Avoid difficult conversations or direct to another member of staff (CT & supernatural)	108-109	
Students excelling in assessments so we're OK The results are there	111 112	Education is assessment driven
CT very important Uncomfortable and don't want to say the wrong thing regarding CT in everyday life	76 79-80	Critical thinking skills are important
Our entire school has same philosophy Don't need to worry about saying anything 'radical' Students with differing cultural religious beliefs wouldn't be attending our school I'm glad I don't have to deal with culturally conflicting ideals Wouldn't present itself in my setting (cultural beliefs)	59 59-60 105 106 107	Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching processes
Uncomfortable discussing humanitarian side of inquisition Personal lack of comfort, not professional (regarding biblical vs fictional supernatural) Hadn't thought about managing own beliefs and objectivity conflicts Christians believe because you believe Don't need evidentiary proof or validation Believe because we do Don't believe I have the skills to support student understanding without bias (mine or schools) I don't believe we're meant to get teenagers to think deeply about everything Don't believe supernaturally themed literature has a place in classrooms	35-36 44 51 53-54 54 55 81-82 96-97 100	Personal beliefs do affect classroom teaching practices
Miracles and supernatural events in the Bible are different as its faith based, not fantasy	102-103	Students see supernatural as

<p>Is school the place for CT? Are we undermining parents by teaching CT Are we taking away parents right to parent as they see fit? Who am I to encourage students to question things Teaching is also about supporting parents I encourage CT within parameter of an educator I don't believe we're meant to get teenagers to think deeply about everything</p>	<p>89 90 91 93 94 94-95 96-97</p>	<p>real</p> <p>Teaching CT in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs</p>
<p>Participant 5 – ‘Sri’</p> <p>Not a lot of time in the school day There's really no time for anything like that (CT & supernatural) Wouldn't be enough time in the day to teach CT</p> <p>CT different in each subject CT in English refers to technical aspect of the genre That's what they are assessed on Predicting, analysing and evaluating text to justify thoughts is CT Combine and not teach CT in isolation Supernatural themes hard to avoid (in Shakespeare) CT is breaking the textual code rather than thinking I don't believe we accomplished anything by having the discussion (CT & supernatural) No one really learnt anything apart from some believed and others didn't (supernatural) Don't think CT about a text is beneficial after school Our role as teacher regarding CT is more academic based I don't know if those skills come from teachers (CT)</p>	<p>9 84 110-111</p> <p>2 7 7 11-12 12-13 15 15-16 82 83 96-97 101-102 108</p>	<p>Lack of time</p> <p>Content is the focus</p>

Never really discussed supernatural type things	52	Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable
I don't interfere either way (with beliefs)	61	
That's a question for someone more learned than me	64	
No up to me to encourage others to question their beliefs	74	
Stay out of the other conversations (beliefs)	74	
It's very rare that topics like this come up (supernatural)	75	
I mediate really difficult conversations rather than participate	79	
Really uncomfortable with situation and changed the subject of the conversation	94	
Have to be very careful when choosing texts in schools	115	
Society is a lot more sensitive now	116	
Very conscious of offending others	116	
Sensitivity can make engaging and teaching students really hard	117	
What engages students is what others are sensitive about	117	
Someone is going to get upset about something	119	
I don't want any fingers pointing at me (when people get upset)	120	
Confusion if Islam condones ghosts (supernatural) or not	37-39	Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting CT
Questioned personal beliefs	40	
Conflicting beliefs within same cultural group	42-43	
Boys genuinely scared of Kuntilanak	46	
The boys fear genuinely surprised and worried me	46	
It was quite confronting though (CT & supernatural)	80	
I can only imagine how confused some students were	81	
Judgement by others at being in year 9 and still believing in witches	88	
That's what they are assessed on	7	Education is assessment driven
Shakespeare is senior study and more end focussed	17	

CT absolutely important	87	Critical thinking skills are important
CT skills are formulated quite early in life	100	
CT is hugely important skill to have	102	
CT really important	103	
Not just taking what they're told for granted (CT)	105	
Evaluate what they are told by others (CT)	106	
CT different in each subject	2	Practical application in classrooms is difficult
Combine and not teach CT in isolation	12-13	
Supernatural themes hard to avoid (in Shakespeare)	15	
I could imagine junior school would ask a lot of questions (of Shakespeare)	18	
Didn't hear any feedback or complaints from parents (CT conversation)	47	
Relieved that no parents had contacted school	48	
I'm quite confused myself	52	
I got confused(supernatural & beliefs)	54	
I hadn't crossed any boundaries with parents (CT and supernatural)	67-68	
I don't like upsetting anyone (CT & supernatural)	68	
I don't want to put my Principal under pressure to answer religious based questions (CT & supernatural)	69	
Really difficult CT conversations with opposing beliefs	79	
Neither are wrong as it's subjective	80	
It was quite confronting though (CT & supernatural)	80	
I can only imagine how confused some students were	81	
I don't believe we accomplished anything by having the discussion (CT & supernatural)	82	
No one really learnt anything apart from some believed and others didn't (supernatural)	83	
Because it was cultural I felt like I had to defend students	89	
Have to be very careful when choosing texts in schools	115	

Society is a lot more sensitive now	116	
Very conscious of offending others	116	
Sensitivity can make engaging and teaching students really hard	117	
What engages students is what others are sensitive about	117	
Someone is going to get upset about something	119	
I don't want any fingers pointing at me (when people get upset)	120	
Confusion if Islam condones ghosts (supernatural) or not	37-39	Personal beliefs do affect classroom teaching practices
Questioned personal beliefs	40	
Conflicting beliefs within same cultural group	42-43	
I thought everyone knew television was fabricated	45	
I'm quite confused myself	52	
I got confused (supernatural & beliefs)	54	
All religions have some sort of supernatural basis	61-62	
There's a bit of that everywhere (supernatural belief)	62-63	
Because it was cultural I felt like I had to defend students	89	
Double standard of believing in God but no Kuntilanak	91	
Felt uncomfortable at having to defend something I didn't believe	92	
I don't interfere either way (with beliefs)	61	Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices
Gave students a choice of 4 texts, Harry Potter was overwhelming winner	21	Student engagement is important
Imagine if we could really do that (magic)	29	
Sensitivity can make engaging and teaching students really hard	117	
Kuntilanak is mythical witch/ghost	33	Students see supernatural as

Indonesian students believed, others didn't	34	real
Confusion if Islam condones ghosts (supernatural) or not	37-39	
Boys genuinely scared of Kuntilanak	46	
The boys fear genuinely surprised and worried me	46	
Judgement by others at being in year 9 and still believing in witches	88	
Confusion if Islam condones ghosts (supernatural) or not	37-39	Teaching CT in school can
Questioned personal beliefs	40	undermine parent
Conflicting beliefs within same cultural group	42-43	responsibilities and beliefs
I don't interfere either way (with beliefs)	61	
I hadn't crossed any boundaries with parents (CT and supernatural)	67-68	
I don't like upsetting anyone (CT & supernatural)	68	
No up to me to encourage others to question their beliefs	74	
It was quite confronting though (CT & supernatural)	80	
I can only imagine how confused some students were	81	
CT skills are formulated quite early in life	100	
I don't know if those skills come from teachers (CT)	108	
Didn't hear any feedback or complaints from parents (CT conversation)	47	Teaching CT opens teachers
Relieved that no parents had contacted school	48	up to parental complaints
I hadn't crossed any boundaries with parents (CT and supernatural)	67-68	
I don't like upsetting anyone (CT & supernatural)	68	
I don't want to put my Principal under pressure to answer religious based questions (CT & supernatural)	69	
Have to be very careful when choosing texts in schools	115	
Society is a lot more sensitive now	116	
Very conscious of offending others	116	
Sensitivity can make engaging and teaching students really hard	117	

What engages students is what others are sensitive about	117	
Someone is going to get upset about something	119	
I don't want any fingers pointing at me (when people get upset)	120	
<i>Participant 6 – 'Rach'</i>		
CT doesn't play a big part	2	Content is the focus
Trying to reach basics of reading	2	
Really comfortable using supernatural themes in class	65	
It's not the theme that is the focus (CT)	65	
Not something I focus on explicitly (CT & supernatural)	99	
Scary themes aren't nearly as harmful for kids as true real life violence	19	Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting CT
Real life issues more scary than literature	23	
Don't think literature messes with children's psychological processes and development as much as real life fears	23-24	
Students stop believing in Santa at a younger age	46	
Contemporary texts and movies on tv have changed views on supernatural	8-9	Critical thinking skills are important
Depiction of witches has definitely changed	11	
Students aren't really scared of witches any more	12	
Supernatural tales train students in CT as just because something looks good doesn't mean it is	14	
Don't judge a book by its cover (CT)	16	
Kids aren't dumb, they know fact from fiction (CT)	39-40	
Maybe there's too much reality and not enough fantasy	46-47	
Exposing children to a variety of cultural beliefs make a better society	52-53	
I don't think those conversations should be avoided (CT)	58	
Might prevent some of the radicalisations	59-60	
CT very important	77	

Need to be able to decipher what is true and what isn't	77-78	
Cannot teach stranger danger any more	80	
Kids really need to evaluate situations realistically	85	
There are real dangers out there, physical, emotional and manipulative	87	
There's a lot of manipulation	89	
I'm dreading it really (CT)	91	
Absolutely teach CT from early age	95	
The more they can think for themselves the better	95	
Scary themes aren't nearly as harmful for kids as true real life violence	19	Practical application in classrooms is difficult
Rather child be scared of a witch than real life situations	22-23	
Real life issues more scary than literature	23	
Santa (& CT) is getting harder to deal with	45	
How are you supposed to teach CT skills at school	60-61	
Some kids are ready and others just aren't (for CT)	61	
CT needs to be done in context	62	
Not something I focus on explicitly (CT & supernatural)	99	
Supernatural themes are a given, it's just how you approach them	97	
Students aren't really scared of witches any more	12	
Supernatural tales train students in CT as just because something looks good doesn't mean it is	14	
Scary themes aren't nearly as harmful for kids as true real life violence	19	
Rather child be scared of a witch than real life situations	22-23	
Real life issues more scary than literature	23	
Don't think literature messes with children's psychological processes and development as much as real life fears	23-24	
Don't believe adults believe in it (supernatural)	30	
Witchcraft more seen as folklore	30	

<p>There's a lot of magic in movies and it is obviously fiction Kids aren't dumb, they know fact from fiction (CT) Maybe there's too much reality and not enough fantasy Exposing children to a variety of cultural beliefs make a better society I don't think those conversations should be avoided (CT) Might prevent some of the radicalisations Young children are not going to be master critical thinkers</p>	<p>35-36 39-40 46-47 52-53 58 59-60 70-71</p>	
<p>Confused about Harry Potter movies because actors are real (not cartoon) and everything looks real Santa (& CT) is getting harder to deal with Students stop believing in Santa at a younger age</p>	<p>40-41 45 46</p>	<p>Students see supernatural as real</p>
<p>Respecting differences of opinion regarding Santa, take it up with your parents Exposing children to a variety of cultural beliefs make a better society I don't think those conversations should be avoided (CT) Might prevent some of the radicalisations Only opposing belief system encountered was Santa Supernatural themes are a given, it's just how you approach them</p>	<p>51 52-53 58 59-60 74 97</p>	<p>Teaching CT in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs</p>
<p><i>Participant 7 – 'Faith'</i></p>		
<p>How am I supposed to fit everything in and prepare students for exams Behaviour management takes up most of the lesson In theory CT is a lot of discussion, in practice takes up a lot of time and only higher achievers contribute CT turns into a debate, or indepth discussion CT takes up a lot of time</p>	<p>3-4 4-5 17-19 40 40</p>	<p>Lack of time</p>

There just isn't time (CT)	45	
Absolutely, lack of time (CT)	48	
If they don't need it then axe it and give time to teach the relevant stuff	62-63	
We can't do everything	66	
No quality time	67	
CT vitally important but no time	102	
There's no time for catch up	105	
CT not much role	2	Content is the focus
Can I tick it off the list to show I've covered the criteria (CT)	12	
Wonder why the students' can't read the exam paper	32-33	
Prepare for exams	41	
Exam results that are recorded not engagement or participation	41	
Get the basic literacy right and the CT and the social aspect of life	63-64	
How am I supposed to fit everything in and prepare students for exams	3-4	
How am I going to assess it (CT)	10	
It's all about results	11	
If I can't empirically measure it, then it didn't happen	11-12	
Can I tick it off the list to show I've covered the criteria (CT)	12	
I have no supporting evidence to prove CT results	13	
If you can't prove it then it didn't happen, but if it doesn't then you're not doing your job	13-14	
Prepare for exams	41	
Exam results that are recorded not engagement or participation	41	
Pressure for them to achieve is immense	50	
Throw out content and assess the technical aspects through free speech	52-53	
If I had the scope to set an assessment (supernatural)	78	
Would be surprised at what students could produce given absolute freedom (supernatural & CT)	80	

They like to have boundaries and assessment structure	81	
Educational anarchy	84	
CT is important as per the curriculum, but in practice it all goes down the tubes	24	Critical thinking skills are important
Get the basic literacy right and the CT and the social aspect of life	63-64	
Make sure they can justify theirs (CT)	90	
Not everything at school learnt out of a textbook	91	
CT really important	94	
Students need to learn this (CT)	97	
Important to be able to synthesize and make informed decisions and judgements	100	
CT vitally important but no time	102	
Spoon feeding for so long people have forgotten how to do it for themselves (CT)	104-105	
All great on paper, but in the classroom it's a bit different (CT)	7-8	Practical application in classrooms is difficult
How can I validate their learning (CT)	9	
How am I going to assess it (CT)	10	
How am I going to report on it (CT)	10	
How am I going to prove it is programmed and not just an easy lesson (CT)	10-11	
If I can't empirically measure it, then it didn't happen	11-12	
Can I tick it off the list to show I've covered the criteria (CT)	12	
I have no supporting evidence to prove CT results	13	
If you can't prove it then it didn't happen, but if it doesn't then you're not doing your job	13-14	
Differentiation makes it difficult (CT)	14	
In theory CT is a lot of discussion, in practice takes up a lot of time and only higher achievers contribute	17-19	
Having such a wide gap in one class is really difficult (CT)	21	
CT is important as per the curriculum, but in practice it all goes down the tubes	24	
Every year we are having to alter the way we teach	27	

Great on paper, but just isn't practical (CT)	27	
Experienced teachers are struggling (CT)	28	
Do 3 lessons in each class	30	
Sink or swim	32	
Wonder why the students' can't read the exam paper	32-33	
If could minimise content teachers would have a chance	51-52	
Curriculum is overloaded	52	
Throw out content and assess the technical aspects through free speech	52-53	
Probably no need for them to be studying in the first place (Shakespeare)	56	
It's outdated and ludicrous (Shakespeare)	59	
We need to cater for the majority	61	
If they don't need it then axe it and give time to teach the relevant stuff	62-63	
If I had the scope to set an assessment (supernatural)	78	
Would be surprised at what students could produce given absolute freedom (supernatural & CT)	80	
They like to have boundaries and assessment structure	81	
Educational anarchy	84	
I don't have a problem with it (supernatural themes)	38	Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices
Status quo of the period, look at what they represent rather than what they were called (supernatural)	44	
It really doesn't bother me (supernatural)	70	
What the students are reading (or watch) anyway (supernatural)	70	
I'm really open to anything (beliefs)	88	
Question student about their ideas not my own beliefs	89-90	
Make sure they can justify theirs (CT)	90	
Not about me as a teacher	90	
Not everything at school learnt out of a textbook	91	
I am pretty liberal and open minded	92	

Engage them (supernatural)	38	Student engagement is important
What the students are reading (or watch) anyway (supernatural)	70	
Safely assume that it is engaging (supernatural)	71	Students see supernatural as real
Have an idea about the popular culture literature so I can connect with students on some level (supernatural)	73	
Do more CT about that than anything we study (when engaged)	76	
Quite inventive and studious analysing how zombies could be real and how to kill them	77	
Quite inventive and studious analysing how zombies could be real and how to kill them	77	Teaching CT opens teachers up to parental complaints
Sick of teachers being blamed for it all (not being prepared for life)	66	
We can't do everything	66	
<i>Participant 8 – 'Daisy'</i>		
It does take up time (CT)	74	Lack of time
Allow more flexibility in what and how is taught, and how to assess	75	
It's how they will be assessed in HSC so need to be prepared	21	Content is the focus
CT hardest with seniors as HSC is set and need to ensure assessed content covered	75-76	
Likelihood of that is slim (supernatural)	27	Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable
Literature vetted by parental body	28	
Parents have a right to have an input	29	
Can purchase texts if justification as to the validity of the text	31	

CT Conversations might be overheard and misconstrued by others	36	
Some topics are best avoided	47	
Might be confronting and challenging (CT)	63	
Some literature not for classroom (supernatural)	71	
Coach them how to express their ideas	23	Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting CT
CT Conversations might be overheard and misconstrued by others	36	
Might be encouraging students to think radically or question church (CT)	38-39	
Don't want to confuse students (CT)	41	
Don't want students questioning own internal thought processes and beliefs	42	
Considered the ramifications of lesson and wider implications (CT)	44-45	
Might be confronting and challenging (CT)	63	
Principal isn't pressuring us to perform (assessment)	18	Education is assessment driven
Devised some alternate assessment	18	
Don't think it is so much about the assessment (CT)	20	
It's how they will be assessed in HSC so need to be prepared	21	
Observational assessment	25	
Consternation about how to apply, plan and assess CT	72-73	
Allow more flexibility in what and how is taught, and how to assess	75	
CT hardest with seniors as HSC is set and need to ensure assessed content covered	75-76	
Believe it was a worthwhile conversation (CT & Bible)	36-37	Critical thinking skills are important
CT is important	46	
Can see from another's point of view but not change own belief	52-53	
Can see sides without personal stance being affected	60	
Conversations need to be had for student benefit (CT)	63-64	

CT really important role	66	
Less likely to succumb to manipulation (CT)	67	
Need to ensure CT covered for curriculum and life after school	77	
Younger years CT should be encouraged	78	
Staff development on CT helped	2-3	Practical application in classrooms is difficult
Was feeling a little overwhelmed (CT)	3	
Principal gave us freedom to experiment with the curriculum	5	
Was really challenging	7	
Not just about ticking boxes (CT)	7	
Lot of discussion based teaching and learning	8	
Isn't emphasis on writing now	9	
Students really ended up leading the discussion	11	
Overall approach (CT) changed from written to discussion based	14-15	
Covering less but in more depth	15	
Change in the delivery of the content	21-22	
Maximum participation	22	
I was a little confused	45	
Might be confronting and challenging (CT)	63	
Some literature not for classroom (supernatural)	71	
Consternation about how to apply, plan and assess CT	72-73	
Colleagues in other schools are struggling (CT)	74	
Little uncomfortable (supernatural)	32	Personal beliefs do affect classroom teaching practices
Correlation between medieval witches and Jesus was made	33	
Little uncomfortable (supernatural correlations)	34	
Against the school ethos to question validity of Bible	34-35	
Might be encouraging students to think radically or question church (CT)	38-39	

Don't want to confuse students (CT)	41	
Don't want students questioning own internal thought processes and beliefs	42	
Didn't see it as questioning church as viewing through CT lens	43	
Considered the ramifications of lesson and wider implications (CT)	44-45	
I was a little confused	45	
Some topics are best avoided	47	
Strong personal faith	51	
Belief is all encompassing	56	
Coach them how to express their ideas		
Didn't see it as questioning church as viewing through CT lens	23	Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices
Can see from another's point of view but not change own belief	43	
Conversations are not going to change beliefs	52-53	
Can see sides without personal stance being affected	57	
	60	
Really engages students (CT)		Student engagement is important
Literature vetted by parental body	9	
Parents have a right to have an input		Teaching CT in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs
Correlation between medieval witches and Jesus was made		
Against the school ethos to question validity of Bible	28	
Might be encouraging students to think radically or question church (CT)	29	
Don't want to confuse students (CT)	33	
Don't want students questioning own internal thought processes and beliefs	34-35	
Didn't see it as questioning church as viewing through CT lens	38-39	
Considered the ramifications of lesson and wider implications (CT)	41	
	42	
Considered the ramifications of lesson and wider implications (CT)	43	Teaching CT opens teachers up to parental complaints
	44-45	
	44-45	

APPENDIX D: Table identifying recurrent themes in interviews

Identifying recurrent themes in interviews									
Theme	Susan	Jimmy	Sandy	Josey	Sri	Rach	Faith	Daisy	Present in over half the sample?
Lack of time to address critical thinking skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	6/8 yes
Content is the focus	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	8/8 yes
Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable (supernatural themes and beliefs)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	6/8 yes
Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting critical thinking	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	6/8 yes
Education is assessment driven	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	6/8 yes
Critical thinking skills are important	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	8/8 yes
Practical application in classrooms is difficult	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7/8 yes
Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	7/8 yes
Personal beliefs do affect classroom teaching practices	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	5/8 yes
Student engagement is important	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	6/8 yes
Students see supernatural as real	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	5/8 yes
Teaching critical thinking in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	7/8 yes
Teaching critical thinking opens teachers up to parental complaints	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	6/8 yes

APPENDIX E: Summary of interviews including participant feedback

Summary of Interviews with participant feedback		
Participant	Summary	Feedback
Susan	<p>The primary practices in the participant’s classroom were content and assessment driven. She established that the content is what is being assessed moreso than the processes and this aspect therefore has most time devoted to it. The participant also noted that students, primarily, would rather regurgitate information rather than think independently and critically about concepts. In essence, she has encountered an overwhelmingly ‘tell me what I need to say/do to pass’ attitude in her classrooms. Critical thinking then becomes an off shoot of the content and is limited to critical thinking regarding the text being studied (synthesis and analysis) in opposition to critical thinking in everyday life contexts. Because of the emphasis on content, and the amount of content required to get through prior to examinations, limited time is a factor regarding the pursuit of critical thinking and/or student interest. The participant avoids any controversial or potentially offensive material or discussions, and when they do occur, she steers the conversation in an alternate route. This is not because she, personally, is averse to exploring these themes, but because she is aware of contrasting beliefs in the student demographic and unsure how conversations taken out of context in a supported classroom and subsequently repeated would be received by others outside the classroom. This includes parental reprisals and having her professionalism compromised. The participant was also mindful that airing personal beliefs in a group classroom setting, and</p>	<p>Yes I would agree with that summary. Really, I would love to focus more on critical thinking and skills for life, but the expectation of teachers is that if the students don’t pass then you’re failing as an educator. And I suppose that is why there is all the talk about teaching to the test – it’s what supervisors, parents and the community wants. It’s their yard stick for quality teaching. And it simply isn’t the case. I would love to involve topics and concepts the students are interested in – like the supernatural – but it opens up too many cans of worms. As soon as you get students thinking independently and questioning the adults, or ideas they have grown up with – for whatever reason – you open yourself up for a lot of issues. As the system stands, there is no way you have the time to prepare students for exams, <i>and also</i> teach critical thinking skills for</p>

	<p>subsequently eliciting critical thinking pertaining to that idea, could open that student up to peer ridicule, affecting their personal sense of wellbeing. Although she acknowledges the importance of critical thinking as a skill for life, she believes teaching these skills is fundamentally flawed in practice as the curriculum is too crowded with requirements for content and assessment, that providing the support required to elicit quality critical thinking in a class of 30 who are all at different level of conceptualisation, maturity, and life experience is difficult, time limitations make devotion to the concept problematic, and parental reprisals leave teachers open to possible professional misconduct issues.</p>	<p>life. As a teacher, it is also very frustrating that students are turning off academically because they just aren't interested in the topic or concept – like poetry! You genuinely want the students to light up and learn, but if it's in the test then it has to be covered. Something's got to give – we can't do it all.</p>
Jimmy	<p>The participant feels time constraints are a large inhibitor to having deep discussions and that critical thinking, in this respect, is more for older students. With content being his primary focus, and also being accountable for covering this content, he feels parents would see critical thinking as teaching outside the curriculum. The participant justifies this by stating he feels critical thinking is part of parenting responsibilities although he acknowledges it is incorporated in the How2Learn approach to education. Due to accountability issues and his multicultural parent body, he avoids anything controversial or potentially offensive. He repeatedly refers to parental ramifications and having a vocal parent cohort which leads him to avoid any topics which may contain supernatural themes and critical thinking conversations. As his students are younger, he feels critical thinking would remove some of the childhood fantasies such as Santa, but acknowledges his students have also discussed zombies as being real. The participant feels that eliciting critical thinking about issues in everyday life could undermine parent responsibilities and that he prefers to guide student thinking rather than encourage independent thinking. The participant remains very guarded and careful about what he says due to parental backlash.</p>	<p>Sounds like I have terrible parents <i>[laughs]</i>, but on the whole it is spot on. I second guess everything I say and do because if I don't I <i>know</i> I will have someone at my door the next day. It's a pretty sad indictment on teaching really. It is really tricky with some students because you want them to understand that zombies aren't real, but then you don't want to destroy the Santa fantasy. That line in the sand is pretty hard to establish sometimes. I guess just avoiding those topics all together has become part of classroom survival – if you don't go there, you don't have to face the jury.</p>

Sandy	<p>The participant recognizes that there is not enough time to cover all requirements in the curriculum and therefore has to prioritise her time accordingly. On the occasion that she focussed on critical thinking, she got behind in the program and had to amalgamate sessions to catch that time up. She accepts that she elicits more critical thinking in the lower achieving percentile of students, allowing them to investigate aspects that interest them in more depth, as she feels it is beneficial to them, whereas the higher percentile needs to concentrate on technical aspects of texts in preparation for assessments. She is wary of being seen as putting ideas into students' heads and therefore steers away from any potentially offensive material, including supernatural themes. The participant does not want to feel responsible for perceivably encouraging students to question their own, or family beliefs because of elicited critical thinking. Although she encourages students to respect the opinions of others, she cannot control what is said outside the classroom. She also acknowledges that she cannot judge what is going on inside a teenager's head and if they have internalised something as a result of critical thinking discussions. The participant remains unsure if, psychologically, critical thinking regarding everyday contexts and student interest topics are not doing more harm than good, and if this internal questioning could mess them up later in life. The participant also raises the notion of performance based pay initiatives floated as an idea by the government for teachers, and that this is a prime example of how important assessment results are in the public view. Tangible results that can be measured objectively are in preference to opinions and critical thinking. She has noted that she has encountered significant student attitudes relating to is this on the test, just tell me what I need to know to pass, and tell me the right response which supports the importance placed on content and assessment. She raised a further point of can critical thinking be assessed accurately, and if indeed it should be assessed at all, as well as how it should be taught. If it were</p>	<p>Yeah, yeah. I guess Some students see a movie and have nightmares, others see the same movie and it doesn't affect them. You know. Everyone's different. If you go down the teaching critical thinking road in everyday terms, especially if those terms may infringe on belief systems, or supernatural, or anything that really elicits a very personal response, then you really don't know how they are synthesising it all internally. I mean... we had a student that committed suicide last year, and everyone though she was fine – popular, academic, world at her feet – but something obviously had been triggered psychologically. I just don't want to be the teacher who pushes that invisible button and gets a student questioning life, the universe and all that. Teaching is a big enough responsibility as it is, let alone placing that kind of pressure on us. As it is, we are second guessing everything we say to students. I think the issue we had with our student really highlighted some of the invisible ramifications of getting teenagers to think deeply about things – some of them just can't switch off that thought train and no-one else knows that. It just</p>
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	<p>accredited in the curriculum on a participation basis rather than academic mark for assessment, that would also be problematic as some students dominate discussions, and others prefer to listen but are actually taking a lot in internally. Although it is a hugely important skill for real life, it is different for each student, both by ability and background. She believes there has been a lot of responsibility placed on teachers for parenting and behaviour management issues, and she is always wary of where the line is, of student opinions, and of what she offers in reply to conversations. The participant believes teachers are not prepared for how to teach critical thinking in general terms, and of the ramifications resulting from students thinking and reacting for themselves.</p>	<p>isn't clear to the rest of the world. Although I said, and still believe, it is an important skill, I just don't know if we should be encouraging critical thinking too much – especially without formal training....psychological type training.... You know. I just teach English, my knowledge of what goes on inside peoples' heads is limited to say the least.</p>
Josey	<p>Until an inservice about the Australian Curriculum, the participant had not really thought explicitly about critical thinking but is now more conscious about promoting deeper level thinking about texts. Texts studied in her school are vetted with parental approval and therefore any controversial themes are avoided. Compulsory texts containing supernatural themes like Hamlet and Macbeth are treated as metaphorical in nature, or a social commentary. Any content arising, for example witches and the inquisition, were referred on to the history department and avoided by the participant. She believes teaching anything with supernatural themes does not fit into the school ethos and anything arising that may question that ethos is referred to the Pastoral care team. This is rationalised by the participant as being because she doesn't believe she has the skills to support student understanding without bias, either hers personally or the school's position. She believes if she as lead a student's enquiry then it is not their journey and their own critical thinking. The participant avoids difficult conversations by redirecting students to other staff members and believes the school is implementing the Australian Curriculum well because the results showed students excelling in their assessments. Although she acknowledges critical</p>	<p>Well...it sounds like we are just ignoring critical thinking when we are not. We do textual analysis, which <i>is</i> a form of critical thinking. It is true that we don't really have any of the issues of conflicting beliefs because other religions simply don't attend our school. That is their choice, but we would certainly accept them if they wanted to enrol. That is when the pastoral team would come in, as I don't believe I could answer some of their questions as adequately as the team could. It's not that I am simply referring every student on to someone else, it just hasn't really been an issue. It was more of a hypothetical, what would I do scenario. Our students rank amongst the top bands in the state, so yes, I do agree we are</p>

	<p>thinking is important in everyday life, she doesn't want to say the wrong thing to students. Instead of encouraging critical thinking along religious lines, she believes Christians believe because they believe, that they don't need any evidentiary proof or validation. She also ascertains that she doesn't believe teenagers need to think deeply about everything and that biblical miracles are faith based rather than fantasy. The participant believes she encourages critical thinking within her parameters as an educator and that eliciting critical thinking practices regarding faith based events is taking away parents' rights to instil the belief systems they wish in their children, thereby undermining parents. As her school is religious based, students, staff and school ethos have the same belief systems and therefore conflicting belief systems are not perceived to be present in this school setting.</p>	<p>performing our roles well and addressing the aspects of the Australian Curriculum as required of us.</p>
Sri	<p>The participant articulates that time is an influencing factor related to adequately addressing critical thinking in classrooms. She relates that most critical thinking in her classroom is content related; predicting, analysing and evaluating text to justify the reader's stance, but that textual content based critical thinking is of little to no benefit after school unless attending university. Critical thinking in relation to supernatural themes rarely comes up in classrooms and she feels it is not up to her to encourage students to question their beliefs in such areas. The participant feels society, in general, is a lot more sensitive about issues involving supernatural themes now and is conscious of offending others. This sensitivity, however, has made it difficult to teach at times when these topics arise. She believes that, ultimately, someone will get upset about something that is said, no matter how innocent. During one of her classes, the topic did present itself where conflicting beliefs were raised and she found herself questioning her own beliefs as a result. Some of her students displayed genuine fear regarding a creature of folklore which was confronting and left the students being judged by other</p>	<p>Yes, I would definitely agree with that summary. In my experience, you just don't know who is going to take offense at what. And then some students just say things to get a reaction. The parents are a bit of a worry though – you can't get them to parent teacher nights, but if they have an issue with something they find their way to school pretty quickly <i>[laughs]</i>. The other side is that you are so pressed for time, to cover everything you need to, that inevitably one student is going to start a conversation just to soak up time. Especially if he thinks it means he gets out of poetry or something.</p>

	<p>students and staff members. At this time, she felt her own personal beliefs were questioned and became confused, and that when discussing the incident with staff members there was a double standard when it came to believing in God and events in the Bible, compared to other religions and their teachings. This placed her in a difficult position of defending something she did not necessarily believe to protect her students' viewpoints. This also demonstrated conflicting viewpoints within the same religious belief system. She was very aware of placing herself and her Principal in a difficult position if the conversation sparked parental backlash. She was concerned that she may have crossed a parental boundary in eliciting responses during the conversation. The participant also stated that sensitivities can make engaging and teaching students really hard, particularly in multicultural settings. When given a choice, in her experience the students opted for novels which were fantastical in nature, often with supernatural themes which she embraced due to the engagement factor. She believes critical thinking in everyday life is important so that students don't just take what they are told for granted, and they can evaluate what they are told by others. The participant also believes that critical thinking skills are primarily formed early in life and she is unsure if they could, or should be learnt from teachers. Throughout the interview, the participant consistently referred to societal sensitivities and being very conscious of offending others.</p>	
Rach	<p>The participant relates that critical thinking does not play a large part in her everyday classroom as she is content driven. She believes she doesn't have time to cover all the content and elicit critical thinking simultaneously. She uses literature with supernatural themes that include witches, but are fairytale in origin, with classic good versus bad witch scenarios. The participant considers these to have a lesser effect on children's psychological processes and development than real life fears. In this respect, she thinks critical thinking is elicited by studying these</p>	<p>It sounds like I have double standards in saying it should be done, but then avoiding it myself doesn't it? Well, I suppose that is true, but mainly because I teach younger grades and don't want to undermine what parents want their children to believe. In older years I believe these conversations... you know,</p>

	<p>tales with children as it teaches them just because something looks good, doesn't mean it is. In general, she believes there is too much reality in the lives of children and not enough fantasy. The participant not only relates that critical thinking is important for students, but that difficult conversations should not be avoided as it may assist in stemming the radicalisation of teenagers; and that students need to evaluate physical, emotional and manipulative situations realistically. She reiterates that she believes supernatural themes aren't as difficult for students to synthesize as true real life violence, and that literature allows students to practice these critical thinking skills in safety, rather than in real life. The participant states that she believes students are ready to deal with critical thinking at different times, not all students are ready at the same time; as is her experience with the age students stop believing in Santa. Her approach to these situations (for example, questioning the existence of Santa) is to discuss it with their parents – so although she has stated that difficult questions should not be avoided, the participant refers them back to parents to deal with when not in a hypothetical scenario.</p>	<p>the cross cultural ones... can assist in informing students so that the radical members of some religions don't have such a significant impact on them. While they are young, I think the onus is on the parents to establish and maintain familial belief systems, be they religious or otherwise, but when they are older I think that we, as a society, are all equally responsible in helping kids think critically about issues, cause and effect, long term repercussions etc. I really do believe it takes a village to raise a child and we all need to play our part, not just ignore the difficult stuff and get them to find out the wrong information from the wrong sources.</p>
Faith	<p>The participant feels there is not enough time to adequately address critical thinking due to content and assessment requirements, and also behaviour management. Debate and indepth discussion take up a lot of time which does not allow for catch up. Exams results reflect content, not participation and the boundaries set to achieve those results do not allow for students' academic freedom and inquisition. There is such an immense pressure to perform in these exams by students, teachers, and the wider community that the content forming the exam is a priority. The participant would enjoy setting assessments based on engagement and supernatural themes, but that content is not being assessed, nor are the process used to think critically about such content. She believes critical thinking is important in the everyday lives of students, and that not everything is learnt from textbooks, but it is difficult to address in the</p>	<p>Yes, I would agree with that summary. If it's being specifically addressed in the exam, then we cover it – the content, examination techniques, breaking down what the question is actually asking you in order to gain maximum marks in that question. For example, what does 'in your opinion' mean – you need to state your position, cite reference to back up that position, ensure those sources are valid etc. These are all aspect of critical thinking, but they don't help you in real life. I haven't met any who...for</p>

	<p>classroom. The participant questions how generalized critical thinking in everyday classroom applications can be assessed, reported on, programmed for, and empirically measured in order to evidence adequately addressing this area of the curriculum. If she can't prove in her programming and with work samples, then it didn't happen. The participant explains that differentiation and having such a wide academic and maturity level gap in one class is problematic. She also questions the validity of some of the content in an already overcrowded curriculum, and suggests the majority should be catered for rather than the assumption that students will attend university and therefore require knowing how to technically unpack Shakespearean works. The participant believes supernaturally themed novels and media are what the students are watching and reading anyway, so it should be utilised more to enhance classroom engagement. She articulates that, although critical thinking is vitally important in everyday life, students have been spoon fed the curriculum for so long in order to pass assessments that they have forgotten how to think for themselves.</p>	<p>example, encounters a religious cult and thinks, hmmm I'd better look at the propaganda, cross reference it with credible sources etc etc. They just get conned. Although we use critical thinking strategies associated with textual sources regarding synthesis and analysis, we don't assist students in generalising these strategies into everyday scenarios. Using something engaging that <i>isn't</i> on the exam... to provide hypothetical scenarios... that might help them to use these skills in other settings. The more they practice the skills in a variety of ways, the more ingrained they become, and the more automatic. We're still addressing the content and exam criteria, just broadening the scope. But this is where the time factor enters the equation. There physically isn't enough time for that. As I said in the original interview, take out a week for NAIDOC, harmony day, sports carnivals – athletics, swimming, cross country – not to mention the extra competitions the students who perform well will be required to participate in – it all takes time out of the classroom. And then if you have serial non-attenders in the</p>
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		<p>class, when they <i>are</i> there you have to try and catch them up, parents who think an extra week extended holiday doesn't matter, general behaviour management in classes. In my experience, the time and effort that goes into managing some individuals' behaviour, and individual programming...not to mention if you end up with an entire difficult class...the time for basic instruction is limited, let alone extending it to be all encompassing. Teaching is a tough gig and the system, parents and the community are quick to point fingers at us.</p>
Daisy	<p>After feeling overwhelmed and challenged initially, the participant attended staff development sessions which assisted this transition on a whole school basis. She acknowledges that critical thinking practices in the classroom take up a lot of time, but that her particular Principal has been very supportive and gave teachers the freedom to experiment with the curriculum. The whole school moved to a more discussion oriented pedagogy, covering less but in more depth. The participant further acknowledges that critical thinking is hardest to include in senior classes as they are preparing for the HSC, which is content driven. She states that their position is not to alter the content, but the way in which it is delivered, with alternative in-class assessments including observation. The choices of texts studied in her school are vetted by the parent body and therefore any controversial themes, such as supernatural ones, are considered prior to teacher choice and interaction. The participant reported that when supernatural events done by Jesus in the Bible were</p>	<p>Well...It's not really so contradictory. Topics like vampires... or magic... those sorts of supernatural themes should be avoided as they really don't have any place in the classroom anyway. And if a student has faith, then they believe that Jesus was performing miracles, not magic. But now that you have also shown me the full transcript, yes, I agree that during the interview I said that my colleagues questioned the conversation. And at the time I <i>did</i> feel really uncomfortable. But since the interview, I have gone away and had quite a deep think about what had come</p>

	<p>related to medieval witches by students that she felt very uncomfortable, and the conversation caused colleagues to be concerned that teaching critical thinking may encourage students to think radically or question the church's stance. The participant also stated that she then considered the ramifications of the lesson and wider implications which confused her. She felt that some topics are best avoided for fear of being misconstrued and she didn't want to confuse students or be in opposition to the school's religious ethos. Although she stated that she was uncomfortable with these conversations and that some are best avoided, she then stated that she believes if a person has strong faith, their stance regarding this will not be swayed by one or two arguments. These comments appear quite contradictory. The participant concluded by reiterating that senior years are content and assessment driven in preparation for HSC, but that critical thinking should be encouraged in younger students as this is where the foundations are built.</p>	<p>up...and I still believe that those critical thinking conversations do need to be had. Perhaps it should be more of a family based conversation though, so that teachers aren't confusing students by maybe saying something, or implying something that parents would explain differently. I personally wouldn't want to cause conflict between how parents parent, and how students revere teachers as vessels of ultimate knowledge. Family should always come first in these types of belief based conversations. But I agree with the summary. And yes, I still think that critical thinking should be <i>taught</i> more in the lower secondary classes so that they can then <i>use</i> these skills moving toward their HSC, rather than trying to teach the skills in conjunction with all the content getting ready for their exams.</p>
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APPENDIX F: Composite summary of interviews

Composite Interview Summary

All participants discuss their classroom pedagogy as being primarily content and assessment driven. This is particularly true of senior students who require substantial content coverage in order to adequately complete their HSC. They relate that it is those assessment results that students, teachers, parents and the wider community consider a measure of satisfactory student education in opposition to skills for life. For this reason, critical thinking in their classroom experience is limited to synthesizing and analysing the text, including the use of credible and valid secondary sources to support the students' evaluation of a text and/or content rather than application to wider real life scenarios. All participants also noted that to adequately cover critical thinking aspects, a significant portion of time must be allowed for discussion, debate and reflection which is a quality lacking in their school experience. Coupled with extra-curricular interruptions, pressure to complete all set content, behaviour management, and a crowded curriculum, there is little time available for in depth discussions or following student lines of enquiry. Although most teachers agree that text and media containing supernatural themes is highly engaging for students and forms a significant part of their popular culture, when placed in the classroom setting it becomes problematic. This is particularly true when addressing critical thinking as teachers have related it has at times, not only caused the potential for peer ridicule of students, opened the teacher up to parental backlash, and resulted in collegial scrutiny, but also caused the teacher to question their own beliefs and sensitivities. Some teachers noted the increased sensitivities in society in general as being problematic and resulted in teachers not knowing where the line in the sand has been drawn regarding teaching and/or parental responsibilities. Another concern regarding the eliciting teaching and application of critical thinking in classrooms is that teachers are concerned about the internalisation by students of content, particularly with reference to supernatural themes, but also regarding belief systems. Some teachers were mindful that they cannot read what is going on inside a student's head, and did not want to be responsible if a student is affected psychologically as a result of eliciting critical thinking and getting them to think deeply about topics, particularly those related to belief systems and causing them to question parents, religion, or systems. All teachers have experienced difficulties when applying the theory of critical thinking into practice in the classroom, with regards to some or all of the following - time management, programming, assessing, perceived parental validation, and amalgamating with existing content. Teachers also presented ideas that critical thinking strategies for everyday life should be explicitly taught early, either at school or by parents, with many participants agreeing that it should primarily be a parental responsibility that they do not want to cross or undermine, particularly when there is a perception of increased sensitivities. Most teachers agreed that the strategies should be taught early and then taught how to apply those strategies to a variety of contexts, both academically and socially, at an older age or stage of increased maturity. All participants avoided any potentially controversial or offensive material, including supernaturally themed texts, due to conflicting personal beliefs or whole school ethos, parental reprisal concerns, student engagement resulting in increased time being spent on the topic and then having to catch up, and/or concern for student psychological wellbeing. The primary concerns relating to the teaching of critical thinking are that of a crowded curriculum, content being a primary focus in preparation for exams (as society views exam results as a measure of educational value rather than skills for life), not enough time, general programming and assessment difficulties, parental reprisals, and concern for student wellbeing, despite all teachers agreeing that critical thinking skills in everyday situations are invaluable for life after school.

APPENDIX G: Average references to identified themes in interviews

Average references to identified themes in interviews											
Theme	Susan	Jimmy	Sandy	Josey	Sri	Rach	Faith	Daisy	Total	Ave	Rank
Lack of time to address critical thinking skills	11	7	10	0	3	0	12	2	45 / 6	7.5	7
Content is the focus	29	12	20	8	12	5	6	2	94 / 8	11.75	3
Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable (supernatural themes and beliefs)	27	29	13	28	15	0	0	8	120 / 6	20	1
Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting critical thinking	10	2	11	0	8	4	0	7	42 / 6	7	9
Education is assessment driven	18	0	14	2	2	0	15	8	59 / 6	9.83	4
Critical thinking skills are important	6	6	12	2	6	19	9	9	69 / 8	8.63	6
Practical application in classrooms is difficult	17	12	18	0	25	9	30	17	128 / 7	18.29	2
Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices	2	1	10	5	1	0	10	5	34 / 7	4.86	11
Personal beliefs do affect classroom teaching practices	0	0	1	9	11	15	0	13	49 / 5	9.8	5
Student engagement is important	15	4	3	0	3	0	6	1	32 / 6	5.3	10
Students see supernatural as real	0	4	0	1	6	3	1	0	15 / 5	3	13
Teaching critical thinking in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs	5	6	7	7	11	6	0	9	51 / 7	7.29	8
Teaching critical thinking opens teachers up to parental complaints	3	7	4	0	12	0	2	1	29 / 6	4.83	12

APPENDIX H: Participants' interview comments listed by category and theme

Student related thematic comments

Student wellbeing and mental health possibly affected by eliciting CT

Susan

Others might not share beliefs
Open that child up to ridicule
Mindful of other students
Can control classroom but not when taken into the community
Classroom conversations are supported
If repeated outside could offend someone
Don't want additional ramifications because I have encouraged CT & supernatural
Encouraging CT could potentially offend
Don't want students to draw levels of criticism on self
Year 9 not mature enough and discussing with parents could undermine family, culture and beliefs (CT, supernatural & beliefs)

Jimmy

CT about Santa not being real and students got upset
Not fair on kids to miss due to CT and belief issues

Sandy

Always wary of putting ideas into students heads
Not prepared for ramifications because student starts thinking for themselves
Always second guessing where the line in the sand is
Wary of student opinion and what you offer in reply
Encourage students to respect other opinions
Internally students are taking a lot away from CT conversations
You don't know if they've internalised something that really messes them up later in life (CT)
How do you know you aren't doing more harm than good when getting students to do CT
Don't want it on my conscience that I've messed a student up psychologically
Don't want students to question own, or family beliefs because of CT
Don't know what's going on inside the students heads

Sri

Confusion if Islam condones ghosts (supernatural) or not
Questioned personal beliefs
Conflicting beliefs within same cultural group
Boys genuinely scared of Kuntilanak
The boys fear genuinely surprised and worried me
It was quite confronting though (CT & supernatural)
I can only imagine how confused some students were
Judgement by others at being in year 9 and still believing in witches

Rach

Scary themes aren't nearly as harmful for kids as true real life violence
Real life issues more scary than literature
Don't think literature messes with children's psychological processes and development as much as real life fears
Students stop believing in Santa at a younger age

Daisy

Coach them how to express their ideas
CT Conversations might be overheard and misconstrued by others
Might be encouraging students to think radically or question church (CT)
Don't want to confuse students (CT)
Don't want students questioning own internal thought processes and beliefs
Considered the ramifications of lesson and wider implications (CT)
Might be confronting and challenging (CT)

Critical thinking skills are important

Susan

Concepts are skills for life
CT as concept is important
CT important element
Value of CT skills is priceless
CT helps to be more street savvy
CT helps think for themselves

Jimmy

Education is learning how to function appropriately in society
CT important to teach
Need to be able to evaluate for themselves
Manipulated by advertising into spending on mother's credit card
Students discussed zombies being real but few different perspectives
CT is important in the long term

Sandy

CT is separating fact from crap
Evaluate info in the light of emerging facts
CT very important for real life
Textual analysis is CT but not attached to life skills
Commonsense has lapsed
Students justifying comments with different forms of evidence (CT)
Students questioned validity and reliability of sources (CT)
Students could justify own opinions or change in light of new evidence (CT)
Teenagers see unreliable sources as credible (CT)
Very valuable, but off track (CT)
CT hugely important
So many applications for sorting fact from crap

Josey

CT very important
Uncomfortable and don't want to say the wrong thing regarding CT in everyday life

Sri

CT absolutely important
CT skills are formulated quite early in life
CT is hugely important skill to have
CT really important
Not just taking what they're told for granted (CT)
Evaluate what they are told by others (CT)

Rach

Contemporary texts and movies on tv have changed views on supernatural
Depiction of witches has definitely changed

Students aren't really scared of witches any more
Supernatural tales train students in CT as just because something looks good doesn't mean it is
Don't judge a book by its cover (CT)
Kids aren't dumb, they know fact from fiction (CT)
Maybe there's too much reality and not enough fantasy
Exposing children to a variety of cultural beliefs make a better society
I don't think those conversations should be avoided (CT)
Might prevent some of the radicalisations
CT very important
Need to be able to decipher what is true and what isn't
Cannot teach stranger danger any more
Kids really need to evaluate situations realistically
There are real dangers out there, physical, emotional and manipulative
There's a lot of manipulation
I'm dreading it really (CT)
Absolutely teach CT from early age
The more they can think for themselves the better

Faith

CT is important as per the curriculum, but in practice it all goes down the tubes
Get the basic literacy right and the CT and the social aspect of life
Make sure they can justify theirs (CT)
Not everything at school learnt out of a textbook
CT really important
Students need to learn this (CT)
Important to be able to synthesize and make informed decisions and judgements
CT vitally important but no time
Spoon feeding for so long people have forgotten how to do it for themselves (CT)

Daisy

Believe it was a worthwhile conversation (CT & Bible)
CT is important
Can see from another's point of view but not change own belief
Can see sides without personal stance being affected
Conversations need to be had for student benefit (CT)
CT really important role
Less likely to succumb to manipulation (CT)
Need to ensure CT covered for curriculum and life after school
Younger years CT should be encouraged

Student engagement is important

Susan

Student barely focus enough to get through assessment
Students want to regurgitate info
Students haven't had to think for themselves but still not producing work
Need time, resources and students' attention
CT depend on students wanting to learn
Often don't want to learn
Doesn't matter how you dress it up, still disengaged
They just don't want to
Should cut topics and incorporate in part to maintain engagement

If could set assignment with very broad scope, can encourage CT
Pull unengaging elements through as can't trick students
They're overloaded with content they don't enjoy
Repackage content to be engaging and they will want to do the CT on it
Including supernatural themes in engaging content would get really hairy
Hypothetically engagement should trump awkwardness

Jimmy

Students have already checked out
Students discussed zombies being real but few different perspectives
Students take it for granted that dogs can talk
Talking dogs are just fantasy

Sandy

Give lower achieving scope to investigate once hooked
Engaged and quality CT but so far behind in the program
Need engagement

Sri

Gave students a choice of 4 texts, Harry Potter was overwhelming winner
Imagine if we could really do that (magic)
Sensitivity can make engaging and teaching students really hard

Faith

Engage them (supernatural)
What the students are reading (or watch) anyway (supernatural)
Safely assume that it is engaging (supernatural)
Have an idea about the popular culture literature so I can connect with students on some level (supernatural)
Do more CT about that than anything we study (when engaged)
Quite inventive and studious analysing how zombies could be real and how to kill them

Daisy

Really engages students (CT)

Students see supernatural as real

Jimmy

CT about Santa not being real and students got upset
Students discussed zombies being real but few different perspectives
Students take it for granted that dogs can talk
Talking dogs are just fantasy

Josey

Miracles and supernatural events in the Bible are different as its faith based, not fantasy

Sri

Kuntilanak is mythical witch/ghost
Indonesian students believed, others didn't
Confusion if Islam condones ghosts (supernatural) or not
Boys genuinely scared of Kuntilanak
The boys fear genuinely surprised and worried me
Judgement by others at being in year 9 and still believing in witches

Rach

Confused about Harry Potter movies because actors are real (not cartoon) and everything looks real

Santa (& CT) is getting harder to deal with
Students stop believing in Santa at a younger age

Faith

Quite inventive and studious analysing how zombies could be real and how to kill them

Teacher based thematic comments

Avoids anything potentially offensive or uncomfortable (supernatural themes and beliefs)

Susan

Controversial theme (supernatural) potentially offends
Avoid controversial/ potentially offensive content (supernatural themes)
Steers things away from topics that provoke thought (CT & beliefs)
Avoid the conversation altogether (CT & beliefs)
Steer conversation in alternative route
Mindful of different perspectives
Demographic of classroom means supernatural themes hasn't been an issue yet
Mindful of supernatural thematic content
Not know how to respond (CT & beliefs)
Steer conversation back to topic rather than explore
Mindful of other students
Safer track to steer away from
Supernatural themes and belief systems such a hairy question
Hesitate to do for potential conflict (supernatural themes)
Can control classroom but not when taken into the community
Classroom conversations are supported
If repeated outside could offend someone
Don't want additional ramifications because I have encouraged CT & supernatural
Encouraging CT could potentially offend
Lack of maturity to do CT regarding beliefs and supernatural
Year 9 not mature enough and discussing with parents could undermine family, culture and beliefs (CT, supernatural & beliefs)
I wouldn't want to cross that line (CT & beliefs)
I'd rather avoid it (CT & belief/supernatural)
Don't want to say the wrong thing
You can't say the wrong thing
Your professionalism is compromised
Need to be able to justify to prevent parental reprisal

Jimmy

Wouldn't go into it (CT) with parent body demographic
I don't go there, I don't need to go there (CT)
Multicultural school with very opinionated parents
Have to be very careful about what you say
Adhering to parent request can see teacher labelled
CT about Santa not being real and students got upset
Easier to avoid the whole thing (CT)
Parental backlash (CT&beliefs)
Not fair on kids to miss due to CT and belief issues
Redirects when CT uncomfortable
Not worth the ramifications (CT)

Parental backlash if encouraging CT
Avoid or deflect CT conversations
Parental ramifications
Won't cover CT if something can't definitively defend
Needs to be able to have evidence to defend CT conversations
Redirects if can't offer proof
Parents always vocal about everything
Avoided the conversation and redirected it to outside the classroom
Not interested in discussing it (CT & supernatural) in class
Don't want to deal with parent complaints about topic
Don't go there (literature with supernatural themes)
Don't use any literature with witches
Witches are too controversial
I would be very careful about when I encouraged open enquiry and CT
Parent base isn't conducive to CT
Parent see CT as teaching outside the curriculum
Don't know who is going to be offended by what
Parents get upset and make complaints

Sandy

Cover your own back
Got so off track and hostile when CT in class
Intense and confronting CT conversation
Always wary of putting ideas into students heads
Not prepared for ramifications because student starts thinking for themselves
Always second guessing where the line in the sand is
Wary of student opinion and what you offer in reply
Lot more comfortable with Hatchet than Harry Potter (supernatural themes) not so much cultural as lifestyle based
Try to stay out of it (beliefs)
Don't enter conversation (on beliefs) as teacher's opinion might be seen as correct
Just try to steer away from it (CT)
Do it (CT) with a safe topic
Don't want students to question own, or family beliefs because of CT

Josey

Don't really do much in the way of supernatural themes
Approved texts used
Choice of literature mirrors school ethos
Text have approval of parent body, so we are pretty safe there
Not much controversial content to worry about
Don't want to jump on the popular culture train
Students free to read popular culture at home
Don't think classroom is place for anything too controversial
Supernatural references are metaphorical in nature
Hamlet didn't really see ghost but conscience talking to him
Macbeth was social commentary of beliefs at the time
Wasn't witches church was seeking (inquisition)
Uncomfortable discussing humanitarian side of inquisition
Leave those conversations to the history department
Don't have an issue with supernatural themes in our text choice
Personal lack of comfort, not professional (regarding biblical vs fictional)

supernatural)

Teaching supernatural events as truths does not fit into school ethos

Would direct students with biblical questions to pastoral team

Any beliefs or questions about Bible aren't directed at me

Voicing own opinions may undermine family unit

Refer anything construed as imparting personal belief onto pastoral team

Refer to someone more equipped to deal with probing questions

Don't want to be saying the wrong thing

Uncomfortable and don't want to say the wrong thing regarding CT in everyday life

Words can be twisted easily

Don't believe I have the skills to support student understanding without bias (mine or schools)

If I lead a student's enquiry, it's not their journey and their CT

Avoid difficult conversations or direct to another member of staff (CT & supernatural)

Sri

Never really discussed supernatural type things

I don't interfere either way (with beliefs)

That's a question for someone more learned than me

No up to me to encourage others to question their beliefs

Stay out of the other conversations (beliefs)

It's very rare that topics like this come up (supernatural)

I mediate really difficult conversations rather than participate

Really uncomfortable with situation and changed the subject of the conversation

Have to be very careful when choosing texts in schools

Society is a lot more sensitive now

Very conscious of offending others

Sensitivity can make engaging and teaching students really hard

What engages students is what others are sensitive about

Someone is going to get upset about something

I don't want any fingers pointing at me (when people get upset)

Daisy

Likelihood of that is slim (supernatural)

Literature vetted by parental body

Parents have a right to have an input

Can purchase texts if justification as to the validity of the text

CT Conversations might be overheard and misconstrued by others

Some topics are best avoided

Might be confronting and challenging (CT)

Some literature not for classroom (supernatural)

Personal beliefs don't affect classroom teaching practices

Susan

Personal beliefs don't weigh in on what teaching

Not know how to respond (CT & beliefs)

Jimmy

Believe what they believe

Sandy

Teacher as mediator

Don't have personal belief in classroom

Try to stay out of it (beliefs)
Encourage students to respect other opinions
I'm not passionate about any belief system
Listen to others rather than impart own ideas
Don't push any of my beliefs onto students by voicing own opinions
Different beliefs don't really come up – monochrome class
Associate belief systems with religion
Don't enter conversation (on beliefs) as teacher's opinion might be seen as correct

Josey

Our entire school has same philosophy
Don't need to worry about saying anything 'radical'
Students with differing cultural religious beliefs wouldn't be attending our school
I'm glad I don't have to deal with culturally conflicting ideals
Wouldn't present itself in my setting (cultural beliefs)

Sri

I don't interfere either way (with beliefs)

Faith

I don't have a problem with it (supernatural themes)
Status quo of the period, look at what they represent rather than what they were called (supernatural)
It really doesn't bother me (supernatural)
What the students are reading (or watch) anyway (supernatural)
I'm really open to anything (beliefs)
Question student about their ideas not my own beliefs
Make sure they can justify theirs (CT)
Not about me as a teacher
Not everything at school learnt out of a textbook
I am pretty liberal and open minded

Daisy

Coach them how to express their ideas
Didn't see it as questioning church as viewing through CT lens
Can see from another's point of view but not change own belief
Conversations are not going to change beliefs
Can see sides without personal stance being affected

Personal beliefs do affect classroom teaching practices

Sandy

Teachers have decided what students are capable of

Josey

Uncomfortable discussing humanitarian side of inquisition
Personal lack of comfort, not professional (regarding biblical vs fictional supernatural)
Hadn't thought about managing own beliefs and objectivity conflicts
Christians believe because you believe
Don't need evidentiary proof or validation
Believe because we do
Don't believe I have the skills to support student understanding without bias (mine or schools)
I don't believe we're meant to get teenagers to think deeply about everything
Don't believe supernaturally themed literature has a place in classrooms

Sri

Confusion if Islam condones ghosts (supernatural) or not
Questioned personal beliefs
Conflicting beliefs within same cultural group
I thought everyone knew television was fabricated
I'm quite confused myself
I got confused (supernatural & beliefs)
All religions have some sort of supernatural basis
There's a bit of that everywhere (supernatural belief)
Because it was cultural I felt like I had to defend students
Double standard of believing in God but not Kuntilanak
Felt uncomfortable at having to defend something I didn't believe

Rach

Students aren't really scared of witches any more
Supernatural tales train students in CT as just because something looks good doesn't mean it is
Scary themes aren't nearly as harmful for kids as true real life violence
Rather child be scared of a witch than real life situations
Real life issues more scary than literature
Don't think literature messes with children's psychological processes and development as much as real life fears
Don't believe adults believe in it (supernatural)
Witchcraft more seen as folklore
There's a lot of magic in movies and it is obviously fiction
Kids aren't dumb, they know fact from fiction (CT)
Maybe there's too much reality and not enough fantasy
Exposing children to a variety of cultural beliefs make a better society
I don't think those conversations should be avoided (CT)
Might prevent some of the radicalisations
Young children are not going to be master critical thinkers

Daisy

Little uncomfortable (supernatural)
Correlation between medieval witches and Jesus was made
Little uncomfortable (supernatural correlations)
Against the school ethos to question validity of Bible
Might be encouraging students to think radically or question church (CT)
Don't want to confuse students (CT)
Don't want students questioning own internal thought processes and beliefs
Didn't see it as questioning church as viewing through CT lens
Considered the ramifications of lesson and wider implications (CT)
I was a little confused
Some topics are best avoided
Strong personal faith
Belief is all encompassing

Teaching CT in school can undermine parent responsibilities and beliefs

Susan

Not know how to respond (CT & beliefs)
Can control classroom but not when taken into the community
Year 9 not mature enough and discussing with parents could undermine family,

culture and beliefs (CT, supernatural & beliefs)
I wouldn't want to cross that line (CT & beliefs)
Need to be able to justify to prevent parental reprisal

Jimmy

Have to be very careful about what you say
Adhering to parent request can see teacher labelled
Teachers can't do everything
Parents have to take responsibility
Guides student thinking rather than encourage independent thinking
Parent see CT as teaching outside the curriculum

Sandy

Responsibility on teachers for parenting duties and massive behaviour management load
Always wary of putting ideas into students heads
Wary of student opinion and what you offer in reply
Try to stay out of it (beliefs)
Don't enter conversation (on beliefs) as teacher's opinion might be seen as correct
Don't want students to question own, or family beliefs because of CT
Don't know what's going on inside the students heads

Josey

Is school the place for CT?
Are we undermining parents by teaching CT
Are we taking away parents right to parent as they see fit?
Who am I to encourage students to question things
Teaching is also about supporting parents
I encourage CT within parameter of an educator
I don't believe we're meant to get teenagers to think deeply about everything

Sri

Confusion if Islam condones ghosts (supernatural) or not
Questioned personal beliefs
Conflicting beliefs within same cultural group
I don't interfere either way (with beliefs)
I hadn't crossed any boundaries with parents (CT and supernatural)
I don't like upsetting anyone (CT & supernatural)
No up to me to encourage others to question their beliefs
It was quite confronting though (CT & supernatural)
I can only imagine how confused some students were
CT skills are formulated quite early in life
I don't know if those skills come from teachers (CT)

Rach

Respecting differences of opinion regarding Santa, take it up with your parents
Exposing children to a variety of cultural beliefs make a better society
I don't think those conversations should be avoided (CT)
Might prevent some of the radicalisations
Only opposing belief system encountered was Santa
Supernatural themes are a given, it's just how you approach them

Daisy

Literature vetted by parental body
Parents have a right to have an input
Correlation between medieval witches and Jesus was made

Against the school ethos to question validity of Bible
Might be encouraging students to think radically or question church (CT)
Don't want to confuse students (CT)
Don't want students questioning own internal thought processes and beliefs
Didn't see it as questioning church as viewing through CT lens
Considered the ramifications of lesson and wider implications (CT)

Teaching CT opens teachers up to parental complaints

Susan

Don't want additional ramifications because I have encouraged CT & supernatural
I wouldn't want to cross that line (CT & beliefs)
Need to be able to justify to prevent parental reprisal

Jimmy

Have to be very careful about what you say
Parental backlash (CT&beliefs)
Parental ramifications
Parents always vocal about everything
Don't want to deal with parent complaints about topic
Parent see CT as teaching outside the curriculum
Parents get upset and make complaints

Sandy

Cover your own back
Not prepared for ramifications because student starts thinking for themselves
Always second guessing where the line in the sand is
Wary of student opinion and what you offer in reply

Sri

Didn't hear any feedback or complaints from parents (CT conversation)
Relieved that no parents had contacted school
I hadn't crossed any boundaries with parents (CT and supernatural)
I don't like upsetting anyone (CT & supernatural)
I don't want to put my Principal under pressure to answer religious based questions (CT & supernatural)
Have to be very careful when choosing texts in schools
Society is a lot more sensitive now
Very conscious of offending others
Sensitivity can make engaging and teaching students really hard
What engages students is what others are sensitive about
Someone is going to get upset about something
I don't want any fingers pointing at me (when people get upset)

Faith

Sick of teachers being blamed for it all (not being prepared for life)
We can't do everything

Daisy

Considered the ramifications of lesson and wider implications (CT)

Curriculum/classroom based thematic comments

Lack of time

Susan

Don't have time to focus explicitly on CT

You don't have time in class
Takes long enough to teach content
No time to balance content and concepts equally
Some units have so much content to get through
Need to spend more time on content
You don't have time to do it all in the classroom
There's just not time for it (CT)
Physically not enough time
There's not enough time
Need time, resources and students' attention

Jimmy

Teachers can't do everything
Parents have to take responsibility
Just not time in the day to have deep discussions
You're trying to fit everything in
Too much else to do
CT more for older levels
Not much time to go further in depth

Sandy

Isn't much time to go over CT regarding texts
Don't have time for debates
No time left in schools
Teachers and students are pushed for time
Have to prioritise your time and energy
No time for going too in-depth with thematic content or CT
Engaged and quality CT but so far behind in the program
Had to amalgamate to catch up
How to fit it into everyday programs and timings (CT)?
There's just no time

Sri

Not a lot of time in the school day
There's really no time for anything like that (CT & supernatural)
Wouldn't be enough time in the day to teach CT

Faith

How am I supposed to fit everything in and prepare students for exams
Behaviour management takes up most of the lesson
In theory CT is a lot of discussion, in practice takes up a lot of time and only higher achievers contribute
CT turns into a debate, or in-depth discussion
CT takes up a lot of time
There just isn't time (CT)
Absolutely, lack of time (CT)
If they don't need it then axe it and give time to teach the relevant stuff
We can't do everything
No quality time
CT vitally important but no time
There's no time for catch up

Daisy

It does take up time (CT)
Allow more flexibility in what and how is taught, and how to assess

Content is the focus

Susan

CT secondary to content
More than enough content
CT is a by- product
Touch on CT but not in depth
CT is implicit
Prioritise content over concept
Content is assessed
Content is assessed
If don't have content then can't pass assessment
Assessment and content is back bone of unit
Concepts come off content and assessment
Some units have so much content to get through
Need to spend more time on content
CT is a byproduct of content
School tells what you need to pass assessment
Regurgitate content to pass
Drive the content
CT needs to play more central part in classroom without taking away from content
Purely content based gearing for an assessment
Students used to content driven assessment so difficult to change
Senior classes have maturity but are content driven
Spent the term driving the content
Need to cover the content to pass assessment
You have to get through the content
Opportunities for this limited as curriculum and programming already dictated
They're overloaded with content they don't enjoy
Including supernatural themes in engaging content would get really hairy
Need to cover the content that is in the assessment
Need to be able to prove you've covered the content

Jimmy

How2Learn incorporates CT so CT is covered
Not a lot of CT to be done
Needs to be able to have evidence to defend CT conversations
Guides student thinking rather than encourage independent thinking
Didn't encourage CT with older students
Concentrate on teaching the words in the text
Try to cover CT in How2Learn approach
CT more for older levels
Parent see CT as teaching outside the curriculum
Don't have much flexibility in teaching schedules
You're always accountable
All the boxes are ticked before you go off track

Sandy

I do this (CT) more with lower achieving students
Give lower achieving scope to investigate once hooked
Other student concentrate on technical aspects of text

Students are learning something that is beneficial to them
Want to learn something, not just regurgitate something they don't understand
Don't have time for debates
More technical lines than exploring critically
Lot of spoon feeding going on
Mature students get quality CT
Textual analysis is CT but not attached to life skills
Massive curriculum
Get kids literate enough to fill out welfare forms is an undertone of teaching
Push the kids that need it
Just tell me what I need to know to pass
Got so off track and hostile when CT in class
Engaged and quality CT but so far behind in the program
Had to amalgamate to catch up
Very valuable, but off track (CT)
How to teach it (CT)?
Physically show us how to work it into program and assess it

Josey

Hadn't previously thought about CT
Previously cover CT in a round about fashion
Until inservice session hadn't really thought about CT at all
More conscious about asking deeper level thinking now
Weave the threads of new curriculum though existing programming
Ask more questions now
Try to elicit what students thought author was trying to convey
CT in terms of textual examination rather than everyday questions

Sri

CT different in each subject
CT in English refers to technical aspect of the genre
That's what they are assessed on
Predicting, analysing and evaluating text to justify thoughts is CT
Combine and not teach CT in isolation
Supernatural themes hard to avoid (in Shakespeare)
CT is breaking the textual code rather than thinking
I don't believe we accomplished anything by having the discussion (CT & supernatural)
No one really learnt anything apart from some believed and others didn't (supernatural)
Don't think CT about a text is beneficial after school
Our role as teacher regarding CT is more academic based
I don't know if those skills come from teachers (CT)

Rach

CT doesn't play a big part
Trying to reach basics of reading
Really comfortable using supernatural themes in class
It's not the theme that is the focus (CT)
Not something I focus on explicitly (CT & supernatural)

Faith

CT not much role
Can I tick it off the list to show I've covered the criteria (CT)

Wonder why the students' can't read the exam paper
Prepare for exams
Exam results that are recorded not engagement or participation
Get the basic literacy right and the CT and the social aspect of life

Daisy

It's how they will be assessed in HSC so need to be prepared
CT hardest with seniors as HSC is set and need to ensure assessed content covered

Education is assessment driven

Susan

Content is assessed
Content is assessed
If don't have content then can't pass assessment
Assessment and content is back bone of unit
Concepts come off content and assessment
School tells what you need to pass assessment
Regurgitate content to pass
Need to draw CT into assessment rather than regurgitating
Teaching a process in order to pass assessment
Teaching is centred around assessment
I know the end goal
Purely content based gearing for an assessment
Students used to content driven assessment so difficult to change
Student barely focus enough to get through assessment
Students want to regurgitate info
Need to cover the content to pass assessment
Opportunities for this limited as curriculum and programming already dictated
Need to cover the content that is in the assessment

Sandy

Need to get best assessment results possible
Want to learn something, not just regurgitate something they don't understand
Need to go over exam criteria
Performance based initiative mean back to teaching the test
Push for tangible results that can be measured objectively
Just tell me what I need to know to pass
Is this in the test (CT & beliefs)
Looking for tell me the right response
Good CT means throwing assessment out the window
Can only assess a tangible objective outcome, not a process
I don't really know if you can assess CT
Should CT be assessed at all
How do I assess it (CT)?
Physically show us how to work it into program and assess it

Josey

Students excelling in assessments so we're OK
The results are there

Sri

That's what they are assessed on
Shakespeare is senior study and more end focussed

Faith

How am I supposed to fit everything in and prepare students for exams
How am I going to assess it (CT)
It's all about results
If I can't empirically measure it, then it didn't happen
Can I tick it off the list to show I've covered the criteria (CT)
I have no supporting evidence to prove CT results
If you can't prove it then it didn't happen, but if it doesn't then you're not doing your job
Prepare for exams
Exam results that are recorded not engagement or participation
Pressure for them to achieve is immense
Throw out content and assess the technical aspects through free speech
If I had the scope to set an assessment (supernatural)
Would be surprised at what students could produce given absolute freedom (supernatural & CT)
They like to have boundaries and assessment structure
Educational anarchy

Daisy

Principal isn't pressuring us to perform (assessment)
Devised some alternate assessment
Don't think it is so much about the assessment (CT)
It's how they will be assessed in HSC so need to be prepared
Observational assessment
Consternation about how to apply, plan and assess CT
Allow more flexibility in what and how is taught, and how to assess
CT hardest with seniors as HSC is set and need to ensure assessed content covered

Practical application in classrooms is difficult

Susan

Can't have individual conversations
Link concepts to skills and processes rather than content
School tells what to think
Analysis is CT but more to it
Analysis is ticking off steps in a process, not CT
Difficult to provide freedom when 30 students at different levels
Student centred to provoke CT great on paper but difficult to translate into reality
CT needs a lot of support from the teacher
Theory is great but practically can't happen (CT)
Haven't had the resources
Should cut topics and incorporate in part to maintain engagement
Filter content rather than stand-alone unit then would still get content and can concentrate on CT
You have to get through the content
If could set assignment with very broad scope, can encourage CT
Opportunities for this limited as curriculum and programming already dictated
Need to be able to justify to prevent parental reprisal
On paper great, but in practice all but impossible

Jimmy

CT about Santa not being real and students got upset
Parental ramifications

Parents have to take responsibility
Parents always vocal about everything
I would be very careful about when I encouraged open enquiry and CT
Parent base isn't conducive to CT
Parent see CT as teaching outside the curriculum
Don't have much flexibility in teaching schedules
You're always accountable
All the boxes are ticked before you go off track
Don't know who is going to be offended by what
Parents get upset and make complaints

Sandy

Teachers have decided what students are capable of
CT different for different students
Don't have time for debates
More capable students would dominate debate (CT)
Mature students get quality CT
New teaching reforms all the time
Go around in circles with pedagogy
CT needs to be streamed through curriculum but given no indication of how and when to do this
Responsibility on teachers for parenting duties and massive behaviour management load
Have to prioritise your time and energy
Teaching 3 to 4 different lessons each period
How to teach it (CT)?
How to fit it into everyday programs and timings (CT)?
How do I assess it (CT)?
Physically show us how to work it into program and assess it
Some practical guidance would be nice
There's so much more to teaching now
Great in theory but really difficult to maintain in practice

Sri

CT different in each subject
Combine and not teach CT in isolation
Supernatural themes hard to avoid (in Shakespeare)
I could imagine junior school would ask a lot of questions (of Shakespeare)
Didn't hear any feedback or complaints from parents (CT conversation)
Relieved that no parents had contacted school
I'm quite confused myself
I got confused (supernatural & beliefs)
I hadn't crossed any boundaries with parents (CT and supernatural)
I don't like upsetting anyone (CT & supernatural)
I don't want to put my Principal under pressure to answer religious based questions (CT & supernatural)
Really difficult CT conversations with opposing beliefs
Neither are wrong as it's subjective
It was quite confronting though (CT & supernatural)
I can only imagine how confused some students were
I don't believe we accomplished anything by having the discussion (CT & supernatural)

No one really learnt anything apart from some believed and others didn't (supernatural)

Because it was cultural I felt like I had to defend students

Have to be very careful when choosing texts in schools

Society is a lot more sensitive now

Very conscious of offending others

Sensitivity can make engaging and teaching students really hard

What engages students is what others are sensitive about

Someone is going to get upset about something

I don't want any fingers pointing at me (when people get upset)

Rach

Scary themes aren't nearly as harmful for kids as true real life violence

Rather child be scared of a witch than real life situations

Real life issues more scary than literature

Santa (& CT) is getting harder to deal with

How are you supposed to teach CT skills at school

Some kids are ready and others just aren't (for CT)

CT needs to be done in context

Not something I focus on explicitly (CT & supernatural)

Supernatural themes are a given, it's just how you approach them

Faith

All great on paper, but in the classroom it's a bit different (CT)

How can I validate their learning (CT)

How am I going to assess it (CT)

How am I going to report on it (CT)

How am I going to prove it is programmed and not just an easy lesson (CT)

If I can't empirically measure it, then it didn't happen

Can I tick it off the list to show I've covered the criteria (CT)

I have no supporting evidence to prove CT results

If you can't prove it then it didn't happen, but if it doesn't then you're not doing our job

Differentiation makes it difficult (CT)

In theory CT is a lot of discussion, in practice takes up a lot of time and only higher achievers contribute

Having such a wide gap in one class is really difficult (CT)

CT is important as per the curriculum, but in practice it all goes down the tubes

Every year we are having to alter the way we teach

Great on paper, but just isn't practical (CT)

Experienced teachers are struggling (CT)

Do 3 lessons in each class

Sink or swim

Wonder why the students' can't read the exam paper

If could minimise content teachers would have a chance

Curriculum is overloaded

Throw out content and assess the technical aspects through free speech

Probably no need for them to be studying in the first place (Shakespeare)

It's outdated and ludicrous (Shakespeare)

We need to cater for the majority

If they don't need it then axe it and give time to teach the relevant stuff

If I had the scope to set an assessment (supernatural)

Would be surprised at what students could produce given absolute freedom
(supernatural & CT)

They like to have boundaries and assessment structure

Educational anarchy

Daisy

Staff development on CT helped

Was feeling a little overwhelmed (CT)

Principal gave us freedom to experiment with the curriculum

Was really challenging

Not just about ticking boxes (CT)

Lot of discussion based teaching and learning

Isn't emphasis on writing now

Students really ended up leading the discussion

Overall approach (CT) changed from written to discussion based

Covering less but in more depth

Change in the delivery of the content

Maximum participation

I was a little confused

Might be confronting and challenging (CT)

Some literature not for classroom (supernatural)

Consternation about how to apply, plan and assess CT

Colleagues in other schools are struggling (CT)

Annex A: Supernatural beings, abilities and mythology – history, links to contemporary beliefs, and references in the selected novels

SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

Ghost/soul/spirit

Mark (2014) confirmed that there was undoubtedly belief in the existence of a soul after the bodily death of a human throughout the ancient world. He suggested that how the dead lived on was dependent on factors including the quality of life they had, how the body was disposed of, and how they were remembered by the living. The specific detail altered according to cultural and religious belief; however the basic precedence existed that the soul remained in its final resting place unless being raised by a god or deity, which may include improper burial or funeral rites, a body not being located, or the souls' need for vengeance or restitution at the time of death.

With the exception of a few cultures such as Latin America where offerings were made to guide the departed spirit home during the day of the dead festivities, ghosts were not generally considered a welcome sight (Prower, 2015). The ancient fear of ghosts could be demonstrated by the customs of All Hallows Eve, the contemporary Halloween, or the Day of the Dead. Similar rituals, beliefs and ghost stories could be found in the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, China, India, and Scotland (Coventry, 2009; Felton, 1989; Mark, 2014; Nardo, 2003, 2004).

During the Celtic Samhain tradition, the spirit of the dead could walk freely amongst the living. Villagers would door knock for food to make a communal feast for their departed friends and relatives and then return to their homes in darkness. Fires were extinguished and dwellings festooned with ash and spider webs in the belief that if a ghost thought a house was not inhabited, they would pass by to the next house.

Masks and other guises were donned so that malevolent spirits could not recognise the living and thus saved them from possession or haunting. Cattle were slaughtered, cured and salted in readiness for the winter, and the bones were burnt, giving rise to

the contemporary practice of bonfires (Kelly, 1919; Mark, 2014; Skal, 2003). With the expansion of the Roman Empire and conversion to Christianity in the fourth century, Samhain was embraced by the church as All Hallows which subsequently became All Soul's Day, when churchgoers would pray for the souls of those in purgatory (Kelly, 1919; Skal, 2003).

In Mesopotamia, regardless of their earthly position when alive, all souls would reside in the land of no return. Special consideration was, however, granted for the soul to return if there was a mission that needed to be completed, for example righting a wrong they had done prior to death (Stuart, 1977). Biggs (2005) alluded to permission being granted for souls to return if family responsibilities to supply offerings to the dead were ignored and that this return as a ghost was more likely if the death was unnatural or they were given an improper burial. The Mesopotamian doctors had the ability to placate ghosts but required the patient to confess their sins that might be drawing the ghost back from the afterlife (Biggs, 2005). Dalley (2004) reported that although there were some records of loved ones manifesting as ghosts with warnings or advice, the majority of Mesopotamian ghosts were considered unwelcome and required banishing through the use of amulets, prayers, charms or exorcism.

The Ancient Egyptian belief in ghosts was indisputable and they believed the soul travelled to be judged by Osiris at the Hall of Truth. Here the heart was weighed against the feather of truth to determine entry to the afterlife. If the heart was heavier than the feather, it was consumed by monsters and the soul would cease to exist (Nardo, 2004). The soul was considered to have five distinct parts, with two of these being the spirit and the personality as the Ba and Ka respectively. Together they would combine after death to create the Akh, which was what was seen as a ghost upon its return to seek its retribution on the living (Nardo, 2004). If the funeral rites were sufficient, and their memory preserved by the living, the spirits were seen as beneficial in watching over the living.

Ancient Romans believed ghosts appeared predictably and only during certain times at night. The ghostly apparitions in dreams were viewed as completely different from a restless vision. Shannon (2013) noted that ancient Roman and Greek literature was

littered with ghost stories, some of which included the story of Philinnion in the second century, and the tale of Athenodorus told by Pliny the Younger in the same century. The story of a ghost returning to ask a loved one to avenge their death was echoed in the story of Thrasyllus as told by Apuleius. Shannon (2013) referred to ghostly phenomena in Roman times as being called mirabilia or miracles/wonders.

Similarly, Chinese culture dictated that the ghost of a person who suffered an untimely death or failed to have sufficient burial rites performed could only be seen at night illuminated by torchlight. They too believed that ghosts would impart warnings or prophecies only in dream form. The Chinese belief in ghosts was greatly influenced by their tradition of ancestor worship. The Ghost Festival was originally held to honour and appease the dead and continues to be held during Ghost Month, which occurs on the fifteenth of July. It is then that the Chinese believe the barrier between the living and the dead is the thinnest and the dead can infiltrate the lives of the living (Hungry Ghost Festival, n.d.). Food and gifts were offered up to the dead to honour them and attempt to ensure they remained on their side of the afterlife. This mirrors the rationale of All Hallows Eve (Samhain) in Celtic traditions and the Day of the Dead in Latin American cultures. Chinese ghost stories often included a moral and included Hungry Ghosts. These Hungry Ghosts were given permission by the gods to torment the living until they feel appeased. They were granted pass to inhabit the home or body of the living similar to the western ideal of a poltergeist (Hungry Ghost Festival, n.d.).

Both Ancient and modern day India believed in these Hungry Ghosts as well (Smith, 2009). These spirits were referred to as Bhoots and could change their appearance and revelled in possessing the body of a living person. The belief that a ghost could reanimate their own corpse was what led to the practice of cremating the dead and denying the ghost the corpse to inhabit (Mark, 2014; Smith, 2009). The Ancient Aztecs believed that dogs could see and protect against ghosts which gave rise to the practice of burying a dog with the corpse of a loved one (Mark, 2014).

As malevolent spirits have died before their perceived time, they often appeared to be restless or angry. This caused perceived hauntings, the most famous site of which is Bhangarh Fort in Rajasthan (Mark, 2014; Sinha, 2014). It was built in 1573 and

was reportedly cursed by a hermit who lived nearby, but a separate version involved a beautiful princess and an evil wizard (Mark, 2014; Sinha 2014). Both versions caused the fort to be simultaneously evacuated and it was not reinhabited. Many local residents reported stories of voices, footsteps, and unexplained lights in windows. Similar stories of ghosts and hauntings abound in all world cultures, with the famous Fisher's Ghost in Australia being synonymous with sightings by learned people as well as everyday Australians (Cusack, 1967; Davis, 1998). The folklore around this spiritual entity gave rise to the Fisher's Ghost Festival held in Campbelltown, New South Wales every November (Festival of Fisher's Ghost, 2015).

In Abrahamic religions there were also references to ghosts in the Bible, including KJB (1987) Samuel I 28:7-20 where Saul engages a witch to bring forth the spirit of Samuel. This conjuring of spirits was condemned in the Bible and Saul was removed from God's favour as a result. KJB (1987) Matthew 14:25-27; Mark 6:48-50 and Luke 24:39-39 all reported witnesses seeing and speaking to the ghost of Jesus long after he had been crucified. In KJB (1987) John I 4:1-4 believers are advised to test ghosts to see if they were indeed from God or from a demonic entity. Where previously, tradition and folklore had seen ghosts as unwelcome, they were now, through Christianity, seen as agents of evil, and if they saw a ghost then it may well be an evil deceit to snare one's soul. This attitude towards ghosts was further reinforced through Shakespeare's work and *Hamlet* in particular. Hamlet was not sure if the ghost he saw was that of his dead father or the work of the devil, and therefore Shakespeare's writing socially assisted in altering the perception of ghosts from being the benign spirit of the dead returned, to that of now possessing deceit and evil and discouraged from belief.

Ghosts represent the main characters in Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2009), as the name implies, it was set in a graveyard inhabited entirely by ghosts and ghostly entities. The spirits Bod encountered were friendly and assisted in guiding him through life, teaching him of their lived history, and of life and death. In addition to being able to reveal their presence visually or fade out if required, they possessed the ability to enter one's dreams. In chapter six, Bod performed a haunting of some bullies at school and demonstrated the ability to fade in and out, move objects, and

enter one's dreams called dreamwalking, all of which were taught to him by ghosts and the ability gifted to him via being granted the freedom of the graveyard as a toddler. These abilities correlate to the historical and folkloric characteristics of ghosts. The halls of Hogwarts in Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001, p. 86) were constantly being visited by ghosts and at one point 'about twenty ghosts had just streamed through the back wall. Pearly-white and slightly transparent, they glided across the room talking to each other and hardly glancing at the first years.'

Vampire

The origin of the vampire was explained in Greek legend as an Italian born man named Ambrogio who travelled to Greece and eventually settled in the city of Delphi. There was a great temple dedicated to the worship of Apollo the Sun God where he went to worship and eventually met a temple maiden named Selene. They began to meet regularly and fell in love and, on his last day in Greece, he convinced Selene to marry him and run away to Italy. Apollo the Sun God had taken a liking to Selene himself and did not want Ambrogio to take his beloved temple maiden so he appeared to Ambrogio and cursed him. His curse was that any touch of Apollo's sunlight would burn Ambrogio's skin and so he ran into a cave for protection against the sun. Here he met Hades who was the god of the Underworld. Ambrogio told him of his plan to run away with Selene and of the curse, so Hades made a deal with him that if he could steal the silver bow of Artemis and bring it back for him, he would grant Ambrogio and Selene the protection of the Underworld. Hades gave Ambrogio a magical wooden bow and 11 arrows, with the idea that he would hunt for trophies and offer them to Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, to gain her favour and then ultimately steal her bow.

Ambrogio was required to leave his soul in Hades as collateral until he returned with the silver bow. Ambrogio used the first arrow to kill a swan, used its feather as a quill and its blood as ink to leave a note for Selene to explain what had occurred. He then presented the dead swan as an offering to Artemis and would then return to the cave to avoid the sunlight. The following day he did the same, but left a love poem for Selene in the blood of the swan. This pattern continued until Ambrogio ran out of

arrows and Artemis, seeing how good a hunter he was and also his dedication to her by leaving his offerings, offered him her bow to hunt a swan to leave one last note for his love, Selene. When she handed him the bow, however, he ran to the cave to give the bow to Hades.

When Artemis realised what was happening she cast her own curse on him and said that all silver would burn his skin for all eternity. At this, Ambrogio dropped the silver bow and fell to the ground in excruciating pain. Ambrogio begged for forgiveness and explained that he was forced to make a deal with Hades in order to counteract his curse by Apollo and be with his love, Selene, stating he had no other choice to make. Artemis again took pity on him and made him into a great hunter with the speed and strength of god, and fangs so that he could drain the blood of animals to write his love poems to Selene. In exchange for this immortality, he was never allowed to touch Selene again, as she was a chaste virgin of the temple.

Ambrogio agreed so that they could be together and left a note for Selene to meet him before dawn on a ship bound for Italy. Selene arrived to find a note on a wooden coffin bidding that she not open the coffin until the sun had set where she would find him alive and well. They sailed to Ephesus, living in a cave and worshipping Artemis for many years, never touching. Ambrogio's immortality allowed him to stay young, but Selene continued to age until she lay on her deathbed. Ambrogio knew they would never be together in the afterlife as Hades still had his soul, so he made an offering to Artemis and begged her to make Selene immortal too. Artemis was thankful for his years of service and dedication so she told him he may touch Selene just once, to drink her blood. This would kill her mortal body but the mixed blood would create eternal life for anyone who drank it and Artemis would guarantee that they would stay together forever. Selene agreed and, after biting her neck, her radiating spirit rose up to illuminate the moon. Selene then became the goddess of the moonlight, reaching down to touch Ambrogio each night and also their children, the newly formed vampires who carried the blood of both Ambrogio and Selene together (Mythical origin of the vampire, 2015).

Although this was the ancient Greek interpretation of the beginning of vampires, other scholars have found similar folkloric stories regarding vampires in belief

systems in India, Persia, ancient Babylonia, Assyria and Hebrew (Bunson, 1993; Burton, 1893; Hurwitz, 1992; Marigny, 1993; McNally & Florescu, 1994; Shael, 2009). Similarly Ancient Greek and Roman mythology also referred to the Empusae, the Lamia, and the striges as creatures who drink the blood of humans (Graves, 1990; Oliphant, 1913). The ancient Norse creature called the draugr had similar characteristics to the vampire and was prominent in their folklore (Jakobsson, 2009). Vampiric creatures have also abounded in African culture where living vampires reportedly hunt children and drink the blood of nobles (Bunson, 1993).

As late as 1892 saw a recorded case in America where a father believed that his daughter, Mercy Brown, had come back from the dead as a vampire. He and the family physician removed Mercy's body from her tomb, cut out her heart and burned it two months after she had died (Bell, 2002). Southern Asian countries including the Philippines, Malaysia, Bali and Indonesia all had legends of creatures similar to the western ideology of the vampire (Bunson 1993; Hoyt, 1984; Ramos 1990; Stephen 1999). These stories and creatures have been in existence for millennia and were the precursor to what is now considered the modern vampire which appears to originate from the early 18th Century in the south east of Europe (Barber, 1988; Marigny, 1993). The belief in vampires increased to become so persuasive that it resulted in mass hysteria and public executions (Cohen, 1989).

The causes for human corpses being turned into a vampire were varied depending to demographic, but included such ideals as a corpse being jumped over by a dog or cat in both Chinese and Slavic traditions, a body whose wounds had not been properly treated in Russia, and also people who had rebelled against the orthodox church (Barber, 1988). Because of this, a variety of burial practices commenced in order to counteract or repel the evil vampiric spirit from taking possession of their loved one. These included burying corpses upside down and placing scythes on or near the grave (Barber, 1988). The Ancient Greek tradition of putting a coin into a corpse's mouth to pay for their crossing of the River Styx and subsequent toll entry to the underworld, appeared to have also been interpreted by some scholars as protection against vampire possession and consequently this tradition continued longer than other ancient superstitions. Successively, it evolved to incorporate a wax crucifix and

piece of pottery that was adorned with religious reference to Jesus Christ to specifically ward off the vampire (Lawson, 1910).

European methods of preventing a suspected vampire from raising from the ground included severing the tendons of the body at the knees, or by placing seeds from the poppy flower, millet or sand around the grave as it was believed that the vampire would awaken and be consumed with counting the grains until the sun rose (Barber, 1988; Summers, 1996). De Groot (1910) alluded to this being a common belief in China also, where grains of rice are employed to use the vampire's arithmomania, and further reflected in the burial practices in South America (Jarmillo Londono, 1986).

Historians Walter Map and William of Newburgh recorded events that would suggest a strong belief in vampires existed in 12th Century England (Cohen, 1989; Jones, 1931). Klinger (2008) suggested that the legend that had created the modern day vampire arose in Eastern Europe in the late 17th and 18th centuries and were embellished as the stories moved through Germany and England. She proposed that the original stories that promoted this came from the area now known as Croatia as early as 1672. This led to a frenzy of vampire sightings and encounters in the 18th century with government officials even being drawn into the capture and destruction of these supposed beings (Barber, 1988). Barber (1988) continued on to suggest that the panic began with a spate of reported vampire attacks in East Prussia in 1720, and subsequently in 1725–1734 in the Habsburg Monarchy. Barber (1988) cited two specific cases of reported vampirism with the first officially recorded occurrence involving Petar Blagojevich, who reportedly arose from the dead asking for food, with the refusing neighbour being found dead from loss of blood the following day. Arnold Paole, an ex-soldier, was the second recorded case who was reportedly attacked by a vampire years before his death, but then rose after his burial to prey on his neighbours.

The Catholic Church itself included a section on vampires in the 1749 edition of *De servorum Dei beatificatione et sanctorum canonizatione* written by Prospero Lambertini, also known as Pope Benedict XIV. In his writings he referred to the conserved bodies of the saints being due to divine intervention and not the attribution

of vampirism. Hoyt (1984) referred to Gerard van Swieten's investigation regarding vampires at the behest of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria in an effort to curtail the hysteria, which concluded that vampires did not exist. This caused the Empress to pass laws that put an end to the vampire epidemic. These laws prohibited the opening of graves and coffins, and the subsequent desecration of the bodies.

The methods of destruction were also varied and dependent on the cultural context. Southern Slavic countries favoured staking the corpse through the chest (Barber, 1988). In Germany and Russia, the corpse was staked through the mouth (Bachtold-Staubi, 1934; Lowenstimm, 1897) while Serbians believed staking through the stomach was the best method (Filipovic, 1962). German and Slavic areas also decapitated the body and physically removed it from the body, burying it in a separate place or between the corpse's legs. Often, people in these countries, would bury sharp objects like a scythe or sickle with the corpse so that if it tried to rise, the objects would pierce the bloated flesh.

In 2008 during an archaeological excavation in a town in Poland, scientists found five bodies dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries with sickles buried across the neck of the corpses (Greenfieldboyce, 2014), and Britain's BBC television studio broadcast an article on 6th of June 2012 stating that in Bulgaria over 100 corpses were found with sharp objects lodged in the body (Vampire skeletons found in Bulgaria near Black Sea, 2012). Discovery News, on the same date, broadcast the find of an 800 year old skeleton with an iron rod staked through the chest being found in Bulgaria (Vampire skeletons found in Bulgaria, 2012). Scientists have also found corpses pinned to the base of coffins to prevent it from rising (Barber, 1988). Pouring the corpse with holy water was commonplace and, up until the 19th Century, it was still common to place garlic in the mouth of a corpse, often accompanied by a stake through the heart or bullet through the coffin as a safety precaution (Bunson, 1993). This belief was mirrored in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (2009) when they destroyed the corpse of Lucy upon finding her arisen from the dead.

European beliefs gave rise to the practice of using garlic, wild rose or hawthorn branches, or sprinkling mustard seeds on the roof to repel vampires if they did manage to rise from the grave (Barber, 1988). A crucifix, rosary or holy water was

also seen as a barrier given the vampire's inability to enter consecrated ground, churches or cross running water (Burkhardt, 1966). These were all amongst the items given to John Harker in Stoker's *Dracula* (2009) when they learnt of his intent to travel to the castle.

According to Spence (1960), the vampire lacks a soul and therefore cannot cast a reflection or shadow, and, consequently, mirrors may also act as a deterrent. This lack of reflection or shadow is oppositional to Greek belief, but was reinforced in Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (2009), and also in Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2009). Spence (1960) also reinforced the notion that vampires could not enter a premises without being invited, but henceforth could enter and leave at will, which was central to Stoker's (2009) character of Dracula stalking both Lucy and Mina, eventually gaining entry through an asylum inmate's invitation. The 18th Century belief was also that the vampire was susceptible to sunlight as a means of slaying; however folklore alludes to the idea that, although they were more active at night, they were not considered defenceless when confronted with sunlight (Silver & Ursini, 1993).

Although there was significant evidence that the belief in vampires existed since the dawn of historic inquiry, their inclusion in works of fiction and poetry did not occur until the 18th century, being encountered first in works of poetry (Phillips-Summers, 2004) and as an overt feature in European literature (Guiley & Macabre, 1994; Skal, 2001). The vampire motif was seen as a reaction to the European Age of Reason where monsters were depicted primarily as vampires (Skal, 2001). Victorian England saw the popularity of macabre novels increase as the working class could now engage in adventures with vampires and demons within the safety of their own imaginations (Guiley & Macabre, 1994; Springhall, 1990).

The publication of *Carmilla* in 1872 saw the first published female vampiric predator and the rise of the femme fatale (Melton, 1998; Miller, 2005). Her character openly flaunted the taboo subjects of the times including homosexuality, vampires, female sex drive and female empowerment (Auerbach, 1982; Jones, 2002; Korven, 2004; Le Fanu, 1872). Through its use as a character in fictional works, the vampire was transformed from the macabre monsters of oral folklore to the humanised figure of

the debonair and educated Count Dracula in Bram Stoker's (2009) novel which captivated the imagination of the Victorian reader (Guiley, 1991b; Zanger, 1997). It was in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (2009), and le Fanu's *Carmilla* that the female vampire emerged as a seductress who flaunted the female subservience of the era (Aucherbach, 1982; Bartlett & Idricceanu, 2006).

With vampires as the central characters in Stoker's *Dracula* (2009), the characteristics and means of destruction were explored throughout the novel in detail. In particular, Stoker (2009, p.226) explained how the vampire 'cannot die by mere passing of the time,' and that he could 'even grow younger.' The text then continued to state that 'he throws no shadow; he make in the mirror no reflect' which was echoed in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2009) of Silas where he stated 'had anyone cared to look, they might have observed that the tall man had no reflection' (Gaiman, 2009, 272).

The description of vampires (Stoker, 2009, p. 226) stated that 'he can transform himself into a wolf' and 'come in mist which he create' is also echoed by Silas' character. Both Dracula and Silas slept in a box filled with earth (Gaiman, 2009; Stoker, 2009) but Gaiman portrayed Silas as a guardian in contrast to Stoker's villain. Stoker made many references to the means of destruction, referring specifically to a stake through the heart, decapitation, and filling the mouth with garlic (Stoker, 2009), and the character of Silas in Gaiman's novel (2009, p. 194) stated 'There are ways to kill people like me... but they don't involve cars. I am very old and very tough.' Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001, p. 187) depicted a scene in the forest where a 'cloaked figure reached the unicorn, it lowered its head over the wound in the animal's side, and began to drink its blood.....unicorn blood was dribbling down its front.' The references in the chosen novels for this study were graphic and explicit in nature involving vampires and vampiric behaviour.

Witch/wizard

The notions of witches and witchcraft have prevailed throughout millennia, with the earliest record being depicted in prehistoric art, depicting people dancing in

ritualistic ways wearing animal skins and costumes (Mastin, 2009). Ancient Sumerian and Babylonian witches believed the world was beset with spirits, most of them hostile in nature, and therefore could only be defeated by the use of magic, incantations and exorcisms. The ancient Egyptians, Hebrews, Greeks and Romans also believed in witches, sorcery and magic (Mastin, 2009).

Although these beliefs centred around sorcery, it was the Celtic societies from 700 BC to 100 AD across Europe who invoked the notion of witches. The advent of Druids, as priests, healers, and judges within these societies developed as an empowered leader, and practiced concocting potions, ointments, casting spells and incantations. These societies later became known as Pagans, and subsequently became reportedly known as witchcraft in Medieval Europe.

These powerful people were known by many titles such as shamans, witchdoctors, and medicine men depending on the country of origin. Mesaki (2009) emphasized the embedded use of witchdoctors throughout Tanzanian national culture and history, and they continue to be a prominent influence in modern day life and law. According to Mesaki (2009), the Tanzanian belief in witches and witchcraft remained so strong that an official report in 1996 into legislation regarding witchcraft was commissioned and concluded that the practice of witchcraft remained widespread in present-day Tanzania. Parrinder (1963) echoed this view stating that the wide belief in witchcraft existed across the African continent, both historically and contemporarily with Witch Smellers commonplace in Zulu and Bantu tribes in Africa, as they seek out the evil witches that may be in the area.

Chinese witchcraft used animals, implements, and books as mediums to curse the enemy, and the Philippines had a version of the witch who incants spells and blends potions capable of hurting or cursing people (Mastin, 2009). New Zealand had a Makutu who could not only curse people, but also perform exorcisms and kill people. The Native American medicine men used charms, vision-inducing rituals, costumes and plants to evoke their magic, with the Navajo using part of a corpse for magical incantations, and the Cherokee supposedly eating the liver of their victim. The Kahuna from the Hawaiian Islands reportedly used sorcery to heal, whereas the Americans from the New World countries of Brazil, Haiti, Dominican Republic and

Cuba brought with them a belief in Voodoo, a pagan religion synonymous with Satan and Voodoo dolls in western cultures (Mastin, 2009). Other ancient cultures including Indigenous Australia and Native America traditionally demonstrated a strong affinity with witchdoctors, shamans, and medicine men that were relied upon to heal clan members, to protect against evil, and also to predict or see into the future (Carmody & Carmody, 1980; Hultkrantz, 1979; Rawlinson, 2012).

In 450 BC, the ancient Romans drew up twelve tablets constituting law, the language of which featured notably in current Latinate legal glossaries used around the world today. They recorded a belief in witches with reference in the Roman Laws of the Twelve Tables (VII.3). This suggested that anyone found to be preventing crops from growing through the use of magic or incantations would be sacrificed to the gods (du Plessis, 2010; Jolowicz, 1952; Steinberg, 1982). Within the belief system of Christianity, there was an additional reference to witches which stated, 'thou shalt not suffer a witch to live' (KJB, 1987, Exodus 22:18).

St. Augustine of Hippo was a fifth century Christian theologian and he claimed that all pagan religion was influenced by the Devil. He also espoused that witches could hold no real supernatural power like that of God and, therefore, were deemed powerless and of no interest to the church (Mastin, 2009). This belief continued throughout the sixth century when, with the rise in Christianity in England, witchcraft was forced underground but did not die out as a belief system in itself. It was still considered a minor infringement on society and therefore continued to be disregarded as a serious threat to the Church at that time (Robbins, 1959).

In 820, however, the Bishop of Lyon made reference to witches being able to fly, change their shape, and invoke bad weather. This began the rise in anti-pagan, or anti-witch sentiment which continued with St. Boniface declaring the belief in witches to be unchristian (Mastin, 2009). With the church now beginning to influence civil law, they now had a vested interest in outlawing any worship other than that of the one true God.

The Catholic Church inquisitions began in 1227 and continued until 1231 under Pope Gregory IX, with Pope Innocent IV authorising the use of torture in 1252 (Jones,

1998; Mastin, 2009). The inquisitions initially targeted heretics, however evolved to include the Cathars, Waldensians, and Knights Templar (Jones, 1998). Similar inquisitions followed including the Spanish Inquisition (1478-1834), the Portuguese Inquisition (1536-1821), and the Roman Inquisition (1542-1860), all of which targeted witches, pagans and all heretics who denied the teachings of the church (Jones, 1998; Mastin, 2009).

Pope Innocent VIII claimed that the threat of witchcraft was not being taken seriously enough and therefore, in 1484, he sent two inquisitors, Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger to investigate. This resulted in the 1486 publication *Malleau Maleficarum* or *The Hammer of Witches* which defined the crime of witchcraft, offered signs and symptoms of witchery, and gave sanctioned methods for identifying and destroying the said witches (Mastin, 2009; Sprenger & Kramer, 1486).

As the sixteenth century drew to a close, witchcraft became a 'crime against God' (Robbins, 1959. p.161) and was punished severely. This treatment expanded across the European continent with the hold of the Catholic church getting greater, and ultimately resulted in the Roman Catholic Inquisition where an estimated 200 000 accused witches were tortured and put to death in the name of the church (Harris, 1979; Moore, 1962). These accusations peaked during Shakespearean times (1564-1616), with untold cruelty imparted on the accused witch. These torturous sessions were reportedly the most gruesome in France and Germany (Robbins, 1959; Moore, 1962). The rationale for these intense tortures was that the witch was seen to have made an agreement or pact with the Devil which, ultimately, meant the denial of God. This was how witches were justified as heretics in the eyes of the church law (Robbins, 1959). They were seen to be the orchestrators of ruining crops, casting spells to make others sick, taking the form of animals, and invoking evil into the lives of others.

In 1401, Archbishop Thomas Arundel passed a parliamentary act specifically aimed at witches entitled *De Haeretico Comburendo* which sentenced witches to be burnt at the stake unless they confessed and repented. Building on this were witchcraft acts passed by Queen Elizabeth I in 1563 and subsequently King James I in 1604 making

witchcraft a felony crime (Mastin, 2009). Torture and burnings became commonplace under the guidance of the *Malleau Maleficarum* with mass executions appearing in 1515. Geneva in Switzerland reported 500 witch burnings in that year, and in Como, Italy 1000 executions in 1526. Claims were made that in France, in 1571, there were reportedly over 100 000 witches drifting around the country (Mastin, 2009). Between 1500 and 1660, it was estimated that between 50 000 and 80 000 accused witches were executed.

Moore (1962, p. 153) wrote about the Elizabethan belief ‘the attitude toward witchcraft in Shakespeare’s day was anything but single, and anything but overwhelmingly credulous.’ Although it was apparent that probably the majority of Elizabethans from all demographic and social classes did believe in the actual existence of witches, the sceptics tended to arise in the educated classes. Even amongst the believers, not everyone believed in the same way. Farnham (1963) stated that there were inherent double meanings regarding the word ‘witch’ during this period. Some believed that witches were ‘essentially tragic beings’ who had ‘sold themselves to the devil’ therefore manifesting themselves as a medium of evil, possessed demonic powers with the ability to command people and objects, could see the future and used magical charms to harm others (Curry, 1959. p 61), but who remained human and not a supernatural being (Farnham, 1963). Others believed that the witches were, in fact, supernatural beings and manifestations of demons or fiends that emerged from hell due to their bargain with the devil, but were able to magically take on the form of a human in an effort to deceive their victims in order to inflict harm (Farnham, 1963). By the end of the 1600’s, the age of Enlightenment contributed to the end of witch-hunting due to its reason, scepticism and humanitarianism.

Witch hunting was not confined to the European continent, however, with the Connecticut witch trials of 1647, and the Salem witch trials in 1692 resulting in mass hangings and burnings (Mastin, 2009). Campbell (1969) documented incidents where witches in Africa were subjected to similar torturous fates as those in the European inquisitions, with thousands being tortured into unsubstantiated confessions. These witch hunts and tortures continued throughout Africa with two recent historical seekers being cited by Marwick (1952) as Mucape and Chakanga. They were famous

witch hunters in the 1940's and 1950's in Eastern Zambia and Northern Malawi, and were documented to have inflicted large razor cuts to the foreheads of people who were found guilty of practising witchcraft. This was reportedly to prevent them from returning to evil and for public identification and subsequent social shunning.

The majority of people accused and trialled for witchcraft in Europe were female, although witches could be of both sexes. Women were seen as the succubus and accused of having sexual intercourse with the devil to contribute to their magical prowess. Although female witches could be any age, the popular view was that they were traditionally depicted as ugly old wrinkled crones (Robbins, 1959), as they still are in contemporary fairy tales, possibly due to their initial representation in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Interestingly, up until Shakespeare's depiction of fairies as small mischievous spirits in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, fairies were seen as full sized entities of mischief and evil, often indistinguishable from witches (Farnham, 1963; Moore, 1962). This was testament to the power of literature in formulating or altering public perception, as it continued in contemporary literature that fairies are small, often diminutive, and mischievous. Examples in popular culture movies include *Hook* (Molen & Spielberg, 1992), *Legend* (Milchan & Scott, 1985), *Labyrinth* (Ratray & Henson, 1986), *Fern Gully* (Faiman & Kroyer, 1992), and *Brave* (Sarafian, Andrews, & Chapman, 2012).

It was as late as 1951 when the English Parliament finally rescinded its remaining laws against witchcraft. Mastin (2009) reported a revival of Paganism with multiple books being published on the subject and Wicca becoming an accepted belief system, and ultimately a recognized religion in the United States in 1997. He further reported that Romania recognized witchcraft as a certified occupation for income tax purposes in 2011. Regarding the Hindu faith, the Indian region of Orissa sanctioned a Witch Prohibition Act in 1999 allowing for harsh treatment of anyone suspected of being a witch. In modern day Saudi Arabia, numerous punishments have been administered under witchcraft and sorcery acts. These included Fawza Falih Muhammad Ali who was condemned to death for practising witchcraft in 2006; Amina bint Abdulhalim Nassar who was beheaded for witchcraft in 2011; and a Sudanese man who was publicly beheaded in Medina for witchcraft in 2011 (Kahn, 2011; Mastin, 2009, Miller, 2011; Pettigrove, 2011; Usher, 2010; Saleh, 2008; Saudi man executed for

witchcraft and sorcery, 2012). Miller (2011, para. 3) also reported that an anti-witchcraft unit was established in May of 2009, and that ‘Saudi Arabia takes witchcraft so seriously that it has banned the *Harry Potter* series by British writer J.K. Rowling, rife with tales of sorcery and magic.’

The witchdoctors of Tanzania held a significant position in contemporary African culture. Not only did they act as proxy doctors in outlying areas, but they also professed to hold traditional cures by way of spells and potions. One of these involved the albino citizens, often referred to as ‘Ghost People’. Claims of physical prowess and monetary riches were made by the witchdoctors via potions utilising body parts from people with this genetic mutation (Charlton, 2016; Cross, 2016; Wojciechowska & Klosowicz, 2016). Because of the demonic connotations placed on these people by witchdoctors, families have abandoned their children showing signs of albinism, and became outcasts of society. Bodies were often dug up after their death which has led to encasing burial plots with concrete, and more recently, the hunting of live albinos for their limbs and body parts (Cross, 2016). This has become a lucrative business for albino hunters and resulted in albinos establishing a closed community on an island with armed guards in order to protect themselves (Charlton, 2016; Cross, 2016; Wojciechowska & Klosowicz, 2016).

In India, witchdoctors were also prevalent, and regularly provided human sacrificial rites to appease the gods. In April of 2013, a witch doctor from Chhattisgarh was sentenced to death after beheading an 11 year old boy, and in 2015 an alleged occultist beheaded a five year old boy in order to please the goddess Kali, and was lynched by an angry mob. In June of 2015, a 55 year old man was beheaded, with police still searching for the perpetrator (Hall, 2015).

With the historical context involving the evolution of witchcraft, it was evident that witches and witchcraft had a rich cross-cultural history, and that these beliefs are still in place in certain cultural demographics. From the Shakespearean representation of a haggard crone, to the Rowling (2001) depiction of pre-pubescent students in *Harry Potter*, the witch appears synonymous with evil, either conjuring it or fighting against it. Gaiman (2009) also portrayed his witch, Liza, as a persecuted soul and in reality just an everyday teenager, however she did possess knowledge capable of incanting

spells which she used to assist Bod in his escape from custody in the antiques store. The witch character in Nix's *Sabriel* (2014) took on the form of a cat, named Mogget which reflected the traditional notion of a witch having a familiar spirit, often a cat, associated with it.

Werewolf

The werewolf was referred to as a lycanthrope and was a mythological being who could alter shape to become man or wolf-like creature. Herodotus (Burn, 1972) wrote about men from the Neuri tribe that would transform into wolves once a year in Ancient Greek literature, and this was followed by accounts in the second century BC of a man who was turned into a wolf as penance for a crime. Ménard (1984) recorded stories of men who wandered in the Arcadian woods in the form of wolves.

Lycanthropy was also recorded in the folklore of Ancient Rome with stories related from Pliny the Elder about instances of men turning into wolves (Indovino, 2015; Sconduto, 2008). The reason and manner in which the transformation took place differed greatly according to culture. For example, the legend associated with Nordic traditions associated the transformation with positivity and allowed them both the mental and physical characteristics of a wolf to complete warrior based tasks (Diederichs, 1985; Höilund, 2007; Lange, 2007; Salisbury, 1994). The ancient Greek and Roman records showed this transformation in a negative light, including the story of the Arcadian King Lycaon who murdered a child and offered its flesh to the god Zeus, with the curse of lycanthropy bestowed upon him as a result (Metzger, 2011). Stories of werewolves have also been traced back to Celtic folklore and sources with numerous tales of human/wolf transformations; however the afflicted human required all their energies to preserve their human form; when transformed into the outward appearance of wolves, they maintained human characteristics on the inside (Roberts, 1999; Salisbury, 1994). These pagan viewpoints were challenged with the arrival of Christianity as only God could alter substance. This resulted in stories of such transformations being deemed not possible (Hirsch, 2005; Salisbury, 1994).

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Europeans, and particularly German pagan traditions, recorded beliefs in the werewolf which echoed Scandinavian folklore. Woodward (1979) reported that Viking warriors would dress in wolf hides and channel the spirit of the wolf which they believed helped them in battle. The Belarusian Usiaslau of Polatsk was an 11th century prince who was reported to have been a werewolf as he could move at superhuman speeds and would prowl at night (Sconduto, 2008).

In Indo-European mythology, the transformation of men into wolves was associated with the devil during medieval times, and as such was closely related to witchcraft (McCone, 1987). It was during this period that the German inspired characteristics of the werewolf became associated more with witchcraft and became targeted during the witchcraft panic of the 1400s, whereas the Slavic inspired werewolf became closer linked with vampire tales (Indovino, 2015; Dixon-Kennedy, 1998). This effectively divided werewolves into the eastern and western strains. Woodward (1979) wrote that in Serbia the collective term *vulkodlak* was used for vampires and werewolves demonstrating the affinity between the two in that area, which was echoed in Hungary and the Balkans.

Sixteenth century France saw numerous reports and trials regarding werewolves and their attacks which then became a by-product of the witch trials documented in the section the previous section about witches. The specific case of Peter Stumpp in 1589 led to an increased persecution of accused werewolves (Bremmer & Veenstra, 2002; de Blecourt, 2015; Frost, 2003; Laffan & Weiss, 2012). Henry Boguet wrote about cases involving werewolves in 1602 with a number of werewolf convictions recorded in the following years (Levack, 2006; Oates, 1989; Voltmer and Irsigler, 2002).

After King James I of England regarded werewolves as merely men with psychological disorders brought on by severe melancholy, the reported incidents regarding werewolves diminished and in subsequent years, lycanthropy was regarded as a disorder of the brain (Castelli, 1607; Clark, 1997; Levack, 2006; Metzger, 2013; Midelfort, 1999). The only European area that continued showing an enthusiastic interest after 1650 was in the Roman Empire, with areas in the Austrian and Bavarian

Alps demonstrating a continued strong belief well into the eighteenth century (Monter, 1986).

The creation of a werewolf appeared to be either curse related, or to be bitten by an afflicted person, much like the transmittable rabies (Woodward, 1979). O'Donnell (1912) also documented drinking water that pooled in the footprint of a werewolf would affect metamorphosis. In the tradition of the curse of Zeus, lycanthropy was also believed to be a divine punishment by God, generally reserved for those who had been excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church (Woodward, 1979). To identify a werewolf in its human form, a piece of flesh was often excised and examined for evidence of fur; in Russia it was believed that bristles could be visible under the tongue, and general physical traits included curved fingernails, eyebrows that met in the middle and low set ears (Woodward, 1979).

Gershenson (1991) cited the case in Jürgensburg in 1692 involving an elderly man referred to in the document as Thiess. During his examination under oath, he testified that he and other werewolves were Hounds of God, and that they had been divinely sent to enter hell and battle demons. He adamantly testified that upon their death, the soul of the werewolf is welcomed into heaven. Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2009) also referred to the werewolf, Miss Lupescu as a Hound of God. Gaiman (2009, p. 88) wrote 'those that men call Werewolves or Lycanthropes call themselves the Hounds of God, as they claim their transformation is a gift from their creator, and they repay the gift with their tenacity, for they will pursue an evil doer to the very gates of Hell.'

Traditional methods of destruction during the medieval period usually proved fatal and included the use of wolfsbane, surgery, or exorcism (Woodward, 1979). An Arabic belief that was also practiced in Sicily included inflicting a gash on the person's forehead, and others from that culture believed it would only be successful if accompanied by piercing the werewolf's hand with nails. Germanic culture held that thrice addressing the person by their Christian name would cure them of the disease (Woodward, 1979).

The Greeks traditionally believed that the corpse of a suspected werewolf needed to be burnt to prevent it from returning in bodily form. Similarly the inhabitants of rural areas in Germany, Poland and Northern France believed the werewolves would inhabit their corpse by day and roam as wolves at night, and therefore must be destroyed via decapitation and exorcism. The head was removed from the area, often thrown into a local stream. With twentieth century evolution, the werewolf now appeared to only possess the shapeshifting abilities upon the full moon and was immune to all weapons with the exception of the silver bullet, or silver projectiles, which appeared to have become the normative weakness in 1941 with the cinematic portrayal of the werewolf in *The Wolf Man* (Jackson, 1995).

The belief in werewolves was not confined to European countries but endemic in other cultures as well. Hungarian folklore deemed that the curse of the werewolf was initiated at an early age, as young as an infant, and then at the age of seven could transform at will. Willis and Davidson (1997) stated that in the area now known as Poland, if a child was born with hair or birthmark, they were possessed with the ability to take on other forms, often a wolf. Woodward (1979) believed the emergence of the werewolf in the new world of the Americas was due to colonisation as there appeared a merging of cultural reference. For example areas of French colonisation in America have records of the *loup-garou* which is endemic to areas in European France.

God

Robert Graves (1990) wrote that the function of myths was twofold. Firstly it answers the difficult philosophical questions of children like what happens when we die? Who made the world? etc. and secondly it justifies an existing social system in that it accounts for traditions and customs. Stories and folklore regarding gods, goddesses, heroes and monsters were socially important in ancient worlds as they explained everyday phenomenon and gave meaning to the world around them.

Early mythology was passed on orally and therefore no single written text like the Christian Bible or Hindu Vedas was in existence. Much of our understanding about ancient beliefs and gods came from poetry and other works of art including Homer's

eighth century BC *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Andrews, 1967; Owen, 1947; Willcock, 1976). Hesiod's *Theogony* was written in about 700BC and was arguably the first written work regarding the origin of life including the gods and goddesses who came forth from the earth, sky, sea and underworld (Burkert & Pinder, 1995; Sandwell, 1996). These deities resided on Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece, and from there ruled mankind. Rather than one god as was the case with Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, ancient beliefs had twelve main gods (Burkert, 1991; Dowden, 2010).

Greek	Roman	Details
Zeus	Jupiter	King of all the gods and father to many. God of weather, law and fate
Hera	Juno	Queen of the gods and goddess of women and marriage
Aphrodite	Venus	Goddess of beauty and love
Apollo	Apollo	God of prophesy, music, poetry and knowledge
Ares	Mars	God of war
Artemis	Diana	Goddess of hunting, animals and childbirth
Athena	Minerva	Goddess of wisdom and defence
Demeter	Ceres	Goddess of agriculture and grain
Dionysus	Bacchus	God of wine, pleasure and festivity
Hephaistos	Vulcan	God of fire, metalworking and sculpture
Hermes	Mercury	God of travel, hospitality and trade. Also Zeus's personal messenger
Poseidon	Neptune	God of the sea

The Pagan religions of Scandanavia, likewise had many gods and, because of this, it reportedly caused no issues to include another god, that being the god of Christianity, as the Roman Empire expanded (Davidson, 1990; Haywood, 2000; Williams, 2011). Williams (2011) believed it was misleading to think that the Vikings held a hatred for the church as the raids and desecration of Christian churches had nothing to do with religion, but merely that they were typically wealthy and poorly defended making them an easy target. It was during these raids that the Vikings first encountered Christianity and adopted it readily. By the mid 11th century, Christianity was well established and took over traditional pagan sites (Haywood, 2000).

The pagan Nordic gods were evidenced in the literary works called the *Eddas* (Dubois, 1999). It was here that the all-powerful god Odin displayed his realm of god of warfare, justice, death, wisdom and poetry. Another well-known god represented in this work was Thor, the god of thunder, who wielded a magical hammer and was looked upon for safe passage by seafarers. The brother and sister combination of Frey and Freyja were the god and goddess of fertility, and therefore also seen as very important deities (Orchard, 1997). Christian influence and/or parallels could be seen in the way that the king of the gods Odin, sacrificed himself for the good of others by allowing himself to be hanged on a tree and then to be pierced in the side with a spear. Following his death, there was a subsequent resurrection mirroring that of Jesus in the Christian Bible.

The belief in a single God stemmed from the ‘three “Abrahamic” religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam)’ (Wells, n.d., para. 3). With the Jewish religion being the base, ‘Christianity and Islam split off from their Jewish roots and grew to become world religions in their own right’ (Wells, n.d., para. 4). Abraham worshipped a god that had many names, El Elion, El Olam, El Shaddai, El Ro’I and could be conceived as deriving from the god El which was worshipped by the indigenous Canaanites long before Abraham (Moynahan, 2002; Wells, n.d.). It was approximately seven centuries later that Moses reportedly conversed with God who relayed to him the first commandment, ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me’ which Wells (n.d., para. 12) said implied ‘that other gods were indeed a possibility.’

By the late second century A.D., society was in such disorder that only a single selected God could provide for the needs of a civilization proliferating in supernaturalism. This God could then dominate over nature rather than simply being an aspect of it (Dodds, 1965 ; Wells, n.d.). Wells (n.d.) reported that the recording of the creation in the Bible starting at Genesis 2:4 was not written until the eighth century, and that it was centuries after that that the preceding account was added in Genesis 1, which supported the need for God to be not only in control of nature, but to be above it, and had therefore created it. At this point, Wells stated that other gods were not rejected, but ‘Christians merely demoted them in rank to the level of demons, denying not their existence but their divinity’ (Wells, n.d., para. 47).

Although the origin of the idea of an exclusive god was unknown, both Jesus and Paul were reportedly apocalyptic evangelists, imparting that the world was full of evil and that God would consequently smote the evil doers (Ehrman, 2010, 2014; Pagels, 2012; Wells, n.d.). Ehrman (2010) also implied that, in the time of Jesus, Jewish people still worshipped multiple gods and ‘exclusivity may actually have infiltrated back into mainstream Judaism from the apocalyptic tradition that evolved into Christianity’ (Wells, n.d., para. 53).

God was referred to primarily in Stoker’s *Dracula* (2009) which was reflective of the period, being first published in 1897. The Roman Inquisition had just finished in 1860 and therefore the church was highly placed in both social order and common law (Jones, 1998; Mastin, 2009). Stoker (2009, p.109) made repeated reference to ‘religious mania’ and Dr Seward made a diary entry stating ‘the real God taketh heed lest a sparrow fall; but the God created from human vanity sees no difference between an eagle and a sparrow.’ The faith in God and in the amulets associated with the church such as the crucifix and holy water became the primary protective tools used throughout the novel.

Undead

James Parker (2011) compiled an exhaustive list regarding the infiltration of zombies into popular culture. In this, he selected the television series *The Walking Dead* (Darabont, Hurd, Alpert, Kirkman, Eglee, Mazzara, Gimple, Nicotero & Luse, 2010) as the epitome of zombie orthodoxy with six seasons having been currently produced, approximately 20 million viewers, and the subsequent creation of a supplementary series in *Fear of the Walking Dead* (Kirkman, Alpert, Nicotero, & Hurd, 2015). The zombie had formed into a cultural supernova, permeating all facets of consumerism from contemporary film, literature, music videos, and electronic gaming (Mariani, 2015; Parker, 2011; Paul, 2011). Just a few examples of these include *28 Days Later* (Macdonald, 2002), *I Am Legend* (Goldsman, Lassiter, Heyman & Moritz, 2007), *World War Z* (Pitt, Gardner, Kleiner & Bryce, 2013), *Zombieland* (Polone, 2009), and *Shaun of the Dead* (Park, 2004) with many portrayals incorporating a post-apocalyptic world (Paul, 2011).

Both ancient and medieval belief systems saw the manifestation of the undead as ghosts or vampires with the latter having been most prolific in Gothic literature and culture. The zombie, in opposition, had a relatively recent origin with related links to Haitian folklore and the Latin American blending of ancient beliefs and Christianity into what is now referred to as Voodoo culture (Paul, 2011).

The first literary works credited with describing the zombie as an entity was the 1929 novel *The Magic Island*, by W. B. Seabrook and then subsequently the 1937 book by Zora Neale Hurston entitled *Tell My Horse* which explored the relationship between the zombie and Haitian folklore (Hurston, 2009; Seabrook, 1929; Paul, 2011). The initial depiction of zombies in film were of humans under a Voodoo spell in which the terror for the viewer lay in possibly being turned into a zombie, and was aimed at the caucasian viewer. Films of this era included *White Zombie* (Halperin, 1932), *Revolt of the Zombies* (Halperin, 1936), and *King of the Zombies* (Parsons, 1941) (Paul, 2011).

As interest in the phenomena increased, the depiction of them also morphed to result in the flesh eating cannibals now considered commonplace in contemporary mediums. *Night of the Living Dead* (Hardman & Streiner, 1968) was a George Romero film that is reported by Paul (2011) as the first to feature the zombie as a flesh-eater; however he views this as an allegory to the Civil Rights Era and the Vietnam war. Paul (2011) reported Romero as having stated himself that he wanted to create a correlation between war and the violent images the audience viewed on screen. In this film the zombies were referred to as ghouls rather than zombies and reflected an understanding of the creature as being the undead Haitian slaves (Mariani, 2015). *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie* (Pérez & Amati, 1974) reflected environmental fears of that decade with experimental pest control resulting in the reanimation of the dead; *Dawn of the Dead* (Rubinstein, Argento & Cuomo, 1978) and *28 Weeks Later* (López-Lavigne, Macdonald, Reich & Bellew, 2007) reflected the decay of social structures and institutes of protection which then could be seen as supporting that Zombies have been metaphors and catalysts for social anxieties (Paul 2011).

Zombies, as a mythological entity, first appeared in the 17th century in the French governed country of Saint Dominique. The African slaves forced to work here suffered intense brutality with many being worked to death within a few years (Mariani, 2015). The zombie, therefore, rose as a mythical creature in this time mirroring the brutal conditions and inhumanity that existed between 1625 and 1800. The zombie was no longer a slave of others, but to itself. Because Haitian belief was that upon death the soul would return to Africa, they believed that death would set them free from slavery. Suicide, however, resulted in the soul not being returned but to be fated to work on the Hispanic plantations as an undead slave trapped inside an undead body forever thereby creating a soulless zombie (Mariani, 2015).

With the end of French colonization in 1804, the zombie remained in folklore and became encompassed in the Voodoo religion, but Irvine professor Amy Wilentz (2013) wrote that after the Haitian revolution, the country considered reinstating slavery on several occasions. Wilentz (2013) and Mariani (2015) agreed that in a matter of decades after the revolution, the memory of the Haitian slaves and their suffering would be excised from the zombie myth which it created. The Voodoo zombies then became a representation of the anxieties of slavery in much the same way that Paul (2011) wrote of the Zombie representation of other contemporary fears including capitalism, war, nuclear fear, civil rights movements, and most recently global pandemics. With the evolution of the zombie now being linked with an apocalypse and the consumption of the humans as a population, even the metaphoric epithet and allegorical shadow of the zombie has been engulfed by pure entertainment and a form of escapism rather than a symbolic messenger (Mariani, 2015). The current cinematic manifestation of the zombie strips life into three essential parts – mankind, nature, and survival. Where the zombie once represented dehumanization and the real life terrors of slavery and brutality, and people were denied the control of their own bodies, seeking death as an escape, now the zombie has become the symbol for escapism itself.

The folkloric zombie could be paralleled to the rising of Lazarus in the Bible, with Jesus being the equivalent of the Voodoo priest reanimating the corpse for the express purpose of following his teachings. The original use in the movie *Night of the Living Dead* (Hardman & Streiner, 1968) of the term ghoul was also used in *The*

Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman (2009). These creatures were also seen as the undead and feasted on flesh. They proposed to take Bod to the ghoul city where he would be transformed into a ghoul, although they made no mention of exactly how this was to be done. The undead portrayed in *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014) were the souls who had not yet completed their journey across the rivers and to the final gate denoting their ultimate resting place and were therefore trapped in death. A necromancer in this instance could either put the dead to rest, or bring them back to the world of the living. They were reclaimed from this limbo, which could be equated to purgatory, and reanimated to create the undead, serving the purposes of evil and feast on human flesh. Nix (2014, pp 105, 106) described in detail the limits of the undead being unable to cross flowing water (comparable to the ancient river Styx crossing to the afterlife) and having to use grave dirt to create walkways to maneuver their way across, similar to the constraints placed on Dracula in Bram Stoker's (2009) novel.

Although this was not historically the case with the zombies of Voodoo, it melds with the beliefs of other ancient cultures creating authenticity for the reader. Nix (2014, p. 191) also gave detailed descriptions of the undead as having 'fleshless eyes...rotten corroded teeth ground and gnashed in skeletal mouths.' Nix (2014, p. 340) described the sound of the encroaching undead as 'the massed grinding of Dead joints, no longer joined by gristle ... the padding of Dead feet, bones like hobnails clicking through necrotic flesh' and then on the subsequent page he wrote of their advance, 'bullets tore Dead flesh, splintered bone, knocked the Hands down and over – but still they came, till they were literally torn apart, broken into pieces, hung up on the wire.' These descriptions equated with the historical viewpoint of zombies and therefore the Undead, as referred to in Nix's (2014) novel, mirrored the characteristics of the zombies portrayed in popular culture and Haitian mythology.

Angel of death/crossing spirit

The belief in the afterlife, or otherworld was recorded throughout history and transcended all religions. The ancient Celts on the European continent believed the otherworld was in the direction of present day Britain and the souls of the dead would travel there on ghostly ships, whereas the Irish Celts reportedly believed it was an underground paradise on a series of islands (MacKillop, 1998). MacKillop

(1998) asserted that a beautiful woman often sang for the soul to follow her to the otherworld, and that in Welsh mythology the souls travelled to Bull Island, which was a real island off the southern coast of Ireland, either to remain or then continue on to the blessed isles across the western sea.

Death, the Angel of death, or a crossing spirit, which guided the soul to these resting places has been personified in many different ways throughout history with the most recent being the Grim Reaper. The scythe carrying cloaked skeleton was first recorded in 15th century England, and the first use of the term ‘Grim Reaper’ reportedly occurring in 1847 (Lynette, 2009). In some cultures, the Grim Reaper reportedly caused death and in others it simply severed the ties that bound the soul to the body and guided the soul to the afterlife. In some cultures this spirit guide was a man and in others a woman. Cassuto (1962) recorded the Canaanite personification to be Mot which evolved to become Maweth, or the angel of death, in Judaism.

The Ancient Greeks did not represent either death or the spirits associated with it as evil in any way. They understood that death was inevitable and therefore just the counterpart to life – life was the female form and death was the male form (Lynette, 2009). The job of Hermes was to escort the dead to the underworld to Charon, who ferried them over the river Styx in a boat. The river Styx was the physical barrier between the land of the living and that of the dead, and therefore, without payment, Charon would not transport the soul to the other side (Bunson, 1996; Retief & Cilliers, 2006). This thematic crossing of a river was similar to that depicted in the novel *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014), with souls being trapped by the icy waters. According to Bunson (1996) it was further believed that Keres, the sisters of Thanatos, were the spirits associated with violent deaths like those from battle, murder and accidents. They reportedly had fangs and talons, and often fed on the body after the soul had left.

The personification called Ankou, in Breton folklore, was depicted as a tall haggard man with a wide hat who drove a cart piled high with corpses. The cart was often said to have a creaking axle so that there was forewarning of his impending visit (Cheung, 2006). Irish folklore had an entity called a dullahan whose head was carried under the being’s arm, and rode a black horse, or at times drove a carriage pulled by

black horses. It was also reported that the dullahan carried a whip fashioned from a human spine and would whip out the eyes of anyone who dared to watch it's actions, or it would declare that person as the next to die (O'Regan, 2014; Witt, 2008).

Scottish folklore depicted a dog, referred to as a Cù Sìth that escorted souls to the afterlife (Cambpell, 1900; Eberhart, 2002).

Polish tradition personified the crossing spirit as a female similar in appearance to the Grim Reaper but dressed in white robes called Śmierć. Scandinavian cultures believed the presider over death was female and would carry either a rake or a broom. The rake meant the ill person would survive and the broom denoted a certain death (Pettigrove, 2011). Pettigrove (2011) related that seeing this character would be more of an indicator of the coming event rather than the actions of a crossing spirit. In subsequent records, the Scandinavians and also Lithuanians showed this personification as being more attuned to the classic Grim Reaper image, with a black robe and scythe (Pettigrove, 2011).

Hindu teachings referred to King Yama who was known as the ruler of Karmic Justice. When he was reviewing the soul, he charged Chitragupta with storing and maintaining both the good and bad deeds. He would then determine if the soul was considered suitable for rebirth and the form and place that reincarnation will take. He resided in a place called Yamaloka, Naraka or pathaloka (Dhavamony, 1999; Eliot, 2010; Parpola, 2015). Yama carried the souls on his black buffalo and secured them by means of a rope lasso. An entity called Mara in Buddhist teaching had a similar function. Synonymous entities also appeared across eastern cultures that had Buddhist and Hindu cultural backgrounds (Eliot, 2010; Parpola, 2015).

Latin American cultures had a rich affiliation with death and spirits. The indigenous Mesopotamian culture and Catholic influence of the Spanish blended together in a mix of pagan and Christian traditions. La Santa Muerte, or Saint Death, was popular from Mexico to Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina and depicted as a skeletal figure holding a scythe. Although the Catholic Church did not condone this devotion, seeing it as pagan in doctrine, many devotees considered it as part of their Catholic faith (Chesnut, 2012; Prower, 2015).

Although the Bible made mention of destroying angels, for example Kings II 19:35; Exodus 12:23; Samuel II 24:16; and Job 33:22 who smote those in the name of the Lord, and Proverbs 16:14 referred to a messenger of death, there was no distinct reference to a spirit or entity that assisted the soul to ascend to heaven (KJB, 1987). The Jewish Talmudic lore also referred to Angels of Dark and Light as being representations of death, and that archangels, specifically Michael, were responsible for destruction in the name of God (Bunson, 1996; Olyan, 1993). O'Boyle (2008) cited Saint Michael as having four separate roles. She listed the second role as that of the Angel of Death in that at the hour of death, he gave each soul the chance of redemption before carrying it to heaven. The other roles O'Boyle (2008) recorded were as the enemy of Satan, weighing the soul on Judgment Day, and that of Guardian of the Church. Islamic belief referred to Azrail as the Angel of Death who removed the soul from the body and guided them to the afterlife (Huda Dodge, 2009; Sardar, 2011).

Although there appeared to be many different depictions of crossing spirits that escorted the soul at the hour of death, during the research I could find no tangible link to documented tradition or cultural beliefs, regarding the lady on the grey referred to as a crossing spirit in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2009) other than in poetry. The lady on the grey danced with Bod during the Danse Macabre and when he asked if he could ride her horse, she replied as 'her cobweb skirts shimmered. 'One day. Everybody does'' (Gaiman, 2009, p. 150). It could be argued that the use of grey as a tone was metaphorical in that it lies half way between perceived good as white, and bad as black. It could also be a link to the horsemen of the apocalypse in Revelation 6:8 where death was described as a pale rider.

Stoker (2009, p. 87) wrote 'the Angel of Death will sound his trumpet for me,' and then later wrote 'I heard this moment the flapping of the wings of the angel of death' (Stoker, 2009, p. 157). These two different views reflected the different opinions of the period regarding the idea of a crossing spirit, especially as England was very religious oriented and predominantly Christian at the time. The fact that Stoker used capitalisation in his first reference and not the second, from different characters, also denoted that one viewed the Angel of Death as a personification, hence the proper

noun capitalisation, and the other as a generalised spiritual reference, thereby negating the use of capitals.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary (2015) defined necromancy as ‘the conjuration of the spirits of the dead for purposes of magically revealing the future or influencing the course of events’ which correlated to the biblical reference in Deuteronomy 18:11 as ‘a charmer, or consulter of familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.....are an abomination unto the lord.’ Stoker (2009, p. 224) stated ‘necromancy, which is, as his etymology imply, the divination by the dead, and all the dead that he can come nigh to are for him at command.’ Nix’s character Sabriel (2014) was a necromancer who walked in death with a sword to fight the evils which abounded there and bells to control the souls trapped in death and send them through the final gate of death. She used the bells as mediums through which to control and/or banish the spirits and ancient magic spells for protection in doing so. She was not an angel or crossing spirit, but a mortal being that could exist in both life and death, therefore in the traditional sense of a guiding spiritual force into death, she was unique.

Biblical/mythical creature other than God

There were references to other mythical creatures, or beings from the Bible other than God. These are listed in the table below.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	The Graveyard Book	Dracula	Sabriel
Devil/Satan	Devil/Satan	Devil/Satan	Mordicant
Dragon	Angel	Angel	Clayr
Goblin	Goblin	Will-o'-the-wisp	Will-o'-the-wisp
Giant	Ghoul	Thor	Gore crows
3 headed dog	Indigo Man	Demons	Mordaut
Phoenix	Night gaunt	Blessed virgin	Haunts
Troll	Sleer	St Joseph	Ghlims
Centaur	Druid	Ste Mary	Wallmaker
	Assyrian Mummy	Methuselah	Greater dead
	Ifrit	Old Parr	Lesser dead
		Enoch	

The Devil, or Satan, is mentioned in three of the four novels investigated and was personified differently depending on the religious belief system. Christianity suggested the Devil, Satan, and Lucifer were the same entity but terminology differed depending on the book in the Bible that referred to it. The book of Revelation in the King James Bible (KJB, 1987) denoted the devil as a serpent, a dragon, and also a seven headed beast, whilst the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians 2:2 likened the Devil to a 'spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience' (KJB, 1987, p.560). Lucifer was the term most commonly used when in conjunction with the notion that he was a fallen angel.

Islamic teachings referred to the Devil as Iblis and his power was limited to casting evil ideas into the hearts and minds of men and women. The Qur'an stated that Jinn (fiery creatures) were created by God prior to the creation of man. This text alleged that God elevated the Jinn called Iblis (the Devil) to rank amongst his angels and when the Jinn were causing problems on earth, Iblis was sent to fight them. His victory caused Iblis to become prideful and believed he was now God's favourite, so when God created Adam and ordered all of his angels to bow down to him, Iblis refused saying 'I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay' (Qur'an, n.d., Sûrah 38:76). He was subsequently banished from Heaven, and Iblis vowed to trap mankind into disbelief and evil as an act of revenge against Adam

(Qur'an, n.d.). The Qur'an explained that Iblis was not an actual angel but remained a Jinn who was elevated to God's grace because of his loyalty, and as such had free will. Angels reportedly did not possess free will and therefore willingly bowed to Adam, but Iblis had the ability to choose his actions for himself, thus choose not to bow and suffered the subsequent banishment as a consequence of his free will.

Sufism correlated the disobedience of Iblis as the ultimate act of love and loyalty (Armstrong, 1994). This belief system instilled the idea that one should give love without expecting anything in return and as such, Iblis was seen by Sufis as an act of self-sacrifice (Armstrong, 1994; Aslan, 2005). He refused to bow to Adam because God taught that no-one should worship or idolise anything or anyone but God. Nurbakhsh (2000) related the story of Moses conversing with Iblis on Mount Sinai, and when Moses asked why Iblis did not bow Iblis replied that he regarded the command as a test, as God forbade the worship of anything but Him. As a result, he believed his unconditional love and obedience would be rewarded by his return to Heaven after the Day of Judgement.

Satanism consisted of two schools of thought and practice, with one being Theistic Satanism and the other Atheistic (or LaVeyan) Satanism. Theistic Satanism believed that the Devil was a definitive deity to be worshiped and was a meld of medieval ideals, folkloric beliefs, and urban legends (Fanthorpe & Fanthorpe, 2011; Fry, 2008; Poole, 2009). Ultimately they believed Satan could physically incarnate himself to believers. LaVeyan Satanism, however, dictated that Satan was a symbol rather than an anthropomorphic being. The Church of Satan High Priest, Peter Gilmore (1992) advocated that

Satan is simply the dark evolutionary force of entropy that permeates all of nature and provides the drive for survival and propagation inherent in all living things. Satan is not a conscious entity to be worshiped, rather a reservoir of power inside each human to be tapped at will.

LaVeyan Satanists referred to the literal meaning of the Hebrew word Satan, which translated as adversary or opposer, alluding to believers questioning the world around them and the faith of others. This was, in essence, the basis of critical

thinking in that one gauges the significance of reliability and sources of opposing viewpoints to establish one's own view, belief or standing on a subject. Gilmore (2012) stated 'we see ourselves as being these Satans; the adversaries, opposers and accusers of all spiritual belief systems that would try to hamper enjoyment of our life as a human being.'

The angel was noted in two of the texts, *The Graveyard Book* (Nix, 2014) and *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009). Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Baha'i Faith and the Church of the Latter Day Saints all believed that angels were messengers from God, sent to deliver messages, teach the path to salvation, save mankind in times of peril, and guide mankind throughout their lifetime (Ahmad, 1997; Coogan, 2009; Copleston, 2003; Evans, 2007; Kosior, 2013; Proverbio, 2007; Smith, 2000; Webster, 2009).

In the King James Bible and the Jewish Torah, Daniel was the first person to mention specific angels by name, notably Gabriel who was God's primary messenger (KJB; Torah, Daniel 9:21), and Michael who was God's primary fighter (KJB; Torah, Daniel 10:13). Both religious books also contained scriptures in Genesis regarding angelic intervention. Genesis 16 told the story of Abraham's mistress who, after falling pregnant to him in order to provide him with an heir, had run away to avoid the scorn of Abraham's wife and her own mistress, Sarah. Genesis 16:9 stated 'and the angel of the Lord said unto her. Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.' The angel continued to give her advice by the fountain in order to guide her to become a formidable part of the house of Abraham.

In Genesis 22, the Lord advised Abraham that he must burn his only son as an offering to him, and after making the necessary preparations, an angel manifested itself from heaven and told Abraham not to murder his son, just as he was about to stab him with his knife. The angel told Abraham that this was a test of his loyalty and miraculously presented a ram for him to offer in his son's stead. Another writing in both biblical texts concerning angelic intervention was in Genesis 19 when two angels appeared to Lot advising him to take his family and followers from the city of Sodom as they were going to destroy it, given the depravity occurring there was not pleasing to the Lord. Lot followed the angels' advice and was saved from the fire and brimstone destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Both Christian and Jewish texts also

offered a warning in Hebrews 13:2 (KJB, 1987; Tanakh, 1985) that ‘forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares’ giving rise to the religious belief that angels walked among mankind.

The Latter Day Saints belief in angels was further documented in more modern times by Matthews (1989) who alleged Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were visited by angels prior to the establishment of the church in 1830. Since then, Matthews (1989) wrote that David Whitmer and Martin Harris also claimed to have had angelic visitations.

The dragon character was referenced in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (Rowling, 2001), and had folkloric backgrounds in European, Middle Eastern, and East Asian cultures. It was considered a mythical creature, commonly thought to have lived in caves or rivers, possessed almost impenetrable skin, and although rarely described as flying in folklore stories, was often illustrated with wings (Ormen, 2005). Pre-Christian dragons were depicted as compassionate creatures, such as that displayed on the Welsh flag. Under Christianity they were considered malevolent, with the Devil sometimes embodied as a dragon. The biblical book of Revelation 13:4 stated ‘and they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast.’

Asian dragon depiction could be found in artefacts dating back to the 16th century B.C and after the 9th Century A.D the dragon motif spread throughout the Asian empire via the spread of Buddhism (Welch, 2008). Mayor (2004) believed archaeological fossils had also attributed to the belief in mythical creatures, like dragons, as many remain unidentified, as did the cause of their extinction. Mackness (2009) hypothesised that mythological creatures like the dragon may have their grounding in now extinct megafauna like the giant Australian land crocodile, or the giant carnivorous goanna.

The goblin was referenced in two of the novels studied and first appeared in 14th century folkloric tales where they were portrayed as mischievous roguish dwarf-like creatures (Hoad, 1993; Liddell & Scott, 1940). This depiction was synonymous with Rowling’s (2001) portrayal of the goblin character in her *Harry Potter and the*

Philosopher's Stone novel where goblins were the custodians of Gringotts bank. Neil Gaiman did not depict a character as being a goblin, but rather with goblin like features. When Bod met Liza Hempstock (the witch) he described her as having 'something of a goblin in her face' (Gaiman, 2009, p. 100). After talking with the witch, Bod reassessed his appraisal of her but stated 'she still looked like a goblin, but now she looked like a pretty goblin' (Gaiman, 2009, p. 101).

The giant appeared only in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 2001), and was personified as Hagrid, the loveable and helpful character that was the groundsman at Hogwarts, and Harry's friend. Giants featured in the folklore of most cultures around the world and also in biblical texts. Genesis 6:4 (KJB, 1987) stated 'there were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that.' The story of David and Goliath in the King James Bible stated the giant's height to be 'six cubits and a span' (KJB, 1 Samuel 17:4) which roughly equated to 2.75metres. The Dead Sea Scrolls and Greek version of the Bible agreed that Goliath's height was equivalent to 2 metres. Josephus was a Jewish historian who claimed fossil evidence dating back to around 93 A.D attested to the existence of giants, and therefore of Goliath (Freedman, 1997).

English stories depicted folkloric giants as being constantly at war with one another and the remnants of their ancient battles scarred the landscape with great rocks and hollows (Briggs, 1967). Norse mythology told of giants who will storm Asgard (the home of the Gods) to destroy the world (McCoy, 2016) and Greek mythology recorded giants as being the offspring of the god Uranus (Leadbetter, 1999).

Loud and Harrington (1929) claimed remains were found in 1911 testifying to the existence of cannibalistic giants in Nevada, United States supporting stories passed down by the Paiute native Americans. Mayor (2005) questioned this as she surmised it was to attract tourists, given that close to the alleged archaeological find, fossils of mammoths and large cave bears were in abundance and these could easily be passed off as humanoid in nature. There has also been alleged bronze age fossil evidence in France that was unearthed in 1890 by Georges Vacher de Lapouge which supported a human being 3.5 metres tall (de Lapouge, 1890).

The three-headed-dog, or Cerberus, was the guardian of the Philosopher's Stone's hiding place in the Rowling (2001) novel. The Cerberus originated from Greek mythology and was the guardian of the underworld who prevented the dead from leaving, however did not have any definitive connection with other cultural backgrounds (Gantz, 1996; Ogden, 2013). Likewise, the Phoenix was also a Greek mythological creature which appeared primarily in that culture. It is described as a bird which was cyclically reborn after it died in flaming combustion, or in another version simply died, decomposed, and rose again (Lundy, 1876; Van der Broek, 1972). Van der Broek (1972) suggested that the ancient Egyptians depicted a similar creature called the Bennu, often referred to as the Sun bird; however he questioned if this interpretation of the hieroglyphs was influenced by the Greek phoenix concept.

The troll appeared in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 2001) as a menacing creature that struck fear into everyone at the school, including Professor Dumbledore. The troll appeared in Norse mythology as mountain dwelling, large, abnormally strong, ugly and dim-witted creatures (Jakobsson, 2008; Orchard, 1997). This depiction was mirrored in Scandinavian folklore, however appeared more human like and less hideous in appearance (Kvidelund, 2010; Simek, 2007). According to Scandinavian folklore, lightning frightened the trolls away, which Lindow (1978) surmised may be a reflection of the god Thor's wrath. Lindow (1978) also noted that the absence of trolls in contemporary Scandinavian countries may be attributed to the accuracy of lightning strikes in these regions. Landmarks in these countries have also been attributed to troll activity, either the throwing of large boulders which subsequently came to rest in areas of the countryside, or the belief that trolls turned to stone upon contact with sunlight (Kvidelund, 2010; Thorpe, 1851). Denmark and Norway also have trolls in their folklore, but they were described as small humanoid creatures (MacCulloch, 1930).

The Centaur appeared in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 2001) as Harry's saviour in the hidden forest. The Centaur was a mythological creature of Greek origin with the torso of a man and body of a horse, allegedly fathered by the god Zeus (Grant & Hazel, 1979). Depictions of Centaurs also appeared in Aztec culture which Chase (1942) attributed to the first encounters with the unfamiliar Spanish cavalry. Graves (1990) noted that Centaurs also appeared in Indian folklore

which he attributed to a tribe who had the horse as a totem. The existence of the Centaur in Indian culture which has a similar appearance to that in Greek mythology was supported by both Pattanaik (2003) and Murthy (1985). In contemporary art, Bill Willers, an American sculptor, has a piece entitled 'Centaur from Volos' which was on display in the John Hodges Library at the University of Tennessee. He fashioned the sculpture from Shetland pony and human skeletons, and added a question on the sculpture's plaque asking if the viewer believed in Centaurs. According to Lyons (1994), this comment was added to mislead viewers and entice them to be more critically aware.

Ghouls appeared in *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009) and tricked Bod into following them in order that they may turn him into a ghoul as well. The Ghoul originated in Arabian mythology and was often depicted as residing in burial grounds and consuming human flesh, although some also depicted the Ghoul as a desert-dwelling creature who lured people into the wasteland in order to devour them (Barber & Riches, 1971; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015; Merriam-Webster dictionary, n.d.). Hindus believed in a similar creature who animated corpses and haunted cemeteries (Encyclopedia of occultism and parapsychology, 2001). All of these portrayals are synonymous with the depiction of ghouls in Gaiman's (2009) novel, as they lived in a wasteland below the graveyard and entered this place via a portal by a specific headstone. Their intent also, was to lure Bod away, not to consume, but to convert him to their lifestyle.

The Indigo Man was a creature only depicted in *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009), its origins were unknown, and appeared to be an invention by the author. The only reference found to Indigo people was by Cecilia Fenn (n.d, para. 3) which referred to these people as having a soul the colour of Indigo with their mission to 'teach and heal, and to shift the consciousness of humanity.' As Gaiman (2009) portrayed the Indigo man as a tool manifested and manipulated by the Sleer, who was of Celtic origin, it could also be interpreted that the Indigo man was a Celtic warrior of some sort as the ancient Celts would paint themselves with indigo in preparation for battle. Fish (2005) attempted tattooing with woad dye, however he reported that it caused temporary scarring and left no blue colouration behind upon healing. He hypothesised that perhaps the blue woad dye reportedly used by ancient

Celts could have therefore been used for closing battle wounds, but little evidence existed to support this idea due to the lack of archaeological finds involving woad or subsequent indigo dye use (Lambert, 2004). Van der Veen, Hall and May (1993) claimed there had been archaeologically confirmed proof regarding the use of woad in iron age Celtic societies as a dye, but little proof regarding the use of it either medicinally or as body adornment.

The Sleer also appeared to be a creature invented by Gaiman (2009) and was depicted as having two heads on a snakelike body, using telepathy to communicate with Bod. Posts on the Neil Gaiman Board website discussed the 'Druid's Stone' folkloric tale as giving rise to the Sleer's physical appearance. The 'Druid's Stone' was also known as 'Adder Stone' and according to folklore was created from the hardened saliva of snakes as they massed together, with their tongues piercing holes in the centre, however a more modern interpretation was that it was merely a rock that had been worn through in the middle by water over centuries without any human intervention (Roud, 2003). The Sleer, as portrayed by Gaiman (2009), feeds on the fear of others in order to maintain its influence over them, but Bod subjugated his own fear when he realised it was the Sleer's only defence. With Bod being granted the freedom of the graveyard, he too possessed similar abilities to psychologically control others, and therefore felt no need to be afraid of a skill he too held. Also, Bod had learnt that death was only a transitional phase as all of his friends were spirits from the past – he therefore had no fear of death. The Sleer's primary motivation in the novel appeared to be to obtain a Master, which was ultimately how Bod dispersed of one of the Jacks in the text, with Bod not wishing to be the Sleer's Master, he discovered he had to be Master of himself.

The Druid was also mentioned in connection with the Sleer and the Indigo Man, with Gaiman (2009) hinting that it could be a Druid that was the Sleer's original master. Although the Druid was not a biblical or mythical creature other than God, it was a person from history who reportedly possessed certain powers or abilities. Little was known about ancient Druids as they appeared to rely on oral history rather than written evidence of their practices and/or beliefs, and archaeological evidence unearthed from the Iron Age provided no definite links to Druids or their practices (Hutton, 2009). MacMathúna (1999) claimed there was reference to Druids in

approximately 750 A.D with a poem by Blathmac stating Jesus was more knowledgeable than Druids. They also appeared in medieval tales where Druids were depicted as sorcerers who opposed the pending spread of Christianity (Hutton, 2009). Hutton (2007) also believed Druids were held in such respect in Gallic societies that by intervening in battle, the hostilities would cease.

Reference has been made historically to the druidic practice of human sacrifice, with Julius Caesar reportedly claiming that these sacrifices were usually criminals who were burnt at the stake in a wooden structure or wagon, which was contemporarily referred to as a wicker man (Daniel, 2010). Anne Ross supported the belief that there was historical evidence to corroborate the idea of Celtic pagan human sacrifice, by citing the Lindow Man bog body as confirmation (Ross, 1986; Ross & Robins, 1989). Archaeologists Stuart Piggott (1968), Miranda Aldhouse-Green (1997) and researcher Barry Cunliffe (2005) agreed with the Ross and the Roman depiction of druidic human sacrifice practices. These claims, however, were opposed by Nora Chadwick (1966) who suggested that accusations of human sacrifice were invented by Romans for propaganda purposes.

Night Gaunts, from *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2009) also appeared to be fictional. They were originally inspired by childhood nightmares and subsequently brought to life in the poem 'Night-Gaunts' written H.P Lovecraft. They were later used again in another story authored by him. They were said to be vaguely humanoid, but black, rubbery, and faceless in appearance; they made no sound when in flight and sported a long barbed tail (Lovecraft, 1985; Pearsall, 2005).

The Ifrit and Assyrian Mummy assisted Silas and Miss Lupescu in their combat against the Jacks in Krakow, Poland. The Ifrit was a creature from Islamic mythology and mentioned by name in the Qur'an as an Ifrit from the Jinn (Qur'an, n.d., Sura An-Nami 27:38-40). Encyclopaedia Britannica (2016) described the Ifrit as an enormous winged creature that lived underground and was often sighted amongst ruins. Gaiman (2009) referenced the Ifrit as being able to become invisible, except in mirrors, however no reference to this could be located in Islamic mythology.

The mummy in Gaiman's novel is described as 'a bandage-wrapped Assyrian mummy with powerful eagle-wings and eyes like rubies, who was carrying a small pig' (Gaiman, 2009, p. 222). Historically, Assyrians did not mummify their dead like the Egyptians did, although their use of burial jars were similar (Baker, 1995). Yoab (2016) related a washing ritual and preparation for burial rites in accordance with the Book of the Dead, but was clothed as he would have been in life, then covered in a linen shroud called a kurakha. No evidence could be located to support the notion of Assyrian mummification and therefore it could be hypothesised that this was poetic licence on Gaiman's behalf.

The will-o'-the-wisp was referenced in both *Dracula* (Stoker, 2009) and *Sabriel* (Nix, 2014). It was a mythical atmospheric light phenomenon referenced all over the world but referred to by different names, will-o'-the-wisp in the Ireland, the United Kingdom and Newfoundland (Trevelyan, 1909), ghost lights or orbs in the United States (Floyd, 1997; Wagner, 2007), Aleya in Asia (Mitchel, 2009; Pandey, 2009), and min min lights in Australia (Kozicka, 1994; Pettigrew, 2003). Each country had a traditional tale of how they lured travellers from their path, but a different reason for their creation. The United Kingdom and Newfoundland told the tale of a terrible blacksmith named Will, who ended up destined to wander the Earth after being refused entry to heaven. The Devil took pity on him and gave him a solitary burning coal to keep himself warm (Briggs, 1978). Ireland recorded a drunkard named Jack who bargained with the Devil to forgive his debts, but instead lured the Devil up a tree, at the base of which Jack carved a cross preventing him from coming down. Another deal was struck whereby Jack removed the cross but as penance, the Devil denied him access to Hell but gave him an ember to light his wandering path over Earth. Jack placed the ember in a carved out turnip to prevent it from going out and acted as a lantern (Hoerrner, 2006). The Aleya was often seen over the waters and were thereby believed to be the ghosts of fishermen who had drowned, sometimes luring them and sometimes assisting them to avoid danger in the water (Mitchel, 2009; Pandey, 2009). Indigenous Australians believed the Min Min light became more prolific after European settlement and they followed people to monitor them in order to protect the land (Kozicka, 1994; Pettigrew, 2003).

The Norse god Thor was revered in Scandinavian countries as well as in Germanic folklore. He was reported to be the son of Odin and wielded a powerful hammer as his weapon in battle and to protect his followers (MacLeod, 2006). It was this image of Thor that was invoked in *Dracula* when Arthur was driving the stake through Lucy's heart, with Stoker (2009, p.206) writing 'he looked like a figure of Thor.' Thor reportedly rules the sky by controlling thunder, lightning, storms and wind (Orchard, 1997), and was the symbol of strength (Dumézil, 1973). As recently as the nineteenth century, Scandinavians were reluctant to utter the names of the gods for fear of reprisals, and words referring to Thor were transitioned into other Germanic languages, including the Norwegian Thorsvarme and Swedish tordön both meaning lightning (Grimm, 1882).

Demons were referred to in *Dracula* generically, for example Stoker (2009, p.108) wrote 'in his delirium his ravings have been dreadful; of wolves and poison and blood; of ghosts and demons' and then subsequently 'is this really Lucy's body, or only a demon in her shape' (Stoker, 2009, p.204). The Ancient Greeks believed demons were happy souls with little to no malevolence, and the evil basis of demonic belief only surfaced with Christianity (Fox, 1989). There were also claims that demons did not exist in Judaism and that such beliefs were based on superstition rather than Jewish doctrine (Bar-Hayim, 2015; Jewish Encyclopaedia, n.d.). The New Testament cited the term demon 63 times in the Christian Bible (Burton & Grandy, 2003; Illes, 2009); however these were sometimes only deities of other religions that were interpreted as demons (Van der Toorn, Becking, & Van der Horst, 1999).

Demonology was an ideal studied by the Roman Catholic Church (Exorcism, 1962) and affirmed by many other Christian doctrines (Chadwick, 1970, Modica, 1996). Roman Catholics believed that demons and angels were real beings and not just symbolic of good and evil, with the church sanctioning exorcisms to save afflicted people via a formal rite and specific prayer code. This was supported in the King James Bible (1987) in Mark 1:39 where Jesus 'preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils' and Mark 5: 8-14 when Jesus cast the unclean spirits out of the man and forced them into the bodies of swine. Luke 10:17 expanded this idea alleging that Jesus passed the power of exorcism on to others to

do in his name and the scripture stated, 'even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.' In Islamic teachings, the Jinn character could inhabit the bodies of humans (Brown, 2011; Hoyland, 2001). In the teachings of contemporary Wicca and Pagan societies, demons were not worshipped or conjured, although their existence was acknowledged (Guiley, 2008).

Stoker (2009) made numerous religious and biblical references to, not only God and the Devil, but to Saint Joseph, Sainte Mary, and the Blessed Virgin. In the novel, he mentioned these biblical characters in reference to protection and prayers, for example he wrote 'I pray God and St Joseph and Ste Mary, many, many happy years for you both' (Stoker, 2009, p. 108). Saint Joseph referred to the husband of Mary, the physical mother of Jesus, and therefore the earthly manifestation of the patriarchal father figure of Jesus. The actual way in which he was referred to differed depending on theological viewpoint, but in general he was not referred to as Jesus' father, but of Mary's husband (Aslan, 2014; Sanders, 1995). He was considered a saint by Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Methodist doctrines as well as orthodox churches (Perrotta, 2000; Souvay, 1910; Spong, 2007).

The Blessed Virgin and Sainte Mary were different names for the same personage (Flinn, 2007). The veneration of her as a redeemer was encouraged by the Catholic Church (Haffner, 2004; Miravalle, 2007; Schmaus, 2004) and gave rise to a variety of Marian societies, including Fatima and Lourdes (Hogan & Kulkami, 2012) in correlation with the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption dogmas (Bäumer & Scheffczyk, 1994; McNally, 2009). The earliest reference to a prayer specifically to Mary, the Mother of God appeared in approximately the third century A.D (Our blessed mother's intercession, n.d.) and since then, the faithful have offered both formal and informal prayers to her for protection since the Middle Ages and particularly expressed in Benedictine monasteries (Campbell, 2001; Osborne, 1981). The collective formalised prayer practice associated with the Rosary and Novenas were also evidence of the significance of Sainte Mary in the Church (Ball, 2003; Herbermann, 1913).

Methuselah and Old Parr were used in reference to unexplained occurrences. Stoker (2009, p. 185) wrote 'There are always mysteries in life. Why was it that Methuselah

lived nine hundred years, and “Old Parr” one hundred and sixty-nine.’ Methuselah was a character in the Old Testament of the Bible and reportedly lived to be 969 years of age (KJB, 1987, Genesis 5:27). He was the son of Enoch, who reportedly lived to be 365 (KJB, 1987, Genesis 5:23) and the grandfather of Noah who allegedly died aged 950 (KJB, 1987, Genesis 9:29). In the Jewish Book of Enoch, Methuselah possessed a sword with which he subjugated ghosts and evil (Shaver, 2013). The Book of Jasher (5:21; 4:20) claimed the biblical flood that took the lives of most mankind was the point at which life longevity ended (Qur’an, n.d.; Shaver, 2013). Jasher 5:21 suggested Methuselah was, therefore, the last of the extraordinarily long lived people and died before the flood, given that God reportedly promised he would not die with the unrighteous (Qur’an, n.d.; Shaver, 2013). In Jasher 5:21, Noah, after being spared from the flood, was the last human to have allegedly been granted this long lifespan (Qur’an, n.d.; Shaver, 2013). Some scholars have hypothesised that diet and water vapour that protected the Earth from radiation potentially resulted in extraordinary long life (Whitcomb & Morris, 1961), while others believe lifespan was gradually cut short due to the introduction of evil (Pilch, 1999). Another rationale was in the translation of ancient teachings, where it was possible that months were misinterpreted as years, equating to 78.5 years in total for Methuselah’s lifespan (Hill, 2003), and others theorized that numbers could have been multiplied by ten, giving Methuselah an age of 96.9 when he died (Etz, 1993). Kitchen (1966) stated the age as pure myth, while Westermann (1984) surmised the ages were simply denoted to construct the idea of a distant past.

Thomas Parr (often referred to as Old Parr) was born in England in 1483 and died in 1635 at the reported age of 152 years and 9 months (Westminster Abbey records, n.d.). The NNDB: Tracking the entire world records surmised that Parr’s birth records could have been misinterpreted as his grandfather’s, given that Parr could not remember explicit events occurring during the 15th century (NNDB, 2014).

Renfield’s reference to Enoch in Stoker’s novel was puzzling to Dr Seward when he stated ‘if I may state my intellectual position I am, so far as concerns things purely terrestrial somewhat in the position which Enoch occupied spiritually’ (Stoker, 2009, p. 251). When Dr Seward enquired as to why, Renfield simply stated ‘because he walked with God.’ In the Bible, it was recorded that ‘he [*Enoch*] should not see

death; and was not found, because God had translated him' (KJB, 1987, Hebrews 11:5). This was echoed in Genesis 5:24 (KJB, 1987; Tanakh, 1985) where it stated that 'Enoch walked with God: and he *was* not; for God took him.' Rabbinical writings claimed God took Enoch before his time because he didn't want him swayed by evil (Jewish encyclopaedia, n.d.; Rashi's commentary on Genesis, 2007).

Several mythical creatures other than God appeared in Garth Nix's (2014) *Sabriel*, however no historical reference in folklore or religious teachings could be located. This indicated the characters, with the exception of the will-o'-the-wisp, were fictional in nature and therefore the only background information regarding the mordicant, clayr, gore crows, mordaut, haunts, ghilms, wallmaker, greater dead and lesser dead appeared uniquely in the novel itself. The information regarding each creature was gleaned solely from the novel with no secondary sources available to confirm the deductions.

The mordicant appeared to be a body formed from bog that was controlled by the dead spirit that inhabited it. Given that the physical manifestation was a creation, rather than the re-animation of a corpse, it needed to be created by a necromancer. It could cross the boundaries between life and death at will and emitted flames from the mouth, hands and feet.

The clayr lived in the glacier and made up one of the five different bloodlines that contained the Charter. Most were female and had the ability to see flashes of the future, however when together in numbers, could see the vision more clearly and for extended periods of time. Wallmakers were another bloodline of the Charter and built the wall in the Old kingdom, along with monuments, Charter Stones and the defences around Abhorsen's house. No description of them was given in Nix's (2014) novel.

Gore Crows appeared in numbers and were created by Necromancers by killing a normal crow and infusing a spirit from death into them. This linked the flock, as though they were controlled and part of the one spirit, and consequently, if one was killed, the others die also.

The mordaut was a parasitic creature that inhabited human bodies and controlled them. They came out at night to kill people and then reinhabit their host's body before dawn, slowly taking the life force from it. They appeared to move as a pool of darkness or shadow, without taking on any discernible form when out of their host.

Haunts and Ghlims were not referred to in detail in the novel, only in one instance where Nix wrote 'otherwise the haunts or the ghlims get you' (Nix, 2014). Because of this, no identifying characteristics or abilities could be deduced.

The Greater Dead were the strongest and commanded the Lesser Dead. They were the spirits of past necromancers who rose from the dead using their knowledge of dark magic. The Lesser Dead consisted of the souls of ordinary men who had died, often suddenly in battle or by accident, and refused to accept death. The Greater Dead then used this to control them.

SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES

Spells/potions/magic

Human beings have had deities and beliefs in the supernatural from the beginning of history and the power of magic and curses have featured during this time across many cultures. Archaeological discoveries have unearthed many artefacts that had protective spells or curses attached to them (Leafloor, 2014). Leafloor (2014) suggested that although the history of the curses may alter, the intention remained consistent as conjuring a supernatural power to inflict misfortune on a target, and could be written, verbalised or ritualised. She further suggested that, although a religious leader, healer or witchdoctor could usually remove the curse, possessions of power to protect from evil curses have been used throughout history to negate this necessity.

One of the most famous spells was the curse that allegedly surrounded Pharaoh Tutankhamun's tomb (Leafloor, 2014). In 1922 when the tomb was opened, mysterious deaths came to members of the archaeological team, and together with media attention, the belief in the power of curses was fanned (Leafloor 2014). In reality, Leafloor believed many inscriptions were used to preserve the ritualistic

integrity of the tomb, as breeching and/or desecrating a resting place was considered implausible by the ancient Egyptians. Leafloor (2014) also noted that the Royal Cobra, or Uraeus that adorned Tutankhamun's sarcophagus was intended to represent protection in opposition to some of the rhetoric referring it as being a curse. She suggested that, in effect, all curses were created as an astute ancient technique of protecting valuables.

Leafloor (2014) believed this practice predated Christianity as a method of protecting ancient books and scrolls, for example the library contents at Ninevah in Mesopotamia were cursed in various ways, and had similar comparisons with modern day copyright. This cursing of libraries continued right through the medieval period. A specific book, infamously called *The Devil's Bible*, that was allegedly written by a monk in a solitary night after making a pact with the devil, was said to be powerfully cursed (Leafloor, 2014).

Whilst Christianity referred to positive curses, as blessings, the negative of this was considered a dark curse and often associated with witchcraft. Ancient Greeks and Romans would practice binding spells, scratching the words into tablets and placing them where desired. One such tablet was unearthed 1600 years after it was written and the curse was translated to read 'destroy, crush, kill, strangle Porcello and wife Maurilla. Their soul, heart, buttocks, liver...' (Jarus, 2012; Kelly, 2015).

Rabbi Geoffrey Dennis (2016) commented on the My Jewish Learning website about supernatural constructive powers, and the belief in magic intrinsically linked with Judaism. Rabbi Dennis (2016) confirmed that Jewish mysticism accentuated a series of 'speech acts' that God performed to create the universe, which could be interpreted as incantations. He believed that, as human beings were the only animal created by God that possessed the power of speech, we too possessed the same constructive or destructive power given the correct conditions.

The underlying beliefs in the Jewish effectiveness of spells, according to Rabbi Dennis (2016), was dependent on three assumptions, which he listed as

- There is special power inherent in the names of God;

- There is special power in the words and phrases that God speaks, for example how they appear in the Torah; and
- The Hebrew alphabet itself is supernatural in origin, meaning that using Hebrew letters in certain combinations is a source of special power, even when it has not semantic value to the adept.

Rabbi Dennis (2016) suggested that incantation phrases contained a number of idiosyncratic technical features including repetition, reversals, foreign words, nonsense words, rhythm and divine names of power. These repetitions were usually done three or seven times, for example repeating the phrase ‘Voice of the Lord’ seven times would prevent evil spirits from appearing at night.

Similarly, Fane (2014) listed ten ancient historical books containing incantations and magic spells that promised supernatural powers:

1. *Greek Magical Papyri*, which allegedly came from the second century B.C. It contained spells and rituals for summoning demons and opening the boundaries to the underworld. It also contained spells and incantations to see the future;
2. *The Black Pullet*, originating in 18th century France. Reportedly written by an anonymous officer in Napoleon’s army, it contained comprehensive instructions for constructing talismans, and an invocation spell to summon a djinn (creature to bring true love), to see behind closed doors, to discover one’s secrets, and to destroy an enemy. Ultimately the book recorded a mysterious black hen (pullet) that could locate buried treasure;
3. *Ars Almadel* was the fourth in a series called the *Lesser Key of Solomon*, or *Lemegeton*. It was compiled in the 17th century and was a substantial grimoire of demonology. It contained instructions for constructing an Almadel (magical was altar, similar to a contemporary Ouija board) and also contained the texts for conversing with angels along with the best dates to invoke them;
4. *Picatrix* was an early grimoire of astrological magic written in Arabic and dated back to the 11th century. Contained in its 400 pages were magic recipes that were potentially lethal, and centred on mind altering concoctions. Ingredients included blood, brain matter, human excrement, hashish and

- opium. The recipe to give one control over the dead required the noxious fumes from a potion of blood, sperm, faeces, urine, ear wax and spit;
5. *Galdrabok* was a 16th century Icelandic grimoire which focused on runes and carved objects. Many incantations focused on healing qualities, however others were more sinister including inciting fear in an enemy, drawing power off others, invoking illness, killing another's animals, and catching thieves;
 6. *Arbatel De Magia Veterum* was a comprehensive book written in the late 16th century which was comparable to a spiritual self-help book utilising the power of positive thinking. Its power was limited to those who were descendants of a mother who was practiced in the art, and could summon the assistance of a variety of spiritual beings including nymphs and sagani, who were spirits that dwelt in the elements;
 7. *Ars Notoria* was compiled in the 13th century and focused on the acquisition of learning rather than spells or potions. Through the text, one could request of God intellectual gifts including wisdom and perfect memory. A 14th century monk named John of Morigny followed its traditions, but began having haunting demonic visions that he attributed to the power of *Ars Notoria*;
 8. *Pseudomonarchia Daemonum* was written by a physician and demonologist named Johann Weyer in the 16th century. Weyer attributed the work's inspiration to his mentor Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, who was a 16th century occultist. Sigmund Freud hailed the book as 'one of the most important books of all time' (Fane, 2014. para. 22) and it contained a detailed catalogue of demons and how to conjure them. Weyer himself was a devout practising Christian and compiled the book as an appendage to his work about the persecution of witchcraft. He cautioned against using the text to conjure spirits as he had omitted key details to safeguard others against conjuring these evil spirits;
 9. *Sworn Book of Honorius* was a medieval grimoire that strongly criticised the Catholic Church as attempting to rid the world of the benefits of magic. Anyone who possessed a copy of the book must locate a suitable beneficiary of it prior to dying or they must take it to their grave. Anyone who possessed the book must also abstain from the company of women. Its contents offered

the rituals to summon both angelic and demonic spirits, give power over nature, to make other ill and even to kill an enemy; and

10. *The Book of Abramelin the Mage* was the work of Abraham von Worms, a Jewish man from the 15th century. He allegedly inherited the book from Abramelin whilst travelling in Egypt and it required 18 months of purification and secret prayer rituals. If this purification was completed, a guardian angel would endow you with powers that included necromancy, precognition, divination and seeing the future. The book contained a series of magic squares, or puzzles containing mystic and occult properties.

Changing appearance

Shapeshifting, or metamorphosis was the ability to physically transform into another form or being, usually via divine intervention or magic. The most common was therianthropy, or changing from human to animal and vice versa. Traditional children's narratives contained this theme abundantly in stories like, *Cinderella* (first published by Charles Perrault in 1697), *Beauty and the Beast* (by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve and first published in 1740), *Snow White* (first published by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in 1812 but revised in 1854) and *Pinocchio* (by Carlo Collodi and first published in 1883). More recently they occurred in movies including *Brave* (Sarafian, 2012), *Willow* (Lucas, Johnston & Wooll, 1988), *The Little Mermaid* (Musker & Ashman, 1989) and in works for adolescents including the *Harry Potter* (Heyman, Columbus, Radcliffe, Barron & Rowling, 2001 - 2011) and *Twilight* series (Godfrey, Morgan, Mooradian, Rosenfelt & Meyers, 2008 - 2012).

Greek mythology abounded in shapeshifting tales as a punitive measure, including Zeus transforming Lycaon into a wolf for killing his children, Athena transformed Arachne into a spider for challenging her, Artemis transformed Actaeon into a stag for watching her bathe, and Circe transformed all intruders on her land into beasts of various kinds. Zeus also transformed himself into various guises to escape Hera's fury (Dorson, 1970). The mother of the goddess Athena, Titan Metis, was the first wife of Zeus and, legend stated, was so proud that Zeus turned her into a fly and swallowed her. Ancient Norse mythology recorded Odin as transforming Svipdagr

into a dragon. Mayans also had myths surrounding shapeshifting, namely Mestaclocan, who had the ability to change into animals in order to converse with them telepathically (Melhorn, n.d.).

Steiger (1999) suggested the transformation, particularly regarding the werewolf, symbolized internal struggle and savagery, similar to that of Dr Jekyll's transformation into Mr Hyde. Tatar (2004) advocated that many folkloric tales in which brides or grooms transform were symbolic representations of the interpretation of arranged marriages rather than perpetuating the idea of a tangible physical ability. Some cultures believed spirits of deceased people could also return in animal form as a message for the bereaved, and Steiger (1999) also recorded an African folk tale where murder victims could return as a crocodile to avenge themselves and then shapeshift back into a human. Apart from the gods and demons abilities to transform, other popular shapeshifting abilities centred on the werewolf and the vampire (Clute & Grant, 1999; Propp, 1968; Steiger, 1999; Thompson, 1977).

The British culture had tales of witches and fairies being able to shapeshift for various reasons (Briggs, 1978; Lenihan & Green, 2003); Scottish mythology recorded the abilities of the selkie and kelpie to change into human or horse form to trap unsuspecting travellers (Briggs, 1978; Child, 1965; Szasz, 2007); and Irish folklore supported a variety of fairy shapeshifters, but the most notable transformation was the tale of Tuan mac Cairill where a lone survivor of an outlying settlement displayed his lifeforce transcending through centuries as a stag, boar, hawk, salmon (before being eaten) and then his rebirth as a human (Lenihan & Green 2003). Norse cultures recorded Odin and Loki as shapeshifters, Freya had the ability to change others, and Scandinavia had a resident race of she-werewolves known as Maras (Briggs, 1978; Poster & Utz, 1998), while Armenian mythology boasted the Nhang, a river monster that could transform into a seal or woman in order to drown people and drink their blood, although their culture also had a Shahapet who was a positive shapeshifter in the form of a man or snake that could guard against harm (Ananikiam, 2010).

Indian mythology described Nāga who shapeshifted between human and snake form, while their scriptures contained the demons Rakshasa who used their shapeshifting ability to deceive people. There also existed the Vanara, who were ape-like humans with supernatural abilities to change their shapes and appearance (Goldman, 1996; Smith, 2006; Vanamali, 2010). The Philippines had the aswang who was vampiric and transformed into a black dog or boar to stalk humans (Fansler, 2006) while Japanese folklore contained ōbake that has the ability to shapeshift. The fox was the most common creature but it could also include the bakeneko, mujina and tanuki (Yōkai, Obake, and Yūrei, 2015). Chinese mythology described the shapeshifting huli jing as a fox that could transform into a woman (Kang, 2006) and Korean folklore also contained a transformable fox called the kumiho; however it was always malicious in contrast to the positive portrayal of the fox in Japanese and Chinese cultures (Fenkl, n.d.).

Medium power

The utilisation of a medium through which to channel energy was an ancient tradition. Prehistoric amulets have been found in some of the world's oldest archaeological sites in conjunction with the earliest identified human remains. Some represented fertility, with carvings and small holes indicating they may have been worn around the neck, and have been dated back to 25 000 BC (Bracken, 1997). The contemporary equivalent could be seen as a rabbit's foot (which was rubbed to bring good luck) or the wish bone (to make a wish come true). Ancient Romans used amulets since the first century B.C. and Ancient Egyptians believed amulets were necessary to protect against evil spirits. The tomb of King Tutankhamen contained crystals that allegedly contained mystical and religious powers (Bracken, 1997). The Sumerians had amulets and pottery inscribed with images for protection, and to bring bad luck to those who opened any sealed pottery. Ancient Jews had amulets which contained within them slips of parchment that were inscribed with the laws of God and worn around the neck. Moses also commanded the Jewish people to inscribe powerful words on the doorposts of their domiciles to protect them, a practice which was reported to continue in many modern Jewish households (Mintz, 1983; Nelson, 2000). Similarly, Muslim amulets inscribed with the name of Allah were considered to be powerful (Budge, 1970; Mintz, 1983). A talisman with reported power worn

by contemporary Jews was the Seal of Solomon, or Star of David, known as a hexagram (Mintz, 1983; Nelson, 2000).

Bells have also been a medium source of power since ancient times which corresponded to the textual representation in *Sabriel*, by Garth Nix (2014). The death knells, or ringing of bell when someone died was an ancient custom to scare any evil spirit that might be lurking nearby, intent on absconding with the spirit of the deceased (Bracken, 1997). During epidemics, like the plague in medieval Europe, bells were rung to clear the air of any lingering disease in an effort to purify the area. The Buddhist bells were also seen as a spiritual cleanser, driving away negative energies. Both Buddhist and Christian church bells were suspended between earth and heaven which allowed their effects to be far reaching (Bracken, 1997). West African inhabitants used to tie a bell to the ankle of a child who was sick to ward off evil spirits, and the contemporary idea of a bell being placed above a shopkeeper's place of business had its origins in keeping evil spirits away from a home or shop. Ancient Jews wore them on their clothing to ward off evil (Bracken, 1997).

Candles have long been associated with religious and magical ceremonies, often as a symbol of remembrance or illumination of the soul (Amulets, 2003). Some Christians light a candle on Christmas Eve and if it burnt through the night and dawn of Christmas Day, good luck would follow in the coming year (Amulets, 2003). The carved candle possessed medium type qualities in the Middle Ages when a candle, shaped as a woman and accompanied by the respective incantation, could bring love to a man from a targeted woman. This process would be repeated nightly until the candle was spent (Telesco, 2001; Walker, 1988).

Gemstones, and crystals in particular, had an affinity with supernatural power and were a prized possession in many cultures (Amulets, 2003). Ancient Greeks believed crystal was frozen water that could never be thawed, which was where the name crystal originated from (kryos meaning icy cold) (Cunningham, 1987). It was known that some crystals developed electrical charges under certain conditions (when compressed or heated); properties that made them useful in radios and amplifying currents (Jones, 1996). Ancient Egyptians believed crystals to have healing properties and that a wand with crystal at each end could locate pain and/or illness in

the body (Cunningham, 1987; Gienger, 1998; Jones, 1996). Edgar Cayce, a modern day mystic, believed that the mythical place, Atlantis, was powered by crystal and that their energy could be transmitted to people via meditation (Cayce, 2009).

Turquoise was a gemstone used in medieval sorcery during a variety of magic rituals, and was reported to protect the wearer from a violent death (Kunz, 1986) which may be why Gaiman (2009) used it as an adornment on the ancient Celtic treasure in his novel, *The Graveyard Book*.

Garlic was a naturally formed anti-evil amulet, reportedly powerful against vampires and evil spirits. In Mexico, garlic must have been received as a gift for these supernatural powers to develop (Allison, 1993). Similarly, silver was also reported to kill vampires, werewolves and ghosts (Cavendish, 1968; Gaskell, 1981).

Leafloor (2014) suggested that the Nocebo Effect, which medical science defined as an adverse reaction to a perception or expectation, was a powerful psychological and physiological phenomenon that suggested a belief in a curse was enough to perpetuate the manifestation of symptoms. Mesaki (2009) wrote that Tanzania law, in 1928, contained a bill that prevented the use (or intended use) of objects or amulets to be used as mediums with which to cast spells. Similarly, any object reported to possess the power, by supernatural means, that caused anyone to act contrary to their regular moral patterns would bring the owner under this law, resulting in fines, imprisonment, banishing and/or deportation. This law was reviewed and subsequently maintained in 1956 (Mesaki, 2009).

Abrahamic religions often used their holy books as mediums of power, placing them under the pillow, or bed of a sick relative (Canaan, 2004). The Roman Catholic Church was wary of endorsing an amulet or object of power, and suggested that the power gained from rosaries, holy water and the crucifix was due to the faith of the holder, entrusting the power of the object to God, rather than the object itself (use and abuse of amulets, 2007). In contrast, however, salt, holy water and the crucifix, as well as the Saint Benedict medal, were all sacraments used to ward off evil during an exorcism (Ball, 2003; Scott, 2006). In addition to a physical crucifix, the sign of the cross was commonly used within Catholicism to ward off evil, including crossing oneself at the sign of death or danger, and during a baptism (Ball, 2003; Lea, 1896).

In 1742, the Saint Benedict medal received the endorsement of Pope Benedict XIV and subsequently became an integral part of Catholic rituals (Heilman, 2015). By virtue of their relationship with an explicit saint or archangel, many sacramentals were believed to defend the holder against evil (Scott, 2006). Holy water was believed to hold such supernatural repelling of evil power that Saint Teresa of Avila reportedly used it often to repel temptation (Fahlbusch, Lochman, Mbiti, Pelikan & Vischer, 1999). The belief in the divine power of objects was evident in the nineteenth century uniform of Spanish soldiers, who wore a medal bearing the Sacred Heart of Jesus on their chests together with the words ‘detente bala’ which translated to ‘stop bullet’ (Ball, 2003; Fahlbusch et al. 1999).

Followers of Islam believed any object that was inscribed with the word God (Allah) invoked the power of God to protect the holder and ward off evil (Al-Selah, 2010). The belief in the power of amulets was evident in modern Africa, when the conflict in 2004 boosted sales of hijabs (small leather pouches believed to ward off harm) for both sides (Sengupta, 2004). There was a reported 40 percent increase in Buddhist amulets in Thailand in 2003, which coincided with recovery from recession (trade in antique amulets soaring, 2003), and in Israel, political parties supported amulets to encourage citizens to vote in the manner God proposed (Marmur, 1998).

Commanding others or objects

Psychokinesis or telekinesis was the alleged ability of a person to influence an object without physical interaction with that object (Irwin, 2007; Xiong, 2010) and the most common of these was levitation (Carroll 2011; Guiley, 1991a). There had been no irrefutable evidence to date that psychokinesis was a genuine phenomenon or ability (Bunge, 1983; Hyman, 2007; Vyse, 2000) particularly given that experiments aimed at replicating the phenomenon to ensure repeatability lacked the adequate control of variables (Girden, 1962; Humphrey, 1995; Kurtz, 1985). Benassi, Sweeney, and Drevno (1979) and Wiseman and Morris (1995) suggested that the illusion was dependent on the viewer’s belief in psychokinesis.

There have been many people throughout history who have claimed to have psychokinetic abilities for example;

- Angelique Cottin and her family claimed in 1846 that she created electric discharges allowing her to move objects, but Podmore (2011) refuted that double movements and contact with garments during the demonstration suggested it was fraudulent;
- An Italian medium, Eusapia Palladino claimed in 1908 that she could move objects during séances, but was caught levitating a table with her foot (Christopher, 1979; Hansel, 1989; Podmore, 1910; Polidoro, 2003);
- Polish medium, Stanisława Tomczyk claimed in 1909 to be able to levitate objects and would often ‘float’ scissors between her hands; however under testing conditions, a thread, believed to be a hair, was observed holding the scissors aloft (Carrington, 1990; Jinks, 2011);
- Annemarie Schaberl, was a nineteen year old who claimed telekinetic powers in the 1960’s Rosenheim Poltergeist case, but scientists and magicians investigating her alleged powers suspected trickery (Frazier, 1986; Taylor, 1980);
- Russian psychic, Nina Kulagina, also in the 1960’s, was filmed allegedly performing telekinetic feats and was so convincing that she was named in the U.S. Defence Intelligence Agency report form 1978 (U.S. Air Force, 1978). Sceptics argued her reported abilities could easily be performed with sleight of hand, disguised threads, magnets and mirrors (Couttie, 1988; Stein, 1996); and
- American psychic, Felicia Parise who, in 1971, purportedly moved a pill bottle along a kitchen table via psychokinesis was so convincing that she was endorsed by parapsychologist Charles Honorton. She was later found to have been using an invisible thread between her hands (Frazier, 1991; Stein, 1996).

Many people that claimed to have metal spoon bending abilities have also been discovered as fraudulent. These included Uri Geller using sleight of hand (Hines, 2003; Randi, 1982); Jean-Pierre Girard who was tested under scientifically controlled conditions numerous times during 1977 but failed to reproduce these abilities in any attempt (and later admitted he sometimes cheated so as not to disappoint members of

the public) (Jones, 1989; Randi, 1982); and Stephen North in 1970, who failed to replicate his spoon bending ability under controlled conditions (Randi, 1982, 1987).

Scientific consensus concluded that psychokinesis cannot be reproduced through reliable, repeatable demonstrations (Gilovich, 1993; Humphrey, 1995; Kurtz, 1985; Park, 2002; Vyse, 2000). Felix Planer (1988) was a professor of electrical engineering and he reported that using very sensitive scientific devices, even minute changes in temperature or circuitry could be detected which could assist in confirming psychokinesis. Parapsychologists, however, reverted to quoting statistics from historically unrepeatable experiments which also had the possible errors of recording mistakes and faulty statistical mathematics that can no longer be scrutinised. Many sceptics also noted that if psychokinesis was a legitimate ability, then gambling and casinos would have a noted decrease in profits (Gardner, 1957; Hurley, 2012; Neher, 1990; Scharff, 1968; Schick, 2010). In relation to physics, John Taylor (1980) suggested that if an unidentified fifth force resulting in psychokinesis were true, then energy would have to dominate the electromagnetic forces that hold all atoms together. The atoms would need to react more intensely with the fifth force than the electric forces. Taylor (1980) argued that if this were the case, then psychokinetic activity should happen consistently and not isolated to alleged paranormal events.

Cognitive bias research suggested that people were vulnerable to deceptions of psychokinesis and their interpretation was from personal experience (Blackmore & Troscianko, 1985; Benassi, et al., 1979; Gilvich, 1993), and that human tendency was to see patterns where none may actually exist (Blackmore, 1992). Wiseman and Morris (1995) also suggested that people who believed in the paranormal were more likely to misremember crucial details of a demonstration and therefore continue to believe despite the lack of evidence. Sternberg (2007, p. 292) stated ‘some of the worst examples of confirmation bias were in research on parapsychology’ and continued to write, ‘arguably, there is a whole field here with no powerful confirming data at all. But people want to believe and so they find ways to believe.’

Immortality

From the earliest time, when man witnessed death, the notion of immortality was created. It was viewed that mortality was the only thing that separated humans from the Gods (Appel, 2014). Appel (2014) suggested an early work of literature penned in the 22nd century B.C entitled *Epic of Gilgamesh*, revolving around a man's quest for immortality, demonstrated the long history man has had with the pursuit of immortality.

Kong (2012) speculated that immortality may be achievable and cited the turritopsis nutricula (or immortal jellyfish) as an example of a living creature that could revert to its juvenile form during unfavourable conditions and then regenerate as required. Kong (2012) noted that there have been no reported data to confirm the death of this animal due to aging. Understanding the intricate genetic, metabolic and evolutionary mechanism that influence life span was imperative. Kong (2012) cited studies done by Thomas Kirkwood in 1977 that hypothesised damage done to somatic cells (brain and heart) at the expense of the germline (reproductive organs, sperm, eggs) resulted in aging. Kong (2012) also cited work done by Professor Andrew Dillin as building on the endeavours of Kirkwood who used his hypothesis to experiment on worm cells that resulted in a 60 percent increase in lifespan. Kong (2012) referred to a caloric and stress hypothesis regarding an increase to lifespan researched by Danica Chen using the diet of Okinawan natives. The residents of the island of Okinawa in Japan had the longest recorded lifespan in the world, and Chen replicated their diet in rats and mice who revealed remarkable lifespan extensions.

There were many reported ingredients to promote immortality, with one being a mushroom called the Lingzhi (literally translated as 'supernatural mushroom') used in traditional Chinese elixirs. Appel (2014) claimed this mushroom had been referenced as early as 475 B.C. and was the oldest known mushroom to be used medicinally. Appel (2014) proposed that alchemists and magicians of the Emperor knew secret locations where the Lingzhi mushroom grew, and, although the fungi contained an acid similar to steroidal hormones, there were no historical accounts of this ingredient producing any prolonged life.

Hinduism claimed the drink Amrita (sometimes called Soma) endowed one with immortality and was referred to in the hymn book Rigveda 8:48:3 (Appel, 2014).

Ambrosia was also comparable to Amrita and was allegedly released naturally by the pituitary gland during meditation (Appel, 2014; McKenna, 1993). Appel (2014) claimed the identity of Amrita had been lost and contemporary scientists had speculated it may have been a plant similar to Fly Agaric (or Amanita Muscaria) which produced hallucinogenic effects when ingested. Others like ethnobotanist Terence McKenna (1993) claimed the origin may be in the Psilocybe Cubensis mushroom that also possessed hallucinogenic properties. Because it grew in cow dung, McKenna (1993) believed it may have been an association that resulted in the Hindu culture raising the status of cattle to sacred, as Vedic literature often referred to the animals as the embodiment of soma. Appel (2014) claimed others believed the plant to be of the Ephedra genus as it was readily available in Hindu based geographical areas and contained Ephedrine and Pseudoephedrine which were chemically comparable to methamphetamine.

Another ancient idea was that metals were indestructible and therefore ingesting them would allow the person similar characteristics. The fact that mercury was a liquid metal fascinated ancient alchemists, and as many myths reported Gods ingesting it, ancient alchemists pursued ways to suspend gold in a drinkable form or combine gold and mercury together (Appel, 2014: McKenna, 1993).

Holmyard (1990) suggested that alchemy became obsolete with the advent of the Scientific revolution, which was echoed in the writings of Principe (2011). Moran (2005) however alluded to alchemy as playing a key role in the evolution of the Scientific Revolution. Coyne (2012) wrote that alchemists focussed on active experimentation in opposition to theory with a clear view in mind; for example chrysopoeia (turning base metals into gold), or creating the Philosopher's Stone. Appel (2014) suggested the ultimate goal of medieval alchemists was to create the Philosopher's Stone. He reported the Philosopher's Stone was alleged to turn basic metals into valuable ones like silver and gold, and also produced immortality. Some myths proposed that the mere possession of it invoked immortality, while others claimed the Stone was used to create the Elixir of Life.

The Ancient Greeks theorized that the first matter (Prima Materia), being chaos, gave rise to the four known elements of earth, wind, fire and water. The ancient alchemists

believed this Prima Material was the crucial element in the Philosopher's Stone and attempted to duplicate it through a delicate balance of components that epitomized those four elements (Appel, 2014). These elements correlated to the traditional Chinese qualities of heat, cold, dryness, and moisture by Jabir ibn Hayyan (an eighth century alchemist) and he believed that together with a catalyst (Prima Materia), could transform into a new substance (Appel, 2014; McKenna, 1993).

According to legend, some individuals have reportedly succeeded in creating this magical elixir of life. Albertus Magnus, from the 13th century, supposedly observed the transformation of lead into gold, and gave the Philosopher's Stone to Thomas Aquinas. Nicholas Flamel (1330 – 1418), was a book merchant who reportedly obtained an original copy of the *Book of Abramelin the Mage*, which allegedly contained the secrets of the elixir of life (Appel, 2014). Although the Philosopher's Stone may never have actually existed, it represented enlightenment and transformation, and was held as a symbol of knowledge regarding psychic alchemy.

SUPERNATURAL MYTHOLOGY

Habitat

One of the hypotheses nominated for the inspiration behind the Count Dracula persona was that Stoker based his central character on the real life fifteenth century prince of Wallachia, Vlad III (1431 – 1477), also known as Vlad Dracula and posthumously as Vlad the Impaler (McNally & Florescu, 1975; Rogers, 2000). It was suggested Emily Gerard's (1888) travel book entitled *The Land Beyond the Forest* inspired Stoker's interest concerning exotic places and cultures (Carlson, n.d; Rogers, 2000).

The mythology surrounding Castle Dracula and its location have provoked many claims regarding which castle was the true inspiration for Stoker's setting. Jardine (1985) referred to this multiplicity of ideas as transpositionality, as the exact castle and location remained indistinguishable, and provided juxtaposition for the overlapping of reality and illusion. Stoker (2009, p.25) stated the castle's location was 'just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bukovina, in the

midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe' which deemed it impossible for the character Jonathan Harker 'to light on any map or work giving the exact locality of the Castle Dracula.' This has resulted in many European castles laying claim to being that which was depicted in Stoker's novel.

Bran Castle was a tourist attraction in Transylvania with many people believing it to be the real Castle Dracula, despite little evidence to link it with Vlad III either by visiting or battling in the immediate vicinity, or by Stoker ever having visited there (Banyai, 2010; Morris, n.d.; Muresan & Smith, 1998). Poenari Castle in Transylvania was fortified by Vlad III and he reportedly enslaved local residence to complete the work which lasted three years, then subsequently had them executed (Cohen, 2012; Morris, n.d.). Hunyad Castle, also in Transylvania, was where Vlad III was held prisoner in the dungeons where he reportedly tortured rodents getting ready for his release. Although Stoker never reportedly visited this castle, it has strong links to Vlad III and therefore considered by some to be a legitimate contender for the right to be considered the mythological Castle Dracula, albeit not viable for tourism purposes (Banyai, 2010; Morris, n.d.).

In conventional graveyards, bodies were buried east to west, but if buried north to south, indicated 'whoever is buried there was considered unworthy of a decent burial' (Goodwin, 2011, p. 26). Another aspect of mythology surrounding burial was that of crossroad superstition. In medieval times, witches, murderers or people who committed suicide were often entombed at crossroads in a supposed effort to prevent them from returning to earth, with some being hanged there (Goodwin, 2011). Goodwin (2011) believed that when people entered graveyards, they were often emotional or mourning, causing their body to vibrate at a different frequency than usual and it was this discrepancy in vibrational frequency that opened a virtual portal, through which spirits could enter. She further surmised that the possibility of graveyards being a focus for spirits could be due to the defilement of their burial plot, bereavement and wanting to say goodbye to loved ones, confused or curious ghosts, and ghosts who were in denial about their current state or fearful to move on. The ghosts in Neil Gaiman's (2009) novel appeared to be none of these, being completely aware of their passing and they continued life as normal, albeit in a

graveyard. Other historical reasons for being denied a burial in consecrated ground was for prostitutes (Constable, 1999), unbaptised children (Murphy, 2011), suicides, the excommunicated, and those accused of witchcraft (Roper, 2004).

Superstition

Superstition has played an active part in human societies with the belief that one incident caused another in the absence of any natural process connecting both events, for example omens and prophecies (Vyse, 2000). As such, superstition was often linked to religion, especially regarding a religion not practiced by the observer, for example African traditional beliefs in contrast to Catholicism (Vyse, 2000). Veyne (1987) related superstition in ancient Rome as those who persistently shuddered with fear of the gods, while Hanegraaff (2012, p. 161) wrote ‘even in Diderot’s Encyclopédie, superstition is still defined as any excess of religion in general.’ Trachtenberg (1939, p. 153) quoted Karl Goldmark as stating, ‘civilized people lose their religion easily, but rarely their superstitions.’ Superstition played an integral part in African communities, particularly in Tanzania where witchdoctors were revered. Many Tanzanian people believed the superstition that having sex with an albino woman would not only bring great riches, but also cure AIDS (Charlton, 2016; Wojciechowska & Klosowicz, 2016). The superstition that albinos’ body parts brought luck, riches and good fortune has resulted in a reported 185 killing and 297 attacks to chop off body parts since 2006 (Pennells, 2016) emphasising the strong belief held by some societies around superstition, even in the 21st century’s age of technology, science, and world wide communication devices.

Trachtenberg (1939) cited one superstitious rite performed by many religions over the world as that of an evening prayer, beckoning angels to protect individuals as they slept. Water, particularly flowing water was said to be holy and protective, whilst fire was linked to demonic spirits and hell (Wagenvoort, 1980). The superstitious belief around water was echoed in both Stoker (2009) and Nix’s (2014) novels with demonic creatures unable to cross. Lucretius’ poem published in 56 BC entitled *De Rerum Natura* referred to the superstition of protecting oneself from evil by spitting three times, an action also referred to in Stoker’s (2009) text. The superstition that noise could scare off unwanted spirits had pre-medieval origins and

has existed to modern times in the guise of ringing a Christian church bell, or the Jewish breaking of dishes and pottery at weddings (Trachtenberg, 1939). Salt was considered historically to be a protective substance, and even the religious texts advocated rubbing new-born babies with salt as fortification against evil (KJB, Ezekial 6:4; Skinner, 1948; Trachtenberg, 1939). Traditionally, the Jewish faith warned off witches by raising an ‘index finger and thumb and recites the name “Uriel” seven times’ and that an evil desire could ‘be vanquished by pressing the thumbs on the ground, repeating “Pipi” nine times, and spitting’ (Trachtenberg, 1939, p. 162).

Another religiously based superstition that was referred to on numerous occasions in Stoker’s (2009) novel was the crossing of one’s self at the mention of anything considered evil. Emmons (2016) stated that initially this ritual was performed using three fingers to represent the holy trinity, but had been relaxed in more modern times. He also alluded to the idea that performing the cross movement on the body emulated the crucifixion and suffering of Christ, and he quoted St John Vianney as saying ‘makes all hell tremble’ (Emmons, 2016, para. 5). He vindicated the sign to be protection from ‘all evil, the devil, and his temptations’ (Emmons, 2016, para. 6).

Significant days

Although the exact origin was not known, the Danse Macabre has been depicted in artistic form since the early 1400’s in a variety of churches, chapels, cloisters and mausoleums (Oosterwijk & Knoell, 2011). These representations were created as a reminder to people concerning the fragility life and how futile their struggles for glory during their lifetime were as none could escape death, and typically depicted a series of alternating dead and live dancers from all ranks in life; emperors to peasants. *Totentanz*, by Bernt Notke was a painting in which the deceased participants were shown as sprightly and alert in contrast to the living looking passive which was echoed in Neil Gaiman’s (2009) novel (Clark, 1947, 1950; Corvisier, 1998; Dreier, 2010; Oosterwijk & Knoell, 2011). Death was seen as the ultimate equaliser of social class (Bätschmann & Griener, 1997).

Halloween, or All Hallow's Eve was believed to have originated as a Celtic pagan festival dedicated to remembering the dead (Hughes, 2014; Palmer, 1882; Roberts, 1987; Rogers, 2002; Smith, 2004; Thomson, 2010) and some believed it had backgrounds in Christianity (Mosteller, 2012). It marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter, which was the darkest part of the year in Celtic areas (Hutton, 1996; Monaghan, 2014) and it was believed that this was when the boundary between the life of the living and the world of the dead was the thinnest, allowing spirits to enter freely (Monaghan, 2014; O'Halpin, 2006). Offerings were left for the souls of the dead so they would not seek entry into the homes of the living, with candles lit and prayers offered to appease the souls passing through (Danaher, 1972; Evans-Wentz, 2010; McNeill, 1961; Monaghan, 2014; Santino, 1994).

The practice of guising or dressing up and going house to house for treats, was thought to have started in the 16th century, and took its origins from the offerings for the dead (Hutton, 1996; McNeill, 1970). This was reserved for a single 'night upon which supernatural beings were said to be abroad and could be imitated or warded off by human wanderers' (Hutton, 1996). The light hearted view of Halloween and guising did not extend to England or abroad until the 20th century (Hutton, 1996). This, more festive approach to the pagan mythology, mirrored how the significant day was portrayed in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 2001).

The Christian claim centred on their observance of Allhallowtide, a day for honouring the saints that dated back to the year 609, however it was originally celebrated in May which co-incided with the ancient roman festival of the dead (Hutton, 1996). It was not until 835 that the date was moved to November by Pope Gregory IV. This was said to have been influenced by practicality as Rome could not accommodate the influx of people celebrating two simultaneous events (Hutton, 1996). The tradition spread and by the end of the 12th century, it became a day synonymous with remembering, praying for, and celebrating the dead (Halloween, 2015). Hörandner (2005) suggested that the origin of contemporary Halloween practices of costume parties dated back to the danse macabre. Regardless of which Christian doctrine belief system one was associated with, the practice of lighting candles and blessing homes on Halloween continued for centuries in an effort to

ward off the evil that, according to mythology, walked the earth on that singular night (Diehl & Donnelly, 2011; Hutton, 1996; Rodgers, 2002).

Death and the afterlife

Death and the afterlife had many guises depending on religious belief systems. For example the Muslim related death in martyrdom as having sexual connotations with their vision of heaven being a group of virgins waiting to attend them in the afterlife, the Jewish faith alleged their predecessors looked down of the surviving family, and Christians believed in the resurrection or continuation of the soul after bodily function cease (Segal, 2004).

Despite the personal belief, the acceptance of some form of spiritual continuation was depicted throughout religious teachings, from Ancient Egypt to contemporary times. Andrew Greeley and Michael Hout (1999) reviewed and compiled data from the *General Society Survey* which revealed that the belief in an afterlife amongst Americans increased significantly between 1970 and 1990. The survey data further revealed that within this time period, the number of Catholics who believed in an afterlife rose from 67 percent in 1970 to 85 percent in 1990 (Greeley & Hout, 1999). Segal (2004) also noted the degree to which sensitivity was affected when personal beliefs regarding the afterlife were challenged. Ultimately, Segal (2004, p. 724) wrote, ‘the history of the afterlife in the West tells that the ‘real’ is itself defined by what cultures define as religious.’

The Australian perspective was polled in 2009 by surveying 1 718 people across all Australian states as part of the *Australian Survey of Social Attitudes*, and compiled by Evans (2009) from the Australian National University, Canberra. This study showed 53 percent of Australians believed in life after death. The mythology surrounding the afterlife was, however, dependent on individual visualisation. Jones, Palffy and Jayaprakash (2013), and Meredith and Hickman (2005) suggest that, as the soul was not a physical entity, it could be detached from the corporeal body and capable of living on indefinitely. Hinduism saw the ‘self as timeless, having no beginning, and identified with the single undifferentiated reality. This self takes on

physical form in a succession of lives, which is the idea of reincarnation...and a fundamental reality of the universe' (Jones et al., 2013, p. 105).

Heaven and Hell

Ancient Egyptian mythology viewed heaven as a physical place, a literal journey that included dangers and other beings, in contrast to other belief systems where it was viewed as a more ethereal plane of existence (Segal, 2004). Buddhism depicted several heavens that linked in one illusionary reality called samsara, where souls were reborn. They viewed heaven as temporary until their soul was reborn in a cyclic manner, and they ultimately escaped this cycle by reaching a stage of enlightenment or nirvana, which was considered a mental state (Jones et al., 2013). Buddhism mythology saw the human world as only one of the existential planes of existence the soul transmigrated through on its journey to nirvana, one of which resembled the mythological Greek city of Olympus (Bays, 2003). Hinduism had a similar view of heavenly planes of existence and cycles of rebirth (Jones et al., 2013).

Christianity typically viewed Heaven as the dwelling place of angels, where the throne of God was situated, and home of the righteous, with the location being skyward (Ehrman, 2006). This was alluded to in many scriptures where Jesus ascended to Heaven, and angels descended from Heaven to address the living (KJB, 1987, Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22, Acts 1:6-9, Revelations 9:1, 20:1, 21:2).

The Islamic mythology surrounding Heaven was that it was a physical place, where banquets were consumed, the inhabitants wore beautiful silk clothes, dwellings were adorned with gold and jewels, and wine was no longer sinful to drink (Qur'an, n.d., Sûrah 13:35, 18:31, 35:33-35, 38:49-54, 52:17-27).

Hell was historically referred to throughout different branches of Abrahamic religions as a place of punishment and/or suffering. Medieval portrayals clearly demarcated fire and brimstone, with fire being a purification instrument during the inquisition periods (David, 2002: Van Dijk, 2003). Biblical scriptures supported the flaming depiction of Hell, and referred to it as everlasting fire, fire that never shall be quenched, and hell fires (KJB, Matthew 18:8-9, Mark 9:43-48). *The New Schaf-*

Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge noted that some versions of the New Testament referred to Gehenna as a metaphor for the resting place of the wicked. Gehenna was an historical refuse tip adjacent to the city of Jerusalem which was systematically burnt off. The corpses of suicide victims and others who were deemed to be sinful and therefore denied burial rites were sent here to be destroyed, which gave a metaphorical picture of the fires of Hell (Herzog, Hauck, Jackson, Sherman & Gilmore, 1912).

Although the mythology surrounding Hell depicted it as a place of burning flames, Buddhist teachings featured both hot and cold hells, and some Christians referred to an inner circle of Hell as a frozen lake of blood and guilt (Alighieri, 2001). Wiccans predominantly worshipped placid deities with an affinity to nature and, as such had no belief in Hell, or punishment and reward (Cunningham, 2011; Murphy-Hiscock, 2005). Segal (2004) pointed out the notion of a decreasing significance of hell in modern day America which he said could denote our declining sense of evil. In the *Australian Survey of Social Attitudes*, a quarter of the participants acknowledged they had no doubts regarding the existence of God, and more people believe in heaven than hell (Evans, 2009).

